THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The Standard of Living Controversy 1790-1840, with Special Reference to Agricultural Labourers in Seven English Counties

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

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by

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PREFACE

The long-standing controversy over working class standards of living during the early nineteenth century is demonstratably one of the most intractable in our historiography. To a large extent the controversy exists because much of the statistical evidence used to measure changes in the standard of living is of dubious value and is open to wide interpretation. In view of the paucity of a reliable body of statistical evidence one of the main tasks of this thesis has been to meet this deficiency by providing a substantial quantity of new statistical evidence on agricultural labourers' wages and the cost of living in seven English counties; Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Dorset, and Hampshire. A further important aim has been to utilise this evidence to test the generalisation put forward by J. H. Clapham that the English agricultural labourer experienced an improvement in his material standard of living between 1790 and 1840.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part I is primarily concerned with providing the necessary background material to the subject. The first chapter begins by surveying the history of the standard of living controversy and the various approaches economic historians have adopted in seeking a solution to the problem. In reviewing the different methods used to measure the standard of living particular attention is focussed upon the usefulness of existing statistical series and the kinds of hazards which are involved in using macro-economic techniques to measure changes in living standards. Chapters 2 and 3 examine in some detail the main strengths and weaknesses of the empirical evidence used in this study and the kinds of practical and methodological problems that were encountered in processing the raw data into final index numbers.

The approach adopted in Part II, which constitutes the major part of

the original research, is primarily one of a series of exercises in quantitative data processing. Two chapters are devoted to each of the seven counties and these are basically concerned with the construction and analysis of two statistical variables - the wage earnings of male agricultural labourers and the cost of living - in order to determine the long-run trend of real wages. In view of the local nature of the evidence, and in the interests of avoiding unnecessary confusion and maintaining a consistent approach to the standard of living question, all the counties have been investigated independently of one another. In Part III, the final section, the conclusions obtained on the standard of living in each county are assembled together and considered on a comparative basis.

It has also been the policy of this thesis to relate the variations in the purchasing power of wages to the economic and social background of each county. In particular, attention has been paid to the role of short-run exigencies, such as a run of abundant or deficient harvests, the outbreak of the Napoleonic war or the post-war economic depression, in order to assess their influence upon the economic welfare of the rural labouring classes. Although the main emphasis has been placed upon statistical material, this material has been generously supplemented by a large quantity of qualitative literary evidence. The main importance of this evidence, which covers such topics as unemployment and the practical operation of the Poor Law, dietary standards and household expenditure patterns, and the incidence of social disorder, is that it gives a vital insight into some of the more obscure aspects of early nineteenth century rural life as well as serving to confirm the conclusions indicated by the statistical evidence.

Finally, it is hoped that this thesis will provide a model for future

research into the standard of living controversy. The methodological approach used in this study could, if the evidence were found, be readily applied to agricultural labourers in other counties as well as to other industries and occupational groups. Until this labour intensive exercise is carried out on a large enough scale the standard of living controversy is doomed to remain an unresolved issue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the various individuals who made this thesis possible. Above all I must acknowledge the immense debt I owe to my supervisor, Professor John Saville, for the inspiration and encouragement he provided at each stage of this study. Particular mention should be made to Professor R. J. Nicholson for his advice on statistical methods and Professor T. C. Barker for reading parts of the thesis in typescript and making many valuable comments. I am also grateful for the help I received from my colleagues at the University of Kent, especially Dr. J. A. Dowie and Mr. J. Whyman, and the constructive ideas which emerged from a discussion on a seminar paper I gave on my research at the University of London.

My thanks are also due to the numerous county librarians and archivists who generously gave their time and energy in procuring for me enormous quantities of contemporary records. In particular I would like to record my gratitude to the archivists and staff of the Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Dorset, and Hampshire County Record Offices.

Finally, I would like to express my special thanks to my wife for her constant encouragement and understanding and Mrs. Marilyn Newman for her help and resolution in typing numerous drafts and the final typescript.

LIST OF GRAPHS USED IN THE TEXT

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CONVERSION TABLE OF MONETARY VALUES

£	s.	d.			New Pence
1	0	0	(or 20s.)	=	100.0
	19	0			95.0
	18	0			90.0
	17	0			85.0
	16	0			80.0
	15	0			75.0
	14	0			70.0
	13	0			65.0
	12	0			60.0
	11	0			55.0
	10	0			50.0
	9	0			45.0
	8	0			40.0
	7	0			35.0
	6	0			30.0
	5	0			25.0
	4	0			20.0
	3	0			15.0
	2	0			10.0
	1	0	(or 12d.)		5.0
	0	6			2.5
	0	3			1.75

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

The following abbreviations are employed in this thesis:

Annals	Annals of Agriculture
E.H.R.	Economic History Review
J.E.H.	Journal of Economic History
J.R.A.S.	Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society
J.R.S.S.	Journal of the Royal Statistical Society
R.E.S.	Review of Economic Statistics
K.R.O.	Kent Record Office
E.R.O.	Essex Record Office
E.S.R.O.	East Suffolk Record Office
D.R.O.	Dorsetshire Record Office
H.R.O.	Hampshire Record Office
L.R.O.	Lincolnshire Record Office
N.U.L.	Nottinghamshire University Library
N.R.O.	Nottinghamshire Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office

MAP 1

Location of Counties in England

Key

(S) = Suffolk
(E) = Essex
(K) = Kent
(N) = Nottinghamshire
(L) = Lincolnshire
(D) = Dorset
(H) = Hampshire

PART I

THE STANDARD OF LIVING CONTROVERSY 1790-1840

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In past years the debate about what happened to the standard of living of the working classes during the Industrial Revolution has attracted the attention of historians of most political persuasions.[1] The debate has a long history and is highly controversial owing to the fact that much of the qualitative and quantitative evidence, especially on wages and prices, is of a conflicting kind and often too weak to support any substantial conclusions about the purchasing power of wages.[2] Indeed, given the recent revival of interest in the standard of living question, it is surprising what little new evidence on wages and prices has been produced on this issue.[3] To a large extent, then, the lack of a consensus

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[1] The leading contributors to the debate are: T. S. Ashton, 'The Standard of Life of the Workers in England, 1790-1830', The Journal of Economic History, IX (1949). E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The British Standard of Living, 1790-1850', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser. X, 1 (1957). S. Pollard, 'Investment, Consumption and the Industrial Revolution', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XI, 2 (1958). R. M. Hartwell, 'Interpretations of the Industrial Revolution in England', J.E.H., XIX (1959). A. J. Taylor, 'Progress and Poverty in Britain 1750-1850', History, XLV (1960). R. M. Hartwell, 'The Rising Standard of Living in England, 1800-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XIII, 3 (1961). E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Standard of Living during the Industrial Revolution: A Discussion'; R. M. Hartwell, 'The Standard of Living', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XVI, 2 (1965). J. E. Williams, 'The British Standard of Living, 1750-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XIX, 3 (1966). See also E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (1964). A. J. Taylor, The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution (1975). Other contributors are mentioned below.

[2] These points are examined at greater length in this and the following two chapters. A further difficulty is that different contributors refer to different time periods. T. S. Ashton wrote of the period 1790-1830. E. J. Hobsbawm 1790-1850, A. J. Taylor 1750-1850, R. M. Hartwell 1800-1850, S. Pollard 1745-55 to 1840-50, and J. E. Williams 1750-1850. Similarly, these writers have written about the 'British standard of living' and the 'English standard of living'. Much of the debate's inconclusiveness can be attributed to the absence of agreement on whose standard of living is being considered and in what time period.

[3] Notable exceptions are: R. S. Neale, 'The Standard of Living, 1780-1844: A Regional and Class Study', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XIX, 3 (1966). G. J. Barnsby, 'The Standard of Living in the Black Country during the Nineteenth Century', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXIV, 2 (1971). T. R. Gourvish, 'The Cost of Living in the Early Nineteenth Century', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXV, 1 (1972). See also M. W. Flinn, 'Trends in Real Wages, 1750-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXVII, 3 (1974).

of agreement among historians can be partly attributed to a dearth of reliable evidence on wages and prices at both the local and regional level. In another respect the controversy has been heightened by the development of an aggregative approach to the standard of living question. This relatively new approach, stemming out of post-war developments in economic theory, was largely due to two developments: first, the realisation that much of the available literary and statistical evidence on wages and prices was too defective and unreliable to support any firm conclusions about the standard of living[1] and, second, the possibility of applying Keynesian economic analysis to historical data. The new approach to the standard of living question, which was adopted in the 1950's, added an important dimension to a very complicated problem and considerably widened the area of discussion.[2] In another sense, however, the field of discussion might be regarded as being too wide owing to the fact that national aggregate statistics tend to obscure occupational and regional differences in the standard of living. Global calculations of average per capita national income, derived from national income and population estimates,[3] throw little light upon individual standards of living because they do not take account of how incomes were distributed between various social and economic groups.[4] Not only was the distribution of national income and wealth between social groups highly unequal in the nineteenth century but the

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[1] Hobsbawm (1957), loc. cit. pp. 48-9.

[2] See, for instance, the aggregative approach adopted by Pollard, Hartwell 1961 and 1963, and Williams.

[3] The most recent arguments are based upon the estimates of national income, capital formation, and consumption in P. Deane and W. A. Cole, British Economic Growth, 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 1964) and B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962).

[4] Hobsbawm (1963), loc. cit. pp. 121-2. Williams, loc. cit. p. 586.

proportion appropriated by the working classes was also unequally distributed. Indeed, the labour force was extremely heterogenous in character and its sectoral and geographical structure was clearly reflected in the existence of a well-marked pattern of wage differentials and standards of living.[1] The study of the agricultural labour force is important in this context as they comprised the largest occupational group in the labour force and were a sizeable component of the English working class.[2] The task of estimating what happened to their standard of living is vitally important to the standard of living controversy and is the raison d'etre for this study.

The controversy over what happened to the standard of living of the agricultural labour force during the first half of the nineteenth century conventionally dates from the start of a debate on the subject between J. H. Clapham[3] and J. L. Hammond[4] in 1926-30. This debate had its antecedents in the public discussions of the 1870's and 1880's over the monopoly of land and the economic and social demise of the rural labour force.[5] In

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1 James Caird's study of English agricultural wages, for instance, made a clear distinction between the high wage areas of northern England and the low wage areas of southern England. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1851).

2 The actual size of the farming labour force remained practically the same in 1841 (1.9 million) as in 1801 (1.7 million) though the number expressed as a proportion of the national labour force fell from 35.9% to 22.2% respectively. Deane and Cole, op. cit. pp. 142-3.

3 J. H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain. The Early Railway Age 1820-1850 (Cambridge, 1926), I.

4 J. L. Hammond, 'The Industrial Revolution and Discontent', E.H.R., 1st ser., II, 2 (1930).

5 The literature on this subject is voluminous. Some examples are: T. E. Kebbel, The Agricultural Labourer (1870), G. C. T. Bartley, The Seven Ages of a Village Pauper (1874), A. Toynbee, The Industrial Revolution (1884), T. Fisher Unwin, ed., The Hungry Forties. Life Under the Bread Tax (1905), W. Hasbach, A History of the English Agricultural Labourer (1908), M. E. Davies, Life in an English Village (1909), F. G. Heath, British Rural Life and Labour (1911), J. L. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer (1911), Lord Ernle, English Farming Past and Present (1912), R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (1912), F. E. Green, The Tyranny of the Countryside (1913), B. S. Rowntree and M. Kendall, How the Labourer Lives. A Study of the Rural Labour Problem (1913).

seeking to modify the pessimistic view of economic and social progress which had emerged out of this period of critical self-examination J. H. Clapham noted in the Preface to the first edition of volume one of his Economic History of Modern Britain,

> The legend that everything was getting worse for the working man, down to some unspecified date between the drafting of the People's Charter and the Great Exhibition, dies hard. The fact that, after the price fall of 1820-1, the purchasing power of wages in general - not, of course, of everyone's wages - was definitely greater than it had been just before the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, fits so ill with the tradition that it is very seldom mentioned, the work of statisticians on wages and prices being constantly ignored by social historians.[1]

Clapham was referring to the statistics of agricultural wages collected by A. L. Bowley in 1898-1900[2] and the cost of living index constructed by S. J. Silberling in 1923.[3] The importance of Clapham's contribution to the standard of living debate was his use of quantitative evidence to modify the 'legend' that everything was getting worse for the working man.[4] By relating Silberling's cost of living index to Bowley's index of English agricultural wages Clapham demonstrated that after the rise in prices and wages during the early years of the Napoleonic war, agricultural wages rose above the general level of the cost of living in 1802 and remained

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[1] Clapham, op. cit. p. vii.

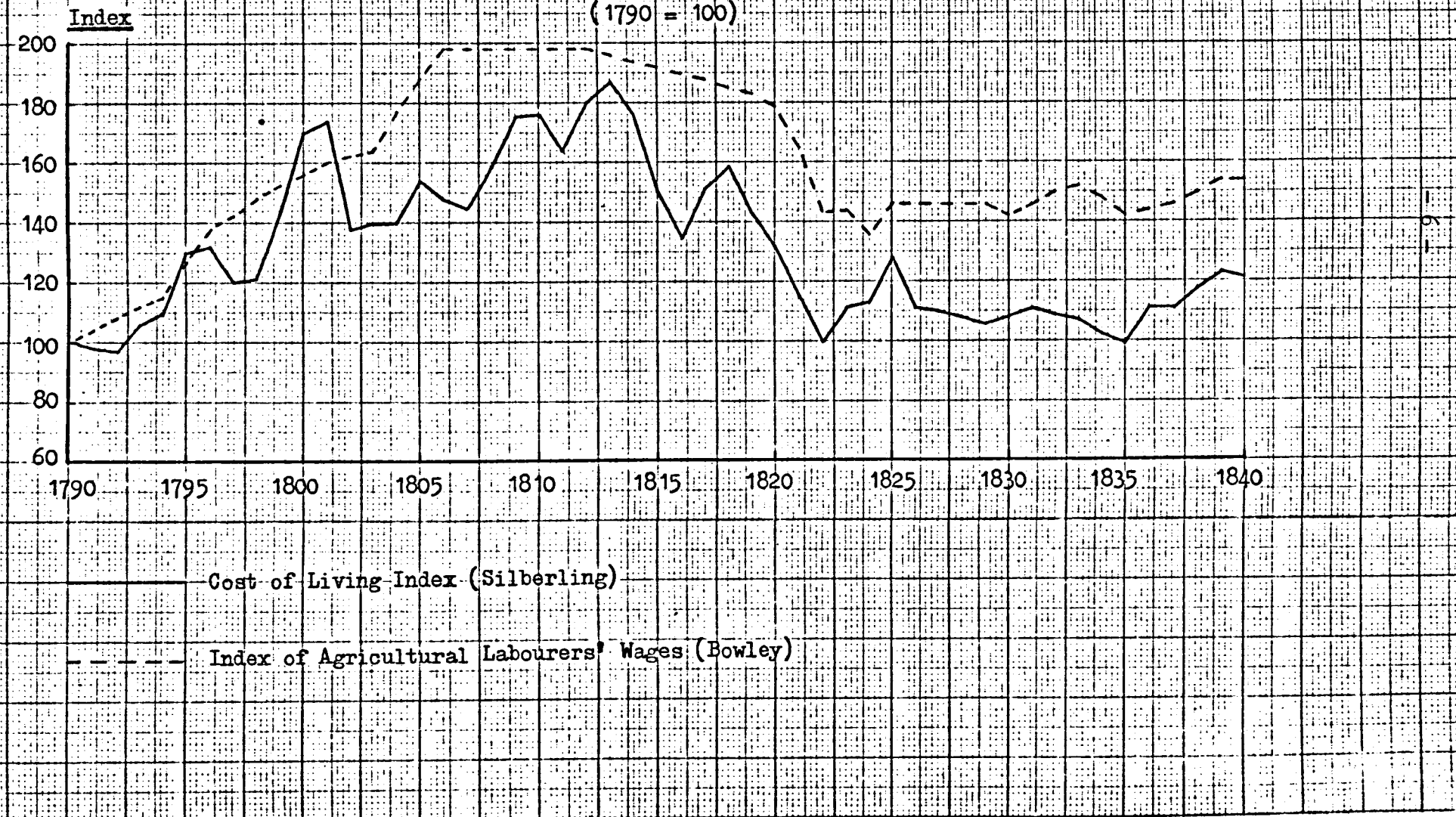
[2] A. L. Bowley, 'The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom during the last Hundred Years: Agricultural Wages', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXI (1898). 'Earnings and General Averages', J.R.S.S., LXII (1899). Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge, 1900). Clapham, op. cit. pp. 125, 128.

[3] S. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923). Clapham, op. cit. pp. 127-8, 601-2.

[4] The legend against which Clapham wrote was started by A. Toynbee's The Industrial Revolution and was also found in Lord Ernle's description of the period 1813-1837 as 'the blackest period in English farming'. Hammond, loc. cit. p. 125. Lord Ernle, English Farming Past and Present, ed., G. E. Fussell and O. R. McGregor (6th ed., 1961), p. 319.

FIG. 1

Agricultural Labourers' Wages in England and Wales and the Cost of Living 1790–1840



there until 1850.[1] The relationship between the rise in wages and the cost of living suggested that real wages increased by 24 per cent. between 1790 and 1840 and 57 per cent. between 1790 and 1850.[2] Clapham found 'that rather vague figure the average English (with Welsh) labourer' had improved his gross earnings by £5 a year, or 1s. 11d. a week, between 1794 and 1824[3] and concluded that,

> . . . whereas on the average the potential standard of comfort of an English (with Welsh) rural labouring family in 1824 was probably a trifle better than it had been in 1794, assuming equal regularity of work, there were important areas in which it was definitely worse, others in which it was probably worse, and many in which the change either way was imperceptible.[4]

This was cautious optimism and it is clear that Clapham's interpretation depended very heavily upon the reliability of Bowley's and Silberling's statistics; especially the observation that the wage index exceeded the cost of living index after 1802.[5] The suggestion that the purchasing power of agricultural labourers' earnings improved ran counter

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[1] Clapham, op. cit. p. 128. See Fig. 1.

[2] These figures have been derived from Clapham, p. 128. The index of real wages has been obtained by dividing Bowley's wage index for 1840 (150) and 1850 (130) by Silberling's cost of living index for the same years; 121 and 83 respectively.

[3] Clapham, op. cit. p. 129. Clapham noted that the average gain in wages was mainly due to the marked rise in wages in the industrial counties north of the Trent. Higher agricultural wages in these counties, due to the competition of high industrial wages, induced an upwards bias in the national average agricultural wage.

[4] Ibid. p. 131. Between 1794 and 1824 agricultural wages fell in Suffolk and Dorset and showed 'no appreciable movement' in Lincolnshire. Wages in Kent experienced a rise equal to the national average. Ibid. p. 129.

[5] Clapham considered Bowley's wage statistics for 1794-5 and 1824-5 to be 'reasonably complete and trustworthy' and 'into which no risk of really serious error enters'. Ibid. pp. 125, 127.

to Lord Ernle's gloomy interpretation[1] and relegated the pessimistic view to the status of a 'legend'.

In later years the optimistic view associated with Clapham, and especially the statistics he used, was criticised on several grounds. The fact that both the wage and price series were found to contain substantial weaknesses seriously undermined the optimists' case and invalidated Clapham's general conclusion about the standard of living. In 1930 J. L. Hammond censured the confidence Clapham placed in other writers' statistics when he wrote,

> How far is his average labourer representative? The average labourer he sets up is not the man who receives a wage calculated from the average of the wages received by the labourers of the country. He is the man receiving the wage arrived at by taking the wage put down for each of the several counties, adding up the figures and dividing the sum by the number of counties, irrespective of the number of labourers each county contained. In this way you get some strange results. The man who improved his position by 1s. 11d. a week between 1795 and 1824 is given on this principle a wage of 9s. 6d. If you take the counties that fall below this figure in the table Dr. Clapham uses and then turn to the census table of 1831 you find that the counties that fall below this average figure contain sixty per cent. of the agricultural labourers of the country.[2]

This was an important point; national aggregate figures tend to conceal significant regional variations in incomes and the distribution of the rural labour force. The fact that 60 per cent. of the agricultural labour force received wages that were less than the national average wage was a substantial argument in favour of the pessimists.[3] Indeed the

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[1] Ernle, op. cit. pp. 314, 325, 327, 331. Ernle noted that if agricultural wages doubled during the Napoleonic war, the prices of provisions trebled and effective earnings were diminished by one-third.

[2] Hammond, loc. cit. p. 218.

[3] In the Preface to the second edition of his book, published in 1930, Clapham accepted Hammond's criticism of his statistics with the comment, 'Against my statistics of agricultural wages - or rather Professor Bowley's - Mr. Hammond makes a valid point.' Clapham (1930), I, op. cit. p. viii.

national average wage was a generous over-estimation because it was inflated by high agricultural wages in the northern and midland industrial counties. Regional variations in the distribution of labour and the domestic and manufacturing industries were clearly marked in the early nineteenth century and gave rise to a marked pattern of regional income differentials and standards of living. Whilst agricultural labourers in the rural eastern and southern counties were paid 7s. and 8s. a week, and suffered a further loss of earnings due to a decline in cottage industries, their northern brethren earned 10s. to 12s. a week owing to the competitive influence of high wages in the expanding manufacturing industries.[1] The artificial inflation of the low wages paid in the rural south with the high wages paid in the industrial north clearly misrepresented the true situation and gave a misleading and optimistic impression of the labourers' standard of living.

A further criticism of Bowley's estimates concerns the sources of evidence from which he drew his wage statistics. Bowley extracted his figures from various contemporary printed sources[2] and the indexes he derived from these form a principal source of reference for historians. The

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[1] Bowley (1898), loc. cit. pp. 704-6.

[2] Ibid. pp. 706-7. Bowley collected his figures from the following sources:

1767-70 A. Young, A Six Months Tour through the North of England (1770). A Six Weeks Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1768).

1795 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (1797), and the complete publications of Arthur Young.

1824 Report from the Select Committee on Paying the Wages of Labour out of the Poor Rates, Parl. Papers 1824, VI.

1833 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXVII-XXXIV.

main weakness of this evidence, however, is that it is incomplete and varies considerably in quality and comprehensiveness from county to county. In estimating the general course of agricultural wages for each county Bowley was obliged to rely upon observations for a small number of years: 1767-70, 1795, 1824, 1833, 1837, and 1850.[1] These few spot observations, interspaced with large gaps of up to twenty-nine years, are inadequate indicators of the general trend of agricultural wages, especially as the sources of evidence and method of calculating average wages varied from year to year. Indeed, not only were many contemporary writers on agricultural affairs 'ignorant of the niceties of calculation'[2] but the information they collected was provided by magistrates, clergymen, landlords, and gentlemen farmers and was not entirely without bias.[3] This element of unreliability in contemporary wage statements was commented on by Bowley, who noted that 'most observers are incompetent, do not register the essential facts, or describe incompletely what they do register . . . highest wages are given as the average . . . and no allowance is made for normal lost time, when the object is to show the prosperity and unfounded discontent of the working classes'.[4]

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[1] Bowley also provided figures for the second half of the century.

[2] Bowley (1899), loc. cit. p. 556.

[3] Most popular and influential journals, such as the Annals of Agriculture and The Farmer's Magazine, published the opinions of all classes on the question of wages, except those of the agricultural labourer. The labourers' silence, in the face of their articulate social superiors, and illiteracy were the reasons why they left no personal records of their experiences for posterity. Had they done so there would probably have been no standard of living controversy!

[4] Bowley (1900), op. cit. p. 12. The Rev. David Davies did not personally collect his information on wages from the labourers themselves. He obtained it from his friends and acquaintances. D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795) pp. 7, 126.

One problem was that many observers of rural life failed to make a distinction between actual wages and theoretical wages; between what the labourer actually earned in the course of the year, taking good seasons with the bad, and what the labourer could earn if he was an industrious man in regular employment and maximised his economic opportunities. Thorold Rogers, for example, criticised Arthur Young's estimates of agricultural earnings because they were 'entirely fictitious' and to which 'not one family in a thousand corresponded'.[1] Where several wage rates were quoted for a county in a particular year, wages given for other years seldom referred to the same districts in the county or stated the method by which the rate was calculated. Sometimes several wage rates were given and no distinction was made between spring, summer, and winter rates nor was any mention made of the length of time a labourer was employed at each rate of pay. The 1824 Returns on Labourer's Wages, for example, presented a bewildering variety and range of agricultural wages for some parishes in Kent such as 10s. 0d. to 13s. 0d., 6s. 0d. to 15s. 0d., and 9s. 0d. to 21s. 0d.[2] Such information as this is difficult to interpret and can tell us little about a labourer's annual average earnings unless the length of time each rate of pay lasted can be determined.[3] This requirement is important when estimating annual average earnings as the corn harvest, when very high wage rates were paid, could last from three to seven weeks and could vary by as much as forty days in two consecutive years.[4]

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[1] J. E. T. Rogers, Six Centuries of Work and Wages (1909), p. 481.

[2] Abstract of Returns on Labourer's Wages made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX, p. 386. Lord Ernle was sceptical of the 1824 Returns and described them as 'very defective and unreliable'. Ernle, op. cit. p. 526.

[3] This point is discussed further in chapter 3.

[4] E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), pp. 62-3. A long winter, due to unusually inclement weather, would operate in the opposite direction by lengthening the period at which low wage rates were paid.

Associated with this point is the question of defining what an agricultural labourer was. In the early nineteenth century the term 'agricultural labourer' was a generic one which embraced several categories of rural labour whose status, terms of employment, and rates of pay varied considerably according to the relative skill and productivity of the individual labourer.[1] Unskilled labourers, which this study is primarily concerned with, were employed by the day, week, or season at either a fixed rate of pay, the wage being determined by the length of time worked, or at a wage which was determined by the quantity of work performed by the labourer. Most labourers were employed at both kinds of work for varying lengths of time and therefore their annual average weekly earnings were strongly influenced by seasonal and secular fluctuations in the demand for labour.[2] For these reasons unqualified wage quotations mean very little unless it can be determined whether they were winter rates, summer rates, or an arithmetic average of summer and winter rates, including or excluding special piece-rate payments paid throughout the year.[3] Contemporary sources invariably failed to make a distinction between these various rates; an omission which led Bowley to conclude that some of the evidence was 'of little statistical value'.[4]

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[1] Farm servants (shepherds, ploughmen, carters) enjoyed a higher status than ordinary unskilled labourers and were usually hired by contract for a year at the local Hiring or Statute Fairs. As they held responsible positions on the farm, especially in handling livestock, their wages were considerably higher than the wages of ordinary labourers. An example of the structure of wage differentials on an Essex estate in 1790-1840 is given in Figure 20, p. 204.

[2] Agricultural wages were also influenced by several other factors such as local custom, the age, strength and marital status of the labourer, and the level of wages paid in non-agricultural occupations.

[3] This point is discussed further in chapter 3.

[4] Bowley (1898), loc. cit. p. 708. Bowley (1899), loc. cit. p. 556.

It is evident from the objections raised against Bowley's index of English agricultural wages that the generalisation that the purchasing power of wages improved from the early 1800's onwards was based upon unreliable and incomplete evidence. This is an important point because Clapham's optimism depended upon the observation that the average labourer added 1s. 11d. a week to his wage between 1795 and 1824 and that the wages curve kept ahead of the cost of living curve. As the maintenance of this statistical relationship was crucial to the optimist's case it is easily seen that if the wages curve was defective then the burden of proof depended heavily upon the strength of the cost of living curve. Indeed, it can be stated that half of Clapham's optimism stood or fell by Silberling's cost of living index. How reliable was this index as a measure of the cost of living in the standard of living debate?

N. J. Silberling constructed his cost of living index from the wholesale prices of fifteen commodities of 'imported raw materials of industrial and commercial consequence'.[1] These commodities[2] were selected for their importance in 'typical working class' budgets and were weighted according to the amount of expenditure spent on them in a number of household budgets published by William Neild,[3] George Wood,[4] and Charles Booth.[5]

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1 Silberling, op. cit. pp. 224, 234. Silberling obtained his data from the London Price Currents. These were published by private agencies for commercial traders and merchants and contained weekly information on wholesale commodity prices. See J. M. Price, 'Notes on Some London Price Currents, 1667-1715', E.H.R., 2nd ser. VII, 2 (1954). Silberling also extracted information from The Gentleman's Magazine and J. R. McCulloch's, Dictionary of Commerce (1882).

2 Wheat, mutton, beef, butter, oats, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, wool, cotton, flax, leather, coal, and tallow.

3 W. Neild, 'Comparative Statement of the Income and Expenditure of certain Families of the Working Classes in Manchester and Dukinfield, in the Years 1836 and 1841', Journal of the Statistical Society of London, IV (1841), pp. 320-34.

4 G. H. Wood, 'A Glance at Wages and Prices since the Industrial Revolution', The Co-operative Wholesale Societies' Annual (1901), p. 253.

5 C. Booth, Labour and Life of the People: East London (1891), I, p. 138.

Price changes were measured from the base year 1790[1] to provide an index of base weighted price relatives, which Clapham used to demonstrate a rise in the purchasing power of wages.

Although Silberling's index provides a useful general guide to the cost of living its many limitations have severely restricted its application to specific aspects of the standard of living debate.[2] Its main weakness is that it is an index of urban raw material prices which assumes a high degree of correlation between retail and wholesale prices. T. S. Ashton made this point with the comment,

> . . . the index is valid only on the assumption that retail prices moved in the same direction and at approximately the same time as wholesale prices and that the spread between the two remained fairly constant . . . It is surely unrealistic to assume that the prices of food and clothing and footwear were faithfully reflected in those of the substances of which they were made.[3]

A further limitation concerns the question as to what extent can an index of London-based commodity prices be used to make generalisations about the cost of living in areas lying outside the metropolis. How representative was London of the country at large? It is quite possible, for example, that, given the uneven pattern of economic development, especially in agriculture and communications, each region had its own price history and its own set of price relationships.[4] A recent study, comparing prices in

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[1] Silberling selected 1790 as his base year because economic conditions then were stable and to which subsequent price fluctuations could be compared. Silberling, loc. cit. p. 229. The same base year has been adopted in this study in order to facilitate a comparison with Silberling's index.

[2] The main critics of the index are: G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People 1746-1946 (4th ed., 1949), p. 85. Ashton, op. cit., Hobsbawm (1957), loc. cit. pp. 48-9.

[3] Ashton, op. cit. pp. 29-30.

[4] Deane and Cole, op. cit. p. 12. See also C. W. J. Granger and C. M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', E.H.R., XX, 2 (1967). This interpretation is discussed further in the following chapter.

London and Glasgow, found that,

> . . . in the Glasgow case, to combine local wages with London wholesale prices would give a misleading and optimistic impression of the trend of real wages. . . . the trends seen in the London price series are markedly different to those in Glasgow and . . . it is unwise to rely upon London wholesale prices rather than regional retail prices, particularly when calculating estimates of real wages.[1]

If difficulties arise from comparing the cost of living in urban areas, it is probable that similar difficulties would arise if an urban cost of living index was combined with an index of agricultural wages to show changes in the standard of living. To combine an index of London raw material prices with an index of English agricultural wages, as Clapham did, tells us little about the standard of living because both series were not representative of the quantities they were seeking to measure. This point was well put by Ashton:

> We cannot measure changes in real wages by means of an index of wholesale or institutional prices. We cannot apply the price data of one area to the wage data of another . . . We require not a single index but many, each derived from retail prices, each confined to a short run of years, each relating to a single area, perhaps even to a single social or occupational group within an area.[2]

Silberling's index can also be criticised on the grounds that the weights he assigned to the various articles in the index bore little resemblance to the way agricultural labourers distributed their incomes on these items in their household budgets.[3] In devising a system of weights for his index Silberling took the average expenditure on the least important article in the budget as representing unity, and expressed all the other items as a multiple of this figure. These items, expressed as a proportion of total expenditure, suggested that 75 per cent. of total

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[1] Gourvish, loc. cit. pp. 76-8.

[2] Ashton, loc. cit. p. 33.

[3] This was because the weights were derived from urban budgets and not from rural budgets. See pp. 18-19.

expenditure was spent on food and drink and that the allocation of expenditure on the nine commodities within this category was as follows:[1]

Wheat	36.0%		Sugar		7.0%
Oats	7.0%	43.0%	Tea	5.0%	
Mutton	14.2%		Coffee	2.3%	7.3%
Beef	14.2%	28.4%	Tobacco		2.3%
Butter		12.0%			
					100.0%

Ashton criticised the budgets from which these weights were derived on the grounds that they excluded certain important items and that some commodities in the index were over-represented:

> He did not occupy a house or at least he was not called upon to pay rent. He allowed himself only a moderate amount of bread and very little porridge, and he never touched potatoes or strong drink. On the other hand, he got through quite considerable quantities of beef and mutton and showed a fondness for butter. . . . The ordinary Englishman of the eighteenth century would have been puzzled by him. For the ordinary Englishman . . . was a granivorous and not a carnivorous animal. His staple diet was bread . . . meat was for him a luxury to be taken once, or at most twice, in the week.[2]

It is clear from the several household budgets collected by F. M. Eden[3] and D. Davies[4] that wheat was under-weighted and meat was over-weighted in

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[1] Silberling, loc. cit. p. 234. The weights assigned to the main categories of expenditure were: Food and Drink 75%, Clothing 12.5%, Shoes 1.8%, Fuel 7.1%, Tallow 3.6%. In certain respects this pattern of expenditure was not too dissimilar from the expenditure pattern of agricultural labourers in the southern counties as suggested by Davies: Food and Drink 67.7%, Clothing 10.2%, Shoes 1.7%, Fuel 5.4%, Candles and Soap 3%. Davies, op. cit. pp. 180-3.

[2] Ashton, op. cit. p. 30 . For practical reasons it is not always possible to include every item of consumption in an index because continuous runs of prices are extremely scarce. Household budgets, for a particular social group or area, showing changes in the pattern of consumption over a given period of time, are difficult to find. Hence, it is almost impossible to adjust the weights in the index to take account of the introduction of new commodities or the temporary substitution of one commodity by another. Cottage rents, in particular are difficult to estimate because the data is not available for dwellings of comparable size and location.

[3] F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928).

[4] Davies, op. cit.

Silberling's index. Bread, or wheat, was the staple of life for the agricultural population, and this was usually supplemented by small quantities of butter, cheese, meat, and tea.[1] Indeed, the demand for bread was highly inelastic and its consumption varied inversely with the standard of living. When the price of bread increased labourers either ate the same quantity of bread and less of other commodities, or ate more bread to compensate them for the loss of other items in their budget.[2] An example of such a reallocation of expenditure as this is seen in the case of Kent. Before the outbreak of war with France expenditure on bread absorbed 48 per cent. of total expenditure on Food and Drink in labourers' budgets. By 1812 the price of bread had tripled and the amount of expenditure on it increased to 74.2 per cent. of total expenditure, which was far in excess of the 36 per cent. given in Silberling's index. The larger outlay on bread was accompanied by a marked fall in expenditure on meat from 26.2 per cent. to 6 per cent.[3] After the war, when wheat prices fell, this relationship was reversed; expenditure on bread was reduced whilst the outlay on meat increased, though no more than 16 per cent. of

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1 Potatoes, a cheaper alternative during years of high wheat prices, were strongly resisted by labourers. R. N. Salaman, The History and Social Influence of the Potato (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 493-517.

2 Bread has sometimes been referred to as a 'Giffen good'. Sir Robert Giffen, from whom the term was coined, noted that an increase in the price of bread was often accompanied by an increase in its consumption and a decrease in the consumption of 'luxury' items such as meat and sugar. See J. C. McKenzie, 'Past Dietary Trends as an Aid to Prediction', in T. C. Barker (ed.), Our Changing Fare (1966), p. 145.

3 An analysis of the several diets collected by Dr. Edward Smith during the cotton famine of the early 1860's revealed that as the incomes of cotton workers fell, significant adjustments followed in their allocation of expenditure on food. On average, bread consumption was reduced by 29%, compared with 52%, 69%, 69%, and 36% respectively for butter, potatoes, meat, and tea. Ibid.

the Food budget went on this item compared with the 28.4 per cent. in Silberling's index.[1] Similarly, expenditure on beverages (7.3 per cent.) and sugar (7 per cent.) in Silberling's index was much higher than the 3 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively spent on these items in agricultural labourers' household budgets.

Urban patterns of expenditure are clearly inappropriate for a study of rural standards of living; especially when they relate to the families of skilled artisans during the second half of the nineteenth century. Silberling derived his weights from such sources. The budgets provided by G. H. Wood were for artisans, such as masons, shipwrights, and compositors, who spent over a pound a week on their sustenance. These workers spent only 35 per cent. of their total expenditure on Food and Drink, on bread, and therefore were able to purchase considerable quantities of 'luxury' items, such as six pounds of meat, seven pints of milk, a pound or more of butter, and a hundredweight of coal a week.[2] Such excesses as these, although probably appropriate for the better-paid urban working classes, were usually beyond the resources of most rural labourers and, therefore, the weights derived from these budgets were of little relevance to the agricultural labourer's experience.[3] The same arguments also apply to Silberling's use of the family budgets collected by William Neild. Neild's study was concerned with the income and expenditure of 19 families employed in the cotton industry in Manchester and Dukinfield between 1836 and 1841.[4]

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[1] See p. 134 and Salaman, op. cit. p. 497.

[2] Wood, loc. cit. p. 253.

[3] This point is also supported by the fact that Wood provided no sources from which his evidence was obtained and admitted that his study laid 'no claim to exactness'. Wood, op. cit. p. 254.

[4] Neild, loc. cit. pp. 320-34.

These budgets were for artisans, such as machine printers, millwrights, dyers, and power-loom weavers, whose weekly incomes were generally in excess of a pound a week.[1] These relatively high incomes were reflected in the distribution of expenditure on food; only 33 per cent. of their expenditure was spent on flour or bread whilst their outlay on butcher's meat, bacon, ham, coffee, tea, sugar, and treacle was far greater than the outlay on these items in agricultural labourers' budgets.[2] Similarly, the budgets collected by Charles Booth in the East End of London in 1887-8,[3] and used by Silberling, were too remote in time and place to be of any relevance to the standard of living of agricultural labourers living in the first half of the century. These budgets were taken from occupations such as bricklayers, engineers, carpenters, policemen, and casual labourers, and contained such unlikely items as fish, liver, coffee, cocoa, and an element of expenditure on 'meals out'. The availability of cheap imported wheat and meat at the end of the nineteenth century meant that many families were able to reduce their consumption of bread and increase their consumption of meat. The weekly amount spent on bread and flour was equivalent to 19 per cent. of total expenditure on Food and Drink; expenditure on meat, on the other hand, absorbed 30 per cent. of the total.[4]

This pattern of expenditure was a clear reflection of the relatively

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[1] The range of incomes was quite wide, ranging from 8s. 8d. a week for a card-room hand and 10s. 8d. for a warehouseman to £4 10s. 0d. for a millwright and £4 7s. 0d. for a machine printer.

[2] For a detailed study of these budgets see J. C. Mackenzie, 'The Composition and Nutritional Value of Diets in Manchester and Dukinfield in 1841', Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 72 (1962), pp. 123-40.

[3] Booth, op. cit. pp. 136-8.

[4] Ibid.

high incomes earned by urban artisans in rapidly expanding commercial and industrial areas during the mid and late nineteenth century. These budgets, however, bore little resemblance to the household budgets of agricultural labourers living in the early part of the century and it is doubtful whether a cost of living index based upon such evidence had any relevance to areas other than for which it was computed. Methodological doubt is also cast upon a procedure which applied a London-based index of raw material prices relating to the first half of the nineteenth century, weighted by urban artisans' budgets derived from the second half of the century, to an index of English agricultural earnings which was relevant only to 40 per cent. of the rural labour force. The fact that both Bowley's wage index and Silberling's cost of living index contains so many weaknesses tends to negate Clapham's suggestion that real wages improved between 1794 and 1824, and diminishes the optimistic interpretation to the status of yet another 'legend'.

The inconclusive nature of the standard of living debate in the post-war period, coinciding with the development of Keynesian economic analysis, led to a fresh approach to the problem. The application of national income techniques to aggregate data, however, assisted to sharpen the division of opinion between optimists and pessimists. R. M. Hartwell's interpretation of the statistics led him to conclude that in the period 1800-50, 'Real national income per capita was increasing; industrial production per capita was increasing . . . capital accumulation was not achieved at the expense of consumption; all these aggregate indices were achieving higher rates of growth than the rate of growth of population.'[1] In another article Hartwell argued that 'since average per capita income increased, since there was no trend in distribution against the workers,

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[1] Hartwell (1963), loc. cit. p. 140.

since (after 1815) prices fell while money wages remained constant . . . then the real wages of the majority of English workers were rising in the years 1800 to 1850'.[1] Against this view E. J. Hobsbawm has argued that the assumption that the increase in national income and per capita income was accompanied by a more equal distribution of income is 'unverified' and 'improbable'. Indeed, more plausible is the contrary assumption that the early stages of industrialisation are likely to make the distribution of the national income less even, to allow for larger savings and more investment.[2] The question of knowing how the rising national income was distributed between competing social and occupational groups is clearly vital to the solution of the standard of living controversy. A step towards this goal was taken with the discovery that in England and Wales private consumption per head experienced only a slight increase between 1751 and 1851.[3] An analysis of consumption figures led J. E. Williams to conclude,

> If there was no significant improvement in average private consumption between 1751 and the period 1811-21 it is statistically impossible that there should have been any improvement in average working-class consumption without a substantial redistribution of income. There is no evidence for this in the eighteenth century. . . . if there was any such redistribution, it certainly did not occur before 1821 for . . . the transfer of income which occurred as a result of the war worsened the economic status of labour.[4]

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[1] Hartwell (1961), loc. cit. p. 398. This was probably only true in industries where productivity was increasing, but was not true of all wage earners.

[2] Hobsbawm (1963), loc. cit. p. 122. This point is discussed at length in Pollard, loc. cit.

[3] Williams, loc. cit. p. 586. The highest eighteenth century level (£12) was only passed in 1821 (£14.2) and although there was some improvement thereafter there was no substantial improvement until after 1841.

[4] Ibid.

In the circumstances it is important to distinguish between the effects of inflation during the war, and deflation during the post-war readjustment period. The question of understanding how incomes were distributed is best answered by studying the real earnings of single occupational groups. What people actually earned, purchased, and consumed is basically what the standard of living is about.[1] This approach, however, has been frustrated by the fact that wage statistics for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are conspicuous for their absence and that what is known about retail prices is negligible.[2] Several studies of commodity prices are available but their usefulness is limited by the fact that they are principally concerned with raw material prices purchased by institutions. A pioneer study by T. Tooke and W. Newmarch was mainly concerned with London raw material prices[3] and a similar study by J. E. T. Rogers examined the prices of cereals, straw, hops, and fruit in London, Cambridge, and Yorkshire.[4] Lord Beveridge's study of prices in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used information from the accounts of

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[1] Besides the quantitative approach, using data amenable to objective statistical measurement, the standard of living question can also be approached through the study of qualitative literary evidence. This latter approach involves numerous social imponderables, such as health, leisure, work-discipline, environment, food adulteration, and general changes in the way-of-life, which, though very important, do not lend themselves to objective quantification. Although changes in the latter might be expected to reflect changes in real incomes it is quite possible for statistical averages and human experiences to run in opposite directions. Thompson, op. cit. pp. 211-12.

[2] B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 338-40, 466. See also G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', J.R.S.S., LXV (1902), p. 685.

[3] T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (6 vols., 1838-57). See also T. Tooke, Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years from 1793 to 1822 (1824).

[4] J. E. T. Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England (7 vols., Oxford, 1866-1902).

Westminster School, Eton College, and the Lord Steward's Department of the Royal Household.[1] The main weakness of this kind of evidence is the difficulty of knowing how representative institutional prices were of prices paid in the market place.[2] Evidence for the eighteenth century suggests that this kind of data was not an accurate guide to the cost of living because contract prices were maintained unchanged for several decades whilst market prices fluctuated more often. Some contract prices, however, changed more than others. Prices of domestic building materials and woollen textiles were fairly stable throughout the eighteenth century whilst prices of fuel, grain, and animal products changed more frequently.[3]

Despite these limitations several writers have used this kind of evidence to construct a cost of living index. E. W. Gilboy and E. B. Schumpeter, for example, used prices derived from such institutions as the Admiralty, Westminster Abbey, and Winchester College to construct cost of living indexes.[4] Similarly, Gayer, Rostow, and Schwartz constructed their index from statistics of wholesale prices of food and raw materials, derived from Silberling, and included such diverse commodities as wheat, mutton, mottled soap, iron pigs, vitriol, and sal-ammonica.[5] The Phelps Brown-Hopkins index of consumables was constructed from the contract prices collected by Rogers and Beveridge from various London colleges and hospitals and is, like Silberling's index and the indexes

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[1] Lord Beveridge, Prices and Wages in England (1939).

[2] This question is discussed further in the following chapter.

[3] E. B. Schumpeter, 'English Prices and Public Finance, 1660-1822', R.E.S., XX (1938), p. 33.

[4] E. W. Gilboy, 'The Cost of Living and Real Wages in Eighteenth Century England', R.E.S., XVIII (1936), p. 136. Schumpeter, op. cit. p. 32.

[5] A. D. Gayer, W. W. Rostow, and A. J. Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy, 1750-1850 (Oxford, 1953), pp. 475-6.

referred to above, of limited value as a measure of the cost of living.

Statistics of agricultural wages for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are also scarce and unreliable. The main body of evidence is found in a number of contemporary printed sources, principally in the writings of Young, Marshall, Eden, Davies, and Caird,[1] as well as in a number of Parliamentary Select Committee Reports,[2] and was thoroughly worked over by Bowley. The main weakness of this kind of evidence is that it is difficult to interpret and consists, in most cases, of a few scattered wage quotations, separated by several years, for different parts of the country. Continuous records of agricultural wages for specific districts or farming regions are difficult to find.[3] Where the evidence does appear its interpretation is fraught with numerous hazards. Besides the difficulty of calculating the difference between nominal wages and wage earnings there is also the problem of estimating the monetary value of a complex range of customary perquisites and allowances in kind which some labourers received in addition to, and sometimes in lieu of, wage payments. Generalisations about the economic value of imponderables such as free, or subsidised, food, drink, and accommodation, a cottage garden or allotment, the keep of a pig, and the carriage of fuel and manure are difficult to make because these practices varied enormously from farm to farm and region

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[1] See p. 9 . W. Marshall, The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties, 2 vols. (1798).

[2] For example, Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX. Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages 1824, Parl. Papers 1824, VI. Abstract of Returns (Labourers' Wages) made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX. Reports from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers, 1836 VIII (i-ii). Reports into the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers, 1834, XXX, Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Questions.

[3] A notable exception, for the eighteenth century, is E. W. Gilboy, Wages in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, Mass., 1934).

to region.[1] Not only did allowances in kind vary in any one year but their long run incidence also suffered a change under the impact of rising prices at the end of the eighteenth century. War-time inflation was a potent solvent upon traditional paternalistic relationships. Although in some districts perquisites and allowances in kind continued into the late nineteenth century, in other districts they were dying out by the time of the Napoleonic war as the burden of inflation was increasingly thrust upon the shoulders of the agricultural labour force; farmers found it costly to provide their labourers with food.[2] The question of how many labourers fell into each category, or how their distribution between the two categories changed over time, is difficult to answer from the available evidence. Given that these traditional practices were becoming decadent, and are difficult to quantify, it is evident that what the labourer earned, in terms of cash wages, constituted almost the only objective measure available by which his standard of living may be judged to have improved or deteriorated.

It is evident from this discussion on the limitations of available wage and price statistics that the Clapham-Hammond controversy remains an unresolved issue. The existing evidence permits no safe conclusions to be made about the standard of living of agricultural labourers and this deficiency can only be rectified by more research into regional wages and prices on the lines suggested by T. S. Ashton. The principal aim of this study has been to meet this requirement by contributing a considerable quantity of new evidence on agricultural wages and commodity prices to

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[1] The system of allowances in kind was frequently abused by some farmers and at times was little more than a 'polite euphemism for truck'. McGregor, op. cit. p. cxix. This point is discussed further in chapter 3.

[2] This point is discussed further in chapter 3.

test the generalisations of earlier historians.[1] This evidence has been derived from the archives of seven County Record Offices: Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Dorset, and Hampshire.[2]

All these counties show a good cross-section of agricultural change during the prosperous years of the Napoleonic war and the distressed years of the post-war period. On the demand side the influence of London's markets had a profound effect upon the development of commercial agriculture in the southern and eastern counties.[3] At least since the sixteenth century Kent had sent considerable quantities of cereal crops, fruit, hops, and livestock to the metropolis.[4] Essex, Suffolk, and Lincolnshire were mainly concerned with producing cereals for London's markets, though by the early nineteenth century the rising level of demand from the industrial towns of the midlands and north gave a further impetus to production in these counties. Dorset and Hampshire, in the south-west, also had strong commercial links with London's food markets and the pattern of agriculture in these counties, mainly mixed arable crops and livestock, was closely attuned to the demands of the metropolis. Long term demand factors associated with population growth and urbanisation, coupled with certain short term factors such as the outbreak of war with

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[1] At various points this evidence is compared and contrasted with the evidence derived from secondary printed sources. In particular the cost of living index constructed for each county is compared with Silberling's index of London prices.

[2] The choice of these counties was determined by factors of time and the availability of sufficient evidence. After a veritable postgraduate 'Rural Ride' these counties were selected because the evidence there was found to be in greater quantity than elsewhere.

[3] F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', E.H.R., V (1935). E. A. Wrigley, 'A single Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967).

[4] Agricultural changes in individual counties are discussed further in the separate chapters on each county.

France, provided a vital stimulus to agricultural improvements in all these counties.[1] Such developments as these carried important consequences for the agricultural labourers' standard of living both during the war and the post-war period. Indeed, in this respect it is important to distinguish between these two periods as both exhibited widely differing characteristics. Expanding agricultural output and full employment during the war, for example, must be set against the post-war period of agricultural depression and rising levels of unemployment and poverty. In tracing this varying pattern of events it is important to bear in mind the fact that the post-war agricultural depression did not fall with equal weight upon all these counties.[2] In Dorset, for example, the dairying areas of the Vale of Blackmoor suffered less from falling cereal prices at the end of the war than the corn-growing areas of the county.[3] In Lincolnshire, despite a fall in farm prices agricultural improvements continued throughout the post-war period owing to the buoyancy of demand for arable crops in the northern industrial towns.[4] Given this changing background of events, this study has been primarily concerned with the

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[1] High grain prices during the war led to the reclamation and enclosure of considerable areas of waste land in Suffolk and Lincolnshire. See J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming (1957). D. Grigg, The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire (Cambridge, 1966). A. H. John, 'Farming in Wartime: 1793-1815', in E. L. Jones (ed.), Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution (1967), pp. 30-31.

[2] Most witnesses who were called to give evidence to Select Committees were interested parties from wheat-producing areas who were capable of making their voices heard. G. E. Fussell and M. Compton, 'Agricultural adjustments after the Napoleonic Wars', Economic History, III (1939), pp. 188-90.

[3] Ibid. pp. 199-200.

[4] Ibid. p. 195. One result of the increase in agricultural output was that the amount of wheat passing through Boston market doubled between the 1820's and 1830's. See Thirsk, op. cit. and Grigg, op. cit.

interaction of two variables, agricultural wages and the cost of living, to discover what effect their relationship had upon the agricultural labourers' material standard of living.

One of the main advantages of using county-based wage and price statistics is that, unlike most contemporary printed sources, much of the evidence is comprehensive in nature and provides continuous runs of statistics for periods of up to fifty years or more. In Essex the Audley End Farm Accounts, for example, provides detailed information on the seasonal work and earnings of several grades of labour - carters, ploughmen, day labourers - for a period extending from 1790 to 1840.[1] Similarly, the Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts for Kent provides a continuous record of wages paid to husbandry and garden labourers between 1790 and 1835.[2] With this kind of evidence it is possible to calculate the annual average weekly wage earnings of labourers employed on these estates and, by comparing these results with the general level of prices in each county, estimate what happened to the purchasing power of wages. In each county the prices used to construct a cost of living index have been derived from the Provisions Accounts of a number of parish workhouses. The main advantage of using evidence drawn from these sources is that it is fairly comprehensive in its coverage and provides continuous runs of prices for the kinds of commodities normally consumed by the labouring poor in the locality. A further advantage is that the evidence relates to the prices of processed commodities, such as bread, butter, cheese, shoes and candles, rather than to the prices of the raw materials from which they were made, as in Silberling's index, and can thus be expected to reflect the

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[1] E.R.O. D/DBy A262-3, 267. Audley End Estate. Farm and Labour Accounts.

[2] K.R.O. U565/A9a-54a, A314. Lord Darnley. Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts.

prevailing cost of living in each county. Hence, in order to estimate what happened to the purchasing power of wages, the index of agricultural wages in each county has been divided by the cost of living index in order to obtain a real wage index. Such estimates, however, are unavoidably constrained by the absence of certain pieces of information and it has therefore been necessary to base these estimates upon certain assumptions. These assumptions, and the methodological problems involved in handling the data, are examined in detail in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 2

STATISTICAL SOURCES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION:

I. COMMODITY PRICES

The standard of living controversy is concerned with what the labouring classes consumed with their incomes. Commodity prices are an important ingredient in this debate because they provide a means of estimating what the cost of living was and what effect it had, in real terms, upon the purchasing power of wages. Despite their importance, however, the study of commodity prices, and especially the commodities purchased by the labouring classes, is a neglected one and what is known about prices in areas outside of London is negligible.[1] Most of our knowledge about the cost of living in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is restricted to a few price series derived from various schools, hospitals, and other institutions in London. Although these sources provide a useful general guide to the cost of living their main limitation is that they apply only to London and cannot be taken to represent other areas of the country. During the early eighteenth century there existed several regional market areas[2] and each one, according to a recent work, 'had its own price history and its own set of price relationships'.[3] Until these price relationships are investigated and analysed it cannot be assumed that London's prices were the same as prices in other areas. This evidence is also limited by the fact that wholesale prices cannot be used to measure changes in the cost of living as the relationship between wholesale prices and retail prices is not yet fully

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[1] Some recent exceptions are noted on p. 1.

[2] Thorold Rogers recognised six price regions: (1) the Metropolitan or Thames region; (2) the Eastern Counties; (3) the Midland Counties lying between the Trent and the Thames; (4) the Southern region lying between Kent and Devon; (5) the South-West region; (6) the Northern region to the north of the Trent. J. E. T. Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England (Oxford, 1887), V, pp. 239-40.

[3] P. Deane and W. A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 12.

understood. In order to understand what happened to the agricultural labourers' standard of living between 1790 and 1840 more information is required on regional prices. The aggregative approach to the standard of living question, as favoured by Clapham, disguises important regional differences. Indeed, it is important to remember that national changes are the sum of a large number of regional changes and that it is necessary to fully understand what happened to the component parts of the whole before a clearer picture can emerge. What is needed is a number of indexes, each derived from a different area, and reflecting in their composition the prices of the kinds of commodities normally consumed by the rural working classes.

An important source of information of this kind, which has been neglected in the past,[1] is to be found in the Poor Law Provisions Accounts of parish workhouses.[2] As each parish was responsible for the maintenance of its poor it was necessary to make regular purchases of a wide range of commodities of a kind which were ordinarily consumed by the labouring classes. The groceries and provisions purchased for the inmates of workhouses included items such as bread, flour, meat (beef, mutton, and pork), cheese, butter, tea, sugar, candles, soap, and shoes and were similar in quality to the commodities consumed by the rural labouring classes living in the area. The importance of this evidence is that it provides a vital insight into local dietary habits and provides a range of commodity prices which often covered a period of fifty years or more. As these prices were local prices they throw important light upon price relationships in regions for which information is

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[1] According to one historian this neglect was due to the fact that 'The economic historian's hostility to the use of prices paid by public institutions in constructing a cost of living index has persisted because of a failure to appreciate the high correlation between retail and contract prices'. W. Woodruff, 'Capitalism and the Historians: A Contribution to the Discussion on the Industrial Revolution in England', Journal of Economic History, XVI (1956), p. 5.

[2] These are usually located in county Record Offices.

lacking and provide a basis for comparing trends in the cost of living in other regions.[1]

Before computing this data into a cost of living index it is necessary, owing to certain imperfections in the evidence, to outline the main practical and methodological problems involved in interpreting the evidence. Two immediate problems, though there are others which are discussed later on, concerns the relationship between workhouse contract prices and retail prices, and the extent to which local prices were an indicator of the level of prices prevailing in the county at large.

Overseers of the poor normally purchased their provisions from local suppliers on short term contracts and hence the prices they paid for the commodities were fairly sensitive to changes in market prices and were readily adjusted to ensure that neither side to the contract sustained a heavy loss.[2] In Pembury parish in Kent, for example, the vestry officials accepted a local tender to supply the workhouse with provisions because the price was 'fair . . . according to the present state of the market'.[3] If the

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[1] The counties examined in this study lie in adjacent pairs - such as Dorset and Hampshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, Kent and Essex, Essex and Suffolk - and may be regarded as three regional areas.

[2] Short term contract prices, which usually lasted from one to three months, were fairly responsive to changes in local market prices and therefore closely reflected the prevailing cost of living. Long term contract prices, which lasted for four months or more, tended to be less responsive to changes in market prices. Long term contract prices also disguised qualitative changes in the commodities being supplied as such changes sometimes took place to offset an increase in market prices. E. B. Schumpeter, 'English Prices and Public Finance, 1660-1822', Review of Economic Statistics, XX, 1 (1938), p. 33. In this study the period covered by short term contracts lasted from 1790 to 1834: the period covered by long term contracts lasted from 1835 to 1840. Owing to these changes in the nature of the statistics two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been adopted in order to take account of these differences. See p. 40.

[3] K.R.O. P286/8/1. Pembury Parish Vestry Minutes 1820-55.

market price of a commodity rose after the contract price had been agreed upon, suppliers sometimes refused to honour the contract until the buyer had agreed to pay them a higher price.[1] Contractors who lost money as a result of an unforeseen price increase were sometimes reimbursed by the parish to cover their loss.[2] Generally, the policy of most institutions was to keep expenditure on poor relief to a minimum and accept the lowest price which was tendered,[3] though there were some exceptions to this. In Hornchurch parish, in Essex, a London butcher offered to supply the poorhouse with meat at 2s. 9d. a stone, which was the lowest price tendered, but the vestry officials declined the offer owing to the disadvantages of carriage during hot weather. Instead, the contract was awarded to Thomas Gates, a butcher who traded in the parish, at 2s. 10d. a stone.[4]

As Poor Law institutions made regular purchases of large quantities of provisions they were usually able to obtain them at a discount. Generally, the overseer of the poor placed an advertisement in the local newspaper inviting tradesmen - butchers, bakers, grocers, and chandlers - to submit their tender and a sample of their wares. Usually, and especially if the contract was a large one, the contract was awarded to those tradespeople who offered the largest discounts and an agreement was signed which clearly defined the price and the quality of the provisions which were to be supplied. An example of a provisions contract agreed between Chelmsford Workhouse and Charles Longstaff in 1830 is shown below:

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1 E.R.O. D/P 115/8/1-2. Hornchurch Parish Vestry Minutes 1826-30.

2 Lord Beveridge, Prices and Wages in England (1939), pp. 307-8.

3 At Beaminster, in Dorset, for example, the standing rule was to give the contract to the supplier who submitted the lowest price. D.R.O. P57/OV11. Beaminster Parish Overseer's Accounts 1768-90.

4 E.R.O. D/P 115/8/1-2. Hornchurch, op. cit.

> The meat to consist of good fat beef in clods stickings thick and thin flanked leg of mutton pieces and chucks of good ox beef (in equal proportions) or mutton from sound fat sheep in quarters taking alternately or in equal proportions the fore and hind quarters - the beer to be brewed from one pound of hops and one bushel of malt to every thirty gallons - the flour to be the best household flour - the bread to be the best second wheaten bread - the cheese to be good Derby or Gloucester cheese - the butter to be good and clean - one pound of suet to one gallon of flour for suet puddings - the milk porridge to consist of one fourth milk - one gallon of peas to eleven gallons of broth for soup - and all other articles whatever to be good of their respective kinds.
>
> The Provisions to be subject to the inspection of the Select Vestry.[1]

Various contemporary writers commented on the practice of giving discounts. Arthur Young, for example, noted the prevalence of giving discounts in Suffolk in the 1770's[2] and the Rev. J. Howlett of Dunmow observed that workhouses in Suffolk and Essex obtained their provisions 10 per cent. under the going market price in this way.[3] Lord Beveridge's study of eighteenth century provisions' contracts revealed that a variety of discounts were given to institutions who made large scale purchases of provisions. For example, between 1767 and 1782 Greenwich Hospital bought its flour at a discount rate of 6s. 0d. a sack below the London Assize price, and between 1782 and 1816 this rate fluctuated between 2s. 0d. and 8s. 0d. per sack.[4] The bread contract gave a 6s. 0d. discount on every 360 one-pound loaves purchased between 1767 and 1783.[5] Similarly, Chelsea Hospital in 1787 purchased its candles at 3d. per dozen below the market price and this discount was increased to 4d. between 1810 and 1819.[6]

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[1] E.R.O. D/P 94/18/38. Chelmsford Parish Agreement.

[2] A. Young, The Farmer's Tour Through the East of England (1771), II, pp. 185-6.

[3] Annals of Agriculture, XXV (1796), p. 602.

[4] Beveridge, op. cit. p. 256.

[5] Ibid. p. 257.

[6] Ibid. p. 312.

Parish records for the nineteenth century frequently contain evidence of this sort. In May 1820, for example, a miller offered to supply flour 'at 1d. per gallon under his selling price', and a butcher offered to supply meat 'at one-half penny per pound under his ready money price' to the parish of Sandhurst in Kent. It was also agreed that 'The shopkeepers to allow 5 per cent. for shop goods under their regular selling price.'[1] In St. Margaret's parish Rochester, in Kent, James Stedman, a baker of the parish, wrote to the overseer, 'If you will favour me with your order I will do my endeavour to serve the House with the best White Wheaten Bread at 2d. per gallon under the London Market'.[2] At that time the price of the gallon loaf in London was 3s. 4d.[3] Similar offers were made to the parish in November 1813 and April 1814 when bread was offered at 2½d. and 3d. below the London Assize price;[4] the price of the gallon loaf in London being 2s. 4d. and 2s. 1½d. respectively at that time.[5] Evidence for Essex indicated that a similar practice prevailed there. The overseer of the poor at Cranham, for example, agreed in May 1829 to buy bread at 10¾d. a loaf, which was ¾d. less than the current retail price.[6] In April 1817 the parish officers of Barking purchased best flour at 3s. 0d. a sack less than the going market price and, in addition, were given a shilling discount on every sack they bought.[7] In December 1833 the parish vestry agreed to buy

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1 K.R.O. P321/8/1. Sandhurst Parish Vestry Minutes.

2 K.R.O. P/R/305/12/13. St. Margaret's Parish Rochester.

3 The Maidstone Journal November 1813, April 1814.

4 Ibid. August 1812.

5 Ibid. November 1813, April 1814.

6 E.R.O. D/P118/18/2. Cranham Parish Overseer's Accounts.

7 J. E. Oxley, Barking Vestry Minutes (Colchester, 1955), p. 244.

flour at 10s. 0d. a sack below the top London price when this reached 60s. 0d. or more per sack, and at 9s. 0d. below when the top London price was 60s. 0d. or less. In September 1834 the vestry officials agreed to buy second grade flour at 9s. 0d. a sack below the top London price, when this was 45s. 0d. or more, and at 7s. 0d. below the London price when this was 45s. 0d. or less.[1] These discounts are summarised below in Table 1

These figures suggest that Poor Law contract prices were, on average, about 11 per cent. less than market prices and that notable differences occurred both between commodities and between certain years. What sort of support do these estimates get from other sources? In 1833, for example, Edwin Chadwick noted that St. Giles Workhouse, Reading, purchased its provisions at wholesale prices, which were 15 to 20 per cent. lower than retail prices. Chadwick observed, 'In nearly every instance I found the commodities supplied unexceptional, or superior in quality, and the prices what are called 'fair': that is to say, they never exceed the retail price of the market, and were often somewhat below it'.[2] According to the owner of a shoe warehouse in Smithfield, men's shoes cost 6s. 6d. a pair wholesale and 7s. 6d. a pair retail; in other words, wholesale prices were 13 per cent. less than retail prices.[3] These figures were consistent with the observations of John Bright and Frederick Purdy, in the 1840's and 1860's respectively, who found that Poor Law institutions paid 12 to 15 per cent. less for their groceries and clothing than agricultural labourers did in village shops.[4] Similar discounts to these were frequently made by

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1 Ibid.

2 Extracts from the Poor Laws (1833), op. cit. pp. 222-3.

3 Ibid. p. 274.

4 L. B. Powell, 'When John Bright went West', The Guardian, 21 February 1968, p. 9. F. Purdy, 'On the Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in England and Wales', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, XXIV (1861), p. 347.

TABLE 1

DISCOUNT RATES ON FOOD CONTRACTS IN KENT AND ESSEX 1812–34

(1) Parish	(2) Year	(3) Commodity	(4) Market Price	(5) Contract Price	(6) (4)–(5)	(7) (6) as % of (4)
St. Margarets	1812	Wheaten Bread	3s. 4d.	3s. 2d.	–2d.	5.0
"	1813	Bread	2s. 4d.	2s. 1¼d.	–2¾d.	9.8
"	1814	Wheaten Bread	2s. 1½d.	1s. 11d.	–2½d.	9.8
Sandhurst	1820	Shop Goods				5.0
"	1820	Meat	9d.	8d.	–1d.	11.1
"	1820	Flour	1s. 5d.	1s. 4d.	–1d.	5.9
Cranham	1829	Quartern Loaf	11½d.	10¾d.	–¾d.	6.5
Barking	1833	Flour	60s. 0d.	50s. 0d.	–10s.	16.6
"	1833	Flour	60s. 0d.	51s. 0d.	–9s.	15.0
"	1834	Seconds Flour	45s. 0d.	36s. 0d.	–9s.	20.0
"	1834	Seconds Flour	45s. 0d.	38s. 0d.	–7s.	15.5
						10.9%

bakers in the Isle of Thanet, Kent, to the Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary in Margate during the early nineteenth century. As a rule the baker who offered the highest discount was given the contract; a summary of the range of discounts offered to the Infirmary between 1826 and 1840 is given below in Table 2.[1]

TABLE 2

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM DISCOUNT RATES
ON BREAD CONTRACTS AT MARGATE 1826-40

Year	Minimum Discount %	Maximum Discount %
1826	18	21
1827	8	26
1828	6	15
1829	8	17.5
1830	10.5	20
1831	10	15
1832	10	15
1833	10	17
1834	10	20
1835	7.5	22
1836	12	24
1837	10	22
1838	10	18
1839	10	17.5
1840	12.5	28
Average	10.0	20.0

The main importance of discount rates to the study of commodity prices is that they provide an insight into the relationship between contract prices and retail prices and furnish a means by which retail prices can be

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[1] K.R.O. The Margate Royal Sea Bathing Infirmary Court of Directors Minute Book 1826-51. I am indebted to Mr. John Whyman of the University of Kent for this information.

estimated. It is clear, however, that discount rates were not static and that their size and range varied considerably from commodity to commodity according to variations in their demand and supply situation. On looking at the demand side it is clear that substantial changes occurred as the administration of the Old Poor Law was changed. Before 1834 overseers of the poor normally purchased small quantities of provisions for the needs of individual workhouses, whereas after 1834, with the amalgamation of 20 or more individual parishes into Poor Law Unions, large quantities of provisions were required for the maintenance of several hundred paupers.[1] These contracts were highly lucrative and suppliers competed for them by offering substantial discounts to Boards of Guardians. An example showing the difference between the prices paid for provisions by individual parishes in Uckfield Union, Sussex, before 1834 and the prices they paid after they were incorporated into a Poor Law Union in 1834 is shown below in Table 3.[2]

It is apparent from this discussion on discount rates that before the New Poor Law came into operation workhouses obtained their groceries and provisions at prices which were, on average, 11 per cent. less than prevailing market prices. After 1834, owing to changes in the size of the administrative unit, Poor Law Unions gained favourable concessions from their suppliers and obtained their provisions at prices which were, on average, 18 per cent. less than the prices paid by individual parishes.[3]

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[1] Poor Law Unions generally embraced 20 to 30 parishes. Tendring Poor Law Union in Essex, for example, contained more than 30 parishes. E.R.O. G/TM.1. Tendring Poor Law Union Minute Book 1835-6.

[2] First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales, Parl. Papers 1835, XXXV (1835), p. 50.

[3] Because of the differences in the nature of the Poor Law statistics and the size of the discount rates two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been used. In the case of Lincolnshire and Hampshire, where Poor Law records have not been used, only one base year, 1790, has been used.

In view of the fact that discount rates tended to rise after 1834, it has been necessary to take account of this when constructing each cost of living index. This has been done by establishing a second base year at the point where discount rates became higher. For the period 1790-1834, when discount rates were relatively small, the base year for each index was established at 1790. Throughout this period, all price changes were expressed as a proportion of the prices prevailing in that year. At the point where discount rates became higher, in 1835, a new base year was established. All price changes which occurred between 1835 and 1840 were expressed as a proportion of the prices prevailing in the new base year. Further, as the cost of living index is primarily concerned with the rate at which prices increased or decreased in relation to their base year, rather than the actual price level, the contract prices used in this study have not been adjusted to take account of discount rates. Nevertheless some attention has been paid to the various factors, especially on the supply side, which influenced the level of commodity prices,[1] though the main emphasis has been directed towards measuring the rates at which prices changed after 1790 and assessing their effect upon the purchasing power of agricultural labourers' wages.

At this point it is necessary to examine the relationship between the prices derived from each county. In order to maintain a consistent approach to the task of constructing a cost of living index, each county

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[1] The vagaries of the weather profoundly affected the quantity and quality of harvests and caused violent fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products. During the Napoleonic war wheat prices were increased to a high level owing to the combined effects of bad weather, poor harvests, and a fall in imports of foreign grain. The adverse weather also affected other branches of agriculture and led to an increase in the prices of meat, dairy produce, leather, and tallow. The prices of imported commodities such as tea and sugar were also increased owing to shortages on the supply side and high excise duties. All these influences are considered in greater detail in the chapters on individual counties.

TABLE 3

PRICES OF PROVISIONS IN UCKFIELD UNION

Commodity	(1) Prices for Single Parishes pre 1834	(2) Prices for Whole Union post 1834	(3) (1)-(2)	(4) (3) as % of (1)
Flat Dutch Cheese cwt.	51s. 4d.	44s. 0d.	7s. 4d.	14.3
Round Dutch Cheese cwt.	51s. 4d.	45s. 0d.	6s. 4d.	14.3
London Yellow Soap	51s. 0d.	42s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	17.6
Brown County Soap	42s. 0d.	41s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	2.4
Moist Sugar	56s. 0d.	49s. 0d.	7s. 0d.	12.5
Rice	26s. 6d.	14s. 6d.	12s. 0d.	45.3
Candles, doz.	5s. 4½d.	4s. 10d.	6½d.	10.6
Salt, bushel	2s. 3d.	1s. 4d.	11d.	40.7
Flour, 4 bushels	26s. 4d.	24s. 0d.	2s. 4d.	8.8
				18.5%

has been studied separately.[1] In each county prices for a selected range of commodities have been derived from a number of parish workhouses and, for each individual commodity, these prices have been averaged into annual figures in order to even-out extreme price variations and hence reduce the possibility of error. These price series form the basis from which a cost of living index has been constructed to represent the general level of prices in each county.

Indeed, by the late eighteenth century contemporary writers on agricultural affairs were commenting on the fact that food prices were fairly uniform over wide areas of the country. As Adam Smith noted,

> The prices of bread and butcher's meat are generally the same or very nearly the same through the greater part of the United Kingdom . . . Good roads, canals, and navigable rivers, by diminishing the expense of carriage, put the remoter parts of the country more nearly upon a level with those in the neighbourhood of the town.[2]

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[1] Commodity prices were more abundant for some counties than for others I visited. For Kent, Essex, Suffolk, and Dorset the principal sources of evidence were derived from Poor Law Records, whilst for Nottinghamshire this evidence was only available for the period after 1836 and hence it has been necessary to utilize prices derived from household account books for the period before 1836. Food prices for Lincolnshire have also been taken from household accounts and The Stamford Mercury. The only prices available for Hampshire were bread prices set by the Assize of Bread at Winchester, Basingstoke, Newbury, Petersfield, and Chichester, as published in The Hampshire Chronicle. These prices have been used to construct a bread index for the county. Bread prices, set by the Assize of Bread and published in local newspapers, have also been used in the cost of living indexes constructed for Kent, Essex, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire. It is important to note that the Assize price was the market price set by magistrates in accordance to the price of wheat in local markets. The price of bread in London was regulated by the Assize until 1815, and until 1836 in the rest of the country. S. and B. Webb, 'The Assize of Bread', The Economic Journal, 14 (1904), p. 200. See also W. M. Stern, 'The Bread Crisis in Britain, 1795-6', Economica, XXXI (1964). T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', J.E.H., XXX, 4 (1970).

[2] A. Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (ed. E. Cannon, 1961), pp. 83-165. Arthur Young, writing in 1769, noted, 'All the sensible people attributed the dearness of their country to the turnpike roads; and reason speaks the truth of their opinion . . . make but a turnpike road through their country and all the cheapness vanishes at once'. Quoted in T. S. Ashton, 'The Standard of Life of the Workers in England, 1790-1830', J.E.H., IX (1949), p. 31.

The general expansion of arable farming, coupled with improvements in roads and canals and the growth of wholesale distribution of bulky commodities, led to the gradual integration of regional market areas into one large market.[1] One consequence of this development was that local market autonomies were broken down and regional price differences were smoothed out. Improved communications particularly affected wheat prices, as wheat was easily transported, enabling commodity dealers to ship large quantities of wheat around from areas of surplus to areas of scarcity with the result that wheat prices tended to move more into line with one another.[2] Arthur Young commented on this fact in 1772 and noted that the price of bread was the same everywhere and that even in the 'extremities of the kingdom' bread was as cheap as in London. In areas as far distant from London as Norfolk, Suffolk, Gloucester, Newport, Bristol, Melksham, and Devizes the price of bread was the same at 2d. a pound.[3] During the eighteenth century wheat prices in London, the North, and the West of England showed no marked regional divergence;[4] wheat prices in London, Winchester, and Lincoln were also approximately the same as the appearance

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[1] The transporting of large quantities of agricultural produce for sale in distant markets, especially the London market, grew in importance after the mid sixteenth century. See, for example, F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market 1540-1640', The Economic History Review, 1st ser. 2 (1935), G. E. Fussell and G. Goodman, 'Eighteenth Century Traffic in Live-Stock', 'Eighteenth Century Traffic in Milk Products', Economic History, III (1936-7). E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (1967). E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967).

[2] C. W. J. Granger and C. M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XX, 2 (1967), pp. 257-65. See also Gourvish, loc. cit. pp. 854-60.

[3] A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), pp. 323-4.

[4] E. W. Gilboy, Wages in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 219.

of price disequilibria in one market was quickly neutralized by the transportation of wheat there from other markets.[1] The evidence obtained for this study shows that the price of the quartern loaf in Kent, Essex, Dorset, Hampshire, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire was very similar to the price of the quartern loaf in London,[2] Bath,[3] Oxford,[4] and Glasgow.[5] All these series exhibited a similarity in the extent and timing of their fluctuations. Major price peaks occurred in 1800-1 and 1812, minor price peaks occurred in 1795, 1805, 1810, and 1817, and troughs occurred in 1798, 1802-3, 1815, 1822-3, and 1835.[6]

As butter was a commodity which was not easily transported over long journeys, especially in hot weather, its price tended to vary inversely with its distance from London. Arthur Young considered that the price .

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[1] Granger and Elliott, loc. cit., pp. 261-2. The greater mobility of corn meant that its price freely adjusted itself through the market mechanism according to the intensity of demand and supply. These developments were frequently the cause of rioting, especially in times of dearth, against millers, grocers, mealmen, bakers, bargees, and carriers who were seen, in the eyes of the village community, as the cause of scarcity and the suffering of the poor. See, for example, E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy and the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136. J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order. Six Studies in British History 1790-1820 (1974), pp. 33-74. It is significant that the geographical distribution of food riots was closely associated with those market towns and villages which were transhipment points on the main communications network. Jackson, op. cit. pp. 43-4.

[2] G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', J.R.S.S., LXV (1902), p. 688.

[3] R. S. Neale, Economic Conditions and Working Class Movements in the City of Bath 1800-1850 (Bristol University M.A. thesis 1963), pp. 340-1.

[4] A. Ballard, 'The Assize of Bread at Oxford 1794-1820', J.R.S.S., LXX, (1907), p. 629.

[5] Gourvish, loc. cit. pp. 855-6.

[6] See Figs. 9, 19, 29, 36, 43, 51, 55.

of butter varied by as much as 3d. a pound between London and the provinces and that this price difference was 'very considerable'. The price of meat also varied for similar reasons, but to a much lesser extent than butter prices,[1] and the difference in price between London and other parts of the country was only 1d. a pound. Young summarised these prices as follows:[2]

Distance from London	Butter (lb.)	Beef and Mutton (lb.)
London - 20 miles	8d.	4¾d.
20–60 miles	6¾d.	4⅙d.
60–110 miles	6d.	4⅛d.
110–170 miles	5½d.	3¾d.

The evidence for Essex suggests that food prices were fairly uniform over many parts of the county. Variations in the price of bread, for example, were quite small and in 14 parishes the price of the quartern loaf in 1800, 1828, and 1834 was very similar:

TABLE 4

BREAD PRICES IN ESSEX IN 1800, 1828, 1834
(Quartern Loaf)

	1800[3]	1828[4]	1834[5]
Chelmsford	11¾d.	9d.	7d.
Colchester	11d.	9d.	7d.
Witham	11½d.	9½d.	6½d.
Coggershall		8½d.	6¾d.

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[1] As butter (or milk) was a highly perishable commodity it could only be carried in the form in which it was made. Meat, on the other hand, was transported long distances on the hoof.

[2] Young (1772), op. cit. pp. 324-9.

[3] The Ipswich Journal, 16 August 1800, p. 2.

[4] The Chelmsford Chronicle, 18 July 1828, p. 3.

[5] Ibid. 12 December 1834, p. 3.

	1800	1828	1834
Hedingham	11¼d.		6¾d.
Kelvenden	11¾d.		6¾d.
Braintree	10¾d.	8d.	6½d.
Brentwood	12d.		
Dunmow	12d.	9¼d.	
Maldon	12d.	9d.	
Romford		10d.	7½d.
Ongar		9½d.	
Halstead		8½d.	6¼d.
Billericay			6½d.

Variations in the price of bread in Hampshire were also slight. In 1818, 1826, and 1838, for instance, there was no marked difference in the price of the quartern loaf in four areas of the county:

TABLE 5

BREAD PRICES IN HAMPSHIRE[1]
(Quartern Loaf)

	1818	1826	1838
Winchester	11½d.	8¾d.	8½d.
Basingstoke	11¼d.	8¾d.	8½d.
Petersfield	11d.	8d.	8d.
Newbury	11½d.	8½d.	8d.

During the late eighteenth century food prices on the Lincolnshire fens were the same as those on the wolds, and market prices in Boston were said to be the same as those in the rest of the county.[2] In Sussex, in 1793, the prices of flour, cheese, butter, pork, and malt were fairly standard over most parts of the county.[3] In Essex the range of meat and dairy prices in

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[1] The Hampshire Chronicle, September 1818, June 1826, February 1838.

[2] T. Stone, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1794), pp. 44. J. A. Clarke, 'Farming in Lincolnshire. Prize Report', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XII (1851), p. 403.

[3] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex (1793), p.92.

ten different areas of the county was remarkably small. From Halstead in the north, near the Suffolk border, to Romford in the south-west, near London, or from Colchester in the east to Dunmow in the west, price variations were slight. These prices are summarised below in Table 6.

TABLE 6

MEAT AND DAIRY PRICES IN ESSEX IN 1828[1]

	Beef	Mutton	Pork	Butter	Eggs
	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	per 1s. 0d.
Chelmsford	8d.	8d.	8d.	15d.	14
Colchester	7d.	7d.	7½d.	12d.	18
Romford	7½d.	7½d.	8d.	15d.	14
Maldon	7½d.	7½d.	8½d.	14d.	16
Braintree	7d.	7d.	8d.	13d.	16
Dunmow	7d.	7½d.	8d.	13d.	16
Witham	8d.	8d.	8d.	13d.	18
Coggershall	7d.	7d.	8d.	13d.	18
Ongar	7d.	8d.	8d.	14d.	16
Halstead	7½d.	7d.	7½d.	13d.	18

The fact that commodity prices were fairly uniform over wide areas of the country suggests that the prices obtained from the several parishes in each county were fairly representative of the general level of prices prevailing in the county. This point is endorsed by the fact that short term contract prices were responsive to changes in market prices and hence reflected, in their timing and rate of change, fluctuations in the cost of living in the county as a whole. Before this evidence can be used to construct a cost of living index, however, it is necessary to outline the main problems involved in interpreting the data and, in the absence of certain pieces of evidence, state the assumptions upon which each index has been

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[1] The Chelmsford Chronicle, 18 July 1828, p. 3. In 1834 the retail prices of beef, mutton, pork, and veal in the same ten parishes varied by only ½d. to 1d. per pound. Ibid. 12 December 1834, p. 3.

calculated.

One problem concerns the qualities of the commodities purchased by parish workhouses; in most cases these were not clearly defined. It is obvious that the price of a commodity was closely determined by its quality and that each commodity had a range of qualities and a corresponding range of prices. Contemporary references to tea, for example, usually distinguished between 'Congou', 'Hyson', and 'Bohea' tea, and 'Black', 'Green', and 'Fine' tea. Butter could be either 'Salt', 'New', or 'Cork' (i.e. Irish) butter, or simply 'second' or 'third' quality butter. In a similar manner soap could be 'Brown', 'Mottled', 'Yellow', 'Best Yellow', or 'White', or could be 'Hard', or 'Soft'.[1] Given the confusion created by these terms and the absence of any clear indication in the evidence relating to the quality of the goods consumed it has been necessary to assume that each good was of a homogeneous quality. This is a reasonable assumption to make in view of the evidence. Throughout the period 1790-1840 the Poor Law authorities were usually anxious to appease the rate-payers by keeping expenditure on poor relief to a minimum and there is little reason to suppose that workhouse diets were qualitatively superior to the diets of independent labourers. Indeed, this view is supported by the Poor Law Commissioners' decree that workhouse diets were 'in no case to exceed, in quantity and quality of food, the ordinary diet of the able-bodied labourers living within the same district'.[2] Associated with this problem is the problem of selecting a 'basket' of commodities, and devising a set of weights,

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[1] This situation is further complicated when other commodities are considered. Labourers could eat 'Brown', 'White', 'Lump', or 'Moist' sugar, drink 'Ale', 'Porter', 'Beer', 'Small Beer', or 'Table Beer', or 'Old Milk', 'New Milk', or 'Skim Milk'. The variety of cheeses and the numbers of different cuts of meat were so numerous as to almost defy analysis.

[2] First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, op. cit. p. 98.

which would faithfully reflect the agricultural labourers' pattern of household expenditure. Given the limitations imposed by the size of a labourer's disposable income, as real incomes changed, due to fluctuations in the level of employment and prices, preference patterns also changed according to the elasticity of demand for the product.[1] If the times were particularly hard substantial changes of a temporary or permanent nature took place as the labouring classes adjusted their pattern of expenditure and substituted new commodities for traditional ones.[2] Important dietary changes, in particular, often occurred as a result of changes in the purchasing power of wages.

By the end of the eighteenth century certain dietary changes were in evidence. In particular, white bread had replaced brown bread as the staple item of the labourers' diet in most districts and was considered more digestable as it did not cause the labourers to suffer from the flatulence which they associated with coarse grains such as barley and rye. Labourers refused brown bread on the grounds that they had 'lost their rye teeth' and

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[1] To contemporary observers it was a well-known fact that when real incomes fell the consumption of necessities such as bread, the demand for which was inelastic, did not fall by a corresponding amount. The consumption of 'luxury' goods such as meat and sugar, on the other hand, whose demand was elastic, showed a marked fall in order to enable more money to be spent on bread. T. Tooke, Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years, from 1793 to 1822 (1824), p. 164. See also J. C. McKenzie, 'Past Dietary Trends as an Aid to Prediction', in T. C. Barker (ed.), Our Changing Fare (1966).

[2] During the Napoleonic war, when wheat was in short supply, the government continually urged the labouring classes to reduce their consumption of wheaten bread and eat bread made from mixed grains such as barley, oats, and rye. Potatoes, rice, and herrings were recommended as suitable alternatives to wheaten bread and there is some evidence in the Annals of Agriculture to show that some such substitution took place. However, it is not possible to measure the extent to which substitution of this kind occurred in individual cases, or say how widespread the phenomenon was and how long it lasted, and include the result in a cost of living index, as the evidence is too fragmentary to permit it. There are no long run price series for potatoes, rice, and herrings for the counties studied here and the dearth of household budgets makes it impossible to assess and weight the significance of new commodities or the temporary substitution of one commodity for another.

that it disordered their bowels.[1] The Rev. David Davies observed, 'Working people seem to judge rightly in giving wheaten bread the preference, since it is the only good thing of which they can have a sufficiency'.[2] By that date the labourers' resistance to potatoes, which had hitherto been based upon the belief that they were an inferior commodity fit only for the poorer classes, was weakening.[3] In Essex, for example, potatoes were scarcely known in the mid eighteenth century but by the early nineteenth century the rural classes were substituting them for commodities which were too expensive for them to buy.[4] Labourers in Suffolk and Dorset resisted the potato until the end of the eighteenth century when rising food prices led them to accept the commodity as part of their normal diet.[5] In particular potatoes, which were cheap and nutritious, were substituted for bread during the Napoleonic war, though the amount of expenditure on them in labourers' budgets was relatively low.[6] Milk and beer consumption also declined and was replaced by tea as the common beverage of the labouring classes. Home brewing had declined by the early nineteenth century, owing to the high price of fuel, and few labourers were able to obtain milk as

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1 Eden, op. cit. pp. 105, 209. Davies, op. cit. p. 32.

2 Davies, op. cit. pp. 33-4.

3 Eden, op. cit. pp. 102-3. Davies considered that the potato was an 'excellent root' but was unlikely to come into general use as the labouring classes were unable to get allotments on which to grow them. Ibid. p. 35. See also p. 93.

4 Annals, XXV (1796), pp. 601-2. A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1807), II, p. 376.

5 Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 136-48. A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1797), p. 118. W. Stevenson, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1815), p. 454.

6 R. N. Salaman, The History and Social Influence of the Potato (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 493-517.

they could not afford to purchase, or maintain, a cow.[1] Tea, of a kind which was 'seldom qualified with milk or sugar', was their only recourse.[2] Against the common charge that tea drinking was an extravagance which caused the lower classes much hardship, Davies replied,

> If you mean fine hyson tea, sweetened with refined sugar, and softened with cream, I readily admit it to be so. But this is not the tea of the poor. Spring water, just coloured with a few leaves of the lowest priced tea, and sweetened with the brownest sugar, is the luxury for which you reproach them. To this they have recourse from mere necessity . . . Tea drinking is not the cause, but the consequence, of the distress of the poor.[3]

It is evident from various contemporary accounts that between 1790 and 1840 agricultural labourers in the southern counties subsisted on a diet of wheaten bread, a little meat (pork, mutton, or beef), potatoes, cheese, butter, tea, and sugar. Eden noted that in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire the labourers' diet consisted of bread, potatoes, meat, butter, tea and milk.[4] A typical Dorsetshire diet was as follows:

> The usual breakfast of the family is tea, or bread and cheese, their dinner and supper, bread and cheese, or potatoes sometimes mashed with fat taken from broth, and sometimes with salt alone. Bullock's cheek is generally bought every week to make broth. Treacle is used to sweeten tea instead of sugar. Very little milk or beer is used.[5]

During his visit to Kent Eden noted that within the past decade the labourers' consumption of meat had diminished by a half or more; instead of eating meat daily they ate it only twice a week, and not at all in the winter except in the poorhouse. Tea had also replaced milk and beer as the

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1 Eden, op. cit. pp. 101, 105-6. Davies, op. cit. pp. 37-8. Lincolnshire labourers were able to obtain milk as cottage cow-keeping was actively promoted by the landowning classes in the county.

2 Eden, op. cit. p. 107.

3 Davies, op. cit. p. 39.

4 Eden, op. cit. pp. 233, 236, 278.

5 Ibid. pp. 177-8.

labourers' main beverage.[1] Two of the diets collected by Eden, for Cobham and Hothfield respectively, are described below:

> The usual diet of labourers is bread, butter, cheese, pickled pork and a little butcher's meat. Potatoes are a principal diet in large families. Wheaten bread of the best quality is generally used here. Milk is very scarce.
>
> Bread is the chief food of labourers. They usually eat meat about twice a week. They seldom can afford to drink beer, and its place has generally been taken by tea at every meal.[2]

The depressed state of agriculture after the end of the Napoleonic war, accompanied by rising unemployment and falling wages, meant that there was little chance for an improvement in the labourers' diet. A witness to the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture in 1821 observed,

> The habits of people are formed upon what they have been able to earn, and I consider that the great point of suffering now is, that from the reduction of labour they have been forced to renounce both their comforts and luxuries; to descend to an inferior kind of food is felt as a great privation.[3]

As agricultural wages were reduced the labourers' consumption of 'luxury' commodities such as meat, tea, and sugar was reduced and more was spent on bread.[4] In 1824 a labourer's diet usually consisted of bread, potatoes, cheese, butter, an occasional piece of meat, tea, and very little sugar or milk.[5] The evidence on rural diets collected by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 revealed a similar picture. The replies to the question, 'Could the Family subsist on their Earnings, and if so, on what Food?', indicated

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[1] Ibid. p. 208.

[2] Ibid. pp. 210-11.

[3] Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, pp. 64-5.

[4] Ibid. p. 118.

[5] Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, pp. 42-54.

that the labourers' diet had hardly improved since Eden's time. Some of the diets described in the Report were as follows:[1]

Dorset:	Principally on Potatoes.
Essex:	They generally live upon bread, cheese, some butter, some tea and sugar, with a very little pork or meat.
Kent:	I think they may, eating bread, butter, and cheese moderately, and a little animal food; pork and bacon, butcher's meat seldom; beer rarely.
Lincolnshire:	Some could, on bread, meat, and potatoes; and some on bread and little else but beer. They can subsist on bread and meat.
Suffolk:	They might perhaps; but their food would be barely sufficient, consisting almost entirely of bread, cheese, butter, and tea. Many do subsist on this. God only knows how.

Nine years after this depressing evidence was published the 1843 Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture found that similar diets to these still prevailed in a number of counties.[2] In Kent the labourers' diet usually consisted of bread and cheese for breakfast and supper, and bread (or potatoes) and meat for dinner.[3] Dorsetshire labourers lived on a diet of bread, potatoes, cheese, tea, and an occasional piece of meat.[4] Edward Spooner, a surgeon from Blandford, told the Poor Law Commissioners, 'The food of the labourer's family is bread and potatoes, with a little cheese and bacon. I know many families who do not taste butcher's meat from one year's end to the other.'[5] It was also

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1 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Queries II, pp. 137-473.

2 For a similar account see T. F. Unwin, The Hungry Forties. Life Under the Bread Tax (1905).

3 Report of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 192-3.

4 Ibid. pp. 19, 90-1.

5 Ibid. p. 83.

unusual for labourers in Norfolk and Suffolk to have meat more than once or twice a week, though in Lincolnshire, where pig keeping was common among the labouring classes, pork or bacon was occasionally eaten along with wheaten bread, potatoes, butter, cheese and tea.[1] Some of the diets relating to Suffolk were described as follows:[2]

Glenham	Meat once a week; bread, cheese, butter, and tea.
Kesgrave:	Bread, cheese, tea, pork, and beer; principally bread.
Hadleigh:	Bread and potatoes, sometimes cheese; rarely meat.
Bungay:	Bread and butter and tea; sometimes bread and milk; occasionally cheese, but very seldom meat or beer. The children have bread and butter, or molasses.
Mildenhall:	Chiefly flour pudding, potatoes, bread, butter, cheese, a small portion of bacon, more or less often, as a man has a large or small family. Tea.

Agricultural labourers consumed these commodities in varying proportions, according to the size of their incomes and the number of dependents they had to support, and the weights which have been attached to each commodity in the cost of living index are proportionate to the amount of expenditure laid out on these items in the labourers' household budgets. In the light of the family budgets collected by Eden and Davies it is clear that bread was the staple item of the labourers' diet and absorbed as much as two-thirds of total expenditure on food and drink.[3]

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[1] Ibid. pp. 217, 254-5.

[2] Ibid. pp. 232-4.

[3] Davies, op. cit. p. 115. By the late eighteenth century the practice of home baking had declined in a number of southern counties owing to the high price of fuel and labourers were obliged to purchase their bread from village shops. Ibid. p. 118.

On average, an adult labourer ate 7lb. to 8lb. of bread a week,[1] which was the same as the workhouse ration for able-bodied paupers.[2] The quantities of other foodstuffs consumed by agricultural labourers were considerably less than these amounts. From the evidence collected by Eden and Davies a typical weekly diet for a family of six (two adults and four children) consisted of four gallon loaves (each loaf weighed 8lb. 11oz.), 1lb. of cheese, 1lb. of meat[3] (pork, mutton, or

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[1] Ibid. pp. 136-191. S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, pp. 41, 133. Two recent studies of working class budgets in the 1830's and 1880's have revealed that the average consumption of bread was 8lb. 6 oz. and 6lb. 8oz. a week respectively. R. S. Neale, 'The Standard of Living, 1780-1844: a Regional and Class Study', E.H.R. XIX, 3 (1966), p. 598. D. J. Oddy, 'Working Class Diets in Late Nineteenth Century Britain', E.H.R. XXIII, 2 (1970), pp. 317-8. In Glasgow the working classes consumed an average of 8¼lb. of cereals (bread, oats, and barley) a week. T. R. Gourvish, 'The Cost of Living in Glasgow in the Early Nineteenth Century', E.H.R. XXV, 1 (1972), p. 68.

[2] According to Eden the workhouse bread allowance at Blandford (Dorset), Portsea (Hampshire), and Alford (Lincolnshire) was 1lb. a day per adult in the 1790's. Eden, op. cit. pp. 177, 197, 230. Edwin Chadwick found that agricultural labourers normally ate 7½lb. of bread a week compared with 7lb. for an able-bodied pauper and 8¾lb. for a convict, Extracts from the Poor Laws (1833), pp. 254, 261.

[3] Contemporary references to meat usually distinguished between butcher's meats, such as beef and mutton, and cured meats, such as bacon and salted pork. According to Chadwick an agricultural labourer consumed 4oz. of meat a week compared with an able-bodied pauper who consumed 1⅓lb. of meat a week. Extracts from the Poor Laws (1833), op. cit. p. 261. Urban artisans in the later nineteenth century ate about 1lb. of meat a week. Neale, loc. cit. p. 598. Oddy, loc. cit. p. 318. Gourvish (1972), loc. cit. p. 69. J. C. McKenzie, 'The Composition and Nutritional Value of Diets in Manchester and Dukinfield in 1841', Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, LXXII (1965), pp. 130-1. Dr. Edward Smith's survey of agricultural labourer's diets in 1863 revealed that adults consumed an average of 16oz. of meat a week. In Dorset, Essex, and Hampshire the weekly consumption was 7¼oz., 6½oz., and 9¼oz. respectively. Sixth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1863, Parl. Papers 1864, XXVIII, pp. 294-5.

beef),[1] ½lb. of butter, 2oz. of tea, and ½lb. of sugar.[2] All these commodities have been taken to form the Food and Drink category in the cost of living index for each county and the proportionate changes in their prices, relative to the prices prevailing in the base years 1790 and 1835, have been combined to form an index of food prices.

Two other main categories of expenditure in labourers' household budgets which need some comment are Cottage Rent and Clothing. Indeed, one of the most intractable problems encountered in this study has been the difficulty of measuring changes in cottage rents. This problem has been recognised by Professor M. W. Flinn, who wrote,

> . . . one of the more frustrating lacunae in the study of nineteenth century economic and social history is the absence of any statistical study of house-rents. No doubt the problem of defining with any precision over a long period of time the extent of a house . . . would make such a study difficult, if not impossible.[3]

Much of the evidence, which is scattered throughout various printed and manuscript sources, is restricted to a small number of parishes in each

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[1] Poor Law records show that workhouse dietaries were similar to the diets of independent labourers and that beef, mutton, and pork were purchased for the pauper inmates. In all cases, except in Dorset, beef prices provided the most comprehensive series and hence an index of beef prices has been taken to represent general changes in the prices of other meats. This procedure is reasonable for two reasons. First, by comparing beef prices with the prices of other meats, wherever these are available, a close correlation was found in the general level and trend of the two series. Second, and in the light of this observation, the fact that a cost of living index is concerned more with the rate at which prices changed than the actual level of prices makes it reasonable to take peef prices as a representative series for meat prices as a whole. The evidence, however, does not permit allowance to be made of the very cheap cuts of meat such as the offal parts - the head, tail, heart, and shins of a beast - which the labouring classes consumed. See Unwin, op. cit. passim, for a description of these kinds of meats.

[2] Davies, op. cit. pp. 8-13, 136-191. Eden, op. cit. passim.

[3] E. Chadwick, Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain (M. W. Flinn (ed.) Edinburgh, 1965), p. 6.

county and is limited to a few isolated years.[1] No continuous series of rents for a specific type of dwelling in a particular district seems to exist. What little evidence there is is vague and imprecise as contemporary observers invariably assumed that a cottage was a homogeneous commodity and neglected to define which type of dwelling they were talking about. It is obvious that the amount of rent paid for a cottage was proportionate in some way to its size and quality; large cottages cost more to rent than small cottages and much also depended upon whether or not the cottage had a garden or piece of land attached to it. The location of the cottage was also important as rents tended to be lower on estates than in villages[2] and were higher in areas close to country towns and large villages than in the purely rural districts of the county. In Kent, for example, rents were higher in the parishes on the periphery of London than in the eastern parts of the county, and were higher in the vicinity of towns such as Faversham and Canterbury than in the country districts of mid-Kent and the Weald.[3] Qualitative differences in the type of dwelling also varied considerably from district to district and substantial differences in the level of rents could be expected between a cottage made of, say, bricks and tiles and a cottage made of weatherboard, or wattle and daub, with an earthen floor and a thatched roof. Important qualitative differences such as these were seldom mentioned by contemporary observers and without this kind of information it is difficult to judge how reliable

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[1] References to these sources are given in the chapters on each county.

[2] This is an impression for which very little evidence is available - especially on the question of 'open' and 'closed' villages.

[3] See pp. 132. In Essex cottage rents were higher in parishes close to London than in the remoter parts of the county.

an incomplete series of rents are as a measure of the cost of living.

Despite these limitations, however, the evidence does suggest a certain consensus of agreement on the extent to which rents increased between 1790 and 1840 which is consistent with the impressions given by contemporary observers.[1] The evidence for each of the counties in this study suggests that cottage rents doubled during this period and that this increase was linked to a general deficiency of cottages.[2] Despite the fact that the population doubled in 1801-51 it appears that on the supply side the construction of domestic dwellings did not keep pace with the demand for accommodation. Between 1790 and 1850 there was a serious deficiency of houses in the country at large and the problem was worsened by a dearth of building materials such as bricks and timber.[3] During the Napoleonic war the output of bricks per head of the population declined and there was an acute shortage of timber owing to the cessation of imports from the Baltic. In 1816-17 imports of timber and the domestic output of bricks lay at a low level and although a recovery began in the following year a large proportion of the output went on industrial construction, especially on factory, canal, and railway construction, rather than on domestic building.[4] Two consequences of the disequilibria between the

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1 J. Marriage, Letters on the Distressed State of the Agricultural Labourers (Chelmsford, 1832), II, pp. 17-18. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 474. See also S.C. on Labourers' Wages, P.P. 1824, VI, p. 47.

2 Marriage, op. cit. p. 5. C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1795), p. 68. Young (1797), op. cit. p. 11. Young (1807) op. cit. pp. 49-50. Stevenson, op. cit. p. 456. J. Glyde, Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century (1856), p. 358. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII (1843), pp. 86-7.

3 T. S. Ashton, 'Some Statistics of the Industrial Revolution in Britain', in E. M. Carus Wilson (ed.), Essays in Economic History, III (London, 1962), pp. 242-3.

4 Ibid. pp. 243-5, 251.

the demand and supply for building materials were a doubling of the prices of bricks and timber[1] and an acute deficiency of domestic dwellings; and stemming out of this situation there occurred a doubling of cottage rents and, given the doubling of the population, an increase in rural overcrowding. In order to reduce the fall in their real incomes and offset the higher cost of their accommodation occupiers developed the practice of sub-letting part of their dwelling to other families.[2]

It is evident from this discussion that despite the impression that cottage rents doubled between 1790 and 1840 it is difficult to substantiate such a conclusion in statistical terms owing to the limitations imposed by the evidence. For this reason it has been assumed, when calculating a cost of living index for each county, that cottage rents remained constant throughout this period. The importance of a 'safe' assumption such as this to a labourer's standard of living is that it understates, rather than overstates, the actual rise in the cost of living and thus removes the possible criticism that the index has an upwards bias. In addition to this, cottage rent usually accounted for less than 9 per cent. of a total household expenditure and hence its weight can have only a small effect upon the final shape of the all-items index.

Clothing, which was obviously an essential item in the labourers' standard of living, is one of the most difficult commodities to quantify. Poor Law records contain almost no references to purchases of clothing for parish paupers, though shoes were frequently purchased for that purpose, and the only evidence available on what a labourer spent on his dress is

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[1] Ibid. p. 251. Between 1793 and 1815 the price index of bricks and timber increased from 61 and 57 to 137 and 120 respectively.

[2] The doubling-up of families in a cottage may be taken to represent a qualitative decline in their standard of living. Evidence of overcrowding is contained in the footnote references relating to the deficiency of cottage accommodation noted above. See also Chadwick, op. cit. passim.

contained in a few contemporary studies of working class budgets. What is striking about this evidence is that few labourers could afford to buy new clothes and that the clothes they wore were generally second-hand and in a poor state. Davies estimated that a man needed a working jacket, a pair of breeches, two shirts, one pair of stout shoes, two pairs of stockings, a hat, and a handkerchief: his wife needed a gown, petticoats, a shift, a pair of shoes and stockings, two aprons, handkerchiefs, and headware.[1] Children required a similar range of articles, though on a smaller scale, and these normally cost one-third of the cost of an adult's clothes.[2] According to the family budgets collected by Eden and Davies at the end of the eighteenth century the cost of clothing a man and a woman was 36s. and 27s. a year respectively and that the annual expenditure on shoes and clothes for the whole family was, depending upon the size of the family, £4 to £6. The price of a pair of men's shoes was a week's wages and the family expenditure on shoes was normally 30s. to 40s. a year.[3] In the light of these prices it is not surprising that Davies found that 'Very few poor people can afford to lay out this sum in clothes' and were obliged to wear second-hand clothes. Davies found that the families he investigated were 'very meanly clothed' because, owing to their inadequate incomes, 'it is but little that . . . the belly can spare the back'.[4] Clothes for children were usually made-up out of their parents' old clothes or were bought second-hand.[5]

Other investigators, writing in the nineteenth century, confirmed the

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[1] Davies, op. cit. p. 15. See also Eden, op. cit. p. 300.

[2] Davies, op. cit. p. 15.

[3] Ibid. pp. 15, 77. Eden, op. cit. pp. 136, 296, 300, 317.

[4] Davies, op. cit. pp. 16, 28.

[5] Ibid. p. 15.

descriptions of Eden and Davies. John Bright, for example, noted during a tour through the southern counties that 'The poor are very badly off for clothing as none is given them by the Poor Law officers . . . They beg a great part of their clothing'.[1] In a similar manner the 1843 Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture noted the general deficiency of clothing amongst the rural labouring classes:

> The clothing of women employed in field-labour would appear to be inadequate for their work . . . A change of clothes seems to be out of the question . . . It not unfrequently happens that a woman, on returning home from work, is obliged to go to bed for an hour or two to allow her clothes to be dried. It is also by no means uncommon for her, if she does not do this, to put them on again the next morning nearly as wet as when she took them off.[2]

It is clear from this evidence that clothing had a low priority in the agricultural labourers' pattern of expenditure and, as the item accounted for an average of about 10 per cent. of total household expenditure, its omission from the cost of living index is not considered significant. Shoe prices for various years, however, were available in the sources used and wherever it has been possible to do so these prices have been incorporated into the cost of living index.[3]

At this point it is necessary to draw together the main categories of expenditure into a single index. Wherever the evidence has been available

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[1] Powell, op. cit. p. 9.

[2] Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII (1843), p. 22.

[3] Agricultural labourers usually wore boots rather than shoes. Boot prices, however, were not available but as both commodities were manufactured from the same raw material, leather, it is reasonable to assume that their prices would fluctuate by a similar proportionate amount from their base year. For this reason shoe prices are regarded as a suitable alternative to boot prices.

six categories have been used - Food and Drink, Cottage Rent, Fuel,[1] Shoes, Candles, and Soap - and the weights which have been attached to each category have been expressed as a proportion of the labourer's total expenditure on these items. These weights have been derived from a number of household budgets located in various contemporary printed and manuscript sources.[2] In particular, the many budgets collected by the Rev. David Davies provides considerable detailed information on the spending habits of rural labourers and have the advantage, compared with the fictional budgets created by earlier writers, of being based upon personal observation.[3] Davies, who began his enquiry into the condition of the rural labouring classes in 1787, observed:

> In visiting the labouring families of my parish . . . I could not but observe with concern their mean and distressed condition. I found them in general but indifferently fed; badly clothed; some children without shoes and stockings; very few put to school; and most families in debt to little shopkeepers . . . These poor people, in assigning the cause of their misery, agreed in ascribing it to the high prices of

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[1] Coal has been used to represent Fuel in this study as it has not been possible to discover any information on the prices of other fuels. Coal was the most common domestic fuel purchased by Poor Law institutions and there is no evidence to show that they purchased firewood. A probable reason for this was the fact that by the late eighteenth century there was a scarcity of firewood and that as it was too expensive to use as a domestic fuel it was being replaced by coal. The rural labouring classes also burnt peat, turf, and animal dung wherever these were available, though it is not possible, because of a lack of evidence, to incorporate these commodities into a cost of living index.

[2] It is regrettable that few labourers were literate enough to record their own experiences. Apart from Eden and Davies the main sources of evidence on family budgets used in this study are: F. Purdy, 'On the Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in England and Wales', J.R.S.S., XXIV, (1861), K.R.O. P. 244/8/2. Marden Parish Vestry Minutes 1814-23. The Chelmsford Chronicle, 28 January 1831, p. 3. N.R.O. SK 188/2. Sherbrooke Estate Accounts. D.R.O. Poole Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 233.

[3] Fictional budgets were frequently the product of writers of 'political arithmetic' who were attempting to demonstrate that poverty was due to improvidence and self-indulgence in 'luxuries' and that wages were adequate if only they were spent wisely. J. Burnett, A History of the Cost of Living (Penguin (ed.) 1969), pp. 162-4.

> the necessaries of life. 'Everything (said they) is so dear, that we can hardly live'. In order to assure myself, whether this was really the case, I enquired into the particulars of their earnings and expenses; and wrote the same down at the time just as I received them from each family respectively, guarding as well as I could against error and deception. . . . From what loose information I could then gather . . . I saw sufficient reason to believe that they presented but too faithful a view of the general distress of such families throughout this and the neighbouring counties.[1]

From an analysis of Davies' budgets it is apparent that about two-thirds of the labourers' total expenditure was spent on food and drink. The provision of three basic necessities of life - food, shelter and warmth - absorbed over 90 per cent. of the labourers' income, leaving a slender margin over for all their other domestic needs.[2] It is also important to note that the general pattern of total household expenditure

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[1] Davies, op. cit. pp. 6-7. For information on other counties Davies relied upon the services of friends and acquaintances who lived there.

[2] Other cost of living indexes, constructed by Gilboy, Silberling and Phelps-Brown and Hopkins, used fewer categories of expenditure and slightly different weights:

	Silberling	Gilboy	Phelps-Brown and Hopkins
	%	%	%
Food and Drink	75	80	81.0
Clothing	14	10	11.5
Fuel and Light	11	10	7.5
	100	100	100

Two important commodities, Rent and Soap, were omitted by the authors of these indexes. N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 234. E. W. Gilboy, 'The Cost of Living and Real Wages in Eighteenth Century England', R.E.S., XVIII (1936), p. 135. E. H. Phelps-Brown and S. V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, compared with Builder's Wage Rates', Economica, XXIII (1956), p. 297.

remained almost unchanged over a long period of time.[1] If the evidence collected by Davies at the end of the eighteenth century is compared with agricultural labourers' expenditure patterns in the 1830's and 1840's it is remarkable how very similar the distribution of expenditure was in both periods. This point is demonstrated in Table 7 where Davies' figures for 1793 are compared with figures derived from other areas in the 1830's and 1840's.

TABLE 7

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE 1793-1849

	Sussex[1]	Bath[2]	Suffolk[3]	Berks[4]	Essex[5]	Suffolk[6]	Notts[7]
	1793 %	1831 %	1831 %	1832 %	1834 %	1843 %	1849 %
Food & Drink	67.7	70.0	68.3	70.1	72.7	80.9	69.2
Rent	8.8	12.5	7.3	9.7		8.5	6.5
Fuel	5.4		7.3	4.0	7.4	5.5	6.0
Clothes				9.4			13.0
Clothes & Shoes	11.9	11.1	14.6				
Candles & Soap	3.0	6.2	2.5	2.8	3.2	3.4	5.3
Rent & Clothes					12.7		
Miscellaneous	3.2			4.0	4.0	1.2	
	100.0	99.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources:

1 Davies, op. cit. pp. 180-3. The Miscellaneous category includes items such as medicine and lying-in.

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[1] It is interesting to note that in the second half of the nineteenth century agricultural labourers spent about 67% of their income on Food and Drink, 10% on Fuel and Light, 12% on Clothes, and 10% on Cottage Rent. H. J. Little, 'The Agricultural Labourer', J.R.A.S., 2nd ser. XIV (1878), p. 777. Royal Commission on Labour. The Agricultural Labourer. England. I, Parl. Papers 1893-4, XXXV, p. 129. Second Report on the Wages and Employment of Agricultural Labourers in the United Kingdom, Parl. Papers 1905, XCVII (1913), p. 230. In 1966 the distribution of household expenditure in Britain was as follows: Food, Drink and Tobacco 38.2%, Fuel, Light, and Power 6.2%, Clothing and Footware 9.3%, Housing 10%, Soap and Matches 1.1%. Ministry of Labour Family Expenditure Survey. 1966 Report (1967), pp. 20-3.

2 Neale, loc. cit. p. 598. The proportion spent on Rent was high because this budget was an urban one.

3 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 28 January 1831, p. 3.

4 Report into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXIX, Appendix A., p. 291.

5 Ibid. XXXI, Appendix B.1., p. 170.

6 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 233. The proportion spent on Food was very high and probably included expenditure on Clothes and Shoes which were not given in the budget.

7 N.R.O. D.D. SK 188/2. Sherbrooke, op. cit.

Wherever the evidence has been available different sets of weights have been used for each county and these have been adjusted at various points to take account of changes in the labourers' expenditure pattern.[1] These weights have been combined, under Laspeyres' formula, with the prices of the various commodities in each main category of expenditure to provide a cost of living index for each individual county.[2] The importance of this evidence is fourfold. First, it provides a basis for comparing long run price trends, and price relationships between commodities, at the local and regional level. Second, the evidence throws considerable light upon short run variations in the timing and degree of amplification in the cost of living and whether or not the counties examined shared a common experience. Third, the county evidence also

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1 In Kent, for instance, the weights in the cost of living index were changed in 1793, 1812, 1814, 1821, 1835, 1837, and 1838.

2 In order to obtain an index number for a particular year the proportionate change in the price of a commodity, relative to its price in the base year, is multiplied by its weight. The figures obtained for the various commodities are added and their sum is divided by the sum of their weights to give an index number. This procedure is repeated for each year being studied to provide a series of index numbers which represent the average rate of change of the cost of a 'basket' of commodities. I would like to express my thanks to Professor R. J. Nicholson, Professor of Economic Statistics at the University of Sheffield, for his advice on the use of this formula. See also H.M.S.O. Method of Construction and Calculation of the Index of Retail Prices (London, 1959).

provides a measure for testing the reliability of Silberling's London-based price index as a guide to the cost of living in areas lying outside the metropolis. Fourth, by examining the relationship between the cost of living and the level of agricultural wages in each county, it is possible to show what effect their interaction had upon the trend of real wages and the agricultural labourers' material standard of living. Before undertaking this exercise, however, it is necessary to examine the main limitations of existing wage statistics and to outline the principal methodological problems involved in handling the new sources of statistical evidence.

CHAPTER 3

STATISTICAL SOURCES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION:

II. AGRICULTURAL WAGES

Statistics of agricultural wages derived from official and literary sources are notoriously difficult to interpret and do not readily lend themselves to the production of averages.[1] The problem of interpreting these statistics is particularly acute because the evidence was not generally collected in a systematic way nor was much attention paid to the method by which the agricultural wage was estimated. Labourers' wages varied considerably from season to season and it is therefore important to know whether the published wage was a summer, spring, or winter wage or an arithmetic average of the wages paid in each of the three seasons. To quote a wage from any of these seasons without referring to the season from which it was derived would clearly give a highly misleading impression of the level of agricultural wages. A further complication is that besides receiving cash wages for their services some labourers also received various forms of non-monetary payment such as harvest victuals and allowances in kind. These benefits were sometimes given in lieu of cash wages, and were a form of truck payment, or were given as a supplement to low wages.[2] It is difficult, however, to evaluate imponderables such as these and fit them into an index of real wages because the practice of paying wages in kind, and

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[1] A. L. Bowley, Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge, 1900), pp. 25-32. See also J. Saville, Rural Depopulation in England and Wales 1851-1951 (1957), pp. 16-18, for a critical discussion on the use of wage statistics derived from official sources.

[2] The lower the wage the greater the proportion allowances represented in the labourers' total earnings. In Dorset, for example, the value of allowances in kind varied inversely with the level of wages. W. Stevenson, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1815), pp. 433-53.

the ratio between cash wages and wages in kind, varied considerably from district to district in the short run whilst in the long run they were rapidly dying out by the early nineteenth century.

