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THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF M.LITT. D'URHAM UNIVERSITY

* by *

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SOMERSET 1800 - 1830

AN INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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Enclosure Acts and Awards

(Dates only given where used)

ACT

AMRD

Askcott

1797

-

Axe Drainage

1807

1810

Brue Drainage

1801

1807

(Enclosure Acts and Awards contd.)

	Acts	Awards
Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	1803	1833
Charlton Morethorn	1812	1811
Cheddar	1811	-
Cheddar, Friddy, & Rodney Stoke.	1811	-
Chilton in Moorlinch	1798	1801
Combe St. Nicholas	1814	1817
Cossington	1804	-
Congresbury Drainage (v. Yeo)	1819	1826
Crowcombe	1776	-
Curry Rivel	1833	-
Doultling & Stokelane	1775	-
Drayton	1817	1818
Dundry	1815	1819
East & West Cranmore	1770	-
East Harptree	1794	-
Exmoor Forest	-	1819
Forsington, Wincanton, & Wapperton	1769	-
Huntspill	1800	-
Ilchester, Stoke-under-Hamdon,		
Tintinhull, Ashington, & Iymington	1806	1810
Keinton Mandeville	1804	1810
Long Sutton	1797	-
Long Sutton	1810	1814
Martock	1806	
Milborne Port	(1803. 1812)	1817
Neroche	1833	-
Fortishead	1814	1823
Rodney Stoke	1791	-
Street	1796	-
Wellington	1816	-
West Lydford	1826	1827
Weston super Mare	1810	-
West Sedgemoor, Stoke St. Gregory,		
North Curry, & Curry Rivel	*	1816

(Enclosure Acts and Awards contd.)

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INTRODUCTION

Scope of the thesis

This is an inquiry into the conditions of life of the people of Somerset during the opening years of the nineteenth century. This is the principle upon which material has been selected. There is no attempt to show the life of the upper classes, nor to trace local connections of famous men during these years. The chief object of the inquiry is to throw light on the economic conditions of the working classes. Since their main occupation was agriculture, this subject forms the central portion of the thesis. Grouped around this nucleus are other influences which affected the life of the ordinary man. This arrangement provides a background of social conditions which could not be dealt with in the main portion of the thesis. Here are studies of political conditions, of the administration of the law, of the county gaol, of industries, of the church, of schools, and of the militia, together with individual examples of a dispensary, a box-club, and a theatre.

Political History (1800-1830)

Political conditions during this period have been adequately dealt with by the Victoria County History so that the principle of selecting fresh material has been introduced. Consequently only two boroughs - Taunton and Ilchester - have been chosen for detailed inquiry.

The county had considerable representation in the unreformed parliament, but the electorate was small and was, in general, at the mercy of the great landowners. There were seven boroughs which returned two members each in addition to the county members. These boroughs show a motley assortment of franchise rules and the total number of electors who returned fourteen members to parliament in 1822 was only 1,250. (*1)

There was a most shocking example of terrorisation after an election at Ilchester during this period. (*2) Bribery was

X1 See Appendix I p. 176-7

X2 See p 31

practised on a large scale and election petitions were frequent. One of these petitions, from Taunton, is examined in some detail in order to show the amount of corruption which had become general in borough elections. An eye-witness account of an election at Taunton (hitherto unpublished) reveals the chaos which attended the polling in that borough. (*1) Although this particular borough had a fairly liberal franchise, the population was deprived of its full representation because the political borough was restricted in area to that of the original parish, to the exclusion of the two other populous parishes of the town.

The difficulties of borough management are illustrated by an Appendix dealing with Ilchester elections during this period. (*2)

It is interesting to turn to the history of the Cordwainers' Company at Wells (*3) for, in my opinion, this was used as an instrument in the management of the borough before the Reform Bill.

In Somerset, as in the rest of the country, eighteenth century conditions ruled the electoral machinery until the Reform Bill introduced uniformity. The need for a Register of Voters was very bad at Taunton where elections lasted a fortnight and hours were wasted in examining the claims of men who presented themselves at the Hustings.

The only sign of coming change is the existence of a movement for moderate reform amongst the freeholders and others. There was a Hampden Club at Bath and 'Orator' Hunt acted as their delegate to present a reform petition at Westminster on one occasion. The pamphleteer Hone was also a Bath man. But the Reform Movement in Somerset lacked power and the freeholders who were supposed to be in favour of reform elected a candidate, Dickenson, who voted against the Reform Bill. (*4)

*1 See p. 32

*2 Appendix II p. 178

*3 p. 162-4

*4 Appendix VI p. 182. : For other County Members v. App III p. 179

A considerable amount of crime, which can be accounted for by the prevailing poverty and ignorance, was committed during this period. Expenditure on prosecutions was steadily increasing. The severity of the law did nothing to check the increase of crime. Before the late twenties at any rate, there are no signs of humane treatment of criminals. Less than 18% of those who were executed in Somerset during the years 1809 to 1821 would have suffered capital punishment to-day.

We are fortunate in having a detailed inquiry into conditions inside the County Gaol at Ilchester. *1 'Orator' Hunt, who was a political prisoner there, brought serious charges against the Governor. A Royal Commission made an exhaustive inquiry into the management of the place.

This inquiry revealed that the gaol was overcrowded, that the drinking water was contaminated by the sewers, and that the Governor had committed certain acts of gross cruelty. The Governor was dismissed and was afterwards prosecuted and fined for one of his acts of ill-treatment. A great deal of money was spent on improvements to the buildings, but the gaol was closed down in 1843.

The revelations are not as sensational as those made in 1728 at the trials of the Wardens of the Fleet, nor do they show that Ilchester Gaol was much worse than other prisons of this period. Hunt prints a 'Narrative' at the end of Volume I of his Memoirs, in which he tries to show that Ilchester was worse than prisons like Lincoln and Oakham, but his arguments are not convincing. In my opinion an independent investigation at any of the prisons during this period would have produced similar results. The difficulty was to obtain an inquiry. There would have been no inquiry at Ilchester if 'Orator' Hunt had not been imprisoned there, and there would have been no inquiry then, if the authorities had allowed him to receive visits from his mistress. This does not alter the truth of what he had to say, and Governor Bridle deserved his dismissal.

It is interesting to apply Howard's four tests of
*1 For other gaols in Somerset see Appendix VIII p. 185

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prison management to Ilchester. First, the gaol should be secure, roomy, and sanitary. This gaol was fairly secure, although the Governor's rooms did not command a full view of the buildings. It was overcrowded and the sanitary ~~arr~~ arrangements were very bad. Second, the Gaoler should be a salaried official. He was, but he also had considerable opportunities to augment his salary. He could let beds and furniture, and rooms too, (*1) as well as take a large share of the proceeds of prison labour. Third, the system should aim at reforming the prisoner through his diet, work, and religious exercises. The county allowance of bread and water was certainly calculated to starve the prisoners unless they were lucky enough to have a private income. The prison cloth manufactory was highly praised by Fowell-Buxton, but it meant that boys were thrown into the company of old lags who must have taught them many other things besides weaving. Religious services were held on Sundays only, and the Chaplain never visited the prisoners. (*2) Fourth, the gaol should be fully inspected by some competent outside authority. The visiting magistrates at Ilchester saw what they were intended to see, and very little else.

Ilchester Gaol was, in Hunt's words, "an old hulk, moored in a swamp."

- *1 In 1799 Jane Perrot lodged in the Governor's house. Hunt does not say whether he paid for his room or not, but he probably did. He had a board floor put in.
- *2 "The Chaplain's Book" is a gruesome relic in MSS. It contains Prayers for those about to be Hung etc.

During this period the first modern drainage schemes were launched and resulted in the reclamation of a great deal of 'moors'. This reclaimed land is still very wet, no less than 107 square miles still being liable to flooding,(*1) but it is worth thousands of pounds annually to Somerset farmers. The problem is one of control rather than of prevention, for the struggle, which has been going on for centuries, between tides coming up the rivers and flood waters rushing down from the hills, has left deposits of silt which have raised the sea-board so that it is higher than the land behind, so that some measure of flooding is inevitable. The existence of the problem to-day therefore, is no criticism of the work done in the early nineteenth century. It must be remembered too that improvements in drainage in the higher lands have increased the rapidity and volume of the flow of water from the hills. (*2)

In 1797 the King's Sedgemoor Drain had just been cut. This greatly increased the efficiency of drainage in a large area served by the rivers Parrett and Cary. The Cary was actually diverted into the new drain so that its waters found a new outlet into the wider channel of the Parrett below Bridgwater.

In 1801 the Brue Drainage Act was passed, and this was followed by the Axe Drainage Act of 1807. In each case new outlets for the rivers were cut, in order to provide a deeper fall into the Parrett, and sluice gates were erected in order to control the discharge of water from these tributaries. The closing of the gates obviously stops the in-rushing tide from fighting its way up the channels and over the banks of the tributaries.

*1 Somerset Land Utilisation Survey Report p. 31

Flooded areas:

Parrett	39,272 acres
Cary	13,958 "
Brue	13,576 "
Axe	2,266 "

69,072 "

*2 See p. 48

12
These three schemes meant that one of the biggest advances ever made in the history of agriculture in Somerset, was made during this period. They were followed by the Congresbury Drainage Act, for the Yeo, in 1819.

During this period the last traces of Somerset's famous Royal Forests were absorbed, and enclosed, in the ordinary agricultural land. The Forest of Selwood, near Frome, had been disafforested under Charles I, the King taking one third, the owners of the soil one third, and one third was appropriated to several commoners for depasturing their cattle. (*1) Something similar had happened to the Forest of Mendip but several large tracts of 'forest' are mentioned in Enclosure Acts of this period. (*2) The Enclosure Act for North Petherton in 1795 enclosed 1,466 acres of common which must have been the remains of the Forest of Petherton. The remains of the Forest of Neroche, 2,357 acres in extent, were dealt with by the Act of 1830 which allotted them to the landowners in a dozen parishes. The Forest of Exmoor was the only case in which the Crown had not divested itself of its rights. (*3) Here, the Forest, covering an area of 22,400 acres, was enclosed under the Act of 1815. The Crown took 12/22 and 1/8 was given to the owner of the tithes. John Knight bought the Crown allotment of 10,262 acres for £50,000. He also bought the titheowner's allotment of 3,201 acres and most of the other allotments. His speculation was not a financial success, but it is he who made the present conditions of agriculture possible in this area.

The Enclosure Movement is a major problem. The understanding of other problems connected with agriculture depends upon the study of this main influence. Yet none of the

*1 Phelps I.149

*2 cf. Shepton Mallet, Wookey, Westbury, Wells.

*3 For discussion of Exmoor Enclosure see p 101-2

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great historians of the county has attempted to explain it and modern historians of the county have not dealt with it in any detail.

The analysis of the general law concerning Enclosure made in this thesis (*1), is based on the Acts of 1235, 1285, 1550, 1773, 1801, 1817, 1821, 1833, and 1836. It was necessary to include this analysis in order to bring the general law of the nation to bear upon the study of the particular statutes which were passed for Somerset. Many of these Acts have no direct concern with Somerset Enclosures between 1800 and 1830. The Acts of 1235, 1285, and 1550 concern the earlier period of Enclosure, which however, had extensive results in Somerset. The Act of 1773, passed with the object of getting turnips grown, was largely inoperative, because the necessary consents of landowners were not forthcoming, (*2) but its clauses give a very clear expression of parliamentary study of the possibilities of agricultural improvement. The Act of 1801 provided a finished model of the elaborate machinery which had been devised for local Enclosures during the eighteenth century. It ensured publicity for all the transactions concerning the Enclosure of any particular area, and secured more equitable division of lands by making the quality as well as the quantity of land a primary consideration before allotment. The Acts of 1817, 1821, 1833, and 1836 were in essence, extensions of the Acts of 1773 and 1801.

In studying the Enclosure movement for Somerset during the period 1800 to 1830, about half the Acts and Awards which were issued during this time have been dealt with in this thesis. It is not possible for more than this to be done at present because photostats of the remaining Awards are not yet available at the County Record Office.

*1 See pages 53-55

*2 Gonner p.235

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The greater part of the county was already enclosed by 1800, and most of the remaining portion was enclosed before 1830. The general tendency had been to enclose the arable first, and then the commons. A great deal of the arable, at any rate, was enclosed by agreement, so that there are no records of this. Most of the Somerset Acts therefore deal with Enclosures of Common, although there are more Acts dealing with arable than has been assumed hitherto.

I have only come across one Somerset Act which was passed to confirm an Enclosure by consent - that of Yatton in 1751. Throughout England in general Enclosure by Act superseded Enclosure by Agreement after 1750. (*1).

Nevertheless there are examples of Enclosure by Consent even as late as the period 1800 - 1830. After dealing with the Enclosure of Westhay Moor (1778), Phelps says that "a large tract of turbary on the south side of the parish, containing 1201 acres - 31 perches, was inclosed in 1814 by the mutual consent of the landholders of the adjoining lands."(*2) He also mentions an enclosure of 'open lands' at Stourton in 1802, of which there is no official record.(*3) He also notes a third Enclosure "by the mutual consent of the landholders" at Barton St. David in 1835.(*4) This was an Enclosure of 'open common fields' but only 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres were affected. He mentions a fourth Enclosure of "open lands, by the consent of the freeholders" at Pen Selwood, but he does not give the date.(*5)

According to Gonner (*6) most of the arable in Somerset was enclosed before 1600. "By the end of the sixteenth century,

*1 Gonner p.190

*2 Phelps I.571

*3 Ibid. I.196

*4 Ibid. I.483

*5 Ibid. I.191

*6 Gonner p.125

Somerset~~x~~ was considered enclosed."(*1) Not only were these early Enclosures limited to arable however, they were limited to West Somerset. (*2) The reason for this was that in these parts of the county Celtic methods survived. This meant that there was an annual re-allotment of the strips in the open fields. Slater calls this system 'run-rig'.(*3) Since Enclosure was to the obvious advantage of everyone in this type of village, it came without outside interference. Many small manors of West Somerset were enclosed at an early date because the number of tenants was too small for open field agriculture.(*4)

There was another big difference between pre-enclosure methods in Somerset, and those in other parts of England. "The Bath, Wells, and Glastonbury records, and the maps attached to the Enclosure Awards, show that the two-field system was normal in Somerset. The three-field system existed in seven large hamlets in Martock parish, in South Petherton, Barrington, and Stoke-sub-Hamdon. Outside that area I have only found it at Pitney and Keinton Mandeville. Four fields were occasionally used, possibly owing to two fields being sub-divided; Somerton is a good example. In many places all traces of a two- or three-field system disappeared early, if either system had ever been worked, but large fields remained of quite irregular size. Such were Chedzoy in 1574, Kingsbury Episcopi (3-5 James I) and Westonzoyland, and Othery at the time of the Enclosure Awards. Some quite small hamlets, such as Wookey Hole, and East Street in West Pennard, had two fields, but many others, such as Pibsbury in Long Sutton and Week in Curry Rivel, had one open field. I have found no trace of the three-field system in West Somerset, and of the two-field system only at Lilstock." (*5)

The two-field system and the ring-fence were, of course, Celtic survivals. On the other hand, this analysis

*1 Gonner p 135 *2 Victoria County History II. 304
*3 Slater p 164 *4 Morland: Somerset Land Utilisation Report p 133
*5 Ibid. p 132

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under-estimates the existence of the three-field system in Somerset. The three-field system had existed at Chedzoy. Two maps of the battle of Sedgemoor (1685) were drawn by the vicar and he shows quite clearly that there were originally three fields. It is also clear that although only one field was entirely open in 1685, yet a second field was not completely enclosed but lay open on the side nearest the village. (*¹) Also Billingsley speaks of a three-year rotation on the common fields of the 'Middle District', which indicates the existence of three-field villages in 1797. (*²) It is also likely that there had been three fields originally at Westonzoyland. (*³)

All these considerations must be taken into account in dealing with Enclosures in Somerset from 1800 to 1830. They take place chiefly outside the Western area, although it is obviously untrue to say that West Somerset was 'almost untouched' by eighteenth and nineteenth century Enclosures, (*) and they are chiefly Enclosures of Commons.

Enclosures in Somerset did not lead to the creation of large farms. They made important additions to the drainage system, which was a very considerable advantage to such a wet area. They also provided a network of service roads. It is not obvious from the study of authorities in 1797 and 1851 that there was any revolutionary increase in the use of agricultural machinery. This may have been due chiefly to lack of capital. The same thing is true of farm buildings.

Many advantages were secured by the Enclosure Acts. Enclosed land could be used for the purposes to which it was best suited. Experiments could be made by progressive farmers. The greater convenience of enclosed lands ~~was~~

*¹ Photostats of these maps (the second of which has only just been discovered at Hoare's Bank, London) are exhibited in the Blake Museum, Bridgwater.

*² Billingsley p.219

*³ See Slater (Chap.1)

was obvious, particularly on arable land where more efficient ploughing and harrowing could be practised too. Farmers had more control over the work of their labourers, and farming became more systematic. Much better use of manure was made on enclosed lands. Land which had been almost worthless as manorial waste, could be made to produce good crops of hay. (*1)

Enclosures caused a steady increase in the value of land. Billingsley, speaking of 'land in open fields in 1, 2, or 3 acre pieces,' says that their value would go up 5 or 10/- an acre if they were collected and enclosed. (*2) Some of the most striking results were achieved on grassland. Wheat farming was stimulated by the wars before 1815 and by the Corn Laws after that date, and about 25% of the entire acreage of the county was under cultivation. Some of it was exhausted by the predatory methods which were encouraged by war prices, but on the whole there was a widespread adoption of improved rotations. The true direction of Somerset agriculture lay in the improved pastureland. The standard of dairy-farming was raised. The breeds of cattle and sheep were improved, although little attention was paid to pig-farming. The growing of teazles declined, but the cultivation of potatoes increased. This was often a source of considerable benefit to the farm labourer. The increased production of barley and oats in Somerset after 1800 implies that there was no decline in employment through Enclosures. (*3)

One of the chief objections to Enclosure was the cost. Gonner gives the average costs of an Enclosure as follows: (*4)

Area	1162 acres
Act	£ 497
Survey & Valuation	£ 259
Commissioners	£ 344
Fences	£ 580
Total	£ 1680

*1 Not that this was easy! e.g. Parts of Exmoor will always remain in their original state.

*2 Billingsley p.237

*3 Gonner p.438

*4 Gonner p. 89

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This works out at less than 30/- an acre for the total cost. In Somerset, the cost of Enclosure by Act of Parliament varied enormously from place to place. The cost of the Act, the Award, and the Hedges, may have averaged between 22/10/- and £3 an acre, but in many instances this was the cost of the Act and Award alone. Gonner's estimate may well be too low, but even so, Somerset Enclosures had a fairly high cost. Some of them were unduly expensive e.g. King's Sedgemoor and North Petherton. (*1)

The Lord of the Manor usually received one twentieth portion of the Commons in Somerset Enclosures. (*2) Lands awarded to the Church were fenced at the common cost. In four or five cases lands were awarded instead of tithes. There are two cases of commutation, based on the average price of wheat over a period of fourteen years, which meant 8/9 a bushel in 1810.

The Awards show that the Commissioners gave fair allotments in exchange for former holdings and rights of common. In certain cases the great landowners had obtained an overwhelming amount of land, but it is not obvious that Enclosures were leading to the destruction of the yeoman. (*3)

Numerous examples of parochial expenditure on Poor Rates are given in the Appendices. (*4) Many examples show a decline in the Poor Rate after the Enclosure of Commons. In many Awards equal allotments were made to cottages 'without land' (known in Somerset as 'auster tenements') (*5)

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- (2x) See p. 94-5
- * 1 See pages 83 and 84 (3x) for discussion of this point See p. 59 and
Especially Drayton (1667-8): p. 102-6
- * 4 See Appendix VII p. 183-14: also see p. 107-8
- * 5 I have not been able to find the term in any Law Dictionary of the period.

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The argument here is not that Enclosures were designed to benefit the Poor, but that they were not designed to rob the Poor, and that they were not followed by an immediate social revolution. There were examples of the unfair use of influence by the privileged classes, and these have been dealt with. ^(*a) In certain places the local gentry could not resist the temptation to make sure of obtaining stretches of land which they coveted for making parks. Presumably this land was valuable for its scenic effects rather than for economic reasons. (*1)

In Enclosures of arable in Somerset it was usual to insert what the Hammonds call the 'Ashelworth Clause' making tiny ~~allotments~~ enclosures allotable along with the open fields. This does not necessarily point to unfair treatment. (*2) Old enclosures were usually irregular and small, whereas new enclosures were regular and compact. (*3) If a big landowner did obtain the insertion of this clause for his own private benefit, he was probably making sure that some small isolated fields of his own were not left stranded away from his main allotment. (*4)

In commenting on the Enclosure of Commons at Kilminster, Phelps noticed that the ~~the~~ Enclosure had been of particular benefit "to the poorer class of inhabitants, who thereby obtained large gardens." (*5)

Admittedly allotments to the Poor were often very small, but "common rights were less valuable than is often supposed." (*6) When Billingsley says that "two acres worth 30/- an acre are necessary to summer a cow well, and one acre

* 1 See page 96 also Phelps I.177
* 2 See page 112 for a full discussion of this point.
* 3 Gonner p.82

* 4 In West Somerset where run-rig and Celtic methods had survived, the tendency had been for "the peasants when they dissolved plough partnership to divide the land in blocks instead of scattered strips" (V.C.H. II.304), and W. Somerset had been enclosed largely before 1800. This gives added force to the suggestion that the clause

referred to, indicates small isolated enclosures in 'non-Celtic' villages. At Portishead (1823) old enclosures of less than 2 acres not (a) next to an enclosed road or (b) next to a homestead, were allotable.

* 5 Phelps I. 177

* 6 Gonner p. 306

* a See pp. 85, 86, & 94 for unfairness at Wiveliscombe. See also p. 102 & 110

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and a half for her winter provender,"(*1) he appears to be playing into the hands of those who argue that tiny allotments of Common were useless. Actually he is stating an ideal. He makes it quite clear that the Commons were badly over-stocked before Enclosure. One may well ask: what sort of cow did unenclosed Commons maintain? In over-stocking, the large farmer had a better chance to oust the Poor who might be unable to buy even the cows which they were entitled to depasture, so that the Rich literally 'ate out' the Poor.(*2) Enclosure of Common put a stop to this.

Most Somerset Acts of this period contain a clause putting an end to rack-renting. Where the extinction of leases at rack-rent entailed loss of rights of common, compensation was awarded. Compensation was also to be given when the Lord of the Manor exercised his rights of mining for minerals. In one or two Acts lands were set aside to provide fuel for the Poor, but usually the 'squatter' as distinct from the 'cottager', got nothing.

It is clear then that there was no general attempt to over-ride the rights of the Poor in Somerset Enclosures. On the contrary there is often some specific attempt to protect their interests. In ten Acts all allotments were of equal value. In three Acts for Enclosures of Common, small-holders were given express permission to throw their allotments together in order to save the cost of fencing. In one Act compensation was actually given to squatters. It is worth noting that when Westonzoyland was dealt with, after the end of this period, the single arable field was divided and allotted but not enclosed. This 500 acre field remains open to this day - a unique experiment in the history of British Enclosures - and it is still cultivated by small-holders and 'yeomen.'

*1 Billingsley p.122: *See thesis p.98*

*2 Gonner p.337

Poor Law

The population of Somerset was rising rapidly during this period and her industries were declining. The Speenhamland method of awarding relief to the Poor was adopted and Poor Rates rose. The rise during this period was most acute during the war years. After 1821 there was a marked decline in expenditure on Poor Rates in the countryside, although not in the towns. (*1)

Actually the rate of increase was gradually slowing down during the opening years of the century as the figures for Somerset as a whole show:

% Rate of Increase of Poor Rates: (*2)

Between 1748 - 50	and 1783-5	158%
Between 1783-5	and 1803	91%
Between 1803	and 1813	53%

Extraordinary relief was granted in the shape of food or clothing. Sometimes ordinary relief was given only if work was done for the parish. At Frome this work was done on the roads. The most general form of relief, however, was the grant of allowances, varying according to the price of the standard wheaten loaf and according to the number and age of children in the family. The scale published by the ~~Overseers~~ Magistrates for the guidance of Overseers was for the total income of applicants for relief, which meant that the allowances could be paid to men who were actually in employment, in order to raise their wages to the required standard.

It has been shown above (*3) that the figures for Poor Rates show that rises were not consequent on

Enclosures of Common or Waste. In connection with

*1 See Appendix VII p. 133-4; See also p. 11-1.

*2 Gonner p. 449

*3 See above p. 18; also Appendix VII p. 183-4; also p. 107

Enclosures it is worth noting that only 1% of Common Fields were enclosed in the county between 1801 and 1810, but during the same period the population increased by 11%, and the Poor Rate increased from 9.2 to 12.8 shillings per head. (* 1)

Experiments were made with a view to checking the pauperisation of the countryside which followed the adoption of the system of allowances. The chief attempt was concerned with the letting of small holdings, but although a scheme of this sort succeeded at Wells, similar schemes failed at Frome and Shepton Mallet. In general, therefore, nothing came of them.

Certain West-country Overseers had a direct interest in increasing grants because they themselves supplied the Poor with goods. In most places the local magistrates regarded themselves as protectors of the Poor, and often intervened in order to increase parish grants to certain individuals. Some magistrates even granted 'licences to beg' in cases of great hardship.

The children of paupers were sent out as 'apprentices' both to local industrial enterprises and to farms. There is no record of the fate of these children.

Wages of Farm Labourers

The usual rate of pay was from 7 to 8/- a week for farm labourers, together with three or four pints of cider a day. A comparison of authorities in 1797, 1843, and 1851 shows that this rate had not increased during this period. "The man's cider is reckoned worth from 1/3 to 1/6 a week." (*2) The cider was not so much a supplement to wages as a form of 'truck.' (*3) The practice of giving it was a social evil in two ways.

In the first place, it deprived the farm labourer's family of food and clothing which could have been bought with the extra money, and in the second place, it encouraged drunkenness. The new generation of farm labourers had no common rights to supplement their wages. The demand for cottage-spun thread was dying out, so that their wives were unable to use the spinning wheel.

There was still the possibility of supplementing

*1 Gonner p. 448
 % Common Fields Enclosed Increase of Population Poor Rate per head in shillings
 1801-10 1750-1801:1801-11 1743-50:1803:1813
 14.5% 11% 2.1 9.2 12.8
 1 1/3

*2 Report of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture (1843): p. 8

*3 See p. 122

wages in other ways.

First, there were garden plots. These appear to have been numerous but they were not of adequate size.

Secondly, there were often grants of potato-ground by the farmers. The rent often included ploughing and manuring. In this way a labourer had a very real opportunity to better his condition of life.

Thirdly, there was seasonal work on the land for women and children.

In the Yeovil area, women could stitch gloves at home.

In Taunton, and elsewhere there was work for women and children in the preparation of silk. The employment of children was considered a blessing rather than an evil. Writing of silk factories, Savage considers it "an advantage belonging to such works that they employ a number of hands, and of children from a very early period of life." (*1)

The chief reason for these low wages in Somerset was the redundancy of labour. Farming was also being run on insufficient capital. ^(X-1a) Agricultural investment had been concentrated on the carrying out of Enclosures. The application of 'Speenhamland' methods of Poor Relief prevented any rise in real wages. Throughout these years the labourers lived in want. In exceptionally bad years such as 1801 their sufferings were intense.

Housing conditions were bad. At the beginning of this period there were still one-room cottages. There had been some improvement by the end of the period, but overcrowding was the normal state of the labourer's cottage.

The same thing might be said of the town worker. Conditions in towns were slow to improve, but some progress was being made during this time. The streets of Bath were paved and lighted. Gas lamps appeared in Taunton in 1822. (*2) Between 1790 and 1822 the number of sedan chairs for hire in Taunton increased from four to eleven. (*3)

*1 Savage p. 381 *2 Ibid. p. 596 -*3 Ibid. p. 608

*1a See p. 122

Industry

The manufacture of woollen goods had once been a thriving industry in the West, but during this period the Somerset woollen towns lost their prosperity in competition with the factories of the North. Taunton, Bridgwater, and Dunster suffered total eclipse. Frome struggled on.

The Somerset clothier was too slow to perceive the immense possibilities which power-driven machinery could offer, and the Yorkshire manufacturers had already far-outstripped their Western rivals. The woollen industry remained in the domestic stage. Small factories did exist at Twerton and possibly at Wellington. Factories certainly existed for the preparation of silk at Taunton, and there was a tiny linen factory at Ilchester.

The silk industry expanded rapidly at Taunton between 1800 and 1826. This prosperity was probably encouraged by the cessation of French imports during the long wars of 1793 to 1815. It was shared to a lesser extent by Bruton, Wells, Milverton and Pitcombe. After 1826 however, the signs of decline, already discernible by 1823, became increasingly harsh, and in 1831 the silk industry was no longer prosperous.

Wiveliscombe seems to have escaped the general decline of the woollen industry in this period, being engaged in supplying coarse cloth for slaves to the West Indies. This trade continued until the Abolition of Slavery.

Cobbett suggests that adverse conditions in the woollen industry were not confined to this district, for he remarks on the irony of finding unemployed weavers from the North singing and begging in the streets of the decaying West-country cloth towns, like Frome.

The sail-cloth makers of Crewkerne and Yeovil seem to have found no difficulty in getting a living throughout this period.

Coal-mining was a relatively prosperous industry during this period. Unfortunately Somerset coal was not of a very good quality and was sold at low prices. The

managers of the Radstock mines showed a good deal of enterprise and the introduction of steam power in the over-head workings enabled them to double their output.

Mining for lead and calamine had been carried on for centuries in the Mendips. The lead mines were exhausted by 1810 and the demand for calamine had decreased to such an extent that mining ceased to be profitable.

The chief arteries which served the county were the turnpike roads, the rivers, and the canals.

Evidence of the vast improvements which were made along the main roads is to be found not merely in the number of Acts for the improvement of roads so much as in observation of the results. Before the Turnpike roads were made, it took four days to go from Taunton to London. In 1790 this journey could be done in two days. (*1) In 1821 the Royal Mail Coach did the same journey in nineteen hours. In 1790 there was only one coach on the main road from Bristol to Exeter, passing through Taunton, and only one on the road from Bath to Taunton, every week. In 1822, about twelve coaches a day were leaving Taunton. *2

The tolls collected for the Navigation of the River Tone rose from £668 in 1789 to £2,369 in 1821. (*3) The Parrett was also busy. In 1806 there were no less than seven ships daily leaving wharves in London for Bridgwater. Unfortunately a great deal of uneconomic expenditure was made on extending the possibilities of navigation on the Axe and the Brue when the drainage schemes for these rivers were being carried out.

Nearly the whole of Somerset canal building dates to this period. The Kennet and Avon Canal with its branch, the Somerset Coal Canal, was begun in 1794 and completed after many delays in 1809. This was another example of the enterprise of the Radstock mineowners. Another line of canal was planned to bring them into communication with Frome and Wincanton, but a lot of money was expended without result.

The only result of the Bristol and Taunton Canal which was projected in 1811 was the stretch between Bridgwater and Taunton which was opened in 1827. This scheme was entirely

*1. Savage: p.603 : *2 Green I xxvi: The first macadamised road was made between Bath and Bristol : *3 Savage p 400

uneconomic. So was the Grand Western Canal (1796 - 1811) between Taunton and Topsham (for Exeter).

There was a great deal of talk, and even an Act of Parliament, about a scheme for cutting a ship canal from the English Channel to the Bristol Channel. Fortunately the idea was dropped, although not before somebody had lost money through it. Since 1825 the idea has been revived from time to time.

Social and Cultural Influences

According to Hannah More, the clergy in the Mendips were either absentees, drunkards, or bigots. There is plenty of evidence of absenteeism in other parts of the county, but the influence of the press was bringing public opinion to bear on this problem. We have a good example of this from Taunton. The taste of the clergy for displaying their learning is well illustrated in some pamphlets from Bridgwater.

Unfortunately these sources of study leave us without any mention of the sound work which many a poor parson was doing in his parish. But the impression that the church was still hampered by the faults of the eighteenth century is certainly correct. Although there was no provision for education in the Mendips before Hannah More started her Sunday schools, elsewhere the church was encouraging the foundation of charity schools, where boys could learn the catechism and read the Bible. These schools, and the church services, were almost the only educational contacts which the poor man made apart from his apprenticeship.

The growth of these schools is evidence of the awakening conscience of mankind towards the lot of the poorer classes. The founding of the Hospital at Taunton and various activities of a similar nature at Bath during this period show that humanitarian zeal took a really practical turn.

The Dispensary at Wiveliscombe is useful as an example of how a small local enterprise to provide medical benefits to the poor, was organised.

Many men were members of some form of trade

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association or friendly society, or simple box-club. The Cordwainers' Company at Wells is not by any means a perfect example to have chosen! Nobody seems to have any notion of the reason for its foundation - or that of the other six 'trading companies' of Wells. Even Phelps, in 1839, had no idea. Nor can anyone say what benefits did, or did not attach to membership. The 'company' must have lost all connection with the trade of which it bore the name, at an earlier period. During our period it seems to have been used as a means of enlisting voters! On the other hand we have the 'company's' books, and from them we can read a story that was familiar in the history of box-clubs.

In many towns during the winter, there was some sort of theatrical performance, perhaps as often as three times a week. To the ordinary man this was an occasional 'treat' which had some cultural influence on his mind. At Bath there was a 'superior' theatre which catered for a 'superior' audience. We are able to examine their performances during a whole season. Their plays were poor and their technique was crude and primitive. When the ordinary man went to a dramatic representation in a small Somerset town, he saw much worse performances than these!

During the Napoleonic Wars all men were constantly being urged to undertake some form of military training. These efforts met with as much success as could be expected in a country like England. The ordinary man however, stood a fair chance of coming into the unwelcome contact of the militia. The amusing incidents of a mutiny in the 'Local Militia' at Taunton,^(*) and of an attack on the gaol at Bath by another of these regiments,^(*) show that the behaviour of the Local Militia was determined by the lowest dregs of society. They were certainly an undisciplined crowd.

Conclusion

The prosperity of the landed gentry in the country and of the

*1 See p. 174

*2 See p. 174

traders in the towns, was based upon agricultural development. 28
High prices and increased production made farming prosperous,
and the sources of this prosperity were brought under more
effective cultivation by the Enclosure Acts. On the other hand
in spite of changes in the general level of prices, agricultural
wages did not rise during this period. The farm labourer did
not share this prosperity. The town labourer in Somerset was
badly off too. The woollen industry had gone and the prosperity
of the silk mills passed away between 1820 and 1830. Mining
for lead and calamine ceased. Coal mining was carried on more
efficiently at Radstock and Paulton, but many pits had closed
down.

The total population of the county was increasing
rapidly throughout this period. In 1801 there were 273,577
inhabitants, and in 1831 there were 402,371 - an increase of
47%. The abundance of labour was bound to force wages down. Poor
Rates rose steadily during the first two decades of the century.
The smiling face of Somerset concealed a mass of human misery.
In 1801 and in 1830 the labourers hesitated on the very brink
of open rebellion.

