



Kent Academic Repository

Billinge, E (1984) *Rural crime and protest in Wiltshire 1830-1875*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/86228/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.86228>

This document version

UNSPECIFIED

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives)

Additional information

This thesis has been digitised by EThOS, the British Library digitisation service, for purposes of preservation and dissemination. It was uploaded to KAR on 09 February 2021 in order to hold its content and record within University of Kent systems. It is available Open Access using a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivatives (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) licence so that the thesis and its author, can benefit from opportunities for increased readership and citation. This was done in line with University of Kent policies (<https://www.kent.ac.uk/is/strategy/docs/Kent%20Open%20Access%20policy.pdf>). If y...

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

RURAL CRIME AND PROTEST IN WILTSHIRE 1830-1875

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Ph.D. in the University of Kent
at Canterbury

by

Edwina Billinge

1984

ABSTRACT

Throughout the period 1830-1875, the position of the agricultural population of many southern and eastern counties of England, including Wiltshire, was one of great uncertainty and often dire poverty resulting from chronic seasonal and structural unemployment. This thesis traces the development of unrest which sprang from the grievances of the rural poor in Wiltshire, from the Swing Riots in the winter of 1830-31, to the emergence of agricultural trade unionism on a national scale, the 'Revolt of the Field', in the early 1870s. For much of this period the poor bargaining position of the agricultural labouring population meant that protest was often expressed anonymously and in criminal forms, notably arson, livestock maiming and threatening letters. Side by side with this underground tradition however, a more organised and open tradition kept up a feeble existence, before establishing itself more strongly in the 1860s and 1870s when the worst rural poverty began to ease.

The extent and nature of protest was determined by a complex array of local conditions. This thesis considers first the nature of rural society in Wiltshire, and then criminal activity as an indicator of rural poverty or as a manifestation of protest. Each of the subsequent chapters deals with one of the major areas of protest; Swing rioting, arson, Anti-Corn Law League agitation, strikes and agricultural trade unionism. Each is considered in relation to a number of parishes in an attempt to illustrate how factors such as the nature of settlement and agricultural activity, occupational structure and the availability of alternative employment, and the response of local landowners and farmers, as well as wider economic and political trends, determined the pattern of rural unrest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	1
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
INTRODUCTION .	7
CHAPTER I: THE AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE OF WILTSHIRE, 1830-1875	19
Agriculture and Landownership	19
Population Trends and Occupational Structure	32
Living and Working Conditions of the Agricultural Labouring Population	52
CHAPTER II: RURAL CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT	89
Rural Crime	90
Law Enforcement	120
CHAPTER III: THE DESTRUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND THE SWING RIOTS	133
CHAPTER IV: ARSON	207
CHAPTER V: ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE AGITATION	255
CHAPTER VI: STRIKES AND AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNIONISM	293
Strikes and Early Attempts at Trade Unionism, 1830-1870	293
The 'Revolt of the Field' in Wiltshire	318
CONCLUSION	351
APPENDIX 1: Winter Unemployment Lady Day 1832 - Lady Day 1835	365
APPENDIX 2: Arson (Chronological summary of each fire)	371
APPENDIX 3: Anti-Corn Law League Agitation (Summary of principal meetings)	399

	<u>Page</u>
APPENDIX 4a: Strikes and Trade Unionism (Summary of main events)	402
APPENDIX 4b: The 'Revolt of the Field' in Wiltshire (Meetings and incidents by parish)	407
REFERENCES	420
BIBLIOGRAPHY	457

LIST OF TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

	<u>Page</u>
Map: Sketch map of land use in Wiltshire	18
Table 1: Downton: Summary of principal land holdings in Tithe Award of 1840	28
Table 2: Hilmarton: Summary of principal land holdings in Tithe Award of 1842	29
Table 3: Occupational Structure of the Wiltshire Population (male and female)	34
Map: Winter Unemployment in the early 1830s	37
Map: Population Density in 1841	40
Table 4: Numbers of offenders committed for trial at the Assizes and Quarter Sessions in Wiltshire, 1830-1875	93
Table 5: Offences under the Game Laws in Wiltshire, 1829-1836	94
Table 6: Offences determined summarily in the County of Wiltshire, 1858-1875	95
Table 7: Indictable offences known to the police in the County of Wiltshire, 1858-1875	96
Table 8: Crime by Divisions, October 1842 - October 1844, January - June 1845, January - June 1847	99
Map: Convictions at Wiltshire Petty Sessions for offences under the Game Laws, January 1831 - December 1835	110
Table 9: The Organisation of the Wiltshire Constabulary, 1844	125

Table 10: Assaults on Peace Officers in the Execution of their Duty in Wiltshire	130
Map: Wiltshire Parishes in which machinery was destroyed during the Swing Riots	132
Table 11: The Wiltshire Special Commission	149
Table 12: Proportion of farmers employing labour to labourers by Hundreds in Wiltshire, 1831	161
Table 13: Scales of parish wages in Wiltshire in the early 1830s	163
Map: Wiltshire parishes experiencing incendiary fires	220
Table 14: Number of incendiary fires in Wiltshire/ price of wheat per quarter, 1830-1875	223
Table 15: Occupational structure of Wroughton	227
Table 16: Occupational structure of Chiseldon	228
Table 17: Occupational structure of Edington	229
Table 18: Occupational structure of Bromham	230
Map: Anti-Corn Law League parishes in Wiltshire	254
Table 19: Anti-Corn Law League supporters in Hilmarton, Christian Malford, Lineham and Bremhill	265
Map: Sketch map of the main area of Anti-Corn Law League support in Wiltshire	268
Map: Parishes experiencing strikes and trade union activity	292

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D.W.G.	Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette
E.L.	English Labourer
H.O.	Home Office
L.U.C.	Labourers' Union Chronicle
N.A.L.U.	National Agricultural Labourers' Union
P.L.C.	Poor Law Commissioners
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
S.W. Jnl.	Salisbury and Winchester Journal
T/A	Tithe Award
W.I.	Wiltshire Independent
W.R.O.	Wiltshire Record Office

INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifteen to twenty years, there has been a considerable growth of interest in the history of crime and protest. In his book, Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain, David Jones summarises the work done in this field, describing the study of crime as 'something of a boom industry' and noting that 'the relationship between crime and protest has become a major preoccupation of modern social historians'.¹

Much is owed to E.P. Thompson, and to the contributors to Douglas Hay's Albion's Fatal Tree for the work done on crime and the legal system up to the end of the eighteenth century. Historians of the nineteenth century too have examined popular protest in relation to social and economic developments. Despite this however, Jones still describes much nineteenth century rural unrest, notably that war of attrition involving the destruction of property, arson and livestock maiming, as being 'under researched'.²

Certainly many previous studies of nineteenth century rural unrest have tended to concentrate on the two peaks of agitation, namely the Swing Riots of 1830-31, and the 'Revolt of the Field' - the emergence of national agricultural trade unionism in the early 1870s. A description of the Swing Riots, 'The Last Labourers' Revolt', forms the culmination of the Hammonds' study, The Village Labourer, first published in 1911. Thereafter, work on the Riots has been extended in a number of regional studies, notably

unpublished theses by S.W. Amos on Essex, A.M. Colson on Hampshire, M. Dutt on Kent, Surrey and Sussex, and N. Gash on Berkshire. All of these were used by Hobsbawm and Rudé whose Captain Swing, published in 1969, provided a new overview of this extensive rural rising. More recently, Andrew Charlesworth has brought a new perspective to bear on the subject, by approaching it primarily from a geographer's viewpoint.

Recent interest in the development of agricultural trade unionism from the 1870s onwards, has centred on the work of J.P.D. Dunbabin whose article on the Revolt of the Field appeared in Past and Present in 1963, and of Pamela Horn, whose biography of Joseph Arch was published in 1971. There are too a number of unpublished theses which consider aspects of the 'Revolt of the Field' as it affected particular counties.³

Work on rural unrest in the intervening years from the 1830s to the end of the 1860s has been comparatively patchy. Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain, edited by Dunbabin, includes chapters on agricultural trade unionism in Oxfordshire, and Northumberland in the 1870s, and aspects of unrest in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. It includes too a chapter on Village Radicalism in East Anglia between 1800 and 1850, by A.J. Peacock. (Peacock also provides us with interesting background to our period with his book on the East Anglian riots of 1816, Bread or Blood.) East Anglia has been particularly well documented in the matter of rural disturbances, having also been covered extensively in the work of Jones, with a chapter devoted to

arson in East Anglia in Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain, as well as an article, published in Social History in 1976, on Thomas Campbell Foster's reporting of the outbreak of incendiaryism in East Anglia in the 1840s. Two of the theses already referred to, those of Amos and Colson, do place Swing unrest in the context of a broader historical span by covering respectively the periods 1790-1850 and 1812-1831. Also, two other aspects of rural unrest, the Rebecca Riots in Wales and the curious incident culminating in the Battle in Bossenden Wood in Kent, in 1838, are the subject of separate books.⁴

The years between the Swing Riots and the 'Revolt of the Field' have not therefore been ignored. There appears however to be no study which attempts to trace the development of rural unrest from the 1830s to the 1870s, while in the matter of regional work on the subject, Wiltshire too has been neglected, despite the fact that with its agricultural division between the arable 'Chalk' and dairying 'Cheese' regions, it presents a particularly interesting county for study.

This thesis considers rural crime and protest in the county from the 1830s to the early 1870s. It should be stressed that no attempt has been made to present an exhaustive breakdown of all crime in Wiltshire in this period. Rather we concentrate on those crimes which could plausibly be considered to form part of a spirit of rural discontent, as well as examining legal forms of protest. Both are placed in the context of the village community in

which they occurred. We examine first the nature of Wiltshire agriculture and some of the common features of rural society in the county throughout the period. We then consider rural crime in a broad aspect, and the extent to which it can be linked with protest, examining too the various means of law enforcement. Each of the subsequent chapters concentrates on one specific aspect or form of unrest, and within each chapter we consider that unrest in relation to particular parishes where it played a significant part.

The highly localised and often anonymous nature of much rural unrest inevitably presents some problems with source material. The bulk of information on the crimes themselves or incidents such as riots and meetings is taken from local newspaper accounts. This information is supplemented by Assize and Quarter Session records, the Home Office correspondence and papers, and collections of correspondence in the Wiltshire Record Office (for the Swing Riots), and to a limited extent, fire insurance records. The condition of the rural poor, to which this unrest is related, is based largely on Parliamentary papers, the Wiltshire Poor Law Union correspondence, various contemporary accounts and certain of the historical farm records held in the University of Reading. Additional information on particular parishes is taken from the Census Enumerator Schedules and Tithe Awards.

Inevitably, those parishes which demand closer attention in terms of the unrest which occurred there, are not necessarily the same parishes for which the richest

source material exists. On some occasions therefore, conclusions concerning a particular form of protest have been drawn from the evidence of a number of separate parishes or a larger area comprising several villages.

Another problem is that we rarely have direct evidence of the views of the rural poor themselves, so that sometimes we can only guess at the motives of those who participated in unrest or the extent to which their actions were supported or approved. The danger is that we see a single personal act as representing wider grievances where none existed. A personal interpretation of events is largely unavoidable, especially for the crime of arson, and an appendix has therefore been supplied listing all the principal information collected on each fire. Similarly, the principal events and details of Anti-Corn Law League and trade union activity have been listed separately.

While the poor were rarely afforded the opportunity to express their own feelings for posterity, those in authority over them, the landowners, farmers, clergy and police chiefs, had both the opportunity and the education to ensure their views were recorded. The problem here is to avoid the imbalance in the evidence affecting our views of society, either by accepting at face value the blanket condemnation of those who participated in unrest by those who sought to justify their own vastly superior standard of living, or conversely to romanticise the rebels of rural society while dismissing the possibly genuine concern of their masters as mere hypocrisy.

We find, in fact, that nineteenth century rural society was made up of a highly intricate web of diverse

social relationships and conditions, creating a pattern of unrest considerably more complex than might at first have been anticipated, and one which frequently defies easy generalisation. A number of common denominators or 'variations on a theme' do however emerge. The prevailing problem which beset the rural population of many southern and eastern counties of England, among them Wiltshire, was the enormous seasonal fluctuations in employment, and the fact that many labourers spent long periods of the year without work. Grievances stemming from the precarious state of subsistence lay behind much unrest in the period, and the labourers' employment prospects at any one time certainly played a crucial role in determining the form which protest took. Hence the comparative fortunes of agricultural activities and the availability of alternative employment were important factors in determining the nature of unrest. The more populous 'open' parishes where the numbers of unemployed might form a significant body were often the centres of rural unrest throughout the period, and the occupational diversity of these communities was a fertile ground for political radicals. The proximity of manufacturing interests too appears to have channelled rural unrest into a political sphere, reflecting the greater sophistication which protest had achieved in manufacturing as opposed to agricultural communities. The nature of agricultural activity also seems to have influenced the aspirations of the protesters. The desire for land was far more marked in the 'Cheese' where the possibility of a labourer setting up as a small farmer was considerably more

of a reality than in the arable 'Chalk'.

The stance taken by those who effectively controlled the lives of the labouring poor was also crucial in determining the extent and nature of unrest, although it is not easily summarised. In spite of the spirit of innovation and improvement which is considered to be so much a feature of nineteenth century agriculture, we find that the paternalist society remained intact in many places. Perhaps an explanatory note should be recorded here concerning our definition of paternalist and benevolent landowners. The terms are used to define not an unqualified philanthropist but a landowner who was prepared to take an active interest in those who looked to him for help, and who, according to the circumstances might adopt a combination of rewarding the compliant, punishing the rebellious or driving away the unwanted.

Where such a landowner was absent, there were often the conditions in which the lone, rural terrorist was most likely to predominate. In such parishes, although bodies of labourers might seek redress for their grievances from outside by appealing to local magistrates at Petty Sessions, within the parish itself protest was expressed primarily in the form of arson or cattle maiming. A resident landowner, on the other hand, might go a considerable way to offsetting or modifying unrest. Paradoxically, however, such a landowner could be said too, positively to encourage a spirit of protest, especially in the more populous parishes and at times when conditions were ripe for some form of action.

In particular, the adoption of organised protest often occurred under one of three broad sets of circumstances. Firstly, by renting their land to wealthy, improving tenants, landowners created the type of agriculture which ensured a yawning gulf between them and their workforce, and which resulted in that sense of clear class identity which appeared to be so conducive, for instance, to the formation of strong trade union branches. It is notable that on the 'Chalk' in particular, where farms were on the whole larger than on the 'Cheese', even organised forms of protest were inclined to be far more militant and 'class conscious'.

Secondly, the landowner could be seen to represent an accessible fountainhead of power and patronage, who might by concerted action (sometimes involving the farmers), be persuaded or coerced into taking action to change an existing set of conditions. Hence, in the Swing Riots, not all the parishes dominated by great landowners remained untouched by unrest, and it appeared that farmers sometimes used their labourers to influence the landowner on the matter of rents and tithes. The majority of subsequent strikes too seemed to be partially directed at the landowner. The aristocracy and more influential gentry were more likely to respond favourably to the labourers if their case was put peaceably. In potentially violent and widespread unrest such as the Swing Riots, such landowners were particularly conscious of the need to defend the existing social order and were less likely to risk giving the impression that they were giving way to intimidation than the lesser gentry.

Thirdly (and probably most rarely), the landowners, by adopting a position which looked beyond the narrow self-interest of the farmer, or by showing tolerance of unorthodox views, allowed the labourers to express their grievances openly. During the Swing Riots, magistrates in some areas appeared to offset unrest by recommending that farmers should increase wages, and as a result rioting and machine breaking were avoided only to result in subsequent strike action when the promised wage rise did not materialise. Anti-Corn Law League activity flourished in an area under the domination of one of the largest aristocratic landowners in the county, namely Lord Lansdowne, and in the same area, agricultural trade unionism made comparatively early headway under direct encouragement from a member of the same aristocratic family.

As well as this picture of rural protest as determined by diverse local factors, we aim too to present a picture of the chronological development of protest. A sufficient number of parishes were involved in more than one type of protest to show that many individual communities were not either inherently lawless or inherently peaceable. Rather, common grievances lay at the root of much protest which was expressed in different ways according to the prevailing economic, political or social circumstances.

Swing unrest, although sometimes violent, showed a considerable degree of organisation, and each incident formed part of a comparatively coherent widespread movement. Subsequent protest in its isolated, anonymous, criminal forms therefore marked something of a backward step,

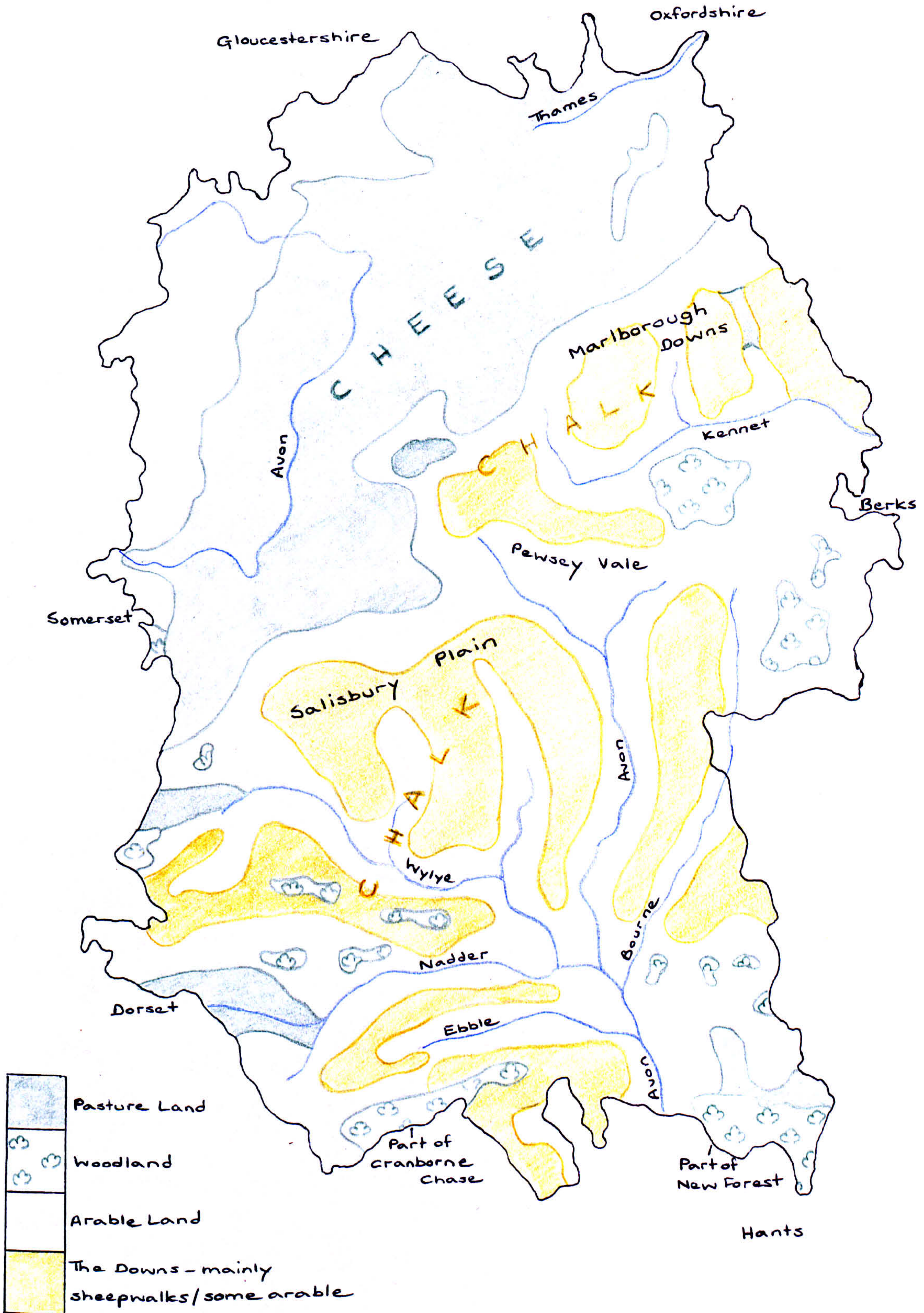
even when as a form of intimidation, it might have achieved the aims of its perpetrators, for it bore witness to the extent to which the labourers' bargaining power had been crushed. Side by side with this anonymous tradition, more organised and open protest struggled feebly on in the form of occasional strikes, deputations of labourers to Petty Sessions, petitions and meetings. The period which saw the introduction of the new poor law was perhaps the period when the two traditions ran closest in harness. The grievances of the poor were focused on a common target to a greater extent than any time since the Swing Riots, although their bargaining position was probably even worse and they were less likely to be supported by the farmers. It was comparatively common therefore for the two forms of protest to go hand in hand in the same parishes, notably Urchfont, Bromham, West Lavington, Christian Malford, Wroughton and Wootton Bassett where, for a short period between 1833 and 1835, open and organised protests were punctuated by incendiary fires and attacks on livestock. Thereafter the traditions diverged more sharply, with organised collective protest often being a very feeble force until the 1870s.

Although much protest shared common roots, the leading protagonists in the underground and collective traditions of protest appeared to have little or no connection. Within each tradition however, there were some notable links; rioters and poachers became arsonists, while petitioners became free trade supporters, and speakers at Anti-Corn Law League meetings turned up later in trade

union activity.

The study of nineteenth century rural crime and protest to date has certainly tended to point in the direction suggested in this introduction; that is, to the influence of highly localised conditions on the extent of much unrest, and to the existence of different traditions of protest, the relative position of which depended on broader economic and political circumstances. It is attempted here to trace and illustrate this process in detail.

Sketch Map of Land Use in Wiltshire



I: THE AGRICULTURE AND THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE
OF WILTSHIRE, 1830-1875

Agriculture and Landownership

Wiltshire may be divided into two distinct agricultural regions known usually as the 'Chalk' and the 'Cheese'. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the agricultural writers who studied the county, notably Thomas Davis, William Marshall, Edward Little and James Caird,⁵ all considered the 'Chalk' to be the more important and prosperous of the two.

The 'Chalk' comprises most of the south and east of the county with the exception of a small region of 'butter country' on the borders of Dorset and Somerset south of Mere, and an area of forest and pasture land in the extreme south-east where the New Forest overlaps into Wiltshire. The 'Chalk' takes its name from the chalk and flint soils of the Marlborough Downs and the Salisbury Plain which make up most of the region. Apart from the chalk downs however, the region includes some very fertile sand veins. One such vein starts near Mere in the south-west and follows the north foot of the Downs to meet the most fertile soil of all in the Pewsey Vale, while another follows the River Nadder from Shaftesbury in Dorset as far east as Burcombe.

In the nineteenth century, the 'Chalk' was principally sheep and corn country. Arable crops included wheat, barley, oats and turnips, with potatoes too on the

sandy soils. Sheep were acknowledged to be the basis of south Wiltshire husbandry, and sheep-folding remained the most important method of manuring throughout this period. The fact that many small farmers during the period of land enclosure often took an allotment of arable in lieu of downland contributed in many cases to their ruin, there being no artificial manures at this time to act as an adequate replacement for sheep dung.⁶

The narrow river valleys which intersect the downs were famous at the beginning of the nineteenth century for their water meadows. 'There is perhaps no part of this kingdom where the system of watering meadows is so well understood and carried to such great perfection as in this district', wrote Davis in 1794.⁷ Water meadows comprised some 20,000 acres of land, and produced an early crop of grass to facilitate the breeding of lambs, after which a hay crop was taken to feed ewes and dairy cows. The meadows were rather less important by the time Little was writing in 1845 however, mainly due to the introduction of Italian rye grass which provided a cheaper alternative food for lambs. This allowed a larger number of sheep to be reared than in Davis's time, and it also meant that in some places more dairy cows were kept in the water meadows.

As a result of the large amount of downland, the settlements of this region tended to grow up along the river valleys: 'Nestling among the green meadows ... are the farm houses and the labourers' cottages, the parish church, and sometimes the well-wooded park and the mansion of the lord of the surrounding manor'.⁸ But being thus

situated for the conveniency of water, farms and cottages were 'frequently inconveniently situated for the occupation of land'.⁹ Many labourers on the 'Chalk' had to walk long distances to their field work, thus adding considerably to the length of their working day.¹⁰

The downs themselves were bare and unsheltered, and were rarely divided by hedges and fences, at least in the first half of the century. Indeed it was difficult to grow hedges on such exposed land, but it was felt that they were not necessary anyway since the sheep were folded every night and attended by a shepherd during the day. On many 'Chalk' farms therefore there was 'no resource of employment in hedging, ditching and draining',¹¹ a fact which exacerbated winter unemployment among the labourers here.

More than 95% of Wiltshire had been enclosed by the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, and by the 1850s the amount of land still to be enclosed had dwindled to 3,000 acres of 'waste'.¹² In the 'Chalk', enclosure appears to have led to a better use of the soil, and the result of the consolidation of land was that farm rentals increased considerably, tending to bring in a wealthier class of tenant. This was a region of rich and extensive farmers, the average farm size being between 400 and 1,000 acres, with some farms as large as 2,000 acres. In 1833, one Wiltshire land-surveyor said of south Wiltshire, 'The estates are large, and no county that I know is better cultivated, and I think the Wiltshire farmers ... are men of more capital than they are in any other county'.¹³ Among the large estates on the 'Chalk' were those of the Earls of

Pembroke and Radnor, the Marquises of Bath and Ailesbury, and the Watson-Taylor family of Erlestoke Park.¹⁴

It was largely because arable farmers were men of such wealth and influence that so much attention was given to their complaints concerning the effect of the fall in corn prices after 1813, following the wartime boom years. Their alacrity to give evidence to the Board of Agriculture's Enquiry into the Agricultural State of the Kingdom in 1816,¹⁵ for instance, encouraged the view that agricultural depression was universal, although in fact, as subsequent research has shown, the period 1813 to 1836 was not one of such general recession as might once have been thought.¹⁶ Nevertheless many farmers on the 'Chalk' were forced to cut back to some extent on their farming operations in these years, employing less labour, allowing buildings to fall into disrepair and generally not taking the same steps to improve the productivity of the land as formerly. Some unsuitable land which had been broken up for arable during the Napoleonic Wars when the price of corn had warranted the effort, was now allowed to fall out of use again.¹⁷ However, by 1870, 30% of the county was still devoted to growing corn, a considerable proportion considering the pastures of the 'Cheese' and the large amount of downland devoted to sheep in the 'Chalk'.¹⁸ It was not to be wondered at that the arable farmers were anxious to protect their interest in corn cultivation. Their investment was protected by means of the 1815 Corn Law (which was subsequently modified in 1822 and again in 1828). The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, however, did little to damage the English arable farmer, and it was

not until the 1870s that imports of cheap foreign grain, especially from the American prairies, began seriously to undercut the home grower. In Wiltshire, the ensuing depression seriously damaged the fortunes of the 'Chalk'. Until then, however, this region remained the dominant area of Wiltshire agriculture.

The 'Cheese' region makes up most of the remainder of Wiltshire, with the exception of an area of arable 'Cotswold country' in the extreme north-west of the county. However, since the land here was said to be wet and heavy and consequently difficult to crop, it was increasingly turned over to pasture during the nineteenth century. Davis for instance noted this trend as early as 1794.¹⁹

The soils of the 'Cheese' are rather more complex than those of the 'Chalk', being a mixture of clays, gravels, and sands. The sand veins here are less fertile than those of the south. The gravels and clays, on the other hand, are generally of very good quality, and the area included, in Cobbett's estimation, some of the richest pastures in all England.²⁰ Farmers here rarely took the trouble to prepare water meadows along the river valleys since the land was believed to be 'good enough already'.²¹

This was a land of dairy farms. Indeed, the prevalence of dairying here surprised some commentators; 'Although this district varies so much, apparently, in soil and situation ... it is amazing how strong the predilection is to the dairy, and particularly to the making of cheese, in every part of it', wrote Davis.²² By the end of the

eighteenth century, the cheese of North Wiltshire, although formerly sold as Gloucestershire cheese, was famous for its quality, and generally considered to be superior to the cheese of Wiltshire's neighbours. Despite the prominence of dairying, the grazing of cattle was also an important activity, especially on the banks of the Thames and the Avon, and pigs too were kept as an ancillary to dairying, being fattened on whey and other dairy offal.

The 'rich and luxuriant appearance' of the 'Cheese',²³ with its numerous and often very small enclosures, and great quantity of hedgerows, presented a sharp contrast to the 'Chalk'. The geography of this region did not necessitate the same crowding of villages down the river valleys as it did on the 'Chalk', and settlement was therefore more scattered with farmhouses generally being positioned in the most convenient part of the farm, and cottages not always huddled together in villages.

Farms were smaller than those on the 'Chalk', the average size being anything between 50 and 500 acres. Hence, although much of the region was made up of large estates, including those of the Dukes of Beaufort and Marlborough and the Marquis of Lansdowne, land tenure was more divided than it was on the 'Chalk', accommodating the tenant who might not be able to provide the same kind of capital outlay on machinery as his counterpart in arable farming. Much of the land was leased out in yearly tenancies. At the end of the eighteenth century there had been some increase in the number of owner-occupiers, in the north of the county in particular, but in Molland's estimation,

small family farms still formed only 20% of the total landownership of the county by the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁴

The larger number of farmers in the 'Cheese' meant that enclosure had presented more legal difficulties here than in the 'Chalk'. Nevertheless, approximately three-quarters of this region was enclosed by the seventeenth century. But although enclosure was generally completed earlier than in the 'Chalk', improvements were slower to follow. In 1850 Caird described the region as being in 'a very primitive state of husbandry'.²⁵ The main problem was one of drainage in an area 'naturally wet and deep'.²⁶ By 1843 all that existed to solve this problem were trenches to carry off surface water, earlier attempts at more thorough drainage having failed some years earlier due to the drains being laid at insufficient depth. By Caird's time many landowners had woken up to the need for improved draining, and supplied pipes to their tenants. But once again the work of laying the pipes was not always done efficiently, especially when it was left to the tenant's discretion.²⁷

By the 1870s however the 'Cheese' was beginning to improve its status in comparison with the 'Chalk'. Certain factors had been developing in its favour since the 1840s. In particular the fortuitous siting of the Great Western Railway Depot at Swindon meant that liquid milk products could now be sent quickly and profitably to the large London market, and increasingly this trade superseded the production of North Wiltshire cheese. With the improvements in living standards, especially diet, in the last

quarter of the nineteenth century, the meat and dairy products of this region found themselves increasingly in demand. Thus the fortunes of the 'Cheese' were almost the exact reverse of those of the 'Chalk' which now began to suffer from cheap imports in a more competitive market.

These general comments on Wiltshire agriculture should not be allowed to obscure the fact that in reality there was a complex pattern of agricultural activity and a great variety of soil types. Soil maps are very complicated to produce, and it was for this reason that Davis, among other writers of Board of Agriculture reports, resorted instead to making land-use maps.²⁸ The map at the beginning of this chapter is based on Davis's map.

In subsequent chapters, a number of parishes will be examined in greater detail, and the diversity of land use and ownership will become clearer. The following tables however illustrate here some of the differences between the two regions, and also the complex structure of ownership and occupation which existed in both. The information is taken from the Tithe Awards for 'typical' 'Chalk' and 'Cheese' parishes, Downton and Hilmarton; (there is, of course, a limit to which any parish may be termed 'typical'; Downton in fact overlaps into the New Forest and is not even totally 'Chalk'). Both parishes will be considered in more detail in Chapters III and V respectively.

The Tithe Awards were made following the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act when the traditional tithe, based on a tenth of agricultural produce, was converted into a money rent. Tithe maps and apportionments represent the first

large-scale survey of the land since Domesday, although their use is sometimes limited by the fact that they are not complete or that only a small area of the parish was tithable.²⁹

Downton is, of course, a considerably larger parish than Hilmarton, and had a more diverse occupational structure. Nevertheless the tables clearly illustrate how much larger farms on the 'Chalk' tended to be. Thomas Poynder, the largest landowner in Hilmarton was a man of considerable property, owning 5,893 acres in 1873. He could not, however, compare with the Earl of Radnor in influence and wealth (Radnor's property amounted to 17,173 acres in 1873).³⁰ The majority of occupiers in both parishes were tenants rather than owner-occupiers; the number of small tradesmen in the large village of Downton itself accounts for most of the smaller occupiers here (i.e. of thirty acres or less).

Table 1: Downton: Summary of Principal Land Holdings in
Tithe Award of 1840

Arable	5848 acres	Orchards	93 acres
Meadow	896 acres	Common, pasture	2875 acres
Water meadow	416 acres	Wood	520 acres
Gardens	187 acres		

Total of 11,896 acres covered by Award

OWNERS	Approx. acreage	OCCUPIERS	Approx. acreage
William Pleydell		Jonathan Taunton*	1925
Bouverie, Earl of		Thomas Maton*	1182
Radnor	4009	George W. Cheyney*	777
Robert Eden		Robert E.D. Shafto	732
Duncombe Shafto	1002	William Street*	713
Executors of Earl		William Westcott	
Thomas Nelson	999	Atkinson*	675
George Matcham	737	William Tamlyn*	639
George Matcham and		William H. Tinney	375
Guardians of Earl		William Andrews*	372
Hoartio Nelson	723	Earl Radnor	357
Guardians of Earl		James Read*	313
Horatio Nelson	464	William Maton*	311
Joseph Goff	628	Jacob Gwyer*	290
Frederick Webb	545	James Cooper*	270
William H. Tinney	375	James Wapshare	262
Mrs Henrietta		Silas Benjafield*	209
Shuckburgh	272	Joseph Goff	201
James Wapshare	262	George Newman*	190
John G. Bailey	236	William Gay*	185
George Newman	190	Bishop of Winchester	181
Bishop of Winchester	181	George Manning*	171
Countess Frances		George Matcham	170
Elizabeth Nelson	162	William P. Shuckburgh*	165
Jonathan Taunton	82	Peggy Gwyer*	137
James Shelley	32	Joseph Nicholas*	109
Ralph Fanstone	30	Henrietta Shuckburgh	35
James Kernish	29	Frederick Webb*	57
James Ingram	26	Jacob Manning*	35
John Street	22	William and Joseph	
		Batten*	33
<u>Average</u>	<u>524</u>	Countess Frances	
		Elizabeth Nelson	34
		James Shelley	32
		James Kernish	29
		James Ingram	26
		Samuel Eldridge*	27
		John Street	22
		John Andrews*	21
		<u>Average</u>	<u>312</u>

* denotes occupier is a tenant

(Source: W.R.O., T/A Downton cum Bodenham)

Table 2: Hilmarton: Summary of Principal Land Holdings
in Tithe Award of 1842

Arable	1548 acres	Houses	65 acres
Meadow	2318 acres	Waste	34 acres
Wood	177 acres	Glebe	6 acres
Orchard	16 acres		

Total of 4182 acres covered by Award

OWNERS	Approx. acreage	OCCUPIERS	Approx. acreage
Thomas Poynder	970	Robert and Samuel Stiles*	562
John Crook (lease- hold from Magdalene College, Oxford)	493	John Crook	493
Madame Anne de Bolleville	443	John Large	334
Provost and Fellows of Worcester College, Oxford	356	James Large	302
John Large	334	Jasper Rumboll	
Edward Stiles	321	Maskelyne*	251
James Large	302	Daniel Vines*	235
Lady Grace Elizabeth Neate	251	Christopher Beavens*	234
Jane Thring	234	Henry Hunt*	229
Jacob Henly	134	Edward Jeffereys*	199
Brian Rumboll	122	James Lawrence*	142
James Bewlay	82	Jacob Henly	134
Samuel W. Neate	67	Thomas Crump*	128
Mary Hopkins	14	John Godwin*	128
<u>Average</u>	<u>294</u>	James Rumming*	122
		Madame Anne de Bolleville	107
		Elizabeth Jeffereys*	102
		Luke Eatell*	101
		James Bewlay	82
		Mary Harris*	67
		John Pinniger*	51
		Thomas Poynder	37
		Elizabeth Rivers*	25
		Jonas Hunt*	22
		Elizabeth Pourney*	4
		<u>Average</u>	<u>170</u>

* denotes occupier is a tenant.

(Source: W.R.O., T/A Hilmarton)

Before concluding this section on land use and ownership, additional mention should be made of the enclosure movement and its effect on the rural poor. As we have seen, the vast majority of enclosures in Wiltshire were completed by 1815. The writings of John Clare among other contemporaries, encouraged a belief that Parliamentary enclosure was responsible for destroying a prosperous peasantry and depopulating the countryside by driving its inhabitants to the industrial towns. But enclosure was a process which had begun long before the Parliamentary Enclosure Acts - indeed in some areas of England, land had never passed through an open field stage. In Wiltshire, Parliamentary enclosure dealt with only about one in four acres (although this rose to one in two acres in parts of the 'Chalk').³¹

There certainly does appear to have been a decline in the number of owners of land in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, especially in the 'Chalk', but the decline was not a direct result of enclosure.³² It is also generally agreed that enclosure, by improving the standard of cultivation actually increased the demand for agricultural labour rather than driving away the rural population. Writing in 1794 of the north-west of Wiltshire where agricultural standards were considered to be inferior to those of the 'Chalk', Davis commented, 'so little manual labour is done to the uninclosed land, in its present state, that every alteration that has improvement for its object, must increase manual labour and, of course, the number of labourers'.³³

There is no evidence to show that the agricultural labourer in this period blamed enclosure for his condition, although earlier in the century there had been some manifestations of popular discontent connected with enclosure, for instance in Ramsbury in 1800.³⁴ After 1830, enclosure awards were made in only a handful of Wiltshire parishes,³⁵ and in no case was unrest linked either with the date of the act or the award.

In some cases Parliamentary enclosure awards compensated the agricultural labourer by promoting allotment schemes. Following the 1806 Enclosure Act in Broad Somerford, the Reverend Stephen Demainbray was offered a liberal allotment of land in lieu of tithes. Demainbray took this opportunity to lay down certain conditions regarding the cottagers and squatters who had settled on the commons due to be enclosed:

Every poor man whose cottage was situated on the commons or waste land, should have his garden, orchard, or little enclosure, taken from the waste within the last twenty years, confirmed to him; and that in case the same did not amount to the half acre, it should be increased to that quantity, by allotting a portion of land ... to the rector, churchwarden, and overseer, for the time being, who should annually let the same to each poor cottager free of rent and taxes, by which clause the allotment was secured from alienation ... In addition to which, 8 acres were allotted to the rector, churchwarden etc. adjoining to the village, for the benefit of its poor inhabitants, to be annually allowed them, according to the number of their respective families. 36

Similarly in Potterne, following an enclosure act of 1824, the ownership of the enclosed commons was vested in the Bishop of Salisbury, and the vicar and churchwardens were made trustees of the land and required to lease it in

small holdings to the poor.³⁷ Another scheme was devised by a Wiltshire magistrate. He described how, following the enclosure in 1820 of a hundred acres of heath on his estate (probably near Malmesbury), the Enclosure Commissioners advised him to set aside eight acres for the poor. Allotments of up to half an acre were rented out both to cottagers on his estate and to those from neighbouring villages. The magistrate claimed that the potatoes grown on these allotments enabled many families to keep pigs, something which they had not formerly been able to do.³⁸

Thus in some parishes at least provision was made by the enclosers for the resident poor. In several cases allotment schemes set up as a result of enclosure allowed a small parcel of land to those who had previously had no land at all, and these schemes were widely copied in the county in the 1820s and 1830s as we shall see. The advantage to the labourer of an allotment in his struggle to eke out a living in the countryside had the effect of increasing his ties to the land rather than driving him to the town.

Population Trends and Occupational Structure

Throughout the period 1830 to 1875 more men in Wiltshire were employed in agriculture than any other occupation. In 1831 24,708 adult males (i.e. over the age of twenty) were employed as agricultural labourers, representing 42.6% of the total adult male population. A more

detailed breakdown may be calculated from the 1841 Census onwards. The tables overpage classify the occupied population of the county for the four Census years from 1841 to 1871 into nine broad categories. They are based on occupational subdivisions devised by Charles Booth for Life and Labour of the People of London, as modified by Dr W.A.

Armstrong.³⁹ Within each of the nine categories are numerous subdivisions, and the tables also identify the most important subdivisions in the manufacturing category in Wiltshire.

Between 1801 and 1831 the population of Wiltshire had increased by 29%, and growth continued after 1831 although at a slower and fluctuating rate:

Total Population of Wiltshire

1831	237,244
1841	256,280
1851	254,221
1861	249,311
1871	257,177

This increase in population, which although considerable was by no means as great as many other southern counties, especially over the period 1801 to 1831, could not be absorbed by the agricultural labour market where employment anyway was of a seasonal nature. The agricultural employment situation became critical after 1815 and the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars which brought a flood of demobilised soldiers onto the labour market. Chronic structural unemployment and underemployment was the root cause of rural poverty and unrest for much of this period, for as Table 3

Table 3: Occupational Structure of the Wiltshire
Population 1841-1871

Occupational group	Percentage of male occupied population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ (Fishing)	48.9	52.3	51.3	43.1
Mining	0.3	0.8	1.2	1.5
Building	7.3	7.7	9.0	9.6
Manufacture (including sub- divisions 18-22: Textiles & Dyeing 23 & 24: Dress)	19.2 (6.0) (5.1)	19.0 (5.3) (4.8)	18.8 (4.0) (4.2)	19.5 (3.6) (3.6)
Transport	1.4	2.4	2.4	2.7
Dealing	4.6	5.0	5.5	6.5
Industrial Service	10.5	6.3	4.8	10.1
Public Service/ Professional	3.0	3.8	3.9	4.1
Domestic Service	4.8	2.7	3.0	3.0

Occupational group	Percentage of female occupied population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ (Fishing)	15.2	26.7	18.8	13.5
Mining	-	-	-	-
Building	0.2	-	0.1	-
Manufacture (including sub- divisions 18-22: Textiles & Dyeing 23 & 24: Dress)	24.4 (16.1) (7.3)	29.0 (15.7) (12.1)	29.0 (14.1) (13.4)	27.0 (13.0) (12.2)
Transport	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.3
Dealing	2.5	4.2	3.3	4.7
Industrial Service	2.2	0.5	0.6	1.2
Public Service/ Professional	2.6	3.7	5.4	5.6
Domestic Service	52.6	35.4	42.4	47.7

Source: P.P., 1844 (587.) XXVII; 1852-53, LXXXVIII, Part I; 1863, LIII, Part II; 1873, LXXI, Part I.

shows, the proportion of the population employed in agriculture continued to rise until 1851, and even when the tide did turn, the decline was very slow. 'The land must bear the burden of a population not required for its cultivation', wrote Caird in 1850,⁴⁰ and eighteen years later the Parliamentary Assistant Commissioner, F.H. Norman could still report that, 'the labour market in Wiltshire has of late years been, and is now, overstocked and ... the wages in that county have consequently been low'.⁴¹

Labour demands varied according to the type of agriculture and the season. They were also, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, very dependent upon the profitability of agriculture at any one time and the confidence of the farmer. As Robert Hughes, a Wiltshire witness before the Select Committee on Agriculture in 1833 explained:

The surplus labourers have very much increased indeed, from the want of capital and confidence in the farmer ... for the moment a farmer gets into distress he endeavours to reduce his expenses, and he throws every labourer he can spare out of employment. 42

Some landowners and farmers felt a deeper sense of obligation towards their workforce than others, and where they had the necessary capital they would make the effort to keep the labourers employed. Others either lacked the wherewithal to do this or simply felt no compunction. For instance, it was said of one Charlton farmer in 1845 that:

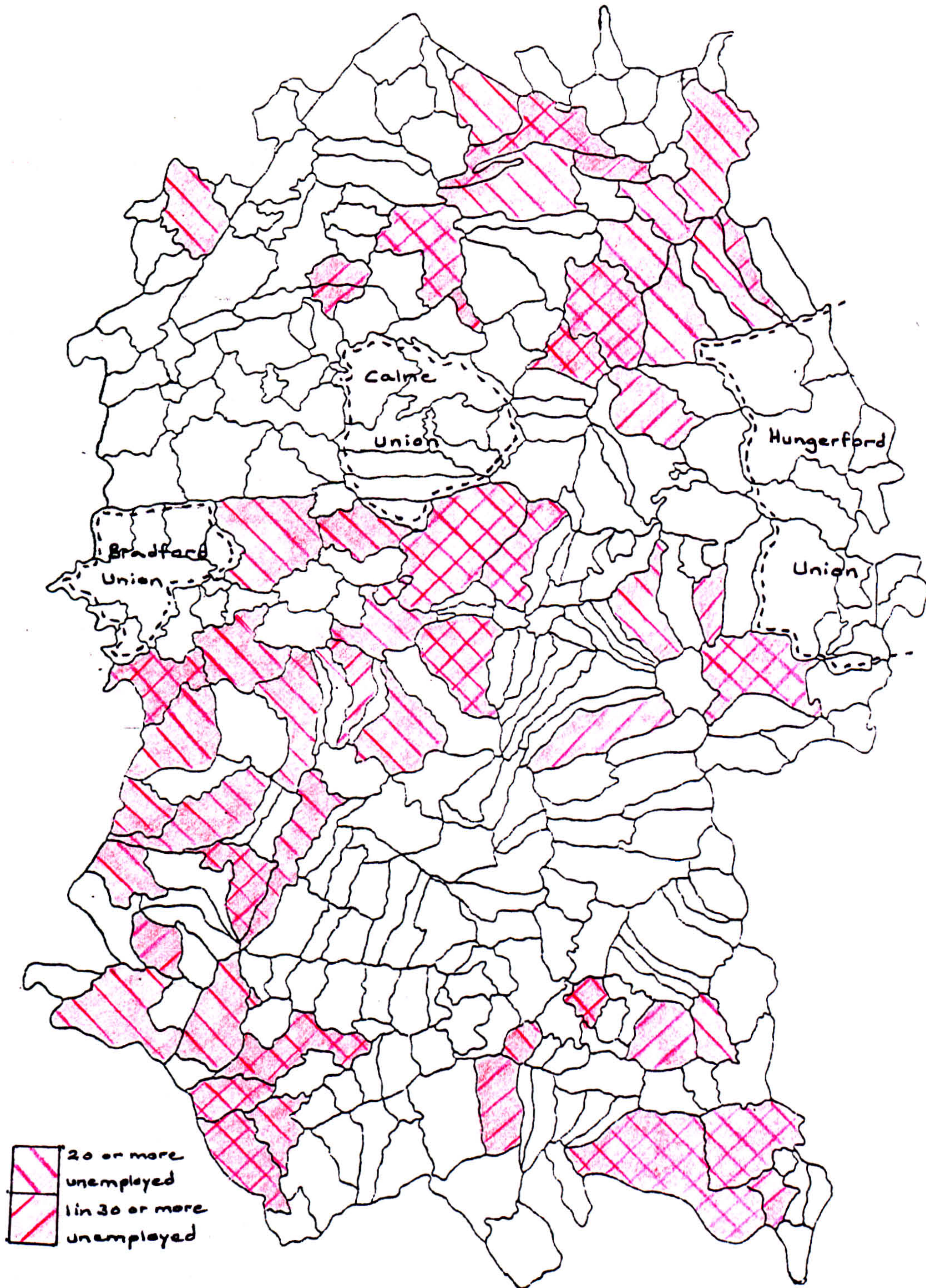
He did with his labourers as he did with his potatoes. He did not keep all the potatoes out for use every day, and he did not, like some farmers try to find work for the men all

the year round. When he did not need them he put them in the workhouse until they were needed.⁴³

During haymaking and harvest there was often an overall shortage of labour in the southern counties, while in the winter months thousands were thrown on the parish. 'There are no surplus labourers, generally speaking, in the summer months', asserted Hughes in 1833; November to March were the months when many labourers were redundant.⁴⁴

When the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Colonel A'Court, was establishing the new Poor Law Unions in 1835 and 1836 he compiled information showing the amount of winter unemployment in many Wiltshire parishes. (Unfortunately no information is available for the Bradford, Calne and Hungerford Unions.) This information is reproduced in the table at Appendix A. On this evidence it can be shown that at the minimum (i.e. taking the lower figure of the estimate for each parish and bearing in mind that not all the parishes in these Unions supplied the information), 2,806 men or 5½% of the adult male population in those Unions accounted for could expect to be thrown out of work in the winter months. Unemployment was more chronic in some parishes than others. The map overpage shows those parishes where the unemployed formed a particularly high proportion of the population and those parishes where there was a large body of unemployed labourers to be found (although not necessarily forming an unusually high proportion of the population). Many of these parishes experienced considerable unrest in this period, and will be considered in greater detail in the course of this study.

Winter Unemployment in the Early 1830's



Labour demands also varied according to the nature of agricultural occupation. Since 'the simple operation of making cheese causes a less demand for labour than the constant preparation of the land for a succession of agricultural crops',⁴⁵ it was generally the case that more labourers were employed to the acre on arable land than in pasture. The usual estimate was one man employed to every fifty acres of pasture, one to every thirty acres of arable and one to every three hundred acres of downland.⁴⁶ During the summer months it was quite usual for agricultural and textile workers from the 'Cheese' to 'beat out' to other parishes, often in the 'Chalk', where there was more work available and more money to be earned. 'They go out of our neighbourhood to get 40 or 50 acres of corn instead of having only 10 or 12 with us; then they come back and throw themselves upon our parishes for employment during the winter months', complained one 'Cheese' farmer in the 1840s.⁴⁷

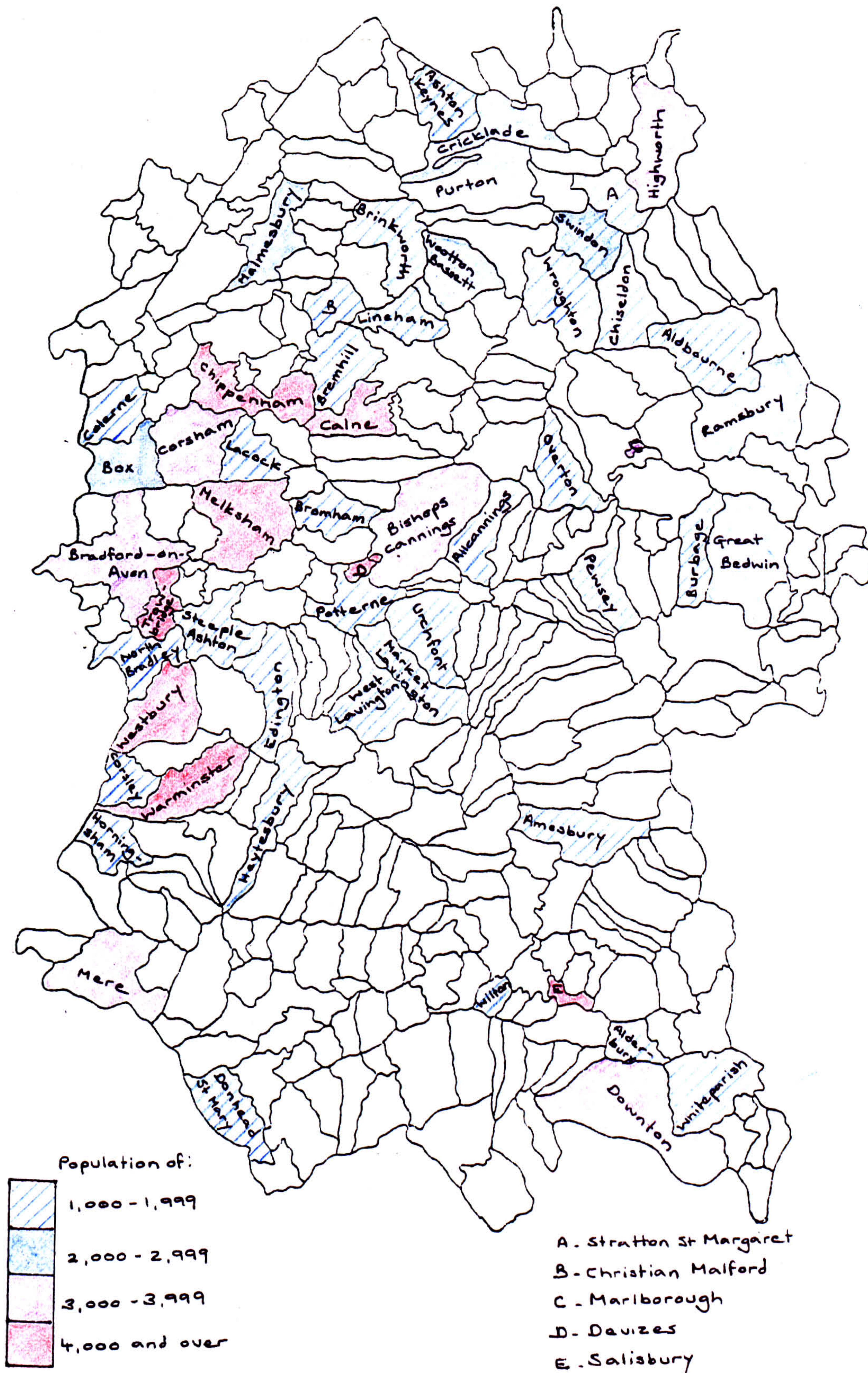
'Job labourers' or 'taskers', as these people were known, were common from the Calne, Chippenham and Swindon and Highworth areas. Although employment was comparatively plentiful in the summer months, 'outcomers' were nevertheless deeply resented in those parishes where they sought work. Two threatening letters received by farmers in Dauntsey and Figcheldean in 1831 and 1855 respectively bear witness to this resentment.⁴⁸

There appear to have been very few Irish immigrants seeking agricultural work in Wiltshire in this period; as Barbara Kerr writes, they 'avoided Dorset and

Wiltshire where they recognised poverty equal to their own'.⁴⁹ Those few who did venture into the county also seem to have met with resentment. In one incident in Charlton, in August 1830, for instance, a number of Irish reapers were turned out of a local pub one afternoon by the landlord who considered they had drunk sufficient beer. The Irish started to throw stones at the door of the house, and 'the noise they made attracted a number of men from the adjoining fields of the village to the spot, who sallied forth, thrashed each of them well and drove them from the place'.⁵⁰ Irish immigrant labour was used in some force in the building of the Great Western Railway, but there is little evidence of this arousing antagonism among the native population, perhaps because the railways represented an area of growth in employment.

The practice of 'beating out' was synonymous with a fast declining way of life in the English countryside of families subsisting on agriculture in the summer months and some form of manufacture, usually textile manufacture, during the winter.⁵¹ Hence 'beating out' was usual in areas surrounding the textile manufacturing towns of west Wiltshire. Woollens were manufactured in a string of towns and villages stretching from Warminster to Malmesbury, with Chippenham, Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon and Westbury being the most important. In addition, fustian-cotton was manufactured at Aldbourne using locally grown flax. Linen was made at Mere, and silk and crape at Devizes. The map overpage shows that these towns and their environs were the most densely populated areas of the county.

Population Density in 1841



This industry still provided a supplement to the wages of the agricultural labourer's family as well as employment for those who were exclusively textile workers. A great deal of this work was done by outwork, i.e. in the workers' own cottages, and only a small proportion was done in workshops in the towns. At Clarks of Trowbridge for instance, only preparatory work for spinning and certain finishing processes were performed in the factory, at the beginning of the century.⁵²

Textile manufacturing did much to boost the standard of living of the 'Cheese' labourer, in particular, at the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1794 Davis wrote, 'there will probably be, in future, more complaint for want of labourers, than for want of work to employ them in, especially in the neighbourhood of the manufacturing town'.⁵³ He went on to warn however that 'if the employ which women and children have hitherto had, in spinning for the cloth manufactories, should be lost, by the introduction of machinery to do that work', then either some other mode of employment should be found for them or 'the families of the labouring poor must fall on the poor rates'.⁵⁴

The years immediately after the Napoleonic Wars were described as 'a high water mark' in the prosperity of the textile manufactories of the west of England.⁵⁵ Decline, or at best stagnation, had set in by 1820 however, in Wiltshire, with increasing unemployment among handloom weavers. 1826 was a particularly depressed year and drove many manufacturers to the wall, especially in Bradford-on-Avon. In Table 3 showing occupational structure (on page

34), the gradual decline in the proportion of the population employed in textiles and dyeing may be clearly seen. This decline was not uniform in its effects however, and the plight of the textile worker was worse in some years than others. In 1826 for instance, William Cobbett saw 'thirty or more men digging a great field', between Warminster and Westbury, in return for 9d a day poor relief. The men were said to be chiefly spinners and weavers from Westbury, Bradford and Trowbridge.⁵⁶

There was some upturn in the industry's fortunes in the next few years, notably in Trowbridge, and the failure of the textile workers to join forces with the agricultural Swing rioters in 1830 was attributed to their being 'pretty generally well employed'.⁵⁷ Throughout the 1830s weavers' wages were considerably higher than those of agricultural labourers.⁵⁸ Trowbridge and Chippenham appear to have suffered a less drastic decline than Bradford, Calne and Westbury. Broadcloth manufacture was still said to be prospering in Chippenham in the early 1850s.⁵⁹ In the parish of Broughton Gifford, between Melksham and Bradford, one third of the population was still engaged in hand-loom weaving in 1867.⁶⁰ But despite pockets of activity, Caird painted a gloomy picture in 1850 of 'a decayed manufacturing population, among whom handloom weaving and pillow lace working still keep a languid existence'.⁶¹

The unemployed textile worker did not necessarily threaten the agricultural labourer by taking his work from him; it was said that 'the employment of manufacturers seems to unfit them for the labours of the field',⁶² and

that the unemployed weaver was 'not held in much estimation as a farm labourer'.⁶³ Obviously some textile workers did turn to farm labour; one former factory worker from Calne had been employed as an agricultural labourer in Cherhill for some years when his wife was interviewed by the Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner, Alfred Austin, in 1843. The change in employment had cost him a cut of at least 2s a week in wages.⁶⁴

The presence of unemployed textile workers in any numbers had a depressing effect on the economy of that area by putting a burden on the poor rates and dragging down wage rates. Moreover the loss of spinning in particular as out-work for the labourers' wives was a serious blow, and meant that women were increasingly driven to take what field work they could in order to supplement the family earnings, although in so doing they often undercut the men by taking lower wages. We should note too that a large proportion of the female population in Wiltshire in this period was employed in domestic service.

With the decline of the textile industry, the population became increasingly dependent on agriculture for employment. Apart from the farmers and labourers, many of those who made up the Manufacture, Building and Dealing categories in the table of occupational structure, serviced the agricultural sector as blacksmiths, harness-makers, millers, maltsters, brewers, carpenters, thatchers, masons, bootmakers, butchers, bakers and general dealers. There were few other employment outlets not directly linked to agriculture or the needs of the rural population. Carpets

were made in Wilton but much carpet production had moved to Kidderminster in the early years of the century, and Somerville found considerable unemployment in Wilton in 1842.⁶⁵ There was a famous bell foundry in Aldbourne, and chair making was also established here, but not until the 1850s.⁶⁶ There were a few brickworks scattered around the county using local clay, at Highworth for instance. There was also some rope and basket making in Highworth. Tobacco and snuff were made in Devizes, although by 1830 silk manufacture had declined here, and ironically a dis-used silk factory in New Park Street was used for a temporary workhouse in 1835.⁶⁷ Cutlery was made in Salisbury, and paper in Downton. Some gloving also continued around the western manufacturing towns.

The coming of the railway to Wiltshire boosted employment opportunities especially in the area around Swindon where the Great Western Railway Works were located. It should be noted however that the branch lines were built largely by immigrant railway gangs, which partly account for the particularly sharp increase in the population of the county in 1841. The individual parishes most affected were Bremhill, Lineham, Wootton Bassett, Lacock, Purton, Stratton St Margaret and Box.⁶⁸

In 1863 the Sixth Parliamentary Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council noted of a number of counties, including Wiltshire, that 'there can be no doubt that the mental and physical condition of the farm labourer and his family is much better in these localities, where

remunerative labour other than farm labour can be obtained in the purely agricultural districts'.⁶⁹ During the nineteenth century there were several attempts to revive cottage industry, in particular to provide women in agricultural districts with alternative employment. In Downton for instance, an effort was made in the early 1830s to reintroduce lace making, for which the parish had once been famous, and straw plaiting, but with little success.⁷⁰ In the early years of the century the Society for the Betterment of the Poor had sent several instructors to Wiltshire, including Avebury, Devizes and Aldbourne, to teach straw plaiting. In Aldbourne at least straw and later willow plaiting was still comparatively successful in the 1840s and 1850s.⁷¹ In general however these attempts to encourage cottage industry made little impact.

Industrial activity in the country had shifted to the midlands and the north, and to the source of cheap power in the form of coal. Large scale industry could not profitably be revived in many southern counties, and the population therefore had to shift instead. But the movement was protracted and painful, especially in those counties like Wiltshire which were some distance from the industrial centres. The majority of migration to the rapidly expanding northern and midland town was from their immediate agricultural environs. In many counties south of the Thames emigration was more common, and there was a particularly large number of emigrants from the counties of Kent, Sussex and Wiltshire.⁷²

A number of factors militated against labourers

leaving their native county. There was an ignorance and a natural fear of what lay beyond the narrow confines of their world. Cobbett met a labouring woman in Ludgershall in 1826 who had never been further than two and a half miles outside her native parish.⁷³ The labourers' immobility however should not be overstated, for as we have seen, many men travelled around the county during the summer months in search of the most lucrative employment. There was considerable difference however between leaving one's native parish temporarily and packing-up with the intention of starting a new life elsewhere. The risks involved in such an upheaval were exacerbated by the law of settlement. The 1662 Act of Settlement had laid down various 'heads of settlement' for determining the parish to which a pauper was chargeable. This had been modified and added to in subsequent years making the law complex and subject to continual dispute. By and large however, individuals were entitled to relief only in the parish of their birth, although a settlement in another parish could be gained by a period of continuous residence, usually of a year. In 1854 one witness before the Select Committee on Poor Removal argued that paupers 'stay paupers at home rather than go and try to get work elsewhere and subject themselves to removal back'. Without this law, he felt:

the tendency would be that the Wiltshire labourer would be induced to go into Lincolnshire, and compete with the Lincolnshire labourer. It would take a generation before they redistributed themselves; but if you abolished the law of settlement I think you would have a re-distribution necessarily following. 74

Although younger labourers might be sufficiently

adventurous to leave home, they were often unwilling to do so out of attachment to their parents.⁷⁵ Many of those who had reached old age were dependent on their children to preserve them from finishing their days in the workhouse.

Another factor in preventing labourers from migrating or emigrating was their sheer financial inability to do so. Most of the labouring population who left the county, in the 1830s in particular, were financed out of the poor rates. For instance in 1831 £200 was spent out of the Great Somerford poor rates to send ten families to Canada.⁷⁶ Between April 1831 and May 1832, the Westbury overseers spent a total of £1,600 to send 250 people to Canada.⁷⁷ Forty-two men left Hindon and East Knoyle for Canada in April 1833,⁷⁸ and 24 left Rockbourne and Damerham for New South Wales in June 1834.⁷⁹

The 1834 Poor Law (Amendment) Act included provision for assisted emigration to British Colonies, and between 1835 and 1837 the pace of this form of emigration was at its height. The Wiltshire Poor Law Union which took greatest advantage of this policy was the Alderbury Union. In 1836 plans were made to enable two hundred families from Downton, and thirty families from Whiteparish to emigrate to Canada.⁸⁰ In this instance help was sought from the landed proprietors of the area to finance the venture, as well as loans from the Government. Similarly in the Warminster Union, the Marquis of Bath donated £200 to help Longbridge Deverell paupers to emigrate.⁸¹ Under the auspices of the Poor Law Commission, a number of other families and single labourers were helped to emigrate,

mostly to Canada, between 1835 and 1837. They came from Durrington and Tilshead in the Amesbury Union, Lacock in the Chippenham Union, Manningford Abbots and Enford in the Pewsey Union, Donhead St Mary and Chicklade in the Tisbury Union and from Wishford in the Wilton Union. A further 122 people from the Wilton area emigrated in 1838 following a talk by Dr Nicholls who had been appointed by the Home Office to visit the agricultural areas and talk on emigration to New South Wales.⁸² Assisted emigration after 1837 should be noted from Bishops Cannings and Brinkworth in 1842, from Bishops Cannings again and Christian Malford in 1843, from Bremhill in 1845 and from Potterne in 1849.⁸³

Migration was less common, as we have already noted. It was only after considerable effort that the Downton overseers could persuade two families in May 1836 to leave for the northern counties.⁸⁴ Only 86 people migrated from Wiltshire under Poor Law auspices between 1835 and 1837 as opposed to the 372 who emigrated.⁸⁵

Although it was quite effective in dispersing the 'surplus' population of many of the most overburdened parishes, the problem with this Poor Law involvement was that it lent the stigma of 'persecution of the unfortunate'⁸⁶ to emigration and migration, which might have actually increased resistance to removal by all except those in the most distressed circumstances.

A fierce propaganda battle was fought in the local press in the 1830s between those exhorting the benefits of removal from the county and those pointing out its hazards. The Salisbury and Winchester Journal published the following

semi-literate and affecting letter from one emigrant to Canada to his former home in Corsley near Warminster, in 1831:

My dear father I think God I am got on the land of liberty and plenty. I arrived here on 9 of July. I had not a single shilling left when I got here. But I met with good friends that took us in and I went to work at 6s pr day and my board on to this day, and now I am gone to work on my one farm of 50 eakers which I bot a 55£, and I have 5 years to pay it in. I have bot me a cow and 5 pigs. I have sowed 4½ eakers of wheat, and I have more to sow, making 6½. Ham goin to bild me a house this fall, if I liv and will; and if I had staid at Corsley I never should had nothing. I like the country very much. I am at librtty to shout terky, quill, pigons, phesents, dear, and all kind of geam, wch I have on my back wood... My wife and to sons is all will and hapy and thinkfull that they are arived over and wishinn Mother and Father and all the famly was as will pervided for as we be. If the labouring men ded but no the valy of thar strauth they oud nevr bid contant in the old contry, as it is caled here ... No pore reats, no tax, no oversear, no begger; the wheat that is lef in the fields oud kip a hole parise...

... So my dear Father I must conclud, with my love to you all brothers and relations. not forgetting my duty to my superiors who interseed in my coming out. 87

This letter, painting such a glowing picture of the emigrant's ability to get on, was believed to have been responsible for encouraging a number of people in the Warminster area to follow the example. Many, however, were said to be disappointed in their expectations, and soon returned.⁸⁸ In 1835 too a letter from a North American emigrant to his former home in Devizes spoke of many wishing to return to England but being held back both by lack of money and the fear of another long and treacherous sea passage.⁸⁹

Some of the resistance to removal from the county appears to have been overcome by the 1850s. Caird spoke of a 'prevalent desire for emigration among the labourers

themselves, as their only mode of benefitting those who go and those who stay behind'.⁹⁰ A Wiltshire Emigration Society was set up to assist those agricultural labourers who wished to emigrate and who were recommended by the Society's subscribers.⁹¹ Wiltshire was the first English county to experience an overall decline in the population, between the 1841 and 1851 Censuses,⁹² but even then the decline was of less than 1%.⁹³

The coming of the railways was an important factor in increasing the labourers' mobility. In the late 1860s, Norman wrote of the 'unsettled and dissatisfied' condition of the labouring population of Wiltshire:

I received numerous complaints from farmers in all parts of the county of the difficulty they experience in getting good steady men to remain with them ... The farmers attribute the dissatisfaction on the part of the labourers to increased education. I believe the real explanation of it to be that the county is overstocked with labour ... and that the labourers are beginning to find out that more highly paid employments are to be met with in other parts of the country, and that the improved means of locomotion enable them to go where they can meet with these higher wages.⁹⁴

Although the tide had turned, and the labouring population was beginning to disperse, the process was still a slow one, and assistance for migration and emigration was to be one of the prime aims of agricultural trade unionism in Wiltshire in the 1870s.⁹⁵

One result (and doubtless, in part, one contributory factor too) to the gradual decline in the numbers of agricultural labourers was that the farmers made increasing use of machinery to solve the otherwise inevitably uneven seasonal labour demands. There were several inventors and

makers of agricultural machinery in Wiltshire in the early nineteenth century, including the Reeve family of Bratton, and J. Trowbridge of Amesbury who invented a winnowing machine known as the 'Amesbury Heaver'. Trowbridge died in 1823; the 'Amesbury Heaver' was still in use in the 1840s however.⁹⁶ Ironically, the first labour saving machine which the farmers adopted in any numbers in this period, the threshing machine, took away winter rather than summer employment from the labourer. Attempts to introduce threshing machines and the opposition this aroused among the labourers will be considered in detail in Chapter III. Suffice it to say here that, although the machine breaking Swing Riots of 1830 and 1831 temporarily interrupted the introduction of this machinery, the use of the steam threshing machine was said to be 'very general' in the county by the 1850s.⁹⁷ In December 1867 one Wiltshire commentator reported seeing ten steam threshing machines at work from different directions from Knook Stone on Imber Down.⁹⁸

The steam plough was another machine which saved labour mainly during the autumn rather than the summer months. Although the first practical steam plough was developed as early as 1833,⁹⁹ there is no evidence of its use in Wiltshire before the 1850s. In 1857 there was an exhibition of steam ploughing at a Royal Agricultural Society meeting at Salisbury, which apparently created little interest among farmers.¹⁰⁰ Steam ploughs were in use at Wroughton and Broad Hinton by the following autumn however,¹⁰¹ and their use in the county was widespread by the late 1860s.¹⁰²

Great curiosity was aroused by a very early reaping

machine in use on Combe Down in 1856, but it was reported that while labourers were so plentiful, it was unlikely that reaping machines would gain general use in Wiltshire.¹⁰³

As other examples of labour saving machinery we should mention chaff-cutting machines which were in use in the Pewsey Vale by 1857,¹⁰⁴ and mowing machinery, reference to which may be found in Wiltshire as early as 1861.¹⁰⁵

The introduction of labour saving machinery was patchy. By the late 1860s however, one labourer of Great Bedwin was convinced that there was 'not as much work as there used to be on account of the machinery',¹⁰⁶ while a Latton farmer explained that he 'could dispense with women's work by using machinery, but in summer I could not'.¹⁰⁷ By the 1870s the use of machinery to cut down on labour in the summer months was certainly becoming more general, and one speaker at an Agricultural Labourers' Union meeting at Wilton in 1872 confirmed that the use of machinery had shortened the duration of the harvest.¹⁰⁸

Living and Working Conditions of the Agricultural Labouring Population

Many agricultural commentators of the time wrote of an apparently widening social gulf between agricultural labourers and farmers. In 1826, Cobbett remarked bitterly that the improved system of agriculture had changed many farmers 'into a species of mock gentlefolk, whilst it ground the labourers down into real slaves'.¹⁰⁹ The practice of labourers lodging with their employers, or 'living in' as it

was known, had largely disappeared in the south of England by this period; thus 'the tie of mutual interest is loosened', wrote the Reverend Demainbray, the labourer 'works for this or that master indifferently, but with little real attachment to his employer'.¹¹⁰

This social polarisation was especially marked in the arable regions such as the 'Chalk', where the farmers were described as being 'a superior class of men, renting the sporting of the manor as well as the land, and holding that position which, from the non-residence of the owner devolves upon them'.¹¹¹ As the Rector of Marlborough wrote in 1830, 'there is to be found a line of destruction between the poor man and the sporting farmer'.¹¹²

On the 'Cheese', the existence of smaller farmers meant that social polarisation was less evident. Richard Jefferies writing of this area in the first half of the nineteenth century, commented that, 'nowhere was the farmer more backward, more rude and primitive, than on the small dairy farms. He was barely to be distinguished from the labourers amongst whom he worked shoulder to shoulder'.¹¹³ In the dairy itself the wives of these farmers too were said to 'take a great deal of the work on themselves, - the heaviest part of it'.¹¹⁴ It was also on these farms that the farmer could most easily afford to dispense with hired labour altogether.

A much smaller capital outlay was required to set oneself up as a small dairy farmer than as an arable farmer. No expensive machinery was necessary. The work of the farm might often be done by the family alone and if dairy workers

were required, the employment of women cut down on wage bills.¹¹⁵ Thus, as Jefferies wrote:

To successfully work a tenancy of such narrow limits it is necessary that the occupier should himself labour in the field from morn till dewy eve - the capacity to work being more essential than capital; and so it happens that the smaller farms are occasionally held by men who have risen from the lower classes. 116.

As we shall see in subsequent chapters the ability of the 'Cheese' labourer to raise himself to the level of a small-holder was considered a very real possibility, especially by certain supporters of the Anti-Corn Law League and strands of the agricultural trade union movement.¹¹⁷ We should note that, even if in practice few labourers were able to set themselves up as farmers, many of those living in the 'Cheese' were able to rent larger allotments than labourers in the 'Chalk', allowing them to support themselves during the winter months when they had returned from their summer employment often in the arable region. In Bromham in 1851, there were three men described in the Census Enumerator's Schedules as 'allotment farmers' with holdings of two, four and seven acres respectively.¹¹⁸

Apart from regional differences between labourers in status and expectations, there were also clear distinctions between the specialist agricultural workers such as shepherds, stockmen, milkers and ploughmen, and the ordinary day labourer. 'The foreman had absolute authority over the carters and labourers', A.G. Street wrote of his father's Wiltshire farm, 'but the head dairyman and head shepherd were in a class apart; they had charge of their respective departments'.¹¹⁹

Similarly among female labourers, we find that the practice of dairymaids boarding in farmers' houses continued throughout this period, and long after 'living in' had declined among male labourers.¹²⁰ 'The farmers take great care of the health of their dairy-women', a Calne surgeon explained in 1843, 'as the loss is great if they are taken ill ... the dairy-women are well fed and lodged, and receive every attention'.¹²¹ Field workers, on the other hand, were described as being 'certainly the lowest class'.¹²²

Specialist workers were paid higher wages than the ordinary labourer, although stockmen and milkers had to work seven days a week.

Shepherds and carters generally receive about 2s a week more than common day labourers, and often extra allowances beside; on large farms shepherds' and carters' places are sometimes of great value, amounting to as much as 17s or 18s a week ... The milkers on the dairy farms in Wiltshire generally have an extra 1s per week, because they are obliged to work on Sundays. ¹²³

In addition, the specialist labourers had the security of being hired for longer periods than the ordinary labourers who were usually hired by the week or even the day. The plentiful supply of labour enabled the farmer to take on hands only as and when he needed them. Even the specialist labourers might be hired for something under a year to prevent them gaining a settlement entitling them to poor relief in the parish of their employment.¹²⁴ In 1832 it was said to have become 'the usual mode of hiring' to take labourers on for eleven months only.¹²⁵

The position was in reverse by the 1860s, however when, with increasing mobility and opportunities available

to the labourer, it was difficult for the farmer to persuade specialists to stay on for a year. As one Chippenham farmer wrote, shepherds and carters were occasionally hired by the year but 'they are rather indisposed themselves to accept a yearly hiring'.¹²⁶ Moreover by the 1860s, there is increasing evidence of ordinary labourers being hired by the year; such was the case for instance on George Brown's farm in Avebury.¹²⁷

We should not underestimate the continuity of employment in many farms, even if hiring was not long-term. Many ordinary labourers worked all their lives for one farmer, although they might experience periods of unemployment. Annual lists of labourers for two farms in Aldbourne from 1867 onwards show a 'hard core' of labourers who were employed on the farms year after year (although it is not clear if they were hired on a yearly, weekly or daily basis).¹²⁸ Additional labourers were taken on for various tasks during the year; it was these labourers who might experience the longest periods of unemployment, being dependent on poor relief, whatever casual work they could get, and possibly on petty theft and poaching. They were sometimes listed in the Census Enumerators' Schedules as 'agricultural labourer/pauper', and their presence in any number in a village inevitably pushed up poor rates, depressed wages and threatened the more regularly employed labourers who were thus forced to be more subservient in defence of their work. We therefore find a further social distinction between the comparatively steady and 'respectable' labourer, and those who, often through no fault of their own, were forced to

take on work on a very casual basis.

In spite of the practice of hiring ordinary labourers by the day or week, hiring or statute fairs, or 'mops' as they were also known, continued to thrive in Wiltshire in this period. Significantly, they were more prominent in the dairying districts where there was a closer relationship between farmer and farm servant, and where dairy women still 'lived in'. The most important hiring fairs were centred on the larger towns of the north of the county, namely Swindon, Wootton Bassett, Highworth, Malmesbury and Chippenham. Fairs which survived in the arable districts were said to be held annually, while in the dairying districts they were held twice a year at Michaelmas and Ladyday.¹²⁹ Fairs at Chippenham, Swindon and Wootton Bassett were all held twice a year certainly. In 1837 the Wootton Bassett hiring fair, described as 'probably the largest in England'¹³⁰ was held every month,¹³¹ although it too was half-yearly by the 1840s. This fair which had been established in 1836 seemed to reach a peak in the early 1850s. In 1853, 280 yearly hirings were recorded, with many more half-yearly hirings,¹³² and in 1854 an unprecedented 340 labourers were hired here.¹³³

It would seem however that local hiring arrangements were not catered for so much by these fairs as hirings for counties where labour was not so plentiful. At Chippenham for example, many servants were hired 'in many instances to proceed into distant counties'.¹³⁴ Increasingly too 'mops' lost sight of their original purpose and became gatherings to be attended for enjoyment rather than business.