In addition to taking into account the loss of income from these sources cognizance must be taken of the fact that, for many rural labourers, the regularity of employment became much less certain, after 1815. Against a background of a general increase in the rural population, the emergence of a permanent surplus of farm labour, and changing social relationships between farmers and their men, periodic unemployment lasting for three or four winter months profoundly diminished the annual income and standard of living of as many as one-third to one-half of the rural labour force in some parishes.[1] Under the impact of price inflation during the Napoleonic war, many of the traditional paternalistic customs, such as providing labourers with board and lodgings at the farm, began to die out as farmers found them too expensive to maintain. The decline of living-in in Kent, for example, occurred in the early nineteenth century and by the 1830's it was said that 'There are not so many kept in the farmer's house as used to be . . . They have no hiring fairs; they go round to the farmer's house and offer themselves'.[2] Statute Fairs in Dorset were dying out by 1815 and very few farm workers were lodged and boarded on farms.[3] In some districts farmers reduced the period they hired farm servants to eleven months in order to prevent them

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[1] N. Gash, 'Rural Unemployment, 1815-34', Economic History Review, VI, I (1935). E. L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793-1872', E.H.R., XVII, 2 (1964).

[2] B. F. Duppa, The Causes of the Present Condition of the Labouring Classes in the South of England (1831), p. 11. Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 574.

[3] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 454.

gaining a 'settlement' and becoming a burden on the parish.[1] The tradition of boarding servants, especially unmarried servants, on the farm also declined in Essex as farmers preferred to employ married labourers from the villages.[2]

Such changes as these did not pass unnoticed and were frequently criticised. Nathaniel Kent, for instance, complained that 'The very person who have the advantage of their labour, and whose duty it is to make their situation comfortable, are often their greatest oppressors'.[3] In a similar vein the Rev. C. D. Brereton noted,

> The change that has taken place in the character of the yeomen and farmers, as it appears in the treatment of their labourers, is the most to be lamented. Formerly relations were in the benevolent spirit of 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn' and in which 'Society was well cemented in civil and social union'. The master's interest was in his labourer's comfort, and the labourer's happiness in the master's success.[4] These customs, however . . . are nearly by gone.

The significance of the decline in living-in and the shortening of the period of hire was that the labourers' income and general standard of living became precariously dependent upon the vicissitudes of a number of market forces over which they had no control.[5] The farm labourer became, in effect, a casual labourer, a hand, who was employed and dismissed at

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1 Ibid. This practice also occurred in Nottingham. Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 574.

2 J. Marriage, Letters on the Distressed State of the Agricultural Labourers (Chelmsford, 1832), p. 18.

3 N. Kent, Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property (1793), p. 238.

4 Rev. C. D. Brereton, Observations on the Administration of the Poor Laws in Agricultural Districts (Norwich, 1824), p. 63.

5 Labourers who were absent owing to sickness or who could not work owing to bad weather were not normally paid any wages. A farmer in Lincolnshire who shared this attitude noted the following memoranda in his account book, 'Never hire a workman without mentioning sickness not to be paid for'. L. R. O. Miscellaneous Deposits 150/2. Farm Account Book of J. Hutchinson of Gedney.

will by his employer according to the demands of the farming seasons. For many labourers the distinguishing feature of their occupation was the uncertainty of earning a regular and adequate income. As one writer put it:

> The price of labour is not fixed to any precise rules; when labourers are required, and the farmer's occasions are pressing, the labourer extracts the utmost he can get; and, on the other hand, when the farmer's occasions are slack, the labourer's wages are proportionately low.[1]

As the demand for agricultural labour was intensely seasonal the period of hire was normally a short one, varying from a week (or even a day) to a month or a whole season, and the labourers were paid according to the length of time they were employed or the quantity of work they did. Most labourers were employed at both day work and piece work (or task work) during the year and their annual income depended upon the ratio of day work, when a fixed rate of pay prevailed, to piece work, when labourers were paid by results and could earn much higher incomes than they normally could if they were employed at day work.[2] Labourers were employed to perform a variety of tasks requiring little more than their physical strength, such as reaping, threshing, and ditching, and each job carried a rate of pay which was roughly commensurate with the condition of the crop and the degree of physical effort required to do the job. The type and yield of a crop, and the physical condition of the crop - whether it was wet or dry, standing or lying - were important factors which affected the rate which was paid for the job. On some Kentish farms the labour bill for picking hops could vary from £400 in a good year, when

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[1] T. Stone, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1794), p. 24. In a similar manner another writer commented, 'Labour is like anything else, when the market is overstocked you buy at an inferior price'. Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 574.

[2] Harvesting work, such as reaping and mowing, and winter threshing were normally paid by the piece.

employment was plentiful, to £20 in a bad year[1] - with disastrous results for the agricultural labour force.[2] A crop of clover seed could yield five bushels per acre in one year and two in the next; the consequence of this situation would be a marked fall in the demand for labour to thresh the crop and a reduction in the expenditure on labour from £120 in the former year to £40 in the latter.[3] The yield from an acre of wheat or barley sometimes varied from two to four quarters and three to five quarters, respectively, and had an important effect upon the demand for labour for winter threshing.[4]

In many cases several rates of pay prevailed for seemingly similar tasks such as reaping and mowing wheat, barley, oats, and grass. The rate of pay for ditching, for example, depended upon the width and depth of the ditch, whether the soil was sandy or clayey, wet or dry, and how far the excavated soil had to be thrown. Arthur Young recorded the following rates of pay during his tour of Lincolnshire in 1799:

TABLE 8

PIECE WORK RATES OF PAY IN LINCOLNSHIRE

> Reaping wheat 10s. to 20s. ditto oats, 10s. to 18s.; beans 9s. 6d.; mowing spring corn 3s.; mowing grass 4s. Hoe turnips 6s.
>
> To reap an acre of wheat 7s. to 10s.; to mow an acre of spring corn 2s. 6d.; hay the same. To hoe turnips once 4s. to 5s. To thrash wheat, 2s. 6d. a quarter to 3s. 6d. in

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[1] Annals of Agriculture, XVIII (1792), p. 569.

[2] Hop picking was a labour intensive operation which employed large numbers of women and children during the hop harvest. The failure of the hop crop in Kent, due to an outbreak of mildew, during the summer of 1830 caused many families to lose their earnings and provided a background of distress which led to the agricultural labourers riots in the autumn of that year. See p. 159.

[3] Annals, XVIII (1792), pp. 569-70.

[4] Annals, XVIII (1792), p. 570. It was said that the halving of the wheat yield in a bad year could reduce the expenditure on threshing by as much as £1 million over the whole country.

summer; barley 2s. to 2s. 2d.; oats 1s.[1]

Such a variety of rates as these are not readily reduced to averages when calculating a labourer's annual income, though the importance of piece rates such as these was that labourers could earn much more at piece work than they could by day work.[2]

> 'When the labourer works by the piece', wrote Arthur Young, 'he confines himself to no particular limits, but in the long summer days, if vigorous, active and industrious, sometimes continues his application from four in a morning till eight in the evening; and from his longer continuance, and more vigorous exertion, he not unfrequently earns one-third more than when he works by the day. But human nature in general is not capable of this; and the very strongest constitution it will wear down very fast and bring an old age long before its usual period.'[3]

Most contemporary writers on agricultural affairs made a distinction between seasonal rates of pay and noted that winter and spring wages, for example, were much lower than summer wages. Young considered that in the southern counties winter wages lasted for twenty-six weeks, spring wages for twenty-one weeks, and harvest wages for five weeks.[4] In Lincolnshire, winter was reckoned to last for twenty-six weeks, from Michaelmas Day (29 September) to Lady Day (25 March). The rest of the year was divided

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[1] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1799), p. 401. Similar payments to these prevailed in Essex. C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1795), p. 113. These rates also varied year by year. The following rates were paid for threshing a quarter of wheat on the Monson estate at Burton Lincolnshire: 1790 1s. 8d., 1796 2s. 3d., 1800 3s., 1805 4s., 1810 3s. 4d. L.R.O. Monson 12 (Uncatalogued Wage Accounts). 2/2/4/1-7. Monson Estate Wage Accounts at Burton.

[2] A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), p. 336. Young noted, 'No labourers will take work by the piece, without a certainty of earning more than the common pay; in returning for working so much harder for themselves than they do for their masters'.

[3] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1807), II, p. 380.

[4] Young (1772), op. cit. p. 333. Winter wages lasted from October to March, spring wages from April to the third week in August, and harvest wages from the end of August to the end of September.

into three periods; a period of ten spring weeks following Lady Day, then nine weeks for the hay harvest, followed by seven weeks for the corn harvest. Wage rates in each period varied considerably:

TABLE 9[1]

SEASONAL WAGE RATES IN LINCOLNSHIRE IN 1799

Season	Number of Weeks	Wage Rate (per day)
Winter	26	1s. 3d.
Spring	10	1s. 6d.
Hay Harvest	9	2s. 6d.
Corn Harvest	7	3s. 3d.

The farming year in Suffolk in 1794 was divided into twenty-nine winter weeks, five harvest weeks, and eighteen summer weeks.[2] In Nottinghamshire winter was estimated to last for thirty-one weeks (Michaelmas to May Day) and summer for twenty-one weeks (May Day to Michaelmas).[3] The seasonal calendar in Dorset was split-up in a similar manner to those in the eastern counties with twenty-six winter weeks, sixteen summer weeks, and ten weeks for the hay and corn harvest.[4] Evidence for other counties, such as Buckinghamshire,[5] Cambridgeshire,[6] and Rutland,[7] suggest that the

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1 Young (1799), op. cit. p. 399. Young was referring to the Normanby and Burton area. The length of these periods varied slightly in other districts.

2 A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1794), p. 56.

3 R. Lowe, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Nottinghamshire (1794), p. 110.

4 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A, p. 20.

5 W. James and J. Malcolm, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Buckinghamshire (1794), p. 39.

6 C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cambridge (1794), p. 175.

7 J. Crutchley, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Rutland (1794), p. 18.

seasons there were also divided into similar proportions.

The main limitation involved in dividing the year up in this manner to estimate an agricultural labourer's annual income is that it is too ideal and does not take account of fluctuations in the lengths of the seasons.[1] Variations in the timing and legnth of the harvest were sometimes quite considerable and had an important effect upon a labourer's annual earnings. A harvest could last for three to five weeks, and even ten weeks in exceptional years, with as long as forty days difference between the duration of harvests in two consecutive years.[2] The evidence from the estate labour accounts used in this study suggest that the division of the farming year into high and low wage periods was not as rigidly maintained as was suggested by contemporary writers. The number of weeks when high and low wages prevailed fluctuated substantially year by year and did not conform to a set pattern. The following figures, derived from the Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts relating to north-west Kent, show significant variations in seasonal wages over a period of forty-five years.

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[1] Professor A. L. Bowley's estimates of agricultural wages were based upon a similar division of the farming year as suggested by Arthur Young and the County Reports of the Board of Agriculture. Bowley assumed that winter lasted for twenty-nine weeks, spring for twelve weeks, and the harvest for eleven weeks and that a labourer's earnings were generally 18 per cent. higher than his nominal wages. A. L. Bowley, 'The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom during the Last Hundred Years: Earnings and General Averages', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXII (1899), p. 556.

[2] Annals, XVIII (1792), p. 570. E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices. The Role of the Weather in English Agricultural History (1964), pp. 62-3.

TABLE 10[1]

SEASONAL WAGE RATES AT COBHAM HALL 1790-1835

Year	Low Rate (weeks)	High Rate (weeks)	Harvest Rate (weeks)	Single Rate (weeks)
1790	32	16	4	
1795	18	29	5	
1800	12	40		
1804	32	20		
1805				52
1810				52
1811	48	4		
1815	8	44		
1820				52
1821	4	48		
1825	32	20		
1830				52
1835				52

Evidence from the Estate Labour Accounts of the Earl of Guildford's estates at Waldershare in East Kent also revealed an equally diverse pattern of seasonal wages.

TABLE 11[2]

SEASONAL WAGE RATES AT WALDERSHARE 1792-1801

Year	Number of Weeks	Rate per Week
1792	48	9s.
	4	21s.
1796	4	10s.
	4	21s.
	44	11s.
1799	13	11s.

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[1] K.R.O. U.565/A9a-54a, A 314. Lord Darnley. Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts.

[2] K.R.O. U.471/A31-3. Earl of Guildford. Waldershare Estate Labour Accounts.

Year	Number of Weeks	Rate per Week
1799	4	21s.
	35	12s.
1801	48	12s.
	4	18s.

Similar examples to these can be quoted from other estates. At Cranbrook and Knole, also in Kent, agricultural labourers were usually employed for forty-eight weeks at a low rate of pay and four weeks, during the corn harvest, at a high rate of pay.[1] On the Monson estates in Lincolnshire the period when labourers were employed at winter wages varied from six weeks to thirty-eight weeks between 1789 and 1808.[2] Labourers employed on the Duke of Ancaster's estates at Edenham and Swinstead, also in Lincolnshire, were normally employed for eighteen weeks a year at a high rate of pay and thirty-four weeks at a much lower rate.[3] In Nottinghamshire, on the Saville estates at Rufford, husbandry labourers usually worked for thirty-four weeks at a low rate of pay, twelve weeks during the harvest at a high rate of pay, and six weeks at an intermediate wage.[4] On the Edge estates at Strelly winter wages lasted for thirty-three weeks.[5] In Dorset, labourers employed at Belhuse Farm worked for forty-three weeks in the year at a low rate of pay and nine weeks at a harvest rate.[6]

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[1] K.R.O. U.683/A2-4. Thomas Pile. Cranbrook Farm Accounts. K.R.O. U.269/A60-89. Sackville, Knole Estate Farm and Labour Accounts.

[2] Monson, op. cit.

[3] L.R.O. 2 Anc 6/64-82. Duke of Ancaster, Labour and Estate Accounts at Edenham and Swinstead.

[4] N.R.O. DD: SR/211/10-338. Hon. and Rev. J. Lumley Saville Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for labourers employed at Rufford. In 1811-12 labourers worked for thirty-four weeks at 12s. a week, twelve weeks at 18s., and six weeks at 15s. a week.

[5] N.R.O. DD. E/1/20-25. DD. E/30/7. Edge Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for Strelly.

[6] D.R.O. D10/AE/53-4. Belhuse Farm Accounts. Day Book of Labourers Wages.

It is clear from this kind of evidence that significant differences in the length of time labourers were employed at high and low rates of pay makes it difficult to generalise about average wages or an average level of earnings. In addition to this is the question of the reliability of contemporary observations on what agricultural labourers earned. Many statements about labourers' wages were derived from such persons as landlords, clergymen, and farmers, rather than from the labourers themselves, and were probably what those gentlemen thought a good labourer could earn rather than what a labourer actually did earn. In order to overcome these two limitations, and present fresh evidence on agricultural wages, the method adopted here has been to calculate new estimates of annual average weekly wage earnings derived from various estate labour accounts.[1] The advantage of using this kind of evidence, compared with using evidence from contemporary printed sources, is that it provides considerable detailed information on the type of work and earnings of an estate labour force and permits an objective study to be made of their annual earnings[2] over a long period of successive

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[1] These estates are located in the same counties for which cost of living indexes have been calculated: Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Dorset, and Hampshire. The choice of the county as the main unit of study was primarily determined by administrative reasons. Although an agricultural or a geographical region might also be considered a suitable unit of study, the fact that County Record Offices did not collect their records with that specific view in mind makes it almost impossible to approach the standard of living question in this way.

[2] In order that a comparison can be made between the cost of living and the trend of agricultural labourers' earnings the same base years, 1790 and 1835, have been used for each index.

years.[1] In calculating these earnings[2] it has been necessary, for practical purposes, owing to a lack of information on the incidence and duration of rural employment, to assume, as a first step, a situation of full employment.[3] This is a reasonable assumption to make for the period 1790–1815 as the demand for labour during the Napoleonic war usually exceeded its supply and the question of unemployment did not arise. After the war the agricultural depression and the existence of a large body of surplus labour meant that many labourers could not obtain regular employment and therefore estimates of earnings for the period 1815–40, calculated on the assumption of full employment, must be regarded as the

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[1] In the graphs wages derived from estate labour accounts (marked with a line or a cross) are compared with wages quoted in contemporary printed sources (marked with a dot). The question as to what difference, if any, there was between estate wages and farm wages is difficult to answer from the available evidence. If a wage differential had existed prior to 1793 it is probable that it would have been reduced during the Napoleonic war owing to the general scarcity of agricultural labour. The high level of demand for labour, due to the large expansion of arable farming, in relation to its supply would tend to even-out any marked wage differentials as labour would not work for low wages when it could obtain higher wages elsewhere - either in agriculture, on the canals, or in the war-industries. After the war this situation was reversed. The agricultural depression and the existence of a large permanent labour surplus meant that landlords and farmers could obtain as much low wage labour as they demanded and therefore there was no necessity to pay higher wages than those prevailing in the market. Probably the most notable difference between estate labourers and farm labourers was that the former enjoyed a greater regularity of employment as more all-the-year-round work was obtainable on large estates than on farms where the practice was to dismiss part of the labour force once the harvest was in. Gash, loc. cit. pp. 90-3. Jones (E.H.R.), op. cit. pp. 323-4.

[2] The index of annual average weekly wage earnings for each estate was obtained by adding the labourer's weekly earnings over the year and dividing the sum by fifty-two.

[3] With the exception of a valuable pioneer study by N. Gash, op. cit. no serious study of unemployment has yet been made.

maximum possible amount a labourer could earn.[1] This assumption, however, is modified later on in order to take account of periodic bouts of unemployment which, according to contemporary estimates, lasted for three or more winter months during the 1820's and 1830's and which substantially reduced the level of a labourer's earnings. Both these sets of figures suggest a range of earnings within which the wages of most agricultural labourers would fall. If it can be shown that the real wages of agricultural labourers fell on either of these two assumptions then the 'pessimists' case for a deterioration in the standard of living is difficult to resist.

The problem of unemployment in the post-war period stemmed largely from the general increase in the rural population, which produced a glut of labour in the countryside, and from the fact that the agricultural sector had to adjust itself from the prosperity of the war to the depression of the peace.[2] In certain years the number of chronically unemployed labourers reached a high level and this situation was

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[1] Although labourers' names sometimes disappeared from estate wage sheets one cannot necessarily assume they were unemployed and therefore received no wages. Names were occasionally omitted from wage sheets in error and groups of labourers were sometimes merged together into a 'gang' or 'company' for a short time to do a certain job. Several other alternatives were also possible. A labourers might absent himself from work for a day or two to work on, say, canal construction at a better wage - as during the 1790's. Jones (E.H.R.), op. cit. p. 323. Even if a labourer was out of work he would receive some relief from the parish which could amount to a half or more of his usual wages. As the evidence does not permit one to take account of all permutations of these eventualities it has been necessary to assume full employment, and then diminish the level of earnings calculated on this assumption by the amount of earnings a labourer would lose if he were unemployed for varying legnths of time.

[2] The problem of rural unemployment was not as serious in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire as it was in the rest of the counties in this study. The existence of alternative employment in the manufacturing industries and trade in Nottinghamshire, often at higher wages than in agriculture, exerted a competitive influence upon the local supply of labour. In Lincolnshire agricultural improvements, especially in arable farming, continued almost uninterrupted throughout the post-war period and maintained a high level of demand for labour. See p. 301.

periodically worsened by a seasonal influx of men on to the labour market who were deliberately thrown there for the winter quarter of the year. This problem was in particular evidence in the grain producing counties of southern and eastern England,[1] and the general situation there was further aggravated by the decline of certain rural domestic industries and the reluctance of the agricultural labour force to migrate to areas where employment was available.[2] Two important consequences of this situation were an unprecedented rise in the number of labourers, and their dependents, seeking relief and an increase in social unrest which periodically errupted into wage and machine breaking riots.

From the evidence collated by the Board of Agriculture's survey, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816, it is fairly conclusive that large-scale unemployment prevailed throughout most counties in southern and eastern England.[3] In some parts of Kent as many as one-third of the labour force were out of work and, at Ash, Tenterden, Brome, Sandridge, and the Isle of Thanet, were seen to be in a distressed and wretched condition. According to a witness from the Maidstone area in west Kent the farmers there were 'obliged to part with perhaps a third of their labourers' and that the general feeling there was that the labourers were

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1 As a result of this development there was a marked coincidence between the spread of Speenhamland and the production of wheat. M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', The Journal of Economic History, XXIII, 2 (1963), p. 171.

2 A. Redford, Labour Migration in England, 1800-50 (Manchester, 1926), pp. 80-1.

3 Forty English counties (besides Wales and Scotland) were investigated and a high proportion of the replies came from eastern and southern counties in which grain production was important and which had experienced a marked expansion during the war. 237 out of 273 replies stressed the high level of unemployment and the poverty it brought to the rural population. Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816; reprinted 1970), p. xiii, 7.

'very distressed for want of employment'.[1] Several observers from Essex and Suffolk described the condition of the unemployed labourers as 'worse than ever known', 'much distressed', and 'in a lamentable state'.[2] An observer from Suffolk commented:

> Scarce any man employs one labourer more than he is compelled to do. This occasions a very large proportion of the labourers to be out of employ, during a great part of the year. At the present moment we have two parishes, Mildenhall and Isleham, which, together have very few, if any, short of 100 labourers . . . for whom the farmers cannot find regular work.[3]

At Bayton, in Suffolk, one-third of the labour force were unemployed and in several other parishes 70 to 100 labourers were normally out of work for some part of the year; at Halstead, in Essex, four-fifths of the labour force were unemployed.[4] A similar situation existed in Dorset and Hampshire where the general stagnation in agriculture reduced employment and caused considerable social distress.[5]

The numbers of unemployed labourers remained at a critically high level throughout the 1820's and 1830's and provided a continuous background of social poverty and tension which culminated in the 'Swing' riots of 1830.[6] Between 1819 and 1823, for example, one-third or more of the agricultural labour force in Suffolk were out of work; at times

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[1] Ibid. pp. 123-40.

[2] Board of Agriculture, op. cit. pp. 86-9, 298-328.

[3] Ibid. p. 310.

[4] Ibid. pp. 86, 299, 316-17.

[5] Ibid. pp. 74-7, 93-100.

[6] The two most important books on this subject are: A. J. Peacock, Bread or Blood. A Study of the Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816 (1965). E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, Captain Swing (1969). Although these two studies deal with the threshing machine breaking riots of 1816 and 1830, respectively, other threshing machine breaking riots occurred on a smaller, though growing, scale in 1815, 1822, 1823, and 1829 in Suffolk and Essex. See Chapters 7 and 9.

the period of unemployment lasted for three or four months, or longer still for 'inferior hands'.[1] High levels of unemployment were reported at Stoke Ash, Langham, Acton, and Badwell Ash, and half of the inhabitants of Brundisburgh were reported to be living in poverty.[2] Between January and February 1830 1,000 labourers out of a total male labour force of almost 3,000 in Blything Hundred were out of work.[3] Six parishes in Hoxne Hundred each had an average of 78 able-bodied labourers without the means of earning a livelihood:[4]

Parish	Labour Force	Men Unemployed
Baddingham	110	60
Dennington	150	65
Wilby	71	32
Laxfield	100	55
Stradbrooke	110	70
Fressingfield	140	110
Framlingham	200	160

Chronic unemployment of this magnitude, even if it only lasted for two or three winter months, was sufficient to pull a labourer's annual income down with a run and reduce his average weekly wage to a subsistence level.[5]

Most Wealden parishes in Kent during the 1820's had a superfluity of agricultural labour. Bethersden, Charing, and Smarden, for example, usually had 25 to 50 excess labourers, which represented one-third to

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1 W. and H. Raynbird, The Agriculture of Suffolk (1849), p. 282.

2 Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, pp. 391-2.

3 J. Thirsk and J. Imray, Suffolk Farming in the Nineteenth Century (Ipswich, 1958), p. 134. These unfortunates had 3,000 dependents to support.

4 Ibid. p. 135. The Ipswich Journal 6 March 1830, p. 3.

5 The Ipswich Journal 6 March 1830, p. 3.

one-quarter of their labour force.[1] Out of a total population of 21,719 in 16 Wealden parishes 8,263 were classified as paupers, and a further 682 were unable to get employment at any time of the year.[2] The distribution of these figures between the parishes was as follows:

Parish	Population	Paupers	Unemployed
Appledore	539	201	32
Benenden	1,747	958	65
Biddenden	1,544	746	80
Cranbrook	3,683	1,310	65
Frittenden	799	360	30
Goudhurst	2,572	1,250	24
Holden	724	320	53
Hawkhurst	2,250	807	60
Kenardington	196	55	2
Marden	2,051	650	50
Newenden	151	31	
Rolvenden	1,403	460	60
Sandhurst	1,182	515	27
Shadoxhurst	244	90	10
Staplehurst	1,513	188	60
Woodchurch	1,095	422	64
	21,719	8,263	682

Other counties experienced similar conditions to these. At Toppesfield and four neighbouring parishes in Essex 200 labourers were unemployed during the spring of 1835, whilst at Woodham Ferris one-fifth of the labour force were reported to be 'spending their time in idleness'.[3]

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1 Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom 1826, IV, I, p. 135.

2 Ibid. pp. 136-8.

3 The Essex Standard 10 April 1835, p. 2. The Chelmsford Chronicle 2 January 1835, p. 3.

In Dorset several parishes, especially in the north-eastern districts of the county, had 70 or more surplus labourers out of work.[1] According to Alexander Somerville, one-half of the labourers in that county could expect to be unemployed for several months of each year.[2]

It is clear from this evidence that the problem of unemployment was widespread and continued almost unabated from the end of the Napoleonic war until the agricultural labourers riots of 1830, and beyond. To the 1833 Select Committee on Agriculture the cause of the problem was clear:

> It appears from the general tenor of the Evidence, that in many districts of the country the supply of Agricultural Labour is greater than the demand, and that this disproportion mainly arises from the inability of the Farmer to employ that quantity of labour on the Land which would be requisite for its perfect cultivation.[3]

In addition to the economic problems created by widespread agricultural unemployment, the general decline of many rural domestic industries after the Napoleonic war assisted to worsen the labourers' plight by removing a source of extra earnings at a time when it was most needed.

During the eighteenth century a number of cottage industries, such as spinning and weaving, knitting, plaiting straw, and glove, button, and lace making, were established throughout most country districts and enabled labourers' families to earn a small wage. In Suffolk, for example, the hemp and woollen industries employed large numbers of women and children who were able to earn from 3d. to 6d. a day spinning.[4] Arthur Young, during a visit to Essex in the 1770's, found that children

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[1] The Dorset County Chronicle 5 July 1832, p. 2.

[2] A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough (Manchester, 1852), p. 335.

[3] Report of the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. ix.

[4] Young (1772), op. cit. p. 64. A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1813), pp. 143, 231. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 315.

earned 1s. a week, girls 2s., and women 5s. to 5s. 6d. a week in the woollen industry.[1] By the end of the Napoleonic war, however, the domestic woollen industry in the eastern counties was in a state of decline owing to the rise of the Yorkshire woollen industry. In Essex and Suffolk the spinning and weaving trades slumped and the manufacture of baize was ruined. In Colchester, the 20,000 hands which had been employed in the baize trade in the 1780's were reduced to 8,000 by 1795 and the earnings of spinners were halved.[2] By that time the woollen industry in Dorset and Hampshire, which had been fairly prominent in the mid-eighteenth century, had almost disappeared. The fact that few non-agricultural industries of any note existed in Hampshire at the end of the eighteenth century, prompted the authors of the General View of that county to note, "It is to be regretted that they (domestic industries) are not more generous, as the poor women and children would thereby be provided with employment, and of course habituate themselves to industry".[3] The woollen industry in Dorset was decadent, and existed only in a small way at Sturminster and Lyme Regis, and the manufacture of silk, which had formerly employed large numbers of women and children, was declining in importance. Woman and children were still employed at spinning flax and hemp in the Bridport and Beaminster area and could earn 8d. and 2d. a day respectively.[4] In the eighteenth century the button making industry in Dorset, which was centred on Shaftsbury and Blandford, gave employment to large numbers of women and children in villages as distant as seven or eight miles away. At that time women button makers could earn 10s. or

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[1] Young (1772), op. cit. pp. 72-6. Eden, op. cit. p. 188.

[2] Young (1807), II, p. 390.

[3] A. and W. Driver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hampshire (1794), p. 15.

[4] Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 446-8.

12s. a week; by 1815, however, these earnings had been reduced to 6s. and 7s. a week and by the 1840's, owing to the competition of machine-made buttons, button makers were scarcely able to earn 1s. 6d. a week.[1] The domestic glove industry, which employed large numbers of out-workers in the rural villages of Dorset, also declined in the early nineteenth century owing to the competition of imported French gloves which reduced the earnings of hand-gloves by a half.[2]

It is evident from this description that for many rural households the loss of income due to seasonal unemployment and the decay of the domestic industries was a serious economic disaster which placed considerable pressure upon their general standard of living. It is important to remember, however, that cash wages did not always comprise the whole of a labourer's income as some labourers were paid part of their wages in kind; in the form of free fuel, food, and drink, a rent free allotment, and cheap farm produce. In many counties the custom of providing labourers with beer and victuals during the harvest had existed a long time. In Nottinghamshire, for example, agricultural labourers were allowed two to three pints of beer a day when they were haymaking[3] whilst in Suffolk labourers were given three bushels of malt or a shilling in lieu of their harvest beer.[4] Essex labourers were allowed six to eight pints of beer during the harvest or an equivalent amount of hops and

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1 Ibid. pp. 448-9. S. B. Osborne, 'The Dorsetshire Poor', in A. White (ed.), The Letters of S.G.O. (1890), I, p. 42.

2 The Dorset County Chronicle 9 February 1832, p. 2. 9 August 1832, pp. 1-4.

3 N.R.O. DD. F/1/7. Franddin Estate Accounts at Gonalston Hall. Thomas Hind's Account Book. Lowe, op. cit. p. 133.

4 E.S.R.O. HA 11/c/1b/2. Rous Estate. Darsham Farm Accounts. E.S.R.O. HA 2/B2/2-4. Biddell Estate. Hill Farm Day Labour Account Books at Playford.

barley.[1] Kentish labourers were allowed up to a quart of beer a day or an amount of money in lieu.[2] Lincolnshire labourers received a similar amount,[3] whilst in Dorset it was said that agricultural labourers there consumed up to a gallon of beer or cider a day during the corn harvest.[4] The value of a labourer's beer allowance depended upon the quantity he was given and whether or not it was given in addition to his wage. Various practices prevailed in different parts of the country and much depended upon local custom and the individual whim of the farmer. Arthur Young considered that a labourer's beer allowance was worth 'twopence in the shilling'.[5] In the 1790's hop pickers in Kent received a beer allowance of one penny for every eight bushels of hops they picked;[6] in Essex the allowance was 1½d. for every shilling they earned.[7] The beer allowance in Nottinghamshire was 5d. a day[8] whilst in Lincolnshire harvest labourers were allowed either 6d. a day in lieu of beer or a pint of beer for every

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1 Young (1807), II. op. cit. pp. 370-6. Labourers were allowed four bushels of malt and four bushels of hops during the harvest month. E.R.O. D/DU 224/2-3. Crop and Labour Accounts of Samuel Watkinson of Black Notley.

2 K.R.O. Darnley, op. cit. K.R.O. Sackville, op. cit. J. Boys, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent (1794), p. 59.

3 L.R.O. Mis. Dep. 150/2. op. cit.

4 Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 218, 428-37. Women were allowed one-half of this quantity. D.R.O. D10/AE/26-48. Thomas Weld Estate Accounts. Receipts and Disbursements. D.R.O. Belhuse, op. cit. According to one writer Dorsetshire mowers sometimes consumed two gallons of beer a day. L. H. Ruegg, 'Farming in Dorsetshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XV (1855), p. 445.

5 Young (1772), op. cit. p. 332.

6 K.R.O. Darnley, op. cit.

7 E.R.O. D/NM 1/1. Edward Stephen Kempton. Farm Accounts at Brightlingsea.

8 N.R.O. Saville, op. cit. N.R.O. Franddin, op. cit.

shilling they earned.[1] It was also customary to provide harvest labourers with victuals and the monetary value of these were worth about 2s. to 5s. to a labourer.[2]

The opportunity to purchase farm produce below its market price was a useful perquisite enjoyed by some labourers in the eighteenth century. In the arable farming areas of Dorset, for example, farmers sold wheat and barley to their labourers for a shilling or more below its market price.[3] In Hampshire labourers were allowed to purchase cheap wheat at 6s. a bushel; a married man with three children was permitted to buy two and a half pecks of wheat a week, and this quota was increased for labourers with larger families.[4] Despite the advantages allowances in kind gave to the agricultural labourer the practice was open to abuse and was frequently used to the labourer's disadvantage. Under the truck system labourers were sometimes obliged to accept inferior produce in lieu of money, inferior corn of a third or fourth grade (called tailings) was sold to labourers for the same price as good quality corn, and the cheese, butter, and meat they received was often said to be unfit for the market.[5]

More important than these petty abuses, however, was the general ending of this kind of rural paternalism under the stimulus of rising

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1 Young (1799), op. cit. p. 401. Annals, XIX (1793), p. 187.

2 E.R.O. Watkinson, op. cit. K.R.O. Darnley, op. cit. E.S.R.O. Rous, op. cit. N.R.O. Saville, op. cit. D.R.O. D10/AE/26-48. Belhuse, op. cit. H.R.O. 4M 51/213. Farm Account Book of Thomas Holland. Labourers at Maplestead, in Essex, were given 8s. in lieu of harvest supper. Young (1807), op. cit. p. 370.

3 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 452. In the pastoral areas of the Vale of Blackmoor, labourers were not normally allowed to purchase grist. Ibid. pp. 430-7.

4 Vancouver (1813), op. cit. p. 338.

5 Osborne, op. cit. I, pp. 16-17. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 72.

prices at the end of the eighteenth century. The huge increase in the population, coupled with the enlarged commercialisation of agriculture, meant that the marketing of farm produce from the producer to the consumer became more complex than every before. Traditional paternalistic marketing practices, whereby producers sold directly to consumers in the open market, gave way to a highly commercialised system in which producers sold their produce to various intermediaries who distributed their produce for them. One important social consequence of this development was that by the early nineteenth century the custom of selling cheap food to labourers fell into disuse; a fact which was frequently lamented by writers who were concerned with the widening gulf between farmers and their hands and the increase in rural poverty.[1] Nathaniel Kent, for example, criticised the new marketing arrangements on the grounds that farmers were no longer willing to sell small quantities of wheat, butter, and milk to their labourers as they could obtain more by selling it in bulk to the market. This development had certain disadvantages as labourers were now obliged to buy their provisions from village shops at prices which were frequently 10 per cent. higher than the prices they formerly paid.[2] The Rev. David Davies lamented the demise of the paternalistic bonds which had formerly bound together the interests of the farmer and his labourers:

> The corn business is now carried on in a systematical way from which the dealers will not depart. Formerly the labourer could have corn of different kinds mixed in any proportion, in exchange for his labour, even more readily

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[1] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 452. The changes in traditional marketing practices, and the popular resentment they invoked, are examined at length in E. P. Thompson's article, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, No. 50 (1971). See also R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order. Six Studies in British History 1790-1920 (1974), pp. 36, 44.

[2] Kent, op. cit. pp. 238-9.

> than he could get money. His wife carried it to the mill, had it ground and dressed, and then brought it home, and baked it for the family. There was no intermediate person except the miller, between the farmer and the consumer, to receive a profit. But now it is out of the course of business for the farmer to retail corn by the bushel to this or that poor man . . . The great farmer deals in a wholesale way with the miller; the miller with the mealman; and the mealman with the shopkeeper; of which last the poor man buys his flour by the bushel. For neither the miller, nor the mealman, will sell the labourer a less quantity than a sack of flour under the retail price at shops: and the poor man's pocket will seldom allow of his buying a whole sack at once . . . It has been asserted by a good judge of these matters, that this is a disadvantage to the poor of at least ten per cent upon this prime necessary of life. In short, the poor man buys every thing at the highest price; . . . He cannot help this; but must submit to the established order.[1]

Those labourers who lost the opportunity to purchase cheap farm produce could, if they were able to rent a garden or an allotment, supplement their income by growing vegetables and rearing livestock. Labourers who had the means to keep a cow or a pig always had some degree of economic independence to sustain them when times were bad.[2] The moral benefits of cottage cow and pig keeping were widely acclaimed by contemporary writers who viewed the system as a means of keeping down expenditure on poor relief. Nathaniel Kent noted,

> It is evident that the labourer who can keep a cow or a pig, is always a faithful servant to the farmer who employs him. He has a stake in the common interest of the country,

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[1] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), pp. 33-4. According to Davies labourers could not buy milk for 'love or money'. Ibid. p. 37. One important social consequence of the change in marketing arrangements was that in years when food was in short supply, due to a harvest failure, popular outrage was invariably levied against middlemen such as millers, mealmen, and bakers. In 1795 and 1800, for example, shops and flour mills were attacked and pillaged, shipments of corn were prevented from leaving the district, and stocks of flour, bread, meat, butter, and cheese, were seized by the crowd and sold in the market at a lower price. See pp. 174-7.

[2] It was quite common for cottagers to eat half of the pig and sell the rest to pay the rent of their cottage and purchase clothes and shoes. Somerville, op. cit. pp. 335-6.

> and is never prompt to riot in times of sedition, like the man who has nothing to lose; on the contrary, he is a strong link in the chain of national security.[1]

Despite the many economic and social benefits claimed by the advocates of the system, contained in such journals as the Annals of Agriculture and The Farmer's Magazine, cottage cow and pig keeping in the nineteenth century was only prominent in a very few counties and had disappeared in many more. Lincolnshire, in particular, was renowned for its cow and pig keeping and was often cited as a model which could be followed by the southern counties.[2] In 1799 Arthur Young noted that the system was widespread in the county:

> It is a general rule for every grazier and farmer to keep cows for his regular labourers . . . on the wolds it is universal, one or two cows, and a pig or two, with a few sheep. In the Marshes . . . very few but what kill a pig, and some two, feeding them much with potatoes and some barley meal; a few are without their piece of potato ground for their families and pigs.[3]

Labourers paid £3 to £5 rent a year for two acres of cow pasture and insured themselves against the possible loss of their cow.[4] In the neighbouring county of Nottinghamshire many cottagers had a portion of land on which to keep a cow or a pig[5] and in Dorset cottage pig keeping

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[1] Kent, op. cit. pp. 283-4.

[2] J. A. Clarke, 'On the Farming of Lincolnshire', J.R.A.S., XII (1851), p. 407.

[3] Young (1799), op. cit. pp. 414-5. In the 1840's most labourers in Lincolnshire were thought to possess a pig. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), p. 255.

[4] Young (1799). op. cit. pp. 411, 417. Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (i), p. 74. L.R.O. 3 Anc 7/23/36/20. Rules of the Swinstead and Creeton Cow Club. Each member paid a shilling a month subscription and received £10 compensation on the loss of their cow.

[5] Lowe, op. cit. p. 140.

was fairly general throughout the county.[1] Elsewhere, cottage cow and pig keeping had largely disappeared during the enclosure movement.[2] By the early nineteenth century few labourers owned a cow or a pig in the eastern counties; in Suffolk most labourers did not have the means to keep a cow.[3]

> 'Wherever the poor can get milk, do they not gladly use it?' asked the Rev. David Davies. 'And where they cannot get it, would they not gladly exchange their tea for it? The truth is, that very few labouring people can afford to purchase a cow, for a cow would cost the earnings of almost half a year. But, were they able to purchase one, where could they find pasture for her? The commons are so covered with the rich farmer's herds and flocks, that the poor man's cow would soon be starved there. And the little ground about their cottage is barely sufficient for garden stuff.'[4]

The moral and economic benefits of field allotments were frequently advocated by writers who were concerned with the growth of rural poverty in the early nineteenth century. An allotment could provide a labourer and his family with a supply of vegetables, which could be consumed or exchanged if times were bad, and would simultaneously induce 'honesty, civility, and industry . . . and enable them to raise themselves from the situation of paupers'.[5] Despite these sentiments, however, only a few labourers in the southern counties enjoyed the benefits of an allotment

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1 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 454. According to Stevenson 'almost everyone' kept a pig in Dorset.

2 J. H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain (Cambridge, 1939), I, pp. 116-18.

3 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 298. J. Glyde, Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century (1856), pp. 354-5.

4 Davies, op. cit. p. 37.

5 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp. 259-63. T. Postans, A Letter to Sir Thomas Baring on the Causes which have Produced the Present State of the Agricultural Labouring Poor (1831), p. 12. B. F. Duppa, The Causes of the Present Condition of the Labouring Classes in the South of England (1831), pp. 76-89.

before the 1830's; it was only after the agricultural labourers' riots of 1830 that allotments were generally introduced into the countryside.[1] Before that date the establishment of allotments was small scale and piecemeal owing to the general hostility shown by landlords and farmers who feared that their labourers would become too independent and neglect their ordinary work.[2] After the 1830 riots this attitude was, conveniently, reversed and labourers' allotments were established in a number of counties, though the speed of their development varied considerably from district to district.[3] In 1833 only 16 per cent. to 30 per cent. of the parishes in Kent and Essex had allotment schemes compared with 31 per cent. to 40 per cent. in Suffolk and Nottinghamshire and over 70 per cent. in Lincolnshire and Dorset.[4]

During the 1830's allotments were established in Essex under the patronage of the Poor Law and various landowners such as Lord Braybrooke.[5] At Saffron Walden, West Hanningfield, Pakenham, Barking, Great Baddow, Braintree, and Hatfield Broad Oak allotments were laid out and rented to

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Labouring Poor (Allotments of Land), Parl. Papers 1843, VII, p. ii. Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. p. 298. D. N. Bates, The Agricultural Labourer in West Oxfordshire (Birmingham University M.A. Thesis, 1955), p. 70.

2 Allotments were generally regarded as an aid to low wages rather than a substitute for wages earned in the normal way. S.C. on the Labouring Poor, P.P. 1843, VII, pp. iv, 2, 39. Bates, op. cit. pp. 35-6. Opposition to allotments was particularly strong in south-east England and East Anglia; especially in Kent and Essex.

3 It is of interest to note that areas where allotments were already established in 1830 experienced the least unrest. Labourers with allotments always had some degree of security when times were bad. D. C. Barnett, 'Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780-1840', in E. L. Jones and G. E. Mingay (eds.), Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution (1967), p. 180.

4 Barnett, op. cit. pp. 163, 172. In the country as a whole allotment schemes were found in 42 per cent. of the parishes, though it is possible that in some of these only one or two labourers would have rented any land.

5 S.C. on the Labouring Poor, P.P. 1843, VII, p. 39. The Essex Standard 10 April 1835, p. 2.

husbandry labourers at 4d. to 6d. a rod.[1] By the late 1830's there were three thousand labourers' allotments in Kent.[2] Labourers' allotments in Suffolk were let at 10s. a year on the condition that labourers would not cultivate them during the day without obtaining the permission of their employer.[3] Potato allotments were common in Dorset and labourers who rented these generally had their land ploughed and manured and their crop carried by the farmer.[4] Most parishes in Lincolnshire contained labourers' allotments and were commended by an observer of the system there:

> In this neighbourhood I was told that there were allotments in almost every village . . . you find a fat pig in the house of every labouring man . . . the size of the allotments vary from half a rood to an acre: sometimes they are cut according to the size of the family; a rood and a half for a man with a family is the best size; it should be never less than a rood; the rents are from 30s. to 40s. an acre, and are usually well paid; the land is variously cultivated, but generally well, owing to the regulation, we let them on that system that no man shall have a cottage-garden unless he keeps a pig.[5]

Against the economic advantages of the allotment system, however, must be set certain disadvantages. Labourers were sometimes charged

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1 The Ipswich Journal 29 January 1831, p. 3. 5 February 1831, p. 4. The Chelmsford Chronicle 3 December 1830, p. 4. 7 March 1834, pp. 3-4. The Colchester Gazette and Essex Independent 9 July 1836, p. 3. E.R.O. D/P/4/8/7. Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Vestry Minutes.

2 S.C. on the Labouring Poor, P.P. 1843, VII, p. 5. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 189. The Maidstone Journal 13 November 1832, p. 3.

3 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp. 259-74. E.S.R.O. Fc 107/A1/1. Monewden Parish Vestry Minutes. Labourers were also required not to work on a Sunday or enter a public house.

4 Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 270, 454. Report into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A, Part I, pp. 15-21. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII (1843), pp. 15-16. O. Piers, A Few Hints to Landowners and Farmers Throughout the Kingdom: more particularly to those in the County of Dorset (Dorchester, 1838), p. 6.

5 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII (1843), p. 271.

extravagant rents for poor quality land and were frequently obliged to pay their rent before their crop was harvested.[1] The fact that farmers owned the land upon which the allotment was sited meant that they were able to keep their labourers 'more under subjection' and could confiscate the crop if the labourer left his employment.[2] According to Somerville,

> Some of them (labourers) had allotments of land, and it was only by having these allotments that they could exist on four shillings and sixpence a week. Thus the allotments, though good in themselves, if allied with full wages, are made instrumental to the depreciation of wages. In short, they are in this case made to reduce wages and to reduce the poor rates at the same time.[3]

It is evident from this discussion that the task of estimating the contribution made to the labourers' standard of living by such imponderables as allowances in kind and field allotments is extremely difficult on both practical and methodological grounds. Much of the evidence relating to rural fringe benefits is impressionistic evidence derived from contemporary printed sources and is of the kind which does not readily lend itself to statistical analysis. The task of balancing the beneficial effects of allowances in kind against the deleterious effects, for example, whilst taking into account the fact that the custom was not found in all areas and was in the process of disappearing in the areas in which it was found by the early 1800's, involves innumerable problems which are not easily reduced to a statistical form. Similar problems to these are also encountered when trying to assess the contribution made by allotments to the labourers' standard of living. The proportion of parishes in a county which had labourers' allotments in the 1830's varied from 16 per cent. in some counties to 70 per cent. in others, but what is

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[1] Bates, op. cit. p. 36.

[2] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 455. The same conditions applied if a labourer rented a farm cottage from his employer.

[3] Somerville, op. cit. p. 36.

not known is the number of labourers in each parish, or what proportion of the total labour force these labourers represented, who cultivated an allotment. Even if these figures were known it would be extremely difficult to quantify and compare the benefits with the cost of the allotment system and estimate the net effect upon the labourers' standard of living. Furthermore, as field allotments only began to come into common usage in the 1830's their contributions, if any, to the general standard of living was limited to only a few years at the end of the period under review. The declining importance of rural domestic industries and cottage cow and pig keeping (except in Lincolnshire and Dorset) assisted to diminish the labourers' standard of living, though the extent of these changes are not easy to incorporate into an index of agricultural wages. All of these factors, singularly and jointly, exerted some influence in a positive or a negative way upon the labourers' standard of living, but as their net effect is, for practical and methodological purposes, largely indeterminate then the labourers' cash wages have been taken as the yardstick by which his standard of living may be judged to have improved or deteriorated.

The assumptions under which the labourers' earnings have been calculated may now be restated. To overcome the limitations imposed by a deficiency of unemployment statistics it has been assumed, as a necessary first-step, that the labourers in this study were in regular employment throughout the period 1790-1840. This is an extreme, though ideal, case and the level of earnings in this situation must be regarded as the maximum possible amount a labourer was capable of earning. The next stage is to diminish this level of income, and the standard of living it gave, by introducing a degree of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations. As unemployment was a post-war phenomenon, not a war-time one, the level of agricultural earnings has been recalculated for

the period 1815-40 on the assumption (based upon contemporary estimates) that unemployment lasted for the winter quarter of the year. Both of these situations represent extreme limits between which the agricultural labour force would be distributed. From the available evidence on the incidence of unemployment it is probable that the incomes of as many as one-third or more of the labour force in some parishes lay close to the lower limit, hence their dependence upon doles of public relief and private charity to make up the deficiency in their incomes and provide them with a minimum level of subsistence.

Finally, at this point it is necessary to give some indication of what is to follow in the next two sections. First, in view of the local nature of the evidence, and in the interests of avoiding unnecessary confusion and maintaining a consistent approach to the standard of living question, all the counties studied in Part II have been investigated independently of one another. In Part III, the final section, the conclusions obtained on the standard of living in each county are considered on a comparative basis.

Second, the approach adopted in the following chapters, which constitutes the major part of the original research, is primarily one of a series of exercises in quantitative data processing. The two chapters devoted to each of the seven counties are basically concerned with two statistical variables - the wage earnings of male agricultural labourers and the cost of living - in order to determine what happened to the purchasing power of wages. The trends shown by these figures are related to the varying pattern of economic and social events in each county, such as the success or failure of harvests or the impact of the Napoleonic war. Although throughout these chapters the main emphasis has been upon statistical material, this material has been judiciously supplemented with a large quantity of qualitative literary evidence. Taken together, both

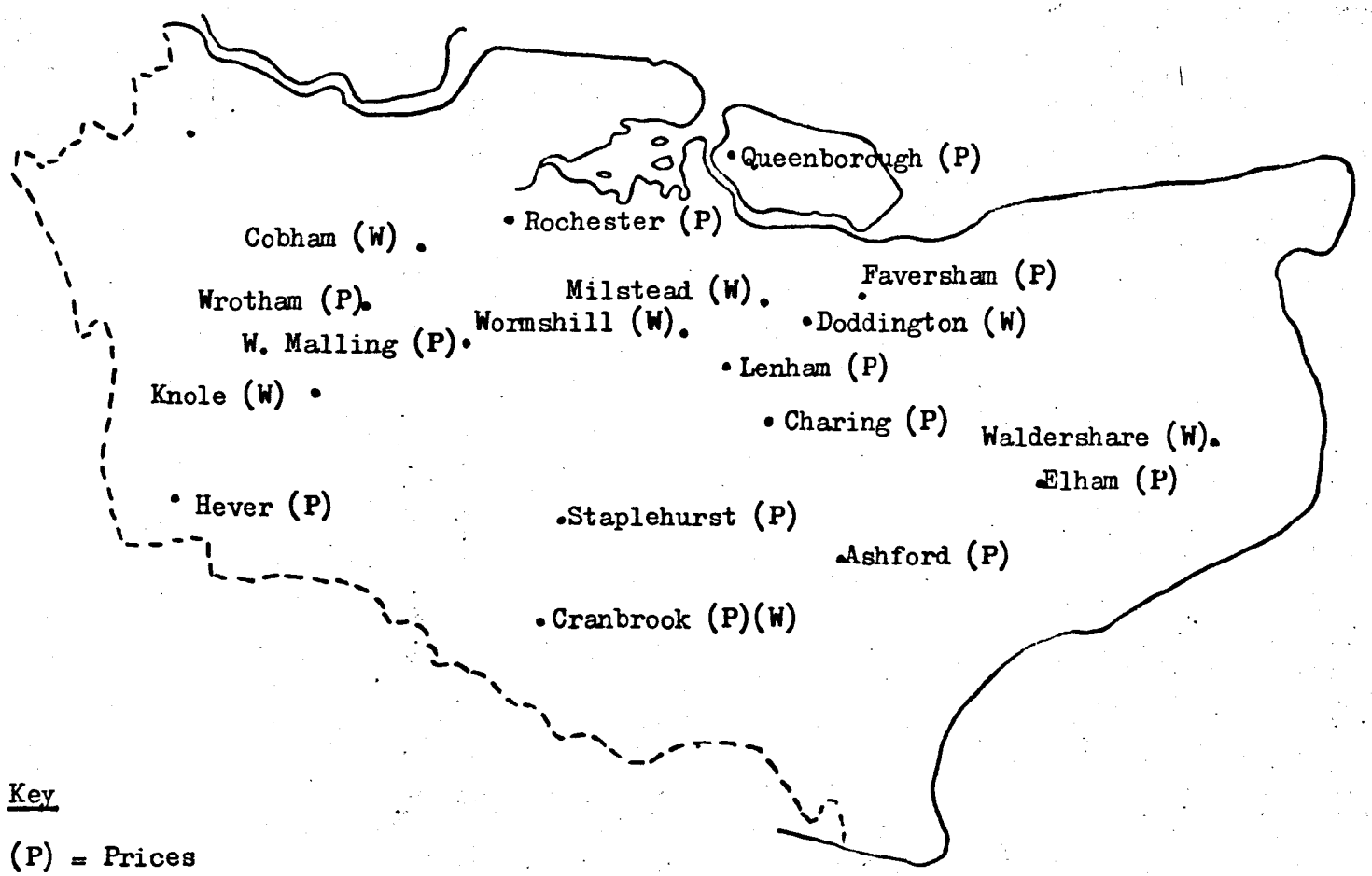
these kinds of evidence provide a graphic insight into the economic and social history of early nineteenth century rural society.

PART II

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES AND THE COST OF LIVING IN SEVEN ENGLISH COUNTIES

MAP 2

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Kent



Key

(P) = Prices

(W) = Wages

CHAPTER 4

THE COST OF LIVING IN KENT 1790-1840

I. Introduction

By the late eighteenth century agriculture was an important part of the Kentish economy. Since the sixteenth century the proximity of London had exerted a vital influence upon the growth of commercial farming throughout the county. Between 1650 and 1750 London's population increased by three-quarters and for Kent, as well as other counties in this study, the metropolis became 'the hub of their economic universe'.[1] Indeed, it was during this formative period that the hop grounds, market gardening areas, and fruit orchards of Kent began to prosper and the corn growing areas of north-east Kent were turned into a 'vast granary' for the ultimate benefit of London's markets.[2] Indeed, by the time of Defoe's tour of Kent in the eighteenth century commercial farming was well developed and large quantities of grain, hops, cattle, timber, apples, and cherries were sent by road and river to the capital.[3] By the seventeenth century the growth of sheep rearing on Romney Marsh made Kent one of the chief wool producing counties in England and each year there was an annual drive of Romney sheep and cattle to Smithfield Market.[4] The rich woodlands of the

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[1] F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640, Economic History Review, V (1935), p. 57. Indeed, London was the largest urban centre in Europe at that time. See E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967), pp. 60-3.

[2] Fisher, loc. cit. pp. 50, 53. It is interesting to note that most of London's food requirements were met from home sources. Wrigley, loc. cit. p. 55.

[3] D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman, ed. 1928), I, pp. 113-4.

[4] C. W. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent (1965), pp. 102, 185.

Weald provided oak and beech timbers for the Thames shipyards and coppice wood for the London faggot-mongers and broom makers.[1] As the volume of trade increased between Kent and London the role of factors and middlemen also grew in importance as, each year, large quantities of agricultural produce were shipped out of the county to the metropolis. In the time of Defoe large quantities of fruit and hops were sent by hoy from the fruit growing area around Maidstone to London,[2] whilst the agents of London bakers, brewers and butchers toured around the county purchasing grain, livestock, and dairy produce.[3]

The development of commercial farming continued during the eighteenth century and various areas specialised in growing crops best suited to the soils in their locality.[4] The chief arable areas in Kent in the late eighteenth century were located on the Northdowns,[5] and the Ragstone Hills,[6] whilst the Weald[7] and Romney Marsh[8] provided the main areas

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1 C. Seymour, A New Topographical, Historical, and Commercial Survey of the Cities, Towns, and Villages of the County of Kent (Canterbury, 1776), p. XV.

2 Ibid. p. 114. A hoy is a small vessel usually rigged as a sloop.

3 Chalklin, op. cit. p. 185.

4 J. Boys, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent (1794), p. 10. G. Buckland, 'On the Farming in Kent', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, 1st ser. VI (1845), pp. 251-2.

5 The Northdown chalk area crosses Kent from east to west and covers almost the northern half of the county. In parts the downs are intersected with rivers, and marshlands lie along the estuaries of the Thames and Medway and round the Isles of Sheppey and Thanet.

6 The Ragstone Hill area varies from three to seven miles in breadth and crosses the mid part of Kent from east to west, dividing the Northdown chalk area from the Weald.

7 The Wealden area covers the southern half of the county and merges into the Sussex Weald in the south and Romney Marsh in the east.

8 The Romney Marsh area covers the south-east corner of the county and is wedged between the Weald in the west and the sea coast in the east.

for rearing cattle and sheep. Generally, the types of crops cultivated in each area were determined by the nature of the soil. For example, the chalky loams in the Isle of Thanet were the deepest and richest of their kind in England and were ideally suited for tillage crops,[1] and Arthur Young recognised the area as the best cultivated in England.[2] John Boys noted that the main crops there were wheat, clover, barley and peas, and that only a few sheep and cattle were found there.[3] In 1799 it was said:

> Almost the entire . . . country is under corn, pease, beans, clover of canary, there is but little pasture, and there are scarcely cows enough in the island to furnish the necessary consumption of milk.[4]

The flat, rich loamy soils around Faversham, Canterbury and Deal were described by Boys as 'mostly arable, extremely fertile, and under the most excellent system of management', and produced good crops of wheat, barley, beans, and peas.[5] Hop cultivation in east Kent was centred on Canterbury, the Sandwich area was under orchard cultivation, and both areas sent large quantities of hops and fruit to London's markets. On the chalk downs to the west of Canterbury the enclosed land on the upland farms grew a variety of arable crops such as wheat, barley, clover and turnips.[6] Between Canterbury and Rochester the upland clay loams bore rich woodlands and provided timber for the dockyards and immense quantities of hop poles for local plantations.[7] The rivers which intersected the Downlands provided

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1 E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (1967), p. 54.

2 A. Young, The Farmer's Tour Through the East of England (1771), III, p. 108.

3 Boys, op. cit. pp. 16, 20.

4 The Observer, 18 August 1799, p. 3.

5 Boys, op. cit. p. 52.

6 Ibid. pp. 55-6, 76, 79. Kent had been enclosed since early times.

7 Boys, op. cit. p. 43.

rich meadowland for grazing livestock on, whilst the lighter soils between Gravesend and Dartford were laid-down to market gardens.[1]

By the eighteenth century fruit growing had spread over most districts in Kent in which it is found today and the main orchard area was located in mid Kent, near Maidstone, and on the chalky loams along the north of the downs between Crayford and Sandwich.[2] In the Sandwich area of east Kent the practice there was for London fruiterers to purchase whole crops, have them gathered and sorted, and transported to London.[3] Maidstone stood at the centre of the west Kent hop and fruit growing area and from it were sent considerable quantities of cherries, apples, filberts, and hops to the capital.[4] In the early eighteenth century Defoe wrote of Maidstone,

> . . . round this town are the largest cherry orchards, and most of them that are in any part of England; and the gross of the quantity of cherries, and the best of them which supply the whole city of London come from hence . . . Maidstone is eminent for the plenty of provisions, and richness of lands in the country all round it, and for the best market in the county . . . From this town, and the neighbouring parts, London is supplied with more particulars than from any single market town in England . . .[5]

Commercial fruit farming continued to develop in Kent throughout the eighteenth century. Between Boys' survey in 1794 and Buckland's essay in 1845 'great improvements' were said to have taken place, and by the latter date the fruit growing areas of mid Kent were providing Covent Garden with about two-thirds of its home grown fruit.[6]

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[1] Ibid. p. 80. Buckland, loc. cit. p. 265.

[2] Chalklin, op. cit. p. 91. Kerridge, op. cit. p. 55.

[3] Boys, op. cit. p. 55.

[4] Ibid. pp. 61-3.

[5] Defoe, op. cit. p. 113.

[6] Buckland, loc. cit. p. 278.

On the Weald agricultural progress differed somewhat from that of other areas of the county. Generally, the area was thinly inhabited, towns and villages were small, and the land was less cultivated than many other parts of Kent.[1] Most of the farms were small in size, mostly under 50 acres,[2] and as the land was enclosed directly from woodland there was no trace of common fields.[3] A large part of the Wealden area consisted of heavy, adhesive clays which made ploughing difficult, though on the uplands soils tended to be weaker and shallower.[4] The main arable crops grown on the Weald were wheat, barley, oats, and clover, though timber cultivation and sheep and cattle grazing were also important.[5] Indeed, considerable numbers of cattle were bred and reared on the Weald each year. During the summer months the Wealden graziers took their herds to graze and fatten on Romney Marsh and then returned them to the Weald in the autumn to feed on hay and pulses during the winter.[6] Flocks of sheep were also driven on to the Weald from the Northdowns and Romney Marsh for winter grazing and were returned home in the spring.[7] However, the production of wool, mutton and lamb was much less important than the production of beef on the Weald, though on Romney Marsh this was the main occupation.

Romney Marsh had been an important sheep rearing area at least since the seventeenth century and was well endowed with natural resources.[8] The

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1 Boys, op. cit. p. 9.

2 Buckland, loc. cit. p. 296.

3 Kerridge, op. cit. p. 132.

4 Boys, op. cit. pp. 91-2. Kerridge, op. cit. pp. 170-1.

5 Boys, op. cit. p. 92. Buckland, loc. cit. pp. 292-5.

6 Boys, op. cit. p. 93. Kerridge, op. cit. p. 133.

7 Boys, op. cit. p. 94. Kerridge, op. cit. p. 133.

8 Chalklin, op. cit. p. 102.

area was covered in rich clay and silt loams and produced a luxuriant carpet of thick grass ideally suited for rearing sheep. Indeed, cattle were brought from Wales and the west of England to fatten on the summer grass before being sold to Romney butchers[1] and, according to a local authority on agricultural affairs, John Boys, the quantity of sheep reared there exceeded 'perhaps any district of the like extent in the kingdom'.[2]

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

In analysing the statistical evidence assembled for this study it is important to bear in mind the powerful influence London exerted upon the supply price of agricultural produce in the county. This fact can be observed from the empirical evidence and was also mentioned by contemporary observers. In 1796, for example, Sir Frederick Morton Eden noted that the prices of provisions in Kent tended to follow the trend of prices in London's markets.[3] John Boys, writing in 1805, also noted the existence of this relationship:

> The easy communications between all parts of this county and the metropolis, renders the markets of Smithfield and Mark-Lane the regulating medium, by which the prices of all kinds of provisions that are sold in the country are governed. If wheat rises 2s. per quarter in London, it immediately does the same at all markets in the county; and if butchers' meat is plentiful, and falls in price in Smithfield, it soon lowers in the country markets.[4]

A good example of this kind of simultaneity of response is had by comparing the trend of bread prices in London[5] and Kent in Figure 2. Here it is

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1 Kerridge, op. cit. p. 135.

2 Boys, op. cit. p. 99.

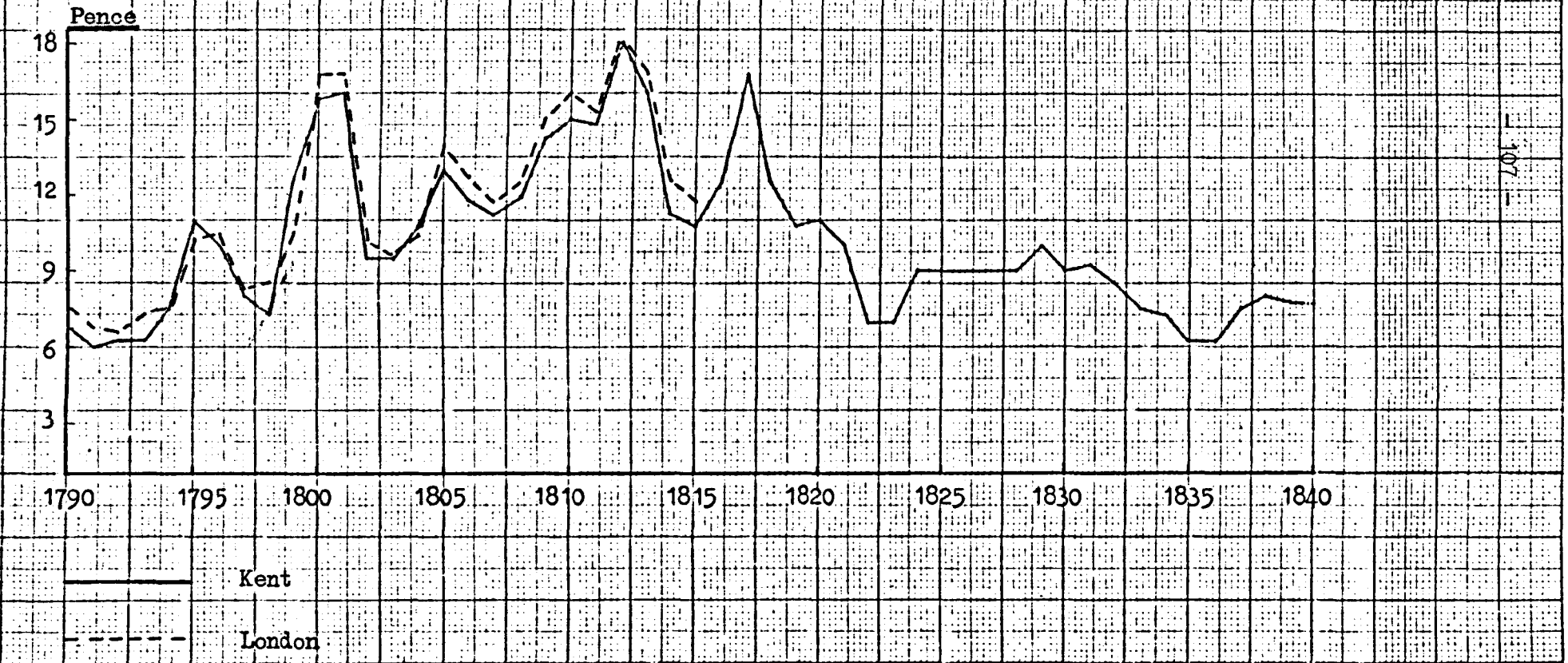
3 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (A. G. L. Rogers (ed.), 1928), p. 210.

4 Boys, op. cit. p. 195.

5 G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXV (1902), p. 688.

FIG. 2

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Kent and London 1790–1840



clear that there existed a high degree of similarity in the timing and degree of change in the price of the quartern loaf in both localities. Both series fluctuated in parallel lines along the same trend, sharing identical peaks and troughs, with the London series tending to lie on a slightly higher plane than the Kent series. The inference to be drawn from this relationship is that, as far as the staple item of the labourers' diet is concerned, the cost of living in both areas during the Napoleonic war was approximately the same.[1]

The main sources of statistical evidence used in this study are local in origin and have been derived from a number of areas in the county. Commodity prices for the 1790-1834 period[2] have been extracted from the

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[1] This observation also adds support to Adam Smith's view that by the end of the eighteenth century the price of bread was almost the same throughout the country. See p. 42. It is also interesting to note that Gourvish's study of bread prices in London and Glasgow in the same period found that bread prices in Glasgow were higher than in London between 1790 and 1805, by as much as 20 per cent., but from 1805 to 1815 prices in both cities were almost identical. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

[2] These prices are monthly contract prices for commodities such as meat (beef and mutton), cheese, butter, sugar, tea, candles, soap, and shoes. The prices of certain commodities such as milk, beer, potatoes, or clothing were, unfortunately, not available. For each commodity, the monthly prices have been collated into an annual average price. In the case of bread, these prices are not contract prices but are market, or retail prices set by the Faversham and Queenborough Assize of Bread. Each week the Assize fixed the price of the quartern loaf and these prices have been collated into an annual average price. The quartern loaf weighed 4lb. 5½oz. K.R.O. Fa/Aa 61. Faversham Borough Records. The Assize of Bread. Qb/AA. Queenborough Borough Records. The Assize of Bread.

Provisions Accounts of eight parish workhouses;[1] prices for 1834-40[2] have been obtained from the Provisions Accounts of three Poor Law Unions.[3] In each case the provisions purchased by these institutions were for the sustenance of the poor and needy who were in their care. All these parishes, except for Hever, are distributed over a central area of the county and the prices derived from these sources form the basis of the cost of living index.[4]

In analysing the general pattern and trend of commodity prices in Kent it is clear that, on the demand side, London exerted a powerful influence upon the supply price of agricultural produce in the county. Factors on the supply side were also important determinants of prices and it is evident from the background of events that the occurrence of certain exigencies, such as an outbreak of war in Europe or a run of abundant or deficient harvests, had a profound influence in shaping the trend of individual commodity prices and giving the all-items index its

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[1] K.R.O.: P 78/18/1-6, 66-82. Charing Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P. 243/12/7-21. West Malling Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. PR 305/12/6-15. St. Margaret's Parish (Rochester) Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P 244/18/1-3. Lenham Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P 100/12/17. Cranbrook Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P 406/12/17. Wrotham Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P 184/12/8-10. Hever Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P 347/8/1. Staplehurst Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts.

[2] These prices are quarterly contract prices for a wide range of commodities of a kind which were ordinarily consumed by the labouring poor. For each commodity the quarterly prices have been collated into an annual average price.

[3] K.R.O.: G/Me/AMI. Malling Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/Ee/AMI. Elham Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/AW/AMI. West Ashford Poor Law Union Minute Book.

[4] See Map 2, p. 100. When constructing a cost of living index the rate by which prices changed from a given base year is more important than the absolute level of prices and therefore it has not been necessary to adjust these prices to take account of their discount rates. Hence, the prices quoted in the following discussion are the prices parish workhouses actually paid for their provisions.

characteristic shape. In particular, given the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short-run, fluctuations in food prices were strongly associated with variations in the weather and the state of domestic harvests.[1]

This correlation is readily seen in the case of the price of bread in Kent.[2] From an average price of 6¾d. in 1790 the price of the quartern loaf rose to reach 11d. in 1795 owing to an outbreak of bad weather which reduced the wheat crop by as much as a third of its normal size.[3] Bread prices fell over the following three years, owing to an improvement in domestic supplies of corn, and then began an upward climb with the onset of more bad weather. The winter of 1798-9 was a cold one, and was followed by an excessively cold and ungenial spring and an almost uninterruptedly wet summer and autumn.[4] The resultant damage to wheat and barley crops in Kent was particularly severe. In the Gillingham and Canterbury areas, for example, the wheat crop was a third to a quarter of its normal size in 1799[5] and, according to one observer,

> The crops of wheat are by far the worst I ever remember; and I believe I may add, remembered by any person living . . . the labourers begin to complain of the high price of bread, corn, and provisions.[6]

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1 With the exception of the following sources very little has been written on this subject. T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856, 6 vols. (1838-57). E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964). M. Olson, The Economics of the Wartime Shortage (Durham, U.S.A., 1963).

2 See Figure 2.

3 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 182-4. One result of the increase in prices was an outbreak of food rioting in Canterbury. J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order, Six Studies in British History 1790-1920 (1974), pp. 36, 44.

4 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 214.

5 Annals of Agriculture, XXXIV (1800), pp. 601, 635.

6 Annals of Agriculture, XXXIV (1800), pp. 113-14.

Disaster struck again in the following year when heavy August rains damaged the wheat crop before it could be harvested with the result that the crop was again deficient by a quarter.[1] The average price of the quartern loaf rose to 1s. 3¾d. in 1800, which represented a doubling of its price within six years, and was the cause of an outbreak of rioting in various parts of the county.[2] Improved harvests in 1802-3 brought the price down to 9½d. and then, owing to the 1804 harvest being deficient by a third, began to rise again to reach 1s. 1d. by 1805.[3] Bread prices temporarily declined over the following two years and increased rapidly during the next five years to reach their peak in 1812. A sequence of bleak springs and wet harvests after 1808, coupled with a fall in corn imports from the Baltic, were primarily responsible for the huge increase in price by 1812. The crop of 1811 was deficient by a third, the 1812 harvest was a poor one, and, as France also suffered from a deficient crop, the 'virtual exclusion' of foreign supplies tended to worsen an already bad situation with the result that the average price of the quartern loaf increased to 1s. 6d.[4] This price was the highest point reached by bread prices in the whole period under review and represented an increase of 167 per cent. on its pre-war level.

The return of good harvests towards the end of the French war, plus an increase in imports of grain, brought bread prices down to an average

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[1] Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 217.

[2] Disturbances occurred at Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Sheerness, Chatham, and Rochester. The Maidstone Journal 7 October 1800, p. 4. Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 36, 44.

[3] Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 262.

[4] Ibid. pp. 293-300, 319-28. In 1809 the deficient domestic wheat crop was made-up by imports of surplus wheat from France. In 1810 the French harvest failed and the decline in imports from there coincided with a deficient home harvest in 1811-12, with the result that bread prices increased sharply. Olson, op. cit. pp. 61-2. It is interesting to note that bread prices in Glasgow in 1812 reached 1s. 6½d. per quartern loaf. Gourvish, loc. cit. p. 855.

of 10¾d. per quartern loaf by 1815.[1] Although the war ended in 1815 the contest between the weather and the harvest continued. The spring of 1816 was cold and wet, the harvest was late, and domestic stocks were run to a low level.[2] In the following year the harvest was again late, owing to wet weather, with the result that the average price of the quartern loaf rose to reach 1s. 4¾d. in 1817. This point, which was the second highest point reached by bread prices in Kent, represented a 148 per cent. increase on its pre-war level. However, over the next six years bread prices fell steeply to reach an average of 7d. a loaf in 1822-3 owing to a run of highly productive harvests.[3] From this low point prices began to recover over the 1820's, owing to a sequence of mediocre harvests, to reach 10d. a loaf by 1829.[4] This price trend was reversed in the early 1830's owing to a run of bountiful harvests in 1832-4, which were some of the most productive on record,[5] which increased domestic stocks to such an extent that they depressed prices until 1835-6, a year when only below-average crop yields were being obtained.[6] After 1836 a return of

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 75. 1811 to 1813 were prosperous years for the Kentish farming community.

2 Ibid.

3 The grain harvests of 1819-20 were so bountiful that they depressed prices for the following two or three years. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 82.

4 Ibid. pp. 132-4. In 1829 a local newspaper commented, 'We regret to state that the vast quantity of rain which has fallen has done immense injury to the crops of this county . . . The wheat is very much damaged and the shocks stand very light. A great quantity of it is mildewed and grown in the sheaves'. The Maidstone Journal, 1 September 1829, p. 4.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, II. op. cit. pp. 226, 231-2. Thanet, in east Kent, had one of its best harvests in forty years. Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 262.

6 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 236-8.

bad weather and deficient harvests brought about an upturn in bread prices to an average of 7¾d. by 1840.[1]

Weather conditions also affected the prices of other farm produce such as meat. A severe winter, by reducing the supplies of livestock available for sale in meat markets, could precipitate a substantial increase in meat prices.[2] Meat prices were also influenced by variations in the prices of fodder crops. For example, if fodder crops were in short supply, owing to either a drought or a flood, an increase in their price could lead graziers to limit their holdings by supplying more livestock to the market. The result of a premature influx of livestock on to the market would be a fall in meat prices. According to an observer of these events such an occasion as this occurred after the difficult winter of 1794-5 when,

> The long continuance of the frost, and the very high price of fodder, made stock of every kind too burdensome for the middling graziers to support. Towards the conclusion of the winter, therefore, lean cattle of all kinds were sent to market, which used to be kept back till the summer.[3]

After the initial fall in prices, prices would increase again owing to the depletion of domestic supplies of livestock. If the supply of breeding stock was seriously reduced then prices would tend to remain high until the deficiency was made-up by livestock breeders. As one writer put it, despite the fall in fodder crop prices, 'meat continued to be dear because the stock of cattle and sheep, which had been reduced by previous scarcities, had not time to be restored.'[4]

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[1] Ibid. III, pp. 11-16.

[2] Jones, op. cit. passim.

[3] Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 238.

[4] S. Hodson, An Extract of an Address to the Different Classes of Persons in Great Britain on the Present Scarcity and High Prices of Provisions (1795), quoted in T. Tooke, Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years from 1793 to 1822, 2nd ed. (1824), Appendix, Part III, p. 8.

From what little evidence there is available for Kent it is clear that meat formed part of the agricultural labourers' diet.[1] Meat, especially beef and mutton, was also regularly purchased by parish workhouses in the county and the general level and trend of the prices paid by these workhouses is shown in Figures 3 and 4. As a rule beef and mutton prices tended to follow a similar long-run trend, fluctuating within a range of 4½d. to 10¼d. a pound. From a level of about 4½d. a pound in 1790 meat prices increased by 89 per cent. over the early years of the war, owing to severe fodder shortages and an outbreak of sheep rot, to reach 8½d. a pound by 1803.[2] Meat prices declined slightly over the next four years to reach 7¾d. a pound in 1807 and then began to climb again to reach 9¼d. a pound in 1812. The rise in prices was particularly marked in 1810-14 owing to a combination of severe winters and wet summers which produced high mortality rates among sheep and cattle and led to a doubling of meat prices by 1814.[3] In that year beef and mutton prices rose to reach 9¼d. and 10¼d. a pound respectively.

Meat prices fell at the end of the war owing to adverse weather and a rise in fodder prices, which resulted in large numbers of livestock being sent to the market, to reach 6d. to 7d. a pound by 1817.[4] Unfavourable weather in 1817-18, coupled with dwindling supplies of livestock, reversed this downward trend and meat prices began to recover to reach 8¾d. a pound by 1819.[5]

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[1] See Table 14, p. 134.

[2] Jones, op. cit. pp. 153-7.

[3] Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-300, 319-25, II, p. 4. Jones, op. cit. pp. 158-9.

[4] Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 4. Jones op. cit. p. 160.

[5] Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 21-2. Jones, op. cit. p. 161. The drought of 1818 was the worst experienced since 1794.

FIG. 3

The Price of Beef in Kent 1790-1840

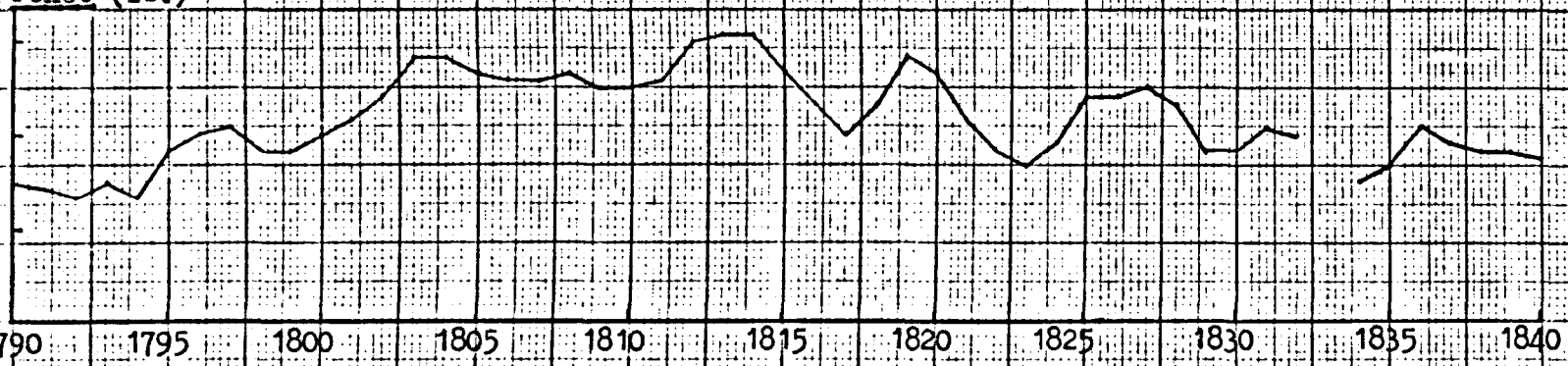
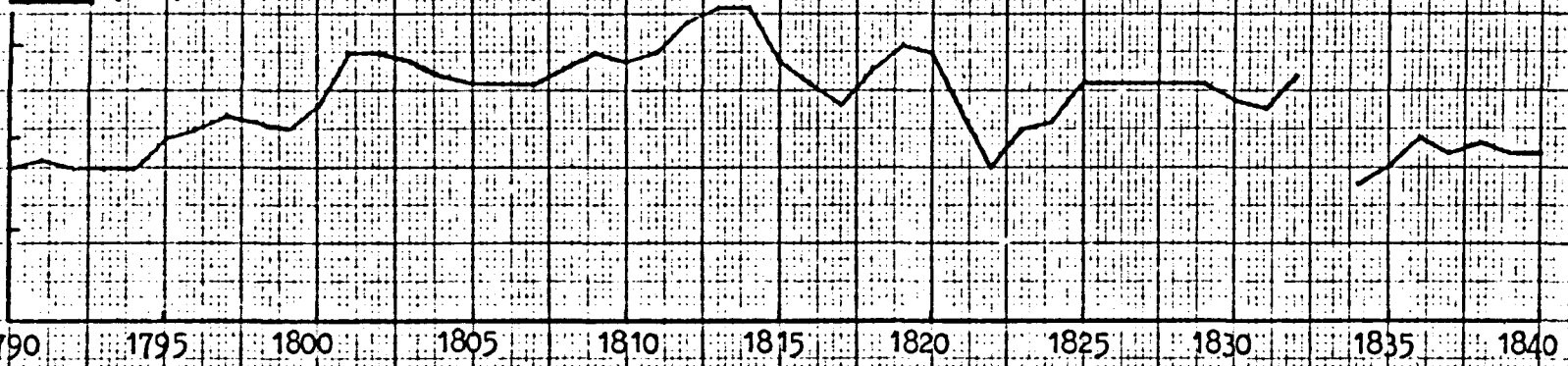


FIG. 4

The Price of Mutton in Kent 1790-1840



Beef and mutton prices in Kent fell over the following three years owing to a shortage of fodder crops and, owing to the high price of feed, a rise in the liquidation sales of livestock.[1] One result of this development was a marked fall in the prices of beef and mutton to 5d. and 6¼d. a pound respectively by 1823. The summers of 1823 and 1824 were wet and an outbreak of cattle and sheep rot in Kent produced a rise in the prices of beef and mutton to 7¼d. and 7¾d. a pound by 1825.[2] These relatively high prices were well maintained over the next four years owing to the effects of adverse weather in producing shortages of fodder crops and outbreaks of diseases in livestock.[3] Improved fodder harvests between 1831 and 1834, however, brought about a reduction in fodder prices and beef and mutton prices fell to 4½d. a pound by 1834.[4] By 1840 meat prices had risen to 5½d. a pound and were, at that date, about ½d. to 1d. more than they were in 1790.

Seasonal variations in the weather also had an important influence upon the supply price of other commodities, especially dairy produce, which normally entered into a labourer's diet. In particular, cheese and butter were such common items of consumption and these, taken together, tended to absorb as much as a fifth of an agricultural labourer's expenditure on food and drink.[5] Kentish workhouses also made regular purchases of these commodities for their inmates and the prices paid by these institutions for these two items of consumption are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

In examining the relationship between the prices of these two highly perishable commodities it is evident that butter was always dearer than

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[1] Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 84-5. Jones op. cit. p. 162.

[2] The Times, 14 December 1824, p. 3. Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

[3] Jones, op. cit. pp. 163-5. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 138.

[4] Jones, op. cit. pp. 165-6.

[5] See p. 134.

FIG. 5

The Price of Butter in Kent 1790-1840

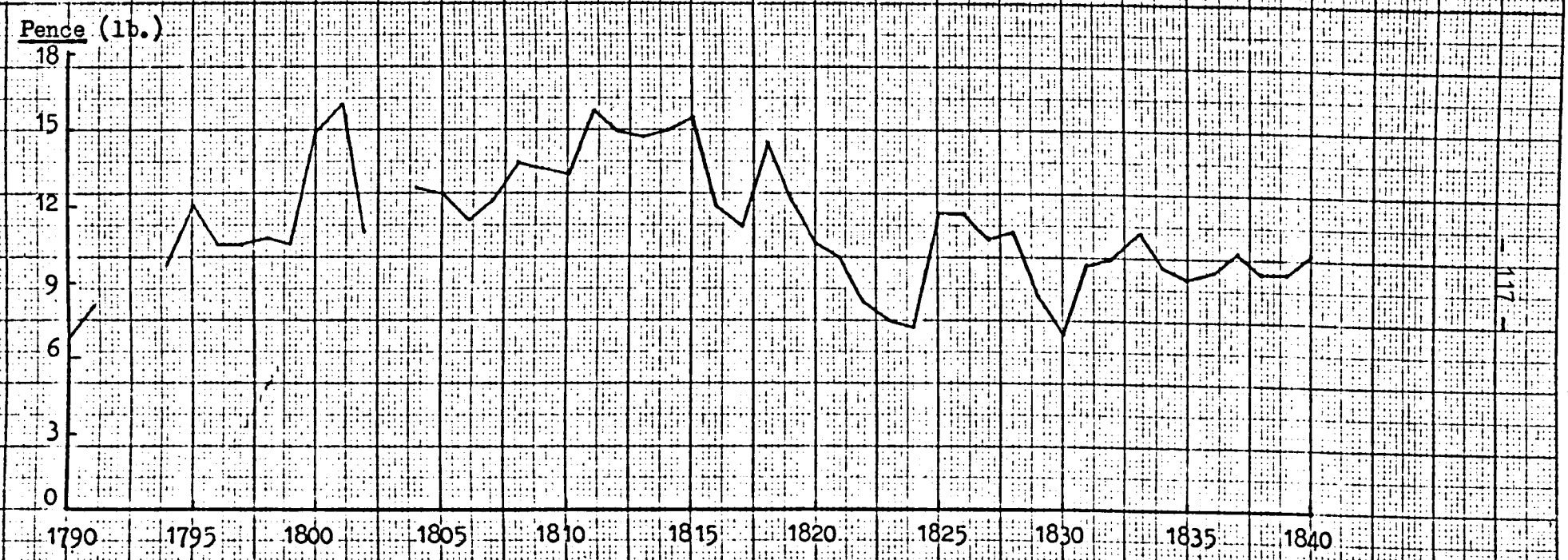
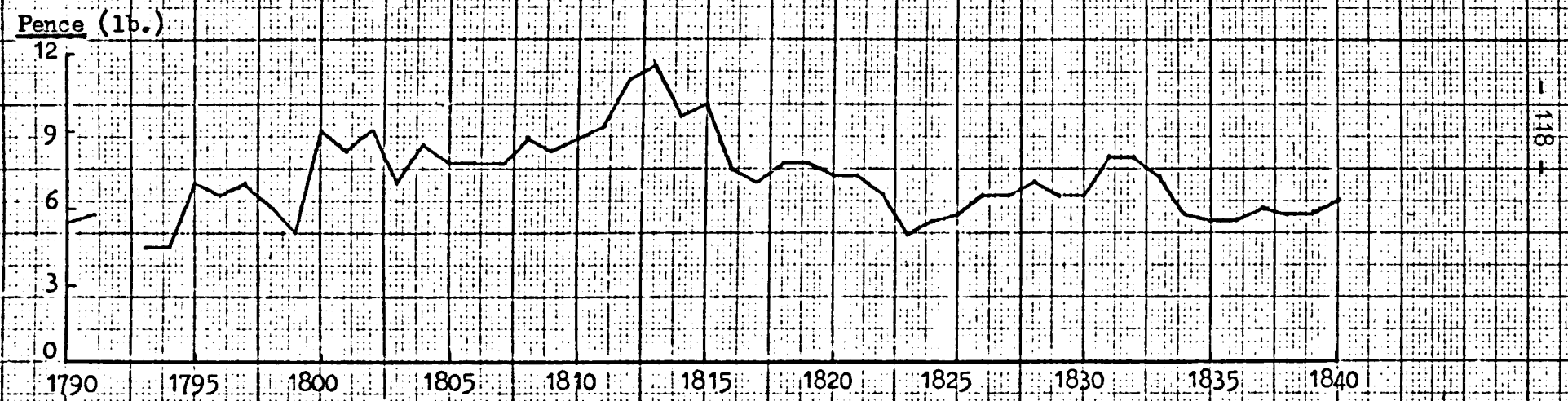


FIG. 6

The Price of Cheese in Kent 1790-1840



cheese and tended to fluctuate within a range of 6½d. to 1s. 4d. a pound compared with a range of 5d. to 11½d. a pound in the case of cheese. Over the course of the Napoleonic war the prices of these commodities shared an upward trend and by 1813 were double the price they were in 1790. Prices fell after the end of the war, in 1816 and 1817, recovered somewhat in the drought year of 1818, and then fell continuously during the early 1820's to reach 5½d. and 7¾d. a pound respectively by 1824.[1] An outbreak of cattle rot in 1824, followed by two severe droughts in 1825 and 1826, led to a decrease in the supply of milk[2] and a rise in the prices of dairy produce to a level, by the early 1830's, which was about 50 per cent. higher than the level prevailing in 1790. Cheese and butter prices in Kent then declined to the mid 1830's and, thereafter, followed a relatively more stable course to 1840.

Parish workhouses in Kent regularly purchased tea and sugar for the consumption of the poor and needy and it is evident from a survey of agricultural labourers' household budgets that these two items formed part of their diet.[3] As tea and sugar were commodities which had to be imported into the country their supply price had to carry the burden of heavy ad valorem duties. In 1790, for example, the duty on a pound of tea stood at 12½ per cent., but this figure was increased with the outbreak of war with France.[4] In 1797 the duty on a pound of tea was raised to 30 per cent., and further increases followed in 1803 and 1807 when the duty was raised to 65 per cent. and 96 per cent. respectively.[5] The Budget of 1819

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[1] Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 14, 20–21. Jones, op. cit. pp. 160–3.

[2] Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

[3] See p. 134.

[4] Tooke, op. cit. pp. 58–61.

[5] Tooke, op. cit. p. 60.

retained the duty of 96 per cent. on tea costing less than 2s. 0d. a pound, but added another 4 per cent. on tea costing more than 2s. 0d., bringing the duty to 100 per cent.[1] This increase brought the average amount of duty paid on a pound of tea to 2s. 11d. which represented a threefold increase on the level prevailing in 1784.[2] Between 1820 and 1823 the duty stood at 2s. 9½d. a pound, and then progressively declined to reach 2s. 1¾d. a pound by 1840.[3]

The long run trend of tea prices paid by parish workhouses in Kent is shown in Figure 7. This curve shows a fairly steady rise in price from 1790 to 1805, a level course to 1815, followed by a long period of gradual decline to the late 1830's. These changes took place within a range of 2½d. to 6¼d. an ounce and were closely related to adjustments in the tea duty. From an average price of 3d. an ounce in 1790 the price of tea in Kent increased pari passu with the development of the French war and the rise in excise duties and by 1805 had doubled in price. The price remained at this level for the next decade and then, between 1814 and 1823, fell to 5d. an ounce owing to a fall in the tea duty from 3s. 3d. to 2s. 10d. a pound.[4] Tea prices continued to fall over the 1820's as the tea duty was progressively lowered and by 1833 had fallen to reach 2s. 2d. a pound.[5] In 1833 the average price of tea stood at 3½d. an ounce and from then until the late 1830's began to fall owing to further reductions in the tea duty

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1 Ibid. p. 61.

2 Report on Wholesale and Retail Prices in the United Kingdom in 1902, Parl Papers 1903, LXVIII, p. 176. G. R. Porter, The Progress of the Nation (ed. F. W. Hurst, 1912), p. 444.

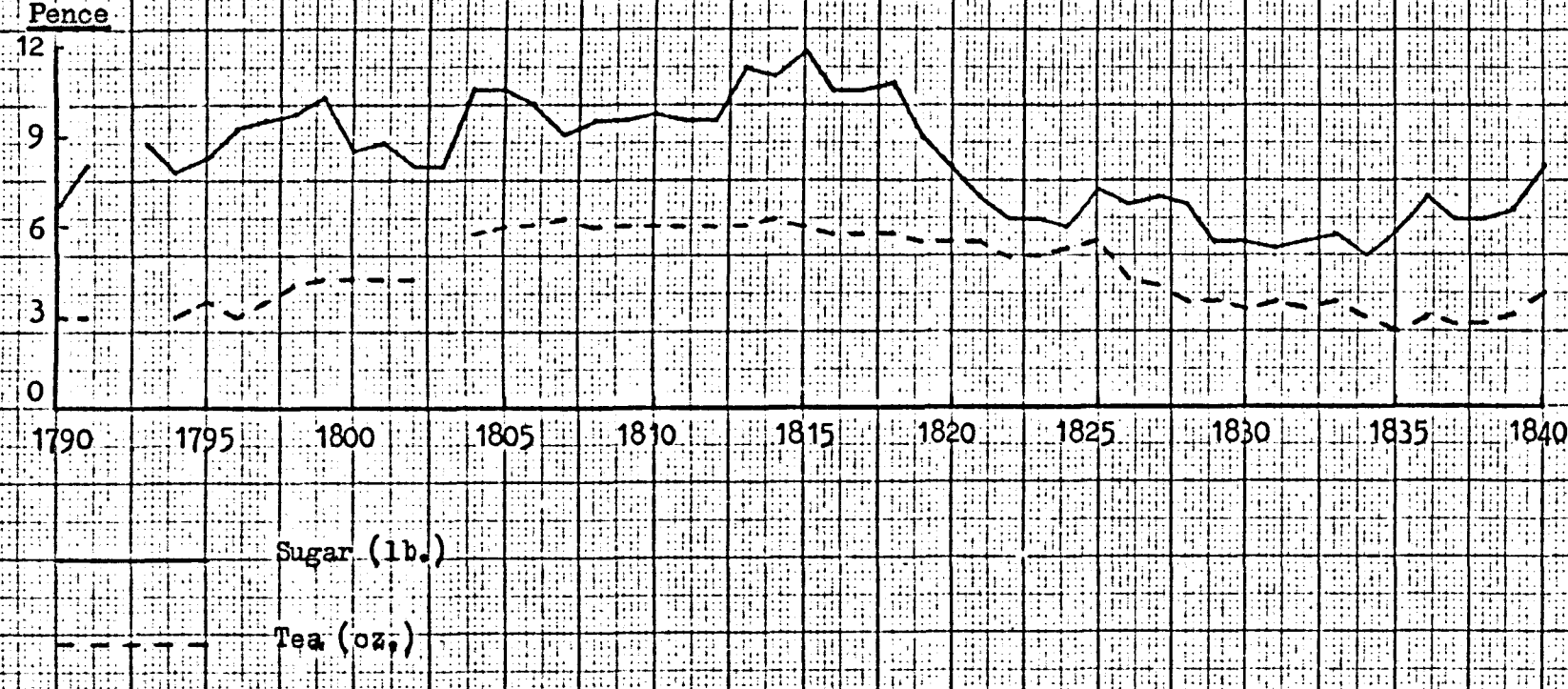
3 Report on Wholesale and Retail Prices, P.P. 1903, LXVIII, pp. 176-7.

4 Ibid. p. 176.

5 Ibid.

FIG. 7

The Prices of Tea and Sugar in Kent 1790–1840



and the ending of the East India Company's monopoly of the China tea trade.[1] During the late 1830's the average price of tea in Kent lay below its pre-war level by a small margin, and then began to rise above that level in 1840 with the onset of one of the heaviest periods of taxation in the history of tea.[2]

The price of sugar, like tea, was also affected by the imposition of excise duties on its entry into the country. In 1790 the sugar duty was relatively low at 12s. 3d. per hundredweight, but soon increased to 15s. 0d. in the following year and remained at that level until 1796.[3] As the war with France developed the sugar duty rose to 20s. 0d. by 1800-4 and to 27s. 0d. by 1805-12.[4] In 1813-15 the duty rose to 30s. 0d. a hundredweight, which was double the duty being levied in 1791, and remained at that level until 1823.[5] In 1830 the duty was reduced to 24s. 0d., and remained at that level until 1840 when a further 5 per cent. was added.[6]

From a level of 6¾d. a pound in 1790 the price of sugar in Kent increased sharply over the following decade owing to the destruction of sugar plantations in St. Domingo.[7] The upward trend of prices was reinforced by the French war and an increase in the sugar duty.[8] By 1799 the average

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[1] Report on Wholesale and Retail Prices, P.P. 1903, LXVIII, p. 176.

[2] J. Burnett, Plenty and Want (Penguin, ed. 1968), p. 23.

[3] Tooke, op. cit. pp. 46-7.

[4] Ibid. pp. 47-8.

[5] Ibid. pp. 48-9.

[6] L. M. Brown, The Board of Trade and the Free Trade Movement, 1830-42 (Oxford, 1958), pp. 36, 149.

[7] Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 178. St. Domingo was one of Europe's largest suppliers of sugar.

[8] See Figure 7.

price of sugar reached 10¼d. a pound, though this price fell somewhat over the next four years owing to a rise in sugar imports of an 'extraordinary magnitude' during the Peace of Amiens.[1] With the resumption of war in May 1803 the price climbed back to 10½d. a pound by 1805 and until 1812 averaged 9½d. a pound. By 1812 the prospects of peace in Europe were strengthening, the price of sugar began to increase, and was accompanied by an increase in the sugar duty to 30s. 0d. a hundredweight in 1813.[2] As a result of this increase the price of sugar rose to reach 11¾d. a pound by 1815, which represented a price increase of 75 per cent. since 1790. At the end of the war, however, sugar prices fell markedly owing to an influx of sugar imports into Europe.[3] In Kent the average price of sugar fell from its peak of 11¾d. a pound in 1815 to 6¼d. in 1823 and so reached its pre-war level again. After a short speculative recovery in 1823-5 sugar prices continued to fall up to the early 1830's owing to a fall in the sugar duty[4] and a rise in sugar supplies.[5] From the mid 1830's, however, this trend was reversed and sugar prices began to rise again, to reach 8d. a pound in 1840, owing to a fall in supplies of West Indian sugar and the levying of high duties on imported non-colonial sugars.[6]

All these commodities - bread, meat, cheese, butter, sugar, and tea - were common items of consumption in the diets of both workhouse paupers and agricultural labourers in Kent and form the basis of the Food and Drink

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1 Tooke, op. cit. p. 359. B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), p. 289. The Peace of Amiens lasted from March 1802 to May 1803.

2 Tooke, op. cit. pp. 48, 359.

3 Ibid. pp. 55-60, 359. Mitchell and Deane, op. cit. pp. 355-6.

4 Brown, op. cit. p. 36.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 140-7, 157, 211.

6 Brown, op. cit. p. 149. These developments were paralleled by a fall in per capita consumption of sugar in the country. Mitchell and Deane, op. cit. p. 356.

category in the cost of living index.[1] Besides this principal category of expenditure, which absorbed as much as two-thirds of a labourer's total household budget, other important items of expenditure must also be considered.[2] In considering the long-run relationship between the prices of candles and soap, for example, it is clear from Figure 8 that their prices tended to follow a parallel course with the price of candles appearing to exceed the price of soap by a varying margin of ½d. to 2½d. a pound. As with all other commodities purchased by Kentish workhouses, the prices of candles and soap began to rise with the outbreak of war in 1793 and continued to rise over the 1790's owing to a fall in imports of tallow and a shortage of home produced fat.[3] A continued deficiency of domestic supplies of tallow maintained prices at a high level during the early 1800's and a worsening of the supply situation in 1807, owing to the closure of the Baltic to British shipping, pushed these prices to a peak in 1809.[4] In that year the average price of candles and soap in Kent rose to 1s. 2¼d. and 1s. 1¾d. a pound respectively, which represented a 73 per cent. price increase since 1790. Further shortages of imported tallow in 1811-13, coupled with a severe deficiency of domestically produced tallow, pushed candle and soap prices to another peak in 1814.[5] In that year the average price of candles and soap rose to 1s. 2½d. and 1s. 0d. a pound respectively.

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1 See p. 134.

2 See p. 133.

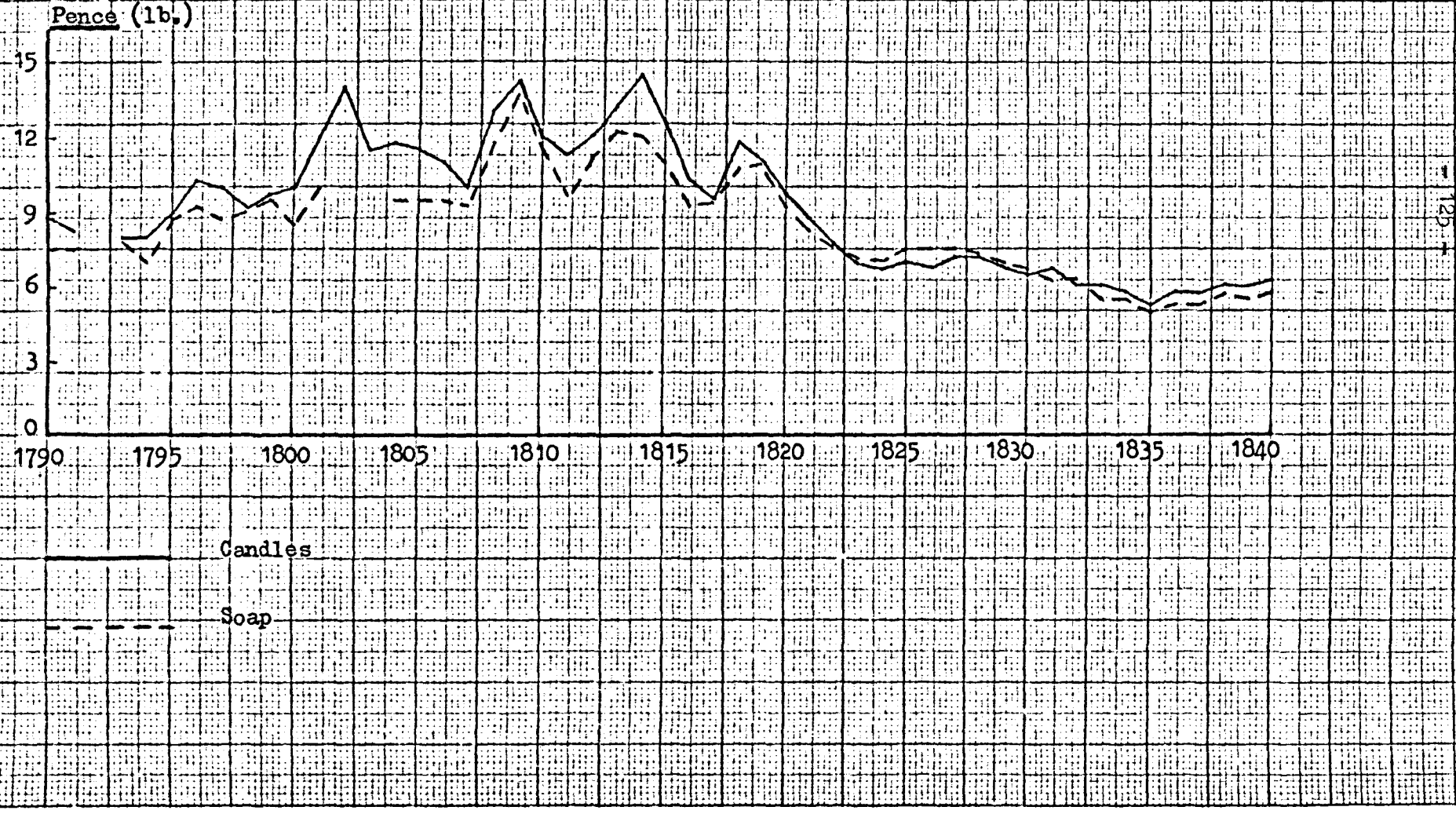
3 Tooke, op. cit. p. 360. Tallow was derived from animal fat and was used for making soap and candles. The bad weather of 1794-5 reduced domestic stocks of cattle and sheep and hence the supply of animal fat. See Jones, op. cit. p. 153.

4 Tooke, op. cit. pp. 360-1. With the closure of the Baltic ports, imports of European tallow fell to a quarter of their previous level.

5 Ibid. Domestic supplies were low owing to a depletion of livestock during a run of adverse seasons between 1810 and 1814. As a result of this beef, mutton, candles, and soap prices in Kent increased to reach a peak in 1813-14.

FIG. 8

The Prices of Candles and Soap in Kent 1790–1840



On reaching this peak, these prices then entered upon a long period of decline, except for a short rise in 1818, due to a return to peacetime conditions and a subsequent increase in supplies of imported tallow.[1] Indeed, such was the downturn in prices after 1814 that by 1823 the prices of candles and soap had fallen below their pre-war level and remained there until 1840.[2]

Fuel, to provide heat and warmth in the labourers' homes, was an important category of expenditure. Indeed, Kentish workhouses frequently purchased quantities of coal, but rarely firewood, and it has therefore been necessary to take the price of coal as being representative of the price of fuel in the cost of living index.[3] The fact that coal, and not wood, was the common fuel used in parish workhouses[4] suggests that wood for burning might have been in short supply in Kent. Indeed, this is the impression given by the writings of contemporary observers. Defoe, for example, noted that in his time the demands of local hop and shipbuilding industries, and the London firewood market, exerted heavy pressures upon local supplies of timber to such an extent that they created an acute timber shortage in the county.[5] By the early nineteenth century firewood was both scarce and expensive in Kent owing to the fact that much of it was being

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1 Tooke, op. cit. p. 361. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 25, 392. Jones, op. cit. pp. 161-2.

2 By 1840 the prices of candles and soap had fallen to 6¼d. and 5¾d. a pound respectively compared with their pre-war price of 8¾d. and 7½d. a pound in 1790.

3 No doubt agricultural labourers burned other fuels, such as peat, turf, bracken, and animal dung, though specific information on these items was not available in the County Record Office.

4 See, for example, Charing Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts, K.R.O. P/78/18/1-6.

5 Defoe, op. cit. pp. 100-1, 114.

sent out of the county to London.[1] This view was later confirmed by William Cobbett, during his tour of Kent in 1823, who noted that in certain parts of the county agricultural labourers had 'not a stick of wood'.[2] The shortage of wood was also in evidence in the 1830's[3] and therefore, in the absence of information on the price trends of other fuels, the price of coal has been taken to represent the price of fuel in the all-items index.

With regard to the remaining items of household expenditure, it has been necessary to omit the clothing category from the index as the parish records for Kent contained no references to purchases of clothing.[4] What the overseers of the poor did appear to purchase, however, were quantities of shoes for their inmates and where the prices of these commodities were available they have been incorporated into the cost of living index.[5]

In considering the last main category of expenditure in the cost of living index, Cottage Rent, it is evident that a labourer's dwelling was not a homogeneous commodity and that its rent depended to a large extent upon its size and condition, and its location in the county.[6] Unfortunately, contemporary observers invariably failed to make such subtle distinctions

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1 Boys, op. cit. pp. 10, 198.

2 W. Cobbett, Rural Rides (G. Woodcock (ed.), 1967), p. 206.

3 S. C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 246.

4 This was also true of other counties in this study and is not considered a serious omission as expenditure on Clothing accounted for only 10 per cent. of total household expenditure. See pp. 60 - 1 for a further discussion on this item.

5 Agricultural labourers probably wore boots rather than shoes. As these commodities were made from leather it is reasonable to expect that their prices would change by a similar proportionate amount from a given base year and that shoe prices would be a suitable substitute for boot prices.

6 The main sources of evidence used in this study have been derived from certain farm, estate, and parish records, and various contemporary printed sources. See pp. 130-1.

as these and therefore, in the absence of such information, it has been necessary to use the evidence as it stands to gain a general impression of the long-run trend of rents in the county.[1]

In examining this evidence it is clear from the writings of contemporary observers that cottage rents were high in Kent. At the end of the eighteenth century Arthur Young noted that cottage rents were £2.10s. 0d. to £3. a year.[2] By 1805 it was said that a good cottage with a garden could not be obtained for under £4 a year, and if a cow-pasture was also required the rent was as high as £5 to £8 a year.[3] According to a farmer from Sturry, near Canterbury,

> Cottage rent is very high. Cottages with two rooms are sometimes let for 1s. 6d. without a garden; sometimes, though not commonly, for 2s. 0d.; 2s. 6d. and 3s. 0d. are paid for four-roomed cottages.[4]

Indeed, the demand for accommodation was such in some parts of Kent[5] that builders and speculators were attracted into building cottages for leasing at high rents.[6] This practice was common in certain parishes in west Kent, for example, where cottages were run-up and let by country builders for 1s. 9d. to 3s. 6d. a week.[7] At Brasted cottages, let by speculators, were rented at £5 a year, whilst at Chevening £4 to £8 a year

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[1] See pp. 57 - 9 for a more detailed discussion of these problems.

[2] Young, III, op. cit. p. 31.

[3] Boys, op. cit. p. 33.

[4] Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), p. 149.

[5] The population of Kent doubled between 1801 and 1851. W. Page, ed. The Victoria History of the County of Kent (1932), III, p. 358.

[6] Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P. P. 1843, XII, p. 148.

[7] Ibid. p. 213.

was charged for renting a cottage with a garden.[1] At Benenden cottage rents varied from £2 12s. 0d. to £5 a year, and more than this if the cottage had a garden attached to it.[2] In Wincheap, in east Kent, a four roomed cottage cost 3s. 0d. a week to rent.[3] In order to illustrate the long-run trend of cottage rents in the county these figures have been summarised, along with rents derived from other primary sources, in the following table.

TABLE 12

COTTAGE RENTS IN KENT, 1771-1845

Year	Location	Rent per Annum
1771[1]	Faversham	50s.-60s.
1801[2]	Hever	50s.
1804[3]	Knowle	100s.
1805[4]		80s.-160s.
1815[5]	Mereworth	50s.-140s.
1821[6]	"	52s.
1822[7]	Charing	40s.-80s.
1823[7]	"	40s.-80s.
1825[7]	"	52s.-80s.
1828[8]	Ash, Waldershare	104s.
1829[7]	Charing	35s.
1833[7]	"	90s.
1833[9]	Milstead, Wormshill	90s.-100s.

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1 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A, pp. 207-8.

2 Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture 1836, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), p. 8.

3 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 193.

1833[10]	Tenterden	80s.
1834[11]	Doddington	104s.-120s.
1834[12]	Brasted	100s.
1834[12]	Chevening	80s.-160s.
1835[13]	Cranbrook	117s.
1836[14]	Benenden	52s.-100s.
1836[11]	Doddington	104s.-120s.
1836[13]	Cranbrook	117s.
1837[11]	Doddington	80s.-120s.
1837[13]	Cranbrook	117s.
1838[13]	"	117s.
1839[13]	"	117s.
1840[13]	"	117s.
1843[15]	Sturry	78s.-156s.
1843[15]	Maidstone	91s.-182s.
1843[15]	Wincheap	156s.
1845[16]	East Kent	100s.

Sources:

1 Young, III, op. cit. p. 31.

2 K.R.O. P 184/12/9 Hever Parish Accounts

3 K.R.O. U 269/A60 Sackville. Knole Estate Farm and Labour Accounts.

4 Boys, op. cit. p. 33.

5 K.R.O. U 282/A18 Stapleton Estate Accounts.

6 K.R.O. P 247/8/1 Mereworth Parish Select Vestry Minutes.

7 K.R.O. P 78/8/7 Charing Parish Vestry Minutes 1828-56.

8 Report from the Select Committee on the Employment or Relief of Able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rates, Parl. Papers 1828, IV, p. 157.

9 K.R.O. U 593/A8 Tylden Estate. Milstead and Wormshill Farming Accounts.

10 S.C. on Agriculture, P. P. 1833, V, p. 249.

11 K.R.O. U 709/A1 Sir John Croft. Account Book for Doddington.

12 Reports into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A, pp. 207-8.

13 K.R.O. U 683/A2-4 Thomas Pile. Cranbrook Farm Accounts. The Accounts did not state whether these rents were for the same cottage or not.

14 Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), p. 8.

15 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp. 149, 193, 213.

16 Buckland, loc. cit. p. 265.

At first sight these figures suggest that cottage rents in Kent doubled, from c.55s. to c.125s., between the 1770's and the 1840's.[1] Can one assume, therefore, that such a rate of increase as this was representative of what happened in the county at large and incorporate the result into the cost of living index? On several grounds it is difficult to justify such an assumption. First, the evidence does not satisfactorily define the type of dwelling it is describing; whether it was large or small, what it was constructed of, what the nature of its tenure was, or whether the rent included a piece of land or not.[2] These omissions are obviously important as all these factors, as they do today, had a direct bearing upon the amount of rent being charged each year. In the absence of any specific information on these factors it would be obviously foolhardy to assume that rents doubled in this period as one might not, strictly speaking, be comparing like with like. If such an exercise as this was undertaken one might, quite unconsciously, be comparing the rent

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1 The evidence for Essex suggests that a similar rate of increase occurred there. See p. 194.

2 This point is particularly important in view of the fact that the rent of a cottage with some land attached to it was double the rent of a cottage without land. Boys, op. cit. p. 33.

of, say, a two-roomed thatched hovel with no garden in 1770 with the rent of, say, a four-roomed brick and tiled cottage, with a garden, in 1840. Given the probable differences in the levels of rents these dwellings would command, such a comparison might, indeed, suggest that rents doubled over this period whereas in reality it might be, on comparing like with like, that the rate of increase was less than this.[1] It therefore follows that any method which assumes that cottage rents doubled in this period stands to yield a highly misleading impression of the long-run trend of rents in the county and hence gives rise to the possible charge that such a procedure implants a positive upward bias in the cost of living index. Second, as the evidence is derived from a relatively small number of parishes, dispersed over a wide area, it is difficult to judge to what extent the rents from these parishes were representatives of the general level of rents prevailing in the county at large. This point is particularly important in view of the fact that rents varied considerably from one end of Kent to the other.[2] Cottage rents were much higher in west and north Kent, especially near large populous towns and villages, than in the purely rural areas of mid and east Kent. For example, in the 1830's cottage rents were particularly high in Lewisham (£8-£15) and Chislehurst (£5-£9), close to London, compared with rents in Nonington (£3-£5) and High Halden (£3-£4) in east Kent and Horsmonden (£2-£5) on the Weald.[3] In view of the

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[1] Gilboy found that in the eighteenth century cottage rents in country districts were 'stationary over long periods, and appear to have been fixed by custom'. E. Gilboy, 'The Cost of Living and Real Wages in Eighteenth Century England', Review of Economic Statistics, XVIII (1936), p. 139.

[2] The evidence also does not distinguish between 'open' and 'closed' parishes, or suggest what differences there existed, if any, between the two in respect of rents.

[3] Reports into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 235-63. In Essex, cottage rents were higher in parishes close to London than in the remoter areas of the county. See p. 193.

existence of this differential structure of rents it is clearly difficult to use this kind of evidence, especially as no continuous series exists for a specific area, to justify the assumption that cottage rents doubled between 1790 and 1840. For these reasons, and to avoid the possible criticism that the cost of living index contains a built-in upward bias, it has been assumed that cottage rents remained unchanged in this period.[1]

III. Household Expenditure

At this point it is necessary to attach a set of weights to the six main categories of household expenditure - Food and Drink, Cottage Rent, Fuel, Shoes, Candles, and Soap - and collate them into a single index. In each case the weights which have been attached to each category of expenditure have been determined by the amount of money agricultural labourers laid out on these items in their household budgets.

TABLE 13

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE IN KENT (%)[2]

Food and Drink	67.7
Cottage Rent	8.8
Fuel	5.4
Clothing	10.2
Shoes	1.7
Candles	1.5
Soap	1.5
Miscellaneous	3.2
	100.0

[1] It will be recognised that such a 'safe' assumption as this will tend to understate, rather than overstate, the rise in the cost of living. As expenditure on Cottage Rent amounted to less than 9 per cent. of total household expenditure its influence upon the all-items index would be slight.

[2] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), pp. 180-3. This information relates to the parishes of Sidelsham and Tuntingham. The Miscellaneous category, which includes such imponderables as medicine and lying-in, has been omitted from the index owing to the absence of specific information on these items.

It is evident from an analysis of these figures that as much as two-thirds of total household expenditure was spent on consumables. The provision of three basic necessities of life - food and drink, shelter, and warmth - absorbed over 90 per cent. of a labourer's income, leaving a slender margin over for all their other domestic needs.[1] The various consumables in the Food and Drink category have been weighted in a similar way according to the amount of expenditure spent on them in family budgets. As the distribution of expenditure on Food and Drink changed from one year to another the weights in the index have been adjusted accordingly.