This is a very depressing picture. Looking on the
brighter side of the canvas we see the approach of political
reform; we see the change of attitude towards prison administration
and later towards the law; we see the small farmer holding his
own in many parts of the county, and we do not find that the
cottager was immediately ruined by Enclosure; we find thousands
of acres of waste coming under cultivation, besides thousands
of acres of 'moor' which were reclaimed from the floods, and we
also find that rural housing conditions had made some
improvement. We do not find any hope for Somerset industries,
except for coal-mining in a small way, but we find tremendous
progress in communications. We find signs of the Church's
awakening and the beginning of an attempt to supply the Poor
with elementary education, as well as with hospitals and
medical care for their bodies.

POLITICAL HISTORY

EXTENT OF REPRESENTATION

At the end of the eighteenth century, sixteen members of the House of Commons were drawn from Somerset. In common with the rest of the country, it was historical accident and not any rational principle which determined this. Fourteen of the members sat for the seven boroughs and the other two were county members. Elections for the latter were held at Ilchester and the forty shilling freeholders voted.

In the boroughs there was a variety of franchise ~~un~~ qualifications. In Bridgwater there was the 'Scot and Lot' franchise. In Bath only the members of the Corporation could vote. In Taunton, 'Potwallopers' were voters. In Minehead the qualification was held by 'householders not receiving alms.' In Wells, the mayor, masters, and burgesses of the city, and ~~the~~ men who had been admitted to their freedom in the trading companies had votes. In Ilchester the bailiff, capital burgesses and inhabitants not receiving alms could vote. In Milborne Port, capital bailiffs, stewards, and inhabitants paying 'Scot and Lot' held the franchise. (*B)

Most of these votes were controlled either by bribery or by intimidation. In 1817 the Radicals claimed that twelve of the borough members were nominees of the borough-mongers. (*1)

REFORMERS

As early as 1808, the Taunton press was printing accounts of meetings at Westminster, led by Burdett and Sheridan, where it had been resolved "That without Parliamentary Reform the people have no means of recovering the liberty they have lost - no chance of retaining that which remains." (*2)

There was a Hampden Club at Bath. Acting in concert with the Bristol Reformers, they sent 'Orator' Hunt to London, in 1817, with a Petition for Reform. The Bristol Petition was said to have 24,000 signatures, and the one from Bath "upwards of 20,000." (*3)

*A: For full details see Appendices I. 176 & N. 180

*B: For functions of Capital Bailiffs in local Government See Appendix I. 213

*1 Hone: Reformers Register I. 18 - May 24 1817

*2 Taunton Courier Oct. 27, 1808

*3 Huish: Life of Hunt II. 30

There was a big demonstration when Hunt was released from Ilchester Gaol in 1822. He made a triumphal 'Progress' from Ilchester to Glastonbury, where he was Lord of the Manor. He was presented with a cup and salver by Somerset Radicals (X1)

COUNTY ELECTIONS

A pamphleteer of 1806 suggests that T.B. Lethbridge became member for the county because he had such a strong 'phalanx of bribery and intimidation' at his back. He regarded the county vote as the foundation of the Constitution. At all costs the county vote must be kept clean. "Venality in a Burgage Voter is base and criminal enough, but its depravity does not so consequentially affect the noble aggregate of our rights, as a careless disregard in the Freeholder of a County to the capacity or merits of his Representative." (*2) "We profess," he says, "a temperate desire to perceive the attention of Government . . . directed to a safe and timely improvement of our representative system." He does not say what alterations he would have made to the county vote, nor does he make a direct charge of corruption against Lethbridge - which he certainly would have done if he had had any good evidence to substantiate such a charge. Apparently then the chief object of the pamphlet was to introduce Dickenson as the prospective Whig candidate for the next election. (X2A) Nevertheless the Tories issued a reply. (*3) They defended the integrity of Lethbridge by pointing out that although he had money enough to buy six rotten boroughs yet he preferred to seek election for the county - ~~which~~ a reply which tacitly admits the corruption of the boroughs! Actually the boroughs were so steeped in corruption that county elections must have appeared spotless by comparison. The worst we hear about county elections is that on occasion, one party was capable of tricks such as hiring all available means of transport in order to prevent the other side from getting

their men to the hustings.

X1 Horsh: Life of Hunt II. 416: X2 Address to the Freeholders p.30 (1806)
X3 Letter to the Freeholders (1806): X2A For Dickenson see 9.5 and p 162

BOROUGH ELECTIONS

An amazing story is told by the Radicals of an incident which occurred at Ilchester in 1802. "The houses in this place .. were purchased by Sir William Manners .. who has since possessed himself of nearly the whole borough.

At the general election of 1802, a great majority of the voters were bribed, at £30 a man, to vote against the proprietor. This caused the trial and conviction of Alexander Davidson Esq. and his agents, at the Assizes for the county of Somerset in 1804: for which they afterwards received sentence in the Court of King's Bench, to suffer one year's imprisonment.

To prevent a similar occurrence at future elections, Sir William Manners caused all the houses to be pulled down, except about sixty, in order to limit the number of voters; and erected a large workhouse, to accommodate those whose disobedience had offended him! The number of houses destroyed on this occasion was ~~not~~ ~~on~~ ~~was~~ about one hundred, and the electors who occupied them, with their families, have mostly resided in the workhouse ever since. The nomination of the members is thereby transferred from about one hundred and sixty householders to an individual." (*1)

Even extreme measures like this could not be effective for ever (and it was probably less drastic than this Radical source makes out) and after 1818 Manners did not have things all his own way in Ilchester elections. (*2) Moreover, if seats in Parliament were regarded as property which could be bought and sold, there was some excuse for the voters if they thought that their votes were saleable commodities too! The constant petitions to Parliament from Ilchester indicate the amount of corruption which was going on all the time.

In his speech in the great Reform Bill debate, Henry Hunt held up Ilchester as a classic example of the fallacy of the argument that the unreformed constitution gave political responsibility to the best elements in the community: "Look at the borough of Ilchester .. and see what classes of men return

*1 Hone: Reformists Register I.No.5 Feb.22 1817.

The matter was brought up in Parliament and is reported in "The Times" April 3.1819. *2 See Appendix: Ilchester Elections

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members to this house .. In Ilchester many of the voters are of the most degraded and lowest class, who can neither read nor write, and who always take care to contract debts to the amount of £35 previous to an election, because they know that those debts will be liquidated for them." (*1)

Tom Clarke, a Quaker, of Bridgwater gives an interesting account of an election at Taunton. (*2)

"March 24 1820. This is the 13th or 14th day of the election for the borough. At the hustings with cousin James Stephens from about 11 o'clock in the morning till after 7 in the evening. I understand that 14 votes only have been polled to-day, it being doubtful whether most of them, or perhaps the whole, possess the right of voting, and the examination of one only sometimes occupied more than an hour. This examination has been most amusing. The officers were not so strict nor the barristers so authoritative as in a court of justice, and the witnesses took far greater liberties.

(25th) Again at the hustings from about 12 o'clock to four. Cousin Jas. Stephens with me the last 2 or 3 hours. The poll closed soon after 3, when the numbers were Baring 407, Warre 326, Seymour 32. For the last hour the hustings were a scene of so much confusion and noise, that I could not ascertain the number that were polled, nor whom they voted for, though I was sitting but a few yards from the officers' table."

It had been agreed that the poll should close at 3 o'clock. Up to about 12 the voters were examined in much the same way as they were yesterday, but after that time their votes were taken without their being examined, and it was supposed that not one in five was good. This seemed to be an arrangement between the parties, when they found that the time would not allow of the polling of more than a very few if they were examined as the others had been, and that there were many on both sides ready to offer their votes. But somehow or other - it is said from the partiality of the officers - a greater

*1 Molesworth: History of England 1830-1874 I.81

*2 MSS Diary of Tom Clarke (in possession of T.B. Dilks Esq. of Bridgwater)

number of Seymour's votes were polled than of Warre's. As well as I could ascertain through the tumult and confusion, two of Seymour's tallies were polled in succession, or at least were attempted to be polled, to the exclusion of one of Warre's, and some votes were taken for Seymour after 3 o'clock. After the numbers were declared Seymour demanded a scrutiny, and each of the candidates made a short speech. I was almost close to Baring and Seymour. The successful candidates were then chaired."

'Tallies' were batches of ten voters who were sent from the Committee rooms to the hustings.

The definition of a 'Potwalloper' at Taunton had been fixed in the early eighteenth century to mean any resident householder not in receipt of poor relief. Also the boundary of the borough was confined to one only of the three parishes in Taunton. No register of voters was kept so there was ample opportunity for unscrupulous agents to bring in strangers or to maintain a few paupers for a few weeks before an election.

Here are some interesting points from the evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons which examined an election dispute from Taunton in 1831 (*1):

G.Porter was told to show "how Upham held his hands." "Cure .. said, 'What do you mean by that: is that 5 shillings apiece?' - 'No,' he said, 'five pounds apiece.' (*2) But apparently Porter and Cure only received half-a-crown between them! William Adams (stone mason) fared no better although Leigh gave him a shilling with the remark that "if I wanted 5 or 10 pounds or more, I should have it."

One Turle called on Coppinger (a silk dyer) who lived in a house worth £20 a year, to distrain his goods for rent owing to the amount of £6/2/6. When Coppinger protested at having his goods seized, Turle told him to see Leigh or Upham. Coppinger came back with the rent in less than two hours' time. In fact he brought £6/8/- ("I charged him 5/6 for our expences.") (*3)

The same witness alleged that during the first canvas it was

~~customary for political agents in Taunton to give a tally~~

~~*1 Trial of the Taunton Election Petition (1831)~~

*2 Ibid. p.133 *3 Ibid. p.115

ticket for 8 quarts of beer for 'Plumpers.' (*1)

James Wool~~an~~ (bricklayer) said that another agent, Cox, had offered him a job in the police!

Samuel Jeffrey, landlord of the 'London Inn,' said that he had received £18/1/2 and another £50 from the agents, who still owed him £920/5/11. Isaac Nethercroft (of the 'Royal Oak') said that the agents still owed him £56. Both men asserted that they had been warned - after the arrival of the Writ for the inquiry - that no further money would be paid. Nethercroft gave details of the enormous amount of beer, ale, punch, and grog which had been consumed during the election. His instructions were - "not to exceed 15/- per man." Robert Green (of the 'Half Moon') also produced a bill for £129/1/4.

Apparently 'Captains of Tallies' like Joseph Warre (plasterer) gave £10 dinners during the election.

It is interesting to learn how much the agents got for 'organising' the election. Leigh received £300 and the others were paid £150 each.

It is obvious from the article in the Victoria County History that things were just as bad in all the other Somerset boroughs. Later in this thesis (see 'Box Clubs'), I have shown how one of the 'Seven Trading Companies' of the City of Wells was under the patronage of J.P. Tudway Esq. who could recruit his party through this medium.²

The Reform Bill put an end to bribery at Ilchester, Minehead ^{and} Milborne Port ~~and Wells~~ by putting an end to their representation, but it did not necessarily 'clean up' the remaining boroughs. In fact things became such a scandal at Bridgwater in later years that the borough was disfranchised.

*1 Ibid. p.117 See also pp.240,170,& 129

'The law is an ass' - Dogbery.

In the days when England was insufficiently policed the law was very severe. This meant that ordinary cases of theft and receiving were not within the jurisdiction of local magistrates and we hear at Bath in 1801 that "the great distance of the places where the Assizes .. were held, occasioned a heavy expense to the injured parties; and consequently prosecutions were often given up and thieves let loose on the ~~law~~ public, to commit fresh ravages at their leisure."(*1) Even when cases were taken to the Assizes decisions were little better than a lottery.

At Taunton in 1809 eleven persons were condemned to death - one for cutting and maiming, three for highway robbery, three for sheep stealing, and four for burglary. All these criminals were reprieved "before the judges left the town."(*2) Yet at the same Assizes seven years transportation was the sentence for child stealing, house-breaking, and for stealing a pig.

Death was the penalty for well over two hundred offences.(*2A) These excessive penalties left an arbitrary margin which was much too wide. When offenders were caught, they were dealt with either too strictly or too leniently. Manslaughter which fell little short of murder might be punished with twelve months imprisonment (*3) in one court and the same penalty might be given for stealing a cheese elsewhere.(*4) At Taunton, one man stole "a bag, a firkin, and a whip" and was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, whilst another who stole "a bag, a rope, and a cloth" got six months, (both were fined one shilling too!), whilst a woman who stole a pound of butter was sentenced to six months imprisonment and a whipping.(*5)

Between 1809 and 1821 twenty-eight persons were

- *1 Mainwaring: Annals of Bath (1800-1835)
*2 Taunton Courier No.33 (1809) *3 Taunton Courier No.27(1809)
Two post boys in Essex killed two people through furious driving. *2A i.e. Before Peel's Reforms 1824-6
*4 Taunton Courier No.108 (1810) *5 Ibid.

executed in Somerset - an average of 2.3 per annum.

This is an analysis of the crimes:(*1)

Crime	No.of executions
Murder:	5
Stealing:	
"Stealing letters from the Bath post office"	1
"Stealing from a dwelling house: above the value of 40/-"	3
Sheep stealing	4
Highway Robbery	3
Burglary	5
	16
Arson:	1
Assault with intent to murder and rob:	1
Forgery:	3
Sex Crimes:	2
Total	<u>28</u>

Only five of these twenty-eight criminals had committed murder. In other words, less than 18% would have been executed to-day. The average age of these criminals was under 38 years. Samuel Gerrish, executed for robbery, and James Gardner, executed for a sex crime, were both boys of eighteen.

Executions were in public. "This day then, at Ilchester, is called 'Hang-Fair Day.' The people assemble from ~~the~~ ^{the} surrounding parishes and I myself have witnessed, on returning from the place of execution, numbers of them dancing in the ale-houses of the town."(*2)

In 1808, the Governor of the Gaol there stopped the practice of sending prisoners to execution at a cross-roads outside Ilchester because the condemned man had to ride through jeering crowds who took a sadistic delight in the proceedings. Executions were then carried out over the entrance lodge at the prison.

*1 Report on Ilchester Gaol(1822):Appendix p.35

*2 Bridle: Narrative of Ilchester Gaol (1822)

Instead of provoking fear or dread, executions provided holidays. One man accosted the Governor in the street with these words: "So Mr. Bridle, there are none of the prisoners to be hung then. By G- it is a shame of the judges to reprieve them all: for d- me if Ilchester is worth living in, without there are Hang-fairs and good elections." The prisoners knew that these were feelings common to Ilchester - "All Ilchester is Gaol, say prisoners there."

Prisoners who refused to plead were still subjected to peine forte et dure. Men still screamed under the torture of the cord. In the 'Press Yard' at Newgate confessions were literally 'pressed' out of men by heavy weights piled on planks. 'Hulks' were a by-word for all that was degraded and cruel. Conditions on the convict ships which actually made the voyage to the penal settlements were no better. Transportation often meant a hideous death in the antipodes. Even ordinary imprisonment in England was exceptionally vile and was accompanied by a great deal of illegal fettering, chaining, and torture. The Pillory, with its frightful mutilations, was in use until 1837. Whippings and floggings were common. In 1822 John Furnell, a soldier, died at Hull after receiving 300 strokes of the lash. Even the village stocks were not yet a picturesque reminder of "the good old days."

Nevertheless there were signs of a change for the better during this period. In 1820 the remaining medieval barbarities which had attended executions for treason were dropped. Over a hundred death sentences were removed when Peel was in office and a more humane attitude was adopted towards prisoners. The use of agents provocateurs was stopped although the 'informer' remained. This unpleasant type of rogue could earn 'blood-money' by inducing others to break the law.

A police officer who came from London to Yeovil to catch two housebreakers in 1817 complained that the informer was paid £80, of which he himself only received £17. "I very seldom found," he says, "where an attorney was engaged

that a constable could get more than his expenses, and hardly that."(*1)

'Orator' Hunt was sent to serve his sentence after 'Peterloo' at Ilchester. Probably this was intended as a warning to Radicals in Somerset. Another Reformer, Hone, who hailed from Somerset had been imprisoned in London in 1817 at the time when Habeas Corpus was suspended. After 1820 there were no further 'political' convictions although the law of libel was not relaxed.

The chief criticism of the administration of justice before the reform of criminal law, was that its severity did not check the growth of crime. Lack of police was a scandal. Not that police can 'cure' the evil. As long as wages were low, food ~~xxx~~ dear, houses ~~xxxx~~ overcrowded, and as long as there was no attempt to educate the masses, crime was bound to increase.

The following figures (Average Annual Expenditure) show the rising cost of crime to the ratepayers of Somerset: (*2)

	1804-1811	1811-1818
	£	£
1. Conveyance of Prisoners:	252	566
2. Keepers of Prisons:	2,454	5,217
3. Prison Repairs:	981	2,808
4. Prison Medical Attendance:	130	193
5. Prison Chaplains:	51	72
6. Vagrants (Apprehension and Passing off):	159	462
7. Prosecution of Felons:	535	1,980

The inclusion of 'vagrants' in the list shows the official attitude towards the Poor! The amount spent on the conveyance of prisoners had increased by 125% from 1804 to 1818, and it stood at £566 in 1818 as against £161 in 1789. The cost of prosecuting felons had increased by 270% from 1804 to 1818 in which year it stood at £1980 as against £177 in 1789. From 1801 (273,577) to 1821 (354,972) the population of the county had increased by 29%.

*1 Hone: Reformists Register I. No. 13

*2 Report on Ilchester Gaol (1822) Appendix p. 19

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Finally, the Game Laws were a grievance, although, if the silence of the local press is any~~thing~~ indication (I mean in the reports of Assizes), not on such a large scale as one would expect. Cobbett has one interesting comment which seems to be perfectly justified: (*1)

"I asked who was the judge at the Somerset Assizes the other day. A correspondent tells me that it was Judge Burrough. I am well aware that, as this correspondent observes, 'Gamekeepers ought not to be shot at.' This is not the point. It is not a gamekeeper in the usual sense of that word; it is a man seizing another without a warrant. That is what it is; and this, and old Ellenborough's Act, are new things in England, and things of which the laws of England, 'the birthright of Englishmen,' knew nothing. Yet farmer Voke ought not to have shot at the gamekeeper, or seizer without a warrant: he ought not to have shot at him; and he would not, had it not been for the law that put him in danger of being transported on the evidence of this man. So that it is, clearly, the terrible law that, in these cases, produces the violence."

(*1) Cobbett: Rural Rides I.217 (1823)

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PRISONS(*A)

ILCHESTER GAOL

John Howard tells us that the gaol was too small in 1774 although Collinson in 1791 makes out that it was "built upon the modern improved plan."

Edward Scadding, the gaoler, was paid £25 a year and made a good deal more by charging 'fees.' He was a "swearing vulgar man" (*1) whose wife used to lick her knife after eating fried onions! Apparently the Surgeon (Salary £8 a year-*2) was also an 'Apothecary, Coal Dealer, and Brick and Tile Maker' too! (*3)

In 1808 the new gaoler, Bridle, found that there was no real classification and the "prison was either a scene of drunken frenzy or gambling association. ... The very Chapel ... became a house of profligacy." (*4) There was no form of employment, no laundry (one old woman did all the washing!), and only one pump.

He set the prisoners to work at new buildings and made classification possible. Incidentally he raised the capacity of the gaol from 80 to 266! He also distributed Bibles and introduced weaving. In 1817 there was a bad outbreak of typhus but his precautions were so effective that only two deaths occurred.

In 1818 Thomas Fowell Buxton visited the gaol and was very favourably impressed. He commended the cloth manufacture and the laundry. He also says that the boys were "all taught to read and write" (*5) which cannot be true.

The author of a short pamphlet in 1821 (*6) had been shown over the prison and he found it clean, dry, and well ventilated, in fact it had "altogether a comfortable appearance!"

*A For other Prisons in Somerset see p. 185 (Appendix VIII)

- *1 Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries XVIII p.7-8 etc.
- *2 John Howard: State of the Prisons 1774
- *3 Som. & Dorset N. & Q. XVIII p.79
- *4 Bridle: Narrative of Ilchester Gaol (1822) Ch.1 (pages not numbered)
- *5 T.F. Buxton: An Inquiry whether Crime and Misery are Produced or Prevented by our Present System of Prison Discipline.
- *6 Visits to a Prison (1821) by a 'Friend' to 'T.F.B. Esq. Bath' See p.9

A much more important pamphlet appeared in 1821 from the pen of one of the prisoners there: Henry Hunt, the 'Orator.' (*1) In twenty-four exciting pages he gives us a vivid description of 'Ilchester Bastille.' The whole place was dripping with damp and was liable to be flooded by water from the river which flowed alongside. The walls were so high that ventilation was impossible and the sun was usually invisible. The ramshackle buildings were unhealthily overcrowded. The wells were foul, being contaminated both by the river and by the sewers. There was no sick-ward. Men in irons were brought round the communion table. There was no education for juveniles. The Cloth Fa^tactory was simply a means for increasing the gaoler's salary. Most of the clothes washed in the Laundry were those of the officials. Debtors had to hire beds, which did not cost more than 50/- each, for 2/6 a week. They were locked up from 5 p.m. until 8 a.m. and "a night-stool is placed at one end of the room, where sixteen or twenty persons are accommodated." They were never allowed any privacy, and the gaoler grew cabbages in the yard where they were allowed to exercise. There were three female debtors. One lived in a damp cell, attended by male officials, and the other two were thrown amongst "the street-walkers and shop-lifters of Bath." The only pretence at classification was to separate men and women - yet two women had recently become pregnant in the gaol.

Hunt then proceeds to make charges against the gaoler. This is what happened at election times: "Ambrose Gillet steps forward as flag-bearer, with colours flying; George Snooke, the leader of a full band of music, strikes up 'Sir David Hunter Blair;' and the gaoler, on light fantastic toe, leads off with the amiable Miss Susan Masters, a notorious lady of Ilchester."

He criticises the way in which the prison books were kept and accuses him of not taking steps to promote cleanliness among the prisoners. He complains that the prison rules were not on view.

His most serious charges were ^{that} cruel punishments, amounting to torture, had been inflicted on two prisoners: Gardner and Hellier.
*1 Henry Hunt: A Peep into a Prison (1821)

When this bombshell exploded things began to happen quickly. It was obvious that what Hunt said was true. His friends in Parliament worried the Government into appointing a Royal Commission of inquiry, in spite of the efforts of the members for Somerset to deride the whole affair. Meanwhile the gaoler went to the magistrates and demanded an investigation. He got it. Without waiting for the Commission, they rushed into an inquiry and decided that he was not 'a fit and proper person' to keep a gaol. Nevertheless they left him in charge until the publication of the Report and at the sessions of the Commission, most of them expressed confidence in him!

The Report of the Royal Commission (1822) runs into hundreds of pages. The Commissioners endorsed everything that Hunt had said about the gaol. Then they proceeded to condemn the gaoler, concluding that "a system of irritation rather than of steady authority and conciliatory government, appears to have existed."(*1) They condemned his organisation and pointed out that classification had been sacrificed in order to staff the workshops. They condemned the practice of allowing boys to be thrown too much into the company of men of the worst possible character. They found that he was guilty of administering 'excessive punishments' (i.e. illegal torture) in three cases.

The first of these disgusting occurrences^r was the punishment of James Hillier. For nine days he was kept in solitary confinement with wrists and ankles tightly fettered and a chain between the ~~two~~ two, barely long enough to allow him to stand upright. Although Bridle claimed that this had been sanctioned by the magistrates, he had not called their attention to the unusual mode of ironing. The rings of the hand-bolts were so small that the prisoner's wrists were in a terrible state.

The second case was mentioned in the prison books by the doctor!:

"1820 Nov. 21 A blister to the head of James Gardiner.

J. Woodeforde M.D." (*2)
*1 Report on Ilchester Gaol p.14; *2 Ibid. Appendix p.41

Gardiner's head was shaved before the 'blister' was applied. His cap was then turned inside out and pulled on hard in order to keep the plaster in position. Although his hands must have been tied he managed to rub his head against the wall and so removed the plaster. Next day he was placed in a strait-jacket in such a way that he could not possibly remove the plaster. Bridle's cunning, after inflicting this pain in such a beastly manner, in getting the doctor's signature, is significant. The Commissioners expressed their "astonishment that any medical man should have lent himself to such a purpose."

The third case was that of Mary Cuer. She was locked in solitary confinement for four days during a week of hard frost. For two days there was no fire. She was given one loaf of bread and a bucket of cold water. She was not even given a cup. She was suckling a child, and her milk stopped owing to her privation. Yet nothing was done to feed the infant. She was not allowed to use its 'maintenance money' and she was not even able to warm bread and water for it.

Box-stocks (a kind of box with holes in the lid) were used to punish boys. One boy of thirteen, John Wheeler, was left standing in these things every day for a week between the hours of 8 a.m. ~~xxx~~ and noon, and from 2p.m. till 6 p.m. He was not allowed a seat.

In the case of Gardiner, Bridle said, "I acknowledge that I exceeded my authority." .. "The unfortunate punishment was suggested to my mind by the impression that Gardiner had feigned ¹illness to avoid working." .. "I have suffered a thousand times more in mind than Gardiner did in person." Afterwards he was prosecuted at the Assizes and was lucky to get off with a heavy fine. He was only convicted on this one count.

Bridle was an unpleasant man. Before coming to Ilchester, he had been in the 'Retribution,' a hulk at Woolwich. He was one of the hard old school. The law held human life cheap, and so did Bridle, but since it was not Bridle's job to make matters worse, his dismissal was just.

Hunt estimated that Bridle had been making £1,500 a year out of the gaol. This is greatly exaggerated. His official salary was £400 and in 1816 he drew £127 from prison labour. He also had his house free and probably managed to pick up a few 'unconsidered trifles.' He was certainly a well paid man. Slackness in administration was not altogether his fault. Travelling with prisoners kept him away from the gaol for one hundred and eleven days of the year in 1820. At the best of times there were only eight or nine persons in charge of over two hundred and fifty prisoners.

New Rules for the Gaol in 1821 forbade the gaoler to have anything beyond his fixed salary. He was to inspect all cells daily and to see each prisoner twice. On no account must the Taskmaster be absent from the gaol at the same time as the Governor. Further Rules followed the Prison Act of 1825. Much fuller particulars of prisoners were to be entered in the books and a very strict watch was to be kept in order to prevent the smuggling of liquor into the gaol. Divine service was to be held every morning.

A great deal of money was spent on 'improvements' to Ilchester Gaol, but in 1843 the magistrates in Quarter Sessions decided to close the gaol and to send the prisoners to Williton. It was left derelict until 1847 when it was offered for sale in the 'Taunton Courier.' (*1) The entire proceeds of this sale amounted to £1,650 and the neighbouring proprietor paid £75 for the boundary wall.

*1 April 21, 28, and May 5 (1847)

Agriculture before 1800

There are two good authorities on the agriculture of Somerset at the end of the eighteenth century: Billingsley and Marshall. The former ^{the} is more satisfactory. He had lived in the county for many years and his survey is exhaustive. His reputation as a practical agriculturist was wide. On the other hand Marshall writes as a traveller. ^(*) The greater and more thorough part of his work deals with Cornwall and Devon. He had already made a name for himself as an agricultural expert by his writings on Norfolk, Yorkshire, Gloucester, and the Midlands. His experience in these researches enabled him to make valuable comparisons between the methods of the West and those of other areas. Unfortunately his observations tend to be cursory, since they are jottings and notes which he took during two journeys in Somerset in 1791 and in 1794. These notes are a refreshing introduction to Billingsley's "General View." (*2)

Marshall treats Somerset as an outlying district of the West, whereas Billingsley assesses the county as a self-contained unit. The backward district of Devon and Cornwall is for Marshall the real 'West' and he traces their methods across the borders into Somerset. He justifies the treatment of the West as a separate area by elucidating the points of divergence between conditions of the West and those of England in general. Three main factors form the basis of this comparison: first, the prevalence of the life-leasehold tenure; second, the high proportion of small farms; ^(*) third, the practice of cultivating commonable lands. Three further factors which help to distinguish the Western area are: certain breeds of cattle peculiar to the West; The prevalence of mountain sheep; and the existence of a large number of archards.

Less important but nevertheless characteristic features are: the extraordinary fences; the exceptional height of earthen walls; implements and tools peculiar to the West (e.g. the pointed shovel of Devon and the long curved narrow blade of the Somerset spade); the treatment of coppices; carriage on horseback; the practice of putting out the children of paupers as apprentices to farmers; the lack of fixed times and places for hiring farm servants; the burning of the beet for wheat and turnips; the method of using lime; the 'Arrish Low' or

*1: Marshall: Rural Oeconomy of the Western Counties (pages not numbered)

*2: Billingsley: General View of the Agriculture of Somerset (1797 Revised Edition)

*3: See Thesis p. 60 ff.

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stacking ^{of} corn in square pyramids.

He makes an interesting division of the county into two parts balanced at Glastonbury. To the West lay the arable lands, and to the east lay the dairy lands. He gives no details to indicate what proportion of each type of farming existed.

From Somerton to Shepton Mallet "the whole (was) in a state of grass; no arable land (was) seen from the road." He calls this "a very cold plot of country; weak and languid even at this season of the year (i.e. near Michaelmas) adapted to the cheese dairy and the rearing of cattle."

"Village and farm buildings are wholly of stone, covered with thatch, tiles, or a heavy kind of slate." He "left the mud wall in the Vale of Taunton: and met the half-timber building and weather boarding in the Vale of Trowbridge."

He noticed that as he entered Somerset the oak and elm hedgerows of Devon gradually changed to hawthorn. Somewhere near Langport he exclaimed: "Act of Parliament hedges against the road - the first from the Landsend."

He says nothing about the state of the roads but he complained about prices near Shepton Mallet: "A shameful road toll: and this where materials are so abundant."

An interesting detail is that the haystacks were flat-roofed and "capped ~~only~~ with the thatch, as in Yorkshire."

Billingsley (1797) is chiefly concerned with giving practical advice on farming. He finds the farmers too fond of traditional methods and lacking in enterprise. He gives them advice on the value of Enclosures, estimates the cost of walls and hedges, recommends rotation of crops with frequent use of lime, and advises pulverising with the harrow. He tells us that a double-furrow plough had been used for ten years by one man in the Mendips without anyone having thought of following his example. "Very few ~~landed~~ gentlemen of landed property in this county have shown that attention to the advancement of rural oeconomy, or to the improvement of agriculture, which a science of such importance merits." (*1)

The Bath Agricultural Society was the only institution of its kind in the county and its influence must have been very

*1 Billingsley p. 297

limited.

Billingsley himself is the outstanding personality in Somerset agriculture. Cooke and Anderdon of Henlade experimented with drills, and White was an important figure in drainage schemes.

A prize essay on "The Farming of Somerset," published by T.D.Acland in 1851, together with a similar essay by W.Sturge, is an invaluable source for estimating progress since the time of Billingsley.

In addition to these sources, Enclosure Acts and Awards are chiefly used in the following pages.

AGRICULTURE

2. THE RECLAMATION OF THE MOORS

In the central portion of the county there were two large areas of marshland. The Brent Marsh extended from the Parrett to the Mendips, from the coast to Glastonbury, whilst the South Marsh lay beyond Bridgwater. Many thousands of acres in these districts lie on or below the level of high tides. Even to-day extensive floods occur after exceptionally high tides or after heavy rains. ^{(*)A} The Axe, the Brue, and the Parrett are tidal rivers and their unaided action in draining these large areas was far from efficient. In early times the whole of these low-lying lands was under water. The task of reclaiming them has been going on for centuries. In the Middle Ages the banks of the rivers and the shores of the Bristol Channel were raised and strengthened by "sea walls." By this means the lowland area was converted into marshland and certain portions became suitable for agriculture. The greater portion however, consisted of barren waste or turf bog. It remained in this state without appreciable improvement throughout Tudor and Stuart times.

With the advent of enclosures the problem was tackled piecemeal. Between 1760 and 1797, 17400 acres of Brent Marsh were enclosed. Each Enclosure Act brought better drains in the parishes affected. Although the benefit so received was "astonishing" ^S ~~(*)~~ the problem as a whole could not be solved without special machinery to enforce a general scheme throughout the area. In 1797 3,000 acres were still unenclosed and 2,800 acres remained turf-bog.

Billingsley, impressed by the cutting of the King's Sedgemoor Drain which improved the South Marsh area (although he was writing too soon after the event to be able to discover its defects), advocated, if he did not originate, a scheme for improving Brent Moor by alterations to the Axe and Brue.

His estimate of the cost - which he calls "a hasty sketch (in which) I do not pretend to accuracy" - amounted to £25,000 (including £400 for one Act of Parliament). In the event there were two Acts - one for each river - and two schemes. The Brue Scheme cost £60,000 and the Axe £41,000 ("On the side of the river Axe, the expence of compleat drainage would not exceed five thousand pounds" ^{(*)2}) making

(*) Billingsley: p. 167

*A: See p. 11

*2 Ibid p. 171

a total initial(*) cost of £101,000 - four times the amount which Billingsley had mentioned. In fairness to him, it must be admitted that the schemes which took effect were much more elaborate than his - but the publication of White's map and Billingsley's low figures must have had considerable influence on ^aw^wyer^wing landon^wers.

The Brue Drainage Act became law in 1801 and the Award was signed in 1807. ~~The~~ Commissioners controlled the £60,000 scheme which extended through the parishes of North Wootton, Pilton, Pennard, Baltonsburgh, Barton St. David, Butleigh, Street, Elaston St. John, Elaston St. Bowdick, Walton, Ashcott, Shapwick, Moorlinch, Catcott, Chilton, Edington, Cossington, Wookey and St. Cuthbert (Wells).

A new outlet was made at Highbridge (the "Western New Cut") and the Channel of the river was deepened, widened, and strengthened from Glastonbury to the Parrett. The new sluice gates controlled the proper discharge of the water and prevented the inflow of the tides. A new bridge, a wharf, and a sluice house were made near the outlet. A network of drains was laid out. Culverts and stop hatches were systematically provided. There was a dam at Mortlake and the stream from the Baltonsburgh Mill Tail was piped.

The whole works planned by the Commissioners were not carried out by 1830 because when their special powers ceased the whole scheme fell into the dead-hand of the Commissioners of Sewers. Before 1839 a further Act of Parliament was required! (**)

Nevertheless the work of reclamation had made a big advance. Green meadows appeared where there was formerly dismal brown bog. New enclosures were made in the neighbourhood of Burnham, Huntspill, Puriton, Pawlett, Woolavington, Cossington, Chilton, Edington, Catcott, Shapwick, Meare, Wedmore, Wells, Glastonbury, Ashcott and Street. (***)

The Axe Drainage Act was obtained in 1807 by the landholders who were interested in the "moors" which lay close to the Mendips and which were often flooded by water from the hills.

The Commissioners were empowered to alter and improve the Navigation of the River Axe. (Their powers are almost identical with those of the Brue Commissioners). They had compulsory powers to purchase land and to grant compensation ~~for~~ loss through their activities. They could make new cuts, new bridges and alterations to

* There was a Second
Act for the Brue.

*** Phelps I.52

*** Phelps I.52

the sea-walls. They could arrange the sale of parts of the river-bed which were left useless. Their powers were, in effect, without limit in matters which would in their opinion advance the business of "draining,~~improving~~ preserving from water, and improving" the area under their control.

