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HIGHLEY : THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
COMMUNITY, 1550 -1880

by

GWYNETH NAIR

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Social Science, University of Glasgow,

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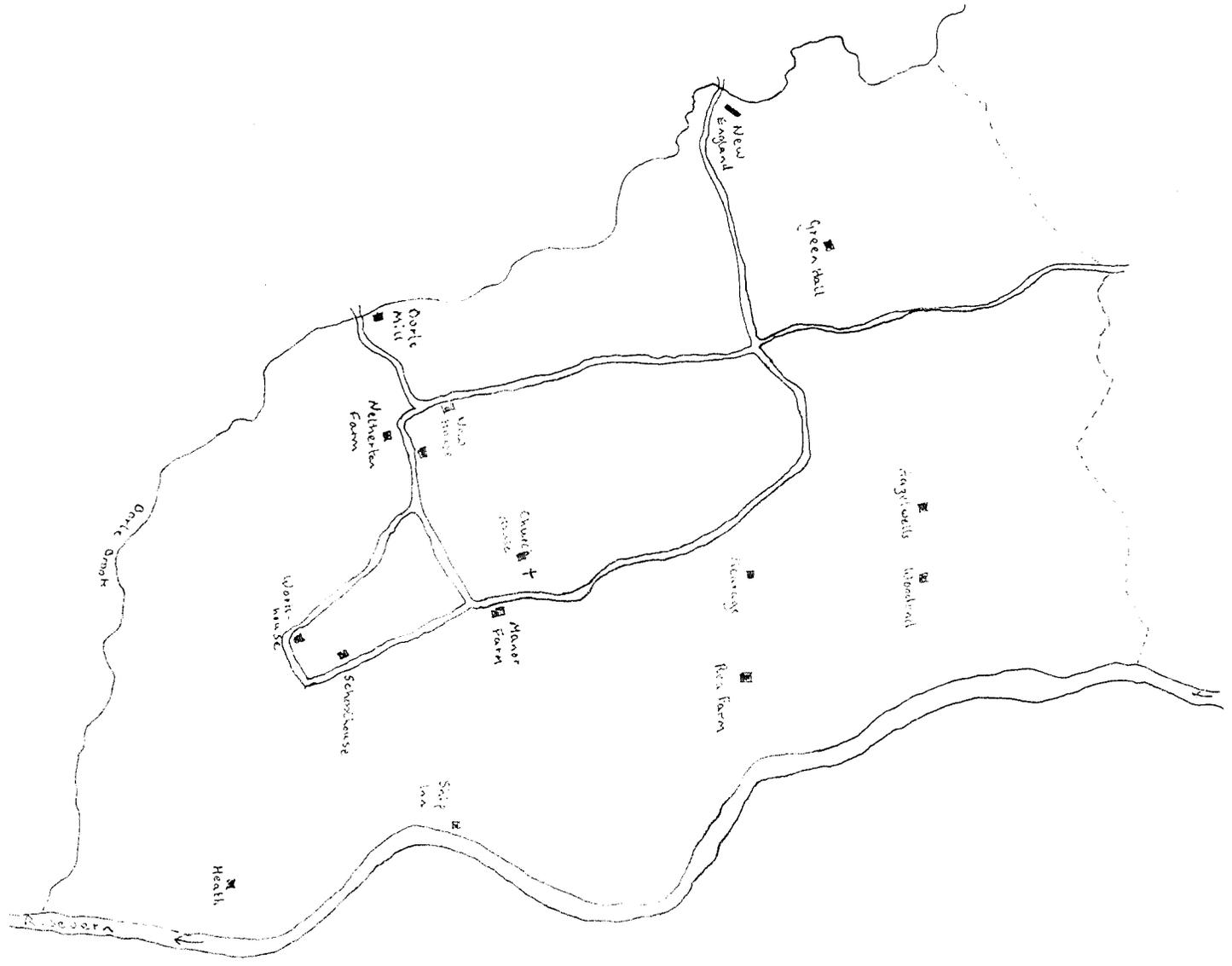
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TO MRS DOROTHY GOUGH OF HIGHLEY -
MY MOTHER.