TABLE 14

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND DRINK IN KENT 1793-1838

	1793[1] %	1812[2] %	1814 %	1821 %	1835[3] %	1837 %	1838 %
Bread/Flour	48.0	74.2	55.8	64.2	49.0	46.1	57.1
Meat	26.2	6.0	10.0	9.3	16.2	16.2	15.1
Cheese	10.0	9.0	13.4	10.4	8.5	12.2	5.3
Butter	8.0	6.0	10.2	7.8	11.3	13.5	11.8
Sugar	5.3	2.0	4.7	3.0	5.8	7.0	5.0
Tea	2.5	2.2	4.0	3.4	5.0	5.0	5.7
	100.0	99.4	98.1	98.1	95.8	100.0	100.0

Sources:

1 Davies, op. cit. pp. 180-3. These weights have been derived from the household budgets of 12 agricultural families, comprising 24 adults and 46 children, living in Sidelsham and Tuntingham.

2 K.R.O. P. 244/8/2. Marden Parish Vestry Minutes 1814-23. The expenditure pattern for 1812, 1814, and 1821 is derived from the household budgets of six families, composed of 12 adults and 31 children, as collected by parish officials investigating into the amount and cost of provisions necessary to support these families 'as given by themselves'.

[1] See pp. 63 - 4 for a further discussion on this point.

3 F. Purdy, 'On the Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in England and Wales', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, XXIV (1861), p. 363. These budgets relate to seven families comprising 14 adults and 29 children.

These budgets throw considerable light upon the distribution of expenditure on food and drink and show how the pattern of expenditure changed under the impact of war-time inflation and post-war deflation.[1] With the outbreak of war with France, for example, the prices of bread, meat, and sugar rose by 167 per cent., 100 per cent., and 41 per cent. respectively by 1812 and these increases were accompanied by marked shifts in the distribution of expenditure on these commodities. As expenditure on bread absorbed such a high proportion of the labourers' expenditure on Food and Drink, the 167 per cent. increase in its price had such a devastating effect upon the labourers' real incomes[2] that it brought about a significant reallocation of expenditure on food and drink.[3] The most notable 'Giffen effect' which resulted from these price increases was a 26 per cent. increase in expenditure on bread, a 20 per cent. decrease in the amount spent on meat, a halving of expenditure on sugar, and a 25 per

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1 As the prices, and quantities consumed, of milk, beer, and potatoes did not appear in these budgets or in the parish workhouse accounts it has not been possible to include them in the index. However, in the light of the evidence given below it is clear that agricultural labourers in Kent seldom touched milk or beer.

2 Between 1790 and 1812 the index of real wages fell by 14 per cent. See p. 145.

3 During the war, when wheat was in short supply, the labouring classes were continually urged to reduce their consumption of wheaten bread and eat a coarser bread made from barley, oats, and rye. E. Melling, Kentish Sources: IV. The Poor (Maidstone, 1964), pp. 152-4. It is extremely difficult to say to what extent such substitution took place as there is almost no evidence on these commodities.

cent. decrease in the amount spent on butter.[1] Such changes as these did not escape the eyes of contemporary observers and it is evident from their accounts that Kentish labourers lived on a diet of wheaten bread, a little meat once or twice a week, cheese, butter, and potatoes. Tea was their main beverage as milk was 'very scarce' and the labourers could 'seldom . . . afford to drink beer'.[2] In 1795 Eden commented,

> The Poor in most parts of Kent ten years ago always ate meat daily. Now they seldom taste it in winter, except in a Poor-house. Private brewing, even among small farmers, is at an end; the Poor drink tea at all their meals, which, with bread, potatoes and cheese, constitute their chief diet.[3]

Falling prices at the end of the war, and during the post-war agricultural depression, led to a partial reversal of the war-time pattern of expenditure. Between 1812, the peak year for prices during the war, and 1823, the nadir in the post-war price depression, the price of bread was halved,[4] thus making possible a reallocation of expenditure in favour of

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[1] It was a well-known phenomenon to contemporary observers that when real incomes fell due to a rise in the cost of living the labouring classes were obliged to reduce their consumption of 'luxuries' such as meat and sugar in order to afford the basic necessities of life such as bread. As one observer noted, 'I believe it has always been found that among labourers the first diminution takes place in tea, meat, sugar, and things of that nature, much rather than in bread'. S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, p. 118. See also, Tooke, op. cit. p. 164. J. C. McKenzie, 'Past Dietary Trends as an Aid to Prediction', in T. C. Barker (ed.), Our Changing Fare (1966).

[2] Eden, op. cit. pp. 210-11. Annals of Agriculture, XVII (1795), pp. 86-7, 175, 180. Dairy farming in Kent was restricted to only a few areas of the county and was regarded as a minor farming activity. There were no dairy farms of any great extent and farmers produced only a little milk for their own consumption. Boys, op. cit. p. 119. According to Davies, 'Were the poor able to afford themselves this wholesome beverage (beer) it would well enough compensate for the scarcity of milk . . . Tea drinking is not the cause, but the consequence, of the distress of the poor'. Davies, op. cit. pp. 38-9.

[3] Eden, op. cit. pp. 208-9.

[4] Between 1812 and 1823 the annual average weekly price of the quartern loaf in Kent fell from 1s. 6d. to 7d.

those commodities whose consumption had been reduced during the war. It is evident from the figures in Table 14 that as bread prices fell after 1812 the amount of expenditure laid-out on this item also fell, and that this trend was accompanied by an increase in expenditure on other commodities such as meat, butter, tea, and sugar.

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various commodities in the six main categories of expenditure have been combined, in Laspeyres form, with these weights to provide a cost of living index for the county.[1] It is evident from Figure 9 that the history of the cost of living in Kent between 1790 and 1840 fell into three well-defined sub-periods; a period of rapidly rising prices between 1794 and 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except in 1817) from 1812 to 1823, followed by a period of recovery from 1823 to the 1830's. It has been shown that in each instance the major peaks and troughs in the cost of living were directly associated, in their timing, with certain short run exigencies such as a run of good or disastrous harvests, an outbreak of war or peace in Europe, or a rise or fall in foreign imports of foodstuffs. Given the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short run, it is clear that sharp variations in food prices tended to determine, because of their relatively high importance in household budgets, the general trend and degree of change of the all-items index. In particular bread prices were exceptionally volatile and, because they accounted for half to two-thirds of total expenditure on Food and Drink, were a vital determinant in giving the cost of living index its characteristic shape. Given the long-run direction and trend of the cost of living, the important question remains as to what extent was this sequence matched, in its timing

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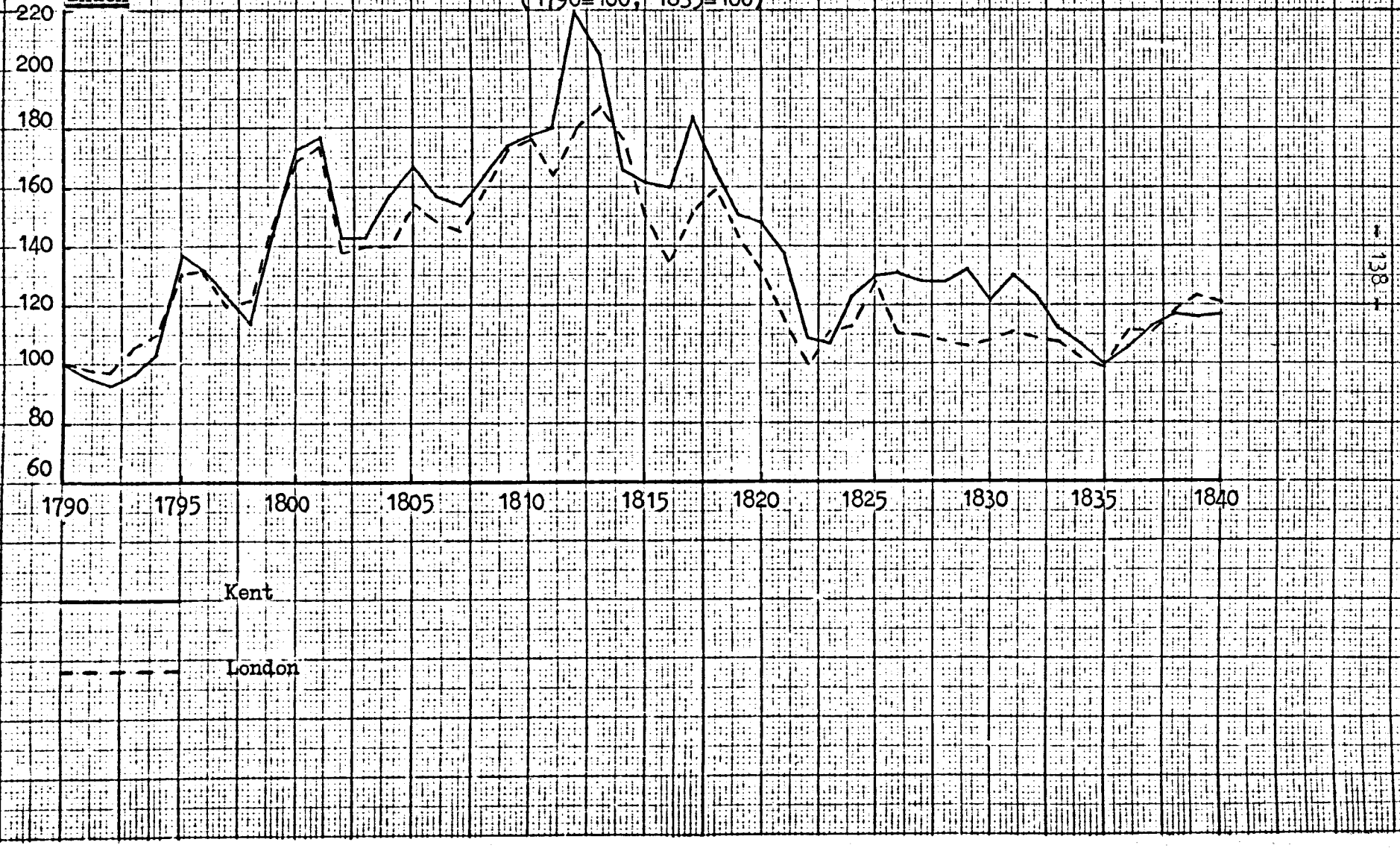
[1] The working of this formula is explained on p. 65.

FIG. 9

The Cost of Living in Kent and London 1790–1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



and degree of variation, by comparable changes in agricultural wages? What effect did the interaction of the cost of living and the level of agricultural wages have upon the trend of real wages and the agricultural labourers' material standard of living in Kent?

CHAPTER 5

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN KENT 1790-1840

I. Introduction

Agricultural wages are an important variable in the standard of living controversy as they constitute one-half of the real wage equation. Given the general level and trend of the cost of living in Kent it is clear that the agricultural labourers' standard of living depended very much upon the ability of agricultural wages to match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living. The extent by which agricultural wages responded to fluctuations in the cost of living, however, was closely determined by the varying state of Kentish agriculture and the effect its changing fortunes had upon the demand for labour. In this respect the diversity of agricultural production in the county provided a wide range of employment opportunities for the rural labour force.[1] By the early nineteenth century crop specialisation was well established in various parts of the county and the wheat, hop, and fruit growing areas made heavy seasonal demands upon local supplies of labour. The wheat growing areas of north Kent, for example, required large quantities of labour for ploughing, manuring, ditching, sowing, reaping, and threshing; and when the harvest was gathered in, there was usually work to follow in the hop plantations and orchards.[2] Fruit cultivation was essentially a labour intensive operation as large quantities of labour were required at specific points in the year

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[1] W. Marshall, The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties (1798), II, pp. 1-44. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 172-3.

[2] Work was not always available in the orchards and hop plantations. In 1830, for example, employment was not to be had in the hop plantations owing to an outbreak of mildew which destroyed most of the crop. The Maidstone Journal, 17 August 1830, p. 4. See also p. 159.

for a variety of tasks such as manuring and hoeing the orchards, planting, picking the fruit, and packing it for the market.[1] Hop growing was also a labour intensive industry and large numbers of labourers were required for turning the soil, manuring, carrying and erecting hop poles, planting and training the vines, and picking the crop.[2] All these activities provided the rural labour force with a range of seasonal tasks at varying rates of pay and the annual earnings they obtained at this work, taking good years with the bad, was an important factor in their standard of living.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were employed in the cultivation of these kinds of crops. The main sources of evidence have been derived from the records of three estates: the Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts,[3] the Farm Accounts of Thomas Pile of Cranbrook,[4] and the Waldershare Estate Accounts of the Earl of Guildford.[5] The Cobham Labour Accounts are the best of the three series as they are the most comprehensive, providing continuous runs of wages for the whole period 1790-1835, and are the principal series used in this

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1 Marshall, I, op. cit. pp. 303-16. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp. 169-70.

2 Marshall, op. cit. pp. 170-260. Marshall noted, 'The town of Maidstone is nearly deserted in the height of the season. . . . Besides the people of the neighbourhood, numbers flock from the populous towns of Kent; and many from the metropolis; also from Wales: hop picking being the last of the summer works of these itinerants.' Ibid. pp. 242-3.

3 K.R.O. U565/A9a-54a, A314. Cobham Hall Estate Labour Accounts. The Cobham estate is situated in north-west Kent. These sources are mentioned in H. G. Hunt, 'Agricultural Rent in South-East England, 1788-1825', The Agricultural History Review, VII (1959), pp. 106-7.

4 K.R.O. U683/A2-4. Thomas Pile. Cranbrook Farm Accounts. Cranbrook lies on the Weald of Kent close to the Sussex border.

5 K.R.O. U471/A31-3. Earl of Guildford. Waldershare Estate Labour Accounts. Waldershare lies close to Dover in east Kent. The location of these estates is shown on Map 2, p. 100.

case-study. The Cranbrook and Waldershare Accounts also provide useful runs of wages for 1818-1840 and 1792-1801, respectively, and at various points these wages have been compared with the Cobham series and with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources.[1] The agricultural labourers employed on these estates were hired by the week at varying rates of pay according to the type of work they were doing and the season in which it was being done. In order to construct a wage index for each estate an arithmetic average has been made of what the labourers on each estate earned during the course of each year. At various points this index has been related to the cost of living index in order to determine what happened to the purchasing power of wages.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural wages and the cost of living and the trend of real wages in Kent, is shown in Figures 10 - 12 .[2] In analysing these relationships it is evident that long-run variations in agricultural wages were closely allied to fluctuations in the cost of living and the rural trade cycle. When prices were high wages were high,

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[1] Agricultural wages paid on other estates in the county have also been used in this chapter. With regard to the level of wages paid by small-scale owner-occupiers and tenant farmers, it is difficult to say what their precise relationship was to the level of wages paid on large estates as very little evidence appears to have survived to support such a comparison. Contemporary printed sources, however, often contain wage quotations for various years, though not necessarily specifying which of the two categories of labour they were referring to, and where these occur they have been compared with the estate wages in order to see if any significant differences existed between the two. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 10 the former have been marked with a cross (x) and the latter with a dot (.). See p. 78 for a further discussion on this point.

[2] These estimates are based on the assumption of constant employment and, in the light of contemporary impressions regarding the incidence of unemployment in the post-war period, must be regarded as being generous. Later on in the chapter this assumption is relaxed in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and a resulting loss of earnings, into the calculations.

FIG. 10

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Kent 1790-1840

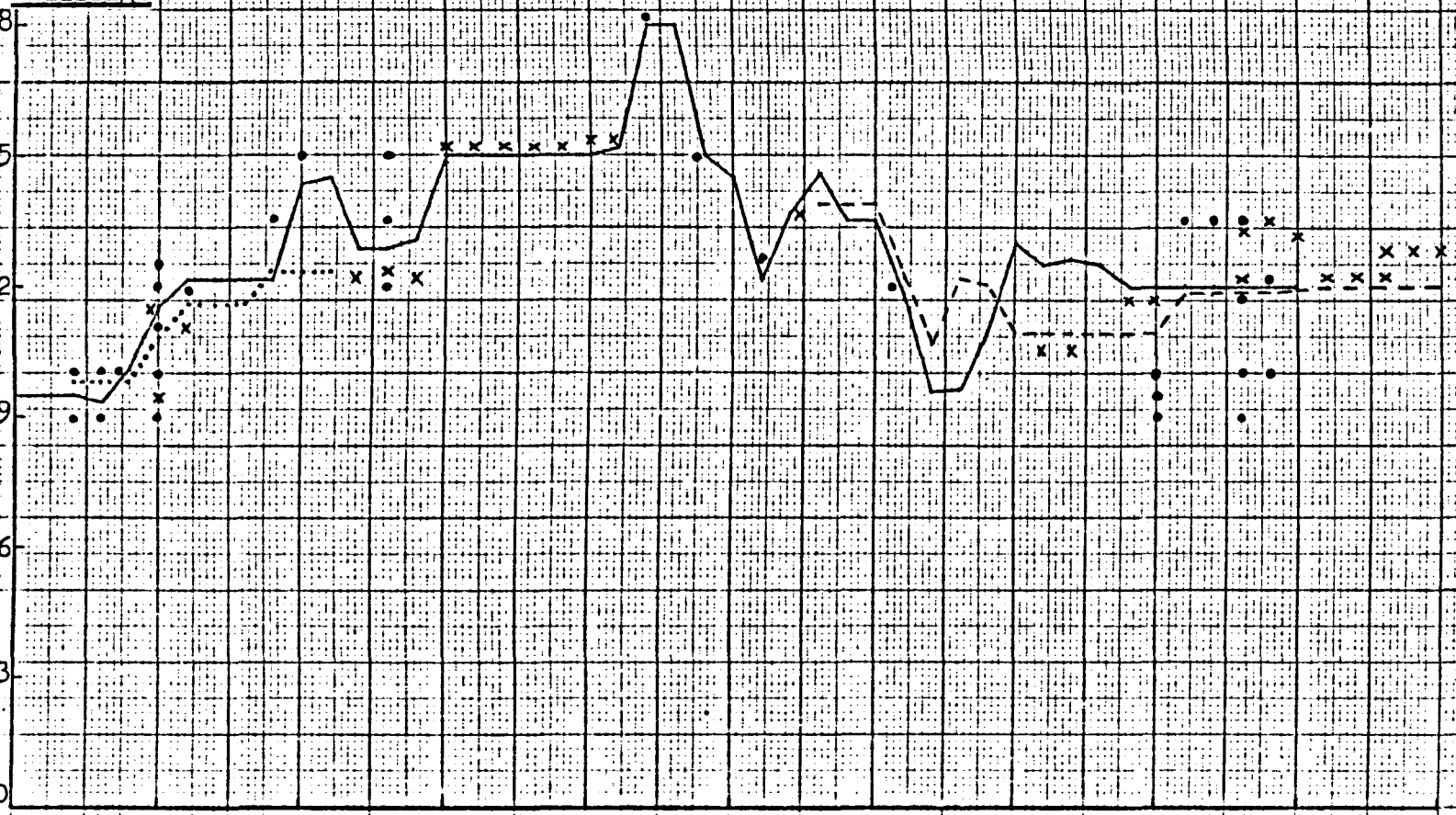
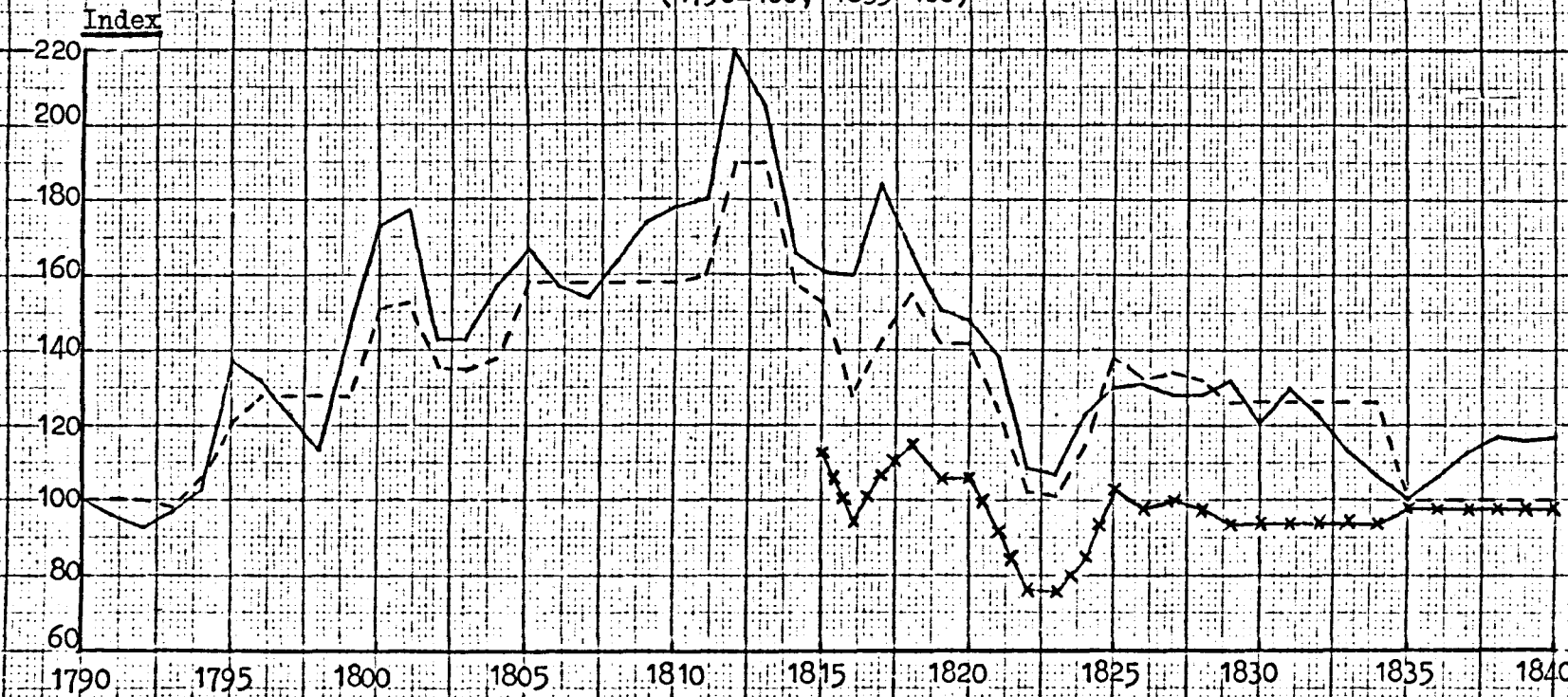


FIG. 11

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Kent 1790–1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



Cost of Living Index

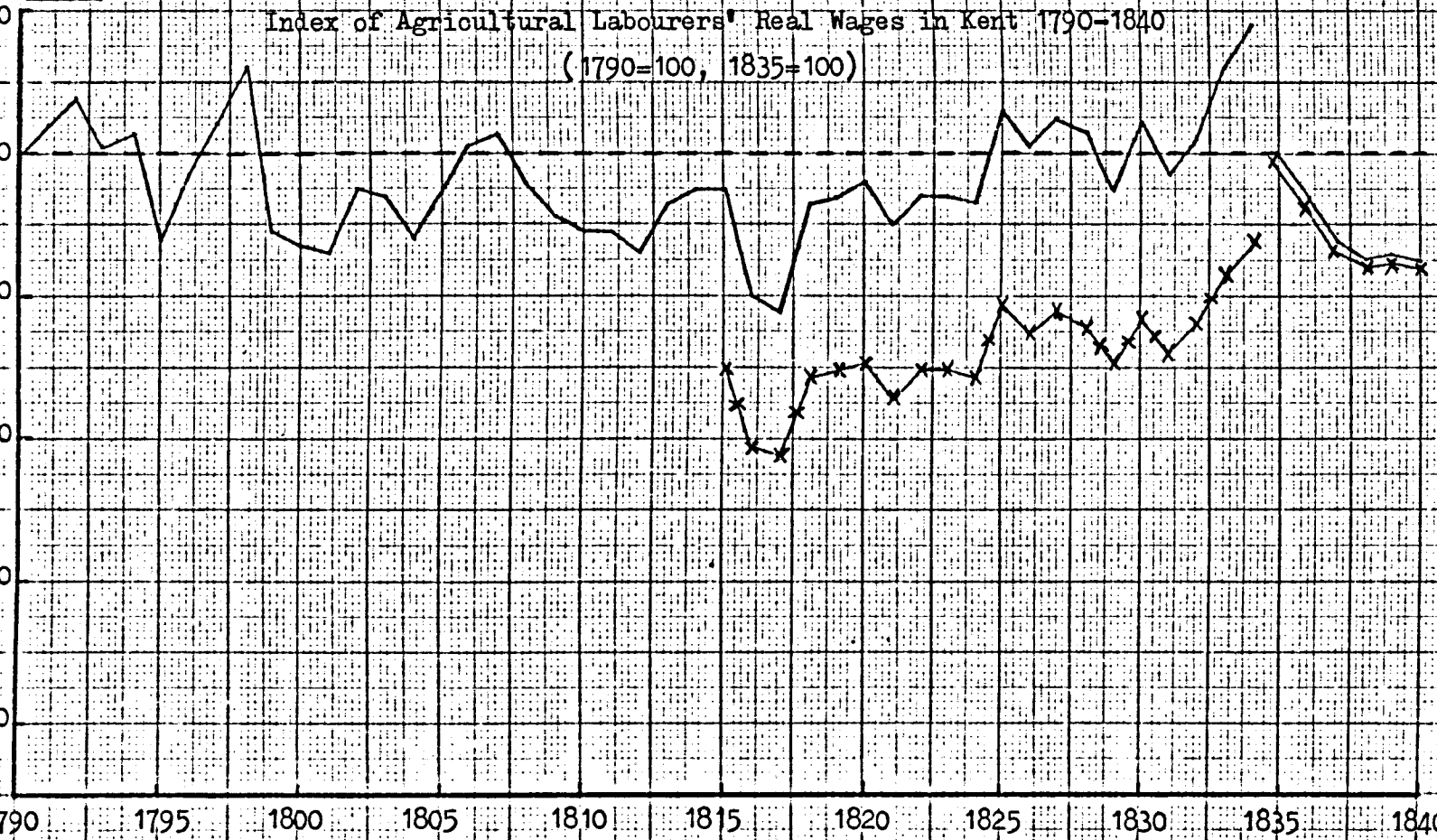
Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers in regular employment at Cobham Hall

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers at Cobham Hall who were unemployed for three months a year

FIG. 12

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Kent 1790-1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



Index of Real Wages for labourers in regular employment

Index of Real Wages for labourers who were unemployed for three months a year in 1815-40

and when prices were low wages were low. An examination of the Cobham series shows that before the Napoleonic war agricultural wages were about 9s. 6d. a week. This figure increased during the early years of the war to reach 11s. 6d. by 1795. Compared with other areas of the county this wage was slightly higher than the 10s. 10d. being paid at Waldershare and was similar to the 12s. being paid at Wingham,[1] 12s. 6d. at Betteshanger,[2] 11s. 5d. at Knole,[3] 9s. 5d. at Milstead and Wormshill,[4] and the various wages quoted by John Boys for other parts of Kent.[5] The rise in agricultural wages during the mid 1790's was influenced by a rise in demand for men by the army and navy and complaints were frequently expressed about the shortage of husbandry labourers.[6] The labour scarcity became so acute during the Napoleonic war that, according to one Kentish farmer, 'we were afraid to turn off a man lest we should not get him when we wanted him'.[7] John Boys also commented on the labour shortage and noted that one consequence was that agricultural wages in the Betteshanger area increased from 9s. to 10s. a week.[8] Some farmers gave their labourers a rise of 3d. for every shilling they earned[9] and Eden noted, in 1795, that in some areas

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1 Annals of Agriculture, XXIV (1795), p. 176.

2 Ibid. XXVI (1796), p. 125.

3 K.R.O. U269/A89. Sackville. Knole Estate Farm and Labour Accounts. Blackhall Farm Labour Book.

4 K.R.O. U593/A7-8. Tylden Estate. Milstead and Wormshill Farming Accounts.

5 J. Boys, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent (1805), pp. 190-2. Labourers employed at Dartford gunpowder mills were paid 11s. 8d. a week in winter and 14s. in summer in 1795. The Maidstone Journal 10 February 1795, p. 1.

6 Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 126.

7 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 250.

8 Annals, XX (1793), p. 183.

9 Ibid. XXVI (1796), p. 125.

wages had increased by one-fifth within three years.[1] Wages continued to rise during the late 1790's and many farmers complained that the shortage of labour had increased the wages of ordinary hands to 12s. and 13s. 6d. a week.[2] In the Gillingham area of north-west Kent labourers' wages rose to 15s. a week by the day and 16s. to 18s. a week, 'if they exert themselves', by piece work.[3] Agricultural wages at Cobham increased throughout the 1790's to reach 14s. 6d. a week by 1801. The Peace of Amiens in 1802-3 coincided with a fall in wages (and agricultural prices) to 12s. 10d. a week at Cobham and 12s. 2d. at Knole;[4] both these figures were similar to the wages quoted by Boys for other parts of Kent in 1803.[5] With the resumption of war, and the rise in prices to a minor peak in 1805, labourers' wages at Cobham increased to reach 15s. a week in that year and remained at that level for the following five years. The same wage was also paid to estate labourers employed at Milstead, Wormshill,[6] and Langley[7] in west Kent and to agricultural labourers employed in other parts of the county.[8] After five years of stagnation agricultural wages

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1 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor, (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 209. According to Eden agricultural wages in 1795 varied from 9s. to 15s. a week. Ibid. pp. 208-11.

2 Annals, XXXIV (1800), pp. 113, 118. Able bodied labourers employed at piece work were said to earn from 2s. 6d. to 5s. a day 'in some particular jobs'.

3 Ibid. p. 637.

4 K.R.O. U269/A61. Sackville, op. cit.

5 Boys, op. cit. p. 190.

6 K.R.O. U593/A8. Tylden, op. cit.

7 K.R.O. U194/A8. Farm Account Book of W. H. Gambier 1810-15.

8 The Farmer's Magazine, XXI (1805), p. 116. At Knole building labourers earned 12s. to 14s. a week. K.R.O. U269/A61. Sackville, op. cit.

at Cobham increased, as did the cost of living, to reach their highest point at 18s. a week in 1812-13. The same wage was also paid to labourers working at Bapchild in north Kent[1] and to labourers employed on the Isle of Thanet in east Kent.[2]

Between 1790 and 1812 the wage index at Cobham registered a rise from 100 to 190 compared with a rise in the cost of living index from 100 to 220. It is evident from Figures 11-12 that one serious result of the failure of agricultural wages to keep pace with increases in the cost of living was that the purchasing power of wages fell by a substantial margin over the course of the Napoleonic war.[3] 'Poverty', wrote Eden, 'is generally ascribed to the low rate of wages and high price of provisions'.[4] Indeed, in 1795 a number of disturbances broke out in Kent over the low level of wages and the high price of flour.[5] Food shortages were so acute in 1795 that justices of the peace recommended the public to adopt the government's policy of limiting wheat consumption 'so as to leave a larger supply of this necessary article of food for the people in general'.[6] Nevertheless, scarcity prevailed over the 1790's and as the cost of living continued to increase the labouring classes continued to protest over the high prices of bread and provisions.[7] By 1800 the price

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 73.

2 Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), p. 12.

3 In 1795, 1800, and 1812, for example, the index of real wages fell to 88, 87, and 86 respectively.

4 Eden, op. cit. p. 208.

5 The Maidstone Journal 17 February 1795, p. 4. J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order, Six Studies in British History 1790-1920 (1974), pp. 36, 44.

6 E. Melling, Kentish Sources: IV. The Poor (Maidstone, 1964), p. 152.

7 Annals, XXXIV (1800), pp. 113, 601-7. Jackson, op. cit. pp. 36, 44.

of bread had increased by 133 per cent. and justices of the peace in the county again exhorted the public to reduce their consumption of wheat and flour and consume more rice and potatoes.[1]

Many labourers were obliged to turn to private charity and the parish overseer of the poor for relief during times of hardship.[2] In West Malling, for example, distressed labourers were given supplies of cheap bread, flour, meat, and coal, and soup was distributed amongst the poor families of the parish.[3] In the Maidstone area a quantity of flour was purchased from a public subscription fund and sold to 900 poor families at the reduced price of 1s. a gallon.[4] Similar schemes were established at Teston, Nettlestead, West Farleigh, Langley, Chart Sutton, Linton, and East Malling.[5] In some parishes a variation of the Speenhamland system was adopted whereby impoverished families were allowed to purchase quantities of provisions at subsidised prices according to the number of children in their family.[6] In the parish of Ightham, for example, a labouring man who was unable to maintain himself and his family was allowed a gallon of flour, at 1s. 4d. a gallon, for each child in his family except the first one.[7]

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[1] Melling, op. cit. p. 154.

[2] Between 1776 and 1803 the amount spent on poor relief in Kent almost tripled and 14 per cent. of the county's population were in receipt of relief. Ibid. p. 147.

[3] The Maidstone Journal 10 February 1795, p. 4.

[4] The Maidstone Journal 6 January 1795, p. 4. A man with a wife and six children was allowed to buy 8 gallons of flour a week at 1s. a gallon.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The Speenhamland system was not widely adopted in Kent. In the 1820's it operated in only seven out of fifteen divisions in the county and was found in only a few of the remaining parishes. J. H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain (Cambridge, 1926), I, p. 124.

[7] Melling, op. cit. p. 160.

Despite conditions of full employment during the war,[1] it is evident that the fall in the purchasing power of agricultural wages brought considerable hardship to the labouring classes and compelled many to adjust their pattern of consumption in order to bridge the deficit in their real incomes.[2] If conditions were bad during the war, forcing many to rely upon doles of private charity and public relief, then they were seemingly worse once the war was over. For the farming classes in Kent prosperity came to an end with the closure of the war in 1815. Agricultural prices and profits fell dramatically, farm debts and bankruptcies increased, and labourers' wages were severely reduced.[3] At Cobham labourers' wages slumped from their peak of 18s. a week in 1812-13 to an average of 12s. 2d. a week in 1816. In addition to reducing wages many farmers, in seeking to reduce their costs and minimise their losses, severely pruned the size of their labour force. In the Maidstone area, for example, a third of the agricultural labour force were thrown out of work; in the Sandridge area farmers discharged their unmarried labourers as they considered it too expensive to maintain unemployed married men and their

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1 Besides the demands of the army and navy, labour was required for constructing coastal defences and for numerous war industries such as shipbuilding (at Chatham, Woolwich and Deptford), iron production (at Crayford and Dartford), gunpowder production (at Dartford and Faversham), coperas production (at Dartford and Whitstable), and chandling - sails, ropes, hemp, pitch, tar, paint. J. Whyman, A Sketch of Economic Development in Kent, 1600-1900 (unpublished seminar paper, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1969), pp. 37-8. The shortage of labour led many farmers to use labour-saving machinery. The threshing machine, for example, was introduced into Kent during the war to supplement the labour force. Machine-threshing was much quicker than hand-threshing and enabled farmers to send their grain to the market at the most opportune time. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (1969), pp. 359-63.

2 The extent to which rising prices forced adjustments to be made in the pattern of domestic consumption is clearly demonstrated in the analysis of agricultural labourers' household budgets in the previous chapter.

3 Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816, Reprinted 1970), pp. 123-40.

families on the poor rates.[1] In the parish of Ash in east Kent, later to be a scene of labourers' riots, 46 labourers were without work and were in a deplorable state.[2] On the Weald, in the Tenterden area, it was said that 'The labouring poor are in a very depressed state, owing to the want of employment, the farmers not being able to have any more work done than what is absolutely necessary'.[3] An eye-witnessed account from Brome noted,

> Nothing can be more wretched than the state of the labouring poor . . . One third, I should think, were out of employ, and a portion of the remainder working at a price which is insufficient to maintain their families.[4]

The post-war fall in prices was temporarily reversed in 1817. Prices recovered to their war-time level again, bringing a brief return of prosperity to Kentish farming,[5] and the cost of living index rose to 184. Agricultural wages at Cobham rose to 13s. 8d. a week, to give an index number of 143, but as this increase fell far short of the increase in the cost of living the index of real wages was depressed to reach, at 78, its lowest point in the whole period under review.

After 1817 prices resumed their downward trend, bringing a 'great loss' of profits to Kentish farmers, and were accompanied by a reduction of wages at Cobham and Cranbrook to 9s. 7d. and 10s. 8d. a week respectively by 1822.[6] At that point the index of agricultural wages at Cobham stood at 102 compared with an index of 109 for the cost of living with the

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[1] Ibid. pp. 133, 137. On the other hand, on the Isle of Thanet single men were employed in preference to married men because, said one farmer, 'they can work cheaper than a married man'. Ibid. p. 139.

[2] Board of Agriculture, op. cit. p. 128.

[3] Ibid. p. 134.

[4] Ibid. p. 136.

[5] S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, p. 75.

[6] Ibid.

result that the real wage index remained below the position it held in 1790 by a margin of 6 per cent. If that was the position of labourers who were in regular employment, then the condition of that sizeable proportion of the Kentish rural labour force who suffered from periodic bouts of unemployment during the 1820's and 1830's was considerably worse. Indeed, throughout this period large numbers of agricultural labourers in Kent had to exist on incomes far lower than those earned at Cobham and their plight did not escape the attention of contemporary observers. William Cobbett, for example, during a tour through the corn growing areas of east Kent in 1823 noted that 'It is impossible to have any idea of anything more miserable than the state of the labourers in this part of the country.'[1] In the following year a 'most alarming increase in pauperism and misery' was reported in the Goudhurst area.[2] Two years later it became apparent that many parts of Kent were suffering from an over-abundance of labour. On the Weald, which was particularly poverty stricken in this respect, it was estimated that a third or more of the inhabitants of 16 parishes had been reduced to the status of paupers and that almost 700 labourers were unable to find work at any time of the year.[3] At Benenden, Biddenden, Hawkhurst, Rolvenden, Staplehurst, and Woodchurch, to take a few examples, 60 to 80 labourers were unable to find employment and, in other parishes, it was common to find as many as a third of the work force out of work for the entire year.[4] This problem was particularly serious at Minster, in east

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[1] W. Cobbett, Rural Rides (Penguin ed. 1967), p. 206.

[2] Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, p. 398.

[3] Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom 1826, IV, I, pp. 135-8. See p. 82 for further details of these figures.

[4] Ibid.

Kent, where 60 labourers a year had been without work for the past decade.[1] Winter unemployment brought particular hardship to the labouring classes and their situation was worsened to some extent by the fact that many Kentish farmers preferred to use machines to thresh their corn rather than employ labourers to do it by hand.[2] This fact did not escape Cobbett's notice when he observed,

> At Monckton they had seventeen men working on the roads, though the harvest was not quite in, and . . . it had all to be threshed out; but . . . they had four threshing machines; and they have three threshing machines at Sarr, though there, also, they have several men upon the roads! This is a shocking state of things; and . . . must be changed.[3]

The high levels of unemployment which prevailed over the 1820's caused considerable poverty and social distress amongst the rural labouring classes and led to a marked rise in expenditure on relieving the poor and needy.[4] Several means were adopted to find work for the unemployed and

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Employment or Relief of Able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate, Parl. Papers 1828, IV, pp. 149, 151.

2 Before the threshing machine was introduced into agriculture, in the early nineteenth century, hand threshing with a wooden flail provided labourers with work throughout the winter quarter of the year. N. Gash, 'Rural Unemployment, 1815-34', The Economic History Review, VI, 1 (1935), pp. 92-3. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (1969), pp. 359-65. According to the latter source, 'For practical purposes machine-threshing in 1800 was entirely confined to the North of Britain. It spread with considerable rapidity during the Napoleonic wars, because of the increasingly acute labour shortage'. Ibid. p. 359.

3 Cobbett, op. cit. pp. 206-7.

4 Between the end of the Napoleonic war, in 1815, and 1821 the amount of expenditure on poor relief in Kent increased from £295,280 to £392,059. This expenditure was the largest amount spent by any county except Middlesex. Over the remainder of the decade the figure remained consistently in excess of £300,000 and this sum was considerably larger than the amounts spent by the other counties in this study. Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1822, V, Appendix C, pp. 20-1. 1825, IV, p. 108. Poor Rate Returns, Account of the Money Expended for the Relief and Maintenance of the Poor 1825-29, Parl. Papers 1830-31, XI, p. 90. Melling, op. cit. p. 148.

hence reduce the cost of maintaining them and their families on the rates. Some parishes used the 'roundsman' system whereby unemployed men were sent tramping around the various farms in the parish looking for work at whatever wages they could obtain; their wages being paid either wholly by the parish overseer or jointly, in some proportion, by the parish and the farmer. Other parishes, as noted by Cobbett, set their unemployed to work repairing the roads. As an observer from Waldershare noted,

> I have seen thirty or forty young men in the prime of life degraded in their own estimation, as well as in the estimation of their beholders, hooked on to carts and wheelbarrows, dragging stones to the highway because they could not get employment elsewhere.[1]

Surplus labourers in the parish of Ash were publicly auctioned once a week and were either employed by the highest bidder or were set to work on the parish roads.[2] In Mereworth parish, in mid Kent, unemployed able-bodied labourers were employed clearing stones off the land at 'such a rate as would enable them, with fair exertion, to earn 7s. a week', and were ordered to suffer a reduction of 2s. a week if they kept a dog.[3] In 1822 the parish vestry ordered the following rates to be paid to persons employed by the parish:[4]

A single Man	4s. 6d. a week
A Man and Wife	5s. 0d. a week
A Man, Wife, and 1 child	6s. 0d. a week
A Man, Wife, and 2 children	7s. 0d. a week
A Man, Wife, and 3 children	8s. 0d. a week

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1 S.C. on the Relief of Able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate, P.P. 1828, IV, p. 156. A man with a wife and child received a wage of 8s. 6d. a week for this work.

2 Ibid. p. 157.

3 K.R.O. P247/8/1. Mereworth Parish Select Vestry Minutes. This was in 1821.

4 K.R.O. P247/8/2. Mereworth, op. cit.

In the same year the wages paid to labourers employed by the parish of Knockholt, in west Kent, were 1s. 6d. a day for married men with families, 1s. 4d. a day for married men with no children, and 1s. 0d. a day for single men.[1] The wage scale at Wrotham for the same categories of labour was 8s. 0d., 6s. 0d., and 4s. 6d. a week respectively;[2] similar wages to these were paid at Waldershare and Tilmanstone in 1828.[3]

Married labourers who obtained casual employment for two or three days were employed by the parish for the rest of the week and were sometimes given additional relief in the form of cash and provisions. This was the practice in Charing parish. A good example of how this system operated is seen in the relief given to William Russell, a married man with three children, in 1830.[4]

	EARNINGS		RELIEF		
Date 1830	Own Earnings	Parish Earnings	Flour (galls)	Money	Total Income
10 April	6s.			3s.	9s.
17 "	4s.			4s.	8s.
24 "	None			6s.	6s.
7 May	6s.			2s.	8s.
14 "	5s.			3s.	8s.
21 "	7s.			6d.	7s. 6d.

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1 K.R.O. P214/8/1. Knockholt Parish Vestry Minutes 1819-74.

2 K.R.O. P406/8. Wrotham Parish Vestry Minutes 1817-24.

3 S.C. on the Relief of Able-bodied Persons from the Poor Rate, P.P. 1828, IV, p. 159.

4 K.R.O. P78/8/7. Charing Parish Vestry Minutes 1828-56. A man with eight children received a total weekly income of 16s. on 10/4/1830, 13s. on 24/4/1830, 14s. on 25/6/1830, 15s. 6d. on 23/7/1830, 12s. on 17/9/1830. In March 1832 William Russell asked the Vestry to assist him to emigrate.

	EARNINGS		RELIEF		
Date 1830	Own Earnings	Parish Earnings	Flour (galls)	Money	Total Income
28 May	7s.			2s.	9s. 6d.
4 June	1s.	2s.		6s.	9s.
11 "	None	None		8s.	8s.
18 "	1s.		3(4s. 1½d.)	5s.	10s. 1½d.
25 "	3s.		3(4s. 1½d.)	2s.	9s. 1½d.
2 July	8s.		2(2s. 9d.)		10s. 9d.
9 "	8s.		2(2s. 9d.)		10s. 9d.
23 "	8s.		1(1s. 4½d.)		9s. 4½d.
24 Sept.	2s.			5s.	7s.
30 Oct.	6s.			4s.	10s.

The 'roundsman' system of employing surplus labourers was adopted by a number of parishes in Kent in the 1820's. Labourers were generally allotted to farmers in the parish in proportion to the farmers' rate assessment and their wages were paid either out of the poor rate or out of a specially levied labour rate. At Knockholt, for example, a labour rate of one shilling in the pound was levied upon the parish and the surplus labourers were divided amongst the rate payers at wages 'in no case to exceed two shillings a day'.[1] The 'great number of unemployed poor' in the parish of Wrotham in January 1821 were distributed amongst the landowners at the rate of one labourer for every £40 of their rate assessment.[2] In the parish of East Malling the Vestry agreed that farmers who employed their quota of surplus labourers could have the services of one or more unmarried labourers over the age of twenty at a wage of 4s. a week, the

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[1] K.R.O. P214/8/1. Knockholt, op. cit.

[2] K.R.O. P406/8. Wrotham, op. cit.

the parish undertaking to pay the labourer an additional 4s.[1] A similar scheme operated at Penshurst and Staplehurst where married men were paid 9s. to 10s. a week and single men and boys 4s. to 4s. 6d. a week.[2] In Charing parish, in October 1833, the Vestry agreed to employ surplus labourers according to the following scale:[3]

Single Men	3 days at 2s. a day
Married Men	4 days at 2s. a day
Married Men with 1 child	4 days at 2s. a day
Married Men with 2 children	5 days at 2s. a day
Married Men with 3 children	6 days at 2s. a day

Similar scales to these were paid in a number of other parishes throughout Kent in the 1830's. Generally, unemployed labourers who were single received 4s. to 5s. a week, whilst married couples were paid 8s. a week plus an allowance of 1s. for each dependent child.[4]

It is evident that over the course of the 1820's chronic levels of unemployment and social distress were reaching serious proportions in many areas of the county. Although agricultural labourers' wages at Cobham began to recover from the nadir of the agricultural depression by 1825, averaging 12s. to 13s. a week,[5] many casually employed labourers had to exist on considerably lower incomes than this of 4s. to 8s. a week.

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1 K.R.O. P242/8/2. East Malling Parish Vestry Minutes 1826-34.

2 K.R.O. P347/8/1. Staplehurst Parish Vestry Minutes 1802-36. Melling, op. cit. p. 166.

3 K.R.O. P78/8/7. Charing, op. cit.

4 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 235-68.

5 Fig. 10. Between 1825 and 1830 the wage index generally exceeded the cost of living index with the result that the real wage index experienced a net gain of about 6 per cent.

Throughout the 1820's these unfortunates suffered a desperately low standard of living[1] and this situation formed the back-cloth for the agricultural labourers' riots which broke out in 1830.[2] Indeed, by the winter of 1829 it was apparent that there was very little hope of any immediate improvement in the Kentish labourers' lot. In September 1829 a bout of wet weather severely damaged the wheat and hop crops and, by diminishing the demand for labour at a time when it was most wanted, gave rise to more unemployment and poverty.[3] By November many labourers were out of work and destitute. The Maidstone Journal commented,

> For several years past the state of the poorer classes has been gradually becoming worse. The want of prosperity amongst the farmers has necessarily produced a great diminution in the demand for labour, and a considerable reduction in the wages paid for what has been done; whilst the increase in population has not ceased. The consequence has unavoidably been that the poor, who depend upon daily labour, for daily sustenance, have been gradually and steadily sinking into greater poverty and destitution, than has been their ordinary lot; until they are generally reduced to a condition which it is lamentable to behold.
>
> The unfortunate harvest and autumn of 1829 have found them in a most destitute state, and have completely disappointed all their hopes of earning the means of providing for the winter. Very few of them have, during several months, been able to earn anything for more than two or three days of every week . . . whilst the great resource of picking hops on which their chief reliance is placed has entirely failed.[4]

In January 1830 accounts of widespread distress were reported in the Maidstone area and upon the Weald and by the following May the deficiencies

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[1] It is significant that the number of convictions under the Game Laws in Kent more than doubled between 1820 and 1826. Returns of the Number of Convictions under the Game Laws 1820-1826. Parl. Papers 1826-1827, XX, pp. 518-25. On some estates in east Kent spring guns and steel traps were used to discourage poachers. Cobbett, op. cit. p. 207.

[2] In Essex the disturbances seem to have begun, on a limited scale, in 1829, See pp. 221-2.

[3] The Maidstone Journal 1, 22, 29 September 1829, p. 4.

[4] The Maidstone Journal 3 November 1829, p. 3.

of the previous harvest had produced severe shortages of corn.[1] Shortages were particularly acute at Egerton and Bethersden, whilst Ulcomb was reported to have less than a month's supply of corn left.[2] Matters worsened during the summer when it was discovered that the hop crop had suffered 'universal injury'. . . by the havoc made by lice and fly, and partial appearance of mould'.[3] By the following August the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that The Maidstone Journal was able to comment,

> The oldest man living does not recollect a year in which so large a breadth of the plantation has been infested with destructive fungus as the present, nor in the major part of the mid-Kent plantations, but East-Kent is also infected with this terrible scourge . . . Several planters in Middle Kent, who, a few days since, had a prospect of five bags per acre, are now pulling the poles and carrying them off the ground, and some have actually commenced grubbing the roots.[4]

It is evident that the culmination of a number of inter-related factors - the deficient harvest of 1829, the severe winter of 1829-30, local grain shortages, and the loss of earnings through the failure of the hop crop - aggravated a long-standing situation which was already bad and prepared the ground for the 1830 revolt. As the demand for labour contracted more men were obliged to join the ranks of the unemployed thus stimulating the concern of contemporary observers with the 'great number of

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[1] The shortage was so serious that officials from Wrotham, Mereworth, Boxley, Headcorn, Ulcomb, Tudely, Boughton, Malherbe, Chart Sutton, Smarden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Benenden, Sandhurst, Staplehurst, Marden, Hollingbourne, Bicknor, Wormshill, Thornham, Boughton Monchelsea, and Otham parishes met at Maidstone to consider the situation and the possibility of petitioning Parliament for assistance. The Maidstone Journal 1 June 1830, p. 4.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. 29 June 1830, p. 4.

[4] Ibid. 17 August 1830, p. 4.

surplus labourers' and 'the great many able men with large families out of employ'.[1] A superfluity of rural labour was reported at Ashurst, Chalk, Eastry, Cobham, Higham, Barham, Chilham, and the Isle of Thanet.[2] At Lenham, later to be a scene of a wage riot, sixty able-bodied labourers, a third of the labour force, were unemployed throughout the year. As a rule 140 men were in receipt of poor relief during the winter and 70 were similarly situated during the summer.[3] At Tonbridge 32 able-bodied labourers, with 218 dependents to support, were unemployed and forced to rely upon poor relief; a similar situation to this existed at Tenterden where 15 to 20 men were regularly without work.[4] Indeed, such was the agricultural labourers' plight in Kent that The Maidstone Journal was able to comment,

> The fact is indisputable that many of the labourers are in a very degraded and wretched condition, wholly unable to provide for themselves more than the bare necessaries of existence, and these the most humble in kind and limited in quantity.[5]

The existence of these conditions, which had prevailed since the end of the Napoleonic war, provided a ground-swell of discontent which culminated in the 'Swing' riots of 1830. The first indication of disquiet occurred in June 1830 with the outbreak of a number of incendiary fires in the Bromley-Orpington area. In August the first threshing machine was broken at Lower Hardres in east Kent and this event triggered-off a wave of

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1 Reports into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1., V, pp. 235-68.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. II, p. 252.

4 Ibid. p. 264. Report from the S.C. on Agriculture P.P. 1833, V, p. 247. A 'great many' labourers were also out of work in Gillingham. Ibid. p. 298.

5 The Maidstone Journal 16 November 1830, p. 3.

rioting which affected many areas of the county.[1] At Ash the labourers went on strike and threatened to break all the threshing machines in the parish if the wages of married labourers were not increased to 2s. 6d. a day.[2] Three hundred labourers assembled at Lenham carrying a banner inscribed 'Starving at 1s. 6d. a day', whilst at Cranbrook 200 labourers went en masse to the local magistrate to ask him to use his influence to get their wages raised to 2s. a day.[3] Similar risings to these took place at East Sutton, Hawkhurst, East and West Peckham, Nettlestead, Yalding, Headcorn, and many other parishes along the borders of Kent and Sussex. At Hawkhurst, Benenden, Sandhurst, Goudhurst, and Lamberhurst, for example, the labourers protested their wages were too low and demanded 2s. 3d. a day in winter and 2s. 6d. in summer.[4]

By late November 1830, however, the 'Swing' riots had been effectively supressed and over one hundred prisoners awaited their trial at the East Kent Special Quarter Sessions and Winter Assizes.[5] On the Cobham estate agricultural wages seemed unaffected by the labourers' demands as they remained unchanged at 12s. a week both during and after the riots.[6] Some changes, however, were discernible on the Cranbrook estate. Labourers' wages at Cranbrook were lower than those paid at Cobham in 1825-30, but

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1 Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. pp. 98-113. M. Dutt, The Agricultural Labourers' Revolt of 1830 in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex (London University Ph.D. Thesis, 1966). T. L. Richardson, 'The Agricultural Labourers' Riots in Kent in 1830', Cantium, Kent Local History, 6 (Winter 1974), pp. 73-5.

2 The Maidstone Journal 2 November 1830, p. 3.

3 Ibid. 9 November 1830, p. 3.

4 Ibid. 2 November 1830, p. 4. 16 November 1830, p. 4.

5 Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. pp. 261-2. Twenty-five were acquitted, 4 were executed, 48 were imprisoned, and 52 were transported.

6 See Figure 10. In 1842 agricultural wages at Cobham were still 12s. a week. K.R.O. U565/A314. Darnley, op. cit.

these increased after the riots to an average of 11s. 10d. a week by 1831. Further increases followed and from 1834 to 1840 the average weekly wage at Cranbrook was 12s. a week.[1] These wages may be compared with the wages paid on other estates in the county and with the wages mentioned in contemporary printed sources. In 1833, for instance, the average weekly wage at Cobham and Cranbrook was 12s. whilst at Knole[2] and Doddington[3] the wage was 12s. and 13s. 6d. a week respectively. On the other hand, witnesses to the 1833 Select Committee on Agriculture quoted wages ranging from 9s. and 10s. a week to 12s. and 13s. 6d. a week, though the method by which these estimates were made was not given.[4]

III. Conclusion

Given the general level and trend of agricultural wages and the cost of living in Kent it is now important to ascertain what effect the interaction of these two variables had upon the agricultural labourers' standard of living. To what extent did agricultural wages on the Cobham estate match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living and what effect did this relationship have upon the purchasing power of wages?

So far it has been assumed, as a first step, that the labourers in this study enjoyed full and regular employment throughout the whole period under review.[5] On the basis of this assumption it is clear from Figure 11 that agricultural wages and the cost of living shared a similar long-run

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1 Figure 10, p. 143.

2 K.R.O. U269/A69/1. Sackville, op. cit.

3 K.R.O. U709/A1. Sir John Croft. Account Book for Doddington.

4 Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, pp. 245, 339. These wages relate to the Tenterden area. According to one witness, when asked why wages in Kent were so high, replied, 'There have been a good many fires in Kent . . . the wages are kept up in many instances in consequence of intimidation'.

5 Later on this assumption is relaxed in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence loss of earnings, into the calculations.

trend from 1790 to 1840. Both series experienced an upward trend during the Napoleonic war and a downward trend thereafter, except for 1817-18, with the cost of living index tending to lie on a higher plane than the index of agricultural wages. Apart from this similarity, certain important differences existed between the two series; especially differences in the extent by which the two series varied from their base year.[1] If their short-run fluctuations are compared, in Figure 11, it is clear that the cost of living index was, on the whole, the more volatile of the two series. On a number of occasions, especially between 1794 and 1817, agricultural wages appeared to be quite 'sticky' and lagged behind price changes by a wide margin, thus implying that the cost of living index was the dominant variable in the real wage equation. Given this relationship, to what extent did agricultural wages lag behind fluctuations in the cost of living and what effect did this have upon the labourers' real wages?

The answer to this question is illustrated in Figures 11 - 12 where it is shown that the most critical period for the standard of living occurred during the Napoleonic war, and in 1817, when agricultural wages consistently failed to keep pace with inflation:

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[2] (Index)
1795	+37	+21	88
1800	+73	+51	87
1812	+120	+90	86
1817	+84	+43	78

These figures clearly bring out the fact that at four critical points

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[1] Because of certain differences in the nature of the price data derived from parish Poor Law records before and after 1834, two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been adopted in constructing the cost of living index. The same base years have also been used in constructing the wage index in order that the two series may be compared. See p. 40.

[2] 1790 = 100.

increases in the cost of living outstripped rising wages by an average margin of 16, 22, 30 and 41 per cent. respectively. In other words, owing to faster rising prices, the index of agricultural earnings and the index of real wages moved in opposite directions. The consequences for the purchasing power of wages and the labourers' standard of living were dire; real wages fell by an average of 13 per cent. during the three war years and by 22 per cent. in 1817. In other years, however, the fall in real wages was not as extensive as this and on other occasions the index of real wages experienced a modest rise. In order to gain an overall impression of the standard of living it is necessary to establish what the exact relationship was between the 'good' and 'bad' years. In other words, to what extent were the years when real wages fell below the position they held in 1790 compensated for by a period of rising real wages?

Taking the 'good' years with the 'bad', and assuming regular employment, it is clear from the long-run trend of real wages in Figure 12 that agricultural labourers experienced very few positive gains in their standard of living. Indeed, most of the evidence points the other way. Although the real wage estimates recorded certain improvements in various years, these gains were not substantial or of a lasting nature and were invariably swamped by long periods in which real wages were diminished by excessive amounts. Between 1790 and 1840 real wages improved beyond their 1790 position on sixteen occasions, whereas on thirty-three other occasions, mainly between 1795 and 1832, real wages sank below that position.[1] The significance of this observation becomes more apparent when it is stated that the extent of the fall in real wages was twice as great as the amount by which they rose. In other words, real wages increased by an average of 5 per cent. over a period of sixteen years, whilst real wages decreased by

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[1] The base year is not included in these figures.

an average of 10 per cent. over a period of thirty-three years. If the chronological distribution of the 'good' and 'bad' years is considered it is evident that, apart from a few isolated gains in the 1790's and 1800's, the downward trend of real wages began with the onset of the Napoleonic war and lasted until 1824. Only after that point did the index of real wages begin to exceed its pre-war position and over the following decade improved at the average rate of 0.6 per cent. per annum. No doubt such modest gains as these were welcomed by the agricultural labourers even though it took so long to achieve them.

At this point it is important to remember that these estimates are based upon a most optimistic assumption: that is, on the assumption that each labourer was in full and constant employment and was able to maximise his earnings each year for a period of fifty years. If, then, the agricultural labourers' standard of living showed no appreciable improvement under such favourable conditions as these, then the condition of those labourers less favourably placed than this must have been truly lamentable. If the estimates based on the assumption of full employment are taken to represent a ceiling of earnings to which a labourer could, in theory, reach, it is also necessary to establish a lower limit in order to take into account a loss of income through unemployment.

In viewing the incidence of rural unemployment in Kent it is clear that the problem was primarily confined to the post-war period and was particularly acute during the winter quarter of the year when as many as a third of the agricultural labour force were out of work.[1] If, then, the assumption of full employment is relaxed and an element of winter unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, is introduced into the calculations it is clear from the downward adjustments to the level of earnings that those labourers who fell

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[1] See p. 151.

into this situation stood to suffer a substantial deterioration in their standard of living. Figure 12 brings out the full extent of this decline and clearly demonstrates that at no point throughout the whole of the post-war period did this sizeable element of the labour force experience any improvement in their real wages beyond their pre-war level. No doubt these were the men who existed on incomes of 6s. to 8s. a week, as shown by the Poor Law evidence, who sold their services at the parish labour auction, as at Ash, who earned a few shillings harnessed to carts on the roads, as at Waldershare, and complained they were 'starving at 1s. 6d. a day', as at Lenham. Doles of public relief[1] and private charity were the means by which some sought to cover the deficiencies in their incomes whilst others turned to direct action in the form of the 'Swing' riots, though these brought the labourers few gains. There was no marked increase in agricultural wages and no immediate diminution of unemployment on a large scale, though more winter threshing was done by hand.[2] Labourers' allotments were introduced into the county on a much larger scale in the hope that they would alleviate unemployment and poverty and by the late 1830's three thousand allotments had been established in the county.[3] The Poor Law was reformed in 1834 and, although its reform provoked a number of disturbances in the county, it did at least

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1 D. A. Baugh's study of poor-relief in Kent found a 'remarkably harmonious movement' of wheat prices and per capita poor-relief expenditure and suggested that poor relief expenditure during the Napoleonic war was 'essentially a response to high food prices rather than unemployment'. On the other hand, relief expenditure was high during the post-war period 'not because parish officers were responding to high prices, but because of chronic unemployment'. D. A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', E.H.R. 2nd ser. XXVIII, 1 (1975), pp. 58-9, 64.

2 G. Buckland, 'On the Farming of Kent', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, 1st ser. VI (1845), pp. 260-70.

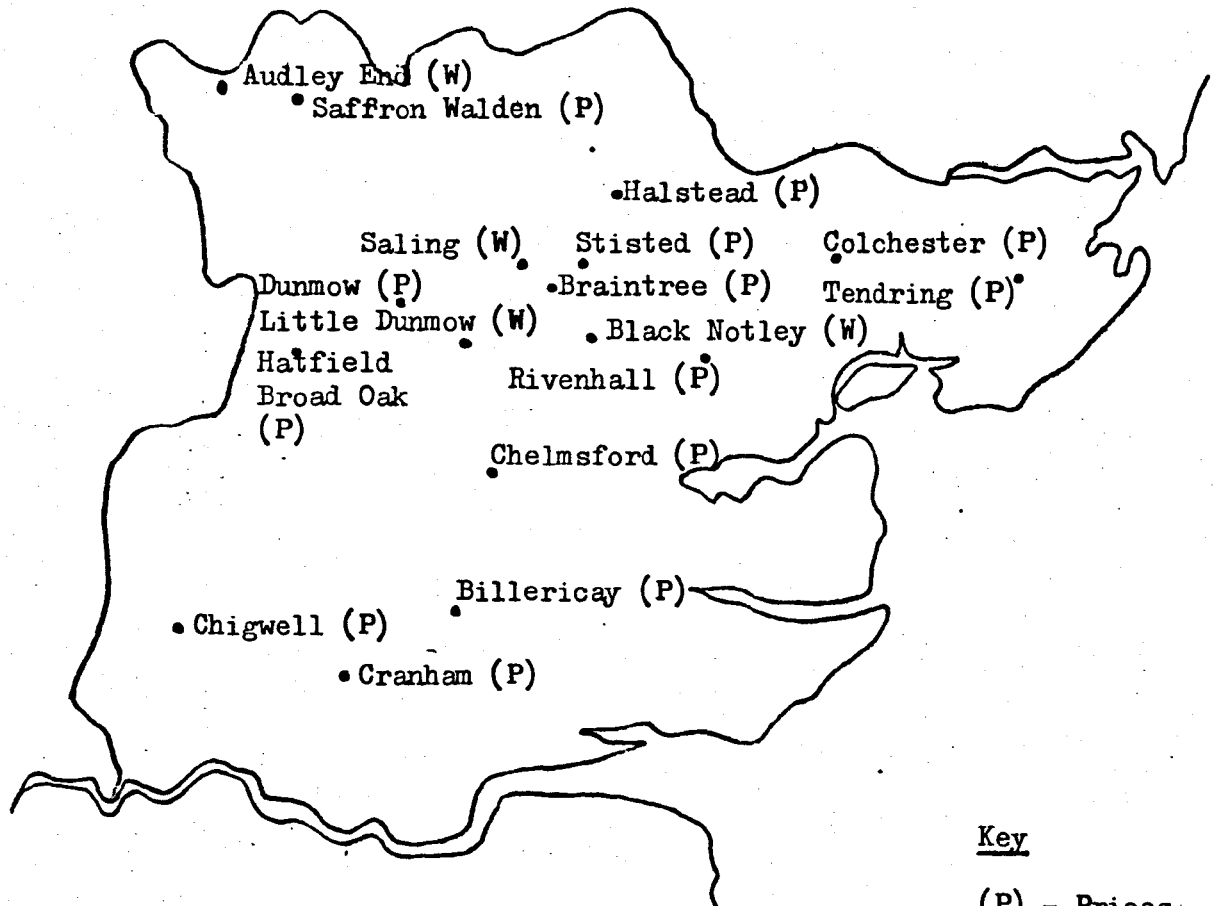
3 The Maidstone Journal 13 November 1832, p. 3. 9 May 1837, p. 3. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 189. Buckland, loc. cit. p. 301.

serve to stand between the labourer and starvation when all else failed.[1]

[1] Riots broke out at Rodmersham, Doddinton, Chiddingstone, Upchurch, Throwley, Bapchild, Hernehill, River, Linsted, and Teynham. K.R.O. Q/SBe/140. East Kent Special Sessions, 3rd June 1835. Depositions and Calendar of Prisoners. The Maidstone Journal 12 May 1835, p. 4. 9 June 1835, pp. 3-4. 16 February 1836, p. 3.

MAP 3

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Essex



CHAPTER 6

THE COST OF LIVING IN ESSEX 1790-1840

I. Introduction

Essex, like Kent, was primarily an agricultural county which came under the direct influence of London. During the sixteenth century large quantities of agriculture produce - wheat, oats, cheese, butter, hops, livestock, and garden produce - were being grown on a commercial scale specifically for sale in London.[1] Throughout the eighteenth century considerable improvements took place, under the stimulus of London, in the production and transporting of cash crops direct to the capital.[2] Indeed, many regular services were established by road and sea to carry agricultural produce to the capital and one of the main reasons for turnpiking the roads leading to London was to provide an easier passage for the corn waggons.[3] One result of the development of carrier services and the greater mobility of farm produce across the county was the growth and development of market towns such as Dunmow, Braintree, Thaxted, and Coggershall.[4] Romford was noted for the quantities of calves, hogs, corn, and general provisions it sent to London, whilst Brentwood, Ingatestone, and Chelmsford were described by Defoe as,

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1 F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', Economic History Review, V (1935), pp. 47-56.

2 E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967), pp. 60-3. A. F. J. Brown, Essex at Work 1700-1815 (Chelmsford, 1969), pp. 28-50.

3 Brown, op. cit. pp. 30, 36, 86-9.

4 D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman (ed.) 1928), I, p. 37. The produce consisted of such crops as wheat, barley, oats, dairy cattle, 'Epping butter', timber, firewood, malt, potatoes, peas, hay, carrots, poultry, caraway, and coriander seeds. Brown, op. cit. pp. 28-30, 39.

> . . . large throughfair towns, full of good inns, and chiefly maintained by the excessive multitude of carriers and passengers, which are constantly passing this way to London, with droves of cattle, provisions, and manufactures for London.[1]

Wheat was the most important cash crop grown in Essex and about half the crop was sent directly to London;[2] two-thirds of this total went straight to London factors without the intervention of local middlemen.[3] Many writers on agricultural matters commented on the excellent system of farming being carried on in the county.[4] The productive marls and clays in the eastern half of the county were highly suited to cereal cultivation and rotations of wheat, oats, barley, clover, and rye produced 'very considerable returns of every sort of grain and pulse'.[5] Defoe described this part of Essex as 'a great corn county' and much of the produce grown in the area was sent from the market town of Malden to London.[6] In the north-west of the country most of the land was under wheat, barley, peas, and beans and considerable quantities of barley were malted in the area before being shipped to London.[7] The rich loams in the south-east corner of the county were said to be farmed 'near, if not nearer perfection, than in any other part of Essex', and produced good crops of wheat, beans, oats,

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1 Ibid.

2 Brown, op. cit. p. 35. Indeed, such was the state of development of this trade that it was said that 'Essex millers sometimes had to go to London to buy Essex wheat for their own businesses'. Ibid.

3 Large quantities of flour were also shipped out of the county to London and, in times of dearth, often caused an outbreak of rioting. Ibid. pp. 57, 131, 162.

4 C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1795). A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1807), 2 vols. R. Baker, 'On the Farming of Essex', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, 1st ser. V (1845).

5 Messrs. Griggs, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1794), p. 10.

6 Defoe, op. cit. p. 14.

7 Griggs, op. cit. p. 12.

and mustard seed.[1] Along the east coast the marshlands provided excellent grazing for sheep and cattle before they were driven to Smithfield market.[2] Dairy farming was mainly located in the Epping and Hainault forest area, whilst much of the land in close proximity to London was laid-down to market gardening.[3] Hop cultivation was found in the northern part of the county close to the Suffolk border in the parishes of Halstead, Castle Hedingham, Finchingfield, and Great Bardfield.[4]

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

It is clear from the foregoing account that by the end of the eighteenth century Essex was an integral part of the metropolitan economy. For the agricultural sector the proximity of London 'insured a quick sale for every commodity' and, as in the case of Kent, the supply price of farm produce in the county was directly influenced by London's markets.[5] The closeness of this association is readily seen, for example, if the prices of bread in each area are compared.[6] It is apparent from Figure 13 that between 1790 and 1815 the price of the quartern loaf (wheaten) in Essex and London was almost identical. Bread prices in both areas fluctuated in parallel series along the same trend, experiencing similar peaks and troughs in price, and sharing, in their rate of change, the same

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1 Ibid.

2 Defoe, op. cit. pp. 9, 15. H. Moore, A New and Comprehensive System of Universal Geography (1811), p. 45. E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (1967), p. 138.

3 Griggs, op. cit. pp. 13-14. The produce was sent to Covent Garden.

4 Ibid. p. 11. Young, II op. cit., p. 31. J. C. Cox, Essex (1909), p. 48. Hops were also grown in the Chelmsford area, Brown, op. cit. pp. 36-7.

5 Griggs, op. cit. p. 8. A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), pp. 323-31.

6 Bread prices for London have been derived from G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXV (1902), p. 688.

FIG. 13

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Essex and London 1790–1840

degree of amplification.[1] As a similar relationship to this was found between Kent and London it would seem that as far as this item is concerned these areas were all part of one big market in which the cost of living was approximately the same.[2]

The main sources of evidence used in this study have been derived from a number of areas in the county. Commodity prices for the 1790-1834 period[3] have been obtained from the Provisions Accounts of nine parish workhouses;[4] prices for 1835-40[5] have been extracted from the Provisions of six Poor Law Unions.[6] The provisions purchased by these institutions were made at regular intervals and were primarily for the poor and needy

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1 Gourvish found a similar relationship between bread prices in London and Glasgow in this period. Between 1788 and 1805 the quartern loaf in Glasgow were generally more expensive, by a margin of about 1¾d., than in London. Between 1805 and 1815 the quartern loaf in both areas were almost identical and differed by an average margin of 1 per cent. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

2 This point is considered further in section IV of this chapter.

3 These prices are monthly contract prices for bread (quartern loaf), meat (beef, mutton, pork), cheese, butter, tea, sugar, candles, soap, and shoes. Prices of other commodities, such as beer, coal, potatoes, or clothing, were not available. For each commodity, the monthly prices have been collated into an annual average price.

4 E.R.O.: D/P 166/12/10-12. Chigwell Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 96/12/17-19. Halstead Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 4/12/3-5. Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 94/18/4-12. Chelmsford Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 118/18/2. Cranham Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 49/12/3. Stisted Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 264/12/41-44. Braintree Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 107/12/5. Rivenhall Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. D/P 203/12/51. St. Botolph Parish (Colchester) Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts.

5 These prices are quarterly contract prices and have been collated into annual averages.

6 E.R.O.: G/TM 1-9. Tendring Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/Bi M 1-3. Billericay Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/Ch M 1-4. Chelmsford Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/D M 1-2. Dunmow Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/Br M 1. Braintree Poor Law Union Minute Book. G/Sw M 1-2. Saffron Walden Poor Law Union Minute Book.

who were under their care. All these parishes are scattered over a wide area of the county and the prices derived from these sources forms the basis from which the cost of living index has been calculated.[1]

In analysing the varying pattern and form of the constituent parts of this index it is clear that on the demand side London exerted an important influence upon the level of prices in Essex. On the supply side factors such as the effects of the weather upon domestic harvests, or the curtailment of food imports due to the Napoleonic war, had a varying impact upon individual commodity prices and exerted a profound influence upon the general level and trend of the all-items index.

In the case of bread prices the role of the weather was particularly important as bread was the most important item in the labourers' diet.[2] From an average price of 7d. in 1790 the price of the quartern loaf rose to reach 11d. by 1795 owing to an outbreak of inclement weather which depleted the wheat crop by a quarter of its normal size.[3] One consequence of this price increase was an outbreak of rioting in various parts of the county. Food riots broke out at Colchester, Saffron Walden, and Braintree; flour mills were attacked and shipments of corn were forcibly prevented

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1 See Map 3, p. 168. The prices quoted in this chapter are the prices parish workhouses actually paid for their provisions and no account has been taken of their discount rates. The main reason for this is that the cost of living index is primarily concerned with the rate by which prices changed from their base year rather than the actual level of prices.

2 Bread accounted for half to two-thirds of total household expenditure on Food and Drink and, because of its importance, frequently became a sensitive issue when its price rose by an abnormal amount, leading to public protests and widespread rioting. See below. See also E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy and the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.

3 Annals of Agriculture, XXV (1796), p. 494.

from leaving the area.[1] In July 1795 300 people assembled in the market place at Saffron Walden and demanded a reduction in the prices of provisions. The town bakers were forced to sell their flour at 2s. a peck, and their bread at 7d. per quartern loaf, to the inhabitants of the town.[2] Corn mills were attacked at Halstead, and their contents pillaged,[3] whilst in the Malden area an outraged mob seized quantities of flour which were due to be shipped to London and sold it to local inhabitants at reduced prices.[4]

The return of better harvests over the following three years brought down the price of bread in Essex, to an average of 7¼d. per quartern loaf by 1798, and temporarily removed the cause of discontent. The return of adverse weather in the following year, however, was the cause of fresh outbursts of discontent. The summer of 1799 was so wet that the potato crop was reduced by a half and the barley crop was so bad that half of it was unfit for malting.[5] The wheat crop was also seriously damaged and was reported to have produced only two quarters of 'thin, damp, poor stuff' per acre.[6] Indeed, by March 1800 the wheat crop in Essex was deficient

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1 D. W. Coller, The People's History of Essex (Chelmsford, 1861), p. 174. Brown, op. cit. pp. 131, 162. See also J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order. Six Studies in British History 1790-1820 (1974), pp. 36, 44.

2 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 31 July 1795, p. 3. The situation became so desperate that the mayor was obliged to send to Colchester for military assistance.

3 E.R.O. Q/Sb 361/74. Information of William Woodhall, 7 August 1795.

4 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 7 August 1795, p. 3. One of the main characteristic features of these disturbances was that they took place at important communications centres or at market towns from which grain was normally sent to London. Jackson, op. cit. pp. 43-5. Brown (1969), op. cit. p. 57.

5 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 95.

6 Ibid.

by a third of its normal size and the condition of the rural poor, now compelled to substitute barley bread for wheaten bread, was variously described as 'very uncomfortable' and 'worse than ever'.[1]

Indeed, by 1800 the average price of the quartern loaf had risen to 1s. 3½d., which was more than double the price prevailing in 1790, and was the cause of fresh outbreaks of rioting in the county. At Steeple a mob demanded that prices should be lowered or wages increased,[2] whilst in Harwich market a crowd seized quantities of provisions and sold them to the people.[3] In several parishes in the Great Bardfield - Saffron Walden area millers, shopkeepers, and ministers received letters threatening to burn their property down if the prices of provisions were not lowered.[4] Anonymous letters were circulated in Chelmsford urging the people of the town to meet in the market place to try and lower the prices of provisions.[5] Indeed, such was the mood of the populace over a wide area of the county that local troops of militia were alerted to stand-by at Chelmsford, Great Bardfield, Harwich, and Halstead in case rioting broke out there.[6] An anonymous letter, addressed to the 'Landowners and Yeomandry' of the county, served to underline the seriousness of the situation:

> You need not sharpen your Sords nor Pride yourselves with the Plasur you will Receve by killing a Stervid multitude . . . you Sant have the Plasur of killing of us as you Count

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1 Ibid. pp. 561-6.

2 The Ipswich Journal, 14 June 1800, p. 2.

3 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 19 September 1800, p. 2.

4 Ibid. 27 June 1800, p. 3. E.R.O. Q/SBb 380/66/1-3. Letter from Lord Braybrook to William Bullock, 18 July 1800.

5 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 26 September 1800, p. 3.

6 Ibid. 27 June - 24 October 1800, passim.

> so much of Youmandry you have began the sham fammenn we will make a Rail one we had Rather be hanged then Stervid in the midst of Plenty you have Stervid us long a nuf. Your houses shall all be in flames.[1]

This situation, however, was temporarily alleviated in 1802-3 when an improvement in domestic harvests brought the average price of bread down to 9½d. a quartern loaf.[2] From that point bread prices began to increase over the next nine years, owing to a run of bad weather and deficient crops,[3] to reach a peak of 1s. 6d. a loaf by 1812. As in the case of Kent, this was the highest point reached by bread prices in the period under review and represented a price increase of 157 per cent.[4] The return of better harvests towards the end of the French war reduced the price of the quartern loaf to 10¾d. by 1815 and, apart from a temporary rise in price to 1s. 2d. in 1817, due to wet harvests in 1816-17, this downward trend was maintained until 1822.[5] Bread prices fell sharply over this period owing to a sequence of four good harvests which produced exceptionally heavy crops of cereals and resulted in a fall in the price of the quartern loaf to 8½d. by 1822.[6] Indeed, by 1822 the price of wheat in Essex had not been so low since 1792 and, as a consequence, produced a 'great depreciation in the value of all farming stock and produce' in the

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1 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 14 November 1800, p. 1.

2 T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838-57), I, p. 238.

3 Ibid. pp. 293-8, 319-25.

4 The price of the quartern loaf in Kent increased by 167 per cent. over the same period.

5 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Memorandum Book of Joseph Page. Joseph Page farmed thirty acres of land at Fingringhoe, near Colchester, and kept a detailed record of his farming activities and the state of the weather there between 1814 and 1834. See also A. F. J. Brown, Essex People 1750-1900 from their Diaries, Memoirs, and Letters (Chelmsford, 1972), pp. 90-103.

6 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit.

county.[1] According to a farmer from Great Holland on the Essex coast,

> Many farmers that commenced business with war prices and borrowed capital were ruined. Those that did continue their holdings experienced great difficulties . . . The land was not so well cultivated, numbers of hands were thrown out of employment . . . Farms that were re-let, the landlords had to take less rental.[2]

The downward trend in prices was temporarily arrested during the following two years, owing to two excessively wet harvests which severely damaged the wheat, barley, and oat crops, and then resumed its previous course again between 1825 and 1827 owing to good harvests and a rise in imports of corn.[3] By 1827 the price of the quartern loaf had fallen to 8¼d., which was about 18 per cent. higher than its average price in 1790, and, apart from a slight recovery in 1828-30,[4] continued to fall during the abundant years of 1832-5 to reach a level of 5½d. by 1835.[5] Indeed, such was the fall in farm prices and profits in these years that the farming classes were said to be in a 'deplorable condition', though this situation was soon remedied with an upturn of prices over the late 1830's.[6]

As in the case of cereal crops, the weather also exerted an important influence upon the supply price of meat.[7] It is evident from the parish

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1 Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 73.

2 Ibid. Memoir of Charles Hicks, Farmer of Great Holland, 1778-1865.

3 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. E.R.O. D/DU 224/1-3. Samuel Watkinson of Black Notley. Crop and Labour Accounts. Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 73. According to Charles Hicks the 1824 harvest was a wet one and the cereal crops were 'badley got up'.

4 The harvests of 1828, 1829, and 1830 were spoilt by rain. E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. A similar experience occurred in Kent.

5 Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture 1836, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII(ii), p. 154.

6 First Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture 1836, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII(i), pp. 103-4.

7 See p. 113 for the ways in which the weather affected the supply price of meat.

accounts for Essex that meat, mainly beef, mutton, and pork, was regularly purchased by the Poor Law authorities for consumption in the workhouse. The long-run trend of these prices is illustrated in Figure 14 and clearly shows that the three series, with minor exceptions, followed a parallel course and fluctuated within a range of 4d. and 10¼d. a pound.[1]

From an average level of about 4d. a pound in 1790 meat prices in Essex increased over the adverse years of the early war period and by 1803 had doubled in price.[2] Beef and mutton prices fell slightly over the next five years and then, owing to a run of bad weather which caused high mortality rates among livestock, increased to reach an average of 10d. a pound by 1813.[3] This was the highest point reached by meat prices in Essex in the period under review and represented a 130 per cent. increase in price since 1790. Prices fell from this war-time peak until 1817, and then recovered to their war-time level again in 1818 and 1819 owing to a drought and shortages of livestock.[4] Indeed, the summer of 1818 was one of the hottest and driest remembered in the county and moved Samuel Watkinson to note in his Crop Book,

> All the part of June very dry and hot, and all July very hot, July 24th could not bear our beds but oblige either to sit up or lie down with our Cloath on.[5]

Between 1819 and 1822 meat prices in Essex fell to their lowest point in the post-war period following a rise in fodder crop prices, due to two dry summers in 1820 and 1822, and a consequent increase in the

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1 Beef and mutton prices in Kent fluctuated within a similar range.

2 Meat prices in Kent increased by a similar amount.

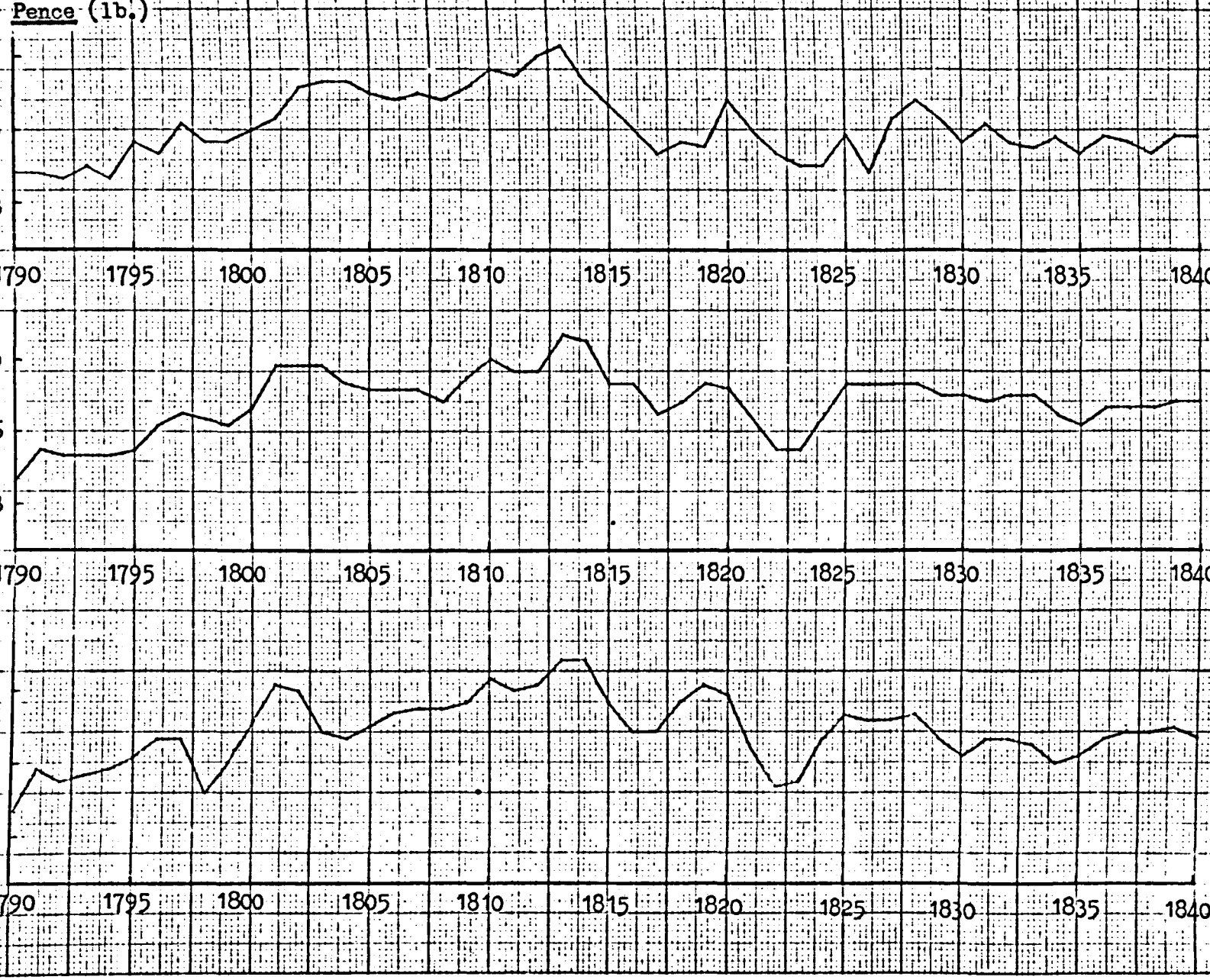
3 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-300, 319-25. II, p. 4. E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), pp. 158-9.

4 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. Jones, op. cit. p. 161.

5 E.R.O. D/DU 224/2. Watkinson, op. cit. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 21-2.

FIG. 14

The Prices of Beef, Mutton, and Pork in Essex 1790–1840



liquidation sales of cattle and sheep.[1] As a result of this situation the average prices of beef, mutton, and pork fell to 5d., 5¼d. and 5d. a pound, respectively, by 1822[2] and, at that level, were a mere 1d. a pound dearer than in 1790. Within three years, however, meat prices had recovered their war-time level again owing to an outbreak of foot rot during the wet summers of 1823-4.[3] A shortage of livestock, and a scarcity of feed,[4] maintained meat prices at a relatively high level over the remainder of the decade and then, over the early 1830's, prices began to fall to a slightly lower level owing to a run of good fodder harvests.[5]

Variations in the weather also exerted an important influence upon perishable commodities such as dairy produce. A summer drought, for example, by reducing the supply of feed to the dairy herds, could adversely affect the supply price of milk and therefore the prices of cheese and butter. Alternatively, a warm wet summer could lead to an outbreak of liver fluke among dairy cattle, resulting in a fall in milk yields and a rise in dairy prices.[6] Given the possible causes of variations in dairy

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1 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 84-5. Jones, op. cit. p. 162.

2 In Kent beef and mutton were 5½d. and 5d. a pound respectively.

3 E.R.O. D/DU 224/2. Watkinson, op. cit. Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

4 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. The summers of 1825, 1826, and 1827 were hot and dry and produced a drought. According to Samuel Watkinson, the summer of 1826 was so hot that 'People did not know how to bear it'. E.R.O. D/DU 224/2. Watkinson, op. cit. An observer from Prittlewell, writing in May 1826, noted 'Unless we have rain very shortly, the crops on the hot lands will all be spoiled, and, as to hay, it is not thought of'. Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 139.

5 The fall in prices was said to have caused distress among livestock farmers. First Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 103.

6 Jones, op. cit. p. 99.

prices, due to the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short run, cheese and butter were common items of consumption in agricultural labourers' diets[1] and were regularly purchased by parish workhouses in the county. An average of the prices paid by these institutions for cheese and butter between 1790 and 1840 are illustrated in Figures 15-16.

In examining the relationship between the prices of these two commodities it is clear that, as in the case of Kent, butter was always dearer than cheese and tended to lie within a price range of 8d. to 1s. 5½d. a pound compared with a range of 4½d. to 8¾d. a pound for cheese. The prices of both commodities fluctuated on a sharply rising trend over the period of the French war, causing considerable distress to the labouring classes, and by 1815 had, on average, doubled in price.[2] At the end of the war cheese and butter prices fell sharply, but increased to their war-time level again in 1818 due to drought conditions,[3] and then fell continuously over the following five years to lie within a penny of their pre-war level by 1823. However, over the next few years dairy prices recovered some of their former level following an excessively wet summer in 1824, which produced an outbreak of cattle rot, and two droughts in 1825 and 1826, which reduced milk supplies.[4] An improvement in the weather, coupled with an increase in the supply of fodder crops during the early 1830's[5] assisted to bring down the level of dairy prices to their pre-war level by the end of the decade.

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1 See p. 196.

2 Riots broke out in 1795 and 1800 at Saffron Walden and Harwich over the high prices of cheese and butter. The Chelmsford Chronicle, 13 July 1795, 19 September 1800, p. 2.

3 E.R.O. D/DU 251/93. Page, op. cit. E.R.O. D/DU 224/2. Watkinson, op. cit.

4 Ibid. Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 73. Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 226, 231-8.

FIG. 15

The Price of Butter in Essex 1790-1840

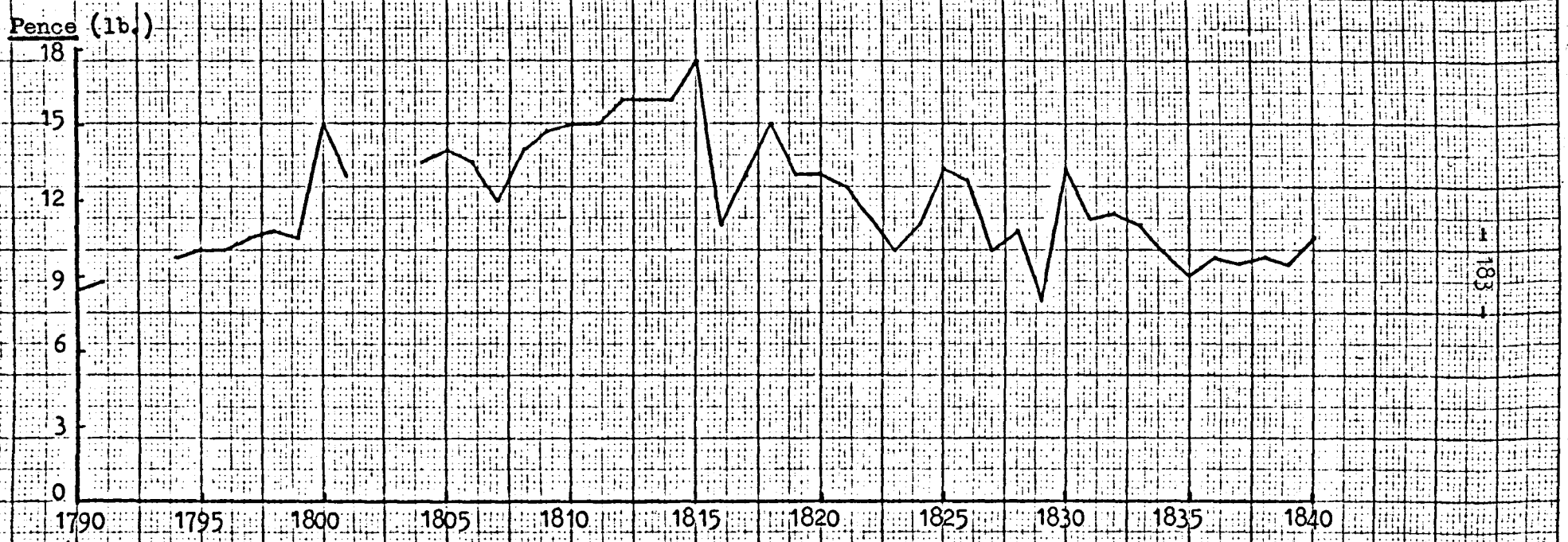
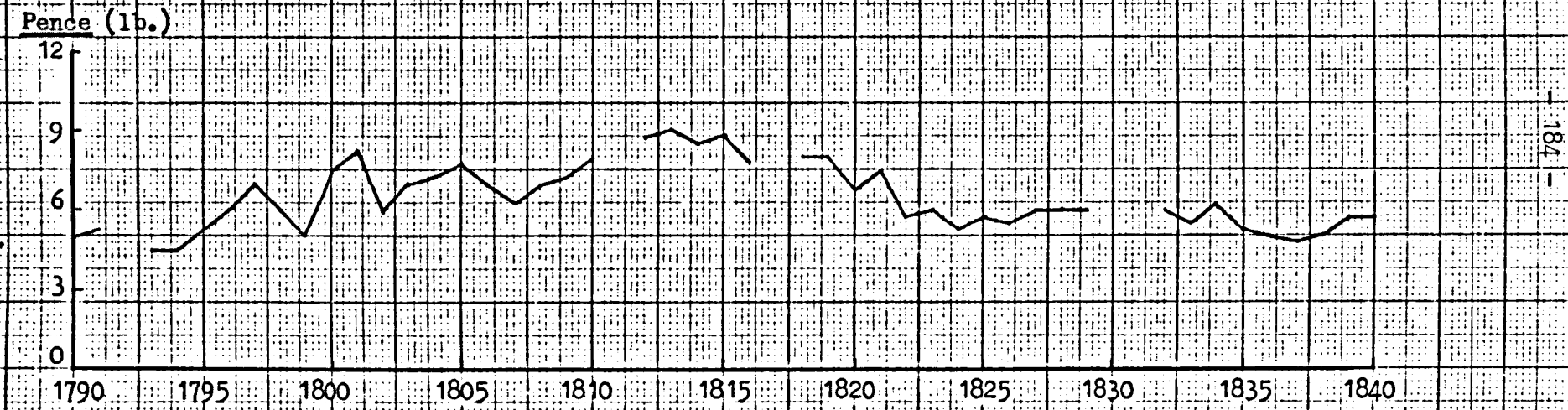


FIG. 16

The Price of Cheese in Essex 1790–1840



Parish workhouses in Essex also made regular purchases of tea and sugar and these two items form part of the Food and Drink category.[1] It is evident from Figure 17 that tea prices followed a more stable long-run trend than sugar prices and, as in the case of Kent, varied within a range of 2¼d. to 6¼d. an ounce.[2] The long-run trend of tea prices showed a steady rise in price from 1790 to 1805, a level course until 1815, followed by a long progressive decline which lasted until the late 1830's. Starting from an average price of 3d. an ounce in 1790 the price of tea in Essex had doubled in price by 1805.[3] The same price increase to this was also experienced in Kent and, in both instances, was directly linked to a doubling of the tea duty in this period.[4] Tea prices remained at 6d. an ounce for the next decade and then, from the end of the French war progressively declined with a lowering of the tea duty to reach 2¼d. an ounce by 1837.[5] From that point, which was the lowest point reached in the whole period under review, tea prices began to rise towards the end of the decade with an increase in the tea duty.[6]

Sugar prices, though more volatile than tea prices, shared a similar long-run trend. From an average price of 6¾d. a pound in 1790 the price

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1 Tea and sugar were minor items of expenditure which accounted for about 10 per cent. or less of a labourer's expenditure on Food and Drink.

2 Variations in tea and sugar prices were also closely related to variations in the state of war and the imposition, by the government, of *ad valorem* duties on these commodities on their entry into the country. The main changes in these duties are outlined on pp. 119-22 and are not repeated here.

3 In July 1800 Joseph Page paid 4s. 4d. a pound for his tea. Brown, op. cit. p. 94.

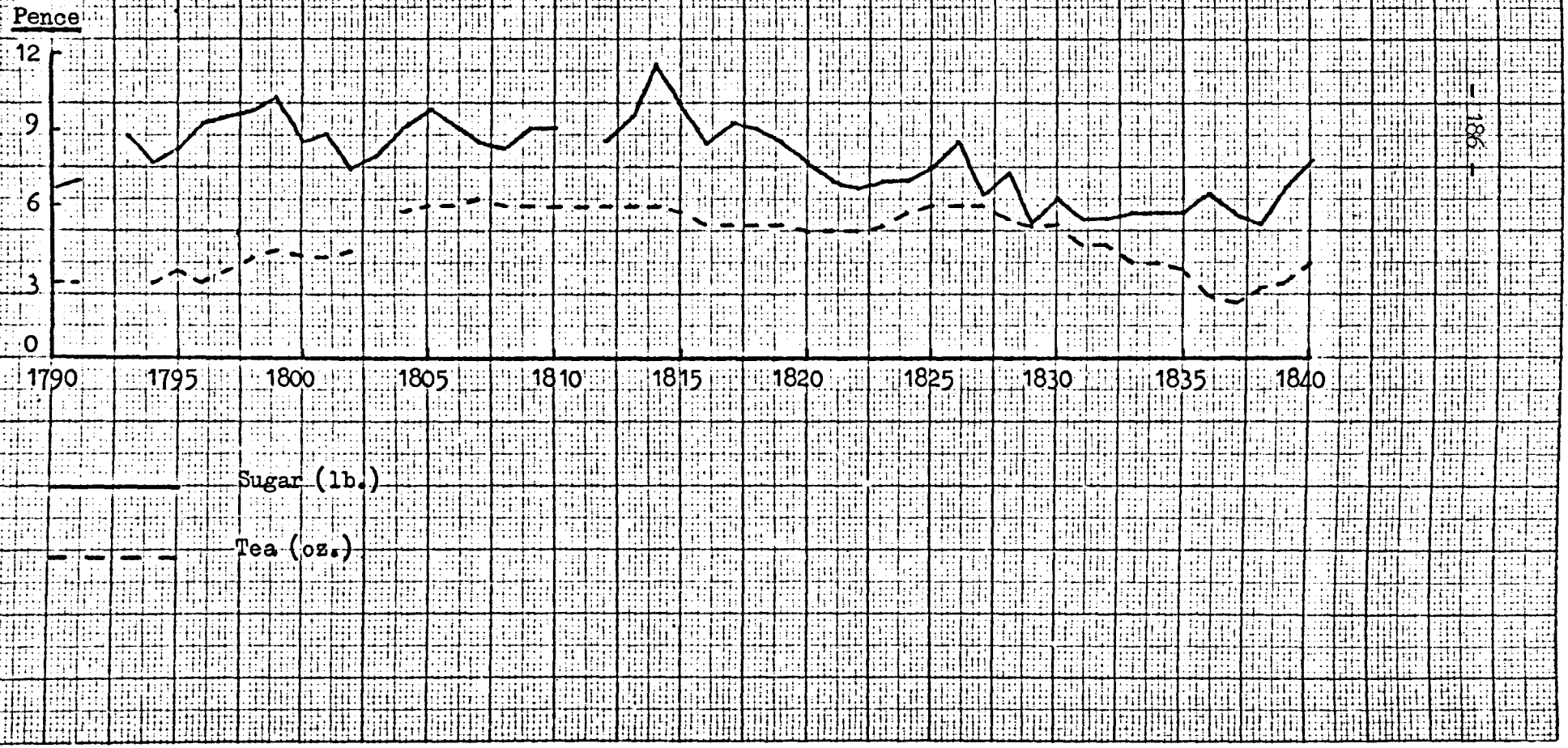
4 T. Tooke, *Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years from 1793 to 1822* (1824), pp. 59-60.

5 *Report on Wholesale and Retail Prices in the United Kingdom in 1902*, Parl. Papers 1903, LXVIII, pp. 176-7.

6 J. Burnett, *Plenty and Want* (Penguin (ed.) 1968), p. 23.

FIG. 17

The Prices of Tea and Sugar in Essex 1790-1840



of sugar in Essex fluctuated on a rising trend over the course of the Napoleonic war to reach a peak of 11½d. a pound by 1814.[1] This price increase, of 70 per cent., was similar to the increase recorded for Kent, At the end of the war sugar prices fell, owing to a rise in imported sugar,[2] to reach 6¾d. a pound by 1822, and then briefly recovered to their war-time level again by 1826. From that point sugar prices in Essex declined over the following decade and a half, owing to a reduction in the sugar duty and a rise in sugar imports,[3] to reach 5¼d. a pound by 1838.

The prices of all these commodities - the quartern loaf, meat, cheese, butter, tea, and sugar - constitute the Food and Drink category in the cost of living index. In addition to this important category of expenditure the prices of non-consumables must also be taken into account. Figure 18 for example, shows the trend of candle and soap prices in Essex. It is clear from the trend of these prices that both series shared an almost identical course, with the price of candles tending to exceed the price of soap by a small margin throughout most of the period.[4] As in the case of all the other commodities purchased by the various workhouses in Essex, candle and soap prices increased continuously over the course of the French war, owing to severe shortages of domestic and imported tallow,[5] to reach a major peak in 1809. In that year the average prices of candles and soap rose to 1s. 2½d. and 1s. 1¾d. a pound respectively and represented on

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1 The sugar duty doubled in this period. Tooke, op. cit. pp. 46-9.

2 Ibid. pp. 55-60, 359. B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 355-6.

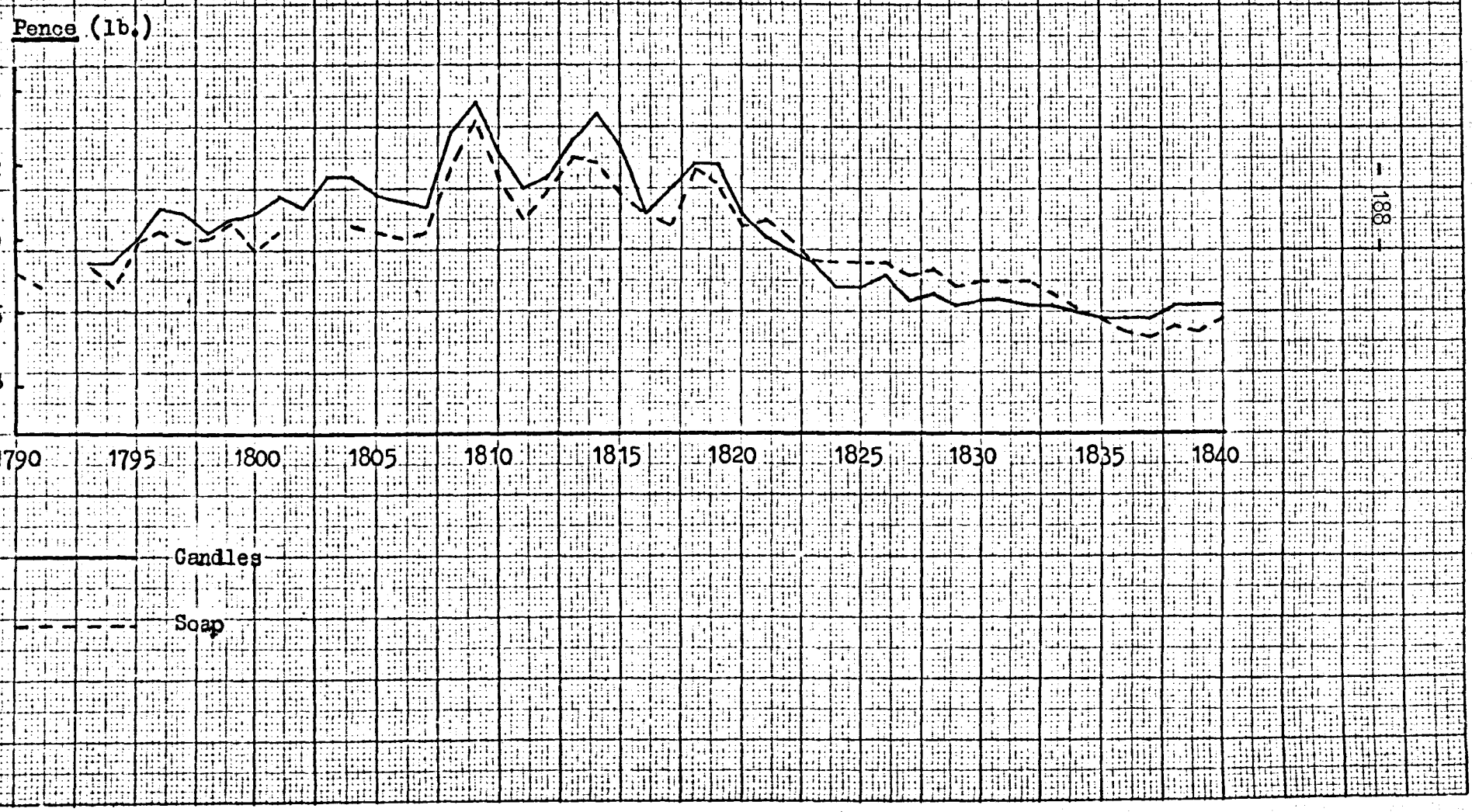
3 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 140-7, 157, 211. L. M. Brown, The Board of Trade and the Free Trade Movement, 1830-42 (Oxford, 1958), p. 36.

4 This was also true in the case of Kent.

5 Tooke, op. cit. pp. 360-1. The closure of the Baltic ports to British shipping during the war severely reduced imports of tallow into the country.

FIG. 18

The Prices of Candles and Soap in Essex 1790–1840



an average increase of 76 per cent. since 1790. Two further periods of dearth, when tallow was in short supply, in 1811-13 and 1816-18 produced two more major peaks in 1814 and 1818-19.[1] From that point onwards, however, candle and soap prices fell continuously over the next twenty years due to an increase in supplies of imported tallow.[2] Indeed, such was the fall in prices after the peak of 1818-19 that from the mid 1820's onwards that the prices of these two items remained below their pre-war level, thus conferring a minor gain on those who purchased these commodities.[3]

Fuel, either firewood or coal, was another item of expenditure which appeared in labourers' household budgets. It is clear from what little literary evidence there is on this essential commodity that the fuel situation in Essex was similar to that in Kent in that firewood was difficult to obtain and was expensive. As in the case of Kent, by the late eighteenth century large quantities of firewood were being sent out of the county to London.[4] In addition to this factor, timber prices were also high due to the grubbing-up of woodland areas in order to put the land down to arable cultivation.[5] The fuel situation in Essex was so bad by the early nineteenth century that Arthur Young was able to note that only a

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1 Ibid. Tooke and Newmarch, II op. cit. p. 25. Associated with this increase, it is also significant that the prices of beef, mutton, and pork (the fat of which was used to make tallow) also rose to a peak in 1813-14 and 1818-19. A similar increase was also recorded in Kent.

2 Tooke, op. cit. p. 361. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 25, 392.

3 This gain was only small as the combined expenditure on candles and soap in labourers' budgets accounted for only 3 per cent. of total household expenditure.

4 Brown (1969), op. cit. p. 30.

5 Griggs, op. cit. p. 21.

small number of people could afford to purchase firewood whilst the rest were obliged to burn turf, hop-bines, and straw, or steal their firewood.[1] The fact that the rural labouring classes were reduced to stealing firewood in order to heat their cottage homes is a clear indication of the desperate state of the fuel situation in the county at that time. This observation is readily confirmed by a glance at the types of offences brought before Essex magistrates during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was during this period that such offences as 'stealing wood' and 'breaking and carrying away timber' were by far the most common petty 'crimes' appearing before Essex courts.[2]

One consequence of the wood shortage was that more coal was burnt in the county. Arthur Young noted,

> . . . coal is everywhere gaining ground upon wood; and in a few years, not improbably a great part of our labourers must have recourse to the same substitute.[3]

Indeed, by this time several thousands of tons of coal were being imported into Essex and many Poor Law institutions in the county were making large scale purchases of coal for the relief of the labouring poor.[4] Despite the existence of this practice, however, it has not, unfortunately, been possible to discover any price data on this commodity and it has therefore been necessary to exclude the Fuel category from the cost of living index.[5]

Essex Poor Law records also contained no references to the prices of

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1 Young, II, op. cit. p. 381.

2 E.R.O. Q/RSc 1/1-6 (1791-1842). Records of Summary Convictions.

3 Young, II, op. cit. p. 381.

4 Brown (1969), op. cit. pp. 87-91, 119-21, 124. Farmers sometimes carried coal and sold it to the public.

5 The omission of the Fuel category from the cost of living index is not considered serious as the item accounted for less than 6 per cent. of total household expenditure.

clothes and therefore this item of expenditure has also been left out of the cost of living index.[1] However, many parish workhouses did purchase quantities of men's shoes and it has been possible to incorporate their prices into the cost of living index for a period of twenty-nine years.[2]

The item Cottage Rent constitutes the last main category of expenditure in the cost of living index. As in the case of Kent, the main difficulty involved in handling this somewhat fragmentary evidence[3] is the problem of measuring the extent by which cottage rents varied from one type of dwelling to another and, given this differential, the extent by which they changed over time.[4] Regrettably, the evidence does not permit such an analysis as this, though it does provide a picture of the general trend and pattern of cottage rents in the county as a whole. In examining this evidence it is apparent that the supply of cottages in Essex was inadequate and of a poor standard. At the end of the eighteenth century many of the cottages in western Essex were found to be 'squalid' whilst those in the south-eastern half of the county were described as being 'bad'.[5] In 1795 Charles Vancouver, whilst undertaking an agricultural survey of the county, noted that there was 'an evident want of cottages'[6] and this observation gained the support of Arthur Young some

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1 This was also the case in all the other counties in this study. Expenditure on Clothing was not large and accounted for only 10 per cent. of total household expenditure. See pp. 60-1 for a further discussion on this item.

2 Shoe prices have been regarded as an acceptable alternative to boot prices. See p. 61.

3 The main sources of evidence have been extracted from various farm, estate, parish, and contemporary printed sources.

4 This point is discussed further on p. 57-9

5 Brown (1969), op. cit. p. 129. Even as late as 1870 Essex cottages left much to be desired. B. S. Clarke, 'The Essex Agricultural Labourer', J.R.S.S., XXXIII (1870), p. 271.

6 Vancouver, op. cit. p. 68.

years later when he noted that 'New cottages in the larger part of the county are much wanted'.[1] Even as late as the 1830's and 1850's the same situation seemed to prevail in the county. In 1832, for example, Joseph Marriage of Chelmsford lamented the lack of proper cottage accommodation in the county:

> The great inconvenience and suffering of the poor are owing to the want of suitable cottages at a moderate rent . . . Even in this parish, the committees have been astonished at the inadequate provision of many of the cottages, large families being obliged to occupy houses only sufficient to accommodate two or three persons.[2]

Similarly, in 1850 James Caird was moved to note that there was a scarcity of cottages in the county.[3] In the areas where cottages were found, many had no gardens and in those instances where gardens were provided they tended to be rather small.[4] In addition to this a further difficulty was that cottages which had a garden tended to command relatively high rents.[5]

In examining the pattern of cottage rents in Essex it is clear that their geographical structure was affected by similar factors to those operating in Kent. In other words, rents were higher in parishes close to London than anywhere else and diminished, except in the vicinity of large populous towns and villages, towards the remoter parts of the county in the north and east. For example, in the 1830's cottage rents

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1 Young, I, op. cit. pp. 49-50. Young noted, 'At Dunton there are not houses to cover the inhabitants already in that miserably peopled place'.

2 J. Marriage, Letters on the Distressed State of the Agricultural Labourers (Chelmsford, 1832), II, p. 5. This was also true in various parts of Essex in the 1860's. Reports of Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, Parl. Papers. 1867-8, XVII, First Report, Appendix II, pp. 68-9.

3 J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 136.

4 Brown (1969), op. cit. p. 133.

5 First Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 114.

were particularly high at East Ham (£6-£10) and Walthamstow (£8-£10) on the periphery of London and in certain large parishes in the southern half of the county such as Romford (£6), Rayleigh (£5), and Rochford (£4-£10).[1] Rents were also high in the county town of Chelmsford (£4-£8) and at Springfield (£2 10s. - £7), but diminished in the northern half of the county at Thaxted (£3-£5), Stebbing (£2 10s. - £3 10s.), Bulmer (£2 12s.) and Castle Hedingham (£3 10s.).[2]

An impression may be gained of the long-run trend of cottage rents in Essex from the figures quoted in various farm, estate, and parish records in the Essex Record Office, and in certain printed sources. These are summarised as follows:

TABLE 15

COTTAGE RENTS IN ESSEX 1771-1844

Year	Location	Rent per Annum
1771[1]	Hadleigh	40s.
1805[2]	Chigwell	50s.
1806[2]	"	50s.
1807[2]	"	50s.
1808[2]	"	50s.
1809[2]	"	50s.
1819[3]	Cranham	100s.
1820[3]	"	60s.-130s.
1822[3]	"	52s.
1824[4]	Colchester	65s.-104s.
1824[5]	Black Notley	60s.-80s.
1825[5]	" "	40s.-60s.
1827[3]	Cranham	60s.
1829[6]	Hornchurch	64s.-105s.
1830[6]	"	100s.

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1 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 167-90.

2 Ibid.

Year	Location	Rent per Annum
1836[7]	Southminster	70s.-100s.
1836[8]	"	70s.-120s.
1844[9]	Danbury	70s.-100s.

Sources:

1 A. Young, A Farmer's Tour through the East of England (1771), II, p. 204.

2 E.R.O. D/P 166/12/11 Chigwell Parish Overseer's Accounts. It is not possible to say whether these rents were for the same cottage.

3 E.R.O. D/P 118/18/2 Cranham Parish Overseer's Accounts.

4 E.R.O. D/P 138/12/2 St. James (Colchester) Parish Overseer's Accounts.

5 E.R.O. D/DU 224/3-4. Watkinson, op. cit.

6 E.R.O. D/P 115/8/1-2 Hornchurch Parish Vestry Minutes.

7 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 15 April 1836, p. 4.

8 First Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII(i), pp. 114, 163.

9 R. Baker, 'On the Farming of Essex', J.R.A.S., V (1844), p. 31.

These figures suggest that cottage rents in Essex doubled,[1] from 40s. to about 85s. a year, between the 1770's and the 1840's. This impression also gains support from the observations of contemporary writers. Joseph Marriage, for example, thought that cottage rents in Essex had doubled between the 1790's and the 1830's,[2] whilst James Caird, writing in 1850-51, thought that rents had doubled since the 1770's.[3] In view of the obvious dangers involved in making generalisations on the

[1] The evidence for Kent also suggests that cottage rents doubled there.

[2] Marriage, op. cit. pp. 17-18.

[3] Caird, op. cit. p. 474.

basis of this kind of evidence it has been necessary to assume that cottage rents did not change during this period.[1]

III. Household Expenditure

At this point it is necessary to draw together the five main categories of household expenditure - Food and Drink, Cottage Rent, Candles, Soap, and Shoes - and collate them into a single index. In attaching a set of weights to each category, the weights have been directly related to the amount of money agricultural labourers laid-out on these items in their household budgets.

TABLE 16

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE[2]

	%
Food and Drink	67.7
Cottage Rent	8.8
Fuel	5.4
Clothing	10.2
Shoes	1.7
Candles	1.5
Soap	1.5
Miscellaneous	3.2
	100.0

The weights which have been attached to the six commodities in the Food and Drink category - the quartern loaf, meat, cheese, butter, tea, and sugar - are the same as those used in Kent and are based upon the amount of money

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[1] These points are discussed at greater length on pp. 57 - 9 and need not be repeated here. It will be appreciated, however, that such a 'safe' assumption as this will tend to understate, rather than overstate, the rise in the cost of living.

[2] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), pp. 180-3. The Miscellaneous category contains a number of imponderables such as medicine and the cost of 'lying-in' and has been omitted from the index because of a lack of information on these items.

agricultural labourers spent on these items in their family budgets.[1] In the light of the dietary evidence for the period it is clear that these items formed the staple part of the labourers' sustenance, though at certain times necessity compelled the labourers to adjust their pattern of consumption. During the Napoleonic war, for example, certain changes took place in the labourers' diet owing to the enormous rise in the price of bread. Between 1790 and 1795 the price of bread in Essex rose by 57 per cent. and it is evident, from the correspondence in the Annals of Agriculture, that as a result of this increase the labouring classes in the county were obliged to reduce their consumption of wheaten bread (and meat) and eat more barley bread and potatoes.[2] At Bradfield, Dunmow, and Gosfield, for instance, potatoes were substituted for meat in the labourers' diet.[3] In 1795 John Howlett, commenting on the labourers' diets in the Dunmow area, noted,

> Very little meat, of any kind, is within reach of the poor; and butter and cheese, from the smallness of the quantity they can purchase, come to them still dearer . . . they have long made considerable use of potatoes, either mixed with flour and made into bread, or boiled and sprinkled with a little salt, and eaten by themselves . . . The conditions of our poor is every day more wretched than ever.[4]

Arthur Young confirmed this view in 1807 when he wrote,

> I have some reason to think that the increased culture and consumption of potatoes (scarcely known in 1767), has made

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[1] See p. 134.