In fact many farmers avoided 'mops' because those who attended them were considered to be neither respectable nor reliable.¹³⁵ The Chippenham Hiring Fair was abolished in 1859, and proposals were made to abolish the Marlborough 'mop' in 1873 because so little hiring took place there.

Throughout this period Wiltshire fell into the category of a 'low wages' county. In his survey of English agriculture between 1850 and 1851, Caird encountered the lowest wages found on his travels in the 'Chalk' region of Wiltshire, at 6s a week, although 7s a week was more common.¹³⁶ The average wage in the 'Cheese' was somewhat higher, averaging between 7s and 8s a week,¹³⁷ for despite the greater demand for labour in the 'Chalk' the availability of alternative employment was still comparatively higher in the 'Cheese'. Caird also attributed the regional difference to the fact that in the 'Chalk', 'the command of wages is altogether under the control of the large farmers, some of whom employ the whole labour of a parish'.¹³⁸ These wage rates in 1850 compared with an average of 11s 6d a week among agricultural labourers in the north of the country, and 8s 5d among labourers throughout the south.

Over the period 1830 to 1875 as a whole, weekly wage rates fluctuated considerably although within comparatively narrow limits. As a general guide it can be said that 6s was about the lowest rate paid during these years; in those instances where lower rates were found the labourer usually received some additional perquisite such as meals or lodging.¹³⁹ For most of the 1830s and 1840s and early 1850s average weekly wages for ordinary labourers

were between 6s and 9s, rising to between 7s and 10s after 1853 when the Crimean War produced something of a boom, in arable agriculture in particular. In the 1860s and 1870s weekly wages settled between 8s and 11s, with a peak being reached in 1873 and early 1874 coinciding with the establishment of agricultural trade unionism.

Variations in wage rates were dependent on two factors; the price of agricultural produce and the proximity of alternative and better-paid employment. In the latter case we have already seen that wage rates were slightly higher in the 'Cheese' than in the 'Chalk', due to the more diverse occupational structure. Wages were sensitive to very small variations in the prospects of the labouring population; in the Hungerford Poor Law Union for instance, wages were said to be slightly higher in the parishes on the Berkshire border than in the more remote parishes further west into Wiltshire.¹⁴⁰

Wage rates also fluctuated with prices, the price of wheat, in particular, often being directly linked to the price of labour. The labourers 'get their wages lowered when the price of the loaf is low', one Brinkworth farmer explained in 1845.¹⁴¹ In 1833 the criterion for calculating the weekly wage rate was said to be the price of a bushel to a bushel and a half of wheat.¹⁴² A widespread lowering of wages occurred in 1835 when the price of wheat fell below 40s per quarter,¹⁴³ while there was evidence of a wage rise in 1840 when wheat rose to 70s per quarter.¹⁴⁴ Thus the 'Speenhamland' system of calculating poor relief in accordance with the price of bread applied equally to

the labourers' wages. For this reason high prices appear rarely to have been the cause of discontent in this period especially in the 'Chalk', since low prices generally meant lower wages and a lower level of cultivation, thereby increasing unemployment.¹⁴⁵

Apart from the weekly wage there were a number of factors which could raise the labourers' overall earnings. Harvest earnings in particular were of fundamental importance in enabling labouring families to make ends meet. As F.G. Heath wrote, 'The harvest times are the halcyon days, in a pecuniary sense, of the farm labourer, enabling him to wipe off some long "scores" run up at the shopkeeper during the year'.¹⁴⁶ The decision to disband the county's 800 militia men in October 1856 at the end of the Crimean War was criticised in the local press, where it was argued that, 'If the men could not have been spared in time to have earned something over the harvest to help them through the winter, they should not have been set adrift till the spring'.¹⁴⁷

As we have already seen, harvest was one of the only times when there was regularly a shortage of labourers, and virtually every member of the labouring family found employment in the fields at this time. The reaping was usually left to the men, although it was by no means unknown for women to do some reaping too.¹⁴⁸ In general however the women and children raked up the corn and put it into sheaves. Hours of work at this time were very long. Agricultural labourers usually worked from daylight to dusk in the winter and from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the summer, although milkers and carters had to start work before the ordinary labourer.

At harvest however some labourers, and especially those migrant workers who travelled around the county, would begin work 'of their own accord at three o'clock in the morning, resting during the mid-day heat, and after resuming labour in the afternoon', continue 'till eight o'clock in the evening'.¹⁴⁹

The labourers' enhanced bargaining position at this time was reflected in higher wages. Piece work rates were paid for harvest work; as much as 7s or 8s per acre could be earned in 1850, making a daily rate of 3s or 4s.¹⁵⁰ Free beer was usually provided by the farmer, and sometimes food too if the work was very urgent. In addition gleaning or 'leazing' rights were an important harvest custom. In 1843 one labouring woman from Calne claimed she had been able to glean six bushels of corn in three weeks, although to achieve this feat she had got up at 2 o'clock every morning and sometimes travelled as far as seven miles from her home in a day.¹⁵¹

Labourers could sometimes earn piece work rates for other tasks. Hoeing, mowing, hedging and ditching were all commonly done by piece work. Threshing too was sometimes paid by the piece; 9s to 10s a week could be earned this way in Shalbourne in 1838 for instance.¹⁵² Piece work declined however in years when unemployment was particularly bad for it became less economic from the farmer's point of view when he found himself paying high poor rates. As Robert Hughes explained, if labourers were given piece work:

the farmers say they should not be enabled to employ so many, that they could then only employ a few men who would earn high wages, and the others would have no employment at all; and therefore, upon that principle they think it better to let them go on by the day. 153

The wages of the labourers' wives and children were also an important supplement to the labouring family's total earnings. Agricultural labourers tended to marry young. A number of factors contributed to this. The decline of 'living in' led to many young men seeking to set up their own home earlier than they might otherwise have done. The single male labourer was also paid lower wages in many instances than his married counterpart, especially in the 1830s. When poor rates were high, farmers preferred to keep on married labourers with families as they would obviously form more of a burden on the rates than the single man if unemployed. In some parishes active steps were taken to drive away single young men; the Shalbourne overseer openly admitted to this in 1838,¹⁵⁴ while in Maddington, in 1834 the handful of farmers who occupied land here refused all poor relief and employment to single labourers.¹⁵⁵

In a paradoxical way the poverty caused by an overstocked labour market forced many women and children into competing with the underemployed male population for agricultural work. The decline in female employment in agriculture after 1851 was therefore a testament to improving conditions among the labouring population, and one of the aims of agricultural trade unionism in the 1870s was to end the employment of women in farm work altogether as a means to improving the male labourers' bargaining position.

Female field workers usually earned between half and two thirds of the male labourer's wage rate, although hours of work were shorter at around eight or nine hours a day to allow the women to perform the household chores. In the Calne area in 1843 when ordinary male labourers earned 8s to 9s a week, women were paid 4s a week in the winter and 4s 6d in the summer, rising at haymaking and harvest to 5s a week.¹⁵⁶ (The casual nature of female field work is indicated by the fact that wages are usually referred to in terms of the daily rate. They are translated here into weekly rates for ease of comparison with male wages.)

Apart from haymaking and harvest, field work for women usually consisted of very menial tasks, namely weeding and hoeing, potato planting, cleaning fields of stones, filling dung carts, spreading manure and pulling up and cleaning turnips and other root crops.¹⁵⁷ In general women worked separately from men.¹⁵⁸ The clergy were critical of mixed employment as being the cause of 'vice and immorality'.¹⁵⁹

Dairy work, as has already been noted, was a more prestigious occupation for women than field work, but even if the dairy workers were better cared for than field workers, the work itself was very arduous. The hours were long and cheese-making in particular could be strenuous.¹⁶⁰

Girls under the age of fourteen were not widely employed in agriculture except at harvest. By the late 1860s it was said that only 10-15% of girls from rural families took up field work, the majority going instead

into service at the age of about fifteen.¹⁶¹ For almost the whole of the period 1830-1875 however, the employment of young boys was widespread. Boys usually began work at the age of seven or eight, and this continued until well into the 1860s.¹⁶² The employment of children under the age of twelve was not made illegal until 1874, four years after the first Education Act, and school attendance was not compulsory on a national basis until 1880. Young boys were initially put to light work such as bird scaring or driving the plough teams, and thence they would gradually learn a wide range of farm tasks in a form of informal apprenticeship. In the 1840s an eight year old boy was paid 1s 6d a week. By the age of twelve he would be earning 2s 6d a week, rising to 6s a week by the age of fifteen or sixteen.¹⁶³ By the late 1860s the usual wage paid to eight year olds was around 2s a week.¹⁶⁴

Children's wages represented an important factor in the labouring family's budget. As one Wiltshire clergyman remarked, 'The children leave school at an early age either because their parents are induced by their poverty to send their children to work, or the employer practically employs pressure to oblige the children to come out to work'.¹⁶⁵ The employment of young boys was considered essential by the farmers to ensure a suitably skilled workforce for the future. Few farmers frowned on the employment of young children as helping to perpetuate an overstocked labour market by fitting them for nothing but agricultural labour. Robert Bowman, a farmer in the Calne

Poor Law Union stated in 1843:

I think that putting them (boys) to work at seven or eight is the very best thing for them, though it necessarily takes them from the day school. They lose school instruction, certainly, but I think the knowledge they get of their future occupation quite compensates for such a loss. According to my experience, I find that beginning as early as seven or eight gets a more thorough knowledge of every part of the work wanted about a farm. When he grows up he can turn his hand to everything that is wanted. 166

Twenty-five years later there had been little change in this outlook; many of the witnesses who gave evidence to the Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner for the 1868 Report on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture were critical of efforts to increase education among labourers' children, unless it was for those boys who might have to work with machinery, in which case it was felt that a certain amount of education would be useful.¹⁶⁷

Within the labouring family therefore, the father's weekly wage was supplemented by harvest and piece work earnings and the wages of the mother and children. Such additions however could easily be offset by periods of unemployment when the family was forced to depend on poor relief, private charity and even petty theft and poaching. The extent of crime in the rural community will be considered in the next chapter. Mention should be made here however of poor relief and charity, although both will also be referred to again in subsequent chapters.

Poor relief was an integral part of most labourers' existence throughout this period. The poor law underwent a major legal change in 1834 in the form of the Poor Law

(Amendment) Act, although in fact the change in the administrative control of poor relief proved, in practice, to be more fundamental than any change in the actual form that relief took. The old poor law, based on the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1597 and 1601 obliged each parish to levy a local rate in order to relieve its own aged and sick, and to find work for the 'industrious poor'. Farmers and tradesmen usually acted as overseers of the poor while any disputes could be referred to the local gentry in their role as magistrates. The old poor law had undergone numerous modifications since the reign of Elizabeth I, and by the late eighteenth century social changes in the countryside had put a considerable strain on the system of relief. Faced with the growth in the population, structural unemployment and the inadequacy of the labourer's wage, Berkshire magistrates meeting at Speenhamland in 1795 adopted the expedient of supplementing wages out of poor rates in order to ensure a minimum standard of living among the labouring population. The level of relief was based on the current price of bread and the number of children in the labourer's family. The 'Speenhamland system' gained widespread usage, although by the 1830s it had diversified considerably. In Wiltshire for instance there were at least eleven different scales used to calculate the level of relief, and a system of child allowances was more common than a subsidy in aid of wages. (The operation of the scale system will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.)

Although no doubt well-intentioned, the 'Speenhamland system' had the effect of institutionalising low wages, and farmers no longer felt an obligation to pay adequate wages. The poor rates of the farmers obviously increased as they paid lower wages, but the full burden did not fall upon them alone. Small farmers who employed little or no labour, shopkeepers and other tradesmen all had to supplement these wages too from their rates. In some places farmers could avoid paying poor rates completely. In parishes where there were only a few landowners, they might reduce the number of labourers living there to fewer than the number required for the cultivation of the land, hence making the parish 'close'. Caird for instance described how the pressure of poor rates:

has induced large proprietors to diminish the cottages on their estates, and thus the burden is increased on those open parishes to which the population is driven. In the Union of Melksham some of the parishes have no paupers, having cast their labourers off upon their unfortunate neighbours, where property being more divided and cheap, cottages are run up on speculation. 168

This practice was able to continue until the 1865 Union Chargeability Act when poor rates became the responsibility of the Poor Law Union as a whole, rather than the individual parish. Most of the more overcrowded 'open' parishes are indicated on the map on page 40. Winter unemployment was particularly bad in many of these parishes which also formed the seedbed of much unrest.

The system of poor relief was an important factor in contributing to the degradation of the agricultural labourer in that it 'destroyed the line between independent

labourers and paupers'.¹⁶⁹ Contemporaries spoke of the 'labouring poor' as one amorphous group. In some parishes able-bodied paupers might be put to work mending roads, or in stone quarries. But under the 'roundsman system' and 'labour rate system' there was no such separation of labourer and pauper. With the 'roundsman system' the parish overseer would send paupers round from farm to farm to beg for work, and sometimes the pauper's labour would be auctioned off to the highest bidder. The 'labour rate system', by which the labourers of the parish were shared out among the employers in accordance with the rateable value of their land, was established in a number of parishes in Wiltshire where one or more influential landowners were prepared to take the initiative in organising it. The Marquis of Lansdowne and the Earl of Radnor both favoured this system. It was considerably less degrading than the 'roundsman system' but it also blurred all distinction between labourer and pauper.

Two further variations in the old poor law should be mentioned here, in particular because they foreshadowed the 1834 Poor Law (Amendment) Act by seeking to give the gentry greater control of day to day administration. Gilbert's Act of 1782 enabled parishes to form themselves into Unions and to entrust poor relief to a committee of local gentry. The sick, the aged and children (but not the able-bodied) were relieved in workhouses.¹⁷⁰ In parishes which adopted the Select Vestry system established by Sturges Bourne's Acts of 1818 and 1819, voting in parish vestries was assessed according to the value of the

ratepayer's property, hence giving the larger landowners greater influence. Resident clergy also became ex officio members of vestries.

The Swing Riots of 1830-31 did much to hasten the move to overhaul the poor law. A Royal Commission of Enquiry was set up in 1832, and the Poor Law (Amendment) Act based on the evidence of the Commission passed through Parliament in 1834, finally becoming law in August of that year. This Act represented an attempt to restore the principle of a free labour market where wages would find their natural level. The practice of supplementing labourers' wages by outdoor relief was to be replaced by a system of indoor relief in the workhouse where paupers were to be put in a 'less eligible' position than the poorest paid labourer. Hence all but the most desperate or degenerate would be discouraged from seeking relief. The architects of the Act argued that this reform was 'intended more as an act of mercy and justice to the independent labourer than as a means of protection to his employer or to the rate payer in general'.¹⁷¹

The new Act continued the trend begun with Gilbert's and Sturges Bourne's Acts of trying to shift the control of poor relief away from farmers and tradesmen to the owners of the land, and also to give the gentry influence in pauperised parishes in their neighbourhood where they had no direct landowning interest. This was to be achieved by setting up Poor Law Unions each with its own workhouse, and presided over by a Board of Guardians. The principle of plural voting was applied to the annual election for

Guardians. Individuals could vote both as landowners and ratepayers; owners could have a maximum of six votes depending on the annual value of their land, and ratepayers a maximum of three votes depending on the rateable value of their property. A large landowner might therefore have as many as nine votes (increased to a maximum of twelve after Graham's Act of 1844). In addition all magistrates resident in the Union were automatically ex officio Guardians.¹⁷²

The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner responsible for setting up the majority of the new Unions in Wiltshire was Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court who had been a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire.¹⁷³ A'Court performed his work diligently, and his reports to the Poor Law Commissioners in London provide an important insight into the structure of Wiltshire rural society.¹⁷⁴ They will therefore be referred to in some detail in the course of this study. The new Unions were set up largely to accord with the existing pattern of landownership, and A'Court was at pains to ensure that each Union, as far as possible, included influential landowners willing to take an active interest in poor law administration. Hence Lord Radnor, Lord Suffolk and Lord Heytesbury (A'Court's elder brother) were the Chairmen respectively of the Alderbury, Malmesbury and Warminster Unions. The Marquis of Lansdowne's agent, Norman Atherton, was Chairman of the Calne Guardians, and Sidney Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke's half brother, was an ex officio Guardian in the Wilton Union. In subsequent

years, landowners tended to devolve these duties increasingly on their tenants, and thus in the long term the effective administration of the poor law returned to the farmers.

The new Act nevertheless gave resident landowners the power to control poor relief directly should they choose to do so.

Once a Union was established and a workhouse built, the Poor Law Commissioners could issue an order prohibiting any further outdoor relief to the able-bodied male paupers. The first Wiltshire Union to receive such an order was the Swindon and Highworth Union, which started its enforcement from 1st November 1836. (Highworth already had a workhouse since the parish had formerly adopted the Gilbert Act system. The necessary alterations to this building, which became the Union workhouse, were complete by November.)

A general order, the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order was issued in 1844.¹⁷⁵ Under the terms of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act however, Unions had comparatively wide discretionary powers in authorising outdoor relief, for instance in cases of 'sudden and urgent necessity'. Guardians, by and large, took full advantage of such loopholes to avoid relieving the able-bodied, especially the temporarily unemployed, in the workhouse, for apart from the humanitarian considerations workhouse relief proved to be far more expensive than providing outdoor relief to tide a family over some difficulty. As one historian writes, 'However much magistrates, guardians and relieving officers might sympathise with the social theory underpinning the abolition of outdoor relief, the harsh necessities of their

practical problems forced them to abandon metaphysics for pragmatism'.¹⁷⁶

Not surprisingly, the poor themselves had an overwhelming aversion to the workhouse. In 1850 for instance, one old man from Mildenhall in Wiltshire tried to hang himself when he realised his inability to find work would drive him to the workhouse,¹⁷⁷ while a number of labourers committed arson in order to go to prison or be transported, considering this preferable to the workhouse.¹⁷⁸ The introduction of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act met with considerable popular opposition, most notably in the northern manufacturing towns, but in the rural south too there were rumblings of unrest. In fact, many of the poor's worst fears proved unfounded as outdoor relief continued on a wide scale, but the period of transition from the old to the new poor law, and especially the years 1834 to 1837, proved to be turbulent in Wiltshire, marked by arson and riotousness. The effect of the 1834 Act itself however should not be overestimated, for both before and after this time grievances over poor relief in various forms were a continual source of unrest.

Just as there were considerable local variations in the administration of poor relief, so the provision of charity varied in the form it took, from the straightforward provision of food, clothing or coal in times of exceptional hardships to schemes designed to encourage self-help such as the allotment schemes already mentioned, and, most drastic of all, financial assistance sometimes given to those wishing to migrate or emigrate. Those who lived within

the sphere of influence of the estates of the aristocracy and gentry benefited most from all these forms of charity. There was a general tendency for charitable payments from landowners to increase after 1815, and they continued to rise for much of this period, so that by 1850, it has been estimated, between 4% and 7% of the gross income of the great estates was spent in charity.¹⁷⁹ Local clergy too would often take what steps they could to alleviate distress.

Charity was by no means doled out indiscriminately however, and emphasis was placed on the deserving nature of each case. In 1830 a country rector described a scheme whereby the poor could purchase blankets and clothing from the rectory at two thirds of their normal price:

When I first established this repository for the disposal of articles at reduced prices, all the poor, without distinction of merit or respectability, were equally permitted to become purchasers, in the hope of producing some effect on even the most careless and irregular; but when it was found by experience, that kindness and attention to their wants, in too many instances made no change whatever in their evil habits, I felt it right to confine this assistance to those only, who by their attention to religious duties, sobriety, and general steadiness of conduct, made it a pleasure for me to administer in any degree to their comforts or necessities. It is for these alone, and not the disorderly, the drunken or the dishonest, that I feel an inclination to exert myself. 180

Warnings were made against allowing the poor to take charity for granted. The ladies who ran the Benevolent Society of Devizes, for instance were advised:

In all cases let not the poor make a demand; let not the good and the bad, the industrious and the idle, the sober and the drunken alike make their claim and feel the benefit ... The moment a claim is made directly or indirectly as a right, the charity is abused. 181

Schemes to encourage self-help among the poor were generally considered far more desirable, as marked by the growth of friendly societies and benefit clubs in this period. There were many local societies and clubs such as the North Wilts Benefit Society and Investment Company, and various pig insurance societies which will be described in more detail in subsequent chapters.¹⁸² National societies, namely the Foresters and Oddfellows were comparatively weak in Wiltshire mainly due to the prominence here of the Wiltshire Friendly Society.¹⁸³ This had been established in 1827 under the presidency of the Right Hon. T.H. Sotheron Estcourt, an important landowner in the county. The objects of this and similar societies were to provide an allowance during sickness and sometimes a pension after the age of sixty-five and a sum payable to the family or a nominee of the member on death. The management of the Wiltshire Friendly Society was largely under honorary members who subscribed to the Branch funds. There were approximately one hundred branch offices in Wiltshire by 1867, but the success of this and other societies was far less significant in the more distressed conditions of the 1830s and 1840s, for even with the charitable contributions to the Society of honorary members, a certain regular financial outlay was required from the benefit members themselves.¹⁸⁴

The provision of allotments was a more generally adopted means of trying to help the labourers in their struggle to subsist. Allotments were rented to Wiltshire labourers on a wide scale in this period, and in 1836 was considered to have 'been carried to a greater extent in

Wiltshire than any other county'.¹⁸⁵ In fact the practice had extended in the late 1820s and early 1830s in response to growing rural poverty. The quality of the land rented out in allotments was said to be good and was generally located near to the village and the labourers' cottages.¹⁸⁶ In West Lavington for instance, all the allotment land was within five or ten minutes' walk of the cottages.¹⁸⁷ This must have contributed very considerably to the comparative success of allotment schemes in this county.

Some idea of the generality of allotments in Wiltshire may be ascertained from a return sent to the Labourers' Friend Society in 1834 or 1835 by the Devizes Labourers' Friend Society, giving details of 'the manner in which land is let to the labouring classes'.¹⁸⁸ Replies had been received from nineteen villages in the district where over 685 acres of land were rented to a minimum of 1391 labourers. In seven of the villages some of the allotments had existed for many years, although many had been created in the previous few years. The land was usually owned by the leading landowner in the parish, although in Beechingstoke, Woodborough, Urchfont and Worton tithing land was let by a variety of small owners, ratepayers and farmers. In Great Cheverell, the land was let by the minister and churchwardens, in All Cannings and Little Cheverell it was the local rector and in Poulshott it was simply said to be let by the parish.

Allotment schemes could therefore vary from charitable acts by individual landowners to specific measures

adopted by the local poor law administrators to alleviate distress. In this objective allotments proved considerably successful and were said to increase the comfort of the poor. In some cases too they were considered to ease the burden on the poor rates although not in Market Lavington, Littleton Panell, Little Cheverell and Great Cheverell where it was emphatically stated that the rates had not lessened since the introduction of the system despite a decrease in distress.

The rent at which allotment land was let could be very high when calculated on the basis of cost per acre; in the Devizes district it varied from £2 to £7 per acre. Tithes, taxes and rates on the land were, however, always paid by the landowner, and in some cases the owner would cart manure to the allotments free of charge, and even plough the land and cart any crops back to the renter's cottage. Otherwise, the labourers manured the allotments from scrapings from the road and the manure from their pig, if they owned one.¹⁸⁹ Renters usually had allotments of between four perches and a quarter of an acre, although there were some of half an acre, and in Potterne and Little Cheverell a few of between one and a half and three acres. There was a prevalent view, especially among farmers that allotments should not be larger than a quarter of an acre. Robert Hughes for instance stated in 1833 that he felt the idea was beneficial 'provided it is not carried too far, by giving too large a proportion to each (cottager); because if you give a cottager more land than he wants for the use of himself and his family, you destroy the character of the man; you make him a little gardener instead of a labourer'.¹⁹⁰

The fear was that by concentrating on his allotment, the labourer would lose his dependence on field work: 'a quarter acre seems to be the quantity of land which, by the opinion of the best informed men, a labourer can occupy without doing injustice to his employer, and robbing him of the labour due to him'.¹⁹¹

As we have already seen however, there were a number of larger allotments. Apart from those in the Devizes area, there were allotments in Burbage on the Ailesbury estate which, in the 1860s, ranged from two and three acres to twenty and thirty acres. Those who held the larger of these allotments were obviously smallholders rather than labourers, and were described as being worse off than labourers, being able to make only a precarious living with no capital behind them.¹⁹² Large allotments were more successful and more common in the 'Cheese'. The Reverend Demainbray of Broad Somerford saw no reason to limit each allotment to a quarter of an acre, and in particular was keen to let allotments of two acres to those men too old to work as regular labourers.¹⁹³ It has already been noted that small dairy-ing enterprises were easier to establish than arable holdings, and in 1868 the Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner, F.H. Norman 'met with a few instances of regular day labourers occupying several acres of grassland with apparently satisfactory results'.¹⁹⁴ Large allotments too were felt to be beneficial to those labourers of the 'Cheese' who would otherwise have been without any occupation during the winter months. On the Bowood estate for instance there were allotments of two to two and a half acres specifically

for this purpose.¹⁹⁵

Potatoes were the most common crop grown on the labourers' allotments, although in Broad Somerford for instance, where allotments were often comparatively large, there was a crop rotation of potatoes, wheat and sometimes barley, oats and vetches.¹⁹⁶ In a few places there were some regulations governing cultivation; for instance in Alton tenants were 'not to exhaust the land by a succession of crops',¹⁹⁷ and on some Market Lavington allotments only half the land was to be planted with potatoes.¹⁹⁸

In addition to controls on cultivation, those who let allotments sought sometimes to impose restrictions on the allotment renters themselves. Allotments in St James's Chapelry, Devizes were only let to those who received no poor relief except in times of sickness, although this stipulation was not made elsewhere.¹⁹⁹ In other parishes however allotments were only let to the 'deserving poor' and any 'misconduct' would result in the tenant losing his land; in Alton for instance, tenants were 'liable to be turned out for misconduct, or neglect of their master's work'.²⁰⁰

The produce from an allotment or cottage garden was an important consideration in determining the labourer's standard of living. As Molland writes, 'Ireland was not the only place in the British Isles where the potato prevented a population from starving'.²⁰¹ The potato blight of 1845-47 which had such a devastating effect in Ireland was a severe blow also for many of the rural poor of England's southern counties, and it was an important element

in sharpening opposition to the Corn Laws in a few of the rural parishes of Wiltshire, including, significantly Bremhill near the Bowood estate, where large allotments were rented to those labourers who had no regular employment during the winter months.²⁰²

Allotments were also said to allow many more labourers than formerly to keep pigs, the pigs being fed on part of the produce of the allotment, and pig manure used in turn to keep the allotment fertile. In 1836, for instance, the steward of an Amesbury estate described how nearly all the 130 cottagers there had pigs as a result of their allotments whereas when he had taken over the estate management in 1829 few had had pigs.²⁰³

Pig meat however was rarely if ever eaten by many of the labouring population; the pig was kept, rather, to pay off debts or buy some costly necessity. In 1843, the wife of a Calne labourer told the Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner, 'We generally fat a pig to sell to pay the shoemaker's bill',²⁰⁴ while another from Cherhill said:

We generally get a pig in the spring, and keep it till late in the autumn, and feed it with potatoes off our piece of ground; but it is always parted with to pay the shoemaker and other tradesmen. We have never killed a pig for ourselves. 205

Periods of unemployment and the practice, found in some parts of the county of paying wages fortnightly and sometimes only monthly,²⁰⁶ resulted in many labourers having to seek credit from local tradesmen. The 'tick system' at shops was described as 'perhaps the greatest evil' the labourers had to contend with.

They know that their pig is too often made the security on which the tick at the shop is based,

and that they are obliged to kill it at the dictation of the shopkeeper at times disadvantageous to themselves. They know that they pay more for their tea and other articles and get them of inferior quality to those supplied at ready money ...; their position is so precarious at a sudden fall in wages, at loss of work, or from sickness, that not wishing at once to go upon the union, they would starve if they had not the shop at hand to trust them. Living so near to the full amount of their regular pay, trusting to piece-work for rent, fuel, and clothing, the least accident sends them into debt, and I fancy few of the average run of labourers are not a week or fortnight behindhand at the shop. 207

It is worth noting here that such a state of affairs, as described by Earl Nelson, resulted in a mutual dependence between labourer and small tradesman which as we shall see in subsequent chapters must have given the latter common cause with the labourers in some of their protests.²⁰⁸

Many commentators of this period testified to the precarious state of the labourers' living, and found it difficult to see how they could subsist from day to day. In 1843 the Vicar of Calne could not see how their expenditure did not always exceed their earnings;²⁰⁹ it was 'a mystery' to the Vice Chairman of the Calne Board of Guardians how a family of four, five or six young children could subsist on the labourer's wage,²¹⁰ while a local doctor observed thus:

A man, his wife and two children, will require, if properly fed, 6s weekly; then rent, at least 1s, and fuel, will very nearly swallow up the remainder. But there are yet many things to provide; soap and candles, clothes and shoes. Shoes to a poor man are a serious expense, as he must have them strong, costing about 12s a pair, and he will need at least one pair in a year. When I reckon these things in detail I am always more and more astonished how the labourers continue to live at all. 211

With the pig money used to pay the shoemaker, and

harvest and piecework earnings soon swallowed up by rent and household articles, the labourers' diet was indeed very meagre, their food being 'insufficient in quantity, and not good enough in quality'.²¹² In the Calne area in 1843, where there were young children in the family 'potatoes do, and must, necessarily form the principal food'.²¹³

Fresh meat was rarely bought (although it might be eaten sometimes in the form of poached game or even stolen sheep). Some bacon or offal might be eaten if there were not many children to feed and the labourer was earning regularly. Otherwise bread and cabbages and a little fat were the main supplement to potatoes, with tea, beer and water. Tea however was rarely drunk with milk, and the word 'tea' was sometimes used by the poor to describe what was no more than kettle broth or 'burnt crust' tea.²¹⁴ Dairy workers who lodged with their employer were of course considerably better fed than the ordinary labourers who had to fend for themselves.²¹⁵

If anything, diet on the 'Chalk' was even more deficient. In 1850, when wages were as low as 6s a week, Caird described a labourer's daily fare:

Breakfast ... is made of flour with a little butter and water "from the tea-kettle" poured over it. He takes with him to the field a piece of bread and (if he has not a young family and can afford it) cheese to eat at mid-day. He returns home in the afternoon to a few potatoes and possibly a little bacon, though only those who are better off can afford this. The supper very commonly consists of bread and water. 216

Improvements in diet were minimal by 1863 when a medical officer of the Privy Council, Dr Edward Smith, made his report on the food of the poorer labouring classes in

England. The nutritional deficiency of the labourers' diet was said to have 'an unenviable pre-eminence' in a number of predominantly rural counties, among them Wiltshire.²¹⁷ Wiltshire was one of the thirteen counties where the amount of money spent on food for each adult per week fell below the average of 2s 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ d.²¹⁸ Bacon continued to be the only meat bought, although there was a comparatively high consumption of cheese.²¹⁹ Where cheese continued to be made, all the milk was used in its production. Elsewhere milk was often sold wholesale to the large London market or used for fattening animals, so the labourers often had difficulty purchasing milk except in circumstances such as those which existed on the Marquis of Bath's estate where milk was regularly supplied for the tenantry 'from motives of benevolence'.²²⁰ One Woodford woman said she had brought up five children 'and the whole had not drunk one gallon of milk'.²²¹ We should note too that in 1843 it was said that labouring women would suckle their children for one and a half to two years.²²²

In 1863 potatoes still formed an important element of the diet in the summer and autumn, although most had been eaten by the spring. The bread that was eaten here and in the south western counties was usually bought rather than baked at home because coal was expensive to buy.²²³ Consumption of sugar among Wiltshire labourers was one of the lowest in England.²²⁴

Examples of the diet of four families in the Heytesbury area show that the variety of food eaten was very limited, consisting mostly of 'water broth', bread and butter, potatoes, cabbage, onions, cheese and tea.

Three of the families had some bacon and milk, and in one family treacle was eaten with the bread for dinner.²²⁵

The poor diet does much to explain the lethargy often noted in the Wiltshire labourer. In 1794 Davis noted:

Wiltshire labourers are, in general, strong and robust, and not deficient in expertness ... But there is a remarkable slowness of step, not only of the shepherds, whose slowness is proverbial, but also particularly that of the ploughmen. ²²⁶

In 1850 Caird remarked that 'the appearance of the labourer showed, as might be expected from such a meagre diet, a want of vigour and activity'.²²⁷ Dr Smith, although endorsing the view that the rural labourers appeared 'dull' and lacking in 'mental vigour', did not consider that they were unhealthy. There were no mortal diseases associated with agricultural occupations, although accidents resulting from the use of machinery seem to become more common in this period. In 1854 for instance a Grittleton labourer lost an arm following an accident with a horse powered threshing machine, while in 1855 a Luckington woman slipped into a threshing machine and had her leg so badly crushed it had to be amputated.²²⁸ Threshing machines in particular were also considered to be 'injurious to all who have weak lungs on account of the dust'.²²⁹

There were also a number of debilitating ailments to which the labourer frequently fell prey, although these were attributable to inadequacies in housing, diet and clothing rather than the work itself. Dr Greenup of Calne listed the symptoms of insufficient food as being, 'Indigestion in its various forms, producing waterbrash and

other diseases of the stomach; then general debility, liability to fever, slow and difficult recovery from any disease, and a smaller proportion of recoveries'.²³⁰

'Scrofulous diseases' too were reported as being 'very common'.²³¹

In the 1840s few labourers had a change of work clothes, and when they were exposed to bad weather all day they were unable to dry their clothes out properly in the evening. In much of Wiltshire and on the downs in particular, where there was little woodland, fuel was an expensive item for the labourer. The effects of cold and wet here became acute. One Calne woman said that her clothes were 'often wet when I take them off and are not dry when I put them on again in the morning',²³² while another reported that:

Often, out of the hay fields, myself and my children have come home with our things quite wet through: I have gone to bed for an hour for my things to get a little dry, but have had to put them on again when quite wet. 233

Neither woman felt her health had suffered from this, although inevitably chills affected others. One boy for instance had caught 'violent cold' two years running and was 'laid up for six weeks without being able to do anything owing to his being exposed to wet and cold'.²³⁴ Rheumatism was one of the most common ailments among agricultural workers, and bronchitis was frequently suffered by the children.²³⁵

Epidemics such as cholera and typhus which affected the whole population often spread with particular rapidity among the rural poor as a result of the insanitary condition of some

cottages and overcrowding; 'diseases are continued and spread' because of 'an insufficient supply of bedrooms' a Swindon suregon reported.²³⁶

The condition of cottages varied considerably from place to place. By far the best were to be found on the large estates such as those of the Marquises of Bath and Lansdowne. On the Ailesbury estate cottage improvements were effected rather later in the period than on the other large estates owing to the Marquis's financial problems. The new cottages which had been built here by 1871, however, were of brick with tiled roofs, and had a living room, three bedrooms, a scullery, pantry, fuel store, piggery, cesspit and ashpit, and a well each.²³⁷

In those parishes where there were only a few landowners, the number of cottages could easily be limited, as has already been illustrated. In the overcrowded 'open' parishes, cottages were of a very inferior quality, and the competition for accommodation meant that rents were often higher than for the far better cottages of the large estates.²³⁸ The 'two room hovel' described as being 'ill-drained, ill-roofed and ill-ventilated' could still be found in many parishes even by the end of this period.²³⁹ In one such cottage in Newton the floor of the downstairs room had to be covered with straw and hurdles because so much water soaked in from outside, sometimes rising to a height of five inches.²⁴⁰ In Wilcot cottages with poorly thatched roofs sported 'a luxuriant crop of nettles and wheat'.²⁴¹ The water supply was frequently drawn from sewage-polluted ponds and streams, while refuse was deposited

in a hole outside the back door.²⁴² It was not uncommon for families of ten or more to live in such houses, sleeping together in the one bedroom, sometimes no larger than sixteen feet long by fourteen feet wide, and six feet four inches high.

The shortage of good cottage accommodation enabled landowners to impose certain moral standards on their tenants. At Wilcot for instance, a tenant who was known to get drunk or whose unmarried daughter became pregnant was immediately given notice to quit.²⁴⁴ Similar regulations were made by G.H.W. Heneage at Compton Basset.²⁴⁵ Such regulations were said to be willingly complied with. It was considered far preferable to rent a good cottage direct from the landowner, whatever the conditions attached, than to rent from the farmer with all the tyrannical oppression to which the labourer could thus be subjected. If he rented a 'tied' cottage, the labourer knew that to offend his employer might mean not only the loss of his job but of his home too. The farmer would simply take the rent for the cottage out of the labourer's wage before paying him. He could more easily insist on the labourer's wife and children working for him as and when he chose, and if a garden was attached to the cottage, the family could be turned out of their cottage before they had been able to benefit from their work in planting and tending it, without any compensation.²⁴⁶ Earl Nelson wrote in 1867 that although the majority of farmers never used such oppression, 'in the hand of a capricious master it is a fearful power to be able to turn a man out of his house and garden at

short notice, and goes terribly to sap the proper wholesome independence of the labouring classes'.²⁴⁷

The control which the farmer might exercise over labourers' accommodation as well as their employment was a major grievance in this period. In a number of cases, cottagers deliberately set fire to their homes on being given notice to quit,²⁴⁸ and one of the main demands of agricultural trade unionists was for cottages to be rented direct from the landowner.²⁴⁹

Any discussion of the position of the agricultural labourer in this period would be incomplete without consideration of the influence on their lives of the Church, 'the keystone of that parental plan of government' which existed in the rural areas.²⁵⁰ We have already noted the dependence of many of the labouring population on the clergy for allotments and other charitable aid. The clergy also played an important role in the administration of poor relief. When forming the Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union, for instance, Colonel A'Court reported to the Poor Law Commissioners:

There are so few influential gentry throughout the district - men of business and anxious to carry out the new system of poor law administration, that I shall be obliged to rely largely on the zeal and goodwill of the resident clergy, who have already in the course of enquiries cheerfully afforded me their very able and ready assistance. 251

The clergy therefore ranked with the landowners and farmers as the effective rulers of rural society.

It should be realised that by dissenting from the theology of the Anglican Church, nonconformists were

challenging an accepted social hierarchy as well as accepted religious beliefs. Jefferies wrote of dissenters that 'it was not the theology they cared about, it was the social nonconformity'.²⁵² Nonconformists, as we shall see, played an important role in rural protest especially in its more organised and articulate forms.

For much of this period however, the almost total dependence of the labourers upon the goodwill of landowners, farmers and clergy for every aspect of their subsistence was the crucial factor in determining the nature of protest, much of which was either expressed anonymously or else was dependent upon the implicit support of at least one section of the tripartite social hierarchy.

II: RURAL CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT 1830-1875

In 1826 William Cobbett wrote of the Wiltshire agricultural labourer:

This is, I verily believe it, the worst used labouring people upon the face of the earth. Dogs and hogs and horses are treated with more civility, and as to food and lodging, how gladly would the labourers change with them! By some means or other there must be an end to it; and my firm belief is, that the end will be dreadful! 253

Cobbett's words might be seen as a prophesy of the Swing Riots which broke out in Wiltshire in the winter of 1830; but the Riots did little in any lasting sense to change the position of the agricultural labourer: sporadic outbreaks of unrest, such as rick-burnings, strikes, protests over poor relief and some Anti-Corn Law League agitation, coupled with widespread rural crime, persisted for many years as a testimony to the continuing deep dissatisfaction and distress of many agricultural labourers.

During much of the period 1830-1875, rural unrest took criminal and, on the whole, violent forms. Apart from the machine-breaking of 1830 and 1831, by far the most clearly identified form of protest was arson, and both these will be examined in subsequent chapters. First, however, some general comments should be made on the nature of rural crime, the extent to which it can be linked with protest, and the methods of law enforcement which were adopted in the face of this crime.

Rural Crime

The sources for studying rural crime in this period are rather patchy and not always reliable. David Jones for instance has drawn attention to the dangers of relying too heavily on statistical evidence and the difficulty of assessing 'the dark figure of unrecorded crime', while pointing out that much literary evidence too can be misleading.²⁵⁴ We should remember that formal channels of justice formed only a part of the 'control and discipline' open to landowners and farmers.²⁵⁵ As we shall see in studies of poaching and arson the threat of unemployment and the loss of cottage or allotment might be considered as a more effective deterrent against crime.

The main source for mapping the extent of detected crime is the Assize and Quarter Session records. A detailed examination of local newspapers is the only way in which the number of incendiary fires can be counted, the same source being crucial for gleaning information of many other forms of unrest. However, even by going through every local newspaper for the entire period, we cannot be sure of learning of every incident which took place, since it was often the policy of newspapers to suppress news of anything which might be considered a bad example, inciting others to similar deeds. The Salisbury and Winchester Journal quite frequently carries notices in the 1840s such as, 'Accounts of incendiary fires never do any good and may be productive of much harm'.²⁵⁶ It was not until 1858 that the numbers of indictable offences known to the police

were recorded in the annual returns published in the Parliamentary Papers. Until this time, the only supplement to the incidents recorded in newspaper reports is an occasional reference to undetected crimes in the Chief Constable's reports to the Quarter Sessions, and some references to incendiary fires in certain fire insurance office records, although obviously the latter cover only the minority of the population who held policies with that particular fire office.

It is even more difficult to assess the amount of petty crime, since many Petty Sessions records no longer exist, while the numbers of summary convictions are also published in the Parliamentary Papers only from 1858 onwards. Before this date, extant records of summary convictions, for instance those listed in the newspapers, represent such a large body of information that their listing and interpretation could take up an entire and separate study.

Some Parliamentary returns do exist for the early part of this period showing committals under the Game Laws between 1829 and 1836, and between 1839 and 1843. Until 1832 these do not cover the whole year but only the winter months from November to February, while between 1833 and 1836 the returns show committals for the whole three years together. Consequently they can offer only a rough idea of the number of poaching convictions in the early decades of the period.

Tables 4 - 7 show the information relating to Wiltshire in the Parliamentary returns, for certain selected crimes which have specific associations with rural areas.

It is very difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from these tables. The wide fluctuations in the number of offenders tried at Quarter Sessions and Assizes may depend on the largely fortuitous circumstances of success in detection. Although there is no clear watershed however, there are markedly fewer offenders in the second half of the century than in the 1830s and 1840s for all the crimes except arson. This anomaly may be explained by the fact that arson, which ceased to be a capital offence in 1837, was committed increasingly as a means to imprisonment or transportation, and hence became less secretive. It was notoriously difficult to detect arsonists if they wished to remain anonymous. By comparing the figures of those tried for arson with fires reported in the newspapers we find that there is a considerable difference between the number of offences and those brought to justice. In 1831, 1833 and 1836 in particular the returns give a misleadingly low indication of the extent of this crime. Table 7 which shows the number of indictable offences known to the police from 1858 onwards confirms that many arsonists escaped detection.

The Assize and Quarter Session figures might also be misleading in suggesting criminal trends. Between 1834 and 1836, for instance, the returns suggest that there was a decline in arson whereas other sources point to quite a sharp increase in these years.

Table 4: Numbers of offenders committed for trial at the Assizes and Quarter Sessions in Wiltshire, 1830-1875

Date	Arson, firing crops & other property	Destroying threshing machines and other agricultural machines	Killing & maiming cattle	Sending letters threatening to burn houses etc.	Being out armed to take game by night ... and assaulting gamekeepers	Stealing cattle, sheep and horses
1830	14	225	2	3	16	23
1831	6	-	-	4	2	24
1832	5	-	-	1	7	25
1833	1	-	2	1	5	24
1834	5	-	2	-	10	12
1835	3	-	-	1	12	11
1836	2	-	-	-	2	12
1837	1	-	2	-	6	23
1838	1	-	-	1	-	19
1839	1	-	-	1	12	15
1840	5	-	-	-	2	22
1841	1	-	-	-	-	12
1842	1	-	2	1	8	27
1843	4	-	1	2	4	13
1844	-	-	-	-	3	11
1845	6	-	-	2	8	6
1846	5	-	-	-	8	11
1847	7	-	-	-	-	14
1848	-	-	3	-	2	23
1849	-	-	1	-	-	11
1850	2	-	2	-	3	9
1851	9	-	2	-	4	12
1852	4	-	1	-	1	7
1853	8	-	-	1	-	8
1854	7	-	1	-	-	12
1855	1	-	1	1	-	11
1856	-	-	-	-	-	14
1857	4	-	1	-	3	6
1858	3	-	2	-	2	4
1859	6	-	-	-	3	8
1860	4	-	-	-	-	7
1861	3	-	2	-	3	2
1862	8	-	-	1	3	4
1863	5	-	1	-	-	3
1864	4	-	-	-	-	4
1865	5	-	-	-	-	3
1866	8	-	-	-	2	3
1867	1	-	-	-	4	2
1868	6	-	1	-	-	1
1869	12	-	-	-	-	12
1870	5	-	-	-	4	2
1871	5	-	-	-	-	2
1872	2	-	-	-	-	2
1873	-	-	2	1	-	3
1874	7	-	1	-	-	3
1875	2	-	-	-	-	5

Source: Figures for 1830-33, W.R.O., Statistics of Crime from 1801 to 1850 compiled by the Governor of the County Gaol (Salisbury, 1855).
 Figures for 1834-75, P.P., 1835 (218.) XLV-1876, LXXIX, Tables of Criminal Offenders.

Table 5: Offences under the Game Laws in Wiltshire
1829-1836

5a: Committals under the Game Laws, 1829-1833

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Average per month</u>
1st November 1829 - 1st February 1830:	82	27
1st November 1830 - 1st February 1831:	48	16
1st November 1831 - 1st February 1832:	79	26
1st November 1832 - 1st November 1833:	167	14

5b: Convictions under the Game Laws, 1833-1836

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Average per month</u>
1st November 1833 - 26 February 1836:	563	20

5c: Summary Convictions under the Game Laws, 1839-1843

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Average per month</u>
1839	585	49
1840	856	71
1841	684	57
1842	841	70
1843	847	71

Source: P.P., 1831-32 (497.) XXXIII; 1834 (72.) XLVII;
1836 (179.) XLI, and P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX.

Table 6: Offences determined summarily in the County of Wiltshire
(for the year ending 29th September), 1858-1875

Date	Offences against the Game Acts, viz:				Stealing or attempts to steal, viz:		
	Trespass- ing in daytime in pur- suit of game	Night poaching and des- troying game	Illegal selling or buying of game	Poaching Preven- tion Act (1862)	Fruit or vegetable products	Fences, wood, etc.	Trees, shrubs etc.
1858	217	15	2	-	111	42	-
1859	189	10	-	-	72	10	-
1860	147	9	-	-	81	17	-
1861	165	8	1	-	109	28	7
1862	218	11	-	-	103	43	4
1863	234	9	-	2	62	9	3
1864	246	15	-	15	60	9	3
1865	187	13	1	6	60	13	8
1866	220	7	1	9	67	7	2
1867	213	10	-	8	112	7	5
1868	164	12	1	2	72	21	1
1869	222	8	-	7	87	17	7
1870	247	13	-	3	51	5	-
1871	165	9	-	6	97	9	-
1872	152	12	1	5	55	9	1
1873	194	8	-	7	58	15	-
1874	167	3	3	4	113	24	-
1875	152	4	-	7	17	6	-

Source: P.P., 1859 (Sess.1) XXVL-1876, LXXIX.

Table 7: Indictable offences known to the police in the County of Wiltshire (for year ending 29th September), 1858-1875

Date	Arson, firing crops & property	Killing & maiming cattle	Sending letters to burn houses etc.	Being out armed to take game by night, and assaulting gamekeepers	Stealing cattle, sheep & horses
1858	4	1	1	-	6
1859	14	1	-	8	6
1860	3	2	-	-	7
1861	3	1	-	4	5
1862	10	1	-	-	5
1863	11	1	-	-	11
1864	5	-	-	-	8
1865	11	-	-	-	6
1866	9	-	-	2	6
1867	4	2	-	4	3
1868	8	2	1	-	6
1869	12	-	-	-	10
1870	11	-	-	4	8
1871	6	5	-	-	6
1872	6	-	-	-	5
1873	6	-	-	-	5
1874	-	2	1	-	3
1875	8	-	-	-	5

Source: P.P., 1859 (Sess.1) XXVI-1876, LXXIX.

The returns of criminal offenders are of more use in trying to gauge how numerous crimes such as arson and cattle maiming were in relation to other crimes. This is, of course, based on the unrealistic assumption that the rate of detection was roughly the same for all crimes. By comparing the number of offenders for each crime with the total number of offenders in the county each year, it can be seen that altogether these crimes formed only a small if persistent part of all crime. Arson, the sending of threatening letters, and the killing and maiming of cattle, all of which fell into the category of malicious offences against property, never amounted to more than 7% of all criminal charges, and in the earlier decades of this period, when a higher number of crimes was tried at Assizes and Quarter Sessions, they usually formed only about 1% or 2% of the total. In the 1830s and 1840s the number of indictments for sheep, cattle and horse stealing was usually about 5% of the total, while those charged with being out armed to poach at night formed about 4% of the total. By far the most common crime was simple larceny which usually made up between 40% and 60% of all indictments.

In many ways, the tables showing indictable offences and summary convictions are more useful. The returns of indictable offences were more accurate than the reporting of offences in the newspapers, since between 29th September 1857 and 29th September 1875 the Parliamentary returns show that there were twenty more incendiary fires than were reported in the papers. The Table of Summary Offences shows how extensive petty crime must have been in

the rural areas, especially since many of these crimes must have remained undetected, even with the introduction in 1862 of the Poaching Prevention Act which gave legal force to the police practice of searching those whom they suspected of theft.

From these sources, it is, of course, virtually impossible to judge accurately how much of this crime was the work of the population in the rural areas and how much originated in the manufacturing towns and boroughs. For a brief period, between October 1842 and October 1844, and between January and June in 1845 and 1847, the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette printed a break-down of certain crimes in Wiltshire by divisions. These figures are shown in Table 8. Assuming that these figures are typical for the period as a whole, it can be seen that for the crimes of sheep-stealing, arson and poaching, the more agricultural the division the more crime occurred there. It can be seen too that particular crimes were more prevalent in some divisions than others; Devizes for instance was by far the worst division for arson, Swindon for sheep-stealing, and Salisbury and Marlborough for poaching. The most consistently lawless divisions for all offences were Marlborough and Devizes, both of them almost entirely agricultural and with few alternative sources of employment. In general there was more crime in the 'Chalk' than in the 'Cheese' divisions, indicating that there was greater distress and dissatisfaction among the population of the former.

Table 8: Crime by divisions, October 1842 - October 1844,
January - June 1845, January - June 1847

Division	Offences (including undetected cases):			Total
	Arson	Poaching	Sheep-stealing	
Salisbury	2	187	13	202
Marlborough	3	144	22	169
Devizes	15	88	14	117
Hindon	-	109	6	115
Warminster	3	92	3	98
Swindon	3	44	25	72
Malmesbury	1	39	11	51
Chippenham	4	35	2	41
Bradford	4	17	7	29

Source: Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette.

It was a common belief of the times that the agricultural population was docile and law-abiding, and that most of the depredations occurring in the county originated in the towns. John Benett, a Wiltshire M.P., told the House of Commons on 30th March 1840 that nine-tenths of the crime committed in Wiltshire took place in the four principal manufacturing towns of the county. But the Judge at the next Quarter Sessions was anxious to correct this misconception; as he pointed out to the jury, of the fifty-five cases of felony tried at that Sessions:

nineteen only of the felonies were committed in towns - he did not mean manufacturing towns merely, but every place in the county that was called a town: - the remainder, two to one, being committed in the rural district! Another circumstance had also attracted his attention; full one third of the charges was for stealing agricultural property. 257

This view was reinforced by the County Constabulary's Chief Constable, who stated in 1855 that:

six out of eight of the offences which have been tried at our quarter sessions have originated in the agricultural districts, ... the offences I allude to particularly are petty robberies from their employers, stealing wheat from the barn, stealing beans from the bean rick, and agricultural implements occasionally; stealing potatoes from the pits. 258

Between 1856 and 1875, 73% of all male prisoners in Wiltshire gaols were classed in the Parliamentary returns as 'labourers', and it seems reasonable to assume that most of these were agricultural labourers since factory workers, mechanics and domestic servants are accounted for in other categories.

The anonymous nature of much rural crime, and the fact that the culprits of many offences were never detected,

makes it difficult to disentangle those incidents which can be regarded as some form of protest from the more ordinary rural crimes which, at best, serve only as some indication of the extent of poverty in the countryside. As Hay writes, few of these crimes 'can ever certainly be identified as expressions of wide discontent because their authors spoke to the enemy in a language of symbolism so dependent on personal context that we can rarely recover it'.²⁵⁹

The sending of letters threatening harm to their recipients is often the only crime in which the motives of those responsible are clearly evident. A good case can also be made out to identify arson as a manifestation of unrest. But it is more difficult to pinpoint elements of conscious protest in crimes such as cattle maiming, sheep stealing and poaching.

A.J. Peacock believes that cattle maiming in East Anglia was a recognized form of social protest,²⁶⁰ and the 'houghing' of cattle was a common feature of unrest in Ireland.²⁶¹ We should not overestimate the element of maliciousness in all cases; Jefferies, for instance, believed that the apparently 'unfeeling brutality' of many labourers to both animals and young boys in their charge, arose not 'from deliberate cruelty, but from a species of stolid indifference or insensibility to suffering', coming about, possibly, from their own rough life and poor living conditions.²⁶² On the other hand many of the cases of killing and maiming livestock, especially in the early decades of this period, cannot be attributed to mere



indifference or carelessness, particularly since a number of them prompted the offer of high rewards of between £30 and £60.

A dozen cases, in particular, in the 1830s and 1840s in Wiltshire were clearly acts of vengeance, often aimed at individuals in their capacity as Poor Law officials or magistrates. In Damerham, on 6th January 1832, there was a savage attack on a cow belonging to George Masters, described as 'an active overseer'.²⁶³ The killing of a lamb belonging to a farmer named Fry, of Lacock, on 11th October 1834, was believed to have been 'actuated by a revengeful feeling in consequence of Mr Fry's performance of the parochial duties'.²⁶⁴ The first of two cases of livestock maiming in West Lavington in the 1830s and 1840s, took place on 27th September 1834, when a pig was poisoned. This incident coincided with the firing of another farmer's property, and followed a series of protests about a reduction in the rate of poor relief, in which the overseer was threatened by paupers, and a body of labourers had gone to the Petty Sessions to put their complaints before the magistrates.²⁶⁵ At the Wiltshire Lent Assizes in 1837, a man named Jesse Selwood was convicted and transported for life for shooting two cows, the property of a magistrate named Whightwick, at Brinkworth on 25th March 1836. Selwood apparently wanted revenge on Whightwick because he had refused to grant Selwood a game licence.²⁶⁶

One of the latest known cases and one of the most interesting, took place at Berwick St James on 25th January 1848, when 190 sheep, the property of E.C. Pinckney,

were poisoned. At the Summer Assizes an agricultural labourer and former workhouse inmate, Jonah Blanchard was charged with this offence: he was known to have a violent dislike of Pinckney who was one of only two farmers in the parish, and who had recently refused to give Blanchard employment. It is significant that there were only two farmers employing labour in this parish, and they presumably kept a tight control on the labouring population. This was the only form of unrest recorded in this parish throughout this period, despite the fact that arson, Swing rioting and strikes affected one or more of the neighbouring parishes of Maddington, Stapleford, Winterbourne Stoke and Woodford.²⁶⁷

Other cases involving the malicious mutilation or killing of lambs, cows and horses took place at Melksham in December 1834, at Shrewton in February 1836, at Yatton in January 1837, at Chippenham in January and, at Bulkington in November 1838, at West Lavington in August 1846, and at Urchfont in September 1847. Most were followed by unsuccessful attempts to find the culprit through the offering of rewards.

It is even more difficult to prove that sheep stealing could fall into the category of malicious or revengeful crime, although here, too, Peacock believes that cases such as those involving the killing of sheep and removal of the best cuts only, might be interpreted as a form of protest.²⁶⁸ The difficulties of hiding entire sheep carcasses in poor cottages, however, might well have

made this a practical rather than a malicious course of action. Sheep stealing was certainly a widespread crime, especially in the 1830s and 1840s when it reached alarmingly high proportions, in particular on open downland where, during the day, sheep wandered across the largely unfenced landscape.

In considering petty theft in the countryside we should not forget a trend noted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to define as criminal, activities which the local population regarded as natural rights. The inhabitants of Great Wishford and Barford St Martin who were accustomed to gather dead wood for fuel in Grovely Wood on the Pembroke estate claimed - successfully in this case - that their right to do so was protected by charters of 1597 and 1603.²⁶⁹

On the whole, it seems unlikely that the theft of most agricultural produce, had any conscious element of protest in it, although it might well have been the case that it contained the idea of striking at a legitimate target. As Holdenby wrote of the rural community at the beginning of the twentieth century:

It was a matter of congratulation among the men as they talked at work if they had succeeded in "doing" a person in a better position, or even if they had "sloped sommat" from the well-to-do. "It won't do 'im any 'arm to part wiv a bit", or, "'E could well afford to give it away" were the usual justifications. It is the idea of a legitimate prey, the right to make some folk disgorge, the suggestion of just reprisal ... It is often the same spirit, too, which initiates poaching rather than the actual material gain. There is a satisfaction in carrying the war right into the enemy's country. I know so well an attitude in which the villagers touch their hats

to the gentry while they are in their employ. The salute is thrown in with the service, but it ceases with the latter. I do not say this position is universal, though I think it is rather general, and also very natural. 270

Poaching was, perhaps, the most widespread and endemic rural crime, for which there was a multitude of game laws to cover its varying degrees of seriousness. Of course, to an extent, the amount of poaching in any place depended on the degree of game preservation. On the whole Wiltshire was not a highly preserved part of the country, although a number of large landowners did have game preserves in different parts of the county. The most highly preserved area was the Marlborough Division, where the Marquis of Ailesbury who resided at Tottenham Park in Savernake Forest had extensive estates. Sir Francis Astley of Everley House near Marlborough, Mr Smith of Ramsbury Manor, and Mr Popham of Littlecott were three other landowners who preserved game in this area. In the south of the county, Salisbury had a reputation as an important centre for the sale of illegal game in the late 1820s, although to an extent this was because poaching was rife in Dorset, a rigidly preserved county. There were some game preserves in south and south-east Wiltshire, however, notably those of the Nelson family of Landford and of the Earl of Pembroke who resided at Wilton House. The third Earl of Radnor, who had succeeded to the title in 1828, had little interest in game preservation. But his son, Lord Folkestone, was different, and when he took possession of certain lands in the Odstock area in 1841 he took all rights over game into his own hands.²⁷¹ Elsewhere

in the county there were fewer game preserves, although a number of smaller landowners did preserve game in their parks, for example the Methuens of Corsham Court, the Calley family of Burderop Park near Swindon, Ludlow Bruges of Sandridge near Melksham, Lord Bolingbroke of Lydiard Park and the Starkeys of Spye Park (see map on page 110). The fact that other areas of the county were not as well preserved as these did not mean that poaching did not take place elsewhere, but it did mean that, being better stocked, these game preserves presented a greater temptation to the poacher. They were also well-guarded, so that many of the more violent poaching affrays took place here, and indeed in many of the parks mentioned above there were fights between armed gangs of poachers and gamekeepers, between the 1820s and the 1840s.

Game preservation, in general, reached its height in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but to some extent it declined in the climate of economic uncertainty in the 1830s and 1840s, and did not regain its old popularity until the late 1850s. The savage game laws of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which broadly speaking aimed at ensuring that the hunting of game was the exclusive privilege of the landed classes, were overhauled and simplified in the late 1820s and early 1830s. After 1831 the rights of shooting game were no longer restricted to owners of land worth £100 per annum or more, and in theory it became possible for anyone to purchase a game licence on application to the magistrates. In practice, however, hunting and shooting continued to be the sport of

the landed gentry primarily, and many tenant farmers were still excluded. This state of affairs resulted in considerable rural conflict, especially in the vicinity of large game preserves where many tenant farmers bitterly resented the fact that they had to seek permission of the landowner to shoot the pheasants, rabbits and hares which frequently caused much damage to their crops. Several tenant farmers from south-east Wiltshire complained bitterly to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Game Laws, in 1846, about the extent of damage caused on their farms by game, and one thought the preservation of game 'very prejudicial' to agriculture.²⁷²

A rather more radical writer on the game preservation on the Marquis of Ailesbury's Savernake estate complained that there were:

many fields on which the tenants can never obtain a crop of grain, tares or roots, everything green being devoured by the game as soon as it appears above the ground ... If this estate ... were really and completely cultivated; if the waste lands of Savernake Forest were brought into tillage and all of it is what farmers would call "useful land" we do not hesitate to say that at least treble the quantities of grain and meat now produced there might be raised, with profit to the cultivator, advantage to the half-employed peasantry, and an improved rental to the landlord.²⁷³

The extent of poaching in the rural areas, therefore, was doubtless exacerbated by the fact that many farmers did not always consider the breaking of the game laws a morally reprehensible act, and not only might they turn a blind eye to poachers, but also they could indulge in a certain amount of poaching themselves. The game laws therefore:

created a curious anomaly in the administration of the criminal laws. They antagonised a great many men who usually were the first to support the defence of property and the conviction of thieves ... Although they created friction and sometimes hostility between gentry and farmers, they created something of an alliance between farmers and labourers, who poached together and supported one another with alibis and verdicts of not guilty. 274

A series of notorious poaching affrays at Fovant, on Lord Pembroke's estate between 25th and 27th January 1845, is an extreme example of how much discord the game laws could create. In evidence given by Wiltshire's Chief Constable to the Select Committee on the Game Laws in 1846, it was implied that the tenant farmer, Mr Martin, who occupied the land on which the fights took place, had encouraged the poachers. The sporting rights on the land were not rented out with the farm, and it was stated that Martin had 'originated all the annoyance he could to the keepers and the preservation of game'. All eight poachers eventually arrested were agricultural labourers employed by Martin, and Martin paid for their defence counsel and gave them all good characters, with the result that the men were given the comparatively lenient sentence of twelve months' hard labour.²⁷⁵

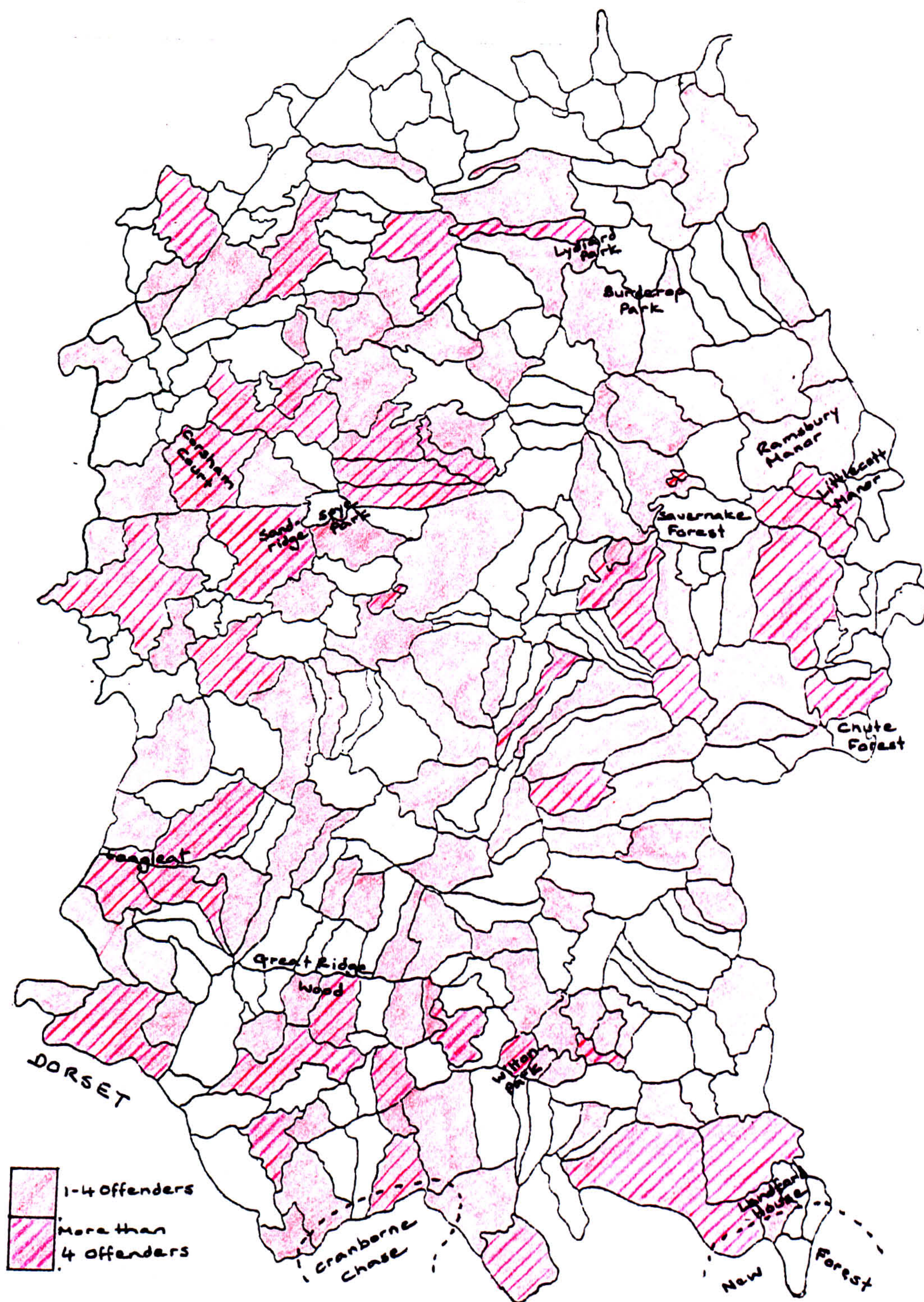
The poaching offence which was regarded as most serious and carried the heaviest penalties was 'being out armed to take game by night, taking game by night and assaulting gamekeepers'. Under the 1828 Night Poaching Act, anyone found poaching at night could be sentenced to three months in prison with hard labour, and at the end to find surety for himself of £10, plus two sureties of £5 each.

If he was unable to find this money, his sentence could be increased by a further six months. For a second offence this penalty was doubled, and for a third, the sentence was seven years' transportation. An armed offender who resisted arrest faced a sentence of seven years' transportation for a first offence. Indictments for these offences are listed in Table 4.

These account for only a small minority of poaching crimes, however, as Tables 5, 6 and 7 show. The majority of minor poaching offences was tried summarily at Petty Sessions. The map overpage indicates the geographical spread of convictions at Wiltshire Petty Sessions for offences against the game laws between 1831 and 1835. Minor poaching offences do indeed appear to have been most common around the well preserved parks and estates which were also the scene of most serious fights between gamekeepers and poachers. Poaching was more common too in wooded areas. Not surprisingly there was a comparatively larger number of convictions in the more densely populated parishes and around the main towns, but there were many convictions too in the sparsely populated parishes of the downs.

The maximum sentence for offenders convicted at Petty Sessions after 1831 was a £2 fine, or £5 if the poacher had been in a gang of five or more. If a convicted man was unable to pay the fine he could be imprisoned with or without hard labour; for fines below £5 the maximum period of imprisonment was two months. These penalties could be imposed by one magistrate alone. The extent of poaching however did not diminish, as Table 5 shows. In

Convictions at Wiltshire Petty Sessions for Offences under the Game Laws, Jan. 1831 - Dec. 1835



fact there was a marked increase in poaching in the early 1840s which was probably a reflection of changes in the Poor Law, with a reduction in the amount and nature of outrelief afforded to the poor in times of distress. Concern at the apparent increases in offences prompted the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee to examine the problem. The Report of this Select Committee in 1846 showed that in a number of rural southern counties including Wiltshire, convictions under the Game Laws in 1843 accounted for around one quarter of all male summary convictions.

It was quite common for poachers to subscribe to clubs which paid their fine in the event of a conviction. The comparative ease with which poachers could therefore go about their business and escape serious punishment was a source of annoyance to the police who felt they were fighting a losing battle in trying to combat the crime, and would have preferred harsher penalties.²⁷⁶ But even if a convicted poacher could escape legal punishment with comparative ease, the social stigma of a conviction could be disastrous for an agricultural labourer, for as one farmer wrote, his former employer:

dares not again employ him, and the other tenants are alike prohibited from employing one who has the brand of poacher on him. He has not only offended the law of his country, but he has offended the all-powerful landlord. 277

This almost inevitably pushed the victimised man back into crime. Among those tried at Petty Sessions between 1831 and 1835 there were several men who were convicted on more than one occasion, namely Henry Cooper of Everley convicted

three times, and George Tarrant of Froxfield, Nathaniel James of Little Bedwin and James Gerrett of Warminster all of whom were convicted twice in these five years. In 1832 William Winter of Chute was also sentenced to one month in The House of Correction for a poaching offence, two years before being hanged for arson.²⁷⁸

The comparative ineffectiveness of legal remedies for poaching led to a reluctance among the farmers to have the culprits charged, and they preferred instead to impose some punishment of their own. One old gamekeeper told Richard Jefferies:

What's the use of summoning a chap for sneaking about with a cur dog and a wire in his pocket? ... His mates in the village club together and pays his fine and he laughs at you ... These here prisons - every man as I ever knowed to go to gaol always went twice, and kept on going.

This particular keeper preferred to dole out his own justice in the form of 'a good leathering'.²⁷⁹ Evidence of this kind proves how extensive poaching must have been and how many offences, not merely undetected ones, must have escaped inclusion in any criminal statistics.

Poachers tended to fall into two broad categories. The man who made his living solely from poaching and crime was described as being usually 'idle and dissolute' and was said to be hated and shunned by the majority of the agricultural population.²⁸⁰ The Chief Constable of Wiltshire believed that these professional poachers were often involved in other rural crime, and that they would turn to sheep and fowl stealing when game was out of season. It was commonly asserted that it was this kind of man who made

up the armed poaching gangs which went into the well-stocked game preserves at night in order to shoot as much game as possible for sale.

The armed and potentially violent professional poacher, however, was the exception rather than the rule. Both the Chief Constable and the M.P. John Benett believed that most poachers were ordinary agricultural labourers, and that their poaching was a 'craft' learned in a kind of apprenticeship from a very young age. Jefferies described a typical poacher of this kind as 'a sober and to all appearances, industrious individual, working steadily throughout the day ... He has no appetite for thrilling adventure; his idea is simply money, and he looks upon his night work precisely as he does upon his day labour'.²⁸¹ Some of these poachers might have had guns, but obviously it was very difficult for most agricultural labourers to obtain one, and anyway it was frequently more desirable for the poacher not to be armed since the possession of a gun drew suspicion on the owner, while the noise of its report would draw the police and gamekeepers to the poacher's whereabouts. Most poaching involved the setting of nets, traps or wires, and was a skilled occupation often requiring considerable patience.

It is not at all clear exactly how many of the agricultural labouring population indulged in this sort of poaching, and commentators vary considerably in their views. Hudson believed that most agricultural labourers would only resort to poaching on the rare occasions when an easy opportunity arose, for instance if they came across a wounded

partridge, hare or rabbit when working alone in the fields, or in their gardens or allotments.²⁸² It seems likely however that many labourers indulged in rather less haphazard poaching than this since it was generally agreed that such crime increased when unemployment was high and when wages were low. A magistrate of the Marlborough and Ramsbury Division, for instance, complained that as a result of high unemployment and low poor relief, the paupers of the area, 'having destroyed all the game ... now nightly plunder hen roosts and cut the woods'.²⁸³

Even if the majority of labourers did not indulge in poaching themselves - and this seems unlikely - there is no doubt that the agricultural labourer was rarely morally outraged by those who did resort to poaching. To the poacher, concealment and hence the need to know the game-keeper's and policeman's beats was vital, and according to Jefferies this information was easily obtained, since, 'the labourers who do not themselves poach, sympathize warmly and whisper information'.²⁸⁴ In a story which he wrote entitled "John Smith's Shanty", Jefferies described how John Smith, an honest labourer came to sympathize with a dissolute character who spent much of his time either poaching or drinking in the beer house. Smith realised that this poacher had a large family:

What labourer could blame the father for taking the hares and rabbits running across his very path to fill that wretched hovel with savoury steam from the pot? And further what labourer could blame the miserable old man for drowning his feelings, and his sensation of cold and hunger in liquor? The great evil of these things is that a fellow feeling will arise with the wrongdoer, till the original distinction between right and wrong is lost sight of entirely. 285

John Benett stated that the agricultural labouring population believed that there was no shame or disgrace attached to poaching, and that they conceived that they had 'a natural right to whatever is produced on their land'.²⁸⁶ They were said to consider the game laws as being excessively harsh, and that this created a feeling of hostility towards the gamekeepers and landowners. Many of the incendiary fires started in furze and gorse were aimed at spoiling the sport of huntsmen, furze and gorse often being used as a cover for foxes and other game.

The practice of some commentators to blame poaching on a small group of hardened criminals, separate from the majority of agricultural labourers was not confined to this crime alone. The belief that the agricultural labourer was law-abiding and well-inclined towards his employer was common among many of the labourers' social superiors. Hence, it was felt, crime must be the consequence of the immorality of the few rather than the general deprivation of the majority, a point which, incidentally, made it easier to justify harsh penalties for crime. As the Salisbury and Winchester Journal remarked in 1842:

If the statement was true that the cause of the increase or commission of crime was to be found in the distress or privation to which the labouring classes are exposed, we should find the first offences in the way of theft being committed by deserving, careful, industrious people ... But every farmer knows that the person to whom he looks for breaking into his barn or robbing his stable, are people of a very different description from these. They are the idle, the drunken, the insolent and the wandering: the pothouse soakers, the sleepers and skittle players by day, and poachers and house-breakers by night. Or they are moreover, the tramps, beggars and gypsies who roam from fair to fair, or from market to market ...

There are two courses which may always be made operative, for the purpose of effecting a decrease of crime in any county: the course of prevention by regulation and vigilance: and the course of deterrent by penalty and example. 287

A common response of farmers and clergy to Swing rioting and incendiary fires was to blame outsiders of some sort - myserious strangers, gipsies or railway labourers. Failing this, it was asserted that the poor agricultural labourer had been corrupted, for instance by the beer house, or 'Satan's Workshop' as it was known.

During the Swing Riots, the correspondent of The Times made humorous capital out of the suspicion with which strangers were regarded in the Wiltshire countryside. As he wrote:

Gentlemen in gigs are peculiar objects of jealousy. A cigar which is no slight comfort in this humid atmosphere, is regarded on the road as a species of pyrotechnical tube; and even an eyeglass is in danger of being metamorphosed into a newly-invented air gun, with which these gentlemen ignite stacks and barns as they pass. An innocent inquiry of "whose house or farm is that?" is, under existing circumstances, an overt act of incendiarism. 288

The Fire Insurance offices were less easily fooled into believing that mysterious strangers were responsible for incendiarism. In a printed circular issued by the County Fire Office of London in December 1830, entitled 'To Discover an Incendiary in the Country' it was written that:

the stories about strangers in gigs, and about fire balls, have in no instance been realized; in many instances they have been invented by persons living near the spot, who are themselves the incendiaries. In almost every instance wherein conviction has taken place, the culprit has been a servant of the sufferer, or a person living near to him, acting under some motive of

revenge ... An incendiary servant, very often before a fire, trumps up a story of having seen some stranger about the premises - heard some noises or threats ... 289

Whether the farmers actually believed the stories about criminal outsiders and agitators, or whether they simply repeated them because they were unwilling to believe that the labourers were guilty of such crimes, or whether they repeated them in order to distract attention from the real causes of unrest, it is very difficult to decide. If, in their pronouncements, however, the farmers, landowners and clergy refused to admit that the labourers were in some way dissatisfied, or driven to crime by poverty, in practice their response was often very different. In a number of cases wages were cut by landowners and farmers in parishes, following incendiary fires, and the labourers of the parish told that they would remain so until the incendiary was found, suggesting that the labourers were seen as accomplices of the incendiary, whose identity they were deliberately concealing.²⁹⁰ Similarly, in West Lavington Lord Churchill threatened to break up three fields which he let to labourers as allotments, and let them all to one farmer, if an incendiary fire ever again occurred on his property.²⁹¹

Quarter Session reports and some Assize judges in their addresses to juries also linked the amount of crime with the economic and social conditions of the population and especially with the degree of unemployment which was seen as the touchstone of depression. For instance, the Chief Constable's report to the Quarter Sessions in April

1842 attributed the increase in crime in the north of the county to an increase in unemployment brought about with the completion of the railway, whereas elsewhere in the county, 'where the working classes have had regular employment, few offences have been committed'.²⁹² In 1844 the Chairman of the Grand Jury at the Quarter Sessions asserted that 'so long as we remain the most pauperised county in England ... we have disturbing courses actively at work generating crime'.²⁹³

In many of their actions aimed at improving labourers' conditions, farmers and landowners implied that they too saw a link between poverty and a certain amount of crime and discontent. The provision of allotments was frequently held up as a means of preventing unrest. In West Lavington it was stated that among the 134 renters of allotments on Lord Churchill's land, 'no tenant has been convicted of any crime since they have had land'.²⁹⁴ In Little Cheverell the provision of allotments was said to have made the labourers 'more honest'.²⁹⁵ Landowners in many parishes which escaped Swing rioting attributed this to the fact that the labourers had allotments. For instance one resident landowner of a North Wiltshire parish wrote in 1830:

When I first resided in the village in 1820, I found the people neglected, poor, uncivil, thieves, poachers, mischievous and idle. They are, now, I hope, attended to; they are certainly contented, civil, laborious and honest ... During the late tumults they have come forward to a man to protect my property; no disturbances, however, have occurred. ²⁹⁶

The provision of education was seen in a similar

light. One Wiltshire clergyman who gave a lecture in 1857 listed ignorance and the absence of education as a prime cause of crime.²⁹⁷ In 1843 the Vicar of Calne stated that education was a major need in the rural areas; he wished the landowners and farmers would assist to meet that need since 'they would find out how much cheaper, better and easier it is to give £100 yearly for good schools in order to remove ignorance, the parent of crime, than to pay £1,000 to a police for the purpose of detection'. He believed in particular that good education would help the agricultural labourers' wives to budget the limited family earnings better.²⁹⁸

Jefferies believed that it was no coincidence that poaching was more prevalent in parishes where the 'keystone' of the parish was missing, normally the landowner,²⁹⁹ and although a landowner who was also a strict game preserver might to some extent threaten rural harmony, nevertheless, the Chief Constable of Wiltshire believed 'the residence of a gentleman is the greatest blessing that can be bestowed upon a poor agricultural parish'.³⁰⁰

The presence in a parish of a benevolent landowner or a farmer who was prepared to try to ease the lot of the labourer could do much to offset unrest and crime. In subsequent chapters we shall see in more detail how far this presence could prevent the labouring population resorting to violent protest.