This area included Wookey, Westbury, Rodney Stoke, Wedmore, Weare, Meare, Nyland, Badgworth, Biddisham, East Brent, South Brent, Cheddar, Axbridge, Compton Bishop, Loxton, Bleadon, Brean, Berrow and Lympsham. It was not as extensive as the Brue scheme which had been executed by two commissioners who had worked for six years. There were three commissioners and they completed their work in three years (the Award was made in 1810). The cost was almost £41,000 and it was raised in the same way as the Brue costs by a Drainage Rate on the lands which derived benefit from the scheme. The Rate varied from sums below 2/6 per acre to as much as 17/6.

The plans too were similar to the Brue scheme in all details. Important works were undertaken at the mouth of the Axe. There was a new cut (Bleadon) to obtain a greater fall, a new sluice (the Ochre House Clyce), a stone dam at Hobbs Boat with a public right of way (after the commissioners had purchased the right of ferry from Francis Popham), a Navigation Quay, a Wharf, and a Sluice House. A Drainage Boat (18 feet long by 7 feet wide!) was provided, and the commissioners made a standing order that goods left on the wharf for a period longer than 48 hours were to be charged 3d. per ton per hour until they were removed.

A formidable list of new cuts, bridges, culverts, tunnels, towing paths, clyces, and walls was set out, together with a host of branch drains. Further provision for trade included a "Coal Bason" and wharf at Weare, and a wharf at Wedmore.

The advantages derived by the agricultural interests were self-evident but the possibilities of commerce along this channel were greatly over-rated. It is impossible to disentangle the cost of the works which were undertaken with the latter object in view either in the case of the Brue or of the Axe, but it must have helped to swell the total which was so much greater than Billingsley's estimate.

North of the Mendips lay another stretch of marshland, comparatively small in area. This was improved by the Yeo Drainage Act (commonly known as the Congresbury Drainage) of 1819 followed by the Award of 1826. The area concerned included Congresbury, Puxton, Winscombe, Banwell, Churchill, Kewstoke, Week St. Lawrence and Yatton. The works were naturally on a smaller scale than those of the Brue and Axe and there was no useless expenditure on commercial ambitions which would never become realities. A new river ^{channel} was cut from Yatton through Week St. Lawrence, and the banks were considerably strengthened at Congresbury. New sluices, bridges, rhines, culverts, and gouts were provided.

Just as an ordinary Enclosure Act⁽¹⁾ had sufficed to drain King's Sedgemoor (in the South Marsh), the much smaller area of Nailsea and Kenn Moors was dealt with under an Act of 1813.

The first extensive drainage schemes in the county had taken place then, during the years 1795 to 1830.

It was perhaps a mistake to deal with the South Marsh by means of the King's Sedgemoor Enclosure Act in 1795 because Aller Moor was untouched. Large areas were flooded around Stoke St. Gregory and North Curry, and beyond Langport. A Parrett Drainage Act would have made the task of the modern Catchment Board considerably lighter. On the other hand the cost was probably prohibitive. A scheme sanctioned in 1937 is to cost £500,000! Technical skill was probably inadequate a hundred years ago. And we have at least the consolation of knowing that no money was spent on fruitless attempts to encourage Navigation above Bridgwater!⁽²⁾

No Drainage Scheme can attain perfection. The meadows which have been produced where there was formerly barren marsh in Somerset are still exceedingly wet and subject to periodic flooding. The steps which were taken over a hundred years ago (1795 - 1830) undoubtedly raised the annual produce of the County sufficiently to make them worth while. It will be noticed too that all three schemes were carried out without recourse to pumping operations. We must however, emphasise one serious lack of foresight. Each scheme provided

commissioners with temporary, if dictatorial, powers only. There was ^(2*) This would have been a real danger. Billingsley says that the Parrett was navigable for 20 miles - i.e. up to Langport.

^(1*) This statement is not quite accurate. The King's Sedgemoor Act only effected sub-division between parishes. The actual enclosures only became realities under the successive parochial Acts.

no attempt to make new machinery for the administration of the entire drainage system of the county. Even as late as 1851(*) the custody of the banks of the Axe, the Brue, and the Parrett, and the general supervision of drainage, remained in the hands of that medieval body the Commissioners of Sewers. Courts of Sewers were held at Wrington, Axbridge, Wells, Glastonbury, Wincanton, Langport and Bridgwater. Their proceedings were a ridiculous farce. Juries were sent out "to view the levels." Delinquents were then fined the ludicrously inadequate sum of half-a-crown, and the Courts concluded their proceedings with a good dinner! Under these conditions no steady improvement was possible, for there was virtually no control over irrigation and drainage. The consequence was that thousands of acres which might have been brought under some form of cultivation were left as moor and fen because a high flood in July would ruin all the crops.

Two main defects remained without remedy.

First, between Langport and ~~B~~oroughbridge where heavy rainfall piled up the river water against the inflowing tides until it poured over the banks, a larger channel for the Parrett was required.

Second, King's Sedgemoor was still liable to periodic flooding because the original cut was not large enough and because its outlet was not taken to a point as low as possible.

*†. Acland pp 45-7

3. ENCLOSURE IN GENERAL

The right to enclose surplus common was granted by Henry III to owners of the soil in the Statute of Merton (1235)* so that the idea of enclosure by the Lord of the Manor was very ancient. In the Statute of Westminster II (1285)* Edward I extended this right to cover cases in which ^{right of} common attached to a tenement held of one lord was exercised over common which was held by another lord. In 1550 Edward VI*** confirmed this right and legalised enclosures not exceeding three acres, for a house and garden. It applied to common of pasture only and the Act stipulated that "sufficiency of pasture" should be left for the commoners.

I have been unable to trace any other ~~general~~ regulations concerning enclosure before the end of the eighteenth century by which time rising prices and increasing population made it imperative that agricultural methods should be improved. Enclosure then became a problem of urgent importance.

An Act of 1773 **** gave a threequarters majority of landholders (in number and value) power to direct the fencing and ~~and~~ cultivation of open fields. The rules which they established were binding for six years only. They could elect a Field Master to supervise the alterations, and the expenses of the improvements were to be defrayed by a rate levied on all the landholders. An annual meeting was to be held on the 21st of May.

It is important to notice that cottagers' rights of common were protected. They could accept an annual payment in compensation for any proposed limitation of their rights and a portion of the common was to be set aside for those who did not wish to compound in this way.

Landholders who had established separate "sheep-walks" were not to be dispossessed. In dealing with the arable, the balks ("any balk, slade, or meer") not used as paths might be ploughed up, provided that the Lord of the Manor gave his consent. A two thirds majority of the "commoners" could direct the opening or shutting of the common pasture, and in order to provide money for further improvements one twelfth of the common could be let.

A tentative step towards the regulation of stock-breeding was

* 20 Hy. iii 4

** 13 Ed. i 46

*** 34 Ed. vi c3 s3

**** 13 Geo iii 8

[Statutes at Large]

taken by the clause which prohibited the turning of any ram on to the waste during the period August 25 to November 25.

Meanwhile enclosure by private Act of Parliament went on apace and until certain standing orders were made by the House of Commons in 1774, 1775, 1781, 1799, 1800, and 1801, there were no general regulations. By these orders it was incumbent on the promoters to publish on the church door a notice of their intention to seek an Enclosure Act, and the names of commissioners were to be stated in the Bill.

An Act of 1801* provided a model which might be altered to suit the requirements of any local Act** and so tended to reduce the cost (since it was no longer necessary to draw up an entirely fresh Act in each new case) and to introduce greater uniformity.

Commissioners were compelled to take a solemn oath promising equity and impartiality, and they were forbidden to purchase any of the land which they had allotted, during the succeeding five years. They had power to fix boundaries but not to settle disputes of title to land. They must consider the position of a man's house when allotting his land. They could register exchanges of lands anywhere in the parish, provided that the consent of both parties, in writing, were obtained. They could use the existing maps.*** They had power to collect individual expenses by distress on a recalcitrant's lands. They must obtain 10% deposits on lands which they might sell in order to defray the cost of the enclosure. The money must be held by somebody chosen by the majority (in value) of the proprietors. They must apply money received through registering exchanges and from the sale of trees to defray general expenses. They must decide on making roads before proceeding with allotments. They had power to summon witnesses - but not from distances greater than eight miles. Their accounts must be open to public inspection. No standing fences were to be destroyed without their consent.

The allotments which they made were to be full compensation for all rights claimed. Claims were to be made in writing. Lands granted were to be accepted within two months of the signing of the Award. Owners who had already accepted could fence their allotments before the execution of the Award. Quickset hedges were to be

*An Act for consolidating in one Act certain clauses etc.

** "Local" is not used in the technical sense.

*** i.e. Plans which had been prepared for the Bill

protected for seven years by outside fences. The penalty for pulling down fences made under an Award was £5. Guardians could charge lands with expenses not exceeding £5 per acre.

Other clauses* empowered the Rector to let his allotments and produced formulae to be used in "Saving the Rights" of the Lord of the Manor, the Crown, and other Public Bodies from any infringement which they might have been supposed to suffer by reason of the enclosure.

It must be remembered that the Act was only a model and its terms could always be changed in any particular private Act but where clauses were omitted in a private Act it is possible that they still held good. The former point is emphasised in an Amending Act of 1821** * that the Act does not over-ride the provisions of an ordinary Enclosure Act.

The remainder of the 1821 Act gives powers of ejectment and distraint and the right to bring actions for damage, to landlords against tenants who had found a loop-hole in the 1801 Act and who were paying no rent between the time when they actually entered their new allotment and the final execution of the Award!

Another Act of 1801 extended the Act of 1773 by empowering the majority of occupiers (in value) to shut off part of the common fields for potato growing. The legislators were again careful to state that compensation must be paid to those whose rights were injured.

An Act of 1817 known as the Land Redemption Act provided for the award of allotments to the owners of fee-farm rents in respect of Land Tax which had been purchased in lieu of such fee-farm rents.

The Enclosure Act of 1833 provided against difficulties concerning titles to land where the procedure of enrolling*** the Award had not been followed. All such Awards were made valid notwithstanding their non-enrolment.

Another Enclosure Act of 1836 enabled a two thirds majority to obtain enclosure of the arable in any parish without the sanction of parliament. This procedure did not apply to Commons or Waste.

* There were 43 in all

** 2Geo iv 23

***i.e. Either by deposit with the Clerk of the Peace or with one of the Courts of Record at Westminster.

4. PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH ENCLOSURE

A handbook on land-stewardship published in the early eighteenth century contains the following advice*: "A steward should not forget to make the best inquiry into the disposition of any of the freeholders within or near any of his lord's manors to sell their lands .. especially in such manors, where improvements are to be made by inclosing commons and common field (which is .. not a little advantageous to the nation .. as well as highly profitable to the undertakers). A steward should as much as in him lieth and without oppression, endeavour to lay all the small farms let to poor indigent people, to great ones."

It has been usual to assume that these results, the buying up of small freeholders and the creation of large farms, attended enclosures. Several difficulties make the task of ~~verifying~~ investigating the assumption far from easy.

Small holdings in Somerset may be taken as less than 13 or 14 acres. Farms over 100 acres begin to look large. When Arthur Young says: "Great farms have been the soul of Norfolk culture, split them up into tenures of an hundred pounds a year, you will find nothing but beggars and weeds," he is setting a standard which could not be applied to Somerset.

Other difficulties are matters of statistics: the dates of enclosures; the number of small freeholders before and after an enclosure. In the County of Somerset it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the dates of enclosures. There were two kinds of enclosure (arable and common) and two methods of enclosure (by consent and by Act). Enclosure of the arable meant the end of Open Fields (or Common Fields) and enclosure of the Common meant the end of the manorial Waste. Another kind of enclosure (e.g. Ilchester 1810**) dealt with Commonable Lands or lands which were held in severalty before a certain date - say Lammastide - and in common after that date. Of course whilst an enclosure like Martock (Act 1806) deals solely with arable and another like Combe St. Nicholas (1817) deals solely with common, it is possible to find examples like Weston super Mare (Act 1810) which deal with all types of manorial land - but they are few in number.

* Edward Lawrence: Duty and Office of a Land Steward 1726

** Where plain dates are given as in this case the date refers to the Award. When the date of the Act is given this is indicated.

"When Common was enclosed by consent it had to be the "unanimous consent of the parties claiming rights, who delegate commissioners, chosen by themselves, to ascertain their validity, and divide accordingly under covenants and agreements properly drawn and executed for the purpose." (*1) Otherwise an Act of Parliament had to be obtained.

In the case of arable, the Act of 1773 enabled a threequarters majority of landholders to carry out an enclosure - but the validity of such enclosure appears to have been good for six years only. Possibly this Act legalised an established custom. Probably once it had come into operation such an enclosure became, in practice, permanent: but enclosures which were not enrolled were not legally safeguarded until 1833.

A preliminary examination of Parliamentary Enclosure in Somerset reveals that the majority of the Awards kept at Taunton deal with Commons. If the figures given by the Victoria County History were true then out of 174 Awards only 9 would deal with the enclosure of arable and out of 68 Awards made between 1800 and 1830 only 6 would include arable: N. Perrott 1804; Alford 1806; Lillstock 1811; Long Ashton 1820; Rodney Stoke 1821; and Martock 1826. These figures are very inaccurate. Arable was dealt with in at least ten other Awards (*2): Moorlinch 1801 (V.C.H. says 1800); Huntspill 1803; Charlton Adam and Charlton Mack^erell 1810; Keinton Mandeville 1810; Martock 1810; Long Sutton 1814; Weston super Mare 1815; Drayton 1818; Wraxall 1819; and West Lydford 1827. Of the remaining Awards four are drainage and one was for Commonable land only. In spite of the misleading figures quoted above it is still true that the Awards deal predominantly with enclosure of commons. Enclosure of commons by consent was "seldom practised" (*3) so that we can date the enclosures of commons from the Awards. On the other hand we can only date the enclosure of arable in a limited number of cases from the Awards. Billingsley discusses the problems of enclosing commons only - as though enclosure of arable were taken for granted and needed no discussion. His general estimate of the amount of land enclosed is contained in the following figures: -b

*1 Billingsley p 49

*2 These figures are not complete

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	Acres
Towns and Villages	3.000
Public and Private Roads	15.000
Rivers, Lakes, Ponds etc.	2.500
Woods and Plantations	20.000
Meadow and Pastureland Enclosed	584.000
Marsh and Fenland Unenclosed	30.000
Arable and Convertible Land Enclosed	260.000
Common Fields	20.000
Uncultivated Wastes	65.000
	(1.000.000)(*)

So that by 1797 there remained only 20.000 acres of common fields, 30.000 acres of marsh and fen, and 65.000 acres of waste.

This estimate is also confirmed by Marshall in general terms: "The entire county (was) inclosed, except the moors or common marshes, and the passage of open common fields between Langport and Somerton." (**)

Actually the total acreage of Somerset is 1.052.800 and by 1851 only 40.000 acres remained unenclosed. (***)

The general tendency then, was to enclose arable first and commons later. Possibly a certain amount of the "Ancient Inclosures (i.e. arable) were inclosed during Tudor times but most of them must have been made in the eighteenth century - by consent. Unfortunately this method leaves us without any means of determining the dates of individual enclosures of arable.

Land Tax Returns exist (at Taunton) and there ^{are} incomplete sets of Poor Books, chiefly in parochial possession, so that some day it will be possible to obtain statistics of the number and size of holdings before and after enclosures. When an inquiry was carried out on these lines for ^{2,000} ~~200~~ parishes in the counties around Oxfordshire (****) the results showed that the number of small freeholders did not decrease in places where enclosure was carried out by Act of Parliament - in fact in many instances there was actually an increase - but that in cases where enclosure was effected by agreement there was a tendency for them to decrease.

* Billingsley p.12

** Marshall: Rural Economy of the Western Counties - the pages are not numbered.

*** Acland p.6

**** Davis: Econ. Hist. Review Vol. I. No. 1

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If the case of Somerset were analagous then, since most of the arable appears to have been enclosed without Act of Parliament, there would be a tendency for the number of small freeholders to decrease. Billingsley's evidence is inconclusive. He says that "no small part" of the land in the Mendips "is the fee of the occupiers, constituting a most respectable yeomanry." * Between Taunton and Yeovil "there are many freeholders who possess from one hundred to seven hundred pounds per annum." **

* Billingsley p.31

** Billingsley p.205 For full discussion of the position of the small landowner See Thesis p. 102-6

5. SIZE OF FARMS

Enclosure does not appear to have resulted in large farms in Somerset. Marshall insists that farms were small although he "believed" that there were bigger farms on the Eastern Dairy Lands. (*a)

Billingsley says that in the Mendips there were large "proprietors" (*) worth £2.000 to £6.000 per annum but most of them were receiving from £50 to £500. The farms seldom exceeded £200 per annum and some of the dairy farms were of £60 to £70. (*2) In the Middle District the farms were from £40 to £600 per annum. (*3) In the Taunton area he simply tells us that the farms were smaller than those in the Middle District. (*4)

We have at least one example of a large proprietor in the Mendips who refused to create a separate large farm after an enclosure (about 1777) although he received a tempting offer from a Norfolk farmer. Whether he did not want to take the risk of spending £600 on buildings or whether he was satisfied to leave his former tenants in possession, is left to the imagination. But Billingsley was in favour of large farms for arable, on the grounds that expenses for buildings and for fencing were less in proportion than they were for small farms. On the other hand dairy farms in his opinion, could not be too small. (*6)***

Acland (1851) gives figures which show that there was no increase in the size of farms during the period 1797 to 1851. In Taunton Vale there were many farms of less than 100 acres. The larger farms in this area contained 200 to 220 acres. On an average farm in this district 75% of the land was arable whilst 25% was orchard and pasture land. (*7) In the Western Hills the average farm was ~~only~~ worth £50 to £100 per annum. (*8) It contained 10 to 15 acres of water pasture, 60 to 70 acres of arable, and about 100 acres of rough ground. Such farms were, of course, large - as things went in Somerset. Farms which were

*1 As Prof. Halevy justly points out, large estates did not necessarily mean large farms.

*2 Billingsley p.31 *3 Billingsley p.205

*4 Billingsley p.269 *5 Billingsley p.67

*6 Billingsley p.157 *7 Acland p.36

*8 Acland p.8

*a See Thesis p.45.

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above the average were worth £100 to £200 and contained 30 acres of meadow, 120 acres of arable, and 120 acres of pasture. There were only a very few farms here worth £200 to £300. These contained as many as 60 acres of water-meadow and 150 to 200 acres of other good land. Acland says that in each of these classes of farm in the hills there were still rights of common. Meanwhile in the dairy lands the farms were all small, ranging from 50 to 120 acres, together with a small amount of arable land. "The texture of the land varies from field to field," he says, "a fact which should be taken into account in the sweeping censure of small enclosures."

6 ENCLOSURES AND DRAINAGE (i.e. PAROCHIAL)

There is not sufficient evidence in Marshall to prove that enclosures led to better drainage. He says that surface drainage was achieved in the wetter parts by cuts across the fields and he did see one "instance of under-drainage, with flat stones set up in the form of the letter U inverted."

Billingsley says that in the Mendips "not so much attention has been paid to the draining of land as the object undoubtedly requires, but in some cases where enclosures have been accompanied with a weeping surface, great improvement has been made by stone draining."(*1) In the Middle District "great attention is paid to draining by all the sheep farmers."(*2) In the South West District, which Billingsley says was practically all enclosed,(*3) the problem of drainage was not acute, but in wet areas "great attention" was paid to it.(*4)

The final proof rests with the actual Enclosure Awards which show that commissioners were well aware of the importance of the problem. The drains which Enclosure Commissioners laid out have been the basis of draining agricultural land in the various parishes concerned from that day to this. There can be no doubt & that these drains were far more systematic and far more efficient than anything which had been possible under the open field method with its unimproved wastes.

In the enclosure of King's Sedgemoor the main drain was cut 15 feet deep, and was 10 feet wide at the bottom, and 55 feet wide across the top.

At Long Sutton (1814) the ordinary ditches were made 4 feet wide and 2 feet deep, whilst those which were on the allotment of King's Sedgemoor were to be $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, 4 feet wide at the bottom, and 8 feet at the top.

*1 Billingsley p.131
*2 Ibid. p.238

*3 Ibid. p.272
*4 Ibid. p.290

7. ENCLOSURES LED TO BETTER ROADS

Accland (1851) declares emphatically that enclosures led to the making of new roads all over the county. By the Act of 1801 commissioners must set out the roads before proceeding to allot the enclosures.

Orwen tells us that after the enclosure of Exmoor (1817) John Knight made 28 miles of road there.

In his two examples of 800 acre~~x~~ enclosures, Billingsley provides for 2 miles of public road in each case, at a cost of £450 in one place and of £350 in the other.*

This length of road may be rather less than the average for a given area but I have only tested one Enclosure Plan: Drayton (1818). Here the enclosure was of 510 acres and $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles of public road were set out. The width of these particular roads was 25 feet, with the exception of 2.4 furlongs which were 20 feet wide. Objections were made to the width of two roads which were consequently altered by the commissioners. In addition to these public roads there were at Drayton no less than 27 private roads of various lengths. There can be no doubt that the country owes its network of local service roads to enclosure commissioners.

Very often the commissioners set aside stone quarries for proprietors and tenants "as well for their own use as for the repairs of the roads within the said parish."(*2)

At Wiveliscombe (1830) stone and gravel pits not exceeding 2 acres were provided for by the Act (1829). Actually 1a. 1r. 30p. were allotted for this purpose.

Often the Act empowered commissioners to stop up roads as they thought fit, but at Charleton Horethorne (1815) this required the consent of two magistrates. Another peculiarity here is that the roads set out were all private "carriage ways."

At Long Sutton (1814) the Langport Road was made 30 feet wide, and so were four private roads over Sedgemoor.

* Billingsley p.57

*2 Portishead (1823)

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The schedule setting out the rates for maintaining the public roads was an important annex to every enclosure Award. At Keinton Mandeville two of the private roads - one "passing through part of the common arable field called West Field" led to "Ancient Inclosures" and the occupiers of the latter lands were given full rights of way here but were obliged to contribute to the cost of maintaining these private roads. At Moorlinch (1801) roads and drains were laid out, then "Foot and Jury Ways" and "Occupation Ways" - an unusual terminology for Somerset Acts.

8. THE USE OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY

It is obvious that under the communal system of agriculture only the traditional implements ~~were~~ used. Enclosures made the use of machinery possible but there was no sudden revolution. In 1794 according to Marshall "swing ploughs" were universal. "The plow of Somerset has a long but well-turned mold-board; with a wrest standing somewhat high; and with a ladder-piece behind, which steadies a long slender ^{right} handle, shooting forward to the beam." Wherever he went ox-carts, "wains or coops," were common. He even saw one so primitive that the yoke was hung to the pole by a simple wooden bow instead of an iron ring.

Horses had not yet supplanted oxen in ploughing. A curious combination of both beasts marked this stage; two horses in front and two oxen behind at the plough. In general oxen were prevalent but horses were coming into their own in the borderland near Wiltshire. Billingsley recommended the use of oxen in preference to horses.

"In no county are the farmers more attentive to the sowing of wheat," says Billingsley. (*1) They ploughed six furrows, known as a 'Ridge' then left one furrow-width unploughed, known as a 'Comb.' This 'Ridge and Comb' method sounds like a survival of the old 'Strip and Balk.' Next they broke up the earth in the furrows with 'mattocks.' The seed was then sown and the ridges were dragged with a harrow. A 'Combing Plough' then turned the soil right and left so as to cover the seed to the correct depth. Finally the farm labourers scattered across the field and by ~~ch~~opping with their mattocks, covered any bare seed.

A layman cannot avoid the thought that a simple drilling would have saved a great deal of time, labour, and expense - which should have been adequate compensation for any loss in the actual crops. On the other hand this is so obvious that there can be only one explanation - no simple or efficient drilling method was available. Only two farmers were drilling for wheat in 1797 and Billingsley himself ~~onfesses~~^{*2} that he has got better results by the broadcast method. He says that drilled corn ripens a fortnight late. Lack of skilled labour and lack of efficient machines had

*1 Billingsley p. 274-280

*2 Ibid 274

delayed success in drilling. He found that his drilled crops were rank and thin;but he warmly recommends drilling for beans peas,turnips,carrots,potatoes,and for wheat on light soils.

Waggons drawn~~by~~ six horses were in use,but light carts drawn by one horse were "coming into fashion." Single ploughs only were used,although Billingsley says that double ploughs would save £1 per acre over an area of 500 acres. (*1) Some winnowing machines were in use,but there was not a single threshing machine in the whole county.(*2) Harrows were common and were used three abreast with three horses pulling.

*1 Billingsley p; 100

*2 Ibid p. 46

9. THE IMPROVED VALUE OF LAND

Billingsley quotes tables drawn up by Richard Locke of Burnham to show the "great advance in the value of the land in the course of forty years," and we can add to these similar figures to cover the succeeding forty years:

Valuation in Quality of Land	1755(*1)			1796(*2)			1812 (*2)			1835 (*2)		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
	(per acre)			--			--			--		
1	1	5	-	3	10	-	5	-	-	3	10	-
2	1	2	6	3	5	-	4	10	-	3	-	-
3	1	-	-	3	-	-	4	-	-	2	10	-
4	-	17	6	2	15	-	3	10	-	2	-	-
5	-	15	-	2	10	-	3	-	-	1	15	-
6	-	12	6	2	5	-	2	15	-	1	10	-
7	-	10	-	2	-	-	2	10	-	1	5	-
8	-	5	-	1	15	-	2	-	-	1	-	-
9	-	2	6	-	10	-	-	15	-	-	10	-

This table has only a general bearing on the question of enclosure. It is obvious that the land values of 1812 were swollen by the influence of war prices. Similarly the general rise in the price level towards the end of the eighteenth century was reflected in the value of land. Billingsley makes no comment. The figures for the lower grades of land are useful in showing the obvious incentive to enclose the wastes and commons; and such enclosures were making for a permanent rise in land values. It is impossible, however, to show how much of the increased value was due to the rise of the general price level and how much was directly the result of enclosures.

- Acland quotes some striking figures to illustrate the tremendous increase in the value of land where enclosure had led to the improvement of grassland. The Venne Farm was a farm of 233 acres in the Brendon Hills. In 1802 it was let on a 21 years lease at a rental of £100 per annum. At the end of this time it was valued at £115 for the Poor Rate. In 1849, 166 acres of improved grassland on this farm produced £365.
- *4 Another farm, the Cooksley Farm, contained 129 acres which let for £45 in 1832. In 1849, 95 acres of improved grassland were let

(*1) Billingsley p 204

*2 Phelps I. 142

*3 Acland p. 12

*4 Acland p. 12

for £176.

These are concrete examples - but Billingsley gives estimates which are worth considering. He says that Waste worth 3/- per acre would let for 8/- enclosed.(*1) After improvement it would be worth 15,20, or even 30/- per acre: and "the commonalty is benefited inasmuch as the land is made to produce ten times as much as it did in its primitive state." (*2)

It is obvious that these figures are all selected from the best results.They could not be achieved without great improvements in agricultural practice. Indeed Billingsley gives an example (*3) of land which would have yielded 15/- an acre on a twenty one year lease if the owner had been willing to spend £600 on buildings for the creation of a separate farm. Left as it was,the yield was only 12/- for ten years, and after that it dropped to 10/-.

It is worth noting that in the Middle District a rotation was practised on the Common Fields(*4): 1. Wheat; 2. Barley; 3. Clover, Vetches,Potatoes. This shows that some improvement was possible without enclosure. On the Poldens the Common Fields followed a course of: 1. Wheat; 2. Beans; 3. Fallow (*5); so that improvement in this respect was not general! In the neighbourhood of Sedgemoor,arable in Common Fields "although exhausted by constant cropping" let for 30/- an acre.(*6)

- *1 Billingsley p.74
- *2 Ibid. p.75
- *3 Ibid. p.67-8 (see above)
- *4. Ibid. p.219
- *5 Ibid. p.200
- *6 Ibid. p.198

10. IMPROVED METHODS ON THE ARABLE

Great improvement undoubtedly followed Enclosure from the nature of the advantages which it gave. It is obvious even without a map that the following farm could be worked much more efficiently with its fields collected into convenient groups than if the holdings had remained scattered in acre and half acre strips:

The Uphill Estate (*1)	A.R.P.
1. Farm House Garden and Orchard	6 3 5
2. Tankerd Close	2 3 38
3. Lower Way Six Acres	5 0 21
4. Spencer's Four Acres	3 2 24
5. Fitchin's Six Acres	4 3 17
6. Ham Six Acres	4 3 10
7. Cobbler's Ham Two Acres	1 2 35
8. Eastern Ham	7 1 27
9. Great Ham	7 0 32

The isolation provided by the hedges made experiments possible. However, the capital necessary for this was not always forthcoming, therefore methods did not improve with revolutionary rapidity. (*2) We have seen this in the case of machinery and implements. Neither Billingsley in 1797 nor Acland in 1851 is satisfied with the general progress. Billingsley says that the produce of the arable could be increased by one third. (*3)

*1 Taken from a Private Act of Parliament known as 'Tayne's Act' 1799^{passed} - in order to effect an exchange with an estate in Gloucester - Schedule B of the Act.

Total Acreage: 44a.1r.29p.

Gross Yearly Rent: £141

Deductions: Land Tax 23, Repairs 27: Total 210

Present Annual Value (1799): £131

Clear Annual Value if now lett (sic): £119/7/-

*2 This point is taken up again under Agricultural Wages

*3 Billingsley p.313

The first evidence of improvements can be found in Marshall. He often noted the growing of turnips. He saw too "many wheat stubbles turned under - an evidence of the forward state of husbandry." There were also "clean fallows and good clover." Yet the existence of a good deal of fallow - "many fallows for wheat are seen" - warns us that scientific rotations had not been developed. Nor was the farming always good. At Langport there was "foul bad husbandry - couch and thistles," and at Shepton Mallet "foul wheat stubble" which he explained by lamenting that "dairy men are bad arable farmers."

Very little land in the North and East of the county was suitable for barley but Billingsley strongly advises the growing of beans. He says that they should be grown in rows running North and South, and that they should be hoed twice. He advocates turnips too and says that at least 25% of the crop should be swedes. But he advocates the growing of potatoes even more strongly. (*1) He is pleased to see that this crop is becoming increasingly popular. Many parishes are already, in 1797, growing 50 acres of potatoes and each acre yields anything from 50 to 120 sacks. They are sold at prices ranging from 4/- to 7/- per sack. They were grown either by drilling, which was the best method, or in beds 5 feet wide drained by 3 foot ditches. Billingsley recommended that they should be manured with horse dung. He said that when the crop had been dug, the potatoes should be stored in pits.

The problem of manure was one of Billingsley's chief concerns. He attached great importance to the big deposits of marl which he said were found in North Somerset near Midsomer Norton (*2) and which could be extracted from shafts at a cost of 8d. per ton. He claimed that the value of the land where marl had been applied had increased from 3/6 per acre to £1/11/6, and that its effects would last for fifteen or twenty years. He stressed the value of lime and claimed that it had not been sufficiently recognised. Its advantages were that it made grass grow sweet and that it attracted and held valuable properties from other manures, thus making them go twice as far.

*1 Billingsley p.115

*2 Ibid p.132

He dealt too with animal and vegetable manures which should be spread carefully on the land.

In the Mendips the chief drawback to good farming was lack of buildings. His principles for the management of farms there were based on alternate lime, dung, and sheep-fold with the following rotation: 1. Oats; 2. Vetches; Turnips; 3. Oats; Artificial Grass; 4. 5. and 6. Artificial Grass (the fourth year for mowing and the fifth for feeding).

On the clay soils of the North East he found that the usual practice was: 1. Beans; 2. Fallow; 3. Wheat; 4. Oats; 5. Oats; and Grass. He did not like this rotation much and recommended instead: 1. Beans; 2. Wheat; 3. Winter Fallow and Artificial Grass or: 1. Teazles; 2. Wheat; 3. Beans; 4. Oats.

For the richer lands of the North East on the stone brash where there was abundance of marl, he recommended: 1. 2. and 3. Wheat; 4. Barley and Clover; 5. Clover: whilst for the red earth there he recommended: 1. Oats; 2. Summer Fallow; 3. Wheat; 4. and 5. Oats; 6. Oats and Grass Seed.

The treatment necessary for the Blackdown area where there were clay soils, was: 1. Fallow and Manure with 10 cart loads of dung and 60 to 80 bushels of lime to the acre; 2. Wheat; 3. Beans; 4. Barley; 5. and 6. Clover; 7. Wheat. (*1)

In order to add variety to these schemes he recommends: 1. Peas; 2. Vetches for feeding with preparation for Turnips by using lime and sheep-fold; 3. Barley and Artificial Grass; - on light soils; and on heavy soils: 1. Beans; 2. Spring Fallow - manure - Cabbages; 3. Oats and Artificial Grass.

In 1851 the rotations used on heavy soils were similar to those advocated by Billingsley: 1. Beans; 2. Wheat; 3. Winter Tares and Rape; 4. Wheat; 5. Swedes, Turnips, Mangolds and Potatoes; 6. Barley, Clover and Grass Seeds; 7. and 8. Clover. On the red lands there was the following rotation: 1. Beans; 2. Wheat; 3. Vetches; Barley; 5. Grass. (*2)

One of Billingsley's chief criticisms of the arable management in the North East is that in many districts turnips were little known so that there was constant recourse to fallow. (*3)

*1 See Billingsley pp. 65; 269; 107; 279; 108; 303; 304. : *2 Acland p. 40

- *3 Turnips were forbidden in certain leases (this would be pasture)

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In the Middle District, however, he exclaims: "These are enlightened farmers." (*1) Turnips were grown on a large scale and a common rotation was: 1. Wheat; 2. Turnips; 3. Barley; 4. Clover; Peas and Beans; 5. Wheat.

A great deal of Billingsley's work was concerned with arable for 25% of the entire acreage of the county was under cultivation. His scientific exposition of the obstacles to be overcome and the principles to be followed was a conscious attempt to break the traditional view that 'anyone could be a farmer.' It was part of the old tradition that farming meant wheat-growing. Since the county had long since ceased to raise "grain sufficient for its consumption" there was a permanent incentive to bring more acres under cultivation for wheat. The War with the famine of 1801 and the long years during which wheat sold at an average price of over 100/- per quarter made this course seem profitable. After 1815 the legislature gave the wheat farmer an artificial stimulus.

II. IMPROVED METHODS: PASTURE

Yet Billingsley saw clearly the true lines along which Somerset farming would make permanent progress. He declares boldly that "dairy farmers pay their rent more punctually than corn-farmers."*1 Here and there his advice was understood and we hear of clergymen opposing enclosures on the grounds that the fields would be converted to pasture and tithes would suffer. At Huntspill the Enclosure Act (1800) contained a clause providing for compensation to the Rector in cases where there was a change to pasture. The compensation was to take the form of a "Corn Rent" equivalent to 1 1/3 bushels per acre..