Highley

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ABBREVIATIONS

Record Repositories

B.L.	The British Library
Bodl.	The Bodleian Library, Oxford
B.R.L.	Birmingham Reference Library
Ch.Ch.	Christ Church, Oxford
G.R.O.	Gloucestershire Record Office
H.R.O.	Hereford Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
S.L.	Local Studies Library, Shrewsbury
S.R.O.	Shropshire Record Office
W.R.O.	Worcester Record Office

Journals

Cambridge J. Econ	Cambridge Journal of Economics
Econ.Hist.Rev.	Economic History Review
J.Eccles.Hist.	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
Loc.Hist.	The Local Historian
Loc.Pop.Studs.	Local Population Studies
Mid.Hist.	Midland History
P. and P.	Past and Present
Pop.Studs.	Population Studies
Procs.Som.A.N.H.S.	Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
T.R.H.S.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
T.S.A.S.	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeol- ogical Society

INTRODUCTION

Highley is a small, roughly triangular parish in the south-east corner of Shropshire, bounded on its two longer sides by the Borle Brook on the west and the River Severn on the east. Thus the centre of the village sits on a ridge, with the land falling away to the watercourses on either side. The nearest towns are Bridgnorth, eight miles to the north, and Bewdley, nine miles to the south. The county town, Shrewsbury, is over 25 miles away.

Highley and its immediate neighbours are situated on the Coal Measures which overlies the Old Red Sandstone : the area provides coal, ironstone and building stone, all of which have been worked in the past. It is, however, a predominantly agricultural area. To the south and west of Highley are the large parishes of Kinlet and Stottesdon, characterised by scattered farms and shrunken hamlets. Billingsley and Chelmarsh, to the west and north, are like Highley itself more strongly nucleated, but nevertheless have outlying farmsteads. Yet this was an area of open-field farming until enclosure began in the late sixteenth century, although the settlement patterns were very different from the typical 'fielden' parishes of the Midlands.

It is because of these two characteristics of the area - mineral wealth and open-field agriculture - that this study covers a period of over three hundred years, from the mid 16th century to the late 19th century. Records for Highley begin to be abundant from about 1550 : the parish registers begin in 1551; wills survive in numbers from the 1550s; a good series of court rolls begins in 1570. This enables a period of about seventy years of open-field farming to be examined. Then followed a post-enclosure period when agriculture remained virtually the only occupation of villagers. Finally, from the 1780s, Highley's minerals began to be exploited and the village entered an 'industrial' phase. The study ends around 1880 for largely practical reasons : at this time further mining developments began to give Highley its 20th century character, but the ensuing changes in the community cannot be studied in the same ways as earlier ones bec-

ause rules of confidentiality mean that modern sources, such as census returns and parish registers of the last hundred years, cannot be consulted.

It is this opportunity to examine the operation of three different economic systems and their effects on social life in the community which makes Highley an interesting case study. Initially, however, the choice of Highley was made for different reasons: I was born and brought up there. In fact this personal knowledge of local people and conditions has been a great advantage. I have had ready access to village homes, and to material held in private hands, and was able to bring to the study a knowledge of local geography, agriculture, dialect and so on which is of considerable value in a reconstruction of this kind.

The survival of records relating to Highley is good, although very little is in print. There are printed calendars of Shropshire Quarter Sessions Rolls, and the 1672 Hearth Tax returns for the county have been published. Otherwise nearly all material is in manuscript, and was located for this project in the County Record Offices of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire; in archive collections at the Bodleian, Birmingham, Shrewsbury and British Libraries; at the Public Record Office and the archives of Christ Church Oxford. Details of primary sources used are given in the brief introductions to each chronological section, and in the bibliography.

There are no published histories of Highley. The descent of the manor and the advowson are dealt with in a 19th century history of Shropshire.[1] Work for the parochially-based studies of The Victoria County History of Shropshire is currently concentrated on the north of the county. Thus much of the local history background to this project, such as details of enclosure and early industrialisation, covers new ground. It was not previously known that Highley had open-field farming until 1620, for example, or that considerable coalmining in the early years of the 19th century preceded the well-evidenced development of mining from 1878.