Law Enforcement

The level of crime then may have been affected on a local basis by the direct intervention of employers and landowners in trying to ease the labourers' conditions through charity and reforms such as better education and the provision of allotments (although very often those responsible for local reforms tended to overestimate the effects of their action). This system of benevolence and local patronage operated in harness with the legal system and threat of a harsh penal code to inspire among the rural population that 'tissue of fear and gratitude that we call deference'.³⁰¹ Douglas Hay writes thus of eighteenth century society:

Benevolence was not a simple positive act; it contained within it the ever present threat of malice ... A justice giving charity to a wandering beggar was benevolent because he could whip him instead. Benevolence, all patronage was given meaning by its contingency ... When patronage failed force could be invoked, but when coercion inflamed men's minds, at the crucial moment mercy could calm them. 302

To some extent this still held true in the nineteenth century. The growth in population however had led to some erosion of that paternalist society described by Hay, and by the late 1830s it was evident that some more formal machinery than had existed formerly was necessary to enforce the law. In 1839 the County Police Act empowered counties to set up their own police forces. Wiltshire was the first English county to take advantage of this Act, its rural constabulary being established by the beginning of 1840. Before this, law enforcement had been rather a

haphazard affair. It was based on medieval practices and depended on unpaid parish constables who were elected by Courts Leet - a practice not abolished until the 1842 Parish Constables Act provided for the appointment of constables at the sessions of justices. Under the old system, the election of parish constables usually worked on a rota basis; a man elected as constable would serve for a one-year term during which his duties consisted of the execution of warrants, the preservation of order and the organisation of the parish watch. Many of those eligible to serve as constables would, if possible, pay a fine to avoid election or pay a deputy to perform the duties in their place.³⁰³

In practice the parish constables did not provide a very satisfactory method of policing, and in times of crisis the authorities preferred to rely on special constables or the military, as they did, for instance, during the Swing Riots. In the early years of this period Wiltshire had a certain advantage over many southern counties in that it had not disbanded its Yeomanry Cavalry. This force was to play an important role in suppressing unrest in 1830.

Farmers wishing to protect their property would often employ night watchmen. Until 1826 man traps and spring guns had sometimes been used to protect farmyards and game preserves, and in 1831, in the wake of rioting and arson, the Liberal Government restored the right to set spring guns in fields and unenclosed gardens for one year in order to help the agricultural counties combat incendiarism

and similar crimes. J.P.s began to grant the short-term licences at Michaelmas 1831.³⁰⁴

In some areas, prominent citizens would form themselves into societies for the prevention of crime and the prosecution of felons. Societies were formed between 1834 and 1835 at North Bradley, Ramsbury and Swindon, for instance, in the face of 'the alarming increase of crime, and the numerous robberies and thefts almost nightly committed'. They endeavoured to fight crime by offering rewards, and by appointing a committee to manage and conduct all their prosecutions, each member paying an equal amount of all the rewards offered, plus an annual membership fee.³⁰⁵

The offering of rewards sometimes attracted the services of London detectives. The Lambourne Incendiaries, whose attacks included the firing of a rick at Baydon in 1832,³⁰⁶ the Wroughton incendiary in 1833,³⁰⁷ and Charles Kimmer, the man hanged for incendiarism at Oare in 1834,³⁰⁸ were all hunted down with the help of Metropolitan Policemen or Bow Street officers as they were still known in the Wiltshire press.

The creation of the Wiltshire Constabulary was prompted not by an awareness of a growth in rural crime, but in the wake of Chartist riots in the textile manufacturing towns of West Wiltshire at the end of 1839. Nevertheless the police soon came to play an important role in crime-fighting in the rural areas. The Wiltshire Constabulary covered the whole of the county except for the borough of Salisbury. Salisbury had its own force of ten

constables and one superintendent who did not come under the jurisdiction of Wiltshire's Chief Constable, a state of affairs which caused some friction and jealousy, and was thought to impair the efficiency of the police as a whole.³⁰⁹

Initially the Constabulary consisted of 170 constables and 12 superintendents.³¹⁰ By 1853 it consisted of 29 second class constables, 125 first class constables, 25 sergeants, 10 inspectors and 10 superintendents. Its Chief Constable was Captain Samuel Meredith, a former coastguard. Originally constables were taken on for two months' probation, extended to six months in 1844, at 12s per week. In 1852 first class constables earned 20s per week, and second class constables 17s 6d per week. In addition, constables were permitted, at the Chief Constable's discretion, to receive any rewards offered for the apprehension of offenders.³¹¹

By 1872, the Constabulary had increased to number 211, comprising its Chief Constable, now Robert Sterne, a deputy Chief Constable, 9 superintendents, 13 inspectors, 26 sergeants, and 161 constables, divided into five classes.³¹²

Between 1843 and 1853 the average cost of the police force in Wiltshire was £10,833 1s 11d, a sum raised by the police rate, which was twopence farthing in the pound. Initially the cost of the Constabulary was thought very high, and it was complained of bitterly. But by a series of complicated calculations, Samuel Meredith tried to prove that the cost to the county was less than that of

the old parish constables who could usually claim various expenses for the apprehension of offenders from a county allowance. Moreover, the new constables, he argued, took on a number of additional duties such as acting as inspectors of weights and measures, and raising recruits for the militia in the Crimean War.³¹³

The organisation of the police force was largely the work of Meredith, the Chief Constable between 1839 and 1870. He divided the county into nine police divisions, and a number of further subdivisions, with an inspector or sergeant at the head of each.

Table 9 shows how the Constabulary was organised in 1844, and in addition shows how many people there were to each constable in the divisions. It can be seen that probably the Constabulary took its duties in the rural areas more seriously than in the towns. The most rural divisions of Devizes, Salisbury, Marlborough and Pewsey, and Hindon all had a higher proportion of constables than the more industrialised divisions of Chippenham, Swindon and Bradford. Nevertheless the scattered nature of the communities in the rural areas doubtless necessitated this, and the large area covered by the Pewsey and Marlborough Division certainly warranted the placing of five stations there.

Every constable was responsible for a particular district within these divisions, which he had to patrol each night, meeting with other constables at a set time and place. Each constable was on duty for twelve hours per day, and during this time on the beat he was supposed to visit every village and outlying farm in the area to check

Table 9: The Organisation of the Wiltshire Constabulary, 1844

Division	Places for station houses	Number of station houses	Number of constables in each division	Extent of each division From / To	Distance in miles	Population	Number of parishes	Number of people to each constable																																																																																																																													
Bradford	Bradford	1	26	North Bradley/ Atworth	7	38,012	13	1,810																																																																																																																													
	Melksham	1		Melksham/ Monkton Farley	8				Hindon	Hindon	1	16	Tollard Royal/ Great Ridge	12	17,304	32	1,081	Donhead	1	Compton	17	Fovant	1	Chamberlayne/Mere		Wiley	1			Swindon	Swindon	1	20	Chiseldon/Marston	14	29,216	31	1,416	Cricklade	1	Maizey		Highworth	1	Bishopstrow/ Lineham	15	Warminster	Warminster	1	21	Monkton Deverill/ Westbury	12	25,721	25	1,225	Westbury	1	Deptford/Corsley	14	Salisbury	Wilton	1	30	S. Damerham/ Orcheston Steeple	20	30,783	62	1,026	Downton	1	Langford/East	14	Shrewton	1	Winterslow		Devizes	Potterne	1	26	Tilshead/Calston	13	23,234	28	894	Edington/ Tinhead	1	Wellington Beechingstoke/ Keevil	13	Malmesbury	Malmesbury	1	15	Kemble/Great	11	15,484	29	1,032	Ashton	1	Somerford		Keynes	1	Brinkworth/ Luckington	15	Marlborough and Pewsey	Pewsey	1	28	Ogbourne/ Durrington	18	29,044	29	1,037	Ludgershall	1	Hungerford/ Avebury	18	Ramsbury	1			Enford	1			Chippenhams	Chippenham	1	22	Stanton St Quinton/ Laycock	7
Hindon	Hindon	1	16	Tollard Royal/ Great Ridge	12	17,304	32	1,081																																																																																																																													
	Donhead	1		Compton	17																																																																																																																																
	Fovant	1		Chamberlayne/Mere																																																																																																																																	
	Wiley	1																																																																																																																																			
Swindon	Swindon	1	20	Chiseldon/Marston	14	29,216	31	1,416																																																																																																																													
	Cricklade	1		Maizey																																																																																																																																	
	Highworth	1		Bishopstrow/ Lineham	15																																																																																																																																
Warminster	Warminster	1	21	Monkton Deverill/ Westbury	12	25,721	25	1,225																																																																																																																													
	Westbury	1		Deptford/Corsley	14																																																																																																																																
Salisbury	Wilton	1	30	S. Damerham/ Orcheston Steeple	20	30,783	62	1,026																																																																																																																													
	Downton	1		Langford/East	14																																																																																																																																
	Shrewton	1		Winterslow																																																																																																																																	
Devizes	Potterne	1	26	Tilshead/Calston	13	23,234	28	894																																																																																																																													
	Edington/ Tinhead	1		Wellington Beechingstoke/ Keevil	13																																																																																																																																
Malmesbury	Malmesbury	1	15	Kemble/Great	11	15,484	29	1,032																																																																																																																													
	Ashton	1		Somerford																																																																																																																																	
	Keynes	1		Brinkworth/ Luckington	15																																																																																																																																
Marlborough and Pewsey	Pewsey	1	28	Ogbourne/ Durrington	18	29,044	29	1,037																																																																																																																													
	Ludgershall	1		Hungerford/ Avebury	18																																																																																																																																
	Ramsbury	1																																																																																																																																			
	Enford	1																																																																																																																																			
Chippenhams	Chippenham	1	22	Stanton St Quinton/ Laycock	7	26,322	30	1,196																																																																																																																													
				Cherhill/Box	16																																																																																																																																

Source: W.R.O., Minute Book of the Wiltshire Police Committee 1844-81.

there were no incidents or complaints. Inspectors and sergeants were supposed to check regularly on constables to ensure they were patrolling conscientiously.

This system however was not foolproof, and there is some evidence of constables failing to perform their duties properly. The Constabulary records show a number of cases of constables being dismissed for being found drunk on duty,³¹⁴ while Jefferies hints at worse corruption, suggesting that in some cases police constables became accomplices of corrupt gamekeepers, and that those labourers who knew of their illegal dealings dared not expose them for fear of being accused, in turn, of poaching.³¹⁵ Meredith's support for police uniform seems to have arisen, not only because he thought it added to the constable's authority, but also because he hoped it would check such 'irregularities' as policemen spending their time on duty in public houses.³¹⁶ In 1869 an unusual incendiary case took place when a religious zealot, later acquitted on grounds of insanity, fired a haystack in order to bring attention to the fact that the constable was in the public house while he was supposed to be on duty.³¹⁷ Such incidents explain the policy of shifting each constable around the rural districts, and, less frequently around the boroughs, in order to prevent him becoming 'too intimate with the inhabitants and not sufficiently attentive to his duty'.³¹⁸

Irregularities such as drunkenness on duty were not calculated to increase the prestige of the police force which from the beginning had been strongly objected to from

some quarters both in principle and on grounds of expense. The dislike of police forces was not confined to Wiltshire. The formation of the Metropolitan Police Force in 1829 was seen as a threat to liberty, and many counties refused to take advantage of the 1839 County Police Act as Wiltshire had done, the majority of county constabularies not being established until Parliament made them compulsory in 1856. The introduction of a professional police force caused riots in parts of the industrial north, East Anglia and in South West Wales.³¹⁹ In Kent the reluctance to form a police force was said to be due to the inhabitants' fear of some new sort of 'police state'.³²⁰ Such fears existed in Wiltshire too, where the Constabulary was dubbed the 'Government gendarmerie' and was seen as an attempt by central Government to interfere in local affairs.³²¹

One of the principal causes of the police force's unpopularity with the middle class especially, was its expense to the ratepayer. John Benett complained to the House of Commons on 30th March 1840 about the expense and comparative inutility of the Constabulary to the county.³²² In 1841 a petition calling for the discontinuation of the Wiltshire Constabulary was signed by 4,408 people paying between them rates of £637,388, and up to the mid 1840s Meredith complained of attempts by 'a very powerful opposition' to get the Quarter Sessions to reduce the size of the force. By 1853 however he believed that this opposition had largely subsided and that only about one in six of the occupiers of land thought the police rate a waste of money.³²³

There is evidence that the Constabulary was very unpopular with the labouring classes too. They resented the implication that a constant watch needed to be kept over them, while the sometimes brutal behaviour of the police in enforcing such policies as the seizure of property from cottagers in rates arrears added to their unpopularity, and one such case at Bromham in 1841 earned them the title of 'A tax on the Poor'.³²⁴

In places with a reputation for lawlessness, attacks on police officers were not uncommon. At Potterne, a parish regularly terrorised by a group of rowdy young men, known locally as the 'Potterne Lambs', it was said that 'if a man is only fancied to be one of the police he is subject to attack', and in fact in August 1840 two strangers, mistakenly believed to be constables, were attacked in Worton, a tithing of Potterne.³²⁵

One constable who lived in Urchfont, had his house windows broken by someone throwing stones, an attack seen by the local newspaper as being connected with 'the hostile feeling so prevalent in the rural district against the new system of constabulary'.³²⁶

Threatening letters, sent by a former workhouse inmate to the Governor of Warminster Workhouse in July 1843, and to Slade Whiting, a Poor Law Guardian of Codford in December 1844 suggest that the writer and her friends saw the police as fellow conspirators with the Poor Law authorities in the oppression of the poor. 'We don't care for none of your damned police', she wrote;³²⁷ and she obviously had little faith in their effectiveness,

writing to Slade Whiting that she was determined to fire his property, 'and your police nor any other shall stop me'.³²⁸

Table 10 compiled from the Parliamentary statistics shows the number of assaults on peace officers in execution of their duty. Between 1834 and 1839 these figures could not of course refer to the Constabulary which did not come into existence until 1840, and must therefore refer primarily to parish constables. The table certainly shows an increase in assaults in the early 1840s matched only by the figures for 1834 and 1837, both years of considerable social unrest and crime. Widespread opposition, however would appear to have been on the decline after 1844.

Although reports of incidents involving hostility to the police declined after the 1840s, one incident in 1862 suggests that perhaps the population was still not entirely reconciled to the presence of a police force. An incendiary fire in a straw stack at Fisherton in March 1862, for which two vagrants were later convicted, drew a considerable crowd, who 'bonnetted' the police when they arrived on the scene, and threw earth and stones at them.³²⁹

It is impossible to judge accurately what effect the police had on the crime rate. Not surprisingly, the opponents of the Constabulary were quick to highlight its failings, while men like Meredith were anxious to praise its successes. Giving evidence before the Select Committee on Police in 1853, Meredith quoted the numbers of convictions to show how crime had decreased in 1852 as compared with 1842, but many other factors could have been involved in this decline, including a gradual improvement in social

Table 10: Assault on Peace Officers in the execution of their duty in the county of Wiltshire

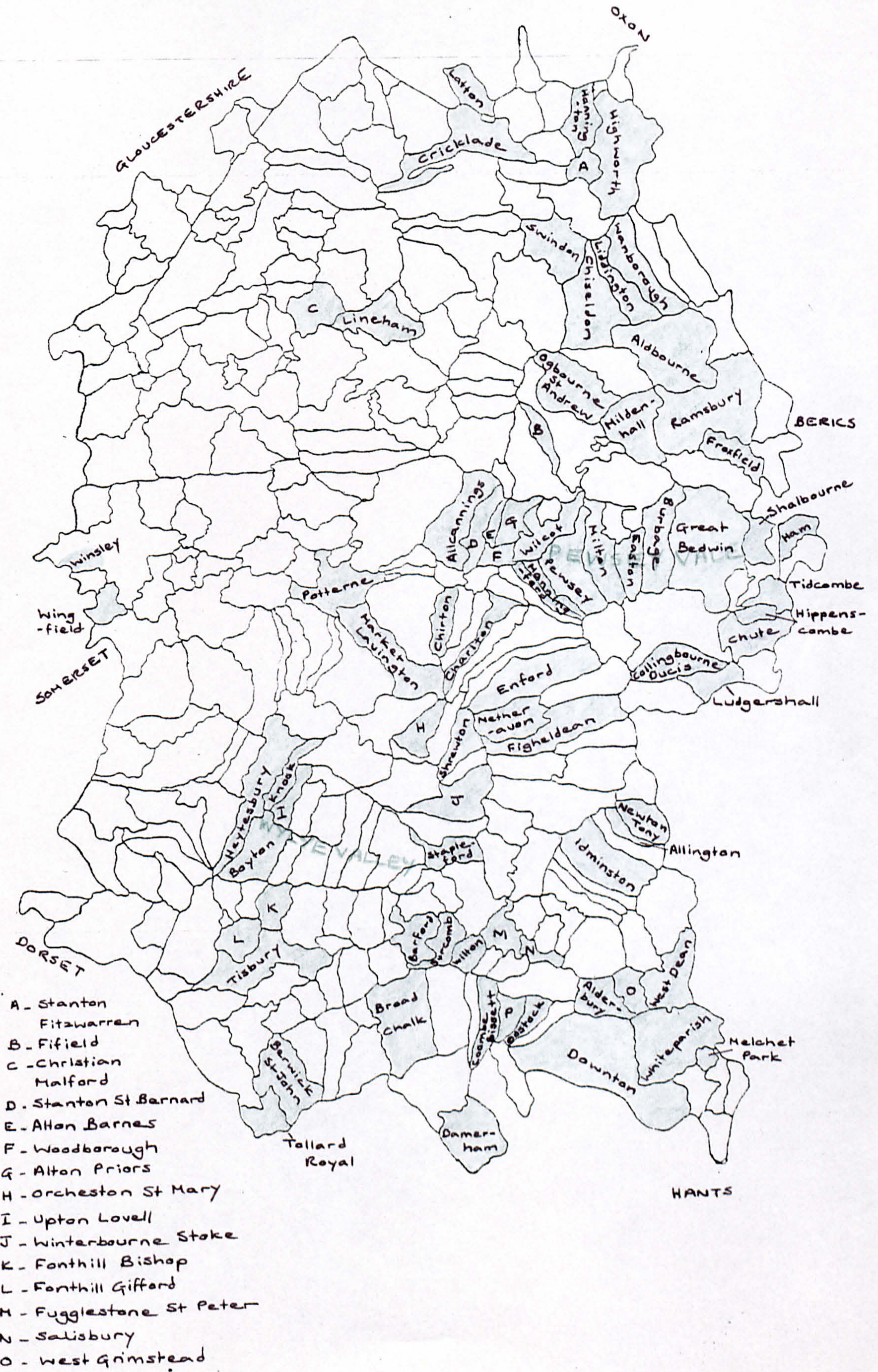
<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Offenders</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Offenders</u>
1834	13	1855	1
1835	9	1856	6
1836	8	1857	2
1837	16	1858	2
1838	8	1859	1
1839	9	1860	5
1840	9	1861	-
1841	15	1862	-
1842	15	1863	-
1843	19	1864	1
1844	10	1865	3
1845	2	1866	2
1846	8	1867	4
1847	1	1868	4
1848	5	1869	-
1849	3	1870	-
1850	-	1871	-
1851	3	1872	-
1852	3	1873	-
1853	-	1874	-
1854	-	1875	-

Source: P.P., 1835 (218.) XLV-1876, LXXIX, Tables of Criminal Offenders.

conditions. Another piece of evidence which Meredith marshalled in support of his case was a comparison between Wiltshire with its 283 prisoners in 1852 and Somerset, which had no police force and where there were 585 prisoners in 1852.³³⁰

On the other hand, the statistics in Table 4 show no dramatic decline in crime in Wiltshire coinciding with the establishment of the Constabulary. Inevitably the police were faced from the outset with the enormously difficult task of trying to patrol the scattered rural communities and to detect the culprits of such furtive crimes as arson and poaching. A frequent complaint of those who disliked the police was that a constable could never be found when one was wanted, and the ratepayers of Devizes, at a meeting in 1842, claimed the term 'rural police' was a misnomer since a police force could only ever be effective in the towns.³³¹ This however was as much a reflection of the extent of rural crime and problems involved in combatting it, as a criticism of the effectiveness of the Constabulary.

Wiltshire Parishes in which Machinery was destroyed during the Swing Riots



III: THE DESTRUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND THE SWING RIOTS

Of all the incidents involving the wilful destruction of agricultural machinery which took place in Wiltshire between 1830 and 1875 the vast majority occurred in the short space of seven days, in November 1830, in an outbreak of unparalleled rural violence. It was, of course, the major feature of the Swing Riots which affected a number of English counties in the winter of 1830-1831, and which, because of their extensiveness and ferocity, are described, somewhat misleadingly by the Hammonds as 'the last labourers revolt'.³³²

There has been considerable historical research into the Swing Riots, although none that has related exclusively to Wiltshire. This chapter will consist of a brief description of the course of the Riots in the county, followed by consideration of the causes of this unrest, and the extent to which the example of Wiltshire accords with other researchers' broader hypotheses. The causes and aftermath of the Swing Riots will also be considered with particular reference to two of the more disturbed parishes in 1830-31, Downton and Tisbury.

Rioting connected with opposition to the threshing machine began in Kent at the end of August 1830, and unrest continued in this county throughout September and October. By November it had reached Sussex and Surrey, and from mid-November spread rapidly through Berkshire and Hampshire to Wiltshire. Swing unrest affected as many as thirty-eight

counties in all, although of these, many, especially the more northerly ones, were only marginally affected.

Counties where unrest was most widespread were Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire and Kent. Sussex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Dorset and Essex were all also considerably affected.

The further west the Riots spread, the shorter did they tend to last in each place, so that in Wiltshire rioting began on 19th November, and was more or less burnt out by 25th November. The days of most widespread violence here were between 23rd and 25th November; in Hampshire and Berkshire the climax of unrest had been reached on 22nd and 23rd November. As the Hammonds write, by the time they reached these counties, 'the disturbances were not so much like the firing of a train of discontent, they were rather a sudden and spontaneous explosion'.³³³

The first manifestations of Swing unrest in Wiltshire occurred on the 15th, 16th and 17th November, with incendiary fires at Knook, near Warminster, Collingbourne Ducis on the Berkshire boundary, and Easton, in the Pewsey Vale. Fear of unrest, arising from the rapid intensification of rioting in Hampshire was evident in the Salisbury area by 19th November, for on the following day farmers flocked to Salisbury in an attempt to insure their property, although the agents of the fire offices refused to take on any new policies.³³⁴

The centre of unrest, however at this stage was further north around the Pewsey Vale and to the east of the county, bordering Berkshire and north-west Hampshire. On the night of 19th November there was an extensive fire

in the rick-yard of Mr Fowler of Oare, a tithing of the parish of Wilcot. This fire was more alarming than the previous outbreaks of incendiarism, since it was clear that the labourers of the parish delighted in the destruction, and showed great hostility to those trying to fight the fire, including some Pewsey labourers, and they cut the pipes of the fire engine. A correspondent who was present at the scene, wrote to the local newspaper:

The fire must have been the work of the labourers of the place, and their intention was no doubt to destroy the whole Village ... As soon as the fire was extinguished, the wretches became irritated and used the most horrid threats: one of them has the audacity to tell Mr J. Edmonds to his face, that his property should go next. The fellow was instantly taken into custody and is now in prison: he was very active in endeavouring to intimidate the Pewsey men, by throwing and encouraging his companions to throw brickbats at their heads while they were hard at work. 335

This man was Charles Kimmer, a native of Wilcot aged twenty-four. He was convicted at the Wiltshire Special Commission of hurling brickbats at those working the fire engine, and then assaulting Mr James Selfe, who was fighting the fire, with an iron bar; and sentenced to fifteen months' hard labour. Four years later at the Wiltshire Summer Assizes he was found guilty of setting fire to the ricks and out-houses of Reverend Goodman, his father's employer, in Wilcot. In his confession, Kimmer stated that he simply felt a 'strong inclination' to set fire to Goodman's property; he said too that he was going to fire the farm of Mr Edmonds, the man he had threatened in 1830, but had desisted because he did not want to endanger his sister who lived in Edmonds's grounds. He was hanged for this crime in August 1834.³³⁶

This is a rare example in Wiltshire of a direct link between Swing rioting and later unrest.

On the whole the rioters of Wiltshire, as with other Swing counties, tended to dissociate themselves from the activities of incendiarists. In the early days of unrest, however, arson attacks continued to be the main feature. On Saturday, 20th November, a mob of about one hundred gathered in Ludgershall, and the dwelling house of a certain William Peasley was destroyed by fire, for which crime Henry Wilkins, a labourer from the neighbouring parish of Chute was convicted at the Lent Assizes in 1831, and subsequently hanged.³³⁷ On the night of the same day there were fires too in the farms of Mr Simpkins and Mr Mills in Stanton St Bernard, again in the Pewsey Vale. On this occasion the labourers of the parish were said to be willing helpers in fighting the blaze.

The following day, however, Simpkins, who owned three or four threshing machines, and the neighbouring farmers were forced to dismantle their own threshing machines in order to 'gratify a lawless mob'.³³⁸ On Monday, 22nd November this same mob was in Charlton where rioters demanded and received £5 from Lady Poore, the wife of a local magistrate, and an unknown sum of money from Mrs Polhill, whose husband was Lieutenant of the Devizes Troop of Yeomanry. On the same day, threshing machines were destroyed at a number of places in the area, including Great Bedwin, Burcomb, Wilcot and Tidcombe. In Figheldean, a machine 'for manufacture' was destroyed, and at Enford an 'apple machine' was also broken up. There had been unrest in Enford the previous

winter too, when Mr Martin, a farmer of the parish, had suffered several 'wilful fires' on his farm, and ploughs and 'other agricultural implements' had been broken into pieces. A Bow Street officer had been called into the neighbourhood to help find the culprit.³³⁹ On 22nd November, it was reported too that coaches passing through Froxfield on the Berkshire boundary were being stopped and money demanded from the passengers.

By 22nd November the work of machine breaking had begun in earnest in the Ramsbury and Aldbourne area, with threshing machines destroyed at Ramsbury, Axford and Mildenhall; and in the south-east of the county too with incidents at Newton Toney, Downton, West Dean, Melchet Park and Whiteparish. At Whiteparish, it transpired at the Special Commission, the rioters had been encouraged to destroy Richard Webb's machine by 'Squire Bristowe' who sent the labourers strong beer, and 'Squire Wynne', a gentleman who was staying with Bristowe actually went with the mob to watch the destruction.

In the Devizes area it was reported that the majority of machines had been dismantled and in some cases destroyed by the farmers themselves, including one at Market Lavington on 23rd November, although some too were destroyed by groups of labourers. A report of 22nd November stated: 'A few labourers out of employ have this day assembled in some of the adjoining villages to assist in taking down such machines as are not already rendered useless, but up to this moment they have done so without showing the least tendency to riot or disorder'.³⁴⁰ Later, these

labourers became more high-spirited and began to go around demanding money 'from every house at which they thought it proper to call',³⁴¹ but the situation in the Devizes area did not reach any more violent proportions than this.

The days on which rioting reached its peak were 23rd, 24th and 25th November. Unrest continued in the Pewsey Vale, with separate mobs at Pewsey and Manningford destroying many of the remaining threshing machines in the area. A particularly violent incident took place on 23rd November at Alton Barnes, where a mob was engaged in breaking all the machines, including two belonging to a farmer named Miller, and one belonging to Mr Neate. Another of the victims of their activities, a farmer named Robert Pyle, annoyed at seeing his property so abused, fired a pistol over the rioters' heads, and then fired a shotgun into the crowd itself, wounding two or three people, although at the Special Commission he claimed the gun had gone off accidentally when someone tried to seize it from him. The rioters were so inflamed that they rushed at Pyle, who was saved only by the intervention of one of the mob's leaders, a sawyer named Stephen Bullock, who carried him into his house. In the atmosphere of wild rumour prevalent in the county at this time it was reported that Pyle had been murdered in this incident. Even if Pyle himself was safe, however, his house came to some harm, much of the furniture in it being destroyed by the furious crowd, and £10 was demanded from Pyle's mother. This mob had shown no enmity towards the farmers before Pyle fired on them, and were reported as telling Pyle himself beforehand, 'We've

nothing to say against you Mr Pyle, but we thought we might as well break your threshing machine as we've broken those of others'. According to the local clergyman, Reverend Hare, the rioters 'were acting under the misapprehension of some advice which they heard that morning from a magistrate and they fancied they were not breaking the law'.³⁴²

After leaving Alton Barnes, this mob went on to Stanton and Woodborough where they were finally overtaken by the Devizes, Chippenham and Melksham Troops of Yeomanry, and twenty-eight people were arrested. As the Yeomanry made its way back through Chirton, an attempt was made to rescue the arrested men by those who had escaped at Woodborough, but the would-be rescuers were themselves taken. On the same day a group of rioters was also dispersed by the Yeomanry at Milton. After this the Pewsey Vale area was comparatively peaceful.

Rioting continued during these days in the Ramsbury area. On 23rd November the Ramsbury and Aldbourne mob travelled around the area breaking threshing machines and demanding money from various individuals. At Rockley they were met by a magistrate, Mr Baskerville, and a group of special constables. Baskerville tried to persuade them to disperse but met only with opposition and abuse. He ordered Oliver Calley Codrington, a special constable, to arrest a man in the mob, Peter Withers, but Withers resisted by throwing a hammer at Codrington, hitting him on the head. The mob went on to break all the machines in this area. Withers was later sentenced to death at the Special

Commission for his assault on Codrington.

By 24th November this area was much quieter. Magistrates and a number of volunteers from Ramsbury scoured the district with the Marlborough Troop of Yeomanry, apprehending those who could be identified as being with the mob the day before. At Ramsbury twenty men in all were arrested, including Thomas Goddard, a carrier and tanner, who was said to have led the mob bearing a tricoloured flag, and was described as belonging to 'the religious sect called the Ranters'³⁴³ (probably the Primitive Methodists). At the Special Commission he was sentenced to transportation for seven years for stealing a sovereign from Richard Church of Aldbourne.

By 23rd November the rioting had also begun to spread further north, although it was still largely on the eastern edge of the county. The property of John Brown of Chiseldon was fired, and the following day a small group of labourers broke the threshing machine of another Chiseldon farmer, Mr Dyke. Further north still, a mob destroyed threshing machines at Liddington and Wanborough before being dispersed by the Swindon Troop of Yeomanry; and also on the 23rd November a crowd of between forty and fifty labourers broke the machine of Richard Shewry of Hannington and demanded money from him.

On the following day, the whole area was still very tense. A report from Swindon spoke of a large body of agricultural labourers going round from farm to farm in the neighbourhood breaking threshing machines. The Swindon Troop of Yeomanry apprehended rioters at Wroughton and took

them back for examination to Swindon, but their arrival in that town was said to exacerbate an already unsettled situation there. The town of Highworth was similarly unsettled. During the night the windows of the workhouse were smashed, and the following day a mob broke many of the threshing machines, although in one case, that of William Smith, those arrested claimed they had been told by Smith's brother, 'Act like men, go and break the machine, but don't go up to the house'.³⁴⁴ There was further trouble on 25th November in Highworth and Hannington, and rioting spread west too to Cricklade, Latton and Lineham, until eventually quelled by the Swindon Yeomanry.

Meanwhile, in the south of the county, a mob in the Salisbury area continued to destroy threshing machines, including one at Bishops Down Farm, and they turned their attention too on Figes Iron Factory. By 24th November there was considerable panic within the city of Salisbury itself as rioters approached nearer, attacking farms in the immediate outskirts of Odstock, Homington and Bemerton. To the relief of the City's inhabitants, however, the Salisbury Yeomanry succeeded in driving back the rioters, although, significantly, when the City's authorities appealed to the farmers at Salisbury market to help the Yeomanry, most refused to have any part in the affair. The same day, the Salisbury Yeomanry dispersed a mob which had broken machines at Shrewton and Winterbourne Stoke. At Stapleford they had also demanded 5s from Christopher Ingram, for which one of the group's leaders, 'Captain' George Shergold, a thresher who had formerly served as a marine in the service of the

East India Company, was transported for life.

On 24th November, there were more incidents at Newton Toney, Alderbury and Whiteparish. Rioting also spread further south and west with the destruction of threshing machines and the extortion of money at Broad Chalk, Coombe Bissett, and at Damerham, Berwick St John and Tollard Royal near the Dorset boundary. At Coombe Bissett, a labourer named James Lush was involved in a scuffle with Bartlett Pinniger, from whom he had demanded money, and for this he was later sentenced to death at the Special Commission. In the Wilton area, a mob of between a hundred and two hundred destroyed a threshing machine at Burcombe, and attacked non-agricultural machinery too, namely woollen manufacturing machinery at Barford, and carding, spinning and shearing machines at Wilton.

On 25th November there was significant unrest for the first time in the Wylve Valley, and around Tisbury. At Heytesbury, a mob of approximately two hundred was dispersed by the Warminster Troop of Yeomanry, but not before threshing machines had been destroyed at Upton Lovell, Boyton and Knook, although in the last place it was claimed by those charged with the offence that they had been incited to it by the farmer, named Parham, who plied them with cider.

In Tisbury there occurred the most violent of all incidents in Wiltshire, and one of the most notorious disturbances of the Swing Riots. A mob, estimated variously at between 250 and 500, many of them, apparently being only 'spectators and idlers', assembled at Fonthill Gifford, with the intention of destroying all the threshing machines

in the vicinity. They were said to be led by two labourers, named Harding and Gerrard, who wore particoloured sashes and worsted cravats to distinguish them, and were marshalled by the sound of a horn. They were met at Fonthill Gifford by John Benett, one of the M.P.s for the county and a major landowner in the area. He remonstrated with the crowd, which nevertheless disregarded his warnings, and continued to break the threshing machine of a farmer named Candy. Benett returned to his farm, Pythouse in Tisbury. The mob went on to destroy machines at Fonthill Bishop without meeting much resistance, and then Mr Lampard's machine at Lawn Farm, and a water-powered machine at Linley Farm, of which Benett was also the owner, although not the occupier. When they finally arrived at Pythouse, however, Benett was prepared to resist any attempt to break his threshing machine there. He, his agent, Mr Legge, and his bailiff, Mr Jay, who was also one of Tisbury's poor law overseers, were attacked by the mob and Benett and Jay were both injured, Benett suffering a black eye and a lacerated nose. The timely arrival of the Hindon Yeomanry saved them from further injury, although the threshing machine and many of the farm buildings were either destroyed or severely damaged. With the arrival of the Yeomanry, the mob took cover in nearby plantations, and a bitter and violent battle ensued. Captain Wyndham, commanding the Yeomanry, was wounded in the face. When prisoners taken in the affray were examined by the magistrates five days latter, six of the twenty-nine were so severely wounded they were unable to appear, and many of the remainder were described as having 'their heads

slashed and their arms and sides much lacerated'.³⁴⁵ One of the rioters' leaders, John Harding was killed in the battle when the Yeomanry opened fire. The inquest returned a verdict of 'justifiable homicide' and, since the coroner claimed this was equivalent to 'felo de se', Harding was denied a Christian burial.

There were no further incidents in the Tisbury area after this particularly violent altercation. Rumours however were rife, and a feeling of panic existed for several days. Between 26th and 28th November twenty lancers were stationed at Hindon to back up the Yeomanry in case of further trouble. The fear of further trouble was, apparently not without foundation. On 30th November a company of solicitors in Wincanton wrote to Benett to inform him that two of the Tisbury mob, Thomas and George Snook, had been arrested in Kilmington, and that in their confessions stated that, before their flight from Tisbury on 25th November, they had all sworn to return to Pythouse the following day, but were put off by fear of the cavalry.³⁴⁶

After the 'Battle of Pythouse', the Swing Riots in Wiltshire were effectively quelled. The very effective, if violent, suppression of unrest in Tisbury, along with the dispersal of the Warminster mob, were credited with preventing the spread of unrest to Mere, Knoyle and the Deverills in the south-west of the county, where, it was said the Tisbury mob had intended to visit, until dispersed at Pythouse.³⁴⁷ By 27th November the various Troops of Yeomanry, special constables and regular soldiers were

involved in a 'mopping up' operation. The Marlborough and Swindon Troops of Yeomanry, for instance, joined up and rode through Hilmarton, Lineham and Wootton Bassett arresting anyone who could be identified as having been with the rioters.

The weekend of 27th and 28th November was quiet, except for an incendiary fire in the farm of Mr Dark of Broughton Gifford. This, along with the destruction on the 29th November of threshing machines in Wingfield near Melksham, and Winsley near Bradford, were the only violent incidents to take place in the vicinity of the manufacturing towns of west Wiltshire. On the whole the Riots were exclusively agricultural, and did not spread to workers in the textile manufactures. In Trowbridge this was attributed to 'the manufacturers being at present pretty generally well employed'.³⁴⁸ But the magistrates in other towns were less confident; in Bradford-on-Avon, the magistrates' clerk wrote, at the beginning of December:

I believe the clothiers consider their machinery in danger as the weavers and others are known to be very hostile to the new improvement which disposes so much with hand labour. They cannot, I understand earn more than one third of their former gains. 349

In the event the magistrates' fears remained unfounded.

On the 29th November a mob of approximately 200 met with three magistrates at Christian Malford, but it was a very good-natured affair, with the magistrates sympathetic to the labourers' grievances and promising to urge a rise in their wages. One of the magistrates, Paul Methuen, a landowner in Corsham, promised to lower his rents to facilitate

such a rise from his tenants.

Throughout December, the aftermath of the Riots was limited to isolated incidents of arson and threatening letters, and, in addition, a number of strikes in the Devizes area for the wage rise recommended by the magistrates in November.³⁵⁰ On the 18th December there was an incendiary fire on the farm of Mr Polhill, the Lieutenant of the Devizes Yeomanry. On the 4th January 1831, the Reverend Edmonstone of Potterne, described as a zealous opponent of Swing rioters, became a victim of incendiarism. On the 21st December a farmer at Axford received a threatening letter, warning him: 'Hif you goes to sware against or a man in prison, you have here farm burnt down to ground and thy bluddy head chopt off'.³⁵¹ For this offence Isaac Looker, aged fifty-four, was charged and convicted at the Special Commission, but he was later discharged when Looker's son, Edward, confessed to writing it. He said he had hoped to secure the release of his two cousins, in prison for their part in the Riots. For this offence Looker was sentenced to seven years' transportation.

In Kent, Swing rioters had been dealt with by normal channels of justice at Assizes and Quarter Sessions. The failure to check unrest here however was attributed to the comparative leniency of this justice, and hence resulted in the setting-up of Special Commissions to try rioters in some of the worst affected counties further west, namely Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Buckinghamshire.

The Wiltshire Special Commission opened in

Salisbury on the 2nd January, following the completion of the Winchester Commission's business, and sat until the 10th January. The three judges, the same as those who had sat at Winchester, were Baron Vaughan, Mr Justice Parke and Mr Justice Alderson. Also sitting on the Commission were Lord Radnor, Mr T.G.B. Estcourt, and the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire. John Benett was the foreman of the Grand Jury for all except the Tisbury cases. The Home Office sent W.E. Tallents from the Secretary of State's office to help the magistrates prepare the cases for trial, and decide, on behalf of the Home Secretary, how many cases were suitable for government prosecution. The Home Office was manifestly more aware of the time and money involved in the Special Commission, and hence Tallents urged the magistrates to pick out only the salient cases and the ringleaders of mobs for trial.³⁵²

Unfortunately no statistical evidence exists on the degree of literacy of those tried at Salisbury, but The Times's correspondent suspected that their education was 'extremely limited'. He was struck too by the difference between the Hampshire and Wiltshire prisoners:

It is impossible for any person who has witnessed these trials and who was present also at those in Hampshire, not to be struck by the great difference in the appearance, manner and character of the accused in this county, from those of the prisoners of Hampshire. In appearance the men here are for the greater part more hardy and athletic - in manner they are much bolder and in character, judging from the much more frequent instances of personal violence in the mobs which were out 'machine breaking' here, than they were in Hampshire we would say they are much less restrained in their moral habits. The prisoners here turn to the witnesses with a bold and confident air ... 353

Although the extent to which those on trial were permitted to talk of their grievances was very limited, the testimony of some of the labourers bears witness to the desperately poor state in which many of them were living. James Mould of Hatch, charged with destroying Benett's threshing machine at Pythouse, told of his difficulties in trying to support his wife and six children, and, in fact, in December 1830, two of his children died of typhus, a disease strongly associated with poor living conditions.³⁵⁴ John Barrett, charged with destroying a threshing machine at Liddington, claimed he had to try to support himself, his wife and child on 5s a week.³⁵⁵

Many of those on trial were given good character references by their employers or local clergy, and were often described as good and steady labourers. Many of them too were young men, the average age of those charged being only 29. The majority of them were married, and were at an age where they were probably trying to support large families of children still too young to work and supplement the family earnings.

The following table shows the number of cases tried, the offences and the sentences. Two men were sentenced to death at the Special Commission: Peter Withers for his assault on Codrington at Rockley, and James Lush for demanding money from Bartlett Pinniger at Coombe Bissett, but both these sentences were later commuted to transportation for life. Of those sentenced to transportation, 101 left England for Van Diemens Land on the 'Eliza' on the 2nd February, 35 left for New South Wales on the 'Eleanor' on the 15th February, and 14 left on the 'Proteus', also for

Table 11: Wiltshire Special Commission

Offences	No.	Acquitted or discharged	Convicted	Sentences
Destroying chaff-cutting, hay-making and other agricultural machines; also furniture, mills and engines	225	74	151	Acquitted: 38 No bill: 9 No prosecution: 13 Discharged on recognizances: 14 Imprisonment: 3 months 6 6 months 11 9 months 3 1 year 21 18 months 2 2 years 1 Transportation: 7 years 92 14 years 2 Life 13
Extorting money or valuables by threats	49	21	28	Acquitted: 17 No bill: 4 Imprisonment: 3 months 1 1 year 2 Transportation: 7 years 9 14 years 10 Life 6
Arson	7	0	7	Imprisonment: 1 year 1 18 months 2 Transportation: 7 years 4
Rescue of prisoners	1	1	0	Discharged on recognizances: 1
Combination of foregoing crimes	16	8	8	Transportation: 7 years 4 Life 4 Acquitted 8
Other outrages: as numerous assembling, creating riots & breach of peace, inciting others to same; breaking windows, attacking Yeomanry, cavalry etc.	23	13	10	Acquitted: 2 No prosecution: 1 No bill: 4 Discharged on recognizances: 6 Imprisonment: 6 months 3 1 year 5 Transportation: 7 years 1 Life 1

Source: W.R.O., County of Wilts, Fisherton Gaol, Statistics of Crime 1801-1851 compiled by the Governor (Salisbury, 1855).

Van Diemens Land on the 12th April 1831.³⁵⁶

Nobody who reads W.H. Hudson's A Shepherd's Life, first published in 1910, can be in any doubt about the effect of the comparative harshness of the Special Commission's justice on the labouring population of Wiltshire, for over eighty years later, the bitter memories of 'that miserable and memorable year of 1830' were still remembered.³⁵⁷

Although arson, threatening letters, riot and theft all formed a part of the Swing Riots, it was the breaking of threshing machines which was their predominant feature. The swinging motion of the flail was thought to be the origin of the term 'Swing'. Nearly twenty-five per cent of all the machines broken in the country were destroyed by Wiltshire mobs. The ferocity of this destruction is largely explained by the extent of structural and seasonal unemployment in many southern and eastern counties, including Wiltshire, and it is no coincidence that rioting reached its peak in the winter months when many labourers would have been expecting to find work at threshing, their major source of winter employment. This view is borne out by the replies to the Poor Law Commissioners' Rural Questions in 1832, where the want of employment coupled with the belief, as one churchwarden stated, that this was 'occasioned by the use of machinery',³⁵⁸ was commonly cited as the cause of unrest.

The employment of threshers was a major item in the farmer's yearly wage bill: it has been estimated that an arable farmer employing ten labourers would have employed three of those for ten months of the year at threshing.³⁵⁹

By attacking the threshing machines, therefore, the labourers' motives could be described as 'Luddite' in that they were opposed to labour-saving machinery. We should note that there was a well-established tradition of machine-breaking among the cloth-workers of the county who had used this weapon both as a means of preventing black-legging in industrial disputes³⁶⁰ as well as preventing the introduction of machinery which would put people out of work. Indeed, it has been argued that those who took part in the industrial disturbances in Wiltshire in 1802 felt that their breaking of cloth-finishing machinery was not simply an effective and proven weapon in the battle to prevent redundancy but was justified 'by a belief that the manufacturers, in introducing cloth-finishing machines, were breaking not only custom and tradition but also statute law'.³⁶¹ There is a certain parallel here with the Swing rioters who, as we have seen, often went about their machine breaking in such a way as to suggest that they did not see themselves as a lawless and desperate mob, but considered their action quite legitimate, claiming in Alton Barnes, for instance, that they were fulfilling the wishes of a magistrate.

Unfortunately there are considerable gaps in our knowledge of the number and type of threshing machines in Wiltshire in 1830, although at least a hundred must have been in use since a total of 97 was destroyed by rioters, while an unknown number was destroyed or dismantled by the farmers themselves. The majority of these machines would have been horse-powered rather than steam-powered, and it

is interesting to note that these machines still employed a fair amount of labour; indeed, it was felt by some observers that it was for this reason that many farmers did not bother to reintroduce threshing machines immediately after the Swing Riots since they required almost as much labour as hand threshing.³⁶² Even the steam-threshing machines which came into more general use by mid-century in Wiltshire, might require the attendance of three or four labourers.³⁶³

In the north of England and Scotland, threshing machines came into general use almost immediately after their invention in the late eighteenth century, and it is significant that there, where agricultural labour was scarcer and able to command higher wages, there was never any widespread opposition to the use of such agricultural machinery. The spread of threshing machines in southern counties was much slower. In the Board of Agriculture Reports, written in the early nineteenth century, the counties surrounding Wiltshire were described as having 'several' machines, although unfortunately for Wiltshire itself we do not have even this kind of vague reference.³⁶⁴

Threshing machines probably came into more extensive use in the south during the Napoleonic Wars when labour was in comparatively short supply, and hence it became economically viable to invest in such machinery, especially in view of the extension of arable agriculture. But when labour was once more very plentiful in the years after the Wars, there was surely a considerable disincentive

to continue investing in machinery. The apparently doubtful economic benefit of threshing machines in the early 1830s, illustrated by the lack of concern shown by some farmers at the destruction of their machines, and their reluctance to reintroduce them for some years after the Swing Riots, begs the question: why should farmers continue to use threshing machines in counties like Wiltshire after 1815? The most plausible explanation, as suggested by Hobsbawm and Rudé,³⁶⁵ is that, with falling prices, it was increasingly important for farmers to try to get the highest price for their corn by getting it to market as quickly as possible after harvest, before the competition from other farmers pushed prices down further. But obviously the more threshing machines were used, the less chance there was of individual farmers being able to outdo their neighbours in the race to corner the early market. So, provided there appeared to be a general move to get rid of threshing machines, the more inclined farmers might be to join the trend, especially if they found their machines inefficient and expensive, and were paying high poor rates to support a large number of unemployed labourers.

Given the lack of statistical information on threshing machines in Wiltshire, it is impossible to judge accurately if there was a sharp growth in the number of machines in the years immediately before 1830. N.E. Fox in his article on the spread of threshing machines in central southern England,³⁶⁶ seeks to explain the timing of the Riots in Wiltshire by pointing to the invention, by Mr Rider of Westbury, in 1829, of a portable threshing machine at the estimated cost of £8 to £10, a price within the

reach of the most modest farmer. The fear of the widespread use of such machines might well have intensified the labourers' anger against the threshing machines, although it is by no means certain that farmers did turn readily to these new machines.

The Swing Riots certainly seemed to delay the reintroduction of machinery. In 1833 a Wiltshire witness before the Parliamentary Select Committee on the state of agriculture stated that there were still some threshing machines in use in Wiltshire, 'but not many - in fact scarcely one to every hundred that used to exist', and the numbers were said to be getting up again only 'very partially'. Three years later Lord Radnor also spoke of the universal abandonment of threshing machines 'for a time' after 1830, but gave no hint as to the extent of their reintroduction.³⁶⁷

By the early 1840s, portable threshing machines were said to be quite common; and the use of steam threshing machines was 'very general',³⁶⁸ by the 1850s throughout Wiltshire, although Caird said they were used only for threshing wheat and not barley.³⁶⁹

The introduction of agricultural machinery was, on the whole, very gradual, partly owing to the continued existence of surplus labourers; 'labourers are plentiful', wrote a correspondent from the Pewsey Vale to the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette in 1856, 'and whilst this is the case we think the reaping machines will be little used in this locality'.³⁷⁰ Steam ploughs were not in general use until the 1860s.

By and large, opposition to the introduction of machinery was comparatively low key after the Swing Riots. In 1831 there were two cases of arson, at Winterbourne Monkton and Broad Chalk, thought to be connected with the intended reintroduction of threshing machines.³⁷¹

The only other cases involving the wilful destruction of agricultural machinery in Wiltshire between 1830 and 1875 did not involve threshing machines. In July 1861 an arson attack in a farm in Bratton was thought to be motivated by opposition to the recent introduction of mowing machinery; while at the 1867 Lent Assizes, an eighteen-year-old boy was sentenced to one month's hard labour for wilfully destroying a chaff-cutting machine at Winterbourne Bassett.³⁷² The tradition of widespread destruction of agricultural machinery therefore largely petered out with the end of Swing Riots. But although threshing machines were not in general use in the years immediately following the Swing Riots, rural unrest did not abate to a comparable extent, as we shall see in the following chapter, highlighting the fact that the threshing machine was by no means the sole grievance of the labourer.

What other factors contributed to the unrest of 1830? The overstocked labour market was a serious problem in many of the most riotous areas of the country, and it is possible that unemployment was exacerbated in the post-Napoleonic War era by the depressed state of agriculture. Recent research has served to stress that this post-war agricultural depression was not so extensive as was once believed. Distress among farmers in pastoral

and predominantly livestock areas was minimal. On the whole the Swing Riots were limited to the arable lands of the south and east of the country, but even here depression was not uniform in its effects. During the Napoleonic Wars much land, once considered too poor for corn growing, was brought under cultivation: and although some of the thinnest of these soils were abandoned again after the Wars, the fall in corn prices affected farmers on the heavy, clay lands most severely, while many of the newly cultivated areas, being light and therefore cheaper to work, especially in wet seasons, remained comparatively profitable. Giving evidence before the Parliamentary Select Committee on the state of agriculture in 1836, Lord Radnor, an extensive landowner in Wiltshire, remarked that: 'a great deal of land was brought under cultivation on account of the high prices in the high downs of Wiltshire, which are now under cultivation, and are increasing in cultivation every day; and that is very much owing to the improvement of agriculture'. But he also added that the competition from these light lands might be causing distress in the clay areas.³⁷³ Lower lying and heavier soils, being more expensive to work, might be left uncultivated, especially in poor seasons, resulting in reduced employment.

This might have been a contributory factor in the comparatively large number of threshing machines destroyed in the Pewsey Vale. The Pewsey Vale was generally considered to be very fertile arable land, but it was on gault clay and greensand, rather than chalk, and although the veins of clay were said to be few and confined to the outskirts of the Vale,³⁷⁴ the sands of the whole of south

Wiltshire were described as close and tough,³⁷⁵ and hence might have been less extensively cultivated in wet years. Similarly, in the Highworth area, another trouble spot in 1830, there was a vein of cold, retentive clay.³⁷⁶

But clearly this is not sufficient explanation alone since rioting was widespread too on the light chalk downlands which made up most of the 'Chalk' region, and parishes like Tisbury and Downton had a comparatively mixed agriculture and were not overwhelmingly arable. The Agricultural Depression may not have affected Wiltshire as adversely as some counties - no great extent of land was thrown out of cultivation completely - but even on the light lands falling grain prices did have some effect on the level and quality of cultivation, and hence on the amount of employment available. Corn prices in 1829 and 1830 were not at their lowest of the period 1813 to 1835; in fact in 1829 there had been some improvement in the price levels, but the general trend since the end of the Wars had still been one of sharp decline, while rents and taxes, on the whole, remained at the old level of the boom years. Much of the land in south Wiltshire was up-and-down land, and in years when prices were low, a greater proportion of it would simply not have been ploughed up.³⁷⁷ Moreover the open nature of the farming landscape in much of the 'Chalk' made it comparatively easy to cut back on certain labour-intensive operations, since there were few hedges, ditches or drains to be maintained.

There is little statistical information for the amount of unemployment, and underemployment in 1830, but

from the evidence about numbers of able-bodied labourers unemployed in the winter, collected by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners when drawing up the new Poor Law Unions only four years later, we can get some idea of the parishes with particularly bad seasonal unemployment. This evidence is shown in Appendix 1 and the map on page 37. The majority of parishes involved were predominantly or purely agricultural, although large 'open' villages with a comparatively diverse occupational structure, such as Ramsbury and Downton, often formed centres of unrest. In all except Swindon, Winsley, Broughton Gifford, Wilton, Heytesbury and Knook the majority of the adult population was involved in agricultural occupations. Certainly a number of parishes experiencing serious Swing unrest also had severe unemployment problems, notably Tisbury and Wardour, Downton, Wroughton, Cricklade St Sampson, Ogbourne St Andrew, Whiteparish, Bishops Cannings, Collingbourne Kingston, All Cannings, Liddington, Chiseldon and Heytesbury.

A detailed description of one of the parishes with chronic seasonal unemployment shows how the problem might come about and the kind of grievances it might create. Cricklade was a large 'open' parish of over 7,000 acres; three-quarters of this, however, was pasture, which, although not as seasonal in its labour demands, certainly did not provide as much employment as arable agriculture. The majority of the labourers' cottages were in poor condition and crowded into one end of the parish, farm property being mostly at the other end of the parish, with farmers refusing to build cottage accommodation in a more

convenient position. The majority of Cricklade labourers, therefore, had to travel a considerable distance to work, sometimes as far as four or five miles, and often into the adjoining rich arable land of Eisey and Latton, and even Down Ampney in Gloucestershire. Of these, Eisey, certainly, and possibly Latton and Down Ampney too, were 'close' parishes, 'burdened only with aged and impotent poor'. In the harvest months therefore, all the Cricklade labourers would find employment in this area, but in the winter they were thrown onto their parish; Cricklade St Sampson had to relieve an average of forty to fifty labourers for the whole of the winter, and Cricklade St Mary was not in a much better position with its poor described as 'almost intolerably burthensome'.³⁷⁸

Other important centres of Swing unrest, although not having such a large proportion of their total population unemployed in winter, did have comparatively large bodies of unemployed labourers who might serve as a nucleus for discontent and collective action, as, for example, at Pewsey, Highworth, Swindon and Wilton, all with between thirty and seventy labourers unemployed in winter. In Downton it was felt that industrious labourers were contaminated by the more dissolute when working in large gangs at road mending or in the gravel pits. Some Swing parishes however, such as Wilcot, had comparatively low levels of unemployment, while parishes such as Alton Barnes and Fonthill Bishop claimed they had no men unemployed in winter at all. Moreover, some Wiltshire parishes with even higher levels of unemployment than Tisbury and Downton did not experience

serious unrest in the seven days of rioting in November 1830, notably Urchfont, with its average of between eighty and one hundred unemployed labourers in winter, or one person to every fifteen of the population.

These problems are partly accounted for by the fact that labourers did not necessarily commit outrages in the parishes in which they lived, but might, for instance, have travelled round with one of the machine-breaking mobs visiting most parishes in their immediate neighbourhood. Threshing machines might also be broken in 'close' parishes where the rioters worked but did not live. Moreover in potentially riotous parishes with high unemployment or other causes of distress, unrest might well have been offset, even if only temporarily, by timely concessions from magistrates or farmers. These are problems which will be dealt with in more detail later.

One other feature of employment patterns in riotous parishes should be mentioned. Extending the observations made by Hobsbawm and Rudé as regards the concentration of agricultural labourers, to all the riotous hundreds of Wiltshire, we see that in the riotous parishes there was generally a higher proportion of labourers to farmers than in the non-riotous parishes as shown in Table 12 overleaf.

Two other causes to which the Replies to Rural Questions attributed the 1830 Riots, were low wages, and to a lesser extent the operation of the poor laws. An anonymous letter sent to James Slade of Codford St Peter in October 1830 described how the writer had overheard eight

Table 12: Proportion of farmers employing labour to labourers by hundreds in Wiltshire, 1831

Hundred	Proportion of farmers employing labour to labourers:	
	Riotous parishes	Non-riotous parishes
Alderbury	1 to 8.6	1 to 6.4
Amesbury	1 to 14.2	1 to 5.8
Branch and Dole	1 to 11.3	1 to 8.9
Cawdon and Cadworth	1 to 11.3	1 to 9.9
Chalk	1 to 10.3	1 to 8.3
Downton	1 to 15.1	1 to 6.6
Dunworth	1 to 9.6	1 to 5.6
Elstub and Everley	1 to 11.3	1 to 8.4
Frustfield	1 to 12.5	1 to 7.0
Highworth	1 to 8.1	1 to 5.9
Kingsbridge	1 to 6.5	1 to 5.0
Kinwardstone	1 to 10.0	1 to 7.7
Potterne and Cannings	1 to 10.6	1 to 7.5
Ramsbury	1 to 14.8	1 to 14.4
Selkley	1 to 6.4	1 to 11.5
Swanborough	1 to 13.0	1 to 9.1
Heytesbury	1 to 11.2	1 to 9.9
Average for all riotous hundreds	1 to 10.1	1 to 6.9

Source: P.P., 1833 (149.) XXXVII.

or nine men planning to burn Slade's wheat and hayricks and the stables of another farmer named Raxworthy but that they would not hurt Mr Chandler who 'did pay them like a man'.³⁷⁹ It is known that the rioters of Tisbury, Liddington and Boyton all demanded a rise in their wages, usually to 2s a day. It was inevitable, given the large amount of unemployment, that wages in the county would be depressed, and indeed it is not always clear if the wage rises demanded were from labourers employed in agriculture or from unemployed labourers agitating for higher rates of poor relief. At Westbury, for instance, it was reported that, 'an attempt was made to raise wages, but the yeomanry being called out dispersed the rioters. The vestry then assembled and declared its resolution not to allow any advance. The poor went away paid as usual, but the house of the overseer was burnt the same night'.³⁸⁰

In return for their parish pay, unemployed labourers were generally put to work on the roads or in quarries. The scale of relief paid to such paupers varied from parish to parish, but most Wiltshire magistrates drew up scales which the majority of parishes in their division tended to use, although some places devised their own parish relief rates while others had no scale at all. Since these scales are not always based on the same criteria they are not easily compared. However the table overleaf has been worked out on the basis of the available information, in order to show the comparative harshness of the various scales of parish wages. The 'parish wage' shows the amount that an unemployed labourer, with a wife and one

Table 13: Scales of parish wages in Wiltshire, 1832-1835

Magistrates' scale	Parish wage	Parishes using this scale	Swing parishes using this scale
Aldbourne and Ramsbury parishes	6s 9d	2	2
Cricklade	6s 9d	2	0
Malmesbury	6s 6d	23	0
Swindon	6s 3d	23	10
Devizes	6s 3d	27	7
Chippenham	6s 3d	21	1
Marlborough	6s 0d	15	3
Salisbury	5s 10d	30	11
Alderbury	5s 6d	14	3
Warminster	5s 6d	7	1
Hindon	5s 2½d	16	3
(No scale)	-	28	2
(Their own scale)	-	39	8

Source: P.R.O., MH12/13639-13892.

child could expect to receive each week with the price of bread at 1s 6d per gallon loaf.

Of course the evidence is not available for every parish in the county, but on the whole, the table suggests that there was no particular tendency to unrest in parishes using comparatively less generous scales. Clearly, life for the pauper and his family cannot have been easy on any of these scales.

The question of scales of poor relief is further complicated by the continued payment of relief to labourers

as a supplement to wages, which were frequently below subsistence level. Wiltshire is generally classed as a Speenhamland county, that is, one employing Speenhamland-type allowances-in-aid-of-wages, based on the price of bread and, where applicable, the number of people in the recipient's family. However, as Mark Blaug has shown, by 1830 a system of child allowances, beginning usually at the third or fourth child only, was more common, even in the so-called Speenhamland counties like Wiltshire. Basing his calculations on the admittedly small and not necessarily random sample of parishes which replied to the Rural Questions, Blaug attempts to show the extent to which true Speenhamland allowances had been superseded. Even though Wiltshire still comes out as the leading Speenhamland county, he estimates that 72% of the replying parishes used child allowances by 1832.³⁸¹

In an attempt to verify the validity of Blaug's calculations, a further table has been drawn up, adding a small number of parishes identified in the Poor Law Union Correspondence to the nineteen parishes whose replies to the Rural Questions are sufficiently clear to place them firmly in one category or the other.

Total number of parishes in Wilts	Number of identified parishes as percentage of total	Percentage of identified parishes	
		Allowances in aid of wages	Child Allowances
374	7.75	27	72

This revised table certainly backs up Blaug's calculations from the Rural Questions only, although because of the confused way in which much of the information in the Poor Law Union Correspondence is presented, it is possible that the additional parishes are biased towards the child allowances since it is easier to identify these. It had been hoped to use the Magistrates' scales to increase the size of this sample, on the assumption that, if a particular scale implied either Speenhamland or child allowances, all the parishes using this scale would fall into the same category. This certainly appeared to hold true for the Alderbury Division, where all the four parishes replying to the Rural Questions used the same Speenhamland-type scales. But in the Chippenham Division, of the four identifiable parishes, three had a system of child allowances, and one a Speenhamland-type scale, although all claimed to use the Chippenham Scale. This typifies the kind of problems encountered by the researcher who tries to quantify a system so diverse and open to modification as the old poor law. Even a scale as complicated and fully drawn up as the Hindon Scale was open to variation; indeed its architect, John Benett, pointed out that he did not feel bound by the scale at all, but simply drew it up for the guidance of young or inexperienced magistrates and overseers.³⁸²

This very small sample, therefore, is the only guide we have to the question of the possible influence of poor relief in rural unrest. In Wiltshire approximately 25% of all parishes were affected by Swing unrest in November

1830; of the parishes where the type of relief has been identified, 37% of all Speenhamland parishes, and 33% of all child allowance parishes were riotous, suggesting no particular tendency to riotousness in either type of parish. Certainly in the Alderbury Division, where true Speenhamland allowances prevailed, unrest was apparently as widespread as in the Pewsey area where child allowances were prevalent. It is possible that unrest might have been sparked off by even more localized variations than this: at Wilcot, for instance, a particularly violent parish in 1830, the child allowance began at the fifth child, whereas elsewhere in the vicinity, the allowance began at the fourth child.³⁸³ But unfortunately insufficient evidence exists to illustrate this hypothesis on any wider scale.

How far the labourers resented the degradation of semi-pauperism which both types of parish allowance placed on so many of them, is also difficult to judge. The comment of an Alton Barnes labourer that he and his companions had joined the rioters because, 'they wished that every man should live by his labour',³⁸⁴ might be taken as evidence of a dislike of parish allowances as much as a protest against unemployment. On the other hand, many labourers were in such desperate straits that they seemed to care little where their subsistence came from; labourers in the Salisbury area told Henry Hunt, the radical M.P., that all they wanted was 'that the poor children when they go to bed should have a bellyful of 'tatoes instead of crying with half a bellyful'.³⁸⁵ Also as we shall see when considering the parish

of Tisbury during and after the Riots, the reintroduction of a system of out relief in aid of wages some time after the passage of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act certainly did not appear to encourage a revival of unrest, and the population here was quieter than in many parishes which were more strict in discontinuing out relief to the able-bodied.

Perhaps the best conclusion that can be reached on this subject therefore is that the high dependence of the agricultural labourers on poor relief was a symptom of the root cause of their discontent - the precarious employment situation - rather than a major cause in itself. The precarious employment situation and poor living conditions of the rural labouring population were obviously crucial in creating the groundwork for protest upon which news of rioting further east could act as a catalyst. As a Westbury magistrate wrote: 'It was the bad example of these counties', (i.e. Kent, Sussex and Hampshire) 'and the state of the poor (who were ripe for anything) that caused them. The riots are to be attributed to the destitute state of the poor, who think that they cannot be worse off, come what will'.³⁸⁶

The spread of unrest throws considerable doubt on the assumption implicit in the Hammonds' account in The Village Labourer, that the Parliamentary Enclosure movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a major cause of the Swing Riots, since the counties most affected by the Enclosure movement were those midland and northern counties which experienced comparatively little unrest in 1830, while the Riots started in Kent, a long-enclosed county where there had been less than one per cent enclosure

of common field since the late eighteenth century. In Wiltshire there is no direct evidence that enclosure was a major grievance. Moreover the demands for higher wages and employment suggests that rioters wished to improve their position as wage labourers, rather than fundamentally change their economic and social status.

The emphasis of both the Hammonds and subsequently Hobsbawm and Rudé has been on the economic and social grievances of the rioters. More recently however, Andrew Charlesworth, by reassessing the Riots with a geographer's perspective, has suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the political motivation of the labourers and organisational aspects of the Riots.³⁸⁷ He places the Riots firmly in the context of the political crisis of Wellington's Government, and the movement for Parliamentary reform. The precarious position of the Tory administration during the initial Kent rioting impeded its ability to react firmly. The comparative leniency with which the offenders were treated allowed unrest to gain momentum, and for the politically conscious radicals at a local level to grasp the significance of the movement and to channel it into a more coherent political protest. The firmer stand which was taken against rioters as unrest spread into Berkshire and Wiltshire coincided with the coming to power of the new Whig administration under Lord Grey.

Charlesworth argues that the 'spatial diffusion' of the Riots, especially in the main period of rioting, was clearly focused on the London highways. In the absence of much clear evidence as to how rioting spread from one place

to another he proposes the following hypothesis. Radicalism was more likely to flourish along the main stage coach roads radiating out from London, these roads bringing both radical newspapers and handbills, and the ideas brought by the 'link men' who travelled the highways in the course of their occupation. Radicalism too was more likely to flourish in the large 'open' villages along the highways where there was a proportion of smallholders and independent tradesmen, and away from the paternalistic control of large landowners. The few local radicals who were scattered around the countryside, often living in these 'open' villages, would learn of the approaching rioting, sense that with the political crisis, the time was ripe for protest, and mobilise their less conscious neighbours to action. Such a hypothesis accords with the speed with which rioting spread. Charlesworth does not claim that rioting was part of a national conspiracy, but neither does he feel that the news of rioting in neighbouring districts was a sufficient catalyst to turn the rural population into an instant mob.

To what extent can the example of Wiltshire be shown to support this theory? Certainly in Wiltshire, as elsewhere, property owners were quick to blame unrest on political agitators. One Wiltshire magistrate went so far as to link rioting directly with the July Revolution in France which had ousted Charles X; writing that 'the great political excitement throughout France in 1830 gave rise to a spirit of incendiarism in Normandy and other provinces which unfortunately extended itself to the county of Kent'.³⁸⁸

The presence of Henry Hunt in the county was seen in the worst possible light, and it was reported that the gentry of Salisbury readily believed Hunt was about to lead the labourers, although Hunt himself vigorously denied such accusations.³⁸⁹ One unknown Wiltshire landowner took the trouble to issue a handbill warning the labourers: 'Beware of false prophets. Beware of those who excite you to Riot and Tumult ... Englishmen! Beware of Traitors who would expose you to the Horrors of Civil War, which they would not have the courage to brave themselves, and who would sacrifice your welfare to their own views of ambition and aggrandizement'.³⁹⁰ A number of those who replied to the Rural Questions asserted that rioting was incited by 'the inflammatory language of itinerants' and 'seditious writings and speeches',³⁹¹ while individual cases of arson were often attributed to mysterious strangers.

The newly legalised beer shops were also frequently cited as a contributory factor to unrest. Beer shops were seen as offering the labourer a meeting place away from the watchful eye of his social superiors. As the Rector of Heddington remarked, 'I am led to think the beer shops afford facilities for conferences unknown before, and that this was one great means of promoting the mischief'.³⁹²

The Act which had legalised the opening of beer shops however had only come into effect on 10th October 1830 after rioting had begun in Kent, and being so topical was likely to exacerbate the hysteria of local authorities. As we shall see, there was considerable panic among many magistrates and farmers, and many of these claims of political

motivation were doubtless exaggerated and coloured by their fear.

Colonel Brotherton, one of the two military advisers sent to Wiltshire by the Home Office to advise the magistrates, took a much cooler view. On his arrival in the county on 28th November he wrote:

The insurrectionary movement seems to be directed by no plan or system, but merely actuated by the spontaneous feeling of the peasantry and quite at random. I cannot trace any existence of fire-arms amongst them - the weapons they have are but the fragment of machines they have broken. No mighty meetings are attempted ... In short nothing but the numbers have been formidable and even those are much exaggerated. 393

Nevertheless the Swing Riots did exhibit a degree of organization unknown in subsequent forms of rural unrest until Anti-Corn Law League agitation and agricultural trade unionism, even if it only operated on a very makeshift and local level. Definite leaders emerged in particular areas, for instance, Thomas Goddard in Ramsbury, and Gerrard and Harding in Tisbury. Quite often such a leader was known as 'the Captain'. It will be remembered that when martialling the labourers, Goddard had carried a tricoloured flag, and Harding and Gerrard had worn 'parti-coloured sashes'. As we shall see, Chartist literature was certainly in circulation in Tisbury ten years later. But apart from this there is little direct evidence of political motivation among the rioters, although in support of Charlesworth's theory of 'link men' it is worth noting, that several years after the Swing Riots, during the formation of the new Poor Law Unions, Colonel A'Court wrote of the Amesbury area:

Here also as in Hampshire itinerant ballad singers attend the races, fairs and markets, turning the whole system into ridicule and detailing in doggerel verses cases of cruelty and oppression existing only in their imagination. 394

The participation in rioting of some non-agricultural labourers was certainly seen by contemporaries as indication of political motivation. It was argued that blacksmiths, tanners, sawyers, clockmakers, bricklayers, and specialized agricultural labourers such as carters, were in a better economic position than the ordinary day labourer and should have taken no part in unrest. One Wiltshire magistrate wrote that 'the poor labourers were led away by designing individuals in situations far above want',³⁹⁵ and his views were echoed by many. But although an academic interest in bettering the conditions of the poor for broad social and political reasons might have prompted some of those involved, it should be remembered that a depressed agricultural labouring population would have had an adverse effect on many other elements of the closely interdependent rural population, either in the paying of increased poor rates or in the depression of local trade, and this would have held particularly true in the populous 'open' parishes such as Cricklade, Pewsey and Ramsbury. Of course, we should not overlook the fact that some of those non-agricultural labourers who participated, as with certain agricultural labourers too, were press-ganged into the mobs. Edmund White, a Tisbury blacksmith, claimed this had been his fate, and no doubt his skills in the dismantling of machinery would have made him an attractive addition to the labourers.³⁹⁶ It is also easy to see how craftsmen and

tradesmen frequently took on the role of the mob's spokesman, since their greater degree of social independence would have been felt to provide them with some immunity from victimization.

The presence of nonconformists in the mobs was also seen in a sinister light. Those nonconformists who did take part in rioting tended to attract an undue amount of newspaper publicity, for example that which surrounded Goddard, the Ramsbury tanner. There was evidence too of elements of religious discord in the Tisbury riot with the participation of a small number of Catholics as well as nonconformists. But on the whole there does not seem to have been an unduly large number of nonconformists among the rioters, although the mobs' hostility to tithe payments would have given non-Anglicans an added motive for anger.

Perhaps more important than the influence of nonconformism was the fear that a population had been allowed to fall away from any moderating religious influence. It is worth remembering that religious neglect was felt to have been a contributory factor in the events which led to the Battle in Bossenden Wood in Kent in 1838 in an area which had a reputation for godlessness and lawlessness.³⁹⁷ In Downton where the proximity of the New Forest was felt to be a factor in the comparative independence of many of the population, there were two new Anglican churches built in the wake of 1830-31 in the more remote tithings of St Mary Redlynch and Charlton.

In some respects however events in Wiltshire would seem to throw doubt on Charlesworth's model or at least

suggest that insufficient account is taken of how the highly varied local conditions could alter the expected course of events. Firstly it would surely be expected, if unrest was being channelled into a more political consciousness by local radicals, that the manufacturing towns of west Wiltshire, most of which were on or near major roads from London, would have participated in the unrest. One would certainly have expected more action from these centres of radical politics. The presence of a troop of regular soldiers in Trowbridge could well have offset any movement to support the agricultural workers of course, and Trowbridge manufacture as we have seen, was comparatively buoyant at this time. Bradford-on-Avon on the other hand was experiencing considerable distress, and yet even in this area unrest was very limited and was confined to the destruction of agricultural machinery, with no evidence of political motivation.

In describing unrest in Norfolk, Charlesworth illustrates how any weakness on the part of the local authorities towards rioters gave an added momentum to rioting. Proclamations issued by magistrates at North Walsham and Melton Constable recommending discontinuation of use of threshing machines and a rise in wages helped to spread unrest into south-east Norfolk and east Suffolk.³⁹⁸ In the Devizes area of Wiltshire, however, a similar recommendation appeared to have exactly the opposite effect and rioting was very limited in this area, although in the years immediately after the Swing Riots it was probably the most unsettled part of the county. Even parishes like

Bromham, which was to show more of a political face in its protest than any other predominantly rural parish in Wiltshire, were lulled into passivity by the recommended wage rise and did not rouse themselves until after the main rioting was over and the magistrates' declaration shown to be a chimera.

The example of Wiltshire would also suggest that Charlesworth had not taken the role of the farmers sufficiently into account. The 'spatial diffusion' of the rioting in Charlesworth's estimation fits a model whereby the news of rioting would be received in a village and one or two people then mobilised their neighbours to follow the example. The same model would fit if those doing the mobilising were not radicals but the local farmers, manipulating the labourers for their own ends rather than in the interests of some political ideal. (This is not to detract from the genuine distress and grievances of the labourers.) The evidence for manipulation by farmers is far greater than that for the influence of radical politics. Examples have already been given in the description of the course of rioting, and further evidence will be given in the consideration of the riots in Tisbury. This model would explain too why rioting was as marked in parishes under the influence of paternalistic landowners as in the more neglected and divided parishes, for here the farmers could indirectly aim their protest at one obvious source for the redress of some of their economic hardships, namely a landowner who could reduce rents. A similar pattern was to be observed in the few strikes of agricultural

labourers which occurred over the next two decades.