[2] Owing to a lack of specific information on the degree of substitution, its geographic distribution within the county, and whether or not it was of a permanent or temporary nature, makes it difficult to measure its net effect upon the labourers' standard of living. Further, the fact that there appears to be no comprehensive long-run price series for such substitutes as potatoes, herrings, or rice makes it impossible to quantify these commodities and incorporate the result into the cost of living index.

[3] Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 48-57, 150-61. In other areas the labourers clung tenaciously to their traditional diet.

[4] Ibid. p. 161. Annals, XXV (1796), pp. 601-2.

up to the poor the rise in these (meat, butter and cheese) articles.[1]

By the 1820's the potato remained an important part of the agricultural labourers' diet in Essex.[2] According to the dietary evidence collected by the Poor Law Commissioners in Essex in 1834 it is evident that if the labourers could afford it they subsisted on a diet of bread, cheese, potatoes, and a small amount of meat, tea, and sugar:[3]

Parish	Diet
Bocking	Bread chiefly, and potatoes.
Harlow	Bread, bacon, cheese, potatoes, and milk.
Castle Hedingham	Principally on bread.
Rochford	Principally on bread, potatoes, tea, milk, occasionally a little meat and beer.
Great Waltham	They generally live upon bread, cheese, some butter, some tea and sugar, with a very little pork or meat.

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various commodities in the five main categories of expenditure have been combined, in Laspeyres form, to provide a cost of living index for the county.[4] This index is illustrated in Figure 19 and it is evident from the information it gives that the history of the

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1 Young, II, op. cit. p. 376.

2 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 108.

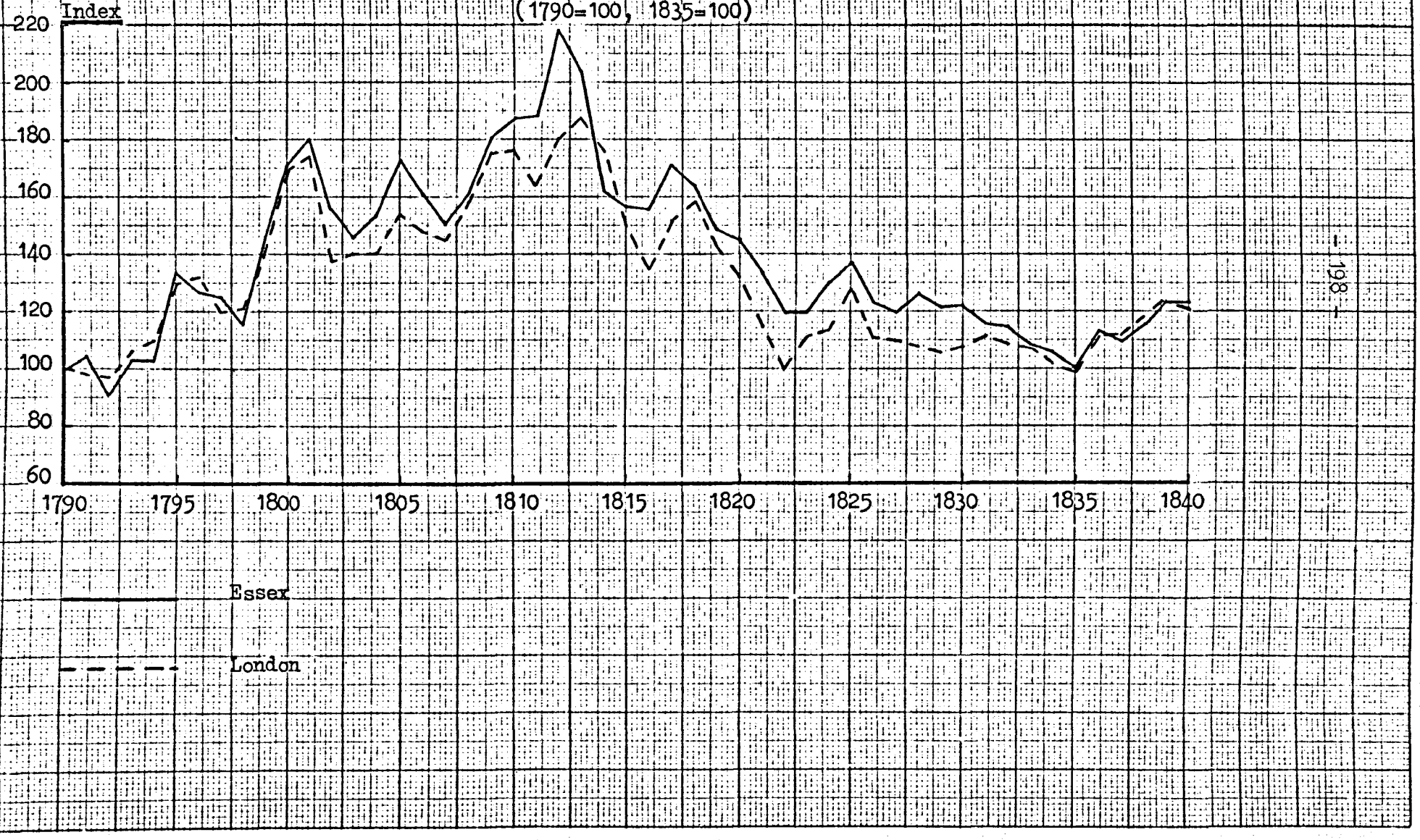
3 Report into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI Appendix B.1, pp. 167-88. Evidence for the 1840's shows that the labouring classes in Essex lived on the same diet. T. F. Unwin (ed.), The Hungry Forties, Life under the Bread Tax (1905), pp. 58-70. Although this book provides a somewhat biased account of the labourers' conditions the evidence it presents is consistent with the dietary evidence in other sources. See, for example, The Essex Review, IX (1900), p. 224, XVIII (1909), p. 148. It is also interesting to note that as late as 1870 the Essex labourer, according to one authority, still showed 'the want of a meat diet'. Clarke, op. cit. p. 271.

4 The working of this formula is explained on p. 65.

FIG. 19

The Cost of Living in Essex and London 1790-1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



cost of living in Essex, like that in Kent, fell into three well-defined sub-periods; a period of rapid inflation lasting from 1794 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except in 1817) from 1812 to 1823, followed by a period of recovery from 1823 to the early 1830's. The main peaks in the cost of living, in 1795, 1800-1, 1805, 1812, and 1817, and the main trough, occurring in 1822-3, coincided exactly with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living in Kent and were associated, in their timing, with the changing fortunes of the weather, domestic harvests, and the state of war in Europe. Indeed, because of the relative importance of the Food and Drink category in labourers' budgets,[1] and especially the role of bread,[2] it is clear that the final shape of the cost of living index was primarily determined by violent fluctuations in food prices. Given the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short-run, it is evident that the role played by bread alone in the agricultural labourers' standard of living was of paramount importance and helps to explain why a sudden increase in its price became such a sensitive issue in the eyes of the rural labouring classes.

At this point it is necessary to compare the cost of living in Essex with the cost of living in Kent and to compare these results with Silberling's estimates of the cost of living in London:[3]

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[1] The Food and Drink category absorbed two-thirds of total household expenditure.

[2] Expenditure on bread accounted for half to two-thirds of a labourer's total expenditure on food and drink. Indeed, it might be said that to a large extent the agricultural labourers' standard of living was primarily dependent upon whatever happened to the price of bread.

[3] N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 235. See also Fig. 9, p. 138.

TABLE 17

VARIATIONS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN KENT, ESSEX AND LONDON 1795-1822

(1790 = 100)

	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Kent	+37	+73	+120	+84	+9
Essex	+34	+71	+119	+71	+20
London	+30	+70	+80	+51	0

These figures suggest two main conclusions. First, the cost of living in Essex and Kent, when compared, demonstrated a high degree of response in the extent and the timing of their variations in the short and long runs. In both cases the general direction and degree of change in the cost of living in the main sub-periods was almost identical, thus suggesting that the counties, because of their proximity to the metropolitan economy, were part of one large market area and were thereby subjected to the same forces of supply and demand. Second, although the cost of living in Essex and London was approximately the same between 1795 and 1801, from that point onwards the gap between the two series widened with the cost of living in Essex tending to lie on a higher plane than that in London.[1] Indeed, in certain years the former series exceeded the latter by a substantial margin. In two critical years for the standard of living, 1812 and 1817, for example, Silberling's index appears to understate the rise in the cost of living by a margin as wide as 20 to 30 per cent. Similarly, with regard to the post-war deflation,

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[1] See Fig. 19. On three occasions, 1796, 1813, and 1818, Silberling located his peak years a year later than the corresponding peak years in this index. As Silberling's index relates to raw material prices, and the county index relates to the prices of processed commodities, one is not strictly comparing like with like here. However, as half of Clapham's optimism stands or falls by Silberling's index it is important to test its general applicability by comparing it with the county evidence.

Silberling's index suggests that the general price level had fallen to its pre-war level by 1822, whilst the county evidence suggests that no such fall occurred there and that, on the contrary, in 1822 the cost of living lay above its pre-war level by a margin of 20 per cent. In the light of the county evidence, therefore, Silberling's index appears to understate the rise in the cost of living and overstate its fall and, as far as Essex and Kent are concerned, thereby appears to be of little value as a guide to the cost of living in these areas.[1]

Given the level and trend of the cost of living in Essex, it now remains to see to what extent was this sequence matched by similar changes in agricultural labourers' wages. What effect did the interaction of these two variables have upon the trend of real wages and the labourers' standard of living?

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[1] It follows from this that any procedure which combines Silberling's cost of living index with an index of agricultural wages drawn from an area outside of London, as Clapham did, is bound to yield a highly optimistic impression of the trend of real wages and the standard of living.

CHAPTER 7

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN ESSEX 1790-1840

I. Introduction

By the early nineteenth century commercial farming was the main form of economic activity in Essex and the agricultural labourers' standard of living was closely linked to the varying fortunes of that sector.[1] Given the dominance of wheat in the county's economy, as well as the diversification of production in the minor branches of farming, it is clear that the farming sector provided a wide range of employment opportunities for the rural labour force. Throughout the farming seasons agricultural labourers were employed at varying rates of pay and the annual sum of their seasonal earnings, taking the good years with the bad, provides a useful basis for measuring changes in their material standard of living.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were employed in arable cultivation on various estates in the county. The main sources of statistical evidence have been derived from four estates: the Audley End Farm Labour Accounts,[2] the Farm Accounts of James Clement of Saling,[3] the Crop and Labour Accounts of Samuel Watkinson of Black

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1 By the 1790's the traditional textile industries in Essex, especially woollen cloth, were in an advanced state of decay. Annals of Agriculture, XVIII (1792), p. 571. A. F. J. Brown, Essex at Work 1700-1815 (Chelmsford, 1969), pp. 1-27. J. Booker, Essex and the Industrial Revolution (Chelmsford, 1974), pp. 49-50.

2 E.R.O. D/DBy A262-3, 267. Audley End Estate. Farm and Labour Accounts. The wages derived from this source provide a continuous run of wages for the period 1790-1840 and are the principal series used in this study. Audley End is situated near Saffron Walden in north-west Essex. See Map 3.

3 E.R.O. D/DTa A1-2. James Clement of Saling. Farm Account Books. Saling lies in central Essex.

Notley,[1] and the Farm Labour Accounts of Butcher's Farm at Little Dunmow.[2] At various points the wages derived from these estates are compared with wages paid on other estates and with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources.[3] As in the case of Kent, a wage index has been constructed for each estate on the basis of what the labourers on these estates earned each year. At various points this index has been related to the cost of living index in order to determine what happened to the trend of real wages.

One of the main advantages of using the Audley End Labour Accounts is that they provide a complete record of the wages paid to a number of categories of farm labour, such as day labourers, carters, yardmen,[4] and ploughmen. In many respects this information provides a unique insight into the wage structure and pattern of wage differentials between different categories of unskilled and skilled labour. For example, up to 1803 the pattern of wage differentials was confined within a fairly narrow range, but from that point onwards, and especially after 1810, the wage scale became considerably wider. By 1812 the wages of yardmen rose to 14s. a week and, in certain years, exceeded the wages of ordinary labourers by as much as

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1 E.R.O. D/DU 224/1-3. Samuel Watkinson of Black Notley. Crop and Labour Accounts. Black Notley lies in central Essex near Braintree.

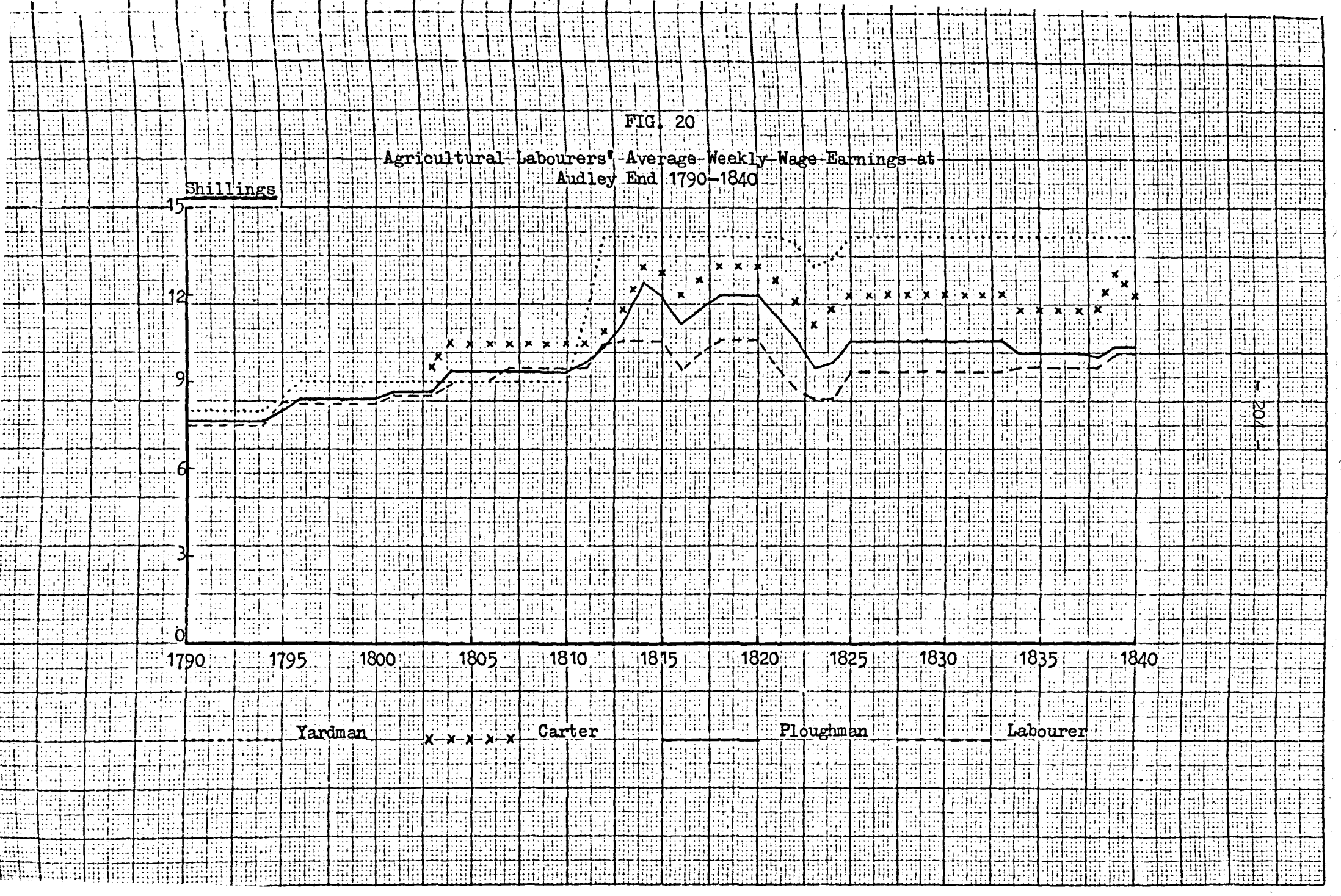
2 E.R.O. D/DZu 214. Butcher's Farm Labour Accounts. Little Dunmow lies in the Western half of the county. See Map 3.

3 The relationship between estate wages and the wages paid on small farms is discussed on p. 78 and will not be repeated here. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 21 the former have been marked with a cross (X) and the latter with a dot (.).

4 A yardman was particularly skilled in the handling of livestock and was paid a higher wage than unskilled labourers. See Figure 20.

FIG. 20

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings at Audley End 1790-1840



4s. 6d. a week. The wages paid to carters and ploughmen lay between these two extremes with carters receiving a shilling or two less than yardmen and a shilling or more per week than ploughmen. Within these boundaries the wages of all these labourers tended to move in parallel series along the same trend with the wages of unskilled labourers lying at the bottom of the scale, thus suggesting that they had a lower standard of living than the skilled labourers.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages and the cost of living, and the trend of real wages in Essex, is shown in Figures 21-23.[1] In observing these relationships it is evident that, as in the case of Kent, long-run changes in agricultural wages were closely linked to variations in the rural trade cycle. When prices were rising wages were rising, and when prices were falling wages were falling, though the former series, being more volatile than the latter, tended to outpace wages by a substantial margin with disastrous consequences for their purchasing power.

An examination of agricultural wages at Audley End in the early 1790's reveals that labourers' wages were, on average, about 7s. 6d. a week. Compared with other parts of the country this figure was similar to the 7s. quoted in the Annals of Agriculture[2] and lower than the 9s. 4d. being paid at Saling and the 9s. and 10s. 6d. recorded elsewhere.[3] With the outbreak of war with France labourers' wages at Audley End rose to 8s. 4d. a week, and, at that point, lay mid-way between the 7s. to 8s. a week at Hedingham

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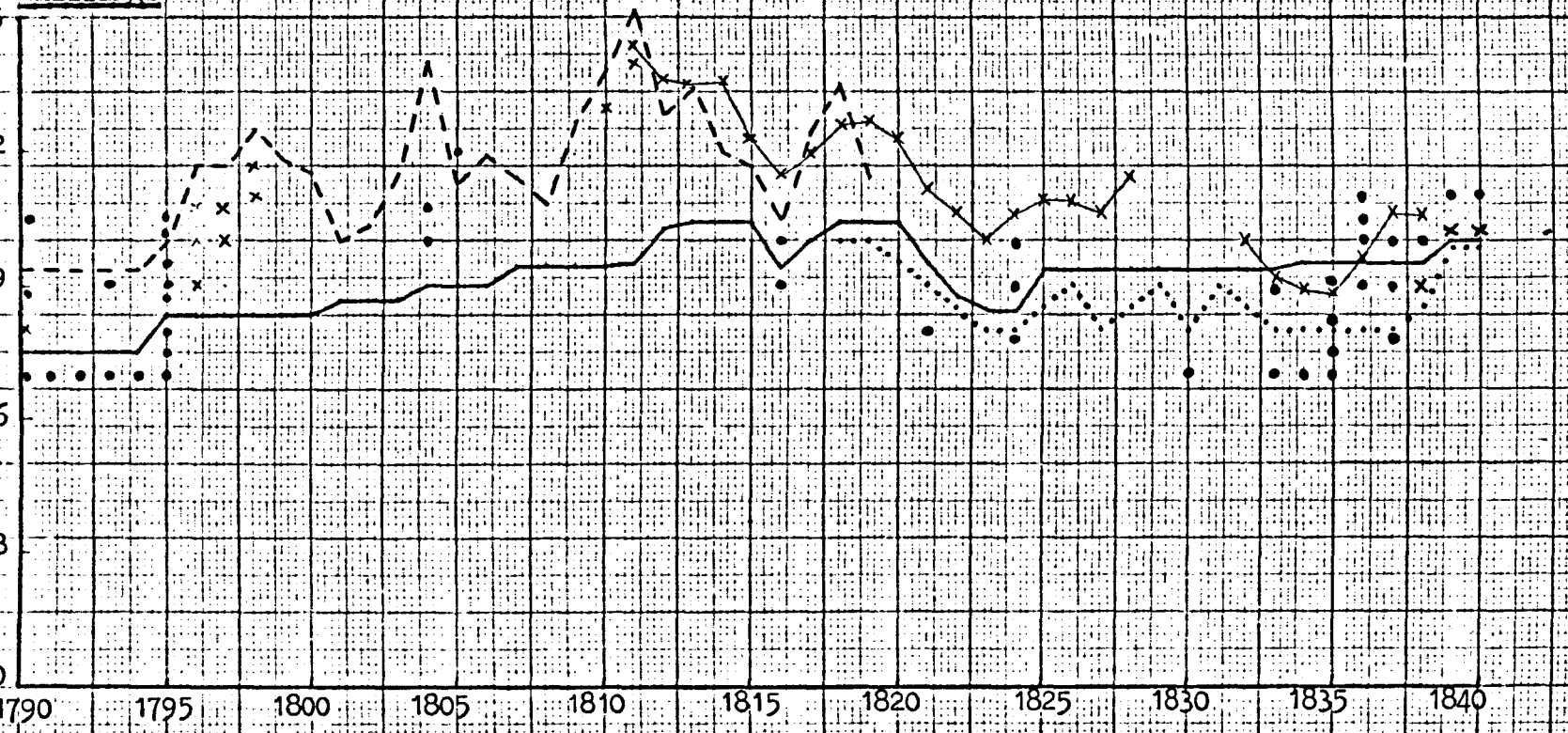
[1] At this point it is important to note that these estimates are based on the assumption of full and regular employment and, in the light of the incidence of post-war unemployment, must be regarded as being generous. Later on in the chapter this assumption is modified in order to introduce a degree of unemployment, and a resulting loss of earnings, into the calculations.

[2] Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 57, 159, 284.

[3] E.R.O. D/DTa A1. Clement, op. cit. Annals, XX (1793), p. 412.

FIG. 21

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Essex 1790-1840



Audley End

Saling

Little Dunmow

Black Notley

Other Estates

Contemporary Printed Sources

FIG. 22

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Essex 1790–1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

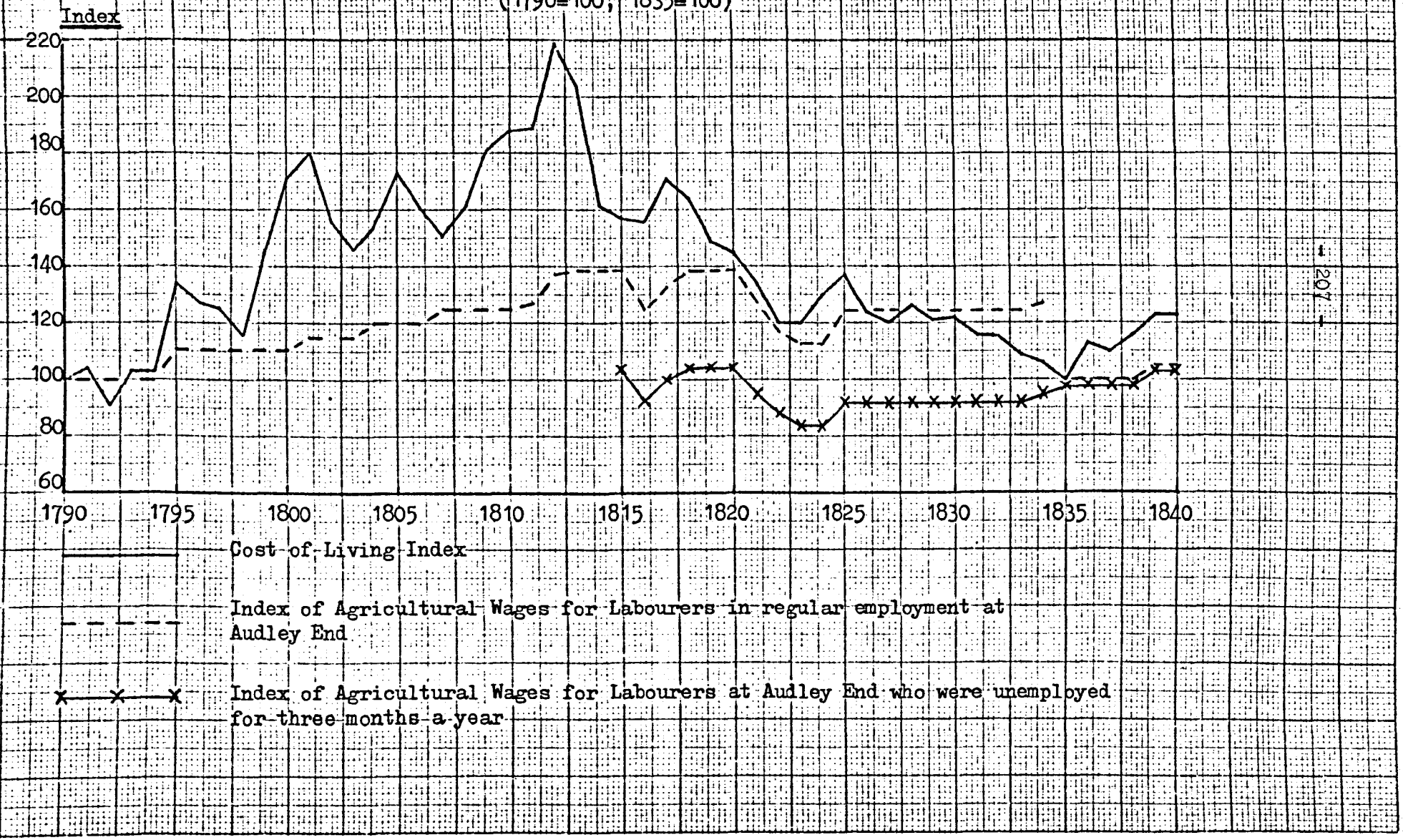
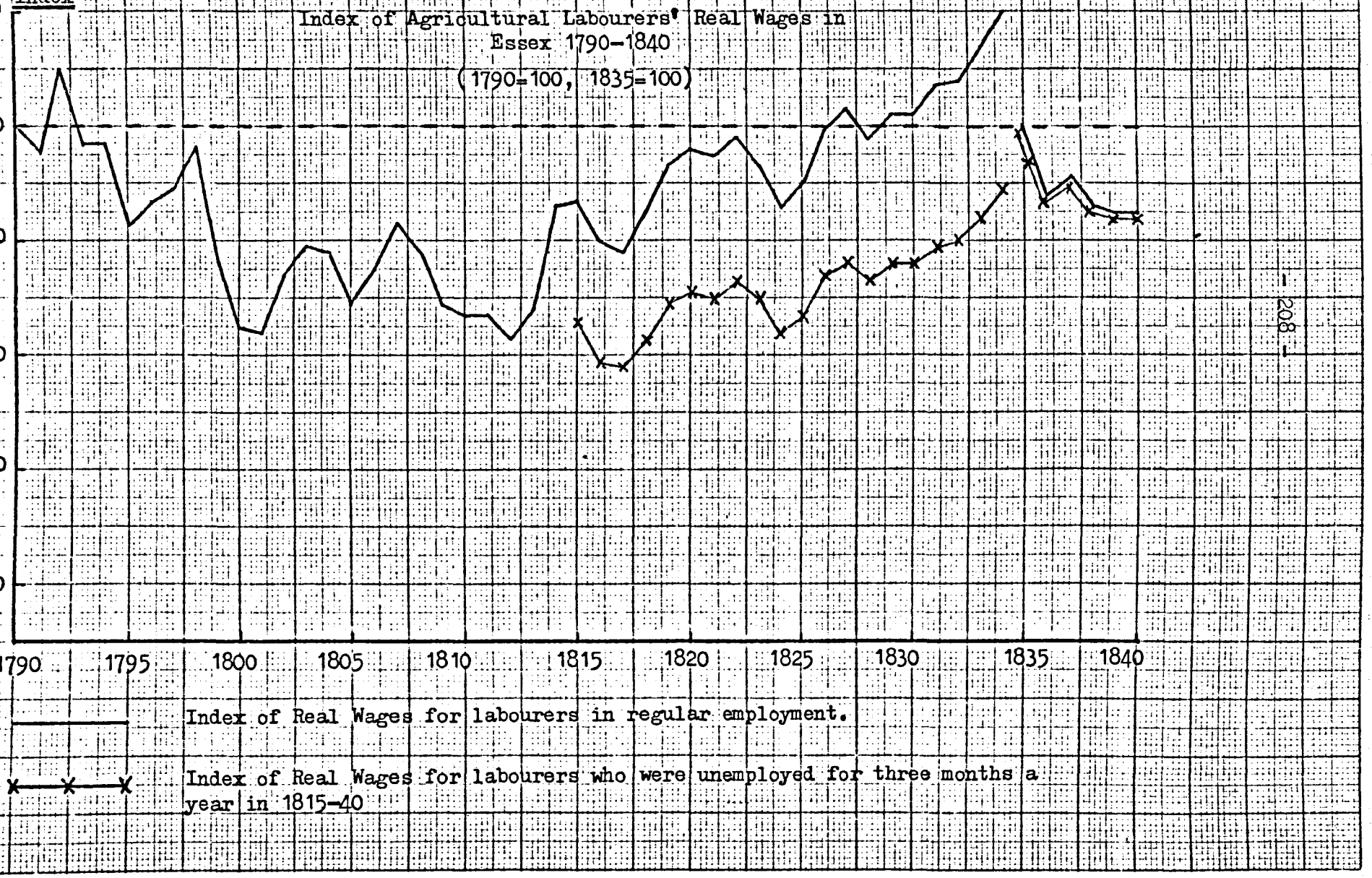


FIG. 23

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Essex 1790–1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



Index of Real Wages for labourers in regular employment.

Index of Real Wages for labourers who were unemployed for three months a year in 1815–40

Castle and Bradfield and the 9s. to 10s. 6d. being paid at Colchester, Dunmow, Saling, and elsewhere.[1] One of the main influences affecting the rise in wages in this period was the shortage of agricultural labour. Complaints of a 'scarcity of hands' and 'they will not work for these earnings' were indicative of the labour situation in Essex at that time.[2] Indeed, such was the strength of the labourers' bargaining position in the 1790's that the labour turn-over on farms increased, the labourers demanded piece-work in preference for day-work, and at Thaxted, Southminster and Steeple the labourers organised a strike to obtain higher wages.[3]

Between 1795 and 1800 agricultural wages at Audley End remained at 8s. 4d. a week compared with higher wages, of 10s. to 11s. 11d. a week at Latchindon, Woodham Mortimer,[4] and Saling. Throughout the rest of the war agricultural wages at Audley End increased in short spurts of two or three years duration to reach an average of 10s. 5d. a week by 1815. Over the same period labourers' wages at Saling followed a more volatile trend, fluctuating between 10s. and 15s. a week. Two spot observations for 1804, derived from contemporary printed sources, show that in other parts of the country wages ranged from 10s. to 10s. 9d. a week.[5] In 1810 and 1811 wages of 13s. and

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1 Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 57, 159, 284. C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1795), p. 114. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 188.

2 Brown (1969), op. cit. pp. 131-2.

3 Ibid.

4 E.R.O. D/DOp E15. Wage Disbursements at Ulmes Farm, Latchindon and Woodham Mortimer.

5 The Farmer's Magazine, XVII (1804), p. 120. According to Arthur Young, in 1804 winter wages were 9s. to 12s. a week, summer wages 9s. to 15s. a week, and average wages were 10s. 9d. a week. A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1807), II, p. 428.

14s. a week were paid at Brightlingsea in east Essex and these were a shilling a week less than the wages being paid at Saling.[1]

What effect did changes in the cost of living in Essex have upon the purchasing power of wages during the French war? Between 1790 and 1812 the wage index at Audley End rose from 100 to 137 compared with a rise in the cost of living from 100 to 219.[2] It is evident from Figures 22-23 that the most serious consequence of the failure of agricultural wages to keep pace with increases in the cost of living was that the purchasing power of wages fell by a substantial amount.[3] 'Their condition', wrote the Rev. J. Howlett with regard to the plight of the labouring classes, 'it is true, is now worse than ever . . . and the general leading cause has been the same, the gradual increasing inadequacy of earnings to their necessities'.[4] Indeed, the fact that sporadic riots broke out in various parts of the county over the scarcity and high prices of provisions, and that the labourers went on strike in order to secure high wages, was indicative of what was happening to the agricultural labourers' material standard of living during the Napoleonic war.[5]

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1 E.R.O. D/NM 1/1. Edward Stephen Kempton of Brightlingsea. Farm and Labour Accounts.

2 Appendix 4.

3 In 1795, 1800, and 1812, for example, the index of real wages fell to 83, 65, and 63 respectively.

4 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 561.

5 The agricultural labourers' plight was worsened by the collapse of the textile industries and the loss of earnings of women and children who were employed in its many branches. Eden, op. cit. p. 188. Young (1807), II, op. cit. p. 390. Annals, XV (1791), pp. 261-2, 331-2; XX (1793), pp. 410-11; XXIV (1795), pp. 161, 166, 283.

In such difficult times as these the labouring classes were obliged to rely upon doles of public relief and private charity to bridge the deficit in their incomes.[1] The upper classes were exhorted to set a good example by reducing their consumption of bread grains in times of dearth. As Joseph Page noted in his journal in 1800:

> This day in the morning service Mr. Gennings, the Curate, read a proclamation from the King recommending in a very forcible manner to the masters of all families to lessen as much as possible the consumption of bread, as the average crop of the last harvest, 1800, falls short of a fair average crop full one fourth . . . and also to restrict as much as possible the consumption of oats by pleasure horses.[2]

At Chelmsford the magistrates agreed to comply with a recommendation of the Privy Council and reduce their consumption of wheaten flour by one-third in order to alleviate the scarcity in the local market.[3]

Subscription funds were established in many parishes for the purpose of relieving the poor. One such fund was set-up in Bocking and was designed to provide each member of poor families with two pounds of bread a week.[4] The poor of Epping were sold soup at 1d. a quart and potatoes at the subsidized rate of 2s. a bushel; at Gosfield flour was sold to the poor at 7s. a bushel, which was 2s. 4d. below its current market price.[5] At Copford bread, purchased out of a public subscription fund, was sold at a cheap rate

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1 Inadequate incomes also induced certain dietary changes in the labourers' standard of living, as seen by the substitution of barley bread and potatoes for wheaten bread and meat. See p. 196. Arthur Young, in noting the rise in meat and dairy prices between 1794 and 1805, observed, 'I have some reason to think that the increased culture and consumption of potatoes (scarcely known in 1767), has made up to the poor the rise in these articles.' Young (1807), II, op. cit. p. 376.

2 A. F. J. Brown, Essex People 1750-1900 from their Diaries, Memoirs, and Letters (Chelmsford, 1972), p. 98.

3 E.R.O. Q/SBb 360/3-4. Minutes of Quarter Sessions, 1795. The Chelmsford Chronicle 15 January 1796, p. 3. A similar resolution was passed at Colchester. E.R.O. Q/SBb 360/37. Minutes of Quarter Sessions, 1795.

4 Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 47.

5 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 298. XXIV (1795), p. 149.

to 60 families, comprising 212 people, at the rate of half a peck a week.[1] Eight hundred people in Romford were relieved in a similar manner.[2] Similarly, the poor of Chelmsford were sold 500 quartern loaves a week, made-up from a mixture of one-third barley flour and two-thirds wheaten flour, at the cost of 6d. per loaf.[3] An observer from Dunmow commented,

> The situation of our poor, from the uncommon and excessive dearness of all kinds of provisions, must be very uncomfortable: the farmers in the neighbourhood seem universally convinced of this, and fearing many inconveniences not unlikely to result from an advance of wages, have made additional allowances, according to their respective judgements or inclinations.[4]

The extra allowance was 6d. a head for each child above one for widows and poor men with large families.[5] Similarly, at Ingatestone the Vestry agreed, in 1800, to make the following allowances:[6]

2s. 6d. a week for a family of 3 children

5s. 0d. a week for a family of 4 children

7s. 6d. a week for a family of 5 children

10s. 0d. a week for a family of 6 children

If the condition of the labouring classes was bad during the French war, in spite of regular employment, then their conditions took a turn for the worst at the end of the war when a period of depression and unemployment

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1 Ibid. XXIV (1795), p. 76.

2 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 153.

3 The Chelmsford Chronicle 5 February 1796, p. 3.

4 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 95.

5 Ibid.

6 E.R.O. D/P 31/8/3. Ingatestone Parish Vestry Minutes 1792-1811.

set in. Indeed, many farmers who had expanded their operations during the war, under the stimulus of high prices, faced ruination once the war was over. The post-war fall in prices and profits drove many farmers into bankruptcy and, as a consequence, their labourers into penury.[1] At Audley End labourers' wages were reduced to an average of 9s. 5d. a week in 1816, whilst at Saling and Black Notley wages were reduced to 10s. 6d. and 11s. 6d. a week respectively. Besides cutting wages, many farmers reduced the size of their labour force, in order to reduce their outgoings, thus adding to the distress of the labouring classes. Indeed, from the end of the war until the 'Swing' riots of 1830 the problems of unemployment and underemployment were prime causal factors in the rise of poverty and social tension in Essex. As one observer noted,

> The state of the labouring poor is truly miserable. Such is the want of employment, that stout active young men are employed by the overseers, at three or four shillings a week, merely to prevent them from starving.[2]

Another witness to this depressing state of affairs noted,

> The labouring poor in husbandry (including disbanded men from the army and navy) are not four-fifths employed. The poor-rates in this parish . . . are higher than at any period, I believe, in the last 40 years.[3]

One consequence of this state of affairs - rising unemployment, falling wages, and reduced living standards - was an outbreak of rioting in the eastern counties. In August 1815 the agricultural labourers at Holbrook, in Suffolk, rioted and broke a threshing machine, and this incident was followed, in November, by more riots at Kenton, Ashfield, and Monk

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[1] Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816, Reprinted 1970), pp. 86-9. Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 73.

[2] Board of Agriculture, op. cit. pp. 87-8.

[3] Ibid.

Soham.[1] By April 1816 the disturbances had spread to Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire - gangs of labourers toured the countryside demanding more employment, higher wages, and that the use of threshing machines should be discontinued.[2] During May 1816 the riots spread over the Suffolk border into north Essex where the labourers were said to be in an 'extremely agitated state'.[3] According to Lewis Majendie of Hedingham Castle,

> The disposition to riot, and to the disturbance of the Peace, which for sometime past has existed in Suffolk, has extended itself to this neighbourhood by numerous assemblies of agricultural labourers, who have with various weapons, destroyed threshing machines and other farming implements.[4]

Threshing machine breaking riots occurred at Finchingfield, Great Bardfield, and Sible Hedingham. At Halstead a mob attempted to free some labourers who had been taken into custody and a battle developed between the labourers and the civil and military authorities.[5] In July a disturbance took place at Lawford when a body of unemployed agricultural labourers, some armed with hammers, forcibly broke a threshing machine.[6] A similar incident

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1 The Ipswich Journal 5 August 1815, p. 3. 25 November 1815, p. 2. The Colchester Gazette 20 January 1816, p. 3. Threshing Machines were widely adopted in Essex during the Napoleonic war to supplement the labour force. Brown (1969), op. cit. p. 42. Booker, op. cit. p. 26. After the war, when unemployment rose to a high level, the labourers resented farmers using the machines to thresh their corn as they deprived them of employment during the winter months.

2 A. J. Peacock, Bread or Blood. A Study of Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816 (1965), passim.

3 P.R.O. H.O./42/150. Letter from W. Sproule of Bardfield to Lord Sidmouth, 27 May 1816.

4 Ibid. Letter from Lewis Majendie to Lord Sidmouth, 29 May 1816.

5 Ibid. The Colchester Gazette 1 June 1816, p. 2. 8 June 1816, p. 3. The Chelmsford Chronicle 31 May 1816, p. 2. 7 June 1816, p. 2.

6 E.R.O. Q/SBb 444/85. Depositions taken at Essex Midsummer Quarter Sessions, 1816. E.R.O. Q/SPb 18. Process Book of Indictments, 1807-19.

to this occurred at Layer Bretton, near Colchester, as the labourers there believed that threshing machines were the cause of their unemployment.[1]

In 1817 the post-war fall in prices was temporarily reversed and prices returned to their war-time level again. Agricultural labourers' wages at Audley End rose to an average of 10s. a week, to give an index number of 133, but as this increase fell far short of the rise in the cost of living, to 171, the index of real wages was reduced to 78. In other words, by 1817 real wages had fallen by 22 per cent. compared with the position they held in 1790.

After 1817 the general price level in Essex resumed its downward trend until 1822-3 and was accompanied by a fall in labourers' wages at Audley End to an average of 8s. 5d. a week. At that point the wage index stood at 112 compared with an index of 120 for the cost of living with the result that the real wage index remained below the position it held in 1790 by an average margin of 7 per cent.[2]

If that was the position of labourers who were in regular employment, then the condition of those labourers who were unfortunate enough to suffer long bouts of unemployment in the 1820's and 1830's was far worse.[3] Indeed, the evidence is clear on the fact that throughout this period large numbers of agricultural labourers in Essex had to subsist on incomes far lower than those being earned at Audley End. In some parishes farmers would employ only local labour and dismissed anyone who originated from another parish.

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[1] The Colchester Gazette 26 October 1816, p. 2.

[2] A similar level to this was reached in Kent.

[3] Indeed, as early as 1822, long before the start of the 1830 'Swing' riots, sporadic outbursts of incendiaryism and threshing machine breaking riots were taking place in parts of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk. The Ipswich Journal, 23 February 1822, p. 2. 13 April 1822, p. 4. The Chelmsford Chronicle 19 July 1822, p. 2. E.R.O. Q/SBb 469/74. Quarter Sessions Minutes, 1822.

At Witham, for example, 28 men were unemployed in November 1818 so the Vestry ordered that they should be set to work by the landowners of the parish and that all labourers who did not belong to the parish should be discharged.[1] Surplus labourers in the parish were relieved according to the size of their weekly earnings and the number of dependants they had to support. For example, a man with seven dependants who earned 9s. a week was allowed 2s. relief per week. A man with a family of nine dependants who earned 4s. a week was allowed 7s. 6d. a week. As a rule, most applicants for relief received from 4s. to 7s. a week.[2] In April 1823 40 unemployed labourers in the parish of Great Clacton were allowed 5s. to 7s. a week.[3] At Cranham surplus labourers were set to work repairing parish roads at 7s. a week.[4] A labourer, with a wife and five children to support, received 6s. a week for working on the roads and 5s. 6d. for the maintenance of his family.[5] In 1822 the Vestry suspected that family allowances were being spent on 'unnecessary and improper articles' and decided to give bread to applicants asking for relief instead of money at the rate of two and a half quartern loaves a week.[6] Similar scales of relief to these were adopted in many other Essex parishes during the 1820's. At Chelmsford the overseers of

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1 E.R.O. D/P 30/8/1. Witham Parish Vestry Minutes.

2 E.R.O. D/P 30/8/3. Witham Parish Select Vestry Minutes.

3 E.R.O. D/P 179/18/20. Great Clacton Parish Overseer's Accounts.

4 E.R.O. D/P 118/18/2. Cranham Parish Select Vestry Minutes 1819-23.

5 Ibid. An old man, aged sixty eight years, had to live on 5s. a week.

6 Ibid. This allowance provided a man with one and a half pounds of bread a day and was regarded as 'fully adequate' as prisoners employed on the treadwheel in Hertford gaol lived on the same diet 'without any other food whatever.' Women were allowed two quartern loaves per week.

the poor resolved to 'provide every person in every family with the means of procuring half a peck of flour per week, together with 10d. per head for other necessaries, if the family consists of two only; 8d. per head if three; 6d. per head if four; 5d. per head if more than four.'[1] At Ardleigh agricultural wages in 1823 were regulated by changes in the price of wheat at Colchester market. When the price of wheat was £9 to £10 a load wages were set at 6s. a week and were increased by a shilling each time the price of wheat rose by £1 a load.[2]

Although such measures as these undoubtedly assisted to relieve the plight of the unemployed labourers, the problem of unemployment remained throughout the 1820's owing to the 'deplorable condition' of agriculture.[3] After the harvest of 1824, and for 'many years after', many parishes found themselves burdened with a large surplus of unemployed labourers.[4] In January 1829, for example, The Chelmsford Chronicle lamented the 'great numbers of labourers out of employ . . . in almost every parish in the county' and the fact that a 'great number' of able-bodied men were able to earn only 3s. 6d. a week.[5] Thirty labourers at Finchingfield were out of work in 1829, whilst at Saffron Walden, in north-west Essex, 136 labourers

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1 A. F. J. Brown, English History from Essex Sources 1750-1900 (Chelmsford, 1952), pp. 115-6.

2 E.R.O. D/P 263/12/7. Ardleigh Parish Overseer's Accounts 1820-23.

3 First Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (i), pp. 103-6.

4 Brown (1972), op. cit. p. 73.

5 The Chelmsford Chronicle 30 January 1829, p. 3. 24 April 1829, p. 3.

were out of work in January 1830 and were employed repairing parish roads.[1] Sible Hedingham was one of the most pauperised parishes in the county and had, on average, 140 labourers out of work during the winter months of the 1830's.[2] Most parishes in the neighbourhood of Hoxne had 30 to 90 men out of work 'subsisting on a pittance barely sufficient to procure them bread only'.[3] At Woodham Ferrers, in south Essex, one fifth of the able-bodied labourers were said to be 'spending their time in idleness' whilst in Toppesfield and four adjoining parishes in the northern half of the county 200 men were out of work.[4] Over 100 men were unemployed in the parish of Writtle, near Chelmsford, in January 1830 and were maintained out of the poor rates. Single men were allowed 4s. a week and married men were relieved according to the number of their dependents.[5] Indeed, the unemployed labourers of Writtle constantly complained to the magistrates that their wages were inadequate to live on. One labourer, Daniel Mead, who was employed on the parish roads, complained at the Chelmsford Petty Session that for the past seven weeks he had earned only 3s. 4d. a week, or 8d. a day, and that he wanted to be paid 'according to the custom of the country'. The magistrate told him that his wage was a fair compensation for eight hours labour per day.[6] Thirty other

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1 Ibid. 16 January 1829, p. 3. 1 January 1830, p. 4. Extracts from the Information Received by His Majesty's Commissioners as to the Administration and Operation of the Poor Laws (1833), p. 41.

2 Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales (1836), p. 254. The Chelmsford Chronicle, 24 January 1834, p. 2.

3 The Ipswich Journal, 6 March 1830, p. 3.

4 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 2 January 1835, p. 3. The Essex Standard, 10 April 1835, p. 2.

5 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 8 January 1830, p. 3.

6 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 5 February 1830, p. 4.

labourers from Writtle, all single men, also complained that they found it impossible to live on 4s. a week after paying 1s. 6d. a week for lodgings and washing and asked for an increase in their wages to 1s. a day. The Chelmsford Chronicle printed the magistrate's reply:

> Mr. Crabbe addressed the applicants in a forcible manner, observing that many of them, he doubted not, during the harvest, earned sufficient money to have enabled them, had they been provident, to have saved something for the winter; it was not for them to call upon honest men to maintain them in laziness.[1]

The overseer of the poor told the Bench that 120 labourers were unemployed in the parish and that he had refused them relief because he thought they did not need it. The magistrate advised him to lend the money to the labourers on condition that if they failed to repay it within two months they would be put to work on the tread-wheel.[2]

In the same month two labourers from Buttsbury complained that all they had to live on was 2s. 6d. a week and that they had to pay 1s. 6d. a week for their lodgings. The overseer of the poor told the magistrate that there were a dozen single men in the parish who received that amount, but the magistrate considered it was impossible to subsist on a shilling a week and ordered the overseer to increase the labourers' allowance.[3]

During the winter of 1830 the overseer of Great Waltham employed a number of surplus labourers to dig over a snow covered field but neglected to provide them with spades. When the labourers refused to work under such conditions the overseer took them before the magistrate for leaving their employment and letting their families become a burden on the parish. In his evidence the overseer told the court that he had offered to lend

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid. p. 3.

[3] The Chelmsford Chronicle, 12 February, 1830, p. 3.

the labourers the money to buy spades with.[1] In the following June several labourers from Writtle complained that the overseer was making them work in the fields 'beyond their strength' and that they were allowed only 1s. 11½d. a week relief for each member of the family. The court dismissed their complaint and its verdict was recorded in The Chelmsford Chronicle:

> The Bench said they did not see any cause of complaint whatever. If single men earned 6s. a week at the work, it was quite enough. They wished labourers to be as 'free as air', but they must remind them that when they applied to the overseer for work, and had employment found them, they were to all intents and purposes the servants of the overseer, and as such, bound to comply with his orders, but the moment they could earn one farthing more elsewhere, they were at liberty to leave him. The object was to make a difference between those who worked for the overseer, and those who worked for the farmers independently; but if a pauper received the same wages when working for the overseer, as he did when working for another person, what inducement would there be for a labourer to get himself off the parish?[2]

What the magistrate failed to appreciate was the fact that the 'free as air' labourers were in a weak bargaining position owing to the surplus state of the labour market. Few farmers were obliged to concede a wage increase when they could get all the labour they wanted at a lower price. When some labourers from Writtle complained that their employer would only pay them a shilling a day for hoeing beans they were told, 'There is the job if you like to do it, - if you don't, leave it'. When the overseer intervened on the labourers' behalf the farmer threatened to dismiss all the local labourers and employ labourers from another parish instead.[3]

It is clear from all this evidence that throughout the 1820's chronic levels of unemployment and social distress were widespread throughout the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The Chelmsford Chronicle, 4 June 1830, p. 3.

[3] Ibid. 7 May 1830, p. 2.

county. Although agricultural labourers' wages at Audley End, and elsewhere, began to recover from the low point they held in 1823 to reach, during the later 1820's, an average of 9s. 4d. a week,[1] many casually employed labourers had to subsist on incomes as low as 5s. to 7s. a week. Indeed, such was the deterioration in the labourers' condition by the eve of the 'Swing' riots that a local observer was able to lament, 'The peasantry . . . from the operation of circumstances beyond their control, have become very destitute and dependent and branded with the degrading epithet of pauper'.[2]

The long build-up of these conditions, starting from the end of the Napoleonic war, were sufficient to precipitate an outbreak of rioting in Essex. Following the riots of 1815-16 and 1822, a fresh wave of rioting broke out in Essex in January 1829, thus being in advance of the 'Swing' riots by a period of eighteen months. In that month several corn stacks and farm buildings were set on fire at Saling, Finchingfield, Great Yeldham, Blackwater, and Witham.[3] Such was the terror created by the destruction of property in this way that it was said that 'No one retires to rest without the dreadful apprehension of a similar affliction; many . . . employ a watch during the night'.[4] As in 1816, the labourers' hatred of the

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1 Fig. 21. Between 1826 and 1834 the wage index generally exceeded the cost of living index and as a result of this the real wage index experienced an average net gain of about 7 per cent. Real wages improved by a similar amount in Kent in this period.

2 J. Marriage, Letters on the Distressed State of the Agricultural Labourers (Chelmsford, 1830), p. 12.

3 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 9 January 1829, p. 3.

4 Ibid. Several £200 rewards were offered, in local newspapers, for the capture of the 'diabolical incendiaries' and in March 1829 a sixteen year old boy was hanged for firing corn stacks at Witham. The Chelmsford Chronicle, 16 January 1829, p. 4. 27 March 1829, p. 2.

threshing machine came to the fore again. At Toppesfield, in north Essex, a number of threshing machines were broken in January 1829 because, the labourers claimed, they were depriving them of winter employment.[1] As one eye-witnessed account put it,

> The use of threshing machines threw many labourers out of employment at that period of the year when they used to be employed in the barns instead of the fields. Low and insufficient wages were also the result of this machinery They had no land or garden of their own to cultivate. They were made solely dependent for their subsistence on the wages of their daily labour, or the Poor Rates. . . . They demolished those machines which they thought superseded human labour. . . .[2]

More disturbances broke out in Essex later on in 1829 and by 1830 had spread over a much wider area of the county.[3] In January 1830 there were several reports of incendiary fires in various parts of Essex. Several farmers and clergymen in the Dunmow area received threatening letters and it was generally feared that 'the bad spirit which prevails at present among the labouring poor, or perhaps those out of work, may proceed to greater lengths'.[4] These fears were realised during the first two weeks in December when a number of threshing machines and farm implements were broken at Kiby le Soken, Walton le Soken, Little Clacton, Great Clacton, High Easter, Great Holland, Ramsey, and Mile End, near Colchester.[5] Many of the disturbances were concerned with raising wages.

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1 Ibid. 30 January 1829, p. 3. 27 March 1829, p. 3. 7 August 1829, p. 2.

2 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1, V, p. 184.

3 E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (1969), pp. 162-3.

4 P.R.O. H.O. 40/23/Part I/17. Letter from the Rev. T. Jee of Thaxted to Robert Peel, January 1830.

5 E.R.O. Q/SBd (Box I). Depositions taken at Essex Epiphany Quarter Sessions, 1831. E.R.O. Q/SPb 20. Process Book of Indictments 1824-31. E.R.O. Q/SR/1028. Quarter Sessions Rolls and Presentment Sheets 1830-31. The Chelmsford Chronicle, 17 December 1830, p. 4.

Higher wages were demanded at Sheering, Clavering, Ashenden, Henham, Steeple Bumpstead, Tendring, Peldon, and Arkesden. At West Mersea, Great Clacton, and Little Clacton the labourers demanded 2s. 3d. a day, whilst at Finchingfield and Kirby le Soken 2s. a day was demanded.[1] The landowners and farmers of Great Dunmow, anticipating trouble, resolved at a hastily called meeting to pay their labourers a minimum wage of 10s. a week and instructed the overseer of the poor to provide the surplus labourers in the parish with work.[2]

By mid December 1830, however, the disturbances in Essex came to an end without any immediate improvement in the level of wages and employment.[3] At Audley End labourers' wages seemed uninfluenced by the riots and remained unchanged at 9s. 4d. a week until the mid 1830's,[4] and then rose to 10s. a week by 1839-40. Labourers' wages at Little Dunmow, on the other hand, rose from 8s. a week in 1830 to 9s. in 1831, and then fell back to 8s. again by 1833. Evidence from other sources suggests that wages in other parts of Essex sometimes exceeded these limits.[5] For example, during the 1830's labourers' wages at Dunmow and Halstead were as low as 7s. a week whilst in other parts of the county the average wage varied from 9s.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The Suffolk Chronicle, 10 December 1830, p. 2.

[3] Hobsbawm and Rudé, op. cit. p. 351. One consequence of the riots was that some farmers laid aside their threshing machines. Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers, 1836, VIII (ii), p. 155.

[4] This was also true of the wages paid on the Cobham estate in Kent.

[5] These wages have been obtained from various contemporary printed sources. Unfortunately these quotations do not state the means by which they were calculated; whether they were summer wages or winter wages, or an arithmetic average of the various wages paid in both these seasons.

to 11s. a week.[1] In 1836 labourers' wages at Southminster and Woodham Mortimer were 9s. to 10s. 6d. a week, whilst at Roxwell and Chelmsford wages were 8s. to 9s. and 10s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. a week respectively.[2] In the light of these figures it is clear that the Audley End series occupied a mid-point in the county wage scale at that time. The problem of unemployment, however, had not been fully solved and many labouers still lived on lower incomes than those quoted in contemporary printed sources.[3]

During the late 1830's there were several reports of unemployment in the county. In 1836 The Chelmsford Chronicle noted,

> At the latter part of last week . . . numbers from the western and northern parts of the county passed through this town in search of harvest work. The last two days many of these poor fellows have been on the return; those with whom we conversed stated that they had walked four days in succession (in the course of which they had met with others similarly situated) without obtaining an hour's employ; that they had spent the few shillings they started with; had worn out their shoes, and, indeed, were possessed of barely necessary means of supporting themselves until they reached their homes.[4]

Unemployment was particularly bad in the northern areas of the county, at Halstead and Sible Hedingham, and the problem was particularly aggravated by the state of decay in local domestic industries there and the unwillingness of the labourers to 'resort to distant parts to obtain employment'.[5] Indeed, owing to the existence of this situation many married

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1 Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales, Parl. Papers, 1836, XXIV (1836), pp. 242, 253. E.R.O. G/DM2. Dunmow Poor Law Union Minute Book.

2 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 8 April 1836, p. 4. 18 November 1836, p. 3. 23 June 1837, p. 2.

3 In 1834-36 a number of agricultural labourers combined together to demand an increase in their wages. E.R.O. Q/SBd (Box II). Depositions taken at Essex Quarter Sessions, 1834. The Colchester Gazette and Essex Independent, 25 June 1836, p. 4. 9 July 1836, p. 4. 23 July 1836, p. 4.

4 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 5 August 1836, p. 3.

5 Ibid. 29 January 1836, p. 3.

labourers with families to support had to exist on incomes as low as 7s. a week. A married labourer with six children, for example, was usually paid 8s. or 9s. a week.[1] In 1834 married labourers at Langham, in north-east Essex, were paid 7s. a week, whilst at Fordham the overseer of the poor usually paid them 8s. a week.[2] The scale of unemployment pay at Sible Hedingham was 3s. a week for single men, 4s. for old people, and 3s. 6d. a week for married couples, 'it being supposed that with that they could earn enough to keep themselves'.[3]

III. Conclusion

At this point it is necessary to combine the cost of living index with the index of agricultural wages in order to determine what happened to the trend of real wages. In other words, to what extent did agricultural labourers' wages at Audley End match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living and what effect did the interaction of these two time-series have upon the purchasing power of wages?

Up to this point it has been assumed, as a first step, that the estate labourers in this case-study were fully employed throughout the whole period under review.[4] Given that assumption, it is clear from Figure 22 that the cost of living index was the most volatile of the two series and lay on a much higher plane than the wage index throughout most of the period. Indeed, if the extent by which the two series changed

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1 The Essex Standard, 16 January 1835, p. 1.

2 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 3 October 1834, p. 3. 26 December 1834, p. 4.

3 Ibid. 30 May 1834, p. 2. The recipients of these allowances, however, rioted because they considered they were too low.

4 Later on this assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

after their base year[1] is compared it is clear that between 1798 and 1818 considerable differences existed between the two indexes. Figure 22 shows that agricultural labourers' wages at Audley End tended to move in a series of short steps, of three to five years duration, and were badly out of line with the more violent fluctuations in the cost of living. The most serious consequence of this situation was a marked diminution in the purchasing power of wages in certain years. The extent to which this occurred in some of the most critical years of the period is shown below:

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[2] (Index)
1795	+34	+11	83
1800	+71	+11	65
1812	+119	+37	63
1817	+71	+33	78

As in the case of Kent, these figures clearly demonstrate the fact that in these years agricultural wages were outpaced by the cost of living by an average margin of 23, 60, 82, and 38 per cent. respectively. In other words, because the general price level rose at a considerably faster rate than agricultural wages, the index of agricultural wages and the index of real wages moved in opposite directions. For the agricultural labourer, the main consequence of this situation was that the index of real wages fell by an average of 30 per cent. during the three war years and by 22 per cent. in 1817. However, in order to gain an overview of the standard of living between 1790 and 1840 it is necessary to take into

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[1] Because of the existence of certain differences in the nature of the price data two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been used in constructing the cost of living index. The same base years have also been used in the wage index in order that the two series may be compared. See p. 40.

[2] 1790 = 100.

account the years when the index of real wages exceeded the position it held in 1790.

On the basis of the assumption of full employment, it is clear from the long-run trend of real wages shown in Figure 23 that agricultural labourers experienced few positive gains in their standard of living. As in the case of Kent, most of the evidence points the other way. Although real wages improved upon their 1790 position in certain years, the extent of the improvement was modest and was outweighed by longer periods in which real wages fell by a substantial amount. Between 1790 and 1840 real wages improved beyond their 1790 position on nine occasions, whreas on forty other occasions, mainly between 1793 and 1825, real wages were depressed below that position.[1] Indeed, when the extent of the rise and fall in real wages is compared it is evident that the fall in real wages was twice as large as the rise in real wages. In other words, real wages increased by an average of 7 per cent. over a period of nine years, whilst real wages decreased by an average of 17 per cent. over a period of forty years. Figure 23 clearly shows that the downward trend of real wages began with the onset of the Napoleonic war and lasted until 1825. After that point the index of real wages began to surpass its pre-war position and over the following eight years improved at the average rate of 0.8 per cent. per annum.[2] Such gains as these, when set against the years of decline, appear quite modest and serve to confirm rather than deny the view that the standard of living fell in this period.

This point gains particular emphasis when it is recalled that these estimates are based upon the assumption of full and constant employment. If agricultural labourers in regular employment were unable to secure any

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[1] The base year is not included in these figures.

[2] In Kent the average rate of increase was 0.6 per cent. per annum.

substantial betterment in their standard of living, then that sizeable proportion of the rural labour force who suffered from periodic bouts of unemployment must have been considerably worse. If, then, the assumption of full employment is modified to allow for a degree of unemployment during the winter quarter of the year,[1] it is clear that these labourers who suffered a loss of earnings under these conditions stood to suffer a substantial deterioration in their standard of living. The extent of this deterioration is demonstrated in Figure 23 which shows that once real wages began to fall, in 1793, they remained depressed throughout the whole period under review and at no point did they advance beyond the position they held in 1790.

On the basis of the empirical evidence it seems that the agricultural labourers' standard of living, as measured by changes in real wages, suffered a substantial fall throughout most of the period under review. It is also significant that this view is consistent with the fact that at certain times in this period - 1795, 1800, 1815-16, 1822, 1829, 1830, and 1834-6 - the distress of the rural labouring classes reached breaking point and erupted into a spate of rioting over high prices, low wages, and the lack of employment. If additional evidence is taken into account, such as Poor Law evidence and the opinions of contemporary observers, the impression is, again, that the standard of living fell rather than rose. Whatever the situation agricultural labourers found themselves in, either in a position of regular or irregular employment, it is clear that doles of public relief and private charity, by bridging the deficit in their

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[1] As in the case of Kent, the problem of unemployment was primarily confined to the post-war period and affected at least a quarter of the rural labour force. See p. 213.

incomes, were a vital part of their existence.[1] Cheap soup, potatoes, bread, and coal, subsidised out of public subscription funds, plus Poor Law allowances in cash and kind, were essential supplements to low wages and provided the labourers with at least a basic minimum of subsistence.[2]

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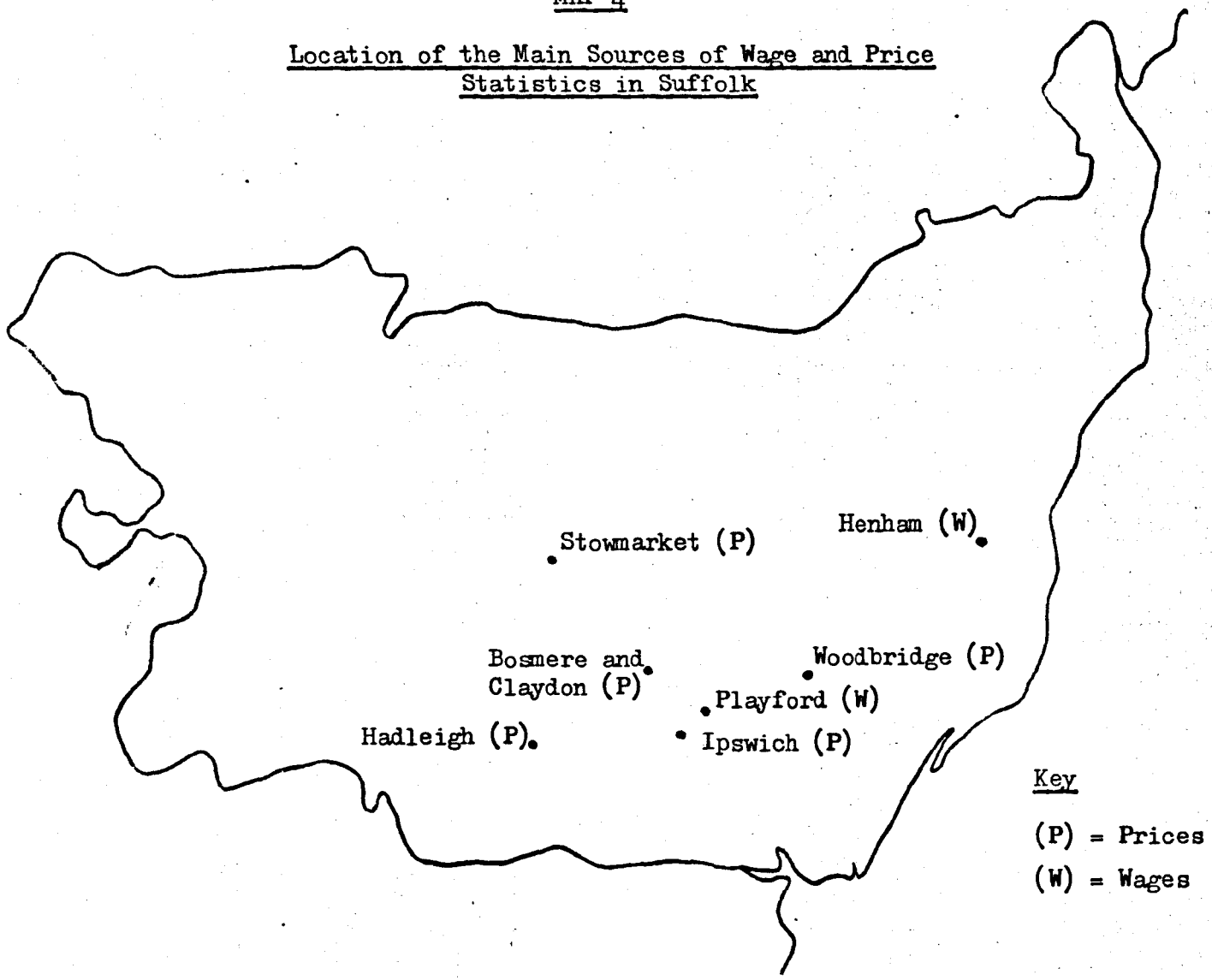
[1] It is an important fact that the trend of per capita poor relief expenditure in Essex, as estimated by D. A. Baugh, was directly correlated to the cost of living, and inversely correlated to the trend of real wages, in Essex. D. A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', E.H.R. XXVIII, 1 (1975), p. 56.

[2] These welfare measures were no doubt missed by the rural poor once the Old Poor Law was reformed in 1834. Indeed, it was significant that the introduction of the New Poor Law into Essex, with its harsher system of administration, roused considerable opposition among the labouring classes and provoked a number of disturbances at Tendring, Great Holland, Braintree, Thaxted, Little Waltham, Great Waltham, Boreham, and Terling. The Chelmsford Chronicle 28 April 1837, p. 3. The Essex Standard 10 July 1835, p. 2. The Colchester Gazette and Essex Independent 9 April 1836, p. 3. The Colchester and Chelmsford Gazette 1 July 1837, p. 3.

MAP 4

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Suffolk



CHAPTER 8

THE COST OF LIVING IN SUFFOLK, 1790-1840

I. Introduction

The process of agricultural development in Suffolk extended over a long period of time and, as in the case of Kent and Essex, was strongly influenced by the demands of London.[1] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries commercial farming expanded in Suffolk and farmers began to send large quantities of wheat, oats, malt, butter, and cheese to the metropolis.[2] By the sixteenth century a well-developed trade in cheese and butter was in existence and Suffolk became one of London's chief suppliers of these products.[3] The county also provided London with a 'prodigious number' of turkeys and geese, Defoe wrote,

> I can't omit . . . that this county of Suffolk is particularly famous for furnishing the city of London and all the counties round, with turkeys . . . there are more turkeys bred in this county, and the part of Norfolk that adjoins to it, than in all the rest of England.[4]

During the eighteenth century agricultural writers, such as Arthur Young, commented on the importance of commercial farming to the economy of the county. This was particularly true of east Suffolk which shipped large quantities of corn to London[5] and was described by Defoe as,

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1 By 1750 London contained 11 per cent. of England's population. E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967), p. 45.

2 F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', E.H.R. V (1935), pp. 48-9.

3 Ibid. p. 56.

4 D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman ed. 1928), I, p. 59. Cereal production and poultry rearing were directly linked as the poultry was fattened on the harvest stubble in preparation for the market.

5 Ibid. p. 45. This part of the county was known as High Suffolk.

> . . . full of rich feeding grounds and large farms, mostly employ'd in dayries for making the Suffolk butter and cheese . . . and a very great quantity of beef, and mutton also, is brought every year, and every week to London, from this side of England, and much more than formerly known to be fed there.[1]

Indeed, Suffolk was eminently suited to dairying and the farming community there made much of their commercial opportunities.[2] As trade expanded corn and butter factors came to play an important role in the collection and distribution of produce in the market towns of Beccles, Bungay, Saxmundham, and Woodbridge.[3] Dunwich was an important outlet for agricultural products,

> . . . particularly for the shipping off butter, cheese, and corn, which is so great a business in this county, and it employs a great many people and ships also; and this port lies right against the particular part of the county for butter, as Framlingham, Halsted, etc. Also a very great quantity of corn is brought up hereabouts for the London market.[4]

The commercial success of the agricultural sector owed much to its ability to adapt its natural resources to suit the demands of the market. Indeed, its factor endowmments were enthusiastically described by writers on agricultural affairs. The county enjoyed one of the most favourable climates in England, had a large area of deep, fertile soil of 'extraordinary fertility', and by the eighteenth century had long been enclosed.[5] In some areas the soil, in Young's opinion,

> . . . for depth and richness, much of it can scarcely be exceeded by any soils to be found in other parts of the county, and would rank high among the best in England.[6]

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[1] Ibid. pp. 58-9.

[2] E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (1967), p. 86.

[3] Defoe, op. cit. pp. 53, 58.

[4] Ibid. p. 55.

[5] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1797), p. 3.

[6] Ibid. p. 3.

By the late eighteenth century corn had become the principal arable crop and export commodity of the county.[1] Although quantities of dairy produce were still sent to London the dairying area gradually diminished as grass land was broken up for arable cultivation.[2] Arthur Young observed this trend in 1797 when he wrote,

> As the plough in this country has prevailed, the cows have decreased in number, and it is said in the neighbourhood of Debenham, and Earlsoham, there are fewer cows than were kept ten years since, by a thousand.[3]

The narrow strip of sandy soil along the east coast was regarded as 'one of the best cultivated in England'[4] and produced quantities of corn, turnips, and carrots.[5] Other farming activities, on a smaller scale, were found in other areas. Hops were grown in mid Suffolk near Stowmarket,[6] hemp cultivation was located in the north-east in the neighbourhood of Eye and Beccles,[7] whilst the poor soil areas in west Suffolk abounded with rabbits and poor sheep walks.[8] Flocks of Norfolk sheep were found in most areas of the county and herds of cattle were imported by graziers for fattening.[9]

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1 Ibid. pp. 32, 53, 208.

2 Ibid. p. 182.

3 Ibid. p. 40. This trend continued up to the 1840's and by that date a large proportion of the dairying area had 'nearly disappeared'. H. Raynbird, 'On the Farming of Suffolk', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, VIII (1847), p. 267.

4 Young, op. cit. p. 5.

5 Ibid. pp. 38-41. Young noted that carrots had been grown in this area for the London market for the last two hundred years, p. 103.

6 Ibid. p. 88.

7 Ibid. p. 119. By the 1840's hemp cultivation had almost ceased in Suffolk. Raynbird, op. cit. p. 267.

8 Young, op. cit. p. 5.

9 Ibid. pp. 188-9.

The movement of agricultural produce to distant markets was greatly assisted by good land and water communications. Young described Suffolk roads, at the end of the eighteenth century, as 'uncommonly good in every part of the county', whilst the extension of waterways and canals, especially the Stowmarket to Ipswich canal, halved the cost of land carriage.[1]

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

The presence of London, then, exerted an important influence upon agricultural prices in Suffolk.[2] In this study the main sources of evidence relating to commodity prices have been obtained from a number of parishes in the county. Commodity prices for the period 1790-1809 have been derived from the Provisions Accounts of Stowmarket and Hadleigh parish workhouses;[3] prices for 1835-40 have been obtained from the Provisions Accounts of four Poor Law Unions.[4] All these parishes are located in the southern half of the county and the prices derived from

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1 Young, op. cit. pp. 205-7.

2 A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), pp. 323-31.

3 E.S.R.O.: ADA 8/CD 12/1. Stowmarket Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. FB 81/3108/2. Hadleigh Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. These prices are monthly contract prices and, for each commodity, have been collated into annual averages.

4 E.S.R.O.L: ADA 12/AB1/1-7. Woodbridge Poor Law Union Minute Book. A2/1/1-4. Ipswich Poor Law Union Minute Book. ADA 2/AB1/2-5. Bosmere and Claydon Poor Law Union Minute Book. ADA 8/AB2/20-1. Stowmarket Poor Law Union Minute Book. These prices are quarterly contract prices and have been collated into annual averages. The prices quoted in this chapter are the prices parish workhouses actually paid for their provisions and no account has been taken of their discount rates. The reasons for this is that the cost of living is primarily concerned with the rate by which prices changed from their base year rather than the actual level of prices.

these sources forms the basis of the cost of living index.[1]

Given the importance of London as a factor on the demand side, similar factors on the supply side to those operating in Kent and Essex, such as the role of the weather or war, also combined to exert their influence upon the general price level. These influences are readily seen in the case of flour prices in Suffolk.[2] Indeed, from what little evidence there is available it is clear that flour prices in Suffolk followed a similar trend to the prices of the quartern loaf in Kent and Essex. Starting from an average price of 36s. a sack in 1790 flour prices increased by 43 per cent. within five years to reach 51s. 6d. a sack by 1795. This price increase, as in the neighbouring county of Essex, was the cause of an outbreak of rioting in various parts of the county. During the first week in May a crowd assembled at Sudbury and prevented a number of waggons from carrying flour to London, insisting that they should be permitted to purchase the flour at 1s. 6d. a stone. A magistrate was called, who read out the Riot Act, and ordered the West Norfolk Militia to form an armed guard on the waggons.[3] More riots broke out in September over the high prices of provisions. At Sudbury, a crowd threatened to demolish the flour mills there if rice and flour prices were not lowered, and sacks of flour were seized and sold in the market place.[4] A number of

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[1] See Map 4, p. 230. It was not possible to find prices for other parts of the county. The Food and Drink category in the cost of living index is constructed from the prices of flour, meat (beef), butter, cheese, sugar, and tea. Prices of other commodities, such as beer, milk, potatoes, or clothing, were not available in the East and West Suffolk Record Offices.

[2] Bread prices were not available in the Poor Law records. The price of flour, for 1790-1809 and 1835-40, was the only evidence available.

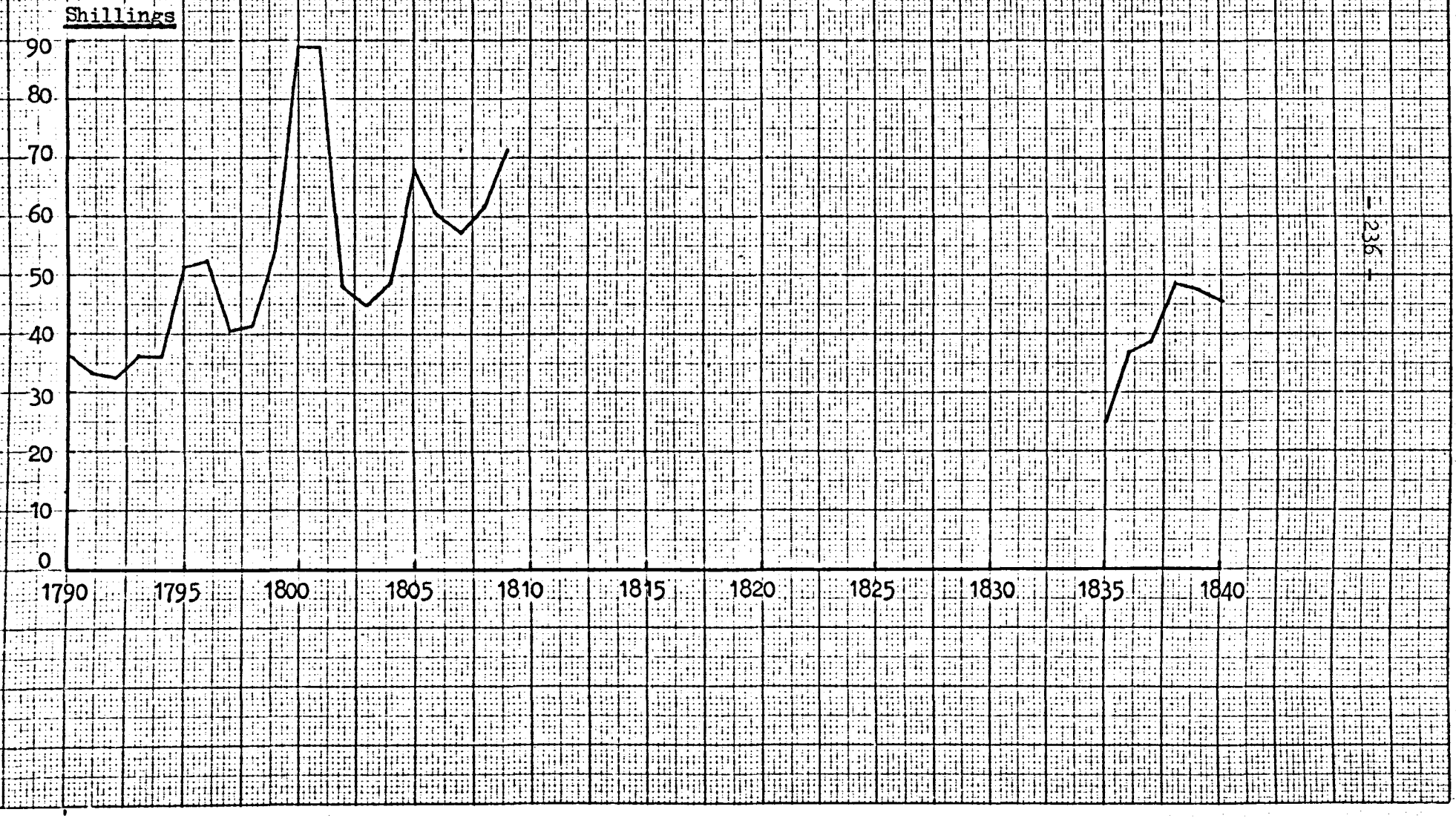
[3] The Chelmsford Chronicle 15 May 1795, p. 2. See also J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order. Six Studies in British History 1790-1820 (1974), pp. 36, 44.

[4] The Ipswich Journal 12-19 September 1795, p. 2.

FIG. 24

The Price of Flour in Suffolk 1790–1809, 1835–40

(per sack)



waggons carrying flour to Long Melford and Colchester were stopped, their contents seized, and sold in the market at 2s. 0d. a stone. The market price at that time averaged 3s. 5d. a stone.[1]

Flour prices fell from this minor peak over the following two years and then, following two deficient harvests in 1799 and 1800,[2] soared to reach an average of 89s. a sack in 1800-1. This extraordinary rise in price represented a price increase of 147 per cent. since 1790 and, as in 1795, was the cause of several riots in the county. In Ipswich market a mob broke the windows of bakers' shops and tried to take possession of a cart load of flour.[3] At Stokebridge a number of women took possession of two flour mills and refused to leave until the price of flour was reduced to 2s. 6d. a stone. The magistrate called out the constabulary and the Ipswich Volunteers, read the Riot Act, and a running fight ensued. Similar riots broke out at Woodbridge.[4]

Improved harvest in 1802-3 led to a fall in flour prices to 45s. a sack by 1803 and then, following a deficient harvest in 1804, rose to reach a minor peak in 1805 at 68s. a sack.[5] By 1808 flour prices were beginning to exceed this level owing to the effects of bad weather upon the corn harvest.[6]

On the basis of contemporary printed sources it appears that the

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1 Ibid.

2 T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838-57), I, pp. 214-17. In the neighbouring county of Essex the wheat crop was deficient by a third of its normal size in 1800.

3 The Ipswich Journal, 20 September 1800, p. 2. See also, Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 36, 44.

4 The Ipswich Journal, 20 September 1800, p. 2.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 238, 259.

6 Ibid. pp. 293-300, 319-25.

condition of agriculture in Suffolk in the post-war period was similar to that in Essex. In 1817, for example, wheat prices reached a high point, and then subsequently fell, owing to an improvement in domestic wheat supplies, to reach a low point by 1821.[1] Two deficient harvests in 1823-4 temporarily reversed this trend and brought a return to prosperity for wheat farmers by 1825.[2] Abundant harvests in the early 1830's brought about a further fall in prices, though by 1840 prices had been restored to their wartime level again owing to a return of bad weather and deficient harvests.[3]

From what little dietary evidence there is available it seems that meat formed part of the agricultural labourers' diet. Parish workhouses in Suffolk also made regular purchases of beef and, for the years which information was available, the general level and trend of these prices is shown in Figure 25. Over the course of the Napoleonic war beef prices followed an upward trend and by the 1800's had almost doubled in price. Starting from an average level of 4d. a pound in 1790 beef prices steadily increased to reach 7½d. a pound by 1801, and remained about that level, fluctuating between 6½d. and 7½d. a pound, until 1809.

According to contemporary printed accounts meat prices in Suffolk during the 1820's and 1830's shared a similar experience to those in Essex. In 1818 and 1819, for example, meat prices in Suffolk were high, as they were in Essex, owing to a drought and a shortage of livestock.[4]

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 85. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 82-3.

2 Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers, 1836, VIII (i), p. 67. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 132-4.

3 Ibid. III, pp. 11-16.

4 S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, p. 87. E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), p. 161.

FIG. 25

The Price of Beef in Suffolk 1790-1809, 1835-40

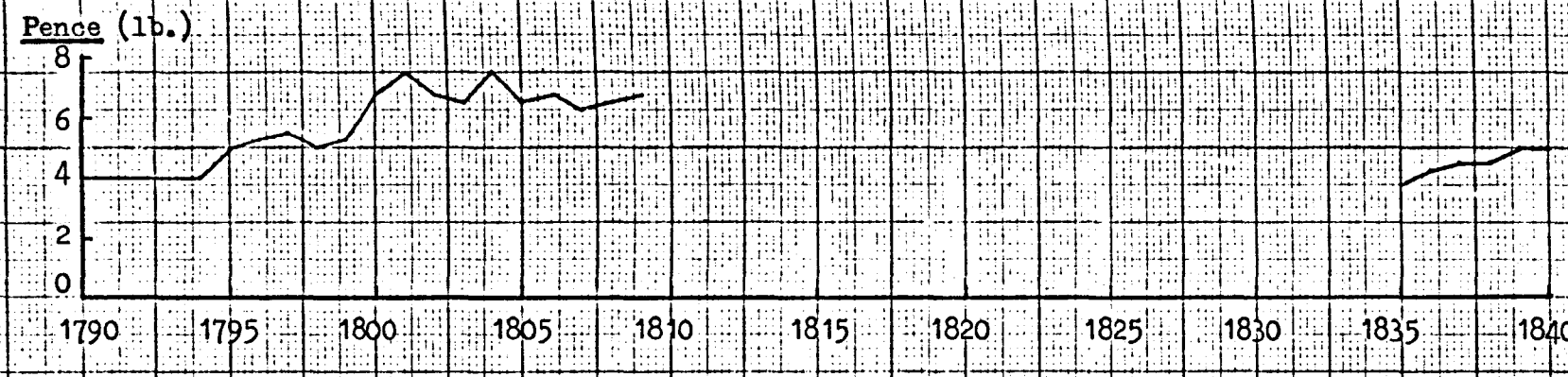
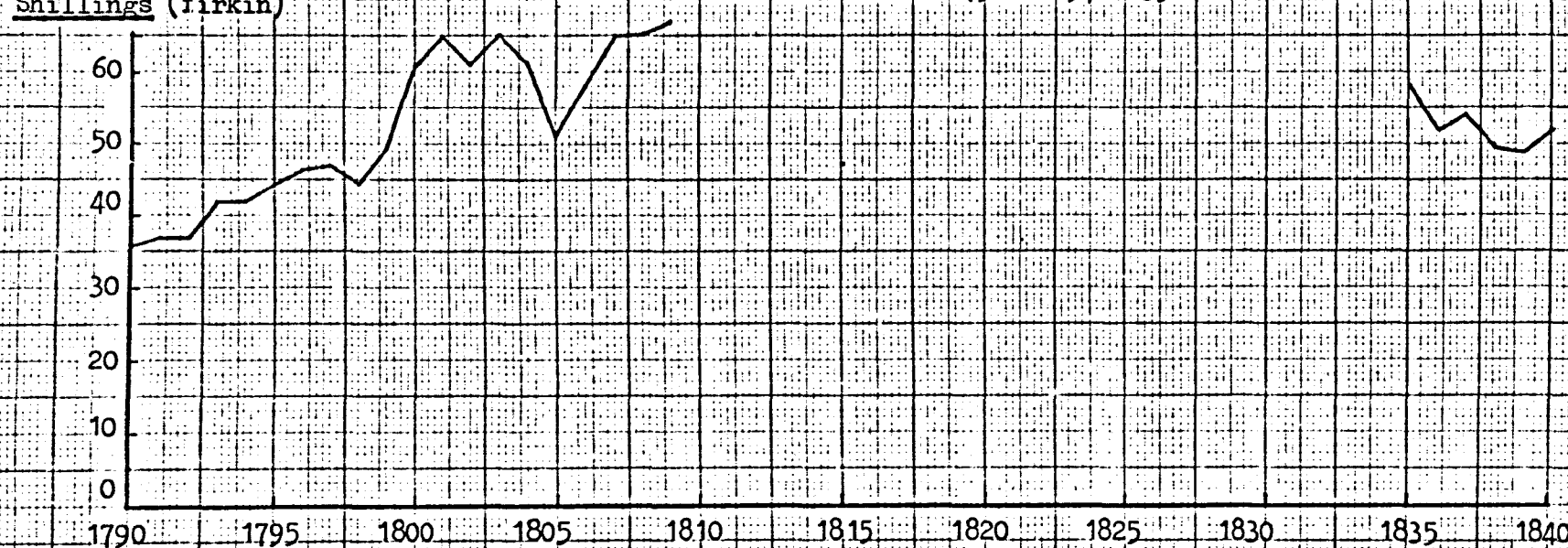


FIG. 26

The Price of Butter in Suffolk 1790-1809, 1835-40



Similarly, mutton prices were high in 1829-30 in Suffolk, as they were in Essex, owing to an outbreak of sheep rot which killed an 'immense number' of sheep in the county.[1]

Overseers of the poor also purchased quantities of dairy produce, such as butter, for consumption in the workhouse. The trend of the prices paid by these institutions for this commodity is illustrated in Figure 26. From what little evidence there is available on butter prices it is apparent that, as in the case of other prices in the cost of living index, their general trend moved sharply upwards over the Napoleonic war. From an average price of 36s. a firkin[2] in 1790 the price of butter increased to reach 65s. by 1801 and 1803.[3] This rise represented a price increase of 81 per cent. since 1790, though butter prices rose to a higher level than this by 1809. It is difficult to say what happened to the level and trend of butter prices from that point until the 1830's, though it is clear from the evidence relating to 1835-40 that at 49s. to 58s. a firkin the price of butter was still as high as it was during the early stages of the war.[4]

The prices of two other consumables in the Food and Drink category, tea and sugar, are illustrated in Figure 27. Although the information on these items is not as extensive as it is for other counties in this study, what little evidence there is on sugar does suggest that its price followed a similar trend to sugar prices in Essex and fluctuated within a range of

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1 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VII (i), p. 67.

2 Butter was purchased by the firkin rather than by weight and therefore this measure has been used in the cost of living index.

3 In September 1800 a number of disturbances broke out in Ipswich, Harwich, and Woodbridge markets over the high price of butter, The Ipswich Journal, 20 September 1800, p. 2.

4 Butter prices in Essex in 1835-40 were also as high as they were during the early stages of the French war.

FIG. 27

The Prices of Tea and Sugar in Suffolk 1790–1811, 1835–40

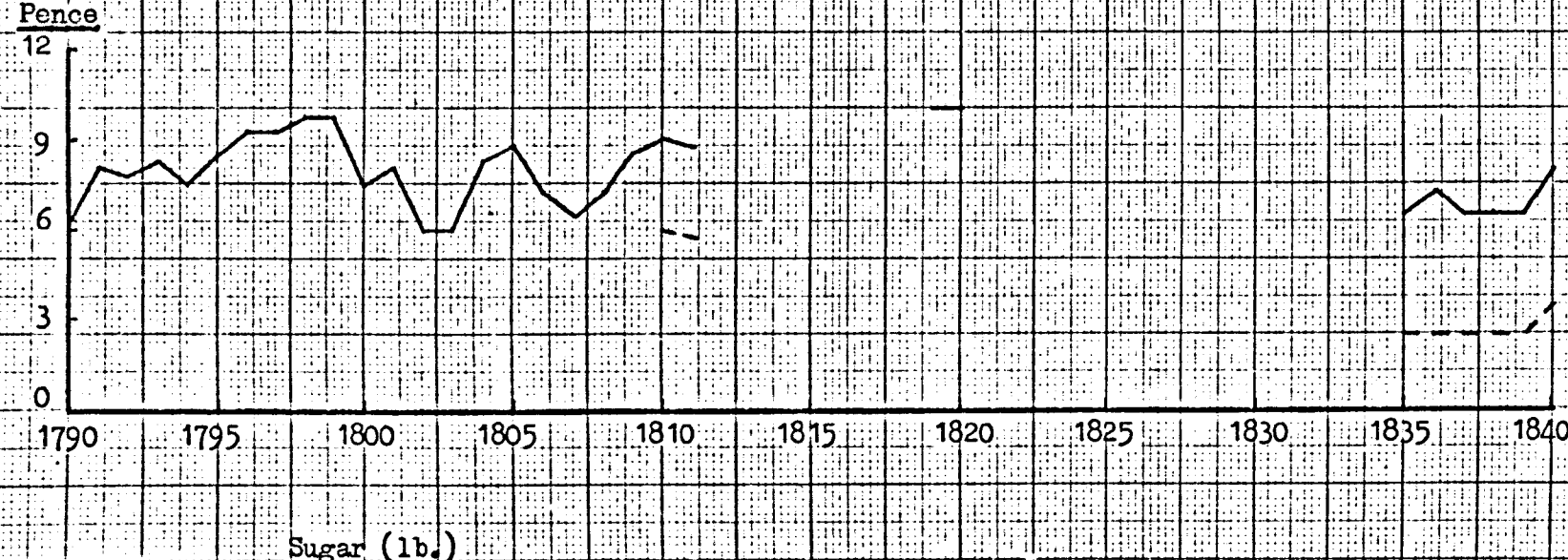
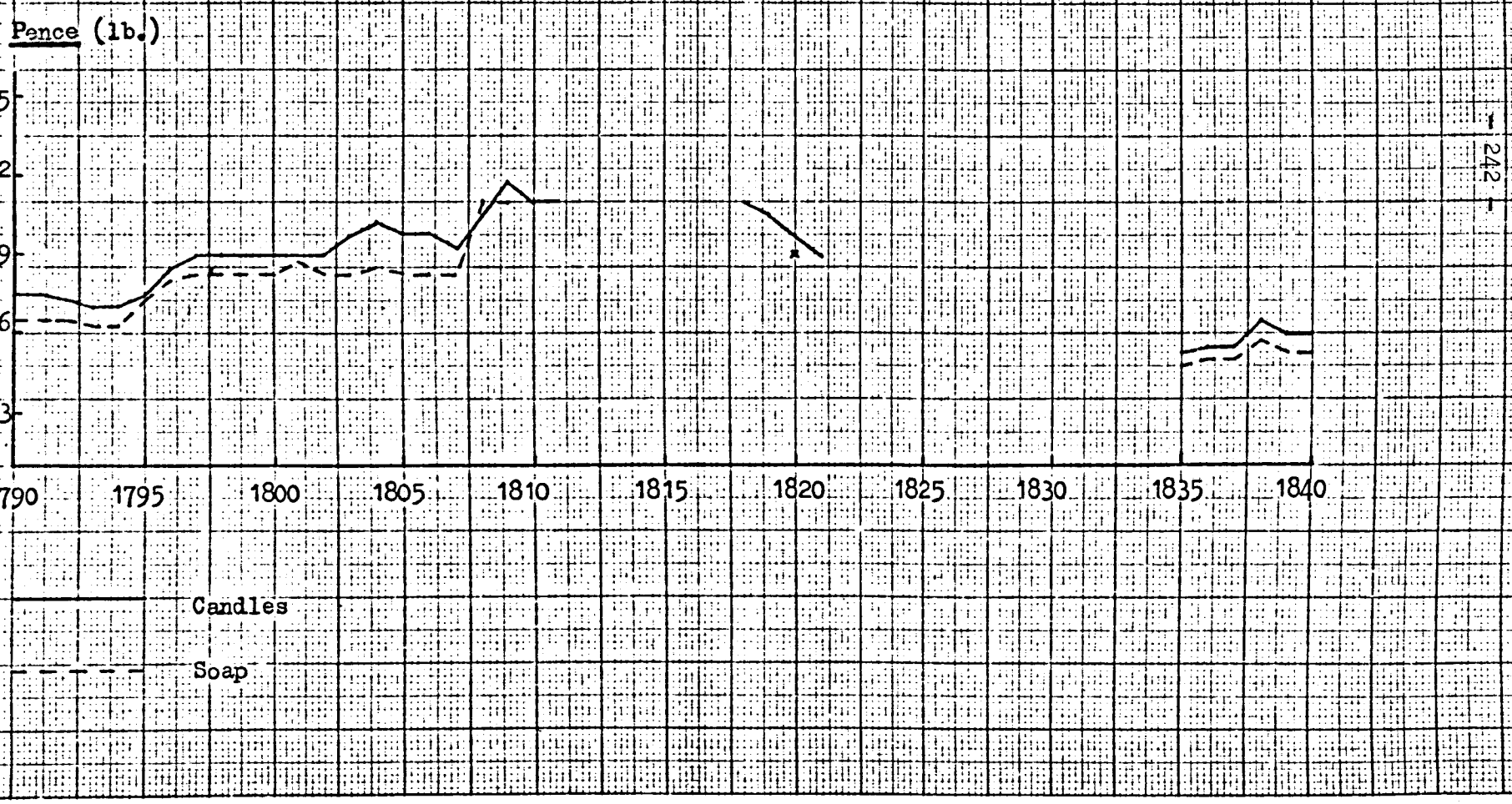


FIG. 28

The Prices of Candles and Soap in Suffolk 1790–1811, 1835–40



6d. to 9¾d. a pound. Starting from an average price of 6¼d. a pound in 1790 the price of sugar in Suffolk increased over the early years of the war to reach 9¾d. a pound by 1799.[1] This rise represented a price increase of 56 per cent. since 1790, which was about the same rate of increase in the sugar duty.[2] As in the case of Essex, sugar prices fell from this point during the Peace of Amiens in 1802-3 and recovered to a minor peak, at 8¼d. a pound, by 1805.[3] By 1810 the average price of sugar in Suffolk was 9d. a pound, which was about 44 per cent. higher than its price in 1790.[4]

The prices of these commodities - flour, meat (beef), butter, tea, and sugar - constitute the Food and Drink category in the cost of living index. Besides this category of expenditure, which accounted for two-thirds of the labourers' household budget,[5] it is also important to consider the prices of other items of expenditure. Figure 28, for example, shows the trend of candle and soap prices in Suffolk. In examining the trend of these prices it is apparent that, as in the case of candle and soap prices in Kent and Essex, their prices tended to follow a parallel trend with the prices of candles exceeding the price of soap by a small margin. The prices of these articles experienced a marked increase over the early years of the war, owing to shortages of imported and domestically produced tallow, and by 1809 were, on average, 63 per cent. higher

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1 1799 was also the first peak year for sugar prices in Essex and Kent.

2 T. Tooke, Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years from 1793 to 1822 (1824), pp. 46-7. The price of sugar in Essex increased by 52 per cent. in the same period.

3 1805 was also a peak year in Essex and Kent.

4 A similar increase took place in Kent.

5 See p. 248.

than they were in 1790.[1]

Candle prices were still lying at a high level, at 11d. a pound, in 1818, as they were in Kent and Essex, but fell during the early 1820's as supplies of imported tallow were increased.[2] Indeed, such was the fall in prices that by 1835-40 the prices of candles and soap in Suffolk, as in Kent and Essex, were lower than they were in the pre-war period.

Fuel, for cooking or heating cottage homes, is another item of expenditure which must be included in the cost of living index.[3] As in the case of other counties in this study, Suffolk workhouses frequently purchased quantities of coal but rarely firewood. Indeed, the fact that they purchased coal for use in the workhouse rather than firewood suggests that firewood was difficult to obtain. From what little literary evidence there is available on this commodity it would appear that that was the case. Owing to the clearance of woodland areas for arable farming it is clear that by the late eighteenth century firewood was 'exceedingly scarce' in the county.[4] Although cottagers on the heaths and fens burned wood and peat in their homes, in other areas coal had been in use since the 1770's in cottage homes.[5] For these reasons the use of coal prices in the cost of living index seems justified.

As the Poor Law records for Suffolk contained no references to the prices of clothing it has been necessary to omit this item of expenditure from the cost of living index.[6] Parish workhouses, however, purchased

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[1] Tooke, op. cit. pp. 360-1.

[2] Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 25, 392. Jones, op. cit. pp. 161-2.

[3] Fuel accounted for about 5 per cent. of total household expenditure.

[4] Young (1797), op. cit. pp. 40-1, 144-5.

[5] Ibid. p. 204.

[6] This was also the case in the rest of the counties in this study. Expenditure on Clothing was not large and accounted for about 9 per cent. of total household expenditure. See pp. 60-1 for a further discussion on this item.

quantities of women's shoes and the prices of this commodity have been included in the cost of living index.[1]

Cottage Rent constitutes the last main category of expenditure in the cost of living index.[2] As much of the evidence on this item tends to be rather fragmentary in nature it does not readily lend itself to statistical analysis. In particular, the evidence provides no solution to the problem of measuring the rate by which cottage rents changed after their datum point.[3] Despite these limitations, however, the evidence does provide a general impression of the trend and geographical structure of rents in the county at large. In examining this evidence it is apparent from the observations of contemporary writers on agricultural matters that there was a shortage of good cottages in Suffolk. Arthur Young, for example, noted,

> In Suffolk, they are in general bad habitations; deficient in all contrivance for warmth, and for convenience . . . the state of reparation bad, and the deficiency of gardens too general.[4]

At that time, in the 1790's, cottage rents varied from £2 to £3 a year.[5] If cottages in Suffolk were 'bad' then, then they were seemingly still 'bad' in the 1840's and their rents were higher. In 1835, for example, cottage rents ranged from £3 to £5 a year, and in 1838 agricultural labourers were said to be paying, on average, £3 11s. a year

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1 Shoe prices are regarded as an acceptable alternative to boot prices. See p. 61.

2 The main sources of evidence on this commodity have been obtained from various farm, estate, parish, and contemporary printed sources.

3 These problems have been discussed elsewhere and are not repeated here. See pp. 57-9.

4 Young (1797), op. cit. p. 11.

5 Ibid. p. 12.

in rent.[1] Some years later James Caird noted that rents were high in Suffolk and varied from £3 to £5 a year.[2] Another observer noted that the rent of a thatched cottage with clay and plaster walls, a typical cottage of the period, was £4 to £5 a year, though half of these had only one bedroom and were decidedly insanitary.[3] As one writer put it, 'This want of sufficient cottage accommodation seems almost universal . . . The cottagers are frequently undrained, and consequently wet and damp'.[4] In Cosford Union a clay hovel, thatched but with no ceiling or hard floor cost £2 12s. to £3 18s. a year to rent.[5] Similar examples to these were found in the parishes of Elmsett, Trimley, Eye, Whitton, Burstall, Badley and Nettlestead.[6]

In looking at the geographical pattern of cottage rents in Suffolk, the highest rents appeared to be located in the northeast part of the county. Rents were particularly high in the large parishes such as Beccles (£4-£5), Bungay (£3-£6), Ringsfield (£4 10s. to £5 10s.), and Halesworth (£3-£6).[7] In the remoter rural parishes, in the southern half of the county, cottage rents were much lower, as at Debenham (£2-£4),

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1 J. P. Kay, 'Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in Norfolk and Suffolk', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 1 (1838), p. 181. This figure was an average of the various rents paid by 449 agricultural labourers.

2 J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 147.

3 J. Glyde, Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century (1856), p. 357.

4 Ibid. p. 358.

5 Ibid. p. 357.

6 Ibid. pp. 361-2. According to one observer, the problem of overcrowding in these parishes arose because 'Many landowners objected to investing money in cottages, thinking by so doing they will burden their estates with poor'. One consequence of this was that rents were high. Raynbird, op. cit. p. 324.

7 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers, 1834, XXI, Appendix B.1, pp. 447-73.

Stanstead (£2-£3), Kersey (£3), Semer (£3), and Benhall (£2-£4).[1]

An impression of the long-run trend of cottage rents in Suffolk may be gained from the rents quoted in various farm, estate, and contemporary printed sources in the Suffolk Record Office. These are summarised as follows:

TABLE 18

COTTAGE RENTS IN SUFFOLK 1770-1856

Year	Location	Rent per Annum
1770[1]	Suffolk	40s.
1797[2]	"	40s.-60s.
1816[3]	Playford	84s.
1825[3]	"	84s.
1835[4]	Suffolk	60s.-100s.
1838[5]	"	71s.
1849[6]	"	60s.-70s.
1850[1]	"	60s.-100s.
1856[7]	"	80s.-100s.

Sources:

1 Caird, op. cit. pp. 147, 474.

2 Young (1797), op. cit. p. 12.

3 E.S.R.O. HA 2/B2/1-4. Biddell Estate. Hill Farm Day Labour Acoount Books.

4 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 70.

5 Kay, loc. cit. p. 181.

6 W. and H. Raynbird, The Agriculture of Suffolk (1849), p. 282.

7 Glyde, op. cit. p. 357.

[1] Ibid.

These figures suggest that cottage rents in Suffolk doubled, from 40s. to about 80s. a week, between the 1770's and the 1850's. However, in the light of the obvious limitations involved in handling this kind of evidence it would be difficult to justify the assumption that cottage rents doubled in this period. For these reasons, and to avoid building an artificial bias into the cost of living index, it has been necessary to assume that cottage rents remained constant in this period.[1]

III. Household Expenditure

It is now necessary to collate the five main categories of household expenditure - Food and Drink, Cottage Rent, Candles, Soap, and Shoes - into a single index. In each case the weights which have been allocated to each category of expenditure are proportionate to the amount of money agricultural labourers laid-out on these items in their household budgets.

TABLE 19

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE AT CASTOR[2]

	%
Food and Drink	67.7
Cottage Rent	6.1
Fuel	5.2
Clothing	9.1
Shoes	2.0
Candles	2.8
Soap	2.1
Miscellaneous	5.0
	100.0

[1] The significance of making such a 'safe' assumption as this is that it will tend to understate, rather than overstate, the rise in the cost of living. As expenditure on Cottage Rent accounted for about 6 per cent. of total household expenditure its overall influence upon the all-items index would not be large.

[2] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), p. 176. The Miscellaneous category includes a number of imponderables such as medicine and lying-in and these have been omitted from the index because of a lack of information on them.

These figures clearly bring out the importance of food and drink in the labourers' standard of living, especially the fact that this category alone absorbed two-third of their disposable income, and helps to explain why an abnormal increase in food prices caused so much distress and discontent in the county. The various weights which have been attached to the commodities in the Food and Drink category have been determined by the amount of expenditure labourers spent on these items in their family budgets.

TABLE 20

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND DRINK[1]

	%
Flour	66.1
Meat	14.6
Cheese	5.9
Butter	6.8
Sugar	4.3
Tea	2.3
	100.0

These figures, as well as the literary evidence on diets, underlines the fact that bread was the mainstay of the agricultural labourers' existence. Indeed, in times of dearth during the Napoleonic war, when bread prices rose to an abnormally high level, agricultural labourers, despite the exhortations of the Board of Agriculture, showed great reluctance to substitute potatoes for wheaten bread. Although flour prices in Suffolk increased by 43 per cent. between 1790 and 1795 it is clear from the correspondents to the Annals of Agriculture, that, at that point, the 'daintiness of the poor' barred the substitution of potatoes

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[1] Davies, op. cit. p. 176.

for wheaten bread in their diets.[1]

Indeed, a correspondent from Wickambrook, in west Suffolk, who had encouraged his parishioners to grow potatoes found that his advice had 'as little effect as if it had been delivered from the pulpit'.[2] By 1800-1, however, the price of flour in Suffolk had risen by 147 per cent. and it is evident by that date that the labouring classes' resistance to the potato was weakening and it was becoming an accepted part of their diet. As one writer put it,

> Wheaten bread and flour dumplings certainly constitute a very principal part of the usual food of our poor; but their consumption of that grain . . . has of late been much diminished by the substitution of potatoes, soup, etc. in its stead. They now make their bread of the coarsest kind of flour which the millers denominate thirds.[3]

Similarly, in 1829 a local newspaper commented

> The high price of flour has increased the consumption of potatoes amongst the poor, and the demand has occasioned a rise of price which will prevent the use of them in feeding cattle.[4]

Besides bread and potatoes, it is clear from the dietary evidence of the period that cheese, tea, sugar, and a little meat were common items of consumption in labourers' households.[5]

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various commodities in the five main categories of

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1 Annals of Agriculture, XXIV (1795), pp. 136-48.

2 Young (1797), op. cit. p. 118.

3 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 612.

4 The Chelmsford Chronicle, 16 January 1829, p. 3.

5 Reports into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1, pp. 447-73. A survey of agricultural labourers' diets in a dozen parishes in Suffolk found that this was their common diet. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 232-4.

expenditure have been combined, in Laspeyres form, to provide a cost of living index for the county.[1] This index is illustrated in Figure 29 and, although the evidence is not as complete as it is for Kent and Essex, the results obtained for Suffolk are agreeably similar to those obtained for these counties. Over the course of the Napoleonic war period the main peaks in the cost of living, in 1795, 1800-1, and 1805, and the main troughs, occurring in 1797-8 and 1802-3, coincided with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living in Kent and Essex. In each instance, variations in the cost of living were directly linked to short-run exigencies such as the vicissitudes of war in Europe or the changing state of domestic harvests. Indeed, the combined effect of these two factors had a profound effect upon the price of flour in Suffolk and, because of the relatively high weight it carried in the cost of living index, exerted a powerful influence upon the agricultural labourers' standard of living. Indeed, in many respects the price of bread (or flour) was a sensitive indicator of the agricultural labourers' standard of living and, when its price rose by an abnormal amount, was so often the cause of ill-feeling among the rural poor and an outburst of civil disorder.

Given the trend of the cost of living in Suffolk, to what extent did it compare with the estimates made for Kent and Essex and with Silberling's estimates of the cost of living in London?[2]

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[1] The working of this formula is explained on p. 65.

[2] N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 235.

FIG. 29

The Cost of Living in Suffolk and London 1790–1809, 1835–40

(1790 = 100, 1835 = 100)

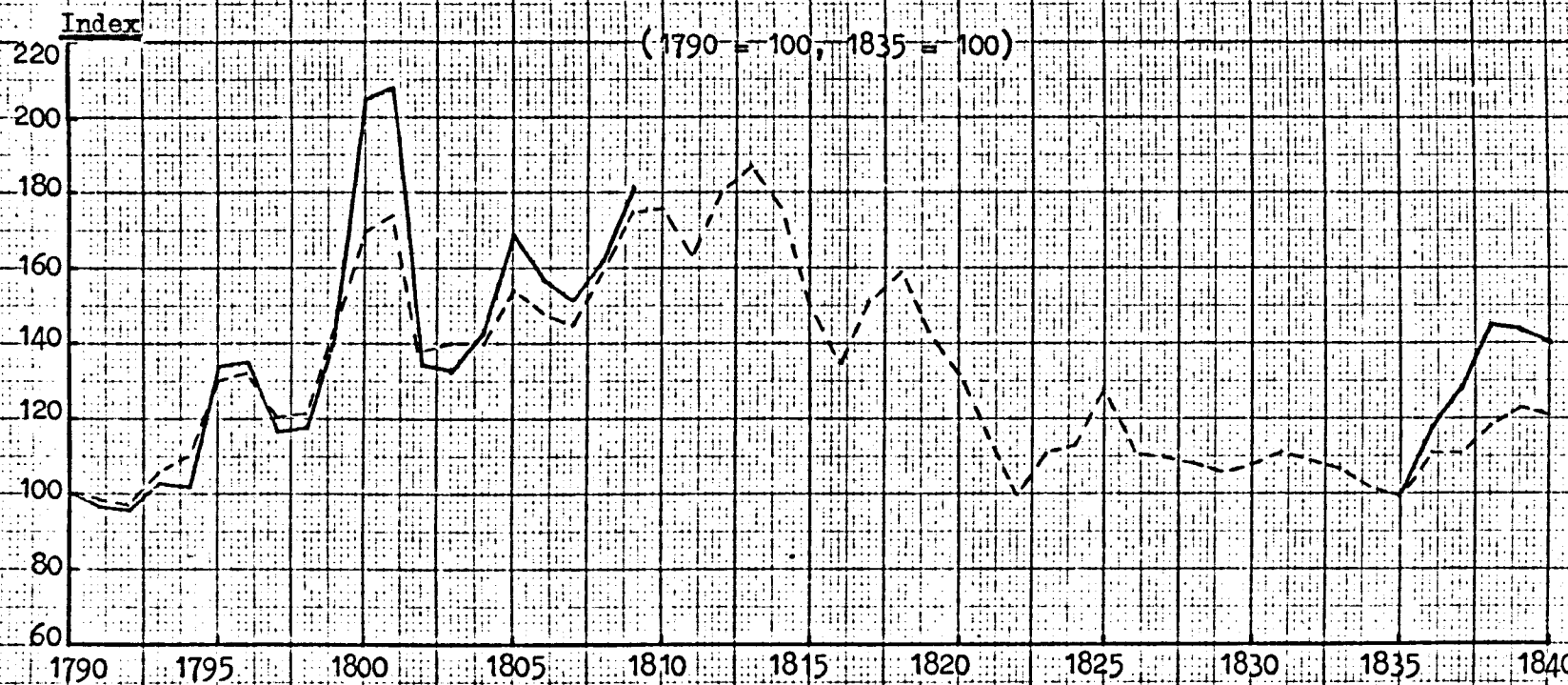

TABLE 21

VARIATIONS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN, KENT, ESSEX, SUFFOLK, AND LONDON

1795–1809
(1790 = 100)

	1795 %	1800 %	1805 %	1809 %
Kent	+37	+73	+67	+74
Essex	+34	+71	+73	+81
Suffolk	+34	+105	+69	+81
London	+30	+70	+54	+75

These figures suggest two conclusions. First, in the years for which comparable data was available the cost of living in Suffolk was, apart from 1800, remarkably close to the cost of living in Kent and Essex. In each county the direction and degree of change in the cost of living between 1790 and 1809 was almost identical, thus suggesting that Suffolk was part of the same market area as Kent and Essex. Indeed, if these three counties had a common denominator it was the all-pervading influence of London upon the level of agricultural output and prices in their economies. Second, although the cost of living in Suffolk and London was approximately the same during the 1790's, from that point onwards a gap developed between the two series with the cost of living in Suffolk tending to lie on a higher level than that in London.[1] At the widest point, in 1800, the cost of living in Suffolk was 35 per cent. higher than in London. In the light of the county evidence, therefore, Silberling's index appears to understate the rise in the cost of living throughout most

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[1] See Fig. 29. At this point it must be recalled that Silberling's index relates to raw material prices whereas the county index relates to the prices of processed commodities, and therefore one is not, strictly speaking, comparing like with like here. Nevertheless, it is instructive to compare the two series to see whether or not Silberling's index has any general applicability to areas other than for which it was constructed.

of the period under review and thereby must be seen to be of little use as a guide to the cost of living in Suffolk.

Given the general direction and trend of the cost of living in Suffolk, it is now necessary to discover to what extent was this sequence followed by similar changes in agricultural wages. In other words, what light does the relationship between the cost of living and the trend of agricultural wages throw upon the labourers' standard of living?

CHAPTER 9

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN SUFFOLK 1790-1840

I. Introduction

By the end of the eighteenth century agriculture and the woollen industry were the two most important industries in Suffolk. Commercial farming developed rapidly during the eighteenth century and by the time of the Napoleonic war this sector had undergone a transformation. Under the stimulus of high and rising corn prices many Suffolk farmers changed over from dairy farming to arable farming and enjoyed a rise in prosperity.[1] The expansion of cereal production provided the local labour force with a widening range of employment opportunities at a time when the domestic woollen industry was providing employment for large numbers of women and children. In the Lavenham area the manufacture of says and calimancoes was said to be 'very considerable' and workmen in the industry earned 5s. 6d. to 6s. a week during the 1770's.[2] During the Napoleonic war Arthur Young noted that 'The principal fabric of the county, is the spinning and combing of wool, which is spread throughout the greater part of it' and that wages were 10s. to 14s. a week.[3] Hemp cultivation, which was mainly located between Eye and Beccles in the north-east area of the county, also employed large numbers of women and children. In noting the importance of hemp cultivation to the local community, Young wrote,

> Women buy it and spin it into yarn which they carry to market, and sell at prices proportioned to the fineness.

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[1] J. Thirsk and J. Imray, Suffolk Farming in the Nineteenth Century (Ipswich, 1958), pp. 18, 21.

[2] A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), p. 64.

[3] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1813), p. 231.

> This the weaver buys, who converts it into cloth, which is sold at market also. The spinners earn better and more steady wages than by wool: a common hand will do two skains a day, three of which are a clue, at ninepence; consequently she earns sixpence a day; and will look to her family and do half a clue. - Nor is the trade, like wool, subject to great depressions, there being always more work than hands; the consequence of a brisk demand. They begin to spin at four or five years old.[1]

By the end of the war prosperity in agriculture and the domestic textile industries came to an abrupt end. Wheat prices fell to a low point and the agricultural sector entered upon a period of depression which lasted until the end of the 1830's.[2] During this period the agricultural labourers in Suffolk suffered a considerable degree of unemployment and poverty and their plight was worsened by the decline of the woollen industry.[3] Spinning and weaving, which provided an important supplementary source of income for labourers' families, fell into a state of decay and the loss of earnings from this source occurred at a time when it was most needed. Throughout East Anglia unemployment and falling living standards produced considerable discontent which periodically errupted into public demonstrations against high food prices, low wages, and the use of the threshing machines.[4]

Given the level and trend of the cost of living in Suffolk, it is

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1 Young (1813), op. cit. p. 143.

2 Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (i), p. 62. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 22.

3 W. and H. Raynbird, The Agriculture of Suffolk (1849), p. 282. Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 31-2.