Secondary sources relating to Shropshire are still relatively few. The landscape and its evolution have been dealt with by

Rowley and by Sylvester. [2] The industrial development of the county has been explored by Trinder, although Highley is not mentioned in his published work, which deals mainly with Coalbrookdale. [3] In fact the south of the county, with the exception of the town of Ludlow, has been the subject of far less research than the north. Richard Gough's early-18th century history of Myddle in north Shropshire is the precursor of modern parochial studies. [4] Hey has followed Gough in providing a detailed study of Myddle. [5] Otherwise the major research on Shropshire is contained in some unpublished theses, and in the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society.

Elsewhere, parish studies have made a major contribution to our knowledge of life from the Middle Ages. Hey's study of Tudor and Stuart Myddle has already been mentioned : Wrightson and Levine's comprehensive examination of Terling in Essex covers a similar time-span. [6] Hoskins dealt with a longer period in the history of Wigston Magna in Leicestershire [7] ; and Howell has tried to bridge the conventional division into medieval and modern in her study of Kibworth Harcourt between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries.[8] Parochial material has also provided the basis for investigations like those of Wrigley into the demography of Colyton, or of Laslett into mobility and household structure in Clayworth and Cogenhoe.[9]

In addition, much research implemented at local level has not concentrated upon a single parish. Some studies, like Skipp's of the Forest of Arden or Spufford's of the Cambridgeshire Fens, have dealt with groups of parishes.[10] Others have compared parishes from different areas in the light of prevailing economic conditions.[11] This kind of study enables comparison between the effects of local systems of agriculture or industry, or customs of land tenure and inheritance, for example, while necessarily forfeiting some of the fine detail of the individual parish study.

Local studies have helped to explode some of the myths of social history : that geographical mobility in the past was much less than today, for instance, or that average marriage age was much lower.

They have also given rise to new orthodoxies about the size and structure of households in 'pre-Industrial' England.

There are of course limitations to the legitimate aims of a single-parish study : Finberg warns that 'One cannot hope to establish a thesis of general application by writing the history of a parish.' [12] One can, however, hope to test some of the theories of historical sociology which have emerged during the last fifteen years, and to provide reliable evidence, together with a full local context, for those seeking to establish a national picture of the course of social change.

Parishes larger than Highley are usually chosen, particularly for demographic studies. The aim in this study, however, is not purely demographic : it attempts to link a wide range of original sources in order to chart and integrate changing economic and social experience in a way that would be impractical over a comparable time-span in a larger parish. Furthermore, there is a danger that in concentrating on communities of an optimum size and with special features to facilitate research, we lose sight of the Highleys - small rural communities of the size and type in which a majority of the population of England actually lived.

Any study of a parish is open to the criticism that it in fact deals with an arbitrary administrative unit, a 'community' only in convenience. In fact, although Highley villagers had considerable links with the surrounding area, which they thought of as 'this country', there is evidence of a strong sense of community and identification with the parish. In Highley more than in any of its neighbours, actual and administrative units coincided : the village, the parish and the manor were virtually identical in terms of geography and personnel. The parish was small and centralised, and its separate identity was further stressed by the fact that all its boundaries except that to the north were formed by waterways which had to be crossed by bridges or, in the case of the Severn, by boat. For most of our period, agriculture, social control and poor relief were locally organised. Villagers were obliged to gather regularly at the parish church,

to pay local tithes and poor rates, to abide by local manorial or parochial customs, to serve as parish officers. Many villagers left sums of money to the parish church and to the poor of the parish. 'Highley', whether as a manor, village or parish, clearly had a real significance for its members.

No student of a parish can afford to ignore the overlapping 'communities' of which his particular place of study was a part - those areas and groups from which business contacts and marriage partners were drawn; the local market towns which exercised an influence and provided a focus; the wider area over which contact with relatives could be maintained. Nevertheless, in dealing with the parish of Highley we are not giving a wholly spurious significance to what happens to be a convenient unit of study.

In fact Highley's small size (a population varying between 150 and, briefly, 480) gives rise to the major strengths of this study. It enables a longer period to be examined than is usually the case with similar projects. Above all, it facilitates the linkage of data from many sources, which are used to reinforce and supplement each other. Some analysis is purely quantitative, but much is based on the reconstruction of the experience of individuals and families, drawing on and synthesising information from parish registers, wills, court rolls and so on. In this way individual family dossiers were compiled which formed the basis of, for example, the illustrations of social mobility in the 16th century, conclusions about kinship networks and the recognition of kin, and industrial and agricultural groups of workers in the 19th century.