Many farmers clearly saw the Riots as a good means of publicizing their own grievances over high rents and tithes: this was a countrywide feature of the Riots, the collusion between farmers and rioters being most marked in Sussex and East Anglia. With lower rents, farmers claimed they would be able to pay the labourers higher wages, while tithes, they argued, also prevented the extension of cultivation and hence increased employment, since they had to be paid equally on good and poor soils. In 1833, one Wiltshireman stated that, 'tithe has always been a sore thing, and always a check on the improvement of agriculture ever since I can recollect', although he also pointed out that, in Wiltshire, at least, the amount of tithe could vary by as much as 25% from place to place, so it was likely to be more of a grievance in some parishes than in others.³⁹⁹

Some farmers were comparatively open in their support of the labourers, others were more secretive or passive, hoping, possibly, to benefit both from the movement for lower rents and tithes, and from any financial compensation which might be forthcoming for damage to their property. Insurance policies could be taken out to cover fire damage, although this became more difficult as rioting intensified. Whether similar policies could be taken out to cover machinery in the event of damage due to civil disturbance is not clear; even if it was possible, and this seems unlikely, there is no evidence of claims for such in the records of fire offices which traded principally in the

rural areas. But fire offices were not the only source of financial repayment. Compensation could also be claimed, from the hundred in which the incident took place under an Act of 1827 (7 & 8 Geo. IV, cap. 31) for physical rather than fire damage to a number of categories, including houses, stables, barns and industrial machines. Again, this did not cover agricultural machines, but it was nevertheless widely used, especially in Hampshire and Wiltshire. In Wiltshire £1,361 was paid out in compensation, including over £300 to Benett for damage to farm buildings at Pythouse; and this despite the fact that many farmers claimed they had been unable to lodge their claims within the required seven days.⁴⁰⁰ Certain farmers benefited too from Government rewards offered for information leading to the conviction of rioters; for instance sums of between £20 and £150 were paid to James Read of Downton, Timothy Rumboll of West Grimstead, Charles Lane of Tollard Royal, Jonathan Smallbones of Enford, Charles Blake of Idminton, Bartlett Pinniger of Coombe Bissett, and James and Charles Judd of Newton Toney, all for information leading to the conviction of those who destroyed their threshing machines.⁴⁰¹

Not surprisingly, it was often the smaller farmers who were under greater financial pressure and lacked the capital to see them through bad times, who were most inclined to support (or incite) the labourer. Colonel Mair, the Government's second military expert in Wiltshire, wrote that, 'the small farmers if they do not aid are evidently glad to see the labourers at work' (i.e. at destroying threshing machines) 'fancying it will tend to their benefits, lowering

of tythes etc.'.⁴⁰²

Apart from the cases of farmers' support already mentioned, there was some doubt as to whether James Lampard, a farmer of 270 acres in Tisbury, had encouraged the rioters to break his machine. Such doubts presented problems to those collecting evidence for the trials. Although Lampard denied having encouraged the rioters, he had certainly not offered any vigorous resistance, having gone off to market that day even though trouble was widely expected, and hence James Cobb, who was drawing up cases for prosecution, advised Benett not to press the charge in court if those involved could possibly be tried on other charges.⁴⁰³

The tacit support of farmers for the rioters was also evident in the difficulties of magistrates in some divisions in recruiting special constables from amongst the farmers, such as the case of farmers in Salisbury market. As late in the rioting as the 26th November, P.M. Chitty wrote to his fellow magistrate, Benett, that he hoped their Magistrates' meeting on the 27th November would take decisive action since, 'nothing but positive orders from persons in authority will make the farmers take upon themselves the office of special constables'.⁴⁰⁴ Also on 26th November a handbill from the Secretary of State was circulated from Salisbury Council House advising on the swearing-in of special constables, which also made provision for the 'calling-in' of the first five householders who could be found in each parish which feared riot, if no volunteer could be found.⁴⁰⁵

All this took time, however, and, on the whole, magistrates depended for military support on the various troops of yeomanry and regular soldiers. Wiltshire authorities considered themselves comparatively fortunate since, unlike many other counties, they had not disbanded their yeomanry cavalry after the Napoleonic Wars. But they were also keen to have all the regular soldiers they could beg from the Government; although the Government was sparing in its provision of regular soldiers, largely, no doubt because they had so many similar requests from other counties. Twenty lancers were sent to the Hindon area on the 26th November to help the local Yeomanry, and a troop of regular soldiers was stationed at Trowbridge. After the rioting, four troops of lancers were sent from Bath to escort prisoners to the Special Commission from the various gaols throughout the county. Apart from this, however, the county had to depend on its own resources.

No hint of the difficulties encountered by the magistrates filtered through to newspaper reports, which concentrated instead on the effectiveness and bravery of the Yeomanry and special constables. But the private correspondence of magistrates and other individuals points to a state of some panic. One Market Lavington farmer wrote bitterly to the Home Office complaining of their 'shameful neglect in defending the persons and property of his majesty's subjects in Wiltshire', and demanding more military backing.⁴⁰⁶

Added to these problems was the fact that the gentry and magistrates of Wiltshire seemed totally unprepared

for such an outbreak of unrest, and frequently responded with panic and uncertainty to wild rumours such as those respecting the murder of Robert Pyle. It was left to Colonel A'Court, a magistrate in the Warminster Division and later an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, to suggest to the Clerk of the Peace for the county, on the 20th November, that the clerks to the magistrates for the various divisions should report to every other magistrates' clerks in the county the full details of any fire or riot to prevent the spreading of such rumours, and to enable other magistrates to send assistance if possible.⁴⁰⁷

Thereafter a number of reports reached the Salisbury and Amesbury Divisions, at least. By the 24th November the Home Office was receiving regular reports too from the various divisions on the state of the neighbourhood. But the degree of coordination among the magistrates still left something to be desired by the time of the Special Commission, for when Tallents arrived in Salisbury to prepare the Government prosecution cases, he discovered that the magistrates had still had no meeting to prepare the business of the Commission.⁴⁰⁸

The panic of local authorities was not reflected by the new Whig Government, partly as a result, no doubt, of the calm reports it received from its military advisers. The Home Office's instructions to the Wiltshire magistrates varied from sharp reminders not to give way to violence with concessions, to advice against being overbearing, once the main danger of unrest was over, in the prosecution of rioters. While not wishing to appear too lenient, the

Government was anxious not to appear too harsh either; a letter to Bennett from the Home Office warned that 'to array all the counsel retained by the Government against the prisoners appears to Lord Melbourne to be open to serious objections; he is apprehensive that it may be looked upon as a form of oppression or an advantage taken by the Magistracy and Government against the accused'.⁴⁰⁹ The prisoners, at least, must have felt that in this respect the Government was far from successful.

So far, we have discussed the Swing Riots in Wiltshire in general terms only, but as has been implied on several occasions, so localized were the Riots that unless the causes of, and responses to, unrest are given some consideration at parish level there is a danger of oversimplifying and distorting the events of November 1830.

The spread of unrest was only partly determined by the extent of distress, the proximity to national lines of communication and the presence of radicals to channel grievances. Equally important was the immediate response of local landowners, farmers and clergy to the fear of approaching violence. In those places where farmers either broke their own threshing machines or offered no resistance to labourers' breaking machines, violence was kept at a minimum, as occurred for instance in the Devizes area, and hence these parishes or areas gave the impression of being less distressed than violent areas, although conditions might have been largely similar in both.

In other places possible unrest appears to have been diverted by timely concessions. The Devizes magistrates'

recommendation made on the 23rd November proposed a wage rise for agricultural labourers to 10s a week, and the Salisbury, Amesbury and Pewsey magistrates soon followed suit, although here not in time to prevent much rioting. A meeting of the Calne poor law officers on the 25th November took extensive consideration of the state of the agricultural labourers, and came up with a number of recommendations, including a request to landowners and clergy to reduce rents and tithes to make possible a wage rise, the letting of allotments to labourers, and the possible introduction of a roundsman system to help ease unemployment.⁴¹⁰ At Orcheston, Maddington, Shrewton and Rolleston, a meeting of the occupiers on 22nd November resolved to discontinue the use of threshing machines, to advance wages by 2s a week, and to provide the poor with coal for three months at 6d a bushel, and this was attributed to forestalling much unrest at least among the native population of these parishes.⁴¹¹

We have already seen how the 'mob' at Christian Malford was easily dispersed by the promise of a lowering of rents; similar rent reductions occurred in a number of places, for instance by Simon Watson-Taylor at Erlestoke, and Norman Atherton at Kington Langley, although it seems more likely that this was a form of reward to the population for not participating in rioting, rather than an attempt to forestall unrest. Elsewhere, the peacefulness of the population was ensured by less conciliatory methods; at Winterbourne Bassett the local landowner, a former Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Hopewell Hayward Budd,

enrolled all seventy labourers there as special constables, and used this force to help keep the neighbouring parishes quiet. Whether unrest would have occurred in all these parishes if preventive action had not been taken is, of course, impossible to tell, but the pattern of subsequent unrest does suggest that in some places, at least, it served to quieten, for a time, potential discontent.

The distribution of Swing unrest might also be distorted by the activities of rioters who did not necessarily live or work in the parish where the incident occurred. The anonymity of many of the rioters - often only a few prominent rioters were arrested and tried and even then their native parish is not always recorded - makes it impossible to map Swing unrest accurately, in terms of the parishes where rioters lived and worked. We should, therefore, be aware that some so-called 'Swing parishes' might be unfairly included in this category. Winterbourne Stoke is one example where local labourers took no part in the rioting, the threshing machines here being smashed by the roving mob which had started out from Shrewton.

Many 'Swing parishes', of course, continued to exhibit signs of unrest after 1830, no adequate solution being provided by the Riots or their aftermath to the acute problems of poverty and unemployment; and the names of parishes in the north-east of the county, in the Pewsey Vale, the Wylve Valley and elsewhere, crop up again in accounts of arson, strikes and trade-unionism. It is a curious feature of rural unrest, however, that some of the areas

where Swing unrest was most extensive or violent, were comparatively quiet after 1830, exhibiting none of their former restless spirit. Perhaps the most notable examples of this are the Alderbury and Tisbury areas, both of which were largely dominated by extensive landowners, especially the Earl of Radnor whose seat was Longford Castle, near Alderbury; and Lord Arundell of Wardour and John Benett who were major landowners in the Tisbury area.

Describing the Swing Riots in Wiltshire, a Westbury magistrate wrote that, 'Great exertions are made both in the employment of labourers, and in the exercise of charity by the owners of property in the county of Wiltshire, a great proportion of whom are almost constantly resident, but the evil has arrived at such a pitch as to be beyond the power of their remedy'.⁴¹² The violent state of some of these parishes under the influence of great landowners can perhaps be explained in fuller terms than their simply slipping from their owner's influence in the general riotousness. It has already been shown how smaller farmers were more inclined to sympathize with the labourers, using the Riots as a vehicle for their own aims, and offering little resistance, in many cases, to the destruction of their machines. Doubtless, gentry and aristocratic landowners had more to lose by the Swing Riots. Many landowners must have resented attempts to force them into lowering their rents. Moreover many of them would have been highly conscious of their position as defenders of the rights of property, and hence would have felt it their duty, as a matter of principle, to oppose attempts to sway them by

threats and violence, no matter what their opinion of the justice of the demands. The extent to which magistrates did give way or make concessions varied from place to place, but there was little sign of giving way in the Alderbury or Tisbury areas at least. Lord Radnor, a man of unusually radical views for a member of the aristocracy and a friend of William Cobbett, censured the prisoners taken at Pythouse, at their examination for 'the illegality of their conduct observing that those who might be convicted would be guilty of rebellion, and would certainly, unless the Royal Mercy interposed suffer death as traitors, and remarking that, whatever their grievances they ought to be brought under the notice of the magistrates in a legal and peaceful manner'.⁴¹³

Some of the larger farmers too might have been more inclined to resist rioters since their threshing machines might have been more valuable and efficient than was common. John Benett's two threshing machines, for instance, one of which was water-powered and the other driven by six horses, must have represented a considerable investment. It is noteworthy that two of the most violent incidents in Wiltshire, at Pythouse and Alton Barnes, took place when particular farmers tried to resist mobs, which, up till then had been given a free hand in their work of destruction, and hence, by the time they met with opposition, were in high spirits and not willingly thwarted. In these cases, then, the attitude of one farmer or landowner might give a parish a reputation for distress and violence which later events did not necessarily bear out, especially since these too were the very farmers and landowners who, in normal

circumstances, were the best providers of employment and charity.

At Downton, for example, Lord Radnor took swift action, in the wake of rioting, to try to ease the chronic winter unemployment problem which was one of the worst in Wiltshire. Radnor was the major landowner in this large parish of 11,500 acres. In 1840 he was recorded as owning over 4,000 acres. The Nelson family too were extensive landowners with property amounting to about 2,500 acres, although this was divided between the guardians of Earl Horatio, the executors of Earl Thomas and the Dowager Countess Frances Nelson. In addition there were eleven other landowners with more than 100 acres each, and between them they accounted for 95% of the parish. Property was most divided in the village itself where there was a number of small owners and owner-occupiers. Few of the major landowners however were also major occupiers. Four of them, including Radnor, occupied only a few hundred acres of woodland and plantations each, presumably for game preservation; and only another four also farmed some of their land. The largest tenant farmer was Jonathan Taunton, with nearly 2,000 acres, and there were five other tenant farmers with over 500 acres each.⁴¹⁴ In 1831 there were 26 occupiers in agriculture employing labour and 8 not employing labour.

A large proportion of the adult male population was employed in agriculture. According to the 1831 Census, 406 males over the age of twenty-one were employed as agricultural labourers, but the Rural Questions show that in 1832 there were an additional hundred men partly employed

as agricultural labourers, a figure which the Census disguises. There was therefore a high concentration of labourers to farmers, there being 12 full-time labourers to every farmer, and nearly 16 labourers to every farmer employing labour. There were few alternative sources of employment in the parish apart from a wicker chair industry and the usual service industries and trades. In the early 1830s some attempts were made to reintroduce straw-hat plaiting and lace-making among the women and children of the parish, in an attempt to revive the once thriving rural industries, especially in lace-making, in this area. But this reintroduction was said to have occurred 'to no great extent',⁴¹⁵ and young single women earned such a miserable pittance at lace-making that by 1836 many were applying to the poor law authorities to emigrate.⁴¹⁶

Unemployment, therefore, was chronic. In the winter of 1830 there were between 140 and 150 labourers on the parish books, who were put to work on the roads or in the gravel pits. The fact that so many of them were collected together was said to increase the possibility of disorder. They worked 'in congregated masses of from 50 to 100 labourers, the few industrious labourers being thus brought into contact with the indolent, profligate and dishonest, the former now assumed the character of the latter and theft, riotousness and drunkenness became the result ... and their general behaviour was of the most violent and daring description'.⁴¹⁷

Being on the outskirts of the forest and pasture region in the south-east of the county, the agriculture of

the parish was very mixed. As with the rest of the 'Chalk' the principal agricultural activity was arable, accounting for 5,700 acres, but there were also 3,000 acres of pasture and downland, 1,800 acres of rough heath and 1,000 acres of woodland. The proximity of the New Forest and the opportunities, perhaps, to eke out a reasonably independent if meagre existence on the heath and woodlands, were also said to make the population here 'insubordinate', the same being true for other parishes in this area such as Whiteparish and West Grimstead.⁴¹⁸

During the winter of 1829 to 1830, there was some hint of the trouble to come the following year, with a large incendiary fire at Pensworth Farm on 7th February, destroying both the farmhouse and a number of outhouses.⁴¹⁹ During the Swing Riots, two threshing machines were broken in Downton parish itself, one belonging to James Shelley, a broom-maker and very small occupier, at least in 1840, of only about twenty acres and hence probably one of those not employing any agricultural labour; and the other belonging to James Read, a more extensive occupier with over 300 acres.⁴²⁰ Four labourers were tried at the Special Commission for these Swing offences. They were all very young, their ages ranging from 18 to 24, and this is possibly a reflection of the fact that, with poor rates so high, farmers would have been more inclined to employ married labourers with large families than young or single men. Three of those convicted had worked at some time on Radnor's estate, but when asked to give them character references, Radnor said he knew little about them.⁴²¹ They were all found guilty and sentenced

to transportation or imprisonment.

In the wake of the Swing Riots, Radnor set about trying to impose some sort of solution to the problem of unemployment. His principal remedy was to persuade the ratepayers to agree to a form of labour-rate whereby each of them employed a certain number of labourers in proportion to his rates and acreage, their wages being paid partly by the employer and partly out of the rates. A 'regulator' was employed to work out to whom the surplus labourers should be apportioned. The severity of the unemployment problem in the parish is illustrated by the fact that this system was kept in operation throughout the year, except for six weeks during harvest, while in 1835 the Board of Guardians told the Poor Law Commission that without the system the unemployed put to work on the roads that winter would have numbered two hundred.⁴²²

The introduction of a labour rate certainly appeared to ease the situation in the parish, even if the new Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Colonel A'Court, was critical of the fact that it continued what was seen by him as the prime evil of out-relief and the scale system. Nevertheless, if A'Court disapproved of Radnor's palliatives, he had no illusions about the benefits of his interest in the area. He considered it a great coup when he persuaded Radnor to become chairman of the new Alderbury Board of Guardians: 'His Lordship's residence at Longford Castle is rarely protracted in the winter months', he wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners, 'but his name is sufficient to induce his brother magistrates to take an interest in the

proceedings of the Guardians'.⁴²³

In fact, even if not always resident, Radnor does appear to have taken a considerable personal interest in the affairs of the Union. Severe unemployment in Downton was considerably eased in 1836 when the Poor Law Commission agreed to lend the parish 1,000 guineas, all the interest on which was paid by Radnor himself, in order to help 200 paupers emigrate to Canada. This number included 73 young men who had always had to resort to poor relief in the winter, and the total group was made up entirely of agricultural labouring families except for one bricklayer, one butcher, one papermaker, one maltster and two blacksmiths. The results of this, one of the largest single groups to emigrate from Wiltshire under the auspices of the Poor Law Commission, were said to ease Downton's unemployment problem considerably, and according to the Board of Guardians, 'answered beyond our most sanguine expectations'. Encouraging the labourers to migrate to the industrial counties further north proved more difficult, but in May 1836 two families were persuaded 'to spy out the land' if the parish paid their expenses to remove. By the end of 1836 the Guardians reported that with only a little more migration or emigration Downton would have 'men sufficient for the regular demands of the parish'.⁴²⁴

It would appear that equal attention was paid to the spiritual needs of the population of Downton. In 1830 the parish of Downton was served by one parish church in the village itself, along with two Wesleyan Methodist Chapels and one Baptist Chapel, while in Redlynch there was

a Particular Baptist and another Wesleyan Chapel. After 1830 however, two other Anglican churches were built in the parish; one, St Mary Redlynch, was built in 1834 'as an additional church to the parish of Downton', and erected by private subscription and the Church Building Society. In the tithing of Charlton, too, a new church was completed by 1851 and while it was being built, the population of Charlton was encouraged by Lord Nelson to attend the Chapel in Trafalgar House. In addition to these new churches two more Baptist Chapels and a Primitive Methodist Chapel had been built by 1845.⁴²⁵

Although it is impossible to judge accurately, it would seem that action of this kind went a considerable way to quell that 'insubordinate spirit' which had formerly existed in Downton. Certainly there was no further unrest except for two isolated incendiary fires in 1847 and 1872. The same is broadly true for the other parishes in this area, where parallel policies were pursued, especially Whiteparish which had suffered similar if less acute problems of unemployment.

The case of Tisbury is rather more complicated than that of Downton. The 'Battle of Pythouse' became so infamous in the history of the Swing Riots that a large number of myths have grown up around it. Both the Hammonds and Hobsbawm and Rudé suggest that the prime cause of unrest lay with the unpopularity of Bennett with the labourers. But a closer examination of the evidence shows the situation to be far more complex than this.

Tisbury, like Downton, was a large parish

extending over 7,253 acres. In 1830 it consisted of four tithings, Tisbury, Staple, Chicks Grove and Hatch, but in 1835 the Enclosure Commissioners divided it instead into three separate parishes of East Tisbury, West Tisbury and Wardour. The two major landowners in the parish were Lord Arundell of Wardour, who owned 1,000 acres and John Benett with approximately 2,250 acres. Benett also jointly owned a further 500 acres with Sir Hyde Parker, while Charles Arundell owned over 600 acres. In addition two other major south Wiltshire landowners, William Wyndham and James Morrison, owned nearly 1,000 acres between them, so three-quarters of the parish was divided among these four or five landowners, all men of considerable social standing.

Unlike Downton, the major landowner in the parish was also the major occupier. Over 1,000 acres, mainly in the south-west of the parish around Pythouse, was farmed by John Benett, who thus dominated the parish both as gentleman and farmer. There were 17 other rented holdings of over a hundred acres in 1840, including those of the Alford family, with 284 acres, and James Lampard with 273 acres, both of whom were involved in Swing unrest in one way or another.⁴²⁶ Although the parish was smaller than Downton, there were more farmers here in 1831, 38 of them employing labourers and 3 working alone. Nevertheless the proportion of labourers to farmers was lower than in Downton, though it was still high at between seven and eight labourers to every farmer.⁴²⁷ Like Downton there was little alternative employment to agriculture, and an even higher proportion of the population here was employed in agriculture.

The agriculture of the parish was principally arable; of the 5,831 titheable acres, 2,861 were arable, 2,335 acres were meadow and 634 were woodland. On the whole, both agriculture and farmers were said to be of high quality, both in Tisbury and its immediate neighbourhood. The Times reported in 1830: 'The farmers, even those who are occupiers, are men of substance. The land itself, which is in a high state of tilth and very productive, is excellent. These are symptoms of a flourishing state of agriculture'.⁴²⁸

John Benett was elected in 1832 for the Southern Division as a Liberal, but in 1841 he stood as a Conservative and in 1847 as a Protectionist.⁴²⁹ The Hammonds' assumption of his unpopularity in Tisbury was based largely on the evidence he gave to the 1817 Select Committee on the Poor Laws. Here, Benett said that if the law of settlement was changed so that a settlement could be gained by a period of residence of three to five years, he would turn out all his labourers and pull down his cottages. At that time, he said he housed all his labourers well, but his employees were mainly men who could not gain a settlement because they were married before he hired them. If he hired labourers who already had a settlement in Tisbury, he hired them for the year, but, in common with most other farmers, he only hired outside labourers for shorter terms to prevent them gaining a settlement. When asked if it was not unjust to turn a man out of the parish in case of infirmity, he replied that he believed a parish should maintain labourers in the event of old age and infirmity

only if they had worked in that parish. In 1817, in line with a general move in the country to reduce scales of poor relief in the face of growing post-War unemployment, he drew up the comparatively harsh Hindon Scale which was based on calculating the needs of an adult male for one week as being the price of one gallon loaf and 4d a week for clothes.⁴³⁰ On the basis of this scale he was dubbed 'gallon-loaf Bennet' (sic) by William Cobbett.⁴³¹

But in all his remarks to the Select Committee Benett was expressing views which were shared by many others at the time, even if other landowners took a more benevolent attitude. He was certainly a forceful character and his opposition to the mob at Pythouse in November 1830 was doubtless the major factor in turning the disturbed situation into an ugly riot, but his character alone cannot explain why unrest was sparked-off initially in the area.

Benett, in fact, had only returned to Wiltshire from Parliament the night before the riot, on hearing of possible unrest at Tisbury; as the local newspaper wrote, he returned 'at the earnest entreaties of his family and expressed his fixed resolution of not suffering himself to be intimidated by these lawless mobs'.⁴³² It would seem, however, that there already had been moves in the parish to give way to pressure from the labourers. A Vestry meeting had been planned for the night of the 25th November, and on 24th November a meeting had been held in the house of the farmer Joseph Alford, to decide 'what proposals they should make to the labourers on the following day as to increase of wages'. Present at this meeting were

several of the major tenant farmers of the parish, John Combes, a tenant of William Wyndham, Samuel Bristol, a tenant of Benett's and the largest farmer in the parish after Benett, and two of the parish overseers, Messrs Maton and Grey. The third overseer, who was also Benett's bailiff, Mr Jay, was not present, having been unable to attend at the last minute.⁴³³

Reports as to why unrest was originally sparked off vary. One correspondent for The Times said that discontent originated from 'fourteen quarrymen' - probably unemployed labourers put to work by the parish - who were employed at 3½d a day, and 'ascribing the low price to the threshing now being effected by machines, they set about breaking the machines'. The problems of low wages, high rates and heavy unemployment in the area were said to have been exacerbated in the years preceding the Riots by the closure of a mill at Fonthill, and the state of the neighbouring parish of Fonthill Gifford would appear to have worsened with the departure of the eccentric William Beckford. Beckford had spent a fortune in the rebuilding of Fonthill Abbey, but in 1822 had finally given up this troubled enterprise, and sold Fonthill to John Farquhar. By 1830 it was reported that, 'The whole place seems fast sinking into ruin. The cottages are fast decaying and the broken windows indicate the extreme poverty of the once happy peasantry of Mr Beckford. The land being for the most part, let to tenants at will, is far from being well cultivated, and it is rare that the poor are allowed more land than a very small slip of garden'.⁴³⁴

Whatever the initial spark to the labourers' grievances it is clear that they encountered little opposition to their machine breaking from many of the farmers. Throughout the Hindon Division, it was said that 'farmers have yielded to the mobs in many parishes both as to the increase of wages and the destruction of machinery and where the mobs have not destroyed the machinery the farmers have exposed them for the purpose of being destroyed'.⁴³⁵

The mob collected at Fonthill on the morning of the 25th November. Benett apparently was not the only farmer to ride out to them. Some time that morning, Alford and Combes also rode out, succeeded in persuading the mob not to destroy a mill belonging to Mr Farquhar, and moved them on. Alford followed them as far as Turner's farm where they proceeded to destroy a threshing machine. Alford however, on being told by Turner that they were destroying the machine with his permission, rode back to the Vestry Meeting at Tisbury. The mob went on to destroy most of the other machines in Fonthill and Tisbury, 'to which they say the farmers expressed no objection',⁴³⁶ until they encountered Benett again, and the 'Battle of Pythouse' ensued.

In the confusion following the Battle, it was rumoured that Alford himself had led the rioters - according to a later legend, mounted on a white horse - and indeed, so alarmed was Alford, described by Arundell as 'a very timid man', that he would be arrested, that he fled to London, writing a letter of explanation to Arundell who interceded for him with the Home Office. Clearly, the

collusion of many farmers with the labourers would encourage Bennett to believe that a farmer was capable of leading the rioters and several of his letters talk of Alford as the ringleader. Alford too, would have been especially suspect since he had a reputation for being very benevolent to the poor. Arundell described him as 'the most sensible, prudent and humane man on my estate'. He spoke of 'his kindness to the poor, and his willingness to come into measures for bettering their condition in a parish in which the poor have been more oppressed and are in greater misery as a whole than any parish in the kingdom'.⁴³⁷

The problem was further complicated by overtones of religious dissension. Lord Arundell was a Roman Catholic and there were a number of Catholics in Tisbury parish; on 10th March 1851, a total of 650 people attended the morning services at All Saints Chapel in Wardour Castle. Alford was 'a dissenter of a congregation of Independents', which had existed in the parish since the Civil War, and rented a meeting house on Arundell's estate. In 1851 it was said that 'dissenters of various denominations and Catholics are very numerous in the parish of Tisbury'.⁴³⁸ The involvement of both Catholics and dissenters in the unrest was allowed to further distort the picture of events at Tisbury, to such an extent that Arundell wrote to the Home Secretary, 'My Lord, party violence in this parish goes so far that an attempt is making in which my name is not spared to give an impression that the Catholics and Dissenters have occasioned this disturbance. Altho' of the 40 men taken only 4 were Catholics, and 2 only of the committed one of

whom is not a frequenter of any place of worship but christened a Catholic'.⁴³⁹

So riddled with rumour has the story of the Tisbury riot become that it is difficult to draw a true and complete picture of what happened and why. One thing however seems clear: the unrest here was largely so prominent because disagreement and discord was rife between the landowners and farmers themselves, and not so much because the labourers disliked Benett with particular vehemence, although in common with much of Wiltshire, poverty and distress were sufficiently widespread to provide a basis for discontent, making it comparatively easy for farmers to incite them to riotousness.

Arundell summed up the situation in Tisbury in 1830, saying:

property is much divided in this parish, and opinion still more so. Law suits have been instituted against each other by the farmers and I and Mr Benett who reside in it have had frequent occasions to experience the violence of the farmers. As far as my means allow I have relieved the poor but in a parish containing 7,500 acres and 3,000 inhabitants, to relieve all is out of my power. 440

The Times's correspondent backed up this view of a divided parish; inquiring of the Tisbury labourers their motive for joining the mob, they replied that the farmers were at the bottom of it; that they gave the men beer and urged them to excesses. I should not think this statement worthy of record, but that Mr Benett in the course of the examination ... distinctly referred to one farmer by name'.⁴⁴¹

Although in this instance Benett was probably referring to Alford, he also wrote soon after the Riots, 'I cannot get a

nigh farmer or brother magistrate to ever to come to my assistance nor can I rely on my own men to fight'.⁴⁴²

And we have seen already the problems he encountered in trying to prepare the prosecution of those who broke the Lawn Farm machine because of Lampard's alleged complicity.

Although it is not clear, it is probable that the discord between the farmers and Benett and Arundell was largely the result of dissatisfaction with high rents. As regards Benett's personal unpopularity with the labourers the evidence suggests that he was certainly not greatly liked by them; on the 1st December it was reported that unrest was still evident and that 'Mr Benett is certainly not popular, and as the affray between the mob and the Yeomanry was in defence of his property it will be some time before it is forgotten'.⁴⁴³ But he does not seem to have been viewed either as a great tyrant: in a highly romanticized version of the 'Battle of Pythouse', written in 1883 'by an eyewitness', Benett is certainly not portrayed as being especially villainous and was said to have begged the Yeomanry not to fire. Wyndham and the Yeomanry came in for greater censure for attacking the rioters without provocation and shooting Harding as he ran away. Lord Arundell had been critical of their action at the time, writing that he could not 'help fancying they might have taken more prisoners by drawing the mob out and not charging them when they did'.⁴⁴⁴

Benett was certainly very zealous in pursuing and prosecuting the rioters, but then so was Lord Radnor,

and it is noticeable that Benett gave many of the rioters good characters, and wrote on Edmund White's plea for pardon: 'I tried to save this man from transportation but without effect. He was a young blacksmith of good previous character, but did much mischief'.⁴⁴⁵

Is it possible, then to explain why, after such a violent beginning to the period, the parish of Tisbury and the majority of parishes surrounding it too, were comparatively peaceful after 1830? In many ways, the Hammonds' stress on Benett's unpopularity with the labourers in the Tisbury Riot can be seen as backing up one of their central arguments, that the degradation of the labourer under the Speenhamland system of relief was a major factor of Swing unrest, since Benett was the architect of the infamous Hindon Scale. The Poor Law Commission, too, was only too ready to blame agricultural distress on the evils of the old poor law; and the fact that comparative quiet in the parish of Tisbury coincided, more or less with the passing of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act, might suggest that the old poor law had indeed been a major source of discontent. A closer examination of Tisbury after 1834, however, would suggest otherwise.

John Benett was opposed to the introduction of the new system, and made no effort to assist the work of his friend, Colonel A'Court who, as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, had to draw up the new Union. He strongly opposed the inclusion of the highly independent borough of Hindon in the Tisbury Union, which he felt would be a problem to the 'better regulated people in the Tisbury

Union'.⁴⁴⁶ He refused to sell a single acre of his land for a Union workhouse in Tisbury; and much to the annoyance of both him and A'Court, largely exaggerated reports began to reach the newspapers about the problems A'Court was encountering in this area.

Benett continued to be a problem to the Poor Law Commissioners in their attempts to enforce the workhouse system, and in the winter of 1838, a year of particularly bad unemployment, he openly defied them by re-introducing a form of the old scale system, his domination of the parish facilitating this kind of action. In 1837 the West Tisbury overseers had relieved distress among large families by taking some of their children into the workhouse, but in 1838, Benett 'invited' all the ratepayers in the parish, many of whom were his tenants, to contribute an extra 3d in the pound on top of their usual rates, to enable the overseers to pay each labourer with more than three young children an extra 1s 6d a week. This system was soon copied in East Tisbury and Wardour.

In a letter to A'Court, justifying the motives for this action, we see that Benett, far from being a tyrant, had his own very clear sense of duty towards the labouring poor even if to modern eyes his attitude frequently seems very harsh; and although his system offered no fundamental solution to the trap of unemployment, low wages and poverty, nevertheless it must have been seen by the labourer as a better alternative than the workhouse. He argued that by defying the Poor Law Commission, he was remaining loyal to 'a higher law ... that no person shall

starve for want of the means to procure food'. He continued:

It could not be the intention of the framers of the New Law that Fathers, Mothers and children, forming large families, should be forced either to steal, starve or go to prison, because though the Fathers are able and willing to work, no master can be found able and willing to pay them double the market value for their labour, to enable them to maintain themselves and their families. The theory that by distressing the poor you can raise wages is, according to my judgement, absurd in the extreme, unless you can effect the absolute starvation of half the labourers so as to reduce the supply of labour in the market, and the practice of which you have now had ample experience proves the fallacy of the theory - Wages are not raised and will not be raised so as to meet the necessities of large families by any other means which you have been able or will be able to adopt ... I am only performing my duty as a resident landowner and farmer by attending to the wants and due comforts of those who by their labour give value to my land, and to this I am called by the highest of all authorities. 447

It has to be admitted that Tisbury did little in comparison with some other Unions to encourage migration and emigration, and hence ease the labour market. In 1838 the Tisbury Board of Guardians did invite the Australian Emigration Agent to visit the neighbourhood, and consider families for emigration, although in comparison with Downton, the actual results were very small.⁴⁴⁸ But in 1837 a magistrate from Prescott in Lancashire, who toured the southern counties in an attempt to encourage migration to the northern manufactures, wrote to the Poor Law Commission complaining of a lack of cooperation he had met with in Tisbury and other Unions in the county, arguing that there was 'a want of willingness on the part of the farmers and others who look too much to their own pecuniary benefit ... without considering the great advantage ... to the hitherto

degraded labourer'.⁴⁴⁹ It might be argued then that Bennett cared not so much for the welfare of his labourers as for keeping a supply of cheap labour in the parish. However, labourers both here and elsewhere often seemed to prefer the old scale system, certainly in comparison with the harshness of the workhouse system, and indeed when forming the Union, A'Court complained that many labourers seemed to prefer parish pay to regular employment with farmers.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, when given the opportunity, most labourers were not especially keen to leave their native parish for distant employment.

What other factors then might have contributed to allaying the open dissatisfaction of Tisbury's labourers? It is possible, of course that the spirit of the labouring population had been crushed by the savage punishment meted out to its most rebellious members by the Special Commission, fourteen men being transported for seven years for breaking Bennett's threshing machines alone. Other parishes in the county, however, which were hard hit by the Special Commission continued to be centres of unrest after 1830, and certain evidence suggests that labourers retained an independent spirit here, with reports, in 1835, of young labourers being insolent to their masters, and leaving their service rather than staying where they were told to do work they disliked.⁴⁵¹

Even if unemployment was not greatly eased in the Tisbury Union by emigration or migration, an improvement in agricultural fortunes could well have provided more agricultural labour in the area, for instance with the

breaking up of a 'considerable quantity of Downland' in Berwick St John in 1837,⁴⁵² and this may have reduced spring and summer unemployment.

Some labourers too might have been able to ease their position with comparatively easy recourse to poaching. Tisbury was not a rigorously preserved parish, and so there were no constantly vigilant gamekeepers to make poaching a particularly risky enterprise. In the 1820s Benett had given up the strict preservation of game almost entirely, because there had been such an increase in fights between poaching gangs and gamekeepers. The majority of poachers in Tisbury, he asserted, were ordinary agricultural labourers who preferred to poach singly, and felt there was no moral shame in poaching.⁴⁵³ The success of poaching as a way of life in this area is illustrated by reports in 1850 of the existence of Poaching Protection Societies, a certain Mr Slade having addressed meetings at Fovant and Tisbury, recommending the labourers 'to form associations and enter into subscriptions for the purpose of defending themselves against prosecutions for poaching'.⁴⁵⁴

The very fact that the parish was dominated by influential, resident landowners doubtless played a crucial role too in preventing further unrest by the labouring population. Partly this involved the provision of charity, such as the distribution of food and clothing every Christmas to the poor of the parish, paid for by Benett, and the scheme for extra poor relief for labourers with large families. Partly it could involve, too, the exercise of more direct and less benevolent power; one small incident

of 1840 will serve to illustrate this. In the parish of Fonthill Gifford, where Benett also owned land, a labouring man named William Burt was reported 'to entertain Chartist principles, and so long as there was any sale for the paper, to be a distributor of the "Northern Star", and to be in the habit of explaining the various articles of that publication on the Sunday evenings to other neighbouring labourers'. In 1840, however Burt was sent to prison, if only for a few days when Benett's agent decided to serve on him a warrant of distress for the non-payment of his rates, Burt owing 1s 3d, and his family were forced into the workhouse. Certainly, in his initial investigation into the subject, A'Court believed this action had been taken against Burt because of his Chartist activities, while others in similar circumstances had been left unharrassed.⁴⁵⁵

The violence and unrest of 1830, then, would appear to have been a situation which uncharacteristically, had gone beyond the control of those who usually dominated the parish, in Tisbury at least, largely as a result of discord between landowners and farmers. The examples of both Downton and Tisbury, therefore, serve to show how the rather untypical conditions created by the Swing Riots, can distort the picture of rural unrest in Wiltshire, giving certain parishes a reputation for violence which later events do not completely justify. It is true that in subsequent years arson proved to be more common in former Swing parishes, but not to any marked extent. Between 1830 and 1875 there was an average of 1.3 incendiary fires in every Swing parish as compared to 1 fire in every

parish which had been unaffected by the rioting. Swing unrest in many cases missed parishes which were to prove far more restless in the following years.

Contemporaries however continued for some time to look to former Swing parishes with most apprehension. A'Court for instance, took enormous pains in forming the Alderbury Union, fearing the outbreak of further unrest. He felt Downton and Whiteparish were too 'proverbially insubordinate' to form the centre of the Union; he dared not 'confine the Union ... to the wild district to the east of the River Avon ... on account of the want of constant and secure communication across the river in the winter months', but included some parishes on the western side of the river too, 'in order that the Union may not be composed of the worst and entirely the same class of labouring people'. In addition, he tried to position the Union's centre as near Salisbury as possible in order to have the use of its police force.⁴⁵⁶

It was with some shock that on progressing further north into the county, especially in the Devizes region, he found, 'more wretchedness and misery in the neighbourhood, than I have witnessed even in the southern division of the county'.⁴⁵⁷ The unrest of 1830 had convinced him that the parishes worst affected by the Riots were those which were in most need of his urgent attention. He was to find that Swing parishes were not always the most demoralised and would not necessarily form the centres of future unrest.

IV: ARSON

After the Swing Riots, and before the emergence of agricultural trade unionism in the early 1870s, the main form of unrest in rural counties was the deliberate firing of agricultural property. As we have already seen incendiaryism played a part in the Swing Riots, although it was less common in Wiltshire in the winter of 1830 and 1831 than it was in certain other counties, notably Kent and Sussex. Incendiaryism as a crime was also comparatively new in Wiltshire. In the Statistics of Crime from 1801 to 1850 compiled by the Governor of the County Gaol in Salisbury, it can be seen that between 1801 and 1830 there were only eight cases of arson coming before Assizes and Quarter Sessions.⁴⁵⁸ This compares with a total of 189 cases between 1831 and 1875. So even though incendiaryism never rose to the epidemic proportions which were reached in East Anglia in 1843 and 1844,⁴⁵⁹ it was nevertheless a persistent feature of rural life in Wiltshire.

The scattered nature of rural incendiaryism meant that it rarely attracted the kind of publicity which surrounded shorter and sharper outbreaks of unrest. As a result it was a commonly held misconception that the rural population of counties such as Wiltshire was docile and contented, whereas in fact, as Peacock writes of the East Anglian labourers, their silence was 'the silence of sullenness, not of a subdued spirit'.⁴⁶⁰

Between 1830 and 1875 there was a total of 332 known incendiary fires in Wiltshire. As has already been

shown in Chapter II the culprits responsible for many of these fires were never detected, while even this figure of 332 fires may be an underestimation, since farmers who were victims of incendiaries and the local newspapers did not always publicise the incidents. It is not possible to estimate with accuracy the cost of these crimes, but from the records of the Sun Fire Office it can be seen that between 1836 and 1864 a total of £6091 5s 6d was paid out in insurance to Wiltshire farmers who had policies with this office, for a total of 38 known incendiary fires. This was just over 20% of the total amount paid out to cover fire damage to farm property in this period, and in a number of particularly bad years, notably 1836, 1839, 1846 and 1848, it was between 50% and even 100% of the total.⁴⁶¹

This represents the money paid out by only one insurance office, and many farmers would either have had policies with other companies or not have been insured at all. The Sun Fire Office however was probably the biggest insurance office in Wiltshire since in 1835 it took over the business of the Salamander Fire Office, which until 1822 had been known as the Wiltshire and Western Assurance Society.⁴⁶²

Some evidence of the seriousness with which arson was regarded in the rural areas can be seen in the rates of rewards offered by a number of societies set up for the prevention of crime and the prosecution of felons. In 1835 the Ramsbury and Aldbourne Association offered £20 reward for information leading to the apprehension of those setting fire to any building, hay, corn or other effects,

but only £10 for murder, highway robbery, burglary and house breaking, and stealing and maiming cattle.⁴⁶³

To the agricultural labourers, unable to combine effectively in order to improve their conditions, and anxious to retain anonymity in their protest, the appeal of incendiarism, 'the hidden crime', was obvious. In 1831 Wakefield described the ease with which a labourer could fire property and escape detection:

A husbandry labourer knows every path, hedge, bush, post, and dog, on his master's farm. His ordinary labour must take him every day close to his master's stacks, and he is thus enabled to reconnoitre, without exposing himself to suspicion, the spot on which we will suppose that he intends to act. Either as a poacher or a pilferer he is accustomed to prowl at night, and, like a cat, can see in the dark, besides being able to leave home at any hour of the night, without exciting the notice of his family or neighbours if they should happen to hear him on the move. ... He can creep towards the devoted ricks, perfectly certain of not being seen ... With three blows of the flint and steel the tinder is alight: he touches it with a match, stuffs the match into a rick, shuts the box, pops it into his pocket, and shuffles away with the same caution as before. In five minutes the stack is in a blaze; and in thrice as much time, perhaps, he is either snoring, wide awake, by the side of his wife, or else bawling under his master's bedroom window, - "fire! help! lord's sake, sir, get up; help! fire!"

... In any case the crime of burning farm produce may be performed by a farm servant, like genuine charity, the right hand not letting the left hand know what hath been done. It requires neither preparation nor assistance, and leaves no trace of guilt. Scarcely an incendiary has been discovered, who had kept his own counsel. Secrecy by itself, assures impunity. 464

The very anonymity of arson, however, makes it impossible to know for certain the reasons which prompted it. How can we be sure that arson was a form of protest? In those cases where the culprit escaped detection we can

of course only guess at the motives. A 1979 Royal Society of Health report on arson describes the most common motives behind arson as being 'revenge against employers, jealousy of a group of people and protest against the social order'.⁴⁶⁵ An article in The Nonconformist in 1843 clearly identified arson with protest, and, in particular believed it to be the only way agricultural labourers could draw attention to their grievances:

Incendiarism! What is it but the tongue of flame with which hopeless misery tells its tale to an otherwise inattentive world? As a crime, it has, as it deserves, our indignant execration ... It is a fiendish revenge misdirected - wreaking out its spite chiefly upon the innocent - throwing about destruction with an indiscriminate hand ... But does the world, while justly denouncing the crime ... bear in mind as assuredly as it ought, the fearful constraint which must be put upon human nature ere it can be driven to such outrages as these, and especially ere such outrages can become common. What must be the long fermentation of woe in man's bosom before distress breaks forth in such inarticulate wailings ... Is it surprising that men ... incompetent to speak their sufferings so as to command the ear of society, should gesticulate them in violence, and write them up and down the country in letters of flame. 466

The known motives of those tried for arson at Assizes tends to back up the picture of arson as a crime of protest. Obviously in some cases fires were accidental or the work of mischievous children, but generally farmers were not anxious to publicise incendiary fires on their property and were careful not to state a fire as being wilful if there was another possible explanation. It should be noted that only those fires described specifically by the papers as being thought to be incendiary are included in Appendix 2, and those described as 'mysterious' or 'of unknown origin' are excluded. This means there could well

have been more than 332 incendiary fires in this period. There were too the fires which the newspapers deliberately failed to report, claiming for instance that 'Accounts of incendiary fires never do any good and may be productive of much harm'.⁴⁶⁷

It might be argued that many cases of arson were acts of personal revenge rather than any sort of wide protest - Assize cases, for instance, suggest that this was quite a common motive. However, since the agricultural labourer lived in such a closely knit society, often with direct contact with his employer, it was inevitable that he viewed his situation in very personal terms. Acts of incendiarism against individuals in authority, therefore, could be seen as part of a subconscious sense of discontent with the social order as a whole.

This problem of interpretation however does not occur in those cases where the labourers of the parish openly delighted in the sight of burning property, and refused to help extinguish the fire. This happened for example in Urchfont in 1833, in Wroughton in 1835, in Tinhead in the parish of Edington in 1836, in Bromham in 1844, and in Stert in 1846. But the fact that the majority of labourers in most places readily helped to extinguish fires is no automatic proof that they abhorred the crime, as was sometimes stated, but rather that they merely wished to avoid suspicion falling on them. The implication in many newspaper reports that ordinary labourers were always morally outraged by arson was rather offset by a comment in the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette in 1834 which said

that many labourers spoke of arson 'in a slight and jesting way' and considered it 'laudable revenge and retaliation, or perhaps gallant daring spirit'.⁴⁶⁸

Of the 332 incendiary fires in Wiltshire of which we have evidence, we can make a reasonable guess at the motives of the individual incendiaries in only 65 cases (this figure includes some cases where the evidence was insufficient to lead to a formal charge or conviction). The circumstances which led to incendiarism were so localised and diverse that it is difficult to generalise on the motives. However the 65 cases can be broken down as follows: 7 people charged at the Assizes were acquitted on grounds of insanity; 8 of the fires were judged by Assize juries to be accidental or caused mischievously rather than maliciously; 3 were possible attempts to defraud landlords or insurance companies; and one fire was started by two youths who wished to create a diversion in order to commit a burglary in a nearby property. The remaining 46 (i.e. nearly 71%) were more clearly crimes of protest. In the years following the Swing Riots there were 3 fires which were directed against the introduction of new machinery. 2 fires were prompted by a dislike of the rural police; and 5 by the unpopularity of the poor law in some form, either the introduction of the new poor law, dislike of individual poor law officials, or as a protest against inadequate poor relief. There were 3 cases of cottage occupiers being charged with firing their cottages after receiving notice to quit or demands for increased rent.

The remainder of the fires can be divided into two broad categories. 11 fires (i.e. 17% of the total 65) were prompted by a general want for food and shelter and were usually accompanied by a desire to be imprisoned or transported, and sometimes to escape the workhouse or military service. All these cases occurred after 1837 when arson ceased to be a capital offence, and usually the culprit fired property quite openly in order to be captured and thus, as one man described it, 'to get out of his misery'.⁴⁶⁹

The remaining 22 fires (i.e. 34% of the total 65) could all be described as acts of revenge upon a farmer, usually the incendiary's employer, and were prompted by a variety of reasons, the most common being recent discharge from employment, or a refusal to give employment, reduction of wages, and criticism of some work done.

What sort of people were these arsonists? Among the forty convictions for which we have clear evidence, there were 5 women, 2 of whom were domestic servants and the remaining 3 were an agricultural labourer's wife, a workhouse inmate and a vagrant. Among the men convicted there was a quarryman, a tailor, a victualler, an unemployed stonemason, a pauper and a schoolboy. There were 19 agricultural labourers, and of these 11 were known to be in work at the time of the crime. The remaining 11 were all vagrants, or described as being without work, food or shelter and had often committed their crime to avoid going into the workhouse. Of these, one was an unemployed cloth worker and two were army deserters.

A notable factor concerning those who were eventually found guilty of these crimes, excluding those who fall into the category of mischievous children, is their youth. Of the 15 men and women whose age is known, 11 were under the age of 23 at their conviction. In the early years of the period in particular, one typical kind of incendiary was the young male agricultural labourer who felt keenly the hopelessness of his situation.

Young unmarried labourers were traditionally paid lower wages than married labourers and were the first to be discharged from their employment when the need arose, since farmers were aware of the advantage to them as rate payers of keeping men with families off poor relief. This custom may well have contributed to a feeling among the young rural workers that they were condemned to a state of poverty and periodic unemployment from which escape was difficult. One agricultural labourer, William Winter, convicted for arson at the age of 21, had actually left his native parish of Chute in 1833 and gone away to London for a short period following an incident when he had 'insulted' the parish overseer, William Bethell, when applying for poor relief. Winter had been forced to apologise to Bethell before the local magistrates for this, and in addition he was refused parish relief. Winter who apparently had little success in making a living in London returned to Chute in 1834 promising to avenge himself on Bethell. On 2nd November 1834 a hay rick belonging to Bethell was deliberately fired, an offence for which Winter was subsequently found guilty and hanged in March 1835.⁴⁷⁰

For these young arsonists, crime had evidently become a way of life while they were still very young, or perhaps it was a previous criminal record which helped the authorities secure a subsequent conviction for arson. Winter had been convicted of poaching in 1832.⁴⁷¹ Charles Kimmer hanged for arson at Oare in 1834, had been convicted three years previously at the age of 25 by the Wiltshire Special Commission for rioting and assault in the Swing Riots.⁴⁷² The third Wiltshire agricultural labourer hanged for arson in 1834, George Watts of Chirton, had already been in prison six times for various minor offences before his final conviction at the age of 17. The examples of Watts, Winter and Kimmer all therefore tend to contradict the view expressed by David Jones that arsonists often had no criminal past.⁴⁷³ Watts was illegitimate and lived with his mother and grandfather. He was known to bear a grudge against his employer, Attwater, and had left his employment one week before a fire at Attwater's farm. Watts, like Kimmer and Winter, was hanged at Fisherton Gaol in Salisbury, despite a request made by Devizes magistrates that the execution take place in Devizes as a salutary lesson to the population of this area, where, as we shall see, arson had reached alarming proportions in the early 1830s.⁴⁷⁴

All three of these men had refused to conform to a role of subservience; indeed to any role which their social superiors expected of them, even that of the repentant criminal. Admittedly Charles Kimmer, to the evident gratification of the local clergyman, at the last blamed

his demise on beer houses where he had found 'the worst company and the vilest conversation'.⁴⁷⁵ Watts, however, who had a great familiarity with the Bible, was said to be unrepentant in his hate for farmers, and Winter was apparently unconcerned by his fate, declaring at his trial, 'Well if I must go, I must go'. He openly scorned the idea of the existence of God or Satan, and it was said that 'all spiritual advice seemed lost on him'.⁴⁷⁶ The lasting impression left by all three of these men is that for them arson was a crime of revenge borne of a sense of hopelessness.

Later in the period Assize courts tended to show more mercy to young offenders. By 1838 arson was no longer a capital offence, and in 1858, for the first time, a boy convicted of arson, Silas Barlow aged 12 years old, was sentenced to Reformatory School at Warminster.⁴⁷⁷ The comparative leniency shown to child and teenage offenders was doubtless the reason why in one arson case in 1858 a 13 year old boy, Robert Dance, was encouraged to fire the farm property of Robert Lyne of Preshute by his two older brothers. The brothers bore a grudge against Lyne, their employer with whom they lived-in, both because their father had been discharged by him and because he had once prosecuted one of them for egg stealing.⁴⁷⁸ This arson incident occurred only three months after Barlow's offence in the nearby parish of Collingbourne Ducis, Barlow being sentenced at the Lent Assizes and Dance at the Summer Assizes.

Apart from the 65 fires for which there are known

motives, the circumstances surrounding many of the other fires give clues to the grievances which might have prompted them. There were for instance, those fires which were connected with wider protest movements, including 12 fires which occurred during the Swing Riots, and 4 fires which occurred in the Trowbridge area during a period of intense Chartist activity in the town. There were too a number of fires which occurred in parishes during a period of particularly severe unemployment; a notable example is Urchfont, a parish which will be discussed in more detail later.

A number of threatening letters also had some connection with incendiary fires or stated a determination to burn the recipient's property, and the grievances outlined in the letters give further indication of the kind of motives which prompted incendiarism. At the Wiltshire Lent Assizes of 1843, James Cooper, an agricultural labourer was charged with writing an anonymous letter to his employer, George Cooke of Stert, on 19th March, threatening to burn his property if he lowered wages:

Sir, we are dermind to burn that vilean out of the parish for he is siden about to lour the wages down to 6 shilens per week and if you do't, after it you may expect to have all the Farme all in flames very soon. 479

Two other letters both had some connection with grievances over employment. The first, sent to Robert Jefferies, a farmer of Dauntsey, on 16th June 1831 voiced a common grievance among labourers in predominantly arable areas, that of the employment of 'outcomers' or migrant workers from other parishes, at haymaking and harvest when

the demand for labour increased dramatically:

This is to give you notice that it is determined that all grass cut by outcomers or hay made by outcomers will be burnt to ashes let it be whosoever it may be as the poor of this parish are used very bad through that cause so if you employ outcomers you will see your rick yard full of ashes instade of hay and corn with some of your cows hamstrings cut ... 480

Another letter sent to Sir Francis Astley of Everley on 22nd March 1845 is rather confused, but the major grievance is clearly that of insufficient employment. The two farmers referred to in the letter, Mr Brown and Mr Harrell, were both tenants of Sir Francis Astley:

Everley Sir Astley if ther not littel alteration in everley verey soon that som of the pepeel send out of the parish of everley as ther is more than hundred inhabetens brote into the parish since Sir Francis is com to everley and Mr brown and Mr horall and if there is not alteration made we will burn the whoul parish doun to the Ground if the land were put into small farms there would be more hands employed and if ther is not we will burn the wohol parish doun to the Ground for it our intengen to set it a fier. 481

So far we have seen the use of arson primarily as a means of retribution, a purely destructive weapon offering in Jones's phrase, 'the glorious prospect of instant revenge'.⁴⁸² But these letters remind us that arson could be used too as a weapon of intimidation to terrorise the victim into changing his ways. In this respect the crime may be seen as one of the only effective forms of bargaining left to the labourer. How effective it actually was is impossible to judge. For obvious reasons, the farmer would not have publicised the fact that he had capitulated to threats and reversed a wage cut, or employed only local labour or changed his plans to introduce new machinery. However

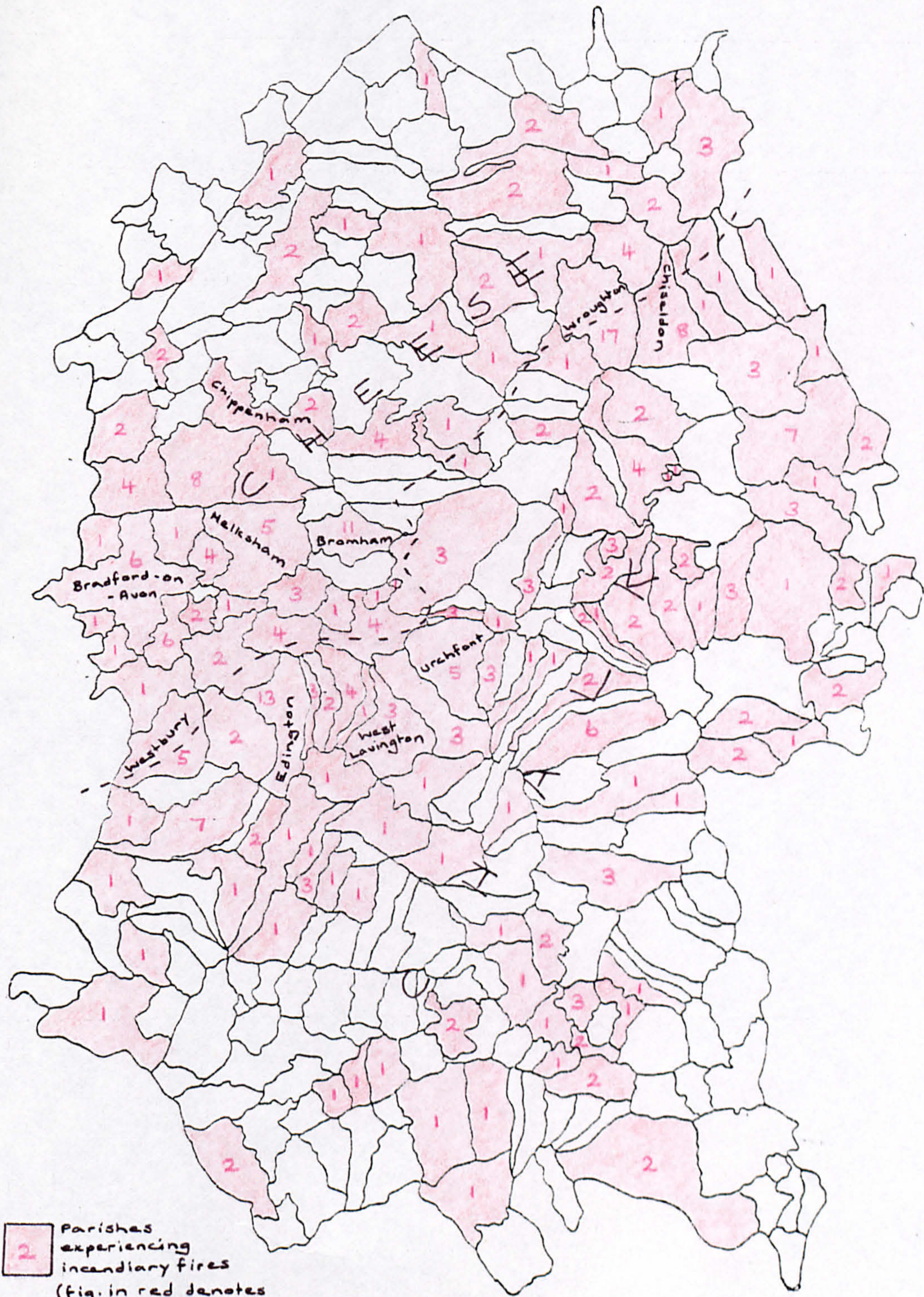
the possibility that arson did achieve such ends should not be overlooked.

The fires for which there are known motives represent only a minority of all incendiary fires in Wiltshire in this period. Is it possible to make any connection between these other fires and rural protest? It cannot be a coincidence that many of the peaks of incendiarism in Wiltshire coincided with peaks of rural incendiarism elsewhere in the country. Rudé, writing of the period 1788-1868, identifies these national peaks of incendiarism as being 1831-32, 1843-45, 1854-55 and 1863-66,⁴⁸³ and within a year or two all these coincide with years of considerable unrest in Wiltshire, although they do not account for all the peak years in the county. Incendiarism in Wiltshire therefore can reasonably be classed as part of a broader mood of unrest among agricultural labourers especially in the south of England.

The map overpage shows those parishes which experienced one or more fires in this period and it reveals how widespread incendiarism was in these years. Inevitably conditions in those parishes affected must have varied, and it would be difficult to identify a 'typical' arson village. A brief glance at the map however is sufficient to show that the large and generally populous parishes where 'Chalk' met 'Cheese' fell prey more frequently to incendiary attacks than for instance did the sparser populated and isolated parishes of the Salisbury Plain.

This map shows too a notable predominance of the crime around the decaying textile towns of West Wiltshire

Wiltshire Parishes experiencing Incendiary Fires



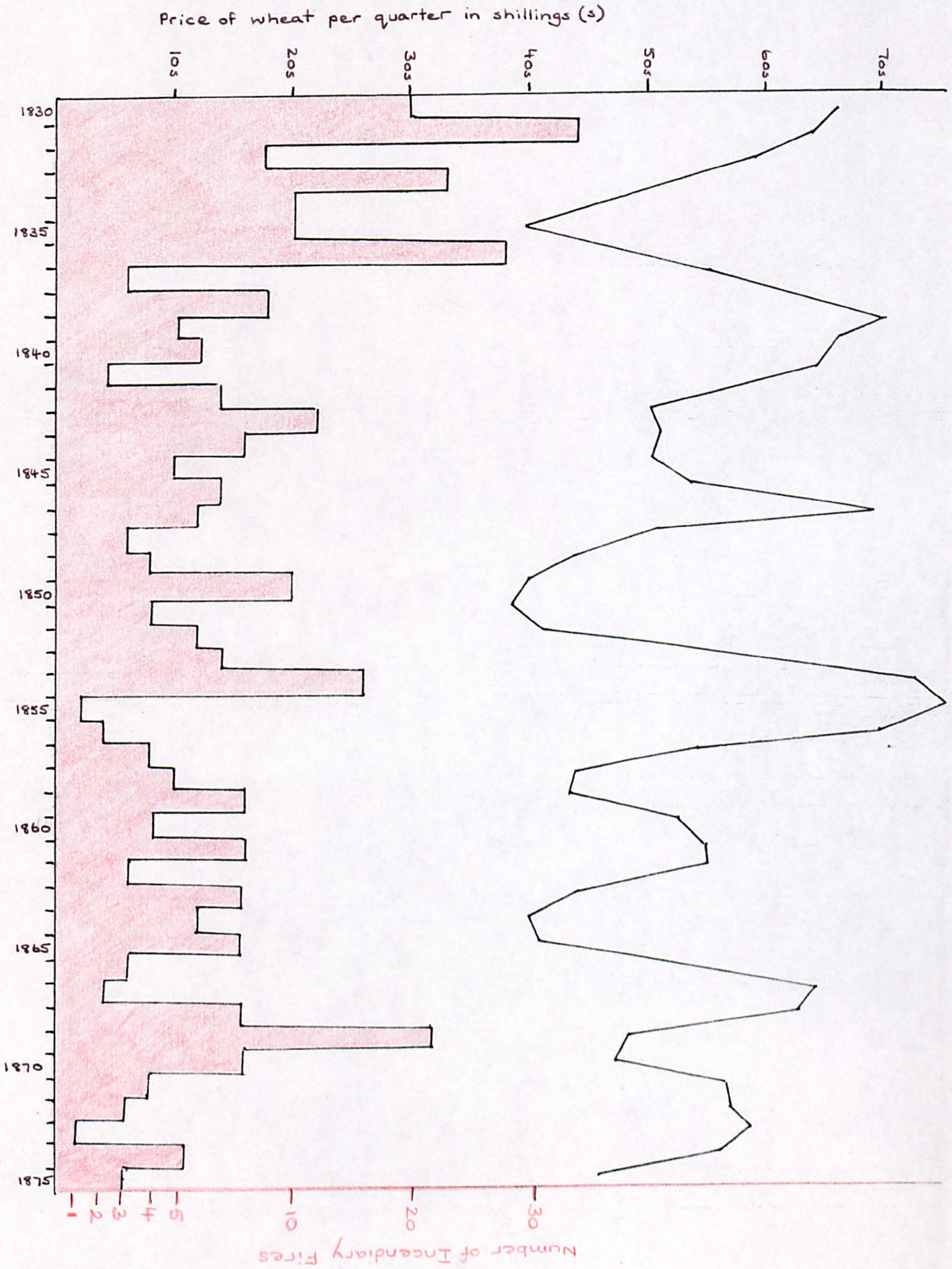
where hardly a single parish between Chippenham and Westbury in the north and south, and Bradford-on-Avon and Melksham in the east and west, remained free from an incendiary fire. As we have already seen in Chapter 1, the decline of the woollen textile industry in west Wiltshire began some time before this period. Since 1815 there had been continuous unemployment and underemployment among the textile workers of this area, not all of whom worked in factories but were outworkers in surrounding villages. So in this area, agricultural unemployment was exacerbated by the steady decline in a traditional source of alternative employment and by the gradual breakdown of the old industrial society. This is not to say that the labouring population was necessarily worse off in these parishes than elsewhere in Wiltshire, but the declining textile industry may have created a comparatively sharper sense of decline into poverty than existed in the exclusively agricultural areas. (This process may be seen as being mirrored in those 'Cheese' parishes where Anti-Corn Law League agitation followed hard on the heels of the years when railway construction had provided alternative employment.) The increasingly distressed industrial workers of west Wiltshire moreover were ripe for Chartist agitation and this appeared to be connected with several fires in this area in 1839.

The effect of a small core of textile workers on a predominantly rural parish will be discussed in more detail later in the analysis of Bromham, a prominent arson village. The case of two connected fires in Semington and West Ashton in 1869, however, will serve to illustrate here

the kind of situation which led to arson in this area. A man named George Barnes was convicted and sentenced to six years penal servitude for the Semington fire. Barnes had once been employed in a Trowbridge cloth factory. Hard times drove him to emigrate to America, but being unable to make a success of his new life there, he returned to England in 1869. Being unable to find work, he applied for parish relief from the Semington Board of Guardians on 17th August and was told he would have to go into the workhouse the following day. The evidence which came out at his trial suggests that Barnes had fired a hay rick at Semington as some sort of revenge for the distress in which he found himself on his last night of 'freedom' before being forced into the workhouse.⁴⁸⁴

Further background information on the role of arson as a crime of protest can be gleaned by comparing the distribution of fires with fluctuations in the price of wheat over the period. The evidence presented in the graph (overpage) is neither conclusive nor completely consistent, but it does give some hints as to the possible causes behind this unrest. Above all it shows that arson tended to be at its height in years of low or falling prices rather than in years of especially high prices. This suggests that it was employment rather than prices which lay at the root of unrest, since farmers tended to take on more labourers when prices were high and they could be sure of a good return for their capital outlay, while discharging labour when prices fell and their profits were

Number of Incendiary Fires in Wiltshire/price of Wheat per quarter, 1830 - 1875



squeezed. (This would help to explain why in the 'Chalk' area of Wiltshire at least, the Anti-Corn Law League was able to make such little headway.⁴⁸⁵) This conclusion applies in particular to the years 1831-1846, 1848-1850 and 1856-1875. Obviously there was usually a time lag before price trends established themselves and farmers decided on their course of action. Sometimes the correlation might be upset by periods of exceptionally severe weather, for instance in 1838 there was an increase in fires despite rising prices, but there were also frosts lasting nearly two months at the beginning of the year and many were put out of work as a result.

In 1847 the correlation is very poor, but this could be explained by the fact that repeal of the Corn Laws had frightened farmers into discharging labourers even though their worst fears of plummeting prices were not immediately realised.

The early 1850s is also a period of considerable confusion. This could be partly accounted for by the outbreak of the Crimean War. With poor harvests in 1852 and 1853, and then the cessation of Russian grain imports in 1854 prices rocketed. In this instance unrest increased accordingly, but then the number of fires declined dramatically in 1855 and 1856, helped perhaps by the enlistment of many labourers into the militia, as well as the increased production of arable crops at home.

Outbreaks of incendiarism also tended to reach peaks in the winter months when seasonal unemployment was most acute. Just over 68% of all the fires took place

between Michaelmas and Lady Day. This might be accounted for by the fact that, after the harvest, haystacks and barns full of grain abounded as easy targets for the incendiary. Similarly in the arable 'Chalk' area where arson was, on the whole, more common, large rick yards would inevitably have been more numerous. But it seems doubtful that large numbers of ricks could be the sole explanation for the increase of arson in the winter months since the arsonist fired many other forms of agricultural property. In addition it was not uncommon for farmers to leave their ricks or store their grain for some considerable time before selling, hoping for an increase in prices.

There is a limit however to which generalisations about incendiarism can be made from this sort of evidence. As Stevenson and Quinault point out in their study of popular protest, it is impossible to explain away unrest by resorting completely to this kind of economic evidence, for as they argue, 'economic causes only operate as part of a complex process. There is no direct relationship between economic deprivation and popular protest'.⁴⁸⁶ So localised was arson as a form of unrest that inevitably its causes varied from place to place. By examining some of those parishes where arson was a problem we can look at these local variations and also try to extrapolate further common factors behind this diverse form of unrest.

Unfortunately the relevant sources of evidence are patchy and it is difficult to make detailed studies of individual parishes. Many of the conclusions therefore have to be gleaned from evidence of a number of parishes.

First, we will look in detail at the population of the four parishes with the highest number of fires over the period 1830-1875. It is not intended to concentrate solely on these parishes since numerous fires which occurred in other parishes, although more isolated, give important background detail to the overall picture of unrest. But the occupational structure of arson parishes is best examined in those places with a run of incendiary fires covering the whole period.

The parishes with the largest number of fires between 1830 and 1875 were Wroughton with 17 fires, Edington (including the tithings of Baynton, Tinhead and West Coulston) with 13 fires, Bromham with 11 fires and Chiseldon with 8 fires. (Corsham too had a total of 8 fires, but it covered a considerably bigger acreage than the four parishes mentioned above, and had a population between 1841 and 1871 of over 3,000.) In Wroughton, Chiseldon, Edington and Bromham the population never rose above 2,000 in this period, except for Wroughton where the population was 2,087 by 1871. The average population of all four parishes in 1851 was 1,370.

Wroughton and Chiseldon are neighbouring parishes in the north east of the county and lie partly on 'Chalk' and partly on 'Cheese'. Edington is one of a string of parishes lying along the north scarp of Salisbury Plain. Bromham lies on an outcrop of greensand in the centre of the county, and was and still is renowned for the market gardens which thrive on its light, fertile soil. Between 1831 and 1871 all were predominantly agricultural parishes,

and the number of males employed in agriculture in each place was well above the county average, with the exception once again of Wroughton in 1871.⁴⁸⁷

The following tables show the occupational structure of each parish between 1841 and 1871 based on the evidence in the Census Enumerators' Schedules.

Table 15: Wroughton (6,390 acres)

Total population in 1841 - 1962	1851 - 1645
1861 - 1721	1871 - 2087

Occupational group	Percentage of Male Occupied Population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ Fishing (including: Agricultural Labourers	60.04	66.09	60.63	39.66
	55.11	61.80	56.19	36.11)
Mining	-	-	-	0.31
Building	5.51	10.30	12.01	12.96
Manufacture	12.40	10.08	8.50	14.20
Transport	1.97	0.21	0.74	1.39
Dealing	2.75	4.93	6.84	6.79
Industrial service	7.48	0.64	1.66	15.74
Public service/ Professional	0.98	0.86	0.92	1.54
Domestic service	8.86	6.87	8.69	7.41

Number of Incendiary Fires:	1830-1841 - 3
	1842-1851 - 0
	1852-1861 - 12
	1862-1871 - 2

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 107/1176; H.O. 107/1833; R.G. 9/1271; and R.G. 10/1881.

Table 16: Chiseldon (5,710 acres)

Total population in 1841 - 1203

1851 - 1137

1861 - 1206

1871 - 1246

Occupational Group	Percentage of Male Occupied Population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ Fishing (including: Agricultural Labourers	75.46	74.22	71.10	59.24
	70.50	66.46	64.47	54.08)
Mining	-	-	0.29	-
Building	5.59	7.45	5.20	10.87
Manufacture	8.38	9.63	9.83	14.94
Transport	-	0.31	1.44	1.36
Dealing	2.79	2.17	4.33	5.16
Industrial service	0.31	-	-	2.44
Public service/ Professional	1.55	1.86	0.87	1.36
Domestic service	5.90	4.35	6.94	4.62

Number of Incendiary Fires: 1830-1841 - 4
1842-1851 - 2
1852-1861 - 2
1862-1871 - 0

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 107/1179; H.O. 107/1833; R.G. 9/1270;
R.G. 10/1880.

Table 17: Edington (5,260 acres)

Total population in 1841 - 1136

1851 - 1079

1861 - 994

1871 - 1032

Occupational group	Percentage of Male Occupied Population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ Fishing (including: Agricultural Labourers	68.63	74.50	74.71	70.00
	58.82	67.22	68.39	65.00)
Mining	1.18	0.66	0.86	0.59
Building	6.27	5.63	6.03	6.47
Manufacture	12.55	10.93	12.64	11.76
Transport	-	0.33	-	0.59
Dealing	3.53	4.30	2.87	4.41
Industrial service	-	-	0.29	-
Public service/ Professional	1.57	1.32	1.15	1.76
Domestic service	6.27	2.32	1.44	4.41

Number of Incendiary Fires: 1830-1841 - 2

1842-1851 - 6

1852-1861 - 3

1862-1871 - 2

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 107/1188; H.O. 107/1842; R.G. 9/1301;
R.G. 10/1928-29.

Table 18: Bromham (3,300 acres)

Total Population in 1841 - 1559
 1851 - 1619
 1861 - 1402
 1871 - 1211

Occupational Group	Percentage of Male Occupied Population			
	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture/ Fishing (including: Agricultural Labourers	63.04	66.03	64.81	63.86
	52.71	56.05	55.09	53.49)
Mining	-	-	0.69	1.93
Building	4.07	4.67	3.70	8.92
Manufacture (including Woollen cloth Weavers and Spinners	24.46	19.53	18.98	13.49
	13.31	9.55	6.25	1.45)
Transport	-	-	0.23	-
Dealing	3.80	3.18	3.24	5.30
Industrial service	0.27	0.85	0.69	0.72
Public service/ Professional	1.09	2.55	1.62	0.96
Domestic service	3.26	3.18	6.02	4.82

Number of Incendiary Fires: 1830-1841 - 8
 1842-1851 - 2
 1852-1861 - 1
 1862-1871 - 0

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 107/1185; H.O. 107/1839; R.G. 9/1292;
R.G. 10/1913.

In the early 1830s all four of these parishes had large numbers of agricultural labourers without employment in the winter months; in Wroughton one in 26 labourers was unemployed, in Chiseldon it was one in 33, in Edington it was one in 56 and in Bromham, one in 62.⁴⁸⁸

In the country as a whole however the number of people employed in agriculture did not reach its peak until well after the 1830s. In Chiseldon, the decline in agricultural workers began comparatively early, being dated from the 1841 Census. In Wroughton and Bromham it was 1851, and Edington the number of agricultural labourers continued to rise until 1861. Did the acreage under cultivation in these parishes increase in line with the growth in the number of agricultural labourers, or were more labourers employed per acre to help absorb the rising labouring population? This is difficult to ascertain from the evidence available. The Census Enumerators' Schedules do indicate from 1851 onwards the number of acres owned or rented by resident farmers, and the number of labourers they employed. In Edington, the only parish of these four where the number of labourers increased after 1851, this source of evidence shows that, although resident farmers numbered 19 in both 1851 and 1861, the number of acres they farmed declined from 4,707 acres to 3,408 acres, while the number of labourers they employed declined from 186 to 141. The number of resident labourers over the same period increased from 203 to 238. The level of agricultural activity within the parish remained roughly constant with one labourer employed to every 25 acres of land held by resident farmers in 1851

and one to every 24 acres in 1861.

Considerable variations in the occupancy of farms in Bromham, Wroughton and Chiseldon makes it more difficult to detect changes in the acreage under cultivation. In Wroughton, and to a lesser extent Chiseldon large amounts of land were farmed by one of the major Wiltshire farming families, the Browns, whose land was said to extend from Horton to Berkshire.⁴⁸⁹ Not surprisingly therefore considerable portions of land were not always farmed by a member of the family who resided in Wroughton or Chiseldon. In all three parishes, however, the number of labourers employed per acre remained fairly constant, suggesting little change in the intensity of agricultural activity.

Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of agricultural employment increasing in neighbouring parishes which might be 'close' or generally less well populated. As Appendix 1 shows for instance, three of the parishes bordering Edington: East Coulston, Steeple Ashton and Norton Bavant had comparatively little unemployment, at least in the winter months of the early 1830s. The remainder of its neighbouring parishes however all suffered considerable distress, while Bromham, Wroughton and Chiseldon were virtually surrounded by parishes renowned for possessing large and often underemployed labouring populations.

From this admittedly rather tenuous evidence, then it would seem that unemployment must have remained a continuing source of distress, adding credence to the view already put forward for the county as a whole, that it acted

as a spur to arson and unrest. Certainly in general arson was more intense in the years of a rising agricultural labouring population.

The glaring exception to this rule is Wroughton where the vast majority of fires occurred after 1851, when the number of agricultural labourers was falling quite sharply as men found alternative work in the iron works and with the Great Western Railway works in the adjacent parish of Swindon. Of the 13 fires taking place between 1859 and 1870 however, 12 were the work of young boys, and Assize Courts decided that those responsible were not maliciously motivated. In 1859 one 16-year old boy was responsible for no less than 10 fires, and was said to be a simpleton. Strictly speaking therefore Wroughton should not be classed as a parish with an unusually high record of incendiary fires as a crime of protest. However its inclusion in this group of parishes is interesting since it illustrates two important points. Firstly it shows how a superficial examination of the basic facts and figures of a crime which does not take due account of the surrounding circumstances might distort our view of 'violent parishes'. Secondly it shows how serious protest might decline with an increase in opportunities to take alternative employment, for apart from the incendiary fires of the 1830s Wroughton was a village which figured in Swing unrest and whose population as we shall see, exhibited violent opposition to the poor law changes of 1834 and 1835. But the decline in violent protest by the 1840s coincided with the establishment of the Great Western Railway Works in Swindon. An initially

small but increasing core of G.W.R. employees are recorded in the Census from 1841 onwards, and by 1871 they were augmented by 115 men employed as unspecified factory labourers and labourers in iron works (recorded in Table 15 under the category 'Industrial Service').

Although Chiseldon was adjacent to both Wroughton and Swindon, its development was different from that of Wroughton. The village itself was further from Swindon, and throughout the period 1841 to 1871 agriculture played a larger role than it did in Wroughton. It was not until the 1871 Census that we see any sizeable group of labourers employed in iron works and in the railway, the number then being 27. Perhaps partly as a result of this the incidence of incendiary fires is more evenly distributed over the period, although there was no fire after 1861.