4 A. J. Peacock, Bread or Blood, A Study of Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816 (1965), passim. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, Captain Swing (1969), passim.

evident that the agricultural labourers' standard of living was heavily dependent upon the ability of agricultural wages to match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living. The main sources of statistical evidence used in this chapter have been derived from the Henham Hall Estate Labour Accounts[1] and the Biddell Hill Farm Labour Accounts.[2] The agricultural labourers employed on these estates were hired by the week at varying rates of pay and an arithmetic average of their annual earnings, taking good seasons with the bad, forms the basis for measuring changes in their standard of living.[3] At various points the wage index has been compared with the cost of living index in order to discover what happened to the purchasing power of wages in this period.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages, the cost of living, and the trend of real wages in Suffolk is shown in Figure 30-2.[4] In looking at the trend of agricultural labourers' wages at Henham Hall it is evident that during the 1790's wages were relatively static at 8s. 6d. a week and, compared with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources,

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[1] E.S.R.O. HA/11/C7/1/25-56. Rous Estate. Henham Hall Labour Accounts. These Accounts cover the period 1790-1817. See Map 4, p. 230.

[2] E.S.R.O. HA2/B2/1-4. Biddell Estate. Hill Farm Day Labour Account Books. These Accounts cover the period 1821-40 and relate to the Playford area. Playford lies in the south-eastern corner of the county.

[3] At various points these wages have been compared with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 30 the former have been marked with a cross (x) and the latter with a dot (.). See p. 78 for a discussion on the relationship between estate wages and farm wages.

[4] The real wage index is obtained by dividing the wage index by the cost of living index.

FIG. 30

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Suffolk 1790–1840

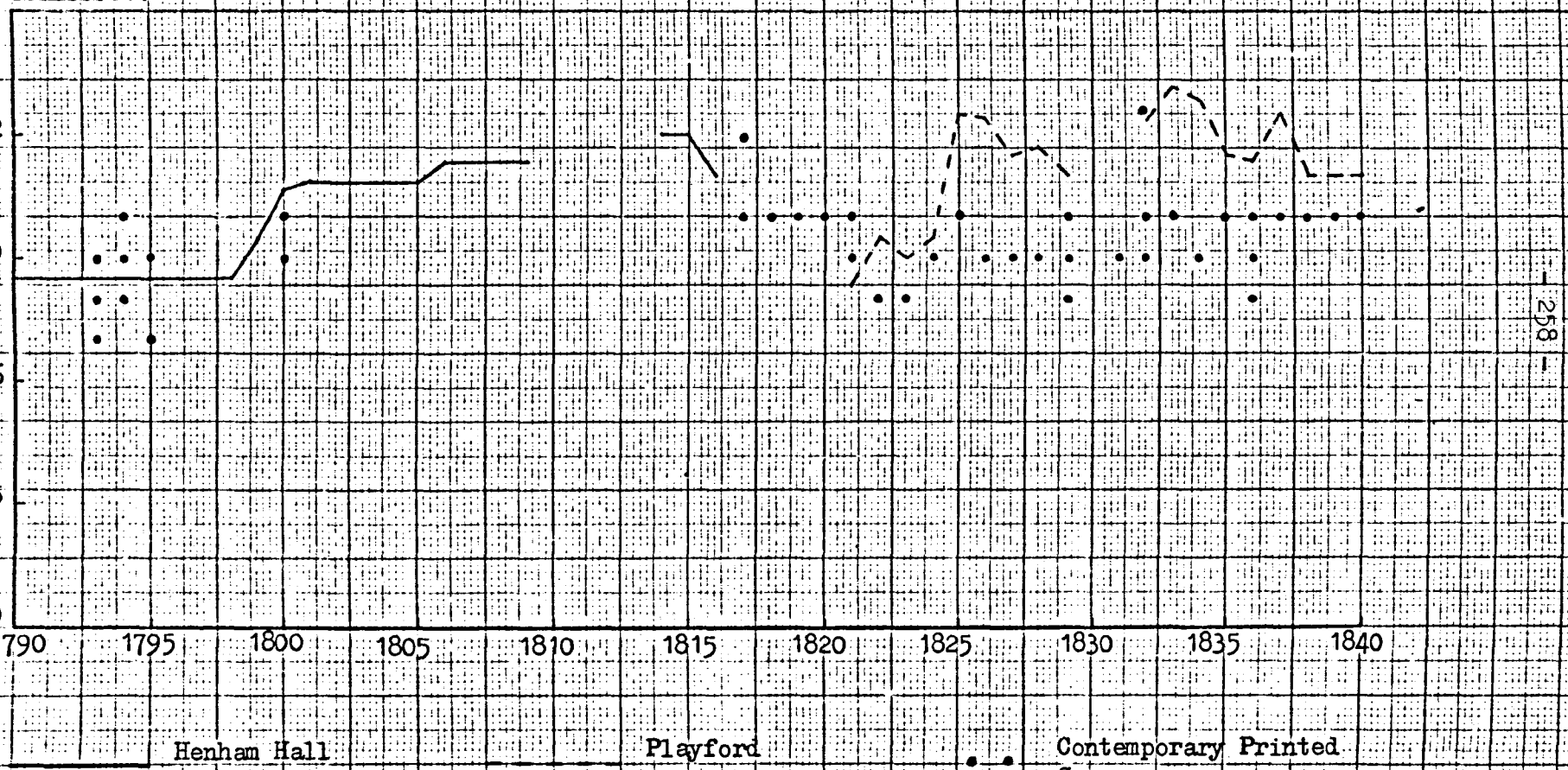
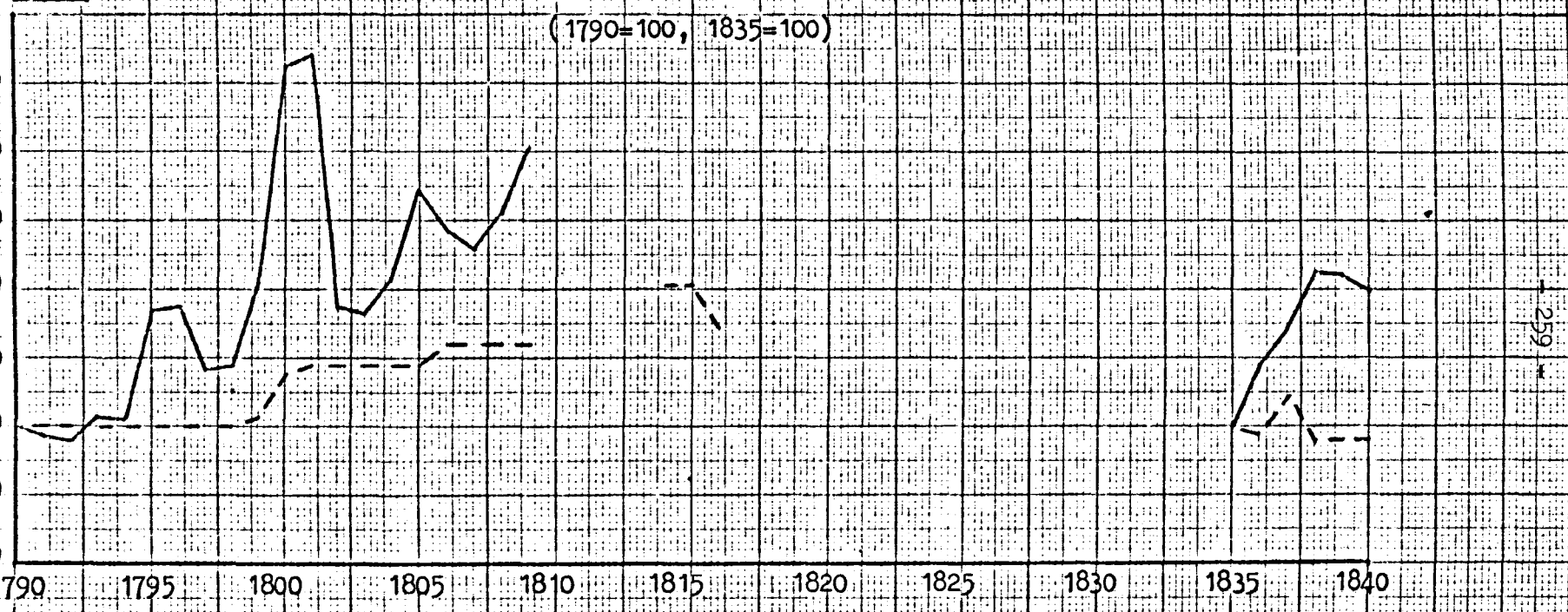


FIG. 31

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Suffolk 1790–1809, 1835–40

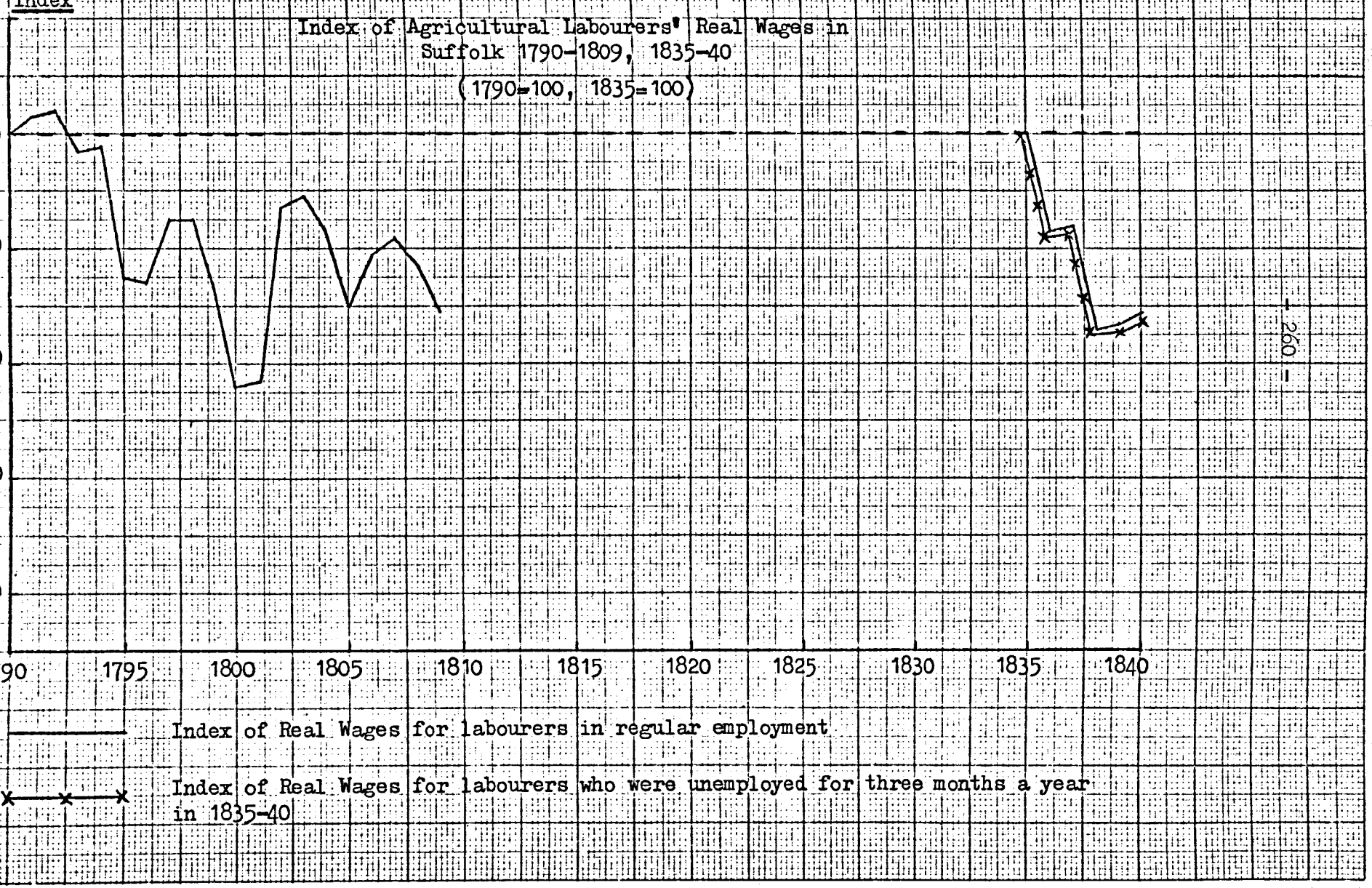
(1790=100, 1835=100)



———— Cost of Living Index

– – – – Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers in regular employment at Henham Hall and Playford

FIG. 32



Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Suffolk 1790–1809, 1835–40

(1790=100, 1835=100)

Index of Real Wages for labourers in regular employment

Index of Real Wages for labourers who were unemployed for three months a year in 1835–40

occupied a mid-way position between the level of wages being paid elsewhere in the county.[1] In the parish of Hoxne and Walton, for example, wages were 8s., and 7s. to 9s. a week, respectively, in 1793.[2] In the following year Arthur Young found that wage variations in the county were 'not considerable' and that winter and summer wages were generally 8s. and 9s. a week respectively.[3] Eden also noted, at the same time, that common labourers in Suffolk were paid 7s. to 9s. a week plus an allowance for beer.[4]

The stability of agricultural wages in the 1790's, however, was not matched by stability in the cost of living and by 1795, the first peak year in the cost of living, the general level of prices in Suffolk had risen by 34 per cent. As one local magistrate said, 'the rise of wages to labourers hath been trifling, as I approve much more of shewing indulgence in the purchase of the necessaries of life, than in raising wages'.[5] The most serious consequence of the failure of agricultural wages to keep pace with increases in the cost of living was that the index of real wages fell by 25 per cent. by 1795, and was accompanied by an outbreak of rioting over the high prices of foodstuffs in various parts of the county.[6]

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1 It is difficult to say how reliable the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources were as the writers invariably failed to state whether the wages were winter, spring, or summer wages, or an arithmetic average of all these seasonal rates. Given these limitations it is, nevertheless, an instructive exercise to compare these observations with the empirical evidence.

2 Annals of Agriculture, XXIII (1793), pp. 19, 44.

3 A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1794), p. 56. Young estimated that winter lasted for twenty-nine weeks and summer for eighteen weeks. During the five harvest weeks wages were 17s. a week.

4 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 315.

5 Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 136-48. XXV (1796), p. 628.

6 See p. 235.

In recognising the extent of the distress amongst the rural labouring classes some parishes established public subscription funds to relieve the agricultural poor with doles of provisions at subsidised prices. In Glemsford parish, for example, the poor were sold flour and fuel at a third less than its retail price.[1] Similar schemes were in operation at Clare, Syleham, Walton, and Hoxne.[2] According to Eden the scale of allowances for the agricultural poor in the Melton area of east Suffolk was as follows:

> A single man or woman, ill, 1s. per week; a man and his wife, both ill, 2s. per week; a man and his wife with two or more children (the man ill), 2s. per week, with 6d. extra for each child under 10 if necessary; a man and his wife with more than two children (the woman ill), 1s. per week; a single woman with a bastard, or a widow in health with one child, not objects of relief. A man in health with only 3 children, not generally an object of relief.[3]

From their static level over the 1790's, agricultural wages at Henham Hall began to rise in 1799 and by 1801, had risen by 18 per cent. to reach, on average, 10s. 10d. per week.[4] Over the same period, however, the cost of living in Suffolk increased by 108 per cent. and the index of real wages fell to 57. As in 1795, the most serious consequence of this state of affairs was an outbreak of rioting in various parts of the county over the shortage and high prices of provisions.[5] Indeed, the wheat shortage was so acute in 1800 that it became too expensive to relieve the rural poor in the traditional manner with doles of cheap food; instead, employers preferred to give their labourers an extra allowance of sixpence

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1 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 136.

2 Ibid. pp. 138-47.

3 Eden, op. cit. p. 314.

4 At Little Livermore, near Bury St. Edmunds, labourers earned 9s. a week by the day and 10s. to 13s. a week at piece work in 1800. Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 612.

5 See p. 237.

per head for each of their dependents.[1] Other labourers suffered a substantial reduction in their material standard of living and were reduced to living on a meagre diet of coarse bread, made from mixed grains, potatoes, and soup.[2]

Over the rest of the war period agricultural wages at Henham rose to reach their peak, at 12s. a week, by 1815. If the labourers' standard of living was bad during the war, when conditions of full employment and regular earnings prevailed, then their condition was decidedly worse during the post-war period when employment became scarce and wages fell. At the end of the war many farmers in the county, who had expanded their operations during the years of prosperity, found themselves in considerable difficulty once corn prices began to fall.[3] Many were ruined and, in order to reduce their outgoings, began to reduce their labour force. The result was a notable rise in rural unemployment and social distress and, as a consequence of this situation, further outbreaks of rioting. In August 1815 a number of agricultural labourers broke a threshing machine in the parish of Holbrook[4] and in the following November more machines were broken at Kenton, Ashfield, and Monk Soham.[5] In the following year wage and machine breaking riots broke out again in East Anglia.[6]

By 1816 rural distress was endemic in Suffolk. In the Bayton area

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1 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 612.

2 Ibid.

3 Thirsk and Imray, op. cit. p. 21.

4 The Ipswich Journal 5 August 1815, p. 3. In January 1816 twelve labourers were given prison sentences of six to twelve months for taking part in the riot. Ibid. 3 January 1816, p. 3. The Colchester Gazette 20 January 1816, p. 3.

5 The Ipswich Journal 25 November 1815, p. 2. Six labourers were subsequently sent to prison for one year for breaking the machines.

6 Peacock, op. cit. passim.

agricultural wages fell by a third and a third of the labour force were out of work.[1] One observer commented, 'We have numerous poor . . . and many labourers out of employ at this time; the farmers here and in adjoining parishes make shift with the least possible number of men'.[2] A correspondent to the Board of Agriculture reported that the state of the poor in the Melton area was 'lamentable indeed' and that several parishes had 70 or more labourers out of work.[3] Mildenhall and Isleham had one hundred labourers out of work, because according to one farmer 'scarce any man employs one labourer more than he is compelled to do'.[4] A farmer from the parish of Bealings told the Board,

> The state of the labourer is distressing in a degree not recollected, I believe, by any. Regular labourers, retained by their old master, are not included in this description. Their wages, of course, have fallen but having regular work . . . the fall of price in most of what they have to buy, is nearly equal to that of labour. This description of labourers, under masters tolerably liberal, suffer less than any . . . It is among the labourers who have not constant employ that the greatest distress prevails . . . To lower their expenses farmers endeavour to keep fewer labourers . . . In some larger villages and towns, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and more men are employed at low wages, by order of the magistrates, under the surveyor of the highways, lifting stones for the roads, smoothing the roads, etc. Framlingham, Woodbridge, Tunstall, etc. are in this predicament. I do not think . . . I have so few as 100 persons before me applying for oders for work, or for something connected with the change in the state of agriculture.[5]

Similarly, a clergyman from Lavenham, near the Suffolk-Essex border, wrote,

> The state of the industrious labouring poor her is indeed very distressing (mere paupers I take not into account for

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1 Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816; reprinted 1970), p. 302.

2 Ibid. p. 304.

3 Board of Agriculture, op. cit. p. 306.

4 Ibid. p. 310.

5 Ibid. pp. 315-17.

> they are not much affected by any change in the times), those I mean who have formally been accustomed to support themselves and a small family in plenty and comfort: these, from the very great scarcity of labour, are forced to go off with half their former earnings, which are reluctantly made up from the parish fund in the same proportion with the pay of other paupers. These are certainly real objects of pity, and one cannot help feeling for the severity of their lot.[1]

Replies to the question 'What is the State of the Labouring Poor?' revealed that there was a 'great want of employment' in 31 parishes and that in some areas the poor rates had increased by as much as 30 per cent.

Inadequate wages, unemployment, and the use of threshing machines were the causes of considerable discontent in rural Suffolk in 1816.[2] An observer told the Board of Agriculture,

> The threshing machine . . . ought not to be found in populous places, and amidst a numerous poor; otherwise, many who might have constant employ must be compelled to have recourse to the rates for relief.[3]

During April 1816 a number of incendiary fires were reported in various areas and several threshing machines and farm implements were broken at Gedding, Rattlesden, and other parishes in west Suffolk.[4] A clergyman from Bildesden, in west Suffolk, described the effect of the riots upon the local farming community:

> We have no rest in our Beds but are kept watching till Break of Day . . . they threaten to burn the Clergy in their Beds - the Clergy are all magistrates - and they have gained from some quarter an idea that the high Tythes are the cause of their Low wages - in the parish of Hettlebason which is the worst in England for civilization . . . all look like Savages - in the next Parish viz Hitcham . . . the poor labourers in that village are in a state of rebellion and threatening to burn every stack and barn - then the Mills . . . For God's sake my Lord think of some exped's out immediately if not, I predict

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[1] Board of Agriculture, op. cit. pp. 232-4.

[2] Ibid. pp. 298-9, 306.

[3] Ibid. pp. 325.

[4] Peacock, op. cit. pp. 72-5.

> it will gather strength - we are all so tired with watching and want of sleep that we must give up the contest . . . send some troops directly and some police officers to the villages of Hettlebason, Hitcham, and Bildesden.[1]

By May 1816 the labourers' riots had spread into north Essex, Norfolk, and Cambridgeshire, though by the following June they had been effectively brought to an end by a coalition of civil and military forces.[2]

A rise in farm prices in 1817 brought a brief return of prosperity to agriculture in Suffolk, but in the following year prices began to fall again and continued to fall until 1822.[3] In that year agricultural wages at Playford were, on average, 9s. 6d. a week and these fell to 9s. a week by 1823. Agricultural employment was said to be 'very much diminished' in many parts of Suffolk and, according to one observer, 'a great number of hands . . . are thrown out of employment and maintained by the parish at a very small pittance indeed.[4] Between 1823 and 1825 agricultural prices began to recover from their depression of 1822 but the return of prosperity still left large numbers of labourers out of work and discontented.[5] Unemployment was particularly high at Acton, Badwell Ash, Langham, Gratfield, and Stoke Ash whilst at Brundisburgh a 'full half' of the

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1 P.R.O. H.O/42/150. Letter from J. Nicholson to Lord Sidmouth, May 1816.

2 Peacock, op. cit. pp. 119, 127.

3 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 67.

4 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 84.

5 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 67. Between 1819 and 1823 a third of the labour force in Suffolk were out of work. W. and H. Raynbird, op. cit. p. 282. According to John Glyde, 'Many men are thrown out of work during three or four months of the year, and the inferior hands during six or seven'. J. Glyde, Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century (1856), p. 353.

inhabitants were pauperised.[1] Stagnation and decay were also in evidence in the domestic industries with a consequent loss of earnings for numerous agricultural families. A witness to these events commented,

> There is no prospect of a reduction in the poor rates, there being more men than can be employed. The women and children have little or nothing to do, as there is no manufacturing; the spinning of wool by hand, which used to employ so many, is now done away, it being transferred to Yorkshire, and done by machinery.[2]

One result of the widespread distress during the 1820's was a renewed outbreak of machine breaking. In February 1822 a threshing machine was broken at Shimpling in south Norfolk and similar incidence occurred in Suffolk at Eye, Laxfield, Occold, Stradbroke, Hoo, Cratfield, Wrentham, and Bedingfield.[3] Several labourers were taken prisoner and during their appearance before a magistrate at Bungay a crowd assembled in the market place to protest and broke several shop windows.[4] As a result of these riots several labourers were imprisoned and two men and a youth were executed for arson.[5]

Despite the severity of these sentences more threshing machines were broken in July at Burgate and Beddingfield.[6] A further outbreak of rioting occurred in December in the Mendham area[7] and accounts of more

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, pp. 391-2.

2 Ibid. p. 399.

3 The Ipswich Journal, 23 February 1822, p. 2. 2 March 1822, p. 2. 20 April 1822, p. 2.

4 Ibid. 13 April 1822, p. 4.

5 The Ipswich Journal 20 April 1822, pp. 2-4. 27 April 1822, p. 2. Labourers who were convicted of breaking threshing machines were usually sent to prison for terms ranging from six months to two years.

6 Ibid. 13 July 1822, p. 2. 20 July 1822, p. 2. The Chelmsford Chronicle 19 July 1822, p. 2.

7 The Maidstone Journal 7 January 1823, p. 3. This report was taken from a Suffolk newspaper.

machine breaking were reported in the following February.[1] In referring to the state of agriculture in Suffolk in 1824 a writer noted,

> Though there has been a considerable advance in the price of almost every article of farming produce, I grieve to be compelled to say that there are still many agricultural labourers who cannot get work ; while . . . many farmers . . . continue to use machinery. The consequence has been restlessness amongst some of the labourers.[2]

In some parishes as many as forty labourers were without work and there was a noticeable increase in crime.[3] Between 1820 and 1826 the number of offences against the Game Laws in Suffolk more than doubled.[4] In the Haveningham area one third to a quarter of the agricultural labourers were unemployed and wages were as low as a shilling a day.[5] Falling farm prices and profits were potent factors in precipitating a change of attitude towards the rural labouring classes. Indeed, throughout the 1820's traditional social relationships between farmers and their men unerwent a fundamental change. In noting these changes the rector of Haveningham, the Rev. Anthony Collett, commented,

> The mutual feeling no longer exists. The labourer is now, in general, the mere servant of the day or of the season; and is cast off, when the task is done, to seek a precarious subsistence from other work, if he can find it, if not from the parish rates.[6]

Social necessity compelled many parishes to relieve the unemployed poor rather than see them starve and various schemes were devised to deal

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1 Ibid. 17 February 1824, p. 3.

2 Ibid.

3 Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages 1824, Parl. Papers, VI, p. 57.

4 Returns of the Number of Convictions under the Game Laws 1820-1826, Parl. Papers 1826-1827, XX, pp. 518-25.

5 S.C. on Labourers' Wages 1824, P.P. 1824, VI, p. 56.

6 Ibid. p. 57.

with the problem. At Monewden, for example, the farmers were required by the parish authorities to employ an able-bodied labourer for every £40 of their rate assessment. All labourers who remained unemployed after the allocation were hired out to anyone who would take them 'for the most wages that can be obtained'. As a rule, married labourers were paid 6s. 6d. to 7s. 9d. a week and unmarried labourers 4s. a week.[1] A similar scheme to this one operated at Stradbroke where there were a 'great number of labourers out of employ'. Surplus labourers were called 'classmen' and were required to work a certain number of days for each landowner in the parish according to the size of their rate assessment. Each landowner was directed to pay his classmen 'what the occupier may think reasonable over and above what he receives of the Overseer'. Married labourers with four children received an allowance of 8s. a week and unmarried labourers received half that amount.[2] Unemployed labourers at Halesworth were employed for a certain number of days a week according to the number of dependents they had to support. Single men were set to work for three days a week at 1s. a day. Married men were employed according to the following scale:[3]

A Married Man	4 days at 1s. 4d. a day
Married Men with 1 child	5 days at 1s. 4d. a day
Married Men with 2 children	5 days at 1s. 6d. a day
Married Men with 3 children	6 days at 1s. 5d. a day
Married Men with 4 children	6 days at 1s. 6d. a day

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[1] E.S.R.O. FC 107/A1/1. Monewden Parish Vestry Minutes. Wages were usually made up as follows. A married man who received 7s. 9d. a week was paid 3s. by his employer and received 4s. 9d. make-up pay from the parish. A single man received 1s. a day from his employer and had the rest of his wage made up by the parish.

[2] E.S.R.O. FC 83/A1/1. Stradbroke Parish Vestry Minutes, 1825. Parishioners who kept a pig were refused relief.

[3] E.S.R.O. FC 184/G10/22. Halesworth Parish. Accounts of Unemployed Labour.

At Tuddenham unemployed single men were allowed 3s. a week relief and married men 5s. a week plus an extra 9d. for each of their children under the age of ten. The parish Vestry also ordered the landowners 'not to pay for loss of time to a single man whose earnings amounts to 5s., a man and wife 6s. 6d., a man, wife and one child 7s. 6d., and a man, wife and two children 8s. 6d.'.[1]

At Playford agricultural labourers' wages increased, along with the general recovery of prices in 1823-5, to reach 12s. 6d. a week in 1825, and then declined over the next four years to reach 11s. a week in 1829. Elsewhere agricultural labourers' wages were little more than 8s. a week and there were reports of extensive rural poverty and distress in various parts of the county.[2] In January 1829 reports of arson and machine breaking in the neighbouring county of Essex began to appear in local newspapers and were soon followed by similar disturbances in Suffolk. A 'tedious' harvest in 1829, which reduced labourers' earnings to 8s. to 10s. a week, resulted in an outbreak of rioting.[3] During September large numbers of labourers assembled at Stonham, Wetheringset, Otley, and Ashbocking and prevented farmers using their threshing machines in the hope that their actions would lead to an increase in local employment.[4]

As in Essex, the riots of 1829 were a prelude to the more serious rioting of 1830. By the early months of 1830 unemployment was widespread in Suffolk and the labourers were in a distressed condition. As many as

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1 E.S.R.O. FC 24/A1/1. Tuddenham Select Vestry Minutes, 1827. Labourers who kept a dog were refused relief.

2 The Ipswich Journal 10 October 1829, p. 4. The high price of flour compelled many families to substitute potatoes for bread in their diet. The Chelmsford Chronicle 16 January 1829, p. 3.

3 The Ipswich Journal 10 October 1829, p. 4.

4 Ibid. 24 October 1829, p. 2. Labourers found guilty of taking part in these disturbances were sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

40 to 50 men were without work in the parish of Stonham,[1] whilst many parishes in the neighbourhood of Hoxne had 30 to 90 surplus labourers 'subsisting on a pittance barely sufficient to procure them bread only'.[2] In the parishes of Baddingham, Dennington, Wilby, Laxfield, Stradbroke, Fressingfield, and Framlingham 50 to 75 per cent. of the able-bodied labourers were out of work.[3] In January and February 1830 one third of the able-bodied men in Blything Hundred were unemployed.[4] An observer from Great Bealings noted,

> If you know a parish where they are 10, 15, 20 to 50 and more able and willing men without a day's work in a month, many of them with large families starving, what are you to expect? In some parishes 8s. per week are given to idle labourers. [5]He spends a miserable time, discontented and unhappy.

During the first week in December the Suffolk labourers began to demand an improvement in their conditions. Large numbers of labourers assembled at Stanningfield, Whepstead, Whelnetham, Bradfield, Rushbrooke, Weston, North Cove, Ellough, and Willingham and asked for an increase in

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1 The Suffolk Chronicle 23 January 1830, p. 3.

2 The Ipswich Journal 6 March 1830, p. 3. Before the formation of Hoxne Union in 1835 there were generally 800 able-bodied labourers out of work during the winter. Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales Parl. Papers 1837, XXXI (1837), p. 175.

3 Thirsk and Imray, op. cit. p. 135. Each parish had an average of 78 men out of work.

4 Ibid. p. 134. These men had to support about 3,000 dependents.

5 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1., V, p. 448. Several witnesses from various parts of Suffolk gave evidence to the Poor Law Commissioners and stated that the 'want of employment' and the 'low state of wages' caused the riots in 1830. Ibid. pp. 447-65.

their wages.[1] At Wortham and Hoxne the labourers demanded a wage of 2s. a day; at Wickham Skeith and Redgrave the disturbances resulted in an increase of wages from 9s. to 10s. a week.[2] Many of the wage meetings were conducted peacefully. Writing from Boxford a correspondent to the Home Office in London noted,

> Today, when something like a general rising seemed to be apprehended, nothing has appeared but a few straggling parties asking, with moderation, for an increase of wages and where refused, retiring without illtreating or insulting anybody. And really my Lord considering how much substantial grievance these poor creatures have to complain of . . . it is to me astounding that they have kept within such bounds.[3]

At Mellis the labourers visited the farmers in the parish in a 'very orderly manner' and requested regular employment and an increase in their wages to 10s. a week.[4] At Beccles, as a result of the labourers' demands, a meeting of local farmers agreed to pay married men 1s. 10d. a day, single men 1s. 6d. a day, and to employ surplus labourers at spade husbandry.[5] In other parishes the labourers resorted to more violent action. Incendiary fires were started at Higham and Sproughton whilst at Chevington, Great Thurlow, Stoke, and Melford wage demands were often accompanied by attacks upon persons and thrashing machines.[6]

By December 1830, however, the disturbances in Suffolk were at an

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[1] The Suffolk Chronicle 11 December 1830, p. 3. An account of the labourers' riots in Suffolk is given in Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. pp. 159-61, 312-58.

[2] Ibid. pp. 159-61.

[3] P.R.O. H.O. 40/27(3)/171. Reports of Military Officers. Letter from Col. Brotherton to Lord Melbourne, 13 December 1830.

[4] The Suffolk Chronicle 11 December 1830, p. 3.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. 18 December 1830, pp. 2-3.

end.[1] Agricultural wages at Playford increased to an average of 13s. 2d. a week by 1833, and then fell to reach 11s. a week by 1838-40. Elsewhere in the county agricultural wages were lower than these wages. At Blythburgh, for example, day labourers were paid 9s. and 10s. a week in 1832. Four years later these wages had been reduced to 8s. and 9s. a week.[2] In the several parishes embraced by the Woodbridge Poor Law Union, in south-east Suffolk, agricultural labourers' wages during the 1830's were 8s. to 10s. a week, and similar wages to these were also paid in other areas of the county.[3]

III. Conclusion

Given the general level and trend of agricultural wages and the cost of living in Suffolk it now remains to see what effect the interaction of these two variables had upon the trend of real wages and the agricultural labourers standard of living.

Up to this point it has been assumed that the labourers in this study were in full and constant employment. On the basis of this assumption it is apparent from Figure 31 that for the years for which comparable data is available the trend of agricultural labourers' wages at Henham was seriously out of phase with the trend of the cost of living. Whereas agricultural wages moved in a series of short plateaux, of five to ten years duration, the cost of living followed a more volatile trend at a considerably higher level than the latter series. Indeed, the most outstanding difference between the two series lay in the extent by which

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[1] Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. p. 170.

[2] Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 63.

[3] E.S.R.O. ADA 12/AB/1-2. Woodbridge Poor Law Union Minute Book. F. Clifford, 'The Labour Bill in Farming', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, 2nd ser. 11 (1875), p. 76.

they varied from their base years.[1] The most serious result of the failure of agricultural wages at Henham to keep pace with fluctuations in the cost of living was a steep fall in the purchasing power of wages. The extent to which this happened is shown as follows:

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[2] (Index)
1795	+34	0	75
1800	+105	+15	56
1805	+69	+18	70
1809	+81	+24	69

These figures clearly show that during these years rising wages were consistently outpaced by faster rising prices by an average of 34, 90, 51 and 57 per cent. respectively. As prices rose faster than wages, the index of agricultural earnings and the index of real wages moved in opposite directions. The most serious consequence of this situation for the agricultural labourers' standard of living was that the index of real wages fell by an average of about 32 per cent. in this period. If the relationship between agricultural wages and the cost of living in the 1835-40 period is considered, it is clear that, owing to wages lagging behind price increases, the index of real wages fell by a precipitous degree. Apart from 1791-2, where real wages improved upon their 1790 position by a modest 3 or 4 per cent., at no point for which information was available did the index of real wages show any positive improvement upon the position it held in 1790. Whether or not the index of agricultural wages began to exceed the cost of living index around 1825-6, as it did in the case of Kent and Essex, is difficult to say owing to a lack of evidence

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[1] Because of certain differences in the sources of the statistical data two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been adopted in constructing the indexes.

[2] 1790 = 100.

on that period. However, in the light of a considerable body of evidence on large scale unemployment, poverty, and wage and machine breaking riots during the 1820's and 1830's it seems unlikely that real wages and the standard of living could have risen in this period. Indeed all the evidence appears to point the other way.

For the residuum, self-reliance and the New Poor Law became important factors in their standard of living. Schemes to provide labourers with allotments, which grew up in Suffolk during the 1830's, were obviously important, in a pre-Keynesian world, for creating additional employment and providing the rural poor with a modicum of economic independence. Schemes such as these, for example, were established at Monewden,[1] Glenham, Beccles, Mildenhall, Eye, Stradbroke, and Framlingham.[2] An observer of the allotment system in Suffolk in the 1830's noted,

> It is an imperative condition that they should cultivate them entirely by hand and spade husbandry . . . and it creates a great deal of additional employment, which is of considerable importance here, as we have a numerous population, principally dependent upon agriculture for employment and support, and a great number of labourers than, under the ordinary and usual system of farming, can find employment; and but for the additional labour so created, we should have generally a considerable number of unemployed labourers, which has not been the case now to any extent for some few years past.[3]

Other labourers, in other parts of the county, insured themselves against sickness and other misfortunes by joining local Box Clubs and Friendly Societies.[4] Indeed, in times of dearth mutual self-help assisted to

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1 E.S.R.O. Fc 107/A1/1. Monewden, op. cit.

2 Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 259-60.

3 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII (1843), p. 262.

4 Raynbird (1849), op. cit. pp. 285-6.

mitigate the penury of the rural labouring classes. As one eye-witnessed account put it,

> The actual service of the poor to one another, among females especially, is truly admirable; the trouble they take, the anxiety they endure, and the sacrifices they make, are unparalleled among the middle classes. The tradesmen's wife relieves poverty by pecuniary donation; the labourer's wife gives personal aid. They often nurse their neighbours in sickness without fee or reward, and help to feed the children out of their own scanty means . . . those best acquainted with the working classes in villages agree that the sympathy of the poor is the best alleviator of the sufferings of the poor.[1]

In order to reduce the size of the pauper horde, and the pressure they exerted upon the poor rates, some Poor Law Unions encouraged their surplus labourers to emigrate or to migrate to the industrial towns of the north.[2] In the spring of 1830 nearly 200 labourers and their families emigrated from Stradbroke, Diss, Palgrave, Wortham, Winfarthing, and Shelfanger to North America.[3] In May 1836 over 100 labourers emigrated from Hoxne Union to Canada.[4] A migration committee was established at Bosmere and Claydon Poor Law Union to assist the labourers to move to other areas;[5] at Woodbridge Union the Poor Law Guardians went to considerable lengths to assist surplus labourers to find employment in Manchester.[6] For the labourers who remained behind the New Poor Law was always a refuge in the last resort when all else failed. Although some people were said to be 'exceedingly dissatisfied' with the practical

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1 Glyde, op. cit. p. 359.

2 Many Suffolk labourers migrated to Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire where they earned 25s. to 40s. a week. Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales, Parl. Papers, 1836, XXIX (1836), pp. 463-5.

3 The Ipswich Journal 24 April 1830, p. 2. 1 May 1830, p. 4.

4 The Colchester Gazette and Essex Independent 21 May 1836, p. 1.

5 E.S.R.O. ADA 2/AB1/2. Bosmere and Claydon Union, op. cit.

6 E.S.R.O. ADA 12/AB1/1-2. Woodbridge Union, op. cit.

operation of the New Poor Law and were reluctant to enter the workhouse.[1] The general effect upon the labourers was said to promote a 'greater disposition to oblige the master than there was'.[2] The Guardian of Bosmere and Claydon Union noted with some satisfaction,

> A remarkable change has taken place in the character of the pauperised labourers . . . those who were idle are now anxious to procure employment and when employed are industrious and respectful . . . there has been a temporary pressure on some of the vicious and idle who had been accustomed to depend on the Poor Rates and the condition of the mass of the labourers has been improved by their being better employed and by the more frugal use of their incomes.[3]

Despite these sentiments, however, discontent smouldered on in the Suffolk countryside and, in the early 1840's, found expression in sporadic outbursts of incendiarism. Indeed, in June 1844 John Kiby Moore, steward to Lord Ashburnham's estate at Bradley, had occasion to write to his master in some alarm:

> My Lord . . . the burning of property increases rather than otherwise in this part of the kingdom. The alarm and dread of fires has not at any period been scarcely so great as at the present time. . . . There are at this time in Bury Gaol no fewer than eleven persons who are to take their trial at the next Assizes for Arson. Still the burning goes on; six fires having taken place within the last week . . . the very threshers themselves show no anxiety to assist in detecting Incendiaries but appear to be in many instances bound in a bond of secrecy.[4]

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1 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 69. In December 1835 an anti-Poor Law riot resulted in the 'Partial destruction' of St. Clements workhouse. E.S.R.O. A2/1/1. Ipswich Poor Law Union Minute Book. The Essex Standard 25 December 1835, p. 4.

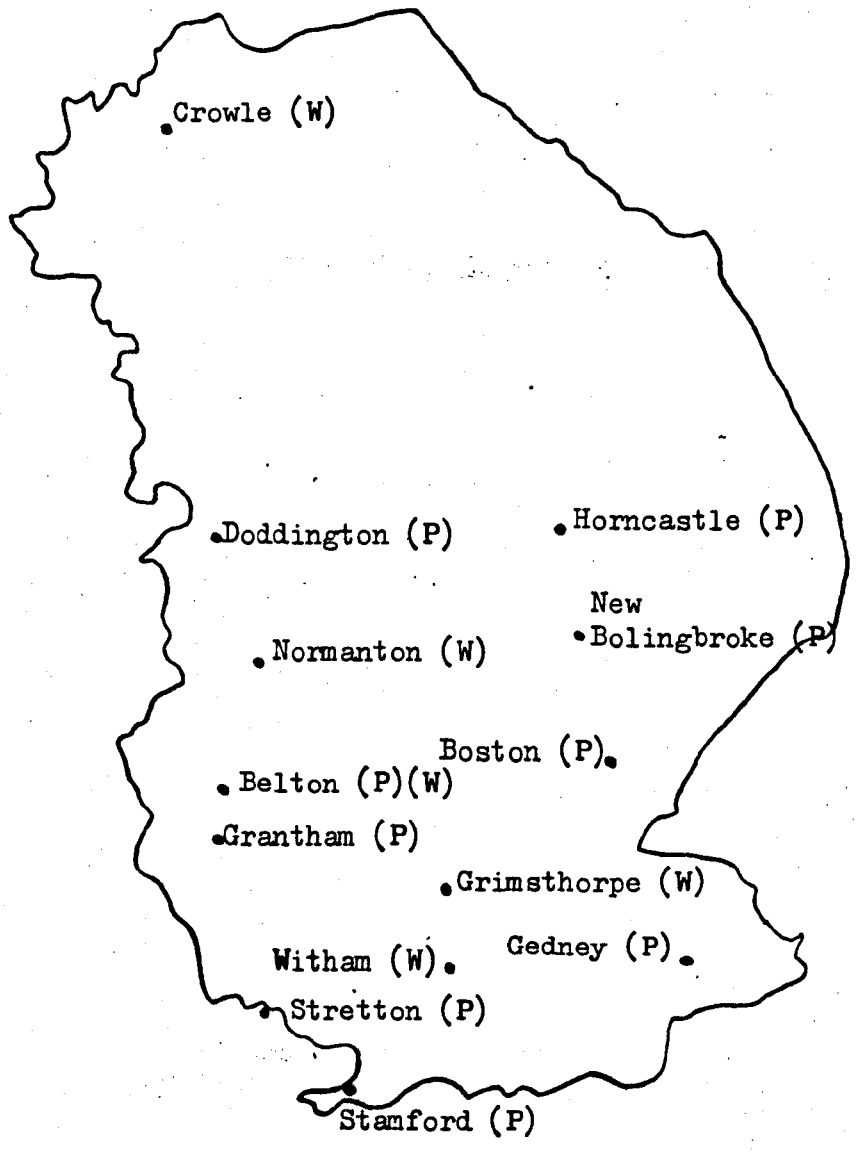
2 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 63.

3 E.S.R.O. ADA 2/AB1/2. Bosmere and Claydon Union, op. cit.

4 E.S.R.O. HA1/HB6/1b/60-2. Letter from J. K. Moore to Lord Ashburnham, 16 June 1844.

MAP 5

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Lincolnshire



Key

(P) = Prices

(W) = Wages

CHAPTER 10

THE COST OF LIVING IN LINCOLNSHIRE 1790-1840

I. Introduction

During the first half of the nineteenth century agriculture was the principal form of economic activity in Lincolnshire.[1] From the sixteenth century onwards London exerted an increasingly strong influence upon the county's economy and drew from it large quantities of wheat, oats, malt, cheese, and butter.[2] Indeed, in many areas of the county agricultural production was specifically organised and directed towards satisfying London's insatiable appetite for large quantities of foodstuffs and as a result of this development the system of production there began to take on its characteristic shape. During the early eighteenth century the eastern half of the county was described as 'the richest, most fruitful, and best cultivated of any county in England'.[3] In this area, bounded by Brigg and Caistor in the north and Spilsby and Wainfleet in the south, cattle and sheep rearing for distant markets was a major industry.[4] This was also true of the fertile, alluvial soils to the south of Boston which were described by Defoe as

> . . . all fenn and marsh grounds, the land very rich, and which feeds prodigious numbers of large sheep, and also oxen of the largest size, the overplus and best of which goes all to London market.[5]

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1 T. Stone, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1794), passim. J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming (1957), p. 200.

2 F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', E.H.R. V (1935), pp. 47-9, 51, 56.

3 D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman ed. 1928), II, p. 94.

4 Ibid.

5 Defoe, op. cit. p. 95. Large numbers of wild-fowl were also sent to London from this area, p. 97.

The large flocks of Lincolnshire sheep also provided an 'inexhaustible fountain' of wool which was sold to manufacturers in Norfolk and Suffolk.[1]

By the early nineteenth century the flow of agricultural produce from Lincolnshire to London was firmly established and regular shipments of cereals, potatoes, timber, hemp, flax, and woad were sent to the metropolis via Gainsborough and Boston.[2] Commercial links were also being developed at this time with the growing industrial and urban areas of Nottingham and Yorkshire. The presence of these markets was commented on in 1794 by Thomas Stone, during his agricultural survey of Lincolnshire, when he wrote,

> Excellent constant markets for fat cattle, and sheep, are found in the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire, whither they are, in large quantities, driven; and here the price of butcher's meat is likely to increase.[3]

During the 1830's and 1840's agricultural production in Lincolnshire was orientated towards this market area and large quantities of wheat,[4] meat, and vegetables were sent to the markets of Wakefield, Leeds, Doncaster, and Sheffield.[5]

Under the stimulus of expanding market opportunities during the late

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1 Ibid. pp. 94-5.

2 Stone, op. cit. Boston was the main port on the east coast, whilst Gainsborough was the main inland port on the river Trent. Large quantities of potatoes were sent down the Trent to London. Ibid. pp. 30, 95.

3 Ibid. pp. 44-5.

4 In the 1830's wheat farmers in Lincolnshire sent their crops to Yorkshire markets rather than to London. Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (i), p. 180.

5 Ibid. J. A. Clarke, 'On the Farming of Lincolnshire'. Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XII (1851), pp. 334, 367. Stone, op. cit. pp. 44-5. In the early nineteenth century fen farmers regularly sold their sheep to Yorkshire agents who purchased meat for the clothing districts. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 233.

eighteenth century several important agricultural improvements took place in the county. These principally took the form of land reclamation, enclosure, and the introduction of new crop rotations which, on the fens and upland areas, transformed the traditional landscape and system of husbandry.[1] These changes, which started in the mid eighteenth century, did not take place at the same time or at the same speed in the four main agricultural regions of the county.[2] Agricultural improvements were most marked upon the upland areas of the wolds and Lincoln heaths, and upon the newly drained fens. During the first half of the eighteenth century the chalk wolds were little more than 'a succession of rabbit-warrens from north to south', whilst the limestone heaths lay in a 'wild and trackless state'.[3] Fifty years later these areas were transformed, the sheep walks and rabbit warrens were enclosed, ploughed up, and brought under arable cultivation. On the wolds improvements were carried out on a 'grand scale' by large occupiers, and the introduction of four course crop rotations produced substantial crops of wheat, turnips, and barley.[4] Similar improvements to these took place on the Lincoln heaths, and these occurred at a faster rate than those on the wolds. Within twenty years of 1779 the wild tracks of gorse and fern were enclosed, ploughed up, and placed under arable cultivation.[5] By 1801 the crop revolution had almost

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1 Thirsk, op. cit. passim. D. Grigg, The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire (Cambridge, 1966), passim.

2 Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 198, 283. The four main farming regions in Lincolnshire were (1) the chalk wolds and limestone uplands, (2) the fenlands, (3) the coastal marshes, (4) the clayland and miscellaneous soil areas. Stone, op. cit. pp. 12-52. Clarke, loc. cit. passim. Thirsk, op. cit. passim.

3 Clarke, loc. cit. pp. 330,338.

4 Ibid. pp. 330-9.

5 Ibid. pp. 330, 338.

been completed in the upland farming region[1] and, within a few years, was enthusiastically described by Philip Pusey as a land 'loaded with roots and with corn'.[2] The arable upland areas also supported 'immense folds of sheep' which were folded on the turnip land before being sold to lowland graziers.[3]

Arable cultivation was also found in several other areas such as the Spilsby district, which produced good crops of cereals, turnips, and cabbages, and the Trent bank district which grew 'abundant crops' of wheat, barley, hemp, flax, and potatoes.[4] The Isle of Axholme, in north-west Lincolnshire, was said to be extremely fertile and yielded rich crops of wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, and beans.[5] Market gardening was carried out on the sandy loams in this area and quantities of carrots and onions were cultivated for the urban markets of Doncaster and Sheffield.[6] In other arable districts, such as the clay soil areas, progress was much slower, even after enclosure, because of the problems involved in draining the land.[7] Hence, traditional crop rotations and poor farming practices prevailed longer there, and clayland farmers benefited least from the agricultural improvements which were taking place on the Lincolnshire heath

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1 Ibid. p. 330.

2 P. Pusey, 'On the Agricultural Improvements of Lincolnshire', J.R.A.S., IV (1843), p. 287. War and high food prices provided the stimulus to agricultural improvements on the wolds and heath. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 259. Grigg, op. cit. pp. 37-8.

3 Clarke, loc. cit. pp. 333, 340.

4 Ibid. pp. 358-62. Stone, op. cit. p. 30.

5 Stone, op. cit. p. 29. Clarke, loc. cit. pp. 364-5.

6 Clarke, loc. cit. p. 367.

7 Ibid. p. 242. Stone, op. cit. p. 29. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 283. These problems were not overcome until the 1840's.

and wolds.[1] Unlike the latter areas, half the claylands were laid down to pasture and many farmers were engaged in cattle and sheep husbandry, though poor drainage was a constant hazard to livestock farmers who frequently sustained severe losses.[2]

The marshlands along the east coast of Lincolnshire were another farming region which made slow progress compared with the advances made in other parts of the county. In some areas, such as in the neighbourhood of Long Sutton, 'immense quantities' of corn, hemp, flax and woad were grown, though these crops were not commonly grown in all parts of this area. As a rule, enclosures on the marshlands occurred later than elsewhere in Lincolnshire and, as the majority of cultivators there were small freeholders with little capital available for agricultural improvements, much of the land lay under bad management.[3] However, the marshlands were rich in grass and livestock rearing was the chief occupation of the farming community there. In 1794 Thomas Stone noted that,

> The most considerable part of this land is in a state of pasture, and of a very good quality for feeding, or fattening, cattle and sheep.[4]

Similarly, the pastoral areas of the fens in south-east Lincolnshire were used for breeding and fattening livestock for the market. Large numbers of cattle were ferried across the Humber, from Yorkshire, to graze on the rich pastures of South Holland.[5] Holbeach, Long Sutton, Kirton,

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1 Clarke, loc. cit. p. 342. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 283.

2 Stone, op. cit. pp. 26-9. Long periods of wet weather frequently caused disastrous outbreaks of sheep and cattle rot. A succession of wet seasons between 1828 and 1831, for example, resulted in high mortality rates among sheep on clayland farms. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 302.

3 Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 237-8, 244.

4 Stone, op. cit. p. 47.

5 Clarke, loc. cit. p. 400.

Algarkirk, Sutterton, and Wigtoft were regarded as 'superior' grazing areas for large numbers of sheep, heifers, and bullocks which were fattened there before being sold in Boston, Lincoln, and Caistor markets.[1]

Arable husbandry was revolutionised on the fens by the draining and enclosing of thousands of acres of low lying land.[2] At the end of the eighteenth century land reclamation, which had been taking place since the previous century, was accelerated under the stimulus of rising food prices and the area came to produce abundant crops of oats, wheat, barley, beans, and root crops.[3] As on the wolds and heath, the traditional system of farming on the fens was rapidly altered, and its productive capacity greatly enlarged in response to the growing demand for food.

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

On the demand side, the growth of external markets exerted a profound influence upon the supply price of agricultural produce in Lincolnshire. Improvements in land and sea communications assisted the flow of produce out of the county and one of the more significant aspects of this development was the gradual disintegration of local market autonomies. Indeed, the all-pervasive influence of London was felt in the remotest areas of the county by the end of the eighteenth century with the result that the general level of prices in both regions tended to move into line with one another.[4]

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[1] Ibid. pp. 385-96. Fen farmers usually bought their sheep, fattened them, and sold them to butcher's agents from Smithfield and Yorkshire markets. In the mid nineteenth century a sale of 30,000 sheep at Boston May fair was not an uncommon sight. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 233.

[2] Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 212-20.

[3] Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 193. Thirsk, op. cit. p. 219. Stone, op. cit. p. 16. Clarke, loc. cit. pp. 384, 388.

[4] C. W. J. Granger and C. M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XX, 2 (1967), pp. 257-65.

The fact that the autonomy of local markets was breaking down in this period is readily confirmed by the empirical evidence and the impressions recorded by contemporary observers. In 1794, for example, Thomas Stone, whilst undertaking his agricultural survey of the county, noted that food prices in fenland markets were about the same as those in markets on the wolds, whilst bread, beef, mutton, and pork prices in Lincolnshire were nearly the same as those in London.[1] Stone also considered it important to note that the prices of provisions in Lincolnshire were the same as those in other counties lying at a similar distance from London.[2] Indeed, the similarity of wheat prices between Lincolnshire and London was most pronounced in this period. The fact that wheat prices in areas as far apart as London and Lincolnshire moved in step with one another suggests that they were all part of the same market area in which wheat was freely moved from areas of surplus to areas of scarcity. The main consequence of this development was that the appearance of price disequilibria in one market was quickly neutralised by transporting wheat there from other markets.[3] One indication of the working of this process is seen if the prices of bread in the two areas are compared.[4] It is clear from Figure 33 that between 1793 and 1815 the price of the quartern loaf (wheaten) in Lincolnshire and London was very similar. Bread prices in both areas fluctuated together along the same trend sharing similar price peaks and troughs. As a similar relationship to this was found between Kent

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1 Stone, op. cit. pp. 25, 44. It was also said that market prices in Boston were a 'fair criterion' of the level of prices in the rest of the county. Clarke, loc. cit. p. 403. In noting this phenomenon Stone confirmed Adam Smith's view that prices were 'the same or very nearly the same through the greater part of the United Kingdom', and Arthur Young's view that in the 'extremeties of the kingdom' bread was as cheap as in London. See pp. 42-3.

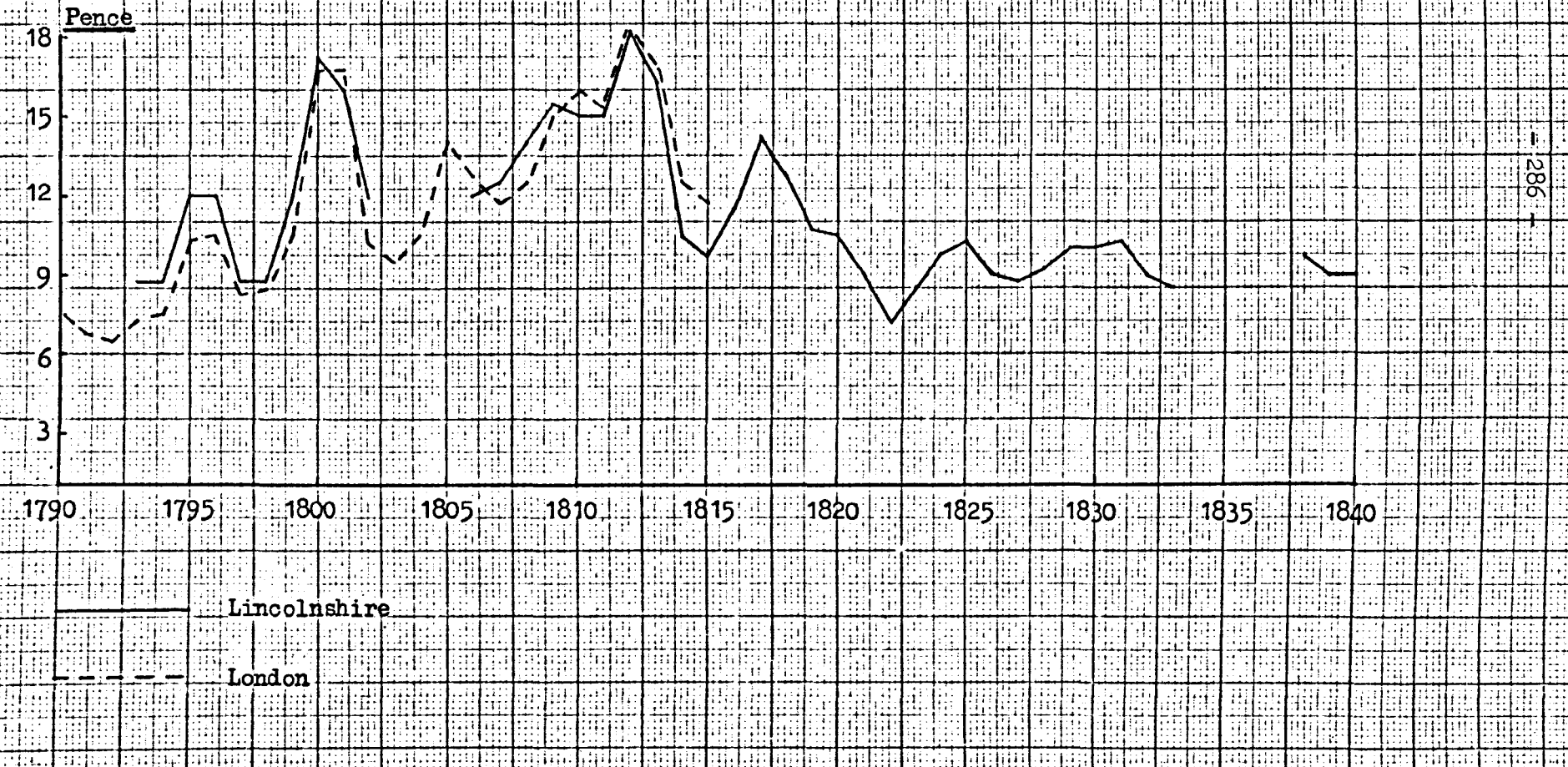
2 Stone, op. cit. p. 25.

3 Granger and Elliott, loc. cit. pp. 261-2.

4 Bread prices for London have been derived from G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXV (1902), p. 688.

FIG. 33

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Lincolnshire and London 1790–1840



Essex, Suffolk, and London[1] it would appear that as far as this item is concerned these counties were all part of the same market area in which the cost of living was approximately the same.

The main sources of evidence used in this study have been obtained from a number of areas in the county. Commodity prices for the 1790 to 1812 period have been extracted from the provisions accounts of various households and tradespeople in the county;[2] prices for 1813-1840 have been obtained from The Stamford Mercury and relate to the prices prevailing in Horncastle, New Bolingbroke, Boston, and Grantham markets.[3] All these parishes are scattered over the southern half of the county[4] and an average of the prices of the various commodities obtained from these sources forms the basis from which the cost of living index has been calculated.[5]

In analysing the roles played by the various components in the cost of living index it has been shown that, on the demand side, London exerted an important influence upon the general level of prices in the county. As

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1 Gourvish found a similar relationship between bread prices in London and Glasgow in this period. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

2 L.R.O.: Monson 12. Bills and Vouchers (Uncatalogued). Ancaster, V11/d/4-5. Miscellaneous Deposits. 150/1-2. Farm Account Book of J. Hutchinson of Gedney. Harvis. III/A/4/3. Lindsey Insolvent Debtor's Account Books 1-5. The prices derived from these sources relate to the Belton, Stretton, Gedney, Doddington, and Lindsey areas of south Lincolnshire respectively. These prices are monthly prices and, for each commodity, have been collated into annual average prices. The Poor Law records for the county did not appear to contain any information on commodity prices.

3 These prices are weekly prices and, for each commodity, have been collated into annual average prices.

4 See Map 5, p. 278.

5 The index is based upon the prices of four commodities; the quartern loaf, beef, cheese, and butter. It was not possible to discover any information on the prices of other commodities in the Lincolnshire Record Office. It will be appreciated that as these prices are current market prices they will, by their nature, provide an accurate guide to the cost of living in the county.

in the case of the counties already investigated, certain factors on the supply side, such as the effect of the weather upon domestic harvests or the ebb and flow of war in Europe, influenced the behaviour of commodity prices in various ways and conferred upon the cost of living index its basic characteristic shape.

The role played by factors such as these in shaping the trend of food prices was particularly important in the case of bread, as bread absorbed a high proportion of the labourers' income.[1] Starting from an average price of 8¾d. in 1793 the price of the quartern loaf[2] in Lincolnshire increased by 37 per cent. within two years to reach 1s. 0d. in 1795. This rise, brought about by severe weather in 1794-5, which reduced the wheat crop by a quarter of its normal size, was the cause of considerable distress in the county.[3] In certain parishes, such as Stainsby, Asgarby, and Ormsby, for example, high prices compelled the labouring classes to substitute potatoes, rye, and barley bread for wheaten bread in their diets.[4] In other areas high prices provoked the labourers into demanding higher wages.[5]

In several areas attempts were made to alleviate the suffering of the labouring poor. In the neighbourhood of Lincoln, for instance, over 3,000

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1 On average, bread absorbed two-thirds of the agricultural labourers' expenditure on food and drink. See p. 296.

2 The price of the quartern loaf was set by the Stamford Assize of Bread at weekly intervals from 1793 to 1833 and was published in The Stamford Mercury. As the Assize price was determined by the price of wheat in local markets it must be regarded as a reliable indicator of the cost of living.

3 Sir F. Hill, Georgian Lincoln (Cambridge, 1966), p. 171.

4 Annals of Agriculture, XXIV (1795), pp. 119-34, 280. In some parishes, such as Blankney and Horncastle, the labouring classes resisted such changes.

5 The Stamford Mercury, 15 May 1795, p. 4.

impoverished people were relieved with charitable doles of cheap bread and flour purchased from a public subscription fund.[1] In the Stamford area the bakers were urged to bake brown bread instead of white, whilst at various Quarter Sessions the magistrates of the county agreed to implement the recommendations of the Privy Council and reduce their consumption of wheaten flour 'so as to leave a larger supply of the necessary Article of Food for the People in general . . . and relieve them from their present Difficulties'.[2]

Nevertheless, despite these attempts to alleviate the dearth, a number of disturbances broke out in various parts of the county over the high prices of provisions. At Grantham, for example, a crowd of women confiscated a quantity of wheat from some waggons to prevent it leaving the district; at Stamford the women there pelted the corn dealers and a hundred special constables had to be hastily sworn in to restore order.[3] A far more serious situation developed at Holbeach when two hundred labourers assembled together with the intention of forcibly reducing the price of bread. The Long Sutton and Spalding Yeomanry were assembled to meet the labourers and, after stating their grievance, the labourers dispersed.[4]

The return of better harvests over the following three years reduced the average price of the quartern loaf to 8¾d. by 1797-8. From that point until the end of the Napoleonic war, bread prices in Lincolnshire fluctuated violently. The winter of 1798-9 was cold and frosty and was followed by a wet summer which flooded many of the newly enclosed fens and destroyed the

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1 Hill, op. cit. p. 171.

2 The Stamford Mercury, 24 July 1795, p. 3. 31 July 1795, p. 2.

3 Ibid. 31 July 1795, p. 3.

4 Ibid.

crops growing there.[1] The harvest of 1800 was also a deficient one[2] and, as a result of this failure, the average price of the quartern loaf increased to 1s. 5¼d. This rise represented an increase of 97 per cent. within the space of seven years and, as in 1795, provoked a number of bread riots in the county. At Stamford, for example, a crowd of people demonstrated their dissatisfaction against the price rise by smashing the windows of bakers' shops, and the Stamford Volunteer Infantry had to be called out to disperse the mob and restore order.[3] Similar disturbances to these also occurred at Tattersal and in a number of villages in the Boston area.[4]

Bread prices in Lincolnshire fell during the Peace of Amiens in 1802-3 and then began to increase, owing to a run of bad weather and deficient harvests,[5] to reach a peak of 1s. 6¼d. per quartern loaf by 1812.[6] This was the highest point reached by bread prices in Lincolnshire in the whole period under review and represented a price increase of 109 per cent. since 1793. The return of better harvests towards the end of the Napoleonic war reduced the price of the quartern loaf to 9¾d. by 1815 and, apart from a temporary rise in price to 1s. 2¼d. in 1817, due to inclement weather in 1816-17, this downward trend was maintained until 1822.[7] At

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1 Hill, op. cit. p. 172.

2 The Farmer's Magazine, III (1800), p. 350.

3 The Stamford Mercury, 5 September 1800, p. 3.

4 The Farmer's Magazine, IV (1800), p. 478.

5 T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838-57), I, pp. 266-71, 293-300, 319-25.

6 In 1812 the average price of the quartern loaf in Kent and Essex was 1s. 6d.

7 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 14-15, 20-1. The fall in prices after 1817 was due to a run of good harvests and an increase in imports of wheat. Ibid. pp. 21-2, 80-4. Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 200.

that point, which was the lowest one recorded in the whole period, the average price of the quartern loaf fell to 7¼d.[1] From that low point bread prices recovered to 10¼d. by 1825, falling to 8¾d. by 1827, and then rose again to reach 10¼d. by 1831 owing to poor harvests in 1828-29.[2] This trend was reversed over the next few years owing to a run of abundant harvests in 1832-4[3] and by the late 1830's bread prices had fallen to their pre-war level.

The weather was also an important factor in determining the supply price of meat in Lincolnshire. Wet weather in particular often led to an outbreak of sheep-rot and the spread of contagious diseases among cattle. During such conditions as these in the eighteenth century, for example, some farmers lost a third to a half of their stock.[4] Thomas Stone noted that a bout of wet weather in low lying areas frequently caused high mortality rates among livestock and that it was not uncommon for breeders and graziers to lose up to three-quarters of their stock in this way.[5]

The average price of beef in Lincolnshire between 1790 and 1840 is illustrated in Figure 34. Starting from an average price of 4¼d. a pound in 1790 the price of beef rose steadily over the early years of the war to reach 7¾d. a pound by 1803. This price represented an increase of 82 per cent. and was similar to the increase recorded for Kent. Beef prices

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1 In Kent and Essex the price of the quartern loaf fell to 7d. and 8½d. respectively.

2 The Stamford Mercury 10 July 1829, p. 4. The newspaper described the 1829 harvest as 'the most unpleasant one this county has had since 1799, which it has greatly resembled, wet, cold, and windy'. A riot broke out at Spalding because the bakers there refused to sell their bread at the Assize price. Ibid. 6 February 1829, p. 3.

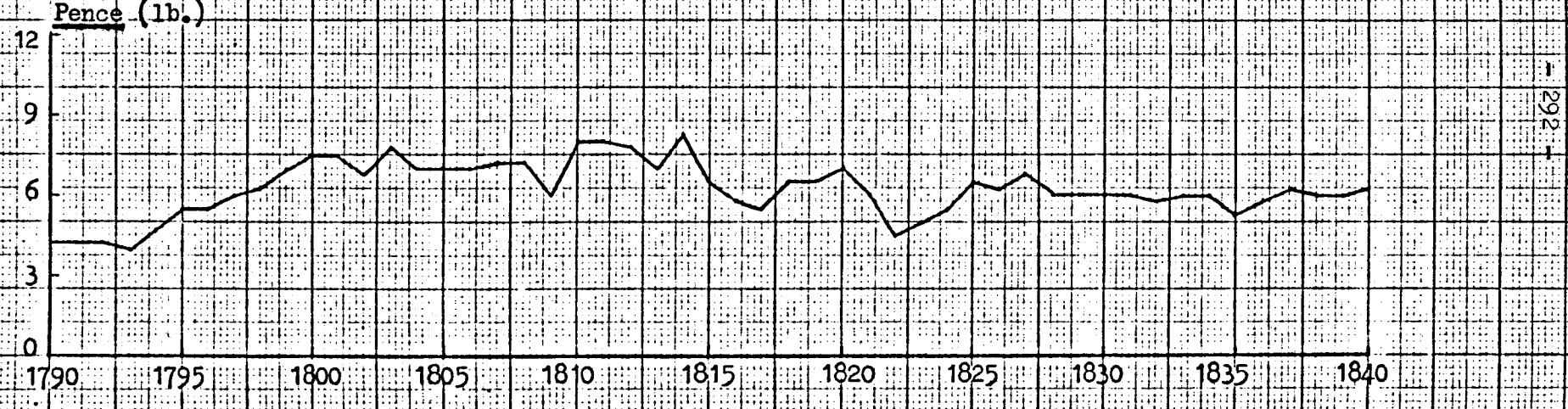
3 Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), pp. 174, 192-5.

4 Thirsk, op. cit. p. 206.

5 Stone, op. cit. pp. 19, 22, 29.

FIG. 34

The Price of Beef in Lincolnshire 1790-1840



remained around this level until the end of the war and fell to reach 5½d. a pound by 1817 owing to a shortage of fodder and a consequent rise in liquidation sales of livestock in provincial markets.[1] A return of unfavourable weather, coupled with falling supplies of livestock,[2] reversed this trend and by 1820 beef prices, at 7d. a pound, returned to their war-time level again. By 1822, however, beef prices fell to their lowest point in the post war period, owing to the high price of feed and an increase in livestock sales, and reached, on average, 4½d. a pound.[3] This fall, however, was only a temporary one, as beef prices recovered over the next three years and from then until 1840 followed a fairly stable course within a range of 5¼d. to 6¾d. a pound.

Cheese and butter were common items of consumption in agricultural labourers' diets[4] and the trend of their prices is shown in Figure 35. From what little evidence there is available on these items it is clear that their prices followed a more volatile trend than beef prices with the price of butter tending to lie on a higher plane, by a margin of 2d. to 4d. a pound, than the price of cheese.[5] It is evident from Figure 35 that, as in the case of all the other commodity prices considered so far, cheese and butter prices fluctuated on an increasing trend over the Napoleonic

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1 E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), pp. 160-1. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 4.

2 Jones, op. cit. p. 161. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 21-2.

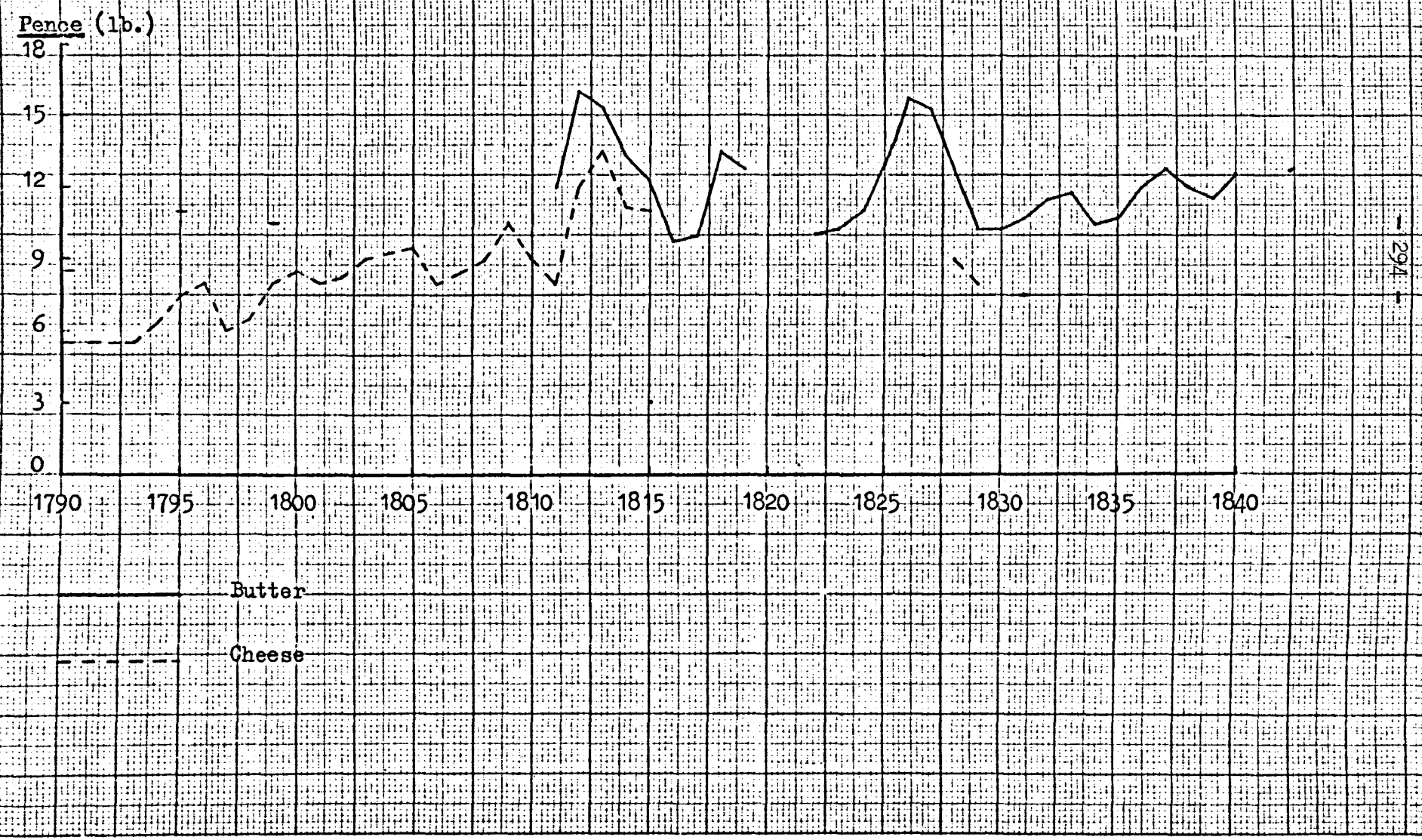
3 Jones, op. cit. p. 162. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 85.

4 Butter and cheese absorbed, on average, about 7 per cent. and 6 per cent. of the agricultural labourers' expenditure on food and drink. See p. 296.

5 A similar relationship to this was found in the case of Kent and Essex.

FIG. 35

The Prices of Cheese and Butter in Lincolnshire 1790-1840



war[1] and by 1812 had, on average, doubled in price.[2] Prices fell from this level towards the end of the war to reach a low point in 1816–17. A drought in the following year,[3] however, pushed butter prices up to an average of 1s. 1½d. a pound by 1818. By 1822 the price of butter, at 10d. a pound, was within a 1½d. of its pre-war level, but was soon to increase to reach another peak in 1826 following an outbreak of cattle rot in 1824 and two droughts in 1825–6 which reduced milk supplies.[4] Butter prices fell from this high point over the next three years and from then until the end of the decade followed a more stable trend, fluctuating within a range of 10¼d. to 1s. 0¾d. a pound.

III. Household Expenditure

It is now necessary to attach a set of weights to the various consumables which comprise the Food and Drink category and collate them into a single index. In each case the weights have been determined according to the amount of money agricultural labourers laid out on these items in their household budgets.

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[1] The rising price of butter triggered-off a riot at Gainsborough in 1795 when a crowd of women confiscated a quantity of butter and sold it in the market-place at 9d. a pound. The Stamford Mercury 24 July 1795, p. 3. At that time the average price of butter in the county was 11d. a pound, and had risen to that level from an average of 8½d. a pound in 1790. Similar riots to these also broke out in Essex. See p. 182.

[2] A similar rate of increase to this was recorded for Kent and Essex.

[3] Jones, op. cit. pp. 160–3. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 21.

[4] Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

TABLE 22

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND DRINK IN LINCOLNSHIRE[1]

	%
Bread	66.1
Meat	14.6
Cheese	5.9
Butter	6.8
Sugar	4.3
Tea	2.3
	100.0

As in the case of the counties already examined, these figures underline the importance of bread in the agricultural labourers' standard of living and serve to confirm the findings of contemporary observers on the dietary habits of the labouring classes. Throughout this period their standard fare consisted principally of bread, cheese, butter, meat, sugar, tea, and a few potatoes.[2]

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various commodities in the Food and Drink category have been combined, in Laspeyres form, to provide a cost of living index

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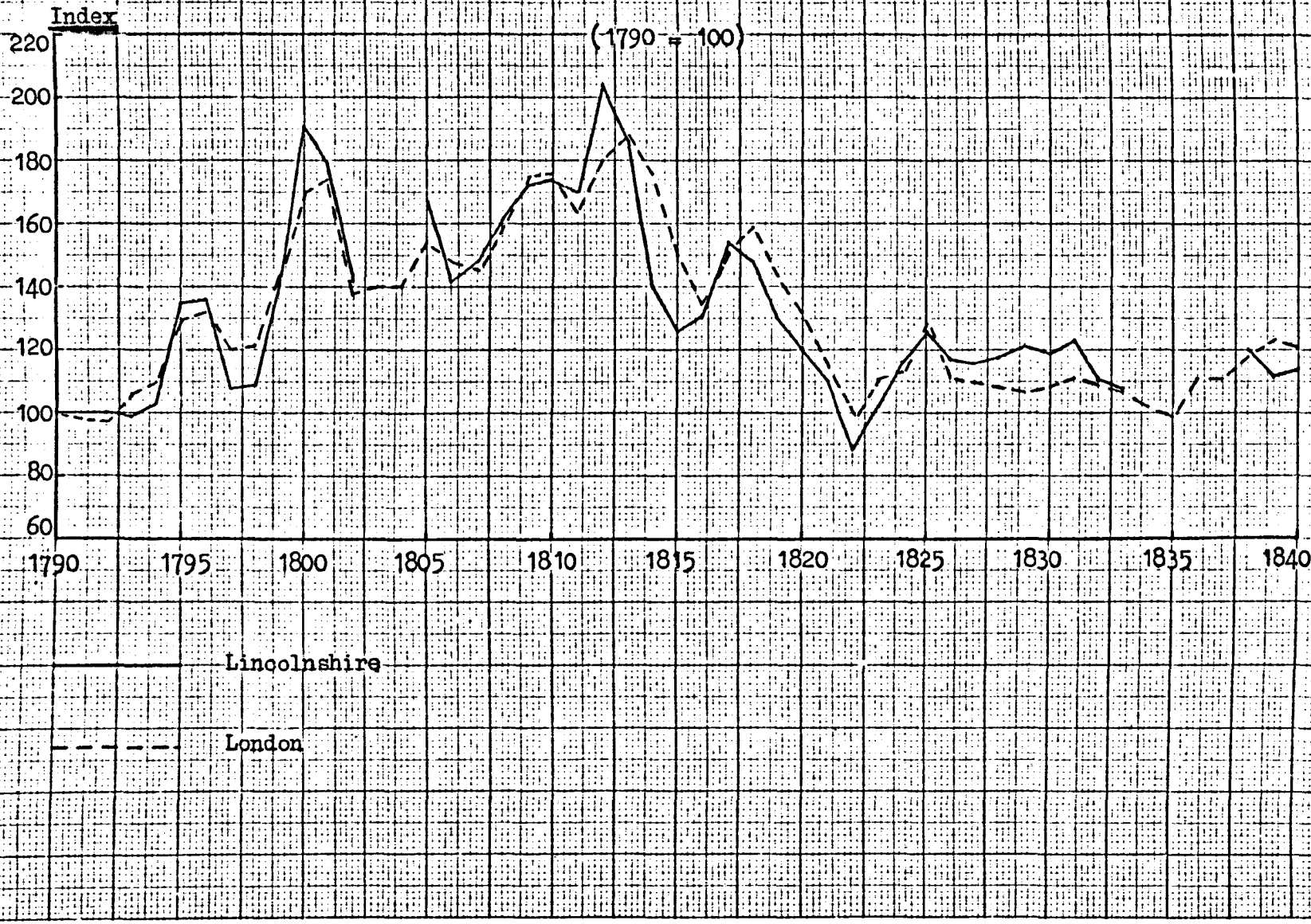
[1] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), p. 176. This budget has been derived from the Castor area which lies seven miles south-east of Stamford.

[2] F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (A. G. L. Rogers (ed.) 1928), p. 233. The Stamford Mercury, 3 November 1815, p. 1. Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 289-97. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 254-5. It must also be borne in mind that it was common for Lincolnshire labourers to rear a cow or a pig for their own consumption. A Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1799), pp. 410-19. Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (i), p. 74.

FIG. 36

The Cost of Living in Lincolnshire and London 1790-1840



for the county.[1] This index is illustrated in Figure 36 and it is evident from the information it yields that the cost of living in Lincolnshire, like that of the counties already examined, divided itself into three natural sub-periods; a period of rapid inflation lasting from 1794 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except in 1817) from 1812 to 1822, followed by a period of recovery from 1822 to the early 1830's. The main peaks in the cost of living, in 1795, 1800, 1805, 1812, and 1817, and the main trough, occurring in 1822, coincided exactly with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living in Kent, Essex and, where comparable data was available, Suffolk.[2] In Lincolnshire, as in all these counties, the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living were closely associated with major variations in the state of the weather and domestic harvests, and the state of war in Europe.

Given the trend of the cost of living in Lincolnshire, it is now necessary to see how it compared with the estimates made for Kent, Essex, and Suffolk and with Silberling's estimates of the cost of living in London.[3]

TABLE 23

VARIATIONS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN KENT, ESSEX, SUFFOLK, LINCOLNSHIRE, AND LONDON 1795-1822

(1790 = 100)

	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Kent	+37	+73	+120	+84	+9
Essex	+34	+71	+119	+71	+20
Suffolk	+34	+105			

[1] The working of this formula is explained on p.65.

[2] Minor troughs in the cost of living occurred in 1797-8 and 1802-3, for example, in both Lincolnshire and Suffolk.

[3] N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 235.

	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Lincolnshire	+35	+91	+104	+54	-11
London	+30	+70	+80	+51	0

These figures suggest two main conclusions. First, the overall direction and trend of the cost of living in Lincolnshire was, with certain exceptions, not too dissimilar from the trend of the cost of living in Kent, Essex, and Suffolk. The main difference between the two series lay in the extent by which the indexes varied from their base year. With the exception of the first peak year, 1795, in which the cost of living rose by a similar amount, the cost of living in Lincolnshire experienced different rates of change in certain years to those recorded for these counties. In 1800, for example, the cost of living in Lincolnshire was higher than in Kent and Essex, by a margin of about 20 per cent., and was lower than the cost of living in Suffolk by about 14 per cent. On the other hand the cost of living in Lincolnshire in 1812 and 1817 was lower than in Kent and Essex by an average of 16 per cent. and 23 per cent. respectively. The most outstanding difference, however, occurred in 1822 when the cost of living in Lincolnshire fell to a point which was 11 per cent. lower than the position it held in 1790. The main reason for this difference was that bread prices in Lincolnshire fell to a lower point in 1822, compared with their base year, than anywhere else. Although meat and dairy prices also fell by 1822 they were, nevertheless, about 6 per cent. and 17 per cent. higher than they were in 1790. Bread prices on the other hand, fell by a considerable amount and by 1822 were 17 per cent. lower than they were in 1790. Given the relatively high weight attached to bread in the index, it is clear that substantial variations in its price tended to outweigh price changes in other commodities and thereby gave the cost of living index its characteristic shape.

Second, when the cost of living in Lincolnshire and London are

compared.[1] it is clear that both series tended to move in parallel series along the same long-run trend. In both cases the general direction of the cost of living, and the timing of their short-run variations in the main sub-periods, were almost identical.[2] The main differences between the two series lay in the extent by which they changed from their base year. Between 1790 and 1811 the two series moved in fairly close harmony, on an inter-changing basis, with neither series dominating the other, though on occasions, as in 1797-8 and 1800, a difference of 10 per cent. or more arose between the two. From 1811 to 1825, however, a notable gap appeared between the two series with the cost of living in Lincolnshire tending to lie on a lower plane, by an average margin of around 10 per cent., than the cost of living in London. From 1825 to 1833 these positions were reversed with the cost of living in Lincolnshire tending to exceed that in London by a similar margin. In the light of this evidence, therefore, it would appear that as far as the cost of living in Lincolnshire is concerned, Silberling's index understates the extent of the fall in the cost of living between 1812 and 1825 and understates its rise from 1825 to 1833. For these reasons Silberling's index appears to be of little use as a guide to the cost of living in Lincolnshire.

Given the level and trend of the cost of living in Lincolnshire, to what extent was this pattern followed by similar changes in agricultural wages? In other words, what effect did the cost of living have upon the purchasing power of wages and the agricultural labourers' standard of living?

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[1] It has to be remembered at this point that Silberling's index relates to raw materials prices whereas the county index relates to the prices of processed commodities and, therefore, one is not comparing like with like. Nevertheless, it is important to compare the two series to see whether or not Silberling's index has any general applicability to other areas.

[2] See Figure 36.

CHAPTER 11

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN LINCOLNSHIRE 1790-1840

I. Introduction

The agricultural labourers' standard of living in Lincolnshire during the early nineteenth century was profoundly affected by the transformation of its agricultural sector. Between 1760 and 1815 the open fields were eliminated and the area of cultivation was greatly expanded by extensive land reclamation schemes. In the thirty years following the Napoleonic war Lincolnshire experienced an Agricultural Revolution.[1] There occurred a marked increase in arable cultivation and the general adoption of new husbandry methods, such as improved rotations and the integration of livestock and crop husbandry, led to a doubling of wheat yields by 1845.[2] Such developments as these were important because they required a larger labour force than traditional methods of farming and hence the demand for farm labour was maintained at a high level throughout the whole period under review. As labour-saving machinery was unimportant before 1850, acute seasonal labour shortages frequently occurred with the result that wages were high and farmers were obliged to use itinerant Irish labour and gangs of women and children.[3]

The fact that agricultural improvements continued almost

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1 D. Grigg, The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire (Cambridge, 1966), p. 191. J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming (1957), passim.

2 Grigg, op. cit. pp. 189-91.

3 Grigg, op. cit. p. 192. This probably explains why threshing machine breaking riots in 1830 were almost unknown in Lincolnshire. The principal form of protest was arson. See pp. 317-19.

uninterrupted after the war-time prosperity period until the mid century meant that the labourers' general standard of living was influenced more by the agricultural sector than by any other area of economic activity. Agriculture was the main employer of labour in Lincolnshire and, with the exception of a few small-scale industries, such as domestic spinning, weaving, and knitting, there were no manufacturing industries of any significance in the county.[1] Some attempts were made in the late eighteenth century to introduce wool combing, spinning, and worsted knitting into the county but these met with little success. Flax and wool production were in a state of decay at Alford, Louth, and Spilsby and Eden noted that at Swineshead 'Women . . . in winter are unemployed except in spinning jersey or worsted, at which they earn so little that scarcely one person in ten will apply for it'.[2] Arthur Young's survey of Lincolnshire in 1813 confirmed the view that there was very little manufacturing being carried on in the county at that time. Attempts to establish woollen mills at Louth and Raithby, using machinery invented by Edmund Cartwright, soon ran into difficulties and ended in failure.[3] The only industry worth mentioning was flax spinning and weaving in Holland fen, at which women earned from 3d. to 6d. a day.[4]

This chapter is mainly concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were engaged in arable cultivation on various estates in the county. The main sources of statistical evidence have been derived from

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[1] There were plenty of manufacturing industries in the neighbouring county of Nottinghamshire though it is difficult to say what effect these had upon Lincolnshire wages.

[2] F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), pp. 230-6.

[3] A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of Lincolnshire (1813), pp. 455-6.

[4] Ibid. pp. 455-9. In 1796 the earnings of spinners in the Boston area were 'very small'. Annals of Agriculture, XXVI (1796), p. 4.

the Ancaster Estate Labour Accounts at Stamford and Normanton[1] and the Monson Estate Wage Accounts at Burton.[2] The Ancaster Wage Accounts are the best of these series as they are the most comprehensive, providing a continuous record of agricultural labourers' wages for the whole period 1796-1833, and are the main series used in this study.[3] The Monson Wage Accounts also provide a highly detailed account of labourers' wages from 1790 to 1818, and at various points these wages are compared with the Ancaster series, with the wages paid on other estates,[4] and with the wages quoted in various contemporary printed sources.[5] On the basis of this evidence a wage index has been constructed according to what the labourers on these estates earned during the course of each year, taking good seasons with the bad. At various points this index has been related to the cost of living index in order to ascertain what happened to the purchasing power of wages.

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1 L.R.O. 2 Anc. 9/15/165-7. 3 Anc. 6/24-25. Duke of Ancaster. Labour and Estate Accounts at Stamford and Normanton. Stamford and Normanton lie in the southern half of the county. See Map 5, p. 278.

2 L.R.O. Monson 12 (Uncatalogued Wage Accounts). 2/2/4/1-7, 1/2/10/2-3, 10/4B/13-20. Monson Estate Wage Accounts at Burton. Burton lies in southern Lincolnshire within a few miles of Grantham.

3 Between 1796 and 1808 the Ancaster and Monson wage series followed a similar trend with the former exceeding the latter by an average of 1s. 10d. a week (Figure 37). In order to construct a real wage index based upon the year 1790, the Ancaster series have been extrapolated to 1790 on the assumption that the wage differential between the two series remained constant between 1790 and 1795.

4 Some useful information on labourers' wages has been obtained from the Lincolnshire Agricultural Reports published in The Stamford Mercury and from the Brace Estate Accounts at Crowle. L.R.O. 23/8/1. Brace Estate Accounts. Crowle is located in the north-west part of the county.

5 The relationship between estate wages and wages paid on small farms is discussed on p. 78 and will not be repeated here. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 37 the former have been marked with a cross (x) and the latter with a dot (.).

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages and the cost of living,[1] and the trend of real wages in Lincolnshire is shown in Figures 37-39.[2] In examining these relationships it is apparent that variations in agricultural wages were associated with variations in the cost of living and the rural trade cycle. When prices were rising wages were rising, and when prices were falling wages were falling, though the former series, being more volatile than the latter, tended to outpace wages by a substantial margin for most of the period under review.

Several factors influenced the level of agricultural labourers' wages in Lincolnshire during this period. Thomas Stone, for example, noted that in the 1790's labourers' wages were 'not fixed by any precise rules' and were determined according to demand and supply for labour during the various seasons of the year.[3] In 1792 there were complaints of a general labour shortage in the county and wages, in the Holbeach area, rose to 10s. 6d. a week.[4] Reclamation work on the fens increased the acreage of arable cultivation without increasing the supply of labour and, as wages rose, labour was attracted into the area from other districts.[5] Arthur Young commented on the rising demand for labour in the fens:

> From the quantity of public works now carrying on from the war, the price of labour is on the increase. . . . This

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[1] At this point it is important to note that these estimates are based on the assumption of full and regular employment, and, in the light of the existence of seasonal unemployment in the post-war period, must be regarded as being generous. Later on in the chapter this assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

[2] The index of real wages has been obtained by dividing the cost of living index into the wage index.

[3] T. Stone, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1794), p. 24.

[4] Annals, XIX (1792), p. 57.

[5] Ibid. p. 188.

FIG. 37

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Lincolnshire 1790–1840

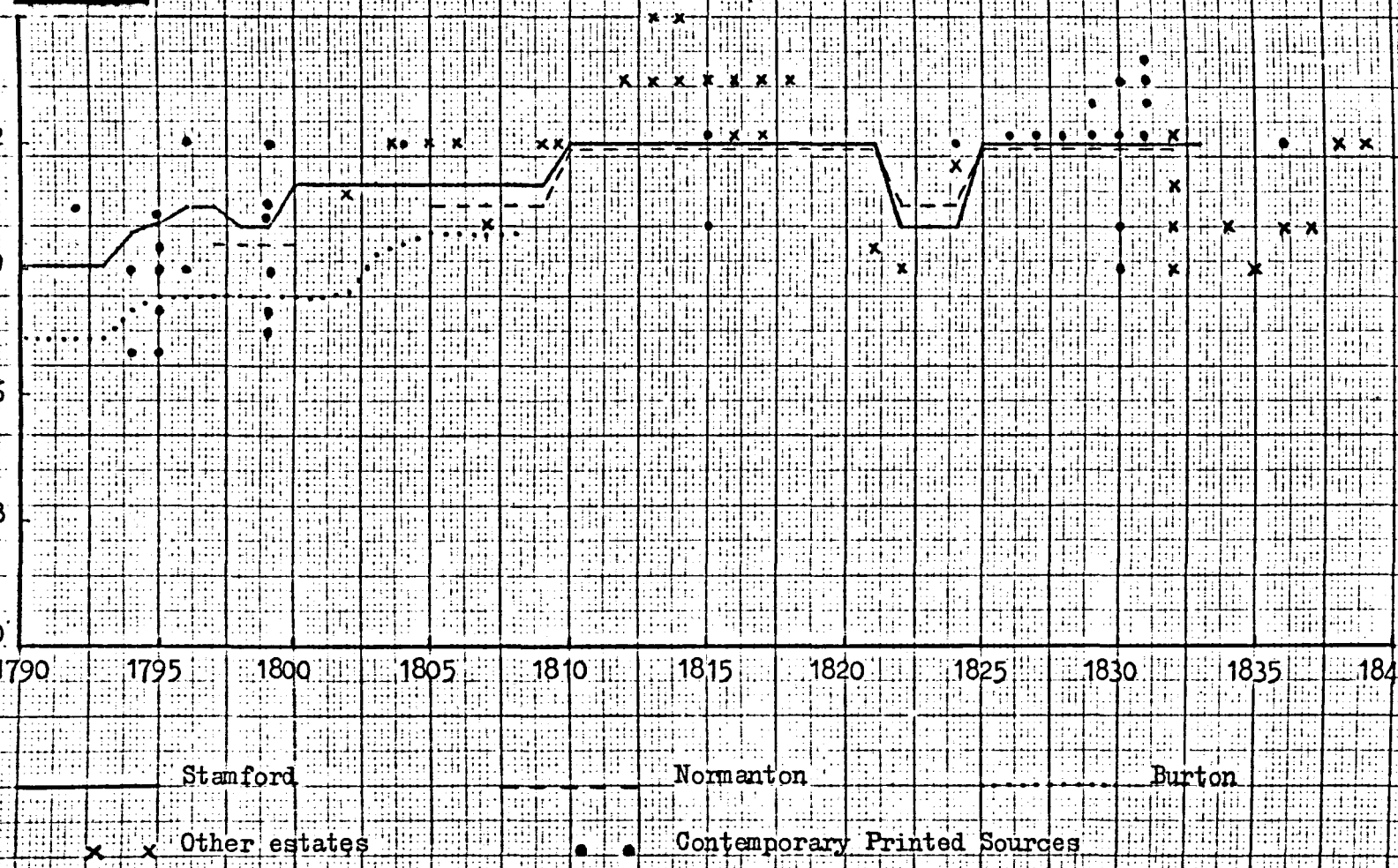


FIG. 38

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Lincolnshire 1790–1840

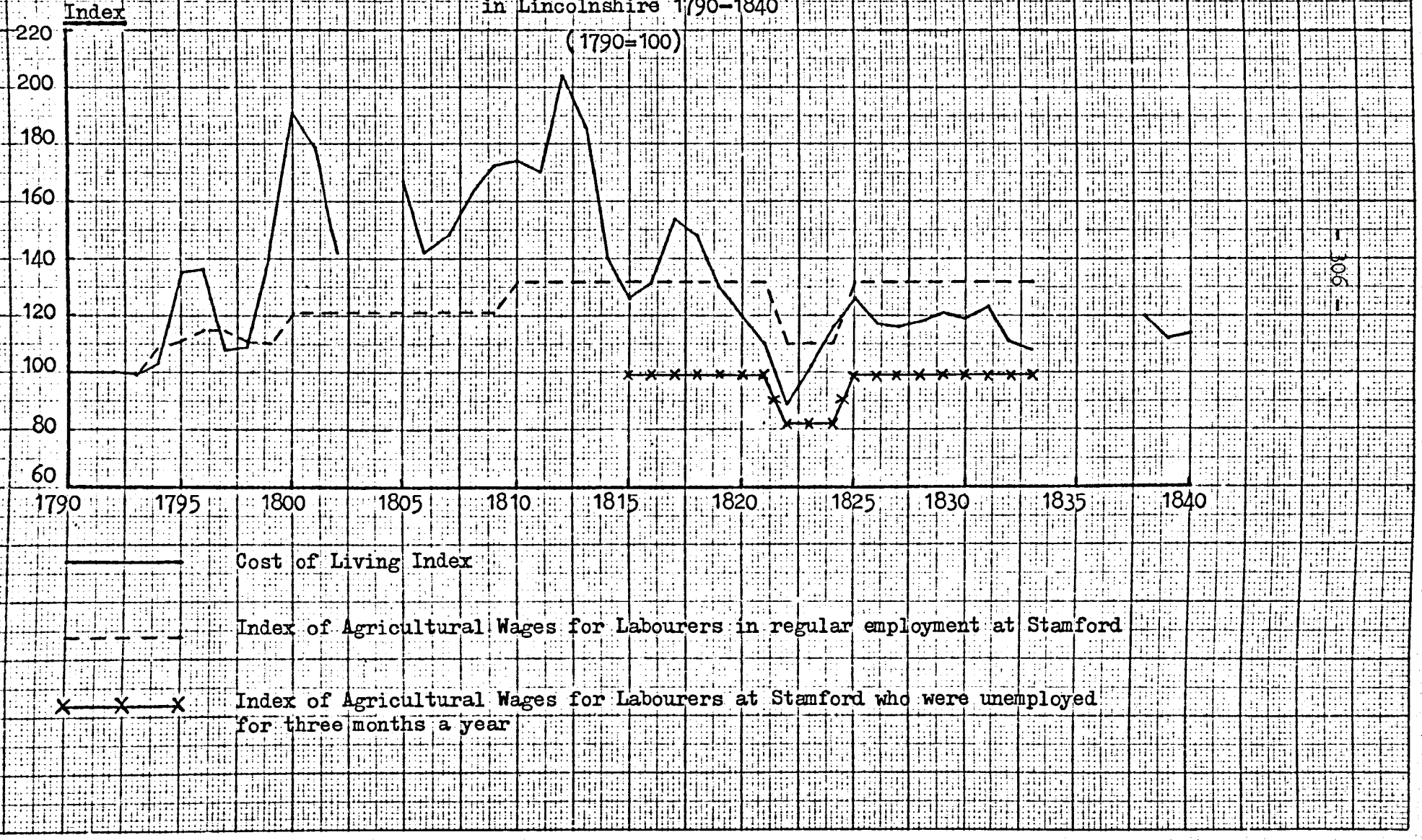
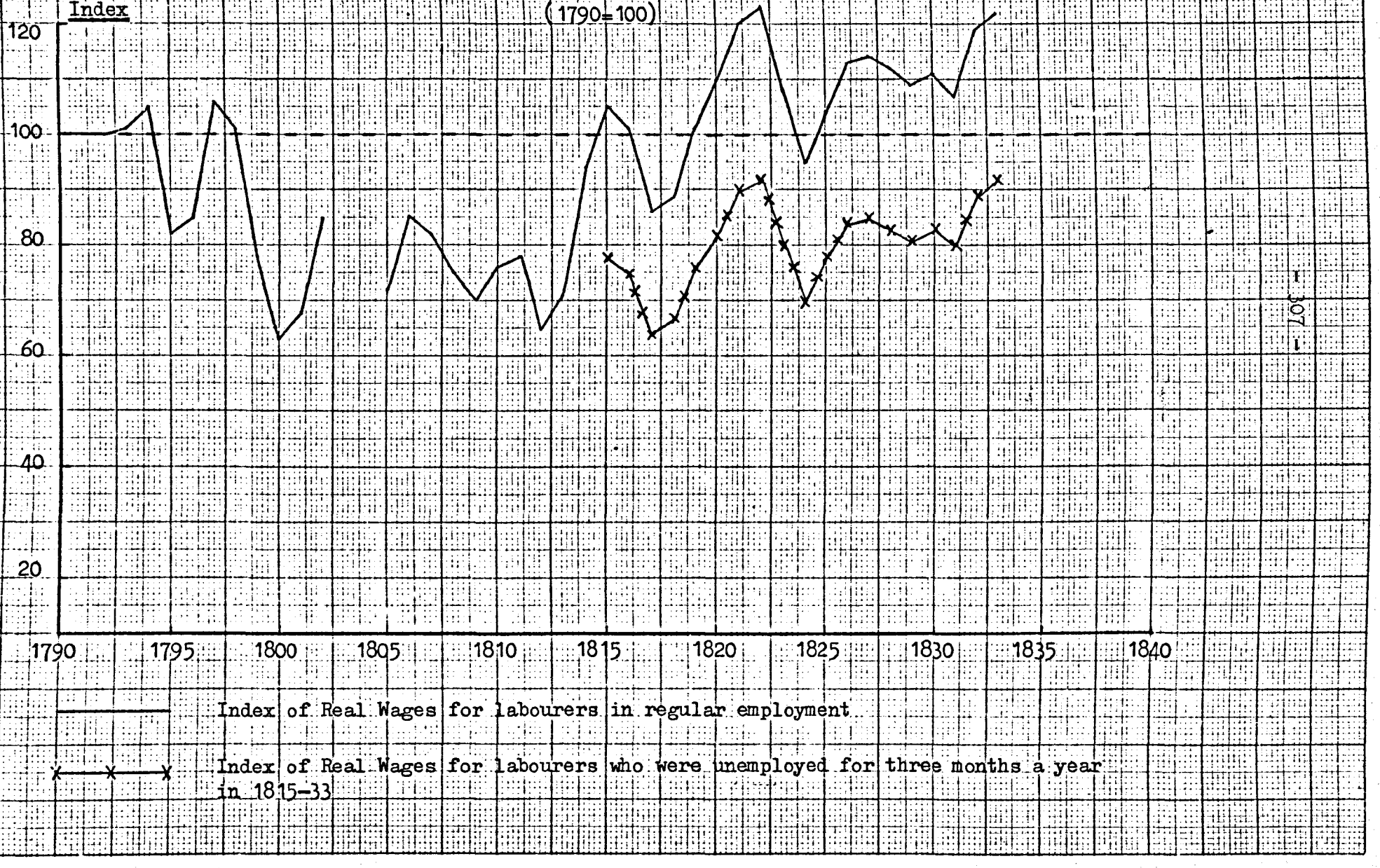


FIG. 39

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Lincolnshire 1790–1833
(1790=100)



> increase of the price of labour is owing in some measure to the scarcity of hands, but more still to the sudden ripening of the corn . . . The consequences of such high prices are very baneful; the workmen get drunk; work not above four days out of six; dissipate their money, hurt their constitutions . . . and are lost to the community for at least one-third of their time in this important crisis.[1]

One consequence of this state of affairs, according to Young, was that agricultural wages in Lincolnshire were 'probably higher than in any other county in the kingdom'[2] and that farmers had to depend upon migratory Irish labour to get their harvest in.[3]

Agricultural wages on the Monson estates at Burton were stationary at 7s. 4d. a week from 1790 until the outbreak of war with France, and then increased to reach 8s. 4d. a week by 1795. Similar wage increases to these were reported in many other areas. At Stainsby, in central Lincolnshire, wages were considered to be 'rather high' at 9s. a week; these had increased by a third within recent years.[4] At Asgarby and Boston agricultural wages increased by about one-fifth between 1792 and 1795.[5] Eden's survey of eight parishes in 1795 revealed that labourers' wages ranged between 7s. and 10s. a week.[6] Labourers at Cockerington were paid 10d. a day in winter and 1s. 6d. a day in summer, plus an allowance

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1 Young, op. cit. pp. 444-5. The recruitment of labourers into the army exacerbated the labour scarcity in the county. The Farmer's Magazine, XVII (1804), p. 119. The presence of a wide range of manufacturing industries in Nottinghamshire offered alternative employment and probably had some influence upon the supply price of labour in Lincolnshire. R. A. Church, Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town, Victorian Nottingham 1815-1900 (1966), pp. 68, 91.

2 Young, op. cit. p. 451.

3 Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 3.

4 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 121.

5 Ibid. pp. 127, 129.

6 Eden, op. cit. pp. 229-37.

for victuals; at Swinestead wages were 1s. 2d. to 1s. 6d. a day in winter and 2s. a day in summer.[1]

Agricultural wages at Burton remained at 8s. 4d. a week between 1795 and 1801 and then began to increase, along with the general inflation of prices, to reach 9s. 10d. a week between 1805 and 1808. At Stamford, Witham and Normanton wages were somewhat higher by an average of 1s. 10d. a week. In the late 1790's agricultural wages on the Ancaster estates at Stamford were 10s. to 10s. 6d. a week. These increased to 11s. in 1800 and remained at that level until 1809. A further increase occurred in 1810 and from then until 1821 agricultural wages at Stamford averaged 12s. a week.[2] At Normanton agricultural labourers earned 9s. 7d. a week between 1797 and 1800, and 10s. 10d. by 1802. Between 1805 and 1809 their wages were 10s. 6d. a week and these increased to 12s. a week by 1810 and remained at that level until 1821.[3] Similarly, at Witham, farm labourers received a wage of 12s. a week during the early 1800's.[4] In other parts of the county agricultural wages were similar to those paid on the Ancaster estate. At Brothertoft, near Boston, a correspondent to the Annals of Agriculture noted that in 1799 labourers in regular employment were paid 10s. to 12s. a week and 'on which they have been able to support themselves and their families decently'.[5] He also noted that when wages were reduced to their winter rate of 9s. and 10s. a week the labourers 'begin to murmur'.[6]

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1 Ibid. pp. 231, 236.

2 L.R.O. 2 Anc 9/15/167. Ancaster. Labour and Estate Accounts at Stamford.

3 L.R.O. 3 Anc 6/24-25. 2 Anc 9/15/166. Ancaster. Labour and Estate Accounts at Normanton.

4 L.R.O. 2 Anc 9/15/165. Ancaster. Labourers' Wages at Witham.

5 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 285.

6 Ibid.

In other fen-land parishes of south-east Lincolnshire wages ranged between 9s. and 12s. a week.[1] At Crowle, in the Isle of Axholme, farm labourers were paid 12s. a week between 1806 and 1810.[2] Arthur Young's 1799 survey of agricultural wages in 22 parishes estimated that the average wage was 12s. 6d. a week.[3] The seasonal rates of pay varied considerably in the county. Winter wages ranged from 7s. 6d. to 12s. a week, spring wages from 8s. 6d. to 12s. a week, summer wages from 10s. to 18s. a week, and harvest wages, from 12s. to 42s. a week.[4] As a rule wages were higher in the south-east than in the northern parts of the county. Whilst summer wages were 12s. a week at Barton and Wintringham in north Lincolnshire, 15s. to 18s. a week were being paid at Spalding, Skirbeck, and Folkingham.[5] At Tathwell, near Louth, in the eastern half of the county, summer and harvest wages were 18s. and 24s. a week respectively because hands were 'not to be got at any price'.[6]

Despite the high level of agricultural labourers' earnings during the Napoleonic war, the real value of agricultural wages was seriously diminished by a faster rise in the cost of living. Between 1790 and 1812 the wage index at Stamford rose from 100 to 132 compared with a rise in the cost of living index from 100 to 204. It is evident from Figures 38-39 that as a consequence of the failure of agricultural labourers'

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1 Ibid. XXVI (1796), p. 3.

2 L.R.O. 23/8/1. Brace, op. cit.

3 A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of Lincoln (1799), p. 403. Young estimated that winter wages were paid for 26 weeks, spring wages for 9 weeks, summer wages for 9 weeks, and harvest wages for 8 weeks.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. p. 400. Wages of carpenters and masons were, on average, 21s. a week. The Farmers' Magazine, XVII (1804), p. 119.

wages to keep in step with increases in the cost of living the purchasing power of wages fell by a substantial amount over this period.[1] As a result of these developments the rural labouring classes suffered a fall in their material standard of living and were obliged to change their dietary habits by eating 'inferior' cuts of meat and by substituting potatoes and barley bread for wheaten bread in their meals.[2] Eden, for example, noted that in 1795, the first peak year in the cost of living index, the rural poor in the county subsisted on a diet of tea, milk, potatoes, and oatmeal, and that they ate butter and butcher's meat 'whenever they can possibly be obtained'.[3] In a similar vein Arthur Young commented,

> It is singular that the labouring poor, with the extraordinary high price of labour at Norton, Kirton, etc. consume very little meat, except the stoutest labourers at taskwork, who earn 3s. a day: these have for dinner some meat in a pye; all consume a good many potatoes.[4]

One further outcome of the steep rise in prices was an outbreak of rioting in various parts of the county, such as at Grantham, Stamford, and the Boston area, over the high prices of bread, flour, and provisions.[5] During such difficult times as these it became the custom to establish public subscription funds and provide the labouring classes with doles of bread, flour, and coal at subsidised prices.[6] By 1800, the second pronounced peak in the cost of living index, many parishes in the county

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[1] In 1795, 1800, and 1812, for example, the index of real wages fell to 82, 63 and 65 respectively.

[2] Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 119-34.

[3] Eden, op. cit. pp. 233, 236.

[4] Young (1799), op. cit. p. 460.

[5] See p. 289.

[6] Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 126-9, 133, 280. These prices were sometimes a third to a half of the current market price.

increasingly found themselves being burdened with large numbers of dependent poor and their workhouses being filled up.[1] Again, as in 1795, public subscription funds were opened for relieving the rural poor, whilst some farmers in the county undertook to provide their labourers with corn at reduced prices.[2]

On reaching their peak in 1812, prices in Lincolnshire fell precipitously towards the end of the Napoleonic war and were accompanied by complaints of distress from the farming community. In many parts of the county there were reports of rising levels of unemployment and poverty amongst the labouring classes.[3] Thomas Pilley, a farmer from Sudbroke, observed,

> Many farms have been given up within the last six months, and a great many more must inevitably be given up . . . the labouring poor which was so usefully and industriously employed before, are now starving for want of employment, and the poor-rates, in consequence, must be very considerably increased.[4]

Most of the parishes included in the Board of Agriculture's enquiry of 1816 reported that the poor rates had increased by as much as one quarter to a third.[5] Some of the replies to the question on the condition of farm labourers were: 'Starving for the want of employment', 'Materially worse', 'In winter very distressing', 'Wretched enough', 'Suffer much from want of employment', 'Extremely bad'.[6]

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1 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 285.

2 Ibid. £600 was raised by public subscription in Boston for the relief of the poor and needy.

3 Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816, reprinted 1970), pp. 150-2.

4 Ibid. pp. 156-7.

5 Ibid. pp. 150-2.

6 Board of Agriculture, op. cit. In areas where cottage cow keeping was found the rural poor were described as 'comfortable'.

The post-war agricultural depression in Lincolnshire lasted, at intervals, until 1836 but as the county had several farming regions no two areas were affected to the same extent and there was no acute unemployment throughout the county at any particular time.[1] On the wolds, heaths, and fenlands the farmers were able to weather the bad years and maintain their labour force. During the war 'prodigious' sums of capital were expended on increasing arable farming in these areas and, despite the onset of an agricultural depression in 1815, improvements to the land continued to be made until at least 1820.[2] As the demand for labour on the wolds and fens was maintained at a relatively high level agricultural wages did not fall to the extent they did in other counties.[3]

Compared with the general decline of food prices in Lincolnshire between 1812 and 1822, agricultural wages at Stamford and Normanton did not fall to the same extent and, as a result of this, real wages began to improve upon their 1790 position from 1819 onwards. At Witham agricultural wages reached 15s. a week in 1813-14, and then fell to 12s. by 1815-17 and 9s. 6d. by 1821. Gardeners employed at Burton were paid 13s. 6d. a week between 1812 and 1818.[4] In 1822 wages followed the downturn in prices and in that year fell to 10s. 6d., 10s., and 9s. a week at Normanton, Stamford and Witham respectively. As the fall in wages was not as great as the fall in the cost of living the index of real wages for labourers in regular employment increased to 123 by 1822. By 1825 agricultural wages

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1 Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 198, 307.

2 Ibid. pp. 257-9. Grigg, op. cit. p. 191. By the 1850's Lincolnshire was said to be one of the best farmed counties in England. Grigg, op. cit. p. 137.

3 Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 217, 260, 268, 308.

4 L.R.O. Monson 12. 10/4B/13-20. Monson Estate Wage Accounts at Burton.

at Stamford and Normanton had returned to 12s. a week and remained at that level until the mid 1830's. The rise in wages after the agricultural depression of 1822-3 was also experienced in several other areas of the county. A scarcity of labour was reported in the Spalding area in 1824 and, as a consequence of this, high wages were paid to agricultural workers.[1] In the fens around Boston nominal wages were 12s. a week and were said to be 'as high as a pound note' during the harvest.[2] However, during the first half of 1826 the demand for labour began to fall and wages were reduced to 12s. or less a week. The Stamford Mercury observed,

> The demand for labour declines; many are getting on the roads, as many farmers who have still the power to pay them are determined to lay out as little as possible either in temporary or permanent improvements.[3]

During the following harvest wages rose to 12s. and 15s. a week and then fell again during the late autumn as labour became more plentiful.[4] Labourers were 'tolerably employed' during 1827 and agricultural wages were generally 12s. a week in the county.[5] Real wages between 1825 and 1827 increased owing to a slight fall in the cost of living and by the latter date the index of real wages reached 114.

The winter of 1827-8 was bleak and cold and the demand for labour was subsequently reduced. A local newspaper commented,

> In many parishes a great many labourers are seen on the roads at scanty pittances, but labourers actually employed by

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1 The Stamford Mercury 9 September 1824, p. 2.

2 Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages 1824, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, p. 14.

3 The Stamford Mercury 16 June 1826, p. 4.

4 Ibid. 18 August 1826, p. 4. 3 November 1826, p. 4.

5 Ibid. 6 July 1827, p. 4. 9 November 1827, p. 4.

> the farmers have better wages than is reported in other counties - generally 12s. per week.[1]

By June of that year farm labourers in the county were said to be 'tolerably well employed' and by the harvest their wages were 'unprecedently high' owing to the fact that fewer Irish labourers than normal were at work in the county.[2] By October agricultural wages had fallen to 12s. a week and threshing machines were 'busily employed in all directions'.[3] The Lincolnshire Agricultural Report noted,

> Threshing machines have been almost entirely fully employed. Labour is stationary, say 12s. per week, though some farmers are induced to allow a trifle more in consideration of the price of bread.[4]

Between 1827 and 1829 the cost of living in Lincolnshire increased whilst agricultural wages remained stationary with the result that the index of real wages fell from 114 to 109.[5] By the early part of 1829 there were cries of 'great distress' amongst the farming community and fears were expressed that unemployment would increase in the county.[6] The following harvest was damaged by cold, wet weather and the plight of the Lincolnshire labourers was worsened by an unusually large influx of Irish labourers into the county seeking work, and by the fact that farmers continued to employ threshing machines to thresh their corn in preference

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[1] Ibid. 25 January 1828, p. 4.

[2] The Stamford Mercury, 6 June 1828, p. 4. 12 September 1828, p. 4. Irish reapers and mowers, working at piece rates, earned 8s. to 12s. a day.

[3] Ibid. 10 October 1828, p. 4.

[4] Ibid. 8 November 1828, p. 4. In Rutland 12s. a week was regarded as inadequate compared with the high price of bread. Ibid. 19 December 1828, p. 4.