There were three types of grassland in Somerset. (*2)

On the prime grassland heavy penalties were imposed to prevent the tenant from spoiling the land either by pasturing it with milch cows or by breaking it up. This land was capable of fattening one bullock per acre followed by two sheep. At the other end of the scale was land which was either constantly mown for hay or which was simply laid down for grass after over-cropping in tillage - land which Marshall called "the temporary ley." The greater portion of the grassland however, belonged to the second class: dairy land. (*3) The chief product of the dairy farms was cheese. On the average 30 cows could produce one Cheddar Cheese (1/2 cwt.) per day and each cow required 3 acres. The price of cheese which Billingsley in 1797 called "the present enormous price of 6d. per lb." had risen to 7 1/2d. by 1848 and was still 7d. in 1851. The chief drawbacks of the average cheese-farmer were that he allowed the women to do all the hard work that he did not bother to keep his ditches clear, that he often left the cows out during the winter, that he did not take the trouble to grow any root crops, and that he suffered from lamentable lack of buildings. (*4)

In writing of the Eastern Area of the county (the Mendips) Billingsley says: "The soil of these hills .. could not fail of being productive in all seasons." He then proceeds to consider how the unsatisfactory standard of production here might best be raised. His advice to the landowner is simply: "Provide all necessary buildings." His advice to the actual farmers is threefold: first, "Grow little of corn and that little in the highest

(*1) Billingsley p. 45 : (*2) Acland p. 51 (*3) Ibid p. 52 : (*4) p. 53

perfection;" second,"Have a great breadth of turnips,cabbages,and other artificals;" third,"Maintain a great stock." These principles were ^{made when} ~~based on~~ the prices of 6/- per bushel for wheat and 2/6 for oats were being paid. But the advice was not taken. "Mendip enclosures were made under the temptation of war prices" and "the farmers grew oats without manure as long as the land would bear it." (*1) When the land was exhausted the enclosures were "laid down in grass to rest." Fourteen or fifteen years later "the land was let at £1 an acre to poor men who breast-ploughed it and took a crop of potatoes; the farmer was thus enabled to get a succession of oat crops in alternate years." The lamentable lack of buildings of which Billingsley had complained had not been remedied during the fifty years which followed and in 1851 we hear that "dairy farmers are in the worst position,for they have often no buildings at all for their cattle."(*2)

Acland considered the Western Area the most advanced in agricultural methods but he was not satisfied with the progress which had been made:"The general average of farming even in this district,cannot be stated to be high." There were a few well-managed farms near Williton,Bishop's Lydeard,Nether Stowey,Cannington,and Wellington.(*3) Billingsley had said that in the Middle District "Natural meadows and pastures are kept in high condition and their artificial grasses may vie with any in the kingdom." (*4) But Acland's summary of conditions in the middle area was not very favourable:"Population is large,perhaps redundant;wages are low, poor rates are high." He made a special plea for the growth of flax in this area.

The methods of management which produced the amazing results quoted by Acland (see above) were based upon much heavier dressings of lime than Billingsley had advocated.(*5) The treatment of a peat bog was first the laying of deep drains at a cost of £5 to £9/10/- per acre,followed by two deassings of lime at the rate of 100 bushels per acre,with the growing of turnip crops. Old grass

*1Acland p.73
*5 Acland p.13

*2Ibid p.90

*3 Ibid p.41

*4 Billingsley p.220

fields were treated with a triennial dressing of lime, 50 bushels per acre, and were renovated by the sowing of new seed, and by rolling with a spiked roller. The use of superphosphate of lime had produced greatly improved crops of turnips. (*1)

*1 Acland p. 15

12. IMPROVED METHODS: STOCK

(a) Cows

— It is refreshing to hear from Marshall that the cows were good: the West of England breed in the West, Gloucestershires and a Middle-horned variety in the East. He speaks of the "good Somerset oxen" of Taunton Vale, "dark blood red," and of the sheet cows near Shepton Mallet. "A sheet cow resembles a red cow of North Devonshire or West Somerset with a white sheet thrown over her barrel: her head, neck, shoulders, and hind parts being uncovered." Only near Somerton did he see "ill-formed cows."

Billingsley says that the cows in the Mendips were chosen chiefly for milking and were of the short-horned variety. Farmers did not follow Bakewell and his disciples in the North who bred long-horns and only kept them for six years for dairy purposes. The Somerset farmer milked his cow for ten years or more. (*1) Fat stock from the Middle District was sold in London, Salisbury, and Bristol. The chief breed of cows used for grazing was the Devonshire breed. "All the graziers of this county are partial to the red oxen of Somerset and Devon." (*2) In the South Western area too cows were chiefly North Devons.

(*3) Acland tells us that "the quality and quantity of the water-meadow (was) the prime consideration in fixing the rent" of a farm. On the improved grassland stock-breeding had taken big strides chiefly through the improvement of the North Devonshire breed of cows. During the Napoleonic Wars "war prices tempted many farmers to sell their best bulls and cows out of the district .. good animals were becoming scarce and the breed generally going back." (*4) Francis Quartly of Molland Botreaux noticed this tendency and quietly bought up good stock. His estate became the fountain head of the North Devonshire breed and the farmers of West Somerset owe him a debt of gratitude because he pursued such a far-sighted policy. Meanwhile the policy of holding cattle shows in order to improve the quality of fat-stock did not begin until 1831 when the first show in the West was held at Exeter.

*1 Billingsley p.142

*2 Ibid p. 241-242

*3 Acland p.8

*4 Acland p.20

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(b) Sheep

All the sheep which Marshall saw were of a horned variety. He expresses no opinion on their value, although on the Blackdowns he calls them "an aukward half-horned breed."

In writing of the North Eastern area Billingsley tells us that George III had presented a fine Spanish ram to the Bath society and that a new breed "bad fair to exceed" the native breeds. But he makes no comment on the results, preferring to wait "until further trial has been made and experience has confirmed their superiority." (*1) The chief trouble in the Mendips, as elsewhere, was foot-rot. In the Middle District preference for Dorsetshire sheep had given way in favour of the "polled" breed of South Somerset. "These sheep are bred in the neighbourhood of Dulverton, Bampton, and Wiveliscombe." "They are well made, yield a large shear of wool, and fat quickly; but they might in my opinion be greatly improved by a cross with the Leicesters." (*2) In his second edition Billingsley tells us that great improvement had been made between 1794 and 1797. In Taunton Deane the sheep were Dorsets and "the dairy farmers are accustomed to take in sheep to keep during the winter - and the Dorsetshire flocks are greatly improved by this custom." (*3) In the remainder of the South Western area there were two varieties of sheep. First the native breed, without horns, which gave good wool and good meat. Second, the small horned variety, "called Exmoor sheep", which were kept as cheaply as possible on the hills for the sale of their fleeces. "It is the opinion of many sensible farmers that they are altogether a profitable stock." (*4) These horned sheep were still prevalent in 1851. (*5) They were chiefly the Exmoor and Porlock breeds. It was the custom to gather them all for sorting and shearing on the 20th of June. The chief advantage of this breed was that they could be left to graze in the hills so that the cost of feeding was negligible. Every fourth or fifth year they were brought in to grass. They were also used to eat off the grass at the fall, and to tread in the young wheat earlier in the year. The weight of flesh which they produced was 11 or 12 pounds per quarter for

*1 Billingsley p. 146-7 : *2 Ibid p. 244 : *3 Ibid. p. 291 : *4 Ibid. p. 292-3

*5 Acland p. 18

the ordinary breeds, 16 to 18 pounds for improved varieties, whilst sheep bred in the Bridgwater Marshes yielded as much as 24 pounds. The objections to the horned sheep were considerable. First, they were left in the open all ~~night~~ the time and were liable to get the scab. Second, this life meant that they were very restless and were constantly breaking hedges and fences. Lastly, they were difficult to fatten. But by 1851, farmers had discovered that they could improve the breed enormously by crossing Bampton with Leicester rams. (*1)

*1 Acland p.19

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(c) Pigs

Marshall gives no account of pig-farming, but near the end of his notes on Somerset he says: "Somerset appears still to persevere in the old white breed," as though wishing to indicate that pig-farming was not progressive. We learn from Billingsley that pigs were of four kinds(*1): -native white; Berkshires (black and white) Chinese (!); and a 'mixed breed'. He says "experiments are wanting to ascertain their perfection." There were no serious attempts to improve pig-farming in the county until a few years before 1851 when Essex and Berkshire breeds were introduced.

*1 Billingsley p. 149

(d) General Considerations

Billingsley summarises his advice under nineteen heads(*1):-

1. Enclose all Wastes and Common Fields;
2. Plant trees on exposed hills;
3. Apply manure liberally;
4. Use a regular rotation of crops;
5. Enlarge the upland corn farms;
6. Improve stock by judicious selection;
7. Use oxen rather than horses;(*2)
8. Improve the roads;
9. Use improved implements;
10. Sow early in exposed situations;
11. Destroy vermin;
12. Introduce threshing machines;
13. Sell unmalted corn by weight;
14. Grant long leases;
15. Sow more sainfoin on the stone brash;
- 16; Roll grassland annually;
17. Set peas and beans in lines (North to South) and hoe twice;
18. 25% of turnips should be swedes;
19. Grass should be considered the ultimate improvement of land in the Western part of the county.

The general advice which Acland offers for the improvement of agriculture in the county as a whole, reveals weaknesses which had been left without remedy since Billingsley's time. Indeed he acknowledges that Billingsley's advice was still the best for the Somerset farmer to follow.(*3) Both Sturge and Acland agree that the amount of agricultural produce for the county was too small. Too much farming was being carried on with insufficient capital. There had been no improvement in the management of dairy farming, and the account given by Billingsley in 1797 would be equally applicable in 1851, with the single exception

*1 Billingsley p. 297

*2 Oxen were principally used near Taunton.

*3 Acland p. 108

that cows were kept in sheds during the winter in some parts of the county in 1851. (*1) Figures given by Billingsley and by Acland speak for themselves:

	1797	1851
Average cheese per cow:	4½ cwt	4 cwt
Average land per cow:	2¼ acres	2½ to 3 acres.

There is one point in connection with arable farming which is worth noticing. The growing of teazels had formerly provided the Somerset farmer with a high rate of remuneration and Billingsley thought it worth his while to give an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of their cultivation - an analysis which was, on the whole, in their favour. Nevertheless the cultivation of teazels was declining in his day for the very good reason that the demand for teazels was falling off - and not because farmers were afraid to take the risk of obtaining a good crop. As the industrial processes of the North began to include carding machines and wire combs, the demand for teazels declined. Teazels were certainly in use for many years to come but by 1851 many districts in Somerset found that the cultivation of teazels was no longer a profitable side-line. (*2)

The cultivation of potatoes which had been advocated by Billingsley had been a profitable source of income until the disease set in (1846) but it had had one very bad effect farming in the county by leading to the exhaustion of the land in places where it was intensively practised. (*3) On the other hand it had had a wholesome social effect because it had given the labourer a chance to improve his standard of life.

Both Sturge and Acland agree on the need for some form of "tenant-right" in order to encourage the introduction of improvements. The only example of this sort of thing in the county in 1851 was to be found at North Petherton where the Farmers' Club had adopted Gabriel Poole's Plan by which permanent improvements were to be turned into a terminable annuity. (*4)

*1 Acland p.138 *2 Ibid p.143 *3 Ibid p.145 *4 Ibid p.176 and p.111

By 1851 it was obvious that the inferior grasslands ought to be broken up, but very little had been done in this direction. Billingsley's advice that the cultivation of turnips should be greatly increased was repeated by Acland, whilst Sturge (*1) says that the growing of root crops - the basis of improvement of arable management - "has been little practised, more especially on the ~~clay~~ soils." He also complains of the stupidity of many farmers in neglecting to collect and use manure. The smallness of many enclosures resulted in waste of time through the great number of turns necessary in ploughing. (*2)

King's Sedgemoor in 1851 "is for the most part under cultivation and very bad that cultivation is." (*3) The management was too predatory. The land was prepared by breast-plough and burning, at a cost of about 11/6 an acre. The Sedgemoor farmer then proceeded to grow wheat, oats, potatoes and beans until the land would bear no more. He then planted clover. One of his chief difficulties was the distance of his house from his holding. Another was the tedious journey in transporting produce to the hills. The land on the moor was subject to weed and "Garrett's horse-hoe does not seem to have found its way into the moor yet." (*4)

In spite of this criticism, the enclosure of King's Sedgemoor was one of the biggest steps in agricultural progress in the county. Before enclosure, the land on the moor was not worth more than 10/- an acre. Billingsley estimated that after enclosure it would be worth 35/- and according to Sturge himself in 1851 "this estimate has been fully borne out by the result." (*5) Acland thought that stone roads must be laid before any further improvements could be made in the district.

*1 Ibid p.164; *2 Ibid p.167; *3 Ibid p.56; *4 Ibid p.57; *5 Ibid p.129

Billingsley's estimate was pretty shrewd, for he wrote just after the passing of the original Act (which provided for the Drain and for allocation of the moor to the various parishes concerned) before the neighbouring parishes had obtained their own Acts which brought the actual enclosure of the land concerned.

13. EXPENSE OF ENCLOSURE

Billingsley estimates the average expenses to be met in an enclosure under three items(*1):-

1. Expenses under the Act and the Award:	£2/10/- (per acre)
2. Hedges	£1/- /- (" ")
3. Buildings	£2/10/- (" ")

This makes the apparently high total of £6 per acre. Since the Act of 1801 makes £5 the maximum charges which might be claimed as the result of an enclosure, £6 appears to be very high. Yet Billingsley was an ardent advocate of enclosure and would not be likely to over-state the cost. It is the third item which makes all the difference to the estimate. He is so insistent on the need for buildings to improve agriculture that he is bound to include cost of buildings in his estimate. The £5 maximum of the 1801 Act was not designed to include this additional cost. Billingsley himself does not urge it for holdings of less than 100 acres, so that his estimate when applied to small or medium sized holdings would amount to £3/10/-.

Billingsley's examples are often taken as £2/10/- for an upland enclosure, £3/-/- for a lowland enclosure and £5 for King's Sedgemoor.(*2) This can be very misleading, for in each case the figures include his estimate of the cost of fencing and ditching the allotments(i.e. they include both items one and two). The first item includes only the following expenses:

	800 acres lowland	800 acres upland	1200 acres K.Sedgemoor
Act	£ 510	£ 300	£ 1628/15/-
Roads (i.e.public)	450	350	15418/2/8
Bridges	140	56	
Commissioners	200	200	4314/7/8
Clerk	60	80	1215/19/-
Surveyor	140	80	908/12/6
Award (legal charges)	110	--	1160
Interest on money borrowed	25	35	3239/4/11
Printers	--	--	362/6/3
Petty Expenses	--	--	575/11/1
Land purchased	--	--	2801/4/11
			31624/4/8
TOTAL	1635	1101	
Cost per acre	£2/-/10½	£1/7/6	£2/11/3

In the case of King's Sedgemoor, however, the allotments to individual proprietors were not given effect until the various

*1 Billingsley p.73

*2 e.g. in the Hammonds:Village Labourer

parishes obtained their own Enclosure Acts. This makes it impossible to give the true figure.

In Somerset this first item of expenditure was met by the sale of land.(*1) By adding the prices of sale plots in cases where they are given in the Awards it is possible to arrive at figures which are at any rate a rough guide e.g. (*2)

1. North Petherton (1798)

Area enclosed: 1466 acres
Cost £7950
Cost per acre: £5/8/6

2. Chilton in Moorlinch (1801)

Area enclosed: 620 acres
Cost £1805
Cost per acre: £2/18/3

3. Stoke St.Gregory,North Curry,and Curry Rivel (1816)

Area enclosed: 3000 acres
Cost £2365
Cost per acre: £-/15/9

4. Portishead (1823)

Area enclosed: 611 acres
Cost £2050
Cost per acre: £3/7/-

Phelps (*3) says that the enclosure of Westbury Commons (1791) was for 841 acres and cost £3095,which would give an average of £3/13/7 per acre. On the other hand he gives no details.(*4)

The cost of the first charges then,was as low as 15/9 in one case,and as high as £5/8/6 in another. Three of the eight examples given were below Billingsley's estimate and five were above it. £3 per acre would appear to be nearer the ~~mark~~ mark.

Since these charges were met by the sale of land,the small landowner was not compelled to find a cash payment either

*1 At Doultling and Stoke Lane (1775) a £ rate was levied,but I have not come across any other example.

*2 "Rough" because all the Acts make elaborate provision for cases in which the amount raised in this manner should be either too much or too little.The Awards do not show anything further.

*3 Phelps II.183

*4 He may have included cost of fencing - but he does not say so.

before

or after receiving his allotments. He would therefore feel the incidence of the change much less than if a £ rate had been substituted. Provided that he had been given a fair allotment and that the land for expenses had been honestly sold, he was not going to be driven out of his holding as a result of the first item on the bill.

The prices paid for sale plots in the Awards are generally amazingly good and since the commissioners were ^{often} ~~usually~~ given the option by the Act of selling either by auction or by private sale, they must have dealt with this important matter in a public-spirited way. According to Billingsley 700 acres were sold to cover the cost of the King's Sedgemoor Act. This gives an average sale price of over £45 an acre, which is rather more than his estimate of the improved value of the land. (*1) Similar prices were paid by the City of Bristol for sale lots at Portishead in 1823: £125 for 3 acres; £340 for 8 acres; £280 for 7 acres; £350 for 8 acres. They paid much higher rates for small plots which they needed: £37 for 29 perches; £24 for 2 roods; £68 for 1 rood 17 perches; £84 for 1 rood 25 perches. At West Lydford (1827) 18 acres of arable fetched £813! At Long Sutton (1812) no land was sold for less than £60 an acre, and some of it realised over £100. At North Petherton (1798) the average price was £59 an acre.

There is an instance of bad favouritism at Keinton Mandeville (1810) where only two lots were sold by auction. The first lot, $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres of arable was sold for £80, and the second, $19\frac{1}{2}$ acres of pasture, for £38/13/-. Then three lots of arable were sold privately. One lot of $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres was sold for £18/12/- and another of 1 acre for £15/15/- whilst the third lot of 16 acres was given away for £16/5/-!

At Wiveliscombe (1830) however, 141 acres were sold to cover the cost of enclosing 340 acres of common: (*2)

The second item, £1 per acre for the erection of hedges, is more difficult to follow.

*1 35/- per acre at 25 years purchase i.e. £43/15/-

*2 See also p. 86 & 94 for other examples of unfairness at Wiveliscombe.

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In both the 800 acre enclosures Billingsley gives £850 (or £1/1/3 per acre) as the cost of "subdivision" but he estimates the cost of King's Sedgemoor at £28000, which means £2/6/8 an acre. He estimates the cost of planting 20 feet of quickset hedge at 7/7. (*1) This would cost more than £1 an acre for small enclosures, and the erection of a protective rail would raise the cost still more. The smallholder could perform the labour himself and save 1/4 on every 20 feet but even so the initial cost of 3/- would mean £3/3/- for 420 feet. The only other possibility was to save the cost of the dead hedges for protecting the young plants by gathering materials on the common. If this were possible it would mean a saving of 2/5 on every 20 feet: leaving only 9d for the 80 plants required.

Unfortunately there are no concrete examples to support these suggestions. The Awards do not even give the cost of enclosing glebeland at the general expense. At Wiveliscombe however, in 1830, the Commissioner, Young Sturge, awarded two plots of 1 rood 17 perches and 20 perches to the Overseers. They were to be fenced at the common cost and Jacob P. Sturge, the Surveyor, was given £10 to do it: *2

In any case, the small-holder without capital could always borrow. Some of the Acts limit this power. Before 1800 it was often restricted to 40/- per acre (e.g. Horsington, Wincanton and Mapperton 1769). After 1801 presumably the figure of £5 mentioned in the "Consolidating" Act would hold good. At Wellington (Act 1816) they could mortgage up to that amount. At West Lydford (1827) tithes were to be redeemed either by giving up land or money. ~~only~~ Some proprietors wanted to give up land (e.g. J. Chaffey - 26 acres of pasture), or rights of common, but the majority paid cash. Certain leaseholders had not enough land and were too poor to pay cash. Seventeen of them were described as "yeomen" and there were five labourers, a blacksmith, a miller, a stonecutter, a mason, a brewer, and a widow. So the Lord of the Manor,

*1 The initial cost was 4/6: 1/4 labour, 2/5 dead hedges. 9d plants. He raised the 7/7 to 8/7 in the revised edition p83.

*2 See above p. 86 & below p. 94

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E.F.Colston,came forward and suffered "considerable deduction and diminution of his allotment" in order to meet their obligations.Apparently this included both exoneration from tithe and their share of the general cost of the Act. An "Indenture" between the Commissioners,and the Lord of the Manor was drawn up and included in the Award. The cash value involved was settled by the Commissioners at the figure of £1549/5/4 and Colston accepted a mortgage on these leasehold lands,at $4\frac{1}{2}\%$,as security for this amount.

14. PROCEDURE UNDER AN ACT

After the passing of an Enclosure Act the Commissioners arrived in the district concerned and proceeded to make a preliminary survey of the lands which were to be enclosed. Next a map was prepared - unless the one made for the Parliamentary Bill would serve. After this, the first public meeting was held so that proprietors could inspect the map and point out any errors. Then followed a view of the land for the purpose of valuation. Next the Commissioners began the long task of preparing the Award. First they decided on the new roads and highways. Then they sold lands in order to pay off the money which had been borrowed (for the passing of the Act) and to cover the remainder of the expenses. Then they allotted to the Lord of the Manor a fixed proportion of the residue. They finally considered the claims, which were handed in (in writing) usually at their second meeting. The allotments were then made amongst the proprietors "according to the value of their respective Lands, Rights, and Interests."

Commissioners were named in the Acts, after 1801, and were usually three in number. In the early Acts it is possible to discover five Commissioners (e.g. Horsington, Wincanton and Mapperton 1769). Amongst the later Acts there is often a sole Commissioner (e.g. Ilchester 1810; Charlton Horethorn 1815, Keinton Mandeville 1810; Drayton 1817; Wiveliscombe 1830; Lundry 1819). At West Lydford (1827) two Commissioners and an umpire were appointed - an improvement on the procedure recommended by Billingsley. (*1)

For the time being the powers of Commissioners were despotic. Usually there was the possibility of an appeal to Quarter Sessions before their decisions became final and conclusive. At Ilchester (1810) parties who were dissatisfied were to give a month's notice to the Commissioner~~x~~ and to bring "a feigned issue" at the next Assizes after an interval of three months following the publication of the Award.

The names of several gentlemen become familiar to the student of Somerset Awards - Thomas Davis, Arthur Billingsley, Richard Richardson, Thomas Abraham. Surely these men were constantly entrusted with Commissioners' powers not that they

(*1) Billingsley p60

might protect the selfish interests of certain large landowners, but because their experience in the study of agriculture made them the persons best qualified to carry out Enclosure Acts.

According to Billingsley (*1) two, Commissioners, one who knew the neighbourhood and another who was familiar with the business details of Enclosure, would be the best combination. There can be little doubt that Billingsley himself and many other men named in Somerset Acts were capable Commissioners from both these points of view.

Billingsley also says (*2) that one big objection to the accepted method of Enclosure was that it was regarded as "a little system of patronage." "The lord of the soil, the rector, and a few of the principal commoners monopolise and distribute the appointments!" Unfortunately this was in keeping with common practice in all branches of the State. Parliament was controlled by patronage, so was the Church, so was the Army. Although the principle was bad the results were not necessarily so. In any case, most of the Acts after 1800 leave the appointments in the hands of the Commissioners - and so a different type of patronage began. Thomas Davis (*3) appointed his son to be his clerk - but when the father died the landowners agreed to make the son Commissioner in his stead. Sturge made his son Surveyor (*4) - but his son was a well-known surveyor in Bristol. The work was competently done.

Commissioners were usually paid (*5). £2/2/- for every day of attendance was the usual fee before 1800. According to Billingsley, this meant that they had the greatest responsibility and the smallest emolument. (*6) After 1800 £3/3/- was the usual fee. Billingsley says that the payment of fees by the day had the useful result of speeding up the process of Enclosure because those who were interested were less likely to regard the meetings as festivities which might be pleasantly prolonged. Since public meetings were always held in a local tavern, this was no doubt a serious temptation. Who indeed could have resisted the call of

the "Tippling Philosopher" in Milborne Port? (*7)

*1 Billingsley p. 59 - 60; *2 Ibid p 59; *3 K. Mandeville 1810
*4 Wiveliscombe 1830; *5 Some Acts do not mention fees. It is possible that these Commissioners were acting without fees (v. Hammond p. 38) but this is unlikely (v. Billingsley p. 56) - especially after 1800.

*6 Billingsley p. 61; *7 It served for two Enclosures - Charlton Horethorne (1815) & Milborne Port (1817).

Delay in executing the Award might be a serious matter. There was bound to be a certain amount of loss through disorganisation. Billingsley thought the loss might amount to half the expense through a year's delay.(*1) But the remedy was in the hands of the Commissioners. Sometimes elaborate provisions were made to help them. The Act of 1801 made it clear that they could give possession of allotments before the final execution of the Award. This clause is repeated in many of the Somerset Acts. At West Lydford (1827) the Commissioners were expressly directed to award compensation for loss of crops through the change-over. They were likewise to obtain compensation from owners gaining crops and to award it to those who suffered through being allotted exhausted ground which was about to lie fallow. Another clause gave them the right to direct the course of husbandry during the term of their Commission. The very completeness of the Commissioners' powers gave them the means of averting injustice during this period of suspense.(*2) It seems obvious (*3) that the shorter the interval between Act and Award, the less the inconvenience to the farming community. On the other hand an Enclosure process which was spread over a number of years might have been deliberately delayed so that the various stages in the development of the Enclosure might be reached at a time of the year when least obstruction would occur to hinder the normal course of husbandry. It would obviously be equitable to arrange a change of possession during a month when there were no crops to be lost or gained. The usual causes of delay were, however, lawsuits, neglect of duty by Commissioners, or obstruction of business at public meetings. Billingsley thought the Award should be completed within a twelvemonth. Perhaps he was right - for the position of a small holder might be precarious in an Enclosure of arable if he had lost his original holdings through Sale for Expenses - although this argument does not hold weight for Enclosures of Common. Very few of the Somerset Awards were carried out within a twelvemonth.(*4) Three years was the usual period.(*5) Intervals of greater length are unusual.(*6) At Milborne Port there was an Act of 1803 and another of 1812 before the Award of 1817!

*1 Billingsley p.56; *2 Hammond p.34 does not appreciate the wisdom of powers such as the direction of husbandry; *3 c.f. Billingsley p.56

*4 Ashcott 1797-8; Drayton 1817-18 [Act stipulated max^m of 3 years]; W. Lydford 1826-7; Wiveliscombe 1829-30; *5 cf. ACTS in Green Vol II with AWARDS in V. County History Vol II.

*6 Portishead 1814-1823; K. Mandeville 1804-1810.

15. WHO WERE TO RECEIVE ALLOTMENTS?

In the case of Enclosure of Arable the allottees were obviously the proprietors in actual possession of strips in the common fields.

In the case of commonable land like Ilchester Mead ("a commonable meadow") allotments depended upon the "respective lands, rights, and interests" of the proprietors. In this particular case the "Foreshear" or right of mowing the meadow belonged to the proprietors of parcels of the Commons and the "Depasturage" or right of "after-feeding" belonged to the proprietors of old enclosed lands in Ilchester in proportion to the quantity of their old enclosed lands. Obviously this was a much more complex problem.*1

When Commons were being enclosed the allottees were, in the words of the Portishead Award (1823), the "owners of estates within the said Parish, and were, or claimed to be, entitled to and exercised Rights of Common in, to, over, and upon the said commons and waste lands." Once the Award was made, it meant that "rights of common and other rights, should cease and be for ever utterly extinguished and abolished."

* Actually it was still more complicated because the proprietors of rights in this Commonable Meadow were not confined to Ilchester but lived in adjoining parishes — Stoke under Hamptden, Tintinhull, Ashington, and Lymington. [1810]

16. WHAT WERE THEY TO RECEIVE?

Very often those who could claim lands were to receive allotments "according to their respective lands, rights, and interests" in which case the Commissioners had to determine what lands should be the equivalent. Their decision might therefore appear to be purely arbitrary. This ~~was~~ not altogether true. One custom which was expressly laid down by several Acts was that the lands to be enclosed were valued independently of the Commissioners and were classified in convenient areas according to their value by certain "Quality Men," - e.g. William Ryall and Richard Hasell at Keinton Mandeville in 1810. Another custom was probably common since it provided an easy gauge for assessing the values of different claims although it is only prescribed in one Act - Dundry (1819). Here, claimants were to receive lands "according to the amount of their respective assessments in the last rates made and allowed for the relief of the poor." Those who were not so assessed could still enter claims and the Commissioner would "ascertain their value in such manner as he should think proper."

There are, however, numerous Acts in which allotments were to be equal in value and were to go to the holders of "Old Auster or Ancient tenements" - "without any regard to the yearly .. value of such holdings .. share and share alike." (Portishead 1823)

Sometimes there was a compromise between the two methods - as at North Petherton (1798) where allotments were equal except when lands were assessed at more than ten shillings to the Drainage Rate; and at Curry Rivel (Act 1833) where 11/18 of the Enclosures were allotted in equal shares and 7/18 to "bodies politic and collegiate" and to "other persons interested" (presumably larger proprietors).

It is made clear in the majority of Acts that the new allotments passing under private ownership were "to be held in the same manner as the lands and property in respect of which they (were) made." (Ilchester 1810). Another way of saying this was that they "enure to the same tenure" (Wraxall Act 1813). The Ilchester Award (1810) goes to the trouble of explaining ~~that~~

freeholders would pay the same rents and services (if any) and that in the case of leasehold property the reversion would be to the same lessor, and that copyhold allotments would be subject to the same Fines and Customs.

17. THE LORD OF THE MANOR

In Somerset the Lord of the Manor received one twentieth portion (in value - not in area) of the Commons which were allotted - after the deduction of lands for the expenses of the Act.

There are certain exceptions in which the Lord received more than this. At Wellington (Act 1816) the Duke received one eighteenth. At Cheddar (Act 1811) it was one fifteenth. At Wiveliscombe (1830) and at Milborne Port (1817) the Lord had one sixteenth.

The areas actually awarded show (very roughly) that these proportions were not exceeded. At Dundry (1819) there were 236 acres of Common and the Lord's twentieth was a grant of 7 acres. At Milborne Port the Lord's sixteenth produced about 10 acres - something in the region of 1129 acres were allotted altogether but this included a lot of meadowland, so that there is no means of obtaining the area of Common. At Moorlinch (1801) there were 220 acres of Common and the "right of soil" yielded 6 acres. At Wiveliscombe (1830) Richard Beadon kept his encroachments but had to pay £77/7.- to the Commissioners for having thereby exceeded his sixteenth portion. * At West Lydford the Lord got $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres - but the total of 400 acres dealt with by this Act included a lot of arable. At Ilchester (1810) $8\frac{1}{2}$ acres were adjudged the equivalent of one twentieth of Ilchester Mead (area 195 acres). At Portishead (1823) 14 acres were given for the twentieth of 312 acres of Common and Wastes. At Combe St. Nicholas (1817) the Lord's twentieth amounted to about 30 acres out of 1000 acres of Common.

In places where there was a possibility of mining enterprises a clause of the Act was always designed to protect the Lord's mineral rights and royalties, and to give him all wayleaves and rights of entry and egress, and the power to erect engines and buildings so that he could work the minerals.

At East Harptree (1794) if the man on whose lands minerals were found, worked them himself, he must pay one tenth of the proceeds to the Lord of the Manor. If the Lord gave

* See above p. 85 & 86: & for division of lands at Wiveliscombe see p. 163: also see p. 116

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permission to others to work the mines, then damages were to be paid to the man whose lands were injured by the operations. These damages were to be assessed by two arbitrators - one chosen by the Lord of the Manor and the other by the landowner. In the event of disagreement an Umpire agreed on by both men, was to be chosen.

At East and West Cranmore (1770 Act) the amount of damages was to be assessed by two Justices of the Peace. No machinery was provided at all at Cheddar (1811 Act) nor at Wraxall (1813 Act) where "areasonable satisfactiøn" was to be made by the Lord. The matter was not mentioned at all in the Portishead clause (1823).

When there was no question of minerals there was still a clause "saving" the Lord's rights. These rights, in the words of the Portishead Award, were "all rents, chief rents, quit rents, heriots, fines, suits, services, courts, perquisites and profits of courts, waifs, estrays and deodands, and all other royalties and privileges whatsoever."

Sometimes the Lord of the Manor and his friends inserted clauses to obtain unfair privileges. At Wraxall (1813) for instance, allotments must be made on Wraxall Hill for Sir Hugh Smyth, Dame Elizabeth Smyth, Giles Hill, Henry Elton, William Cambridge, and Joseph Manfield.

At Drayton (1817) the right of soil of the Waste was claimed by W.C. Trevillian, J.F. Pinney, and T. Meade, and the dispute had not been settled at the time when the Award was published.

Lands awarded to the Church were fenced at the common cost and maintained for the following three years. Commissioners always appear to have compounded for the latter stipulation by a cash payment. Presumably this was not a terrific burden on the other allottees unless there was an enormous proportion of glebe or of lands awarded instead of tithes. There was very little glebeland in most of the Awards, but at West Lydford (1827) there were 68 acres of glebe and 140 acres were awarded instead of tithes.

Lands were awarded instead of tithes at Cheddar (1795). At Stoke St. Gregory (1816) lands were given instead of the small tithes. At Neroche (1830) and at Curry Rivel (1833) the Acts made the provision that lands should replace tithes if this was demanded by the Rector and a majority of the landowners in each parish.

At Exmoor (1819) one eighth of the Forest was fixed as the proportion for redeeming tithes and Sir T.Acland was awarded 3,201 acres! (*1)

Beyond stating that tithes were a grievance, Billingsley avoids all discussion of the tithe question. (*2)

It is a pity that Enclosure Acts did not solve the problem for future generations. Most of the Acts in Somerset ignore the problem, some state that tithes shall not be affected in any way (e.g. Wellington 1816), a few award lands to the Rector to replace his tithes, and one or two carry out a commutation. At Charlton Adam and Charlton Mackrell (1806) and at Keinton Mandeville (1810) commutation was based on "the market price of wheat for the last fourteen years" and the "expenses of extinguishing tythes (were) to be borne by proprietors of lands whereon tythes should be extinguished." The price of wheat actually used (in 1810) was 8/9 per bushel.

*1 This does not appear to have been fenced at the common cost

*2 Billingsley p. 35

Obviously the interests of the Lord of the Manor and of the Rector were safeguarded by special clauses in the Acts, but there are no examples in Somerset of gross misuse of this preferential treatment.

19. NEW LANDS FOR OLD

An initial difficulty in attempting to show what a man might expect to receive in an Award is the difference between the Old Field Measures and the Statute Measure. Chapman's Act (1802) concerns a $44\frac{1}{2}$ acre estate at Glastonbury. According to the Field Measure its total would have been $59\frac{1}{2}$ acres. In most of the parts of this estate the area by State Measure was only threequarters of the "computed acres." (*1) It is impossible therefore to find with any degree of accuracy, the amount of land held by a man before any particular Enclosure.