In the two Chiseldon fires for which some surrounding evidence is available, suspected culprits were in both cases recently unemployed agricultural labourers. Following a fire at the farm of John Brown on 9th February 1836, a labourer named William Alder who had worked for Brown during the previous harvest was charged with incendiarism. Alder had been forced into the workhouse like many other young men in the parish during the winter months. Alder however refused to remain there even though no other farmer had work for him, and he was heard to threaten that 'he would either catch or be caught'.⁴⁹⁰ In a fire on the farm of John Baden too, in 1861, a charge was brought against a labourer named Fox who had recently been discharged by Baden, although there was insufficient evidence to convict

him.⁴⁹¹

Of all the four parishes, the one with the highest proportion of its population employed in agriculture was Edington. Moreover the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture continued to grow until 1861. Edington was close to the textile manufacturing towns of Westbury and Trowbridge but there is no evidence that any of its population were employed in this manufacture until 1861 when there were two males recorded in the Census as working in woollen factories; in 1871 there were three female workers and one male. Although there was no large body of cloth workers in Edington it was one of the few parishes outside the towns where serious Chartist agitation was attempted among the agricultural population. 'Citizen Carrier', a prominent Trowbridge Chartist promised the Edington labourers in 1838 that if Chartism was successful they would have roast beef, plum pudding and strong beer for working a three hour day.⁴⁹² There were Chartist meetings here in 1839 too. But although a number of incendiary fires took place in the vicinity of Trowbridge at the height of Chartist unrest, none occurred in Edington in the period 1837 to 1842. Unfortunately there are no known motives for any of the fires which occurred in Edington, and it can only be guessed that since the majority of incendiary fires here (7 out of the total 13) took place after 1850, that this had some connection with the continued growth in the number of agricultural labourers which was higher in 1871 than it had been in 1841.

Perhaps the most interesting of these four parishes

is Bromham. Bromham could be described as the most restless of all Wiltshire parishes between 1830 and 1875, since apart from its 11 incendiary fires, it had connections with Swing unrest in the form of a strike in 1830, exhibited dissatisfaction with the system of poor relief, experienced Chartist unrest, and had a comparatively early and strong involvement in agricultural trade unionism.

Bromham differed from the other three parishes in this group, and indeed from the majority of other parishes in the county, in that it had a large number of small farms. In 1851 12 of the residents in the Census had holdings of ten acres or less, and three of these were described as 'allotment farmers'. It is worth noting the parallel here with East Anglia where, as Jones's study shows, one group of parishes most affected by arson was the home of many 'penny capitalists and allotment owners'.⁴⁹³

Bromham also had a strong connection with the textile industry. In 1831 there were 46 families in the parish occupied in weaving, including approximately 69 adult males.⁴⁹⁴ This compares with 48 male weavers in 1841, 45 in 1851 and 27 in 1861. These figures exclude those who by 1851 were described as 'pauper/weaver' to join the already common category of 'pauper/agricultural labourer'.

The decline in textile manufacturing occupations must have put a strain on the agricultural sector, and may well have been a factor in the incendiary fires in the parish, most of which occurred in the 1830s. But perhaps the main legacy of the presence of a comparatively independent if increasingly distressed element of textile outworkers

in the population was to give unrest in Bromham a political aspect not evident in most rural parishes, for as it was said, 'a certain degree of political independence seems invariably to accompany every sort of manufacturing industry'.⁴⁹⁵ Chartist activity was quite prominent in Bromham. In 1839, groups of Chartist supporters described as 'operative weavers' used to assemble outside the Church during Sunday service and read aloud Chartist tracts, disturbing those in the service.⁴⁹⁶

Three years earlier in 1836 when opposition to poor relief changes was widespread, Bromham was unique in that its opposition was well organised. It was reported that a 'union' of cottagers and other small ratepayers used to meet regularly at the Shoulder of Mutton Inn in Bromham on Tuesday evenings. These assemblies sometimes numbered 200 and included people from adjoining parishes.

Those present:

discussed different matters, and procured various Acts of Parliament for the purpose of ascertaining the best method of evading them, and that among other things they had determined that recent alteration in the poor laws was for the benefit of the rich only, and that therefore they would not contribute a single farthing to support such a system. 497

The meeting of this 'little legislature' in 1836 coincided with no less than five incendiary fires in the same year. The refusal of cottagers to pay their poor rates continued sporadically in the parish throughout the 1830s and 1840s; numerous summonses were issued against those in rates arrears, including some agricultural labourers and a higher proportion of weavers and tailors. On several

occasions the villagers helped barricade the cottages of those summonsed to prevent the police seizing goods in lieu of rate payments.⁴⁹⁸

As a result of the unusual occupational structure of Bromham with its weavers and 'allotment farmers', opposition to the Poor Law (Amendment) Act centred on small rate payers. Elsewhere in Wiltshire it was the agricultural labourers who were prominent in this opposition. In the 1830s and 1840s dissatisfaction with poor relief in some form or other lay behind many incendiary fires, and for this reason it is useful to consider it as a separate topic. Dissatisfaction with the system of poor relief had a close connection with unemployment since in the winter months many labourers had no other source of support than the parish allowance. The amount of unemployment alone however is not sufficient explanation for unrest; rather, as we saw in the examples of Tisbury and Downton in Chapter III, the response to the unemployed was a crucial factor.

Apart from Bromham, the Wiltshire parishes which exhibited the most violent discontent over the method of poor relief, especially in the period of transition from the old to the new poor law, were Wroughton, West Lavington, Potterne, Christian Malford and Urchfont. There was unrest too in the towns of Calne and Wootton Bassett.⁴⁹⁹

In the 1830s, Urchfont was renowned in the county for its severe unemployment problems. The agriculture of this and the surrounding parishes, was predominantly arable and the labour demands were therefore very seasonal. Unfortunately the Census Enumerator's Schedules for the

parish in 1841 are incomplete, but in 1851 just over 58% of the male occupied population were agricultural labourers - not an exceptionally high proportion.

In 1832 the poor rates for the parish were £1,450, and there were said to be over 50 men out of work for 45 weeks every year. In the winter months the number of unemployed men might rise to over a hundred; this happened for instance in the winter of 1835. So severe was the problem that in some years the parish paid them three shillings a week each without demanding any labour in return. The unemployed were simply left to their own devices,⁵⁰⁰ and according to the Deputy Overseer in 1834, they could be found 'lying about in large gangs, doing nothing, ripe for any mischief'.⁵⁰¹ In 1833 the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette reported that many of the labourers in the parish 'appear to be in the last stage of demoralisation',⁵⁰² and in 1835 Colonel A'Court, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, described it as 'proverbially pauperised and proverbially lawless'.⁵⁰³

Dissatisfaction with poor relief was first evident in Urchfont in 1832 with an incendiary fire in a barn belonging to Mr Alexander, a leading farmer and the parish overseer. In April and again in June of the following year, Magistrates at the Devizes Petty Sessions twice had to deal with disputes over poor relief in Urchfont. In the former case, a body of between 30 and 40 labourers attended the Sessions to complain that they were expected to work on the roads or in the chalk pits for the same hours as employed agricultural labourers, but for an

allowance of only 2s 6d per week. They complained that they should not be 'punished for that which everyone must allow was a misfortune - a want of work'. When the Magistrates refused to change the overseer's regulation, there were scenes of disturbance, and the labourers were censured by the magistrates for coming in such a large body and thinking to intimidate them.⁵⁰⁴

Following these incidents more incendiary fires occurred in the winter of 1833. On the night of 18th September there was another fire in the farm occupied by the overseer, Alexander, and this was followed by another fire, on the same night in the farm of Mr Compton. No culprits were ever tracked down, but the feelings of the labouring population were clear enough since it was reported that 'a number of wretches stood by while the flames were progressing, appearing delighted with the scene'.⁵⁰⁵

Another incendiary fire broke out in a barley rick belonging to an Urchfont farmer, Mr Butler, on Saturday, 10th November 1833. Alexander, an earlier victim of incendiarism, and Butler were, in 1851, the two largest resident farmers in the parish with 500 acres and 530 acres respectively, and employing a total of 39 labourers. Resentment against these two considerable employers was evident, and once again the poor of the parish demonstrated their feelings plainly. As the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette reported:

Such is the lawless state of Urchfont that - notwithstanding the wretches of the parish must be aware that they are narrowly watched and that a most awful punishment awaits them in case of conviction - whilst the flames were raging, they gave evident symptoms of the delight

they took in the scene; and early on Sunday morning actually danced in triumph around the expiring embers!! About a load of the barley had, by great exertions, been preserved from the fire, and was placed a short distance from where it formerly stood; and it is a fact that while the better portion of the parish was engaged in their devotions on the Sunday forenoon, an attempt was again made, by those who have neither the fear of man or God, to consign the remaining part of the rick to flames. 506

Distress did not abate in 1834. In March paymasters of Wedhampton tithing appealed for a separation from Urchfont parish in Poor Law administration,⁵⁰⁷ and the following month a petition from this and other parishes was presented to Parliament drawing attention to their acute distress.⁵⁰⁸

An incendiary fire in the property of a magistrate named Warriner in the adjacent parish of Chirton in September 1834 was thought by one local man to have some connection with the Urchfont unrest. It followed an incident in Urchfont in which an old woman had had one shilling deducted from her poor relief by the overseer because she had gone out gleaning. It was thought that the fire might have been an act of revenge on Warriner for refusing to uphold the woman's appeal against the overseer's action at the Petty Sessions.⁵⁰⁹

On two further occasions at the beginning of 1835, bodies of unemployed labourers from Urchfont complained to the Petty Sessions about reductions in poor relief, resulting from the fact that, once again, over one hundred labourers were out of work and dependent on the poor rates.⁵¹⁰

By 1836 the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner was writing of a great easing of Urchfont's problems resulting

from the introduction of the new poor law. But other evidence points to a continued state of unrest in the parish, with gangs of labourers said to be resorting to organised theft in the winter months.⁵¹¹ Other incidents in the parish include an attack on the house of the local constable in 1842, while the local newspapers talked of 'club law' in the parish, a term used to denote general lawlessness and rowdy behaviour. As late as the winter of 1871 there was a report of 40 unemployed Urchfont labourers going round from place to place begging for work, rather than applying for poor relief and running the risk of being sent to the workhouse with their families.⁵¹²

In the 1830s discontent was evident in a number of other parishes in the Devizes area. The parish of Potterne was said to be:

filled with a very discontented and turbulent race, and it may be mentioned, as a curious feature of the times and a new fact in the history of pauperism, that the paupers of Potterne raised a subscription among themselves, and bought a "Burns Justice" for the avowed purpose of puzzling the overseers and magistrates. 513

An incendiary fire in the property of the Reverend Edmonstone in Potterne in January 1831 was thought to be connected with the fact that Edmonstone had been one of the magistrates who a short time before had ruled in the favour of the Potterne parish overseers in a dispute before the Petty Sessions with local labourers.⁵¹⁴

In West Lavington, as we saw in Chapter II, there were strong links between cases of cattle maiming and arson, and protests over poor relief in 1834. In 1865 a young female pauper fired the farm property of one of the Poor

Law Guardians, William Hooper of West Lavington, after he had requested she be dismissed from the workhouse and made to earn her own living.⁵¹⁵

Incendiary incidents connected with the system of poor relief in Wroughton and Christian Malford were confined to the period of transition from the old to the new poor laws. In November 1834 a mob of about one hundred men, women and children occupied the Church at Christian Malford and refused to allow the overseer to enter, after it became known that the Vestry was about to meet to discuss changes in the method of relief under the Poor Law (Amendment) Act. The mob was heard to threaten a 'flare-up', and that evening a hay rick in the parish was wilfully set on fire.⁵¹⁶

In Wroughton the situation was different in that the parish already had a workhouse system before 1834 under the Gilbert Act.⁵¹⁷ When a notice of change in this workhouse system was announced at the beginning of the Church service on 16th March 1834, however, many labourers walked out of the service as a protest and stood around in the churchyard, smoking their pipes. The same thing occurred the following Sunday, a total of 150 poor people attending the service in order to be able to register their protest by walking out again as soon as the notice was announced. Around this time another incident occurred in which a Wroughton labourer, arrested by the parish constable for an unknown offence, attempted to assault Oliver Calley Codrington, the parish overseer, whom he happened to pass as the constable led him handcuffed through the streets.

The arrested man seized Calley Codrington by the cravat with his free hand and threatened to burn all his property on his release from prison. So savage was his grip that Calley Codrington's cravat had to be cut with a knife before he could be released.⁵¹⁸ It was little wonder therefore that at the beginning of 1835 the Poor Law Commissioners received a letter from Calley Codrington in which he expressed fear at the 'discontented state of the paupers'.⁵¹⁹ In June of the same year, an incendiary fire in the farm of James Bedford was met by a complete refusal by the labourers of the parish to help extinguish the flames.⁵²⁰

But why should some parishes like Urchfont, Potterne, Christian Malford and Wroughton have exhibited such violent unrest in the face of unemployment and poor relief changes while other parishes remained placid? When considering the parishes of Tisbury and Downton in Chapter III it was seen how different were the responses of John Benett and the Earl of Radnor to the problems of their respective parishes. Both, however, in their different ways exhibited an active interest which was lacking by the landowner and farmers in many of the worst arson parishes. Henry Olivier, a magistrate who took up residence in Potterne in 1834, believed that the non-residence of 'people of substance' in many of the parishes in the Devizes area was a major factor contributing to unrest. On 15th October 1834, he wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners:

In my capacity of a Magistrate for the county of Wilts I have had frequent opportunities of observing the various bad consequences which attend the maladministration of the Poor Laws in this immediate vicinity, and some adjoining parishes and will instance Urchfont and Great Cheverell, where the ill effects are even more

striking than in my own. This may in great measure be attributed to the non-residence of people of respectability and influence as well as to numerous abuses which have gradually crept into their systems, and from the inattention and ignorance of those who have managed the parochial affairs. In these parishes many labourers have been already thrown out of work for some weeks past, and chiefly because no one seeks for employment for them. 521

In Urchfont, land was divided among a large number of occupiers and owners. Throughout the period there was no resident gentleman of large property, and it is worth noting that in 1835 there was no resident clergyman either.⁵²² Despite the fact that it covered only about half the acreage of Tisbury, there were five more occupiers in Urchfont in 1831, and twelve more occupiers than in Downton, a parish almost three times its size. Bromham, Potterne and West Lavington all had more occupiers of land in 1831 than Tisbury and Downton, although they were all considerably smaller. In Urchfont, the major landowner in 1842 was George Watson Taylor of Erlestoke Park, with approximately 2,400 acres. The Watson Taylor family were also major landowners in Edington, where Anna Susanna Watson-Taylor, George's wife, owned nearly 5,000 acres of land in 1844.⁵²³ Apart from being non-resident landowners in both these prominent arson parishes, the Watson-Taylors experienced considerable financial difficulties in the 1830s. Newspaper reports spoke of the failure of Mr Watson Taylor, and in Erlestoke in June 1832, the wages of many of the labourers employed on the estate were said to be in considerable arrears until 'some gentlemen' applied on their behalf to the trustees under the will of the late head of the family,

Simon Watson-Taylor, who had died in 1825.⁵²⁴

In West Lavington in 1841 the major landowner, with approximately 4,000 acres of land held as copyhold under the Bishop of Salisbury, was Lord Churchill. Lord Churchill appeared to be frequently absent from the parish, and much of his business was conducted through his agent. The Earl of Radnor, who resided in the south east of the county many miles from West Lavington, also owned about 650 acres in the tithing of Littleton. The six or seven principal farmers in the parish were all tenants of Lord Churchill. Otherwise there were many small renters of land; the 1831 Census recorded the comparatively large number of thirty-one occupiers not employing labour. It was said that these people cared little about the administration of parish affairs.⁵²⁵

There were few resident gentry in Potterne too, as Olivier had complained. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner wrote that, 'many of the principal proprietors of land reside out of the parish, otherwise independent labour might be in more demand'. He continued to explain that before 1835 the parish was governed by an open vestry which met only occasionally, and that the assistant overseer was paid a paltry annual fee.⁵²⁶

In many of the prominent arson parishes therefore, there was a marked lack of resident landowners imbued with a sense of duty towards the poor and unemployed. In the period of transition from the old to the new system of poor relief following the Poor Law (Amendment) Act in 1834, however, this situation was exacerbated by a decline in the

influence of local magistrates (and it should be remembered that it was the magistrates who during the Swing Riots were largely responsible for preventing unrest spreading into the Devizes area by recommending a wage rise).

There is some controversy as to how far the influence of the gentry was affected by the introduction of the New Poor Law, and how far local authorities were forced to surrender power to central government. Anthony Brundage argues that landowner power was strengthened overall by the New Poor Law since it gave landowners a direct role in Poor Law administration as Guardians. Moreover there was provision for plural voting on Boards of Guardians, with landowners being allowed up to nine votes each depending on the extent of their acreage. However as Peter Dunkley argues in reply, the actual effect of the landowners' power depended on how far they were prepared to take advantage of the possibilities now open to them.⁵²⁷

As we have seen with the examples of Tisbury and Downton, Benett and Radnor were prepared to take an active role in the poor law administration of their respective parishes. In the Devizes area, the setting up of a Poor Law Union certainly enabled local gentry and clergy on the Board of Guardians to take a more direct role in the affairs of parishes like Urchfont and Potterne where they had no landowning interest, and where the occupiers themselves were careless of their obligations to the poor. In 1835 Mr Compton, a farmer and ratepayer of Urchfont, and victim of an incendiary fire in September 1833, wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners urging them to hurry with the formation

of the Devizes Union, and arguing that, 'unless we have some centre of that description it will be almost impossible to get together a Board of Guardians who will act with spirit and intelligence that the urgent necessities of the parish demands'.⁵²⁸

In the long term therefore the new poor law could be seen as increasing the influence of the gentry, or at least those of them willing to take an active role in otherwise neglected parishes. In the short term, however, amid the confusion which marked a transition in parish administration, the magistrates' power appears to have been seriously diminished, thus adding to a sense of uncertainty and discontent. There was a common belief among farmers and poor law officials that the Poor Law (Amendment) Act marked the end of the magistrates' role in poor law administration. A Ramsbury magistrate, for instance, wrote in 1835 that farmers 'think that the late bill has set them free from the control of the Magistrate, and the latter has the greatest difficulty in enforcing the slightest order that he makes'.⁵²⁹ Similarly a Devizes magistrate wrote of Urchfont in September 1834 that:

The poor have hitherto looked to us for protection against any harshness of overseers ... We have generally avoided a direct exercise of authority but if the matter could not be adjusted in such a way, we have made a positive order. The poor come to us, as hitherto, and we are no longer able to interfere; but unless some remedy is afforded, I cannot conceive how many of them will subsist ... It is impossible to change from the old vicious practice to a new improved system at once: and it is transition state which causes distress and apprehension. 530

These comments help to explain why trouble was so acute in many parishes in 1834 and 1835.

The influence of the gentry on Boards of Guardians however could not entirely compensate for the absence of a resident landowner who would take upon himself the duty of trying to provide employment and charity. Moreover many of the lesser gentry, no matter how well-meaning, did not have the wherewithal to provide such benefits. In 1833, Richard Webb, the land agent for a number of large properties in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset, knew of no incendiary fire which had taken place on estates under his management, but he believed there was a difference in this respect between owners of large estates and small proprietors, since the land belonging to the latter was generally not so well cultivated and used less labour.⁵³¹ It is certainly noticeable that many parishes which escaped with comparatively few incendiary fires fell within the estates of the large aristocratic landowners, for instance those of the Earl of Radnor; the Earl of Pembroke, who resided at Wilton House; the Marquis of Lansdowne whose Wiltshire estate centred on Bowood near Calne; and the Marquis of Bath's Longleat estate.

On the Wilton estate the Earl of Pembroke took great pains to get the best tenants and to keep them. Rather than underlet a farm, he would keep it in hand himself. Between 1821 and 1839, rents were reduced by between 15% and 25% to help tenants through the depression. Pembroke ranked with some of the wealthiest and most generous landowners in the country, and the total outlay on his estate in this period worked out at about £10 per acre, resulting in a very high standard of agriculture. There was a high level of charitable payment, too, rising

steadily in the post-Napoleonic period to reach its peak in 1876.⁵³² By 1868 there were said to be schools and allotments in every parish of the estate.⁵³³

There was similar charitable activity on the Longleat estate. In the parish of Horningsham, for instance, considerable unemployment caused by the closure of a silk factory was eased by the efforts of Lord Bath who insisted that every farmer in the parish took on a share of the unemployed labourers until migration and emigration reduced the overall population.⁵³⁴ All cottages on the estate were said to be in good condition, and most were rented out directly by Lord Bath. In addition he ensured that a quantity of the milk produced on the estate was not sold wholesale, but kept back for the tenantry of the estate.⁵³⁵

Similar examples of paternalistic behaviour can be found on the Lansdowne estates, which as we shall see in the next chapter largely escaped all violent unrest in this period.

The exception which might be thought to disprove this hypothesis is the extensive Wiltshire estate of the Marquis of Ailesbury, whose residence was Tottenham Park in Savernake. The parishes of Collingbourne Kingston, Collingbourne Ducis, Burbage, Easton, Great Bedwin, Little Bedwin, Shalbourne, Preshute, Mildenhall and parts of Milton, Wootton Rivers, Chute and Marlborough all came under his dominance, and all, with the exception of Collingbourne Kingston and Mildenhall, were comparatively turbulent, with a total of 23 incendiary fires in the period 1830 to 1875.

An examination of the Marquis of Ailesbury's

financial affairs, however, would suggest that his ability to maintain his role as a paternalistic landowner was inferior to that of his fellow Wiltshire aristocrats. After his creation as first Marquis of Ailesbury in 1821, Charles Brudenell Bruce embarked on an expensive scheme to enlarge Tottenham House in accordance with his new status. By 1832, he was in such financial difficulties that the administration of his affairs had to be taken over by a trust which kept control until 1856. The trust aimed to impose economies on the Marquis, and although he frequently overspent his annual allowance, there were considerable restrictions on his lifestyle and his ability to distribute largesse. Inevitably the estate became neglected. In comparison with the Wilton estate outlay on the Savernake estate amounted to only about £7 per acre.⁵³⁶ Improving tenants were discouraged by lack of support from their landlord. In 1833 the practice of allowing tenants six months credit on their rents was stopped, and further attempts to keep down estate costs meant that tenants might be asked to bear a larger share of repair costs in return for short leases of from eight to twelve years.

The problem was exacerbated by the incompetence and dishonesty of the estate steward, Iveson, who consistently swindled the estate over timber sales, and neglected repairs on farm buildings and cottages. He was replaced in 1833, but it took some years for the full extent of the damage to come to light, and efficient estate management did not really commence until the mid 1840s. Even then, progress in such things as cottage renovation was slow.⁵³⁷

The district quickly got a reputation for not being 'enterprising', as the commentator on the game laws in the area quoted in Chapter II noted at some length.⁵³⁸ The failure to attract tenants of capital, dedicated to improved farming had a demoralising effect on the population.

Ailesbury took a noticeably less prominent role than his fellow aristocrats in assisting A'Court in the setting up of the Poor Law Union. A'Court complained that he could not 'entirely depend upon securing the services of a competent Chairman for the Board of Guardians', and continued:

so thinly scattered are the gentry in this wild neighbourhood, that my chief reliance for conducting a Union must be in the yeomen and retired tradesmen of the Borough of Marlborough. With their assistance we shall ... be able to form a very respectable Board of Guardians, but they ought not, in my opinion, to be placed in a situation of too great responsibility. 539

Writing of the parish of Preshute, where there were five fires between 1831 and 1868, the vicar summed up the state of the population:

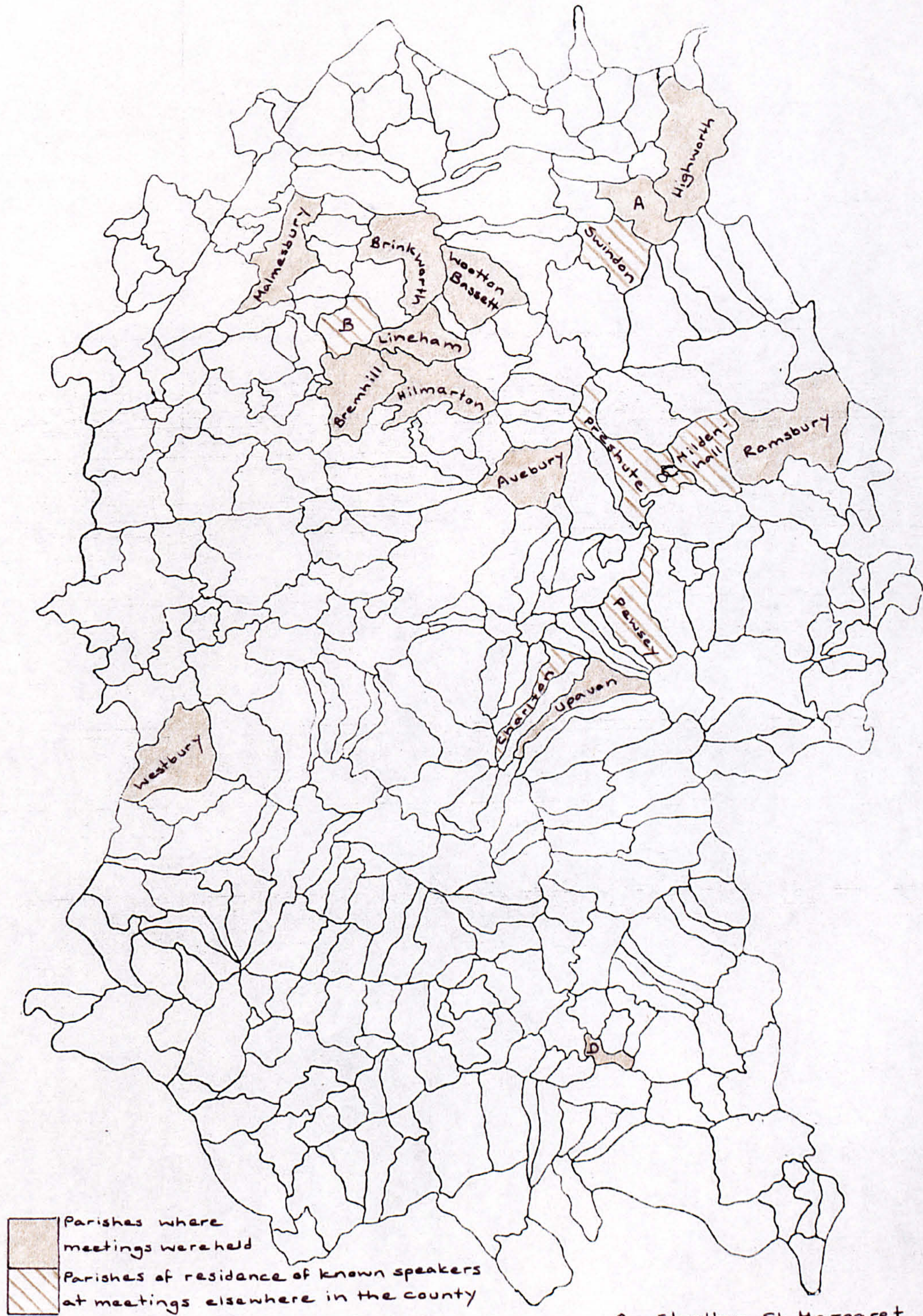
There is no one pervading sense of care or interest in their general welfare, so often visible on the estates of high-principled, conscientious landlords, which leads the tenants to feel that they are looked upon as somewhat more than mere engines of labour, and give them a higher self respect ... the occupiers, ... feel themselves uncared for and let alone and ... in too many instances have been the weedings-out of more strictly regulated estates. 540

In view of this evidence the unsettled and turbulent state of the labouring population in this area is more easily understood.

.....

The overall picture of arson as a crime of protest is very complex, as the diverse evidence presented in this chapter has shown. However it is possible to make a number of generalisations concerning this widespread form of unrest. The preconditions for arson existed in many of the parishes in the county where agriculture formed the predominant source of employment. The position of the agricultural labour force was one of considerable uncertainty. Labourers faced the possibility of suddenly losing their livelihood for the slightest offence they might give, or because of severe weather conditions or when prices fell and the farmer started to feel the pinch of economic depression. Their situation was particularly precarious when no alternative source of employment existed in the vicinity. In such uncertainty they were inevitably very sensitive to the employment of outsiders in their parish, or to changes in poor relief on which so many of them were frequently dependent. Parishes which were not cushioned from the worst effects of such circumstances by landowners willing and able to take the affairs of the area in hand, were often particularly distressed and prone to arson. For of all the major forms of unrest considered in this study arson was the least coherent. Its prevalence between the 1830s and 1870s bore witness to the weakness of the labourers' bargaining power and to the fragmented state of rural society. Faced with their impotence to take effective collective action to improve their conditions, the rural poor resorted to arson as a secret revenge, as a weapon of intimidation or as a desperate means of escape from their lot. As a form of protest it was borne largely of demoralisation or despair.

Anti-corn Law League Parishes in Wiltshire



- A - Stratton St Margaret
- B - Christian Malford
- C - Marlborough
- D - Salisbury

V: ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE AGITATION

In comparison with Swing rioting and the burning of agricultural property, Anti-Corn League activity was a very limited form of unrest in the rural south of England. The Anti-Corn Law League was formed in Manchester in 1838, and served as a focus for certain disarrayed radical forces and for the northern manufacturing interest which was beginning to feel the effect of industrial depression. League supporters argued that the Corn Laws stifled trade by reducing overseas demand for British goods and by keeping the price of the population's staple foodstuff artificially high.

Corn Laws of some sort had been in operation since the 1660s, but only started to become controversial with the 1815 Corn Laws by which landowners sought to protect the considerable capital investment which had been made in agriculture during the Napoleonic Wars. The sale of imported corn was then prohibited until the price of home grown wheat was above 80s per quarter, and the price of barley and oats above 40s and 27s per quarter respectively. The 1815 Corn Laws were subsequently modified in 1822, in 1828 by a sliding scale, and again in 1842.

More lay behind the League's campaign than the pure free trade argument however. After all, industry was protected as well as agriculture. Moreover the effect of the Corn Laws on the price of bread was negligible, as was ultimately shown by Repeal in 1846, since there were no vast quantities of foreign corn waiting to swamp the English market. To the members of the League the Corn Laws were,

in effect, a symbol of the social, economic and political predominance of the aristocratic landed interest, and it was this, above all, which they wished to undermine.

In view of this, it was not surprising that the League had little support in rural areas, despite efforts to woo farmers and agricultural labourers to its cause by means of lecture tours and meetings. Two costly and largely unsuccessful series of lectures were organised in 1839 and in 1840-41. Frequently the speakers met with hostility and rough receptions, and the associations formed in the rural areas had little weight or substance.⁵⁴¹

In 1843 the League made yet another determined effort to win over the support of the farming community. On Cobden's recommendation the principal speaker for the tour was the talented orator and writer, Alexander Somerville, who wrote a series of letters about his travels under the name of 'Whistler at the Plough'.⁵⁴²

The campaign continued throughout 1844 and 1845 with a series of meetings, which in Wiltshire at least produced some support from agricultural labourers, although by and large the rural population remained hostile. In this campaign the League tried to split the farmers from the landowners by emphasising areas of rural disharmony such as the Game Laws and the length of tenant farmers' leases. Attacks on the Corn Laws and agitation against high food prices had a limited appeal only in the rural areas where farmers aimed for a good return for their produce, and agricultural labourers feared unemployment above all else. For instance, Lord Radnor, a supporter of free trade,

admitted that his tenant farmers and agricultural labourers did not share his view that a decline in agricultural prices would benefit the population as a whole. He himself did not believe that the higher the price of corn, the more labourers were likely to be employed, but the labourers he spoke to thought otherwise and generally welcomed the prospect of rising corn prices: 'When I had conversation with a number of labourers, they said they wished corn was much dearer and I said I wonder that you should wish that, as you are buyers of corn and not sellers ...' but 'labourers think they are doing best when their masters are doing well'.⁵⁴³

In this situation it is surprising that the League should win any support in the rural areas at all, and in fact in Wiltshire, League supporters were found in only a small group of parishes. In spite of the limits of its influence, however, the Anti-Corn Law League, with its remarkable organisation and propaganda powers, won publicity for the plight of the Wiltshire agricultural labourer on a scale not achieved since the height of Swing rioting. Moreover, this agitation forms a subject worthy of detailed consideration in that it marks an important stage in the development of a non-violent tradition of protest forming part of a coherent national organisation.

.....

Anti-Corn Law League activity did not come to the attention of the press in Wiltshire until late 1843, when a number of large and carefully organised free-trade meetings were held

in Salisbury as part of the election campaign. The first of these meetings which took place on 8th August was an impressive affair, attended by between 3,000 and 4,000 people and addressed by Cobden and Bright, among others. In November an Anti-Corn Law Association was formed. Significantly, however, little attempt was made to win support in the surrounding villages on the Salisbury Plain, and very little was heard of further Anti-Corn Law League activity in the south of the county after 1843.⁵⁴⁴

Similarly, a meeting attended by about 300 people was held at Westbury in May 1844. Much to the horror of his fellow protectionist landowners, Lord Radnor shared the platform on this occasion with Cobden. Once again, however, little lasting support was won for the League in this area.

Then in June 1844 a meeting was reported in the tiny hamlet of Goatacre in the parish of Hilmarton, and although not attended by large numbers or addressed by national figures, the small group of people present at this meeting represented a nucleus of genuine grass-roots, rural support for the aims of the League.

There were three or four small knots of League activity in Wiltshire connected to some extent by the person of William Edwards of Marlborough, one of the League's agents, or by one of its more stalwart middle class supporters such as the Stratton St Margaret farmer, Arkell, or Pillgrem, the dissenting minister from Swindon, all of whom were prepared to travel around the county to address meetings. The heart of the rural movement however centred on a group of

parishes in the 'Cheese', Bremhill, Hilmarton, Lineham, Christian Malford, Brinkworth and Wootton Bassett.

It is not surprising that the heart of the movement should be in the pasture rather than the corn growing area. Dairying and livestock rearing regions generally were more sensitive to industrial depression since the demand for their produce was buoyant only when urban wages were high. Farmers in pasture regions, such as Wales, Cheshire, Lancashire and North Wiltshire therefore were more receptive to the arguments of the Anti-Corn Law League.

Those who attended meetings in these north Wiltshire villages did not confine themselves to discussing the Corn Laws. In fact the Corn Laws often took second place to wider social grievances. The meeting held in Goatacre in November 1844, for instance, was called for the purpose of 'taking into consideration the distress of the working-classes, and to discuss the benefits likely to arise if the trade in corn were made free'.⁵⁴⁵

The groundwork for these meetings was usually done by men like William Edwards, a journeyman tailor from Marlborough, or George Read, the preacher at the Independent Chapel in Goatacre. Read was the leading light in the Goatacre Reform Society which had monthly meetings in Read's house. The aims of this Society, which was formed in September 1844, were to fight for the repeal of the Corn Laws, to enquire into and publicise cases of working class distress, and to organise 'a union of all classes for the betterment of the country as a whole'.⁵⁴⁶ It was reported that those who attended the meetings paid one penny towards

the Society, and were addressed by either Read or Edwards. According to the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, which took a vehemently protectionist stance in these years, the speakers would instruct those who attended the meetings in what they should say and do at the Anti-Corn Law League meetings.⁵⁴⁷

The Reform Society certainly played a leading role in organising Anti-Corn Law League meetings, especially the Goatacre meeting on 5th January 1846, which was probably the greatest of the League successes in Wiltshire, meriting considerable coverage in the newspapers, including a long report in The Times.⁵⁴⁸ As with most of the large meetings, the great Goatacre meeting was publicised by means of handbills circulated several weeks before the meeting, and apparently within a comparatively wide radius of the meeting-place since some of those who attended the meeting were said to have travelled up to twenty miles.⁵⁴⁹

The handbill which advertised the 1846 Goatacre meeting listed the resolutions which had been made at the Goatacre Reform Society meeting on 5th December 1845, and which had included the decision to hold a public meeting 'for the purpose of petitioning the Queen for a total repeal of the Corn Laws' since the high price of bread and the failure of the potato crop were said to be causing undue distress among the labouring population.

The image created by these meetings, frequently held in the open air on winter nights, caught the public imagination, and excited considerable sympathy for the

labourers. The correspondent for The Times for instance set the scene for the famous Goatacre meeting in these terms:

A hurdle supported by four stakes, driven into the ground beneath a hedge on the road-side formed a narrow and unsteady platform, capable of supporting only the Chairman and one speaker at a time. Below this rustic erection were placed a small deal table and some rush-bottom chairs borrowed from a neighbouring cottage, for the accommodation of reporters. Four or five candles, some in lanthorns, and others sheltered from the wind by the hands that held them, threw a dim and flickering light upon the groups on this spot, before and around which were gathered nearly 1,000 of the peasantry of Wiltshire, some of them accompanied by their wives and children, who thus collected presented a wild and painful appearance. In the shadows of the night the distinctive garb of their class was everywhere discernible, but when flitting clouds permitted the moon to shine brightly in their faces, in them might be seen written, in strong and unmistakable lines, anxiety, supplication, want, hunger, ever responsive in expression to the sentiments and statements delivered by the speakers, who merely described in plain unvarnished language the miseries of their rural auditors. 550

The pattern which the larger meetings generally followed was for the Chairman of the meeting to make an opening speech, and then for the labouring people present to be asked to speak out about the hardships they suffered. Hence the meetings became a platform for the agricultural labourers and an opportunity for them to express their grievances - of which the high price of bread formed only a part - in their own words.

Many of the agricultural labourers who spoke recounted difficulties of raising large families on low wages and precarious employment. Several pointed out how much worse their situation was made at that time by the potato

blight which destroyed the all-important crops of their allotments. A few complained about the operation of the poor law. On rare occasions a speaker would express more political views, although these usually came from those closely involved with the organisation of the meeting. The Chairman of the 1846 Goatacre meeting for instance called for:

Good laws, for freedom, for equality. I envy not the rich man for his riches, but is it not unreasonable and arbitrary that the rich man should be endowed with the full and sole power to send members to Parliament to legislate? ... But I do think the time will come when every labouring householder will have the privilege of sending members to Parliament. 551

As with the national Anti-Corn Law League campaign, many of the aims of the meeting were expressed by their organisers in terms of a crusade, repeal being put forward as a humanitarian measure to better the conditions of the poor through cheaper food and greater national prosperity, and there was constant use of Biblical metaphor. The use of Biblical language was doubtless largely accounted for by the considerable nonconformist support for the campaign, nonconformists often being attracted to the League in its role as an opponent of the landed interest and hence, implicitly, the dominance of the Church of England. George Read, for instance, an Independent preacher, would read passages from the Scriptures at meetings,⁵⁵² while one labourer, a man named Pegler, speaking at a meeting in Lineham in 1844, advocated prayer and fasting as remedies for the nation's troubles.⁵⁵³

It must be admitted that not all those who attended

these meetings or spoke at them were agricultural labourers, and many of those agricultural labourers who did speak attended more than one meeting. Those who represented the driving force behind much of this activity were not agricultural labourers at all, but men like Read, said to be a bootmaker by trade, and Edwards, a journeyman tailor. Of the 24 men who spoke at the meetings for whom occupational evidence is available, there were three dissenting ministers, one shoemaker, one baker, one tailor, one mason and one glazier. Two were said to be farmers. The remaining 14 were agricultural labourers. However it should be noted that of these 14, several had comparatively diverse backgrounds. Walter Matthews of Hilmarton and Charles Vines of Christian Malford, for instance, worked only occasionally as agricultural labourers, being respectively a cordwainer and a chairmaker by trade. In the 1841 Census in fact, Matthews was described as a shoemaker, and not an agricultural labourer as he was referred to in newspaper reports, while Vines although described as an agricultural labourer in 1841, was described as a chairmaker in 1851. In 1841 the Vines family had a lodger by the name of James Humphries who was a chairmaker.⁵⁵⁴ Another speaker, James Pegler of Christian Malford had worked both as a cloth worker and a railroad labourer, before becoming an agricultural labourer on Lord Caernavon's estate.⁵⁵⁵

The following table summarises the available evidence for those League supporters living in the parishes of Bremhill, Hilmarton, Lineham and Christian Malford. The

associated sketch map of the area illustrates how close many of these people lived to each other. They lived on the whole not in the main villages, but in the scattered hamlets between the four villages, and all no more than three or four miles apart. The Tithe Award for Hilmarton shows an even closer link between Matthews and Lewis who lived in adjacent cottages. Their cottages and gardens of 36 poles each were rented from a small leaseholder, Sarah Hilliar.⁵⁵⁶ Both men spoke at Brinkworth in July 1844, and Lewis also spoke at Goatacre in November 1844.

Table 19: Anti-Corn Law League supporters in Hilmarton, Christian Malford, Lineham and Bremhill

Name	Place of residence in 1841	Place of birth	Occupation in 1841	Age in 1841	Other householders in 1841	Additional information
<u>HILMARTON</u>						
George Read	Goatacre	Luckington, Somerset	Dissenting preacher	50	Wife & 2 daughters aged 15 & 10	Described in press as bootmaker by trade. In 1851, wife was described as a schoolmistress, and daughter as assistant.
Anthony Smith	Goatacre	Wiltshire	Agricultural labourer	35	Wife & 5 children between ages of 15 and 1 year	-
Joseph Brewer	Goatacre	Hilmarton	Agricultural labourer	25	Father aged 70, wife aged 16	In 1851, father was described as 'Pauper/ (Agricultural labourer)'
Ambrose Lewis	Catcomb	Wiltshire	Agricultural labourer	45	Wife & 5 children between ages of 6 & 20. Eldest son also ag. lab.	Neighbour of Walter Matthews
Walter Matthews	Catcomb	Wiltshire	Shoemaker	45	Wife & 4 children between ages of 15 & 1 yr	Neighbour of Ambrose Lewis. Described in press as cordwainer and occasional agricultural labourer. Not resident in parish in 1851.
(William Burchell	Middle Beaversbrook	Hilmarton	Agricultural labourer	29	Wife & 1 child aged 9 months	The William Burchell who spoke at League meetings was described in press as having 6 children. He worked for Mr Henly for 8s a week. 2 eldest sons also worked for Henly as shepherd and milker for 6s and 5s a week, respectively.)
Charles Vines	<u>CHRISTIAN MALFORD</u>	Christian Malford	Agricultural labourer	28	Wife & 6 children between ages of 9 & 10 mths. Lodger, James Humphries, chairmaker.	In 1851, described as a chairmaker. Wife was born in Lacock.

Table 19 continued

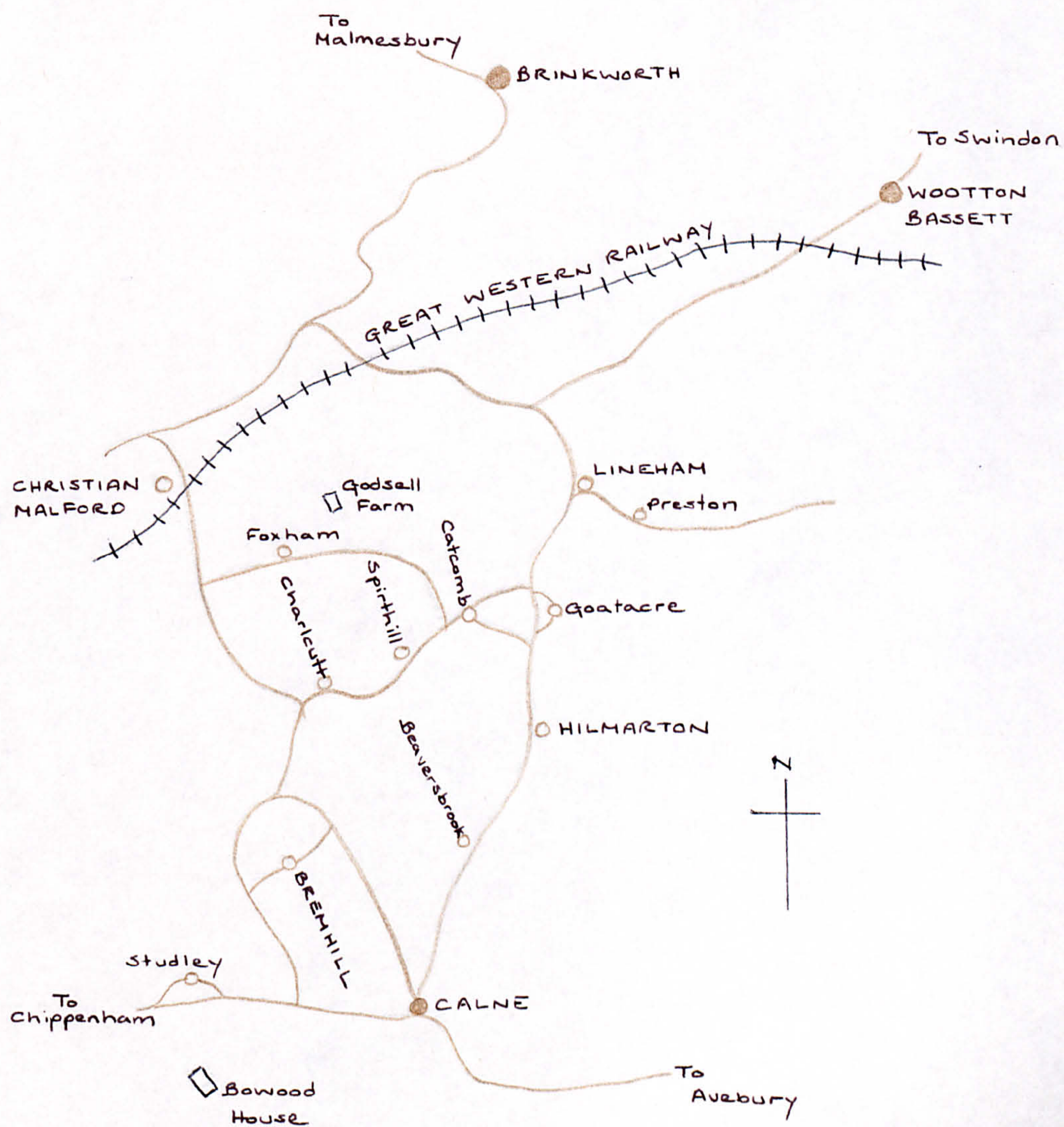
Name	Place of residence in 1841	Place of birth	Occupation in 1841	Age in 1841	Other householders in 1841	Additional information
James Pegler	Christian Malford	Foxham, Bremhill	Agricultural labourer	40	Wife & 4 children between ages of 14 & 1 yr.	Wife born in Berks. In 1851, 13 yr old son worked as a 'boatman'. Described in press as having worked as a cloth worker & railroad labourer. At one time had been in workhouse for 11 mths. When turned out of workhouse to find work, had left district and was consequently imprisoned for 1 mth for desertion of family.
<u>LINEHAM</u>						
Charles Gingell	Preston	Wiltshire	Agricultural labourer	35	Wife and 6 children between ages of 13 and 4 mths.	-
Lucy Simpkins	Preston	Wiltshire	Wife of agricultural labourer	30	Husband (William) & 6 children between ages of 13 & 1 yr.	Described in press as having 9 surviving children in 1846, the eldest son earning 3d a day. Lived next door to two 'excavators', neither of whom was born in Wiltshire.
<u>BREMHILL</u>						
Abraham Rivers	Charlcutt	Wiltshire	Mason	35	Wife and 5 children between ages of 14 & 2 yrs.	-
Mary Ferris	Charlcutt	Bremhill	Wife of agricultural labourer	35	Husband (William) & 5 children between ages of 12 & 1 yr.	Husband born in North Lydiard, Wilts.

Table 19 continued

Name	Place of residence in 1841	Place of birth	Occupation in 1841	Age in 1841	Other householders in 1841	Additional information
BREMHILL contd.						
Isaac Summers	Spirthill	Bremhill	Agricultural labourer	35	Wife and 5 children between ages of 10 and 1 year.	Described in press as living with wife and 8 children in 1846. In 1851, four children between ages of 8 and 8 mths living with Summers and wife, plus a lodger, George Harding, also an agricultural labourer.
Mr Turk (Alfred?)	Godsell Farm	Wiltshire	Farmer's son	15	Mother, (Rebecca), farmer aged 50 and brother aged 12	-

Source: P.R.O., H.O. 107/1171; H.O. 107/1179; H.O. 107/1185; H.O. 107/1837.
The Times, 7th January 1846; W.I., 12th February 1846, 29th January 1846;
D.W.G., 15th March 1838, 19th February 1846.

Sketch Map of the Main Area of Anti-corn Law League Support in Wiltshire



Nearly all the League supporters in these parishes had large families of young children, and on average they were older than those who were known to have taken part in Swing rioting and arson. Even with the young farmer's son, Alfred Turk, their average age in 1844 was 37½. There is also evidence to suggest that those agricultural labourers who were connected with the meetings were considered to be men of good character. William Simpkins, for instance, won a 30 shillings premium from the Chippenham Agricultural Society in 1844 for bringing up his family without recourse to parish relief,⁵⁵⁷ while William Burchell of Hilmarton won a £2 premium in both 1840 and 1841 for good conduct.⁵⁵⁸

There was therefore a small core of people prepared to speak out at these meetings. Many other labourers were doubtless too intimidated to speak. As the Wiltshire Independent commented on the Ramsbury meeting in 1845, when other speakers were called for from among the listening crowd, men and women urged one another to step forward, 'but fear predominated, dread of being "marked" men, of losing even the small pittance they now receive, kept back the desire'.⁵⁵⁹ It was because many of the men were fearful of losing their jobs that their wives had to speak in their stead; or so Mary Ferris, one of the women who addressed these meetings, claimed. She and Lucy Simpkins, whose speeches were said to have been the inspiration for Charles Dickens's poem, 'The Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers',⁵⁶⁰ were agricultural labourers' wives and they spoke at several of the meetings.

Another of the regular speakers, David Keele of

Preshute, was discharged by his master for speaking at Ramsbury,⁵⁶¹ while two Beckhampton labourers lost their employment for merely attending the Avebury meeting.⁵⁶² Pressure on the agricultural labourer not to support the Anti-Corn Law League could be considerable. In June 1844 the first of the Goatacre meetings was preceded by a tract addressed 'To Artisans and Labourers', circulated by many farmers in an attempt to get their farm workers to sign a petition supporting the Corn Laws.⁵⁶³ It is interesting to note that Joseph Arch, founder of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872, remembered how his father had been unemployed for some time as a result of his refusal to sign a similar petition.⁵⁶⁴

Somerville illustrated how the farmers could use their economic hold over the labourer to push him into opposition to the League. He claimed that 'a gentleman and agent' in the Upavon area threatened to prevent a meeting being held there in 1845. The local labourers told Somerville how, during the previous election campaign, the same man had paid them all a day's wages and sent them off to Devizes, supplying them with beer and instructions to shout down the free-trade candidate when he tried to speak.⁵⁶⁵

At Charlton the employer of William Perry, one of the labourers who attended the Upavon meeting, visited Perry's wife the following day and told her that since they complained of poverty she could go to work for him at haymaking that afternoon. When she protested that she had to remain at home to look after her young family, he

threatened to discharge her husband.⁵⁶⁶

An attempt was also made to stop the Bremhill meeting in February 1846 by a local clergyman, the Reverend Drury. When he failed in this, he applied for a large number of police in order to be ready to disperse the meeting should 'the slightest confusion' take place.⁵⁶⁷

As well as this direct intimidation, the local press, especially the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, conducted an extremely hostile campaign against the League, attempting to brand its supporters as riotous, and to discredit it by linking it with more violent forms of unrest. In 1843 the paper described an incendiary fire at Horton as being 'perpetrated by wretches corrupted by the abominable doctrine circulated by the emissaries of the Anti-Corn Law League'.⁵⁶⁸

The same paper also conducted a smear campaign against Read, harking back to the 1838 Lent Assizes when Read had been charged with sending a threatening letter to Jacob Henly of Goatacre on 17th January. The writer of this letter, signing himself 'The Devil', had charged Henly and others of the parish with starving the poor, and had threatened to kill them as punishment. The same day, a Lineham farmer, Mr Rumbold, was shot and wounded as he returned from Calne market, for which offence a labourer named George Maslen was subsequently found guilty and hanged. For his part, Read was acquitted of the charge of sending the threatening letter.⁵⁶⁹ He was said to have been a known radical even at that time and held 'the same sort of meetings as now'. This had doubtless drawn

suspicion upon him. Despite his acquittal, however, the Gazette in 1846 branded him as a man who had incited murder and arson. 570

Attempts such as this to link Anti-Corn Law League agitation with more violent rural unrest might seem justified since on average twice as many incendiary fires occurred in 'League parishes' as in parishes unaffected by this agitation, and Swing unrest in some form had occurred in nine of the nineteen 'League parishes'. The term 'League parishes' however included places like Westbury, Ramsbury and Highworth, all large villages with a history of unrest, and all of which had one Anti-Corn Law League meeting only. On the other hand violent unrest was comparatively uncommon in that little group of parishes which lay at the heart of the movement in Wiltshire. In particular, Bremhill and Hilmarton had had no Swing rioting, and no incendiary fire occurred in either parish throughout the period 1830-1875. The supporters of the League consciously strove to dissociate themselves from the more violent tradition of unrest which had preceded them. At the Goat-acre meeting in January 1846 the Chairman reminded his listeners of the Swing Riots. He recollected that:

a few years ago the mob rose in Ramsbury and other places, and took the wrong step. They destroyed people's property, and demanded their money, instead of acting legally and petitioning the Sovereign and Government. Had they done so, no doubt they would have been heard. But not doing so, they put a weapon into the hands of the monopolists, and the monopolists rode about the country, and hauled them away to prison, and rejoiced that they had got them just where they would have them. 571

The petitioning of the Queen and Parliament was the action which speakers at these meetings advocated.

David Keele, for instance, told his listeners, 'Let us join heart and hand, my fellow labourers, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in destroying people's property, but to make known our state to the Queen and her Parliament'.⁵⁷²

At the Bremhill meeting in February 1846, the Wiltshire Independent reporter described how two Chartist orators from London met with a very hostile reception because they tried to 'induce the men to listen favourably to incendiary advice'. They were said to have been, 'sent down from London to divert the labourers' minds from the Corn Laws to Machinery'. The labourers present however referred 'to the misery which machine breaking had brought to many peaceful villages' and asked 'how they would be able to purchase smock frocks and other articles of clothing, were they not rendered cheap by means of machinery'. Some of the League supporters were said to be 'inclined to handle the fellows rather roughly', shouting, 'We don't want to come against our masters'.⁵⁷³

Anti-Corn Law League agitation, therefore, seems to have marked the development of a different strand of rural protest in Wiltshire, although the fact that a greater than average number of League parishes were at one time affected by Swing and arson suggests that this new form of protest had links with an older tradition, and indeed it would seem to be true that the same fundamental grievances caused both. Nevertheless the prominence of formerly peaceful parishes like Bremhill and Hilmarton in Anti-Corn Law League activity suggests that some factors existed here over and above the common background of distress which led

them to adopt this form of protest.

Some evidence has already been put forward which shows that a number of those who were prominent at meetings had a certain amount of social and economic independence and might therefore have been comparatively unafraid to voice unorthodox political views. Additional demographic and occupational evidence should not be ignored. Firstly it is worth stressing that settlement in parishes such as Hilmarton was very scattered, especially in comparison with typical 'Chalk' parishes where the majority of the population lived in nucleated villages. In 'Cheese' parishes, on the other hand, there was usually a number of small, scattered hamlets and farmsteads. To some extent this must have made it difficult for the labourer to organise any kind of political activity, but on the other hand it also gave him a certain amount of social independence since his everyday activities could be less closely observed once he had left his daily work.

An important point to note, too, is that in Hilmarton in the 1840s there was no resident clergyman, George Read being the only religious figure of any description recorded in the Census Enumerator's Schedules in 1841. Nonconformity, an important element in the League's support, was therefore comparatively strong in Hilmarton. On 30th March 1851 almost as many people attended nonconformist chapels in Hilmarton as went to the Church of England. 98 people attended the service in the Independent Chapel at which Read preached and 63 attended the Particular Baptist Chapel which had been erected in 1849, while 181

people attended the morning service in the Anglican Church.⁵⁷⁴ Unfortunately the 1851 Ecclesiastical Returns for Bremhill are incomplete so comparison here is difficult. It should be noted however that the Reverend Bowles, vicar of Bremhill, always spent the winter season in London and only returned to Bremhill in the summer months.⁵⁷⁵

The nature of agricultural life, too, was very different in pasture regions. The social gulf between farmer and labourer tended to be narrower, farms were generally smaller and there was often a larger proportion of farmers employing labour to the resident labourers in 'Cheese' parishes. The average size of the nine principal farms in Hilmarton in the early 1840s - and there was a total of 19 farmers in 1841⁵⁷⁶ - was only 167 acres.⁵⁷⁷ In 1831 there was one farmer to every 6 labourers in the parishes of Hilmarton, Lineham and Bremhill, compared with one to every 16 labourers in the prominent Swing parish of Downton. Agricultural employment in 'Cheese' parishes was generally not controlled by a small number of large and powerful farmers, and to offend one's employer by outspoken protests was somewhat less hazardous. On the other hand, social and economic grievances could not so obviously be attributed to an employer, whose mode of living was not a great deal more luxurious than that of the labouring population. Consequently discontent was channelled into wider political movements and against national targets.

Some interesting occupational factors may also have encouraged the kind of environment which made these parishes receptive to the League's propaganda. The Great

Western Railway line between Swindon and the Box Tunnel, passing through Wootton Bassett and Chippenham, was under construction in the early 1840s. At the time of the 1841 Census, 30 railway labourers were recorded in the Enumerator's Schedules in Bremhill. In addition there were 72 men described as 'labourers', many of whom may have worked on the railway since agricultural labourers were clearly specified as such.⁵⁷⁸ In Lineham, 95 railway labourers were recorded.⁵⁷⁹ The railway work accounted for the temporary increase in population in both these parishes in 1841, since many of the labourers were newcomers to the area: in Bremhill 30 of the railway labourers and 17 of the 'labourers' were born outside the county of Wiltshire.

For a time therefore the native population of Bremhill and Lineham had close contact with people who had lived outside the narrow confines of its rural society, and who had doubtless picked up various political ideas in the course of their travels. In 1841, for instance, the Simpkins family of Preston lived next door to two 'excavators' both born outside the county. It is likely too that wages would have been pushed up temporarily in this area while the railway competed with agriculture for labour. Hence the completion of this section of line in 1841 and the removal of the alternative source of employment would have resulted in a sudden decline in the prosperity of many families, sharpening their sense of deprivation in the years immediately following, and making them more receptive to political agitation.

The parishes at the heart of this agitation were

also, of course, close to the towns of Calne, Chippenham and Malmesbury, and hence the agricultural population here would have been more aware of the manufacturing interest than the inhabitants of much of the 'Chalk'.

Another interesting occupational factor among the agricultural population in the north of the county generally, was the large amount of 'beating out' which took place. 'Job labourers' would take piece work away from their native parishes for higher wages than could be earned as regular day labourers, and then return home in the winter months, where they frequently resorted to seeking parish relief.

In the late 1860s Lord Lansdowne's agent wrote that:

the surplus labourers here are in the habit of going into the down district (when labour is not so abundant) as soon as the autumn sown wheat requires hoeing. They then follow on with spring sown crops, and then with swedes and turnips, which take them on till the harvest. This over, they return here, and get what work they can during the autumn and winter, the usual employment being draining, quarrying, etc.⁵⁸⁰

Inevitably this gave the labourer an additional degree of social and economic freedom, since he was not dependent on one master for his employment. Such workers were not popular with the resident labourers, as is illustrated by the threatening letter (quoted in Chapter IV) sent to the Dauntsey farmer in 1831 complaining of the employment of 'outcomers'.⁵⁸¹ Another anonymous letter sent in 1855 to Thomas Etwell Simpkins, a farmer of Figheldean, complained that Simpkins paid outsiders higher piece rates for turnip hoeing than he paid the parish labourers, whereas in

the neighbouring parish of Amesbury the farmers' 'own men and strangers' were 'yoused all alike; they are not such rougs as to robb their ow men as you do'. The writer warned Simpkins that if he continued 'to rob your ow men so hell will be your doomb'.⁵⁸² Simpkins justified this practice by pointing out that the strangers were never paid when bad weather prevented them working, and 'job labourers' were always the first to be turned off when the season was poor. It was frequently an insecure way of life then, but the rewards were generally considered to be worth the risks.

The 1840s were apparently thought of as being a bad time for beating out; 1844 and 1845 especially were both years of poor harvests. It is interesting however that the problems of the 'job labourers' were blamed by one of the speakers at the Goatacre meeting in January 1846 on the decline in manufacturing in the county. As he told the meeting, at one time

the labourers of Wilts used to go up into the hills and make a good harvest; but since trade had failed it was no use for them to go looking for reaping, for many thousands of "scribblers" and weavers out of employment went and cut down the wheat at low wages. But he believed that if every "scribbler" had work at his mill, and every weaver employment at his loom, they would not rob the poor agricultural labourer out of his day's work. 583

It seems doubtful that this was, in fact, the main cause of decline in summer employment in the 'Chalk' since the Wiltshire farmer had very little respect for the unemployed cloth worker as an agricultural labourer, and was more likely to have employed skilled and experienced reapers.

or hoers. But even if this speaker was quoting an opportunist argument put forward by the League to win rural support by linking industrial prosperity to agricultural prosperity, it doubtless struck a cord in the audience of poor Goatacre labourers, accounting for yet another blow to their prospects. It was, however, an argument which would have had any appeal only in the 'Cheese' parishes where beating out was a common practice.

In view of the fact that the Anti-Corn Law League was a focus for opposition to the landed interest, the attitude of landowners and farmers should also be important in determining the kind of parish where League activity could flourish. It might be expected, therefore, that property would be divided in these parishes, since the hostility to the League by the majority of great landowners and farmers was inevitable. Somewhat surprisingly, however, we find that, although farms generally were smaller than in the 'Chalk', both Bremhill and Hilmarton were largely owned by great landowners. The principal landowner in Bremhill, in particular, was the Marquis of Lansdowne, who resided in the adjacent liberty of Bowood. His influence in this area extended beyond Bremhill and Bowood. Apart from the social and economic influence which a large aristocratic landowner could always exercise over the area in which he lived, it should be noted that his agent, Norman Atherton, was Chairman of the Calne Board of Guardians from the formation of the Union in 1835 until the early 1840s, a position in which it was said that, as 'Lord Lansdowne's man of business' he had 'unbounded influence, and any opinion taken

up by him is sure to be supported by all the other Guardians'.⁵⁸⁴

Lord Lansdowne was President of the Council in the Liberal Government between 1830 and 1841, and was again offered that post by Russell in November 1845, after the Tory Government was split by Peel's proposal to repeal the Corn Laws. Lansdowne's attitude towards the Corn Laws is shown by the fact that one of his stipulations to Russell for accepting the Government post was that one million pounds should be spent in compensation to those interests likely to be harmed by repeal.⁵⁸⁵

Lord Lansdowne was no supporter of the League as Lord Radnor was, but he was known as the champion of causes as diverse as Catholic emancipation, popular education and the abolition of the slave trade, as well as having the reputation of being a most benevolent landowner. Nevertheless, when collecting evidence for his report on the employment of women and children in agriculture, the Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner, Austin, found considerable poverty among the population of the Calne area, although conditions here were not unusually bad. Moreover, Austin's evidence suggested that local clergy and landowners were generally concerned about the welfare of the labourers.

Cottages built on the Lansdowne estate were said to be of a higher standard than was usual in the county, with large gardens, and let at a comparatively low rent.⁵⁸⁶ Similarly at Hilmarton, the principal landowner, Thomas Poynder had many cottages built on his land, and also a church, an inn and a Post Office, all between 1832 and 1877.⁵⁸⁷

The allotment system was also very well established on the Bowood estate, having been extended in the 1830s in response to growing rural distress. The provision of allotments was seen as a positive measure to ease the problem of winter unemployment, and was thought of as being especially beneficial to those 'job labourers' returning to the 'Cheese' in the winter months. Some of these allotments were as large as two and even two-and-a-half acres. Lansdowne's agent however, writing in the 1860s, did not feel that they were too large, arguing that:

In places where the labouring population have regular employment and good wages 40 or up to 80 poles would be ample but ... the increased size of the allotments on this estate has arisen to meet an exceptional case, where the supply of labour is in excess of the demand, more particularly during the autumn and winter months, at which time the allotment has their labour, and fills up their spare time which they would otherwise find a difficulty in employing at that season. 588

These large allotments must have contributed to the independence of those who rented them, especially those who did not work for local farmers during the summer months. (The failure of the potato crop at the time of League agitation would also have been a severe blow to such allotment renters.) It is significant that this enhancement of the labourer's independence was apparently considered by the landowner to be worth encouraging. This was in marked contrast to the attitude of many farmers who felt that their authority over their workforce was impaired by the ability to rent allotments.

As well as providing allotments, Lansdowne took steps to provide winter employment for the local labouring

population. For instance, in 1834 the poor rates for Bremhill were reduced by £1,000 in comparison to the 1832 rates, and on enquiry A'Court discovered that Lansdowne had 'expended a large sum in draining the land, which had employed nearly all the labourers'.⁵⁸⁹ Energetic, improving farmers were encouraged by the offer of premiums for the best cultivated farms.⁵⁹⁰

Lansdowne provided education for the labouring population, too. In 1839 he erected a school at Foxham in Bremhill for 76 pupils⁵⁹¹ while Lady Lansdowne paid for many of the children in Studley, also in Bremhill, to attend the Book-hill School.⁵⁹² Lady Lansdowne did much good work in general to help her husband. She was said to be 'kind-hearted and benevolent to the poor ... and has cottages built and personally inspects the residences of the poor, and supplies them with necessary clothing'.⁵⁹³

In 1846 the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, reporting on the meeting at Bremhill on 17th February commented that both Poynder in Hilmarton and Lord Lansdowne did 'everything to improve the moral and social condition of the poor', and hence Bremhill was 'not very judiciously chosen for the scene of such a meeting'.⁵⁹⁴ The Wiltshire Independent, however, replied:

To the praise of the Marquis of Lansdowne we have nothing to object. But because Bremhill belongs to a nobleman who knows that property has its duties as well as its rights, and who acts on that knowledge, that it is therefore free from distress is an assumption which few journalists besides the "Gazette" would have the folly to make. Wages are the same at Bremhill as they are in other parts of the county, and those wages being inadequate to supply the labourers with the necessities of life, distress must exist there as

well as in other parishes. It is true that distress may be, and is alleviated by the charity which flows from the noble Marquis, but there it is and there it will remain while the cause (insufficient wages) exists. 595

Bremhill had problems of poverty much as other parishes in the county, but it was not markedly distressed, and in some respects its population was comparatively well cared for. Poverty alone therefore cannot sufficiently explain why Bremhill and a small group of parishes near it turned to this form of unrest. In a paradoxical way the comparative benevolence of the resident landowner to the labouring poor may have contributed to encouraging a spirit of protest, but a kind of protest which was able to manifest itself openly and peacefully.

This process is illustrated to some extent by the events of the 1830s, and in particular the transition period from the old to the new system of poor relief. Considerable unrest occurred in the Calne and Wootton Bassett area during this period. Fears that the new poor law would mean the separation of families in the workhouse prompted about a hundred Christian Malford paupers in November 1834 to take possession of the church and to refuse entry to the overseers who were due to meet in the vestry. A hay rick in the parish was wilfully fired the same evening.⁵⁹⁶

In the towns of Calne and Wootton Bassett riots broke out in early 1835 when notice was given that pauper allowances would be paid half in money and half in kind instead of wholly in money. In Wootton Bassett a large number of paupers gathered to confront the paymaster in the vestry. Some windows in the town were smashed and three

men were arrested.⁵⁹⁷ In Calne, where approximately half the population was concerned with manufacture and half with agriculture, pauperism was chronic largely due to the decline in woollen manufacture. By the early 1830s only one mill was still employing labour in the town and poor rates were rising accordingly.⁵⁹⁸ When the change in the payment of allowances was due to take place for the first time in January 1835, the three hundred or so paupers who came to be paid on Saturday night insisted that they should be paid fully in money, and when the assistant overseer refused, their mood grew ugly. The arrival of two magistrates only inflamed them further, and six men were ultimately arrested. One of the magistrates, Reverend Money subsequently received an anonymous letter condemning him for his role in suppressing the riot and demanding the release of those in gaol.⁵⁹⁹ An incendiary fire in Calne in early January was also probably connected with this unrest.⁶⁰⁰

Hand in hand with the rioting and arson, however, a more passive sort of protest was already emerging in this area in the form of petitions to the Poor Law Commissioners, from a number of labourers in the parishes of Wootton Bassett and Lineham. The Lineham petitioners complained of low wages and inadequate poor relief, and asked to be told:

where we can command any more than what we now receive, according to the present sistom - and if we can how much more - and how we are to proseed to obtain it - for the parish officers will not allow us no more unless they are compelled to do it by you or some other power. 601

Among the signatories of this petition was one W. Simpkins of Preston in the parish of Lineham. It seems

reasonable to assume that this was the same William Simpkins who was married to Lucy Simpkins, one of the speakers at League meetings.

The Poor Law Commissioners remained unmoved both by riots and petitions. The Calne Board of Guardians, however, their views possibly coloured by fear of a repetition of the unrest of 1835, adopted a comparatively generous attitude.

The order prohibiting all outdoor relief to able-bodied male paupers was supposed to have come into force in the Calne Union on 1st May 1837. The Calne Guardians, however, refused to limit their relief to the able-bodied to the offer of the workhouse. They continued, for instance, to offer parish work to the temporarily unemployed in severe weather, paying them half in money and half in bread. They argued that if they did not do this, 'the men will submit to starvation rather than the workhouse and we shall be making the workhouse the means of reducing wages'.⁶⁰² They continued too with a practice of offering relief to the agricultural labourer with a large family in the form of 'a little rigging out for his daughter or eldest boy going out to service'.⁶⁰³

We have already seen that out relief for the able-bodied remained comparatively widespread in Wiltshire after 1834. The success with which the Calne Board of Guardians defied the Poor Law Commissioners seems surprising when one considers that its Chairman, Atherton, was the agent of a Liberal politician who had been in the very Government responsible for the Poor Law Amendment Act. Lansdowne had,

in fact, with Althorp, Richmond, Russell, Melbourne and Graham, been on the cabinet committee to which the Poor Law Amendment Bill had been referred in 1834. Somewhat to the annoyance of the drafters of the Bill, this committee had modified the original clause concerning the prohibitory power of the Poor Law Commission on outdoor relief, by allowing parishes to object to a prohibitory order on the grounds of special circumstances, either of the parish or the individual concerned.⁶⁰⁴ On his estate, Lansdowne took full advantage of this proviso. In his letters to the Poor Law Commissioners, therefore, while professing allegiance to the principles of the Act and concurring with the Assistant Commissioner that it would be beneficial to the labouring population to end the practice of relief in aid of wages, Atherton denied that this was intended to include the kind of emergency and irregular relief which the Guardians continued to sanction.

Initially the Calne Guardians seemed prepared to give way to the Poor Law Commissioners' order to end all out relief to the able-bodied, but Atherton with his considerable influence (and presumably the ear of Lansdowne), was less easily browbeaten, and when he threatened to resign as Chairman the Board of Guardians quickly fell in with his wishes. Atherton's explanation of his position to the Poor Law Commissioners is illuminating, illustrating how in practice he felt the need to temper the intentions of the Commissioners in the interests of the labouring population.

He wrote:

The state of society in England is more artificial than in any other part of Europe, the great

majority of people have no ownership or right of occupying in the land although they are dependent on it for support - their numbers more than equal our means of employment whatever political economists may say to the contrary ... I know very well that on the subject of wages it is impossible to legislate - the price of labour must and will be dependent on the demand for it - you will perhaps wonder at what I am driving by these observations, I will tell you - if I am right in the position I have taken that our state of society is artificial, and that good men frequently cannot find employment, the Rule of the Commissioners, which in effect treats the inability to obtain work as a crime, and punishes it by imprisonment in a workhouse, is a cruel Rule and if acted on rigidly will place the poor man in a worse situation than ever. 605

The tone of the Commissioners' response to Atherton was noticeably less bullying than it was to less influential Guardians elsewhere in the county. They felt that being in the position that he was they could trust him to keep in mind 'the need to put the pauper in a less eligible position than the labourer'.⁶⁰⁶ Eventually in 1841 Colonel A'Court, the Assistant Commissioner recommended that since Atherton was intending to emigrate, the Calne Guardians should be left to their own waywardness until Atherton had left, writing that:

I am quite sure that it would be prudent not to put the points in question more strongly on the Guardians than I have already done verbally and in writing until Mr Atherton has left the neighbourhood. It would be very difficult for any Assistant Commissioners to establish sound principles in the Union if Mr Atherton be forced to express a more decided opinion against these. 607

With Atherton's departure the Calne Guardians became more pliable to the Poor Law Commissioners' will, but even then they continued regularly to ask for sanction for out-relief for employed labourers with families too large to be supported on low wages, or for outrelief in the

form of bread for labouring families in periods of severe weather. The Poor Law Commissioners generally, if reluctantly, agreed to this, and in 1845 and 1846 the Guardians frequently applied for the sanction retrospectively, having already provided the relief.

In the considerable privations which beset the labourers at the time of Anti-Corn Law League agitation therefore, it is evident that they met with a more benevolent attitude from the Calne Guardians than in certain other Unions.

The fact that outrelief in some form or other was still extensive at the time of the League meetings sheds some light on a poem written by Charles Vines and recited at the Goatacre meeting in January 1846 which points to this continuation of relief in aid of wages:

My only claim is this,
 With labour stiff and stark,
 By lawful turn, my bread to earn,
 Between the light and dark.
 My daily bread and nightly bed,
 My bread and cheese and beer;
 But all from the hand that holds the land
 And none from the overseer.
 No parish money, nor parish loaf,
 No pauper badge for me;
 I'm a son of the soil, by rightful toil,
 Entitled to my fee.
 No alms I ask, give me my task,
 For will, or arm, or leg;
 I'm strong and bold, and to this I'll hold -
 To work and not to beg. 608

This poem suggests that benevolent forms of out-relief and charity were not universally popular with the labouring population, and that some felt a certain degradation in this state of semi-pauperism. But this was a dissatisfaction which suggests that the labourers of these

parishes at this time had higher aspirations than the Swing rioters, who seemed to have cared little whether their relief came from the parish or their employer. Clearly those who participated in the Anti-Corn Law League meetings were frequently living in real and desperate hardship, and yet they were concerned with more than the basic 'bread and butter' issues which had almost totally preoccupied earlier protesters.

Other evidence, too, suggests that the Anti-Corn Law League agitators were less brutalised than their predecessors in Swing unrest and incendiarism. This is illustrated by an interesting postscript to the Anti-Corn Law League agitation. In June 1846 there was formed in Goat-acre The North Wilts Benefit Society and Investment Company. It was a combined sickness benefit society and building society; each year the dividends of the first were to be paid into the second and then used for hiring land in the county to form smallholdings for its members. Read was prominent in this society, and William Edwards, the journeyman tailor from Marlborough and former agent for the League, was the Secretary of its Board of Directors. Its aims were not simply material, but also involved 'developing the principles of religious and civil liberty', in order to 'raise the labourer in the social scale'.⁶⁰⁹

In a pamphlet entitled, A Building Society, What is it? A conversation between George Read and Stephen Cole, Wiltshire Labourers., the ideas of the Society were developed further:

Cole: Master says, these Societies are only Political Clubs, got up by Radicals and Free Traders to give votes for the County to poor men, and so to try to overbalance the rich in the Elections.