Because of the extensive use of record linkage and the mass of data involved, an initial attempt was made to use a micro-computer to store and collate information. This was found, however, to be impractical for the bulk of the material used, although it was useful for the parish registers. Thus only the vital events of the registers were put onto the computer, and were used to compile family cards on which were entered not only register details but also all other mentions in wills, deeds, court cases and the whole range of

sources consulted. This method, although somewhat cumbersome, was found to be perfectly adequate for the size of parish involved : otherwise the amount of time needed to devise a format for the computer storage of so many differing types of information and to enter all the data was greater than that needed to compile the whole set of index cards.

The advantages of this laborious method are considerable. It becomes unnecessary, for example, to estimate the numbers dying between one 19th century census and the next, as is frequently done : it is perfectly possible (if time-consuming) to establish exactly who had died and who had left the village. In addition to rates of illegitimacy in the community, it becomes possible to recover information about the mothers of illegitimate children, the relationships in which conception occurred, and the subsequent fate of the children. Most importantly, this study provides an unusually (but by no means absolutely) complete picture of social and economic change in Highley over a period of more than three hundred years.

The body of the thesis is arranged in three chronological sections, each prefaced by a brief introduction explaining the length and nature of the period and the chief sources used. Each section is further divided into three chapters, which take broadly similar forms in all sections. In each case, the first chapter outlines the economic background to the period; the second discusses the demographic profile of the community and, where possible, the structure of its households; and the third chapter deals with social relations, geographical mobility and related topics. Naturally, the changing nature of the data results in a shifting emphasis from section to section : we can, for instance, learn little about household structure in the pre-enclosure period, although the period is rich in information about economic factors.

The conclusion is both more general and more speculative, and attempts to deal with some wider themes and their relevance to broader issues. I have there allowed myself to raise questions and to advance explanations in a way which would have been out of place in the more rigorous methodology applied to the analysis of the data

in the main body of the work.

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M.Spufford, Contrasting Communities : English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge, 1974).
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I THE PRE-ENCLOSURE PERIOD,

1550 - 1620

This pre-enclosure period covers the years between 1550 and about 1620. The breakdown of the manorial system and the enclosure of the open fields was a gradual process which began before 1610: indeed some features of the protracted movement towards enclosure, such as the rise in numbers of peripatetic landless labourers, and the accumulation of considerable amounts of cash by principal tenants which permitted the purchase, improvement and enclosure of holdings, can be traced to the last decades of the 16th century. Enclosure did not happen in 1620: nevertheless this is a convenient point of division since its effects were largely felt after that date.

During this seventy year period, then, open-field agriculture was practised in Highley. The nature of this system is important to the study of all aspects of village life, for it affected everyone. Involvement in agriculture was universal: even the parish priest and local craftsmen were also farmers. The open-field system demanded a certain degree of contact and co-operation between individuals, and was fundamental in shaping village society. The manorial system made for a measure of equality, as most individuals - whatever their wealth - were tenants of the manor and subject to its rules. The key division in society was between those who held land and those who did not: this resulted in a lack of real social distance among greater and lesser tenants, and a status hierarchy which was largely independent of wealth. Only the small numbers of landless labourers were excluded, for they fulfilled neither of the two crucial requirements - landholding and length of residence in the community.

Land tenure, whether leasehold or copyhold, was usually for three lives, and inheritance resulted in considerable continuity of yeoman and husbandman families. There was little opportunity for immigration, and although emigration was frequent it was usually undertaken by young single people. Thus kinship networks within the community became dense, and the natural growth brought about by a relatively favourable demographic profile was off-set. The total population of perhaps 125 was all that could be maintained under the existing economic conditions.