A second difficulty is to judge the value of a right of common - or even to know whether it was stinted or not. There is still (1938) a stretch of 40 acres of stinted common at Langport and the rights of common may be bought and sold, provided that the purchaser is an inhabitant householder of Langport. There are 36 Commoners. They let their rights of stocking for about 25/- a year. According to the custom of the Manor (*2) "no person is entitled to stock with more than two beasts and their sucklings, and such beasts to be geldings, properly gelded, mares, cows, and heifers." This is what is meant by "two beast leazes" at Langport. Two beast leazes may be bought for £5 or £6. The annual return from letting them cannot be more than seven or eight shillings a year. The Balance Sheet shows that about £20 tithes are paid, £1/16/2 Land Tax, and nearly £6/10/- Drainage Rate.

The value of a right of common then would depend on the custom of the Manor concerning "commonable beasts," the size of the Common, and the number of Commoners. All this must be borne in mind before we jump to conclusions such as "a tiny allotment was worth much less than a common right," (*3) or "threequarters of an acre is obviously insufficient for the pasture of a cow." (*4) It is equally obvious that if Langport Moor were to be enclosed to-day, no commoner could expect to receive more than threequarters of an acre. This "tiny allotment" would also be more valuable to him than his "two beast leazes." Overstocking on the commons in the eighteenth century (of which Billingsley complains) probably

*1: Chapman's Act (1802) 1st Schedule; *2: Manor of Langport Eastover - Presentment of Jury at Court Leet (1906);
*3: Hammond: Village Labourer p. 77; *4: Ibid. p. 62: Also see Thesis p. 19

meant that the cows which were fed on unimproved grass were little better than bags of skin and bone.

A third great difficulty is that very few Enclosure Awards give any information about the holdings previous to Enclosure. The most that we can do is to show one or two examples from different Manors.

At Rodney Stoke (1791 Act) the right to stock 8 oxen was to be taken as equivalent to one tenement with its right of common.

At Keinton Mandeville (1810), J. Grant got 3 roods 4 perches in lieu of his right of common for one beast on Keinton Comb.

At Milborne Port (1817) 6 beast leazes on Milborne Down produced a grant of $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres to the Marquis of Anglesey - copyhold under the Warden of Winchester College.

The Award for Prayton (1817)* is the only Award in which numerous examples can be found. Here, in the Common Fields, Coate received $\frac{3}{4}$ acre in lieu of 1 "reputed acre." Donne got $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres instead of 6 reputed acres. Edmunds was given $\frac{1}{2}$ acre for his $\frac{1}{2}$ acre cottage tenement. Stuckey received $5\frac{1}{4}$ acres instead of $6\frac{1}{2}$, $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres instead of 2, $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres instead of $4\frac{1}{2}$, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres. John Thomas had $4\frac{3}{4}$ acres instead of 6, and nearly 5 acres instead of $5\frac{1}{2}$ "computed acres." Warren had 3 roods 19 perches instead of two "reputed" $\frac{1}{2}$ acre strips. John Wheller of Combe St. Nicholas got $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres instead of 2 computed acres, whilst John Wheller of Long Load got nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres instead of 6. One Yendale was given $4\frac{3}{4}$ acres instead of $5\frac{3}{4}$ computed acres which had been in six parcels - two of $\frac{1}{2}$ acre, one of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre, two of 1 acre, and one of ~~two~~ 2 acres.

All this seems fair enough if we assume that the quality of the land was uniform. 250 acres of arable fields were divided in this way. The remaining land consisted of 180 acres of stinted moors (Perry Moor and South Moor), 70 acres of common meadow in five places - Bellam, Marsh Mead, Great Man Mead, Little Man Mead, Latch Mead - and 10 acres of Waste known as Wendick Moor. Here the value of the land must have varied considerably and it is difficult to choose

* See below p. 104-5

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examples which will give any rough formula for examining equivalents. George Gooding, however, received 1 acre on Latch Mead in place of 1 acre, and Gummer got $\frac{3}{4}$ acre instead of 1 reputed acre. Stuckey had one allotment of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre on Perry Moor instead of 1 reputed acre in Latch Mead, another of 2 acres instead of 5 leazes on Perry Moor and 5 on South Moor, another of 4 acres in Little Man Mead instead of 6 leazes on Perry Moor and 6 on South Moor, and another of $7\frac{3}{4}$ acres on South Moor instead of 2 leazes on Perry Moor, 9 on South Moor, 1 acre of Marsh Mead, and 1 acre of Great Man Mead. Two of Trevillian's allotments were of 3 acres each in South Moor and each represented 10 beast leazes.

The most that we can say of Drayton is that a man who held one 'reputed' or 'computed' acre might expect to receive from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 acre in exchange, and that 1 beast leaze yielded from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre. Since Henry Stuckey paid £272 for the 10 acres of Wendick (Waste), we may put the capital value of this rough pasture at £27 an acre.

At North Petherton (1798) the "share and share alike" principle produced about $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres each.

20. SOCIAL PROBLEMS

THE YEOMAN

In the Awards the term 'Yeoman' is applied to leaseholders (e.g. in the Indenture at W.Lydford) ^(*a) so we need not restrict its use to freeholders. We have already discussed the size of a small farmer's holding and we have found that although Billingsley evidence is not conclusive, yet he gives the impression that Somerset was still a land of yeoman farmers.

The modern writer Orwin (*1) takes the view that enclosures brought large farms and the ruin of the small landowner - "The large ^{tenant} farmer and the labourer replaced the yeoman and the tenant of the common lands." He certainly proves the case as far as Exmoor is concerned. After the Act, John Knight bought up all the allotments and created 800 acre farms. But surely this was an exceptional kind of Enclosure which can hardly be taken to prove that this "occurred all over England!"

First, it was an unusually large area - 22,400 acres (*2) i.e. 35 square miles! The average Enclosure in Somerset was, say, 800 acres or $1\frac{1}{4}$ square miles. The most distant holdings were not very remote - as they were on Exmoor - and since every Enclosure brought a network of service roads, access was made easier.

Secondly, John Knight was offering a good price for land. When the Crown Allotment of 10,262 acres was offered for sale, Sir T. Acland, the Forester, put in a shrewd bid for £5,000, but John Knight offered £50,000. Naturally the other allottees were eager to sell!

Thirdly, the Exmoor Enclosure can prove nothing concerning Enclosures of arable.

Fourthly, Orwin's argument that the allotment of 31 acres to a free suitor was "no equivalent for the right of the allottees flock to range the forest at large" (*3) is not very

*1 Orwin: Reclamation of Exmoor Forest p.27

*2 I am quoting the Award (1819) - Orwin says 20,122 (p.20)

*3 Orwin p.28

*a See p. 104

convincing. He does not tell us how many weeks they used to waste in searching for their flocks over 35 square miles of rough ground! Nor does he pause to consider the question of overstocking. Yet he tells us that there were 25,000 sheep (*1) in addition to the flocks of the free suitors, as well as horses and colts and the animals which belonged to the Forester. Sometimes there were 30,000 sheep brought by strangers. (*2)

Fifthly, historians of Enclosure have never troubled to distinguish between the process of 'buying out' before ~~an~~ Enclosure and after Enclosure. If they have proved that the small landowner was being bought out, then surely this was a general process which was not due primarily to Enclosure any more than the Black Death can be said to have produced the pre-enclosure village from the medieval manor. The buying out of the small landowner was, in the long run, inevitable. So was Enclosure. But that does not mean that these things were cause and effect. Behind each movement was the driving power of agricultural improvement. The most that can be said of the connexion between the two, is that in certain cases the buying up of the lands of those who objected to an Enclosure, took place, and in certain other cases allotments were bought up when the holders were unable or unwilling to meet the new agricultural conditions.

It has already been shown that the Enclosure movement did not lead to any general building up of large farms in Somerset (Exmoor is an exception). Two private Acts of Parliament for exchanges of land - Payne's Act (1799) and Chapman's Act (1802) - are both for 44 acre farms with a clear rental of about £120 each.

With regard to the position of the small farmer, the Awards supply valuable cross-sections of agricultural society at the point when Enclosure took place.

Before considering this evidence it is worth noticing that when Allen revived the scheme for enclosing King's Sedgemoor in 1775, his first move was to purchase a large number of rights. (*3) In spite of this he was not successful and when Sir Philip Hales held a meeting at Wells in 1788, it had to be abandoned owing to "much abuse and opposition from the lower orders of commoners."

Billingsley says that all public meetings were spoilt by noise which drowned 'sound sense and argument.' However, the Act was obtained in 1791 and when the Commissioners met there were 4,063 claims "of which only 1798 are allowed!" Evidently the commoners were right in thinking that they stood to lose by this Enclosure. Billingsley says that if the Commissioners have erred "it has been an error of the head and not of the heart." He does not explain why it was that more than 50% of the claims were rejected.

At Milborne Port (1817 - population 1,000 to 1,400) we find 77 landowners. Arranged according to Land Tax Assessments *1 there were 39 in Class 0, 12 in Class 1, 10 in class 2, 7 in Class 3, 3 in Class 4, 3 in Class 6, and one each in Classes 8, 10, and 11. 30 of the first 39 held less than 1 acre. At the other end of the scale three owners had more than 67 acres and three had more than 100 acres.

The Marquis of Anglesey held 1498½ acres. Before the Award he had 1083 acres of old enclosures and he had another 49 acres from exchanges. Shortly before the Enclosure he had bought 13¾ acres of ancient enclosures and 8 acres of pasture. This is obviously a case in which the small men were being bought out. New allotments of pasture meant an addition of 366½ acres to the lands of the Marquis.

At Wiveliscombe (1830) *2 Richard Beadon had one sixteenth of the Commons and was not satisfied with this, preferring to pay £77/7/- for the excess. He received enormous allotments in respect of his arable holdings. 40 freeholders received less than an acre each. Another four had about 2 acres each. Only one leaseholder is called a Yeoman and he was given a ¾ acre allotment. Nearly all the leasehold land, as well as the copyhold, consisted in tiny plots held under Beadon. Only 12 allotments were otherwise. One of them was an allotment of 12 acres to the Earl of Carnarvon. There was another of 4 acres and the other 10 were all of less than 1 acre each. Of the Sale Plots, 55 acres were purchased by Fry, 50 acres by Stone, and 36 acres by Ash.

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- *1 Where this classification is used it refers to the classification drawn up by Davies (in Econ. Hist. Review Vol I. No 1): for the amount of land in each class see below p. 106.
- *2 For other references to Wiveliscombe see pp. 85, 86, 94, 110

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At W.Lydford (1827) the Rector, W.H.Colston held 68 acres of glebe and 140 acres which replaced tithes. The Lord of the Manor, E.F.Colston, had 292 acres. He held the Reversion of all the leasehold land and he had been busy buying out the freeholders. The Award mentions allotments to him totalling some 33 acres which resulted from purchases which he had made during the previous twelvemonths. Only six freeholders are mentioned in the Award. Their allotments were: 17 acres, 8 acres, 7 acres, 6 acres, 4 acres, and 2 acres. The largest leasehold allotment was only 8 acres. Most of the leasehold allotments were of 1, 2, or 3 acres.

In spite of the description of 17 leaseholders as 'Yeomen' - and we should never have known this if they had been rich enough to pay their share of the expenses - the real yeoman no longer existed at W.Lydford. This fact is reflected in the Road Repair Schedule in which we find one holding of 88 acres, one of 253, three of ten, and one each of 4, 5, 6, and 8 acres.

At Ilchester (1810) we also find the great landowner ~~preponderant~~ preponderant. Sir William Manners was rated at 10 units (out of 26) for Road Repairs. Nobody else was rated at more than 2 units. His total holding was 155 acres from a commonable meadow of 195 acres. He also obtained the manorial rights from the Bailiff and Burgesses of Ilchester, by exchanging a fee-farm rent of £8 a year.

Obviously these Road Schedules are only a rough guide to the proportions of land held - but they are a very useful guide when supported by other evidence. At Dundry (1819) out of 36 proprietors scheduled, 14 paid less than a 3d. rate, 9 less than 6d., and only 7 paid more than 6d., whilst 8d. was the highest charge. The largest individual allotment was not more than 15½ acres, whilst the biggest holding - 35 acres - belonged to Sir Hugh Smyth of Long Ashton, in the next parish. 32 acres of this estate were obtained by purchase from the Commissioners. Evidently the small landowner was not bought out here.

The Enclosure at Drayton (1817)* was for 510 acres - 180 acres of 'stinted moors,' 250 acres of common arable fields,

*See above p. 99

70 acres of common meadows, and 10 acres of Waste (which were sold to cover expenses.

There were 31 landowners. When they have been classified according to the size of their holdings, we find 7 in Class 0, 6 in Class 1, 6 in Class 2, 8 in Class 3, 3 in Class 4, and one in Class 6. The average size of a holding would be about 16 acres (500 acres divided by 31) which would fall just inside Class 3. This Class contains the largest number of landowners - although one of them, Stuckey, holding 26 acres, bought the Sale Plot, which would raise his estate to Class 4. Roughly half the landowners fall into Classes 2 and 3 (from 62/3 to 27 acres)*. The biggest estate was 96 acres in extent. Strangely enough J.F. Pinney who claimed to be Lord of the Manor, is not ~~among~~ in the list of landowners!

There is no evidence then that the yeoman was being driven off the land at Drayton.

At Martock (Act 1806) where 1025 acres of arable were enclosed there was no great discrepancy in the size of estates like there was at Milborne Port and W. Lydford even though G.B.M. Napier, Lord of the Manor of Ash, did own 200 acres. Moreover, only 148 acres of his estates were freehold, the remainder being leasehold orchards and meadows under H.R.H. George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, Lord of the Manor of Milton Faulconbridge (part of the Duchy of Cornwall). A gentleman called Lewis received 60 acres, but other allotments did not exceed 30 acres. Only a third of the proprietors had 7 acres or less. The status of some of the allottees is inserted e.g. E. Ball, gentleman (30 acres), John Andrews, Esquire, (18 acres), Leach - a Yeoman - (17 acres), House - Yeoman (5 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres), and J. Baker - Yeoman (4 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres).

At Martock too, the Yeoman still held his place in agricultural society.

At Keinton Mandeville (1810) holdings attached to the Road Schedule, classified according to the unit of payment, show that there were 6 of 1 unit, 6 of 2 units, 2 of 3 units, 1 of 5 units, 1 of 7 units, 1 of 10 and 1 of 12. Since this only shows 18 proprietors we can add an analysis of the Tithe

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Schedule. When these tithe lands are classified according to the Land Tax scheme they show 17 in Class 0, 8 in Class 1, 4 in Class 2, 5 in Class 3, 5 in Class 4, 1 in Class 6, and 1 in Class 8. Admittedly this shows a preponderance of the smallest holdings, but more than 50 % of these proprietors are in Classes 1. to ^(x1) 4. One pleasing feature of this Enclosure is the way in which six of the Yeomen bought small strips which were sold by the Commissioners. They were: J. Cabbell (15½ acres) who paid £6 for Lot 103 - 22 perches; T. Cooling (2 acres) who paid £1/10/- for Lot 111 - 7 perches; J. Dauncey (3¾ acres) who paid £3 for Lot 108 - 8 perches; H. Evill (Widow: 7½ acres) who paid £3/10/- for Lot 104 - 17 perches; H. Oburn (41 acres) who paid £3 for Lot 100 - 16 perches; and J. Squire (10 acres) who paid £8 for Lot 107 - 25 perches.

Finally, the statistics provided by the Enclosure of Commons at North Petherton (1798) throw exceedingly valuable light on the problem of the small landowner^(x1). It is reasonable to suppose that the arable land here had already undergone the process of Enclosure without Act of Parliament^(x2). If any method of enclosing arable was likely to drive out the small farmer, it was that of "consent." The figures provided by the 1798 Award do show beyond reasonable doubt that the Yeoman had not been extinguished at North Petherton. It must be remembered ~~that~~ although for convenience these figures are arranged according to the Land Tax plan, they do not relate to any man's total holdings but only to his share of the Common (1466 acres altogether), which means that apart from purely 'Auster' tenements, the large numbers of small and medium-sized holdings were part of fairly substantial Yeomen's lands. The figures are:

Class:	Area:	Freeholders:	Leaseholders:
0	less than 2⅔ ac.	43	3
1	2⅔ to 6⅔ acres	58	72
2	6 to 13 acres	14	10
3	13 to 27 acres	8	3
4	27 to 53 acres	2	-

(*) See p. 59 for Billingsley's evidence: (a*) cf. Drayton p. 104-5
 (*) See Intro. p. 14-15

107 - 25 perches.
100 - 16 perches; and J. Spurre (10 acres) who paid £8 for 10
for Lot 104 - 17 perches; H. O'Brien (41 acres) who paid £3 for
Lot 108 - 8 perches; H. E. V. (Widow) (7½ acres) who paid £3/10
for Lot 111 - 7 perches; J. Danney (3½ acres) who paid £3 for
£6 for Lot 103 - 22 perches; T. Cooling (2 acres) who paid £1
the Commissioners. They were: J. Campbell (15½ acres) who paid
which six of the Yeomen bought small strips which were sold
1 to 4. One pleasing feature of this Enclosure is the way in
holdings, but more than 50 % of these proprietors are in Class
1 in Class 8. Admittedly this shows a preponderance of the
4 in Class 2, 5 in Class 3, 5 in Class 4, 1 in Class 6, and
the Land Tax scheme they show 17 in Class 0, 8 in Class 1,
Schedule. When these tithe lands are classified according to

The Lord's right of soil brought him a grant of about 50 acres. Only two other proprietors got as much as 30 acres each.

THE POOR

Billingsley argues that Enclosure of Common tended to stimulate the Cottager's industry and to ^{check the growth of} ~~lower~~ the Poor Rate. (*1) He stresses the overstocking of Commons before Enclosure. He points out that a right of Common which might be let for 10/- or 12/- a year was converted by Enclosure into something worth from £3 to £20 (which sounds like an overstatement of the case!) He argues with some show of justice that "allotments are made equal in quantity" to "rights appendant to cottages without land, under the denomination of Auster tenements." At least ten of the Acts under review contain this clause: Rodney Stoke (Act 1791) Street (Act 1796), Ashcott (Act 1797), Long Sutton (Act 1797), North Petherton (1798), Chilton-in-Moorlinch (Act 1798), Weston-super-Mare (Act 1810), Wraxall (Act 1813), Portishead (1823), and Curry Rivel (1833). This is a very high proportion - especially since there is no question of the clause in Acts which deal only with arable.

Billingsley gives four examples to support his contention that the Poor Rates did not rise appreciably after Enclosure of Commons (they must be read with the reminder that in neighbouring parishes Poor Rates had doubled and trebled at the same time): Wedmore £2132 to £2342; Mark £1985 to £2163; Huntspill £1561 to £2204; Mere £2016 to £2170. (*2) The figures are taken seven years before and seven years after Enclosure.

A list of twenty seven Enclosures will be found in an Appendix to this thesis and it will be found that ten cases (*3) support the theory and only one case (Wells) is definitely against it.

There is certainly no suggestion that Enclosure gave immunity from rising Poor Rates, for all parishes were subject to chronic rises during this period. Billingsley himself speaks of "growing dissoluteness in the manners of the poor, which ever accompanies national improvement." (*4) This sounds as though

*1 Billingsley p55 ff.; *2 Ibid. p 174-5

*3 Charlton Musgrave, Kilmington, Upton Noble, Milborne Port, Charlton Horethorne, Priddy, K. Mandeville, W. Lydford, N. Curry, Drayton. p. 183 *4 Billingsley p 36

Also see above p. 18 & 21

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he was not absolutely sure of his theory! Also his annotator (W.F.) inserts a footnote to page 50, in which he suggests that Enclosures of commons should include schemes for building cottages "for the benefit of poor persons."

We may also quote a conversation which took place between a clergyman and a labourer at Cheddar in 1800. (*1) The clergyman admitted that the words of the labourer shook his faith in Enclosures and made him wonder whether the only people to gain were the landlord, the farmer, and the Rector. This is what the labourer said:

"Ah Sir, time was when these commons enabled the poor man to support his family and bring up his children. Here he could turn out his cow and poney, feed his flock of geese, and keep his pig. But the inclosures have deprived him of these advantages. The labourer has now only his 14d. per day to depend upon, and that Sir, (God knows), is little enough to keep himself, his wife, and perhaps five or six children, when bread is 3d. per lb. and wheat 13/- per bushel. The consequence is, the parish must now assist him. Poor rates increase to a terrible height. The farmer grumbles and grows hard-hearted. The labourer, knowing that others must maintain his family, if he do not do it himself, becomes careless or idle or a spendthrift, whilst the wife and children are obliged to struggle with want or to apply to a surly overseer for a scanty allowance. This is the case with Cheddar now Sir, which is ruined for everlasting."

In spite of this, figures do not show any catastrophic rise in Poor Rates as a direct result of Enclosure. The inference is then, that the cottager was not made worse off by Enclosure - badly off though he was.

On the other hand the ~~Squatters~~ Squatters were hard hit. There are no figures to show how many there were. Their sufferings go unrecorded except that they swell the totals of the rising Poor Rates. All Somerset Acts compel squatters of less than twenty years standing to lose their holdings. Portishead (1823) is an exception. Here, encroachments made before the passing of the Act (1814) were recognised. *2

*1 Rev. R. Warner: A Walk through some of the Western Counties p. 50

*2 But only if made under lease of the lord of the Manor!

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Only three Acts contain any sort of compensation in the shape of lands for the Poor. At Street (Act 1796) and at Ashcott (Act 1797) 20 acres was set aside for the poor to cut turf for their own use. At Combe St. Nicholas (1817) 30 acres - although the Act allowed 50 - were awarded to the Churchwardens and Overseers to provide fuel for the Poor.

At Curry Rivel (Act 1833) however, the Commissioner was empowered to pay compensation to those who lost their encroachments. This was to repay them for the cost of their labour and buildings. It was stipulated that they should not receive any money until they had peaceably given up their holdings.

At Wraxall (Act 1813) encroachments made with the consent of the Lord of the Manor were recognised - this was a common provision. The Lord and other men entitled to rights of common could keep their encroachments as part of their allotments. There was a special clause granting Seymour 35 acres (encroachments) in lieu of his rights of common and he was allowed to keep 10 acres recently taken in, instead of the land which he had "thrown out" on Wraxall Hill. Encroachments by 'strangers' within the last twenty years were to be investigated by the Commissioners if there was any dispute. But there was no compensation for the poor squatter. His labour had been in vain. His misfortune was that he had no legal right to his land, so he lost his all.

Three Acts - Ashcott (1797), Wellington (1816) and Curry Rivel (1833) - showed kindness to the very small holders by allowing them to throw their allotments together. This only applies to allotments of Common.

In Enclosures of arable it was usual to make allottable, "all enclosures containing the property of two or more persons within one fence" - "whether it belongs to different lords .. or is held of one lord by different tenures" - and sometimes "one person's property if .. held under different tenures." (*1)
*1 e.g. Acts: Weston s. Mare (1810): Chilton in Moorlinch (1798)
Cheddar (1795): Wraxall (1813): Awards - W. Lydford (1827)
Portishead (1823): K. Mandeville (1810)

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Apparently the Hammonds only discovered one example of this clause (Ashelworth*1) and declare that it "simply meant that some big landowner had his eye on some particular piece of enclosed property which in the ordinary way would not have gone into the melting-pot at all." This does not seem to me to be a fair comment. Surely this provision was necessary where arable was being enclosed if the purpose of enclosure was to be carried out. In the event of the sale of land (which was now supposed to be held in severalty) or of the reversion of part of such an enclosure, a fence would be indispensable. The clause probably prevented endless legal proceedings in after years. Probably too, it prevented what were to all intents small 'open' fields from escaping enclosure. In many villages there were not three clear-cut open fields but several small ones. Four was quite usual (e.g. Northfield, Eastfield, Westfield, Southfield at Witcombe -*2). At Drayton (1817) there were six - Higher Northfield, Lower Northfield, Middle Field, Hole Furrow, Melham, and South Field. Probably this clause prevented endless disputes about the course of husbandry in these places now that the authority of the Court Leet, in this respect, ~~has~~ gone.

At Wiveliscombe (1830) it was unlawful pending the Award "to cut, dig, pare, grave, flay, or carry away any Turf, Sod, Furze, or Fuel in upon or from the said common or waste lands" (-penalty £5). The incidence of clauses of this type fell entirely on the Poor, but the suspension of all common rights was necessary if the Enclosure was to be carried out in an orderly manner. A similar type of clause (e.g. Neroche 1830 Act) imposed a penalty of ten shillings per head of cattle or one shilling for sheep or pigs, for stocking the common after the extinguishing of common rights.

*1 Village Labourer p.22 : See above - Introduction p. 19 and footnote

*2 Martock (Act 1806)

21. THE POOR LAW

The most ~~farmer~~ cursory glance at agrarian conditions bears out Cobbett's famous words: "A very large portion of the agricultural labourers of England, a very large portion of those who raise the food, who make all the buildings, who prepare all the fuel, who, in short, by their labour sustain the community; a very large portion of these, exist in a state of almost incessant hunger."

Actually the line between workers and paupers becomes increasingly difficult to draw. Once the unsound principle of granting supplementary payments to men who were at work, had been adopted, wages fell below the level of subsistence and the labourers had to seek relief. The Poor Rate became an increasingly heavy burden on the land. "Many parishes," says Billingsley (*1), "which within twenty years past paid no more than £150 per annum to the poor, now pay £200, and unless some plan of prevention be adopted, the evil is not likely to abate." In other parishes, he says, "the poor's levy has been doubled, trebled, nay quadrupled, in the course of the last twenty years." (*2)

The population of Somerset was increasing rapidly during this period. At the same time her industries were declining, and her agriculture was not supported by sufficient capital to make farming efficient. The problem of her Poor became increasingly acute. At Bedminster the amount paid in Poor Relief had increased from £991 in 1803 to £3498 in 1831. At Yeovil it had increased from £936 in 1803 to £2084 in 1821. At Priddy, where the lead mines were being worked out, it had increased from £11 in 1791 to £91 in 1811. At Wells it had increased from £335 in 1791 to £2042 in 1831. At Upton Noble it had increased from £18 in 1791 to £194 in 1801. At Shepton Mallet it had increased from £1329 in 1791 to £4673 in 1831. ^(*3) Further figures are set out in the Appendix. In many places the peak year was 1801 - the worst year of the War - in fact these figures for Somerset show why England was so ready to make peace at Amiens! After the War the figures were still bad but there are signs that the rise of Poor Rates was being checked in 1821, whilst the decade from 1821 to 1831 shows a decided

*1 Billingsley p.36

*2 Ibid. p.53 foot-note

*3 p. 183-4

reduction in nearly all places except the towns. (X1)

Those who regard the authors of the evil "Speenhamland system" as evil men are not merely being wise after the event, but are guilty of misjudging them and their intentions by the application of standards which should only be applied to men of a later age. The central government refused to deal with the problem of poverty on a national scale. This was not the Age of 'Collectivism.' The problem of directing the War against the French Revolution postponed the consideration of social and political grievances by the national government. The local magistrates dealt with the problem of poverty as best they could. There was this much in common in what they did in different parts of the country: they awarded out-door relief in money and they regulated the amount according to scales which varied with the price of bread. The total amounts were not lower than wages had been. They tried to give the Poor 'fair' treatment. The results which followed were terrible. Grants for children encouraged immorality. Grants to wage-earners drove wages down. The country-side was inhabited by paupers. Rates increased annually. Large farmers did at least get the advantage of cheap labour at the expense of the Rates, but for the small farmer the burden became intolerable. Everybody deplored the pass to which things had come but nobody could find a way out. The rich paid the heavy rates and felt that this relieved them of any further responsibility for the welfare of the Poor. The peasantry were soon dependent on Parish Relief for their existence. When the Whigs cut the Gordian Knot in 1834 they caused terrible sufferings. They did not cause a Revolution because the vigour and self-reliance of the English labourer had been sapped away by a generation of Speenhamland. The Berkshire prosecutions of 1830 and the Tolpuddle Case of 1834 were brutal reminders that no form of association among labourers would be tolerated.

There were a number of schemes, long before 1834, which often embodied advanced ideas, such as old-age pensions, but it was beyond the wit of man to apply them. Billingsley advocated Pew's "Twenty Minutes Advice on the Poor Law." It was a plan to establish local funds with contributions with unemployment and sick benefits,

(1) See Introduction p. 21

and pensions. But such schemes were regarded as being beyond the scope of Government. As for placing them in private hands - the experience of those who joined 'box-clubs' was not encouraging; nor could any scheme of this kind begin without a big loan to finance it. Nobody had the practical experience necessary for running it; so the dead hand of Speenhamland remained.

In 1834 the Poor Law Commissioners made the detailed inquiry which led to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. They found that indoor relief was exceptional, and where it existed it was attended by grievous abuses, the workhouses being houses of 'rest' rather than of 'work.' (*1)

Relief was often administered in kind, or by the granting of house room. Sometimes exemption from rates was granted. Sporadic relief in kind must have been administered at times when food touched famine prices during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1800 the price of wheat had reached the phenomenal figure of 184/- per quarter, and the quartern loaf had sold for 1/10½. In 1801 beef was costing 10½ per lb., mutton 1/-, and veal 1/2.

At Wincanton in 1800 an order dated May 22 was made that a waggon load of potatoes should be given to the Poor for planting. This was followed by an extraordinary amendment:

"Town Hall

16 June 1800

That it having been found impossible to comply with the order of the last vestry, in consequence of the scarcity of potatoes, this meeting is of the opinion that it would greatly tend to alleviate the wants of the poor, by procuring a great quantity of rice, and retailing the same to them at a reduced price ...

John Randall (Overseer)." (*2)

It was suggested that three tons of rice should be sold at 4d. per lb. This was then altered to two measures - '1502' and '3002' - to be sold at 3d. and 6d. respectively.

There were, however, five methods, in general, of granting out-door relief:

1. Relief without any Labour required;

2. Allowances to those at work;

*1 - The suggestion in the Vict. County History that workhouses were used only at Bruton, Frome, N. Curry, Stoke St Gregory, Tawton & Yeovil is quite wrong.
v.2 "The Frome & Wincanton" p. 12-13

3. The Roundsman System;
4. Parish Employment;
5. The Labour Rate System.

The Labour Rate System, under which each farmer was compelled to employ a certain number of paupers, did not exist in Somerset, (*1) nor did the Roundsman System. (*2)

The method of relief by Parish Employment was the only form of relief for the able bodied poor, which had clear legal authority. Yet it was the most unusual method of relief! The Commissioners complained that where it did exist, the paupers seemed to think that they had the right to short hours and light work. The evils which resulted in Parishes where the work was trifling but the pay was higher than in ordinary employment, must have been patent to everybody concerned. When the unimaginative Vestry had exhausted its schemes for work, the men were left idle but were required to report at frequent intervals during the day. Cobbett noticed a crowd in a quarry at one place in Somerset. They were throwing stones at a target. Sometimes these discontented gatherings were not so innocently 'employed' and the Commissioners thought that these groups originated the agricultural riots in Berkshire (1830).

The bad state of the roads suggested an obvious form of employment for paupers. Road-making was one form of relief adopted by the administrators at Frome. Cobbett mentions it (*3): "I saw .. upon my entrance into the town, between two and three hundred weavers, men and boys, cracking stones, moving earth, and doing other sorts of work towards making a fine road into the town

The parish pay, which they now get upon the roads, is 2/6 a week for a man, 2/- for his wife, 1/3 for each child under 8 years of age, 3d. a week in addition, to each child above eight, who can go to work; and if the children above eight years old, whether girls or boys, do not go to work upon the road, they have nothing. Thus a family of five people have just as much, and eighteen pence over, as goes down the throat of one single foot soldier."

*1 Poor Law Commissioners Report 1834 p.196

*2 Ibid. Although the Vict. County History suggests that it had been tried at Bruton. Farmers were paid to employ paupers under this method.

*3 Cobbett: Rural Rides II.72 (Everyman)

At Frome too, work was introduced in the Poor House. The inmates were required to make serge, bedding, and stockings. This had reduced the cost of indoor relief to $2/2\frac{1}{2}$ weekly (per head).

The most nauseous form of 'relief' was the farming out of paupers. When children^{were} sent to Northern factories^t, they were being sold into an atrocious form of slavery. In Shepton Mallet adults were farmed out at 3/- per week and children at 2/-. In Taunton, children were sent to the silk factories for 4/4 per head. Many advertisements appear in the Taunton press offering pauper children as apprentices.

The system of Allowances usually took the form of payments in addition to wages. This was the real 'Speenhamland System.' At Brompton Regis the scale was regulated directly according to the price of wheat, but, in general, parishes which granted Allowances did so in relation to the price of the standard wheaten loaf. At Ilminster in 1801 the lowest scale was: $2/8$ for a man, 2/- for a woman, $1/8$ for a child of 12 to 14 years, $1/4$ for child of 9 to 11 years, and $1/2$ for a child under 9 years of age. These sums were to be the total weekly incomes including earnings, so that a family of five (man, wife, and three children under 9 years) receiving $8/3$ on the roads at Frome in 1826 would have been receiving $8/2$ on the land at Ilminster, if the price of the quartern loaf was not more than 12d.

The evil of this system was forcibly stated before the Commissioners by a witness from Stogumber: "An allowance is made, unhappily, beginning at three children. I consider that nearly all the work is partly paid for by the parish, and that this fact is a crying evil, working great mischief and distress, and carelessness, and indifference about his family, in the mind of the labourer." (*1)

Once the pernicious system of allowances had begun, it spread like a poison through the parish. The original delusion that the parish was gaining, since relief was not accompanied by unemployment, persisted for a long time. The Commissioners were amazed at the amount of evidence which showed that farmers preferred low rents and high rates. Yet the terrible aspect of

*1 Poor Law Commissioners Report 1834 p. 33

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the pauperisation of the countryside was the most appalling social phenomenon of the times.

In connection with Bagborough, Bishop's Lydeard, Combe Florey, Cothelstone, and Kingston, we hear that "all farm labourers, during the whole or part of the year, receive a portion of their wages out of the poor's rate." (*1) The same thing was said of Taunton. The words would be true of many other parishes. The farm labourer lost all sense of shame and regarded Poor Relief as his right. The Overseer granted allowances without discrimination. In one parish, three out of every four persons drawing relief were said to be impostors. (*2).

At Weston, where there were no allowances, the poor rate had never exceeded 10/4 per head, and in 1831 it was down to 3/5. This stands in striking contrast with Stoke St. Gregory where it was 26/10. At Taunton (Bishop's Hull) allowances at the rate of 1/6 per week for each child, beginning with the third, had sent the poor rate up from 6/9 in 1801 to 13/6 in 1831.

Experiments were sometimes made. The occupation of land by labourers was occasionally successful. A scheme of this sort was put into operation by the Bishop at Wells in 1826. It began on 30 acres of land and when it proved successful it was extended to 50 acres in 1832. The land was let in $\frac{1}{4}$ acre plots at a rent of 12/6 per annum. No man could have more than two of these plots. It was calculated that a man could make a profit of £2/14/6 to £4/4/6 by growing potatoes on one of these plots. 203 men became smallholders under this scheme, and only three of them were receiving poor relief. (*3)

At Frome, a small garden experiment was begun in 1820 on 6 acres of land granted by the Marquis of Bath. For a year it worked well, then there was so much grumbling and quarrelling that the scheme was relinquished.