Read: That's a very old objection, raised by a class of men, who want to confine all power to themselves, and to crush every scheme that is calculated to raise a poor man in the social scale ... In fact our Society disclaims all political purpose, and its promoters are of all political parties; their simple object is to encourage men of small means, to save their money, and rise to independence and respectability. 610

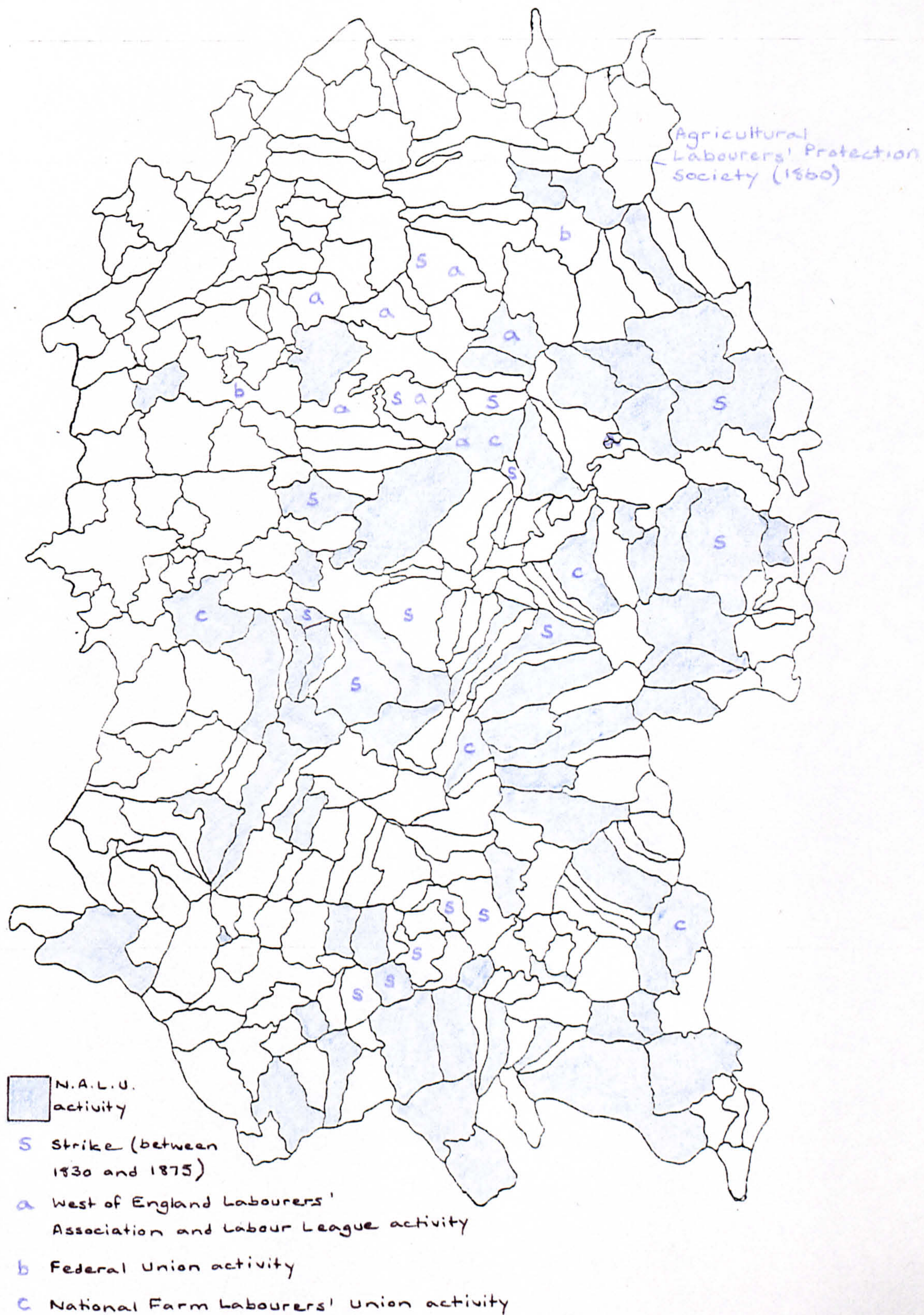
Under the Society's rules, any saver wanting a loan for a house or holding would apply to the Secretary. The Directors would examine the claim and if they gave their consent the Society would then make up the balance of the claim over and above what the applicant had already saved plus any interest which had accrued. The rate of repayment for a loan of, for example, £100 would be 17s 6d a month to be repaid over fourteen years.

In reality these rates must have made it impossible for the majority of ordinary labourers to borrow money and set themselves on the path of social independence. In many ways this kind of attempt at self-improvement was ahead of its time in rural Wiltshire, and little noticeable advance in the labourers' conditions seems to have resulted either out of Anti-Corn Law League activity or subsequent schemes such as the Building Society. There was certainly little change in the status of those taking part in League activity in the parishes of Lineham, Christian Malford, Bremhill and Hilmarton, between 1841 and 1851, with the exception of Vines who was described as being a chairmaker in 1851, and Read's wife who was a Schoolmistress in 1851.

This agitation does, however, mark an important milestone in the development of the Wiltshire labourers' protest. It seems that Anti-Corn Law League activity was able to flourish partly as a result of a comparatively benevolent attitude taken by the landowners in the parishes where it was strongest, and that many of those who participated in meetings had or had had at one time a degree of social and economic independence. In better times, doubtless, many of them could have made a reasonably good living, but all those hardships which characterised the 'Hungry Forties' - the high price of bread, long periods of unemployment, potato blight - had driven them to desperation. Nevertheless with the particular conditions which existed in these parishes, this desperation was channelled not into violence and rioting, but into peaceful and organised protest with little or no hostility directed against individual masters; 'If we petition Parliament it is more than a peradventure that we shall be heard, and if we are not we can but starve'.⁶¹¹

It must be stressed that the effect of this agitation, both in the length of time and area it covered, was minimal; and yet it can be seen as a forerunner of the more influential trade-union movement of the 1870s in which the part played by parishes like Bremhill was not insignificant.

Parishes experiencing Strikes and trade-union activity



VI: STRIKES AND AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNIONISM

Strikes and Early Attempts at Trade Unionism, 1830-1870

Labour is the poor man's property, from which all protection is withheld ... But I am told that the working man ought to remain still and let their cause work its way - "That God in his good time will bring it about for him". However this is not my creed; I believe that God works by means and men, and that he expects every man who feels an interest in the subject to take an active part in bringing about and hastening so important a period. Under such an impression, I would call upon every working man in England, and especially the agricultural labourers, who appear to be the lowest, degraded and least active, to shake off their supineness and indifference to their interests, which leaves them in the situation of slaves, for no longer can they live by the sweat of their brow; let no one expect that another will do it for him. 612

These were the words of George Loveless, leader of the most famous of all English agricultural labourers' protests, the ill-fated trade union formed in Tolpuddle in 1833. The reason why the case of the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' became such a cause celebre in the nineteenth century was that it represented a blatant attempt to prevent the spread of recently legalised trade unionism to this part of rural Dorset, by means of an obscure law of 1797 prohibiting the administering of illegal oaths.⁶¹³ By and large, however, local authorities had no need of such devious means of thwarting agricultural trade unionism, for as we have seen in previous chapters, the labourers' bargaining position in the face of widespread rural unemployment was so poor that combination had little hope of success.

It is significant that the Tolpuddle Martyrs had

tried to combine for the purpose of redressing a wage cut. The slowness of the agricultural labourers to turn to trade unions as a means of fighting for improvements, was not 'supineness and indifference to their interests' so much as the overwhelming odds against success. Apart from the high unemployment among ordinary labourers, the skilled and yearly hired farm workers such as shepherds, stockmen and carters could not withdraw their labour without risking prosecution for breach of contract. The scattered nature of rural settlement also hampered collective organisation.

Appendices 4a and 4b show how few and far between were strikes, both before and after the emergence of national agricultural trade unions in the 1870s. It is possible that strike action was more widespread than is recorded here, but as with incidents of incendiarism, local newspapers were loth to report this sort of activity unless it was unsuccessful and discouraged imitation. Prefacing its report of a strike in the Beckhampton area in 1853, for instance, the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette stated:

A strike amongst labourers is a matter which we have always been reluctant to notice ... We should not therefore advert to the differences which have taken place during the past week in some of the parishes between this and Marlborough, if we did not believe that the publication of the RESULT of those differences would have a beneficial effect upon those who are, in such cases, frequently led away by the impulse of the moment, under the influence of bad advisers:- we mean the labouring classes. 614

A strike at Compton Bassett in 1834 was reported only by very indirect means, being mentioned in the proceedings at Chippenham Petty Sessions. Three men were charged with intimidating a fourth, named Sexton, who had refused to

join the labourers of the parish when they agreed upon a strike. Sexton had apparently been assaulted and dragged along by the others. The magistrates wanted to send the case to the Assize Courts, but four of the farmers of the parish interceded, and the charge was limited to a comparatively minor one of assault. Hence further details of the incident were prevented from being publicised.⁶¹⁵

In the predominantly 'laissez-faire' climate of this period, it was felt that wage rates would find their own level, and that all interference with that process should be avoided. Governments of the day consistently refused to meddle with wage rates no matter how inadequate they were considered to be. In 1795 and again in 1800, Samuel Whitebread introduced Minimum Wage Bills in the Commons, but met with defeat on both occasions.⁶¹⁶

There is some evidence, however, that this refusal to become involved in wage rates was not shared by those authorities at local level who were closer to the effects of low wages. In Wiltshire interference occurred most notably during the Swing Riots. In a number of places the threat of riot and machine breaking was offset by the magistrates' recommendation of a wage rise. A notice issued in Devizes on 29th November 1830 declared that 'when order and quiet should have been restored' they would 'adopt the best means in their power to secure a just and proper amount of WAGES to LABOURERS'. In large letters at the bottom of the notice it was stated that the magistrates:

DO HEREBY STRONGLY RECOMMEND to all Landowners and Occupiers of LANDS in this DIVISION to ADVANCE forthwith the AMOUNT of WAGES to their

LABOURERS, so as that every able bodied Labourer should receive for his full labour WAGES AT THE RATE of TEN SHILLINGS WEEKLY. 617

Similar magistrates' meetings took place in Melksham and Warminster, although the resulting statements did not make such strong recommendations of a wage rise.⁶¹⁸

These meetings were swiftly reported to Melbourne, the Home Secretary, by the Government's military advisers in the county, and the magistrates in all counties affected by rioting soon received a circular, dated 5th December 1830, from Melbourne. The circular noted the various recommendations made 'under the influence of threats and intimidation, and the apprehension of violence and outrage', and went on to stress:

The Justices of Peace must be aware that they are invested with no legal authority to settle the amount of the wages of labour; and any interference in such a matter can only have the effect of exciting expectations which must be disappointed, and of ultimately producing in an aggravated degree, a renewed spirit of discontent and insubordination. 619

The magistrates were thus brought to heel. When confronted by labourers from Bromham, Urchfont and Marston (in the parish of Potterne) all asking for the enforcement of the recommended wage rise, the magistrates stated that:

they had no intention of interfering between the farmer and the labourer, they had no power, indeed, and if they had it would be far from their inclination; they barely recommended 10s a week; conceiving that it was fair remuneration for the labour of an able bodied man ... They would advise farmers generally to offer a liberal rate of wages; and in such cases, if the labourer refused to work, to discharge them at once, after which, if they applied to a Magistrate, they might rely upon it they would be refused all parish relief. 620

By December 1830 however many farmers had already raised wages. In Bromham all the farmers except one,

Mr Butler, had put up their labourers' wages, and it was in order to bring Mr Butler in line that his labourers struck work on 6th December. Mr Butler, several years later, was the victim of an incendiary attack on his farm.⁶²¹

The Parliamentary Commissioners reporting on the Poor Laws in 1834 found that wage rises had followed the Swing Riots in a number of parishes, but it was generally agreed that by 1833 wages had fallen back to their old level.⁶²²

The assumption that the magistrates' action in November 1830 had indeed been prompted by fear of violence is inescapable, for there were no similar recommendations for wage rises once the threat of unrest subsided. No doubt, Nassau Senior, one of those who was instrumental in carrying through the Poor Law (Amendment) Act, had this kind of incident in mind when he argued for greater control by central government in poor law administration, remarking that 'the enforcement of improvements must devolve upon those who had no stacks to be fired'.⁶²³

However we should note that among some magistrates there was a genuine feeling that a redress in the labourers' favour was necessary, and indeed many reduced rents in order to facilitate wage rises. Sir Edward Poore, one of the magistrates who had signed the Devizes recommendation, declared that having reduced his rents, he would 'compel' his tenants if necessary 'to give the wages recommended'.⁶²⁴ Another of the Devizes magistrates, Estcourt, wrote to the Home Secretary, following the meeting on 23rd November, to justify the recommendation by pointing out that the expense

was intended to fall on the landlord in revaluation of rents.⁶²⁵ In his private correspondence, one Salisbury magistrate wrote that he was 'fully convinced that there can be no peace restored among the labouring classes without higher wages are given', and felt his fellow magistrates should do as much as they could to 'promote an advance in wages'.⁶²⁶

It is worth noting, too, that in all the parishes where strikes occurred at this time land was divided among numerous farmers and owners, many of whom were neither willing nor able to give their labourers a wage rise.

On the question of wage rates, the agricultural labourers were constantly reminded of their weak and subservient position. They were told that wage rises should not be demanded as a right but politely requested, as a favour. 'Improper' demands for wage rises would threaten the 'good feelings' which existed between labourer and farmer. As the Beckhampton strikers were told, wage rises should be 'solicited' and not demanded with the backing of strikes; they were advised to 'go back to their work and trust their masters as they had always done'.⁶²⁷

But while attempts by the agricultural labourers to raise their wage rates were condemned as pernicious interference with the 'free labour market', there is good evidence to show that there existed informal but highly effective combinations of farmers which acted to keep wages as low as possible. In effect it was the breakdown of this informal combination of farmers which sparked off the strike in the Beckhampton area in 1853. Two Avebury

farmers promised a wage rise to their labourers 'unknown to the rest of the parish'. When the labourers of adjoining parishes struck for a similar rise, it was reported that 'the masters refused ... till it was generally agreed upon'.⁶²⁸

In 1867 Earl Nelson, writing of the parishes of Downton and Whiteparish, referred to a 'system of keeping the general wages down to just above starvation level'. He explained this system in detail:

When bread is high complaints are made by different men to their employers, and at last, after some weeks pinching under high prices, a rise of a shilling is announced. When bread is lower again some day a general lowering of wages is simultaneously agreed to by the farmers ... no individual farmer taking the responsibility, but all acting together on some arbitrary principle unknown to the labourer. 629

This kind of collective action taken by farmers was felt to give justification to agricultural trade unionism. One Maddington labourer, speaking at a meeting of the local National Agricultural Labourers Union (hereafter referred to as the N.A.L.U.) in 1872, declared that, 'the farmers and clergy have formed a union between them against poor men and it was the duty of poor men to form a union to protect themselves'.⁶³⁰

Before the emergence of national agricultural trade unionism in 1872, strikes in rural areas fell into two categories, those which aimed to secure a wage rise during those brief periods when the labourers' bargaining position was temporarily improved, and those which were a desperate attempt to prevent a wage reduction. The action taken by labourers during the Swing Riots following

magistrates' recommendations for wage rises obviously falls into the first category. Also in this category are harvest strikes. Some form of collective action by labourers before or during harvest was probably more common than the reported incidents suggest. As we have already seen, newspapers were loth to advertise successful action by the labourers. Hence the harvest strike in Wootton Bassett in 1843 was reported because the farmer involved had refused to give way to his employees' demands for an extra 1d a day and had secured the harvest with the help of friends.⁶³¹

Apart from the Wootton Bassett incident, only two harvest strikes were reported in the Wiltshire newspapers in this period, in Wedhampton and Upavon. Both occurred in 1858 which saw a very good and plentiful harvest.

Even if labourers did not commonly resort to strike action at this time, it is likely that they collectively negotiated their rates for harvest and for other piece work, just as in the early twentieth century the labourers on A.G. Street's farm in south Wiltshire had an unofficial spokesman, nicknamed 'Lawyer Charlie' who negotiated rates for all his fellow labourers' piece work.⁶³²

There were also three reported strikes for wage rises in the spring of 1853, in Compton, Fovant and Barford in January, in the Salisbury area in February, and in the Beckhampton area in March. In the first of these incidents the labourers of Barford, Fovant and Compton (mistakenly cited as Codford in the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette) demanded an extra 2s to raise their wages from 7s to 9s

a week. A body of labourers, numbering around 150 to 200, went from farm to farm 'quietly stating their determination to get the advance they asked, and to obtain in addition a settlement weekly on a Friday, instead of a Saturday night'. The labourers were apparently successful in winning a wage rise of at least 1s per week, and by the following day all was reported as quiet.⁶³³

In the wake of this strike, all the labourers of 'an extensive parish' near Salisbury struck work on 7th February for a 2s increase in wages, to 9s or 10s per week, the same rise which they said had been given to the labourers of Barford St Martin. They all went to Salisbury where they went from door to door begging, so that they should be able to hold out until their demands were met. One farmer of the parish sent to Salisbury for his men telling them he was prepared to meet their terms, but in a remarkable show of solidarity, his labourers refused to give up the strike until a settlement was reached for all.⁶³⁴ The eventual outcome was not reported.

The third strike was further north in the county, affecting the villages of Beckhampton, Kennett and Winterbourne Monkton. The labourers of Beckhampton struck on Saturday 12th March for the same wage rise which had recently been given to the Avebury labourers, and when the farmers refused to meet their demands they went to adjacent parishes 'to spread the discontent'. By Tuesday, 15th March most of the labourers had returned to work, and a 'general rise in wages' was paid the following Friday.⁶³⁵

All these strikes appear to have been sparked off

by a desire to catch up with wage rises which had already been given in other parishes. It is not immediately clear why this upward move in wages occurred at this time. The newspaper report of the Barford strike wrote of a diminution in the numbers of labourers caused by emigration. A further reduction in the number of farm workers resulted from an Army recruitment drive. The restoration of the Empire in France in the person of Napoleon III, following a coup d'etat in 1851, re-awoke Britain's fear of her old enemy. The militia began to be revitalised following the 1852 Militia Act, and during the strike near Salisbury in February, The Times reported that 'the recruiting officers of the different regiments stationed at Salisbury have had a rich harvest owing to the strike'.⁶³⁶

It is significant, too, that the price of corn began to rise in 1852, a fact which was calculated to have the twofold effect of reducing the spending power of the labourers' wages and at the same time tending to increase the acreage under cultivation and hence the demand for labour. The harvest of 1852 was largely spoiled by late rains which persisted throughout the autumn, hindering ploughing and sowing operations so that by the spring of 1853 the comparative urgency of such tasks could have contributed to pushing up wages.⁶³⁷

The second type of strike which took place in this period was the strike prompted by a wage cut. At first glance these incidents appear to be doomed to failure; desperate, last-ditch efforts to change the farmers' minds. On closer examination, however, one becomes suspicious that

the labourers might, to some extent, have been encouraged by the farmers, just as they had sometimes been during the Swing Riots, in the expectation that such protest might convince the landowner of the need for a rent reduction.

The first such strike which occurred in West Lavington in 1831 certainly had a complex involvement with farm rents. On Monday, 30th May, 50 labourers refused to start work following a reduction in their wages on the previous Saturday from 9s to 8s per week. During the Swing Riots, Lord Churchill, the major landowner in West Lavington, had reduced rents by 10% in order to allow his tenants to put up wages. Recently however he had restored that 10% cut, arguing that farmers had not increased wages, a fact disputed by some farmers who now claimed they had to cut wages because of the rent increase. Caught in this cross-fire of claim and counter-claim, the striking labourers went to Devizes to appeal to the magistrates, with a confidence apparently not abated by the magistrates' turn around in December 1830 when they had refused to enforce the recommendation for a wage rise. The magistrates listened sympathetically to the labourers' story but they concluded that the situation was not so desperate as it had been the previous winter. Once again they declined to interfere, merely recommending the men 'to return to their work and take task work instead'. The labourers appear to have submitted and returned to work.⁶³⁸

Wages in West Lavington declined even further in the following years, and by February 1850 another strike occurred when wages were cut from 7s to 6s per week.⁶³⁹

The price of wheat had been falling steeply since 1847 and between 1850 and 1852 was below 40s per quarter causing considerable panic among arable farmers. Weekly wages had apparently been at 6s for some time in parishes adjoining West Lavington.

This strike was more serious than the 1831 incident, and to some extent appears to have been inflamed by the presence of the police. The West Lavington farmers had made known their intention to reduce wages about a fortnight before the strike occurred, and the labourers had asked Lord Churchill's steward, Mr Kelsey, to intercede on their behalf. Perhaps the farmers had given their labourers so much prior warning precisely in the hope that such an appeal would be made, and that rents might consequently be lowered. The local newspaper suggested that wages were certainly not the labourers' only grievance and that they were concerned too about their cottage and allotment rents.

Mr Kelsey promised to make the labourers' case known to Lord Churchill. On Saturday, 16th February, however, the wage cut was implemented. The following Monday about 150 labourers, instead of returning to work, went round from farm to farm in the parish persuading other labourers to join them, virtually bringing all farm work to a halt. This must have involved stopping the work of yearly hired labourers too, since sheep were released from folds, and horses were unharnessed from ploughs and turned loose into the fields. The strikers caused no breach of the peace, however, that could be detected by the Chief

Constable who was present in the village with a detachment of police. Indeed the strike appears to have been little more than a token protest, and the following day most men returned to their work.

Doubtless no more would have been heard of this incident had not warrants been issued the following day for the arrest of the strike ringleaders. When news of this reached the labourers on Tuesday evening, about a hundred of them collected in the streets armed with staves. They made no more than a brief show of strength, however, and soon dispersed to their homes. By midnight news of the demonstration had reached the Chief Constable, who immediately dispatched a police guard to the village. This incident was later used by the Chief Constable to illustrate to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Police the speed with which his force could act in an 'emergency'. Within two hours of receiving the news, 35 police constables were stationed in the parish.⁶⁴⁰

On Wednesday, 20th February a reputedly respectable agricultural labourer named Kite was arrested for his part in the strike, and the following morning he was brought before the magistrates in Devizes. His fellow West Lavington labourers set out for Devizes that morning, armed with sticks, apparently with the intention of rescuing Kite. By the time they reached Devizes, however, Kite had already been committed for further examination and had been returned to prison.

The impression that the West Lavington farmers implicitly supported the labourers' action is reinforced

by the fact that when Kite came before the magistrates for further questioning, Mr Hooper, the farmer whose labourers Kite was accused of inciting to strike, refused to press any charges. The magistrates had to be content with dismissing Kite with a reprimand. Throughout this series of events, it was reported that 'no symptoms of personal hostility had been evinced towards the farmers of the parish'. Three months later, in May, following the audit of Lord Churchill's land in West Lavington, a 10% reduction was made in rentals on all his farms.⁶⁴¹ A similar reduction was made by many landowners in the 1850-1852 crisis.

It seems probable that farmers' concern over the payment of rents had played some part in causing another strike in October 1849 (a few months before the West Lavington strike) in the normally quiet villages of South Newton, Wishford and Stoford on the Earl of Pembroke's estate. The farmers justified the need for a wage cut by pointing to the low returns they were receiving for their produce, and it is worth remembering that between 1821 and 1839 rents on the Wilton estate had been reduced by between 15% and 25% to help tenants through a period of economic depression.⁶⁴² The aggrieved labourers sought redress from 'the fountain head' at Wilton House, much as West Lavington labourers were to appeal to the landowner's steward. It is difficult to see how a landowner in this situation could be expected to intercede for agricultural labourers in any other way than reducing rents since, as we have already seen, there was a considerable ideological barrier against any direct interference with wage rates. A body of about 60 labourers

made their way peacefully to Wilton House where they had 'an audience' with the Earl's half brother and heir presumptive, the M.P., Sidney Herbert. The Times described the incident. The labourers' two spokesmen

told the right hon. gentleman that their wages were reduced to 6s and 7s per week, and that it was impossible they could live on it, and that they were now worse off than when bread was dearer. The right hon. gentleman, having listened to their simple, unvarnished tale, begged them to return to their work. He said his steward (Mr Robson) was not at home; when he returned some endeavour should be made that they might have the same wages as before, and if either of them should lose employment by the peaceful course which they had adopted, he would give such persons employment in the park. The men kindly thanked Mr Herbert, and returned home in the same order. 643

It was not reported if the wage cut was reversed.

We do know, however, that rents on the Wilton estate were reduced by 10% between 1850 and 1852 in line with the general rent movements on large estates. 644

The similarity between the Wilton area and West Lavington strikes - the course of action taken by the labourers in appealing to the landowner or his steward, and the fact that in a period when strikes were so rare only a few months separated the two incidents, - leads one to the conclusion that in both cases the labourers were being used by their employers to put pressure on the landowners to reduce farm rents. In this respect, the Wiltshire labourers' position was different from that of the Tolpuddle labourers, although they were all taking action against a wage cut. Indeed it is possible that, living in parishes under the domination of a large landowner willing to reduce rents, they were more cushioned in the crisis years of the early 1850s

than were their fellow labourers elsewhere. Certainly in West Lavington a cut in wages came later than in neighbouring parishes. Rather than pointing to any real progress in the labourers' ability to make their protest through peaceful, collective action, these strikes tend to highlight how far they were controlled and used by their masters.

Attempts to form any sort of trade union were even more rare than strikes, although as has already been suggested, informal forms of collective wage bargaining were probably quite common. Evidence of one kind of labourers' 'combination' for instance is found in the report of the Petty Sessions proceedings of 19th December 1837, when three labourers of Bishops Cannings were charged with destroying a net belonging to another labourer, George Chubb. The net was used by Chubb to catch sparrows. The labourers of this village, however, had agreed amongst themselves to stop netting sparrows when the farmers had reduced the price paid for their catch from 6d a dozen to 3d a dozen. The three defendants had caught Chubb defying this self-imposed ban, and had destroyed his net, warning him not to say anything about the incident. The magistrates expressed deep concern at this sort of action, and ordered the defendants to pay costs of 2s each plus 5s between them to pay for the net.⁶⁴⁵

There were very few attempts however to form formal agricultural trade unions or labourers' protection societies throughout the country until the 'Revolt of the Field' in the early 1870s. An Agricultural Labourers

Union existed in Tendring in Essex between April and July 1836, and in the late 1850s a shortlived union was formed in Montacute in Somerset at a time when labour was scarce during haymaking and harvest.⁶⁴⁶ In December 1865 a Farm Servants Protection Society was formed in Midlothian, and in 1866 an Agricultural Labourers' Protective Association existed in Kent.⁶⁴⁷ In the village of Great Glen in Leicestershire a strike took place following the formation of a union, again in 1866, although this was quickly crushed when all the strikers were evicted from their cottages. An Agricultural Labourers Protection Society, centred on the villages of Gawcott, Ivinghoe and Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire, was formed in 1867. The following year the first attempt at a national agricultural labourers' union was made, mainly at the instigation of urban trade unionists and middle class well wishers, notably Canon Girdlestone, but it made little headway among the labourers themselves.⁶⁴⁸

In Wiltshire there was one attempt to form a Labourers' Protection Society as early as 1860. This was confined to the parish of Highworth in the north east of the county. Two meetings were held here in June 1860. Highworth was a more populous parish than any which has been considered in detail so far in this study with the exception of Downton. Apart from the small town of Highworth, itself, the parish included the tithings of Westrop, Eastrop and Fresdon and the chapelries of Broad Blunsden, Sevenhampton and South Marston. According to the 1831 Census it covered 9,810 acres and had a population of 3,127. By 1861 the population had increased to 3,629. Although

situated in the 'Cheese' region of the county, an outcrop of limestone within the parish meant that its agriculture was comparatively diverse. The Tithe Award for 1842 for instance, although covering only 3,735 acres of Highworth, shows that a sizeable proportion (1,579 acres) was arable, while the remainder was meadow. Certainly farms here were generally larger than in a true 'Cheese' parish like Hilmarton, the average size being around 250 acres in the 1860s.⁶⁴⁹

The proportion of labourers to farmers was higher than that of Bremhill and Hilmarton, and bore more resemblance to those parishes affected by Swing rioting.⁶⁵⁰ Highworth, indeed, had a background of riotous activity including Swing unrest. Much of the unrest it experienced in the 1830s was connected with poor law administration. On 24th November 1830, Swing rioters broke all the windows in the parish workhouse. As the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, D.O.P. Okenden, reported in 1832, the Highworth poor were governed by a workhouse system under a local variation of the Gilbert Act. (In this respect, Highworth bore a certain resemblance to Wroughton, a similarity which as we shall see extended to other matters.) In Highworth the details of workhouse administration did not come under the scrutiny of the magistrates at the Petty Sessions, and Okenden found 'the general management of the poor was worse conducted than in other parishes, and the poor a most turbulent and discontented set'.⁶⁵¹

In the early 1830s many agricultural labourers here must have had to resort to poor relief since unemployment,

especially in the winter months, was chronic, being estimated in the years immediately before 1834 at seventy or eighty labourers out of work. The Earl of Radnor who played a major role in alleviating the lot of the poor of Downton also had landowning interests in this part of the county. In 1834 the overseer of Highworth reported how, following the Swing Riots, Radnor proposed a plan to ease the situation which had 'worked very well and given general satisfaction to the ratepayers'.⁶⁵² Details of this plan were not given, but it seems safe to assume that it took the same form as the labour rate adopted in Downton at around the same time.⁶⁵³

There was, however, little emigration or migration out of the parish in the 1830s. Unemployment remained a problem for some time and unrest accompanied it. In January 1836 (while alterations were taking place to the workhouse to prepare for the prohibition of all out-relief to able-bodied male paupers, in November) the paupers of the parish rioted.⁶⁵⁴ In November, when the poor law changes came into force, there was a desperate fight between a gang of poachers and gamekeepers at Round Robin Coppice, resulting in four Highworth men being sentenced to fourteen years transportation apiece.⁶⁵⁵ During the winter of 1841-42 more than fifty able-bodied labourers were unemployed in the neighbourhood of Highworth,⁶⁵⁶ and the following winter a hay rick was destroyed and stock perished in an incendiary fire on the farm of Mr Chillingworth of Sevenhampton.⁶⁵⁷

There was a decline in violent unrest in Highworth

following this incident, however, and more peaceful forms of protest emerged including an Anti-Corn Law League meeting on 16th October 1844. The meeting was chaired by the Earl of Radnor, a fact which doubtless contributed to the presence of a number of farmers, tenants of Radnor, among the 700 estimated to be attending the meeting.⁶⁵⁸

A number of factors favoured the progress of activity such as this and the later Labourers' Protection Society in Highworth. Larger than most of the parishes we have so far considered, the occupational structure was also more diverse. Although agriculture was always the major occupation, employing 411 families in 1831, 197 families were employed in trade, manufacture and handicraft in the same year. Rope and basket making, clock and watch making, brewing, furniture and cabinet making and brick works using local clay, all took place in the parish.⁶⁵⁹ The non-agriculture elements within the population, however, had a common cause with the farm worker, for in 1842 it was said:

the condition of the small tradesmen in this neighbourhood is little better than the labourer; in some instances it may be said to be worse, if possible, inasmuch as, those with large families, such as platers, plasterers, masons, etc. cannot work for considerable period during the winter. 660

It is worth noting that it was a grocer and not an agricultural labourer who chaired the first meeting which was called to form the Agricultural Labourers' Protection Society on 12th June 1860.⁶⁶¹

Significantly, too, the growing town of Swindon was only a short distance from Highworth. This had a

twofold effect on Highworth. Firstly, the Great Western Railway line offered easy access to the London market, after 1840, for the agricultural produce of the area; and secondly the railway service industry was a source of alternative and comparatively well paid employment for the population of the area.

By 1861 the occupational structure of Highworth was very similar to that of Wroughton, with just under 61% of the adult male population employed in agriculture, of whom 55½% were labourers and dairy workers. In addition, there were ten resident railway labourers and porters and 46 unspecified 'labourers', some of whom may have been employed in the railway works in Swindon.⁶⁶²

Nonconformity, too, which was to play such an important role in agricultural trade unionism a decade later, was comparatively strong in Highworth. Apart from the parish church of St Michael in Highworth and three Anglican chapels in South Marston, Sevenhampton and Broad Blunsden, the town itself boasted Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist and Congregational chapels, while Westrop had one Wesleyan chapel, and Broad Blunsden, Particular Baptist and Primitive Methodist chapels. On Census Sunday in March 1851, attendance at nonconformist chapels was almost twice as high as Church of England attendance; the total number of people at the best attended service of the day in each being 961 at nonconformist and 486 at Anglican services.⁶⁶³ (On Census Sunday attendance was generally lower than average in Highworth due to a smallpox outbreak in the town.)

The labourers of Highworth, therefore, appear to have been more prepared than many of their fellows elsewhere in the county to organise themselves with a view to agitating for improved conditions. Only one parish separated them from the growing industrial town of Swindon, and in the railway line they had a vital communication link with the outside world and an escape route if necessary to new employment. They were part of a community which was not totally dominated by agriculture and by farmers. Evidence of their comparative independence is seen in the strength of nonconformity in the parish. Moreover, one of the most influential landowners in the area was known to hold unorthodox and somewhat radical views.

No matter how well placed the Highworth labourers were at this time, however, their bargaining power should not be overestimated. A brief examination of their short-lived attempt at forming a protection society will illustrate how many obstacles still lay in the path of self-organisation. On the evening of 12th June 1860 a meeting was held at The Fishes Inn in Highworth 'to consider the present rate of wages paid to the agricultural labourer'.⁶⁶⁴ Average wages for agricultural labourers in the parish at this time were around 9s a week. June 1860 was not a fortuitous time to be looking for a wage rise, being a very wet month and following a cold, wet and late spring.

The meeting was advertised beforehand by means of notices circulated in the area and even affixed to church doors. During the course of the evening about 300 people turned up at the meeting, but it appears to have been

poorly organised. For a long time those present 'made no progress with their meeting; they were evidently without a leader, and were at a loss to know how to proceed'. In the absence of anyone to take charge from the start, a grocer named Mills eventually agreed to take the chair. In both his opening and closing remarks he stressed the need for restraint by the labourers, urging them to be 'moderate in their demands and courteous in their conduct towards their masters'.

The reluctance of the labourers to speak out was marked. There was little order in the meeting, and those present seemed to prefer to air their grievances in general conversation amongst themselves. Suspicion was rife; a remark from one man in the crowd to the effect that if the labourers had not actually asked for a wage rise they could not complain, 'appeared to give great offence to several in the room, who retaliated by declaring the room was full of spies'. Many obviously feared that their presence at the meeting made them 'marked men' and they were unwilling to commit themselves openly without the assurance that their fellows were equally committed, and so avoid individuals being isolated. One proposal called for all those in favour of asking for a wage rise to have their names written down so that, as they said, 'there could be no mistake about it'. Support was not insignificant, however, as 43 names were recorded during the meeting and 'many others' agreed to have their names taken as they left the room.

Moreover after some hesitation several labourers did come forward to speak. All in all, the local press

reported seven speakers. One of the most eloquent of these, a man named Frederick Oakey, was evidently a man of some skill and independence since he earned his living through piece work which he would take when and from whom he chose. A previous speaker, who had felt that 9s a week was too little for him, his wife and two children to live on, had proposed that the following day every labourer should ask his employer for a rise in wages, and that if this was not forthcoming they should leave their work at the end of the week. This had met with approval from the audience, and the general consensus was that 2s a day was a fair price to ask. Oakey declared that he could 'earn money enough' from his piece work, but that he would join with the ordinary labourers if that was agreed on. He was aware of a need for complete solidarity; 'unless we all combine together, and say we won't work unless you give us more money, it will be no good, and we had better have stopped at home'.

Another of the speakers was a less respectable figure than Oakey, but he too had developed a sense of social independence, and he was certainly a well travelled man since he had returned to Highworth after serving a sentence of ten years transportation! He had evidently found employment again in Highworth, although he complained that on 9s a week, he and his family lived worse than when he had been a convict. Many of the speakers felt that 9s a week was insufficient to live on. One labourer proposed that on every farm the labourers should nominate a spokesman to put all their grievances to the farmer.

A further meeting was agreed to for the following week, on 18th June. A falling off of support was already evident by this second meeting which was not so well-attended as the first. Mills again took the chair. He proposed the formation of 'a society by which the agricultural labourer would be enabled to command a fair and honest reward for his labours'. The purpose of the society would be the 'raising of a fund out of which members should be paid 12s a week when discharged from their employ in consequence of demanding a fair rate of wages; each member of the society to subscribe 2d a week towards the fund when in work'.⁶⁶⁵

One speaker, a radical tailor, recommended an immediate strike, but his speech was not well received. Another speaker foreshadowed the programme of the N.A.L.U. by urging the labourers to induce their wives to give up field work.

It was agreed that a further meeting would be held on 25th June for the purpose of formally inaugurating 'The Agricultural Labourers' Protection Society'. There are, however, no reports of any further meetings, and it must be assumed that there was insufficient support to make such a society feasible. Certainly a lack of firm leadership and clear organisation seemed to be evident in these meetings, and both were necessary to overcome the natural hesitation of the labourer. It was not until a decade later that the collective spirit was to be revived, and then it was in response to a lead which was given from outside the county.

The 'Revolt of the Field' in Wiltshire

A number of factors contributed to the emergence of a national agricultural trade union movement in the early 1870s. An industrial boom had created a buoyant urban labour market, and this, coupled with the 1871 Trades Union Act (by which trade unions were no longer to be considered as 'criminal conspiracies') led to an upsurge in urban trade unionism. The effect of this was not unfelt in rural areas and the pace of agricultural trade unionism began to gather momentum especially in the midland counties. In the early 1870s agricultural trade unionists found both moral and financial support from their urban counterparts. The Warwickshire labourers' movement for instance which formed the backbone of the N.A.L.U., received considerable support from Birmingham trade unions.⁶⁶⁶ The booming industrial centres were a good source of employment for the disaffected farm worker, too, and demand for labour in the towns put some pressure on the agricultural labour market.

The period between 1850 and 1875 is seen by historians as one of stability and prosperity for British farming; a 'Golden Age'. Following the repeal of the Corn Laws, wheat prices had not fallen drastically as feared because foreign producers were in no position to undercut the home market. The mid-Victorian industrial boom ensured a buoyant demand for agricultural produce, and the position of the agricultural labourer had also seen some improvement in the 1850s and 1860s. There is evidence to suggest however that by the 1870s farmers were beginning to feel the

pinch of rising costs and that agricultural wages had consequently reached a ceiling, thus frustrating the labourers' rising expectations.⁶⁶⁷

In Wiltshire, no less than in other counties, improvements in the lot of the agricultural labourer were evident by the 1870s, although the greater distress which had existed in the southern as compared to the midland counties placed certain limitations on the extent to which unionism could flourish here. Nevertheless conditions had improved since the 1840s. The extent to which female labourers were employed had declined steadily since 1851. Improved education and the coming of the railways had extended the labourers' horizons. The railway too had opened up the market for the produce of the 'Cheese' in particular. One speaker at an N.A.L.U. meeting in Bremhill in 1875, who had also been present at a meeting here thirty years before during the Anti-Corn Law League agitation, was struck by the changes which had occurred over this timespan. The appearance of 'want and wretchedness' which he had observed in 1845 had now changed to show 'all the outward marks of cheerfulness, comfort and happiness'.⁶⁶⁸

In a letter to The Times in 1872, Richard Jefferies also claimed that the conditions of Wiltshire agricultural labourers had recently improved, to such an extent that 'there has been no extended strike, and very few meetings on the subject (of wages), for the simple reason that the agitators can gain no hold upon a county where, as a mass, the labourers are well paid'. Jefferies' final paragraph however sounded a warning note for the labourers, and tends

to confirm the view that the farmers were beginning to fear economic reversals, and that this might rebound upon their workforce, confounding hopes of further improvement.

'Farming', wrote Jefferies, 'as a rule, is carried on with a large amount of borrowed capital':

... when the slightest derangement of calculation in the price of wool, meat, or corn, or the loss of a crop, seriously interferes with a fair return for capital invested, the farmer has to sail extremely close to the wind, and only a little more would find his canvas shaking. It was only recently that the cashier of the principal bank of an agricultural county, after an unprosperous year, declared that such another season would make almost every farmer insolvent. Under these circumstances it is really to be wondered at that they have done as much as they have for the labourer in the last few years, finding him with better cottages, better wages, better education, and affording him better opportunities of rising in the social scale. 669

The account book of labour payments for Manor Farm, Bremhill also indicates that the Wiltshire labourers had reached a wage ceiling by the beginning of the 1870s. Running from Lady Day to Lady Day, annual labour payments rose from £231 9s 3d in 1867-68 to £238 18s 11½d in 1869-70, but then fell to £218 14s 7d in 1870-71.⁶⁷⁰

The first event which marked the re-emergence of the trade union spirit in Wiltshire in the 1870s was a meeting held in the yard of the Crown and Anchor Inn in Marlborough in April 1872, called 'for the purpose of enrolling members in the Labor League Society'. It is interesting to note that the revival of trade union activity in the county after a gap of more than a decade should be in a place which bore close resemblances to Highworth. Marlborough, like Highworth, was a substantial town in

Wiltshire terms with a population of 3,660 people in 1871, and although serving an overwhelmingly agricultural area, the occupational structure here was inevitably more diverse than the rural parishes surrounding it. At the meeting held in April 1872 it was said that nine-tenths of those present were 'mechanics' while the 'genuine agricultural labourer did not make up a tithe part of the meeting'. The chairman of the meeting was a currier named Royce.⁶⁷¹

Marlborough had also been involved in the Anti-Corn Law League agitation of the 1840s, a tradition to which Royce harked back in his opening remarks at the first meeting. A journeyman tailor of the town, William Edwards had been local agent of the League and had helped to organise many of the Wiltshire meetings, at which a number of Marlborough men, including a school teacher, a shoemaker and a baker had all spoken. William Edwards himself spoke at a subsequent union meeting in Marlborough, in June 1872, and gave his blessing to the formation of a branch of the N.A.L.U. here.⁶⁷²

As we have already seen, the labourers of this area, including the Ailesbury estate, were considerably distressed and demoralised earlier in this period.⁶⁷³ There was little evidence of a marked improvement by the 1870s although Edwards felt that the labourers were better off than they had been during the 1840s. However the unemployment which resulted from there being 'more labourers living in a neighbourhood than the land could employ', was still a source of distress in the opinion of Royce. Two years earlier, Ailesbury had advocated measures to disperse

the surplus agricultural labourers in the area, although in comparison to other major landowners in the county, this response to the problems of the rural population was very late. The organisers of the union meetings had no faith that the labourers would find relief from this aristocratic quarter; 'the labourers must enter into a combination and agree to help themselves before their condition would be bettered'. But they also had no illusions about the backwardness of the labourers' position in this area, and stressed that they were 'advising the men to form a Union, but not to strike - they couldn't afford it'.⁶⁷⁴

The first Marlborough meeting in April followed the tradition of Anti-Corn Law League meetings and the 1860 Highworth meetings in calling for speakers from the labourers present. On this occasion, however, no-one could be persuaded to come forward, even though Royce promised that 'if any labourer was discharged in consequence of attending that meeting, he would engage to get him a better position'. The meeting therefore proceeded with a proposal to take the names of those willing to join the society, the entrance fee for which was 6d with weekly contributions of 'a few pence'. Because of the reticence of the agricultural labourers however, it was decided that this society should not be restricted to them alone, 'seeing that the attendance of the real element was wanting'.⁶⁷⁵

At the time of this meeting, it was not at all clear what connection, if any, the Marlborough society had with agricultural trade union movements which were gaining strength elsewhere in the country. The most famous of

these movements was the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers Union which had been formed the previous month, in March 1872, and which, under the leadership of Joseph Arch became the driving force behind the formation of the first national agricultural labourers' union (the N.A.L.U.) on 29th May 1872. There were certainly delegates from south Warwickshire attending the Marlborough meeting held in April, and at a second meeting held in June, once again in the yard of the Crown and Anchor and also chaired by Royce, it was decided to form a branch of the N.A.L.U.

During the months of March to May 1872, the Warwickshire Union was receiving many appeals for help from agricultural labourers all over the country, and it was as a consequence of these that it called a delegate conference of local unions, from which was born the N.A.L.U. However by no means all the local unions in existence in the early 1870s were prepared to join the N.A.L.U., largely because they resented the central control of Union finances from Leamington. (Under the rules of the N.A.L.U., three-quarters of all entrance fees and weekly contributions had to be sent to the Executive Committee.) Another bone of contention was the N.A.L.U.'s insistence that only farm labourers could be delegates to the annual conference or be on the Union's executive. This would effectively have excluded many of the leaders of the independent unions who were not employed in agriculture. Between December 1872 and March 1873 attempts were made by the N.A.L.U. and the independent unions to resolve their differences, but failing to make progress, the independent unions formed a

separate Federal Union of labourers, in which each union was left largely in charge of its own funds and business.⁶⁷⁶

We find that despite the Warwickshire connection with the isolated Marlborough meetings of 1872, it was one of these independent unions, the West of England Labourers' Association, which was in the forefront of early trade union activity in Wiltshire. The West of England Labourers' Association had its origins in the Herefordshire union movement beginning in Leintwardine in 1871. In May 1872 it was said to have 30,000 members in several counties, among them Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset, as well as Herefordshire.⁶⁷⁷ The inevitable confusion between all these early union movements is made more difficult to untangle by the fact that local newspapers tended to blur the distinctions. For instance, T.H. Strange, the General Secretary of the West of England Labourers' Association is sometimes referred to in the newspaper reports as secretary of the Warwickshire Labourers Union.⁶⁷⁸

One of the most significant factors in the West of England Labourers' Association's activity in Wiltshire is that it centred on almost the same area which had formed the heart of Anti-Corn Law League agitation. The local newspapers reported three major Association meetings. The first two held before the formation of the N.A.L.U. in May 1872, were held in Wootton Bassett and on Lineham Green. The third meeting held in July 1873 in Calne was for the purpose of forming a district section of the West of England Labourers' Association, the North Wilts Union.

Once again, we find that meetings were held in

towns and dependent on the support of town workers. Only one third of the 400 or so who attended the Calne meeting were said to be agricultural labourers. The organisers of early agricultural trade unionism, and especially those of the future Federal Union, were aware of the usefulness of the more active and independent town workers in encouraging the rural worker. However, in the north of Wiltshire at least, this meant that agricultural trade unionism was less of a grass roots rural movement than the Anti-Corn Law League agitation which, in national terms, had been an overwhelmingly urban phenomenon.

The first of the Association meetings held in Wootton Bassett in early May 1872 was attended by about 600 of the labouring population there. It was organised by Mr Strange, a former schoolmaster of Wootton Bassett British School and now General Secretary of the Association. It was chaired by Mr Morris, proprietor of the Swindon Advertiser and a speaker at the Marlborough meeting in April. Few labourers could be persuaded to vote in favour of forming a union branch at this meeting.⁶⁷⁹

The Lineham meeting, however, was more successful. Some 600 or 700 labourers were reported as attending. Any fear which might normally have resulted in the labourer holding back his support was offset by the fact that the meeting was chaired by the M.P. and brother of the fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice. Fitzmaurice, who had first entered Parliament in 1868, was part of that radical wing of the Liberal Party which included other notable Parliamentary supporters of agricultural trade

unionism, namely Joseph Chamberlain, A.J. Mundella, Charles Dilkes and Henry Fawcett.⁶⁸⁰

The labourers at this meeting were quite willing, when called upon, to make statements concerning their condition.⁶⁸¹ Absalom Black of Lineham, for instance, earned only 10s a week on which to support his wife and five children. His cottage rent was 1s a week. Although he felt the pinch of providing for his family out of his wages, he was prepared to pay 4d a week to a benefit society, and 5½d a week to a 'clothing club'. One woman told how her husband was now better able to support her and their eight children since he had become a milker, increasing his wages from 9s to 11s a week, although this involved Sunday work. Two other speakers, William Beer of Calne and Henry Iles of Christian Malford, both formerly agricultural labourers, now claimed to have enough land of their own to be self-sufficient. William Beer had also been present at an Anti-Corn Law League meeting at Bremhill in 1845. Evidence was given, too, of the higher wages which could be earned in nearby towns. This fact evidently caused concern among employers of farm labour. Their response however was not necessarily to raise farm workers' wages. One speaker, Thomas Fry, told, for instance, of a widow who rented a cottage on the Lansdowne estate; when she had gone to the steward one day to pay her rent, he had asked her where her two sons were working, and on being told that one was employed in a Swindon factory, she had been told that he must either return to work for the local farmer, or she must leave her cottage.

Another of the speakers at the Lineham Green meeting was named in the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette as Mr Henry Atherton, a former resident of Calne who had returned to the area after thirty years with the Bengal Civil Service. Apart from the difference in Christian name (and this may well have been a newspaper error), this description could fit the Norman Atherton who had been Lansdowne's agent and Chairman of the Calne Board of Guardians before his emigration in 1846. As a speaker here he struck something of a discordant note initially by lamenting the decline in population in Calne since he had left the country, and then urging that 'the remedy for the men was to be found in combination'.

The programme of the West of England Labourers' Association did not differ markedly from that of the N.A.L.U., although there were differences in emphasis. There was at this time no great antagonism between the Association and the N.A.L.U.; the Association had sent delegates to the founding Congress of the N.A.L.U. although it had not joined, and Fitzmaurice had sent a letter of sympathy to the Congress.⁶⁸² Relationships remained cordial until the formation of the Federal Union in 1873. The principal aims of the Association, as stated at the Lineham Green meeting, were for labourers' cottages to be rented direct from the landlord, the abolition of part payment in alcohol, the extension of the allotment system, the ending of female and child employment in agriculture, a set pattern of working hours and proper overtime rates, and a general increase in wages. The strike weapon was discounted as a means to

achieve these aims, and a large amount of the Association's funds and efforts was directed towards migration and emigration. Its motto indeed was 'Emigration, Migration but not strikes',⁶⁸³ and Fitzmaurice was said to have been prominent in assisting families to emigrate to Canada.⁶⁸⁴ Fitzmaurice also emphasised that the Association was not antagonistic to the tenant farmer but aimed at a solution which was to the mutual satisfaction of labourers and farmers.⁶⁸⁵

The extension of the allotment system was an aim on which the Association in Wiltshire laid considerable emphasis. Fitzmaurice spoke of consideration being given to providing the labourers with 'grass for a cow system' as well as allotments, and Strange felt that allotments and 'cow feeds' would compensate the labourer for the loss of common rights in the past. He even suggested that if labourers were unable to command better wages, they should be 'prepared to farm on the co-operative principle'.⁶⁸⁶ The practicality of such a scheme was more relevant in the dairying regions in which the Association flourished. Farms here were generally smaller than on the arable, and good pasture was not as coveted as it was on the chalk downlands. On the Bowood estate large allotments providing in some cases sufficient land for the labourer to keep a pig had been a reality since the 1830s.⁶⁸⁷ From the evidence of Beer and Iles it would seem that 'allotment farmers' also existed in Calne and Christian Malford.

The emphasis on the extension of the allotment system was not found in the N.A.L.U.'s programme. In May

1875 the N.A.L.U. was split when Henry Vincent, the proprietor of the Labourers' Union Chronicle, formed a break-away movement, the main purpose of which was to acquire land for distribution among its members as allotments and smallholdings.⁶⁸⁸ The aims of this National Farm Labourers' Union, as the breakaway movement was called, were regarded as totally impractical by many in the N.A.L.U. who dubbed it 'the Bogus'. At Shrewton on Salisbury Plain a National Farm Labourers' Union delegate was mocked as a 'flower pot man', the local N.A.L.U. branch secretary remarking that 'it was impossible to get land for them in that village, except it was brought to them in flower pots'.⁶⁸⁹

It might have been expected that the National Farm Labourers' Union would do better in the 'Cheese'. In fact there appears to have been only one staunch union parish here by 1875, and this was Bremhill, which had a strong N.A.L.U. branch and which remained loyal to that Union. (In Bremhill, of course, there was already a well-established and extensive allotment system.) One National Farm Labourers' Union parish, Steeple Ashton, did lie partly on the 'Chalk' and partly on the 'Cheese'. The remaining four Wiltshire parishes which were reported as having significant defections to 'the Bogus', Winterslow, Shrewton, Avebury and Pewsey, were all firmly in the 'Chalk'. It is perhaps worth noting that two of these, Avebury and Pewsey, had figured quite prominently in Anti-Corn Law League agitation.

As a whole, the programme of the West of England Labourers' Association appears to have been aimed at

increasing the social independence and self-reliance of the labourers, even turning the more successful into small farmers, while not significantly challenging the existing social hierarchies. The Rev. T. Storey, secretary of the north Wilts district section of the Association, speaking at the Calne meeting, 'advocated a common brotherhood between class and class, but did not claim equality nor put all on the same level. God had intended them for different works in their different spheres so that the resources of the world might be developed'.⁶⁹⁰ As Dunbabin writes of those middle-class supporters of unionism who eventually withdrew their support in the face of growing radicalism, these people were prepared to take on what they saw as a paternalistic duty to improve the labourers' conditions, often at considerable cost to themselves, but they were 'not prepared to accept any fundamental alteration in the social structure of the countryside'.⁶⁹¹

Following the Calne meeting in July 1873 union activity on the 'Cheese' seems to have declined. Apart from two Federal Union meetings in November 1873 in Swindon and Chippenham, Bremhill was the only parish north of a line from Wanborough to Steeple Ashton with a consistent union tradition in the early 1870s. Perhaps the labourers of this area, meeting with comparatively little opposition from their employers, were lulled into passivity. In July 1873 Storey spoke of a wage rise of between 2s and 5s having already followed the establishment of the union. We have already noted that Association meetings were dependent on non-agricultural support, so probably trade unionism

was not sufficiently well-rooted in the countryside in this area. In Bremhill alone there seems to have been a strong enough tradition of independent action to allow trade unionism to flourish, and as we have already noted, Bremhill came under the influence of the N.A.L.U. rather than the Association. Even in Bremhill, however, there is evidence of less antagonism between union and farmer than existed in the 'Chalk'. A Bremhill farmer by the name of Vines, for instance, lent one of his fields to the Union for a meeting in September 1875 which was addressed by Joseph Arch.⁶⁹²

While the West of England Labourers' Association was spreading its gospel in the 'Cheese', the N.A.L.U. was making progress in the 'Chalk'. The day after the Lineham meeting in May 1872, a meeting was held in Wilton to discuss 'questions of wages, hours of labour and to form a union'. It was chaired by a former agricultural labourer from Warwickshire, John Tutt, and one resolution determined to connect this union with 'the grand Agricultural Union formed at Wellesbourne'.⁶⁹³

A further meeting was held in Wilton in June, following the formation of the N.A.L.U. The Chairman on this occasion was a Mr Morris, presumably the same Morris who had chaired the Association meeting in Wootton Bassett in May. Speakers included agricultural labourers from Fovant and Maddington. One Maddington labourer, Edward Pierce, had been discharged for attending the first Wilton meeting,⁶⁹⁴ and it should be noted that one of the most 'militant' actions by labourers in this period of early

unionism in Wiltshire had occurred here in early May when the following handbill was circulated:

To employers of agricultural labour - Gentlemen - we beg hereby to give you notice that we, the labourers of Shrewton, Maddington and neighbouring parishes, require an advance of 5s a week wages, nine hours a day, and 4d an hour for extra time beyond nine hours a day, and respectfully to say that unless we obtain this we shall seek employment elsewhere - Signed on behalf of the men of the above parishes - Labourer. 695

Fitzmaurice had told those at the Lineham meeting that they should act 'more wisely' than these labourers with their 'extreme demands'.⁶⁹⁶

The principal demands at the Wilton meetings were for an increase in wages to 2s a day, rising to 3s a day at harvest and for mowing and piece work; allotment and cottage rents to remain the same and cottages to be rented direct from the landlord; and for a nine hour day (industrial workers had won this in 1870). Demands concerning hours of work and wage rates were therefore more specific than those of the Association. Tutt also complained about the use of machinery at harvest time.⁶⁹⁷

The N.A.L.U. in general recognised the fact that the potential for strong union support in Wiltshire was not promising. Among N.A.L.U. delegates there seems to have been the idea that they were 'colonising' the county by gradually working their way in from the outskirts. Edwin Pill, a member of the N.A.L.U. Executive Council and the most prominent Union delegate in Wiltshire, sent regular reports of his progress to the Labourers' Union Chronicle. In June 1873 he wrote:

The farmers in these parts said that the Union agitation would not visit such remote villages as those in the middle of this county; but they are greatly mistaken, for the Union intends embracing this county as well as the adjoining ones. If there is one county more than another that needs the National Agricultural Labourers Union, it certainly is Wiltshire. No doubt that when the NALU is better understood, the men will shake off that slavish fear which enthrals them. 698

But by October 1873 there were still parishes in Wiltshire where the N.A.L.U. was unheard of. The labourers of Poulshot, for instance, were said to be 'quite ignorant' of the movement, and between Lavington and Upavon 'many of the men had never before heard of the Union'.⁶⁹⁹

Apart from the early union activity already considered, meetings in 1872 were confined to the eastern edge of the county in the parishes of Ramsbury, Winterslow and Burbage. By early 1873 the union spirit had penetrated into the Devizes area, affecting notably the parishes of Bishops Cannings, Bromham, Poulshot and Market Lavington, and spreading as far west as Steeple Ashton. Otherwise meetings were again largely confined to the eastern edge of the county, namely in Wanborough, Aldbourne, Ramsbury, Great Bedwin, Shalbourne, Collingbourne Kingston, Upavon, Enford, Netheravon, Figheldean and Durrington. Other meetings were also held on the very outskirts of Wiltshire at Mere on the Dorset border, and in the southern tip of the county in Broad Chalk and Martin.

A South Wilts District branch of the N.A.L.U. was formed at a meeting held at Fisherton Anger on 28th July 1874, at which Arch was present.⁷⁰⁰ A North Wilts District based on Devizes also existed by 1874. The two districts were amalgamated in February 1875,⁷⁰¹ and three months later

the former Andover, North Wilts and South Wilts Districts were formed into the Salisbury District with an estimated membership of 3,000.⁷⁰² The national membership of the N.A.L.U. in 1875 was 40,000. This however represented a considerable decline from the 86,214 members which the Union boasted in 1874 before the defeats suffered during the Great Eastern Counties Lock Out of that year.⁷⁰³

Although by 1875 the N.A.L.U. had extended further into the centre of the county, the north west of Wiltshire was largely ignored by the delegates of the N.A.L.U. Perhaps it was considered unwise or unnecessary to compete with the Association, and later with the Federal Union, which had some influence in the area. Despite the N.A.L.U.'s aim to have a branch in every parish, in Wiltshire it appears to have given all its efforts to the 'Chalk', with its higher concentration of agricultural labourers. Of course, not all the parishes here responded equally to these efforts, and later we will examine the extent to which unionism gained a foothold in particular parishes.

The incidence of trade union activity should first of all be considered over the county as a whole. As with Anti-Corn Law League activity, the opponents of the N.A.L.U. were quick to brand it as being akin to Swing unrest. Clearly, both these forms of protest with their rejection of violent direct action were very different from Swing unrest and arson. However there is a correlation between trade unionism and all its forerunners. Not surprisingly, the links are most marked with Anti-Corn Law League agitation; 74% of Anti-Corn Law League parishes subsequently

had some form of trade union activity. Of links with less peaceable unrest, we find that 54% of Swing parishes subsequently had some form of trade union involvement as compared to only 23% of non-Swing parishes; while on average, incendiary fires occurred at a rate of 1.5 per trade union parish as compared to 0.9 per non-trade union parish. It was therefore comparatively rare for trade unionism to become established in a vacuum, as it were; in only 11 out of a total of 87 parishes affected by trade unionism had there been no recorded tradition of protest in the years since 1830. In our description of the 'Revolt of the Field' in Wiltshire we constantly come across parishes already considered in detail in previous sections. The fact that in the early 1870s, the violent and anonymous tradition of arson, in particular, was replaced by trade unionism points to an improvement in the labourers' conditions and bargaining power.

In Wiltshire, of course, this bargaining power was limited. The West of England Labourers' Association laid great stress on the need for migration and emigration out of rural areas. At first, Arch personally was unenthusiastic about emigration and considered the booming industrial towns provided ample employment for labourers prepared to leave the countryside. But following Arch's trip to Canada between August and October 1873, the N.A.L.U.'s policy towards emigration changed. The Canadian Government offered special assisted passages to agricultural unionist emigrants. Books of warrants were made available to union offices to be given to N.A.L.U. members in order to obtain

these special passages. The signature of Arch or a 'duly authorised' Union officer was accepted on these warrants in lieu of the magistrate's or clergyman's signature which was usually necessary to prove the applicant's suitability.⁷⁰⁴

Assistance for migration and later emigration was especially prominent in the N.A.L.U.s' programme for counties such as Wiltshire. In 1873 the Labourers Union Chronicle described emigration as 'the labourers' Best Hope'.⁷⁰⁵ Colonel Denison, a member of the Canadian Governor General's staff who had accompanied Arch on his Canadian tour, spoke at a number of union meetings in Wiltshire, both N.A.L.U. and Association. A number of labourers left Calne for Canada in February and March 1875 under these auspices, 'steady, respectable men such as England can ill afford to lose'.⁷⁰⁶ The statement of the Wiltshire N.A.L.U.'s district finances given at their annual meeting at Devizes in February 1875 showed that a total of £61 6s 11d had been spent on migration and emigration, the emphasis being principally on migration. A great burden had been put on Union finances that year by the Great Lock Out which all but broke the N.A.L.U., so it is probable that expenditure had dropped during the year.⁷⁰⁷

Inevitably, this policy meant that unionism lost some of its most committed supporters. At Enford, for instance, which had one of the best supported branches in the county, a number of members were thus lost. Following a meeting here one Saturday in October 1873 at which more than 30 men had joined the N.A.L.U., the Union delegate, Pill, had been approached by the new recruits on the Monday

and told that they had been sacked by their employer, Mr Moore. 'He asked us if we had joined the Union, and we done as you told us' the men told Pill, 'we looked him straight in the face and said, "Yes, sir, we have," then said Mr Moore "be off my ground at once and out of the cottage as well."' By 6th November the Enford Branch had arranged for the migration of ten men who had been discharged for being in the Union. Pill took them to the nearest station ten miles away and paid their fares to Wales, with money voted out of N.A.L.U. funds. On returning from the station he met the bailiff from the farm on which the ten men had worked. The bailiff complained that it had been 'inconvenient' to lose ten men all at once, and Pill warned him that all the men would leave if they were not treated better.⁷⁰⁸ Such incidents were used by the Union to their full propoganda effect. But as well as being an inconvenience to the farmers, this migration meant a loss to the Enford branch of ten of its most stalwart supporters.

Nevertheless, the N.A.L.U. was well aware that strikes were not a viable alternative in the face of opposition from the farmers to their demands. In the introduction to the Rules and Constitution of the N.A.L.U. in 1872, Arch wrote:

Let peace and moderation mark all our meetings.
 Let courtesy, firmness and fairness characterise
 all our demands. Act cautiously and advisedly,
 that no act may have to be repented or repudiated.
 Do not strike unless all other means fail you. 709

In Wiltshire, the Vicar of Wootton Rivers bore witness to the moderation of the Union movement, describing how a Union speaker urged his listeners 'to the practice of

virtue and self-improvement generally and sobriety'.⁷¹⁰

Only one strike is reported as occurring in Wiltshire in the first half of the 1870s, taking place between 18th and 24th February 1875 in the small village of Wilton-in-the-Valley in the parish of Great Bedwin. The labourers here had to work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. for 11s a week, while in the surrounding villages the hours were generally held to be 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the same wages. The labourers applied to their masters to finish work at 5 p.m. Some farmers complied but others refused. Those labourers who struck work were said to be 'non-union men'. There is no evidence to tell if they finally secured shorter hours as a result of their action.⁷¹¹

But although the N.A.L.U. urged self-control and avoided strike action where possible, it would be wrong to over-emphasise the passivity of its supporters in Wiltshire. On several occasions, both supporters and opponents of the union demonstrated their willingness to back up their views with more than words. This antagonism was far more evident in the 'Chalk', where wages were generally lower than in the 'Cheese'. Doubtless, the influential arable farmers of this area felt they had more to lose from agricultural trade unionism. As we have already seen, the N.A.L.U. which did not have the middle-class links of the Association, concentrated on this part of the county, and the farmers here bitterly resented the challenge to their all-powerful control of the labourers. Some feared the Union signalled the revival of the Swing spirit. One 'Wiltshire Farmer' with 750 acres of downland wrote thus to the local paper in

May 1872:

I have carefully noted since the strike in Warwickshire that there is a marked difference in the demeanour of the men and in the contentment which reigned here previously; and I am met day by day with sharp answers, disrespect and threatened partings, and I have no doubt that if unions are commenced in the neighbourhood some of my men would willingly join and others would be compelled to do so ... I am old enough to remember the agricultural riots in 1830-1831, and I look forward to a repetition of them. 712

Union meetings were sometimes rowdy affairs, thanks to the interruptions of hecklers and those determined to disrupt the proceedings. Such disruption was comparatively easy at open-air meetings, and most union meetings were, by necessity, held outside as no room would be made available in many villages. At Avebury for instance the Union delegates were unable even to get beds to sleep in for the night let alone a room in which to hold meetings.⁷¹³ The inability to secure rooms for meetings was a problem encountered by the N.A.L.U. all over the country. N.A.L.U. members from Littleworth in Berkshire were prosecuted early in 1873 for causing an obstruction on the Queen's highway when holding an open-air meeting. Arch held a test case meeting at Faringdon following this, and invited a number of prominent figures including the London barrister, W. Mackenzie, to attend. Summonses were issued against the most prominent men at the meeting, but this inevitably embarrassed the authorities and the case was dismissed.⁷¹⁴ Although this incident helped to clarify the legal right to hold open-air meetings, it could not prevent disruption at meetings.

At Devizes, a Union meeting addressed by Arch on

4th March 1875 had to be held around the market cross when the use of the Corn Exchange was refused by the Mayor and Corporation. The Corn Exchange, they argued, had been built principally from subscriptions by local farmers who would not have wished it to be used for labourers' union meetings. Arch's address was accompanied by heckling from 'a little knot of those Tory rowdies'.⁷¹⁵ Arch's meetings were always a prime target for hecklers. At the Fisherton meeting on 28th July 1874 there were scuffles with farmers in the crowd who were trying to shout down Arch.⁷¹⁶

Despite their commitment to peaceful agitation, union supporters were not prepared to ignore such provocation, and there is no mistaking a certain note of jubilation in accounts of their counter-attack. At Mere a Union meeting was held in the market place on a July evening in 1873. Soon after the meeting started a two-horse van arrived, driven by Mr Butler, a farmer of Gillingham in the neighbouring county of Dorset. In the van was a brass band attempting to drown the union Speakers! Two men attending the meeting, however, seized the horses and backed the van away. It was escorted out of the town accompanied by 'a crowd of hooting men and boys'. 'Notwithstanding the rapidity of the ignominious retreat', the Labourers' Union Chronicle reported, 'the weaker party sustained some rather severe contusions on their persons as well as their instruments'.⁷¹⁷

At Shalbourne in June 1873 a Union delegate named Edmonds complained of 'a very stormy meeting caused by a drunken farmer and a drunken miller, who used very abusive

language'.⁷¹⁸ A further meeting held here on 16th July was a considerable success for the Union. Alluding to the disruption at the previous meeting, Edmonds wrote that 'a threat had been made for this meeting, but as a certain incident happened to our opponent (known to the Shalbourne people) he did not carry out his threat'.⁷¹⁹

The position of the union in Wiltshire became more precarious in 1874 following the Great Eastern Counties Lock Out. This was a major set-back to the fortunes both of the N.A.L.U. and the Federal Union, dealing a serious blow to funds and membership. The Federal Union was forced to compromise with the farmers' defence association in May, and the N.A.L.U., too, had to admit defeat two months later by advising those locked out to migrate or rely on their own resources as dispute pay would be ended in August.⁷²⁰

Following the blow, the N.A.L.U. became a stronger advocate of emigration and Arch personally began to place his hopes in the extension of the franchise to the agricultural labourer. Wiltshire was not directly affected by the Lock Out, although inevitably the presence in the county in May of locked out Suffolk labourers seeking work must have dampened enthusiasm for the union here.⁷²¹ Many branches declined seriously and had to be built up again in 1875.

Although there was no widespread move in Wiltshire to lock out unionist labourers, there was something of a backlash against the union. In January 1874 three Union delegates, including Edwin Pill and an agricultural labourer of Netheravon, were charged with riotous assembly at an evening meeting in Ludgershall. Following threats of

disruption by anti-unionists, the four delegates together with many of the agricultural labourers present carried sticks for self-defence. Pill asserted that he had been 'determined to hold a meeting and did not care for the magistrates or the police ... They did not want the police to protect them as they had brought their own police'.⁷²² The N.A.L.U.'s London solicitor, Straight, defended the four by pointing out that the Union's opponents were responsible for any disturbance. There was no evidence that the four had actually used any physical violence, and at the Wiltshire Lent Assizes they were acquitted, although not without a severe reprimand from the judge for failing to hold meetings 'under proper circumstances and at a proper time'.⁷²³ As with the Tolpuddle labourers, the holding of meetings at night was still taken as an indication of sinister intentions.

Further legal action was taken against the Union in Wiltshire in 1874. Charles Spreadbury, agent for the N.A.L.U. at Durrington, was fined £10 and bound over to keep the peace for a year for using insulting language towards James Weeks in February. Spreadbury had been trying without success to persuade Weeks to join the Union, and had accused Weeks of being 'a snake in the grass' and 'an old backslider'.⁷²⁴

In April, Walter Smeath of Amesbury, a weekly hired labourer who had spent all his life in the employ of Mr Long, was charged at the Petty Sessions with breach of contract. Smeath had left his work when Long, who the week before had reduced wages from 12s to 11s a week, had

told his protesting workforce that he would increase wages to 12s again only if they worked a ten hour day. Long had given the labourers five minutes to consider his offer, and Smeath, thinking he would not be needed if he refused these terms, had left the farm immediately. He was found guilty of breach of contract and ordered to forfeit a day's wages.⁷²⁵

Further damage was done to the prestige of the N.A.L.U. by the split in 1875 which led to the formation of the breakaway National Farm Labourers' Union, led by Matthew Vincent, the proprietor of the Labourers' Union Chronicle. The year 1875 should have been one for trying to recoup the losses of the previous year, when many Wiltshire branches had fallen off badly and arrears of union dues were common. Some recovery was evident in 1875, although the labourers now faced the additional confusion of the N.A.L.U. split. Some Wiltshire branches went over to the National Farm Labourers' Union wholesale. At Shrewton meetings of the new Farm Labourers' Union branch were disrupted by remnants of the old N.A.L.U. branch.⁷²⁶ The Labourers' Union Chronicle was now the paper of the Farm Labourers' Union, and the N.A.L.U. was forced to establish a new newspaper, the English Labourer, which was issued from June 1875 under the editorship of Howard Evans. N.A.L.U. delegates seemed to spend more time extolling the virtues of the English Labourer over the well-established Labourers' Union Chronicle than developing the programme of the Union.⁷²⁷

Such a state of affairs cannot have enhanced the reputation of agricultural trade unionism in Wiltshire, where progress anyway was faltering. It would have been

too much to expect the labourers, who had little practice of successful self-organisation, to turn immediately and wholeheartedly to trade unionism. The example of the Broad Chalk branch illustrates the fluctuations in fortune of the N.A.L.U. in Wiltshire. In the spring of 1874 Broad Chalk had a comparatively strong branch with £6 12s 1d in Union dues. Instead of sending it to the district secretary, however, the branch members divided up the money amongst themselves and spent it in the public house. The labourers here clearly saw no virtue in being part of a national organisation which took their money but provided little tangible benefit. By the following year in fact they seemed 'determined not to have the Union' and only two staunch Union members still existed in the parish.⁷²⁸

As we have already noted, many of the parishes in which trade unionism flourished had some tradition of collective protest. The example of Bremhill and other Anti-Corn Law League parishes has been mentioned. Bromham, too, where trade union activity was in evidence in 1873, had 'a very good substantial Branch' by 1875. Bearing in mind the political background of Chartist agitation and Bromham's 'little legislature' in the 1830s,⁷²⁹ it is significant that as early as 1873 a Bromham Union meeting drew up a petition 'for the extension of the franchise to the labourers'.⁷³⁰

West Lavington was another parish with a tradition of both individual and collective protest, including arson, cattle maiming, protests over poor relief and strikes. A feature of self-help among the labourers here which we have not so far mentioned was a pig insurance society. 'The

Providence Insurance Society against the loss of a pig by premature death, amongst working men' had been founded in 1859 and had seventy members by 1862. Each member paid 6d entrance fee for one pig and 6d for every additional pig, and monthly subscriptions of 2d for one pig with an extra 1d per month for each additional pig.⁷³¹ The Society by all accounts was well managed, and in it may be seen a forerunner of the spirit which was to encourage West Lavington men to support the Union.

But trade unionism also gained a foothold in parishes with no recent tradition of collective action. Edington, for instance, one of the most prominent arson parishes in the county in this period, developed one of the strongest N.A.L.U. branches with 130 members by May 1875 (although it had struggled through the winter of 1874 with only 17 members).

Two of the best branches in Wiltshire were in parishes which we have not yet looked at in detail, Enford and Netheravon, although both had experienced some unrest in the previous forty years. Both parishes, which are neighbours, lie on the north edge of Salisbury Plain and in the nineteenth century were classic 'Chalk' parishes with the main settlement along the River Avon. Both were largely devoted to 'sheep and corn' husbandry.

The Hicks-Beach family held a large sporting estate in Netheravon which was noted for hare-coursing.⁷³² Poaching offences were common in both Enford and Netheravon.

Between 1836 and 1899 much of the parish of Enford formed the estate of Sir Edmund Antrobus.⁷³³

Property in both parishes was therefore largely consolidated in the hands of prominent landowners with the capital to provide that investment in agriculture which was a feature of this period. Farms were large and there were very few smallholdings. Of the 16 resident farmers in the two parishes in 1871, 6 had farms of over 1,000 acres, and apart from 4 holdings of between 20 and 40 acres, the next smallest farm was 400 acres.⁷³⁴

Agriculture was still the overwhelmingly predominant occupation in 1871. In Enford, in particular, an astounding 84% of the occupied male population was engaged in agriculture; occupations in Netheravon were a little more diverse although agriculture still accounted for 65% of the male population in employment. The social hierarchy of these villages was therefore sharply and rigidly divided between the vast majority of agricultural labourers and a handful of rich and powerful farmers and landowners. It was a distinction which was much clearer than in most of the parishes we have so far considered, and one which evidently made for fertile ground for the Union.

Both parishes had been involved in Swing rioting; indeed in Enford arson fires and the destruction of 'agricultural implements' were reported in the previous winter of 1829.⁷³⁵ Machine breaking mobs attacked farms in both parishes in November 1830. Enford was one of the worst-off parishes in the Pewsey Poor Law Union in the 1830s and 1840s. The Board of Guardians complained in 1836 that it caused more problems than all the other parishes in the Union put together, and there was said to be 'a spirit of

discord reigning in the parish'.⁷³⁶ Enford also experienced at least five incendiary fires between 1830 and 1859.⁷³⁷

The farmers of these parishes put up strong opposition to the N.A.L.U. Apart from the incident which we have already noted, in October 1873, when ten union men were forced to migrate to Wales, one Union member, James Hall (who was also a local nonconformist preacher) was turned out of his house after 21 years' service for the farmer, Andrew Baden. According to the Labourers' Union Chronicle, Baden had asked the police to ascertain if Hall or his son were Union members, and Baden himself had told Hall that if only his son was in the Union, Hall himself could stay on provided he turned his son out of the house.⁷³⁸ Despite intimidation, however, the men here remained by and large loyal to the Union; 'the men are of the right mettle here ... they don't mean to rest till all the men as far as Amesbury are in the Union', reported the Labourers' Union Chronicle.⁷³⁹

It is notable that many prominent N.A.L.U. parishes were those which had a recent past history of distress; a past history which must have made their labouring populations more acutely aware of gradual advances, and which appears to have made up for any lack of experience in collective action (although such experience certainly played a role in those parishes where such a tradition existed). A past history of distress alone, however, was not a sufficiently fertile seed bed for trade unionism. Urchfont for instance remained untouched by the 'Revolt of the Field', perhaps because its population was still too demoralised even in 1871 when it

was reported that forty men in the parish were without work and in 'lamentably great destitution'.⁷⁴⁰

Many of the N.A.L.U. Parishes - Edington, West Lavington, Enford, Netheravon - were in the heartland of Wiltshire's arable farm land, a sector which in reality had benefited less fundamentally from the agricultural developments of 'high farming' than the dairying and livestock-rearing north of the county, and where farmers were more fearful of anything which threatened their profits, as Jefferies had commented in 1872. It seems reasonable to assume that the labourers of this region were also more conscious that the attitude of the farmers might frustrate their slowly awakening aspirations and this fear committed them all the more to trade unionism. It is significant that there was a marked revival in some branches following 1874, despite the difficulties in which the N.A.L.U. found itself nationally. Wage rises were common in Wiltshire in 1872 and 1873, sometimes being conceded by the farmers specifically to pre-empt support for the Union. Annual labour payments on Manor Farm in Bremhill, for instance, rose to £242 in 1871/72 and reached a peak of nearly £265 in 1873/74 before falling the following year to just under £224.⁷⁴¹ When many wage rises were reversed following the good harvest of 1874 and a fall in the price of wheat,⁷⁴² some labourers turned belatedly to the Union in their disappointment. In West Lavington, for instance, the N.A.L.U. branch had largely collapsed when the farmers had agreed to a wage rise, and it was only kept together by the secretary and a few members. In March 1875, however, the farmers

threatened their labourers with either a reduction in wages by 1s a week, or an increase in hours by one hour each day. Subsequently, at least 28 more labourers joined the Union branch which thus experienced a short-lived revival. Unfortunately for the labourers, the revival came too late. The tide was already turning against them. The West Lavington branch secretary and treasurer were both dismissed, and left for the north country.⁷⁴³ Such setbacks became more widespread in 1875. In December of that year even the men of Enford were forced to accept a wage cut.⁷⁴⁴

Cases of arson in Wiltshire, ominously, began to rise again in 1874. Following only one arson incident recorded in 1873 (in Westbury), there were five fires in 1874. One of these fires in Bradford (in an area largely untouched by agricultural trade unionism), was the work of an unemployed farm labourer who fired the rick of a farmer from whom the labourer had received 'a rough answer' when he asked for work.⁷⁴⁵ Arson and violent protest were not to make a wholesale reappearance in Wiltshire, however. The expectations of the labourers and improvements in their bargaining power were only partial, and subject to every fluctuation in the agricultural market and the economic fortunes of the farmer. There had nevertheless been real improvements. The number of agricultural labourers had declined and there were more opportunities for others to leave. 'To a considerable degree the labourer was the instrument of his own ultimate improvement both by leaving the land which would not yield him a reasonable livelihood, and by forming effective trade-unions for those who stayed

behind'.⁷⁴⁶ Protest no longer found expression solely in anonymous and inarticulate acts of attrition. The trade union weapon had proved limited. But still trade unionism had taken root, and although it was not to return to Wiltshire in any strength for nearly twenty years, it had become established among the labourers as an accepted means of protest.