Highley's economy was a semi-peasant one: the family was an important unit of production, but by no means all production

was by the family for home consumption. There are indications of live-in servants and married day labourers at work in Highley before enclosure, and of an increasingly cash-based economy, with production for sale as well as for subsistence. Most villagers were part of a network of small cash loans within the community and its surrounding areas. Links with the immediate neighbourhood, within a radius of ten miles or so, were frequent, and Highley's position on the River Severn brought some contact with towns further away downriver. Yet the considerable geographical mobility and social contact with a wider area still took place within the framework of a stable society, where most families resident in 1550 were still represented seventy years later.

The quality and quantity of source material for such a relatively remote period is good. The parish registers commence in 1551, and cross-checking with other sources, principally wills, suggests that they are reliable. Occupations are not given, but the names of both parents accompany baptisms for most of the period; infants are indicated as such at burial, and their fathers' names stated; and occasionally we are given extra information such as 'never married' or the cause of death at burial.

Court rolls from 1570 to 1618 have survived in the papers of the Littleton family, together with two very informative rentals of 1587 and 1603. The lord of the manor, Sir John Littleton was tried for treason in 1599, and as a result two surveys of his possessions were taken, which are held in the Public Record Office, which also houses subsequent cases in Chancery about these possessions, as well as a series of Lay Subsidy Rolls which list a considerable proportion of male inhabitants.

At Hereford Record Office, the sources include wills from 1544, Bishops' Act Books detailing cases in the ecclesiastical courts (together with some witnesses' depositions), and an unusually early glebe terrier of c.1590. The Miscellaneous deeds collection in the Local Studies Library in Shrewsbury includes some leases from the early years of the 17th century, and one very full lease of 1569 which describes one holding in the open fields.

With so much information about a small parish, synthesis of the various sources provides an unusually complete dossier on individuals. Although some short-term residents, notably servants, undoubtedly escape record in any source, the great majority of inhabitants

are mentioned several times over. The advantages of drawing on a wide range of sources rather than simply parish registers for a family reconstitution method are obvious: such reconstitution provides insights not merely into demography but also into migration patterns, kinship networks and a whole range of social relations.

Chapter One - The Village Economy

The methods of agriculture practised in Highley in the 16th century are of paramount importance in any study of the community, for virtually every inhabitant was involved in farming. Unfortunately there are few documentary sources for this period which list occupations of individuals: Highley parish registers, for instance, do not include occupations until the 19th century. However, because Highley was at this date a small community of at most 150 people, it is possible to draw together a wide range of sources in order to compile quite extensive dossiers on most individual heads of household. Thus it becomes apparent that there was no local industry as such in the 16th century. The great majority of men were exclusively farmers; yeomen, husbandmen or labourers, earning their families' living solely from the land.

Where other occupations existed, they were concerned with the provision of local services - there were two tailors, a miller, a blacksmith and a mason in the 1580's. There is little sign of production for a wider market, although the Severn provided a convenient link with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, and in 1569 Thomas Lowe recorded his occupation as "waterman". Such local tradesmen as there were were also directly involved in working the land, and usually combined at least a small holding with their trade. Even the village priest was active in farming his glebe lands. Thus every member of the community was directly affected by the prevailing system of agriculture; and until the period 1610-1620, this system was farming in common.

A study of agrarian organisation in the parish as a whole is complicated by the manorial origins of most of the documentary sources for the period, for the manor did not quite coincide with the parish. The manor of Highley had belonged before the Dissolution to Wigmore Abbey in Herefordshire. After a brief period in the hands of the King, and of a London merchant called Cupper, it was sold in 1546 to Sir John Littleton of Frankley in Worcestershire.[1] One farm which lies outside the parish, in the parish of Kinlet to the south, was included in the manor, but is readily identifiable as a separate entity, its lands not part of the open fields of Highley, and so can be easily

discounted when necessary. There were, however, three holdings which lay within the parish of Highley which did not form part of the manor. A small area of woodland in the south-east near the Severn had been granted to the Priory of St. Wulstan at Worcester in the 13th century, and this passed at the Dissolution to Christ Church, Oxford.[2] More importantly, the water mill on the Borle Brook, together with a virgate of land, had belonged to the White Ladies Priory at Brewood in Staffordshire. This was acquired by the Throckmorton family of Coughton in Staffs.[3] Finally, a farm in the south of the parish called Ardens was sold to John de Arderne of Kinlet in 1470, and by the 16th century had come into the possession of George Southall of Kinlet.[4] Thus in any rental or survey of the manor, we must bear in mind the existence of two more holdings; the mill, which was bought by its occupant Thomas Lowe in 1579; and Ardens which was the home of Thomas Strefford the village blacksmith.