At Shepton Mallet, the Parish Vestry took a lease on 32 acres at £5 an acre. They offered this land to labourers in $\frac{1}{4}$ acre plots at the same rent. There was no drop in the poor rate and in 1834 only 12 acres were let, so the scheme was to be dropped as soon as the lease terminated. (*4)

*1 Ibid p. 34; *2 Bedminster: *3Ibid p. 186 - 187;*4 Ibid.p.191

The Commissioners make an interesting comment on these schemes: "Where the system .. has been introduced and carried on by individuals, it has generally been beneficial; and on the other hand .. where it has been managed by parish officials, it has seldom succeeded." (*1) It seems to me, however, that the real reason for failure was the high rent charged for the land.

One great defect behind the whole system of Poor Law administration was the inefficiency of the annual Overseers. Captain Chapman, who made a detailed examination of the West country, emphasised the general corruption which existed through "the appointment of persons who supply the poor with goods, and thus have a direct interest in giving them money from the poor rate." (*2)

The attitude of the farmers too, was purely selfish and short-sighted: "In most parishes there are also a proportion to whom the poor rate is a convenience, who employ the smallest possible number of steady labourers, and depend upon the parish to supply the additional demand which they require periodically." (*3)

Once allowances had begun there was a spate of demands. "It was a very general opinion that frequent meetings of the Vestry only tended to encourage applications." (*4) In some parishes the poor rate was actually reduced by the expedient of cutting down the number of Vestry meetings.

The Commissioners thought that many magistrates were soft-hearted and prone to make decisions which increased the poor rates. They "considered themselves as the protectors of the poor .. the Overseers were looked upon as almost devoid of the feelings of humanity." (*5) If an applicant for relief was dissatisfied with his treatment, he simply sought out one of the Justices of the Peace, who made out an order which over-rode the Parish authority, so that "the tendency was .. to render the decisions of the Vestry of no avail." This also encouraged the

feeling amongst the labouring classes that the Overseers and

*1 Ibid. p 193

*2 Ibid. p100

*3 Ibid p.111

*4 Ibid. p.114

*5 Ibid. p. 141

Vestry were their enemies. "Every appeal gained by the pauper was looked upon as a triumph over the Overseers and Vestry." An example is quoted from South Petherton where there was a public demonstration after one of these cases.

It was indeed a flaw in the system that a single Justice of the Peace, sitting in his own home, could set aside the decisions of the Parish Vestry. "In most cases a sum, considered as the minimum on which a person can live (1/6 per week) is the guide in ordering relief." Then a magistrate would (*1) intervene on behalf of some individual and order higher relief. Yet, who ~~sh~~ can blame the magistrates for their humanity? Or did they hope to protect their game?

Often Overseers did not hold office even for a year, in practice. Even if a man had imagination and determination to introduce reforms, he was powerless to alter the general tendencies which had grown deep-rooted.

After the rising of 1830, the Vestries of the affected areas were afraid to reduce the amount of poor relief. Although Somerset was not the scene of actual disturbances, this influence was certainly felt.

The Settlement Laws~~x~~ had peculiarly evil effects. No labourer found a welcome in a strange village. If he did find work away from his own parish, the farmer who employed him took care to make his contract run out before the completion of a twelvemonth, in order to prevent him from obtaining a settlement and so becoming a potential charge on the parish. Large sums of money were paid out by parishes, in transporting paupers to their legal 'settlements.' Further sums were squandered in legal disputes between parishes. All manner of mean dodges were employed in order to shift the responsibility for individual paupers on to other parishes. One such device emerges from the Minutes of Quarter Sessions: (*2)

Thomas Silverthorn was the Overseer at South Bruham. Henry Watts was a pauper legally settled at Gillingham in Kent, but who had wandered into Somerset. Silverthorn gave this man a present of five guineas in order to persuade him to marry

Ann Weeks. Through this marriage the pauper woman became chargeable to the parish of Gillingham. The angry authorities of Gillingham arraigned Thomas Silverthorn. He was tried at Quarter Sessions in Wells. The magistrates found him guilty - and fined him one shilling! However anxious the magistrates were, in the eyes of Edwin Chadwick, to give the poor higher rates of relief than the Overseers wished, yet they had sufficient esprit de corps to aid and abet the illegal devices which reduced the number of paupers in the county!

Cobbett mentions another minor factor which sprang from this desire to move the poor on. In 1826 he came across unemployed weavers from the North of England, singing in the streets of Somerset towns. "The landlord of Heytesbury told me that every one of them had a licence to beg, given them he said 'by the government.' I suppose it was some pass given by a magistrate; though I know of no law that allows of such passes, when the law so positively commands that the poor of every parish shall be maintained in and by every such parish." (*1) Notwithstanding the principle of the law in dealing with paupers, these licences had been well known in the eighteenth century. The wording of one of them may have run as follows: "To all whom these presents shall come .. greeting. The bearer hereof .. is become an object of charity .. Wee have therefore as much as in us lyeth given leave unto him .. to ask, receive, and take .. charity." (*2) Presumably there existed some sort of convention among magistrates that they should recognise the validity of such extraordinary documents.

*1 Cobbett: Rural Rides II.74

*2 Bayne-Powell: English Country Life in the Eighteenth Century p.221

(SOCIAL CONDITIONS)

22. FARM LABOURERS

It has been computed that wages in Somerset at the beginning of the nineteenth century were as low as 7/- per week in some parts and as high as 12/- in others.¹

The figures given by Billingsley in 1797 may be regarded as typical of many districts throughout this period: 1/- per day with cider in winter, and 1/4 per day with cider in summer.

With wages at this level and the price of wheat hovering between 90 and 100/- per quarter, the men who relied upon bread and tea, with a portion of cider, for their food, and who worked long hours from dawn till dusk, were not in an enviable position. Tradition has it that the countryside is "healthy," but nothing short of a miracle - eked out by Christmas charity - can have kept alive the large families of farm labourers who lived in hunger, rags, ignorance, and squalor.

Any theory that Factories created the Housing Problem is not true, for rural housing conditions were as bad in the eighteenth century as in any industrial slum in the nineteenth.

"It has been of late the practice of parish officers to prostrate cottages, and to lessen as much as possible the number of inhabitants of their respective parishes." This process of demolition was increased by the "prevailing custom of making the tenant pay the poor's levy." Such was the humanitarian zeal of the parish authorities in 1797.²

"Many of the cottages now in use are on too small a scale. Few of them have more than one room above stairs .. The rent of these cottages varies from 30/- to 50/- per year, including a small portion of garden ground."

1. Victoria County History Vol II

2. Billingsley: p. 32-3

From 1800 to 1815, war prices with enhanced profits set the landowning farmers on the road to prosperity, whilst they aggravated the misery of the farm labourers. From 1815 until 1846 the Corn Laws partially reproduced the same conditions and by 1830 social divisions in the countryside had reached such an unhealthy point that only a rebellion amongst the peasantry or passive acceptance of their lot could solve the future of rural society.

In the long run the peasants accepted their lot as inevitable but at times when they felt desperate the landed gentry were sitting on a powder magazine. This passive acceptance of circumstances finally enabled the Government to break the vicious circle of Speenhamland by the drastic measure of 1834 and so to rid agriculture of the dead weight of increasing Poor Relief which had crippled the smaller farmers.

There were at least two occasions in Somerset when agrarian unrest was acute.

The first of these occasions was in 1801. This is an extract from a letter written by Tom Poole of Nether Stowey to Coleridge, the poet:

"We have been in a continued state of agitation and alarm by the riots concerning the price of provisions. It began in Devonshire, and has gradually travelled down to the Land's End and upwards to this neighbourhood so that last week it might have been said that from the Land's End to Bridgwater the whole people had risen en masse. It is not now much otherwise, though there is a momentary calm. It is now, I understand, all in arms at Bristol, and among all the colliers, miners, and Pill-men of that neighbourhood.

Here for the present, the people have succeeded in lowering the price of provisions as follows: the quartern loaf from 2ld. to 10d.; butter, cheese, and bacon from 1/- and 14d. to 8d.; shambles meat from 9d. to 6d. per lb.

The men of Stogursey and the neighbouring parishes joined

the people here, and patrolled the country. They committed no violence, indeed they met with no opposition.*1

The sufferings of a family of five persons when the man's wages amounted to 7/- or 8/- per week, of which 10d. or 1/- had to be spent on cottage rent, when the quartern loaf was reaching the price of 1/9d. are too obvious to require comment.

The second occasion was in 1830.

From Kent to the borders of Somerset the labourers of five counties rose in what amounted almost to rebellion. The Somerset labourers did not rise en masse but there were signs of disaffection and landowners in some districts took the precaution of associating in order to be ready to deal with any trouble.

Meanwhile there were possibly fluctuations in the rate of wages but it is difficult to give any precise figures during the operation of the Speenhamland scales except by reference to the actual scales including Poor Relief which are dealt with elsewhere. Nevertheless it is worth while glancing at conditions in 1850 for purposes of comparison.

One authority in 1851 states that wages stood at 1/6 per day which appears to be an increase of 50% on the figures quoted by Billingsley in 1797.^{*2} On the other hand the 1/6 may mean without cider, in which case the increase is not so great. Another authority in 1851 states that the general level of agricultural wages was 7/- to 8/- per week together with 3 or 4 pints of cider per day.^{*3} This seems to confirm the view that wages had not increased appreciably at all. The same writer adds that the Somerset level was higher than the wages paid in Dorset and Devon. He expresses the shrewd opinion that there could be no increase in this rate of pay without improvement in the management of farms. As this improvement could not be made without an augmentation of agricultural capital, the rate of wages remained unchanged.*4

*1. Sandford: *Tom Pook and His Friends* II. 42

*2. Acland : p 61

*3. Sturge : p 172

*4. See p. 23

Before the fall of prices after 1846 there were at least four distinct rates of pay in Somerset: 9/-; 8/-; 7/-; 6/-.*1

The highest weekly wage was earned by the labourers in the neighbourhood of the coal pits. The lowest scale was to be found in the southern districts near Yeovil and Ilminster. The intermediate rates were paid in the middle district in the neighbourhood of Taunton and Bridgwater.

In addition to these money wages there were varying 'privileges'.*2 The most common of these has already been noticed: it was the payment of three or four pints of cider daily. At first sight this may seem to have been a welcome addition to the money wage, but if we consider that the true economic wage of a labourer who was earning 7/- per week and daily cider was 8/3 per week, then it at once becomes obvious that the 'privilege' of receiving 15% of his wages in cider instead of in cash, was a very doubtful sort of 'privilege'.*3 The cider may have refreshed the man during his long working day but it certainly did not nourish him. Those who really suffered through this system were the women and children. Another of these privileges common in Somerset was the right to buy wheat at a fixed price of 6/- per bushel all the year round. Only during periods of falling prices would the labourer lose through being bound to pay more than the market price, but his nominal gain at other times must be discounted, because he was bound to accept wheat of inferior quality. Another privilege which was sometimes offered to the labourer was that of renting a plot of ground for potatoes at £8 per acre. In this case the farmer did the ploughing and manuring. Sometimes this was a very real opportunity to a man who was determined to ameliorate his conditions of life. It was often too, a good bargain for the farmer! Another privilege which existed was that of living in a cottage either at a low rent or rent-free. This might be equivalent either to an addition to, or to a deduction from wages! The chief drawback to living on these terms was that it meant an increase in the power of the employer over the labourer.

*1 Acland: 97

*2 Ibid 98

*3 See above p. 20.

Rural housing conditions were certainly bad throughout this period. Isolated reformers might declare that decent dwellings near their work ought to be provided for farm labourers, but landowners were slow to make any move in the right direction.^{*1} In many cases a labourer had to walk four miles to his work in the morning. Not only did this add to the fatigue of the day's work but it meant a further reduction of his well-being since it deprived him of leisure hours for work in his garden. The only improvement that can be noticed, was the gradual disappearance of the one-room cottage(!) during the first half of the nineteenth century.^{*2} The average labourer's cottage had only one or two bedrooms. It was the practice of landlords in 'close' parishes to reduce the number of cottages by demolition. This policy was by no means philanthropic for it enabled them to speculate in the raising of rents which reached the figure of £4 per annum in some cases.

Wages were low in Somerset in comparison with those of the Eastern Counties. In Norfolk for example, farm labourers were earning 12/- per week in 1850.^{*3} There were two reasons for this difference: lack of capital and abundance of labour. In 1851 there were 41 persons to every 100 acres in Somerset, whilst there were only 32 in Norfolk and 22 in Lincolnshire. In certain purely agricultural districts like South Petherton there were 80, and in other parts the pressure of the population was much heavier than the average suggests because a large proportion of the land used in agriculture (perhaps as much as 50%) was grassland, whilst in 1851 there were still 40,000 acres of unenclosed commons and wastes.

There was a special reason for the exceptionally low wages in the Yeovil district.^{*4} Women worked at home as glove-sewers and wages for the men employed in agriculture were depressed. It is impossible to estimate the earnings of a family in this district but the social effects of this glove-sewing were certainly bad. The work was miserably paid, and moreover it was paid by 'truck.'

*1 Acland 98

*2 Ibid 99

*3 Ibid 101

*4 Ibid 102

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5. INDUSTRY

TEXTILES

(1.) WOOL

Somerset was once the seat of a thriving woollen industry. "The inhabitants possess a capital manufactory of woollen cloth," says a cheerful Directory of 1822.(*1) "In different parts, they manufacture serges, corduroys, druggets, coarse-linens, dowlas, bed-ticking, and knit worsted stockings."

The West country staple was serge cloth because of the long-haired sheep. But in Somerset there was a great variety of stuffs. 'Tauntons' and 'Bridgwaters' were made at Chard as well as in the towns of their origin. Coarse cottons were also made at Chard. 'Ratteens' were made at Bridgwater. We hear of 'Bath Beaver' and of 'Dunsters' as well as Dunster kerseymeres and serges. 'The narrow Somersets,' 'plunkets or azures,' 'handywraps,' and 'broad-listed whites and reds' are all names associated with the Somerset cloth industry. Livery cloth was manufactured at Frome, Chard, and Ilminster. Drugget was made at Twerton. Crewkerne produced sail-cloth. The looms of Wincanton wove dowlas and ticking. Blanketing~~s~~, knap-coating, kerseys, shrouds, ermine, baize, and 'penistones' were made at Wiveliscombe.

In 1791 Collinson tells us that woollens from Wiveliscombe were being sent to Exeter, Bristol, and London, and that they were exported to foreign markets, including Spain and Germany. This foreign trade was hampered by the Napoleonic War but it was still being carried on at the end of our period. 'Penistone' was a cheap, coarse, blue woollen cloth supplied for clothing slaves in the West Indies. Its manufacture was worth £400 to £500 a week to the industrial community of Wiveliscombe. Messrs. Whitmarsh and Brice of Taunton were paid £6,000 per annum for carrying this cloth to London. The abolition of slavery in 1833 dealt a death blow to this industry. In 1822 there had been no less than sixteen clothiers in this little township.

*1 Pigot's Directory (1822) later figures are taken from the same Directory for 1830

There was only one clothier left in Bridgwater at that date. This town had already lost its influence in the woollen industry for good. So had Taunton. By an extraordinary error, the Victoria County History (*1) credits Taunton with 800 looms, and 1,000 weavers engaged in the woollen industry, as well as other auxiliary workers in 1821. Actually these figures, which are taken direct from Savage (*2), apply to the Silk industry and have nothing whatever to do with Wool. "The woollen manufactory of Taunton," says Savage in 1821, "is now reduced to a low ebb. .. There is not at present, it is believed, more than ten or twelve looms employed in this trade, and not above six or eight persons as wool combers." (*3) Pigot's Directory does not mention the name of a single clothier in Taunton. The only persons mentioned in connection with the woollen industry there, in 1822, are one 'worsted manufacturer' and one dyer.

Savage ascribes the decline of the woollen industry in Taunton to five causes: first, loss of orders during the idleness and drunkenness of disputed parliamentary elections; second, over-competition and under-cutting; third, labour disputes resulting from falling prices and decreasing wages; ~~fifth~~ fourth, changes in fashion; fifth, "the advantages which the manufacturers in the north have derived over us, from the introduction and use of spinning machines; which would have been peculiarly useful here, not only to secure the exact and true execution of this part of the trade, but to supply the want of hands for conducting it, which, for a number of years, was very sensibly felt." (*4) It is possible that this lack of spinners had been due to the introduction of the flying shuttle.

Once factories with power-driven machinery had begun in the north, the Somerset woollen industry was rapidly outstripped. Some sort of machinery had been introduced at Shepton

*1 Vict. County Hist. II.418

*2 Savage: History of Taunton (1821)p.382;*3 Ibid.p.375

*4 Ibid.p.376

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Mallet in 1776 and had been followed by a riot in which the new machines had been destroyed. Spinning was still done by hand in 1820. Spinning Jennies were not adopted at Taunton, but they may have been the cause of the trouble at Shepton Mallet. Carding machines were not used in Somerset. The wool-combers still worked by hand, using teazles. These were not replaced by wire until the end of the nineteenth century.^x The combers worked in groups of four, in each other's houses, keeping the combs heated in charcoal stoves. They combed the long hairs ready for spinning into warp threads, and the short ones were made ready for the weft.

The industry as a whole certainly remained in the domestic state and there is very little evidence of the introduction of any power-driven machinery. The names of 'T. Elworthy & Co., Woolstaplers, Westford,' and "Thomas Fox & Sons, Tonedale" may indicate isolated examples of factories, so may 'Hainbury Mill' which was owned by the Ilchester Flax Mill Company. There were three cloth mills at Twerton in 1790 and Bamford Cooke and Co. were said to produce kerseymeres and broadcloths from machinery turned by water-power. It is interesting too to learn that an 'Inspector of ^EFactories' was appointed in 1802 after the passing of the first Factory Act. (*1) His position must have been a sinecure!

Marshall's notes are evidence of the absence of factories in 1794: "A broad-cloth manufacture, of considerable extent, I believe, is carried on, in the Eastern part of this line of country. But, in travelling it, few traces of such a manufacture appear. The manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, --- more especially those of the woollen manufactures, are marked by their dirt and misery: companions, however, which, it would appear, in travelling through Somersetshire and Wiltshire, are not essentially necessary to the woollen manufacture: the most natural, as well as the most political, branch of Manufacture, this Island can encourage." Evidently it did not occur to Marshall that the Somerset industry was doomed, just because the West country clothier still employed men who worked in their own homes.

Frome was the most important of the woollen towns.

At the end of the eighteenth century there were forty-seven clothiers here. They employed 220 weavers who were earning 20/- a week, 146 shearmen at 15/- to 20/- a week, and 141 'scribblers' at 12/- a week. The latter term meant men who were employed in napping the cloth. Women and children were employed in picking out thorns and straws which had escaped the carding combs. The women were paid 8d. a day for this work, and the children 2/6 a week.

Frome was said to be the only town in England where 'livery cloth' was made entirely from English wool (1828). In 1822 there were fifty clothiers in Frome - "fifty manufacturers of broad-cloth, employing perhaps not fewer than 5,000 persons, including children." These figures sound rather high. In 1831 only 730 persons are classified as wool workers. According to Phelps (*1) they were 'upwards of twenty years of age.' In 1822 there were seven cardmakers, six woolstaplers, and three fullers there. Frome was noted for 'superfine' (Spanish wool), 'super,' 'best super,' and 'kerseymeres.' Kerseymeres were made for export to France, and the Revolution followed by the long wars, ruined this trade.

When Cobbett came to Frome in 1826 he noticed the depression of the Cloth trade. "At Frome they are all upon a quarter work. It is the same at Bradford and Trowbridge; and, as curious a thing as ever was heard of in the world is, that here are, through all these towns, and throughout this country, weavers from the North, singing about the towns ballads of distress!" (*1)

At Twerton in 1808 there were still 300 adults and 80 children engaged in the woollen industry. In 1839 (although Phelps is quoting the census figures for 1831) there were still 284 adult workers.

Blankets were made at Dulverton, but this was 'a lost trade' by 1830. Crèkerne was supplying serges to the East India Company in 1828. In 1830 'Linsey woollens' were still being made at Milborne Port. In 1839 Phelps writes: "Some trade is

*1 Cobbett: Rural Rides II.74

carried on in the town and neighbourhood, particularly the manufacture of sail-cloth, dowlas, and linsey-woolsey; leather dressing and glove-making have been introduced of late years, and have superseded in some degree its former manufactures." (*1) Only one hundred families were stated to earn their living from agriculture here, as against two hundred and eighty eight from trade and manufacture, in 1831.

At Freshford they still appointed an 'amanager' to inspect the cloth, but in 1831 there were only thirty-two persons engaged in the ~~xxx~~ cloth manufacture.

There were ten wool-combers at Wellington at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and we have seen that there may have been some sort of factory here in 1822. In 1831, 258 men were earning their living from the different processes of woollen manufacture, and Phelps says that Wellington produced coarse cloths, druggets, serges, and blankets. The inscription 'Thos. & Ely Were 1754' at Tone Bridge, still shows where the fulling mills were.

In 1831 there were 565 cloth workers at Lyncombe and Widcombe, and 200 at Milverton. There were also 59 at Street, where Phelps says "sheep skins are tanned and dyed for rugs", 42 at Hinton Charterhouse, 32 at Beckington, and 59 at Road.

If we compare the facts given by the Directory for Frome (12,400 inhabitants) with those for woollen towns of the same size in the West Riding (e.g. Halifax 12,600 and Huddersfield 13,200) it is obvious that the northern towns were much more highly industrialised than Frome. At Frome in 1822 there were 50 clothiers, 7 card-makers, and 3 fullers. At Huddersfield there were 102 'manufacturers,' 30 woolstaplers, 24 dyers, 67 cloth dressers, 6 cloth drawers, and 5 heald and stay makers, besides 3 cotton manufacturers. At Halifax there were 16 'manufacturers', 28 woolstaplers, 14 dyers, 25 cloth dressers, 58 card-makers, 4 card-makers engine manufacturers, 3 stuff and ⁷woolen printers, 11 cotton manufacturers, and 4 carpet manufacturers. In the latter town, there were also many men who earned their living by highly specialised work
*1 Phelps I.287

which depended directly on the prosperity of the main industry. There were 8 reed makers and 3 shuttle makers. There were 5 nail and tenterhook makers and 3 wool-comb makers. There were 31 cotton spinners. There was one flax and tow spinner. There were four 'machine makers' - whatever that might mean - one of them made patent mangles. There was also one cudbear and archill manufacturer.

~~Dyeing~~ Dyeing was not yet a lost art in Somerset. The county had once produced quantities of woad. There is no evidence that this substance was being used in 1800, although a lot of the Somerset cloth was blue. In 1822 there were thirteen dyers at Bath, two at Chard, six at Frome, one at Wells, one at Taunton, and there were ~~probably~~ some at Wiveliscombe for a great deal of the cloth here was dyed indigo after being washed in the Tone.

There were three fullers at Frome besides those at Wellington.

A great deal of the wool was imported from Spain, and there was panic amongst the clothiers when Napoleon invaded the Peninsulax.

Billingsley evidently thought that there were good prospects for the linen industry when he recommended the growing of flax, but the industry had already ceased to be of any importance. The decrease of the population of Queen Camel was said to be due to the cessation of the linen industry there. There was a small flax mill at Ilchester and one at Wincanton. In the seventeenth century the linen trade had been prosperous at Glastonbury, Ilminster, Yeovil, Wincanton, Milborne Port, and Penselwood. Phelps (1839) only mentions flax-dressing at Keynsham.

Sail-cloth was manufactured at Crewkerne where there were six manufacturers in 1822. Trade was said to be brisk, and there were fifteen sail-cloth makers in Yeovil. According to Phelps, "about 300 men are employed in making sail-cloth, sacking, and girth web, at Crewkerne and its vicinity."

During this period, dowlais and ticking were

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still made at Wincanton, Yeovil, Corton Dinham, Widcombe, and Stoke Trister; but in 1839 "This trade has declined many years." (Phelps)

Sacking and twine were made at Frome, Glastonbury, and Wells, and there were fifteen 'glove-makers' at Yeovil. At Yeovil and Stoke under Hamdon, the glove-trade was said to give employment to about six hundred persons. (*1)

*1 Phelps I.125 He also says that "edge-tools are made at Mells, Whately, and Chew Magna."

2. SILK

"At East Coker, Merriott, West Hatch, and North Perrott; at Ilminster, Bruton, Chard, Dulverton, Taunton and its neighbourhood, the lace and silk manufactory is carried on." (*1) This was in 1839. Certainly, a considerable amount of silk was manufactured in Somerset. Raw silk, imported from Italy, was bought at London and Coventry. A great deal of the labour in this industry was done by women and children. Many of them did the preparatory work in their own homes, although small factories existed for spinning the finest threads - "the work passes through three different engines; one to wind, the second to twist, and the third to double." (*2)

The industry became important towards the end of the eighteenth century. Bruton and Wells appear to have been the first Somerset towns engaged in this trade. (*3) In 1791 there were three or four hundred 'young persons' engaged in silk reeling at Bruton. (*4) In 1793 silk was being manufactured at Glastonbury and Wells. There was still one silk thrower at Wells in 1822. (*5) Silk was being made at Kilmersdon in 1808.

In Taunton the manufacture of silk stimulated a certain regeneration of the industry of the town which had suffered severely from the loss of the woollen trade. It was introduced here in 1778. (*6) Cunningham suggests that it was probably the result of a migration from Spitalfields. Savage lends colour to this theory for he mentions the names of several London firms as owners of silk businesses in Taunton.

The first articles produced at Taunton were "Barcelona handkerchiefs, tiffanies, Canterbury muslins, modes, florentines, and ladies' shawls." The weaving of crepe began in

*1 Phelps I.125

*2 Savage p.380

*3 Vict. County Hist. II.

*4 Collinson

*5 Pigot 1822

*6 Savage p.382

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1795. The industry prospered and a big expansion took place in 1806, when a new and large enterprise was set on foot. The industry was still thriving in 1821, when the principal products of the Taunton looms were: "~~excess~~ crapes, persians, sarsanets, and different sorts of mixed goods." (*1)

In 1821, "the number of looms employed amounts to about eight hundred in Taunton and two hundred in the vicinity. There are about one thousand persons engaged in weaving, one hundred as winders, and two hundred as quillers. The throwing mills employ about five hundred persons." One small factory had been working since 1778. In 1821 it was owned by Samuel Norman of Wilton. Savage describes it as a large building in Upper High Street which contained 'extensive machinery' with 'suitable wheels,' sufficient to employ from sixty to eighty persons. (*2)

The Population Returns for 1831 show that silk was still being manufactured at Bruton, Milverton, Clevedon, and Pitcombe, and in the same year Pigot says that there was 'considerable trade' in crepe at Shepton Mallet.

But the decline of the silk industry had set in before 1831. One throwster who had been engaged in the ~~manufacture~~ manufacture of silk at Milverton since 1819, had used as many as 5,500 spindles, employing 300 hands, but in 1831 he could only find sufficient work to employ 60 persons for a few days each week. The silk manufacturers complained bitterly of Huskisson's policy of reducing tariffs. They said that this had led to an influx of cheap foreign silks with which they could not compete. The reduction was from 5/- to 3/6 on Organzine, and from 3/- to 2/- on Tram. ^{(*)3} Throwsters had earned as much as 7/- or 8/- for throwing 1 lb. of Organzine, but in 1831 the most they could get was 3/6 or 4/-. It took them twice as long to throw Marabout, for which they earned 7/6. The wages for throwing Tram had dropped from 5/6 to 2/6.

*1 Savage p.382 *2 Ibid.p.381: Not 32 looms, as the Vict. County History says! These were part of a different enterprise which began in 1781 and finished in 1791 or 1793. This business had been carried on in Canon Street.

*3 ie reduction of duty.

In 1831 John Ward's mill at Bruton had been working for sixty five years. In 1823 15,700 spindles had been turning, giving employment to 800 persons. In 1831 only 7,000 spindles were being used.

The fall in the rate of wages had been continuous:

Wages for throwing 1 lb. of:	1823	1829	1831
Organzine	9/-to 10/-	4/6 to 5/-	4/-
Tram	5/6	3/-	2/6

Women and children earned an average weekly wage of not more than 2/3.

3. COAL

There were coalfields at Nettlebridge, Radstock, and Paulton, Twerton, Bedminster, and Nailsea. The total output of the Somerset pits at the end of the eighteenth century, was in the region of 138,000 tons annually. Billingsley tells us that there were twenty-six collieries in the northern part of the county with a weekly production of about 2,000 tons. This coal sold for 5d. a bushel. (*1) There were nineteen seams which varied in depth from 10 inches to 3 feet, and the workings went down to 400 or 500 feet. There were also twenty-five seams in the south (from 6 inches to 7 feet in width) but the weekly output was under 1,000 tons and the coal was only worth 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a 'bushel.'

Arthur Young found that 4d. and 5d. per bushel were the highest prices paid for Somerset coal. 'Furnace coal' was sold for 3d. and the remainder of the small coal, for burning lime, only realised 2d. Billingsley says that one colliery was supplying glass-houses with 2,000 bushels a week for 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel. In 1797 the mines at Clapton were producing 240 bushels every day, but their best coal only realised 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel, and all the rest was sent to South Wales (of all places!) for lime-burning. Welsh coal was sold for 8d. a bushel at Watchet. Somerset coal was poor in quality and 'very sulphurous.' The peasantry all burnt peat, so that there was no great demand for house coal.

*1 The Victoria County History says that a 'bushel' of coal was equivalent to 90 lb. but McMurtie gives 400 bushels as 20 tons i.e. 1 bushel = 2 cwt.

*2 Neither Billingsley nor Young state whether their prices are taken at the pit-head or not.

The mines of North Somerset were active and important during this period. 'White's seam' at Nailsea was worked a great deal and the roads around Priddy were churned into a terrible state by the wheels of carts carrying coal from Faulton. Men were boring for coal near Burrington. But the Radstock mines were the most important. The old method of raising coal to the surface depended on horse-power. The coal was transferred from sledges at the bottom of the shaft to hooped buckets. Two horses then turned drums which hauled the buckets to the top. The amount of coal which could be raised in this way was about 20 tons daily. The introduction of steam engines in 1804 meant that the output was more than doubled. A canal was opened and Radstock was able to supply coal to the whole of Wiltshire.

The survey of the coal industry, made by Buckland and Conybeare in 1824 revealed that there had been considerable modernisation, so that although fewer mines were being worked the total output for the whole county had increased*. In many places the seams were thin but profits were ~~profit~~ made because of efficient machinery. Single pits were producing from 60 to 100 tons per day. Places where workings had been abandoned were: Brislington, Queen's Charlton, Burnett, and the pits between Pensford and Marksbury. Evidently a great many of the coal deposits were being exhausted.

* See Victoria County Hist. Vol. II. (p. 385)

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(4) ZINC LEAD AND IRON

(a) ZINC

Until the end of the eighteenth century zinc mining was profitable in the Mendips. The ore was worth from 65 to 70/- per ton and Collinson (1791) alludes to zinc mining as a flourishing industry. Billingsley says that deposits of lapis calaminaris were found at Rowberrow, Shipham, Winscombe, Compton Martin, and East Harptree. A note in the 1797 revised edition, adds Binegar and Mells.

In 1839, mining for calamine had finished altogether at Worle Hill and Bleadon, and only one or two mines were being worked elsewhere.

This flourishing industry had declined to the point of extinction during the early years of the century. Whether this was due to the exhaustion of deposits or to 'changes in the method of brass making' remains a moot point.

(b) LEAD

The story of the rise and fall of lead-mining is told in Gough's 'Mines of Mendip.' At the beginning of the nineteenth century the lead deposits were completely exhausted, and another Somerset industry was dead.

(c) IRON

A certain amount of iron ore - never enough to be of importance - was to be found at Ashton Vale, Friddy, and in the Brendon Hills. There is evidence that iron from the Brendon Hills was exported from Watchet during the eighteenth century, but there is no evidence to show that this industry existed in the nineteenth century.

6. CIDER

The making of cider was a branch of agriculture rather than a separate industry. It was a cheap and popular drink and was used in the payment of agricultural wages. It was produced in large quantities by farms all over the county. A hogshead worth about 20 or 25/- could be produced by a tenth of an acre of orchard in a good year. Billingsley praises the 'fruit produced at the northern base of the Mendip Hills, as far as Langford, Burrington, Rickford, Blagdon, Ubley, Compton Martin, and Harptree,' saying that cider from this district was 'strong, palatable, and highly esteemed as a wholesome table liquor.'

'White sours, Cackagee, Royal Wildings, Redstreak, and Golden Bushels' were the best types of cider apple. At Taunton Vale they grew 'Kingstone Black, Court of Wick Pippin, Fry's Pippin, Monday Apple, Jersey, Buckland, and Redstreak.'

It is interesting to notice that there were vineyards at Claverton as late as 1805 when £28 was paid for four hogsheads by Richard Holden.

BREWING

The cheapness and popularity of cider meant that brewing was not such an important industry in Somerset as it was in other parts of England. Nevertheless the beers of Taunton, Bath, Frome, Shepton Mallet, and Charlton were well known.

In 1822 there were thirteen brewers in Bath, four in Taunton, two in Chard, and two in Yeovil. Frome, Wells, and Crewkerne had one each. There were also forty-two maltsters in different parts of the county.

Two 'Ale-tasters' were still appointed by the Bridgwater Corporation every year.(*1)

*1 Minutes of the Corporation 1800 - 1820

6.
Communications

(a) Roads ~~and Bridges~~

Writing of "Public Roads" in Somerset, Billingslay tells us that "they are 40 feet wide and are stoned," .."one foot thick in the middle and 9 inches at the sides, thereby making a gentle curve."

Care of the roads was still a matter for the Parish Surveyors of the Highways and everybody was legally bound to contribute his quota of "Statute Labour."

This much is clear from a perusal of the Surveyor's Account Book of Road Work at Cheddar: that two Surveyors were appointed annually for the district - the method of selection is not indicated but presumably it was still a matter for the Parish Vestry acting in the capacity of a Court Leet; that holders of land must either provide "Statute Labour" or compound for it - and compounding appears to have cost as much as 5/- for 10 acres; that payment for labour on the roads was at the rate of 2/- per diem and that allowances for liquor were made to the labourers. The following is an interesting entry:

" pd. for rising stones in the clefts	£1 - -
pd. Isaac Rogers for mowing the river	3/- "

Presumably the latter feat was not as difficult as it sounds!

It is untrue then, to assert, as many historians do, that the corvée was a grievance in France but that it did not exist in England: it had simply taken a different turn in this country so that its incidence was on a different class, whilst instead of the heavy backing of seignorial jurisdiction to enforce it, the English form had no machinery behind it beyond the fact that the working of the Road Statutes was casually left to the Parish.

Attempts were made to improve matters but without general effect. The magistrates meeting in quarter sessions at Wells in 1809 complained of the facility with which indictments were held up by people charged with neglect to repair roads and bridges. What action they took subsequently is not clear but in 1810 one Francis Drake Esq. presented a road in the Parish of Street as being out of repair and the parish was fined £300.