CONCLUSION

Rural society in the period 1830-1875 was by no means as uniform or unchanging as might at first be imagined. In Wiltshire, the most basic contrast was between the arable 'Chalk' and the dairying 'Cheese' regions, where a number of distinct social and economic conditions reflected the geographical and agricultural differences. Although there were large landed estates on both 'Chalk' and 'Cheese', land holdings were larger, on average, on the 'Chalk' where farmers in general were more prosperous and influential than the small farmers of the more backward 'Cheese'. By the 1870s however, the 'Chalk' was beginning to face serious economic difficulties, while the economy of the 'Cheese' was increasingly buoyant.

Throughout the period agriculture was the chief source of employment, not reaching a peak until the 1851 Census when 52.3% of the county's adult occupied male population was directly employed in the cultivation of the land. However with the growth in population which had been particularly marked in the early decades of the century, the supply of labour had outstripped the demands of agriculture and its service industries. There were few alternative sources of employment, the woollen textile manufactories of the county having largely declined by the 1820s. Unemployment and underemployment therefore lay at the heart of the rural problem in this period. There were considerable obstacles preventing the poor from moving away to find work elsewhere, and migration and emigration was sponsored in

turn both by Poor Law Unions and the agricultural trade unions.

Agricultural employment tended to be very seasonal in nature especially on arable farms, and in the winter months many were thrown out of work. Employment prospects were also affected by the farmer's confidence in the state of the market which influenced the level of cultivation year by year. The attitude of individual farmers and landowners was therefore an important element in determining the extent to which the labourer was protected from the effects of precarious employment prospects. Distress tended to be worst in the 'open' parishes where there were no paternalistic landowners and farmers willing and able to alleviate the situation. In particular, distress was often most in evidence in the large villages of the 'Chalk', and here the labouring population was at its most militant. In the 'Cheese', the social gulf between labourer and farmer was less wide. Moreover it was quite common for labourers to 'beat out' in the summer months, leaving their native parish for more lucrative employment in the arable areas. This gave many a 'Cheese' labourer a greater sense of independence than his counterpart on the 'Chalk', and meant that he was less likely to attribute his grievances to individual farmers.

Within every parish there were, of course, those labourers, notably the specialists such as milkers, shepherds and ploughmen, who could depend on regular employment with one farmer for most of their working lives. But the very existence of more casually employed labourers

increased the insecurity and subservience of the whole labouring population, and wages and living standards reflected this situation. There was too a high dependence on poor relief and charity.

A major change in poor law administration occurred in this period in the form of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act of 1834 which aimed to replace outrelief to the able-bodied by indoor relief in workhouses. Among the poor there was universal fear of the workhouse, and the period marking the introduction of the new system was one of great social tension. In fact there continued to be considerable local variation in poor law administration, and outdoor relief for the able-bodied in some form or other was by no means eliminated. The creation of Poor Law Unions with Boards of Guardians also enabled those landowners who were prepared to take advantage of the new system to influence affairs throughout the area and not just in those parishes in which they had a direct interest.

There were local variations too in the provision of charity, which included the encouragement of self-help and schemes to enable complete removal from the county, as well as direct hand-outs. Those who lived near the large landed estates were most likely to feel the benefit of charitable enterprises.

The extent of unemployment together with the social subservience of the labouring population certainly put constraints on the effective expression of grievances through open, collective protest. For much of the period, discontent was expressed through the anonymous acts of what

can best be described as rural terrorists, through crimes such as arson, the maiming of livestock, threatening letters and, more arguably, poaching and theft. It is impossible to judge accurately the extent and true motivation of these crimes since much of it remained undetected or was dealt with, not through formal channels of justice, but by landowners and farmers using their power as employers and landlords to punish wrongdoers or regulate standards of behaviour as necessary. It is also difficult to detect a conscious element of protest in the less obviously vengeful crimes of poaching and theft of agricultural produce, although there is evidence to suggest that many of the rural population felt they were entitled to take a share of the earth's produce.

Contemporary views about poaching were complicated by the fact that some farmers, resenting the damage done to their crops by the game which they often had no legal right to destroy, would side with the labourer against the landowner who held the sporting rights to the land.

A number of contemporaries, most notably those linked with the legal process in some form, were anxious to explode the myth that the rural population was overwhelmingly law-abiding and compliant. They saw a link between crimes such as petty theft and poaching and the extent of rural distress, noting an increase in such crime in periods of high unemployment. In the 1840s, two of the most distressed divisions in the county, those of Devizes and Marlborough - both of which were purely agricultural - were the most consistently lawless; while the major rural crimes certainly

appear to have been on the decline everywhere after mid-century, when living standards began to show improvement.

The victims of crime were generally unwilling to admit that their own tenants or employees could be implicated in crime or unrest, and blamed instead outsiders such as gipsies and vagrants, or a small group of hardened criminals whom, they claimed, were shunned by the majority of the law-abiding labourers. But in practice the steps they took against the whole labouring population in response to particular outrages suggests they suspected a wider complicity or fellow felling with the poacher and arsonist.

Although the farmer and landowner traditionally had their own informal means of fighting crime, it was becoming increasingly apparent by this period that additional, formal means of law enforcement were necessary. In 1839 Wiltshire became the first English county to establish a police force. The police were initially highly unpopular with the majority of society, and opposition to the police formed another aspect of protest in the 1840s. The rural crime rate was not significantly affected by the introduction of the police force.

The period 1830-1875 began with the Swing Riots, a particularly widespread and serious outbreak of rural unrest which affected much of south and east England. The predominant feature of the Riots was the destruction of the threshing machines which seemed to threaten one of the only sources of winter employment for many labourers in the corn growing regions. The timing of the Riots was partly determined by the agricultural depression which undermined

many farmers' belief in the benefit of labour saving machinery, while allowing them to use the labourers' very real distress to their own advantage as a means of highlighting their own grievances over tithes and high rents.

Among the labourers' grievances were low wages and low scales of poor relief. The Riots certainly gave impetus to poor law reform, and the outlawing of the 'Speenhamland' system of supplementing wages out of the poor rates. The evidence suggests however that the form which poor relief took was not the major grievance so much as the sheer physical want resulting from an inadequate income. Certainly, the subsequent re-establishment of a scale system in Tisbury in 1838 caused no revival of the violence which had been a feature of the parish during the Swing Riots.

The political crisis which Wellington's Government was facing in the autumn of 1830 played a part in allowing rioting to spread, dulling the speed and decisiveness of the authorities' initial response to unrest. The evidence of the Riots in Wiltshire however only partially reinforces Charlesworth's theory that the timing and 'spatial diffusion' of rioting reflected the presence of radicals who were taking advantage of the crisis to mobilise their neighbours into action. There does not appear to have been a significant radical influence on the Wiltshire rioters, and there is more evidence to suggest that it was the farmers who were surreptitiously encouraging the rioters in their machine breaking.

Indeed, the response of local farmers and landowners

appears to have been crucial in determining the pattern of unrest. A timely concession to the labourers could preempt rioting, while a farmer or landowner who steadfastly refused to capitulate to a group of machine breakers could quickly inflame them to violence. Thus although Swing rioting affected some of the most distressed and divided parishes which continued to experience unrest after 1830, paradoxically it also affected some of those parishes which came under the influence of enterprising landowners and farmers who took an active interest in trying to help the poor, and which after 1830 were comparatively peaceful. On the other hand some of the most neglected and distressed parishes which figured prominently in subsequent troubles temporarily escaped upheaval on this occasion.

Unlike the short, sharp burst of agricultural machine breaking which was almost exclusively confined to the period of the Swing Riots, arson as a form of rural protest was a more extensive phenomenon both in the area and the period it covered. However, in Wiltshire, arson never reached seriously alarming proportions acting rather as a persistent irritant.

The wilful burning of agricultural property was virtually unknown as a crime in the county before 1830, although between 1830 and 1875 there were at least 332 incendiary fires and possibly a considerable number more which were dismissed as accidental or never reported. Of those fires for which evidence of specific motives exists, nearly three-quarters were either clear acts of protest or revenge, usually against individual farmers or poor law

officials, or were started as a means of being imprisoned in order to find food and shelter or escape the workhouse. At least three of the five men hanged for this crime in the county were very young, had already had some involvement with crime or violent unrest and gave the impression of being greatly disaffected with the society in which they lived.

Arson was the common revenge threatened in anonymous letters as retribution for grievances such as low wages or the employment of 'outsiders', thus reminding us that, as well as being a form of revenge, arson could act as a tool of intimidation - one of the only effective 'bargaining' tactics available to the labourer.

Further indications of the causes of arson may be gained by placing the fires in the political or economic context in which they occurred. A number of fires coincided with the introduction of the new system of poor relief and with Chartist agitation. Although arson was not markedly worse in either 'Chalk' or 'Cheese', it was particularly widespread in the parishes surrounding the decaying textile manufacturing towns in the west of the county. Over the period as a whole, incendiary fires were more frequent in years of falling grain prices, and hence, by implication, in years of rising unemployment. They were also a more frequent occurrence in the winter than the summer months, when there was more unemployment. A study of the four parishes in Wiltshire with the highest number of incendiary fires over the period tends to reinforce the view of arson as stemming from grievances associated with unemployment,

while at the same time highlighting how parochial this crime generally was as a form of protest.

Incendiary fires were often isolated acts of protest. But on occasions they also formed part of a wider movement such as protests over poor relief, in the early 1830s, when labourers also went in deputation to Petty Sessions, boycotted Church services, occupied vestries or petitioned Parliament. With the Poor Law (Amendment) Act, unrest was exacerbated by the popular belief that the local magistrates no longer had any effective role in disputes over poor relief. This was a crucial factor in parishes such as many of those in the Devizes area, where, in the absence of influential resident landowners, the poor often appealed to the magistrates as arbitrators.

Arson in general appeared to be more common in those parishes where landownership was fragmented, and the local population was uncared-for and unregulated. In those parishes which were part of large landed estates but where arson was nevertheless widespread, it is often found that the landowner was financially embarrassed, such being the case with the Watson-Taylor family and the Marquis of Ailesbury.

On the other hand, in those parishes which came under the influence of wealthy and benevolent landowners, protest was able to develop more peaceably, for instance through the Anti-Corn Law League meetings which took place principally in the 'Cheese'. The Anti-Corn Law League won very little support in the rural south of England. Significantly, the small area in which it did flourish in

Wiltshire was one which was more sensitive to the industrial market than the corn growing 'Chalk', and a notable proportion of those who took part in meetings were artisans, professional men and dissenting preachers. However nearly three-quarters of those known to have spoken at meetings were agricultural labourers or their wives, although a number of these had at one time worked in other trades or industries. Many were regarded as steady workers, and the average age of all speakers was older than the average age of known Swing rioters and arsonists. A significant core of the speakers were near neighbours living in a small group of hamlets in the parishes of Bremhill, Lineham, Hilmarton and Christian Malford, an area where the Anglican church was somewhat weak at the time of the meetings, and where the labourers' cottages were situated at some distance from the isolated farmhouses.

Attempts were made by opponents of the free trade movement to link these meetings with more lawless protests such as incendiary fires and the attempted murder of a Lineham farmer in 1838. There is little evidence to support this accusation, and League supporters were anxious to show that they were not 'troublemakers'. However the fact that a greater than average number of League parishes were at one time affected by Swing rioting and arson suggests that there were links between the forms of protest, if not in the participants then in the social conditions which caused the unrest.

The form which protest took in this area in the 1840s was very much a reflection of local conditions.

The smaller farms and narrower social distinction between labourer and farmer, the proximity to the Great Western Railway line and the population's recent contact with railway labourers, the practice of 'beating out' and the proximity to declining textile manufactories all contributed to the outlook of the agricultural population in this area. Moreover, despite considerable poverty and distress, the area benefited from the efforts of the resident landowner, Lord Lansdowne, to provide the poor with employment and charity. The Calne Board of Guardians under the influence of Lansdowne's agent also took a more pragmatic and generous approach to the provision of relief than was common elsewhere in the county. There thus developed in this area a non-violent spirit of protest which exhibited little antagonism to the existing social order. This diversification in the tradition of protest which, by the 1840s coincided, broadly speaking, with the division between 'Chalk' and 'Cheese', was more clearly in evidence during the 'Revolt of the Field' in the 1870s.

Prior to the 1870s, strikes and trade unionism among agricultural labourers were very limited. National governments were highly averse to interfering with wage levels, and a move by some magistrates during the Swing Riots to prevent rioting by recommending a wage rise was very quickly suppressed. But despite the emphasis placed on the importance of wage rates being allowed to find their 'natural' level, unofficial combinations of farmers existed to keep labourers' wages uniformly low.

The few strikes which did occur fell into two

categories: strikes to secure a wage rise and strikes aimed at preventing a wage cut. In the first category were harvest strikes, and a number of strikes which occurred in 1853 when there was a general upward move in wages. The second type of strike aimed at preventing a wage cut, appears to have been partly encouraged by the farmers as a means of putting pressure on the landowner to reduce rents, and to some extent mirrors the events of the Swing Riots in suggesting a greater complicity by farmers in labourers' unrest than might be thought from a superficial examination.

Attempts at forming trade unions were even more rare than strikes, being limited in Wiltshire to a short-lived Labourers' Protection Society in 1860 in Highworth, a large parish with a diverse occupational structure and a previous tradition of unrest.

By the time agricultural trade unionism began to become established in the country in the early 1870s, the economic and social developments of the previous decades had served to improve the conditions of the rural labouring population if only to a limited extent. Such improvements were less marked in Wiltshire than counties nearer to industrial centres, and consequently the 'Revolt of the Field' affected the county comparatively slowly.

There were two strands of trade unionism in Wiltshire. The West of England Labourers' Association was in the forefront of trade union activity in the county, operating in an area broadly similar to that in which Anti-Corn Law League activity had flourished. The Association was partially dependent for its success on the participation of

town workers and middle and upper class supporters such as Edmond Fitzmaurice, the M.P. and brother to the Marquis of Lansdowne. The Association's programme did not differ greatly from that of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. Neither favoured the strike as a weapon and both laid emphasis on the importance of migration and emigration. However the Association, not surprisingly, laid less emphasis on the interests of the agricultural labourer as a class. It also advocated the extension of the allotment system and even the creation of small owner-occupiers, reflecting the agricultural customs of the 'Cheese'.

The N.A.L.U. in comparison was far more successful in the large villages of the 'Chalk' with its extensive farmers and high concentration of agricultural labourers. Even so, the N.A.L.U. had something of a struggle to establish itself, and there was noticeably more antagonism between the Union and local farmers, occasionally breaking out into violence.

Trade unionism in general was more likely to thrive in parishes which had experienced some unrest in the previous four decades. The links were most marked with parishes which had experienced Anti-Corn Law League activity, although the small number of parishes involved in the latter might distort the correlation. Trade union activity was also more likely to occur in Swing parishes, and to a lesser extent, parishes which had experienced incendiary fires. Trade unionism rarely occurred in parishes which had no previous tradition of protest, especially collective protest,

in some form.

By 1875, the effects of the extensive lock-out in the eastern counties, and divisions within the N.A.L.U. were taking their toll on the effectiveness of agricultural trade unionism. Ironically it was at this inauspicious time that trade unionism in Wiltshire seemed to revive following a comparatively barren period when farmers had often succeeded in pre-empting trade union activity by awarding a wage rise. By the end of 1875 however, even those labourers in the strongest union branches had been forced to accept a wage cut.

Nevertheless, no matter how short-lived the movement had been, agricultural trade unionism had made its mark on Wiltshire, eclipsing previous methods of protest although at the same time apparently drawing on the earlier experience. In particular, it eclipsed the rural terror tactics to which the rural poor had had to turn, following the defeat of the Swing Riots, as the only effective way of expressing their grievances.

APPENDIX 1: WINTER UNEMPLOYMENT, BETWEEN LADY DAY 1832 AND
LADY DAY 1835

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Alderbury	8 - 10	1 in 77
Alderton	3 - 4	1 in 61
All Cannings	20 - 24	1 in 30
Alton Barnes	0	-
Alton Priors	4 - 5	1 in 45
Amesbury	2 - 10	1 in 157
Ansty	0	-
Ashton Keynes	20	1 in 46
Avebury	1	1 in 747
Barford St Martin	4 - 5	1 in 127
Baverstock	3 - 4	1 in 47
Beechingstoke	1 - 2	1 in 105
Berwick St James	0	-
Berwick St John	5 - 6	1 in 77
Berwick St Leonard	0	-
Berwick Bassett	0	-
Biddestone St Nicholas	1 - 2	1 in 282
Bishops Cannings	40 - 50	1 in 30
Bishopstone (nr Swindon)	10 - 15	1 in 55
Bishopstone (nr Wilton)	30	1 in 22
Bishopstrow	6 - 8	1 in 40
Blunsden St Andrew	3	1 in 24
Bowerchalk	8 - 9	1 in 43
Box	12 - 15	1 in 115
Boyton	0	-
Braydon (tith)	1 - 2	1 in 43
Bremilham	0	-
Brimslade & Sth Savernake	0	-
Brinkworth	40 - 60	1 in 28
Britford	10	1 in 84
Brixton Deverell	0	-
Broad Chalk	12	1 in 66
Broad Hinton	30 - 40	1 in 20
Brokenborough	6 - 8	1 in 40
Bromham	20 - 30	1 in 62
Bulford	2	1 in 145
Bulkington	4 - 5	1 in 55
Burbage	8 - 10	1 in 160
Burcombe	0	-
Castle Combe	3 - 4	1 in 187
Castle Eaton	3 - 4	1 in 86
Charlton (nr Pewsey)	1 - 2	1 in 122

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Charlton (nr Malmesbury)	5 - 6	1 in 126
Chicklade	0	-
Chilmark	0	-
Chippenham	8 - 10	1 in 481
Chirton	7 - 8	1 in 54
Chiseldon	30 - 40	1 in 33
Chitterne All Saints	8 - 10	1 in 42
Chitterne St Mary	2 - 3	1 in 73
Chittoe (tith)	3 - 4	1 in 63
Christian Malford	12	1 in 82
Cholderton	0	-
Clyffe Pypard	15 - 20	1 in 21
Codford St Mary	6 - 8	1 in 41
Codford St Peter	1 - 2	1 in 258
Colerne	8 - 10	1 in 103
Collingbourne Ducis	5 - 6	1 in 83
Collingbourne Kingston	30	1 in 30
Compton Chamberlayne	8 - 10	1 in 34
Corsham	18 - 20	1 in 155
Corsley	30 - 40	1 in 49
Cricklade St Mary	6 - 8	1 in 63
Cricklade St Sampson	40 - 50	1 in 27
Crudwell	2 - 3	1 in 242
Dauntsey	5 - 6	1 in 102
Devizes St James (chap)	20	1 in 88
Devizes St John	20	1 in 99
Devizes St Mary	2	1 in 1294
Dinton	0	-
Ditteridge	2	1 in 41
Donheard St Andrew	30	1 in 27
Donhead St Mary	80 - 90	1 in 18
Downton	150	1 in 23
Draycot Cerne	4 - 5	1 in 40
Draycot Foliat	2 - 3	1 in 67
Durnford	10 - 12	1 in 44
Durrington	4 - 8	1 in 78
East Coulston	2 - 3	1 in 41
Easterton (tith)	13 - 14	1 in 31
East Kennett	0	-
East Knoyle	20 - 30	1 in 41
Easton	4	1 in 12
Ebbesbourne	'few'	?
Edington	20	1 in 56
Eisey	3 - 4	1 in 48
Enford	4 - 5	1 in 17

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Erlestoke	3	1 in 140
Etchilhampton	6	1 in 45
Everley	1 - 2	1 in 234
Fifield Brabant	'very few'	?
Figheledean	1 - 2	1 in 354
Fisherton Anger	3 - 4	1 in 427
Fisherton Delamere	0	-
Fonthill Bishop	0	-
Fonthill Gifford	9 - 10	1 in 46
Fovant	10 - 12	1 in 50
Fugglestone		
St Peter	5 - 6	1 in 94
Garsden	0	-
Great Cheverell	40	1 in 14
Great Somerford	15 - 20	1 in 29
Great Wishford	6	1 in 60
Grittleton	0	-
Hannington	0	-
Hankerton	3 - 4	1 in 118
Hardenhuish	0	-
Heytesbury	40	1 in 35
Highworth	40 - 70	1 in 57
Hill Deverell	2	1 in 65
Hilperton	3 - 4	1 in 305
Hindon	40	1 in 23
Hinton Parva	10 - 15	1 in 25
Homington	2 - 3	1 in 80
Horningsham	30 - 40	1 in 38
Huish	0	-
Hullavington	7 - 8	1 in 75
Idminston	5 - 6	1 in 94
Imber	8 - 10	1 in 45
Keevil	8 - 10	1 in 49
Kington St Michael	10 - 12	1 in 48
Knook	3 - 4	1 in 80
Lacock	Average 16 (sometimes 70)	1 in 103
Langley Burrell	8 - 10	1 in 49
Latton	6	1 in 60
Laverstock & Ford	5 - 6	1 in 62
Leigh Delamere	0	-
Liddiard Millicent	6	1 in 68
Liddiard Tregoze	6 - 8	1 in 109
Liddington	10 - 15	1 in 32
Lineham	10	1 in 103
Little Cheverell	'few'	?
Little Somerford	3 - 4	1 in 107
Littleton Drew	3 - 4	1 in 51
Longbridge		
Deverell	15 - 20	1 in 75
Luckington	0	-
Maddington	4 - 5	1 in 85
Maiden Bradley	6	1 in 95

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Malmesbury Abbey	0	-
Malmesbury St Paul	8 - 10 ('has been 40')	1 in 241
Malmesbury		
Westport	10 - 12	1 in 117
Manningford Abbots	0	-
Manningford Bohün	6	1 in 40
Manningford Bruce	0	-
Marden	0	-
Market		
Lavington	6 - 8	1 in 217
Marlborough		
St Mary	5 - 6	1 in 336
Marlborough		
St Peter	8 - 10	1 in 175
Marston (tith)	5 - 6	1 in 32
Melksham	50	1 in 94
Mere	50 - 60	1 in 49
Mildenhall	8 - 10	1 in 47
Milford	10 - 12	1 in 47
Milton Lilburne	8 - 10	1 in 73
Minty	5 - 6	1 in 106
Monkton Deverell	2 - 3	1 in 82
Netheravon	0	-
Nettleton	4 - 5	1 in 100
North Bradley	90 - 100	1 in 11
North Newnton	8 - 10	1 in 35
North Wraxall	4 - 5	1 in 92
Norton Bavant	0	-
Oaksey	4 - 5	1 in 110
Odstock	0	-
Ogbourne St Andrew	15 - 20	1 in 28
Ogbourne St George	15 - 20	1 in 31
Orcheston		
St George	1 - 2	1 in 146
Orcheston St Mary	2	1 in 67
Patney	0	-
Pewsey	30	1 in 53
Pewsham	0	-
Pitton & Farley	20	1 in 32
Potterne	20 - 30	1 in 47
Poulshot	4	1 in 87
Preshute	17	1 in 45
Purton	40	1 in 43
Rodbourne Cheney	8 - 10	1 in 61
Rowde	6 - 7	1 in 156
Rushall	7 - 8	1 in 66
Savernake North	1 - 2	1 in 73
Seagry	8 - 10	1 in 26
Sedgehill	1 - 2	1 in 157
Seend	14 - 15	1 in 79
Semington	4 - 5	1 in 88
Semly	'64 previous winter'	1 in 11
Sherston Magna	20 - 30	1 in 54

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Sherston Pinkney	2	1 in 61
Shrewton	5 - 6	1 in 89
Slaughterford	0	-
Sopworth	4 - 5	1 in 49
South Newton	5 - 6	1 in 103
Stanton		
Fitzwarren	2 - 3	1 in 75
Stanton		
St Bernard	4	1 in 80
Stanton		
St Quinton	0	-
Stapleford	4 - 5	1 in 75
Steeple Ashton	'few'	?
Steeple Langford	3 - 10	1 in 90
Stert (chap)	2	1 in 93
Stourton	10 - 12	1 in 32
Stratford		
Sub Castle	24 - 25	1 in 15
Stratford Tony	2	1 in 63
Stratton		
St Margaret	20	1 in 46
Sutton Benger	5 - 6	1 in 98
Sutton Mandeville	0	-
Sutton Veny	30 - 40	1 in 24
Swallowcliffe	2 - 3	1 in 111
Swindon	30 - 40	1 in 50
Teffont Evias	0	-
Teffont Magna	1 - 2	1 in 142
The Lea	10	1 in 42
Tilshead	3 - 4	1 in 133
Tisbury & Wardour	100	1 in 22
Tockenham	6	1 in 27
Tollard Royal	3 - 4	1 in 82
Trowbridge	100	1 in 108
Tytherton		
Kellaways	0	-
Upton Lovell	3 - 4	1 in 71
Upton Scudamore	3	1 in 130
Urchfont	80 - 100	1 in 15
Wanborough	20 - 30	1 in 41
Warminster	40 - 50	1 in 136
West Dean	'few'	?
West Grimstead	0	-
West Harnham	14 - 15	1 in 18
West Knoyle	0	-
West Lavington	20	1 in 66
West Overton	3 - 4	1 in 205
Whiteparish	20 - 30	1 in 28
Wilcot	6 - 8	1 in 97
Wiley	0	-
Wilsford	0	-
Wilton	40 - 50	1 in 44
Winterbourne Bassett	0	-
Winterbourne		
Dauntsey	0	-

	No. of able-bodied men usually out of work in the winter	Unemployed able-bodied men as a proportion of the parish population
Winterbourne Earls	6 - 7	1 in 37
Winterbourne Gunner	3	1 in 55
Winterbourne Monkton	0	-
Winterbourne Stoke	'few'	?
Westbury	100.	1 in 73
Winterslow	10 - 12	1 in 68
Woodborough	2 - 3	1 in 149
Woodford	4 - 6	1 in 79
Wootton Bassett	20	1 in 95
Wootton Rivers	4 - 5	1 in 90
Worton (Tith)	10	1 in 30
Wroughton	60	1 in 26
Yatton Keynall	5 - 6	1 in 76

Source: P.R.O., M.H. 12/234 and M.H. 12/13639-13892.

APPENDIX 2: ARSON: CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EACH FIRE,
1830-1875

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1830		
9 Jan.	Enford	Target: Haystack of T. Martin. W. Hillier, agricultural labourer and J. White, small farmer, acquitted Summer Assizes. Hillier had previously worked for Martin during which time they had a dispute about turnip hoeing.
7 Feb.	Downton	Target: house and farm buildings of Mr Parsons.
5 Nov.	Wanborough	Target: Strawstack of J.T. Smith. E. Haines charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
14 Nov.	Knook	Target: oat, barley and bean ricks of Mr White. Suspicion falling on W. Mussel alias Olding, a former employee of White's and now a workhouse inmate. Also possible connection with threatening letter sent to James Slade of Codford St Peter, complaining of low wages.
16 Nov.	Collingbourne Ducis	Target: barn of Mr Ford.
17 Nov.	Easton	Target: bean-haulm rick.
19 Nov.	Oare (in parish of Wilcot)	Target: ricks of Mr Fowler. Local labourers refused to help to extinguish fire and hampered efforts of those manning fire engine.
20 Nov.	Ludgershall	Target: house, property of W. Peasley, occupied by R. Barnes. Henry Wilkins, agricultural labourer, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: Hanged. Wilkins was part of a Swing mob.
20 Nov.	Stanton St Bernard	Target: farm of Mr Mills, 2 barns of Mr Simpkins.
21 Nov.	Amesbury	Target: grain stack of H. Selfe. W. Jacob acquitted, Lent Assizes.
23 Nov.	Chiseldon	Target: strawstack of J. Brown.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1830 contd.		
27 Nov.	Broughton Gifford	Target: hay and stubble ricks and cow shed of Mr Dark. Swing mob in parish on same night.
11 Dec.	Coate	Target: hay ricks of Messrs Wilde and Giddings.
18 Dec.	Charlton	Target: wheat, bean and hay ricks of Mr Polhill (Lieutenant of Devizes Yeomanry).
28 Dec.	Burbage	Target: ricks.
1831		
4 Jan.	Potterne	Target: barn of Rev. Edmonstone (a magistrate who had been actively involved in the pursuit of Swing rioters). I. Nash, agricultural labourer, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
5 Jan.	Great Cheverell	Target: ricks, a public house.
10 Jan.	Upton Lovell	Target: barn, ricks and skilling of J. Raxworthy. £100 reward offered by Raxworthy and £500 by Government for capture of arsonist.
11 Jan.	Ogbourne St Andrew	Target: cart house of R. Canning
22 Jan.	Amesbury	Target: farm of R. Selfe.
19 Mar.	Highworth	Target: bean stubble of Martha Harris. Jane Lea acquitted, Summer Assizes.
2 Apr.	Codford St Peter	Target: outhouse of J. Slade. Sarah Wheeler, wife of J. Wheeler, labourer, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 12 months' imprisonment.
15 Apr.	Preshute	Target: barn, shed and barley rick of J. Goodman. Reward offered for capture of arsonist.
16 Apr.	Manningford Bohun	Target: ricks of H. Hitchcock. Reward offered for capture of arsonist.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1831 continued		
4 June	Winterbourne Monkton	Target: farm buildings of G. Neate. Neate had recently re-erected a threshing machine which he had dismantled in Nov. 1830 during the Swing Riots.
1 Aug.	Winterbourne Monkton	Target: wheat ricks, bean stack and barn of G. Neate.
28 Aug.	Broad Chalk	Target: sacks of wheat, rye and oats of J. Rumbold. Rumbold had recently made known his intention to erect a threshing machine.
12 Sept.	Urchfont	Target: barn, stable and hayrick of Mr Alexander, parish overseer.
22 Oct.	Charlton	Target: hayrick of Mr Pike.
31 Oct.	Maddington	Target: wheatricks of Mr Miles.
2 Nov.	Potterne	Target: outhouse and hayrick of Mr Lennard.
3 Nov.	Stratton St Margaret	Target: strawrick of R. Tuckey.
5 Nov.	Swindon	Target: barn of Mrs Bradford, hayrick of Mr Goddard.
14 Nov.	Upton Lovell	Target: hayrick of J. Raxworthy.
23 Nov.	Wootton Bassett	Target: wheat rick of J. Smart.
4 Dec.	Corsham	Target: carthouse and hayrick of Mrs Barton.
5 Dec.	West Lavington	Target: pearick of B. Hayward. Agricultural labourer of parish apprehended but not charged.
1832		
9 Jan.	Westbury	Target: sacks of barley of J. Bourne, parish overseer.
11 Jan.	Southwick	Target: hayrick of J. Long.
27 Jan.	Tinhead	Target: barley rick of W. Price. £300 reward offered by farmers of parish for capture of arsonist.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1832 continued		
9 Mar.	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: house, property of H. Battenbooth, occupied by J. Buxton, victualler. Buxton guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: hanged. Buxton had intended to defraud Battenbooth.
16 July	Great Cheverell	Target: house of J. Butcher.
24 July	Great Cheverell	Target: ricks, barns and farm buildings of Mrs Butcher (mother of above).
10 Sept.	Christian Malford	Target: skilling and hayrick of R. Hull. £50 reward offered for capture of arsonist.
9 Oct.	Corsham	Target: hayrick of R.H. Alexander. J. Pegler, butcher, acquitted, Lent Assizes. Alexander was said to be very unpopular with local labourers.
19 Nov.	Baydon	Target: barns and ricks of Mr Williams.
1833		
21 Apr.	Amesbury	Target: barns and livestock of C. Rendall (amounting to loss of approx. £2,000).
8 May	Shrewton	Target: house, outhouse and cottage of Mr Hooper.
2 July	Upavon	Target: hay and pearicks of Mr Alexander.
18 Sept.	Urchfont	Target: wheatrick and barn of Mr Alexander, parish overseer, farm buildings and ricks of Mr Compton. A number of local labourers refused to help to extinguish the fires.
25 Oct.	Warminster	Target: cornstack of W. Sly. J. Ingram acquitted, Lent Assizes.
4 Nov.	Wroughton	Target: strawstack of S.B. Pickett. R. Jefferies, army deserter, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
10 Nov.	Urchfont	Target: barley rick of Mr Butler.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1833 continued		
15 Nov.	Imber	Target: hayrick of Mr Fricker. Following the fire agricultural labourers' wages were reduced by 1s a week, and there was a threat to discontinue the renting of land for allotments pending capture of the arsonist.
17 Nov.	Swindon	Target: cowstalls in farm of A. Goddard, occupied by J. New.
19 Nov.	Huish	Target: strawstack of R. Fowler. S. Matthews charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
3 Dec.	Salisbury	Target: wheat rick, New Farm.
5 Dec.	Ramsbury	Target: farm buildings, corn and livestock of Mr Osmond, Ramsbury Farm.
14 Dec.	Wootton Bassett	Target: straw and barley ricks of Mr Young.
1834		
27 Jan.	Tilshead	Target: hayricks of Mr Giddings. Body of labourers, said to be from Imber gathered outside Giddings' house in an ugly mood during fire. Tilshead farmers reduced wages by 1s a week following fire.
20 Apr.	Oare	Target: wheatricks, farm buildings of Rev. Goodman. Charles Kimmer, agricultural labourer, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: hanged. Salamander Fire Office paid £40 towards prosecution.
22 Apr.	Chirton	Target: farm building and labourers' cottages owned by R. Hayward. R. Wells, agricultural labourer, acquitted, Summer Assizes. Wells had complained about a deduction in wages for neglect of work on the day before the fire.
30 June	Colerne	Target: hayricks of J. Pinchin. £200 reward offered for capture of arsonist.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1834 continued		
9 Sep.	Chirton	Target: barns of Mr Warriner, J.P., occupied by T. Attwater. George Watts, agricultural labourer, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: hanged. Watts had been employed by Attwater until a week before the fire.
1 Nov.	Stapleford	Target: pearick of E. Saph.
2 Nov.	Ramsbury	Target: wheat rick of Mr Spearing.
2 Nov.	Chute	Target: hayrick of H. Bethell, formerly parish overseer. William Winter, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: hanged. Winter had been ordered by magistrates to apologise to Bethell for insulting him when he had applied for poor relief. Winter had promised to avenge himself on Bethell for this incident.
6 Nov.	Christian Malford	Target: hayrick. Fire coincided with riot over poor law changes.
14 Nov.	Sutton Mandeville	Target: barn and ricks of M. Blandford.
1835		
14 Jan.	Calne	Target: hayrick of W. Baily.
30 Jan.	Melksham	Target: hayrick of T. Miles, parish overseer.
Jan. - day not known	Warminster	Target: barn, property of parish overseer.
13 Feb.	Calne	Target: corn stack) of W. Baily.)
14 Feb.	Calne	Target: strawstack) of W. Baily.)
16 Feb.	Broughton Gifford	Target: house of G. Paradise
21 June	Froxfield	Target: barn and hayrick of J. White.
23 June	Wroughton	Target: house of J. Bedford, farmer. Local labourers were unwilling to help to extinguish fire.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1835 continued		
24 Sep.	West Lavington	Target: hayrick of Mr Fowle. Fire thought to be connected with fear of poor law changes, by Assistant Poor Law Commissioner.
13 Dec.	Britford	Target: hayrick of Mr Newman.
1836		
8 Jan.	Brokenborough	Target: barn of R. Love. G. Coates charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
23 Jan.	Castle Combe	Target: barn and ricks of I. Holborrow.
28 Jan.	Malmesbury	Target: cowhouse and stalls of R. Lloyd.
9 Feb.	Chiseldon	Target: beanrick of J. Brown. W. Alder acquitted, Summer Assizes. Alder had worked for Brown during harvest, and then, being unable to find work, had gone into the workhouse.
14 Feb.	Chiseldon	Target: barn and rick of Mr Baldwin.
21 Feb.	Upavon	Target: outhouses of Mr Maslen.
28 Feb.	Bromham	Target: barn of Mr Bankes.
7 Mar.	Burderop	Target: carthouse of Mr Brown.
8 Mar.	Chiseldon	Target: outhouse of Mr Brind.
11 Mar.	Bromham	Target: barn and rick of Mr Clifford, innkeeper.
15 Mar.	Bromham	Target: barn of Mr Clifford.
16 Mar.	Bromham	Target: barn.
24 Mar.	Corston	Target: barn and rick of Mr Sanders.
8 Apr.	Bromham	Target: barn and rick of Mr Butler.
23 Apr.	Semington (in parish of Hilperton)	Target: barn and stable of Mr Bruges, Poor Law Guardian and magistrate.
24 Apr.	Melksham	Target: barn of Mr Methuen, occupied by Mr Bird.
21 May	Tinhead	Target: wheat rick, farm buildings of M. Butler. Local labourers refused to help to extinguish fire.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1836 continued		
6 Nov.	Wroughton	Target: ricks of Mr Puckeridge.
11 Dec.	Hannington	Target: cottage of R. Finch. W. Newman charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
1837		
6 Jan.	Lea	Target: oatricks of Mr Reeve.
1 Apr.	Bromham	Target: barn of Mr Perrott.
13 Apr.	Stert	Target: beanstack of Mr Bury.
1838		
3 Jan.	Great Cheverell	Target: wheatricks of T. Chapman.
27 Mar.	Bromham	Target: barn and stable of Rev. Baynton.
29 Mar.	Chippenham	Target: hayrick of R. Humphrys.
30 Mar.	Seend	Target: stable and carthouse of Mr Porter, occupied by Mr Roger.
1 Apr.	Lacock	Target: furze, property of Fox- Talbot, esq.
6 June	Chilton	Target: strawricks and barn of Rev. Moreland.
14 Nov.	Keevil	Target: stubble of Mr Collett.
16 Nov.	Keevil	Target: beanricks of Mr Collett.
20 Nov.	Keevil	Target: barn of Mr Bartlett.
1839		
19 Apr.	Wingfield	Target: barn and ricks in farm of Mrs Gould, occupied by Mr Gibbs. (Possibly connected with Chartist agitation in Trowbridge.)
6 May	Westbury	Target: barn of J. Paviour. E. Lloyd charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
7 May	Trowbridge	Target: hayrick of J. Cadby.
8 May	Steeple Ashton	Target: barn, ricks and cottages of Mr Miles.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1839 continued		
Between 5 & 12 Nov.	Broughton Gifford	Target: skilling and stable of Mr Bendry.
1840		
31 Jan.	Trowbridge	Target: hayrick of Mr Hancock.
8 Mar.	Cherhill	Target: house and barns of Mr Pottow.
10 Mar.	Lockeridge	Target: hayrick of W. Neate.
31 Mar.	Devizes	Target: hayrick of Rev. A. Smith.
23 July	Farley Chamberlayne	Target: farm buildings of T. Woodham.
19 Oct.	Bromham	Target: carthouse of J. Blackman. William Gardener guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 15 years. Gardener was a pauper and resented the fact that his allowance was only 1s and 2 loaves a week.
1841		
7 Dec.	Donhead St Mary	Target: house of A. Butland. J. Trowbridge charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
31 Dec.	Liddington	Target: barn of G. Brind.
1842		
14 Mar.	Westwood	Target: barn of P. Cadby.
5 May	Chilton	Target: outhouse of Mr Goddard. R. Wallis, J. Wallis, J. Annette, J. Blisset, J. Wilson (the 'Chilton Incendiaries') guilty, Berkshire Summer Assizes. Sentence: trans- portation for life, except J. Wallis, 15 years transportation. The 'Chilton Incendiaries' were respon- sible for many fires in Berkshire as well as Wilts.
30 Sep.	Corsham	Target: hayrick of W. Arnold.
17 Oct.	Norton Bavant	Target: hayrick of W. Hayward. J. Stocker, baker, aged 23 of Heytes- bury, acquitted, Lent Assizes.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1842 continued		
28 Oct.	Bromham	Target: hayrick of D. Butler.
3 Dec.	Highworth	Target: fattening stall, rick and livestock of Mr Chillingworth.
17 Dec.	Edington	Target: barn of Anna Watson-Taylor and S. Mitchell.
1843		
21 Jan.	Edington	Target: outhouse of J. Pepler. H. Scull acquitted, Lent Assizes.
27 Jan.	Corsham	Target: hayrick of Lord Methuen. J. Hiscocks charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
27 Jan.	North Tidworth	Target: seed-hayrick of S.P. Taylor.
1 Mar.	Tinhead	Target: barn and stable of R. Oram.
4 Mar.	Tinhead	Target: ricks of I.C. Pepler.
7 Mar.	Thornhill	Target: cottage. £150 reward offered by Government for capture of arsonist.
10 Mar.	Corsham	Target: carthouse of Mr Parker.
16 Apr.	Horton	Target: ricks and barns in farm of Mr Sotheron, occupied by Mr Brown.
25 Apr.	Corsham	Target: stable and outhouse in farm of Lord Methuen, occupied by Mr Pegler.
7 June	Market Lavington	Target: hayrick of Mr Fowle and outhouse of Mr Lawes, innkeeper of The Kings Arms.
11 Sep.	Heytesbury	Target: stables of Mr Goodman, occupied by Mr Marsh.
1844		
25 Jan.	Kingston Deverell	Target: hayrick of W. Rogers.
29 Jan.	Chippenham	Target: gorse of J. Neald.
9 Mar.	Steeple Ashton	Target: barley-strawrick of Mr Butcher. A poaching gang was suspected.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1844 continued		
5 Apr.	Bromham	Target: outhouse and ricks in farm of Mr Spackman, occupied by Mr Gaby. A number of local labourers refused to help to extinguish the fire.
28 Aug.	Stratford-sub-Castle	Target: rickyard of Mr Walters.
4 Nov.	Box	Target: strawrick of H. Mizen. James Isaac, quarryman, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 15 years. Isaac had had a dispute with Mizen over turnips.
23 Nov.	Coulston	Target: barn and outhouse of J. Grant.
19 Dec.	Marston (in parish of Potterne)	Target: pearick of Messrs Rose. C. Nicholas and M. Compton indicted Lent Assizes, but not tried on this charge (see below).
1845		
27 Jan.	Marston	Target: outhouse of Mrs Watson-Taylor, occupied by Mr Rose. Christopher Nicholas and Mark Compton, agricultural labourers, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 15 years. Nicholas and Compton fired property in order to create a diversion while they robbed houses.
15 Mar.	Pewsey	Target: rickyard of Mr Allen and strawricks of Mr Pyke.
20 Apr.	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: furze and gorse of Sir John Hobhouse and W. Redman. J. Gregory, W. Dredge and G. Harding guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 1 month imprisonment each.
2 May	Stowell	Target: house and brewhouse of C. Giddings.
12 Nov.	North Bradley	Target: hayricks of G. Woods.
1846		
13 Jan.	Swindon	Target: strawrick of G. Haggard.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1846 continued		
21 Feb.	Enford	Target: outhouse of J. White. Mary Ann White, wife of victim, charged Lent Assizes, no bill.
22 Mar.	Enford	Target: house of J. White. Mary Ann White, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years.
29 Mar.	Stert	Target: outhouse and ricks of farm of Mr Gabriel, occupied by Mr Cook. Some local labourers refused to help to extinguish the fire.
4 Apr.	Broughton Gifford	Target: haystack of S. Smallcombe. Z. Abbott, acquitted on grounds of insanity, Summer Assizes.
18 Nov.	North Tidworth	Target: wheatricks of Mr Northeast.
29 Nov.	Warminster	Target: stubble and straw stacks of W. Trap. John Edwards acquitted, Sidney Ledbury and Charles Provis guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 6 months imprisonment each.
1847		
2 Feb.	West Harnham	Target: strawrick of Rev. Edmonds and Eliza Bell. James Russell, pauper, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years. Russell had recently come out of the workhouse, but could get no work and wanted revenge on the farmers of the parish.
4 Feb.	Atworth	Target: wheatricks of J. Hulbert.
25 Apr.	Chiseldon	Target: furze and gorse of A. Baden and J.J. Calley. Thomas Whiting and James Fisher, agricultural labourers, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 3 months imprisonment each.
8 Sep.	Shalbourne	Target: ricks and barns of Mr Phillips
27 Sep.	Fovant	Target: ricks and farm buildings of W. Futcher.
11 Oct.	Redlinch	Target: 2 cottages, one occupied by parish constable. (One cottage was fired, the constable was sent for and in his absence, his cottage was fired.)

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1848		
16 Feb.	Wootton Rivers	Target: carthouse of Miss Scrivens.
30 May	Upton Lovell	Target: farm buildings of J. Everett, occupied by J. Ingram.
26 Oct.	Stratton St Margaret	Target: hayricks of G. Lawrence.
1849		
10 Jan.	Little Bedwin	Target: barns, wheat and straw stacks of T. Potter.
4 Sep.	Alderton	Target: straw and pea stacks of J. Bathe. Ann Fry, domestic servant aged 15 guilty, Lent Assizes. Fry had fired the stacks as revenge on her mistress, Mrs Bathe, for refusing to let her young man visit her.
10 Sep.	Seend	Target: haystack of W. Harris.
27 Nov.	Corsley	Target: stable of N. Barton.
1850		
1 Jan.	Manningford Bruce	Target: wheat and hayricks of J. Stratton. A public handbill was produced by Stratton's labourers deploring the fire.
24 Feb.	Chiseldon	Target: outhouse of W. Gosling. Eliza Smith, aged 22, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years. Smith had been imprisoned 11 times in the last 3 years for vagrancy. She said she had committed arson rather than apply for relief.
10 Mar.	Baynton	Target: outhouse and ricks of J. Grant.
2 Sep.	Edington	Target: strawstack of S. Mitchell. David Scull acquitted, Lent Assizes.
24 Sep.	Box	Target: rick of Mary Iddols. William Bullock guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years.
29 Sep.	Edington	Target: ricks of I. Collingbourne. Nathan Selwood (Collingbourne's nephew) guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1850 continued		
12 Oct.	Boyton	Target: muckle heaps of C. Churchill and R. Smith. Charles Hooker, aged 18, acquitted Lent Assizes, on grounds that indictment read 'straw ricks'.
12 Oct.	Woodford	Target: house of the overseers of Woodford, occupied by J. Gilbert. Elizabeth Coombes acquitted, Lent Assizes.
6 Nov.	Box	Target: barleyrick of D.R. Pinchin. Henry Isaac charged, Lent Assizes, no bill. Subsequently confessed, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: transportation 10 years.
14 Dec.	Donhead St Mary	Target: house of Mary Sharp. Emma Oxford, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
1851		
22 Jan.	Bishops Cannings	Target: wheatstack of Sarah Ruddle. William Briggs guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 18 months imprisonment with hard labour.
20 Sep.	Preshute	Target: oatstack of G. White. Henry Scott and G. Waite charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
19 Oct.	Wootton Rivers	Target: hayrick of Mr Neale, wheat rick of Mr Sindle.
25 Oct.	Bishops Cannings	Target: 5 ricks of M. Sloper.
1852		
5 Mar.	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: house of J. May senior. Hannah and Elizabeth Sheppard acquitted, Summer Assizes (indicted for arson with intent to defraud the Law Fire Insurance Society).
28 Mar.	Corsham	Target: shed of Lord Methuen.
9 Sep.	Stanton St Bernard	Target: farm of Earl of Pembroke, occupied by W. Clark. A labourer recently discharged from the farm was apprehended but not charged.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1852 continued		
30 Oct.	Woodford	Target: wheatrick of E. Olding. Elizabeth Coombs acquitted on grounds of insanity, Lent Assizes.
6 Nov.	Bishops Cannings	Target: wheatricks of R. Ruddle.
23 Nov.	Purton	Target: strawstack of W. Baily. Jane Curtis, domestic servant in Baily's employ, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
1853		
8 Jan.	South Newton	Target: rick of F. Tabor. William Briggs, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation for life. Briggs had been convicted of arson at Bishops Cannings in Jan. 1851.
27 Jan.	Horningsham	Target: rick of T. Dredge.
3 Mar.	Chute	Target: haulm stack of R. Mundy. Sarah Cook, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
4 Mar.	Edington	Target: stable and barn in farm of Simon Watson-Taylor, occupied by J. Newman. Job Orchard, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: transportation 14 years.
9 May	Chirton	Target: farm building of J. Akerman. Charles Smith, Charles Waters and Charles Moody, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 3 months imprisonment with hard labour each.
6 Nov.	Coulston	Target: ricks, farm buildings of Simon Watson-Taylor.
10 Dec.	Coulston	Target: strawrick of Mr Redman. 3 local men apprehended but not charged.
1854		
11 Feb.	Edington	Target: farm buildings of Simon Watson-Taylor, occupied by J. Howell. William Stagnell charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
11 Feb.	Tinhead	Target: cowshed of J. Howell.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1854 continued		
9 Apr.	Milton Lilburne	Target: gorse of Marquis of Ailesbury. Morris Pontin and John Allen, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
11 Apr.	Shalbourne	Target: strawstack of A. Pike. George Turner, acquitted on grounds of insanity, Summer Assizes.
15 Apr.	Shercott	Target: ricks and barns of J. Grant and Col. Wroughton. Agricultural labourer recently discharged by Grant apprehended but not charged.
18 Apr.	Swallowcliff	Target: gorse and furze of G. Blandford. George Roberts, postman, acquitted, Summer Assizes. Roberts had been seen running from fire but claimed he was chasing the arsonist.
21 May	Ham	Target: furze of Henry Woodman. Charles Latimer, aged 14, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 6 months imprisonment with hard labour. Latimer's motives were considered to be mischievous rather than malicious.
10 June	Milton Lilburne	Target: gorse of Marquis of Ailesbury. William Bentley, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
25 June	Chiseldon	Target: farm buildings of Trustees of the Poor of the parish of Highworth, occupied by Mr Baverstock. William Farr charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
6 Aug.	Bratton	Target: clover-hayrick of Mr Pocock. 11 year old boy, Smith, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: to be whipped. Smith's motives considered to be mischievous rather than malicious.
6 Oct.	Manningford Bruce	Target: wheat and hayricks of J. Stratton.
20 Oct.	Wroughton	Target: stubblerick of J. Washbone.
7 Dec.	Martin	Target: farm buildings of G. Waters. William White charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1855		
18 Dec.	Compton Bassett	Target: wheatrick of W. Salter.
1856		
4 Nov.	Bulkington	Target: woodstack of J. Orchard. William Marks and Thomas Oram, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: Marks, 1 year imprisonment; Oram, 4 months imprisonment. Marks wanted revenge on Orchard with whom he had quarrelled.
26 Dec.	Calne	Target: barleyrick of H. Waller.
1857		
30 Jan.	Bishopstone	Target: pigsty of S. Wiggins.
25 Apr.	Burbage	Target: barn of W. Nutley. John Stagg, charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
9 May	Brimslade	Target: strawrick of H. Gidding. John Chunn, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 14 years transportation. Chunn was described as a simpleton. He had no work, and confessed to being hungry, miserable and wishing himself out of the way.
27 May	Barford St Martin	Target: cottage of J. Simper, occupied by G. Simper (J. Simper's nephew). G. Simper acquitted, Summer Assizes. He had a rent dispute with his uncle.
1858		
4 Jan.)	Aldbourne	Target: house of J. Liddiard. Daniel Liddiard, his brother, charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
3 Mar.)		
23 Mar.	Collingbourne Ducis	Target: barns and ricks of J. Hill. Silas Barlow, agricultural labourer, aged 12, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 5 years in Reformatory School. Barlow fired the property as revenge on his employer, Hill, for a beating.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1858 continued		
4 July	Preshute	Target: farm buildings of Marquis of Ailesbury, occupied by R. Lyne. Robert Dance, agricultural labourer aged 13, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 4 months imprisonment and 5 years Reformatory School. Dance had been incited into arson by his 2 older brothers, also employed by Lyne. Lyne had once prosecuted one of them for egg-stealing, and had discharged the boys' father from his service because he did not live in Preshute.
15 Aug.	Castle Combe	Target: stable and outhouse of V. Dickman. H. Cooper acquitted on grounds of insanity, Lent Assizes.
1859		
31 Jan. - 15 Feb.	Wroughton	10 separate fires. Target: farm of Mr Bedford and farm of Mr Spackman. William Coster, ploughboy aged 16, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 5 years Reformatory. Coster was described as a simpleton. He was employed by Bedford.
2 Mar.	Malmesbury	Target: house of Mary Garlick. Rhoda Gale, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 6 years transportation.
21 Mar.	Wroughton	Target: house of W. Speck. G. Tibble and R. Pearce, both aged 12, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 3 months imprisonment with hard labour each/to be whipped once. Motives considered to have been mischievous rather than malicious.
16 Apr.	Enford	Target: rick of R. Kilmister. Job Hillier, agricultural labourer, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 6 years transportation. Hillier had been employed by Kilmister from 1852 to 1859. He had left his service, and then been re-employed by Kilmister at his request. Hillier confessed to arson, and said he had not intended to remain much longer in Enford.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1859 continued		
15 May	Lineham	Target: barleyrick of J. Freegard. Charles Reeves, birdscarer, employed by Freegard, charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
28 Aug.	Ramsbury	Target: oatstack of J. Nash. Edward Andrews, swineherd aged 8, acquitted, Lent Assizes. Andrews was considered to have been coerced into confessing by Nash, his employer.
3 Dec.	Enford	Target: barn of R. Kilmister. Job Maggs, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 12 months imprisonment with hard labour.
1860		
9 Feb.	Clyffe Pypard	Target: sheepfold of H. Goddard. John Chunn, aged 57, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 15 years transportation. Chunn had previously been convicted of arson at Brimslade in May 1857. He said he committed the crime because he had nowhere to live and no work.
4 May	Cricklade St Sampson	Target: barn and ricks of G. Stone. H. Gosling and G. Hopkins, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
5 May	Swindon	Target: haystack of T. Arkell. 10 guinea reward offered for capture of arsonist.
14 Sep.	Trowbridge	Target: hayrick of Messrs Bowyer. William Painter, army deserter, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 15 years transportation. Painter had wanted to escape further military service.
1861		
16 Feb.	Warminster	Target: ricks at Reformatory. William Coster (convicted for arson at Wroughton in 1859) acquitted, Lent Assizes (as a result of discrepancy in evidence).
28 Feb.	Seend	Target: wheatrick of Mr Whale.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1861 continued		
4	July	Bratton
Target: strawrick of Mr Pocock. Possible motive was recent introduction of mowing machinery by Pocock.		
6	Sep.	Trowbridge
Target: hayrick of Rev. T. Mann. George Norris of Pewsey, army deserter, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation.		
17 Oct.	Chiseldon	
Target: stalls of A. Baden. John Fox, agricultural labourer, acquitted, Lent Assizes. (Fox had recently been discharged by Baden.)		
28 Oct.	Barford St Martin	
Target: haystack of W. Drew. John Smith, stonemason, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation. Smith said he had committed arson because he had no work and no money.		
1	Nov.	Preshute
Target: ricks of J. Hillier. Edward Eyles, aged 15, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 14 days imprisonment with hard labour and 5 years Reformatory. Eyles confessed that he wanted to get into the Reformatory.		
3	Nov.	Liddiard Tregoze
Target: farm buildings of C. Everleigh and Lord Bolingbroke. Mary Ann Tuck charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.		
1862		
13 Mar.	Fisherton Anger	
Target: strawrick of T. Gilbert. John Clark and James Lee, vagrants, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation. Clark and Lee had spent the previous night in the workhouse. In his confession Lee said he was tired of life. The fire drew a crowd who attacked the police when they came to investigate.		
19 July	Poulshot	
Target: farm buildings of J.W. Hampton. William Watts, Hampton's nephew, charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.		

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1862 continued		
25 July	Milston	Target: strawstack of E.T. Edward. Frank Hopgood charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
1863		
10 Mar.	Stanton St Bernard	Target: strawrick of Mr Simpkins.
30 Mar.	Laverstock	Target: ricks and barns of J. Sutton. Leonard Prideaux, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 8 years transportation. Prideaux confessed that he committed arson because he wanted food.
8 Apr.	Keevil	Target: strawrick of Messrs Taylor.
9 Apr.	Bromham	Target: strawrick of Mr Fennell.
10 Apr.	Purton	Target: stable and shed of J. Wilkins. George Legge, aged 18, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
25 May	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: strawstack of William Norris, innkeeper. James Angel, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 8 years transportation.
5 June	Norton Bavant	Target: ricks and outhouses of J. Knight. A. Howell, a carter employed by Knight, apprehended but not charged.
12 Nov.	Monkton Farleigh	Target: cornstack of Mr Wilkins. John Mizen, charged, Lent Assizes, no bill. Mizen had been employed by Wilkins at threshing. He had been particularly resentful of a wage reduction, and a further threatened reduction in his own wages for arriving late to work.
1864		
3 Feb.	Warminster	Target: barley rick at the Reformatory.
30 Mar.	Warminster	Target: Reformatory. Charles Deacon, inmate, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1864 continued		
15 May	Huish	Target: strawrick and farm buildings of T.E. Bennett. Frederick Webb, labourer in brick yard, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation.
7 June	Wroughton	Target: ricks of R. Webb. Charles Jones, aged 9, acquitted, Summer Assizes. Jury decided it was accidental.
23 July	Overton	Target: barley-strawrick of C.R. Long.
6 Nov.	East Grafton	Target: rickyard of T. Hayward. Moses Martin, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 10 years transportation. Hayward's nephew had twice refused to give Martin bread. Martin said he wanted to be transported.
1865		
30 Jan.	Codford St Mary	Target: house of H.G. Briggs, occupied by J. Sparey. Ann Sparey, acquitted on grounds of insanity, Lent Assizes.
15 Mar.	Melksham	Target: ricks of R. Manning. W. Weston, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
22 Mar.	Westbury	Target: outhouse of G. Millard. J. Francis, guilty, Lent Assizes (1866). Sentence: 7 years transportation.
26 May	Erlestoke	Target: 12 cottages of S. Watson-Taylor, occupied by his labourers. Thomas Godden, agricultural labourer, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 10 years transportation. Godden, an occupier of one of the cottages had been given notice to quit by Michaelmas as a result of complaints against him by one of his neighbours, Hobbs. Godden wanted revenge on Hobbs and Watson-Taylor.
14 June)	West	Target: ricks, machinery and farm buildings of W. Hooper, Poor Law Guardian. Ellen Mannings, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 18 months imprisonment with hard labour. Mannings wanted revenge on Hooper who had advised she be dismissed from the workhouse to earn her own living.
) Lavington	
16 June)		

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1865 continued		
6 Nov.	Burbage	Target: stacks of C. Bond. George Cox, aged 21 and John Smallbones, aged 16, agricultural labourers, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: Cox, 12 months imprisonment with hard labour; Smallbones, 7 years transportation. Cox and Smallbones claimed it was a 5th Nov. prank.
26 Nov.	Zeals	Target: house of C. Penning, shoemaker. George Bishop, aged 17, Penning's apprentice, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
1866		
26 Feb.	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: haystack of C. and A. Morgan. John White, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation. White confessed; he had gone without food for several days.
8 May	Froxfield	Target: strawstack of J. Redman. George Wright, aged 20, vagrant, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation.
6 Nov.	Bishopstone	Target: carthouse of W. Wagg. J. Baker, blacksmith's assistant, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
1867		
19 July	Preshute	Target: skilling and farm implements of C. Giddings. John North, carter's boy, aged 11, guilty, Lent Assizes.
14 Sep.	Southwick	Target: farm of S. Perrott.
1868		
8 Feb.	Enford	Target: barley-strawrick of T. Fay. E. Kiel and F. Hawkins, acquitted, Lent Assizes. It was thought that the fire was accidentally started by Kiel or Hawkins while smoking.
10 Apr.	Sutton Veny	Target: furze stack of J. Rawlings, road surveyor. H. Hodinott, J. Ball and G. Paine, labourers of Crockerton, acquitted, Summer Assizes. Ball had threatened Rawlings because of a pile of stones left by road-menders outside his cottage.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1868 continued		
24 July	Melksham	Target: hayrick of D. Merrett. W. Nash, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 5 years transportation.
5 Aug.	Stratford-sub-Castle	Target: haystack of G.J. Good. J. Highman, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
24 Sep.	Warminster	Target: strawrick of W. Pullin.
20 Oct.	Erlestoke	Target: wheatrick of Mr Cooper.
19 Nov.	Cricklade St Sampson	Target: strawstack of W. Sadler. Arthur Champernowne, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 7 years transportation. Champernowne was related to Sadler, and was said to be vindictive towards his richer relation.
30 Nov.	Corsham	Target: ricks of R. Neate.
1869		
18 Mar.	Somerford Keynes	Target: strawstack of M. Arnold. W. Roseblade, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
7 Apr.	Blunsden St Andrew	Target: shed and outhouse of R. Plummer. H.T. Scott charged, Summer Assizes, no bill.
26 June	Sevenhampton	Target: wood and haystack of R. Whitfield. A. Whiteman, bird-scarer aged 10, acquitted, Summer Assizes. Whiteman was deemed too young to be responsible for his actions.
5 Aug.	Edington	Target: stack of S. Watson-Taylor. Stephen Whitebread charged, Winter Assizes, no bill.
19 Aug.	Edington	Target: house of W. Chapman. Charles Whitebread, charged, Winter Assizes, no bill.
18 Aug.)	Semington	Target: hayrick of Mr Burbidge (Semington); hayrick of Mrs Price (West Ashton). George Barnes indicted for Semington fire, guilty, Winter Assizes. Sentence: 6 years transportation. Barnes, a former cloth worker, had recently returned from America. Knowing he would be forced into the workhouse, he had sought revenge first.
19 Aug.)	West Ashton	

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1869 continued		
22 Aug.	Hilperton	Target: hayrick of Mr Pike.
6 Sep.	Pewsey	Target: vetchrick of Mr Cook.
16 Sep.	Marlborough	Target: rick of Captain Reed. £100 reward offered for capture of arsonist.
26 Sep.	Ramsbury	Target: barns of A. Neate. Henry Stocker, under-carter employed by Neate, guilty, Winter Assizes. Sentence: 8 years transportation.
9 Oct.	Winterbourne Earls	Target: haystack of J. Read. W. Judd, tailor, acquitted on grounds of insanity, Winter Assizes. Judd was seeking to expose the village policeman who was in the pub while on duty.
5 Nov.	Clench Common	Target: stables of Mr Smith of Clatford Park.
13 Nov.	Melksham	Target: Sandridge Farm occupied by Mr Lenthall. Lenthall himself apprehended but not charged. He had insured his farm heavily and was known to be dissatisfied with arable farming.
6 Dec.	Marlborough	Target: house of M. Blake. Ann Hillier, domestic servant employed by Blake, aged 18, guilty (of attempted arson), Winter Assizes. Sentence: 2 months imprisonment with hard labour. Hillier had been given her notice by Blake.
25 Dec.	Ramsbury	Target: farm buildings of Sir Robert Burdett, occupied by F.B. Rowland. John Looker, acquitted, Lent Assizes. Looker had recently been discharged by Rowland and missed his traditional Christmas dinner.
1870		
21 Jan.	Kennett	Target: barley-hay and strawstacks of R. Spackman. I. Salter, Avebury farmer, charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1870 continued		
26 Feb.	Little Chalfield	Target: rickyard of W. Tilke. Jane Rudman charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
26 Feb.	Wroughton	Target: stubble and strawstacks of J. Duck. Emma Thompson acquitted, Lent Assizes.
16 Mar.	Ramsbury	Target: 2 separate farms, both owned by Mr Waldron.
4 Apr.	Fugglestone St Peter	Target: plantation of Earl of Pembroke. John Burt, aged 34, guilty, Summer Assizes, Burt wanted to be out of the way.
8 Apr.	Britford	Target: strawstacks of J. Taunton. Henry Button, agricultural labourer, aged 18, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
15 Oct.	Little Cheverell	Target: farm buildings of E.P. Bouverie.
14 Nov.	Devizes	Target: strawstack of R. Moore. G. Rogers, vagrant, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 5 years transportation. Rogers wanted to get into gaol as he had no work or money.
1871		
13 Jan.	Ogbourne St Andrew	Target: house of Rev. J. Weston. Mary Wyatt, cook to Rev. Weston, acquitted, Lent Assizes.
1 Apr.	Westbury	Target: hayrick of A. Hall.
10 Oct.	Stratford-sub-Castle	Target: hayrick of G.J. Gordon. S. Rhodes, gunmaker, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 10 years transportation.
21 Nov.	Market Lavington	Target: hayricks of Mr Langdon
1872		
20 Jan.	Little Bedwin	Target: cornstack of O. Richens. B. Edwards, guilty, Lent Assizes. Sentence: 6 years transportation.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1872 continued		
5 Nov.	Sutton Benger	Target: strawstacks of W. Miles
3 Dec.	Donwton	Target: carthouse, stable and wheat-rick of Mr Parsons.
1873		
29 Sep.	Westbury	Target: beanrick of G. Cornish. Mary Wadman, wife of Westbury farmer, acquitted, Lent Assizes. The rick had originally been Wadman's, but when he became bankrupt, Cornish took it as repayment of a debt.
1874		
1 Mar.	Aldbourne	Target: farm buildings of S. Palmer. R. Marchant and H. Marshall charged, Lent Assizes, no bill.
2 July	Bradford-on-Avon	Target: wheat-strawricks of J.A. Wilkins. George Morris, guilty, Summer Assizes. Sentence: 12 months imprisonment with hard labour. Morris had recently received an unfavourable answer from Wilkins when asking for work.
6 Aug.	Broad Hinton	Target: ricks and farmhouse of Mr Price. James Parson, agricultural labourer, aged 17, guilty, Winter Assizes. Sentence: 18 months imprisonment with hard labour.
8 Oct.	Ramsbury	Target: cottage occupied by Mary Ann Marshall. Occupier guilty, Winter Assizes. Sentence: 18 months imprisonment. She had fired her cottage on being given notice to quit and then tried to drown herself.
14 Nov.	Market Lavington	Target: house of Mr Pepler, surgeon. Pepler acquitted on grounds of insanity, Summer Assizes.
1875		
Jan.	Figcheldean	Target: barley stack of J. Pearce. William Freeman, agricultural labourer, charged Lent Assizes, no bill.

Date	Parish/Borough	Details
1875 continued		
12 July	Colerne	Target: strawstack of J. Beer. Charles Sumption, acquitted, Summer Assizes.
28 Sep.	Chitterne	Target: wheatrick of A. Blake. G. Wallis, farmer's son, acquitted on grounds of insanity, Lent Assizes.

Source: D.W.G.; S.W. Jnl.; W.I.; The Times; P.R.O., H.O. 40/25 and H.O. 52/11, M.H. 12/234 and M.H. 12/13639-13892, ASSI, 25/21/18-25/50/25; Guildhall Library MS. 11,937A/1-11,937A/4.

APPENDIX 3: ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE AGITATION

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details (including attendance, speakers, etc.)
1843		
8 Aug.	Salisbury	Meeting. Attendance 3-4,000. Speakers included Cobden and Bright.
6 Nov.	Salisbury	Free-Trade meeting as part of election campaign.
24 Nov.	Salisbury	Anti-Corn Law Association formed.
1844		
4 May	Westbury	Meeting. Attendance reports vary widely from 300 to 1,500.
6 June	Goatacre (in Hilmarton)	Meeting held in Independent Chapel. Addressed by Read, dissenting minister of Goatacre. Pro-Corn Law tract had been circulated in days leading up to this meeting in an attempt to persuade labourers to sign a petition in support of the Corn Laws.
18 June	Lineham	Meeting held on Lineham Green. Attendance approx. 1,000, mainly agricultural labourers. Speakers included Read; William Edwards, journeyman tailor of Marlborough and agent for the League; J. Arkell, farmer of Stratton St Margaret; Pilgrem, dissenting minister of Swindon; Walter Matthews, cordwainer and occasional agricultural labourer of Hilmarton; W. Pegler, agricultural labourer (also worked as servant, cloth worker and railway labourer) of Christian Malford.
9 July	Stratton St Margaret	Meeting. Attendance 700-800 'of all Classes'. Speakers included Arkell; W. Spackman, labourer of Highworth; Pierce, glazier of Stratton. Meeting sent petition to Parliament calling for repeal of Corn Laws.
9 July	Bremhill	Meeting 'to discuss present distress'. Attendance approx. 500, including 'farmers, mechanics and labourers'. Speakers included Read.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details (including attendance, speakers, etc.)
1844 contd.		
17 July	Salisbury	Free Trade Demonstration. Attendance approx. 600.
23 July	Brinkworth	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,200, 'labourers and mechanics'. Speakers included Arkell; Read; Matthews; Abraham Rivers, mason of Bremhill; Ambrose Lewis, agricultural labourer of Hilmarton.
2 Sep.	Goatacre	Meeting. Attendance approx. 300. Speakers included Read and Edwards.
23 Sep.	Bremhill	Meeting in Wesleyan Chapel. Attendance approx. 150. Speakers included Read; Edwards; Mr Turk, farmer of Bremhill; Mary Ferris, wife of agricultural labourer of Charlcott, Bremhill; Isaac Summers, labourer of Bremhill.
16 Oct.	Highworth	Meeting. Attendance approx. 700 farmers and agricultural labourers. Chaired by Lord Radnor. Speakers included Spackman; William Cole, labourer of Lechlade.
25 Nov.	Goatacre	Meeting called for the purpose 'of taking into consideration the distress of the working classes, and to discuss the benefits likely to arise if the trade in corn were made free'. Speakers included Read; Mary Ferris; Summers; Joseph Brewer, labourer of Hilmarton; Anthony Smith, agricultural labourer of Goatacre; Charles Gingell, labourer of Lineham.
1845		
3 Mar.	Avebury	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,500 'almost entirely of the labouring classes'. Speakers included George Awdry, shoemaker; William Alderwood, baker, both of Marlborough.
4 Mar.	Goatacre	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,000. Originally to be held in Chapel, but the trustees of the Chapel forbade this, so held instead outside Read's house.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details (including attendance, speakers, etc.)
1845 contd.		
1 Apr.	Ramsbury	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,000, mainly of agricultural labourers. Speakers included Mr Alexander, local preacher; David Keele, agricultural labourer of Preshute; Edmund Gregory, agricultural labourer of Mildenhall.
21 Apr.	Wootton Bassett	Meeting. Attendance approx. 750. Speakers included Lucy Simpkins, wife of agricultural labourer of Lineham; William Burchell, labourer of Hilmarton; Mr Westell, schoolmaster of Marlborough.
Early July	Upavon	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,000, mainly agricultural labourers. Speakers included Keele (discharged since speaking at the Ramsbury meeting); William Perry, agricultural labourer of Charlton; Westell.
29 Dec.	Malmesbury	Meeting. Attended by farmers, labourers and mechanics.
1846		
5 Jan.	Goatacre	Meeting. Attendance approx. 1,000. Speakers included Edwards; Perry; Pegler; Burchell; Charles Vines, chairmaker by trade, but occasional agricultural labourer, of Christian Malford. Meeting attracting national publicity; reported in <u>The Times</u> . Some reports of a strike for higher wages by agricultural labourers a few days before the meeting.
17 Feb.	Bremhill	Meeting. Attendance 500-600. Speakers included Edwards; Lucy Simpkins; Mary Ferris; Gingell; Smith; John Batchelor, labourer of Pewsey.

Source: D.W.G.; W.I.; The Times.

APPENDIX 4a: STRIKES AND AGRICULTURAL TRADE UNIONISM.
 MAIN EVENTS 1830-1875

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details
1830		
November	Bromham) Urchfont)	Labourers assembling to obtain an advance of wages following Magistrates' recommendation for a wage rise.
6 Dec.	Marston (in parish of Potterne)	Strike of threshers employed by Mr Grant, for the 10s a week recommended by the local Magistrates. Magistrates refused to enforce recommendation and threshers returned to work at 8s a week.
6 Dec.	Bromham	Strike of Mr Butler's labourers for Magistrates' recommended wage rise. Strikers claimed that all other local farmers had raised wages.
1831		
3 Mar.	Ramsbury	Strike of 50-60 labourers (grievances not known). Strikers went round adjacent villages to enlist support, until dispersed by Marlborough Yeomanry.
30-31 May	West Lavington	Strike of approx. 50 labourers against a wage cut from 9s to 8s a week.
1834		
Early May	Compton Bassett	Strike of labourers. 3 labourers were charged at Chippenham Petty Sessions with intimidation of a fourth labourer who had been forced to join the strike against his will.
1843		
Early July	Wootton Bassett	Harvest strike of Mr Hunt's labourers for an extra 1d a day. Hunt managed to get the harvest in with the help of friends and neighbours.
1849		
29 Oct.	Stoford, South Newton and Wishford	Strike against a proposed wage cut. Strikers went in a body to appeal to Sidney Herbert at Wilton House.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details
1850		
Mid-Feb.	West Lavington	Strike of labourers against a wage cut from 7s to 6s a week (allotment and house rents were also a grievance). There was subsequent unrest as the result of the arrest of one of the strike leaders.
1853		
31 Jan.	Barford, Fovant and Compton	Strike of labourers for wage rise from 7s to 9s a week.
7 Feb.	Salisbury area	Strike of labourers of 'an extensive parish' for a wage rise from 7s to 9s a week (apparently already won by the Barford labourers in Jan.).
12-15 Mar.	Beckhampton, Kennett and Winterbourne Monkton	Strike of labourers for the wage rise recently awarded by Avebury farmers to their labourers.
1858		
July	Wedhampton (in parish of Urchfont)	Harvest strike of Mr Taylor's labourers.
July	Upavon	Harvest strike of reapers demanding 16s a week.
1860		
12 June	Highworth	Meeting held for the purpose of forming an Agricultural Labourers' Protection Society.
1872		
16 Apr.	Marlborough	Meeting to form a branch of 'The Labor League Society'. Only about one tenth of those present were agricultural labourers. Speakers included 'delegates from South Warwickshire', William Morris, proprietor of the Swindon Advertiser.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details
1872 contd.		
Early May	Wootton Bassett	Meeting to form a branch of the West of England Labourers' Association. Attendance approx. 600. Speakers included T.H. Strange, Secretary of the Association and a former teacher at Wootton Bassett British School.
Early May	Shrewton, Maddington	Handbill circulated in these and neighbouring parishes, signed by 'labourer' on behalf of men of parishes, asking for a rise in wages to 5s a week + 4d an hour overtime and a nine hour day.
12 May	Lineham	West of England Labourers' Association meeting. Attendance approx. 600-700. Speakers included Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice M.P.; Absalom Black, agricultural labourer of Lineham; William Beer of Calne and Henry Iles of Christian Malford both former labourers and now self-sufficient; Thomas Fry, Henry Atherton, Morris and Strange.
13 May	Wilton	Meeting to discuss 'questions of wages, hours of labour and to form a union'. Speakers included John Tutt former Warwickshire agricultural labourer.
31 May	Marlborough	Union meeting. Attendance approx. 200, about half being agricultural labourers. Speakers included William Edwards (former Anti-Corn Law League agent); Bill Scott, agricultural labourer of Martin; Miles, agricultural labourer of Marlborough who had recently been given notice to quit his work and cottage for union activity; Strange.
1873		
5 June	Calne	West of England Labourers' Association meeting to form a district section in North Wilts. Attendance approx. 400-500. Only one third were agricultural labourers. Speakers included Strange and Rev. T. Storey, Secretary of North Wilts district.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details
1873 contd.		
12 Nov.	Swindon	Conference in connection with the formation of the Federal Union. Attendance 600-700.
25 Nov.	Chippenham	Meeting of Lincoln and neighbouring counties League' (i.e. Federal Union). Speakers included Storey. Approx. 25 joined Union.
1874		
30 Jan.	Ludgershall	N.A.L.U. rally. 3 delegates and one labourer subsequently charged with riotous assembly for attending meeting armed with sticks to offset threats by anti-Unionists. Acquitted at Assizes.
28 July	Fisherton Anger	N.A.L.U. meeting to form South Wilts District. Attendance 2-3,000. Speakers included Arch. Scuffles and heckling.
4 Sep.	Fisherton Anger	N.A.L.U. meeting. Speakers included Arch.
1875		
10 Feb.	Devizes	Annual meeting of North Wilts district of N.A.L.U. Amalgamation with South Wilts district agreed upon.
18-24 Feb.	Wilton-in- the-Valley (in Great Bedwin)	Strike of agricultural labourers demanding same hours and wages as labourers in neighbouring villages. Some farmers gave way, but others holding out. Strikers said to be not in Union.
4 Mar.	Devizes	N.A.L.U. meeting in market place. Corn Exchange refused by Corporation. Attendance approx. 1,000. Addressed by Arch. Heckling.
April	-	Formation of Salisbury District of N.A.L.U., comprising former North Wilts, South Wilts and Andover districts.