Otherwise, the whole of the parish belonged to Littleton. It comprised a manor house and demesne lands, already leased since 1521 to a sitting tenant, and at least 25 tenancies, a few freehold but the majority held by lease or copy of court roll. There were four open arable fields, closes of meadow and pasture, and a wood of 137 acres where tenants had rights of common.

The arable land lay in four open fields. Since an extent of 1332 described a three-field system, a fourth field had been added at Netherton, a settlement to the west of the village centre.[5] This was known as Netherton Little Field, and does seem to have been smaller than the other fields, stretching along the higher slopes of the Borle valley. The larger, older fields were Rea Field, north and east of the village; Cockshutt Field, north and west; and the self-explanatory South Field. The rough borders of these fields can be determined, but it is impossible to arrive at a very exact picture of their extents in the absence of any surviving estate map of the pre-enclosure period.

That Netherton Little Field was a later addition to a three-field system is further suggested by the absence of any glebe land here. A four-field system of open-field farming is by no means unknown: Gray noted that in Oxfordshire a sub-division of two fields into four was a common 17th century practice.[6] The change from three

fields to four, however, seems to have been more unusual - Yelling notes an example at Oxton, Notts, in 1773, but this is a case of three fields being re-divided as four; a different matter from the creation of a new field such as appears to have happened in Highley.[7] Possibly Netherton Little Field was assart land, taken from the woodland of the Borle valley, although other assarts in the north of the parish seem to have become enclosed pastures rather than common arable lands.

Whatever its origins, Netherton Little Field raises doubts about the nature of Highley's open-field farming in the 16th century. The vicar, and probably other tenants too, held no land here. There are indications that a disproportionate number of strips in this field were held by men whose homes were in the Netherton township - and who therefore would have had a correspondingly small stake in one or two of the other fields. It is difficult to reconcile this with the classic pattern of open-field farming, with its reliance on a rough equality of holdings in all fields to allow for the fallowing of one field each year.

Tate points out that "any proprietor having land in only one field of two, or two of three, would have found himself without bread or beer for a whole year every two or three years..... Moreover he must have approximately equal areas in each of the fields!"[8] As we shall see, this was by no means always the case in Highley by 1570; and it begins to look as if the process of exchange and consolidation of holdings which was to lead to enclosure in the 17th century was begun with the creation of this fourth smaller field.

Otherwise the lay-out of arable land in the parish was as one would expect: the fields were laid out in strips, locally called rudes, which were grouped together in furlongs. Individual tenants occasionally held single strips, but more usually blocks of anything up to a dozen. There is insufficient surviving evidence to enable us to arrive at any clear idea of the size of these strips, but certainly they were much smaller than the "text-book" one acre. In a survey of three farms in 16th century Wigston, Leics, Hoskins finds an average of three strips to the acre.[9] Our only firm evidence for

Highley comes in an important glebe terrier of 1625, which we shall later examine in greater detail for its information on enclosure, where in several instances both acreage and number of strips in a parcel of land are stated. It is unwise to generalise too far from such scant evidence, but the glebe strips mentioned here were very small, between a quarter and a fifth of an acre.

The open fields were surrounded by hedges; with several stiles giving access to unploughed "headlands" or "hardbutts" which served as paths. Unfortunately the earliest survey of the manor which permits a computation of the total arable acreage in Highley dates from 1603, by which time several farms, including the demesne, had been sold, and so we do not know what percentage of the parish total acreage of 1527 acres was under the plough in this pre-enclosure period. In 1603 there were 184 acres of arable out of a total of 738 still belonging to the Littletons.[10] If this proportion was reflected in the remaining farms of the parish, and there is no reason to believe that it was not, this represents a very different state of affairs from that more accurately assessed in the mid-19th century, where of a total of 1350 acres farmed, 780 were arable.[11] This means that in 1603 there were, for every 10 acres of meadow and pasture, only 4.69 acres of arable; while in 1851 for every 10 acres of pasture and meadow there were actually 13.68 acres of arable. The importance of pastoral farming to the pre-enclosure economy was clearly considerable.