The roads were fairly good where there was a turnpike trust, where there was an energetic Surveyor in the Parish, and where ~~there~~ road work was made the chief means of awarding outdoor relief to the poor (as at Frome).

Visitors to Bath in the winter months complained that the roads were a disgrace. The "Bath Herald" said that Bath was "so destitute of exterior accomodation as to be fit only for the residence of those whose infirmities confine them to the use of its superior pavements."

It is only reasonable to suppose that the majority of the lesser roads were always in a bad state but the opening of new and regular coach services must have brought onsiderable improvement on the main routes which linked Bath with London and Bristol with Exeter. "The first macadamised road was made between Bath and Bristol."

In 1809 a new road from Honiton to Ilminster was projected. By June, £4,600 had been raised but the promoters were advertising for another £1,500. The road was to be known as the "New Western Posting Road."

The increasing expenditure on Bridges by the Somerset Quarter Sessions is indicative of the general tendency:

1789 - 96 (Average Annual Expenditure)	£565
1796 - 1803	£395
1804 - 1811	£745
1811 - 1818	£995

The new century with increasing population and increasing traffic forced the problem on the attention of the local authorities.

In 1809 at Taunton we find a Committee specially summoned to settle the terms of the Bill "for taking down and re-building TONE Bridge and enlarging Shuttern Bridge and for opening convenient approaches to the same."

The necessity for obtaining specific parliamentary sanction for any borough scheme hampered local action in the days before 1835. Had the Municipal Act of 1835 and the County Councils Act of 1889 been passed a century earlier in each case, it would have been easier to discover a big increase in the efficiency of all branches of the public

services (including roads) but even under the old authorities, with the rusty machinery of the eighteenth century, there was improvement.

Readers of Dickens will recall that when Mr. Pickwick arrived at Bath, he did so in a coach which bore his own name, for it was the property of Moses Pickwick who actually lived in Bath and who was an important coach proprietor.

Much valuable information concerning the speed, frequency and cost of coach services can be obtained from their advertisements.

"The Free Mason's Coach" operating between London and Barnstaple via Bath and Bristol, claimed to save 10 miles of road on the whole journey. The coach which left London at 5 p.m. was advertised to arrive at Bristol at 5 p.m. on the following evening. These coaches left London on Saturdays, Mondays, and Wednesdays at 5 p.m. and left Barnstaple on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 7.30 p.m. The fares were as follows:

Barnstaple to Taunton: Inside 15/-: Outside 10/6.

" " Bristol: " £1/10/-: " 18/6.

" " London: " £2/15/-: " £1/13/6.

In Taunton they called at the "Swan."

The Castle Inn at Taunton advertised coaches to Barnstaple 3 days a week (leaving at 5 a.m.) and a daily service to Bath and Bristol (10 a.m. and 11 p.m.) as well as to Exeter, Plymouth, and Falmouth (2 p.m. and 9 p.m.). They also offered to forward four inside passengers to London via Wincanton and Salisbury.

The "Royal Devonshire" (Exeter and Plymouth Dock Coaches) left ^{the} ~~the~~ White Lion Inn, Broad Street, Bristol at 2 or 2.30 p.m. every day except Monday and arrived at the Old London ~~Bank~~ Inn, Exeter, early next morning. Here the "Royal Express Diligence" left for Barnstaple three days a week at 6 a.m. On the return journey the coaches left Exeter at 6 p.m. and arrived in Bristol at 10 a.m. next morning.

The editor of the "Taunton ~~Chronicle~~ Courier" boasted that his fast coach service enabled him to receive his news on Tuesday nights, sixteen hours in advance of the mails from London.

~~XXXXXXXX~~ According to Savage (*1) only two stage coaches passed through Taunton in 1770. One was the London coach which ran three times a week and the other was a coach which ran from Bristol to Exeter and back. It took two days to run from Bristol to Exeter. Before the making of turnpike-roads it took four days to go from Taunton to London. This had been reduced to two days in 1790. We have seen that the journey from Bristol to Exeter had been reduced from two days to sixteen hours by 1809. By 1822 the journey from Taunton to London had been reduced from two days to nineteen hours by the Royal Mail, whilst the 'Devon Telegraph' did the journey in twenty-three hours.

These two coaches were running every day in 1822. There was also a daily service to Bath from the Castle Inn, whilst there was a second coach to Bath ('Martin's Caravan') three days a week. There was also a daily service to Barnstaple and another to Bridport. There were three coaches a day to Bristol (from Whitmarsh's Office, the Bell Inn, and from the George) and four to Exeter (Whitmarsh's, the Castle, the Bell, and the George).

This tremendous improvement in coach services is ample evidence of the value of the turnpike trusts. Six main routes from Taunton were thus improved:

1. to Exeter
2. to Bridgwater and Bristol
3. to Bath
4. to London via Bruton and Frome
5. to Salisbury and London via Wincanton
6. to Bridport via Ilminster, and Crewkerne.

It is interesting to note that the internal communications of Taunton were improved by the 'Sedan Chair.' In 1770 there was only one privately owned Sedan chair in the town. In 1790 there were four for hire and in 1822 eleven.(*2)

*1 Savage p.603 also v.p. 606-8 for coaches in 1822

*2 Ibid.p.608

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(b) CANALS

Canal building in Somerset was a lengthy and expensive business, fraught with ~~xxx~~ great risks to its promoters. The first Act for the Kennet and Avon Canal, to join Bath with Newbury, was passed in 1794. This was followed by two more Acts in 1796 and 1798 to 'vary the line.' Probably this was due to the opposition of selfish landowners. When all the money which had been raised was spent, another amending Act was passed (1801) 'to enable the proprietors to complete the same.' This did not suffice, and a similar effort was made in 1805. Still the canal remained uncompleted. If it had been left derelict at this point there would have been a double catastrophe for a second canal, which was a branch line from Foulton and Radstock, was either complete or nearly so.

This was the Somerset Coal Canal. It was begun in 1794 at the same time as the Kennet and Avon Canal. The original Act was amended in 1796 and again in 1802 (to 'vary the line').

Both these schemes were held up after 1805 until somebody with unbounded energy and enthusiasm should come forward and push them to completion. The man who rallied the flagging forces of their supporters was John Thomas, a Quaker, and a retired grocer of Bristol. Phelps thought that but for his efforts the canal would never have been finished. (*1) Another Act was obtained in 1809 and the canal was opened in the same year. (*2) On November 9th the inhabitants of Bath had the pleasure of watching the arrival of the first barges. Drawn by six horses, they brought 40 tons of stone and 800 sacks of flour. It would have required a hundred horses to pull the same load by land. (*3)

Both these canals were economically sound propositions. Although separate undertakings, they are certainly parts of a single scheme. The canal was 44 feet wide and 5 feet deep. It was a short circuit between London, Bath, Bristol and Gloucester. It spelt ruin to an earlier enterprise, the expensive 'Thames and Severn,' which was a ship canal. If the promoters of this first canal hoped to collect trade by lengthening their route and passing through Stroud, they were making a bad mistake. The new

*1 Phelps I. 55-60 : *2 There was one more Act in 1813 to raise money for buying the shares of "Kennet Navigation" : *3 See Earle: Bath. A.M.

and shorter route through Somerset tapped a great deal of their trade and in 1814 £100 shares of the earlier company were not worth more than £1. (*1) The Kennet and Avon Canal prospered. Trade from South Wales passed along this route and so did manufactures from Bristol. The branch line from Paulton and Radstock gave a great stimulus to the coal industry in North Somerset which now obtained more distant markets.

In 1811 an Act was passed for the 'Bristol and Taunton Canal.' It is useless to speculate on the economic possibilities, at that time, of joining the Avon and the Tone. Although the prospects must have seemed good, surely the Severn route was sufficient for the purpose. But the great scheme encountered the opposition of a great landowner and a tremendous amount of money was wasted. Phelps does not say who the opponent was, but the idea of this canal was first mooted in 1795 only to be frustrated by 'a certain nobleman.' (*2) It is impossible to say how much work had been done before the scheme was abandoned, but we find a clause in the Enclosure Act at Wraxall (1813) stipulating that the canal proprietors shall be called upon to pay ^{for} lands which they have taken from the Waste. An Act of 1824 changed the name of this project to 'Bridgwater and Taunton Canal' and made the necessary provisions for 'extending and improving' the cut which was being made between these towns. This canal, ten miles long, was the only tangible result of the original proposal. It was economically worthless. It was opened in 1827.

A worse fate befell the scheme for a second coal canal, which was to join the Mendip collieries with Frome and Wincanton. An Act was obtained in 1796 (*3) and the actual digging operations began. When all the money which had been raised had been spent, the scheme was abandoned.

'The Grand Western Canal' also dates back to an Act of 1796. The Dorset and Somerset Canal Company was formed for the purpose of joining the Exe and the Tone, from Topsham to Taunton. In 1803 they obtained a second Act for raising more money, and in 1811 a third Act to 'alter the line.' In that year the canal

*1 Earle: Bath A.&M. *2 Billingsley p.160

*3 Both Billingsley p. 159 (v. also p.260) and Phelps deal with this Act and scheme, although the Act is not catalogued by Green (Bibliotheca Somersetensis).

reached completion with a fourth Act to increase the rates. If the Exe and Tone had been bigger and more important rivers, this canal might have been a great success. As it was, the traffic between Taunton and Exeter was not, by itself, sufficient to make the canal a paying proposition.

In 1811 an Act was obtained for the Bath and Bristol Canal.

Meanwhile the grandiose scheme for a ship canal to connect the English Channel with the Severn was being discussed. The idea was to make a route across country which would save the long voyage round the Land's End. There was undoubtedly a large volume of trade by sea between the ports of London, Bristol, and Bridgwater. 'Holden's List' in 1805 says that there was a daily vessel to Bridgwater from seven wharves in London.(*1) Nevertheless the enormous difficulties and the terrific cost which such a scheme would involve, made it impracticable. This did not deter the enthusiasts who were infected with the 'canal fever' and there was a meeting at Chard in 1809 to launch the project.(*2) The idea met with the approval of a majority of those who attended. They resolved "that a canal is preferable to a railroad" - whatever that might mean - and in 1810 subscription lists were opened at Chard, Bridgwater, and London. The project became the subject of an amazing amount of discussion which attracted a great deal of attention in the county for more than a quarter of a century. From time to time the idea was revived during the nineteenth century so that it became a sort of 'King Charles' Head' in the history of Somerset. The scheme itself never got beyond the initial stages - which was far enough to cause a good deal of financial loss to the idealists who supported it. They procured an Act of Parliament in 1825 and the proposed line was surveyed. The canal was to extend from the tiny village of Seaton, in Devon, to a point near Stolford on the Severn shore of Somerset. By the time that Phelps was

*1 Holden's List (1805) p.33:the wharves were: Beal's, Cotton's, Symon's,Topping's,Griffin's,Hambro',and Chamberlain's.

*2 See the 'Taunton Courier' 1809 and 1810 (adverts.)

writing (1839) the idea was to use the Parrett, which would save the cost of cutting the entrance further down the coast, and to take the canal from Bridgwater to Ilminster, Chard, Axminster and Seaton. (*1).

Another canal scheme is mentioned by Billingsley who says (*2) that an Act had been obtained for the Ilchester Canal. This Act is not catalogued in Green and it is difficult to imagine that such a project could have served any useful purpose.

Finally an Act of 1827 introduced the Glastonbury Canal. This was a small affair to link Glastonbury with the Brue. It had been completed before Phelps was writing (1839). Apparently credulous speculators had been induced to support the scheme in the hope that trade would follow. Needless to say, the hope was not realised.

*1 Local tradition has it that work was begun at Seaton.

*2 Billingsley p.159

6. SOCIAL and CULTURAL INFLUENCES

6. Religion and Humanitarianism

(1) The Church

New forces had not yet awakened the church from the long atrophy of the eighteenth century. The evils of plurality and absenteeism were common. Chief among the signs of the Church's slow awakening were her missionary activities. But narrow minds frittered away many opportunities of common christian action in hair-splitting theoretical disputes - not of a sensational nature for the scope of this work does not extend to the controversy on High Church Ritual nor to the strange affairs of Brother Prince and the Agapemone.

On the other hand records of disputes and abuses may be plentiful, but the faithful work of many who did carry out their duties properly has no record. This does not mean that it did not exist.

(a) Inx the Mendips

The state of the church in the Mendips may be judged from the experiences of Hannah More. At Cheddar there was an absentee vicar "who has something to do, but I cannot here find out what, in the University of Oxford, where he resides. The curate lives at Wells twelve miles distant."

At Axbridge the vicar was resident, but "is intoxicated about six times a week, and very frequently is prevented from preaching by two black eyes honestly caused by fighting."

At Blagdon the curate, Rev. Thomas Bere, looked upon Hannah More as something of a Jacobin and Methodist. He fought her work and in 1800 succeeded in forcing her school to close down.

There was a bitter pamphlet war and she had to endure a great deal of ridicule.

One of the local gentry near Bridgwater told her that Religion made the poor lazy and useless.

The school at Blagdon was re-opened in 1802 when the new Bishop, Beadon, had been appointed. He wrote to tell her that: "so far from desiring that your remaining schools should be abolished, I heartily wish them success, and you may assure yourself

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(b) A Dispute Concerning Absenteeism

In 1808 the editor of the "Taunton Courier" ^(x1) drew the attention of his readers to the parishes of North Curry, Stoke St. Gregory, and West Hatch which constituted a single benefice worth £300 a year. This was in the possession of Archdeacon Turner who, being non-resident, must supply a curate. During three months illness, followed by the death of the curate, there had been no regular ministration, and it was said that one body had been interred without funeral rites. A deputation interviewed the Archdeacon who said that if they would undertake to find a curate at £50 per annum with a house, he would ratify the agreement. When told that three-quarters of the stipend would be spent on the horse, the Archdeacon asked, "Why need he keep a horse?" The parishes were only seven miles apart!

The same source retails a story which, although not connected in any way with the ~~present subject~~ dispute at North Curry, shows the attitude of a large section of public opinion - an attitude which was begotten by men ~~in~~ of the Archdeacon's type:

"Profane Wit

The salary of a clergyman who officiated at a certain church being small, and the service being performed only once a month, some of the parishioners desirous of more frequent opportunities of public worship, conversed on the subject with their minister, who offered (not unreasonably) that if the parish would add ten pounds a year to his income, he would preach and pray once a fortnight. - A meeting was held to discuss the business; but the proposal of the clergyman was not acceded to. - A profane rogue, whose wit ran away with his discretion, informed the divine 'that if he would abate ten pounds a year in their tythes, they would excuse his coming at all.'" ^(x2)

The evils which did exist, even if they did not lead to feeling of great bitterness, were making the church into a figure of fun.

But to continue the story of the North Curry dispute, the topic re-appeared in the press in February 1809. ^(x3) At the beginning

*1. Taunton Courier No 15 p. 116. Dec 27 1808

*2. Ibid. No 19. Jan. 1809

*3. Ibid. Feb. 9th. 1809

of the week preceding the newspaper report, 'A Parson at last' was the cry in North Curry, and the bells rang and a coffin arrived to receive the burial rites but no parson came.

"Why are the people of these parishes to be so .. humbugged?" asks the editor. Some blamed the Archdeacon personally. The Archdeacon blamed his lessee (Dane). "Then whose duty is it to find a curate?" asks the editor. And "how is it that dissenting ministers are so diligent and anglicans so lax? .. The higher orders of the church .. are careless, luxurious, graspingly avaricious, and sordidly mean." As for the corpse which awaited burial at North Curry, it was interred on the following Thursday, thirteen days after death, by the Rev. Strangeways ("The name came very apt to the occasion") of Hatch Beauchamp.

The dispute took other turns. (*1) The Rev. T. Coombes of Creech St. Michael asserted that he had taken services at North Curry more than once (here the editor stood by his words: "no regular ministrations") and as for the burial, he was there at the appointed hour (10 a.m.), waited for nearly an hour, then he was obliged to "hurry away in a very uncomfortable manner through miry roads to perform the morning service at another parish."

Next the value of the cure was disputed. In a letter the Archdeacon said that it was worth "altogether near £100" because he offered:

(a) Stipend	£70
(b) Vicarage worth:	£20
(c) "The Churchyard now lets for	£3/3/-"

Against this contention the editor maintained that the offer was limited to £50 until Dec. 1 (the Archdeacon's letter was of Dec. 10), that the house was not worth more than £10 since the original offer had been £50 with the house or £60 without it, and as for letting the churchyard for grazing, this he describes as an "indecent, indeed scandalous violation of public right and individual feeling."

When the incumbent further stated that he only 'cleared' £100 out of the £300 gross income from the parishes, the editor suggested that he had permitted himself to make allowance for some

exceedingly liberal 'deductions.' For 'liberal' it is not difficult to read 'mythical!'

The whole dispute finally subsided in the following summer when the Archdeacon attempted to take legal proceedings against the editor for his statements in denouncing the ecclesiastical maladministration of Stoke St. Gregory, West Hatch, and North Curry. (*1) But at Westminster Hall the judges refused to allow the information to be filed, on the grounds of delay in taking the matter to court!

"We would have continued," declares the editor, "to proclaim .. the evils we described .. had they still been suffered to exist."

*1 Ibid. NO.39 June 16 1809

Alongside the Established Church, which was strong in this diocese, were many members of the Dissenting sects, and their relations with the Establishment during this period were sometimes far from smooth. 'Toleration' is an elastic term!

In 1817 the Rev.J.Matthew M.A., Rector of Kilve and Stringston, published a sermon which he had delivered in Bridgwater in 1816 to the local brach of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He was advising Anglicans not to join the Bible Society.(*1) His chief argument was that all religious teaching needs the direction of priests qualified to give it.

In another pamphlet (*2) came an effective reply from the Rev.M.Whitehead who was quick to seize on the fallacies of his opponent's arguments. His contention that the Bible Society was only concerned with the publication of the 'written word' and not with its interpretation without pulpit direction, knocked the bottom out of Matthew's argument at once. He points out that the malicious descriptions of Bible Society members in the first pamphlet, were caricatures of a Socinian, a Quaker, a Calvinist. He tartly assures Matthew that he obviously lives amongst Socinians, misrepresents the Quaker, and himself tramples on passages of scripture in attacking the Calvinist. As for Matthew's sneer at the other members whom he did not describe for fear of 'outraging the feelings of his hearers' - is he by any chance referring to the three Peers or to the fourteen Bishops who are members? Matthew had said that to support the Bible Society was not only to militate against 'our incomparable church' but against 'Christianity itself.' Surely those who do not support the principle of the Bible Society are the enemies of Christianity. As for the allegation that this support even threatened 'our glorious Constitution' - is this likely since the Society contained not only Parliamentary leaders and Cabinet Ministers but members of the Royal Family? Also he thinks that Matthew's insistence on the danger of reading the Bible without priestly guidance smacks of Romanism, just as his emphasis on reasoning powers smacks of

Socinianism. Finally there is room for both the S.P.C.K. and the

*1:The Churchman Dissuaded from becoming a member of the Bible Soc.
*2:The Churchman Upheld in his Support of the Bible Society.

Bible Society "and ten thousand societies with a similar object."

In another reply (*1) a Unitarian protested that God's word is not obscurely revealed and objected to Matthew's sneers at the dress of Quakers and Methodists: "In the peculiar habits and deportment of these men, I can perceive nothing more worthy of derision, than in the clerical costume of some of the more privileged orders of the church."

The Rev. J. Matthew raised another small storm with another sermon which he published in 1825. (*2) In it he made out a strong case against Fundamentalism and attacked Transubstantiation and Predestination. The Rev. C. H. Lutwidge, Vicar of Othery, published a reply. (*3) He condemned the assertion that the Word of the Bible is not sufficient in itself. He said that to ~~gx~~ concede the literal interpretation to the Romanists was not justifiable. He then pointed out that in condemning the Calvinist doctrine Matthew had himself fallen into the error of setting limits to the Omnipotence of the Deity. Finally he states his belief that the example of Christ's life should be the basis of all religious teaching, and ^rriticises Matthew for not including any reference to this.

*1 "Reply etc." by 'A Layman' (John Richards)

*2 "The Necessity of Philosophy to the Divine": Matthew

*3 "Strictures on etc.": Lutwidge

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Schools were few during this period but Somerset was as well off as other counties. The education of the ordinary man was his apprenticeship. The worst defect of this scheme was not so much the possible cruelty of the master as his indifference; not so much the ill-treatment of apprentices as neglect to train them and teach them their trade. Nevertheless many masters found the opportunity of making profits by half-starving their apprentices who were already providing them with cheap unskilled labour. The local press is full of advertisements which describe runaway apprentices and which threaten all and sundry with prosecution should they harbour the boys. Other advertisements from Poor Law authorities and 'charitable hospitals,' like that of Bruton, offer to send boys out as apprentices. Presumably this was an easy means of saving the keep of the boys and inquiries concerning the suitability of the homes to which they were sent would be perfunctory.

Apart from apprenticeship, some elementary form of education was being given, although the number of schools was inadequate. Many of these schools were run on small endowments eked out by small fees and others were 'charity schools' pure and simple, which depended entirely on the generosity of the local gentry from year to year. Usually the Vicar had the deciding voice in appointing the schoolmaster. Since the principles of the Anglican church were usually taught, he was also the obvious person to supervise the running of the school. The existence of these schools is therefore proof, in itself, that the influence of the Established Church was still being exerted. About fifty such schools had been founded during the latter half of the eighteenth century. When allowance has been made for the ignorance of the schoolmasters and for the crudity of the teaching, this influence was still worth a good deal.

The Charity school at Taunton appears to have had one master, one hundred boys, and two subjects in its curriculum: "Wanted a person who will undertake to instruct from 50 to 100 or more boys, in Reading and the Principles of the Religion of the Established Church. The hours of attendance will be from

Nine to Twelve o'clock in the forenoon, and from Two to Four in the Afternoon in the Winter, and from Two to Five in the Summer. It is also expected that the Master will attend the Boys to Church twice every Sunday.

Application to .. the Rev.Mr.Clapp or the Rev.Mr. Webber.

Taunton (April 10 1809)"(*1)

Often the schoolmaster's job was such a thankless and ill-paid task that nobody who could find other work would turn to teaching. The consequence was that posts in the profession were filled by men who were either incapacitated from pursuing their normal occupations by illness or injury, or who were turned adrift through drink or through sheer incompetence. The amount of salary offered is rarely mentioned in advertisements. The authorities were either ashamed to publish such mean figures or were glad to reserve the power of bargaining in order to reduce the amount to a fresh low level. Here is a typical advertisement:

"A schoolmaster is wanted at Kingston near Taunton, to instruct the youth there in Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. The charity school of the parish may likewise be put under his care. Early applications to the minister."

The significance of this silence about emoluments can be judged by the amount of the endowments. At West Pennard "the sum of ten pounds, given by Mr.Richard Slade, is paid by his representative, out of a farm called Woodlands in this parish, to a schoolmaster, who teaches ten poor boys reading, writing, and arithmetic." (*2) At Horsington "there is a charity school endowed with five pounds per annum for teaching twelve poor children."(*3)

Occasionally a parish school was opened and run by the Vicar. A school like this was known as the 'Grammar School' at Meare and achieved 'considerable repute' under the Rev.Thomas Smith between 1803 and 1824, but under his successors it was given up.(*4)

*1 See the 'Taunton Courier' of that date.

*2 Phelps I.386 *3 Ibid. I.321 *4 Ibid. I.572

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The preliminary announcement of the Charity School at Taunton sets out the aims of the founders very clearly. (*1) The school is intended for 'the poorer classes of children' only. "It is not the plan of this institution to give them an education superior to their present station in life, but to impress strongly upon their infant minds the many disadvantages which will inevitably attend an idle or a vicious course, and to make them more respectable and useful servants of the public, by instructing them to be honest, industrious, and on all occasions to adhere strictly to the truth." The subjects to be taught were: Reading and the Principles of the Christian Religion. On Sundays the boys were to have the Catechism at 9 a.m. followed by church. They were to be dressed alike, being given 'jacket, trowsers, and cap' annually.

This was obviously philanthropy tempered by eighteenth century ideas of what the social order should be - 'God bless the squire and his relations, And keep us in our proper stations.' The school was to be made an institution for preventing the spread of Jacobinism. This insistence on the Poor telling the truth betrays a certain hypocrisy of outlook on the part of the rich. Those who sent their children to this type of school were to be made to feel the full meaning of the word 'Charity.'

It is easy to ridicule these ideas and this outlook, but the men who started ^h schemes like this were pioneers who were cutting the beginnings of a very long road. Moreover there is some sound sense in their principles. It may not be possible to inculcate moral virtues by means of instruction, yet modern education must have some ^h ethical basis. We know too, the dangers educating men so that they consider themselves fitted for positions which they can never attain. In spite of all modern progress towards 'equality of opportunity' we have not lost the social snobbery which was focused on the 'Charity Schools.' The middle classes to-day often look upon the state elementary schools with superior eyes and send their children to private schools where education is something of a mockery.

----- *1 Taunton Courier April 1809

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The appeal for subscriptions met with an instant response at Taunton, to the amount of 105 guineas.

Other schools which were advertised in Taunton were private schools of the kind which Dickens described as being dominated by the hideously artificial rules of 'deportment': "Mrs. Poole's Infantile Academy for Gentlemen from 3 to 10 years of age;" "Mr. Trenow. Great House Academy;" "Mrs. Reals. The Preparatory School for Young Gentlemen from 3 to 10 years of age." (*1)

After these there were 'Grammar Schools' although, if the Newcastle Report for Somerset is anything to judge by, they were all inadequately staffed, were teaching very little of the classics, and were providing a syllabus which can only be described as elementary. (*2)

At the beginning of this period the villagers were absolutely ignorant and illiterate, except in the comparatively few places where Charity Schools existed. A certain amount of progress was made before 1830 - by private enterprise with the support of the local clergy - and the first signs of this change appeared in 1789 when Hannah More introduced elementary education in the Mendips. She won the reluctant support of the local gentry, "rich savages" she calls them, by persuading them that her plan would help to protect their fruit and game, and might even tend to reduce the Poor Rate. She began by renting a house at Cheddar for 6½ guineas a year. She had no difficulty in beginning a Sunday School, but found a great deal of trouble in finding a mistress suitable for a Day School. Within a few months, however, she claimed to have schools serving an area of ten or twelve miles, with a school population of five hundred children. (*3) During the next few years she devoted her life to running these schools and to writing 'Cheap Repository Tracts'. Two million of these tracts were sold in the first year (1794).(*4) They were written with

*1 See Adverts. Taunton Courier 1808, 1810 etc.

*2 Report of the Newcastle Commission (1860): Schedule of Endowed

Schools in Somerset
*3 Meakin, Hannah More p.294

*4 Ibid. p.316

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the object of providing cheap and 'good' literature for the poor. The simple cause of virtue and religion which they teach in a most uncompromising way, makes it impossible for the modern reader to scan their pages without impatience, but they did at least teach the poor to read. Hannah More spent a great deal of her time and a great deal of her own money in trying to put her ideals into practice.

The little schoolrooms which she had established in the Mendips were centres of a real communal education which had a much wider significance than the somewhat narrow curriculum with which as schools they were of necessity endowed. Not that the subjects taught were confined to reading and writing, for the scholars at Cheddar spun worsted for the stocking-makers of Axbridge. (*1) The Sunday school experiments were followed by day-schools, and these in turn by 'friendly Societies and Clubs, whilst her 'Evening Readings' may not unfairly be described as attempts at adult education by incipient Evening Schools. Adults, as well as children, came to her Sunday schools too. In this way her influence extended to the whole population of the district. There was a most "extraordinary proceeding" when she returned to one of these schoolrooms after some time of absence. The whole people stood up whilst the schoolmaster gave her an account of their behaviour. (*2) No wonder she was accused of Methodism! But she asserts that it never was her object to teach dogmas and opinions "but to train up good members of society, and plain practical Christians." (*3)

The pamphlet war which suddenly broke out in 1800 against her schools, seems to have been inspired entirely by the jealousy of the curate of Blagdon (Bere) and to have been fanned by the inherent distrust of educating the poor, which lingered in the minds of the local gentry. This persecution not only caused the temporary closing of the school at Blagdon, but subjected her to incessant worry for the next three years, and she suffered from a serious breakdown in health. In 1805, four of her attackers were

*1 M. More: Mendip Annals p.24

*2 Meakin p.327

*3 Ibid. p. 328

found guilty of libel in the King's Bench. (*1)

Three of her schools were flourishing at Cheddar, Nailsea, and Shipham in 1825, when she was in her eighty-first year. (*2)

This enterprise wrought a visible change amongst the inhabitants of the Mendips. According to the wife of a clergyman there, one parish, formerly a 'black-spot', was set free from crime in a very short time by the influence of Hannah More's school. (*3) One contemporary writer, assessing the value of the Mendip experiment as a whole, says that "no plan has promised to effect a change of manners with equal ease and simplicity, since the days of the apostles." (*4) Both these opinions appear to be over-optimistic.

It would be wrong to assume that the general increase of elementary education in the county, and the increase was not uniform, produced any remarkable results. Statistics show that crime was on the increase. In 1839 amongst the offenders who were brought before the Judges, 136 were under the age of 12, 281 could neither read nor write, 375 could read imperfectly but could not write, and only 118 could both read and write well. (*5)

*1 Meakin p. 331

*2 V.C.H. II 435

*3 Meakin p. 327

*4 According to Bayne-Powell (English Country Life in the Eighteenth Century) Adam Smith said this, but I have been unable to trace the reference to its source.

*5 V.C.H. II 327

3. HUMANITARIANISM: BATH

The number of charitable societies which were formed in Bath alone during this period is a strong indication of the growth of humanitarian feeling. In 1805 the Monmouth Street Society was established for the relief of the sick poor, for the encouragement of industry, and for the suppression of mendicancy. In the same year the 'Humane Society' was founded, and Lady Isabella King opened an 'Orphan School and House of Protection' which she had endowed. (*1)

In 1811 an Infirmary for the Cure of Diseases of the Eye was begun. The Bath District Benevolent Institution was formed to give assistance to people of good character and education who had reached the age of sixty. In this year, too, the Blue Coat School was founded.

In 1821 there were disastrous floods at Bath and £181/16/- was soon collected for the victims. Its distribution was put into the hands of the 'Society for the Relief of Occasional Distress.' They actually found that the relief fund had been over-subscribed. They did not want to 'exceed the measure of sufficient relief' lest this should 'withdraw the poor from reliance on their own exertions and lead them to speculate on periodical recurrences of these accidents and applications.' Six hundred and twenty seven families received gifts of food, coal, and money. The balance of the relief fund was deposited in the local savings bank against future emergencies and it was used in 1823 when there were floods again.

Finally, the 'Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners Royal Benevolent Society' was opened in 1830.

*1 The facts are taken from Earle: Bath Ancient and Modern

4. THE DISPENSARY AT WIVELISCOMBE

One interesting experiment during this period was the "Public Dispensary at Wiveliscombe." The President was Thomas Buckler Lethbridge, for many years member of Parliament for Somerset.

Patients were admitted to the Dispensary by a card of recommendation from the subscribers. Subscribers were not to have more patients on the books than there were guineas in their subscriptions. Patients were to be drawn from the working classes - servants, labourers, mechanics - but not paupers, who "are already provided with medical attention." The patients had to provide their own bandages, phials and boxes, and had to pay a deposit of 2/6 to ensure that the rules were obeyed.

The Dispensary was open on three days every week (Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays), from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. The cards of recommendation were valid for three months, at the end of which time they must be renewed by the subscribers.

Special cases were provided with beds at the expense of the institution, but 5/6 a week had to be paid if a nurse was required. The 'medical gentlemen' of the district attended without any emoluments.

From 1804 to 1808 a total of 3250 patients had been given attention. Of these, 3013 were described as 'Proper Objects' and 237 as 'Improper Objects.' During 1808 there were 611. 560 of these were 'proper' and 51 'improper.' Of the 51 'improper' cases, 39 had been 'cured and relieved.' There were 5 deaths. (*1)

(*1) See advertisements and Reports of the Dispensary in the Taunton Courier (1808 and 1809)

5. THE CORDWAINERS' COMPANY OF WELLS

Before Disraeli's wise and statesmanlike Act to safeguard the funds of Friendly Societies, there were many small societies, of which the real purposes - whether sick benefits, religion, drink, or trade and craft interests - are now obscure: but in general all followed the same road. The members gradually accumulated the savings of the society until the day was reached when an unscrupulous majority seized the savings of past years and squandered them in a 'share-out.' When that happened, all the benefits ceased, and usually the society came to a mute and inglorious end.

One of these organisations was the 'Cordwainers' Company' of Wells. Their history may be traced in their own log-book which has been preserved in the archives at Taunton Castle.

The objects and benefits of the society are not inscribed in this book, and their sole standing order (written on Oct 26 1762) was to the effect that "if any member shall make a disturbance and being called to order by the present master, and not complying, he shall by a majority then present pay five shillings or be excluded."

The Company seems to have begun on a craft basis. A man was admitted to membership after having served his seven years apprenticeship, by "keeping his breakfast, taking up his stamp, and paying a fine of 3/4 to the Company." By 1800 most new members paid fines of £1/1/- each, in preference to "keeping their breakfasts." Presumably the cost of providing food for the voracious appetites of the other members had grown too expensive.

On May 29 1801 William Westcoat, Warden of the Company, was fined 5/- for neglect of duty (in not warning the Company in proper time, and not attending to carry the Streamer to Church before the Mayor), and also was fined a further 5/- "for insulting the Present Master and the Company - when told of his fault." His remarks on that occasion, are not recorded, but on June 23 "Wm. Westcoat paid his fine of 10/-."

In December 1802 the Company, feeling prosperous, "paid for

a new streamer £ 15/15/-."

Nothing else of note occurred to disturb the calm existence of the Company until Dec.1805 when it was felt that expenses were increasing beyond revenue.Subscriptions,payable at the monthly meeting,were therefore raised to 9d.a month,of which 6d. went to the general fund and 3d. was spent.

It becomes clear by this time that membership of the Company included not only Cordwainers,but also Carpenters,Plasterers and Tilers,Brightsmiths,Bakers and Sadlers. Since "being the eldest son of a burgess" or "marrying the eldest daughter of a burgess" seems to have been an additional qualification for membership, nothing but the name could have remained from the old craft basis.

The total number of members during the arly years of the nineteenth century never exceeded 25,but in 1825 numbers suddenly expanded. On May 30 1825 they enrolled 20 new members who paid £5 each on entrance. On August 2 1825 another bloc of 19 were admitted. These men paid only the customary £1/5/4. On August 18 another 31 arrived and paid the same fees.On September 24 another 8 joined and on May 29 1826 a further group of 16 were accepted.

No wonder they could now buy a marvellous new flag. It must have been a work of art,for it cost £25 in 1827.On April 19 1871 when the Company was wound up,the following entry was made:
"Sold the flag to Mr.J.Boyce for the sum of 6 shillings."

Their total assets then (1871) amounted to the ludicrous sum of £2/1/10 which they spent on "Dinners and Grogs."