[5] The rise in prices was due to bad weather in 'three deplorable years' in 1826, 1827, and 1828, which severely damaged the cereal crop in Lincolnshire. Ibid. 10 July 1829, p. 4.

[6] The Stamford Mercury 30 January 1829, p. 4. 10 April 1829, p. 4.

to hand threshers. As in other counties in this study, these developments were the cause of considerable distress and social unrest in the Lincolnshire countryside. The Stamford Mercury commented,

> Perhaps it was never more difficult to present a satisfactory report on the state of agriculture than at this period; all is doubt, anxiety, and alarm. There has been an unusual number of Irish harvestmen, and in consequence the price of reaping wheat has been lower than for some years; this has caused great dissatisfaction amongst the labouring class . . . and in some cases has produced ill-treatment of the Irish by them . . . there was never recollected any harvest time like the present - the farmers impoverished and alarmed, the labourers dissatisfied and grumbling; there is no remaining appearance of mirth and good humour heretofore the attendant of the labourer and excitement of the harvest.[1]

Irish labourers were attacked at Stamford, Uffington, and Langham and 'murderous attacks' were said to have been made upon them in the neighbouring county of Rutland.[2] By October 1829 The Stamford Mercury could note,

> Labourers have earned very indifferent wages, and have the prospect before them of a long winter; the means of the farmer are so crippled, that work . . . will be difficult to procure, even at low wages in this county, which hitherto has not experienced that excessive surplus of labour complained of in the southern counties.[3]

The winter of 1829-30 saw a rise in unemployment and distress in Lincolnshire.[4] Agricultural labourers' wages fell to 9s. and 10s. a week and there was a noticeable slackening off in the demand for farm servants at the Bingham, Swineshead, Bennington, and Lincoln Hiring Fairs.[5] By

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1 Ibid. 4 September 1829, p. 4.

2 The Stamford Mercury 14 August 1829, p. 3. 4 September 1829, p. 3. 25 September 1829, p. 4.

3 Ibid. 23 October 1829, p. 4.

4 Ibid. 8 January 1830, p. 3. 15 January 1830, p. 3. Distress was particularly acute in the Sleaford area.

5 Ibid. 22 January 1830. p. 4. 19 February 1930, p. 3. 14 May 1830, p. 3. 11 June 1830, p. 3. 18 June 1830, p. 4. At this time there occurred a marked increase in emigration to North America from villages in the neighbourhood of Lincoln and Boston. Ibid. 9 April 1830, p. 3.

June the situation had deteriorated further with the onset of a period of wet weather which damaged the cereal crop and raised widespread fears that the harvest would be both late and deficient.[1] These fears were confirmed during the following September when it was discovered that crops of wheat, barley, oats, and beans were backward and deficient and that the turnip crop was 'almost a total failure'.[2] Although arable crops on the Lincoln Heath were said to be 'unusually productive', the Wolds suffered a bad corn harvest. The fens experienced a 'more defective crop than usual' whilst arable crops on the cold clays were 'the worst that had been known for many years'.[3] As a result of these adverse events the demand for labour began to fall. The Agricultural Report noted, 'Labourers have been plentiful through the harvest, and the enormous wages that have been usually demanded . . . has this season been unknown'.[4]

By November 1830 the fires of discontent, which had swept northwards from Kent into Essex and Suffolk, reached Norfolk and spilled over into Lincolnshire. With the exception of a few threatening letters and demands for higher wages, the agricultural labourers' disturbances in Lincolnshire were mainly confined to acts of incendiarism. Unemployment, falling wages, and personal grievances were some of the main reasons for unrest in the county.[5] The assistant overseer of the poor at Burton noted,

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1 Ibid. 18 June 1830, p. 4. Rutland experienced similar weather and labourers' wages there fell to 10s. a week.

2 The Stamford Mercury 17 September 1830, p. 4.

3 Ibid. 19 November 1830, p. 4. The deficient harvest caused a marked rise in wheat and barley prices and the average price of the quartern loaf increased to 10d. by 1830. See Fig. 33.

4 Ibid.

5 Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1., V, pp. 290-7. These reasons were given by witnesses to the disturbances.

> The labourer who finds himself and family starving when surrounded with corn stacks etc., which he has perhaps laboured hard to produce, and of which he cannot obtain a portion sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger, thinks himself an injured man, and an outcast of society. He becomes careless of consequences, and stimulated by revenge endeavours to reduce the man whom he fancies to be his greatest enemy to the same level with himself by destroying his property.[1]

In early October a thrashing machine was set on fire at North Fen and four stacks were fired at Stickford near Boston.[2] At Carrington, also near Boston, the agricultural labourers demanded an increase in their wages to 2s. a day. Acts of arson multiplied during November and December and accounts of threshing machine breaking and the destruction of farm buildings, livestock, and corn stacks were reported at length in the local press. Fires were reported at Spilsby, Spalding, Easton, Stickford, Muckton, Irby, South Reston, Swaby, Market Rasen, Donington, Horncastle, and Sutton Marsh.[3] At Barton, in north Lincolnshire, a farmer who had been warned not to use his threshing machine had three corn stacks set on fire whilst the populace 'looked on with the most perfect indifference'.[4] The Stamford Mercury noted the effect of these events upon the farming classes:

> The panic among the Lincolnshire farmers is universal, particularly such as have threshing machines on their premises. Many have received threatening letters and the breaking of machines, and the conflagration of property form the unvarying theme of conversation amongst all ranks of society.[5]

A wage meeting, attended by 40 to 50 agricultural labourers, took

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1 Ibid. p. 290.

2 The Stamford Mercury 1 October 1830, p. 3. 20 October 1830, p. 3.

3 The Stamford Mercury 3 December 1830, pp. 2-3. 10 December 1830, pp. 2-3.

4 Ibid. 10 December 1830, p. 2.

5 Ibid.

place at Swinstead and several similar meetings occurred in the villages around Boston.[1] At the Bourn Quarter Sessions in January 1831 three Heckington labourers were charged with 'not being content to work and labour at the usual rates and prices for which they and other labourers were wont and accustomed to but falsely and fraudulently conspiring and combining unjustly and oppressively to increase and augment the wages of themselves and other labourers'.[2] Two threshing machines were set on fire at Moulton and Deeping St. James in early December and a spate of fires were reported at Elton, Dyke, Wisbeck, Burwell, Toynton, Belton, Freiston, Saltfleet, Barrow, and Market Rasen.[3] A correspondent from Spilsby observed that throughout the southern Wolds, 'The most industrious man can seldom find employment without claiming it of his parish, nor in many cases will his wages alone suffice for the maintenance of a numerous family'.[4]

Incendiarism continued throughout 1831.[5] In March the Lincolnshire Agricultural Report commented,

> Labourers are well employed at 12s. to 14s. per week. The county <u>appears</u> tranquil but the dreadful fiend of incendiarism is not yet satiated.[6]

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1 Ibid. pp. 3-4.

2 L.R.O. KSB. Bourn Epiphany Quarter Sessions. Presentment Sheet, 6 January 1831. The labourers had demanded a minimum wage of 2s. 6d. a day. At the same time a party of women assembled in the village and demanded a reduction in the price of flour.

3 <u>The Stamford Mercury</u> 17 December 1830, pp. 2-3. 24 December 1830, pp. 2-3. 31 December 1830, p. 2.

4 Ibid. 31 December 1830, p. 2.

5 E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude referred to 28 fires in the county between mid-November 1830 and mid-March 1831. 'Most occurred along the coastal strip between Louth and Boston.' E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, <u>Captain Swing</u> (1969), p. 167.

6 <u>The Stamford Mercury</u> 18 March 1831, p. 4. Wages in Rutland were 12s. a week.

By the summer of 1831 agricultural conditions in Lincolnshire had improved and there was a noticeable reduction in unemployment.[1] The Report commented,

> Labourers have been fully employed through the spring and summer, at good wages compared with those of other counties, namely, 12s. to 15s. per week, and land allotments are very general; yet they are not well satisfied. Many, though civil, are gloomy and discontented. In populous villages, where they are less restrained, dark hints and threats to those who may employ Irish-men to reap in harvest are not unusual; and, in some instances, some of those unfortunates . . . have been greatly maltreated and assaulted. . . . The Fen harvest cannot be reaped without the Irish; and, unless some prompt and vigorous measure is immediately resorted to, the Irish dare not come to the Fen, nor dare the Farmers . . . employ them.[2]

Indeed, in the Boston area the populace were so incensed by the presence of the Irish that a riot broke out and the civil authorities had to provide them with an escort to the Fens. Similar disturbances broke out at Spalding, Willoughby, and Wisbeck.[3] One consequence of the discontent was that farmers were afraid to employ Irish harvesters and wages were increased to 7s. and 10s. a day on the Fens.[4] However, despite local opposition the Irish returned in 1832 in greater numbers 'than ever before known' and more disturbances took place because the Irish were prepared to work for lower wages than local labourers.[5] In June of that year agricultural wages in Lincolnshire were, according to the local press, 'stationary at 12s. per week'.[6]

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1 Ibid. 10 June 1831, p. 4.

2 Ibid. 29 July 1831, p. 4.

3 The Stamford Mercury 5 August 1831, pp. 3-4. Several farmers were threatened with arson if they employed Irish labourers.

4 Ibid. 2 September 1831, p. 4.

5 Ibid. 3 August 1832, p. 3. 10 August 1832, p. 3.

6 Ibid. 1 June 1832, p. 4.

Agricultural wages at Stamford and Normanton were 12s. a week in 1832; at Grimsthorpe they were 9s. to 12s. a week.[1] During the latter part of the 1830's labourers' wages in Lincolnshire were generally about 12s. a week. In 1836 12s. a week was paid at Brocklesby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, and Spalding and there were reports that labourers were fully employed; indeed, in some districts it was said that there was a labour shortage.[2] Slightly lower wages than these were paid at Witham, though these varied from year to year by a shilling or two. For example, labourers' wages at Witham fell from 10s. to 9s. a week in 1834-5 and then increased to 10s. in 1836-7 and 12s. in 1838; 12s. a week was also paid to labourers employed at Grimsthorpe in 1840.[3]

During the 1840's Lincolnshire labourers were generally in regular employment. With the exception of some winter unemployment in the Fen and Marsh towns, and some underemployment in the south-west and north-east clay districts, agricultural employment was good in most parts of the county.[4] Writing on the state of agriculture in the 1840's, J. A. Clarke noted,

> On the Wolds there is full occupation for them (labourers); in the central district they are well employed, all are employed; on the Cliff and in the north-western district (there) is plenty of work; in the Isle of Axholme the labourers are fully employed, - women, and children above ten years of age, have nearly full employment at from 9d. to 2s. per day . . . on the Heath and the districts east and west of it, general employment is the rule.[5]

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1 L.R.O. 2 Anc 7/23/25/52. Duke of Ancaster. Labour Accounts at Grimsthorpe.

2 Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (i), pp. 302-2, 405, 425. Piece rates were 25% to 30% lower than during the Napoleonic war.

3 L.R.O. 2 Anc 7/7/53. Duke of Ancaster, op. cit.

4 J. A. Clarke, 'On the Farming of Lincolnshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XII (1851), pp. 405-6.

5 Clarke, loc. cit. p. 405.

Employment, he found, had kept pace with the increase in the agricultural labour force and agricultural wages were maintained at the level they were in Arthur Young's time.[1] In noting local difference in labourers' wages Clarke wrote,

> On the Wolds the general wage is 12s. per week, the men working from 6 o'clock to 6, with a rest at dinner hour. Many receive 13s. 6d.; but in winter the rate is frequently lowered to 10s. or 10s. 6d. In harvest, of course, the wages rise; the cutting is done 'by the grate', the wheat at 6s., 7s., and 8s. per acre, and barley 5s. The wages on the eastern Clay and Marsh district were 12s. to 15s. per week in summer, but 10s. in the winter of 1849-50. In the central district wages are now from 10s. to 12s., the labourers at taskwork earning 2s. 6d. per day. The general wage in the north-western district is 12s., but during this winter only 10s. 6d., varying from 9s. to 12s. The present rates in the Isle of Axholme are 10s. to 15s. per week. The wages on the Cliff during the same winter are 10s.; the winter before the minimum was 12s. per week; on the Heath at the present time, 10s.; in the south-western district 10s. The general wages in the Fen and Marsh district are 12s. in summer and 10s. in winter, the hours being generally between half-past six and half-past five o'clock, but many farmers have at present dropped to 9s. The reaping and mowing in harvest varies from 8s. to 14s. per acre, all by the piece. The average of the foregoing minutes is about 11s. per week, excluding harvest, but the average of the county is probably more. The average of same number of figures collected by Arthur Young is about 11s. 6d. without the harvest; and this comparison, therefore, shows pretty clearly that after the lapse of half a century the agricultural labourers of Lincolnshire are obtaining no better livelihood in exchange for their toil than before.[2]

III. Conclusion

Given the general level and trend of agricultural wages and the cost of living in Lincolnshire it is now necessary to combine the two series together in order to see what effect they had upon the trend of real wages. In other words, to what extent did agricultural labourers' wages at

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[1] Ibid. p. 406. In 1850 James Caird noted that labourers' wages in Lincolnshire were 10s. a week. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 197.

[2] Clarke, loc. cit. pp. 403-4.

Stamford match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living and what effect did the interaction of these two variables have upon the purchasing power of wages?

Up to this point it has been assumed, as a first step, that the labourers in this study were in full and regular employment throughout the whole period under review.[1] Given that assumption, it is clear from Figure 38 that both series moved in the same direction with the cost of living index, being the more volatile of the two, lying on a much higher plane than the wage index throughout most of the period. If the extent by which the two time-series varied from their base year is compared, it is clear from Figure 38 that agricultural wages at Stamford tended to move in a series of long low plateaux, of up to ten years duration, and that in their timing and degree of change seriously lagged behind the cost of living index. The most serious consequence of this state of affairs was a pronounced fall in the purchasing power of wages. The extent to which this happened, during the worst years of the Napoleonic war, was as follows:

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[2] (index)
1795	+35	+11	82
1800	+91	+21	63
1812	+104	+32	65
1817	+54	+32	86

As in the case of the counties considered so far, these figures clearly show that at these critical points agricultural wages were outpaced by the cost of living by an average margin of 24, 70, 72, and 22 per cent.

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[1] Later on this assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations. See Figs. 45-46.

[2] 1790 = 100.

respectively. In other words, because the cost of living rose at a considerably faster rate than agricultural wages, the index of agricultural wages and the index of real wages moved in opposite directions. The main consequences of this situation for the agricultural labourers' standard of living was that the index of real wages fell by an average of 30 per cent. during the three war years and by 14 per cent. in 1817. In some years, however, the fall in real wages was not as great as this and, indeed, in other years, the index of real wages recorded a positive rise. Hence, in order to gain an overall impression of the trend of real wages between 1790 and 1840 it is necessary to understand the chronological relationship between the 'good' and the 'bad' years. In other words, to what extent were the years of falling real wages compensated for by periods of rising real wages?

Taking the 'good' years with the 'bad', and assuming regular employment, it is clear from the long-run trend of real wages in Figure 39 that the chronological distribution of 'good' and 'bad' years between 1790 and 1833 was almost equally divided. During this period real wages improved upon their 1790 position on twenty-two occasions, whereas on nineteen other occasions, mainly between 1795 and 1818, real wages fell below that position.[1] As far as the standard of living is concerned these figures suggest that the agricultural labourer had an equal share of good and bad fortune in this period. However, if the extent of the rise and fall in real wages is taken into consideration it is clear that the years of bad fortune seriously outweighed the good. Indeed, when the figures are compared it is evident that the extent of the fall in real wages was more than double the extent of their rise. In other words, real wages

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[1] The base year is not included in these figures. Information was not available for the 1835-40 period. In Kent, Essex, and Suffolk, however, real wages fell in this period.

increased by an average of 8 per cent. over a period of twenty-two years, whilst real wages decreased by an average of 22 per cent. over a period of nineteen years. Figure 39 clearly shows that, apart from a few gains in the 1790's, the downward trend of real wages began with the first serious rise in prices in 1795 and lasted until (apart from 1815-16) 1819. After that point the index of real wages began to surpass its pre-war position and up to 1833 improved at the average rate of 0.8 per cent. per annum.[1]

For those labourers who were unfortunate enough to suffer from periodic bouts of unemployment during the winter quarter of the year it is evident, from Figure 39, that the loss of earnings they sustained would depress their standard of living below its 1790 position for the whole period under review.[2] Apart from this extreme position, in two important respects Lincolnshire labourers differed from those of the southern and eastern counties. First, Lincolnshire, unlike Kent, Essex, and Suffolk, did not suffer from large scale unemployment during the post-war period. After the Napoleonic war the high level of demand for labour did not fall to the extent it did in these other counties owing to continued expansion of arable farming.[3] Farm labour was always in short supply, especially on the Fens, and as a consequence of this one of the characteristic features of the county was the considerable influx of itinerant Irish labourers into the county each year to cut the harvest. An interesting aspect of this state of affairs was that the use of threshing machines did not

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[1] The rate of increase in Kent and Essex was 0.6 per cent. and 0.8 per cent. respectively.

[2] As the war-time period in Lincolnshire was characterised by a labour shortage, the problem of winter unemployment was mainly confined to the post-war period.

[3] Thirsk, op. cit. pp. 259-60, 268.

provoke rioting in the county, as in Kent and Essex, because they were not seen to create unemployment, though several attacks were made upon Irish harvesters.[1]

Second, another important factor, which distinguished Lincolnshire from Kent, Essex, and Suffolk, was the tradition of cottage cow and pig keeping which prevailed in many parts of the county.[2] Arthur Young, for example, constantly praised the system in the hope that the southern and eastern counties would follow Lincolnshire's example:

> At Saltfleet, etc. most of the poor have cows. It is a general rule for every grazier and farmer to keep cows for his regular labourers . . . and on the Wolds it is universal, one or two cows, and a pig or two, with a few sheep. In the Marshes the poor eat a great deal of bacon; very few but what kill a pig, and some two, feeding them much with potatoes . . . and few are without their piece of potato ground for their families, and pigs; in general living very well.[3]

Indeed, if times were hard a cottage garden, with its pig or cow, would always stand between the labourer and starvation and provide some degree of economic independence. The justification of the system was seen in the fact that in the areas where it was found the poor rates were low and the labourers ate a better diet.[4]

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[1] Hobsbawm and Rude noted, 'Apart from a few scattered threatening letters, the emphasis was all on arson . . .', op. cit. p. 167.

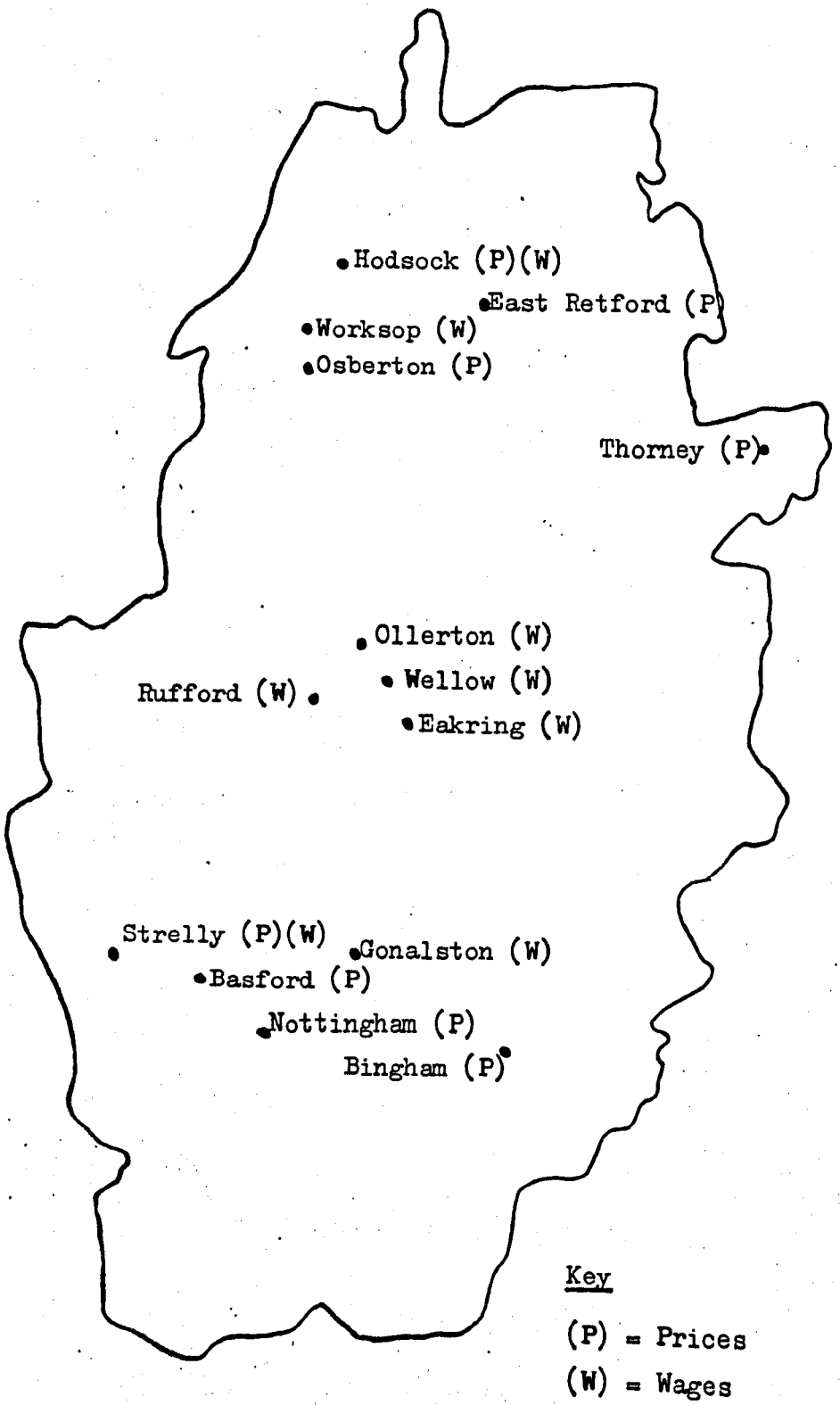
[2] Young (1813), op. cit. pp. 463, 468-9.

[3] Ibid. pp. 464-5.

[4] Ibid. p. 469. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), pp. 254-5, 261, 271-4.

MAP 6

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Nottinghamshire



CHAPTER 12

THE COST OF LIVING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 1790-1840

I. Introduction

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Nottinghamshire lay close to the geographical heart of the industrial revolution. Located between Yorkshire and Derbyshire in the north and west, and Lincolnshire and Leicestershire in the east and south, economic growth in Nottinghamshire took place within an environment of expansion and change. The county was well endowed with natural resources, especially coal, and from the 1750's onwards population growth, rising industrial and agricultural prosperity, and the development of communications integrated the county into the economic expansion of the midland region.[1] Agriculture, framework knitting, and mining were the main industries in the county, though a variety of minor industries such as brewing, brick making, and pottery existed in various areas.[2] Nottingham was renowned for its hosiery, silk, and lace industries, whilst numerous trades connected with these industries proliferated in the neighbouring countryside. Mansfield and Southwell were noted for their framework knitting, and Gamston, Lowdham, Popplewick, and Newark produced large quantities of thread for Manchester's cotton mills. Lace, thread, and artificial marble were produced at Mansfield, sail cloth at Retford, whilst malting and brewing were carried on at Nottingham, Newark, and Mansfield.[3] Central to these developments lay the river Trent and its tributaries which provided the

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[1] J. D. Chambers, 'The Vale of Trent 1670-1800', Economic History Review, Supplement, No. 3 (1957), p. 4.

[2] J. D. Chambers, Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century (1932), p. 99. R. A. Church, Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town: Victorian Nottingham 1815-1900 (1966), passim.

[3] R. Lowe, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Nottingham (1794), pp. 53-4.

main highway for trade, linking the industrial and agricultural areas together with shipments of iron, coal, hemp, flax, salt, grain, and general provisions.[1]

Agriculture played an important role in the economic advance of Nottinghamshire and it was reorganised and improved to meet the demands of the manufacturing and urban areas of the county.[2] Agricultural improvements, such as enclosures, had been taking place since the seventeenth century, but from the 1750's onwards these were accelerated, and by the 1860's about one third of the county was enclosed by Act of Parliament.[3] The remains of Sherwood Forest, described as 'one wide waste so naturally sterile, as scarcely to have the power of clothing itself with the scantiest vegetation', was transformed by enclosure and arable cultivation.[4] According to one writer,

> Where in former times only the rabbit browsed, large flocks of sheep are now fed - nutritious pasturage in the summer and fine crops of turnips in the winter, furnishing to them an abundance of food, whilst these crops are succeeded every alternate year by cereal ones of the best quality.[5]

The 'great spirit of improvement' amongst large farmers and landowners, such as the Duke of Portland, resulted in the reclamation of

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1 D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman ed. 1928), II, pp. 140-1, 145. Lowe, op. cit. pp. 51-2.

2 The population of Nottinghamshire more than doubled between 1801 and 1841. W. Page (ed.), The Victoria History of the County of Nottingham (1910), II, p. 309.

3 Chambers (1932), op. cit. pp. 148-9, 165.

4 R. W. Corringham, 'Agriculture of Nottinghamshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, VI (1845), pp. 3, 42. Lowe, op. cit. p. 9. According to Defoe the area had wasted to such an extent that Robin Hood could hardly have found shelter for a week! Defoe, op. cit. p. 146.

5 Corringham, loc. cit. p. 3.

several thousand acres of waste land which was enclosed and placed under arable cultivation.[1] The cultivation of the turnip[2] facilitated the adoption of the Norfolk four course rotation in many areas whilst the expansion of livestock breeding increased the numbers of sheep and cattle reared in the county.[3]

Arable farming was principally located on a wide band of friable, clay soil which stretched from Nottingham to the northern border of the county and occupied a third of the area.[4] Much of this area, especially north of the Trent, was enclosed after 1794 and came to produce large quantities of wheat, barley, peas, and beans under four and six course rotations. Considerable quantities of hops were also grown in this area in the neighbourhood of East Retford, Southwell, Rufford, and Ollerton.[5] Brewing and malting were old established industries in the county and were supplied with 'prodigious crops' of barley grown on the banks of the Trent. Defoe wrote,

> As they brew a very good liquor here, so they make the best malt, and the most of it of any town in this part of England, which they drive a great trade for, sending it by land-carriage to Derby, through all the Peak as far as Manchester, and to other towns in Lancashire, Cheshire, and even into Yorkshire itself.[6]

Land to the south of the Trent contained a variety of soils which were

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1 Ibid. pp. 4-5, 42. Lowe, op. cit. p. 58. J. Parkinson, 'On Improvements in Agriculture in the County of Nottingham since the year 1800', J.R.A.S., XXII (1861), pp. 159-62.

2 The turnip was introduced into Nottinghamshire at the end of the eighteenth century. Corringham, loc. cit. p. 5.

3 Corringham, loc. cit. pp. 5-7, 18-23, 43.

4 Ibid. pp. 2-7. Lowe, op. cit. pp. 27-30.

5 Corringham, loc. cit. pp. 24-5, 42. Lowe, op. cit. pp. 15, 33. Lowe estimated that hop cultivation occupied 1,100 to 1,400 acres of land in 1794. Ibid. p. 33.

6 Defoe, op. cit. p. 146.

laid down to arable and pasture farming. Once the heavy soils were drained and improved, 'wonderful changes' followed as the area became one of the most productive districts in the county and produced heavy crops of cereals and roots.[1] The pasture areas, especially the meadows along the banks of the Trent and Soar, provided excellent grazing for beef and dairy cattle. Dairying was mainly located in the neighbourhood of Thrumpton, Wilford, Allenborough, and Fledborough, and along the Trent bank as far as Gainsborough.[2] Grazing and dairy farming were also found on the clay soils of the wolds and in the Vale of Belvoir in south-east Nottinghamshire. Enclosure, drainage, and the introduction of improved breeds of cattle and sheep in this area during the early nineteenth century raised the quality of the livestock to 'a standard of great excellence' for the fatstock markets of Newark and Nottingham.[3]

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

Given the expansion and growth of the manufacturing and trading industries during the early nineteenth century, it is clear that agricultural production was primarily geared towards satisfying the demands of local markets rather than those of London. Indeed, such was the demand for foodstuffs from the growing manufacturing and urban sectors in Nottinghamshire that the county was obliged to supplement its output by drawing upon the agricultural surplus of Lincolnshire.[4] Despite this reliance, however, it is interesting to note that bread prices in

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[1] Corringham, loc. cit. p. 33. Lowe, op. cit. pp. 21-2. Parkinson, loc. cit. p. 162.

[2] Lowe, op. cit. pp. 22, 31.

[3] Ibid. pp. 35-6. Corringham, loc. cit. pp. 33-4.

[4] See p. 280.

Nottinghamshire, were, on the whole, not too dissimilar from those in London.[1] The relationship between the prices in these two areas is illustrated in Figure 40. Here it can be seen that the price of the quartern loaf (wheaten) in both regions fluctuated in parallel series along the same trend and, with few exceptions, experienced similar turning points in their peaks and troughs.[2] The main difference between the two series, however, lay in the level of prices in certain years, such as 1795-6, 1800-1, 1810, and 1812, where one of the series would exceed the other by a margin of one or two pence.

The main sources of evidence used in this study have been derived from a number of areas in the county.[3] Commodity prices for the 1790-1827 period have been obtained from the household provision accounts of several families in the county;[4] prices for 1836-40 have been derived from the Provisions Accounts of three Poor Law Unions.[5] All these locations are dispersed over a wide area of the county and the prices derived from these

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1 Bread prices for London have been derived from G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXV (1902), p. 688.

2 Gourvish found a similar relationship between bread prices in London and Glasgow in this period. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

3 See Map 6, p. 327.

4 N.R.O.: DD. SR/211/10-338. A/24-25. Hon. and Rev. J. Lumley Saville Estate Accounts. DD. E/1/20-25, 37-66. DD. E/30/7. Edge Estate Accounts. DD. N/213/11-22. Nevile Estate Accounts. N.U.L. E-RA/19-26. Mellish Estate Accounts. The prices derived from these sources relate to the Osberton, Strelly, Thorney, and Hodsock areas of the county. These prices are monthly prices and, for each commodity, have been collated into annual average prices. The Poor Law records for the county contained no information on commodity prices for the period before 1836.

5 N.R.O.: P.U.E. 1/1-2. East Retford Poor Law Union Minute Book. P.U.B. 1/1-3. Basford Poor Law Union Minute Book. P.U.D. 1/1-2. Bingham Poor Law Union Minute Book. These prices are quarterly contract prices and, for each commodity, have been collated into annual average prices.

sources forms the basis from which the cost of living index has been calculated.[1]

As bread was the most important commodity in the agricultural labourers' diet, variations in its price exerted a profound influence upon the shape of the cost of living index.[2] In turn, the price of bread was primarily determined by short-run variations in the weather and its effect upon the wheat harvest. The closeness of this relationship is readily seen in Figure 40 which shows the long-run trend of bread prices in Nottinghamshire from 1790 to 1840.[3] Starting from an average price of 8d. in 1790 the price of the quartern loaf increased by 50 per cent. within five years, owing to severe weather in 1795, to reach 1s. 0d. by that year.[4] As in Lincolnshire, which saw its wheat crop reduced by a quarter, the rise in bread prices caused considerable distress and discontent among the labouring classes in Nottinghamshire. According to an eye-witnessed account from the Newark area,

> Never for these several years have the inhabitants of this borough experienced such a scarcity of bread . . . several hundreds have been under the necessity of living entirely without bread, as it was not to be purchased at any price.[5]

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1 The index is based upon the prices of six commodities; the quartern loaf, beef, cheese, butter, sugar, and tea. It was not possible to discover any information on the prices of other commodities in the Nottinghamshire Record Office.

2 On average, bread absorbed half of the agricultural labourers' expenditure on food and drink. See p. 341.

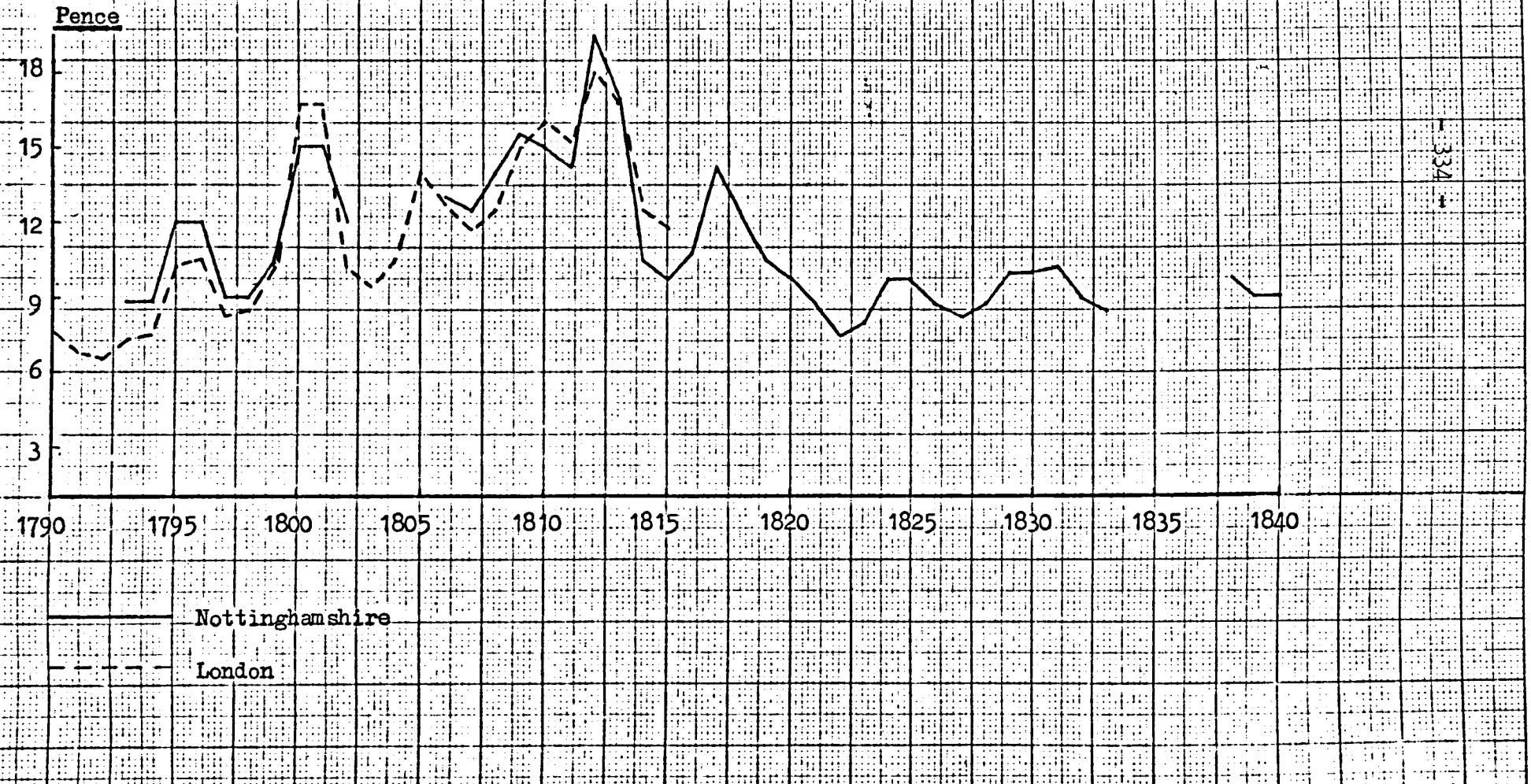
3 The bread prices used in this chapter relate to the price of the quartern loaf (wheaten) as set by the Nottingham Assize of Bread at weekly intervals and published in the The Nottingham Journal. As the Assize price was set, by magistrates, according to the prevailing price of wheat in local markets it must be regarded as a market price and, thereby, a reliable indicator of the cost of living.

4 The early months of 1795 were very cold and the Trent was frozen as far as Gainsborough. Later, when the thaw started, flooding damaged crops and livestock in many areas. J. F. Sutton, The Date-Book of Remarkable and Memorable Events connected with Nottingham and its Neighbourhood, 1750-1879. (Nottingham, 1880), pp. 202-4.

5 The Stamford Mercury, 18 September 1795, p. 3.

FIG. 40

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Nottinghamshire and London 1790–1840



In July 1795 a serious situation developed when a mob of people seized a quantity of corn from vessels lying in the river and sold it in the market place.[1] Some people blamed the 'extortionate bakers' for the high price of bread and forcibly compelled them to reduce their prices.[2]

Falling prices over the next two years, owing to better harvests, removed the cause of the discontent for a while, but a combination of bad weather and deficient harvests in 1799-1800 sent the price of the quartern loaf up to 1s. 3d. by 1800-1.[3] This rise represented an increase of 88 per cent. and, as in the case of 1795, led to an outbreak of rioting in the county. By August, 1800 the high prices of bread and flour were said to have 'roused the vindictive spirit of the poorer classes to an almost ungovernable pitch' and, as a consequence of this state of affairs, considerable violence ensued in many parts of the county.[4] In Nottingham mobs of people marched through the streets smashing the windows of bakers' shops, whilst others broke into granaries and stole quantities of grain and flour.[5] Similar disturbances broke out in the countryside around Nottingham and, according to a local report, 'The country villages around us . . . have been a scene of tumult and devastation before the soldiery could arrive in time to disperse the delinquents.'[6] Some of the Nottingham rioters set off to march to Southwell, raising the populace en route, but were pursued and caught by a force of Royal Horse Guards and and Yeomanry Cavalry from Nottingham, Bunny, Newark, and Mansfield. The

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1 Ibid. 24 July 1795, p. 3.

2 Sutton, op. cit. p. 207.

3 T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838-57), I, pp. 214, 217.

4 Sutton, op. cit. p. 232.

5 Ibid. The Stamford Mercury, 5 September 1800, p. 3.

6 The Nottingham Journal, 6 September 1800, p. 3.

mob pelted the cavalry with stones and the cavalry returned the fire, with the result that several rioters were wounded and taken prisoner.[1] Order was restored and in the following week the magistrates of the area publicly announced that they would,

> . . . use the force committed to them, in securing and protecting all farmers, and other lawful dealers, who shall bring their corn or other commodities regularly to market . . . The magistrates entreat that no person will disregard this Caution, as they have given directions to an adequate Body of Troops to hold themselves in readiness to act at a moment's notice; and they are determined to . . . direct them to cut down or fire upon all persons who shall dare to assemble themselves in defiance of this notice.[2]

Bread prices in Nottinghamshire fell from their high peak of 1800-1 towards the Peace of Amiens in 1802-3 and then began to rise on a fluctuating trend, owing to a run of bad weather and deficient harvests,[3] to reach a peak of 1s. 7½d. by 1812.[4] In the Nottingham area people demonstrated against the price increase by smashing the windows of bakers' shops and exhorted the bakers to reduce their prices of bread and flour. Other groups of people raided corn warehouses and, as the disturbances spread, the military were called out to restore order.[5]

An improvement in the weather after 1812 led to a steep fall in bread prices and by the end of the Napoleonic war the average price of the quartern loaf had fallen to 9¾d. Two poor harvests in 1816 and 1817[6]

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1 The Nottingham Journal, 6 September 1800, p. 3. The Stamford Mercury, 5 September 1800, p. 3.

2 The Nottingham Journal, 13 September 1800, p. 3.

3 Sutton, op. cit. p. 268. Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-8, 319-25.

4 This price represented an increase of 144 per cent. since 1790. Over the same period the price of flour in Nottinghamshire increased by the same rate. M. I. Thomis, Old Nottingham (New York, 1968), p. 78.

5 Sutton, op. cit. pp. 286-7.

6 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 14-15, 20-1. By December 1816 the price of bread had become so expensive that public subscription funds were established in the county for the relief of the poor. Sutton, op. cit. p. 309. The Farmers' Magazine, LXX (1817), pp. 253-4.

temporarily increased the price to a peak of 1s. 2¼d. in 1817 and, thereafter, bread prices fell continuously until 1822. At that point the price of bread reached its lowest point in the whole period under review, owing to a run of highly productive harvests, at 7½d. per quartern loaf, was about 6 per cent. lower than in 1790.[1] Two wet and deficient harvests in 1823-4[2] brought about a recovery in price to their early war-time level by 1825 and, at 9¾d., the price of the quartern loaf was about 22 per cent. higher than it was in 1790. From that point onwards bread prices in Nottinghamshire followed a more stable course, owing to a run of abundant harvests in the 1830's,[3] within a range of 8¼d. to 10¼d. per quartern loaf.

As in the case of wheat crops, the weather also exerted an important influence upon the supply price of meat. Meat formed part of the agricultural labourers' diet in Nottinghamshire and the long-run trend of beef prices in the county is shown in Figure 41.[4] Starting from an average price of 5d. a pound in 1790 beef prices increased steadily over the course of the Napoleonic war and, owing to a long run of adverse weather which produced high mortality rates among livestock, had almost doubled in price by 1813.[5] At that point, which was the highest point

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1 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. p. 82. The grain harvests of 1819-20 were so abundant that they kept prices at a low level during the following two or three years.

2 Ibid. pp. 132-4.

3 Ibid. pp. 226, 231-2. Sutton, op. cit. p. 419.

4 See p. 388. It was not possible to discover any information on the prices of other meats in the Nottinghamshire Record Office.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-300, 319-25. II, p. 4. E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), pp. 158-9. High meat prices caused a number of riots to break out in several areas and the troops had to be called out to disperse the mobs. Sutton, op. cit. pp. 181, 204, 231.

FIG. 41

The Price of Beef in Nottinghamshire 1790-1840

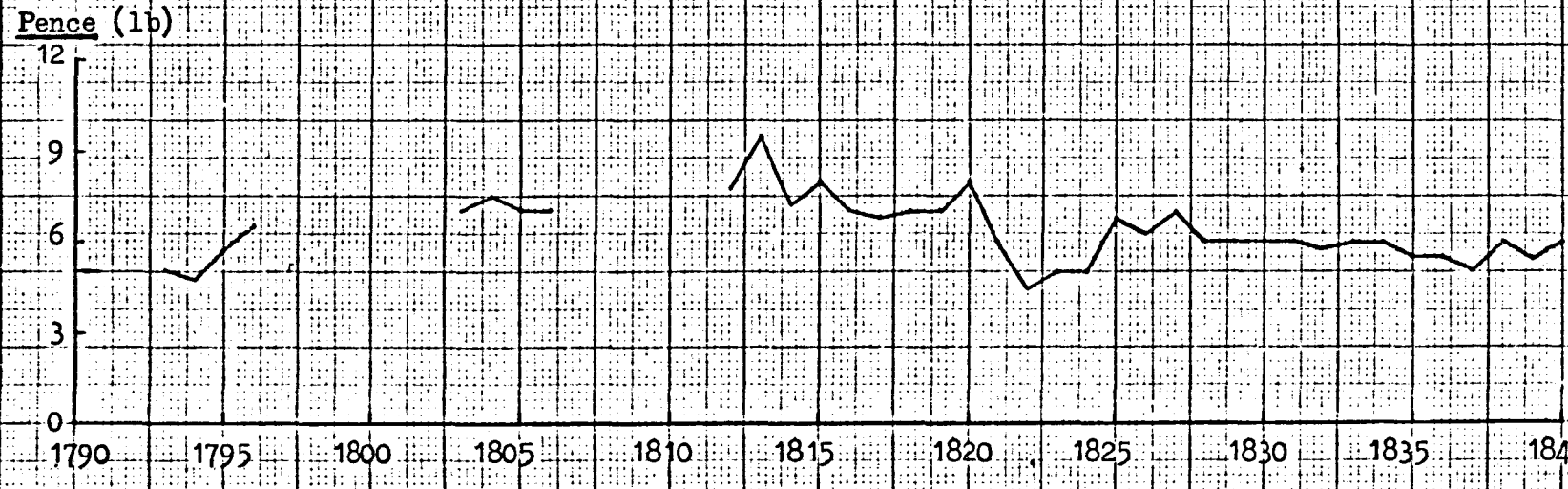
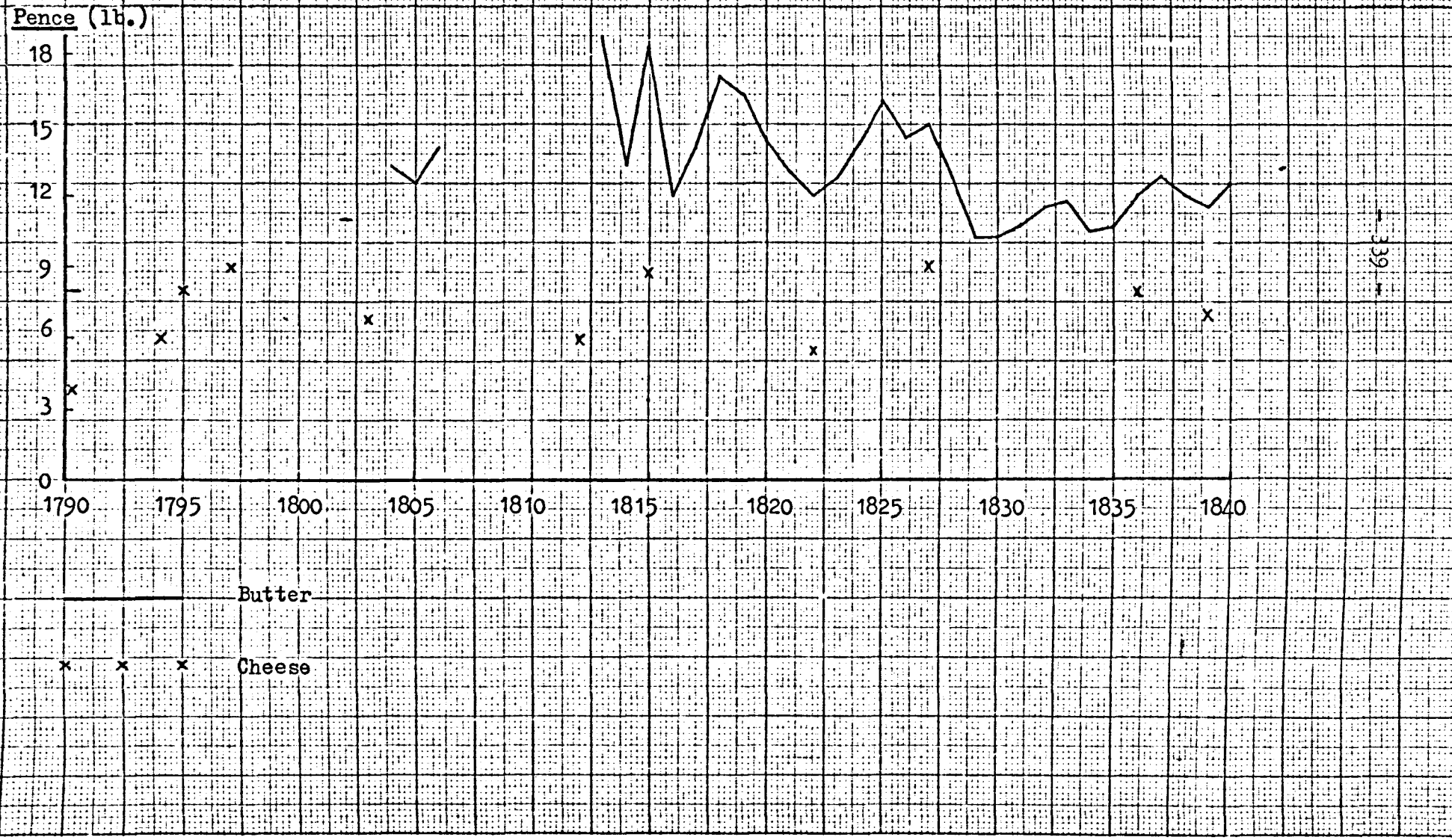


FIG. 42

The Prices of Cheese and Butter in Nottinghamshire 1790–1840



attained by beef prices, the average price of beef reached 9½d. a pound.[1] Beef prices fell from this war-time peak until 1817, owing to a rise in fodder prices and an increase in liquidation sales of livestock, and then increased again, owing to unfavourable weather and falling supplies of livestock, to reach their war-time level by 1820.[2] From this relatively high level, beef prices fell steeply to reach 4½d. a pound by 1822. This was the lowest point reached by beef prices in the whole period under review and, at that level, were 10 per cent. lower than they were in 1790. Two wet summers in 1823-4,[3] however, caused heavy mortality rates among livestock and led to a recovery in beef prices to 6¾d. a pound by 1825; from that point until the end of the period beef prices followed a relatively stable course within a range of 5d. and 6d. a pound.

Cheese and butter were common items of consumption in agricultural labourers' diets in Nottinghamshire[4] and the trend of their prices in the county is shown in Figure 42. In looking at the relationship between the prices of these two commodities it is clear that, as in the case of the counties already examined, butter was always dearer than cheese by a margin as wide as 50 per cent. Although the evidence is not complete for all the period, an upward trend is discernible over the course of the Napoleonic war and by that point their prices had more than doubled.[5] From

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1 In other counties 1813 was also a peak year for meat prices.

2 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 4, 21-2. Jones, op. cit. pp. 160-1.

3 Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

4 On average agricultural labourers' spent around 18 per cent. of their expenditure on food and drink on these two items. See pp. 341-2.

5 A similar rate of increase was also experienced by other counties in this study over the same period. In 1800 the increase in the price of butter caused an outbreak of rioting in the county and, in some areas, butter dealers had to be protected from the wrath of the populace. The Nottingham Journal, 27 September 1800, p. 2. Sutton, op. cit. p. 231.

the end of the war until the 1830's butter prices followed a downward, though, wildly fluctuating, trend. A drought in 1818,[1] for example, sent butter prices up to their war-time level of 1s. 5d. a pound, and was followed by a steep downturn in prices over the next four years to reach, an average, 1s. 0d. a pound by 1822. Butter prices recovered from this low point over the next three years owing to a wet summer in 1824, which led to an outbreak of cattle rot, and a drought in 1825, which reduced the supply of milk for making butter.[2] From 1825 butter prices fell sharply to 1829-30 and from then until the end of the decade followed a less violent course within a range of 10¼d. to 1s. 0¾d. a pound.

III. Household Expenditure

At this point it is necessary to allocate a set of weights to the various consumables which make-up the Food and Drink category and collate them into a single index. For each commodity the weights have been determined in accordance to the amount of expenditure agricultural labourers' laid out on these items in their household budgets.

TABLE 24

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND DRINK IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE[3]

	%
Bread	50.0
Meat	19.0
Cheese	12.3

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1 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 14, 20-1. Jones, op. cit. pp. 160-3.

2 Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

3 D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), p. 146. This budget has been derived from the Kedleston area which lies sixteen miles west of Nottingham. In the mid nineteenth century agricultural labourers in the county distributed their expenditure on food and drink as follows: Bread 68.5%, Meat 12.8%, Butter 2.7%, Milk 5.4%, Tea 3.1%, Sugar 3.5%, N.R.O. D.D. SK 188/2. Sherbrooke Estate Accounts.

	%
Butter	6.3
Milk	5.4
Tea	3.5
Sugar	3.5
	100.0

It is evident from these figures that the agricultural labourers' diet in Nottinghamshire was, with the exception of milk, very similar to the labourers' diets in the counties examined so far. The same kinds of commodities were consumed there as in the southern and eastern counties with bread, obviously the staple item of their diet, absorbing the bulk of expenditure on food and drink. In this respect, however, the Nottinghamshire labourers differed somewhat from their southern and eastern bretheren by spending about 10 per cent. less on bread and slightly more on meat.

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various consumables in the Food and Drink category have been combined, in Laspeyres form, to provide a cost of living index for the county.[1] This index is illustrated in Figure 43 and it is evident from its trend that the history of the cost of living in Nottinghamshire, as in all the counties considered so far, fell into three characteristic phases: a period of rapid inflation from 1794 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except in 1817) from 1812 to 1822, followed by a period of recovery from 1822 to the 1830's. The main peaks in the cost of living, in 1795, 1800-1, 1812, and 1817, and the main trough, occurring in 1822-3, coincided exactly with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living in the counties examined so far. It is

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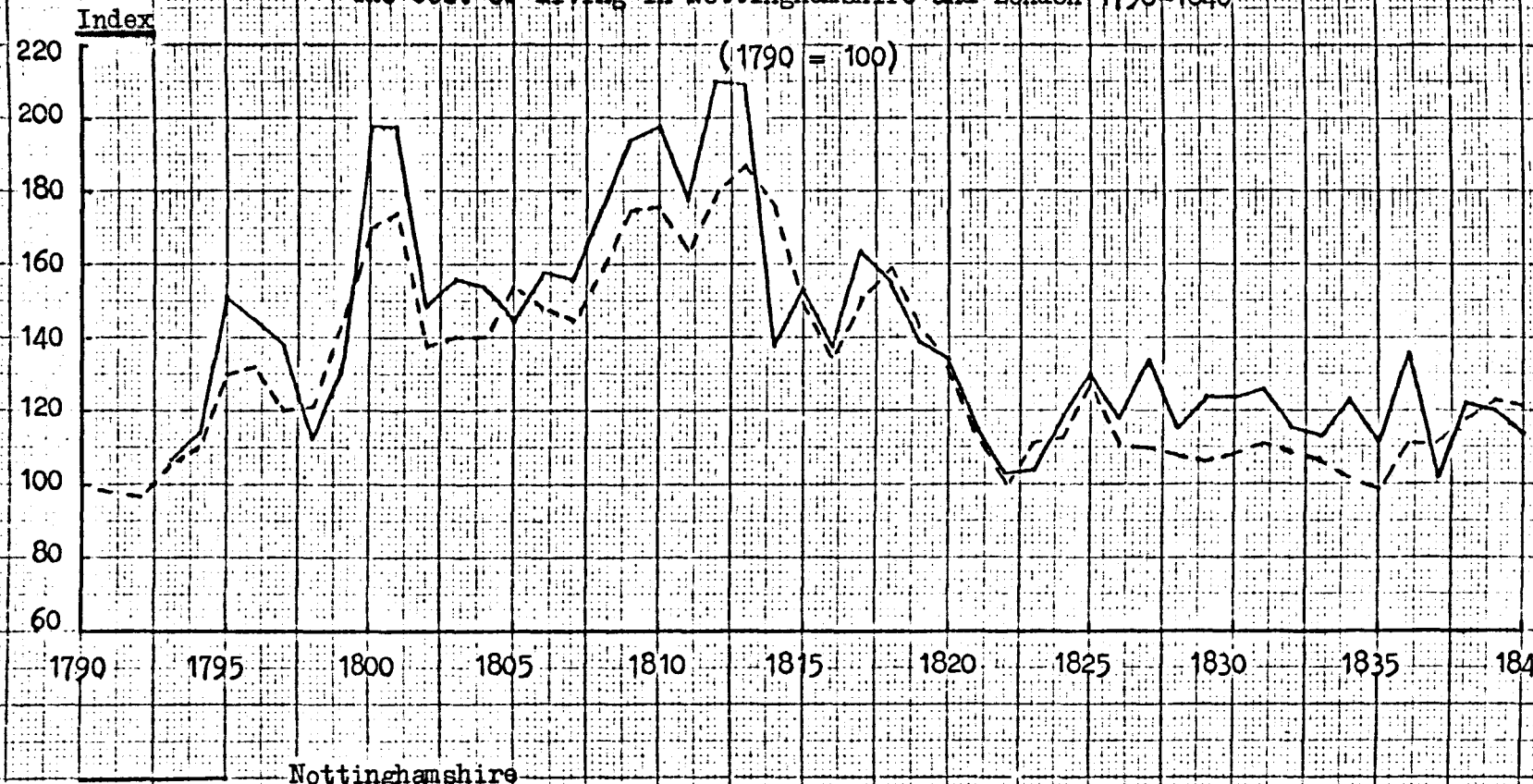
[1] The working of this formula is explained on p. 65.

FIG. 43

The Cost of Living in Nottinghamshire and London 1790-1840

(1790 = 100)



also significant that the major swings in the cost of living in all these counties were directly correlated to major variations in the weather and the state of domestic harvests.

At this point it is necessary to compare the cost of living in Nottinghamshire with the cost of living in the counties examined so far and to compare these results with Silberling's estimate of the cost of living in London.[1]

TABLE 25

VARIATIONS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN KENT, ESSEX, SUFFOLK, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 1795-1822

(1790 = 100)

	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Kent	+37	+73	+120	+84	+9
Essex	+34	+71	+119	+71	+12
Suffolk	+34	+105			
Lincs.	+35	+91	+104	+54	-11
Notts.	+51	+88	+110	+64	+3
London	+30	+70	+80	+51	0

These estimates suggest two main conclusions. First, although the long run trend of the cost of living in these counties was almost identical, certain differences existed between them in the rates by which the cost of living changed in certain years. In this respect Nottinghamshire's experience appeared to lie closer to that of Lincolnshire than to the other counties. Apart from 1795, when the cost of living in Nottinghamshire was higher than anywhere else, the difference between the two counties in 1800 and 1812 was only 3 per cent. and 6 per cent., respectively, whilst the difference between these counties and Kent and

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[1] N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 235.

Essex was much wider than this. Similarly, in 1817 and 1822 the cost of living in Nottinghamshire was higher than in Lincolnshire but lower, by several points, than the cost of living in the southern and eastern counties. Nevertheless, given the diversity of the statistical sources used for each county, it remains a remarkable fact that in areas as far apart as these the cost of living should experience an almost identical pattern of behaviour.

Second, although the cost of living in Nottinghamshire and London followed a similar long-run trend, over certain periods notable gaps existed between the two series. With the exception of a few isolated years, the cost of living in Nottinghamshire was higher than in London, and, in certain periods, was higher by a substantial margin.[1] In three critical years for the standard of living, 1795, 1800, and 1812, the cost of living in the county was 21, 18, and 30 per cent. higher than in London, and similar differences to these also existed throughout the period 1826-36. In the light of these findings, therefore, it would appear that Silberling's index tended to understate the rise in the cost of living between 1793 and 1812, and overstated its fall from that point onwards, and therefore appears to be of little use as a guide to the cost of living in Nottinghamshire.

Given the level and trend of the cost of living in Nottinghamshire, to what extent was this pattern matched by similar changes in agricultural wages? What effect did the cost of living have upon the purchasing power of agricultural labourers' wages and with what consequences for their material standard of living?

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[1] It is important to note here that as Silberling's index relates to raw material prices, and the county index relates to the prices of processed commodities, one is not, strictly speaking comparing like with like. Nevertheless, it is instructive to make such a comparison in order to test the general applicability of Silberling's index to other area.

CHAPTER 13

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 1790-1840

I. Introduction

Unlike the other counties in this study, Nottinghamshire was not exclusively an agrarian economy. Indeed, coal mining and the textile industries were important fields of economic activity which, along with the agricultural sector, provided the local labour force with a wide range of employment opportunities. The textile industries, particularly wool, silk, hosiery, and lace, offered a range of semi-skilled jobs which, in times of an economic boom, attracted labour from a wide area of the county as entry into the textile trades was relatively easy.[1] During the lace boom of 1824-5, for example, labour from eighty miles around Nottingham flocked into the city in search of work.[2] The attraction of earning higher wages in non-agricultural work had an inflationary effect upon agricultural wages and one contemporary found it difficult to ascertain what agricultural wages were in the county. Writing in 1794, Robert Lowe commented,

> The price of wages is so different in different parts, and so fluctuating partly from local and temporary causes, as for instance, the great number of hands taken off to work at the numerous canals now on foot, that no satisfactory account can be given on these heads.[3]

Indeed, in times of economic boom, as during the Napoleonic war, the competing demands of agriculture and the manufacturing industries for labour placed an upward pressure upon wages. This situation, however,

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[1] M. I. Thomis, Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835 (Oxford, 1969), p. 32.

[2] Ibid. p. 3.

[3] R. Lowe, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Nottingham (1794), p. 47.

was reversed after the war as agriculture and industry developed along different lines. Whilst agricultural improvements continued, with minor recessions, from 1815 to the 1830's in response to a rising demand for food, the level of activity in the textile trades was significantly affected by a series of trade recessions which caused widespread industrial unemployment. In certain years trade was particularly bad, as in 1809, 1811-12, 1816, 1818-19, 1826, 1829, 1832, and 1837, and employment and wages were reduced to a low level.[1] Furthermore, the situation was worsened by an increase in machine production in certain branches of the textile industry and, therefore, technological unemployment came to exert an important influence upon the standard of living of industrial workers to an extent unknown by husbandry labourers. Compared with agricultural labourers, framework knitters suffered a catastrophic fall in their wages and living standards between 1815 and the 1830's.[2] Wages fell by one third to a half and in the main manufacturing areas of the county the industry was said to be in a state of 'almost perpetual depression, alleviated by only very transitory periods of buoyancy'.[3] Social distress was widespread and severe.

This chapter is mainly concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were engaged in arable cultivation on a number of estates

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[1] Thomis, op. cit. pp. 16, 26. R. A. Church, Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town. Victorian Nottingham 1815-1900 (1966), p. 106. J. F. Sutton, The Date-Book of Remarkable and Memorable Events connected with Nottingham and its Neighbourhood, 1750-1879 (Nottingham, 1880), pp. 273-97, 327-42.

[2] Thomis, op. cit. pp. 17, 26.

[3] Ibid. p. 26.

in the county.[1] The main sources of evidence have been derived from five estates: the Edge Estate Wage Accounts,[2] the Saville Estate Labour Accounts,[3] the Nevile Estate Labour Accounts,[4] the Franddin Estate Labour Accounts,[5] and the Manvers Estate Labour Accounts.[6] At various points the wages obtained from these estates are compared with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources.[7] On the basis of this evidence a wage index has been constructed according to what the labourers on these estates earned during the course of each year. At various points the wage index has been related to the cost of living index in order to determine what happened to the trend of real wages.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages and the cost

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1 It was not possible to discover a continuous run of wages for the whole period for one estate. From what evidence there was available in the Nottinghamshire Record Office, however, it was possible to construct a picture of the pattern and trend of wages for the county. See Map 6.

2 N.R.O. DD. E/1/20-25, 37-66. DD. E/30/7. Edge Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for Strelly. Strelly lies in south-west Nottinghamshire.

3 N.R.O. DD. SR/211/10-338. A/24-25. Hon. and Rev. J. Lumley Saville Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for Labourers employed at Rufford, Wellow, Eakring, and Ollerton. These parishes are grouped in the centre of the county.

4 N.R.O. DD. N/213/11-22. Nevile Estate Accounts. Labourers' Wages at Worksop. Worksop lies to the north-west of the county.

5 N.R.O. DD. F/1/7. Franddin Estate Accounts at Gonalston Hall. Thomas Hind's Account Book. Gonalston occupies a central position in the southern half of the county.

6 N.U.L. Ma. B/79, E-RA. 19-26. Manvers Estate Accounts. Hodsock Labour Accounts. Hodsock lies in north-west Nottinghamshire.

7 The relationship between estate wages and farm wages is discussed on p. 78 and will not be repeated here. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 44 the latter have been marked with a dot (.).

of living,[1] and the trend of real wages in Nottinghamshire is illustrated in Figures 45-46.[2] As in the case of the counties examined so far, it is clear that in Nottinghamshire long-run variations in agricultural labourers' wages were closely associated with the vagaries of the rural trade cycle. As a rule, when prices were rising wages were rising and when prices were falling wages were falling. When the two series are compared, it is evident that the cost of living index was the more volatile of the two and tended to outpace the wage index by a varying margin for much of the period under review.

Before the outbreak of war with France agricultural labourers' wages at Strelly were, on average, 8s. 6d. a week and, at that level, were similar to the wages being paid in other parts of the county.[3] In 1794 Robert Lowe, during his agricultural survey of the county, noted that within the past two or three years the wages of day labourers had increased from 1s. a day to 1s. 4d. and 1s. 6d. a day.[4] Labourers employed on the hop grounds were paid 7s. a week from Michaelmas Day to May Day and 9s. a week throughout the rest of the year.[5]

By 1795 agricultural wages at Strelly had increased to 9s. a week and, at that level, were similar to the wages being quoted in the Annals of Agriculture for other areas of the county.[6] Eden's survey of

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[1] These estimates are based on the assumption of full and constant employment and, in the light of the incidence of post-war unemployment, must be regarded as generous estimates. Later on in this chapter the assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

[2] The real wage index is obtained by dividing the cost of living index into the wage index.

[3] Annals of Agriculture, XXIV (1795), p. 190. Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), p. 195. These sources mentioned wages of 7s. to 9s. a week.

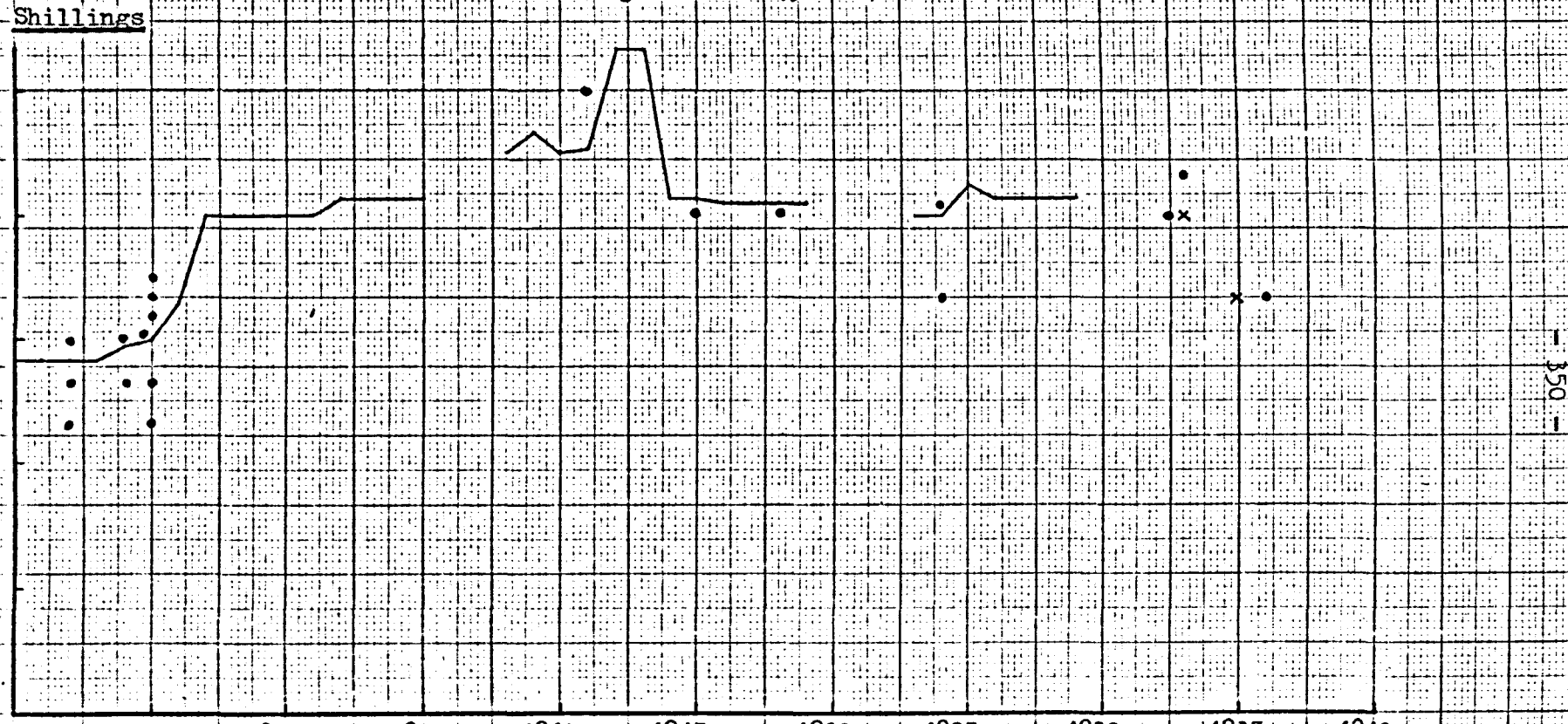
[4] Lowe, op. cit. p. 47.

[5] Lowe, op. cit. p. 110.

[6] Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 190. These sources quoted 8s. to 9s. a week.

FIG. 44

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Nottinghamshire 1790–1840

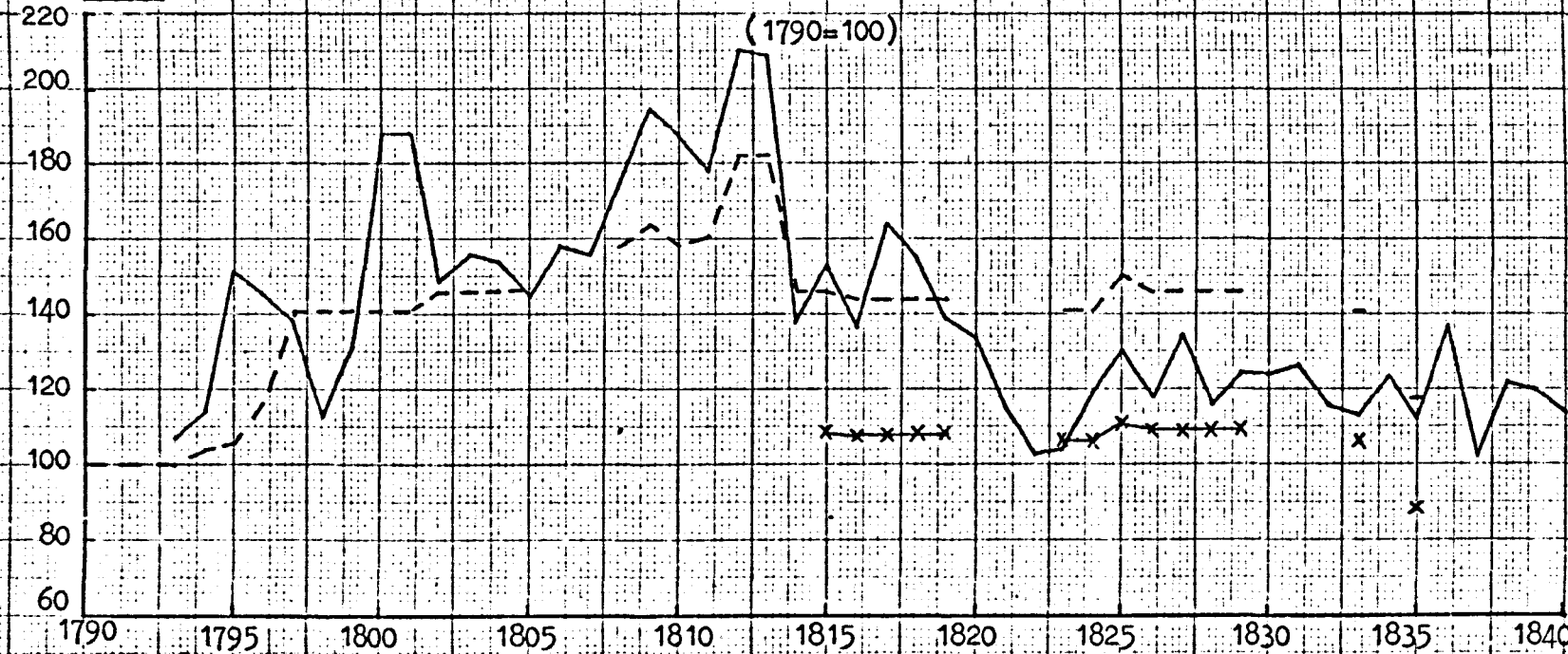


Strelly (1790–1801), Worksop (1802–5, 1826–9), Rufford (1808–13, 1835), Gonalston (1814–19), Hodsock (1823–5)

Contemporary Printed Sources

FIG. 45

Agricultural Labqurers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Nottinghamshire 1790-1840



Cost of Living Index

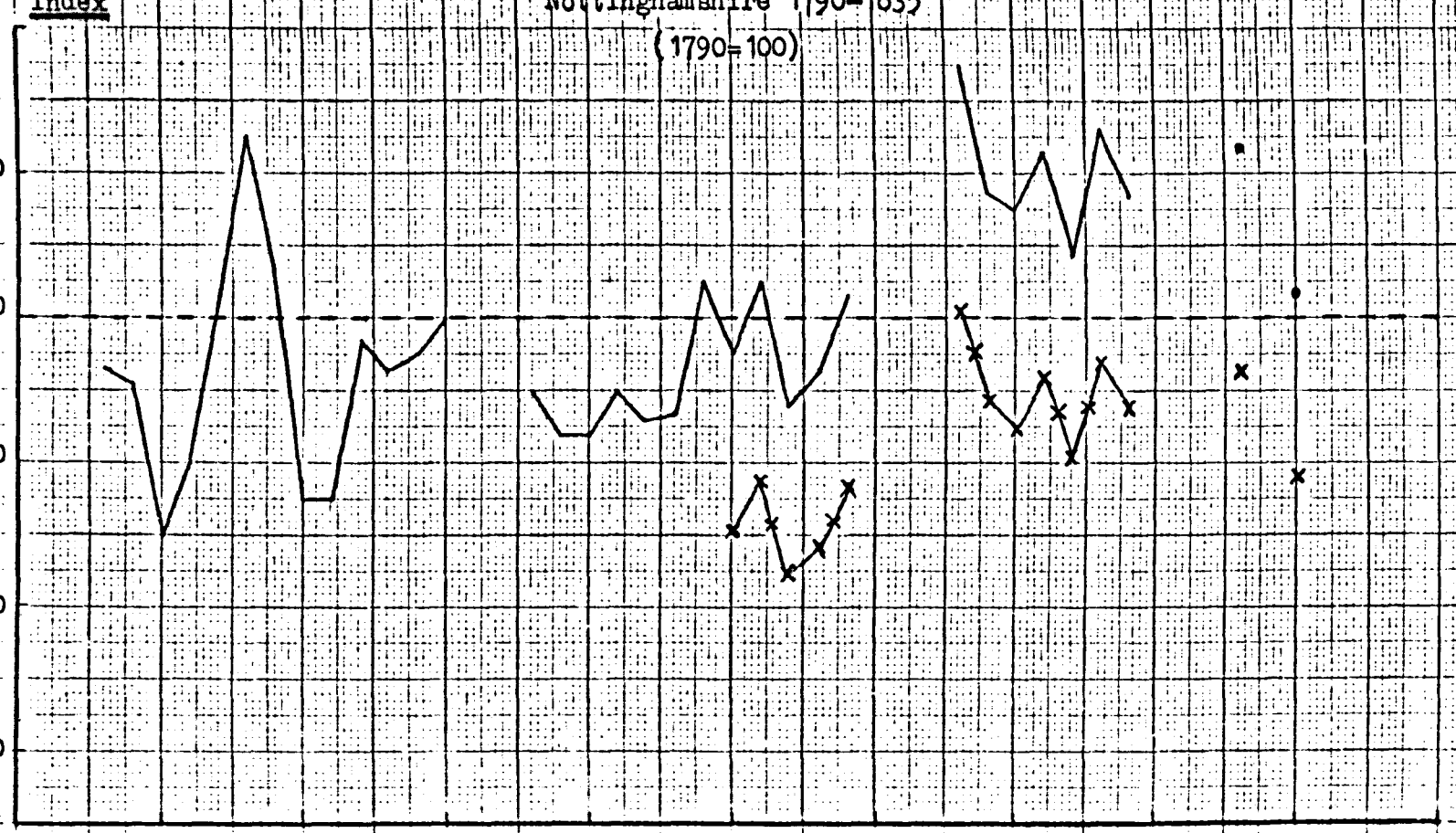
Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers in regular employment at Strelly, Worksop, Rufford, Gonalston, and Hodsock

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers who were unemployed for three months a year

FIG. 46

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Nottinghamshire 1790–1835

(1790=100)



Index of Real Wages for labourers in regular employment

Index of Real Wages for labourers who were unemployed for three months a year in 1823–35

Nottinghamshire in the mid 1790's revealed that agricultural wages ranged from 7s. to 10s. 6d. a week. Labourers' wages in the Overingham area of east Nottinghamshire were 2s. a day plus victuals during the harvest and 1s. a day with victuals during the rest of the year; farm labourers in the Nottingham area received 10s. to 10s. 6d. in summer and 8s. in the winter.[1] In the same area lace workers earned 20s. to 40s. a week and weavers from 8s. to 40s. a week, though two-thirds of these did not earn more than 10s. a week.[2] Stocking weavers earned 12s. a week.[3]

Agricultural wages at Strelly continued to increase over the early years of the war to reach 12s. a week, on average, by 1797-1801. However, although agricultural labourers' wages increased by 41 per cent. in this period, the cost of living rose by 88 per cent. with the result that the index of real wages fell by 25 per cent. One important consequence of this fall in the labourers' material standard of living was an outbreak of food rioting in various parts of the county.[4]

Agricultural wages continued to rise over the war period to reach a peak of 15s. 6d. a week by 1812-13 at Rufford. Similar wages to these were also being paid at South Collingham, near Newark at that time.[5] From this high point agricultural wages began to fall towards the end of the war to reach, on average, 12s. 4d. a week, and were accompanied by a fall in wages for other labour groups in the county. During the 1790's,

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1 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), pp. 276-8. Eden noted that 'Hands cannot easily be procured in winter'.

2 Ibid. p. 276. Eden noted that wages were 'very variable' in the textile industry and depended upon the line of work the men were engaged in.

3 Ibid. p. 278.

4 See p. 335.

5 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 568.

for example, framework knitters earned 13s. to 15s. a week but, by 1812, these had fallen to an average of 12s. As prices in the county reached their highest point in that year there were, as a consequence, reports of 'half famished' labourers in most branches of the industry.[1] Indeed, by 1817 their average wages had fallen to 8s. to 9s. a week.[2]

Although agricultural labourers also suffered a reduction in their wages towards the end of the war their general condition was not quite as bad as that of the framework knitters. In January 1815 The Farmers' Magazine reported,

> A considerable reduction has taken place in labour. The common wages for a day's work are now 2s., especially in the immediate vicinity of the market towns, where higher wages are always given; and the price of work by the piece or task, have lowered nearly in proportion. But few labourers are destitute of employment, as many Farmers now have a spirit for improvements . . .[3]

In the following year, however, these conditions were temporarily reversed owing to a fall in farm prices and there were reports of 'a great many out of employment' in various parts of the county.[4] In the Tuxford area agricultural labourers' wages were reduced by 10 and 12 per cent., whilst in the Aversham district surplus labourers were shared out amongst the local farmers at labour auctions.[5] A witness to this system noted,

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1 Thomis, op. cit. pp. 15-16. Sutton, op. cit. pp. 273-8. Falling wages, especially piece rates, and the mechanisation of the textile industries, caused considerable discontent among the industrial working classes and precipitated the Luddite riots of 1811-12.

2 Thomis, op. cit. p. 17.

3 The Farmers' Magazine, LXI (1815), p. 128.

4 Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816; reprinted 1970), pp. 243, 249.

5 Board of Agriculture, op. cit. pp. 249-50.

> The superfluous labourers . . . are appointed and allotted to each farmer, for a certain time, according to his rental, and to his next neighbour afterwards, around the parish; the farmer paying the labourer from 8d. to 1s. per day; and from 8d. to 1s. per day is given to him for the maintenance of himself and his family by the overseer of the poor.[1]

By December 1816 there were reports of unemployment in the county and, to add to the privations of the rural poor, a deficient harvest led to a doubling of bread prices within the space of a few months and placed potatoes almost beyond the reach of the poor.[2] Distress in the mining and manufacturing areas continued into the Spring of 1817 and labourers who were unable to find employment were set to work repairing the parish roads at 9s. to 10s. a week.[3]

By the autumn of 1817, however, there were signs that the demand for labour was increasing and there were reports of an advance in wages.[4] Agricultural wages at Gonalston Hall were 12s. 4d. a week at that time and similar wages to these were also being paid in other parts of the county.[5] In 1819 The Farmers' Magazine noted,

> There has been plenty of work for the agricultural labourers, who have seldom been in more comfortable circumstances; but great distress still prevails in the manufacturing districts.[6]

Indeed, 1819 was a year of 'deep and widely diffused distress' for labourers in the textile industry in Nottinghamshire. Wages were reduced to 4s. to 7s. a week, for an eighteen hour day, and the workers in the

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1 Ibid. p. 251. These figures suggest that the incomes of unemployed labourers ranged from 8s. to 12s. a week.

2 Sutton, op. cit. p. 309. Thomis, op. cit. p. 20.

3 The Farmers' Magazine, LXX (1817), p. 254. N.R.O. CP5/5/133. Clerk of the Peace Papers, Nottingham.

4 The Farmer's Magazine, LXII (1817), p. 505.

5 Ibid. LXXVI (1818), p. 516.

6 Ibid. LXXX (1819), p. 514.

industry were said to be subsisting on a diet of meal, salt, potatoes, and water.[1] The demand for agricultural labour, on the other hand, was well maintained:

> There has not been much complaint of want of work by agricultural labourers in this county. Several noblemen and gentlemen are giving employment to numerous hands; and the recent enclosures have caused, and will continue to occasion, much work to be done. The unusual bulk of produce in the stock-yards has employed an extraordinary number of hands in threshing.[2]

This increase in agricultural activity was paralleled in the industrial sector by a marked expansion in the machine-made lace industry between 1821 and 1826.[3] Throughout the 1820's agricultural wages at Hodsock and Worksop were maintained at a fairly high level and averaged 12s. 5d. a week. Somewhat lower wages than these, ranging between 10s. and 12s. a week, were paid in the Bassetlow, Newark, and Southwell districts of the county.[4] Compared with the stability of agricultural wages in the period after 1815, the cost of living index experienced a marked fall from its peak in 1817 until 1822-3.

For the agricultural labourers, this meant a rise in their real wages and from 1823 to 1829 real wages improved upon their 1790 position by an average of about 3 per cent. per year. For the framework knitters, however, their experience was a less happy one. Between 1792 and 1832 their wages declined by a third whilst the cost of living had increased by a quarter.[5] Indeed, according to one writer, the relationship between

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1 Sutton, op. cit. pp. 327-31.

2 The Farmer's Magazine, LXXXV (1821), p. 122.

3 Church, op. cit. p. 113.

4 Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX, p. 298.

5 Thomis, op. cit. p. 19.

industrial wages and the cost of living by 1829 was such that in order to maintain their standards of 1790 industrial workers had to work three times as long as they used to do.[1]

During the 1830's agricultural wages in Nottinghamshire ranged between 10s. and 12s. a week. At Barton, near Nottingham, and South Collingham the standard wage at that time was 12s. and 13s. a week. By 1835-6, according to contemporary printed sources, wages of 10s. a week were being paid in the Barton and Rufford districts of the county.[2] By 1845 12s. a week was considered an average wage for agricultural labourers in the county, though by the time James Caird undertook his survey of the county in 1850 wages had fallen to about 10s. a week.[3]

III. Conclusion

One of the most striking features of Nottingham's economy in the early nineteenth century was the duality of economic development. Agriculture and the manufacturing and trading industries grew up together throughout this period and the competing demands they made upon local supplies of labour exerted an upward pressure upon wages. Indeed, such was the operation of these influences that Nottinghamshire became a high wage county for agricultural labour. James Caird, writing in 1850, classified Nottinghamshire as a high wage county[4] and it is evident from the empirical data collected for the county that wages there were higher than in most of the other counties in this study. For example, wages in

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1 Ibid. p. 25.

2 S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 568. Third Report from the S.C. on the State of Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (ii), p. 194.

3 R. W. Corringham, 'Agriculture of Nottinghamshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, VI (1845), p. 39. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 202.

4 Caird, op. cit. p. 512.

Nottinghamshire were much higher than agricultural wages in Suffolk and the neighbouring county of Lincolnshire, and considerably higher than the wages paid in Dorset and Hampshire.[1]

Given the level and trend of agricultural labourers' wages and the cost of living index for the county, it is now necessary to combine the two series together in order to determine what effect they had upon the trend of real wages. To what extent did agricultural wages match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living and what effect did the interaction of these two variables have upon the labourers' standard of living?

So far it has been assumed, as a first step, that the labourers in this case-study were in regular employment throughout the whole period under review.[2] On the basis of this assumption it is clear from Figure 45 that agricultural wages and the cost of living shared a similar long run trend. Both series followed an upward trend over the Napoleonic war and a downward trend thereafter. In looking at the way these series behaved it is clear that agricultural wages on the Nottinghamshire estates tended to move in a series of short flat steps, of two or three years duration, compared with the more violent year to year fluctuations in the cost of living. Generally, from 1793 to 1819 the cost of living exceeded the wage index by a considerable margin, whereas from 1819 this sequence was reversed. The extent to which the two series were out of line with one another at four critical points in this period is shown below:

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[1] This point is examined at greater length in Chapter 18.

[2] Later on this assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[1] (Index)
1795	+51	+6	70
1800	+88	+41	75
1812	+110	+82	86
1817	+64	+44	88

These figures clearly show that in these years the cost of living outpaced the index of agricultural wages by an average margin of 45, 47, 28, and 20 per cent. respectively. The main consequences of this situation for the agricultural labourers' standard of living was that the index of real wages fell by an average of 77 per cent. during the three war years and by an average of 12 per cent. in 1817. However, it is also evident from Figure 46 that in certain years the index of real wages showed a positive gain upon the position it held in 1790. Hence, in order to obtain a balanced view of the whole period it is necessary to take into account the chronological relationship between the 'good' and 'bad' years.

If the assumption of full and constant employment is maintained, it is clear from Figure 46 that the extent and duration of the positive and negative changes in real wages tended to balance with one another. For the years for which comparable information was available, 1790-1835, real wages improved upon the position they held in 1790 on sixteen occasions, whereas on eighteen other occasions real wages sank below that position.[2] If the extent of the rise and fall in real wages is compared it is seen that the rise in real wages was the same as the fall. In other words, real wages increased by an average of 13 per cent. over a period of sixteen years, whilst real wages fell by an average of 13 per cent. over a period

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[1] 1790 = 100.

[2] The base year is not included in these figures. Information was not available for the 1835-40 period, though in Kent, Essex, and Suffolk real wages fell throughout this period.

of eighteen years. In looking at the chronological distribution of the 'good' and 'bad' years it is clear from Figure 46 that apart from a brief, though substantial, rise in 1797-9 real wages tended to be depressed between 1793 and 1818. After that point real wages began to rise above their 1790 position and over the 1823-29 period increased at the average rate of about 3 per cent. per annum.[1]

It will be recalled that these estimates are based upon the assumption of full employment and therefore stand to represent a maximum limit of earnings. If, in order to establish a lower limit of earnings, this assumption is modified by assuming the existence of unemployment during the winter quarter of each year,[2] it is clear from Figure 46 that those labourers who fell into this situation stood to suffer a worsening of their standard of living. Throughout almost all the period under review the index of real wages remained depressed below its 1790 position. On the other hand, it must be stated that owing to the diversity of economic activity in the county, with widening employment opportunities in the manufacturing and mining sectors, the experience of the Nottinghamshire labourers was substantially different from that of the labourers in the southern and eastern counties. Whereas Kent, Essex and Suffolk had little or no alternative employment opportunities to absorb their labour surplus, Nottinghamshire, and to a lesser extent Lincolnshire, had and as a consequence of this wages were high and the standard of living of the labouring classes fared a little better.

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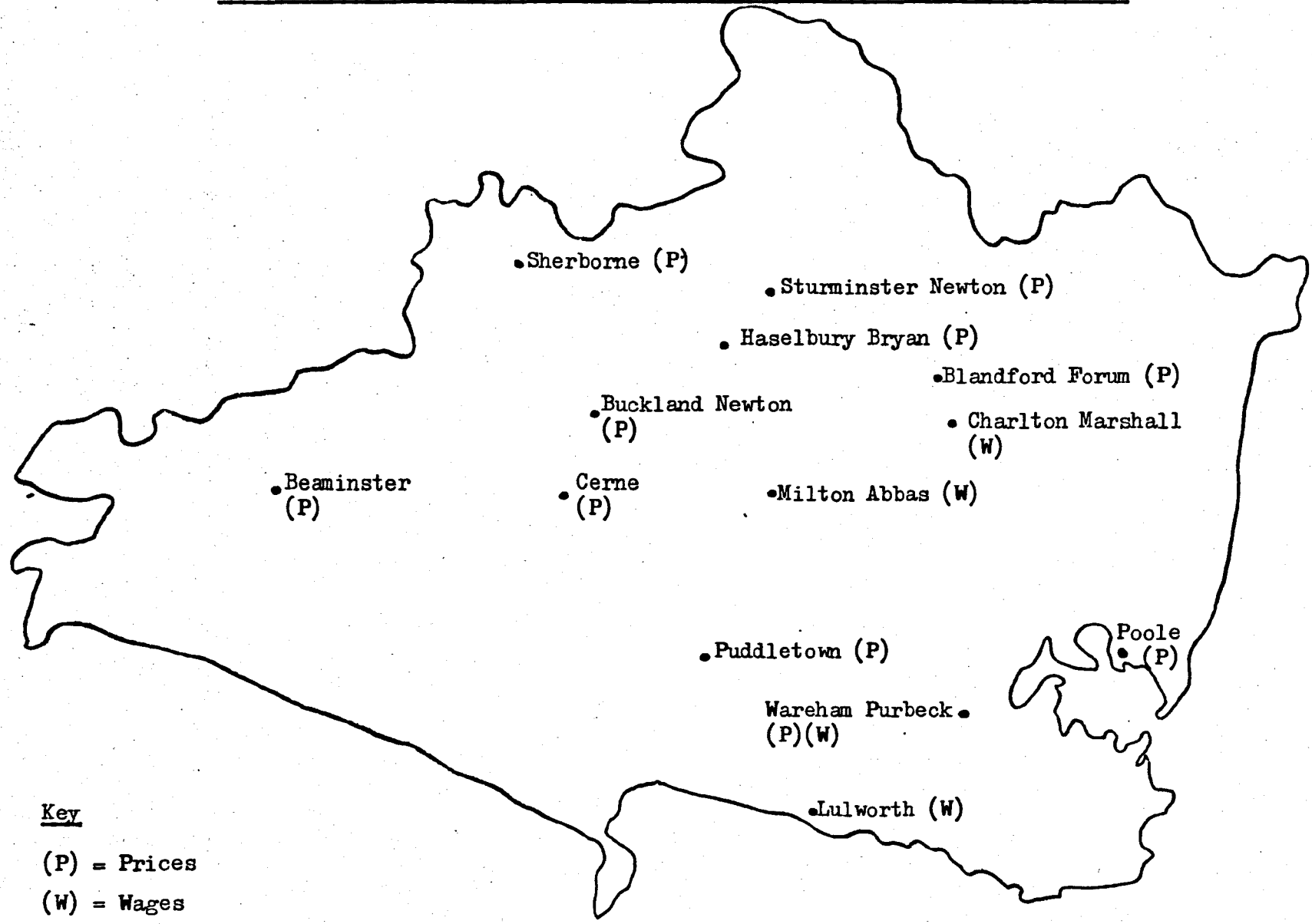
[1] In Kent and Essex real wages increased at the average rate of 0.6 per cent. and 0.8 per cent. per annum respectively.

[2] The problem of winter unemployment, when it arose, was primarily confined to the post-war period.

MAP 7

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Dorsetshire



CHAPTER 14

THE COST OF LIVING IN DORSET, 1790-1840

I. Introduction

During the early nineteenth century commercial farming was an important part of the Dorset economy.[1] In several areas, such as the chalk downs and the clay vales, commodity specialisation had developed over a large number of years in response to the rising demand for food outside the county. In the eighteenth century thousands of sheep were grazed within a few miles of Dorchester and were, according to Defoe,

> . . . bought by all the farmers thro' the east part of England, who came to Burford Fair in this country to buy them, and carry them into Kent and Surry eastward, and into Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire, and Oxfordshire north, even our Bansted Downs in Surrey, so fam'd for good mutton, is supply'd from this place.[2]

During the early nineteenth century the pastoral vales of north-west Dorset were said to produce 'the finest grained meat in the kingdom' and much of this was sent to Smithfield market.[3] The Vale of Blackmoor was renowned for the number and quality of its livestock, and one writer noted,

> Beef is sent from this vale in considerable quantities to the fortnightly markets of Salisbury, Shaftsbury, Sturminster, and Stalbridge, and is also sold to contractors and sent to Poole, Portsmouth, &c., without passing through any market, and it is computed that this district alone sends as many fat pigs to the London markets as either of the counties of Somerset or Devon.[4]

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[1] Although a number of small local industries and trades existed in the county, Dorset was principally an agricultural county in this period. J. Claridge, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1793), pp. 37-42.

[2] D. Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (Everyman ed. 1928), I, p. 210.

[3] W. Stevenson, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1815), p. 375.

[4] H. Ruegg, 'Farming of Dorsetshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XV (1855), p. 418.

Dairy farming was another important commercial activity which was carried on in most parts of Dorset, especially on the low pastures of the chalk soil areas and along the Devonshire border.[1] Dairy products were sold in the local markets of Weymouth, Poole, Cranborne, Farnham, and Wareham, and quantities were transported by waggon to Portsmouth and London.[2]

The main area of arable cultivation was located on the broad band of chalky soil which occupied a large part of central Dorset.[3] On the hills overlooking the Vale of Blackmoor the soil was said to be thin, poor, and of 'unvaried barrenness', and most of the unenclosed area was used for rearing sheep.[4] In other areas soils were fertile, enclosed, under arable cultivation and, according to Ruegg, 'there is no better farming in the kingdom'.[5] Stevenson thought that the most fertile part of the chalk area lay between Dorchester and Wimborne Minster,[6] and to the north of this area, stretching from Cerne Abbas to Blandford Forum, lay the main arable area of the county. A number of root and cereal crops were grown there under different rotations[7] and, prior to the 1840's, a 'good deal' of its corn was sold to markets outside the county.[8]

In other parts of Dorset the pattern of cultivation was primarily

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1 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 309.

2 Ibid. pp. 381-5, 442-4. A waggon took four days to travel from Dorset to London, p. 384.

3 The chalk area covered more than one third of Dorset. Stevenson, op. cit. p. 35.

4 Ibid. pp. 36-38, 310, 335.

5 Ruegg, loc. cit. p. 400.

6 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 38.

7 Ibid. pp. 190-4, 202.

8 Ruegg, loc. cit. p. 424.

determined by the quality of the soil. For example, south of the arable chalk area, in the south-east corner of Dorset, a large tract of 'barren and unimprovable' soil was said to be 'so destitute of every principle of fertility, as to be entirely incapable of growing any kind of corn'.[1] Apart from a little cultivation along the river banks of the Stour, Frome, and Piddle, the area was of little commercial use and was inhabited by 'some poor half-starved sheep'.[2] The clay loams along the sea coast varied in quality and productivity, being exceptionally good in the Vale of Purbeck where they were considered to be 'very productive, the pastures are fertile and luxuriant, and the meadows good . . . the soil produces excellent wheat'.[3] In the nearby area of Encombe and Kimmeridge it was said,

> . . . the snow never remains, and vegetables flourish almost the whole of the winter. From these parts are driven to Weyhill, the most forward ewes in Dorsetshire, for the production of early lambs for the London market.[4]

The cultivation of flax and hemp was mainly located in west Dorset along the Somerset border, whilst sainfoin was mainly grown on thin, gravelly loams in upland districts.[5] Potatoes were grown in most areas, especially on the rich loams in the vicinity of Bridport, Beaminster, and Abbotsbury, in south-west Dorset, for sale in Weymouth.[6]

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1 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 227.

2 Ibid. pp. 332-3.

3 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 41.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. pp. 272, 287, 295.

6 Ibid. p. 267.

II. Commodity Prices: Trends and Relationships

As in the case of the other counties in this study, the prices of agricultural produce in Dorset were strongly influenced by the pull of external markets; especially London and, to a lesser extent, the large market towns of the southern and midland counties. The extent of London's influence upon the supply price of wheaten bread in Dorset is seen in Figure 47 where the prices of the quartern loaf in both regions are compared with one another.[1] As in the case of Kent and Essex, the price of bread in Dorset was very similar to the price of bread in London. In both regions bread prices moved in parallel series along the same trend, sharing similar price peaks and troughs, with the London series tending to exceed the Dorset series by a margin of one or two pence.[2]

The main statistical sources used in this chapter have been derived from a number of areas in the county.[3] Commodity prices for the 1790-1834 period[4] have been derived from the Provisions Accounts of six parish workhouses;[5] prices for 1835-40[6] have been obtained from the Provisions

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1 Bread prices for London have been derived from G. H. Wood, 'The Investigation of Retail Prices', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXV (1902), p. 688.

2 A similar relationship to this existed between bread prices in London and Glasgow in this period. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

3 See map 7, p. 361.

4 These prices are monthly contract prices for bread (quartern loaf), pork, cheese, butter, tea, sugar, milk, candles, coal, and shoes. Prices of other commodities, such as potatoes, beef, clothing, or soap were not available in the Dorsetshire Record Office. For each commodity the monthly prices have been collated into an annual average price.

5 D.R.O.: P57/OV/12-16. Beaminster Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P70/OV/8. Blandford Forum Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P162/Ov/11. Puddletown Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P113/OV/2. Haselbury Bryan Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P18/OV/10-11 Buckland Newton Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts. P71/OV/46. Sturminster Newton Parish Workhouse Provisions Accounts.

6 These prices are quarterly contract prices and have been collated into annual averages.

Accounts of five Poor Law Unions.[1] All these institutions made regular purchases of provisions for the poor and needy in their care, either indoor or outdoor paupers, and were of a kind and quality normally consumed by the labouring classes in the county. The prices derived from these sources forms the basis from which the cost of living index has been calculated.[2]

The price trend of the most important item of consumption in the index, bread, is shown in Figure 47. As in the other counties in this study, the main swings in bread prices in Dorset were closely linked with variations in the weather and the state of domestic harvests. Starting from an average price of 8d. in 1790 the price of the quartern loaf fluctuated violently along an upward trend throughout the Napoleonic war. By 1800-1, following a run of bad weather and deficient harvests, the price of the quartern loaf had more than doubled in price and stood at 1s. 4¾d.[3] As a result of this increase a number of bread riots broke out in various areas of the county. In August 1800 an angry mob assembled in the streets and pelted the bakers of the town for selling their bread in another parish.[4] At Sherborne a mob visited the farmers of the area and made them

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1 D.R.O.: Beaminster Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). Poole Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). Wareham Purbeck Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). Cerne Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). Sherborne Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued).

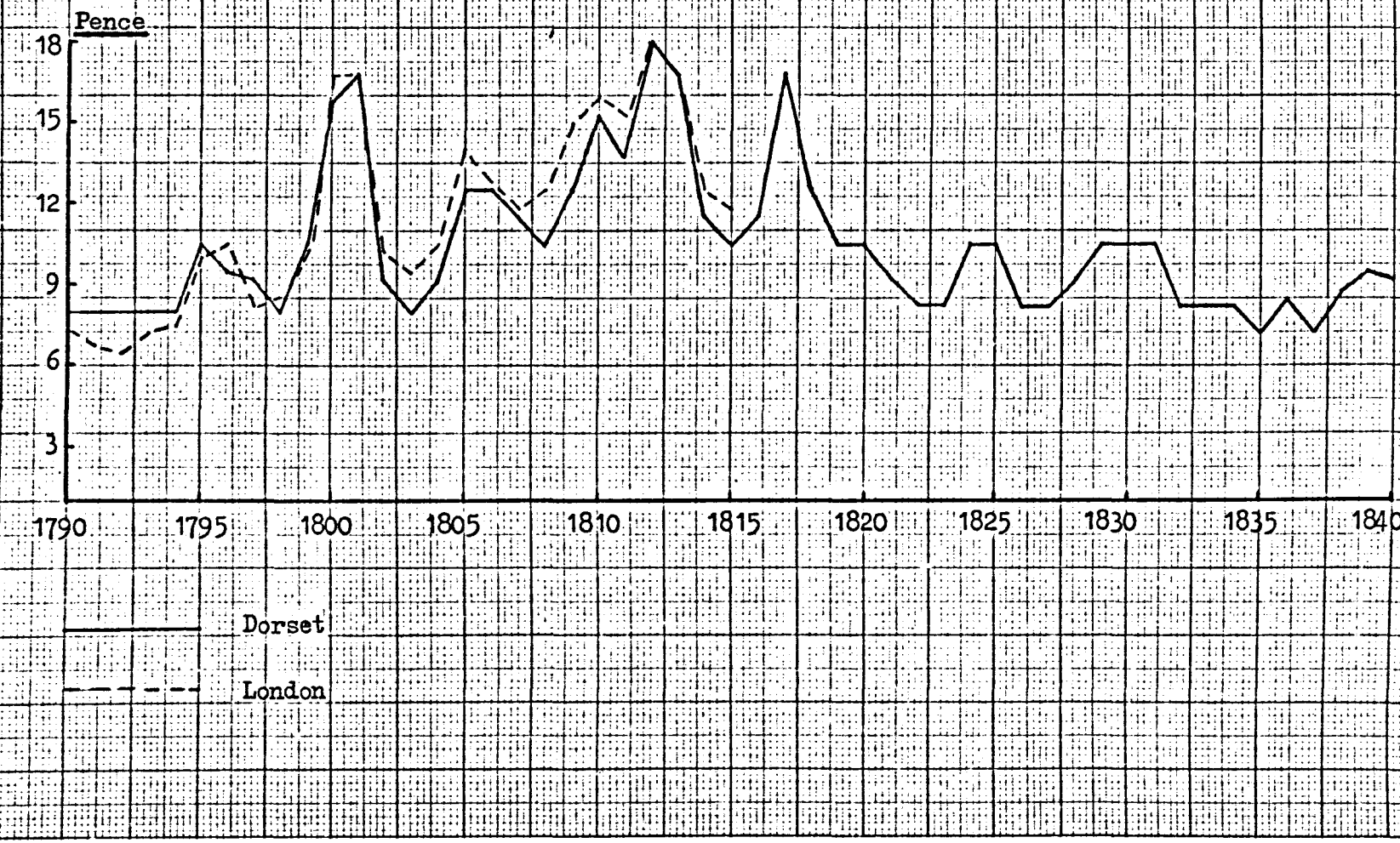
2 The prices quoted in this chapter are the prices parish workhouses actually paid for their provisions and no account has been taken of their discount rates. The reason for this is that the cost of living index is primarily concerned with the rate by which prices changed from their datum point rather than the actual level of prices.

3 T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838-57), I, pp. 213, 217. By March 1800 the wheat stocks in Dorset were half their normal size for the time of year. Annals of Agriculture, XXXIV (1800), p. 639.

4 The Dorset County Chronicle 1 August 1800, p. 3.

FIG. 47

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Dorsetshire and London 1790–1840



promise they would sell their wheat in the market-place at 10s. a bushel.[1] By mid September riots were breaking out in other districts over the exhorbitant price of bread. At Blandford, for example, a bakery and flour mills were attacked by the populace and a troop of Royal North Dragoons had to be brought from Dorchester barracks to restore order.[2] Similar riots broke out in the neighbouring county of Hampshire at Winchester, Romsey, and Alresford.[3]

Improved harvests in 1802-3,[4] during the Peace of Amiens, led to a temporary fall in bread prices to an average of 8d. per quartern loaf by 1803. From that point, however, bread prices fluctuated on a rising trend to reach their highest point in the whole period by 1812.[5] This increase, which also occurred in the counties considered so far, was conditioned by the progression of the war in Europe and a run of bad weather and deficient harvests.[6] Indeed, by 1812 the average price of the quartern loaf had risen to 1s. 6d., which represented a price increase of 125 per cent. since 1790.

From that peak position until the end of the war bread prices fell to reach an average of 10½d. per loaf in 1815 and, apart from an extremely sharp increase in 1817, continued to fall until 1822-3. The rise in bread prices in 1817 was due to two wet harvests in 1816-17 which brought a

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1 Ibid. 12 September 1800, p. 3.

2 The Dorset County Chronicle 12 September 1800, p. 3. The Hampshire Chronicle 15 September 1800, p. 4. This newspaper warned its readers, 'Very serious apprehensions are entertained, that unless an immediate reduction takes place in the necessaries of life, the consequences will be dreadful'.

3 The Hampshire Chronicle 22-29 September 1800, p. 4.

4 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. p. 238.

5 Bread prices in all the counties in this study also reached their highest point in 1812.

6 Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 224, 437. Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-8, 319-25.

brief return of prosperity to wheat farmers in the county.[1] This trend, however, was soon reversed by a run of abundant harvests[2] which reduced the average price of the quartern loaf to 8¼d. by 1822-3. Two poor harvests in 1824-5[3] brought about a short recovery in bread prices and from that point until the end of the 1830's the price of the quartern loaf followed a more stable path, fluctuating within a range of 7¼d. to 10¼d. a loaf.

As in the case of cereal crops, the weather also exerted an important influence upon the supply price of meat in Dorset. Dorset was renowned for its livestock industry and it is evident from the Provisions Accounts for the county that meat, especially pork, was regularly purchased by the Poor Law institutions for the inmates of workhouses. The long run trend of pork prices in Dorset is illustrated in Figure 48.[4] Starting from an average price of 4½d. a pound in 1790 the trend of pork prices moved sharply upwards over the early stages of the Napoleonic war and by 1801, the first major price peak, had more than doubled in price. Pork prices fell from this high point over the next three years, and then began a steady climb upwards over the adverse years of 1808-12, characterised by heavy mortality rates among livestock,[5] to reach their highest point in

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1 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 150. Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), pp. 13-15. The farming community in Dorset were described as being 'very well off' in this period.

2 Third Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII (ii), p. 115.

3 Ibid. p. 116.

4 Agricultural labourers in Dorset usually ate pork. Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 452, 454. Report into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 137-45. The prices of other kinds of meats were not available in the Dorset Record Office.

5 Tooke and Newmarch, I, op. cit. pp. 293-300, 319-25. E. L. Jones, Seasons and Prices (1964), pp. 158-9.

FIG. 48

The Price of Pork in Dorsetshire 1790–1840

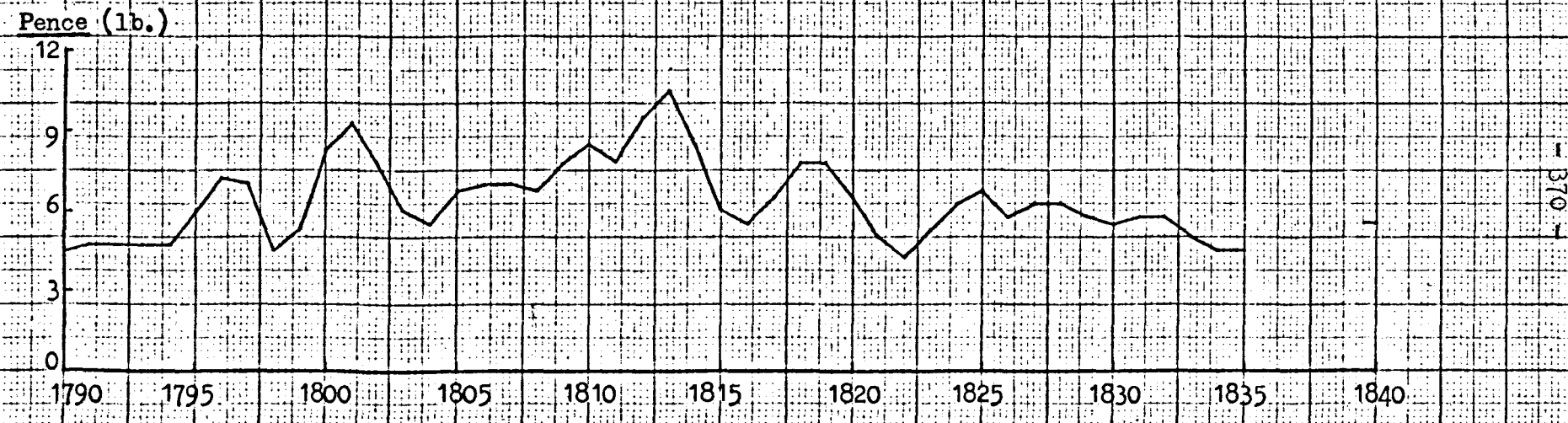
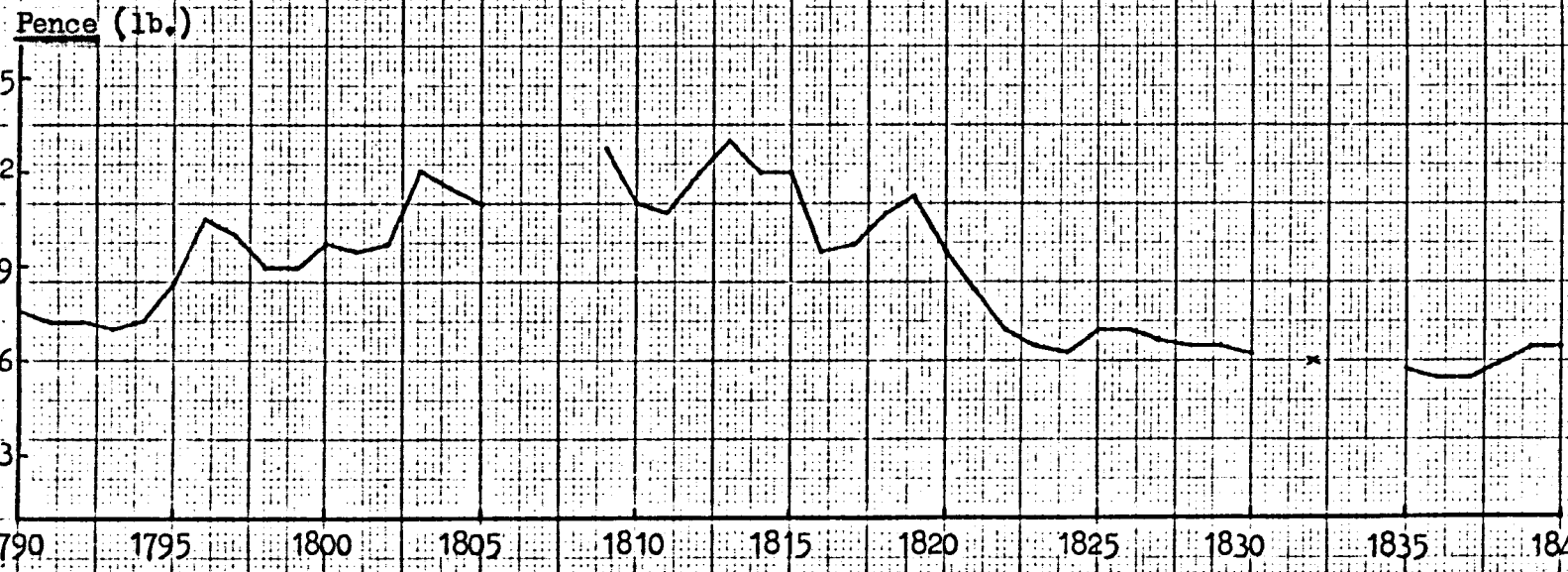


FIG. 49

The Price of Candles in Dorsetshire 1790–1840



the whole period under review by 1813.[1] In that year the average price of pork reached 9½d. a pound.

Pork prices fell from this war-time peak until they reached 5½d. a pound in 1816, and then increased to their war-time level again in 1818-19 owing to a drought and a shortage of livestock.[2] Between 1819 and 1822 pork prices in Dorset fell to their lowest point in the post-war period due to high fodder prices, following two dry summers in 1820 and 1822, and a rise in the liquidation sales of livestock.[3] As a result of these events the average price of pork fell to 4¼d. a pound by 1822 and, at that point, were a fraction below the average price prevailing in 1790. Two wet summers in 1823-4, however, caused outbreaks of diseases among livestock[4] with the result that by 1825 pork prices in Dorset had recovered to their war-time level again at 6¾d. a pound. From that point until the mid 1830's pork prices followed a declining trend, fluctuating within a range of 4½d. to 6¼d. a pound.

Cheese and butter formed part of the agricultural labourers' diet[5] in Dorset and were commodities which were also consumed in parish workhouses in the county. From what little evidence there is available on these two items it is clear that the price of butter in Dorset was about the same as the price of butter in Kent and Essex, whilst the price of cheese in the county was much lower than elsewhere. As the statistical evidence on these commodities is not complete an analysis of their prices will not be made here.[6]

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1 In other counties in this study 1813 was also a peak year for meat prices.

2 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 21-2. Jones op. cit. p. 161.

3 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 84-5. Jones, op. cit. p. 162.

4 Jones, op. cit. p. 163.

5 See p. 381.

6 See Appendix 20(i), p. 520.

Statistical information on tea[1] and sugar prices for Dorset is also incomplete, though what evidence there is does provide a useful guide to their range and trend. For example, sugar prices in Dorset were similar to those in Kent, Essex, and Suffolk and fluctuated within a range of 6½d. to 1s. a pound. Starting from an average price of 7¾d. a pound in 1790 the price of sugar increased along with the rise in the sugar duty[2] to reach, on average, 11d. a pound by 1799. Sugar prices remained high over the war period, falling to an average of about 10¾d. a pound after the war. From the mid 1830's to the end of the decade a fall in the sugar duty[3] was accompanied by a fall in sugar prices to a range varying from 6½d. to 8d. a pound.

All these commodities - bread, pork, cheese, butter, tea, and sugar - were common items of consumption in the diets of workhouse paupers and agricultural labourers in Dorset and their prices forms the basis of the Food and Drink category in the cost of living index. In addition to considering the roles played by these commodities it is also important to take into account the prices of other commodities which entered into the family budgets of agricultural labourers. Figure 49, for example, shows the trend of candle prices in Dorset. This trend shows an upward movement of prices over the Napoleonic war to reach an average price of 1s. 1d. a pound by 1813.[4] As in the case of the other counties in this study, the rise in prices in this period was closely associated with periodic shortages

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1 Generally, variations in tea prices tended to follow variations in the tea duty.

2 T. Tooke, Thoughts and Details on the High and Low Prices of the Thirty Years from 1793 to 1822 (1824), pp. 46-8.

3 Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 140-7, 157, 211. L. M. Brown, The Board of Trade and the Free Trade Movement, 1830-42 (Oxford, 1958), p. 36.

4 By 1796, the first peak year in candle prices, the labouring classes of Dorset were said to be 'most aggrieved' at the rise in candle prices. Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 117.

of tallow, whilst the downward trend throughout the post-war period was linked to improvements in domestic and foreign supplies of tallow.[1]

Fuel, for heating cottage homes, was another item of expenditure which appeared in agricultural labourers' household budgets.[2] From what evidence there is available on this commodity it is clear that the fuel situation in Dorset was very similar to that in Kent, Essex, and Suffolk in that firewood appeared to be in short supply and was expensive. As in the case of these counties, Dorsetshire workhouses made regular purchases of coal but rarely purchased firewood. The fact that these institutions purchased coal for heating the workhouse rather than firewood implies that firewood was difficult to obtain in the county. Indeed, it is clear from the observations of contemporary writers of the period that by the late eighteenth century firewood was 'almost unobtainable'[3] and, according to Stevenson,

> Timber is scarce in this county, and the quantity is continually diminishing. . . . There are few parishes that have woods which contain timber exclusive of parks, where they are mostly preserved for ornament, and consequently are of little use to the public.[4]

The wood shortage in Dorset was also being felt in the 1840's and was commented upon by the Rev. S. B. Osborne:

> As to the crimes most common . . . wood stealing is the most common overt act of crime they commit: it is

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[1] Tooke, op. cit. pp. 360-1. Tooke and Newmarch, II, op. cit. pp. 25, 392. The closure of the Baltic ports to British shipping during the war seriously reduced supplies of European tallow.