In the typical open-field parish, pasturing was done on the fallow field and on commonly-held waste land. In Highley this was not the case. By the mid-16th century there were numerous closes of pasture on the fringes of the arable fields, held in several. Much of this pasture represents clearance of woodland in the north and west of the parish, which had probably been enclosed since its clearance.

By the time of the 1603 survey, every farm listed had some pasture of its own, as well as rights of common in Highley Wood. Indeed some farms consisted entirely of pasture, the largest being the 114 acres of Green Hall, a "messuage etc iacen' juxta Higley Woode". Highley's origins as a forest-fringe parish, and the nature of its

soil, clearly affected its pre-enclosure agrarian system to the end.

The only truly common pasture land seems to have been Highley Wood in the north of the parish, where all tenants had rights of pasture according to the number of acres in their holding, and which was one of the first parts of the parish to be enclosed. Sixteenth century rentals give the extent of this wood as 40 acres, but the more detailed survey of 1603 gives $137\frac{1}{2}$ acres, a much more plausible figure, especially as the half-dozen or so shares of the wood of which we have details from its apportionment around 1618 themselves add up to well over 40 acres. In the south of the parish a tongue of Earnwood Park, property of the lord of the manor of Kinlet, extended into Highley, and legally did not concern Highley villagers at all, although there had been cases of poaching in the park in the 15th century, and the same temptation obviously remained.

Highley also appears to be atypical in its meadows. Usually the common meadows would be divided up in much the same manner as the arable land, though with less permanent divisions; and frequently lots would be drawn to decide which 'doles' a tenant received. There is no indication of this happening in Highley. In the 1570's and 1580's we find several mentions of "little meadows", obviously enclosed, and only two larger meadows - Coltam Meadow and Held Meadow - which could conceivably have been sub-divided. The 1603 survey is silent here, merely grouping together meadow and orchard and listing each tenant as having a small acreage varying between $\frac{1}{4}$ acre and $11\frac{3}{4}$, with an average holding of about four acres.

Pre-enclosure Highley can never have presented the open, almost tree-less aspect of the true "champion" country. Besides the Wood and Park and the hedges of the arable fields which we have already noted, the tenants' holdings, presumably the pasture closes, were all well-wooded. Highley Wood, although described in a rental of 1601 [12] as having mostly "dotted and firewood trees and some underwood and bushes" was found in 1603 to contain 3,200 oak trees. William Pountney's large pasture tenement of Green Hall alone had 920 oaks and 20 ashes. Altogether the sixteen holdings mentioned had growing on them 2,900 oaks and 60 ashes. To this of course must be added the unspecified amount of orchard, and any trees in the gardens and home closes

attached to the houses.

With all this timber available (at a price) it is not surprising that the majority of houses in Highley were of timber-frame construction. In spite of the fact that building stone had been quarried in the village in the past, and was to be more extensively so from 1700 onwards, there is almost no evidence of the use of stone in domestic buildings in the 16th century, other than as foundations for timber structures. In fact the one house known to be entirely of stone was sufficiently unusual for this to become its name (Stone House, 1591).

In the typical Midland open-field village, farmsteads were clustered together in the centre, perhaps round a green or along a village street. In Wigston they were "never out in the fields", but "either faced the street or lay at right angles to it." Although Highley was basically a nucleated settlement, centred on the church and manor house, there were in the 16th century houses out, if not in the open fields, at least on the edges of them. One would naturally expect the surviving large timber-framed farmhouses of the early 17th century date to have been built as a result of enclosure: yet in fact in most cases these are the result of re-building at the time of enclosure, for houses had existed on these sites since the beginning of our period. Four of these scattered farmsteads are in the north of the parish, and were surrounded by pasture which we have speculated to be medieval assarts. The settlement of Netherton, half a mile or so west of the centre, was made up of six or seven houses. Two other large farms bordered Rea Field - the Rea at its northern end, and Potters at the east towards the Severn.

All arable lands were not roughly equidistant from all farmhouses, and although Highley is not a large parish, the possession of strips in Rea Field, for instance, was a serious inconvenience to the man living in Netherton. This factor should not be under-estimated in any consideration of the enclosure activities of the 17th century.