Obviously some big crisis had ruined the Company. It was the old story. At the beginning of this period (1800) they owned £100 which was lent at interest to Mr.Tudway. After the terrific increase in membership of 1825 -6 this capital was increase to £175 and was to be raised to £200 as soon as possible.

Then on Dec.30 1831 the Master,Robert Edgehill,proposed that

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the £175 be called in. One A.Buck then proposed that "this be divided among the members." He then added "that each member having kept the company above ten years be first repaid their (sic) expences of admission and that the residue be then equally divided among the members who have regularly attended its meetings."

On Jan.30 1832 this was done. Twenty-nine members shared the plunder, most of them ~~receiving~~ ^{receiving} £5/5/- each.

It seems to me that the explanation of all this is to be found in the political conditions of the borough. The franchise included "such persons as are (by consent of the ~~mayor~~ and common council) admitted to their freedom in any of the seven trading companies, on account of birth, servitude or marriage."

One of the chief advantages accruing from membership of the company would be the right to vote. It will be noted that the funds saved by the company were all lent, at good interest, to Mr. Tudway - surely none other than 'John Payne Tudway' member for the borough who was stated by the Radicals in 1817 to be part-owner of the borough. It seems likely therefore that the huge numbers of new members who sought and gained admission in 1825, were seeking votes. When the Reform Bill was passed in 1831 the borough franchises were made uniform in the £10 householder qualification so the Cordwainers' Company lost its minor political importance. The members lost no time in sharing out the funds. They acted with indecent haste once it became clear that party leaders could no longer take any interest in their continued existence.

After this staggering blow, the wonder is that the Company now moribund, should have managed to survive at all, let alone till 1871, the date when it expired.

Somerset towns like Brid^gwater and Taunton boasted some sort of theatrical productions at least twice a week during the winter. This does not mean that drama was a leading amusement for the ordinary man. On the other hand it was a cultural influence and is therefore worth considering. Since there is no record of the performances given in the smaller places beyond the newspaper advertisements, we have to turn to Bath. Admittedly this was chiefly a resort of fashionable 'society' but by learning what was 'the best' in the county we have at least some idea of what was produced elsewhere.

On Jan 30th 1823 Robert Allen M.A. has had enough of "the puerile occupations of our dramatic corps." He tells us that "the favour of the public can by no means benefit or advance the most meretorious actor in the Bath company. The wishes of the patrons are neither consulted nor regarded .. Private pique and unaccountable favouritism must regulate every appointment." (*1) So he goes to the Concert instead of the Play but is thoroughly incensed because there is so much orchestral music and so little singing. He also demands more English songs instead of "Italian words which are unintelligible to four fifths. of the hearers, and consequently devoid of 'pathos or expression' which .. is the chief excellence of music" - although he admits that the Mariage de Figaro is "ill-suited to the roughness of our language." (*2)

On Feb. 5th he is in a better humour and the horse in 'Kenilworth' "played so feelingly as to frighten all the ladies into hysterics - no joke for some of them."

"'Get Backerder' roared some stentorian orator" behind the scenes when Mr. Archer, playing a death scene, had fallen into "a posture which we shall forbear to name." (*3) On another occasion, the only 'hit' in 'Life in London' came when Mr. Archer "passed the lantern in so effective a manner, as very much to endanger the person of a lady in the side-box." (*4)

The infrequency of such amusing incidents is regrettable, for Allen's 'Review' is dull. This is not because he spares the lash.

*1 R. Allen: Theatrical Review (Bath) 1822-3 No. 19 p. 112

*2 Ibid. 15p. 80 *3 Ibid. 13p. 67 *4 Ibid. 16p. 88

He whips most members of the company without mercy - especially poor Miss Dance. Indeed it is rare that he lavishes praise, although he does tell us that "Mr. Young's 'Lear' stands eminent, we had almost said unrivalled .. We think the Lear of this evening infinitely superior to that of Mr. Kean."(*1) As an example of witty criticism there is: "Mr. Cooke - Generally perfect, simple and inoffensive. Mannerism - a pitiable glance at the Manager's Box."(*2) After a month of the season has gone 'The Fugitive' he says "is the only play that has been tolerably cast."(*3)

The prevailing dullness would appear to be due largely to the poverty of the dramatic pieces presented, partly to Allen himself whose critical faculty hardly makes him an Agate, and partly to the reader's mind which cannot be familiar with all those parts of the presentations which Allen takes for granted.

The modern reader feels acute mental pain when he realises that the Bath Theatre was producing a great deal of rubbish, nearly a century before the competition of Hollywood was to drive the provincial theatre out of business in many English towns. One comment will indicate what the audience had to suffer: 'Family Jars' - "nonsense as it was, it suffered nothing in comparison with the trash that preceded it."(*4) Often the titles need no further comment: Rule a Wife and Have a Wife; A Bold Stroke for a Husband; Wife of Two Husbands; Heads and Blockheads; Fortune's Frolic; Match Making; No Song No Supper; The Maid and the Magpie. Yet the fare was not always trivial, for interspersed between the ephemeral productions of the day, appear Shakespear's 'Hamlet', 'Macbeth,' and 'Lear,' an occasional Restoration Play such as 'Venice Preserved' and Cibber's 'Fop's Fortune,' as well as Sheridan's 'Rivals' and 'Duenna.' There are dramatised versions of 'Kenilworth,' 'Rob Roy,' and 'Guy Mannering,' although they appear to have been boring.

*1 Ibid. 22.p.138

*2 25.p.162 Ibid.

*3 Ibid. 13.p.65

*4 Ibid. 10.p.38

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It is strange to find Robert Allen selecting for special criticism the play 'George Barnwell' - the only piece amongst a mass of rubbish, which is acknowledged to have had any influence on the modern stage. It was performed during Christmas week 1822, and Allen says: "We presume this play was selected for the exclusive amusement of the holiday folks. ... A miserable story, destitute of any poetical ^oclouring, and crammed with everyday, good, old, stale, and unprofitable maxims." (*1) Yet 'Jane Shore' he says "has been established by successive judges, as one of those monuments of scenic poetry which must, while learning lasts, continue uninjured by time." (*2) He calls 'Fazio' "this beautiful and classic play." (*3)

In the early numbers he selects 'Life in London - or Tom and Jerry' for an intensive campaign of hatred, but he failed to convince the management of its worthlessness, for although he gleefully records 'thin attendances' it appeared regularly on the play-bills for a long time. "While riot is glorious and obscenity wit; while slang is eloquence and vulgarity admired; 'Tom and Jerry' will never want an audience." (*4) "It belongs to the days when getting drunk was thought gaiety," says a correspondent (*5) - which makes us wonder how far Regency morals had been reflected in Bath. Apparently the piece offended both his aesthetic and moral tastes, for the womenfolk are "characters of whom it is not decent even to speak." The plot was highly artificial, being the story of the escapades of two 'country cousins' who have a gay time in London. Their two sweethearts accompany the two men throughout, but are so well disguised that they are not recognised until the last scene. The humour was largely dependent on horse-play in which a watchman was cracked over the skull and a squib~~x~~ ignited in his box. Our critic follows up his direct hits by a piece of mockery in which he publishes two letters purporting to come from the watchmen:

*1 Ibid. 15.p.79

*2 Ibid 15.p.81

*3 Ibid. 16p.89

*4 Ibid. 6 p. 22

*5 Ibid. 7 p.26

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"Sir, - I hope you'll take our case into consideration.

The dandies from the Theatre make regular goes at the watchmen, and place our lives in danger by endeavouring to upset our boxes, or dousing our glims with their punchers.

Yours to command,

T. Quiet." (*1)

There is something strangely modern and American in the second letter: "Worthy Sir, - As I hear you are making some noise ~~an~~ Bahh, I think you must be an acquaintance of some 'swell kiddies' (I think they called themselves), who paid me a visit on Wednesday night. I must tell you sir, that I have been twelve years a watchman, being too old for anything else, and have always hitherto, been able to sleep all night, which, to a man aged 79, is a great comfort. Well, Sir, I was roused on the night aforesaid by a tug at the nose, which made me roar lustily, and was deafened by a shout of, 'Mill the Charley, nab his castor, sherry, mizzle, give him a sneezer.' A gentleman with a plaguy queer name, told me to shew them the watchhouse; but I said the night was too wet, and ⁺ had never done such a thing in my life; so he said I was a sleepy dog, pulled me out, and crushed my lanthorn to a pangake. I lost my stick, two night-c^aps that cost me 9d., my hat, rattle, and coat, with which they marched off saying, (God preserve me!) 'Bang up for the Holy Land!' and springing my ~~rattle~~, to the great~~x~~ terror of the neighbours. Pray procure me these articles from your friends, and a promise that I may sleep unmolested, and you'll ever oblige,

Worthy Sir,

Quiet Street

Your humble servant,

Nov. 23

P. Peaceable." (*2)

Incidentally this letter provides us with a delightful caricature of a watchman. Nevertheless this medium of criticism makes us wonder whether a single genuine letter was ever published in 'The Review' e.g.: "Sir, - Allow me through the medium of your paper to complain of the insolence of one of our door-keepers at the Theatre. ... Yours, L." (*3)

*1 Ibid. 6.p.22

*2 Ibid. 7.p.27

*3 Ibid. 11.p.46

Possibly the management, irritated by Allen's criticisms, had told the 'furry-cap gentlemen' at the doors to keep him out!

Other influences which help to brighten the pages, are Allen's quarrels with the 'Bath and Cheltenham Gazette' which he accuses of pushing poor actors and of praising trashy plays; and his replies to 'No Critic' whom he crushes with the full weight of his heavy artillery. Once only do we find Allen so far losing his rigid sense of values as to praise a sham grand piece: 'Cherry and Fair Star.' He talks of the 'glittering splendour' of the scene; of the 'Isle of Tenedos'; of 'Mount Caucasus covered with snow'; of the effect of the burning forest which was 'strikingly grand'; of the 'contrivance of making an aerial spirit traverse the air' which was 'novel and pleasing'. Behind these crude experiments in the art of production was a pantomime equally crude. Allen himself discloses the crudity of the production when he tells us that 'frequent openings in the scenery .. marred the piece of the evening' and referring to the 'Monster of the Burning Forest' he says 'the introduction of .. a dragon .. was puerile.' (*1)

On the whole we are left with the impression that Allen was far more highly endowed with the critical faculty than were the other theatre-goers of Bath. Yet the principles of his dramatic criticism appear to have been those of the previous century. No-one could claim that he was a great or original dramatic critic, or that he held views in advance of his age. He does his best to persuade us that the audience at Bath was 'liberal and enlightened' but even at the outset he involves himself in contradictions: "The Bath audience may be considered as the most efficient in judgment, not excepting that of the Metropolis; yet the Bath audience are sometimes inclined to deceive the actor, as to the real impression he makes, by an injudicious applause;" (*2) therefore "It is difficult to ascertain

*1 Ibid. 16.p.91

*2 Ibid. 1.p.2

the taste of the Bath public;"(*1) yet "there is none more respectable none more capable of just descrimination." At all events,they were not interested in developing their powers of critical appreciation under the guidance of Robert Allen. Between February 26 and April 23 1823, there was no issue of the 'Review' and on April 30 the last issue appeared. "We do not feel ourselves called upon to return any acknowledgments to the public for patronage we have never received. .. If we have been dull, our remuneration has not been liberal ..; but if we have been just, neither assistance nor encouragement has been held out to induce our perseverance."(*2) The reason which he gives for stopping publication is that his object has been to influence the management in order to obtain better plays and better casts. Having failed to do this, he closes down, cheerfully and pluckily threatening to reappear 'next season.'

The whole venture was that of an idealist. He defended the actor Huckel and denounced the theatre authorities for the way in which they treated this man. After having engaged him for a whole season, they had found that they did not require his services. They waited until he had gone away for the week-end then announced a change of programme so as to include him in the cast. They then declared that they could not proceed with the new programme owing to his absence, and substituted the original programme,which had already been printed and published. When Huckel returned on Monday morning,he was dismissed and made to forfeit all arrears of salary. For the worst case of this kind a £10 fine was usual, but according to Allen five shillings would have settled this account.The spirit which Allen showed in defence of an oppressed fellow-creature reveals the nobility of his character, whilst his failure to obtain redress is eloquent of the callousness of others.

*1 Ibid.2.p.3

*2 Ibid. 25.p.157

*3 Ibid. p.102-3

7. THE MILITIA

When Lord Castlereagh sought to strengthen the defences of this island in the struggle with Napoleon, he reorganised the militia and required local authorities to comply with his policy and to carry out their obligations under his new legislation. The reader of military history in this period is puzzled to distinguish between the Regular Army, the Old Militia, the 'Additional Military Force'(*1) and the 'Local Militia.'(*2) The requirements of the Local Militia Act give a rough but interesting cross-section of Society and throw light on the customs of the day. Most people were liable to serve, but only a limited number were chosen each year. Presumably this was done by drawing lots - 'Balloting' is the term used in the Act. Failure to appear within the time appointed was punishable by a fine of from £1 to £5. Immediate exemption was given on production of a medical certificate to prove ill-health. Clergymen and medical men were exempt by virtue of their professions. Men who had served or were serving in the Additional Military Force established in 1803 were exempt as follows:

- (i) Four years from the expiration of their period of service if they had served in person;
- (ii) Six years from the date of enrolment of a substitute;
- (iii) Four years from the payment of an exemption fine.

Exemption by substitute was not permissible in the Local Militia, but exemption by fine was procurable for two years at the following rates:

£30 for a man whose income was above £200 per annum;
£20 for a man whose income was between £100 and £200;
£10 if the income was less than £100.

The penalty for a false declaration of income was £50.

*1 Phelps.I.90-91 says that the strength of the Militia in 1803, not including the 'regular militia' was:

Class 1.	14,644
Class 2.	2,896
Class 3.	4,905
Class 4.	17,433
Yeomanry	<u>9,035</u>
	<u>48,913</u>

*2 Ibid. The Local Militia was formed in 1809 and was a 'more regular form of the previous Volunteers.'
There were seven regiments in Somerset with a total strength of 6,224 men.

Service in the Local Militia gave the same exemption as service in the 'Volunteers' - four years service gave two years exemption from the Regular Militia. The Act is careful to emphasise that "Articled Clerks or Apprentices, Poor Men having less than three children, and Persons 5 feet 2 inches high, are liable to serve."(*1)

It also states that there is a penalty of £50 for insuring. The object of this ~~tax~~ proposition is not clear. Since several Militia Insurance 'Clubs' advertised their existence quite openly, the restriction must have applied exclusively to the Local Militia and not to the Regular Militia! It must have been perfectly easy for these Clubs to extend their scope to the Local Militia under the cloak of their business with men insuring against service in the Regular Militia. If the reason was that the Government frowned upon all activities of a gambling nature which might offer competition to state lotteries, then there was no reason why they should not include the Regular Militia. 'The Union Militia Club of England and Wales - Head Office: 405, Denmark Street, Bristol' accepted premiums of 2, 1, or $\frac{1}{2}$ a guinea and those called upon to serve in the Militia would receive a proportionate share in the Club's 'funds.'

A similar organisation, the 'Sherborne Militia Society' offered definite returns from the fixed premiums, instead of a share in the funds: a man who had paid 17/- would receive £6 if chosen to serve; for a premium of £1/7/- he would receive £10; for £1/19/- he would receive £15; and for £2/10/- he would receive £20.

The 'Militia Society' of 10, Corn Street, Bristol, offered $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 guinea 'shares' on the 'share-out' principle.

Service in the Local Militia appears to have been for 28 days in the year. The county was divided into areas which produced seven separate regiments. A general meeting of the Lieutenancy was held to decide on dates and places for training which were then announced in the press. In 1809 they were as follows:

*1 The terms of the Act together with the other information which follows, were taken from the 'Taunton Courier' for 1808, 1809, and 1810.

Regiment:	Commander:	Place and Date of Training:
Polden Hill;	Lieut-Col. Strangeways;	Bridgwater; May 30 - 14 days
" "	" "	" Oct. 20 - "
Bridgwater;	Lieut-Col. Allen;	" May 15 - "
" "	" "	Taunton; Oct. 9 - "
West Mendip;	Lieut-Col. Rogers;	Wells; Oct. 1 - 28 days
Somerton & Langport;	Lieut-Col Pinney;	Langport & Somerton; May 26 - 14 days
" "	" "	Bridgwater; Oct. 4 "
East Mendip;	Lieut-Col. Rt. Hon. J. H. Addington;	Wells; May 29; "
" "	" "	" Oct. 30; "
East Somerset;	Lieut-Col Woodford;	Bath; May. 15; 28 days
West Somerset;	Lieut-Col. Lethbridge;	Taunton; June 1; " "

Occasionally we find announcements in advertisement columns, calling upon "All Constables and His Majesty's Peace Officers" to apprehend say, "John Tapp of Goathurst - who has neglected to join the Militia." Throughout the war these efforts were made to enforce military training.

One or two 'incidents' show that the material recruited was extremely 'raw.' Whether the so called 'ballot' was handled in such a way as to recruit only the rougher elements of the community, is a matter for conjecture. In a country which had never possessed an adequate police system, all laws were imperfectly enforced, and although the provisions of the Local Militia Act sound stringent, and although a most serious war was in progress, it is doubtful whether the principles of the system received more than a very partial application. England has never taken kindly to the existence of standing armies, let alone military conscription, and nothing short of an invasion scare would arouse any martial enthusiasm. Such panics did not take place every year, even in the days just before 'Boney went to Moscow.'

Granted that there have been numerous occasions on which militiamen have been used with effect, as when Alfred used his 'fyrd' against the Danes, and during the Civil War when the 'train-bands' frightened Charles I away from London and then proceeded to march to the relief of Gloucester, and in the Spanish Civil War when the Madrid Militia held up Franco's advance on the capital, yet there can be little doubt that Castlereagh's Militia was inefficient and

could not have offered serious resistance to Napoleon's regulars if left to themselves. On the other hand they might have been increased rapidly in time of actual necessity and might have been used to ~~skiffen the~~ fill the gaps left by deficiency in the numbers of regular troops.

On June 29 1809, when the West Somerset Regiment concluded a fortnight's training at Taunton, the men were marched out to Sand Hill Park, where colours were presented by Mrs. Lethbridge. "Several hogsheads of beer and 700 rations of bread and cheese were served out to the men." They then marched back to Taunton. One man refused to march with his own company. Eventually he was escorted to the rear of the whole column and compelled to march with arms reversed. When the regiment arrived at Taunton, Lieut-Col. Holton ordered the arrest of this man, whereupon one of his friends attacked the officer with his bayonet. Major Elton gallantly came to the rescue and "made a thrust at the breast of the mutineer with his sword, which broke without inflicting a wound." The incident was not closed until a troop of Dragoons had been called out and the whole regiment of Militia disarmed. The men of the Taunton Rifle Corps stood to arms all through the night in expectation of further trouble.

In May 1810 the Mendip Regiment at Bath was involved in a dispute over the 'marching guinea.' The men objected to deductions 'for trowsers.' Four of them refused to obey orders and were lodged in the City Gaol. At about 8 p.m. the other privates assembled, "broke open the doors, liberated their comrades, and carried them off in triumph." The four men were retaken but were set free after apologising to the Colonel. The ring-leaders of the attack on the gaol were then given a drum-head court-martial on Claverton Down. One of them was sentenced to receive 50 lashes, but Col. Rogers pardoned him, and the others, and said that he acted with leniency because the trouble had been started by some of the civilian population of Bath.

This state of affairs in the militia may be contrasted with the treatment meted out to regular troops at the same period. In December 1808 two troops of the 16th Light Dragoons under Capt. Murray and Capt. Ashworth, arrived at Taunton. Ashworth dismissed his men after a few minutes inspection. Murray refused to dismiss his men until one man

who was missing, should arrive. "The men having stood at ease in the wet and cold for an hour and a half" decided to dismiss themselves. There was a court-martial and two men received sentences of 622 lashes each, and a third 580. 'One bullying swaggering blade' dared the Editor of the 'Taunton Courier' to publish an account of this - which he did. In less than two years' time Cobbett was fined £1,000 and clapped into Newgate for two years for daring to comment on some military floggings.

On another occasion the same editor commented on the action of a court-martial in Devonshire which sentenced a man to 300 lashes (of which he actually received 100) for 'marrying without the consent of his commanding officer.' He tried to raise subscriptions for the purpose of buying this man out of the militia but the plan failed. The inference is that discipline in the regular militia was not as lax as it was in the 'volunteers' which became 'local militia.'

APPENDIX I (POLITICAL)

List of Members of Parliament for Somerset (1822) with

particulars of the elections of both 1818 (names only) and 1820, and with details of the borough franchises:

Royal Kalendar 1822 (Hansard)

Bath 23 Ed.I

1818 1820

Lord John Thynne Re-elected

Charles Palmer Esq. Re-elected

In the mayor, aldermen, and common council only -23 Jan 1706: 18

Bridgewater 23 Ed.I

George Pocock Esq. C.K. Tynte Esq.

William Astell Esq. Re-elected

Stated to be in the majority of the corporation, consisting of a mayor, aldermen, and capital burgesses, in number 24. 7 Dec. 1669.

Agreed to be in those that pay scot and lot, inhabiting in the said borough. 10 Dec. 1692. ~~A Maken~~

If the mayor, aldermen and capital burgesses are not inhabitants, though they pay scot and lot, yet they have no right to vote. 9 March 1769

The inhabitants of the eastern and western divisions of the parish of ~~Bridgeater~~ have no right to vote for representatives, but the right of election is in the inhabitants of that division of the said parish which is commonly called the borough, paying scot and lot within the said division, and in them only. 14 March 1769.

- 300

Ilchester 23 Ed.I

Sir Isaac Coffin Bart. Sir Isaac Coffin Bart. 74

John Will. Drage Merest Esq. Dr. Lushington 74

L. Manners Esq. 36

Captain Manners 36

Alleged to be in the inhabitants of the said town paying scot and lot, which the town call potwallers, 6 May 1689.

Agreed to be in the bailiff, capital burgesses, and inhabitants not receiving alms. 28 Jan. 1702. :- 70

Milborne Port 26 Ed.I

Hon. Sir Edward Paget G.C.B. Hon. Berkley Paget 67

Robert Mathew Casberd Esq. Lord Graves 67

Rich. Sharpe Esq. 44

J.W.D. Merest 44

Is only in the capital bailiffs and their deputies, in the
commongalty, stewards, and the inhabitants paying scot and lot.

8 Dec. 1702. :- 92

Minehead 1 Eliz.

John Fowles Luttrell Esq.

Re-elected

Henry Fownes Luttrell Esq.

Re-elected

Is in the parishioners of Minehead and Dunster, being housekeepers
in the borough of Minehead and not receiving alms. 24 Feb. 1717. -10
The precept to be directed to the two constables, and they to
make a return. 13 June 1717. *

Taunton 23 Ed. I

Alexander Baring Esq.

Alexander Baring Esq.

401

Henry Powell Collins Esq.

J.A. Warre Esq.

324

H. Seymour Esq.

315

In the inhabitants of the said borough being potwallers, and not
receiving alms or charity. 28 July 1715. :- 450

Wells City 23 Ed. I

Charles William Taylor Esq.

Re-elected

John Payne Tudway Esq.

Re-elected

Is in the mayor, masters and burgesses of the said city. 18 Feb. 1695

N.B. The bye-law of 1712, for inflicting penalties on the mayor
and burgesses, declared to be illegal. 30 May 1716.

Resolved to be in the mayor, masters and burgesses, and in such
persons as are (by consent of the mayor and common council)
admitted to their freedom in any of the seven trading companies,
on account of birth, servitude, or marriage. 2. May 1723.

The same resolution 18 April 1729.

The same again. 11 March 1734. :- 130

Somersetshire

William G. Langton Esq.

Sir T.B. Lethbridge Bart.

William Dickenson Esq.

Re-elected

* A mis-print in the Kalender. In 1831 Minehead had a
Population of 148, and Dunster 983. There were
180 electors in Minehead and 35 in Dunster.

(See Hancock: Minehead p. 363)

In 1790 there was a total of 190 electors.

(See Hancock p. 324) Presumably 190 was intended.

APPENDIX 2. Ilchester Party Elections 1800 - 1831

(Notes by Lieut.-Col. Welby: Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries

Vol. XX. p. 249)

		Poll	Poll as altered by Committee
1802	W. Hunter T	86	62
	T. Plummer T	85	61
	Sir W. Manners W	65	57
	J. Graham W	64	56
Manners petitioned: election declared void and new writ issued			
1803	C. Brooke T	81	
	Sir W. Manners W	76	
	J. Manners W	75	
	W. Webb W	73	
	J. R. Cuthbert	18	
Election of Manners declared void and new writ issued			
1804	J. Manners W		
	J. Ogle T		
Ogle petitioned without success			
1806	Sir W. Manners W		
	N. Saxon W		
1807	Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan W		
	M. A. Taylor W		
1812	Hon. J. W. Ward W		
	G. Philips W		
1818	J. W. D. Mevest W	64	
	Adml. Sir I. Coffin W	64	
	H. J. W. Ward T	24	
	L. J. W. Manners T	24	
Manners petitioned without success			
1820	Adml. Sir I. Coffin W	74	
	S. Lushington W	74	
	Hon. J. W. Ward T	24	
	L. J. Manners	24	
1826	R. Sharp W	110	
	J. Williams W	110	
	Hon. L. W. J. Talmash T	71	
	Hon. F. T. Talmash T	71	
Petition: Return amended (1827) & Talmashes declared elected			
1830	M. Bruce W	68	
	J. J. H. Vere W	68	
	Hon. F. T. Talmash T	64	
	Hon. A. O. Talmash T	64	
Petition by two latter candidates (without success)			
1831	S. Lushington W		
	Hon. E. R. Petre		
Sir William Manners Bart. (the proprietor) took the name Talmash - later Tollemache - in 1821 on becoming Lord Huntingtower. John Manners was his brother. The Hon. Felix Thomas Talmash and Hon. Algernon G. Talmash were his sons.			

(I find that they are stated
to have had 36 votes each
in Hansard's Kalendar 1822)

LIST OF COUNTY MEMBERS * KNIGHTS OF THE SHIRE

1796	William Dickenson William Gore Langton
1802	ditto (Dickenson died in 1806)
1806	William Dickenson (Junr.) Thomas Buckler Lethbridge
1807	ditto
1812	ditto
1818	ditto
1820	ditto
1826	William Dickenson William Gore Langton
1830	William Dickenson Edward Ayshford Sanford

* Phelps I.68

APPENDIX 4.

POLITICAL HISTORY

Wells (Phelps II.19) "The burgesses were members of the Corporation they were elected by the mayor and common council; and then admitted into their body without any qualification, or title to admission, other than electors. The freemen are not members of the corporation, are neither entered nor admitted by the Corporation, but are admitted into one of the seven trading companies either by redemption, or under their title to freedom, by birth, servitude, or marriage. These were the electors of parliament to serve for the borough and many of them being not resident in the town, when an election took place, a great expense was incurred in bringing them to the poll, which gave rise to disputes, enormous expenses, and frequent petition to the House of Commons." (The Tudway family controlled the borough from 1754 to 1826. Under the Reform Bill came a new class of voters and "a great number were disfranchised." I.20)

On page 22 he says there were six trading companies incorporated 'but of their origin we have no account': Mercers, Hammermen, Cordwainers, Tailors, Butchers, and the Shearmen and Tuckers.

Milborne Port (Phelps I.296): "Nine parcels of borough land, the property of two individuals, gave a right of voting for members of parliament to any nine persons, to whom the proprietors chose to convey them for that purpose. Two of these nine burgage or feudal tenants presided yearly by rotation, as returning officers. The persons to whom they are conveyed are called Bailiffs, as constituted by the conveyance of these tenures. In addition to these nine freehold or feudal voters, all the householders paying scot and lot were entitled to the right of voting. These nine parcels of burgage tenures, and nearly all the scot and lot houses ... were formerly leased to the Marquis of Anglesey by Sir William (Medleycott) and thus gave that gallant nobleman the right of nomination of members for the borough."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Milborne Port:(Phelps I.287): "The town is governed by the proprietors of nine bailiwicks or burgage tenures, and the persons to whom they were conveyed, are called Capital Bailiffs; two of whom preside annually at a Court Leet held in October. At this court, two deputies or sub-bailiffs, and two stewards of the commonalty lands, are appointed; also two constables, and ale-taster, a searcher and sealer of leather; besides the parish officer.

The nine commonalty stewards are elected from the respectable householders in the borough paying scot and lot; two of whom are annually chosen as reigning stewards, the others being assistants.

The parish is divided into three tithings viz.

Milborne Port, Milborne Wick, and Kingsbury Regis. The borough and Kingsbury Regis lie in many places promiscuously intermixed both in the town and in Milborne Wick. The part called Kingsbury Regis has Land Tax and parochial assessments different from the borough~~x~~ but the same church and poor, excepting that the charity called 'Commonalty' is given only to the poor of the borough.

At Kingsbury Regis an annual Court Baron is held, where the king's rents are collected and paid, presentments made, and a constable, tithingman, and hayward appointed."

APPENDIX 6. POLITICAL HISTORY

THE TYPE OF MAN WHO REPRESENTED THE COUNTY

(From Phelps I.478)

WILLIAM DICKENSON (Junr.)

His father was Knight of the Shire for Somerset from 1796 until his death in 1806.

He was educated at Oxford and took his M.A. at Christchurch in 1795 and his B.C.L. at All Souls in 1799.

He was a bencher at Lincoln's Inn and was called to the bar in 1796.

His political career:

1796 M.P. for Ilchester

1802 M.P. for Lostwithiel

1804 One of the Lords of the Admiralty under Pitt

1806 Knight of the Shire for Somerset

Re-elected 1807, 1812, 1818, 1826, and 1831.

He voted against the Reform Bill.

He was Recorder for Glastonbury and was Chairman of Quarter Sessions.

APPENDIX 7.		POOR RATES						
	Date of Enclosure	Amount of Poor Rates in £:						
		1791	1801	1811	1821	1831	1838	
Musgrave	1821	179	352	255	267	380	--	
ton	1821	165	-	570	442	478	--	
on	1771 & 1821	848	1887	1510	1987	2447	--	
bble	1804	18	194	93	130	187	--	
e Port	1817	314	874	703	620	823	--	
a Horethorne	1815	--	--	467	502	389	--	
on	1771	420	1170	831	842	919	--	
& Buckshaw	1799	100	281	192	363	211	--	
	1852	122	253	230	342	255	--	
ury	1722 1783 & 1800	-	-	-	-	1506	1045	
anard	1787	231	758	526	490	-	459	
urgh	1720	---	---	564	402	238	208	
Mallet	1785	1329	3558	3149	3248	4673	3178	
	1796	247	528	669	849	703	599	
& Stokelane	1776							
	1844 & 1856	260 (1795)	1698	1498	1200	1259	1070	
	1794	335	798	1046	1561	2042	1374	
	1786							
	1791	64	259	148	286	241	123	
	1821	11	67	91	42	34	23	
	1793	80	120	120	181	176	188	
Mandeville	1810	48	64	44	159	58	65	
ford	1827	70	326	-	-	297	248	
	1771	49	211	181	201	148	--	
mel	1798	--	--	259	340	369	342 (1836)	
ford	1838	36	92	56	115	92	89 (1836)	
e	1793	-	452	542	617	514	429	
ove figures have been collected from Phelps 'Parochial History'.								
owing figures are taken from the Victoria County History II.329								
		1803	1813	1821	1831			
		229	579	535	568			
er		991	2188	2921	3498			
rry	1816	475	990	982	1102			
	1817	182	406	351	200			
		185	281	241	401			
		936	1399	2084	1851			

APPENDIX

POOR RATES (continued)

Parish	Date of Enclosure	Amount of Poor Rates in £:				
		1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
						1838
N.Cadbury		177	637	539	613	622
Barton St. David	(1835)	-	-	99	140	113
E.Pennard		183	304	481	522 522	700
Pylle		-	-	-	-	136
Binegar		128	206	189	239	295
Meare		-	-	542	532	-
King Weston		17	61	47	105	66
Alford		37	177	124	95	77
Lovington		-	-	-	-	119
S.Barrow		-	48	93	125	65
N.Barrow		33	105	83	133	82
bcary		52	266	132	131	188
Sparkford		-	-	-	-	113
Weston Bampfylde		-	-	-	65	66
Sutton Montacute		-	79	99	96	78
Holton		57	127	99	84	120
Compton Pauncefoot		-	-	196	179	254
S.Cadbury	179 ⁵⁷ (1796)	153	189	187	118	97
Almsford		62	320	335	321	315
Castle Cary		378	585	1929	1622	1338
ampton		-	-	-	-	145
Marston Magna		89	140	145	155	160
Sandford Orcas		-	-	-	226	197
Poinington		59	135	151	95	68
Corton Dinham		109	343	332	338	415
Stowell		-	101	112	82	99
N.Cheriton		64	263	224	234	285
Abbas Combe		174	422	316	406	447
S.Brewham		-	-	-	(1820) 537	603(1830)
Pitcombe		-	283	203	281	395
Bruton		444	940	1124	1223	1425
Shepton Montacute		-	-	259	325	289
Cucklington		-	190	203	366	307
Stoke Trister		95	270	180	-	-

(These figures are all collected from Phelps)

From Appendix to Report on Ilchester Gaol (1822)

Names of Prisons	2. Whether Common Gaol House of Correction or Penitentiary Containing	3. Number of Prisoners each House of Correction is capable of containing	4. Number of classes or Departments	5. Whether classes can be increased	6. Number of prisoners committed in 1820	7. Greatest number of prisoners at one time in 1820	8. Debtors	9. Tried	10. Untried	11. CRIMINALS Males	12. FEMALE	13. Under 17	14. Above 17	15. Any and What alterations since the last return
is Majesty's Gaol of Bristol	Common Gaol	196	4 classes for debtors, belassess, criminals	Cannot be increased	195	139	40	59	40	75	24	6	93	A new Common gaol has recently been erected, to which the prisoners have been removed from the old gaol of Newgate, which old gaol is abolished.
Bristol Bridewell	Bridewell	36	4 classes	Cannot be increased	297	53	None	297	-	223	74	22	275	All the persons committed to Bridewell have been tried or convicted
Ilchester	Common Gaol House of Correction and Sheriff's Ward	220	13	Not without extending the limits of the prison	478	229	59	128	42	139	31	10	160	None completed but a new boundary wall is in progress, which will make a considerable addition to the area of the gaol, and another piece of land is purchased to build an infirmary upon. W. Bridle, Keeper or Governor
Borough of Bridgewater Common Gaol	Common Gaol	6 or 8	None	-	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	No alterations made since the last return
Arbridge Borough Gaol	House of Correction	6	None	-	None since Oct. 2nd 1820	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	None to my knowledge
Wilton	House of Correction and used as a Common Gaol; very comfortably Prisoners, in order to the emergency relief of the county gaol, being also committed for trial for felonies and other offences	About 93	13	Not without extending the building, which could be done, there being half an acre of garden ground without the boundary wall of the prison.	255	73	None	37	36	61	12	3	70	No alteration has been made since the return of last year Alexander Crane, Keeper
Shepton Mallet	House of Correction	200	13	-	668	157	-	61	96	136	21	18	139	Edw. Pitman, Keeper