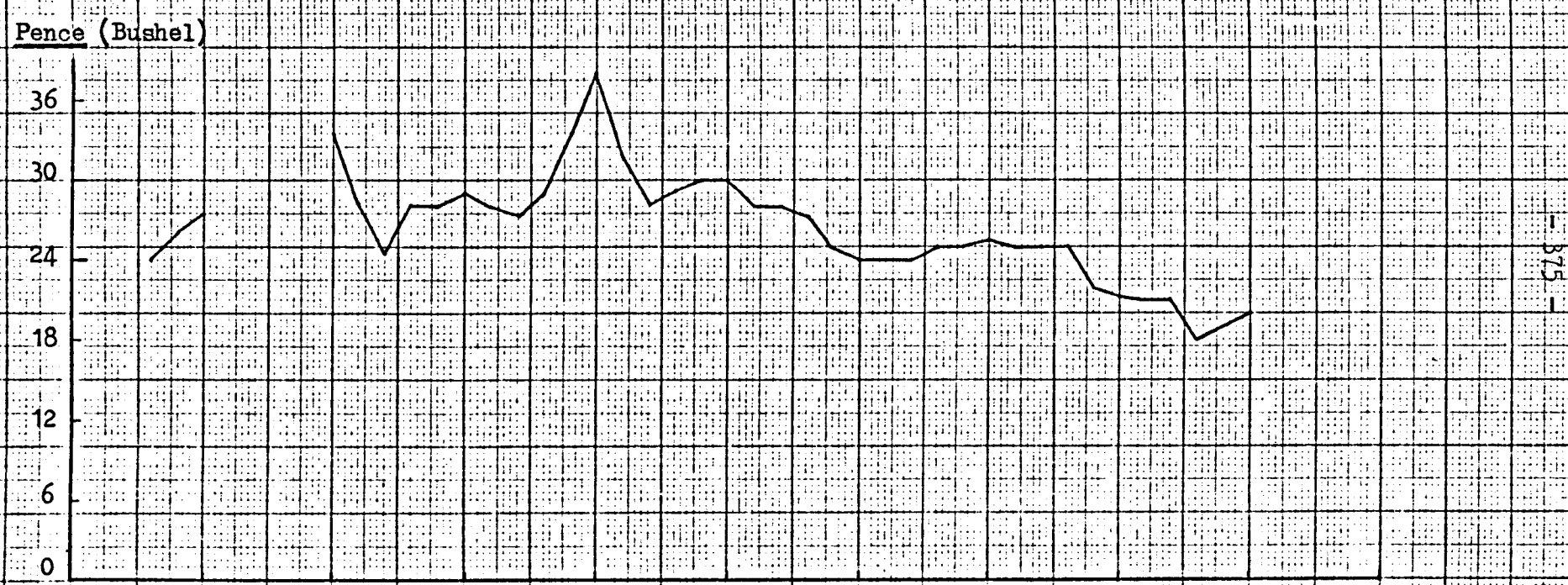
[2] On average expenditure on fuel absorbed about 4 per cent. of total household expenditure. See p. 380. No doubt agricultural labourers also burned other fuels, such as peat or turf, but owing to a lack of specific information on these items it has not been possible to include them in the cost of living index.

[3] B. Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer 1750-1850', Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, LXXXIV (1962), p. 171.

[4] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 325.

FIG. 50

The Price of Coal in Dorsetshire 1790–1835



> practised in some districts to an immense extent by women and young children . . . Unless they have a right of turf-cutting, or the proprietors of woods will sell fuel on the spot, they are often wholly without the means of procuring it honestly.[1]

In the light of the literary evidence regarding the shortage of firewood available for the rural labouring classes,[2] and given the fact that coal was the usual fuel burned in parish workhouses in the county,[3] it seems reasonable to use coal prices to represent the price of fuel in the cost of living index.[4]

As the Poor Law records for Dorset, as elsewhere in this study, contained no information on the prices of clothing it has been necessary to omit this item from the cost of living index.[5] Quantities of shoes, however, were purchased for the workhouse inmates and wherever their prices were available they have been included in the cost of living index.[6]

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1 Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), p. 75. The stealing of firewood was also a common crime in Essex in this period. See p. 190.

2 By the early 1840's there is some evidence to show that agricultural labourers were purchasing coal through their local coal clubs. Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 88. Ruegg, loc. cit. p. 445.

3 In the early nineteenth century coal from Newcastle and the Mendip pits, in Somerset, was being imported into the county. Stevenson, op. cit. p. 438.

4 See Figure 50 and Appendix 20(ii), p. 522.

5 Expenditure on clothing was not large and accounted for 8 per cent. of total household expenditure. See p. 381. John Bright, during a visit to Dorset in the 1840's noted, 'The poor are very badly off for clothing, as none is given them by the Poor Law officers as it used to be. They beg a great part of their clothing'. Bright estimated that a male pauper's clothes cost £1 13s. 6d. and lasted about 18 months. L. B. Powell, 'When John Bright went West', The Guardian 21 February 1968, p. 9. By the mid 1850's clothing clubs existed in most parishes in Dorset. Ruegg, loc. cit. p. 446. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 73.

6 Shoe prices are regarded as an acceptable alternative to boot prices. See p. 61.

Cottage Rent constitutes the last main category of expenditure in the cost of living index. As in the case of other counties in this study, the statistical evidence is somewhat fragmentary and is not readily incorporated into a cost of living index.[1] Nevertheless, given its limitations, the evidence does provide a useful picture of the trend and structure of rents in the county at large for a period of fifty years or more.

In examining this evidence it is apparent from the observations of various writers that there was a shortage of cottages in Dorset during this period. In many instances this situation led to overcrowding and insanitary conditions in a large number of parishes. In 1815, for example, Stevenson noted that 'a scarcity of cottages . . . is a subject of much complaint in Dorsetshire', and was the cause of overcrowding in several villages.[2] In the Winterborne area of south Dorset, villages were said to be 'overflowing' because cottage building had lagged behind the growth of population.[3] The curate of Pimperne, the Rev. Henry Austen, wrote,

> The poor people have to struggle with the want of proper accommodation in their dwellings, which I fear is too general in our rural districts.[4]

Similar cases of overcrowding were found at Bryanston-cum-Durweston, Blandford, Beaminster, Stourpaine, and Milton Abbas.[5] In the village of

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[1] The main problems involved in handling this data have been examined elsewhere and are not repeated here. See pp. 57-9. The main sources of evidence on this commodity have been derived from various parish and contemporary printed sources.

[2] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 456.

[3] Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 87.

[4] Ibid. p. 78.

[5] Ibid. pp. 73-87.

Milton Abbas cottages averaged nine persons to every two rooms,[1] whilst in the parish of Hook, owned by the Duke of Cleveland, labourers' cottages were described as,

> . . . bad as it is possible you can conceive - many of them without chambers - earth floors - not ceiled or plastered.[2]

A similar situation prevailed in the village of Kingston with its 'open stagnant drains, pools, and filth of all descriptions and the character of the people is similar to these external appearances'.[3] In Cranbourne, cottages were described as 'crumbling hovels of clay and wood'[4] and, according to Sidney Godolphin Osborne, the Rector of Bryanston, 'in nine villages out of ten the cottage is still nothing but a slightly improved hovel'.[5]

An impression may be gained of the long-run trend of cottage rents in Dorset from the following figures:

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1 Ibid. p. 87.

2 Ibid. p. 86.

3 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, p. 87.

4 A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough (Manchester, 1852) p. 27.

5 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 77. In 1867 cottages in the parishes of Stourpaine, Dorchester, Bere Regis, Sturminster Newton, Sturminster Marshall, Stratton, Cerne Abbas, Wool, and Hazelbury Bryan were described as 'bad', 'very bad', and 'miserable tenements' with mud floors and walls, and covered with thatch. Reports of Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1867-8, XVII, First Report, Appendix II, pp. 16-31.

TABLE 26

COTTAGE RENTS IN DORSET 1771-1838

Year	Location	Rent per Annum
1771[1]	Critchell-Moreton area	30s.-40s.
1789[2]	Affpuddle	25s.-45s.
1789[2]	Bishops Caundle	32s.
1789[2]	Sherborne	30s.-50s.
1797[3]	Blandford Forum	70s.-104s.
1803-5[3]	" "	43s.-60s.
1806-8[4]	Hazelbury Bryan	40s.-60s.
1807[5]	Puddletown	40s.
1812-13[3]	Blandford Forum	65s.-104s.
1815[6]	Frampton	40s.-60s.
1824[7]	Tolbridge	156s.
1834[8]	Blandford	52s.-100s.
1834[8]	Buckland Newton	40s.-100s.
1834[8]	Hazelbury Bryan	70s.-90s.
1834[8]	Rampisham	60s.
1834[8]	Winterborne Kingston	50s.-100s.
1833-5[9]	Sturminster Newton	65s.-78s.
1838[10]	Dorset	78s.-104s.

Sources:

1 A. Young, A Farmer's Tour Through the East of England (1771), III, pp. 249-50, 282.

2 D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), pp. 149-53.

3 D.R.O. P70/OV8 Blandford Forum Parish Overseer's Accounts.

4 D.R.O. P113/OV1 Hazelbury Bryan Parish Overseer's Accounts.

5 D.R.O. P162/OV12 Puddletown Parish Overseer's Accounts.

6 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 429.

7 Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, p. 32.

8 Report into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 137-45.

9 D.R.O. P71/OV8 Sturminster Newton Parish Overseer's Accounts.

10 O. Piers, A Few Hints to Landowners and Farms Throughout the Kingdom; more particularly to those in the County of Dorset (Dorchester, 1838), p. 6.

These figures suggest that cottage rents in Dorset more than doubled, from about 35s. to about 91s. a week, between the 1770's and the late 1830's. However, in view of the limitations of this kind of evidence it would be difficult to justify the assumption that cottage rents doubled in this period. For this reason it has been necessary to assume that cottage rents remained constant over this period.[1]

III. Household Expenditure

At this point it is necessary to collate the five main categories of household expenditure - Food and Drink, Cottage Rent, Candles, Soap, and Shoes - into a single index. In each case the weights which have been attached to each main category of expenditure are determined by the amount of money agricultural labourers laid-out on these items in their household budgets.

TABLE 27

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE IN DORSET[2]

	%
Food and Drink	67.5
Cottage Rent	6.3
Fuel	4.2

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1 This assumption will tend to understate, rather than overstate, the rise in the cost of living. As expenditure on Cottage Rent accounted for about 6 per cent. of total household expenditure its overall influence upon the all-items index would not be large.

2 Davies, op. cit. pp. 148-55. These weights have been derived from the household budgets of agricultural labourers living in the parishes of Affpuddle, Bishops Caundle, Sherborne, and Stinsford. The Miscellaneous category includes a number of imponderables such as medicine and lying-in and it has been necessary to omit these from the index owing to a lack of information on them.

	%
Clothing	8.0
Shoes	2.0
Candles	3.0
Soap	3.0
Miscellaneous	6.0
	100.0

As in the case of the family budgets used in other counties in this study, these figures underline the importance of food and drink in the labourers' standard of living, especially the fact that this item alone absorbed two-thirds of their disposable income.[1] The various weights which have been attached to the commodities in the Food and Drink category have been determined by the amount of expenditure labourers spent on these items in their family budgets.

TABLE 28

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON FOOD AND DRINK IN DORSET[2]

	%
Bread	61.4
Meat	12.6
Cheese	10.1
Butter	3.2
Sugar	4.7
Tea	4.2
Milk	3.8
	100.0

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[1] In the 1860's agricultural labourers in Dorset distributed their expenditure as follows: Food and Drink 62.1%, Cottage Rent 9.1%, Fuel 6.8%, Clothing 13.6%, Candles 2.3%, Soap 1.5%, Club 2.3%, School 2.3%, Reports on Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, P.P. 1867-8, XVII, p. 38.

[2] Davies, op. cit. pp. 148-55.

These figures are confirmed by the literary evidence on agricultural labourers' diets in Dorset which shows that throughout the period under review their usual fare consisted of bread, meat, cheese, potatoes, and tea.[1] By the late eighteenth century wheaten bread was said to have replaced rye bread in the labourers' diets[2] and, according to Arthur Young, 'all drink tea twice a day'.[3] According to a Dorset correspondent to the Annals of Agriculture,

> No . . . mixture of potatoes and flour, no barley, no rye, is used in these parts as food for the poor; they allege that as they live almost entirely on bread, they cannot perform their labour without good bread.[4]

However, in times of dearth and inflation, as in the 1790's, necessity increasingly compelled the rural labouring classes to substitute cheaper commodities, such as barley bread and potatoes, for wheaten bread in their diets.[5] Indeed, the fact that price increases easily outstripped wages in this period was the cause of considerable distress among the labouring poor.[6] As David Davies noted,

> Many working men breakfast and dine on dry bread alone, without either cheese or drink of any kind; their meal is supper, and that generally no better than unpealed potatoes and salt, or barley cake fried, and water.[7]

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1 Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 431, 452. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (A.G.L. Rogers (ed.), 1928), pp. 177-8.

2 Annals, XIII (1790), p. 515.

3 Young, op. cit. p. 330. See also Stevenson, op. cit. p. 453.

4 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 316.

5 Ibid. XIII (1790), p. 515. Owing to a lack of information on these commodities it is not possible to incorporate them into the cost of living index.

6 Between 1790 and 1795 agricultural wages increased by 7 per cent. compared with an increase of 28 per cent. in the cost of living. See Appendix 19, p. 518.

7 Davies, op. cit. p. 149.

By the early stages of the Napoleonic war the condition of the labouring classes in Dorset was described as 'in general . . . bad, from the high price of everything they use as well as bread'.[1] In view of this situation it is significant that at this point in time potatoes, which were 'scarcely known' in Dorset in the 1780's, became an established commodity in labourers' diets and remained a part of it thereafter.[2]

Throughout the post-war period, up to the 1840's, the Dorsetshire labourers' basic diet remained almost unchanged. In Sturminster Newton, for example, the labourers lived on bread made from a mixture of wheat and barley; labourers in Hazelbury Bryan were said to live 'almost entirely' on tea and potatoes.[3] The evidence collected by the Poor Law Commissioners in the early 1830's clearly revealed that the rural labouring classes, if they could afford it, lived on a diet of bread, potatoes, pork, cheese, and tea.[4] This kind of diet was also commonly found throughout Dorset in the 1840's.[5]

IV. The Cost of Living

The prices of the various commodities in the main categories of

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[1] Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 117.

[2] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 454.

[3] D.R.O. MR/44. Reminiscences of Sturminster Newton, pp. 12-14. Report from the S.C. on Labourers' Wages, P.P. 1824, VI, pp. 45-6. Occasionally a little meat was consumed, as well as a small quantity of milk and sugar.

[4] Report into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1. pp. 137-45.

[5] Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, pp. 90-1. In the 1860's Dorsetshire labourers subsisted on a similar diet. Reports on Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, P.P. 1867-8, XVII, Appendix II, pp. 15-23.

expenditure have been combined, in Laspeyres form, to provide a cost of living index for the county.[1] This index is illustrated in Figure 51 and on examination shows that the cost of living in Dorset fell into three well-defined sub-periods; a period of inflation lasting from 1794 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except in 1817) from 1812 to 1822-3, followed by a period of recovery from 1822-3 to the early 1830's. The main peaks in the cost of living in 1795, 1800-1, 1812, and 1817, and the main trough, occurring in 1822-3, coincided exactly with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living in the other counties in this study. It is also significant that the major variations in the cost of living in all the counties considered so far were directly associated with major variations in the weather and the rural trade cycle.

At this point it is necessary to compare the cost of living in Dorset with the cost of living in the other counties in this study, and to compare these results with Silberling's estimate of the cost of living in London.[2]

TABLE 29

VARIATIONS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN KENT, ESSEX, SUFFOLK, LINCOLNSHIRE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, DORSET, AND LONDON 1795-1822

(1790 = 100)

	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Kent	+37	+73	+120	+84	+9
Essex	+34	+71	+119	+71	+12
Suffolk	+34	+105			

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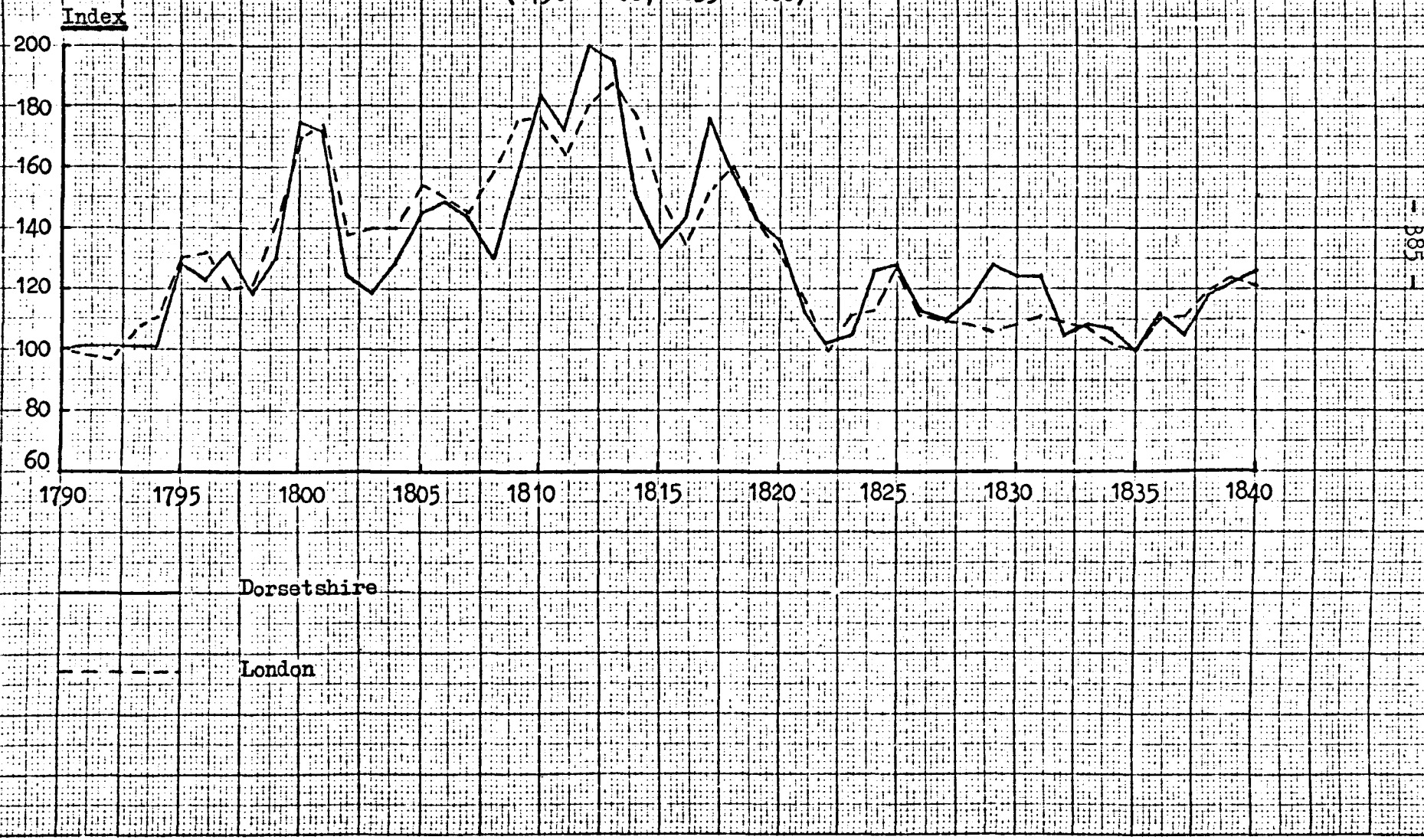
[1] The working of this formula is explained on p. 65 . Because of certain differences in the nature of the price data two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been used in constructing the cost of living index. See p. 40.

[2] N. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', Review of Economic Statistics, V, Supplement II (1923), p. 235. See Figure 51.

FIG. 51

The Cost of Living in Dorsetshire and London 1790–1840

(1790 = 100, 1835 = 100)



	1795 %	1800 %	1812 %	1817 %	1822 %
Lincs.	+35	+91	+104	+54	-11
Notts.	+51	+88	+110	+64	+3
Dorset	+28	+75	+100	+76	+2
London	+30	+70	+80	+51	0

These figures clearly bring out the fact that despite Dorset's geographical isolation from these counties the cost of living in all these areas was agreeably similar. In each county the general trend of the cost of living, and the timing of its short-run variations in the main sub-periods, was almost identical. When the rates by which the cost of living changed after their base yeare are compared it is clear that certain differences existed between the counties on a number of points. In 1795, for example, the cost of living in Dorset was lower than in, say, Kent or Essex. whereas by the next price peak in 1800, the cost of living in Dorset had moved closer into line with these two counties. This differential widened in the year of the highest price increase, 1812, and then narrowed again by 1817 and 1822. With the exception of Nottinghamshire, the common denomination in all these counties was the influence of London upon the general price level. Indeed, when the cost of living in Dorset and London is compared it is apparent that the cost of living in each region moved in parallel series along the same long-run trend, though certain differences existed between the two series at various points.[1] Between 1790 and 1800 the two series moved together on an inter-changing basis and were separated by only a few index points. However, between 1802 and 1809 the cost of living in Dorset lay below that in London by a

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[1] It has to be remembered that whereas Silberling's index is composed of raw material prices, the county index is based upon the prices of processed commodities and therefore one is not, strictly speaking, comparing like with like. However, it is important to undertake this exercise in order to test the general applicability of Silberling's London-based index.

margin extending up to, at its widest point, 20 per cent. From 1818 to 1822 the cost of living in both localities was almost identical, though from that point until about 1836 the cost of living in Dorset was usually higher than in London. In the light of this evidence, therefore, it would appear that as far as the cost of living in Dorset is concerned, Silberling's index overstates the rise in the cost of living between 1802 and 1809 and overstates its fall over the 1820's and 1830's. For these reasons Silberling's index appears to be of little use as a guide to the cost of living in Dorset.

Given the level and direction taken by the cost of living in Dorset, to what extent was this pattern matched by similar changes in agricultural wages? What effect did the cost of living have upon the trend of real wages and the agricultural labourers' material standard of living?

CHAPTER 15

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN DORSET 1790-1840

I. Introduction

In the early nineteenth century Dorset was primarily an agricultural county which was said to be 'yet uncontaminated by the enticement of manufacture'.[1] Certain small scale domestic industries existed in the county and these had survived from the previous century, such as lace, button, and glove making, straw plaiting, and the manufacture of silk, hemp, rope, and sail-cloth.[2] These, however, were diminishing in importance owing to the competition of machine-made articles manufactured outside the county. At the close of the eighteenth century David Davies noted that one of the probable causes of social distress in Dorset was 'the increasing scarcity of employment for the poor, and their own want of industry, having no encouragement given them'.[3] By the 1820's many of these traditional domestic industries were in a state of decay and had ceased to provide agricultural labourers' families with employment.[4] By 1832 the Yeovil glove industry, which provided domestic employment for rural families as far away as Bridport, Dorchester, and Beaminster, was suffering from the competition of imported French gloves. As a result of this development many domestic workers found

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[1] W. Stevenson, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1815), p. 70.

[2] J. Claridge, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1793), passim. Stevenson, op. cit. passim. W. Page (ed.), The Victoria History of the County of Dorset (1908), II, pp. 325-62.

[3] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), p. 149.

[4] Page, op. cit. pp. 325-62. The competition of machine-made goods was said to have 'annihilated' some of these trades in Dorset.

themselves without work and their incomes reduced by a half.[1] Similarly, the button making industry, which had previously employed considerable numbers of women and children, was said to be 'almost altogether gone' by this date and good workers could scarcely earn 1s. 6d. a week at the trade.[2] The loss of non-agricultural incomes meant that many families became dependent to a much greater extent upon their earnings in agriculture. In this respect Dorset is seen to stand in sharp contrast to Nottinghamshire where mining and the manufacturing industries were expanding and integrating the county into the economic transformation of the Midland region. Whereas the competition between agriculture and industry for labour in Nottinghamshire made the county a high wage county, the absence of these competing influences in Dorset reduced wages to a nominal level and degraded it to the status of a low wage county. Indeed, in the years for which comparable data is available, agricultural labourers' wages in Nottinghamshire were 30 to 50 per cent. higher than in Dorset.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were engaged in arable cultivation on various estates in the county. The main sources of statistical evidence have been obtained from the Thomas Weld Estate Accounts,[3] the Belhuse Farm Accounts,[4] the

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1 The Dorset County Chronicle 9 February 1832, p. 2. 9 August 1832, pp. 1-4.

2 S. G. Osborne, 'The Dorsetshire Poor', in A. White (ed.), The Letters of S. G. O. (1890), I, p. 42.

3 D.R.O. D10/AE/26-48. Thomas Weld Estate Accounts. Receipts and Disbursements. This estate was near Lulworth. See Map 7, p. 361.

4 D.R.O. D10/AE/53-4. Belhuse Farm Accounts. Day Book of Labourers' Wages. This estate was near Lulworth.

Sherborne Estate Accounts,[1] the Damer Estate Accounts,[2] and the Kezworth Farm Accounts at Wareham.[3] At various points the wages derived from these estates are compared with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources.[4] As in the case of the rest of the counties in this study, a wage index has been constructed for each estate according to what the labourers earned, taking good seasons with the bad, each year. At various points this index is related to the cost of living index in order to see what happened to the purchasing power of the agricultural labourers wages.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages and the cost of living, and the trend of real wages[5] in Dorset, is shown in Figures 52-54.[6] In examining this relationship it is clear that, in the years for which comparable information is available, wages and prices tended to rise and fall together with the latter series, being more volatile than

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1 D.R.O. KG 1229-40. Lord Digby's Estate Accounts at Sherborne.

2 D.R.O. D177/1/2, D188. Estate Accounts of the Damer Family.

3 D.R.O. D15/E31. Kezworth Farm Accounts at Wareham.

4 The relationship between estate wages and farm wages is examined on p. 78 and will not be repeated here. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 52 the former have been marked with a cross (x) and the latter with a dot (.).

5 The real wage index is obtained by dividing the wage index by the cost of living index. It is important to remember at this point that these estimates are based on the assumption of full and constant employment and, in the light of the existence of unemployment in the post-war period, must be regarded as being generous. Later on in the chapter this assumption is modified to allow for a degree of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, in the calculations.

6 Owing to the existence of certain differences in the nature of the statistics derived from Poor Law sources two base years, 1790 and 1835, have been used for both the cost of living index and the wage index. See p. 40.

FIG. 52

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Dorsetshire 1790–1840

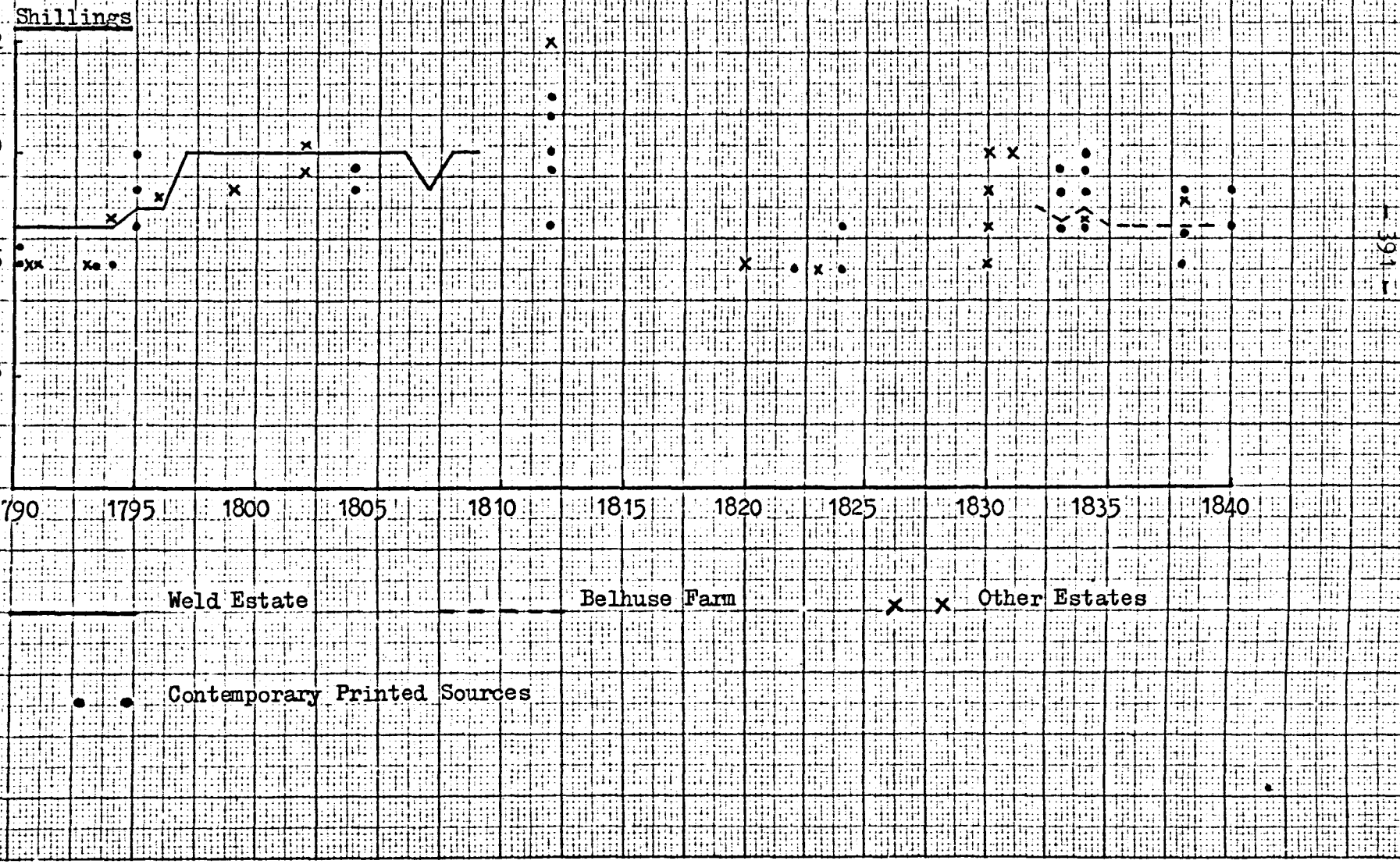
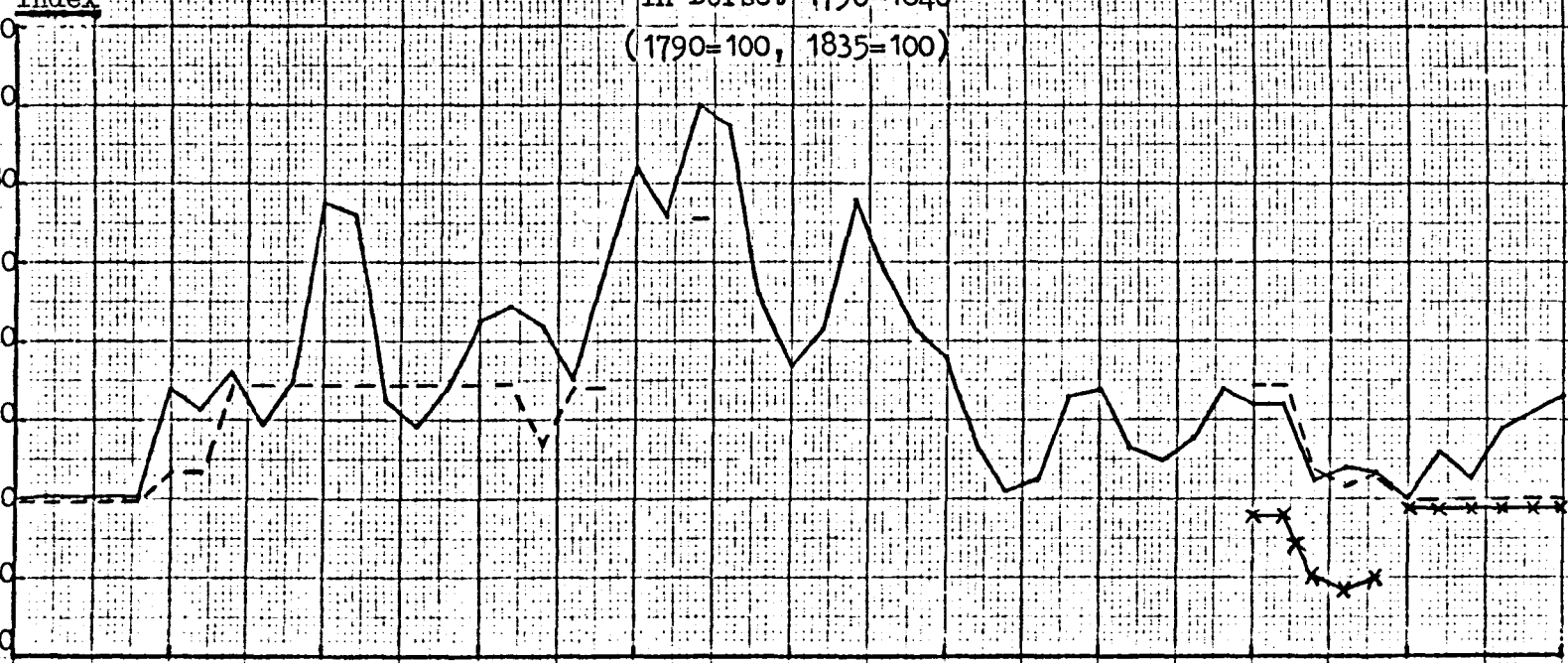


FIG. 53

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Dorset 1790–1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)



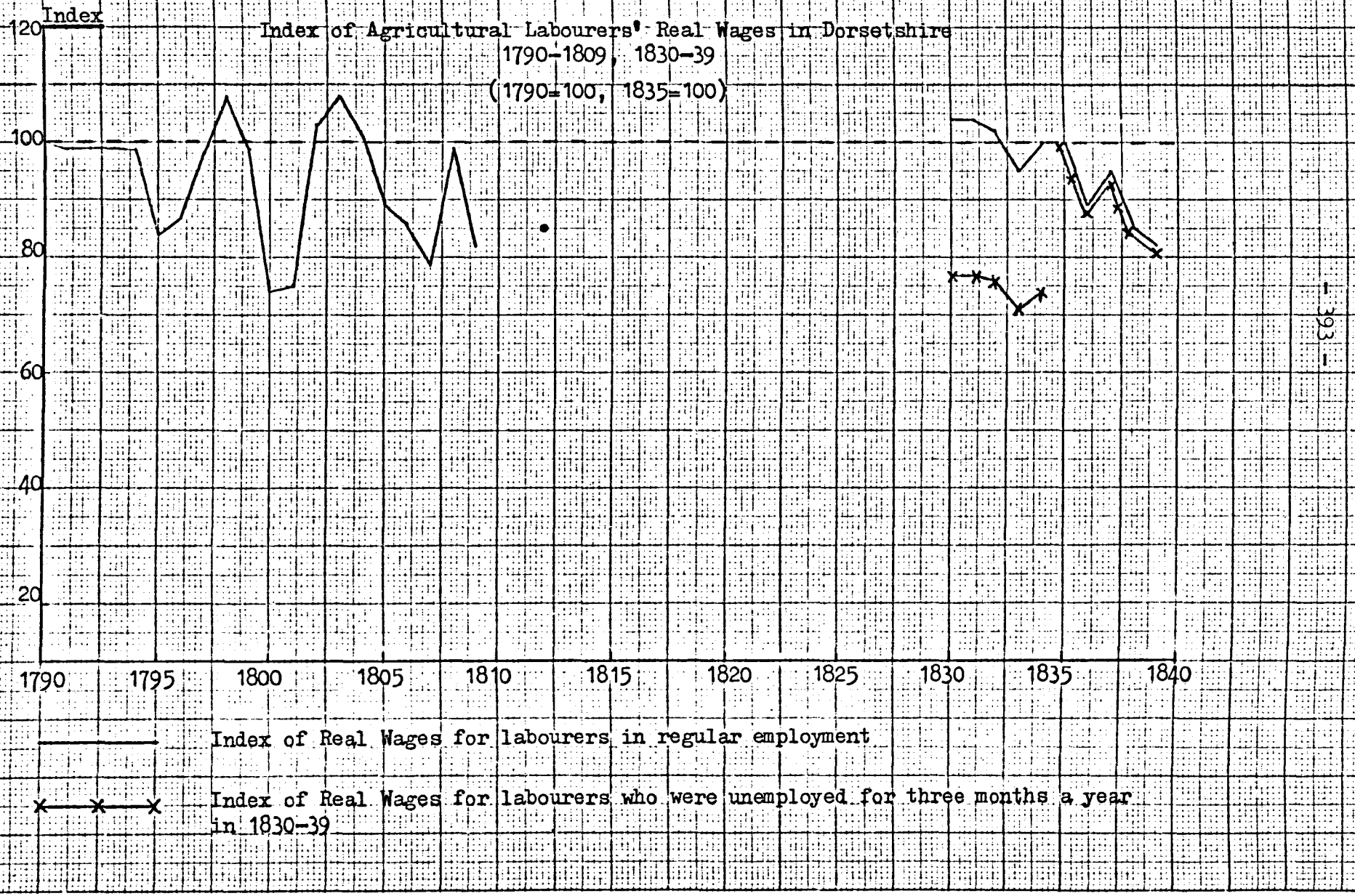
Cost of Living Index

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers in regular employment on the Weld Estate and Belhuse Farm

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers who were unemployed for three months a year

FIG. 54

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Dorsetshire
1790–1809, 1830–39
(1790=100, 1835=100)



the former, tending to outpace wages by a considerable margin over the Napoleonic war period.

In 1790 agricultural wages in Dorset were 6s. to 7s. a week. David Davies' study of the expenses and earnings of 20 agricultural labourers' families in Dorset in 1789 revealed that agricultural wages averaged 6s. 6d. a week.[1] Owing to a general rise in prices and, what he called, 'the low and unproportionate price of labour' most of the families in his survey had deficient incomes. Davies noted,

> Many working men breakfast and dine on dry bread alone, without either cheese or drink of any kind; their meal is supper, and that generally no better than unpealed potatoes and salt, or barley-cake fried, and water. Clothes they get as they can, and the children go nearly naked.[2]

Similar wages to those quoted by Davies were also paid on the Milton Abbas estate of Lord Milton[3] and on Thomas Bastard's farm at Charlton Marshall,[4] 6s. a week being the average weekly wages being paid there. This figure was confirmed by John Claridge in 1793. Claridge wrote,

> The price of labour is 6s. per week, and it is a settled point between the labourer and the farmer in most parts of the county, that all workmen employed in agriculture, shall have a sufficient quantity of wheat, for the support of their families, at the standing price of 5s. per bushel . . .[5]

By 1795 the cost of living in Dorset had increased by 28 per cent., compared with 1790, and was accompanied by a rise in agricultural wages. At Mapperton wages were increased by 2d. in the shilling[6] whilst at

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1 Davies, op. cit. pp. 148-55. Davies collected his information from the parishes of Affpiddle, Bishop's Caundle, Sherborne, and Stinsford.

2 Davies, op. cit. p. 149.

3 D.R.O. D177/1/2. Lord Milton's Estate Accounts. Receipts and Bills

4 D.R.O. 5339. Farm Accounts of Thomas Bastard of Charlton Marshall. Charlton Marshall lies in central Dorset.

5 Claridge, op. cit. p. 22.

6 Annals of Agriculture, XXIV (1795), p. 316.

Blandford and Durweston husbandry wages increased from 6s. a week to 8s. and 9s. a week.[1] On the Weld estate labourers' wages increased by a modest amount, from 7s. a week in 1790-4 to 7s. 6d. in 1795. This gain, however, was more than offset by a steep rise in the cost of living which reduced the index of real wages to 84 by 1795.[2] The general distress occasioned by the rise in food prices was mitigated to some extent by the Poor Law, which allowed destitute labourers 6d. a week for each of their dependent children, and by the policy, practiced by some farmers, of selling the labouring classes cheap wheat.[3] A correspondent to the Annals of Agriculture noted,

> The state of the poor in general is bad, from the high price of everything they use as well as bread; the labourers in husbandry feel the pressure of the times less than others, as they are furnished in general by their employers with wheat and barley at reduced prices.[4]

In the parish of Sydling St. Nicholas, in central Dorset, an allowance system was adopted to meet the problems caused by high prices and low wages. A sliding scale of family allowances was drawn up which was linked to the price of bread. The scale operated as follows:[5]

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1 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), pp. 176-8. Eden estimated that an gricultural labourer could earn 6s. a week between the harvest of 1794 and March 1795, 7s. a week between then and the following harvest, and 9s. a week during the harvest month.

2 Eden attributed the rise in the poor rates to 'the high price of provisions, the smallness of wages'. Ibid. p. 177.

3 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 316.

4 Ibid. XXVI (1796), p. 117.

5 D.R.O. P36/VE1. Sydling St. Nicholas Parish Vestry Minutes, 1790-1870.

Scale of Allowances

	When the standard loaf cost: 9d.-11d.	1s.-1s. 2d.	1s. 3d.-1s. 5d.
	Relief	Relief	Relief
Labouring man	2s. 8d.	3s. 4d.	4s. 0d.
Woman	2s. 0d.	2s. 6d.	3s. 0d.
Children:			
12 to 14 years	1s. 8d.	2s. 1d.	2s. 6d.
9 to 12 years	1s. 4d.	1s. 8d.	2s. 0d.
Under 9 years	1s. 2d.	1s. 6d.	1s. 9d.

The Vestry also declared that 'In no case is the allowance to be less than the above, and where the paupers are deserving characters, it is recommended to be increased'.

Agricultural wages continued to rise after 1795 and, on the Weld estate, reached 9s. a week by 1797, and maintained that level until the early 1800's. This wage represented an increase of 29 per cent. since 1790 but, as the cost of living index had increased by 75 per cent over the same period, the index of real wages fell to 74 by 1800. In that year, owing to a deficient harvest, stocks of wheat in Dorset fell to half their usual size[1] and, owing to a sharp rise in bread prices, resulted in an outbreak of rioting in the county.[2] Soup kitchens were established in a number of parishes for the relief of the poor and quantities of cheap food were sold to destitute families at reduced prices.[3] In Symondsbury parish barley, peas, and potatoes were sold to the poor at subsidised

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[1] Annals of Agriculture, XXXIV (1800), p. 639.

[2] See p. 366.

[3] Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 639.

prices[1] whilst at Sturminster Newton the rural poor were provided with rice, peas, herrings, pilchards 'or any other kind of wholesome and nutritious food except bread made wholly of wheat'.[2]

By 1812 agricultural wages on the Weld estate had increased to 12s. a week, though lower wages than these prevailed in other parts of the county. Stevenson, for example, noted that wages varied from district to district and that low wages were sometimes supplemented by allowances in kind. Stevenson wrote,

> The price of labour, in many parts of this county, appears to have undergone little variation for some years; yet, as it is paid partly in kind, by the allowance of wheat and barley at a low and fixed price, it has, of course, advanced in some measure according to the increased price of provisions.[3]

The custom of paying wages in kind was largely confined to the chalk and upland areas though by 1812 the practice was declining owing to the high price of corn.[4] In areas where the custom prevailed allowances in kind were a useful supplement to low wages. Cash wages were generally 6s. to 12s. a week in 1812 and the value of allowances in kind tended to vary inversely with the level of wages. At Spettisbury and Corfe Castle, for example, labourers were paid the relatively high wage of 9s. to 12s. a week and therefore were not permitted to purchase cheap corn from their

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1 D.R.O. P93/OV3. Symondsbury Parish Overseer's Accounts, 1796-1817. Barley was sold at 6s. a bushel, peas at 8s. a bushel, and potatoes at 10s. a sack.

2 D.R.O. P4/OV9. Sturminster Newton Parish. General Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Overseers of the Poor, 1801.

3 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 428. Cheap corn was called 'grist' in Dorset.

4 Ibid. p. 452. Stevenson collected the material for his book in 1810-12 and it was published in 1815.

employers.[1] A similar practice prevailed at Swannage, Wareham, Fifehead, Magdalen, Ryme, Netherbury, Winfrith, Lulworth, Shaftsbury, and the Vale of Blackmoor.[2] Wages in these areas were much higher than the wages paid in other parts of Dorset and were generally around 12s. a week. Where allowances in kind were given agricultural wages were sometimes as low as 6s. and 7s. a week. At Wimborne labourers were either paid 10s. 6d. a week with no allowances or were paid 6s. a week and were allowed to purchase wheat at 6s. a bushel.[3] Other areas in which low wages were supplemented by grist were Kingston Russel, Stinsford, Warmwell, Tarrant Gunville, Crawford, Blandford, and Whitechurch.[4] In most cases labourers were permitted to purchase a bushel of wheat a week for 5s. or 6s. or a bushel of barley for 3s.

By 1812 agricultural wages in Dorset, according to a variety of sources, ranged from 7s. to 12s. a week. To some extent this level of wages was primarily due to the effects of the French war upon the agricultural sector calling for an increase in production whilst at the same time making heavy demands upon the local labour force for the army and coastal defences.[5] During Stevenson's survey of the county, labour shortages were reported at Kingston Russel, Frampton, and Melbury Osmund.[6] Stevenson noted,

> A considerable number of thrashing machines have been erected in this county, and nearly all of them within

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1 Ibid. p. 433.

2 Ibid. pp. 434-7.

3 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 431. A man with a wife and three children was expected to consume a bushel of wheat a week. Ibid. p. 453.

4 Ibid. pp. 428-33.

5 Labour shortages were also encountered at this time in the neighbouring county of Hampshire. See p. 420.

6 Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 428-9, 435.

> the present century: the principal inducement for using them is a scarcity of labourers, which, in a state of war-fare, may be expected to be felt most in the maritime districts.[1]

Falling prices, and the onset of an agricultural depression at the end of the war, brought the good times to an end for the farming community in Dorset. Trade in the domestic industries dwindled and there was a rise in unemployment in some of the larger towns.[2] Rural correspondents to the Board of Agriculture lamented the depressed state of agriculture in the county and its effect upon the labour force. At Norden, Blandford, and Charborough the condition of the agricultural labourers was said to be 'Bad, for want of employment' and 'Worse than in 1812'.[3] A state of stagnation in the rural domestic industries exacerbated the situation for many labourers as these industries had, in the past, provided them with a means of supplementing their incomes. Whereas during the war a woman could earn 6d. a day by spinning,[4] by 1818 there was said to be a 'great complaint . . . for the want of spinning'.[5] By the 1820's there were reports that the supply of agricultural labour was exceeding its demand and that wages were consequently being forced down.[6] Unemployed labourers

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1 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 144. The use of threshing machines caused considerable unrest in the county in the winter of 1830.

2 In Bridport a number of unemployed labourers rioted over the high price of bread and smashed the shop windows of millers and bakers in the town. The Dorchester and Sherborne Journal 10 May 1816, p. 3.

3 Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816; reprinted 1970), p. 74.

4 Stevenson, op. cit. p. 435.

5 D.R.O. P32/VE1. Marnhull Parish Vestry Minutes.

6 Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages 1824, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, p. 33. It was perhaps significant that the number of offences under the Game Laws in Dorset almost doubled between 1820 and 1824. Returns of the Number of Convictions under the Game Laws 1820-1826, Parl. Papers 1826-1827, XX, pp. 518-25.

were sent around the parish looking for work at whatever wages they could get with the knowledge that the parish would make their wages up to a subsistence level. Where this system operated labourers' wages fell to 10d. and 1s. a day.[1] At Sturminster Newton low and deficient wages were 'made-up' by amounts varying from 2s. to 5s. a week.[2] At Halstock parish the Vestry decreed that farmers who were willing to employ surplus labourers should pay them a wage of 1s. a day and 'if labourers force the parish to find them in work, them that have but one child out of work is to have but 6s. per week'.[3] Several parishes in the Sturminster Newton area of north-east Dorset had 70 or more able-bodied men out of work at one time and these were employed in the quarries for ten hours a day. An observer who saw this system in operation commented,

> The Overseer assured me that no other employment could be provided for them, that the farmers would not hire them, and that he could do nothing but send them in droves to wear out their days in unprofitable labour.[4]

Labourers who were fortunate enough to find regular work were generally paid 7s. a week.[5]

By November 1830 low wages and unemployment were prime causes of social unrest in Dorset. As one magistrate put it,

> The chief cause was a want of regular employment and better wages than they were receiving then. The first

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1 S.C. on Labourers' Wages 1824, P.P. 1824, VI, pp.32, 43-6. Labourers who were paid from the parish rates were called stem-men.

2 D.R.O. P71/OV7. Sturminster Newton Parish Overseer's Accounts, 1815-24.

3 D.R.O. P137/OV1. Halstock Parish Overseer's Accounts, 1815-43.

4 The Dorset County Chronicle 5 July 1832, p. 2. For this labour they were paid the unbelievably low wage of 2s. 10d. a week.

5 Abstract of Returns (Labourers' Wages) made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX, pp. 374-5.

> person who suffered by burning was generally the Overseer, who was made the object of vengeance by some of the Paupers who were in great numbers employed upon the roads at the very low wages of 2s. 6d. to 3s. per week.[1]

The labourers of the Vale of Blackmoor were said to be 'disaffected' and in other areas 'uneasy, discontented and sullen . . . as if their entire character had suddenly been altered'.[2] Mary Frampton, who was personally affected by the disturbances, noted the change in the labourers' attitude in her Journal:

> As the month advanced it became very gloomy, more than its proverbial horrors ever displayed before. A universal spirit of dissatisfaction pervades every class. The plentiful harvest, good potato crop, remarkably fine autumn weather without frost to impede the labourers of husbandry, appeared to have no effect in lessening the murmurs of discontent.[3]

The first major rising occurred on the 22 November at Bere Regis where the labourers demanded a wage of 10s. a week, and over the next few days similar assemblages took place at Handley, Cranbourne, Winterborne Kingston, Charborough, and Puddletown.[4] On the 27 November gangs of labourers from East and West Lulworth and Osmington assembled at Winfrith to demand an increase in their wages but they were dispersed by the local magistrates and a force of 160 special constables.[5] A troop of the Dorset

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1 Reports into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXXI, Appendix B.1., V, p. 137.

2 W. H. P. Okeden, 'The Agricultural Riots in Dorset in 1830', Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, LII (1931), p. 8. D. R. O. J. Frampton, Account of the Regiment of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry from its Reformation in 1830 (n.d.). Colonel James Frampton, of Moreton Hall, was in command of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry and played an active role in supressing the labourers' riots in 1830.

3 M. Frampton, The Journal of Mary Frampton from 1779 to 1846 (1885), p. 360. Mary Frampton was the daughter of James Frampton.

4 Ibid. Frampton (J.), op. cit.

5 Frampton (J.), op. cit.

Militia were sent to guard Moreton Hall, the family seat of James Frampton, as the labourers of Turner's Puddle, Bryant's Puddle, and Beer were insensed over his refusal to raise wages to 10s. a week and proposed to attack his house. As a result of this threat Moreton Hall was said to be 'barricaded like an Irish Mansion' and was guarded by day and night patrols.[1] By late November the labourers' disturbances had spread over a wide area of the county and wage meetings were accompanied by arson and threshing machine breaking riots.[2] Threshing machines were broken at Handley, Cranborne, Buckland Newton, Stour Provost, Farnham, Mappowder, Shaftsbury, Pentridge, and Bere Regis and in several other areas close to the Wiltshire and Hampshire borders.[3] However, by early December 1830 the Dorsetshire Yeomanry Cavalry, with military help, had effectively suppressed the labourers' movement and 62 prisoners awaited their trial for various offences.[4]

In addressing the Grand Jury at the Special Commission held to try the prisoners at Dorchester in January 1831, Mr. Justice Alderson did not consider that the distress, brought about by low wages, was a sufficient reason to explain the outbreak of unrest. The real causes were, he considered, 'early and improvident marriages', 'payment of . . . wages . . . from the poor's rate', 'the general spread of education', and 'on a population thus distressed and half instructed . . . evil men have been

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1 Ibid. Frampton (M.), op. cit. p. 360. Okeden, loc. cit. p. 10.

2 Frampton (J.), op. cit. A study of these riots has suggested that there were two main areas of disturbance in Dorset: the eastern inland area centred on Bere Regis, and the north-eastern area close to the southern boundaries of Wiltshire and Somerset. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, Captain Swing (1969), p. 127.

3 The Dorset County Chronicle 13 January 1831, pp. 3-4.

4 Frampton (J.), op. cit. Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. p. 308. Although the riots had ended incendiary fires continued throughout the winter.

too successfully practising their dangerous arts'. To Mr. Alderson the solution was clear:

> Poverty is indeed, I fear, inseparable from the state of the human race; but poverty itself, and the misery attendant upon it, would, no doubt, be greatly mitigated if a spirit of prudence were more generally diffused amongst the people, and if they understood more fully, and practised better, their civil, moral, and religious duties. By your advice . . . and relief of the distresses of the poorer classes . . . you will . . . prevent these evils from spreading, and retain and insure the tranquility of the realm and the happiness of the people.[1]

The outcome of the disturbances brought the labourers few material gains, though some farmers tended to lay aside their threshing machines.[2] In some areas a general agreement was reached amongst farmers to increase the wages of day labourers to 10s. a week.[3] In the Blandford area it was proposed to adopt the following scale of wages:

> Ten shillings a week to able-bodied men from 20 to 50 - seven shillings to lads from 16 to 20 - to boys in proportion, three and sixpence to the aged and infirm. The ten shillings to cover the maintainence of a man, his wife and two children - every additional child unable to work to be allowed the gallon loaf and threepence from the poor rate. . . . extra labourers for whom the farmers have no employment, but who are on the roads, should have seven shillings a week.[4]

At Hazelbury Bryan the parish Vestry divided the surplus labourers into three classes and offered them to local farmers at a fixed wage of 5s., 7s., and 8s., a week according to which class the labourer was in. Married labourers with children were also allowed a piece of rent-free land.[5] In

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[1] D.R.O. JP/19. The Charge of the Hon. Mr. Justice Alderson to the Grand Jury of the County of Dorset at the opening of the Special Commission at Dorchester. 11 January 1831.

[2] Frampton (M.), op. cit. p. 365.

[3] The Salisbury and Winchester Journal 29 November 1830, p. 4.

[4] Okeden, loc. cit. p. 9.

[5] D.R.O. P113/VE1. Hazelbury Bryan Vestry Minutes 1813-1839. 29 December 1830. The three classes were probably for single men, married men with no children, and married men with children.

December 1830 a scale of relief was established at Sturminster Newton for all categories of labour. Able-bodied labourers with a wife and child under fourteen years of age were given 6s. a week when the price of the quartern loaf was 8d., 8s. when the loaf was 10d., and so on. In addition to this 1s. 6d. a week was allowed for each extra child under fourteen years of age, 2s. for each child between fourteen and sixteen years, and 3s. for each child between sixteen and eighteen years. Able-bodied labourers employed by the parish were paid 6s. a week, and aged, infirm, and single persons were paid 3s. a week.[1] At Cann unemployed labourers were employed repairing the parish roads at 7s. a week.[2]

During the decade of the 1830's agricultural wages in Dorset were 7s. to 9s. a week. In 1830-31 9s. a week was paid to labourers employed on the Damer estate near Dorchester[3] and 7s. to 8s. 6d. a week was paid at Cranborne and Hazelbury Bryan in 1833-4.[4] An agricultural labourers' annual earnings at that time was made up as follows:

26 winter weeks	at	7s. 0d.
16 summer weeks	at	9s. 0d.
10 harvest weeks	at	9s. 0d.
A harvest beer allowance		25s. 0d.
Free fuel allowance		20s. 0d.

This total gave the labourer an annual average weekly wage of 8s. 6d.[5] The average weekly wage for the county was said to be 9s. 'with

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1 D.R.O. JP/310. A Scale of Relief paid by Overseers for Sturminster Newton. 20 December 1830.

2 D.R.O. P39/VE2. Cann Parish Vestry Minutes 1830-1883. 16 December 1832.

3 D.R.O. D.188. Damer, op. cit.

4 Reports into the Poor Laws, P.P. 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A.1., pp. 11-18.

5 Ibid. p. 20.

Indulgences', though able-bodied single men employed on the parish roads only received 3s. a week.[1] Lower wages than these were paid to labourers employed at Belhuse farm. In the early 1830's agricultural wages there were, on average, 7s. 2d. to 7s. 6d. a week, but these fell to 7s. in 1835 and remained at that level until the end of the decade.[2] Unemployed labourers in the parish of Beaminster were paid according to a scale of allowances laid down by the overseer of the poor in 1834:

A single man	4s. 0d. a week
A man and wife	4s. 6d. a week
A man, wife and 1 child	5s. 0d. a week
A man, wife and 2 children	6s. 0d. a week
A man, wife and 3 children	6s. 6d. a week
A man, wife and 4 children	7s. 0d. a week

Sixpence a week was allowed for additional children and deductions were made from these totals if any member of the family earned any money from another source. Further deductions were made for provisions, mainly bread and potatoes, purchased from the parish. For example, a man with a wife and four children was usually employed for six days at 1s. 2d. a day and, after purchasing four loaves and 90 pounds of potatoes, received 3s. to 3s. 6d. in cash. A married couple with no children usually had three loaves and 40 pounds of potatoes from the parish and earned 2s. 3d. for working six days a week.[3] In the Sherborne area unemployed labourers were set to work quarrying stones at wages '$\frac{1}{6}$ less than the ordinary price'.[4] At Tarrant Launceston a labourer's weekly wage was reckoned to be worth

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1 Ibid. pp. 11, 13.

2 D.R.O. D10/AE/53-4. Belhuse, op. cit.

3 D.R.O. P57/OV27. Beaminster Parish Overseer's Accounts 1834.

4 D.R.O. Sherborne Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). 28 May 1836.

a bushel of wheat and a shilling, or 8s. a week,[1] whilst at Wareham and Purbeck 8s. was considered to be insufficient for the maintenance of a labourer and his family.[2]

Contemporary observers writing in the 1830's and 1840's leave little doubt that agricultural wages in Dorset had scarcely risen since the 1790's. In 1838 the Rev. Octavious Piers noted that cash wages in the county were 6s. to 7s. a week and were supplemented by an extra shilling or so a week by piece work and allowances in kind.[3] Alexander Somerville found that on average agricultural wages were 7s. a week for married men and 4s. to 5s. a week for single men in the 1840's, and this view was confirmed by John Bright who found that wages were 'pretty steady' at 7s. a week.[4] In the Blandford area labourers' wages were 7s. to 8s. a week, though 9s. a week could be earned by task work.[5] As late as the 1850's James Caird could note:

> On the smaller farms . . . the weekly wages are as low as 7s. and even 6s. 6d.; and we were told that even that small sum was in many cases paid partly in inferior wheat, charged at a price which the farmer could not realise in the market.[6]

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1 Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1843, XII (1843), p. 89.

2 D.R.O. Wareham and Purbeck Poor Law Union Minute Book (Uncatalogued). 23 October 1838.

3 O. Piers, A Few Hints to Landowners and Farmers Throughout the Kingdom; more particularly to those in the County of Dorset (Dorchester, 1838), pp. 5-6. Piece work was called 'tut work' in Dorset.

4 A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough (Manchester, 1852), p. 335. Ploughmen and carters earned 8s. a week. L. B. Powell, 'When John Bright went West', The Guardian 21 February 1968, p. 9. Labourers usually had 1s. a week deducted from their wages for cider and 1s. 2d. for their cottage rent, thus leaving them with 6s. or 7s. a week for food, fuel, and clothing.

5 Reports on Women and Children in Agriculture, P.P. 1843, XII, p. 80.

6 J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 72. In 1855 L. H. Ruegg noted that labourers' wages were 7s. a week plus allowances. L. H. Ruegg, 'Farming in Dorsetshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society, XV (1855), p. 445.

Allowances in kind, free fuel, rent free cottages, free potato allotments, cottage gardens, and pig keeping were characteristic features of rural life in Dorset in the early nineteenth century. In 1815 William Stevenson noted that labourers were provided with free fuel, 'almost everyone keeps a pig', and 'the greater part of the poor have a house, a garden, a potato ground in the field, and fuel, and medical aid . . . and wheat at a cheap rate'.[1] Such benefits as these were important to the general standard of living of labourers in receipt of low wages as they added a shilling or two to their weekly incomes. Labourers bought their wheat and barley for a shilling below its market price, whilst the value of a rent-free cottage and an allotment was 1s. 6d. to 2s. and 1s. a week respectively.[2] Against these advantages, however, must be set the disadvantages these allowances frequently contained. Stevenson, for example, noted that by allowing labourers to cultivate potatoes on the fallows a farmer could keep them 'more under subjection' as they forfeited the crop if they left his employment.[3] Similarly, Somerville noted that some farmers were hostile to the allotment system and would not employ a man if he had an allotment.[4] Labourers who enjoyed the benefits of a rent free cottage sometimes had the rent deducted from their wages by their employer. Stevenson commented,

> A man is under an obligation to work for the farmer in whose cottage he resides; apparently under the idea that he is receiving a part of his wages, every day in house rent. Under these circumstances the liberty which is left to the labourer is very small indeed.[5]

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[1] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 454.

[2] Piers, loc. cit. pp. 5-6.

[3] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 455.

[4] Somerville, op. cit. p. 33.

[5] Stevenson, op. cit. p. 456. Powell, op. cit. p. 9.

The practice of paying wages in kind was also abused. Labourers were sometimes overcharged for their grist and were obliged to take inferior corn (called tailings) at the same price as good quality corn. Butter, which was sometimes unfit for the market, was sold to labourers 'at a price above the market price of good butter', and the meat they bought was of a poor quality and at times came from a 'giddy sheep' which had been killed 'just afore he died'.[1] Although some labourers kept a pig they ate very little of it as it was usually sold in order to purchase clothes or pay the year's rent on their cottage. Somerville noted,

> Those families who feed a pig sell it, more frequently to pay for shoes and rent than they eat it. . . . But in many parts of Dorset no pigs are allowed to be kept by labourers. The dictum . . . is understood and acted on in Dorset - 'No labourer can be <u>honest</u> and feed a pig!'[2]

III. <u>Conclusion</u>

At this point it is necessary to combine the cost of living index with the index of agricultural wages in order to determine what effect the interaction of these two variables had upon the trend of real wages. To what extent did agricultural labourers' wages match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the cost of living and what effect did their interaction have upon the purchasing power of wages?

So far it has been assumed, as a first step, that the labourers in this study were in full and constant employment throughout the whole period under review.[3] Given that assumption, it is clear that Dorset, because of its geographical isolation, was essentially a low-wage county

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[1] Osborne, op. cit. pp. 16-17. Caird, op. cit. p. 72.

[2] Somerville, op. cit. pp. 335-6.

[3] Later on this assumption is modified in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

compared with, say, Nottinghamshire (influenced by industrial expansion) or Kent (influenced by the metropolitan economy) where wages were 30 to 50 per cent. higher. In looking at the relationship between wages and the cost of living in Figure 53 it is clear that, for the years where comparable data is available, both series tended to rise and fall together with the latter series, being the more volatile of the two, lying on a much higher plane than the former. The fact that wage increases were badly out of step with the more violent swings in the cost of living meant that in certain years, as during the Napoleonic war, the purchasing power of wages fell by a substantial degree. The extent to which this occurred in certain years is shown below:

	Cost of Living %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[1] (Index)
1795	+28	+7	84
1800	+75	+29	74
1806	+49	+29	86

These figures suggest that during some of the worst years for inflation in the war-time period the cost of living outpaced agricultural wages by an average margin of 21, 46, and 20 per cent. respectively. Indeed, as in the case of the other counties in this study in this period, as the general price level rose at a considerably faster rate than agricultural wages, the index of agricultural wages and the index of real wages tended to move in opposite directions. For the agricultural labourers' standard of living, the main consequence of this situation was that the index of real wages fell by an average of 16, 26, and 14 per cent. respectively in these years.

If that was the position of labourers in regular employment, then the conditions of those labourers who suffered from bouts of winter

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[1] 1790 = 100.

unemployment,must have been far worse. The Board of Agriculture's Report for 1816 and the parish records for the county indicate that from the end of the war until the 'Swing' riots unemployment was an ever-constant problem over much of Dorset and was a reason, besides the absence of industrial employment, why wages were so low in the county. Under these conditions the rural labouring classes were obliged to look to public relief and private charity to supplement the deficiencies in their incomes. When the purchasing power of wages fell, allowances in kind gave the labourers certain compensatory benefits even though the value and motives for 'giving' these was sometimes dubious. The 'Swing' riots brought the labourers no discernible gains. Agricultural wages did not increase and there was a general hardening of attitude on behalf of magistrates, landowners, and farmers towards any interference in the labour market which sought to increase the price of labour.[1] According to one local exponent of this view, combinations of labourers who sought to increase wages were 'evil', 'ungodly', and 'unscriptural', and 'such a state of things as cheap bread and high wages for the Agricultural Labourer never had and never could exist in this world'.[2]

Such an attitude as this was obviously conditioned by the 'Swing' riots of 1830 and the Tolpuddle incident of 1834 and was probably another important reason why agricultural labourers' wages were so low in the county. Indeed, the final word on this matter was aptly put by a local magistrate:

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[1] During the 1830 riots a few farmers agreed to the labourers' demands and increased their wages to 10s. a week. This was widely disapproved of as it was believed that it encouraged the disturbances. Frampton (J.), op. cit.

[2] O. Piers, An Affectionate Warning to the Agricultural Labourers in the Parish of Preston-cum-Sutton in the County of Dorset (Preston, 1838), p. 4.

> Let the Farmer and his Labourers make their own free and unfettered bargains. Let us, as Magistrates confine ourselves to the seeing . . . that both parties fully and fairly complete their contracts. . . . Let Magistrates refuse the loaf to the able Labourers, and labour left to itself, must and will, like every other commodity, find its true level. Where it is wanted it will be demanded. Where it is well supplied it will be well paid for. . . . the Poor must be left very much to the care and kindness of their more wealthy and natural Protectors. . . . The Poor must live, to use their own forcible and homely expression, 'from hand to mouth'.[1]

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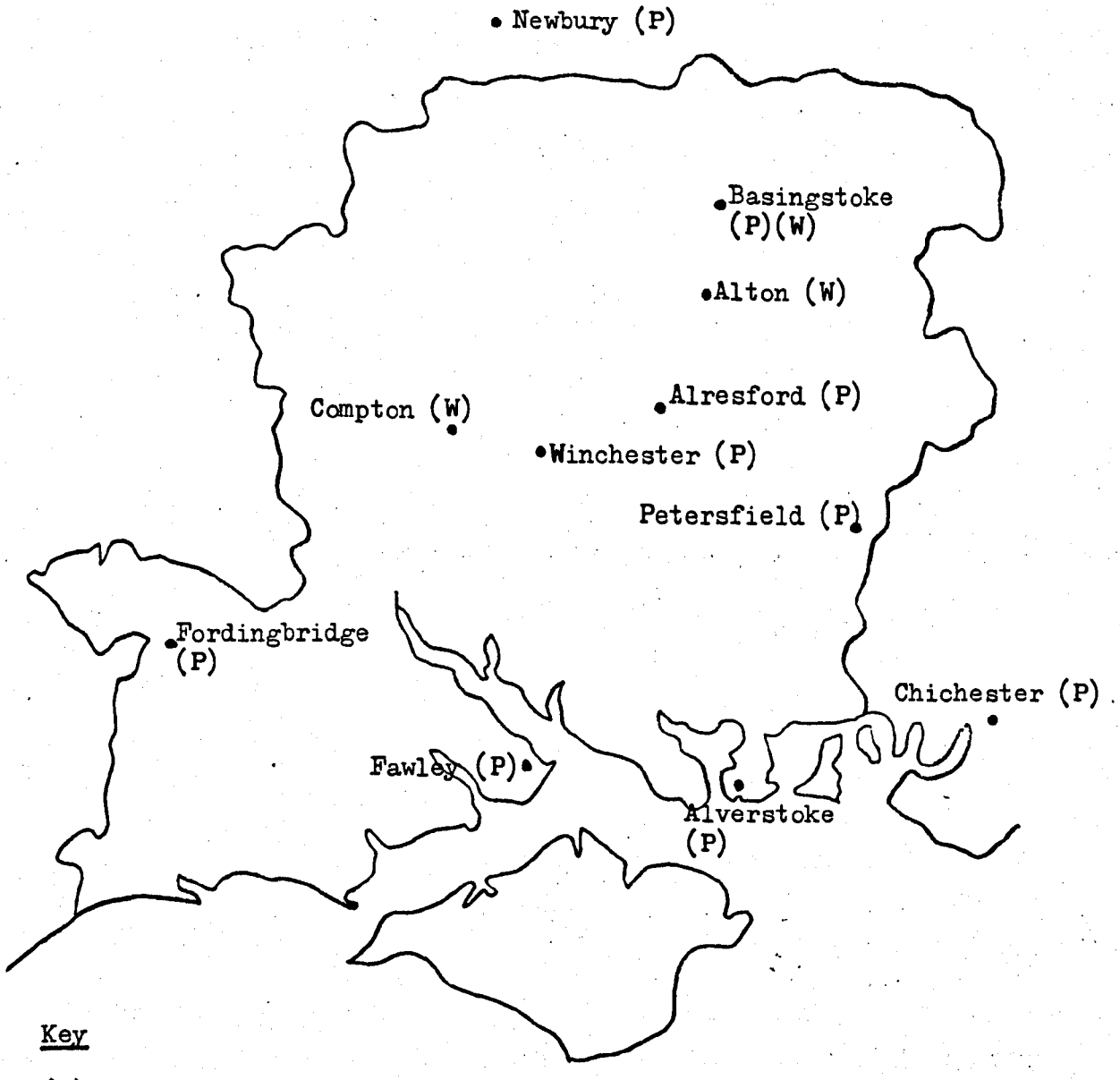
[1] D. O. P. Okeden, A Letter to the Members in Parliament for Dorsetshire on the Subject of Poor Relief and Labourers' Wages (Blandford, 1830), pp. 15-18.

MAP 8

Location of the Main Sources of Wage and Price Statistics in Hampshire



CHAPTER 16

THE COST OF LIVING IN HAMPSHIRE, 1790-1840

I. Introduction

The pattern of agricultural development in Hampshire in the early nineteenth century was, like that of Dorset, closely linked to the growth of external markets such as Portsmouth and London.[1] Corn, sheep, and cattle were the main agricultural commodities produced in the county[2] and these were distributed through an excellent system of markets. Writing in 1813, Charles Vancouver commented,

> Within the county, and at no great distance from its eastern borders, there are some of the best corn and cattle markets in the kingdom. These places generally afford opportunities for obtaining the best times price for all sort of agricultural produce, and at the same time exhibit assortments of manufactured goods, in all the variety of home or foreign taste, for domestic consumption.[3]

The roads in the county were described as, 'In general, good; some, the very best in the kingdom',[4] whilst water communications, especially the Basingstoke, Andover, and Kennet canals, were said to bring 'considerable advantages' to the farming community in the area.[5] In many areas commercial farming was specifically directed towards serving the needs of external markets. In the Kingsclere area of north Hampshire, for example, the main commercial activity there was malting and rearing

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1 In the seventeenth century large quantities of cereals were sent by sea from Hampshire to London. F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market, 1540-1640', Economic History Review, 1st ser. V, (1935), pp. 47-9.

2 C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight (1813), p. 6.

3 Ibid. p. 295.

4 Ibid. p. 391.

5 Vancouver, op. cit. pp. 393, 402.

livestock for London.[1] Fish farming, in fresh water ponds, was carried on in the Odiham area of north east Hampshire, whilst large quantities of fish caught off the south coast were sent to London, Bath, and Oxford.[2] In the livestock areas of the county calves were reared to provide veal for London, Portsmouth, Winchester, Reading, and Salisbury markets.[3]

One important consequence of Hampshire's trade with the capital was that the supply price of agricultural produce in the county was strongly influenced by the demands of London. This fact was noted by contemporary writers on agricultural affairs and is also evident from the empirical evidence for the county. Charles Vancouver, for example, whilst undertaking his agricultural survey of the county in the early nineteenth century, noted that 'The price of animal food through the county is much influenced by the London markets'.[4] The extent of the similarity of prices in London and Hampshire is readily seen, for example, if the prices of bread in each region are compared. Indeed, it is evident from Figure 55 that between 1790 and 1815 the price of the quartern loaf (wheaten) in London and Hampshire were very similar.[5] Bread

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1 Ibid. p. 396.

2 Ibid. pp. 397, 428.

3 Ibid. p. 362.

4 Vancouver, op. cit. p. 388. In a similar vein Adam Smith noted that 'The prices of bread and butcher's meat are generally the same of very nearly the same through the greater part of the United Kingdom'. A. Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (ed. E. Cannon, 1961), p. 83.

5 These findings are consistent with Granger and Elliott's study of movements of wheat prices in London, Winchester, and Lincoln during the eighteenth century. The authors found that wheat prices moved closely in step with one another in each of these regions as the appearance of price disequilibria in one market was quickly neutralised by the transporting of wheat there from other markets. C. W. J. Granger and C. M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XX, 2 (1967), pp. 261-2.

prices in both areas fluctuated in parallel series along the same trend, sharing similar peaks and troughs in price,[1] with the London series lying on a higher plane than the Hampshire series from 1800 to 1815.

Owing to a lack of information on commodity prices for Hampshire it has been necessary to confine the index to bread prices alone. The main statistical sources used here have been derived from five areas, Winchester, Basingstoke, Newbury, Petersfield and Chichester, and the price of the quartern loaf in each of these areas forms the basis of the bread index.[2]

II. Bread Prices 1790-1840

As bread was the most important single commodity in the agricultural labourers' diet, absorbing as much as two-thirds of their total expenditure on food and drink, its price was of paramount importance to their standard of living. Indeed, so important was this commodity that, in times of dearth, any abnormal increase in its price often outraged local communities and provoked an outbreak of rioting against farmers, corn dealers, and bakers.

In examining the long-run trend of bread prices in Hampshire in Figure 55 it is evident that the main peaks and troughs were closely associated with major variations in the weather and the state of domestic harvests. Starting from an average price of 6¾d. in 1790 the price of

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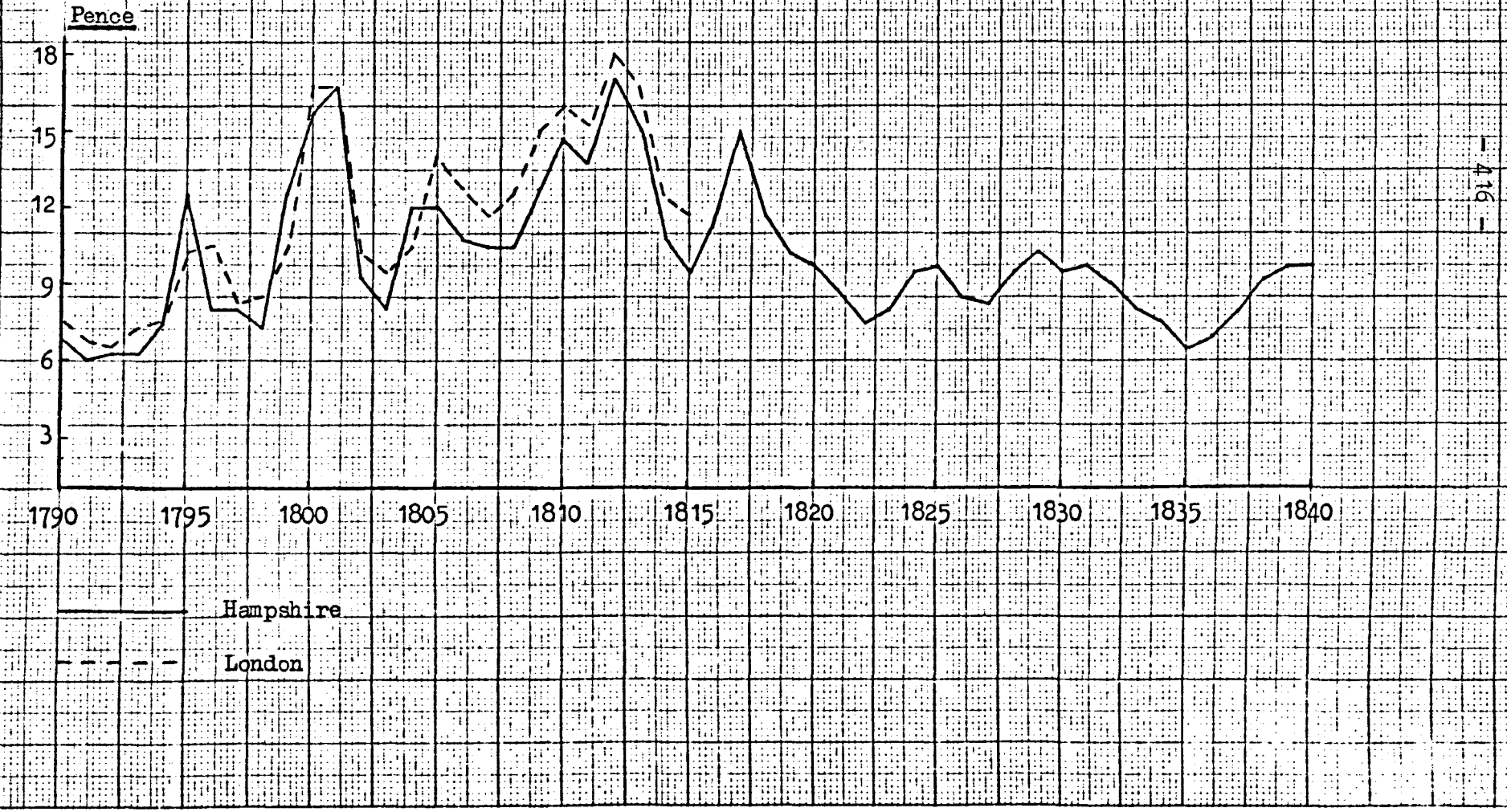
[1] A similar relationship to this existed between bread prices in London and Glasgow in this period. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

[2] These prices were set by the Assize of Bread in these areas and were published at weekly intervals in The Hampshire Chronicle. As the Assize price was set by local magistrates according to the prevailing price of wheat in local markets it must be regarded as a reliable indicator of the cost of living. See Map 8, p. 412.

FIG. 55

The Price of the Quartern Loaf (Wheaten) in Hampshire and London 1790–1840



bread fluctuated on a rising trend over the early war period to reach 1s. 4¾d. by 1801. This price represented an increase of 140 per cent. and was the direct cause of an outbreak of unrest in the county. During March of 1800 a number of threatening letters were posted in the Odiham area addressed to 'The Damnd Villans of Farmers that will hold the corn that please God to send for the people of the Earth away from them'.[1] The grievance of the writer, like that of the 'Stervid' labourers in Essex, was clear,

> If there is not a Speedy Alteration made for the Good of the Poore that You that have corn thinking to make Your Fortunes of Shall have it Burnt to the Ground wether It Be in Stacks or Barns for the fire that took Place Last Week was But the Beginning of Your Trouble we know Every Stack of Corn about the Country and Every Barn that have Corn Concealed in it for the Purpose of Starving the Poore.[2]

By September the plight of the labouring 'Poore' was desperate and at Winchester a crowd assembled there to demand a reduction in the price of bread to 1s. 3d. a gallon.[3] Some people tried to persuade the farmers to reduce their wheat prices whilst others forced dealers to sell their butter at 1s. 0d. a pound and meat at 4½d. and 5d. a pound.[4] Similar disturbances to these occurred at Romsey, whilst at Alresford the populace there assembled together and hissed at the farmers and millers in the market place. The local magistrate, fearing an outbreak of violence, read out the Riot Act and called on the Fawley Light Dragoons to patrol the streets.[5]

Bread prices in Hampshire fell precipitously after 1801, owing to

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1 The Hampshire Chronicle 24 March 1800, p. 4.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. 22 September 1800, p. 4.

4 Ibid.

5 The Hampshire Chronicle 29 September 1800, p. 4.

improved harvests and an increase in imports of Baltic corn,[1] to reach an average of 8d. by 1803. However, a run of bad weather and deficient harvests after that point[2] steadily increased the price of the quartern loaf until it reached 1s. 5d. by 1812. This was the highest point reached by bread prices in Hampshire and represented a price increase of 152 per cent. since 1790.[3] Improvements in the weather and domestic harvests after 1812 reduced the average price of bread to 9½d. by 1815 and, apart from a temporary rise to 1s. 3d. in 1817, prices continued to fall to reach 7½d. by 1822. Two deficient harvests in 1823 and 1824[4] raised the average price of the quartern loaf to 9¾d. by 1825 and thereafter, to 1840, the price fluctuated within a range of 6½d. and 10¼d.

III. The Cost of Living

Given the dominant role played by bread prices in shaping the trend of the cost of living in the other counties in this study, it is evident from Figure 55 that the bread index for Hampshire followed a familiar cycle. Indeed, the trend of bread prices fell into three well-defined periods: a period of violent inflation from 1793 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation (except for a marked rise in 1817) from 1812 to 1822, followed by a period of recovery from 1822 to the early 1830's. The main peaks, occurring in 1795, 1800-1, 1812, and 1817, and the main trough, in 1822, coincided exactly with the main peaks and troughs in the cost of living

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[1] T. Tooke and W. Newmarch, A History of Prices from 1792 to 1856 (1838), I, pp. 237-8.

[2] Ibid. pp. 266-71, 293-300, 319-25.

[3] Bread prices in all the counties in this study reached their highest point in 1812.

[4] Tooke and Newmarch, op. cit. pp. 132-4.

in all the counties in this study. The main implication of this conclusion is that if the prices of other consumables were available for Hampshire it is probable that they would tend to share the same general trend as bread prices, as they did in the other counties, and would, because of their relatively lower weight, tend to confirm rather than alter the characteristic shape of the index. Second, as the general direction of change in the cost of living in the main sub-periods was almost identical in all these counties, and all (except Nottinghamshire) were strongly influenced by London, the suggestion is that they were all part of one large market area in which all were being subjected to the same forces of supply and demand.

Given the level and trend of bread prices in Hampshire, to what extent was this sequence matched by similar changes in agricultural labourers' wages? What effect did the interaction of the bread index and the wage index have upon the trend of real wages in Hampshire?

CHAPTER 17

REAL WAGES AND THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN HAMPSHIRE 1790-1840

I. Introduction

Although Hampshire was primarily involved in agricultural production in the early nineteenth century the county also had its compliment of domestic industries. The production of wool, silk, leather, and pottery was located in several districts whilst the industries connected with the county's maritime economy were engaged in a diversity of activities which made considerable demands upon the local labour force.[1] Agriculture and industry competed for labour and, as Hampshire lay in close proximity to London, the metropolis also exerted a strong influence upon its labour supply and local wage rates.[2] In certain years, as during the Napoleonic war, the relative attractiveness of non-agricultural employment seriously depleted the supply of agricultural labour and caused farmers to complain about the scarcity of hands. Charles Vancouver noted this tendency during his agricultural survey of the county in 1813:

> There is scarcely any part of this county that does not afford a temptation at no great distance, for withdrawing from the common labours of the field, the resident peasantry of its neighbourhood, and rendering a supply of labourers as uncertain, as on the most pressing occasions, they are difficult to obtain.
>
> The peat meadows in Berkshire draw numbers from the north western parts of the county. The forests, wastes, and woodlands, allure many to task-work in such places, cutting wood and raising fuel. The saltings and fisheries on the coast offer employment for a number of hands during the summer; a number are continually employed in the transport of timber from the woods to the canals, and

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[1] C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight (1813), pp. 6, 395.

[2] A. Young, A Six Weeks Tour Through the Southern Counties of England and Wales (1772), p. 335. Vancouver, op. cit. pp. 68-9.

> other boatable waters; and to crown the whole, Portsmouth, and the other shipyards on the coast, afford a constant market for all the prime and picked labourers in the country, leaving little behind but feebleness and debility, to carry forward the common labours of the county. . . . In the Berkshire peatmeads, a man, his wife, and two children, will readily earn a guinea a week the greater part of the summer season; . . . Temptations of a similar nature are afforded by the woods and forests along the sea coasts, and in the neighbourhood of many of the large towns, all of which contribute to a great scarcity of hands at particular seasons, and give rise to well-founded complaints among the farmers.[1]

This chapter is primarily concerned with the earnings of agricultural labourers who were employed in arable cultivation on various estates in the county. The main sources of statistical evidence have been obtained from three estates; Lord Bolton's Hackwood Estate Accounts,[2] the Gatehouse Farm Accounts,[3] and the Holland Farm Accounts.[4] All the labourers employed on these estates were engaged by the week at varying rates of seasonal pay and an arithmetic average of their annual earnings forms the basis for measuring changes in their standard of living.[5] At various points the wage index has been compared with the bread index in order to determine what happened to the purchasing power of wages.

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1 Vancouver, op. cit. pp. 384-5. See also F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 198.

2 H.R.O. 11 M49/25-45. Lord Bolton. Hackwood Estate and Farm Accounts. Hackwood lies near Basingstoke in the northern part of the county. See Map 8.

3 H.R.O. 35 M63/36-43. Thomas Gatehouse of Compton. Farm Accounts. Compton lies in central Hampshire near Winchester.

4 H.R.O. 4M 51/213. Farm Account Book of Thomas Holland. These Accounts relate to the Alton area in the north-east of the county.

5 At various points these wages have been compared with the wages quoted in contemporary printed sources. In order to distinguish between estate wages and wages derived from contemporary printed sources in Figure 56 the latter have been marked with a dot (.). See p. 78 for a discussion on the relationship between estate wages and farm wages.

II. Agricultural Wages: Trends and Relationships

The relationship between agricultural labourers' wages, the cost of living, and the trend of real wages in Hampshire is shown in Figures 56-58.[1] On examining these relationships it is clear that, in the years for which comparable data is available, wages and bread prices tended to rise and fall together with the latter series, being more volatile than the former, tending to outstrip wages by a substantial margin over the period of the Napoleonic war.

In looking at the level of agricultural wages at the beginning of the period under review it is apparent that the average wage was about 7s. to 8s. 6d. a week. Labourers employed by Thomas Gatehouse at Compton were paid 7s. a week, and David Davies' study of the earnings of 18 agricultural labourers in 1789 showed that wages of 7s. to 8s. 6d. a week were usual in the county.[2] Wages remained at 7s. a week at Compton until 1794; similar wages to these were paid at Petersfield.[3] The rise in prices in 1795 was accompanied by an increase in wages to 8s. at Compton and elsewhere[4] but, as the index of bread prices increased by a greater amount than wages, the index of real wages fell to 62 in that year. Compared with 1790, bread prices increased by 85 per cent. by 1795 whilst wages increased by only 14 per cent. F. M. Eden, in noting this

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[1] The real wage index is obtained by dividing the wage index by the cost of living index. It is important to point out that these estimates are based on the assumption of full and constant employment and must be regarded as being generous. Later on in the chapter this assumption is modified in order to introduce a degree of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

[2] D. Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (1795), pp. 164-9. Davies collected his information from the parishes of Crawley, Long Parish, Monk Sherborne, and Basing.

[3] Eden, op. cit. p. 195.

[4] Annals of Agriculture, XXV (1796), p. 625.

FIG. 56

Agricultural Labourers' Average Weekly Wage Earnings in Hampshire 1790-1840

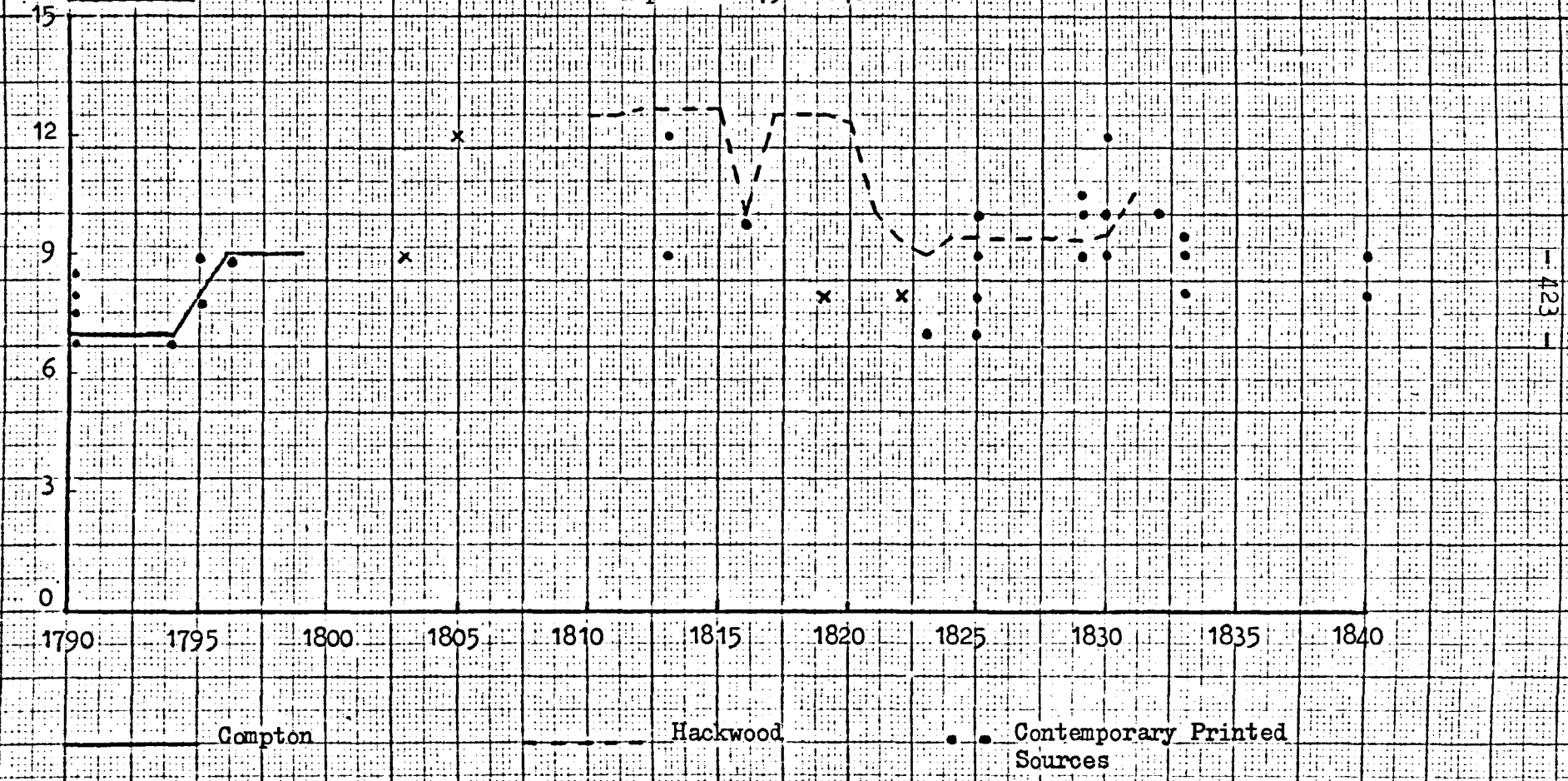
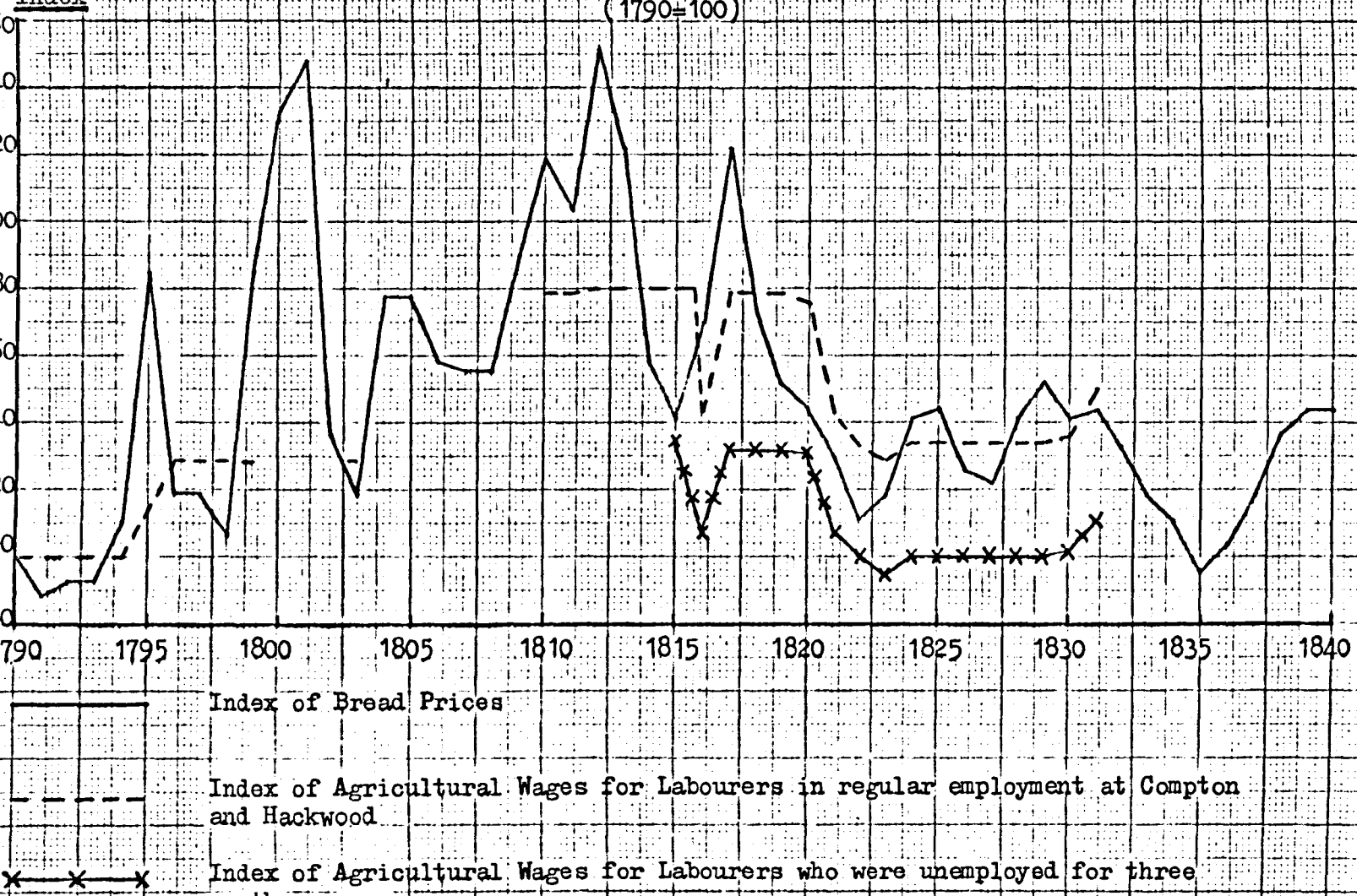


FIG. 57

Agricultural Labourers' Wages and the Cost of Living in Hampshire 1790–1840

(1790=100)



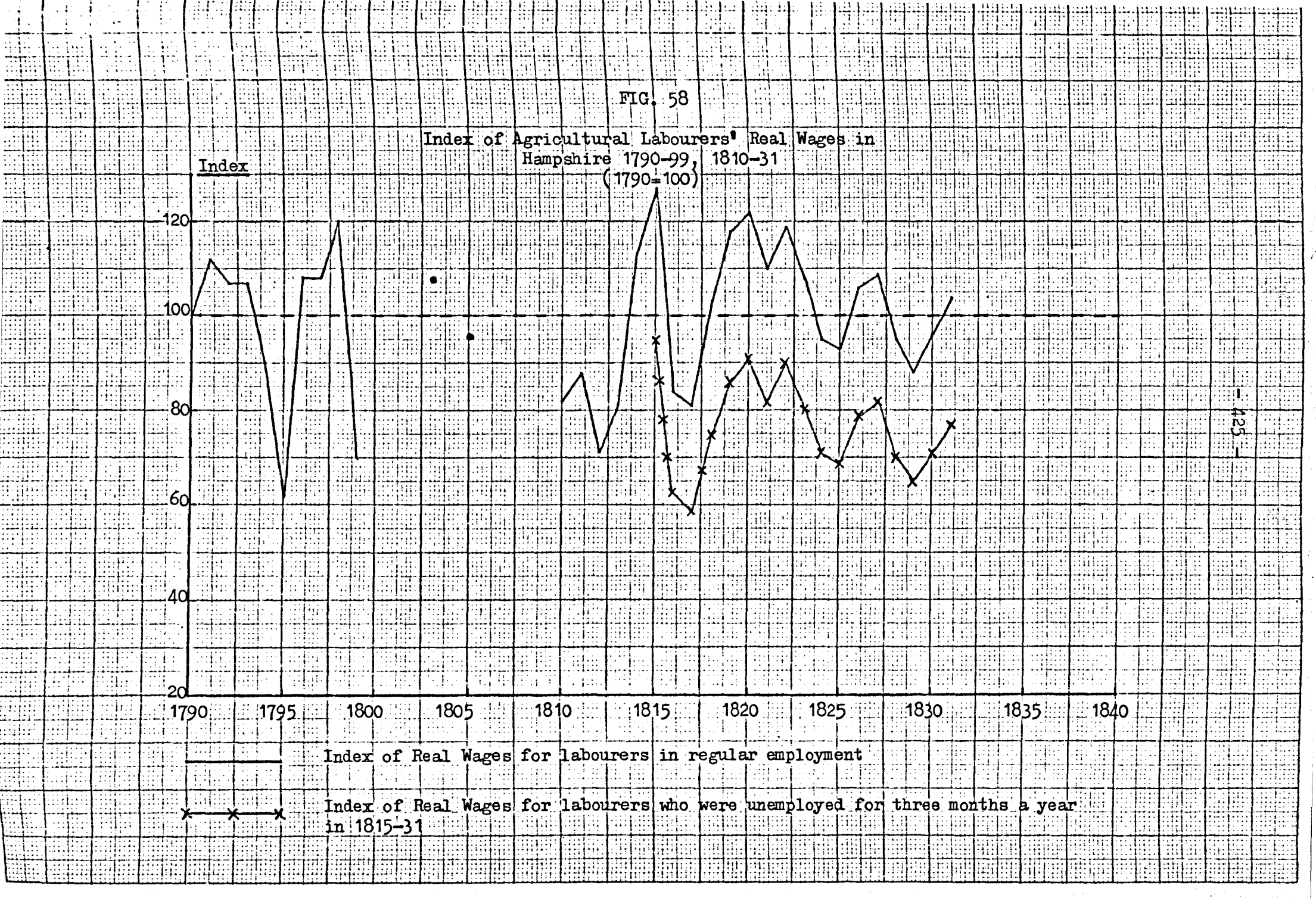
Index of Bread Prices

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers in regular employment at Compton and Hackwood

Index of Agricultural Wages for Labourers who were unemployed for three months a year

FIG. 58

Index of Agricultural Labourers' Real Wages in Hampshire 1790-99, 1810-31 (1790=100)



disparity, commented, 'The high prices of provisions is much felt among the labouring classes'.[1] The most serious result of this price increase was a 38 per cent. reduction in real wages and a marked diminution in the labourers' standard of living. A further consequence of the high price of bread was that many labourers were obliged to substitute potatoes for wheaten bread in their diets, and potatoes, bread, and tea became their usual diet at that time.[2]

Agricultural labourers' wages increased to 9s. a week by 1796 at Compton, and elsewhere in the county,[3] and remained at that level until 1799. Two spot wage figures for 1803 and 1805 suggest that labourers' wages at Compton increased from 9s. to 12s. a week between those two dates. By 1810 agricultural labourers employed on Lord Bolton's Hackwood estates were paid 12s. 6d. a week and their wages remained at that level until the end of the war. Similar wages to these were also paid on Thomas Holland's farm at Alton. Charles Vancouver made the following observation on agricultural wages in the county:

> The stated daily labour through the county may be taken in the winter at 9s., in the summer at 12s. per week. The hours of work should be from light to dark, with half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner; and in the summer from six to six, with the same intervals or respite from labour. In summer time, when engaged in piece-work, the labourers will commonly be absent from their homes from five till seven, in which case they usually allow themselves half an hour to breakfast, one hour for dinner, and half an hour between four and five in the afternoon. In hay time, the wages of 2s. per day are continued, with drink and occasional eating. In harvest the same wages.[4]

Although agricultural wages were high at 12s. 6d. or more a week at

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1 Eden, op. cit. p. 198.

2 Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 304-9.

3 Ibid. XXV (1796), p. 625.

4 Vancouver, op. cit. pp. 385-6. Women, boys, and girls were paid 8d. a day.

Hackwood, Alton and elsewhere bread prices, by the end of the war, had risen by a greater amount. Whereas, compared with 1790, agricultural wages increased by 80 per cent. by 1812, bread prices increased by 152 per cent. with the result that the index of real wages fell by 29 per cent. The deterioration in real wages was offset to some extent by the practice, adopted by some farmers, of supplying their labourers with cheap wheat at 6s. a bushel. For example, a man with a wife and two children was allowed half a bushel of wheat a week; men with large families to support were allowed a peck of wheat for each additional child above that number.[1]

At the end of the Napoleonic war a marked fall in agricultural prices and profits brought considerable distress to the farming community in the county. The fall in corn prices was particularly felt by arable farmers who began to reduce wages and dismiss part of their labour force in order to reduce their costs. Agricultural wages fell to about 10s. a week and in a number of parishes contemporary observers saw 'Great numbers unemployed' and described the labourers' distress as 'most alarming'.[2] Some respite was gained in the following year, however, when grain prices experienced a temporary rise to their war-time level. Compared with 1790, the index of bread prices increased by 122 per cent. by 1817 whilst wages rose by only 79 per cent. As a result of these differences the index of real wages fell to 81 by 1817.

The index of bread prices fell continually between 1817 and 1822 and was accompanied by a marked fall in labourers' wages at Hackwood. Agricultural wages fell to 9s. 4d. a week by 1822 but, as bread prices fell by a

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[1] Vancouver, op. cit. p. 388.

[2] Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1816; reprinted 1970), p. 93.

greater amount than this the index of real wages improved to reach 119.[1] Labourers who were not in regular employment, however, did not fare as well as this. In Fawley parish, for example, married men who were out of work in 1819-22 had to subsist on 8s. a week; other labourers received only 1s. a day from the parish. A widow with three children was allowed 5s. a week by the parish and another widow with seven children, 'neither of which are unable to gain their livelihood', was allowed 10s. a week. People who kept a dog were refused relief.[2]

During the latter half of the 1820's agricultural labourers' wages at Hackwood averaged 9s. 5d. a week, though lower wages than these were paid in other parts of the county. William Cobbett mentioned wages of 7s. to 9s. a week in 1823-5 and wondered how a married labourer could exist on such low wages.[3] The state of the labourers in the Binley area caused Cobbett to comment,

> These poor creatures, that I behold here, pass their lives amidst flocks of sheep; but, never does a morsel of mutton enter their lips.[4]

Similar wages to those quoted by Cobbett, 7s. to 9s. a week, prevailed over a wide area of the county during the mid 1820's.[5] Unemployment, low wages, and the labourers' resentment towards the use of threshing machines in the late 1820's were factors which precipitated an outbreak of rioting in Hampshire in 1830.[6] Popular concern over the causes of rural distress

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[1] See Figure 58, p. 425.

[2] H.R.O. 25 M60/22. Fawley Parish Select Vestry Minutes.

[3] W. Cobbett, Rural Rides (G. Woodcock (ed.), 1967), pp. 136, 260.

[4] Ibid. p. 280.

[5] Abstract of Returns (Labourers' Wages) made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers, 1825, XIX, pp. 360-82.

[6] A. M. Colson, The Revolt of the Hampshire Agricultural Labourers and its Causes, 1812-1831 (London University M.A. thesis, 1937), passim. The labourers' movement gained its greatest momentum in Hampshire and Wiltshire. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, Captain Swing (1969), p. 116.

were expressed by a labourer from the parish of Newchurch in November 1830:

> Much distress in England was never known before . . . thousands are forced to beg from door to door . . . the Labourers are sorely oppressed. All for the want of Employment they are in great distress - Their children crying out for bread - Alas what shall I do - I have got none the Mothers cries you Father's nought to do - In Country Town and Villages the Poor they are oppressed - For Machinery is all in use the Poor men to distress - Machinery is all the go in Country and in Town - For to distress poor working men they keep their wages down.[1]

By mid November 1830 the Hampshire labourers had 'felt their strength' and there were several reports of arson, wage meetings, and attacks upon farm machinery.[2] Large numbers of armed labourers from Wonston, Hunton, Mitcheldyer, Stratton, Borten Stacey, Chilbolton, and Long Parish assembled at Sutton Scotney and marched from there to Stratton, smashing a number of threshing and chaff-cutting machines on their way. When the labourers were confronted by the local magistrate they demanded an increase in their wages to 12s. a week for married men and 9s. a week for single men.[3] Following a riot at Whitchurch a meeting of local farmers agreed to pay married men with three children 12s. a week plus a quartern loaf for each child above that number. Single men were to be paid 7s. a week and given 'the liberty to better their condition at any time'.[4] Over the following few days riots, often accompanied by demands for money and victuals, were reported at Stockbridge, Houghton, Bossington, King's Somborne, Itchen, Swathling, Stoneham, Littleton,

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1 H.R.O. Hampshire Quarter Sessions Rolls, January 1831. Presentment Sheet for William Smith.

2 H.R.O. 25 M61/2/2. Letter from William Portal of Laverstoke to the Duke of Wellington, 20 November 1830. The Hampshire Chronicle 23 November 1830, p. 1.

3 The Hampshire Chronicle 23 November 1830, p. 1.

4 The Hampshire Chronicle 23 November 1830, p. 1.

Wickham, Durley, and Bishop's Waltham.[1] As a result of these assemblies some farmers agreed to raise labourers' wages from 8s. to 10s. a week. At Holybourne the labourers complained that their wages were too low for them to live on and demanded an increase. A similar meeting at Hambledon resulted in the farmers agreeing to raise wages to 10s. 6d. a week, reduce cottage rents to a shilling a week, and provide more employment. When the labourers of Long Parish petitioned the local magistrates for an improvement in their wages the magistrates 'declared their conviction that it was impossible for labourers to exist on the present rate of wages' and recommended an increase. Able-bodied men above the age of twenty were to get 12s. a week, plus a gallon loaf, and 6d. for each child. Single men between the age of sixteen and twenty were to be paid 9s. a week and old and infirm people 3s. a week. A similar scale of wages was also agreed upon by the magistrates at Basingstoke.[2]

Wage demands were frequently accompanied by machine breaking. Threshing machines, the scourge of winter employment, were broken at Rockborne, Basingstoke, Andover, Weyhill, Fordingbridge, Romsey, Buriton, Wickham, Kimpton, Broughton, Burghclere, Sidmonton, and Binsted. In the Andover area, in North-west Hampshire, the threshing machine breaking riots were followed by an attack upon the local gaol in an attempt to free some of the rioters who had been taken prisoner. In the Romsey area, close to the Wiltshire border, threshing machines were broken at Houghton, Compton, Mottisford, Mitchelmarsh, Lockerley, and Tytherly; at East Den and Tytherly some turnpike gates and a toll-collectors house were also set on fire.[3] By the last week in November the disturbances had affected

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[1] Ibid. 29 November 1830, p. 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] The Hampshire Chronicle 29 November 1830, p. 1. H.R.O. 14 M50/2. Calendar of Prisoners for the Special Commission at Winchester, 18 December 1830.

the greater part of the county. Southampton was said to be 'in a state of alarm' following an outbreak of rioting at Fawley, Ringwood, and Fordingbridge whilst at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, the 'spirit of insubordination' which was said to prevail amongst the agricultural labourers there resulted in demands for higher wages.[1]

By early December 1830 the labourers' disturbances in Hampshire had been brought to an end by the army and local militia forces and almost 300 prisoners awaited their trial at the Special Commission to be held at Winchester.[2] The return to peace in the countryside was accompanied by a growing awareness among the landed community that something had to be done to improve the labourers' situation. At Owslebury, for example, the landowners and farmers agreed to pay able-bodied men 10s. a week plus a gallon loaf and sixpence for each child above the age of three. Young men between thirteen and twenty years of age were to be paid 4s. to 7s. a week and old and infirm people 3s. a week.[3] In other areas 9s. a week was established as the standard wage.[4] In the Romsey area landowners and farmers agreed to employ surplus labourers in proportion to their rate assessment and pay wages, 'as determined by the vestry', according to the following scale:[5]

Married men aged	18 to 45 years	12s. 0d. a week
Single men aged	18 to 45 years	10s. 0d. a week
Inferior men aged	45 to 60 years	9s. 0d. a week
Infirm men aged	over 60 years	6s. 0d. a week

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1 The Hampshire Chronicle 29 November 1830, p. 1.

2 The Hampshire Chronicle 29 November 1830, p. 1. The Dorset County Chronicle 3 January 1831, pp. 2-4. Hobsbawm and Rude, op. cit. pp. 121, 308.

3 The Hampshire Chronicle 20 December 1830, p. 1.

4 Ibid. p. 3.

5 Ibid. 27 December 1830, p. 1.

Boys aged	16 to 18 years	5s. Od. a week
Boys aged	14 to 16 years	4s. Od. a week
Boys	under 14 years	3s. Od. a week

It was also agreed to provide the labourers with small plots of land and 'To make an earnest recommendation that they shall secure their future happiness and respectability by becoming members of the County Friendly Society as full assurers in the 3rd class'.[1]

A further consequence of the disturbances was a temporary rise in agricultural wages. In the Winchester area labourers' wages 'were raised to make them better satisfied' and were increased to 12s. a week. In the Havant area wages were 10s. and 11s. a week before the riots; at the time of the riots they were raised to 12s. and 13s. a week, but subsequently fell to 8s. to 10s. a week by 1833.[2] At Droxford agricultural wages were increased by 10 to 15 per cent. during the 1830 riots but by 1836 these had been reduced to the level they were at in 1820.[3] The disturbances did not cure the problem of unemployment, which lasted throughout the 1830's and in many Hampshire parishes 'superfluous' labourers could earn no more than 7s. to 9s. a week.[4] It was difficult to see how wages could increase when the supply of agricultural labour in the county generally exceeded its demand and when farmers dismissed many of

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1 The Hampshire Chronicle 27 December 1830, p. 1.

2 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, pp. 186-8, 465.

3 Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII (ii), p. 112.

4 H.R.O. 25 M60/22. Fawley, op. cit. H.R.O. 11 M53/9. St. Mary Bourne Parish Overseer's Account Book 1823-1833. Able-bodied labourers employed on the roads in the Andover area were paid wages which were a quarter less than the wages paid to labourers in regular employment. H.R.O. 27/M48/1. Andover Poor Law Union Minute Book 1835-1842.

their labourers during the winter months 'as a matter of economy'.[1] As one farmer in the Winchester area told the 1833 Select Committee on Agriculture,

> Those farmers who are occupying lands of their own . . . keep on their labourers . . . but taking the tenantry in general, as soon as the harvest is over they reduce their hands as much as they can in order to save the amount of out going: the hands are not so numerous and burthensome to the parish from Michaelmas to Christmas, as from Christmas to May, when there is little outdoor work in the fields.[2]

During the 1840's labourers' wages were 8s. a week in some parts of Hampshire; ploughmen received 9s. a week,[3] and as late as 1850 similar wages to these were still being paid in the county.[4]

III. Conclusion

To what extent did agricultural labourers' wages in Hampshire match, in their timing and degree of change, variations in the price of bread and what effect did the interaction of these two variables have upon the purchasing power of wages?

Given the assumption of full and constant employment, it is clear from Figure 57 that the bread index was the more volatile of the two series and lay on a much higher plane than the wage index throughout most of the period.[5] Whereas agricultural wages tended to move in a series of flat steps, of three or four years duration, bread prices fluctuated violently from year to year. The main result of this situation was a

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1 The Hampshire Chronicle 20 December 1830, p. 3. S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 187.

2 S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 187.

3 A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough (Manchester, 1852), p. 119.

4 J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), p. 95.

5 Later on this assumption is relaxed in order to introduce an element of unemployment, and hence a loss of earnings, into the calculations.

marked fall in the purchasing power of wages. The extent to which this occurred during some of the worst years of the Napoleonic war is shown below:

	Bread Prices %	Agricultural Wages %	Real Wages[1] (Index)
1795	+85	+14	62
1799	+85	+29	70
1812	+152	+80	71
1817	+122	+79	81

These figures clearly bring out the fact that in these years agricultural wages were outpaced by the index of bread prices by an average margin of 71, 56, 72, and 43 per cent. respectively. For the agricultural labourer, the main consequence of this situation was that the index of real wages fell by an average of 67 per cent. during the three war years and by an average of 19 per cent. in 1817.

In other years, however, real wages improved upon the position they held in 1790 and, therefore, in order to obtain a balanced view of the period it is necessary to understand the chronological relationship between the 'good' and the 'bad' years. In other words, in the period for which information was available, real wages improved upon their 1790 position on eighteen occasions, whereas on fifteen other occasions real wages fell below that position.[2] When the extent of the rise and fall in real wages is compared it is evident that there was little difference between the two. In other words, real wages increased by an average of 11 per cent. over a period of eighteen years, whilst real wages fell by an average of 16 per cent. over a period of fifteen years. Figure 58 clearly demonstrates that the period of falling real wages was mainly confined to

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[1] 1790 = 100.

[2] The base year is not included in these figures.

the inflationary period of the Napoleonic war. However, from the end of the war onwards real wages began to improve upon their pre-war position and until 1831 improved at the average rate of about 1 per cent. per annum.

It is important to remember, however, that these estimates are based upon the assumption of full and regular employment. If this assumption is now relaxed in order to allow for a degree of unemployment during the winter quarter of the year,[1] it is clear from Figures 57-58 that those labourers who suffered a loss of earnings under these conditions stood to suffer a substantial deterioration in their material standard of living. Apart from a few isolated gains during the 1790's, real wages fell from that point onwards and at no time did they advance beyond the position they held in 1790.

In this respect Hampshire's experience was similar to that of many other counties in this study and, at this point, it is now necessary to bring them all together to compare their individual experiences and see what light they throw upon the standard of living controversy.

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[1] The problem of unemployment was primarily confined to the post-war period in Hampshire.

PART III

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 18

CONCLUSION

I. Introduction

This study has been primarily concerned with testing the hypothesis, put forward by J. H. Clapham, that the English agricultural labourer experienced an improvement in his standard of living between 1790–1840. In particular, attention was focussed upon the generalisation that the long-run trend of agricultural wages ran ahead of the trend in the cost of living and that as a result of this favourable relationship real wages increased by an average of 24 per cent. during this period. In view of the central importance of this statistical relationship to Clapham's case two approaches were adopted to test the validity of his hypothesis.