Date	Parish/ Borough	Details
1875 contd.		
9 July	Shrewton	N.A.L.U. meeting. Addressed by Howard Evans, editor of the new English Labourer (Labourers' Union Chronicle now the organ of the breakaway National Farm Labourers Union).
15 Sep.	Bremhill	N.A.L.U. meeting held in field loaned by local farmer, Vines. Attendance 1,200-1,500. Speakers included William Cole of Calne (former supporter of Anti-Corn Law League); Arch.
16 Sep.	Stonehenge	N.A.L.U. meeting. Attendance approx. 1,200. Addressed by Arch.

Source: D.W.G., S.W. Jnl., W.I., The Times.

APPENDIX 4B: THE 'REVOLT OF THE FIELD' IN WILTSHIRE.
MEETINGS AND INCIDENTS BY PARISH

ALDBOURNE:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 5th July 1873. Union membership here 'beginning to look up'.

ALDERBURY:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, January 1875. One man joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Branch established by March 1875.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 6th April 1875. Nearly all the men in the parish said to be in the Union.

AMESBURY:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 17th March 1875. Only a few here struggling to keep Union alive.

AVEBURY:

West of England Labourers' Association Branch established here but then 'fell through'. A shoemaker of the parish organised a Union meeting here in May or June to which he invited Royce, Strange and Arch. (Reported in Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 6th June 1872).

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 18th July 1873. Approx. 200 attended. Branch of 19 members formed.

Union branch suffered setbacks in 1874.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, January 1875. Branch membership reported to be picking up again. Union unable to secure room in which to hold meeting.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 16th February 1875, in order to discuss emigration.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 31st March 1875.

Union membership all reported to have become supporters of National Farm Labourers' Union in September 1875.

BERWICK ST JOHN:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 18th January 1875. Union members here in arrears in their subscriptions.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 2nd March 1875. Poor weather and low attendance reported.

BIDDISTONE:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 19th February 1875.

BISHOPS CANNINGS:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 3rd December 1873. 6 joined the Union.

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence here in March 1875.

BISHOPSTONE (near Salisbury):

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 9th February 1875. No one joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 7th April 1875. Very few Union members here.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 17th May 1875.

BREMHILL:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 17th February 1875. An 'exceedingly good Branch' in existence here.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 17th May 1875. Large attendance.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 15th September 1875, addressed by Arch. Held in field loaned by local farmer, Vines. Attendance 1200-1500.

BROAD CHALK:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, July 1873.

Branch established by 1874, but instead of sending subscriptions to the district secretary, Branch members divided money amongst themselves and spent it in the public house. Only two fully paid-up Union members remaining by March 1875.

BROAD HINTON:

Union meeting in first week of June 1872.

West of England Labourers' Association meeting, early March 1873. Addressed by T.H. Strange, Rev. T. Storey and Colonel Denison of Canadian Government.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 30th October 1873.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 13th November 1873.

BROMHAM:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 11th November 1873. 10 men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 2nd December 1873. 400-500 people attended. Over 40 men joined Union. Demands at this meeting included extension of the franchise to the agricultural labourer.

N.A.L.U. Branch's Christmas Dinner, 26th December 1874. Branch of 40 members here.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 27th February 1875. 'A very good Branch' reported here. Some men had been in arrears but all were now fully paid-up.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 11th May 1875. Large attendance. 7 men joined.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 22nd May 1875. 'A very good, substantial Branch' again reported.

BURBAGE:

Union meeting, 20th June 1872. Attendance approx. 300.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 20th June 1872. Chaired by Royce. No men here prepared to join Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 25th February 1875. Addressed by labourer named Rolling.

CALNE:

West of England Labourers' Association meeting, to form a district section in North Wilts, 5th June 1873.

'Labourers Union' meeting, 5th July 1873.

'Labour League' meeting, 12th February 1875.

CHARLTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 17th February 1875. Branch secretary here had lost his employment as a result of his Union activity. Some members paying arrears of 3 months in subscriptions.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 30th March 1875. Branch reported to be in a 'poor state'. Four men joined Union.

CHRISTIAN MALFORD:

West of England Labourers' Association meeting, March 1873.

CODFORD:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, January 1875. A 'small number' joined Union.

COLLINGBOURNE DUCIS:

N.A.L.U. Branch of 80 reported in June 1875.

COLLINGBOURNE KINGSTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 20th November 1873. A few men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 23rd March 1875. 25 joined Union.

COMPTON BASSETT:

'Labour League' meeting, 5th December 1873.

COMPTON CHAMBERLAIN:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 23rd February 1875. 3 joined. B. Sanger was secretary of the Branch (which also covered Dinton).

COOMBE BISSETT:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 7th May 1874. Little response to Union delegate reported.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 18th February 1875 (described as third meeting here). 12 joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 24th March 1875. 3 joined.

DAMERHAM:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 12th February 1875. 4 more joined. Branch here now numbered 69.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 4th May 1875.

DEVIZES:

Labourers Union meeting on the Green, 18th September 1873.
Little response to Union delegates reported.

Annual meeting of North Wilts district of N.A.L.U., 10th
February 1875. Amalgamation of North and South Wilts
districts agreed to at this meeting.

N.A.L.U. Meeting held around market cross, 4th March 1875.
Attended by approx. 1,000. Addressed by Arch.

DINTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 9th March 1875. 24 men joined Union -
men here in Compton Chamberlain Branch.

DOWNTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 16th February 1875. Branch here 'sadly
out of order for want of a secretary'. 1 man joined;
1 man paid-up arrears.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 1st April 1875. Many Union members in
arrears. 7 men joined.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 8th May 1875. Large attendance.

DURRINGTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 7th November 1873. 10 men joined.
Some Union members here preparing to emigrate to New Zealand.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 9th December 1873. 30 men joined.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, January 1875. Good attendance.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 18th March 1875. A good Branch reported
here. 1 locked-out Union man about to emigrate to Canada.

EASTON:

First N.A.L.U. Meeting, 22nd March 1875. 3 joined, but
many of those attending too afraid to do so.

EBBESBOURNE WAKE:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 19th January 1875. Branch reported as
weak.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 3rd March 1875. 2 men joined Union.

EDINGTON:

N.A.L.U. Branch formed in 1874. Reported to have 17 members during winter 1874/5.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 7th January 1875. Branch picking up.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 1st March 1875.

N.A.L.U. Branch numbered 93 by beginning of May 1875.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 16th May 1875. Branch now numbered 130.

ENFORD:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 11th October 1873. 30 men joined Union. 3 men losing their employment and cottages as a result of joining.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 27th October 1873. Attended by 400. 94 men joined.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, early November 1873. Nearly every labourer in the village reported to be in the Union. 10 men discharged for being Union members. N.A.L.U. assisted them in migrating to Wales.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 20th November 1873.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 11th February 1875.

ERLESTOKE:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 2nd April 1875.

FIGHELDEAN:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 22nd November 1873. Attended by 300. 17 men joined Union.

FISHERTON ANGER:

N.A.L.U. Meeting to form South Wilts district, 28th July 1874.

GREAT BEDWIN:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 10th November 1873. Several men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 22nd or 23rd November 1873. Attended by 200. It was reported that a Branch would soon be formed.

STrike by the labourers of Wilton-in-the-Valley in this parish, 18th - 24th February 1875, for same hours and wages as labourers of surrounding villages. Strikers not reported to be Union members.

GREAT CHEVERELL:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 12th May 1875. 7 men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Branch of 127 members reported in June 1875.

HEYTESBURY:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 12th January 1875. Branch reported here.

HILMARTON:

West of England Labourers' Association meeting, March 1873.

HINDON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 22nd February 1875. (No Branch here yet.)

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 8th March 1875. Attended by 300. 7 men joined.

IDMINSTON:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 2nd February 1875. Good Branch reported here (also covered Newton Toney). 2 men joined.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 15th March 1875. 23 men joined.

IMBER:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 5th February 1875. A good Branch reported here.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, Whit Monday 1875.

LOCKERIDGE:

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 24th February 1875. This was the first N.A.L.U. meeting here. A few men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. Meeting, 30th March 1875. A Branch formed here by now.

MARKET LAVINGTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 10th October 1873. Attended by between 300 and 400. 18 men joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 5th November 1873. A Branch was formed; number of members not known.

MARSTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting (said to be first meeting here) November 1875. Branch of 7 formed.

MARTIN:

N.A.L.U. meeting, July 1873.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 10th February 1875. Men here said to be losing heart in the Union.

MERE:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 8th July 1873. Attempts at disruption by Gillingham farmer were foiled. 27 men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 24th March 1874.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 1st June 1875. 7 more joining Branch to bring membership up to 40.

MILDENHALL:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 6th January 1875. A good branch reported here.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 23rd February 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 2nd April 1875. One member had been given notice to quit his cottage for attending a meeting addressed by Arch.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 20th May 1875.

NETHERAVON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 20th November 1873. Attended by approx. 600. 23 men joined Union.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 5th December 1873. Branch of 93 members formed.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 12th February 1875. Very large attendance reported. 18 men joined Union.

NETTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 16th September 1874.

ODSTOCK:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 23rd March 1875. Small attendance.
3 men joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 2nd May 1875. 5 joined.

OGBOURNE:

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence by March 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 1st April 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 19th May 1875.

OVERTON:

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence by January 1875.

PEWSEY:

N.A.L.U. Branch meeting, 28th January 1875.

N.A.L.U. Branch meeting, 24th March 1875. Branch here
'doing well'.

At least some members of N.A.L.U. Branch becoming supporters
instead of National Farm Labourers Union in September 1875.

PITTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 19th March 1875. Branch of 10 members
formed.

POULSHOT:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 24th September 1873. Attended by approx.
200. Men here reported to be ignorant of Union movement.
Some heckling of Union speakers by master miller and farmer
named Butler.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 9th October 1873. Attendance of 200
again reported. Butler speaking against Union at meeting.
10 joined Union. It was reported that presence of employers
prevented more joining.

RAMSBURY:

Union meeting, first week of June 1872. Attended by 400-500. Approx. 60 joined Union (N.A.L.U.?).

Union meeting, 13th March 1873.

N.A.L.U. 'large demonstration and tea meeting', 14th June 1873, held in field loaned by farmer named Talmage. Procession formed by Union members wearing blue rosettes and accompanied by the brass band and banner of the Ramsbury Temperance Movement in the afternoon. In the evening a public meeting addressed by Messrs Pill, Talmage and Dumper was held. 25 more men joined the Union, making the Branch up to 149 members.

N.A.L.U. said to have brought about a wage rise here of 2s a week by August 1873.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 25th October 1873. It was reported that one Union member was promised a wage rise of 1s per week the following spring if he left the Union. The man refused and was consequently dismissed.

REDLYNCH:

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence here by January 1875 and 'doing well'.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 31st March 1875. 4 more joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 3rd May 1875. 6 more joined.

ROCKBOURNE:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 11th February 1875. 5 joined.

SHALBOURNE:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 28th June 1873. 18 men joined. Some attempts at disruption by local farmers reported.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 26th July 1873. Attended by approx. 400, some coming from a distance. Branch of 29 formed.

SHREWTON:

(Handbill circulated in this area in early May 1872. See Appendix 4a.)

N.A.L.U. meeting, 20th January 1875.

Many N.A.L.U. members switched allegiance in September 1875 to National Farm Labourers Union. N.F.L.U. meetings disrupted by N.A.L.U. members.

STEEPLE ASHTON:

N.A.L.U. Branch formed, Easter 1873.

Many N.A.L.U. members switched allegiance to National Farm Labourers Union in September 1875.

STRATTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 7th October 1873.

SUTTON VENY:

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence here by January 1875.

SWALLOWCLIFFE:

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence by March 1875, but it was weak.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 10th March 1875. 3 more joined.

TEFFONT:

First N.A.L.U. meeting, 13th May 1875.

TILSHEAD:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 3rd February 1875. 2 joined.

UPAVON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, September 1873. 8 joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 13th October 1873. 18 joined. Branch of 24 in existence by October 1873.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 10th February 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 20th May 1875.

WANBOROUGH:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 5th May 1875 at which Branch was formed.

WEST GRINSTEAD:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 18th March 1875. Many of the men here reported as already being members of the Alderbury Branch.

WEST LAVINGTON:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 2nd February 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 30th March 1875. 46 men joined and 28 rejoined. Many of the men here had previously been 'bought-out' of the Union by the farmers. The revival of support for the N.A.L.U. followed a threatened wage reduction. Branch Secretary and Treasurer were dismissed their employment following this meeting.

WHITEPARISH:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 5th April 1875. Delegate reported that he had been unable to elicit any response on previous visits, but on this occasion 13 men joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 18th May 1875.

WILTON:

Meeting on 13th May 1872 'to form a Union' (see Appendix 4a).

N.A.L.U. meeting, 3rd June 1872. 60 Wilton men reported to be in Union.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 31st May 1875. 2 more joined.

Demonstration organised by Branch on 18th August 1875 in support of 6 Salisbury labourers who had been imprisoned for 14 days for leaving their work during the hay harvest.

WINTERBOURNE BASSETT:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 29th September 1873. Reported as well attended. 7 joined.

N.A.L.U. Branch of 15 in existence by February 1875.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 16th March 1875. Attended by approx. 300. 4 more joined.

WINTERSLOW:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 20th July 1872. Attended by 60-70 agricultural labourers. Approx. 11 joined the Union.

N.A.L.U. Branch of 18 formed on 17th March 1875.

Union Branch reported to have switched allegiance to National Farm Labourers Union, September 1875.

WOODFORD:

N.A.L.U. meeting, 1st March 1875. 6 joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 12th March 1875. Attended by approx. 300.
15 joined.

N.A.L.U. meeting, 11th May 1875. It was reported that
Union support here was not strong.

WOOTTON BASSETT:

West of England Labourers Association meeting, early May 1872.
Attended by approx. 600.

Association meeting, 6th March 1873.

WOOTTON RIVERS:

First N.A.L.U. meeting, 25th February 1875. Local vicar
attended.

N.A.L.U. Branch in existence here by March 1875.

Sources: L.U.C.; E.L.; D.W.G.; W.I.; S.W. Jnl.

REFERENCES

Introduction

1. D. Jones, Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1982) pp. 1, 14.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. N.A. Scotland, The Role of Methodism in the Growth and Development of the 'Revolt of the Field' in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, 1872-95 (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Aberdeen University) and B. Felicity Carlton, A Substantial and Sterling Friend to the Labouring Man: the Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union 1872-95 (Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, Sussex University, 1978).
4. D. Williams, The Rebecca Riots (Cardiff, 1955); P.G. Rogers, Battle in Bossenden Wood (O.U.P., 1961).

Chapter I

5. T. Davis, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Wilts with observations on the means of its improvement (London, 1794).
W. Marshall, The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the several agricultural departments of England, Vol. 2: Western Department (First published 1809. York, 1817 edition) and Vol. 5: Southern and Peninsular Departments (First published 1817. York, 1818 edition).

- E. Little, 'Farming of Wiltshire' in The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, Vol. V, 1845.
- J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-1 (First published 1852. Second edition, 1968).
6. R. Molland, 'Agriculture c. 1793 - c. 1870' in The Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol. IV (O.U.P., 1959).
 7. Davis, op.cit., p. 30.
 8. Caird, op.cit., p. 79.
 9. Davis, op.cit., p. 95.
 10. See for instance P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 71.
 11. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13830. Correspondence of Pewsey Union, 1835-37. Ratepayers of Enford to P.L.C., 3rd June 1836.
 12. Molland, op.cit., p. 66.
 13. P.P., 1833 (612.) V., p. 66.
 14. Local Government Board Return of Owners of Land (England and Wales), 2 Vols. (London, 1874).
 15. Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1970 edition. Introduction by G.E. Mingay).
 16. E.L. Jones, The Development of English Agriculture 1815-1873 (Studies in Economic and Social History, Macmillan, 1968).
 17. P.P., 1833 (612.) V., p. 47.
 18. Molland, loc.cit., pp. 76-7.
 19. Davis, op.cit., p. 117.
 20. W. Cobbett, Rural Rides (First published 1830. Penguin paperback edition, 1967), pp. 408-9.

21. Davis, op.cit., p. 125.
22. Ibid., p. 118.
23. Caird, op.cit., p. 74.
24. Molland, loc.cit., p. 69.
25. Caird, op.cit., p. 78.
26. Davis, op.cit., p. 117.
27. Caird, op.cit., p. 74.
28. D.B. Grigg, 'The Changing Agricultural Geography of England; a commentary on the sources available for the reconstruction of the agricultural geography of England, 1770-1850' in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Vol. 41, 1967.
29. E.J. Evans, Tithes and the Tithe Commutation Act, 1836 (National Statutes and the Local Community. Standing Conference for Local History, London, 1978).
30. Local Government Board Return of Owners of Land (England and Wales), op.cit.
31. W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (First published 1955. London, 1981 edition), p. 180.
32. Molland, loc.cit., p. 64.
33. Davis, op.cit., p. 139.
34. E.P. Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity' in D. Hay et al., Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England (London, 1975), p. 282.
35. W.E. Tate, 'A Handlist of Wiltshire Enclosure Acts and Awards' in Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine, Vol. 51, 1945-47.
36. Rev. Stephen Demainbray, The Poor Man's Best Friend, or, land to cultivate for his own benefit: being the

- result of 24 years experience. In a letter to the Marquess of Salisbury, as given before the House of Lords Committee on the Poor Laws (London, 1831).
37. J.L. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer (First published 1911. Longmans, 1978 edition), pp. 47-48.
38. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 106. Spade Cultivation, tried for ten years on an estate in Wiltshire in a letter to the Right Hon. W. Sturgess Bourne. By a Magistrate for the Counties of Hants and Wilts. London, 1830.
39. W.A. Armstrong, 'The Use of Information about occupation. Part II: An Industrial Classification 1841-1891' in E.A. Wrigley (Ed.), Nineteenth-Century Society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data (C.U.P., 1972).
40. Caird, op.cit., p. 75.
41. P.P., 1868-69, XIII., p. 53.
42. P.P., 1833 (612.) V., p. 56.
43. A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough; containing travels, statistics and descriptions of scenery and agricultural customs in most parts of England (Manchester, 1852), p. 385.
44. P.P., 1833 (612.) V., p. 56.
45. P.P., 1868-69, XIII., p. 240.
46. D.W.G., 4th July 1833.
47. P.P., 1847-48 (461.) VII., p. 298.
48. P.R.O., ASSI. 25/22/18 and D.W.G., 9th August 1855. Letters are quoted in Chapter IV, p. 218, and Chapter V, pp. 277-78.

49. B. Kerr, Bound to the Soil. A Social History of Dorset 1750-1918 (John Baker, 1968), p. 107.
50. D.W.G., 19th August 1830.
51. P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost (Methuen University Paperbacks, 1971), pp. 14-16.
52. J. de la Mann, 'Textile Industries since 1550' in The Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol. IV (O.U.P., 1959), p. 172.
53. Davis, op.cit., p. 139.
54. Ibid., p. 159.
55. A. Redford, Labour Migration in England 1800-1850 (Manchester University Press, 1926), pp. 38-9.
56. Cobbett, op.cit., p. 351.
57. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots (MSS Letters of J. Cobb), Letter from the Clerk of the Magistrates of the Trowbridge Division, dated 28th November 1830.
58. P.P., 1837 (415.) XVII., Part II, p. 22.
59. C.R. Dod, Electoral Facts from 1832 to 1852 impartially stated. Constituting a Complete Political Gazeteer (First published London, 1853. Harvester Press edition, Brighton, 1972), p. 63.
60. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 241.
61. Caird, op.cit., p. 75.
62. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII, p. 502a.
63. Caird, op.cit., p. 75.
64. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 68.
65. Somerville, op.cit., p. 45.
66. M.A. Crane, The Aldbourne Chronicle (Aldbourn Civic Society, Aldbourne, 1974).

67. P.R.O., MHI2/13735. Correspondence of Devizes Union, 1834-38. Devizes Board of Guardians to P.L.C., 2nd December 1835.
68. See map on page 40.
69. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 269.
70. See Chapter III, p. 187.
71. I. Gandy, The Heart of a Village; an Intimate History of Aldbourne (Moonraker Press, Bradford-on-Avon, 1975).
72. Redford, op.cit., pp. 93-95.
73. Cobbett, op.cit., p. 292.
74. P.P., 1854, XVII, p. 473.
75. P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.)XIX, p. 36 (Evidence of A. Kingston, Churchwarden and overseer of Shalbourne, Wilts).
76. D.W.G., 14th April 1831.
77. D.W.G., 7th May 1832.
78. S.W. Jnl., 22nd April 1833.
79. S.W. Jnl., 30th June 1834.
80. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639. Correspondence of Alderbury Union 1834-37.
81. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13863. Correspondence of Warminster Union, 1834-36.
82. D.W.G., 15th March 1838.
83. D.W.G., 17th February and 17th November 1842, 28th September 1843, 10th April 1845 and 9th August 1849.
84. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639. Hooper to P.L.C., 30th May 1836.
85. Redford, op.cit.
86. B. Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer 1750-1850' in Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Vol. 84, 1962.

87. S.W. Jnl., 1st August 1831.
88. S.W. Jnl., 18th August 1831.
89. D.W.G., 2nd July 1835.
90. Caird, op.cit., p. 85.
91. D.W.G., 12th February 1852.
92. P.Horn, The Rural World 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside (Hutchinson Social History of England, 1980), p. 256.
93. E.L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England 1793-1872' in Economic History Review, Vol. 17, 1964-5.
94. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 58.
95. See Chapter VI.
96. Molland, loc.cit., p. 85.
97. D.W.G., 4th September 1856.
98. W.I., 12th December 1867.
99. J.M. Stratton, Agricultural Records 220-1968 (London, 1970), p. 103.
100. D.W.G., 30th July 1857.
101. D.W.G., 23rd September 1858.
102. Molland, loc.cit., p. 86.
103. D.W.G., 4th September 1856.
104. D.W.G., 12th February 1857.
105. D.W.G., 11th July 1861.
106. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 298.
107. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 250.
108. S.W. Jnl., 8th June 1872.
109. Cobbett, op.cit., p. 227.

110. The Labourers' Friend: A Selection from the Publications of the Labourers' Friend Society, showing the utility and national advantage of allotting land for cottage husbandry (London, 1835), p. 15.
111. Caird, op.cit., p. 80.
112. P.R.O., H.O. 40/25, Fos. 402-4, Rev. E. Williams to Melbourne, 14th December 1830.
113. R. Jefferies, Hodge and His Masters (First published 1879. 1937 edition), p. 324.
114. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 61.
115. B. Kerr, op.cit., pp. 56-7.
116. R. Jefferies, The Gamekeeper at Home. The Amateur Poacher (First published Pall Mall Gazette, 1878 and 1879. O.U.P., 1978), p. 34.
117. See for example Chapter V, pp. 289-90, and Chapter VI., p. 328.
118. P.R.O., H.O. 107/1839.
119. A.G. Street, Farmer's Glory (London, 1932), p. 30.
120. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 250.
121. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 61.
122. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 290.
123. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 57.
124. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 64.
125. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII, p. 5a.
126. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 245.
127. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 240.
128. University of Reading. WIL.11.8. Annual Lists of Labourers at Aldbourne and Warren Farms, 1867-1907.
129. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 250.

130. D.W.G., 7th April 1853.
131. S.W. Jnl., 10th April 1837.
132. D.W.G., 24th March 1853.
133. D.W.G., 16th April 1854.
134. D.W.G., 28th September 1854.
135. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 250.
136. Caird, op.cit., p. 85.
137. Ibid., p. 86.
138. Ibid., p. 85.
139. See for instance D.W.G., 2nd April 1840.
140. P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.) XIX, p. 93.
141. P.P., 1846 (463-I) IX, p. 200.
142. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 60.
143. See for instance, P.R.O., M.H.12/13699 Correspondence of Chippenham Union 1834-38; M.H. 12/13735 Correspondence of Devizes Union 1834-38.
144. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13776 Correspondence of Malmesbury Union 1834-42.
145. See for instance Chapter IV, pp. 222-224.
146. F.G. Heath, Peasant Life in the West of England (New Edition, London, 1880), pp. 243-244.
147. D.W.G., 9th October 1856.
148. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 69.
149. Caird, op.cit., p. 82.
150. Ibid.
151. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 65.
152. P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.) XIX, p. 119.
153. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 64.
154. P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.) XIX, p. 29.

155. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13658, Correspondence of Amesbury Union, 1834-38. Rev. E. Duke to P.L.C., 20th November 1834.
156. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 62-66.
157. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 56, 61, 69; P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 53.
158. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 69.
159. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 56.
160. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 60-61.
161. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 252.
162. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 254.
163. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 58-63.
164. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 245.
165. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 237.
166. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 64.
167. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 248. Also pp. 236, 239 and 244.
168. Caird, op.cit., pp. 75-6.
169. P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.) XIX, p. 79.
170. A. Brundage, The Making of the New Poor Law. The politics of inquiry, enactment and implementation, 1832-9 (London, 1978), pp. 6-7.
171. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13751, Correspondence of Swindon and Highworth Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 24th August 1836.
172. A. Brundage, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: a reappraisal of the revolution in government' in English Historical Review, LXXXVII, 1972.
173. Brundage, op.cit., p. 83.
174. P.R.O., M.H. 12/234 and M.H. 12/13639-13892. Correspondence of Wiltshire Poor Law Unions from 1834.

175. A. Digby, 'The Rural Poor Law', in D. Fraser (Ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1976), p. 156.
176. Fraser, op.cit., p. 18 (Introduction).
177. D.W.G., 10th October 1850.
178. See Chapter IV, p. 213.
179. F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (London, Routledge paperback edition, 1971), p. 210.
180. 'A Country Rector's Address to his Parishioners, at the close of the 25th year of his residence amongst them, with reference to the disturbed state of the times'. First published in London, 1830. Reprinted in The Rising of the Agricultural Labourers. Nine Pamphlets and Six Broad-sides 1830-31 (British Labour Struggles: Contemporary Pamphlets 1727-1850, Arno Press, 1972).
181. D.W.G., 27th September 1832. Letter from 'A Friend of the Poor'.
182. See Chapter V, p. 289, and Chapter VI, p.345.
183. P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875 (Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 42 and p. 54.
184. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 71.
185. P.P., 1837 (464.) V, p. 163.
186. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 56.
187. The Labourers' Friend, op.cit., p. 197.
188. Ibid., pp. 197-203.
189. P.P., 1843 (402.) VII, p. 14.

190. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 56.
191. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII, p. 5a.
192. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 70.
193. P.P., 1843 (402.) VII, p. 12.
194. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 70.
195. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 70.
196. P.P., 1843 (402.) VII, p. 14.
197. The Labourers' Friend, op.cit., p. 201.
198. Ibid., p. 199.
199. Ibid., p. 197.
200. Ibid., p. 201.
201. Molland, loc.cit., p. 84.
202. See Chapter V, p.281.
203. P.P., 1837 (464.) V, p. 162.
204. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII.
205. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII.
206. Wages, for instance were paid monthly at Horningsham; P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 268; and at Burbage; P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 247.
207. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 247.
208. See Chapters III, V and VI.
209. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 57.
210. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 64-65.
211. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 59.
212. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 58.
213. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 59.
214. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 69.
215. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 61.
216. Caird, op.cit., p. 85.

217. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 242.
218. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 264.
219. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, pp. 250 and 256.
220. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, pp. 255-6.
221. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 255.
222. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 59.
223. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 245.
224. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 248.
225. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, p. 262.
226. Davis, op.cit., p. 90.
227. Caird, op.cit., p. 85.
228. D.W.G., 12th January 1854; W.I., 19th April 1855.
229. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 291.
230. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 58.
231. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 59.
232. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 69.
233. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 65.
234. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 67.
235. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 290.
236. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 291.
237. W.I., 12th January 1871.
238. D.W.G., 30th October 1856.
239. Heath, op.cit., pp. 260-6.
240. Ibid., p. 267.
241. Ibid., p. 262.
242. Ibid., pp. 262-6.
243. Ibid., pp. 260-1.
244. Ibid., p. 286.
245. D.W.G., 16th October 1856.

246. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 296.
247. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 247.
248. See Chapter IV, p. 212.
249. See Chapter VI, pp. 327 and 332.
250. R. Jefferies, The Toilers of the Field (London, 1892), p. 52.
251. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13719. Correspondence of Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 27th October 1835.
252. Jefferies, op.cit., p. 52.

Chapter II

253. Cobbett, op.cit., p. 320.
254. Jones, op.cit., pp. 2-3.
255. D. Jones, 'Rural Crime and Protest', in G.E. Mingay (Ed.), The Victorian Countryside Vol. 2 (London, 1981).
256. S.W. Jnl., 16th March 1844.
257. D.W.G., 2nd April 1840.
258. P.P., 1854-55, X, Questions 2289-90.
259. D. Hay et al., Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England (London, 1975), p. 253.
260. A.J. Peacock, 'Village Radicalism in East Anglia 1800-1850' in J.P.D. Dunbabin (Ed.), Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain (London, 1974).
261. G. Rudé, Protest and Punishment. The Story of the Social and Political Protesters transported to Australia 1788-1868 (Oxford, 1978), p. 8.
262. Jefferies, op.cit., pp. 109-10.
263. S.W. Jnl., 16th January 1832.

264. D.W.G., 16th October 1834.
265. D.W.G., 1st May and 1st October 1835.
266. D.W.G., 19th March 1837.
267. D.W.G., 17th August 1848.
268. Peacock, loc.cit.
269. R.W. Bushaway, "'Grovely, Grovely, Grovely and all Grovely" Custom, Crime and Conflict in the English Woodland' in History Today, May 1981.
270. C. Holdenby, Folk of the Furrow (London, 1913), pp. 26-27.
271. P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX, pp. 166-76.
272. P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX, p. 169.
273. Devizes Museum Library. Wilts Miscellaneous MSS IV.
Article on the Game laws in Wilts (no date).
274. Hay, op.cit., p. 212.
275. D.W.G., 13th March 1845; and P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX.
p. 273.
276. P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX.
277. D.W.G., 20th April 1848.
278. D.W.G., 2nd February 1832. See also Chapter IV, p. 214.
279. Jefferies (O.U.P., 1978), op.cit., pp. 152-53.
280. W.H. Hudson, A Shepherd's Life (First published 1910.
Tisbury, 1978 edition), p. 57.
281. Jefferies, op.cit., p. 112.
282. Hudson, op.cit., pp. 55-56.
283. P.R.O., M.H. 12/234. Correspondence of Hungerford
Union, 1834-36. Meyrick to P.L.C., 22nd January 1835.
284. Jefferies, op.cit., p. 120.
285. Jefferies (London, 1892), op.cit., p. 190.
286. P.P., 1828 (235.) VIII, pp. 368-74.

287. S.W. Jnl., 7th January 1842.
288. The Times, 4th December 1830.
289. P.R.O., H.O. 40/25. Fos. 228-497.
290. See for example accounts of fires at Imber and Tilshead in D.W.G., 21st November 1833 and 3rd January 1834.
291. D.W.G., 15th December 1831.
292. D.W.G., 7th April 1842.
293. D.W.G., 4th July 1844.
294. The Labourers' Friend, op.cit. (A statement showing the manner in which land is let to the labouring classes in some parishes in the county of Wilts).
295. Ibid.
296. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 106.
Spade Cultivation, tried for ten years on an estate in Wiltshire in a letter to the Right Hon. W. Sturgess Bourne. By a Magistrate for the Counties of Hants and Wilts. London, 1830.
297. D.W.G., 12th February 1857.
298. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 57.
299. Jefferies (O.U.P., 1978), op.cit., pp. 278-79.
300. P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX, p. 275.
301. Hay, op.cit., p. 249.
302. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
303. J.J. Tobias, Nineteenth Century Crime; Prevention and Punishment (Newton Abbott, 1972), pp. 97-100.
304. D.W.G., 29th September 1831.
305. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 64. Articles of the North Bradley Association for the Prevention of

- Robberies and Thefts and Protection of Persons and Property; University of Reading. WIL.11.9, No. 10, 1835 Rules and Regulations of the Ramsbury and Aldbourne General Association for the Protection of Property, and the Prosecution of Felons and Other Offenders; S.W. Jnl., 17th February 1834.
306. D.W.G., 3rd January 1833.
307. D.W.G., 28th November 1833.
308. D.W.G., 1st May 1834.
309. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Samuel Meredith.
310. D.W.G., 19th April 1840.
311. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI. Evidence of Meredith.
312. W.R.O., The Minute Book of the Wilts Police Committee 1844-1881.
313. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
314. W.R.O., Wiltshire Constabulary: Return of Members of the Force since its Establishment 1839-1874.
315. Jefferies, op.cit., pp. 164-65.
316. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
317. D.W.G., 16th December 1869.
318. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
319. D. Jones, op.cit., p. 22.
320. P.G. Rogers, Battle in Bossenden Wood (O.U.P., 1961), p. 207.
321. D.W.G., 16th April 1840.
322. D.W.G., 12th April 1840.
323. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
324. W.I., 25th March 1841.
325. D.W.G., 27th August, 1840.

326. D.W.G., 27th October 1842.
327. D.W.G., 20th July 1843.
328. D.W.G., 13th March 1845.
329. D.W.G., 3rd April 1862.
330. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
331. D.W.G., 17th November 1842.

Chapter III

332. Hammond, op.cit., p. 176.
333. Ibid., p. 190.
334. The Times, 23rd November 1830.
335. D.W.G., 25th November 1830.
336. D.W.G., 24th April, 1st May, 8th May, 7th August 1834.
337. P.R.O., ASSI. 25/22/6.
338. D.W.G., 25th November 1830; S.W. Jnl., 15th February 1830.
339. D.W.G., 28th January 1830.
340. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, letter dated 22nd November 1830.
341. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, letter dated 23rd November 1830.
342. The Times, 7th January 1831.
343. D.W.G., 2nd December 1830.
344. The Times, 8th January 1831.
345. The Times, 3rd December 1830.
346. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots. Messiter and Co. to J. Benett, 30th November 1830.
347. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots. Clerk of Warminster Division Magistrates to J. Benett, 27th November 1830.
348. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots. Clerk of Trowbridge Division Magistrates to J. Benett, 28th November 1830.

349. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11. Clerk of Bradford Division Magistrates, 1st December 1830.
350. See Chapter VI, pp. 295-97.
351. The Times, 7th January 1831.
352. P.R.O., H.O. 40/27/6. W.E. Tallents to the Home Secretary, 13th December 1830. .
353. The Times, 8th January 1831.
354. The Times, 3rd January 1831.
355. The Times, 5th January 1831.
356. P.R.O., H.O. 11/8.
357. Hudson, op.cit., p. 124.
358. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXXIV. Appendix B1 Part V, p. 571e.
359. N. Gash, The Rural Unrest in England in 1830 with Special reference to Berkshire (Unpublished B. Litt. Thesis, Oxford University, 1934), p. 9.
360. E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers' in Past and Present, 1952, 1.
361. A.J. Randall, 'The Shearmen and the Wiltshire Outrages of 1802: trade unionism and industrial violence' in Social History, Vol. 7: No. 3, October 1982.
362. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 64.
363. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 249.
364. S. Macdonald, 'The Progress of the Early Threshing Machine' in Agricultural History Review, Vol. 23, 1975.
365. E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (Penguin University Paperbacks edition, 1973), pp. 317-23.
366. N.E. Fox, 'The Spread of the Threshing Machine in Central Southern England' in Agricultural History Review, Vol. 26, 1978.

367. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 64; P.P., 1836 (465.) VIII.
368. D.W.G., 13th March 1856.
369. Caird, op.cit., p. 84.
370. D.W.G., 11th September 1856.
371. S.W. Jnl., 5th September 1831; D.W.G., 9th June 1831.
372. D.W.G., 28th March 1867.
373. P.P., 1836 (465.) VIII, Evidence of Lord Radnor.
374. P.P., 1837 (464.) V, p. 164.
375. Marshall, op.cit., Vol. 2, p. 115.
376. Ibid., p. 116.
377. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 71.
378. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13719, Correspondence of Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union, 1834-38.
379. P.R.O., ASSI. 25/22/6.
380. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII:
381. M. Blaug, 'The Poor Law Re-examined' in Journal of Economic History, XXIV, 1964.
382. P.P., 1817 (462.) VI, pp. 86-91.
383. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13830, Correspondence of Pewsey Union, 1835-37.
384. The Times, 7th January 1831.
385. The Times, 23rd November 1830.
386. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII, p. 502a.
387. A. Charlesworth, Social Protest in a Rural Society: The Spatial Diffusion of the Captain Swing Disturbances of 1830-1831 (Historical Geography Research Series No. 1, October 1979).
388. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXXIV, p. 575e.
389. The Times, 23rd November 1830.

390. W.R.O., 413/23.
391. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXXIV, p. 573e and p. 577e.
392. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXXIV, p. 576e.
393. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Colonel Brotherton, 28th November 1830.
394. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13658., Correspondence of Amesbury Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 14th September 1835.
395. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXXIV, p. 577e.
396. W.R.O., 413/23. Confession of Edmund White.
397. Rogers, op.cit., pp. 184-203.
398. Charlesworth, op.cit., pp. 20-22.
399. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, p. 61.
400. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Clerk of Pewsey Division Magistrates, December 1830.
401. P.R.O., T. 1/4194.
402. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Colonel Mair, 26th November 1830.
403. W.R.O., 413/23, Benett to Cobb, 22nd December 1830 and Cobb to Benett, 26th December 1830.
404. W.R.O., 413/23, Chitty to Benett, 26th November 1830.
405. W.R.O., 413/23.
406. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Saunders to Home Office, 23rd November 1830.
407. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots, A'Court to Swayne, 20th November 1830.
408. P.R.O., H.O. 40/27/6.
409. W.R.O., 413/23, S.M. Phillips to Benett, 14th December 1830.
410. The Times, 1st December 1830.
411. S.W. Jnl., 29th November 1830.

412. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII, p. 502a.
413. The Times, 3rd December 1830.
414. W.R.O., T/A Downton cum Bodenham.
415. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXX, p. 574a.
416. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, Correspondence of Alderbury Union 1834-37.
417. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, Alderbury Guardians to P.L.C., 3rd February 1835.
418. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, A'Court to P.L.C., 27th August 1835.
419. S.W. Jnl., 22nd February 1830.
420. W.R.O., T/A Downton cum Bodenham.
421. The Times, 6th January 1831.
422. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, Alderbury Guardians to P.L.C., 3rd February 1835.
423. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13658, Correspondence of Amesbury Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 14th September 1835.
424. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, Circular from Churchwardens and Overseers of Downton, 13th February 1836; A'Court to P.L.C., 25th March 1836; Downton Guardians to P.L.C., 30th May 1836.
425. P.R.O., H.O. 129/263-265, Alderbury, Salisbury and Wilton Districts.
426. W.R.O., T/A Tisbury.
427. P.P., 1833 (149.) XXXVII.
428. The Times, 4th December, 1830.
429. Dod, op.cit.
430. P.P., 1817 (462.) VI, pp. 86-91.

431. Cobbett, op.cit., p. 296.
432. D.W.G., 2nd December 1830.
433. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Arundell to Home Secretary, 6th December 1830.
434. The Times, 10th December 1830.
435. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots, Clerk of Hindon Division Magistrates to Cobb, 26th November 1830.
436. The Times, 10th December 1830.
437. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Arundell to Home Secretary, 6th December 1830.
438. P.R.O., H.O. 129/266-267, Tisbury and Mere Districts.
439. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Arundell to Home Secretary, 6th December 1830.
440. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Arundell to Home Secretary, 6th December 1830.
441. The Times, 3rd December 1830.
442. W.R.O., 413/23, Benett to Cobb, 26th November 1830.
443. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Letter from Salisbury Post Office, dated 1st December 1830.
444. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 165.
Lt. A. Harfield, Captain William Wyndham of the Hindon Troop, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, 1964.
445. W.R.O., 413/23.
446. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13849, Correspondence of Tisbury Union, 1834-37. A'Court to P.L.C., 15th October 1835.
447. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13850, Correspondence of Tisbury Union, 1838-42. Benett to A'Court, 19th December 1838.
448. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13850, P.L.C. to Tisbury Guardians, 18th April 1838.

449. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13849, S. Taylor to P.L.C., 7th September 1837.
450. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13849, A'Court to P.L.C., 15th October 1835.
451. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13849, Overseers of Fonthill Gifford to P.L.C., 21st January 1835.
452. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13849, Overseers of Berwick St John to P.L.C., 23rd February 1837.
453. P.P., 1828 (235.) VIII.
454. D.W.G., 14th March 1850.
455. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13850, A'Court to P.L.C., 24th April 1840.
456. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13639, Correspondence of Alderbury Union, 1834-37. A'Court to P.L.C., 27th August 1835.
457. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Correspondence of Devizes Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 3rd October 1835.

Chapter IV

458. W.R.O., County of Wilts. Fisherton Gaol. Statistics of Crime from 1801 to 1850 compiled by the Governor of the County Gaol (Salisbury, 1855).
459. D. Jones, 'Thomas Campbell Foster and the Rural Labourer: Incendiarism in East Anglia in the 1840s' in Social History, Vol. 1, January 1976.
460. A.J. Peacock, Bread or Blood: A study of the Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816 (London, 1965), p. 96.
461. Guildhall Library. Sun Fire Insurance Office. MS. 11,937A/2-11,939A/4.

462. Guildhall Library, MS 11,935E.
463. University of Reading. WIL.11.9, No. 10, 1835.
Rules and Regulations of the Ramsbury and Aldbourne
General Association for the Protection of Property,
and the Prosecution of Felons and Other Offenders.
464. E.G. Wakefield, Swing Unmasked; or the Causes of
Rural Incendiarism (London, 1831), pp. 32-34.
465. Quoted in Daily Mirror, 4th April 1979.
466. The Nonconformist, Reprinted in W.I., 21st December
1843.
467. S.W. Jnl., 16th March 1844.
468. D.W.G., 7th August 1834.
469. W.I., 21st July 1870.
470. D.W.G., 6th November 1834 and 12th March 1835.
471. See Chapter II, p.112.
472. See Chapter III, pp.135-136.
473. Mingay (Ed.), op.cit., p. 575.
474. D.W.G., 11th September 1834 and 12th March 1835.
475. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Sermons 8. Rev.
G.J. Majendie, Satan's Workshop. A sermon preached
at Wilcot, May 4th 1834.
476. D.W.G., 12th March 1835.
477. D.W.G., 8th April 1858.
478. D.W.G., 22nd July 1858.
479. P.R.O., ASSI.25/30/7.
480. P.R.O., ASSI.25/22/18.
481. D.W.G., 14th August 1845.
482. D. Jones, op.cit., p. 61.
483. Rudé, op.cit., pp. 16-17.

484. D.W.G., 26th August, 9th September, 16th December 1869.
485. See Chapter V, pp. 256-57.
486. J. Stevenson and R. Quinault (Eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order, 1790-1820 (London, 1974), p. 24.
487. See Table 3.
488. See Appendix 1.
489. Molland, loc.cit., p. 86.
490. D.W.G., 21st July 1836.
491. D.W.G., 3rd April 1862.
492. R.B. Pugh, 'Chartism in Wiltshire' in Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine, Vol. LIV, 1951-52.
493. D. Jones, op.cit., p. 47.
494. W.R.O., 518/82.
495. D.W.G., 9th October 1857.
496. Devizes Museum Library. W.A. Webb, Bromham. A History of a Wiltshire Parish. 1913; D.W.G., 18th April and 16th May 1839.
497. D.W.G., 3rd March 1836.
498. D.W.G., 16th March 1837, 16th May 1839, 2nd April and 25th April 1840, 16th March 1843; W.I., 25th March 1841.
499. Chapter V, pp. 283-84.
500. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII.
501. D.W.G., 17th April 1834.
502. D.W.G., 21st November 1833.
503. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Correspondence of Devizes Union, 1834-38. A'Court to P.L.C., 3rd October 1835.
504. D.W.G., 18th April 1833.

505. D.W.G., 19th September 1833.
506. D.W.G., 21st November 1833.
507. D.W.G., 27th March 1834.
508. D.W.G., 24th April 1834.
509. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Captain Bouverie to P.L.C.,
10th September 1834.
510. D.W.G., 12th February and 16th April 1835.
511. D.W.G., 16th April 1837.
512. W.I., 12th January 1871.
513. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII.
514. D.W.G., 27th January and 10th March 1831.
515. D.W.G., 22nd June and 27th July 1865.
516. D.W.G., 13th November 1834.
517. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13751, Correspondence of Swindon and
Highworth Union 1834-38. Calley Codrington to P.L.C.,
4th November 1835.
518. D.W.G., 27th March 1834.
519. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13751, Colley Codrington to P.L.C.,
February 1835.
520. D.W.G., 25th June 1835.
521. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Correspondence of Devizes
Union, 1834-38. Olivier to P.L.C., 15th October 1835.
522. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, J.H.W.S. Estcourt to P.L.C.,
12th September 1834; Compton to P.L.C., 11th March
1835.
523. W.R.O., T/A Urchfont and T/A Edington.
524. D.W.G., 21st June 1832.
525. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, F. Kelsey (Lord Churchill's
steward) to P.L.C., 25th November 1835.

526. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, A'Court to P.L.C., 3rd October 1835.
527. Brundage, loc.cit. and P. Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law; A Critical Note' in English Historical Review, LXXXVIII, 1973.
528. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Compton to P.L.C., 11th March 1835.
529. P.R.O., M.H. 12/234, Correspondence of Hungerford Union, 1834-36. Meyrick to P.L.C., 22nd January 1835.
530. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13735, Estcourt to P.L.C., 12th September 1834.
531. P.P., 1833 (612.) V, Questions 975-977.
532. Thompson, op.cit., pp. 197-210 and pp. 234-250.
533. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 257.
534. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 249.
535. P.P., 1864, XXVIII, pp. 255-56.
536. Thompson, op.cit., p. 250.
537. F.M.L. Thompson, 'English Landownership: The Ailesbury Trust 1832-56' in Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol. XI, 1958.
538. Chapter II, p. 107.
539. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13789, Correspondence of Marlborough Union, 1834-42. A'Court to P.L.C., 30th October 1835.
540. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 252.

Chapter V

541. N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League (London, 1958), p. 143.
542. Somerville, op.cit.

543. P.P., 1836 (465.) VIII, Questions 16, 776 and 16,792-93.
544. W.I., 10th August, 9th November and 30th November 1843.
545. W.I., 28th November 1844.
546. W.I., 5th September 1844.
547. D.W.G., 22nd January 1846.
548. The Times, 7th January 1846.
549. D.W.G., 8th January 1846.
550. The Times, 7th January 1846.
551. The Times, 7th January 1846.
552. W.I., 13th June 1844.
553. W.I., 20th June 1844.
554. P.R.O., H.O. 107/1179.
555. D.W.G., 22nd January 1846.
556. W.R.O., T/A Hilmarton.
557. D.W.G., 19th February 1846.
558. W.I., 12th February 1846.
559. W.I., 3rd April 1845.
560. Daily News, 14th February 1846.
561. W.I., 12th June 1845.
562. W.I., 4th December 1845.
563. W.I., 12th June 1844.
564. F.E. Green, The History of the English Agricultural Labourer 1870-1920 (London, 1920), p. 30.
565. Somerville, op.cit., p. 386.
566. Ibid., p. 388.
567. D.W.G., 19th February 1846.
568. D.W.G., 27th April 1843.
569. D.W.G., 15th March 1838.
570. D.W.G., 22nd January 1846.

571. The Times, 7th January 1846.
572. W.I., 3rd April 1845.
573. W.I., 12th February 1846.
574. P.R.O., H.O. 129/254.
575. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 116.
 Summer Visits to Cottages in a Country Village. By
 Mrs Bowles of Bremhill Parsonage, London, 1836.
576. P.R.O., H.O. 107/1179.
577. W.R.O., T/A Hilmarton.
578. P.R.O., H.O. 107/1171.
579. P.R.O., H.O. 107/1179.
580. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 244.
581. Chapter IV, pp. 217-218.
582. D.W.G., 9th August 1855.
583. The Times, 7th January 1846.
584. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, Correspondence of Calne Union,
 1834-42. A'Court to P.L.C., 16th February 1841.
585. McCord, op.cit., p. 198.
586. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, pp. 62-63.
587. G. Darley, Village of Vision (London, 1975), p. 145.
588. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 244.
589. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, A'Court to P.L.C. (no date).
590. D.W.G., 19th February 1846.
591. D.W.G., 13th February 1840.
592. P.P., 1843 (510.) XII, p. 63.
593. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, A'Court to P.L.C. (no date).
594. D.W.G., 19th February 1846.
595. W.I., 26th February 1846.
596. D.W.G., 13th November 1834.

597. D.W.G., 29th January 1835.
598. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, Proposed Rules for Regulating Relief to the Poor of the Parish of Calne.
599. D.W.G., 22nd January and 19th February 1835.
600. D.W.G., 15th January 1835 and S.W. Jnl., 23rd February 1835.
601. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13719, Correspondence of Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union, 1834-38.
602. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, Correspondence of Calne Union, 1834-42. Atherton to P.L.C., 21st March 1837.
603. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, Atherton to P.L.C., 25th March 1837.
604. Brundage, op.cit., pp. 50-51.
605. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, Atherton to P.L.C., 25th March 1837.
606. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, P.L.C. to Atherton, 5th May 1837.
607. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13686, A'Court to P.L.C., 16th February 1841.
608. The Times, 7th January 1846.
609. W.I., 4th June and 26th September 1846.
610. Devizes Museum Library. Wiltshire Tracts 82.
611. Somerville, op.cit., p. 383.

Chapter VI

612. G. Loveless, 'The Victims of Whiggery; being a statement of the persecutions experienced by the Dorchester labourers, their trial, banishment etc. etc.', 2nd edition, London, 1837. Reprinted in Trade Unionism in the Early 1830s (British Labour Struggles:

- Contemporary Pamphlets 1729-1850, Arno Press, 1972).
613. R. Groves, Sharpen the Sickle! The History of the Farm Workers' Union (First published 1949. London, 1981 edition), p. 18.
614. D.W.G., 17th March 1853.
615. D.W.G., 8th May 1834.
616. Hammond, op.cit., pp. 87-94.
617. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots.
618. P.R.O., H.O. 40/25, Brotherton to Home Secretary, 5th December 1830; H.O. 52/11, Handbill dated 24th November 1830.
619. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots.
620. D.W.G., 9th December 1830.
621. D.W.G., 14th April 1836.
622. P.P., 1833 (612.) V.
623. Brundage, op.cit., p. 50.
624. D.W.G., 9th December 1830.
625. P.R.O., H.O. 52/11, Estcourt to Home Secretary, 29th November 1830.
626. W.R.O., Machine Breaking Riots, letter dated 26th November 1830.
627. D.W.G., 17th March 1853.
628. D.W.G., 17th March 1853.
629. P.P., 1868-69, XIII, p. 247.
630. S.W. Jnl., 8th June 1872.
631. D.W.G., 13th July 1843.
632. Street, op.cit., p. 14.
633. D.W.G., 3rd February 1853; S.W. Jnl., 12th February 1853.

634. The Times, 9th February 1853.
635. D.W.G., 17th March 1853.
636. The Times, 9th February 1853.
637. Stratton, op.cit., pp. 110-11.
638. D.W.G., 2nd June 1831; The Times, 6th June 1831.
639. Unless stated otherwise, the account of this strike is based on reports in D.W.G., 21st February and 28th February 1850.
640. P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI, Evidence of Meredith.
641. D.W.G., 16th May 1850.
642. See Chapter IV, p. 249.
643. The Times, 3rd November 1849.
644. Thompson, op.cit., p. 240.
645. D.W.G., 21st December 1837.
646. S.W. Amos, Social Discontent and Agrarian Disturbances in Essex, 1795-1850 (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Durham University, 1971), pp. 152-53; E.L. Jones, loc.cit., p. 353.
647. Groves, op.cit., p. 33.
648. P. Horn, Joseph Arch (1829-1919) The Farm Workers' Leader (Roundwood Press, Kington, 1971), pp. 18-20.
649. P.R.O., R.G. 9/1268-69.
650. See Chapter III, p. 161.
651. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII.
652. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13751, Correspondence of Swindon and Highworth Union, 1834-38. T. Sealey to P.L.C., 18th September 1834.
653. See Chapter III, p. 189.
654. D.W.G., 14th January 1836.

655. D.W.G., 16th March 1837.
656. D.W.G., 7th April 1842.
657. D.W.G., 8th December 1842.
658. D.W.G., 24th October 1844.
659. P.J. Archer, Highworth and Round About (Oxford, 1973).
660. W.I., 10th February 1842.
661. D.W.G., 21st June 1860.
662. P.R.O., R.G. 9/1268-69.
663. P.R.O., H.O. 129/250.
664. Unless otherwise stated, the account of this meeting is based on the report in D.W.G., 21st June 1860.
665. W.I., 28th June 1860.
666. Horn (Kineton, 1971), op.cit., p. 52.
667. E.L. Jones, op.cit.; J.P.D. Dunbabin, "'The Revolt of the Field": the Agricultural Labourers' Movement in the 1870s' in Past and Present, 1963, 26; D.H. Aldcroft, 'Communications: the "Revolt of the Field"' in Past and Present, 1964, 27.
668. W.I., 25th September 1875.
669. The Times, 14th November 1872.
670. University of Reading. WIL.7.2. Account book of labour payments of Manor Farm, Bremhill 1867-1913.
671. D.W.G., 18th April 1872.
672. S.W. Jnl., 8th June 1872.
673. See Chapter IV, pp. 250-52.
674. D.W.G., 18th April 1872.
675. D.W.G., 18th April 1872.
676. Groves, op.cit., pp. 64-66.
677. J. Arch, Joseph Arch: The Story of his Life (London, 1898), pp. 110-11.

678. See for instance, D.W.G., 9th May 1872 and S.W. Jnl., 4th May 1872.
679. D.W.G., 9th May 1872.
680. K.G. Ponting, Wiltshire Portraits (Moonraker Press, Bradford-on-Avon, 1975), p. 129.
681. Unless otherwise stated, the account of this meeting is based on the report in D.W.G., 23rd May 1872.
682. Arch, op.cit., pp. 110-111.
683. Ibid., p. 110.
684. D.W.G., 10th July 1873.
685. D.W.G., 23rd May 1872.
686. D.W.G., 10th July 1873.
687. See Chapter V, p. 281.
688. Horn (Kineton, 1971), op.cit., p. 113.
689. E.L., 11th December 1875.
690. D.W.G., 10th July 1873.
691. Dunbabin, loc.cit.
692. W.I., 25th September 1875.
693. S.W. Jnl., 18th May 1872.
694. S.W. Jnl., 8th June 1872.
695. S.W. Jnl., 4th May 1872.
696. D.W.G., 23rd May 1872.
697. S.W. Jnl., 8th June 1872.
698. L.U.C., 28th June 1873.
699. L.U.C., 4th October 1873.
700. S.W. Jnl., 1st August 1874.
701. W.I., 18th February 1875.
702. L.U.C., 1st May 1875.
703. Horn (Kineton, 1971), op.cit., p. 222.

704. Ibid., pp. 95-96.
705. L.U.C., 12th July 1873.
706. W.I., 18th February 1875.
707. L.U.C., 20th February 1875.
708. L.U.C., 25th October and 22nd November 1873.
709. Horn, op.cit., pp. 222-28.
710. W.I., 11th March 1875.
711. W.I., 25th February 1875.
712. D.W.G., 2nd May 1872.
713. L.U.C., 25th October 1873.
714. Horn (Kineton, 1971), op.cit., pp. 80-83.
715. W.I., 11th March 1875.
716. S.W. Jnl., 1st August 1874.
717. L.U.C., 12th July 1873.
718. L.U.C., 28th June 1873.
719. L.U.C., 26th July 1873.
720. Horn (Kineton, 1971), op.cit., pp. 103-8.
721. D.W.G., 14th May 1874.
722. S.W. Jnl., 7th March 1874.
723. S.W. Jnl., 4th April 1874.
724. S.W. Jnl., 14th March 1874.
725. S.W. Jnl., 18th April 1874.
726. L.U.C., 19th June 1875.
727. D.W.G., 15th July 1875.
728. L.U.C., 20th March 1875.
729. See Chapter IV, pp. 237-38.
730. L.U.C., 13th December 1873.
731. W.I., 30th October 1862.

732. The Victoria County History of Wiltshire. Vol. XI
(O.U.P., 1980), pp. 165-81.
733. Ibid., pp. 108-35.
734. P.R.O., R.G. 10/1937.
735. D.W.G., 28th January 1830 and S.W. Jnl., 15th
February 1830.
736. P.R.O., M.H. 12/13830, Correspondence of Pewsey
Union 1835-37. Board of Guardians to P.L.C., 5th
July 1836.
737. See Appendix 2.
738. L.U.C., 29th November 1873.
739. L.U.C., 8th November 1873.
740. W.I., 12th January 1871.
741. University of Reading. WIL.7.2.
742. D.W.G., 24th September 1874.
743. L.U.C., 10th April 1875.
744. E.L., 11th December 1875.
745. S.W. Jnl., 18th July 1875.
746. J. Burnett, Plenty and Want. A Social History of
Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day (London
and Edinburgh, 1966), p. 115.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript Sources

Devizes Museum Library (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society):

Wilts Miscellaneous MSS. IV. Article on the Game Laws in Wilts (no date).

Wiltshire Sermons 8. Rev. G.J. Majendie, Satan's Workshop. A Sermon preached at Wilcot, May 4th 1834.

Wiltshire Tracts 64. Articles on the North Bradley Association for the prevention of Robberies and Thefts and Protection of Persons and Property.

Wiltshire Tracts 82. A Building Society, What is it? A Conversation between George Read and Stephen Cole, Wiltshire Labourers (no date).

Wiltshire Tracts 106. Spade Cultivation, tried for ten years on an estate in Wiltshire in a letter to the Right Hon. W. Sturgess Bourne. By a Magistrate for the Counties of Hants and Wilts. London, 1830.

Wiltshire Tracts 116. Summer Visits to Cottages in a Country Village. By Mrs Bowles of Bremhill Parsonage. London, 1836.

Wiltshire Tracts 165. Lt. A. Harfield, Captain William Wyndham of the Hindon Troop, Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, 1964.

W.A. Webb, Bromham. A History of a Wiltshire Parish. 1913.

Guildhall Library. Records of British Insurance:

Sun Fire Insurance Office. MS. 11,937A/1-11, 937A/4.

Register of County Losses by Fire, 1820-1845.

MS. 11,935E. Take-over papers of Salamander Fire Office Society, 1835.

Public Record Office (P.R.O.):

Assizes:

ASSI. 25/21/18-25/50/25. Gaol Books, Western Circuit
1830-74.

Home Office Papers (Swing Riots):

H.O. 11/8. Convict Transportation Registers 1831.

H.O. 40/25-27. Disturbances Correspondence and Papers
1830-1831.

H.O. 52/11. Municipal and Provincial Correspondence 1830.

Treasury Board Papers:

T 1/4194. Rioters, 1831-32.

Poor Law Union Correspondence:

M.H. 12/234 and M.H. 12/13639 - M.H. 12/13892. Correspondence of Wiltshire Poor Law Unions from 1834.

Census Papers:

Enumerators' Schedules H.O. 107/1149 Tisbury and Wardour 1841;

H.O. 107/1171 Bremhill 1841; H.O. 107/1176

Wroughton 1841; H.O. 107/1179 Chiseldon, Hilmarton

1841; H.O. 107/1185 Bromham 1841; H.O. 107/1188

Edington 1841; H.O. 107/1833 Wroughton, Chiseldon

1851; H.O. 107/1839 Bromham, Urchfont, West

Lavington, 1851; H.O. 107/1842 Edington 1851;

R.G. 9/1268-69 Highworth 1861; R.G. 9/1270 Chisel-

don 1861; R.G. 9/1271 Wroughton 1861; R.G. 9/1292

Bromham 1861; R.G. 9/1301 Edington 1861;
R.G. 10/1880 Chiseldon 1871; R.G. 10/1881
 Wroughton 1871; R.G. 10/1901 Bremhill 1871;
R.G. 10/1913 Bromham 1871; R.G. 10/1928-1929
 Edington 1871; R.G. 10/1937 Enford and Nether-
 avon 1871.

H.O. 129/250-267. Ecclesiastical Returns 1851.

University of Reading. Historical Farm Records collected
 by the Institute of Agricultural History and the
 Museum of English Rural Life:

WIL. 7. Manor Farm, Bremhill (Acc. 372).

WIL. 11. Aldbourne Farm (Acc. 405).

Wiltshire Record Office (W.R.O.):

Machine Breaking Riots (MSS letters of J. Cobb).

413/23 Correspondence of J. Benett.

518/82 Bromham Miscellaneous Parish Records, 30th May 1831.

Population Enquiry

Tithe Awards (T/A):

T/A Downton cum Bodenham (1840).

T/A Bromham (1847).

T/A Edington (1844).

T/A Hilmarton (1842).

T/A Tisbury (1840).

T/A Urchfont (1842).

T/A West Lavington (1841).

County of Wilts. Fisherton Gaol. Statistics of Crime from
1801 to 1850 compiled by the Governor of the County
Gaol (Salisbury, 1855).

Wiltshire Constabulary: Return of Members of the Force
since its Establishment 1839-1874.

The Minute Book of the Wilts Police Committee 1844-1881.

Newspapers

Daily News

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette (D.W.G.)

English Labourer (E.L.)

Labourers' Union Chronicle (L.U.C.)

Salisbury and Winchester Journal (S.W. Jnl.)

The Times

Wiltshire Independent (W.I.)

Parliamentary Papers (P.P.)

Reports:

P.P., 1817 (462.) VI. Report from the Select Committee
appointed to consider of the Poor Laws.

P.P., 1828 (235.) VIII. Report by the Lords' Committee
appointed a Select Committee to take into consi-
deration the Laws relating to Game.

P.P., 1833 (612.) V. Report from the Select Committee
appointed to inquire into the present state of
Agriculture, and persons employed in Agriculture
in the United Kingdom.

P.P., 1834 (44.) XXVIII. Report from His Majesty's Com-
missioners for inquiring into the Administration
and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws.

Appendix (A) Part I: Assistant Commissioners'

Reports. P.P., 1834 (44.) XXX-XXXIV. Appendix (B1) Parts I, II, III, IV, V: Answers to Rural Questions.

P.P., 1836 (465.) VIII. Third Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the state of Agriculture, and into the causes and extent of the Distress which still presses upon some important branches thereof; Part II.

P.P., 1837 (464.) V. Report by the Lords' Select Committee appointed in the following Session to consider the same subject.

P.P., 1837 (415.) XVII. Twentieth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; Part II.

P.P., 1837-38 (719-I.) XIX. Report by the Lords' Select Committee appointed to examine into the several cases alluded to in certain papers respecting the operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act; Part I.

P.P., 1843 (402.) VII. Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the results of the Allotment System, and into the propriety of setting apart a portion of all waste lands which shall be inclosed by Act of Parliament, or of any lands which, under any Inclosure Act, shall have been appropriated to the benefit of the Poor, to be let out in small allotments to the Labouring Poor of the district, and also into the best Mode of effecting the same.

P.P., 1843 (510.) XII. Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture.

P.P., 1846 (463-I.) IX. Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the operation of the Game Laws; Part I, Session 1845.

P.P., 1847-48 (461.) VII. Report from the Select Committee on Agricultural Customs.

P.P., 1852-53, XXXVI. First Report from the Select Committee appointed to consider the expediency of adopting a more Uniform System of Police in England and Wales, and Scotland.

P.P., 1854, XVII. Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Operation of the Act 8 & 9 Vict., c117, relating to the Removal from England of chargeable Poor Persons born in Scotland, Ireland, the Isles of Man, Scilly, Jersey and Guernsey, and also into the Operation of the Act 8 & 9 Vict., c83, relating to the removal from Scotland of chargeable Poor Persons born in England.

P.P., 1854-55, X. First Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Act of last session, for further regulating the Sale of Beer and other Liquors on the Lord's Day.

P.P., 1864, XXVIII. Sixth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1863 (Appendix No. 6. Report by Dr Edward Smith on the Food of the Poorer Labouring Classes in England).

P.P., 1868-69, XIII. Second Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture, with Appendix.

Tables:

P.P., 1831-32 (497.) XXXIII. Number of Commitments under the Game Laws in England and Wales, 1st November 1839 to 1st February 1832.

P.P., 1834 (72.) XLVII. The like in 1831-32.

P.P., 1836 (179.) XLI. The like on the 1st November 1832.

P.P., 1835 (218.) XLV; 1836 (61.) XLI; 1837 (87.) XLVI;
1837-38 (115.) XLIII; 1839 (179.) XXXVIII; 1840 (252.)
XXXVIII; 1841 (318.) XVIII; 1842 (390.) XXXII; 1843 (465.)
XLII; 1844 (554.) XXXIX; 1845 (651.) XXXVII; 1846 (701.)
XXXIV; 1847 (807.) XLVII; 1847-48 (949.) LII; 1849 (1081.)
XLIV; 1850 (1227.) XLV; 1851 (1395.) XLVI; 1852 (1518.)
XLI; 1852-53, LXXXI; 1854, LIV; 1854-55, XLIII; 1856,
XLIX; 1857 (Sess. 2) XXXV; 1857-58, LVII; 1859 (Sess. 1)
XXVI; 1860, LXIV; 1861, LX; 1862, LVI; 1863, LXV; 1864,
LVII; 1865, LII; 1866, LXVIII; 1867, LXVI; 1867-68, LXVII;
1868-69, LVIII; 1870, LXIII; 1871, LXIV; 1872, LXV; 1873,
LXX; 1874, LXXI; 1875, LXXXI; 1876, LXXIX. Tables

showing the Number of Criminal Offenders committed for trial or bailed for appearance at the Assizes and Sessions in each county in England and Wales.

P.P., 1857 (Sess. 2) XXXV - 1876, LXXIX. (Same as for Criminal Offenders above) Abstracts of Returns from the County, Borough and Liberty Prisons, showing the Number of Commitments in the Year ended 29th September; the Age, Sex, Birthplace, Degree of Instruction, and Occupations of the Persons Committed.

P.P., 1859 (Sess. 1) XXVI - 1876, LXXIX. (Same as for Criminal Offenders above) Tables showing Indictable Offences. Nature of the Crimes Committed in each Police District (so far as they are known to the Police) in the year ended 29th September. Tables showing Offences determined summarily. Total Number of Persons in each Police District proceeded against before Justices specifying the Offences, in the year ended 29th September.

P.P., 1833 (149.) XXXVII. Abstract of the Population Returns of Great Britain, 1831.

P.P., 1844 (587.) XXVII. Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to Acts 3 & 4 Vict. c99 and 4 Vict. c7 for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain; Occupation Abstract, 1841: Part I.

P.P., 1852-53, LXXXVIII, Part I; 1863, LIII, Part II; 1873, LXXI, Part I. Population Tables. Ages, Civil Condition, Occupations and Birthplaces of the People (England and Wales Division V).

Contemporary Works

J. Arch, Joseph Arch: The Story of his Life (London, 1898).

J. Bateman, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland: A list of all owners of 3,000 acres and upwards, worth £3,000 a year in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales (New edition, London, 1879).

- Board of Agriculture, The Agricultural State of the Kingdom, 1816 (1970 edition. Introduction by G.E. Mingay).
- J. Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-1 (First published 1852. Second edition 1968).
- W. Cobbett, Rural Rides (First published 1830. Penguin paperback edition 1967).
- T. Davis, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Wilts with observations on the means of its improvement (London, 1794).
- Rev. S. Demainbray, The Poor Man's Best Friend, or, land to cultivate for his own benefit: being the result of 24 years experience. In a letter to the Marquess of Salisbury, as given before the House of Lords Committee on the Poor Laws (London, 1831).
- C.R. Dod, Electoral Facts from 1832 to 1852 impartially stated. Constituting a Complete Political Gazetteer (First published London, 1853. Harvester Press edition, Brighton, 1972).
- T. Hardy, 'The Dorsetshire Labourer' in Longman's Magazine, July, 1883.
- F.G. Heath, Peasant Life in the West of England (New edition London, 1880).
- C. Holdenby, Folk of the Furrow (London, 1913).
- W.H. Hudson, A Shepherd's Life (First published 1910. Tisbury, 1978 edition).
- R. Jefferies, The Gamekeeper at Home. The Amateur Poacher (First published Pall Mall Gazette 1878 and 1879. O.U.P., 1978 edition).

R. Jefferies, Hodge and His Masters (First published 1879. 1937 edition).

R. Jefferies, The Toilers of the Field (London, 1892).

E. Little, 'Farming of Wiltshire' in The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, Vol. V, 1845.

The Labourers' Friend: A selection from the Publications of the Labourers' Friend Society, showing the utility and national advantage of allotting land for cottage husbandry (London, 1835).

Local Government Board Return of Owners of Land (England and Wales), 2 volumes (London, 1874).

G. Loveless, 'The Victims of Whiggery; being a statement of the persecutions experienced by the Dorchester Labourers, their trial, banishment etc. etc.' (2nd edition, London, 1837). Reprinted in Trade Unionism in the Early 1830s (British Labour Struggles: Contemporary Pamphlets 1727-1850, Arno Press, 1972).

W. Marshall, The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the several agricultural departments of England, Vol. 2 Western Department (First published 1809. York, 1817 edition) and Vol. 5 Southern and Peninsular Departments (First published 1817. York, 1818 edition).

G. Mitchell, The Skeleton at the Plough, or the poor farm labourers of the West; with the autobiography and

reminiscences of George Mitchell, 'One from the Plough' (London and Leamington, 1874).

The Rising of the Agricultural Labourers. Nine Pamphlets and Six Broad-sides 1830-31 (British Labour Struggles: Contemporary Pamphlets 1727-1850, Arno Press, 1972).

J.M. Stratton, Agricultural Records 220-1968 (London, 1970).

A. Somerville, The Whistler at the Plough; containing travels, statistics and descriptions of scenery and agricultural customs in most parts of England (Manchester, 1852).

E.G. Wakefield, Swing Unmasked; or the Causes of Rural Incendiarism (London, 1831).

E. Walford, The County Families of the United Kingdom; or, Royal Manual of the Titled and Untitled Aristocracy of Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1860).

Secondary Works

D.H. Aldcroft, 'Communications: The "Revolt of the Field"' in Past and Present, 1964, 27.

S.W. Amos, Social Discontent and Agrarian Disturbances in Essex, 1795-1850 (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Durham University, 1971).

P.J. Archer, Highworth and Round About (Oxford, 1973).

M. Blaug, 'The Poor Law Re-examined' in Journal of Economic History, XXIV, 1964.

A. Brundage, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: a reappraisal of the revolution in government' in English Historical Review, LXXXVII, 1972.

- A. Brundage, The Making of the New Poor Law. The politics of inquiry, enactment and implementation, 1832-9 (London, 1978).
- J. Burnett, Plenty and Want. A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day (London and Edinburgh, 1966).
- R.W. Bushaway, "'Grovely, Grovely, Grovely and all Grovely" Custom, Crime and Conflict in the English Woodland' in History Today, May 1981.
- B. Felicity Carlton, A Substantial and Sterling Friend to the Labouring Man: the Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union 1872-95 (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Sussex University, 1978).
- J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880 (London and Sydney, 1966).
- A. Charlesworth, Social Protest in a Rural Society: The Spatial Diffusion of the Captain Swing Disturbances of 1830-1831 (Historical Geography Research Series No. 1, October 1979).
- J.S. Cockburn (Ed.), Crime in England 1550-1800 (London, 1977).
- A.M. Colson, The Revolt of the Hampshire Agricultural Labourers and its causes 1812-1831 (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, London University, 1937).
- M.A. Crane, The Aldbourne Chronicle (Aldbourn Civic Society, Aldbourne, 1974).
- G. Darley, Villages of Vision (London, 1975).
- J. de la Mann, 'Textile Industries since 1550' in The Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol. IV (O.U.P., 1959).

- J.P.D. Dunbabin, "'The Revolt of the Field": the Agricultural Labourers' Movement in the 1870s' in Past and Present, 1963, 26.
- J.P.D. Dunbabin (Ed.), Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain (London, 1974).
- P. Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law; A Critical Note' in English Historical Review, LXXXVIII, 1973.
- M. Dutt, The Agricultural Labourers' Revolt of 1830 in Kent, Surrey and Sussex (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London University, 1966).
- E.J. Evans, Tithes and the Tithe Commutation Act, 1836 (National Statutes and the Local Community. Standing Conference for Local History, London, 1978).
- A. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes' in Agricultural History Review, Vol. 18, 1970 Supplement.
- N.E. Fox, 'The Spread of the Threshing Machine in Central Southern England' in Agricultural History Review, Vol. 26, 1978.
- D. Fraser (Ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1976).
- I. Gandy, The Heart of a Village; an Intimate History of Aldbourne (Moonraker Press, Bradford-on-Avon, 1975).
- N. Gash, The Rural Unrest in England in 1830 with special reference to Berkshire (Unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1934).
- P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875 (Manchester University Press, 1961).

- F.E. Green, The History of the English Agricultural Labourer 1870-1920 (London, 1920).
- D.B. Grigg, 'The Changing Agricultural Geography of England; a commentary on the sources available for the reconstruction of the agricultural geography of England, 1770-1850' in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Vol. 41, 1967.
- R. Groves, Sharpen the Sickle! The History of the Farm Workers' Union (First published 1949. London, 1981 edition).
- J.L. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer (First published 1911. Longmans, 1978 edition).
- D. Hay et al., Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England (London, 1975).
- E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers' in Past and Present, 1952, 1.
- E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries (Manchester University Press, 1963).
- E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (Penguin University Paperbacks edition, 1973).
- P. Horn, Joseph Arch (1829-1919) The Farm Workers' Leader (Roundwood Press, Kineton, 1971).
- P. Horn, The Rural World 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside (Hutchinson Social History of England, 1980).
- W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (First published 1955. London, 1981 edition).
- D. Jones, 'Thomas Campbell Foster and the Rural Labourer:

- Incendiarism in East Anglia in the 1840s' in Social History, Vol. 1, January 1976.
- D. Jones, Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1982).
- E.L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England 1793-1872' in Economic History Review, Vol. 17, 1964-5.
- E.L. Jones, The Development of English Agriculture 1815-1873 (Studies in Economic and Social History, Macmillan, 1968).
- B. Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer 1750-1850' in Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Vol. 84, 1962.
- B. Kerr, Bound to the Soil. A Social History of Dorset 1750-1918 (John Baker, 1968).
- E. Kerridge, 'Agriculture c. 1500 - c. 1793' in The Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol. IV (O.U.P., 1959).
- P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost (Methuen University Paperbacks, 1971).
- S. Macdonald, 'The Progress of the Early Threshing Machine' in Agricultural History Review, Vol. 23, 1975.
- J.D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law 1795-1834 (Studies in Economic and Social History, Macmillan, 1968).
- N. McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League (London, 1958).
- G.E. Mingay, Rural Life in Victorian England (London, 1977).
- G.E. Mingay (Ed.), The Victorian Countryside 2 Vols. (London, 1981).
- R. Molland, 'Agriculture c. 1793 - c. 1870' in The Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol. IV (O.U.P., 1959).

- A.J. Peacock, Bread or Blood: A study of the Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816 (London, 1965).
- K.G. Ponting, Wiltshire Portraits (Moonraker Press, Bradford-on-Avon, 1975).
- R.B. Pugh, 'Chartism in Wiltshire' in Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine, Vol. LIV, 1951-52.
- A.J. Randall, 'The shearmen and the Wiltshire Outrages of 1802: trade unionism and industrial violence' in Social History, Vol. 7: No. 3, October 1982.
- A. Redford, Labour Migration in England 1800-1850 (Manchester University Press, 1926).
- P.G. Rogers, Battle in Bossenden Wood (O.U.P., 1961).
- G. Rudé, Protest and Punishment. The Story of the Social and Political Protesters transported to Australia 1788-1868 (Oxford, 1978).
- N.A. Scotland, The Role of Methodism in the Growth and Development of the 'Revolt of the Field' in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, 1872-95 (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Aberdeen University).
- J. Stevenson and R. Quinault (Eds.), Popular Protest and Public Order, 1790-1820 (London, 1974).
- A.G. Street, Farmer's Glory (London, 1932).
- W.E. Tate, 'A Handlist of Wiltshire Enclosure Acts and Awards' in Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine, Vol. 51, 1945-47.
- F.M.L. Thompson, 'English Landownership: The Ailesbury Trust 1832-56' in Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol. XI, 1958.

F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (London, Routledge paperback edition, 1971).

J.J. Tobias, Nineteenth Century Crime; Prevention and Punishment (Newton Abbott, 1972).

The Victoria County History of the Counties of England.
A History of Wiltshire. Vols. IV and XI (O.U.P., 1959 and 1980).

D. Williams, The Rebecca Riots (Cardiff, 1955).

E.A. Wrigley (Ed.), Nineteenth Century Society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data (C.U.P., 1972).