First, a critical examination was made of the two principal statistical series used by Clapham, A. L. Bowley's index of agricultural labourers' wages and N. J. Silberling's cost of living index, in order to determine whether they were reliable indicators of the standard of living. Bowley's index was criticised on the grounds that the data was not collected in a systematic way, too much reliance had been placed upon contemporary observations, and that no allowance had been made for seasonal and cyclical unemployment. Silberling's index was dismissed on the grounds that as it was a London-based index of raw material prices, weighted according to the household expenditure patterns of urban artisans, it was of little relevance to areas other than for which it was computed. In view of these criticisms it was argued that Clapham's statistics were too weak to bear the weight of the conclusions he built upon them. In particular, it was emphasised that the procedure he employed, of combining an index of London-based raw material prices with an index of English agricultural wages, gave a highly misleading picture of the standard of

living. Clapham's approach to the standard of living question was also censured on the grounds that his use of national aggregate wage data disguised important regional differences in wage levels and standards of living.

Second, the limitations of existing statistical evidence and the inconclusive nature of the standard of living debate provided the motive for a fresh approach to the problem in terms of the desiderata suggested by T. S. Ashton. In response to the recognition of this need, the central task of this study has been to assemble and evaluate a substantial quantity of statistical evidence on local wages and prices in order to provide a new measure of the agricultural labourers' standard of living. The adoption of this approach was also conditioned by the desire to step aside from the more ideological aspects of the standard of living controversy and provide an objective viewpoint of the problem. Further a grass-roots study of local prices and wages was considered preferable to the national aggregate income approach favoured by some economic historians. Indeed, in viewing a society which was far from being homogeneous in terms of social and occupational stratification, it was considered desirable that the specific identity of distinct labouring groups should not be lost sight of. It was also recognised that until the constituent socio-economic parts of the national whole are fully investigated and analysed the long-standing debate about working-class standards of living is doomed to remain an unresolved issue.

The main approach to the standard of living question has been made through a detailed examination of seven counties. Although, in the interests of maintaining an objective approach, most emphasis has been given to quantitative material, considerable use has also been made of literary and non-quantitative evidence. The main strengths of the statistical material might be mentioned. Its main importance is that it

is highly detailed and provides continuous runs of statistics for periods of up to fifty years. The main strength of the price data is that it is local in origin and relates to the kinds of commodities normally consumed by the labouring classes in the area. The wage data provides detailed accounts of the seasonal earnings of agricultural labourers for long periods of time. By studying the inter-relationship of these two statistical series a vital insight is gained into some of the more obscure aspects of the economic and social history of the period. For example, a clearer understanding is obtained of the relationship between the prices of various commodities both within a county and between counties. The evidence also throws considerable light upon the way these relationships were changing under the impact of various market forces. In a similar way, a clearer insight is given into the pattern of regional wage differentials. Taken together, the interaction of these two variables - the wage earnings of male agricultural labourers and the cost of living - provides the principal measure by which the labourers's standard of living may be judged to have improved or deteriorated.

Although each county has been treated as a self-contained unit,[1] and therefore contains its own conclusions, these conclusions are now drawn together in order to see if they provide a consensus of opinion on the standard of living. As this task involves summarising at least 21

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[1] The choice of the county as the main unit of study was primarily determined by administrative reasons. Although an agricultural or a geological region might also be considered a suitable unit of study, the fact that County Record Offices did not collect their records with that view in mind makes it almost impossible to approach the standard of living question in this way.

statistical series it has been necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to summarise the wage and price data separately before considering the wider implications of these conclusions for the standard of living controversy.

II. The Cost of Living

Estimates of the cost of living are important to the standard of living question as they constitute one-half of the real wage equation. In summarising the results obtained for each county it is important to know to what extent each region had its own price history and its own set of price relationships. Although the relationship between the rise in agricultural output and improvements in the transporting and marketing of foodstuffs are well known, what is less certain is the effect these developments had upon the cost of living at the local and regional level. To what extent did the integration of local and regional market economies into a national marketing system lead to a narrowing of regional price differentials? Did the general trend and degree of change in the cost of living vary from county to county, or did each county experience a similar pattern of change? In addition to these questions is the one concerning the applicability of Silberling's London-based price index to other parts of the country. Indeed, what light does the county evidence throw upon the reliability of Silberling's index as a guide to the cost of living in areas outside the metropolis?

With regard to the long-run trend in the cost of living, the evidence clearly shows that the general direction of change was almost identical in each of the counties studies. In each case the main peaks and troughs in

the cost of living coincided with one another; minor peaks being recorded in 1795 and 1805, major peaks in 1801, 1812, and 1817, and a major trough in 1822.[1] The period 1790-1840 divided itself into three distinct sub-periods; a period of rapid inflation lasting from 1794 to 1812, followed by a period of deflation from 1812 to 1822,[2] followed by a period of recovery from 1822 to the 1830's. The fact that the speed of response of prices to changes in supply and demand was identical in areas as far apart as Dorset and Essex, or Kent and Nottinghamshire, is a signficant one in that it suggests that all these counties were part of the same market area.[3] To what extent, then, was this simultaneity of response in the <u>timing</u> of changes in the cost of living paralleled by a simultaneity of response in the <u>extent</u> by which the cost of living changed in each county?

The following figures show the extent by which the cost of living changed in each county[4] in the three main sub-periods.

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1 It is worth noting that on three occasions, 1796, 1813, and 1818, Silberling located his peak years a year later than in the county indexes. Gourvish's study of the cost of living in Glasgow also located 1813 as a peak year, but agreed with the county indexes by making 1817 a peak year and 1822 a trough year. Neale's study of the cost of living in Bath agreed with the county evidence by making 1812 and 1817 peak years and 1822-3 a trough year. S. J. Silberling, 'British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779-1850', <u>Review of Economic Statistics</u>, V, Supplement II (1923). T. R. Gourvish, 'The Cost of Living in Glasgow in the Early Nineteenth Century', <u>Economic History Review</u>, 2nd ser. XXV, 1 (1972), p. 72. R. S. Neale, 'The Standard of Living, 1780-1844: A Regional and Class Study', <u>E.H.R.</u>, 2nd ser. XIX, 3 (1966), p. 606.

2 Except for a brief rise in 1817.

3 This would appear to be so in the case of wheat prices in London, Winchester, and Lincoln in the eighteenth century. C. W. J. Granger and C. M. Elliott, 'A Fresh Look at Wheat Prices and Markets in the Eighteenth Century', <u>E.H.R.</u>, 2nd ser. 2, XX (1967), pp. 257-62.

4 Hampshire has been excluded from this exercise as the county index is a bread index, and is therefore not strictly comparable with the county indexes.

TABLE 30

CHANGES IN THE COST OF LIVING 1790-1830

	1790-1812 %	1812-1822 %	1822-30 %
Kent	+120	-50	+11
Essex	+119	-55	+2
Lincs.	+104	-44	+33
Notts.	+110	-49	+20
Dorset	+100	-51	+22
Silberling	+80	-56	+8

These figures suggest a number of points. First, although there was a remarkable consensus of agreement concerning the direction of change in the cost of living, the extent by which the general level of prices changed in each of the three periods varied from county to county and differed considerably, in two instances, from Silberling's estimates.[1] In particular Silberling's figures, when compared with the county evidence, seem to seriously underestimate the rise in the cost of living during the Napoleonic war.[2] Between 1790 and 1812, for example, the increase in the cost of living in Kent and Essex was 10 to 20 per cent. higher than the increase recorded for Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Dorset and about 40 per cent. higher than the increase recorded for London by Silberling. In Dorset and Lincolnshire, where prices rose less dramatically than the other counties, the increase in the cost of living was about 20 per cent.

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[1] As Silberling's index relates to raw material prices, and the county indexes relate to processed commodity prices, one is not comparing like with like here. However, as half of Clapham's optimum stands or falls by Silberling's index it is necessary to test its general applicability by comparing it with the county evidence.

[2] Gourvish found that between 1788 and 1805 the price of the quartern loaf in Glasgow was more expensive than in London. Between 1788 and 1794, for example, the disparity in price was as high as 20 per cent. T. R. Gourvish, 'A Note on Bread Prices in London and Glasgow, 1788-1815', Journal of Economic History, XXX, 4 (1970), p. 856.

more than in London.[1]

During the post-war period, however, these discrepancies were substantially reduced. After 1812 prices entered upon a long period of decline which lasted, except for a brief recovery in 1817, until 1822. During that period the prices of most commodities were halved and the cost of living in the counties fell by an average of about 50 per cent. In this respect the county estimates lay close to the 56 per cent. decrease estimated by Silberling and the 52 per cent. decrease in the cost of living for Bath, estimated by Neale.[2] This situation was reversed, however, after 1822 with an upturn of prices and by 1830, the year of the agricultural labourers' riots, the cost of living in the counties had risen by an average of 17 per cent. Although individual counties experienced greater or lesser changes than this figure, the average increase was, nevertheless, much higher than the 8 per cent. increase estimated by Silberling and lay close to the 20 per cent. increase in the cost of living estimated for Bath.[3]

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1 Prof. M. W. Flinn's recent survey of London-based price series (Sauerbeck, Kondratieff, Silberling, Tucker, Gilboy, Schumpeter, Rousseau, Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, and Phelps Brown and Hopkins) suggests that the price rise between 1788/92 and 1809/15 was of the order of 65 to 85 per cent. M. W. Flinn, 'Trends in Real Wages, 1750-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXVII, 3 (1974), p. 404. This estimate lies close to Silberling's estimate of an 80 per cent. increase as shown above. Gourvish, using the same sources, suggests a price increase of about 72 to 84 per cent. for the period 1788/92-1811/15. T. R. Gourvish, 'Flinn and Real Wage Trends in Britain, 1750-1850: A Comment', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXIX, 1 (1976), p. 137.

2 Neale loc. cit. p. 606. Neale constructed his index from retail prices. Flinn, using the London-based series, estimated a fall of 23 to 24 per cent. for the period 1809/15-1820/26. Flinn, loc. cit. p. 404. Gourvish, using the same series, estimated a fall of 37 to 39 per cent. for the period 1811/15-1822/26. T. R. Gourvish, 'Flinn and Real Wage Trends in Britain, 1750-1850: A Comment', E.H.R., XXIX, 1 (1976), p. 137. Gourvish's estmmated price fall for Glasgow, 1812-1822, was of the order of 72 to 78 per cent. Gourvish (1972), loc. cit. p. 72.

3 Neale loc. cit. p. 606.

So far the county evidence has suggested two main conclusions:

1. That the cost of living in seven counties fluctuated in parallel series along the same short and long run trend.
2. That this trend, though very similar to the trend in Silberling's London series, generally lay on a higher plane than the London series and, at certain points in time, exceeded it by a substantial margin.

The main importance of these points to the standard of living controversy is that they cast more doubt on the limited applicability of Silberling's index. The fact that Silberling's index is seen to understate the rise in prices during one of the most critical periods in working-class history, by a margin as wide as 17 to 30 per cent., seriously reduces its usefulness as a guide to the cost of living. This point gains particular force when the standard of living is being considered in regions far removed from the metropolis.[1] The county evidence clearly demonstrates that regional variations in the cost of living persisted well into the nineteenth century and that London's experience did not accurately represent conditions in other parts of the kingdom.[2] It also follows from this that any procedure which combines Silberling's London-based index with an index of agricultural wages derived from a distant rural county, as Clapham did, is bound to exaggerate the trend of real wages and give a miselading and optimistic impression of the standard of living.

The county evidence also throws some important light upon regional price relationships. Although in their timing the speed of response of

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[1] This was certainly true in the case of Glasgow. Gourvish (1972), loc. cit. p. 76.

[2] This is not to deny, of course, that London exerted a powerful influence over a very wide area of the country. See, for example, F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market 1540-1640', E.H.R., 1st ser. 2 (1935). E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', Past and Present, 37 (1967).

prices in each county was remarkably close, the evidence suggests that local influences were still strong enough, in the pre-railway age, to account for the persistence of regional differences in the cost of living. No doubt an expansion of agricultural output, coupled with improvements in communications and the marketing of foodstuffs, assisted to break down local market autonomies and prepare the ground for the emergence of an integrated national market.[1] However, despite the gradual disappearance of traditional market imperfections and the subsequent narrowing of regional price variations under this process, the market for certain commodities was still far from being perfect in the early nineteenth century.[2] This observation becomes more apparent when the perishable nature of different kinds of agricultural produce is taken into account.

It is evident from the county evidence that regional price differences varied more for some commodities than for others and were much smaller, for example, in the case of bread than in the case of highly perishable dairy produce. The extent of regional variations in the price of the quartern loaf, shown at five year intervals, is given below:

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[1] Granger and Elliott suggest that this was happening in the case of wheat in the eighteenth century. Granger and Elliott, loc. cit. p. 262.

[2] These differences seemed to have disappeared with the coming of the railways in the second half of the nineteenth century. A recent study of the period, for example, found "a remarkable similarity in the cost of living in various parts of Britain . . . prices of commodities were similar throughout the country". E. H. Hunt, Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914 (Oxford, 1973), p. 104.

TABLE 31

REGIONAL BREAD PRICES 1790-1840[1]
(Quartern Loaf) (Pence)

	Kent	Essex	Lincs.	Notts.	Dorset	Hants.
1790	6¾	7		8	8	6¾
1795	11	11	12	12	10½	12½
1800	15¾	15½	17¼	15	15¾	15¾
1805	13	14			12½	12
1810	15	15½	15	15	15¼	14¾
1815	10¾	10¾	9¾	9¾	10½	9½
1820	11	10¾	10½	9¾	10½	9¾
1825	9	10¼	10¼	9¾	10½	9¾
1830	9	8½	10	10	10½	9½
1835	6¼	5½			7¼	6½
1840	7¾	7½	9	9	9¼	9¾

These figures show that in any one year regional differences in the price of bread were, at most, about 2d. a loaf. If these counties are grouped into regional pairs - Kent and Essex, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, Dorset and Hampshire - and their prices compared it is clear that price differences between adjacent counties were generally smaller than inter-regional price differences and were of the order of 1d. or less per quartern loaf. The fact that the county evidence is able to show that the price of the staple item in the labourers' diet was fairly uniform over such a wide geographical spread of counties is a significant one for a number of reasons. First, because of the relatively high weight attached to bread in the family budgets of agricultural labourers, it is clear that fluctuations in the price of bread were a dominant influence in the cost of living and, because its price was fairly uniform over a wide area, help to account for the similarity in the cost of living in each county. The evidence also assists to confirm the impressions of contemporary observers, such as Adam Smith,

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[1] Appendix 1(i), 5(i), 13, 16(i), 20(i), 23. With the exception of Dorset these prices were set by the Assize of Bread in each county.

that bread prices were 'the same or very nearly the same through the greater part of the United Kingdom'.[1] Third, the county evidence also lends support to the conclusions of other writers on the subject. For example, Gilboy's conclusion that 'the regional divergence of the price of grain . . . was not marked'[2] is thereby strengthened, as is Gourvish's study of London and Glasgow bread prices. In both cities Gourvish found a high degree of similarity in the extent and timing of price fluctuations,[3] and these were identical to the fluctuations in the price of bread in the county evidence. Prior to 1805, bread in Glasgow was dearer than in London by an average of 1½d. a loaf, but thereafter bread prices in the two cities were almost identical and differed by 'scarcely one per cent'.[4]

The most likely explanation for this situation is that agricultural improvements and transport developments were ironing-out traditional marketing imperfections and, as a result, the market for wheat (and hence bread) was becoming more perfect. Agricultural observers in each of the counties investigated[5] referred to the influence of London upon the production and price of wheat (and other produce) and its sale in distant markets.[6] Large quantities of wheat were shipped around the country in this way, from

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1 See p. 42.

2 E. W. Gilboy, Wages in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 219. Gilboy was comparing wheat prices in London, the North, and the West of England.

3 Gourvish (1970), loc. cit. p. 855.

4 Gourvish (1970), loc. cit. p. 856.

5 Except Nottinghamshire.

6 See p. 106, 171, 231, 280, 362, 414.

areas of surplus to areas of scarcity, with the result that regional prices tended to move into line with one another.[1] The fact that price disequilibria could be speedily neutralised by the transportation of wheat from one market to another implies that each regional market was part of the same market area, though this was not necessarily true for all foodstuffs.[2] What light, then, do the prices of other commodities throw upon market imperfections and regional differences in the cost of living?

The county evidence suggests that certain commodities, especially non-perishable commodities, also experienced relatively little regional variation in their price. In the case of candles and soap, for example, regional price differences were usually less than 1¾d. a pound.[3] In the case of tea and sugar, whose supply price was uniformly influenced by the imposition of heavy ad valorem duties on their entry into the country, regional variations in their price were not large.[4] Small variations, of a 1d. to 1½d. a pound, were also found in regional beef prices.[5] In the

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1 'All the sensible people', wrote Arthur Young, 'attributed the dearness of their country to the turnpike roads; and reason speaks the truth of their opinion . . . make but a turnpike road through their country and all the cheapness vanishes at once'. Quoted in T. S. Ashton, 'The Standard of Life of the Workers in England, 1790-1830', J.E.H., Supplement, IX (1949), p. 31. The operations of corn factors in this field often led to outbursts of rioting, as in 1795-6, 1800-1, 1810-13, and 1816-18, over the scarcity and high price of bread. It is also significant that the distribution of food riots in southern England were closely related to certain market towns and villages which were transhipment points on the main communications network. J. Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order. Six Studies in British History 1790-1820 (1974), pp. 43-4. See also E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy and the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.

2 Granger and Elliott, loc. cit. pp. 261-2.

3 Appendix 1(ii), 5(ii), 9(ii), 20(ii).

4 Appendix 1(i), 5(i-ii), 9(i), 16(i), 20(i).

5 Appendix 1(i), 5(i), 9(i), 13, 16(i).

pre-railway age vast quantities of meat were transported around the country on the hoof[1] and this practice was an important factor in breaking down market imperfections and smoothing out extreme price variations.[2] Indeed, by the 1840's meat prices in some of the principal towns and cities followed a similar trend and showed 'no consistently wide differences in regional prices'.[3] This was not the case, however, with respect to perishable commodities such as butter and cheese where wide regional differences in price were found. The difficulties involved in transporting and marketing dairy produce in the pre-railway age are well known[4] and were sufficient to preserve market imperfections and a differential structure of regional prices. The prices of cheese and butter, for example, could vary by as much as 7d. a pound in certain years, and in Kent, Essex, and Lincolnshire the price of cheese was frequently twice as high as in Dorset.[5] This fact confirms Arthur Young's impression that differences in the price of butter between London and the provinces were 'very considerable'.[6]

Given the existence of differing degrees of market imperfections it is evident that the growth and unification of the national market did not entirely eliminate all regional price differences, thus suggesting that

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1 G. E. Fussell and C. Goodman, 'Eighteenth Century Traffic in Live-Stock', Economic History, III (1936), pp. 214-236.

2 The coming of the railways transformed the character of domestic meat markets by increasing their supplies of dead meat. R. Perren, 'The Meat and Livestock Trade in Britain, 1850-70', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XXVIII, 3 (1975), pp. 385-400.

3 Ibid. p. 396. In certain years, however, variations of 10 per cent. were sometimes experienced between different towns.

4 G. E. Fussell and C. Goodman, 'The Eighteenth Century Traffic in Milk Products', Economic History, III (1937), pp. 380-87. E. H. Whetham, 'The London Milk Trade, 1860-1900', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XVII, 2 (1964), pp. 369-80.

5 Appendix. 1(i), 5(i), 13, 20(i).

6 See p. 45.

before the coming of the railways local conditions were sufficiently strong to offset national developments. Nevertheless, it remains an important fact that over a very wide area of the country the prices of certain foodstuffs normally consumed by the rural working class moved in step with one another and shared an identical long-run trend. A number of factors operated to influence the direction of this trend. Given the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short run, the erratic behaviour of individual prices was closely associated, in their timing, with the occurrence of short-run exigencies such as an outbreak of war, a run of abundant or poor harvests, or a rise or fall in foreign food imports. All these influences operated in varying degrees upon the prices of individual commodities in each index. In the last analysis, however, violent fluctuations in food prices tended to determine, because of the relatively high weight attached to them in agricultural labourers' budgets, the direction and degree of change in the all-items index. In this respect the importance of bread in the Food and Drink category was paramount. As a staple item in the labourers' diet, accounting for a half to two-thirds of total expenditure on Food and Drink, large variations in its price tended to outweigh price changes of other foodstuffs, though these invariably moved in the same direction, thus conferring upon each index its characteristic shape. To what extent was this pattern of events paralleled by changes in agricultural wages?

III. Real Wages and the Standard of Living

At this point it is necessary to examine the relationship between the cost of living and the level of agricultural wages in order to discover what effect the interaction of these two variables had upon the trend of real wages. Such an exercise as this obviously involves a number of questions. In particular it is important to know to what extent did the general level and trend of agricultural wages vary from county-to-county. At any point in

time was the level of wages in each county broadly the same or did the level vary substantially between counties, thus suggesting the existence of a pattern of regional wage differentials? In addition to these questions is the important question concerning the degree of response of agricultural wages to changes in the cost of living. To what extent were fluctuations in the cost of living matched, in their timing and degree of oscillation, by comparable fluctuations in agricultural wages and how did their interaction influence the trend of real wages?

With regard to the level of wages in each county, it is clear from the evidence that there existed a fairly well defined pattern of regional wage gradations.[1] Each county appeared to have its own particular wage history. Kent and Nottinghamshire were clearly high wage counties and the level of wages there were higher than in Lincolnshire and Suffolk, and considerably higher than in the low wage counties of Dorset and Hampshire. Although these relationships were sometimes modified from time-to-time, this general pattern was maintained intact throughout most of the period. An idea of the form these wage gradations took may be obtained by comparing the actual levels of wages prevailing in high and low wage counties.[2] For example,

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[1] This view is also confirmed by the findings of James Caird. Writing in 1850-1, Caird concluded that 'The disparity of wages paid for the same nominal amount of work in the various counties of England, is so great as to show that there must be something in the present state of the law affecting the labourer, which prevents the wages of agricultural labour finding a more natural level throughout the country. Taking the highest rate . . . and comparing it with the lowest . . . and considering the facilities of communication in the present day, it is surprising that so great a difference should continue'. J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1851. Reprinted 1968), pp. 510-11. E. H. Hunt's recent study of regional wage variations found that one of the outstanding features of the pattern of wage variations in Britain was the magnitude of the variations and their extraordinary persistence throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Hunt, op. cit. p. 356.

[2] Caird classified Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire as high-wage counties and Suffolk, Essex, Hampshire, and Dorset as low-wage counties. Kent was not included in his survey but must be regarded as a high-wage county as agricultural wages there were affected by the metropolitan economy. Caird, op. cit. p. 512.

estate wages in Kent and Nottinghamshire, both high wage counties, in 1800 were 14s. 4d. and 12s. a week respectively compared with 9s. a week in Dorset. In 1812 wages in Kent and Nottinghamshire were 18s. and 15s. 6d. a week respectively compared with 12s. and 12s. 8d. a week in Dorset and Hampshire. In other words, these wage contours show that agricultural wages in Kent in 1800 were 19 per cent. higher than in Nottinghamshire, about 30 per cent. higher than in Lincolnshire and Suffolk, and about 59 per cent. higher than in Dorset.

This structure of wage differentials, however, changed from time to time and there was a noticeable narrowing of wage differentials after the Napoleonic war.[1] For example, the wage differential between Kent and Nottinghamshire fell to 2 or 3 per cent. by the 1820's and for many years the wages of estate labourers in these counties were almost identical.[2] On the other hand, although there also occurred a narrowing of wage differentials between Kent and the low-wage counties of Hampshire and Essex in the same period, the cash difference between the prevailing levels of wages in these counties, nevertheless, remained a wide one. For instance, although the wage differential between Kent and Essex had been halved by the 1820's, agricultural wages in Kent were still about 30 per cent. higher than in Essex. The wage differential between Kent, and Lincolnshire and Suffolk, also fell by a substantial amount in the post-war period and by the 1820's averaged about 10 per cent. or less. Given, then, the pattern of regional wage variations, and their changing relationships over time, it is

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[1] Flinn's study of national wage trends between 1750 and 1850 found that 'Not only were there very clearly substantial regional variations in wages, but some of these disparities showed a tendency to change during the period under review'. Flinn, loc. cit. p. 404.

[2] The fact that Nottinghamshire was a high-wage county was no doubt due to the expansion of the textile industries there during the first half of the nineteenth century and the competitive influence they exerted upon local wages and supplies of labour.

important to consider how the county estimates compared with A. L. Bowley's estimates of agricultural wages for the same counties. This is a necessary exercise as it has been shown that, Silberling apart, half of Clapham's optimum regarding the standard of living depended heavily upon Bowley's estimates of agricultural labourer's wages. What light, then, does the county evidence throw upon Bowley's wages estimates as a guide to the standard of living?

TABLE 32

LABOURERS' WAGES: BOWLEY'S ESTIMATES AND THE COUNTY ESTIMATES COMPARED[1]

(Annual Average Weekly Wages in Shillings)

	1795		1824		1833		1837	
	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)
Kent	10.5	11.5	11.75	10.75	13.5	12.0	12.0	12.0
Essex	9.0	8.3	9.3	8.3	11.0	9.3	10.3	9.5
Suffolk	10.5	8.5	8.25	9.5	11.25	13.2	10.3	12.5
Lincs.	10.5	10.0	10.25	10.0	12.5	12.0	12.0	
Notts.	9.0	9.0	10.25	12.0	12.5	12.0	12.0	
Dorset	8.0	7.5	7.0		8.3	7.2	7.5	7.0
Hants.	9.0	8.0	8.5	9.25	11.0		9.5	

Note: (B) = Bowley (R) = Richardson

These figures show that Bowley's estimates were generally higher than the county estimates. Out of a total of 23 observations for which comparable information was available, the two sets of figures agreed on only two occasions. On 15 occasions Bowley's estimates exceeded the county estimates, and were lower on six other occasions. Indeed, when the county evidence is considered in the light of Clapham's statement, that the average English agricultural labourer increased his earnings by an average of

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[1] A. L. Bowley, 'The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom during the Last Hundred Years. Agricultural Workers, England and Wales', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXI (1898), pp. 705-7.

1s. 11d. a week between 1794 and 1824,[1] it is evident that the county evidence does not support such a view. In the counties for which information was available the annual average increase in wages between 1795 and 1824 was about half of Clapham's figure. The largest increase occurred in Nottinghamshire, with a rise of 3s. a week, whilst agricultural wages in Essex and Lincolnshire saw no improvement at all between these dates. Wages there were the same in 1824 as they were thirty years previously. Hampshire estate wages increased by an average of 1s. 3d. a week, whilst those in Suffolk and Kent increased by 1s. and 9d. a week respectively.

For the labourer such modest gains as these were no doubt welcomed, even if it took thirty years to obtain them, but more important than this to their standard of living was the effect the cost of living had upon the purchasing power of their wages. In other words, to what extent did agricultural wages respond to changes in the general level of prices? Did agricultural wages, in their timing and degree of change, move in close harmony with fluctuations on the cost of living, or did each series exhibit highly individualistic characteristics and follow an independent line? And, if the latter were true, to what extent did the two series differ from one another?

In summarising the results obtained for each county it is clear that certain marked short and long-run differences existed between wage and price trends in each instance. Although there existed a high degree of simultaneity of response in the timing of changes in the cost of living in each county, this was not the case in respect of agricultural wages where each county exhibited its own particular characteristics. Not only were there important differences in the actual level of agricultural wages being paid in each county at any point in time, but their relationship to the cost

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[1] See p. 7.

of living also varied from county to county. In examining this relationship it is necessary to establish two main points. First, as a rule, the general trend of the cost of living lay on a higher plane than the trend of agricultural wages[1] and that both series, exhibiting a differing bias, shared an upward trend during the French war and a downward trend thereafter. Apart from these similarities the timing and degree of change of agricultural wages in each county did not conform to a common pattern nor did the timing of their fluctuations necessarily coincide with the main turning points in the cost of living. Second, not only did agricultural wages generally lie on a lower plane than prices, but their year-to-year variations were considerably less volatile than corresponding variations in the cost of living. Indeed, compared with the annual variations in the cost of living, agricultural wages were decidedly 'sticky'[2] and tended to assume the shape of a series of low plateaux, though some counties differed somewhat from others in this respect. In Kent and Nottinghamshire, for example, the relationship between agricultural wages and the cost of living was a relatively close one. Although, on a number of occasions, prices tended to lead wages by a considerable margin, nevertheless, wages tended to respond to price changes with a greater degree of alacrity than in the other counties. On the other hand, in Lincolnshire, despite wild swings in the cost of living, agricultural wages at Stamford stagnated for periods as long

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[1] This view may be contrasted with the impression suggested by Clapham. Clapham, using Bowley's estimates of agricultural wages and Silberling's cost of living index, suggested that after the initial rise in prices during the early part of the Napoleonic war, agricultural wages in England and Wales rose above the general level of prices in 1802 and remained in that position until 1850. See p. 6. Flinn, using these statistics and other national series, suggests that wages kept pace with prices during the French war, and then fell by a lesser extent than prices from the end of the war until the mid 1820s. Flinn, loc. cit. p. 408. Neale, on the other hand, agreeing with the county evidence, suggests that in Bath wages lagged behind price increases during the French war with the result that real wages fell. Neale, loc. cit. pp. 590-606.

[2] This reference is to estate wages.

as a decade, with disastrous consequences for their purchasing power. In Essex agricultural wages at Audley End tended to be stable for somewhat shorter periods, of three to five years, and thus followed a long, slightly inclined trend against a background of fluctuating prices. As in the case of Lincolnshire, the consequences for the purchasing power of wages were dire.

The fact that agricultural wages and the cost of living were badly out of step with one another is a significant one in that it suggests that the cost of living was a dominant influence in the real wage equation. If this was the case, then it is important to know to what extent agricultural wages lagged behind price changes. In other words, by what amount did fluctuations in the general cost of living outstrip fluctuations in agricultural wages? As this relationship was particularly crucial to the agricultural labourers' standard of living during the inflationary years of the Napoleonic war it is instructive to consider the interaction of these two variables during that period:

TABLE 33

RELATIVE CHANGES IN AGRICULTURAL WAGES AND THE COST OF LIVING 1795-1817

(1790 = 100)

	1795		1800		1812		1817	
	(CL) +%	(W) +%	(CL) +%	(W) +%	(CL) +%	(W) +%	(CL) +%	(W) +%
Kent	37	21	73	51	120	90	84	43
Essex	34	11	71	11	119	37	71	33
Suffolk	34	0	105	15				
Lincs.	35	11	91	21	104	32	54	32
Notts.	51	6	88	41	110	82	64	44
Dorset	28	7	75	29	100	71	76	

Note: (CL) = Cost of Living (W) = Agricultural Wages

It is evident from these figures that agricultural wages consistently failed to keep pace with increases in the cost of living. Whatever increases there were in agricultural wages in these counties they were invariably

swamped by faster rising prices. In three of the worst years for inflation, 1795, 1800 and 1812, fluctuations in the cost of living outstripped increases in agricultural wages by an average margin of 26, 56, and 48 per cent respectively.[1] The net result of such uneven changes as these was a serious decline in the purchasing power of agricultural wages:

TABLE 34

REAL WAGES 1795-1817

(1790 = 100)

	1795	1800	1812	1817
Kent	88	87	86	78
Essex	83	65	63	78
Suffolk	75	56		
Lincs.	82	63	65	86
Notts.	70	75	86	88
Dorset	84	74	85	

These estimates clearly bring out the extent of the fall in real wages and suggest a substantial deterioration in the agricultural labourers' material standard of living in this period. To what extent were these years of deterioration offset by years of positive advance? In this context it is indeed important to discover to what extent were the years of falling real wages compensated for by periods of rising real wages; and, given this chronological relationship, to what degree was the extent of the decline in real wages compensated for by a corresponding rise in real wages? In other words, what was the precise long-run relationship between 'good' and 'bad'

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[1] Flinn, on the other hand, has suggested that between 1788/92 and 1810/14 agricultural wages in England and Wales increased by 92.5 per cent. compared with a 65 to 85 per cent. increase in prices. Flinn, loc. cit. pp. 404, 407. In the light of the evidence used to calculate this estimate, such an optimistic impression as this was inevitable when based upon Bowley's and Silberling's national wage and price data. On the other hand, the county evidence presented here gains support from Neale's study of real wage trends in Bath who found that real wages fell almost uninterruptedly over the course of the French war and by 1812 were 50 per cent. lower than they were in 1780. Neale, loc. cit. pp. 599, 604.

years?

TABLE 35

REAL WAGE TRENDS 1790-1840

	INCREASE		DECREASE		
	No. Years	Average Change	No. Years	Average Change	Total Years[1]
Kent	16	+5%	33	-10%	49
Essex	9	+7%	40	-17%	49
Suffolk	2	+4%	22	-23%	24
Lincs.	22	+8%	19	-22%	41
Notts.	16	+13%	18	-13%	34
Dorset	8	+4%	21	-11%	29
Hants.	18	+11%	15	-16%	33

In summarising these results it is possible to make a number of important observations. First, it is evident that the long-run trend in real wages varied from county to county and that the worst cases of deterioration were located in Kent, Essex, Suffolk, and Dorset. Although agricultural labourers on the estates in these counties experienced a positive improvement in their real wage situation in certain years, these improvements were invariably swamped by long periods in which real wages fell by excessive amounts.[2] Except for Nottinghamshire and Hampshire, where the extent and duration of positive and negative changes in real wages roughly balanced with one another, the amount by which real wages fell in the remaining counties tended to be proportionately greater than the amount by which they increased. Indeed, on average, the amount by which real wages fell tended to be twice as large as the amount by which they increased. The fact that such a large

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[1] The two base years, 1790 and 1835, are not included in these figures.

[2] Clapham, using Bowley's and Silberling's statistics, suggested that real wages in England and Wales increased by 24 per cent. between 1790 and 1840. See p. 7.

differential as this existed is highly significant to the standard of living question and it is obvious that in assessing the net effect of long run gains and losses in real wages the chronological relationship between good and bad years is vitally important to the final result. Second, and following on from this point, not only did real wages fall by a proportionately larger amount than they increased, but the number of years in which real wages fell tended to outweigh, by a considerable margin, the number of years in which they rose, though some differences were discernible between certain counties. In Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Hampshire, for example, the total number of years in which real wages increased were about the same as the number of years in which they decreased. Except for Lincolnshire, where real wages fell by a much greater extent than they rose, the net effect of these changes upon the labourers' standard of living was to produce a rough balance between the good and bad years. This, however, was not the situation in the remaining four counties: there, the total number of years in which real wages fell was substantially larger than the numbers of years in which they rose. In the case of Kent, Essex, and Dorset, for instance, the number of years in which real wages were falling was more than twice as long as the number of years in which they were rising. The net effect of balancing good years with bad in this case is the implication that the agricultural labourers' standard of living suffered an overall deterioration during this period. Third, as regards the chronological distribution of good and bad real wage years (Figures 12 and 23) each county tended to exhibit a similar pattern: a substantial fall in real wages during the French war, followed by a period of recovery from the 1820's onwards. Apart from a few isolated gains in real wages in the early 1790's and 1800's, sharply rising prices during the war had a devastating effect upon the purchasing power of wages in each county. Indeed, from 1793 onwards agricultural real wages entered upon a long protracted period of decline

which lasted until the 1820's when, at about that point, they began to attain their pre-war position again.[1] The improvement in real wages from the 1820's onwards, however, was short-lived and lasted for periods of about a decade or less:

TABLE 36

IMPROVEMENTS IN REAL WAGES

	Average Increase	Period/Years
Kent	6%	1825-34
Essex	7%	1827-34
Lincs.	12%	1819-33
Notts.	19%	1823-35
Dorset	3%	1830-34
Hants.	11%	1818-31
Average	9.5%	10

In the final analysis it is evident that, taking good years with the bad, after experiencing twenty or more years of retardation, real wages began to improve upon their pre-war situation by the 1820's and for about a decade increased at the rate of 1 per cent. per year.[2] Such positive gains as these, when set against the years of decline, indeed appear to be modest and do little to alleviate the pessimistic gloom which currently hangs over the standard of living debate. If, then, the case for pessimism remains strong, it is important to remember that this result was achieved on the basis of the most optimistic assumption possible: that is, on the most favoured assumption that each labourer enjoyed constant and regular

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[1] Flinn, by contrast, suggests that the improvement in real wages occurred much earlier than this. After 1810/14 the fall in prices, of the order of 25 to 35 per cent., was much greater than the fall in agricultural wages with the result that agricultural labourers in England and Wales were able to maintain the level of their real wages, though in relative terms they were less well off than other labour groups. Flinn, loc. cit. p. 408.

[2] Flinn, who confined the real wage gains to 'scarcely a dozen years', from 1813 to 1825, suggested that real wages increased at the average rate of up to 2 to 3 per cent. per annum. Flinn loc. cit. p. 409.

employment, and thereby maximised his annual earnings each year, for a period of fifty years. At no point throughout this long period was it assumed that the labourer suffered any loss of income through illness or unemployment. It will be appreciated that such a model as this represents an idyllic situation which was, in the light of the evidence we have on poverty and social distress in the early nineteenth century, far removed from the harsher realities of life. Nevertheless, it was necessary to make such an assumption in order to establish, as a first step, a ceiling of earnings which would represent a maximum limit which a labourer could, in theory, reach. If, as it has been consistently demonstrated throughout this work, a labourer situated in such a world of Arcadian bliss was unable to enjoy any appreciable improvement in his material standard of living, then the condition of those labourers less favourably placed than this must have been truly lamentable. Indeed, given the vagaries of the rural trade cycle, it is important to try and estimate what happened, at the lower end of the rural social scale, to the standard of living of those labourers who were unfortunate enough to suffer from periodic bouts of unemployment. As, in the worst circumstances, the problem of unemployment was primarily located in the winter quarter of the year during the post-war period, it was therefore necessary to make a downwards adjustment on the maximum limit of earnings in order to take account of a possible loss of income through unemployment. In establishing this lower limit of earnings it is important to note that in certain years as many as a third of the agricultural labour force fell into this category through no fault of its own. Indeed, it was this sizeable category, plus their dependents, who stood to suffer a long and substantial decline in their material standard of living. At no point in the 1820's and 1830's did their real incomes exceed their pre-war position. Somewhere between these upper and lower limits were distributed the rural labour force in these counties and therein a large part of the answer to the standard of living question.

IV. Conclusion

At this stage it is necessary to consider the agricultural labourers' standard of living in a wider context. Between 1790 and 1840 the labourers' standard of living was influenced by the interaction of a number of forces which operated with varying degrees of intensity from one period to another. In examining these forces a distinction has been made between the period of the Napoleonic war and the post-war period as the factors affecting the labourers' standard of living in each of these periods were fundamentally different from one another.[1]

As the county evidence has shown, the Napoleonic war was a period of agricultural expansion and prosperity. Owing to the difficulties of importing foodstuffs the principal task of expanding output to meet the needs of the growing population fell upon domestic producers. The extent of the farming communities' response to these conditions, however, was conditioned by two factors; the inelasticity of agricultural supply in the short-run, and the fact that a run of disastrous harvests during the war seriously reduced food supplies by as much as a quarter of their pre-war level.[2] Nevertheless, the profitability of agriculture encouraged investment and expansion and these conditions created a situation of full employment and rising wages.[3] However, the fact that the general price level increased

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[1] The most important difference between the two periods was that the former period was characterised by inflation and full employment and the latter by deflation and considerable underemployment.

[2] During the war 14 out of 22 harvests were below their pre-war average. M. Olson, The Economics of the Wartime Shortage (Durham, U.S.A., 1963), pp. 62-3.

[3] Throughout the war there were frequent complaints over the scarcity of agricultural labour. The scarcity of hands and the increase in agricultural labourers' wages introduced an element of cost-push inflation into the farm economy, leading many farmers to adopt labour-saving devices, such as threshing machines, on their farms. E. J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (1969), pp. 359-63.

by a greater amount than wages had serious consequences for the labourers' standard of living.

In the first place, the fact that agricultural prices and profits increased at the expense of wages meant a shift in the distribution of income away from labour towards the farming and landowning classes.[1] Second, the agricultural labourers found themselves having to adjust their whole way of life to a totally new price level and food supply situation. As the county evidence has shown, their problem was not solely one of a physical shortage of food, but was also one of insufficient incomes with which to purchase the basic necessaries of life. The labourers' reaction to this situation took various forms.

First, it is evident from the dietary evidence that the deficit in the labourers' incomes resulted in a deterioration in dietary standards.[2] An examination of household expenditure patterns revealed that inflation necessitated both a contraction and a reallocation of expenditure upon most foodstuffs. Generally, luxuries were sacrificed for necessaries. Expenditure on bread, the staple item in the labourers' diet, was increased at the cost of a 20 to 50 per cent. reduction in the consumption of meat and sugar.[3] However, despite the heavier outlays on bread, it was

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[1] Much of the investment that went into agriculture in this period originated from the shift in incomes in favour of the farming and landowning classes. A. H. John, 'Farming in Wartime: 1793-1815', in E. L. Jones (ed.), Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution (1967), pp. 42, 45. J. E. Williams' estimates of per capita consumption in this period concluded that 'the transfer of income which occurred as a result of the war worsened the economic status of labour'. J. E. Williams, 'The British Standard of Living, 1750-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. XIX, 3 (1966), p. 586.

[2] This view is shared by other writers. See, for example, E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The British Standard of Living, 1790-1850', E.H.R., 2nd ser. X, 1 (1957), p. 57. J. Burnett, Plenty and Want (Penguin ed. 1968), p. 29.

[3] Contemporary observers, such as Eden, frequently commented on the reduction of meat consumption among the rural labouring classes in this period. Sugar consumption suffered the same fate. As the demand for sugar varied inversely with its price, its consumption fell among the labouring classes during the war as the imposition of heavy excise duties increased its price.

difficult for the labourers' consumption of bread to increase owing to the deficient state of domestic harvests.[1] Indeed, in the light of contemporary opinion, what appears to have happened in these counties was a gradual and partial substitution of potatoes and bread made from mixed grains for wheaten bread in the labourers' diet.[2] In view of this evidence it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the distribution of foodstuffs during the war, like the distribution of incomes, was not in favour of the agricultural labouring classes.

Second, the labourers' attitude towards high prices and food shortages during the war often led to rioting. As the County Reports of the Board of Agriculture have shown, the practice of transporting large quantities of farm produce to urban markets simultaneously reduced local food supplies and raised local prices into line with those of urban markets. In addition to this, as Davies and Kent noted, the development of new marketing arrangements, whereby farmers increasingly sold their produce in bulk to the wholesale trade, tended to place certain foodstuffs, such as milk and hops, beyond the reach of the labouring classes.[3] Hence, these developments, occurring at a time when the supply of food was critically low, became very sensitive public issues indeed. The large scale shipment of foodstuffs by

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[1] According to Salaman, the amount of wheat available per capita of the population fell in this period. R. N. Salaman, The History and Social Influence of the Potato (Cambridge, 1949), p. 617.

[2] The amount of potatoes available per capita of the population increased in this period. Ibid. p. 613.

[3] The fact that beer became 'too dear' and milk could not be obtained for 'love nor money' meant that these items began to disappear from the labourers' dietary. Neither of these commodities appeared in the household budgets for these counties, though in Lincolnshire, where cow keeping was common, the labouring classes were able to obtain milk. According to Burnett, cottage brewing had ceased over most of the country by 1815. Between 1800 and 1840 per capita beer consumption in the country at large fell by about a third. Burnett, op. cit. pp. 18-19, 26-7.

road and river to distant markets was bitterly resented by the populace[1] and often resulted in an outbreak of rioting. As the county evidence has shown, acting on the belief that high prices and the dearth of foodstuffs had been artificially created, violent attacks were made upon the property of wholesale food traders - waggons, barges, warehouses, graineries - in the hope of preventing the movement of produce out of the locality.[2]

Third, the labourers' response to dearth and inflation was to look to the Poor Law and private charity for relief. The fact that incomes were badly out-of-step with the cost of living during the war is reflected in both the rise in Poor Law expenditure and the types of schemes adopted for the relief of the poor. Indeed, it is significant that the main peaks in per capita poor relief expenditure, in 1795, 1800 and 1812, coincided exactly with the main peaks in the cost of living.[3] The fact that per capita poor relief expenditure bore a direct relationship to the cost of living, and an inverse relationship to the index of real wages, is a clear indication that relief was primarily given in response to inadequate wages or high food prices. Whatever the cause, the Poor Law was obliged to narrow the deficit with allowances in aid of wages and doles of cheap foodstuffs subsidised out of the rates. These measures were reinforced by private charity. Public subscription funds were established for the purpose of setting-up soup kitchens and for selling quantities of

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[1] The attitude of the labouring classes is aptly summed up in the threatening letters, quoted in the text, that were sent to the farming classes in this period.

[2] See also Thompson, loc. cit., Stevenson, op. cit. passim.

[3] D. A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', E.H.R. 2nd ser. XXVIII, 1 (1975), pp. 56-8. These estimates relate to Kent, Essex and Sussex. Estimates for war-time expenditure in other counties are not available as the annual returns of poor-relief expenditure did not begin until 1813. Ibid. pp. 51-4.

foodstuffs, such as potatoes, flour, and rice, at subsidised prices to the rural poor.

It has been constantly emphasised throughout this study that the factors which influenced the agricultural labourers' standard of living during the war fundamentally changed once the war was over. In 1815 the era of agricultural prosperity and full employment was replaced by an era of deflation, agricultural distress, and widespread rural unemployment and underemployment. Although improvements in domestic harvests and the general agricultural supply situation brought the level of prices down with a run, these gains were offset by a rise in unemployment and a fall in wages. Many farmers, fearing ruination, drastically reduced their labour force and subjected their permanent staff to a round of wage cuts. These developments affected the labourers' standard of living in a number of ways.

First, the post-war fall in agricultural prices and profits did not produce a shift in the distribution of income in favour of labour because agricultural wages tended to fall, pari passu, with prices. Hence, as agricultural wages fell with the cost of living the purchasing power of wages continued to remain depressed until at least the mid 1820s.

Second, although the post-war fall in prices, and especially bread prices, permitted a partial reversal of the war-time pattern of household expenditure on food and drink, the dietary evidence suggests that no overall improvement took place in the labourers' basic fare. Indeed, it was a well-known fact to contemporary observers that poor wages meant a poor diet. In the light of the literary evidence for the 1820s and 1830s, the labouring classes appeared to subsist on an unvarying diet of bread, potatoes, cheese, butter, tea, and a small amount of meat and sugar. This view also gains the support of the national aggregate consumption figures. Although estimates of national per capita consumption provide only a general guide to the standard of living, it is significant that they indicate

either stationary or declining trends in wheat, beef, tea, sugar, and beer consumption.[1] Following Williams' analysis,[2] the importance of these estimates is that if average per capita consumption of these commodities did not increase, then it would have been statistically impossible for the labourers' average level of consumption to have risen without a substantial redistribution of income in their favour - and as we have seen, there was no evidence of that in this period. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that the operation of market forces made for a distribution of income away from agricultural labour rather than towards it.

Third, the deterioration in the agricultural labourers' economic position during the post-war period was reflected in both the level of poor relief expenditure and the kinds of policies adopted by the parish Poor Law authorities to deal with the situation. Despite a halving of the cost of living between 1812 and the mid 1820's, the amount of poor relief expenditure did not fall. On the contrary, from the end of the war until the mid 1830's the level of per capita poor relief expenditure remained as high as it was during the Napoleonic war.[3] This suggests that whereas rising prices determined the level of poor relief expenditure during the war, after the war low wages and unemployment, affecting a quarter to a third of the rural labour force, were primarily responsible for the heavy

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1 B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 355-6. Salaman, op. cit. p. 617. Burnett, op. cit. p. 26. P. Deane and W. A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 74. M. J. R. Healy and E. L. Jones, 'Wheat yields in England 1815-59', J.R.S.S., Series A, 125, IV (1962), pp. 574-9.

2 Williams, loc. cit.

3 Baugh, loc. cit. pp. 56, 58. Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1822, V, Appendix C, pp. 20-1. Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Rate Returns, Parl. Papers 1825, IV. Supplemental Appendix to the Report, pp. 73-207. Poor Rate Returns. Account of the Money Expended for the Relief of the Poor 1825-1829, Parl. Papers 1830-1, XI, pp. 53-196. Poor Rate Returns. An Account of the Money Expended for the Relief of the Poor, Parl. Papers 1835, XLVII, pp. 51-191.

outlays on poor relief. Indeed, in view of the main policy measures adopted by the parish authorities in these counties - allowances in aid of wages and employment creating schemes - it would appear that this was the case. The county evidence has provided detailed examples of the various ways the parish authorities sought to create work and make-up sub-standard wages to a living-wage - the Roundsman System, the Labour Rate system, variants of the Speenhamland system, and parish-sponsored emigration. By these means the amount of poor relief expenditure was maintained at a high level up to the 1834 Poor Law Act. In view of the general background of poverty and social depravation in these decades, there seems little doubt that the Old Poor Law fulfilled a vital role in the labourers' existence by standing between the labourer and total destitution when all else failed.

In the light of the interaction of these short-term and long-term factors the case for pessimism appears difficult to resist. It has been statistically demonstrated that even on the most favourable assumptions possible, real wages failed to respond by the amount suggested by Clapham. On the contrary, the long-run trend of real wages was generally downwards throughout most of the period under review. At the points where real wages did improve, the amount of increase was negligible and was restricted to a small cluster of years towards the end of the period. For those labourers who experienced periodic bouts of unemployment, no gains at all were recorded in their standard of living. Finally, it is of some significance that the conclusions suggested by the statistical evidence are strongly borne out by the literary evidence. In the final analysis, when both the quantitative and qualitative evidence is taken into account, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the agricultural labourers' material standard of living deteriorated in this period.

STATISTICAL APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1(i)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN KENT

(Pence)

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Mutton lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.
1790	6¾	4½	5	5½	7	3	6¾
1791	6	4¼	5¼	5¾	8	3	8
1792	6¼	4	5				
1793	6¼	4½	5	4½			8¾
1794	7½	4	5	4½	9¾	3	7¾
1795	11	5½	6	7	12	3½	8¼
1796	10	6	6¼	6½	10½	3	9¼
1797	8	6¼	6¾	7	10½	3½	9½
1798	7¼	5½	6½	6	10¾	4	9¾
1799	12½	5½	6¼	5	10½	4¼	10¼
1800	15¾	6	7	9	15	4½	8½
1801	16	6½	8¾	8¼	16	4½	8¾
1802	9½	7¼	8¾	9	11	4½	8
1803	9½	8½	8½	7			8
1804	10¾	8½	8	8½	12¾	5¾	10½
1805	13	8	7¾	7¾	12½	6	10½
1806	11¾	7¾	7¾	7¾	11½	6	10
1807	11¼	7¾	7¾	7¾	12¼	6¼	9
1808	12	8	8¼	8¾	13¾	6	9½
1809	14¼	7½	8¾	8¼	13½	6	9½
1810	15	7½	8½	8¾	13¼	6	9¾
1811	14¾	7¾	8¾	9¼	15¾	6	9½
1812	18	9	9¾	11	15	6	9½
1813	16	9¼	10¼	11½	14¾	6	11¼
1814	11¼	9¼	10¼	9½	15	6¼	11

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Mutton lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.
1815	10¾	8	8½	10	15½	6	11¾
1816	12½	7	7¾	7½	12	5¾	10½
1817	16¾	6	7	7	11¼	5¾	10½
1818	12½	7	8¼	7¾	14½	5¾	11
1819	10¾	8½	9	7¾	12¼	5½	9
1820	11	8	8¾	7¼	10½	5½	8
1821	10	6½	6¾	7¼	10	5½	7
1822	7	5½	5	6½	8¼	5	6¼
1823	7	5	6¼	5	8	5	6¼
1824	9	5¾	6½	5½	7¾	5¼	6
1825	9	7¼	7¾	5¾	11¾	5½	7¼
1826	9	7¼	7¾	6½	11¾	4¼	6¾
1827	9	7½	7¾	6½	10¾	4	7
1828	9	7	7¾	7	11	3½	6¾
1829	10	5½	7¾	6½	8½	3½	5½
1830	9	5½	7¼	6½	7	3¼	5½
1831	9¼	6¼	7	8	9¾	3½	5¼
1832	8½	6	8	8	10	3¼	5½
1833	7½			7¼	11	3½	5¾
1834	7¼	4½	4½	5¾	9¾	3	5
1835	6¼	5	5	5½	9¼	2½	5¾
1836	6¼	6¼	6	5½	9½	3	7
1837	7½	5¾	5½	6	10¼	2¾	6¼
1838	8	5½	5¾	5¾	9½	2¾	6¼
1839	7¾	5½	5½	5¾	9½	3	6½
1840	7¾	5¼	5½	6¼	10¼	3¾	8

A P P E N D I X 1(ii)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN KENT

(Pence)

Year	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Coal bushl.	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1790	8¾	7½	6s. 6d.	15	100
1791	8¼	7½			96
1792					93
1793	8	8	7s.		97
1794	8	7			103
1795	9	9			137
1796	10¼	9¼			132
1797	10	8¾			123
1798	9¼	9			114
1799	9¾	9¾			144
1800	10	8½			173
1801	12	10			177
1802	14				143
1803	11½			15	143
1804	11¾	9½		18	157
1805	11½	9½		18	167
1806	11	9½		18	157
1807	10	9¼		18	154
1808	13	11¾		18	164
1809	14¼	13¾		18	174
1810	12	11½		18	178
1811	11¼	9¾		18	180
1812	12	11¼	9s.	18	220
1813	13¼	12¼	8s. 6d.	18	205
1814	14½	12		18	166

Year	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Coal bushl.	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1815	12½	10¾		18	161
1816	10¼	9¼		18	160
1817	9½	9½	10s. 6d.	18	184
1818	11¾	10¾		18	166
1819	11	11		18	151
1820	9¾	9¼		18	148
1821	8¾	8¼		18	138
1822	7¾	7¾		18	109
1823	7	7	10s. 6d.	18	107
1824	6¾	7	10s. 6d.	18	123
1825	7	7½			130
1826	6¾	7½			131
1827	7¼	7½		15	128
1828	7¼	7¼		15	128
1829	6½	6¾			132
1830	6¼	6½			121
1831	6½	6¼			130
1832	6	6¼			123
1833	6	5½			113
1834	5¾	5½	10s. 6d.		107
1835	5¼	5	11s.		100
1836	5¾	5¼			106
1837	5¾	5¼			113
1838	6	5¾			117
1839	6	5½			116
1840	6¼	5¾	6s. 9d.		117

A P P E N D I X 2

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON THREE ESTATES IN KENT 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Cobham Hall	Cranbrook	Waldershare	Wage Index
1790	9s. 6d.			100
1791	9s. 6d.			100
1792	9s. 6d.		9s. 10d.	100
1793	9s. 4d.		9s. 10d.	98
1794	10s. 1d.		9s. 10d.	106
1795	11s. 6d.		10s. 10d.	121
1796	12s. 2d.		11s. 7d.	128
1797	12s. 2d.		11s. 7d.	128
1798	12s. 2d.		11s. 7d.	128
1799	12s. 2d.		12s. 6d.	128
1800	12s. 4d.		12s. 6d.	151
1801	12s. 6d.		12s. 6d.	153
1802	12s. 10d.			136
1803	12s. 10d.			135
1804	13s. 1d.			138
1805	15s. 0d.			158
1806	15s. 0d.			158
1807	15s. 0d.			158
1808	15s. 0d.			158
1809	15s. 0d.			158
1810	15s. 0d.			158
1811	15s. 2d.			160
1812	18s. 0d.			190
1813	18s. 0d.			190

Year	Cobham Hall	Cranbrook	Waldershare	Wage Index
1814	15s. 0d.			158
1815	14s. 6d.			153
1816	12s. 2d.			128
1817	13s. 8d.			143
1818	14s. 7d.	13s. 11d.		155
1819	13s. 6d.	13s. 11d.		142
1820	13s. 6d.	13s. 11d.		142
1821	11s. 10d.	12s. 2d.		124
1822	9s. 7d.	10s. 8d.		102
1823	9s. 8d.	12s. 2d.		101
1824	10s. 11d.	12s. 0d.		115
1825	13s. 0d.	10s. 11d.		138
1826	12s. 6d.	10s. 11d.		132
1827	12s. 7d.	10s. 11d.		134
1828	12s. 6d.	10s. 11d.		132
1829	12s. 0d.	10s. 11d.		126
1830	12s. 0d.	10s. 11d.		126
1831	12s. 0d.	11s. 10d.		126
1832	12s. 0d.	11s. 10d.		126
1833	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		126
1834	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		126
1835	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		100
1836		12s. 0d.		100
1837		12s. 0d.		100
1838		12s. 0d.		100
1839		12s. 0d.		100
1840		12s. 0d.		100

APPENDIX 3

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN KENT DERIVED FROM ESTATE LABOUR ACCOUNTS AND CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1792[1]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Ash, Ashford
1793[2]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	East Kent
1794[3]	10s. 0d.	East Kent
1795[4]	9s. 5d., 10s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 12s. 0d., 12s. 6d.	Wingham, Milstead, Knole, Wormshill
1796[5]	11s. 0d.	Knole
1799[6]	13s. 6d.	East Kent
1800[7]	15s. 0d.	Gillingham, Canterbury
1802[8]	12s. 2d.	Knole
1803[9]	12s. 0d., 12s. 2d., 13s. 6d., 15s. 0d.	Knole, Kent
1804[10]	12s. 2d.	Knole
1805-9[11]	15s. 0d.	Milstead, Wormshill, Kent
1810-11[12]	13s. 4d.	Langley
1812[13]	18s. 0d.	East Kent
1814[14]	15s. 0d.	Gillingham
1816[15]	12s. 6d.	Boxley
1817[16]	13s. 7d.	Boxley
1821[17]	12s. 0d.	Bapchild
1826-7[18]	10s. 6d.	Knole
1829[19]	11s. 8d.	Boxley
1830[20]	9s. 0d., 9s. 6d., 10s. 0d., 11s. 8d.	Boxley, Kent
1831-2[21]	13s. 6d.	Tenterden
1833[22]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Tenterden, Doddington, Gillingham
1834[23]	10s. 0d., 12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Doddington, Marden

Year	Wage	Location
1835[24]	13s. 2d.	Doddington
1836[25]	12s. 0d.	Doddington
1837[26]	12s. 0d.	Knole
1838[27]	12s. 0d., 12s. 10d.	Knole, Milstead, Wormshill
1839[28]	12s. 10d.	Knole
1840[29]	12s. 10d.	Knole

Sources:

1 Annals, XX (1793), pp. 249, 253, 267.

2 Ibid. p. 183.

3 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 74.

4 Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 125. XXIV (1795), p. 176. K.R.O. U593/A7. Tylden Estate. Milstead and Wormshill Farming Accounts. K.R.O. U269/A89. Sackville. Knole Estate Farm and Labour Accounts. J. Boys, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent (1805), pp. 190, 192.

5 K.R.O. U269/A89. Sackville, op. cit.

6 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 113.

7 Ibid. pp. 607, 637.

8 K.R.O. U269/A60. Sackville, op. cit.

9 Ibid. Boys, op. cit. pp. 190, 192.

10 K.R.O. U269/A61. Sackville, op. cit.

11 The Farmer's Magazine, XXI (1805), p. 116. K.R.O. U593/A8. Tylden, op. cit.

12 K.R.O. U194/A8. Farm Account Book of W. H. Gambia 1810-15.

13 S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, p. 73.

14 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 294.

15 K.R.O. U480/E1. Best Estate. Boxley Court Lodge Farm Acoounts.

16 Ibid.

17 S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, pp. 73-4.

18 K.R.O. U269/A70/2. Sackville, op. cit.

19 K.R.O. U480/E2. Best, op. cit.

20 Ibid. The Maidstone Journal 2 January 1830, p. 4.

21 Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 245.

22 Ibid. p. 245, 294, 339. K.R.O. U269/A69/1. Sackville, op. cit. K.R.O. U709/A1. Sir John Croft. Account Book for Doddington.

23 K.R.O. U709/A1. Croft, op. cit. Reports into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Parl. Papers 1834, XXVIII, Appendix A, I, p. 209.

24 K.R.O. U709/A1. Croft, op. cit.

25 Ibid.

26 K.R.O. U269/A69/2. Sackville, op. cit.

27 Ibid. K.R.O. U593/A10. Tylden, op. cit.

28 K.R.O. U269/A69/2. Sackville, op. cit.

29 Ibid.

APPENDIX 4

WAGE EARNINGS, THE COST OF LIVING, AND REAL WAGES IN KENT AND ESSEX 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

	KENT			ESSEX		
Year	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1790	100	100	100	100	100	100
1791	100	96	104	100	104	96
1792	100	93	108	100	91	110
1793	98	97	101	100	103	97
1794	106	103	103	100	103	97
1795	121	137	88	111	134	83
1796	128	132	97	111	127	87
1797	128	123	104	111	125	89
1798	128	114	112	111	116	96
1799	128	144	89	111	145	77
1800	151	173	87	111	171	65
1801	153	177	86	115	180	64
1802	136	143	95	115	156	74
1803	135	143	94	115	146	79
1804	138	157	88	120	154	78
1805	158	167	95	120	173	69
1806	158	157	101	120	161	75
1807	158	154	103	125	151	83
1808	158	164	96	125	161	78
1809	158	174	91	125	181	69
1810	158	178	89	125	188	67
1811	160	180	89	127	189	67
1812	190	220	86	137	219	63

Year	KENT			ESSEX		
	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1813	190	205	93	139	204	68
1814	158	166	95	139	162	86
1815	153	161	95	139	157	87
1816	128	160	80	125	156	80
1817	143	184	78	133	171	78
1818	155	166	93	139	164	85
1819	142	151	94	139	149	93
1820	142	148	96	139	145	96
1821	124	138	90	127	134	95
1822	102	109	94	117	120	98
1823	101	107	94	112	120	93
1824	115	123	93	112	130	86
1825	138	130	106	124	137	90
1826	132	131	101	124	124	100
1827	134	128	105	124	120	103
1828	132	128	103	124	126	98
1829	126	132	95	124	121	102
1830	126	121	104	124	122	102
1831	126	130	97	124	116	107
1832	126	123	102	124	115	108
1833	126	113	112	124	109	114
1834	126	107	118	127	106	120
1835	100	100	100	100	100	100
1836	100	106	94	100	113	88
1837	100	113	88	100	110	91
1838	100	117	85	100	116	86
1839	100	116	86	105	123	85
1840	100	117	85	105	123	85

APPENDIX 5(i)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN ESSEX

(Pence)

Year	Quartern Loaf	Beef lb.	Mutton lb.	Pork lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.
1790	7	4¼	4	4	5	8½	3
1791	6	4¼	5¼	5¾	5¼	8¾	3
1792	6	4	5	5¼			
1793	7	4½	5	5½	4½		
1794	7½	4	5	5¾	4½	9¾	3
1795	11	5½	5¼	6¼	5¼	10	3½
1796	10	5	6¼	7	6	10	3
1797	8	6¼	6¾	7	7	10½	3½
1798	7¼	5½	6½	4¾	6	10¾	4
1799	12½	5½	6¼	6	5	10½	4¼
1800	15½	6	7	7¾	7½	15	4
1801	16½	6½	8¾	9¼	8¼	13	4
1802	9½	7¾	8¾	9	6		4½
1803	9½	8	8¾	7¼	7		
1804	10½	8	8	7	7¼	13½	5¾
1805	14	7½	7¾	7½	7¾	14	6
1806	12½	7¼	7¾	8	7	13½	6
1807	11	7½	7¾	8¼	6¼	12	6¼
1808	12½	7¼	7¼	8¼	6¾	14	6
1809	15	7¾	8¼	8½	7¼	14¾	6
1810	15½	8½	9	9½	8	15	6
1811	14¾	8¼	8½	9		15	6
1812	18	9	8½	9¼	8¾	16	6
1813	16	9½	10	10¼	9	16	6
1814	11¼	8	9¾	10¼	8½	16	6

Year	Quartern Loaf	Beef lb.	Mutton lb.	Pork lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.
1815	10¾	7	8	8½	8¾	17½	5¾
1816	12½	6	8	7¼	7¾	11	5¼
1817	14	5	6¾	7¼		13	5¼
1818	12¾	6½	7¼	8½	8	15	5¼
1819	11	6¼	8	9¼	8	13	5¼
1820	10¾	7¼	7¾	8¾	6¾	13	5
1821	9½	6	6½	6½	7½	12½	5
1822	8½	5	5¼	5	5¾	11¼	5
1823	8¾	4½	5¼	5¼	6	10	5¼
1824	10	4½	6¾	7	5¼	11	5¾
1825	10¼	5¾	8	8	5¾	13¼	6
1826	9	4¼	8	7¾	5½	12¾	6
1827	8¼	6½	8	7¾	6	10	6
1828	8¾	7¼	8	8	6	10¾	5½
1829	8¾	6½	7½	7	6	8	5¼
1830	8½	5½	7½	6¼		13¼	5¼
1831	8	6¼	7¼	7		11¼	4½
1832	8	5½	7½	7	6	11½	4½
1833	7½	5¼	7½	6¾	5½	11	3¾
1834	7	5¾	6¾	6	6¼	10	3¾
1835	5½	5	6¼	6¼	5¼	9	3½
1836	7	5¾	7	7	5	9¾	2½
1837	7	5½	7	7¼	4¾	9½	2¼
1838	7½	5	7	7¼	5	9¾	2¾
1839	7¾	5¾	7¼	7½	5¾	9½	3
1840	7½	5¾	7¼	7	5¾	10½	3¾

APPENDIX 5(ii)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN ESSEX

(Pence)

Year	Sugar lb.	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1790	6¾	8½	7½	5s. 9d.	100
1791	7		7	5s. 9d.	104
1792					91
1793	8¾	8	8	5s. 9d.	103
1794	7¾	8	7	6s. 9d.	103
1795	8¼	9	9	6s. 6d.	134
1796	9¼	10¼	9¼	6s. 6d.	127
1797	9½	10	8¾	7s.	125
1798	9¾	9¼	9	6s. 9d.	116
1799	10¼	9¾	9¾	8s. 3d.	145
1800	8½	10	8½	7s. 9d.	171
1801	8¾	10¾	9¼	8s. 9d.	180
1802	7½	10¼		8s. 9d.	156
1803	8	11½			146
1804	9	11½	9½	8s.	154
1805	9¾	10¾	9¼	8s. 6d.	173
1806	9¼	10½	9	8s.	161
1807	8½	10¼	9¼	8s. 9d.	151
1808	8¼	13¼	11¾	8s. 9d.	161
1809	9	14½	13¾	8s. 9d.	181
1810	9	12½	11½	7s.	188
1811		11	9¾		189
1812	8¼	11½	11	9s.	219
1813	9½	13	12¼		204
1814	11½	14	12		162

Year	Sugar lb.	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1815	10	12¾	10¾	9s. 9d.	157
1816	8½	10	10	9s. 3d.	156
1817	9¼		9½	10s. 6d.	171
1818	9	12	12	8s. 4d.	164
1819	8½	12	11¼		149
1820	7¾	10	9½		145
1821	7	9	9¾		134
1822	6¾	8½	9		120
1823	7	8	8		120
1824	7	7	8		130
1825	7½	7	8		137
1826	8½	7½	8		124
1827	6½	6½	7½		120
1828	7¼	6¾	7¾		126
1829	5¼	6¼	7		121
1830	6¼	6½	7¼		122
1831	5½	6½	7¼		116
1832	5½	6¼	7¼		115
1833	5¾	6¼	6¾		109
1834	5¾	6	6		106
1835	5¾	5¾	5¾	8s.	100
1836	6½	5¾	5¼	8s.	113
1837	5¾	5¾	5	7s.	110
1838	5¼	6¼	5½	6s. 6d.	116
1839	6¾	6¼	5¼		123
1840	7¾	6¼	5¾	5s. 9d.	123

APPENDIX 6

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS AT AUDLEY END IN ESSEX 1790 - 1840

(Shillings)

Year	Yardman	Carter	Ploughman	Labourer
1790	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 8d.	7s. 6d.
1791	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 8d.	7s. 6d.
1792	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 8d.	7s. 6d.
1793	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 8d.	7s. 6d.
1794	8s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	7s. 8d.	7s. 6d.
1795	8s. 6d.	8s. 6d.	8s. 0d.	8s. 4d.
1796	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 5d.	8s. 4d.
1797	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 5d.	8s. 4d.
1798	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 5d.	8s. 4d.
1799	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 5d.	8s. 4d.
1800	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 5d.	8s. 4d.
1801	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 8d.	8s. 8d.
1802	9s. 0d.	9s. 0d.	8s. 8d.	8s. 8d.
1803	9s. 0d.	9s. 6d.	8s. 8d.	8s. 8d.
1804	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 0d.
1805	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 0d.
1806	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 0d.
1807	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 5d.
1808	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 5d.
1809	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 5d.
1810	9s. 0d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 5d.	9s. 5d.
1811	11s. 3d.	10s. 4d.	9s. 8d.	9s. 6d.
1812	14s. 0d.	10s. 9d.	10s. 3d.	10s. 3d.
1813	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	11s. 0d.	10s. 5d.

Year	Yardman	Carter	Ploughman	Labourer
1814	14s. 0d.	13s. 0d.	12s. 5d.	10s. 5d.
1815	14s. 0d.	12s. 9d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.
1816	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	11s. 0d.	9s. 5d.
1817	14s. 0d.	12s. 6d.	11s. 6d.	10s. 0d.
1818	14s. 0d.	13s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.
1819	14s. 0d.	13s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.
1820	14s. 0d.	13s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.
1821	14s. 0d.	12s. 6d.	11s. 3d.	9s. 6d.
1822	13s. 9d.	11s. 9d.	10s. 6d.	8s. 9d.
1823	13s. 0d.	11s. 0d.	9s. 6d.	8s. 5d.
1824	13s. 3d.	11s. 6d.	9s. 8d.	8s. 5d.
1825	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1826	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1827	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1828	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1829	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1830	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1831	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1832	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1833	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 5d.	9s. 4d.
1834	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	10s. 0d.	9s. 6d.
1835	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	10s. 0d.	9s. 6d.
1836	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	10s. 0d.	9s. 6d.
1837	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	10s. 0d.	9s. 6d.
1838	14s. 0d.	11s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	9s. 6d.
1839	14s. 0d.	12s. 9d.	10s. 3d.	10s. 0d.
1840	14s. 0d.	12s. 0d.	10s. 3d.	10s. 0d.

APPENDIX 7

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON FOUR ESTATES IN ESSEX 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Audley End	Saling	Black Notley	Little Dunmow	Audley End Wage Index
1790	7s. 6d.	9s. 4d.			100
1791	7s. 6d.	9s. 4d.			100
1792	7s. 6d.	9s. 4d.			100
1793	7s. 6d.	9s. 4d.			100
1794	7s. 6d.	9s. 4d.			100
1795	8s. 4d.	10s. 0d.			111
1796	8s. 4d.	11s. 8d.			111
1797	8s. 4d.	11s. 8d.			111
1798	8s. 4d.	12s. 6d.			111
1799	8s. 4d.	11s. 10d.			111
1800	8s. 4d.	11s. 8d.			111
1801	8s. 8d.	10s. 0d.			115
1802	8s. 8d.	10s. 4d.			115
1803	8s. 8d.	11s. 6d.			115
1804	9s. 0d.	14s. 0d.			120
1805	9s. 0d.	11s. 4d.			120
1806	9s. 0d.	11s. 11d.			120
1807	9s. 5d.	11s. 5d.			125
1808	9s. 5d.	10s. 10d.			125
1809	9s. 5d.	12s. 8d.			125
1810	9s. 5d.	13s. 10d.			125
1811	9s. 6d.	15s. 2d.	14s. 2d.		127

Year	Audley End	Saling	Black Notley	Little Dunmow	Audley End Wage Index
1812	10s. 3d.	12s. 11d.	13s. 7d.		137
1813	10s. 5d.	13s. 5d.	13s. 5d.		139
1814	10s. 5d.	12s. 0d.	13s. 7d.		139
1815	10s. 5d.	11s. 6d.	12s. 4d.		139
1816	9s. 5d.	10s. 6d.	11s. 6d.		125
1817	10s. 0d.	12s. 5d.	12s. 0d.		133
1818	10s. 5d.	13s. 6d.	12s. 7d.	10s. 0d.	139
1819	10s. 5d.	11s. 5d.	12s. 8d.	10s. 0d.	139
1820	10s. 5d.		12s. 4d.	9s. 6d.	139
1821	9s. 6d.		11s. 2d.	9s. 0d.	127
1822	8s. 9d.		10s. 8d.	8s. 6d.	117
1823	8s. 5d.		10s. 0d.	8s. 0d.	112
1824	8s. 5d.		10s. 7d.	8s. 0d.	112
1825	9s. 4d.		10s. 11d.	8s. 6d.	124
1826	9s. 4d.		10s. 11d.	9s. 0d.	124
1827	9s. 4d.		10s. 8d.	8s. 0d.	124
1828	9s. 4d.		11s. 5d.	8s. 6d.	124
1829	9s. 4d.			9s. 0d.	124
1830	9s. 4d.			8s. 0d.	124
1831	9s. 4d.			9s. 0d.	124
1832	9s. 4d.		10s. 0d.	8s. 6d.	124
1833	9s. 4d.		9s. 2d.	8s. 0d.	124
1834	9s. 6d.		8s. 11d.	8s. 0d.	127
1835	9s. 6d.		8s. 10d.	8s. 0d.	100
1836	9s. 6d.		9s. 7d.	8s. 0d.	100
1837	9s. 6d.		10s. 8d.	8s. 0d.	100
1838	9s. 6d.		10s. 7d.	8s. 6d.	100
1839	10s. 0d.			10s. 0d.	105
1840	10s. 0d.			10s. 0d.	105

APPENDIX 8

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN ESSEX DERIVED FROM ESTATE LABOUR ACCOUNTS AND CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1790[1]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 6d.	Essex
1791[2]	7s. 0d.	Dunmow
1792[3]	7s. 0d.	Bradfield
1793[4]	7s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Bradfield
1794[5]	7s. 0d.	Bradfield
1795[6]	7s. 0d., 7s. 6d., 8s. 0d., 8s. 9d., 9s. 0d., 9s. 6d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d.	Hedingham Castle, Bradfield, Colchester, Saling, Dunmow
1796[7]	9s. 0d.	Latchingdon, Woodham Mortimer
1797[8]	10s. 0d., 10s. 9d.	Latchingdon, Woodham Mortimer
1798[9]	11s. 0d., 11s. 8d.	Latchingdon, Woodham Mortimer
1804[10]	10s. 0d., 10s. 9d.	Essex
1805[11]	12s. 0d.	Essex
1810[12]	13s. 0d.	Brightlingsea
1811[13]	14s. 0d.	Brightlingsea
1816[14]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Essex
1821[15]	8s. 0d.	Dunmow
1824[16]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Chelmsford, Colchester, Dunmow, Hinckford, Walden, Witham
1830[17]	7s. 0d.	Writtle
1833[18]	7s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Denham, Halstead
1834[19]	7s. 0d.	Essex
1835[20]	7s. 0d., 7s. 6d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Essex
1836[21]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d., 11s. 0d.	Southminster, Woodham Mortimer, Roxwell, Chelmsford
1837[22]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Essex

Year	Wage	Location
1838[23]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Great Henny
1839[24]	10s. 0d., 11s. 0d.	Great Henny
1840[25]	10s. 0d., 11s. 0d.	Great Henny, Essex

Sources:

1 Annals, XXIV (1795), pp. 57, 159, 284.

2 Ibid. XVIII (1792), p. 571.

3 Ibid. XXIV (1795), p. 57.

4 Ibid. XX (1793), p. 412,

5 Ibid. XXIV (1795), p. 57.

6 Ibid. pp. 57, 159, 284. XXV (1795), pp. 131, 603. C. Vancouver, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1795), p. 114. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 188.

7 E.R.O. D/DOp E15. Wage Disbursements at Ulmes Farm, Latchindon and Woodham Mortimer.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 The Farmer's Magazine, XVII (1804), p. 120. A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex (1807), II, p. 428.

11 The Farmer's Magazine, XXIV (1805), p. 512.

12 E.R.O. D/NM 1/1. Edward Stephen Kempton of Brightlingsea, Farm and Labour Accounts.

13 Ibid.

14 The Chelmsford Chronicle 12 January 1816, p. 3. 19 January 1816, p. 3.

15 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 108.

16 Abstract of Returns on Labourer's Wages made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX, pp. 377-8.

17 The Suffolk Chronicle 15 May 1830, p. 3.

18 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 76. Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales, Parl. Papers 1836, XXIV (1836), p. 253.

19 The Chelmsford Chronicle 26 December 1834, p. 4.

20 Second Annual Report of the P. L. Commissioners, P.P. 1836, XXIV (1836), p. 242. The Essex Standard 16 January 1835, p. 1.

21 First Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII(i), p. 108. Third Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII(ii), p. 158. The Chelmsford Chronicle 18 November 1836, p. 3. 8 April 1836, p. 4.

22 The Chelmsford Chronicle 23 June 1837, p. 2. E.R.O. D/DU 441/52. Edm. Cook's Farm Accounts at Great Henny.

23 E.R.O. D/DU 441/52. Cook, op. cit.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. R. Baker, 'On the Farming of Essex. Prize Report', J.R.A.S., V (1844), pp. 17, 31, 39.

APPENDIX 9(i)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN SUFFOLK

(Pence)

Year	Flour sack	Beef lb.	Butter firkin	Cheese lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.
1790	36s. 0d.	4	36s. 0d.			6¼
1791	33s. 6d.	4	37s. 0d.			8
1792	32s. 9d.	4	37s. 0d.			7¾
1793	36s. 6d.	4	42s. 0d.			8¼
1794	36s. 0d.	4	42s. 0d.			7½
1795	51s. 5d.	5	44s. 6d.			8½
1796	52s. 6d.	5¼	46s. 6d.			9¼
1797	40s. 4d.	5½	47s. 0d.			9¼
1798	41s. 5d.	5	44s. 4d.			9¾
1799	54s. 0d.	5¼	49s. 6d.			9¾
1800	89s. 0d.	6¾	61s. 0d.			7½
1801	89s. 0d.	7½	65s. 0d.			8
1802	48s. 0d.	6¾	61s. 0d.			6
1803	45s. 0d.	6½	65s. 0d.			6
1804	48s. 9d.	7½	61s. 6d.			8¼
1805	68s. 0d.	6½	51s. 0d.			8¾
1806	60s. 4d.	6¾	57s. 9d.			7¼
1807	57s. 6d.	6¼	65s. 0d.			6½
1808	61s. 9d.	6½	65s. 4d.			7¼
1809	71s. 4d.	6¾	66s. 9d.			8½
1810					6	9
1811					5¾	8¾
1818						
1819						10

Year	Flour sack	Beef lb.	Butter firkin	Cheese lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.
1820						10
1821						
1835	25s. 0d.	4	58s. 0d.	3¾	2½	6½
1836	37s. 0d.	4½	52s. 0d.	4½	2½	7¼
1837	39s. 0d.	4¾	53s. 6d.	4¾	2½	6½
1838	48s. 9d.	4¾	49s. 9d.	5¼	2½	6½
1839	47s. 4d.	5	48s. 9d.	5	2½	6½
1840	45s. 6d.	5	52s. 0d.	4½	3½	8

APPENDIX 9(ii)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN SUFFOLK

(Pence)

Year	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Coal bushel	Women's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1790	7½	6½	9¾		100
1791	7½	6½	9¾		97
1792	7¼	6½	9¾		96
1793	7	6¼			103
1794	7	6¼			102
1795	7½	7½			134
1796	8½	8	9¾		135
1797	9	8¼	10¾		117
1798	9	8¼	11¾		118
1799	9	8¼	14		142
1800	9	8¼	16¼		205
1801	9	8¾	16		208
1802	9	8¼	12¾		135
1803	9¾	8¼	16½		133
1804	10¼	8½	15¾		143
1805	9¾	8¼	15¼		169
1806	9¾	8¼	15¼		157
1807	9¼	8¼	15¼		152
1808	10½	11	16		162
1809	11¾	11	17		181
1810	11				
1811	11				
.1818	11				
1819	10½				

Year	Candles lb.	Soap lb.	Coal bushel	Women's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1820	9¾	9			
1821	9				
			cwt.		
1835	5¼	4¾	15	3s. 6d.	100
1836	5½	5	15½	3s. 6d.	118
1837	5½	5	15	3s. 6d.	129
1838	6½	5¾	15	3s. 6d.	145
1839	6	5¼	14½	4s. 0d.	144
1840	6	5¼	14	4s. 4d.	140

A P P E N D I X 10

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON TWO ESTATES IN SUFFOLK 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Henham Hall	Playford	Wage Index
1790	8s. 6d.		100
1791	8s. 6d.		100
1792	8s. 6d.		100
1793	8s. 6d.		100
1794	8s. 6d.		100
1795	8s. 6d.		100
1796	8s. 6d.		100
1797	8s. 6d.		100
1798	8s. 6d.		100
1799	9s. 6d.		103
1800	10s. 7d.		115
1801	10s. 10d.		118
1802	10s. 10d.		118
1803	10s. 10d.		118
1804	10s. 10d.		118
1805	10s. 10d.		118
1806	11s. 4d.		124
1807	11s. 4d.		124
1808	11s. 4d.		124
1809	11s. 4d.		124
1810			
1811			
1812			
1813			

Year	Henham Hall	Playford	Wage Index
1814	12s. 0d.		141
1815	12s. 0d.		141
1816	11s. 0d.		129
1817			
1818			
1819			
1820			
1821		8s. 4d.	
1822		9s. 6d.	
1823		9s. 0d.	
1824		9s. 6d.	
1825		12s. 6d.	
1826		12s. 5d.	
1827		11s. 6d.	
1828		11s. 8d.	
1829		11s. 0d.	
1830			
1831			
1832		12s. 4d.	
1833		13s. 2d.	
1834		12s. 10d.	
1835		11s. 6d.	100
1836		11s. 4d.	98
1837		12s. 6d.	109
1838		11s. 0d.	96
1839		11s. 0d.	96
1840		11s. 0d.	96

APPENDIX 11

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN SUFFOLK DERIVED FROM CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1793[1]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Hoxne, Walton
1794[2]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1795[3]	7s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Melton
1800[4]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Little Livermere
1817[5]	10s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Suffolk
1818[6]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1819[7]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1820[8]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1821[9]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1822[10]	8s. 0d.	Suffolk
1823[11]	8s. 0d.	Suffolk
1824[12]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1825[13]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1826[14]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1827[15]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1828[16]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1829[17]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1830[18]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1831[19]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1832[20]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 12s. 6d.	Blythburgh, Suffolk
1833[21]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1834[22]	9s. 0d.	Suffolk
1835[23]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1836[24]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Blythburgh, Suffolk
1837[25]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk

Year	Wage	Location
1838[26]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1839[27]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk
1840[28]	10s. 0d.	Suffolk

Sources:

1 Annals, XXIII (1793), pp. 19, 44.

2 A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Suffolk (1794), p. 56.

3 F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), p. 315.

4 Annals, XXXIV (1800), p. 612.

5 Report from the Select Committee on the Depressed State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1821, IX, p. 84. F. Clifford, 'The Labour Bill in Farming', J.R.A.S., 2nd ser. II (1875), p. 76.

6 Clifford, loc. cit. p. 76.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. S.C. on the Depressed State of Agriculture, P.P. 1821, IX, p. 84.

10 Clifford, loc. cit. p. 76.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. The Ipswich Journal 10 October 1829, p. 4.

18 Clifford, loc. cit. p. 76.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid. Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII(i), pp. 63, 291.

21 Clifford, loc. cit. p. 76.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid. Second Report from the S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII(i), p. 63.

25 Clifford, op. cit. p. 76

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

APPENDIX 12

WAGE EARNINGS, THE COST OF LIVING, AND REAL WAGES IN SUFFOLK AND LINCOLNSHIRE 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

	SUFFOLK			LINCOLNSHIRE		
Year	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1790	100	100	100	100	100	100
1791	100	97	103	100	100	100
1792	100	96	104	100	100	100
1793	100	103	97	100	99	101
1794	100	102	98	108	103	105
1795	100	134	75	111	135	82
1796	100	135	74	115	136	85
1797	100	117	85	115	108	106
1798	100	118	85	110	109	101
1799	103	142	73	110	141	78
1800	115	205	56	121	191	63
1801	118	208	57	121	179	68
1802	118	135	87	121	142	85
1803	118	133	89	121		
1804	118	143	83	121		
1805	118	169	70	121	167	72
1806	124	157	79	121	142	85
1807	124	152	82	121	148	82
1808	124	162	77	121	162	75
1809	124	181	69	121	172	70
1810				132	174	76
1811				132	170	78
1812				132	204	65

Year	SUFFOLK			LINCOLNSHIRE		
	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1813				132	186	71
1814	141			132	140	94
1815	141			132	126	105
1816	129			132	131	101
1817				132	154	86
1818				132	148	89
1819				132	130	101
1820				132	120	110
1821				132	110	120
1822				110	89	123
1823				110	102	108
1824				110	116	95
1825				132	126	104
1826				132	117	113
1827				132	116	114
1828				132	118	112
1829				132	121	109
1830				132	119	111
1831				132	123	107
1832				132	111	119
1833				132	108	122
1834						
1835	100	100	100			
1836	98	118	83			
1837	109	129	84			
1838	96	145	66		120	
1839	96	144	67		112	
1840	96	140	69		114	

APPENDIX 13

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN LINCOLNSHIRE

(Pence)

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Cost of Living Index (1790=100)
1790		4¼	5½	8½	100
1791		4¼	5½		100
1792		4¼	5½		100
1793	8¾	4	5½		99
1794	8¾	4¾	6¼		103
1795	12	5½	7½	11	135
1796	12	5½	8		136
1797	8¾	6	6		108
1798	8¾	6¼	6½		109
1799	12	7	8	10½	141
1800	17¼	7½	8½		191
1801	16	7½	8		179
1802	12	6¾	8¼		142
1803		7¾	9		
1804		7	9¼		
1805		7	9½		167
1806	12	7	8		142
1807	12½	7¼	8½		148
1808	14	7¼	9		162
1809	15½	6	10½		172
1810	15	8	9		174
1811	15	8	8	12	170
1812	18¼	7¾	12	16	204
1813	16¼	7	13½	15¼	186
1814	10½	8¼	11¼	13¼	140

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Cost of Living Index (1790=100)
1815	9¾	6½	11	12¼	126
1816	11½	5¾		9¾	131
1817	14¼	5½		10	154
1818	12¾	6½		13½	148
1819	10¾	6½		12¾	130
1820	10½	7			120
1821	9	6			110
1822	7¼	4½		10	89
1823	8½	5		10¼	102
1824	9¾	5½		11	116
1825	10¼	6½		13	126
1826	9	6¼		15¾	117
1827	8¾	6¾		15¼	116
1828	9¼	6	9	12¾	118
1829	10	6	8	10¼	121
1830	10	6		10¼	119
1831	10¼	6	7½	10¾	123
1832	9	5¾		11½	111
1833	8½	6		11¾	108
1834		6		10½	
1835		5¼		10¾	
1836		5¾		12	
1837		6¼		12¾	
1838	9¾	6		12	120
1839	9	6		11½	112
1840	9	6¼		12½	114

APPENDIX 14

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON THREE ESTATES IN LINCOLNSHIRE 1790 - 1833

(1790=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Stamford	Normanton	Burton	Stamford Wage Index
1790	9s. 1d.		7s. 4d.	100
1791	9s. 1d.		7s. 4d.	100
1792	9s. 1d.		7s. 4d.	100
1793	9s. 1d.		7s. 4d.	100
1794	9s. 10d.		8s. 0d.	108
1795	10s. 1d.		8s. 4d.	111
1796	10s. 6d.		8s. 4d.	115
1797	10s. 6d.	9s. 7d.	8s. 4d.	115
1798	10s. 0d.	9s. 7d.	8s. 4d.	110
1799	10s. 0d.	9s. 7d.	8s. 4d.	110
1800	11s. 0d.	9s. 7d.	8s. 4d.	121
1801	11s. 0d.		8s. 4d.	121
1802	11s. 0d.	10s. 10d.	8s. 5d.	121
1803	11s. 0d.		9s. 4d.	121
1804	11s. 0d.		9s. 7d.	121
1805	11s. 0d.	10s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	121
1806	11s. 0d.	10s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	121
1807	11s. 0d.	10s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	121
1808	11s. 0d.	10s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	121
1809	11s. 0d.	10s. 6d.		121
1810	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1811	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1812	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132

Year	Stamford	Normanton	Burton	Stamford Wage Index
1813	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1814	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1815	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1816	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1817	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1818	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1819	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1820	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1821	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1822	10s. 0d.	10s. 6d.		110
1823	10s. 0d.	10s. 6d.		110
1824	10s. 0d.	10s. 6d.		110
1825	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1826	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1827	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1828	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1829	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1830	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1831	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1832	12s. 0d.	12s. 0d.		132
1833	12s. 0d.			132

APPENDIX 15

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN LINCOLNSHIRE DERIVED FROM ESTATE LABOUR ACCOUNTS AND CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1792[1]	10s. 6d.	Holbeach
1794[2]	7s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Fens and Wolds
1795[3]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 9s. 6d.	Stainsby, Alford, Cockerington, Louth, Spilsby, Swineshead
1796[4]	9s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Boston and Fens
1799[5]	7s. 6d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d., 12s. 0d.	Brothertoft, Lincolnshire
1802[6]	10s. 10d.	Normanton
1804[7]	12s. 0d.	Witham, Lincolnshire
1805[8]	12s. 0d.	Witham
1806[9]	12s. 0d.	Crowle
1807[10]	10s. 0d.	Normanton
1809[11]	12s. 0d.	Crowle
1810[12]	12s. 0d.	Crowle, Burton
1812[13]	13s. 6d.	Burton
1813[14]	13s. 6d., 15s. 0d.	Burton, Witham
1814[15]	13s. 6d., 15s. 0d.	Burton, Witham
1815[16]	10s. 0d., 12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Burton, Witham, Newark
1816[17]	12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Burton, Witham
1817[18]	12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Burton, Witham
1818[19]	13s. 6d.	Burton
1821[20]	9s. 6d.	Witham
1822[21]	9s. 0d.	Witham
1824[22]	11s. 6d., 12s. 0d.	Witham, Boston, and Fens
1826[23]	12s. 0d.	Folkingham, Lincolnshire
1827[24]	12s. 0d.	Lincolnshire

Year	Wage	Location
1828[25]	12s. 0d.	Lincolnshire
1829[26]	12s. 0d., 13s. 0d.	Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire
1830[27]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 12s. 0d., 13s. 6d.	Lincolnshire
1831[28]	12s. 0d., 13s. 0d., 13s. 6d., 14s. 0d.	Swineshead, Folkingham, Lincolnshire
1832[29]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 11s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire
1834[30]	10s. 0d.	Witham
1835[31]	9s. 0d.	Witham
1836[32]	10s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Witham, Brocklesby, Barnoldby, Spalding
1837[33]	10s. 0d.	Witham
1838[34]	12s. 0d.	Witham
1840[35]	12s. 0d.	Grimsthorpe

Sources:

1 Annals, XIX (1792), p. 57.

2 T. Stone, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1794), pp. 24, 44.

3 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 121. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), pp. 229-37.

4 Annals, XXVI (1796), p. 3.

5 Ibid. XXXIV (1800), p. 285). A. Young, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln (1799), pp. 397-403.

6 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 6/24-25. Duke of Ancaster. Labour and Estate Accounts at Normanton.

7 The Farmer's Magazine, XVII (1804), p. 119. L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Duke of Ancaster. Labourers' Wages at Witham.

8 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

9 L.R.O. 23/8/1. Brace Estate Accounts.

10 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 6/24. Ancaster, op. cit.

11 L.R.O. 23/8/1. Brace, op. cit.

12 Ibid. L.R.O. Monson 12. 10/4B/13-20. Monson Estate Wage Accounts at Burton.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid. L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

15 Ibid.

16 The Stamford Mercury 13 October 1815, p. 3.

17 L.R.O. Monson 12. 10/4B/13-20. Monson, op. cit. L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

18 Ibid.

19 L.R.O. Monson 12. 10/4B/13-20. Monson, op. cit.

20 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid. Report from the Select Committee on Labourer's Wages 1824, Parl. Papers 1824, VI, p. 14.

23 The Stamford Mercury 31 March 1826, p. 2. 3 November 1826, p. 4.

24 Ibid. 5 January 1827, p. 4. 9 November 1827, p. 4.

25 Ibid. 18 April 1828, p. 4. 10 October 1828, p. 4.

26 Ibid. 6 February 1829, p. 4. L.R.O. 2 Anc. 7/23/25/52. Duke of Ancaster. Labour Accounts at Grimsthorpe.

27 The Stamford Mercury 22 January 1830, p. 4. 9 April 1830, p. 2.

28 Ibid. 11 February 1831, p. 4. 18 March 1831, p. 4. 29 July 1831, p. 4. 18 November 1831, p. 3.

29 Ibid. 24 February 1832, p. 4. 1 June 1832, p. 4. L.R.O. 3 Anc. 7/23/25/52. Ancaster, op. cit.

30 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid. Second Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VII(i), pp. 301, 405, 425.

33 L.R.O. 3 Anc. 9/15/165. Ancaster, op. cit.

34 Ibid.

35 L.R.O. 2 Anc. 7/7/53. Ancaster, op. cit.

APPENDIX 16(i)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

(Pence)

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.	Milk quart
1790	8	5	3¾	8	6	11	
1791							
1792							
1793	8¾	5					
1794	8¾	4¾	6				
1795	12	5¾	8				
1796	12	6½					
1797	9		9				
1798	9						
1799	10½						
1800	15						
1801	15						
1802	12			11			
1803		7	6¾				
1804		7½		13¼			
1805		7		12½	9		
1806	13	7		14			
1807	12½						
1808	14						
1809	15½						
1810	15						
1811	14¼						
1812	19½	7¾	6				
1813	17	9½		18¾			
1814	10½	7¼		13¼			
1815	9¾	8	8¾	18¼			

Year	Quartern loaf	Beef lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.	Milk quart
1816	10¾	7		12			
1817	14¼	6¾		14	6		
1818	12¼	7		17			
1819	10½	7		16¼			2
1820	9¾	8		14¼	5		
1821	8¾	6		13	5		
1822	7½	4½	5½	12	4½		2
1823	8	5		12¾	4½		2
1824	9¾	5		14¼	5		2
1825	9¾	6¾		16	5		2
1826	8¾	6¼		14½	5		
1827	8¼	7	9	15	4½		
1828	8¾	6		12¾			
1829	10	6		10¼			
1830	10	6		10¼			
1831	10¼	6		10¾			
1832	9	5¾		11½			
1833	8½	6		11¾			
1834		6		10½			
1835		5½		10¾			
1836		5½	8	12	3	7½	1¾
1837		5		12¾	2¾	7¼	1¾
1838	9¾	6		12		7	1¾
1839	9	5½	7	11½	2¾	7½	1¾
1840	9	6		12½	3¾	7½	1¾

A P P E N D I X 16(ii)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

(Pence)

Year	Candles lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100)
1790			100
1791			
1792			
1793			107
1794			114
1795			151
1796			145
1797			138
1798			113
1799			131
1800			188
1801			188
1802			149
1803			156
1804			154
1805			145
1806			158
1807			156
1808			175
1809			194
1810			188
1811			178
1812			210
1813			209
1814			138
1815			153

Year	Candles lb.	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100)
1816			137
1817			164
1818			155
1819			139
1820	9		134
1821	9		115
1822	8¼		103
1823	7		104
1824	7		119
1825			130
1826			118
1827			134
1828			116
1829			124
1830			124
1831			126
1832			116
1833			113
1834			123
1835			112
1836	5¾	7s. 9d.	136
1837	5¾	7s. 6d.	102
1838		6s. 0d.	122
1839	6¼	6s. 9d.	120
1840	6¼	7s. 3d.	114

A P P E N D I X 17

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON FIVE ESTATES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 1790 - 1835

(1790=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Strelly	Worksop	Rufford	Gonalston	Hodsock	Wage Index
1790	8s. 6d.					100
1791	8s. 6d.					100
1792	8s. 6d.					100
1793	8s. 6d.					100
1794	8s. 10d.					104
1795	9s. 0d.					106
1796	9s. 11d.					116
1797	12s. 0d.					141
1798	12s. 0d.					141
1799	12s. 0d.					141
1800	12s. 0d.					141
1801	12s. 0d.					141
1802		12s. 5d.				146
1803		12s. 5d.				146
1804		12s. 5d.				146
1805		12s. 5d.				146
1806						
1807						
1808			13s. 6d.			158
1809			14s. 0d.			164
1810			13s. 6d.			158
1811			13s. 7d.			161
1812			15s. 6d.			182

Year	Strelly	Worksop	Rufford	Gonalston	Hodsock	Wage Index
1813			15s. 6d.			182
1814				12s. 5d.		146
1815				12s. 5d.		146
1816				12s. 4d.		144
1817				12s. 4d.		144
1818				12s. 4d.		144
1819				12s. 4d.		144
1820						
1821						
1822						
1823					12s. 0d.	141
1824					12s. 0d.	141
1825					12s. 9d.	150
1826		12s. 5d.				146
1827		12s. 5d.				146
1828		12s. 5d.				146
1829		12s. 5d.				146
1830						
1831						
1832						
1833	12s. 0d.					141
1834						
1835			10s. 0d.			117

APPENDIX 18

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DERIVED FROM ESTATE LABOUR ACCOUNTS AND CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1792[1]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	West Retford, Barton
1794[2]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Nottinghamshire
1795[3]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d.	Nottinghamshire
1811[4]	15s. 0d.	South Collingham
1815[5]	12s. 0d.	Nottinghamshire
1818[6]	12s. 0d.	Nottinghamshire
1824[7]	10s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Bassetlaw, Newark, Southwell
1833[8]	12s. 0d., 13s. 0d.	Barton, South Collingham, Strelly
1835[9]	10s. 0d.	Rufford
1836[10]	10s. 0d.	Barton

Sources:

1 Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 190. Third Report from the Select Committee on the State of Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1836, VIII(ii), p. 195.

2 R. Lowe, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Nottingham (1794), p. 47.

3 Ibid. pp. 47, 110. Annals, XXIV (1795), p. 190. F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor (ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1928), pp. 276-8.

4 Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture, Parl. Papers 1833, V, p. 568.

5 The Farmer's Magazine, LXI (1815), p. 128.

6 Ibid. LXXVI (1818), p. 516.

7 Abstract of Returns on Labourer's Wages made to the Committee in 1824, Parl. Papers 1825, XIX, p. 298.

8 S.C. on Agriculture, P.P. 1833, V, p. 568. Third Report from the S.C. on the State of Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII(ii), p. 194. N.R.O. DD E/30/7. Edge Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for Strelly.

9 N.R.O. DD.SR/211/10-338. Hon. and Rev. J. Lumley Saville Estate Accounts. Wage Sheets for Labourers employed at Rufford.

10 Third Report from the S.C. on the State of Agriculture, P.P. 1836, VIII(ii), p. 194.

APPENDIX 19

WAGE EARNINGS, THE COST OF LIVING, AND REAL WAGES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND DORSET 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE			DORSET		
Year	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1790	100	100	100	100	100	100
1791	100			100	101	99
1792	100			100	101	99
1793	100	107	93	100	101	99
1794	104	114	91	100	101	99
1795	106	151	70	107	128	84
1796	116	145	80	107	123	87
1797	141	138	102	129	132	98
1798	141	113	125	129	119	108
1799	141	131	107	129	130	99
1800	141	188	75	129	175	74
1801	141	188	75	129	172	75
1802	146	149	97	129	125	103
1803	146	156	93	129	119	108
1804	146	154	95	129	128	101
1805	146	145	100	129	145	89
1806		158		129	149	86
1807		156		114	144	79
1808	158	175	90	129	130	99
1809	164	194	84	129	157	82
1810	158	188	84		184	
1811	161	178	90		172	
1812	182	210	86	171	200	85

Year	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE			DORSET		
	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index	Wage Earnings Index	Cost of Living Index	Real Wage Index
1813	182	209	87		195	
1814	146	138	105		152	
1815	146	153	95		134	
1816	144	137	105		143	
1817	144	164	88		176	
1818	144	155	93		158	
1819	144	139	103		143	
1820		134			136	
1821		115			113	
1822		103			102	
1823	141	104	135		105	
1824	141	119	118		126	
1825	150	130	115		128	
1826	146	118	123		113	
1827	146	134	109		110	
1828	146	116	126		116	
1829	146	124	117		128	
1830		124		129	124	104
1831		126		129	124	104
1832		116		107	105	102
1833	141	113	124	103	108	95
1834		123		107	107	100
1835	117	112	104	100	100	100
1836		136		100	112	89
1837		102		100	105	95
1838		122		100	118	85
1839		120		100	122	82
1840		114			126	

A P P E N D I X 20(i)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN DORSET

(Pence)

Year	Quartern loaf	Pork lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.	Milk quart
1790	8	4½	2¼	7¾	1¾	7¾	1¼
1791	8	4¾					1¼
1792	8	4¾					1¼
1793	8	4¾					1¼
1794	8	4¾				8	1¼
1795	10½	6	3¼	11½			1¼
1796	9½	7¼					1¼
1797	9¼	7	5	10½	3	10	1¼
1798	8	4½	5¼	9½	3¾	11	1¼
1799	10½	5¼		10¾	4	11	1¼
1800	15¾	8¼	3¼				1½
1801	16¾	9¼	3¼				1½
1802	9¼	7¾	3¼	12			1½
1803	8	6	3½		4	8½	1½
1804	9¼	5½	3½	12	5	10	1½
1805	12½	6¾	3¼			9¾	1½
1806	12½	7	3		4¾	9	1½
1807	11½	7	3½		4¾	9¼	1½
1808	10½	6¾				10	1½
1809	12½	7¾			4¾		1½
1810	15¼	8½	6				1½
1811	13¾	7¾	6½				1½
1812	18	9½					1½
1813	16¾	10½		15	5½	11¼	1½
1814	11½	8½	3¼	15	5¾	11	1½

Year	Quartern loaf	Pork lb.	Cheese lb.	Butter lb.	Tea oz.	Sugar lb.	Milk quart
1815	10½	6	4				1½
1816	11½	5½	3¼	13½	5½	12	1½
1817	16¾	6½	3	12	5¼	10½	1½
1818	12½	7¾	4	13¾	5½	11	1½
1819	10½	7¾		14	5½	10¾	1½
1820	10½	6½			5½	10	1½
1821	9¼	5					1½
1822	8¼	4¼					1½
1823	8¼	5¼					1½
1824	10½	6¼					1½
1825	10½	6¾					1½
1826	8¼	5¾	3¾	12			1½
1827	8¼	6¼	3				1½
1828	9¼	6¼	2¾				1½
1829	10½	5¾	3¼	9¾	3¾		1½
1830	10½	5½	3				1½
1831	10½	5¾	2¾				1½
1832	8¼	5¾					1½
1833	8¼	5	3½				1½
1834	8¼	4½	3½				
1835	7¼	4½	3¼	8½	3	6½	
1836	8½		3¼	9½	2¼	7	
1837	7¼		3¾	11	2¾	7¼	
1838	8¾		3¾	11	2½	7½	
1839	9½		3	10	3	7¼	
1840	9¼	5½	4¼	11	3½	8	

APPENDIX 20(ii)

ANNUAL AVERAGE COMMODITY PRICES IN DORSET

(Pence)

Year	Candles lb.	Coal bushel	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1790	7½	24	5s.	100
1791	7¼		5s.	101
1792	7¼		5s.	101
1793	7	24		101
1794	7¼	26		101
1795	8½	26½		128
1796	10½			123
1797	10			132
1798	9			119
1799	9		7s. 6d.	130
1800	9¾	33½		175
1801	9½	28		172
1802	9¾	24½		125
1803	12	28	8s. 6d.	119
1804	11½	28	7s. 9d.	128
1805	11	29	7s. 6d.	145
1806		28	8s.	149
1807		27¼		144
1808		29		130
1809	12¾	33½	8s.	157
1810	11	38	8s. 6d.	184
1811	10¾	31¾	8s. 6d.	172
1812	12	28¼	8s. 6d.	200
1813	13	29¼	8s. 9d.	195
1814	12	30		152

Year	Candles lb.	Coal bushel	Men's Shoes pair	Cost of Living Index (1790=100, 1835=100)
1815	12	30		134
1816	9½	28	8s.	143
1817	9¾	28		176
1818	10¾	27¼	9s. 6d.	158
1819	11¼	25	10s.	143
1820	9½	24		136
1821	8¼	24		113
1822	7	24		102
1823	6½	25		105
1824	6¼	25		126
1825	7	25½		128
1826	7	25		113
1827	6¾	25		110
1828	6½	25		116
1829	6½	22		128
1830	6¼	21¼		124
1831		21		124
1832	6	21		105
1833		18		108
1834		19		107
1835	5¾	20		100
1836	5½		4s. 6d.	112
1837	5½		5s.	105
1838	6			118
1839	6½			122
1840	6½			126

A P P E N D I X 21

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON THREE ESTATES IN DORSET 1790 - 1839

(1790=100, 1835=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Weld	Dorchester	Belhuse	Wage Index
1790	7s. 0d.			100
1791	7s. 0d.			100
1792	7s. 0d.			100
1793	7s. 0d.			100
1794	7s. 0d.			100
1795	7s. 6d.			107
1796	7s. 6d.			107
1797	9s. 0d.			129
1798	9s. 0d.			129
1799	9s. 0d.			129
1800	9s. 0d.			129
1801	9s. 0d.			129
1802	9s. 0d.			129
1803	9s. 0d.			129
1804	9s. 0d.			129
1805	9s. 0d.			129
1806	9s. 0d.			129
1807	8s. 0d.			114
1808	9s. 0d.			129
1809	9s. 0d.			129
1810				
1811				
1812	12s. 0d.			171

Year	Weld	Dorchester	Belhuse	Wage Index
1830		9s. 0d.		129
1831		9s. 0d.		129
1832			7s. 6d.	107
1833			7s. 2d.	103
1834			7s. 6d.	107
1835			7s. 0d.	100
1836			7s. 0d.	100
1837			7s. 0d.	100
1838			7s. 0d.	100
1839			7s. 0d.	100

APPENDIX 22

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' WAGES IN DORSET DERIVED FROM ESTATE LABOUR ACCOUNTS AND CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1790[1]	6s. 0d., 6s. 6d.	Milton Abbas, Charlton Marshall, Affpiddle, Bishop's Caundle, Sherborne, Stinsford
1791[2]	6s. 0d.	Charlton Marshall
1793[3]	6s. 0d.	Symondsbury, Dorset
1794[4]	6s. 0d., 7s. 0d.	Wareham, Blandford
1795[5]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Blandford, Durweston
1796[6]	7s. 6d.	Symondsbury
1799[7]	8s. 0d.	Symondsbury
1802[8]	8s. 6d., 9s. 0d.	Sherborne
1804[9]	8s. 0d., 8s. 6d.	Dorset
1812[10]	7s. 0d., 8s. 6d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d., 12s. 0d.	Dorset
1820[11]	6s. 0d.	Halstock
1822[12]	6s. 0d.	Haselbury Bryan, Tolbridge
1823[13]	6s. 0d.	Halstock
1824[14]	6s. 0d., 7s. 0d.	Blandford, Dorchester, Wareham, Shaftsbury
1830[15]	6s. 0d., 7s. 0d., 8s. 0d. 9s. 0d.	Dorchester, Blandford, Cann, Haselbury Bryan, Sturminster Newton
1831[16]	9s. 0d.	Dorchester
1833[17]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 8s. 6d.	Cranborne, Haselbury Bryan
1834[18]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 8s. 6d., 9s. 0d.	Cranborne, Haselbury Bryan, Beaminster
1838[19]	6s. 0d., 7s. 0d., 8s. 0d.	Wareham Purbeck
1840[20]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d.	Dorset

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APPENDIX 23

ANNUAL AVERAGE WEEKLY PRICE OF THE QUARTERN LOAF IN HAMPSHIRE

(Pence)

Year	Quartern loaf	Index (1790 = 100)
1790	6¾	100
1791	6	89
1792	6¼	93
1793	6¼	93
1794	7½	111
1795	12½	185
1796	8	119
1797	8	119
1798	7¼	107
1799	12½	185
1800	15¾	233
1801	16¾	248
1802	9¼	137
1803	8	119
1804	12	178
1805	12	178
1806	10¾	159
1807	10½	156
1808	10½	156
1809	12¾	189
1810	14¾	219
1811	13¾	204
1812	17	252
1813	15	222
1814	10¾	159

Year	Quartern loaf	Index (1790 = 100)
1815	9½	141
1816	11½	170
1817	15	222
1818	11¾	174
1819	10¼	152
1820	9¾	144
1821	8¾	130
1822	7½	111
1823	8	119
1824	9½	141
1825	9¾	144
1826	8½	126
1827	8¼	122
1828	9½	141
1829	10¼	152
1830	9½	141
1831	9¾	144
1832	9	133
1833	8	119
1834	7½	111
1835	6½	96
1836	7	104
1837	8	119
1838	9¼	137
1839	9¾	144
1840	9¾	144

APPENDIX 24

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER'S AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS ON TWO ESTATES IN HAMPSHIRE 1790 - 1831

(1790=100)

(Shillings)

Year	Compton	Hackwood	Wage Index
1790	7s. 0d.		100
1791	7s. 0d.		100
1792	7s. 0d.		100
1793	7s. 0d.		100
1794	7s. 0d.		100
1795	8s. 0d.		114
1796	9s. 0d.		129
1797	9s. 0d.		129
1798	9s. 0d.		129
1799	9s. 0d.		129
1800			
1801			
1802			
1803	9s. 0d.		129
1804			
1805	12s. 0d.		171
1806			
1807			
1808			
1809			
1810		12s. 6d.	179
1811		12s. 6d.	179
1812		12s. 8d.	180
1813		12s. 8d.	180

Year	Compton	Hackwood	Wage Index
1814		12s. 8d.	180
1815		12s. 8d.	180
1816		10s. 0d.	143
1817		12s. 6d.	179
1818		12s. 6d.	179
1819		12s. 6d.	179
1820		12s. 4d.	176
1821		10s. 0d.	143
1822		9s. 4d.	133
1823		9s. 0d.	129
1824		9s. 5d.	134
1825		9s. 5d.	134
1826		9s. 5d.	134
1827		9s. 5d.	134
1828		9s. 5d.	134
1829		9s. 5d.	134
1830		9s. 6d.	136
1831		10s. 6d.	150

APPENDIX 25

AGRICULTURAL WAGES IN HAMPSHIRE DERIVED FROM CONTEMPORARY PRINTED SOURCES

Year	Wage	Location
1790[1]	7s. 0d., 7s. 6d., 8s. 0d., 8s. 6d.	Crawley, Long Parish, Monk, Sherborne, Basing
1794[2]	7s. 0d.	Petersfield
1795[3]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Michelmersh, Hawkley, Newton Valence, Petersfield
1796[4]	9s. 0d.	Mitchelmersh
1813[5]	9s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Hampshire
1816[6]	10s. 0d.	Exbury
1819[7]	8s. 0d.	Fawley
1822[8]	8s. 0d.	Fawley
1823[9]	7s. 0d.	Durley
1825[10]	7s. 0d., 8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 10s. 0d.	Burghclere, Alresford, Atlon, Alverstoke, Droxford, Fawley, Fordingbridge, Kingsleve, Romsey
1829[11]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 10s. 6d.	Hampshire
1830[12]	9s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 12s. 0d.	Hampshire
1832[13]	10s. 0d.	Hampshire
1833[14]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d., 9s. 6d.	Hampshire
1840[15]	8s. 0d., 9s. 0d.	Hampshire

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APPENDIX 26

WAGE EARNINGS, THE COST OF LIVING, AND REAL WAGES IN HAMPSHIRE 1790 - 1840

(1790=100)

		HAMPSHIRE	
Year	Wage Earnings Index	Bread Index	Real Wage Index
1790	100	100	100
1791	100	89	112
1792	100	93	107
1793	100	93	107
1794	100	111	90
1795	114	185	62
1796	129	119	108
1797	129	119	108
1798	129	107	120
1799	129	185	70
1800		233	
1801		248	
1802		137	
1803	129	119	108
1804		178	
1805	171	178	96
1806		159	
1807		156	
1808		156	
1809		189	
1810	179	219	82
1811	179	204	88
1812	180	252	71

HAMPSHIRE

Year	Wage Earnings Index	Bread Index	Real Wage Index
1813	180	222	81
1814	180	159	113
1815	180	141	127
1816	143	170	84
1817	179	222	81
1818	179	174	103
1819	179	152	118
1820	176	144	122
1821	143	130	110
1822	133	111	119
1823	129	119	108
1824	134	141	95
1825	134	144	93
1826	134	126	106
1827	134	122	109
1828	134	141	95
1829	134	152	88
1830	136	141	96
1831	150	144	104
1832		133	
1833		119	
1834		111	
1835		96	
1836		104	
1837		119	
1838		137	
1839		144	
1840		144	

APPENDIX 27

THE COST OF LIVING 1790 - 1840

(1790=100, 1835=100)

Year	Kent	Essex	Suffolk	Lincs	Notts	Dorset	Hants	Silberling
1790	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1791	96	104	97	100		101	89	98
1792	93	91	96	100		101	93	97
1793	97	103	103	99	107	101	93	106
1794	103	103	102	103	114	101	111	110
1795	137	134	134	135	151	128	185	130
1796	132	127	135	136	145	123	119	132
1797	123	125	117	108	138	132	119	120
1798	114	116	118	109	113	119	107	121
1799	144	145	142	141	131	130	185	143
1800	173	171	205	191	188	175	233	170
1801	177	180	208	179	188	172	248	174
1802	143	156	135	142	149	125	137	138
1803	143	146	133		156	119	119	140
1804	157	154	143		154	128	178	140
1805	167	173	169	167	145	145	178	154
1806	157	161	157	142	158	149	159	148
1807	154	151	152	148	156	144	156	145
1808	164	161	162	162	175	130	156	159
1809	174	181	181	172	194	157	189	175
1810	178	188		174	188	184	219	176
1811	180	189		170	178	172	204	164
1812	220	219		204	210	200	252	180
1813	205	204		186	209	195	222	187
1814	166	162		140	138	152	159	176

Year	Kent	Essex	Suffolk	Lincs	Notts	Dorset	Hants	Silberling
1815	161	157		126	153	134	141	150
1816	160	156		131	137	143	170	135
1817	184	171		154	164	176	222	151
1818	166	164		148	155	158	174	159
1819	151	149		130	139	143	152	143
1820	148	145		120	134	136	144	132
1821	138	134		110	115	113	130	115
1822	109	120		89	103	102	111	100
1823	107	120		102	104	105	119	111
1824	123	130		116	119	126	141	113
1825	130	137		126	130	128	144	128
1826	131	124		117	118	113	126	111
1827	128	120		116	134	110	122	110
1828	128	126		118	116	116	141	108
1829	132	121		121	124	128	152	106
1830	121	122		119	124	124	141	108
1831	130	116		123	126	124	144	111
1832	123	115		111	116	105	133	109
1833	113	109		108	113	108	119	107
1834	107	106			123	107	111	102
1835	100	100	100		112	100	96	99
1836	106	113	118		136	112	164	111
1837	113	110	129		102	105	119	111
1838	117	116	145	120	122	118	137	118
1839	116	123	144	112	120	122	144	123
1840	117	123	140	114	114	126	144	121

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