This then, is the physical context in which pre-enclosure society in Highley existed, and it is important to have some idea of this background before attempting any study of that society. Too many reconstructions of communities ignore this context, yet in the day-to-day

life of the 16th century peasant farmer, the lay-out of the land he worked loomed larger than almost any other factor. It determined the format of his working day - year in fact; the standard of living he could reasonably expect to achieve; and his relationships with his neighbours.

Let us turn to look in detail at one peasant holding in this open-field lay-out, for this best illustrates the operation of the system.¹

In 1569 Nicholas Bradley was granted the lease of a farm in Highley. A copy of this survives, and describes in minute detail all the lands making up the holding.[13] Bradley came to Highley from Northfield in Worcestershire as a young married man with an infant son. His lease was for 1,000 years and so to all intents and purposes he was as secure in his tenure as a freeholder, although he paid a rent of 9/4d per annum rather than the nominal chief rent of a freeholder.

The lease specifies pasture and arable land, but makes no mention of meadow as a separate category. However, one item in the list of pasture closes has the addition "and one little meadow adjoining, about two acres", suggesting that there may be no distinction between pasture and meadow in other entries. In only one case is the pasture specifically called a "close" - but other pastures all have separate (and often identifiable) names, and it is clear that they too were enclosed. There were seven of these pasture closes, varying in size from two to eight acres. The total acreage is 31.

Bradley's^{arable} land was entirely comprised of strips in the open fields. The position of each group of strips is carefully given; but only occasionally is this in relation to an identifiable feature. The usual method is to name the tenants on all four sides of the strips. In Cockshutt Field Bradley held 49 "rudges" of land, grouped in eleven parcels. At least 40 of these can be positively identified as lying in

¹ Unfortunately the holding discussed is the only one for which such a detailed extent survives.

the south of the field, nearest to his pasture and house. In Netherton Little Field, the fourth field, he held 35 strips in ten groups. The largest number of strips, 57, was in South Field, of which all but ten lay in the west of the field, nearest Netherton. In the most distant field, Rea Field, Bradley had only six strips.

Thus there were a total of 147 strips of arable land. We have tentatively suggested that a strip may have been as small as a fifth of an acre, and no larger than a quarter:- in which case Bradley's arable acreage would be between 29 and 37, comparable with his pasture total. In order to be at all viable as a unit, such small strips would need to be amalgamated to some extent, as indeed they were. Only one strip stood alone, and although one block had twelve strips together, the mean group was four, or about one acre.

Unfortunately Bradley died intestate in 1607, and so we have no will or inventory to supply further information about the stock he kept on this farm, or of any of the crops grown. We know that at least one of his pasture closes, called Bonde Lye or Bowndeley, was hedged around, for in the court rolls of the 1570's several references are made to disputes over these hedges, although it is not clear whether Bradley was trying to poach land from his neighbours, or merely failing to maintain the hedges. Court rolls also tell us that he kept pigs (in 1575 he had failed to ring them at the proper time), though this is hardly surprising.

The Court Leet and View of Frankpledge of the manor of Highley was held twice a year during Littleton's ownership, and a good series of court rolls survives from the period 1570-1590, with a later sequence from 1609 to 1617.[14] The rolls throw considerable light on the communal aspects of pre-enclosure farming in the village. Rules were necessary to ensure that everyone ringed and yoked his pigs by Christmas, for instance, or maintained his stretch of hedge once the arable fields were sown until after harvest. In the autumn court of 1572, the jurors were instructed to draw up a list of all the tenements of the tenants of the manor so that it could be decided what and how many beasts each tenant could keep in Highley Wood. Unfortunately this list no longer exists, if indeed it was ever actually written down.

It also fell to the court to decide what heriot was due to the lord on the death of one tenant and the admittance of another, a subject to which we shall return when considering rents and tenure in the village.

Besides these communal decisions, the court settled disputes between tenants and fixed fines for offenders. By far the most frequent disputes were over hedges; often a tenant was negligent of repairing a gap in his hedge, presumably allowing beasts to stray and cause damage, as George Pearson's black goat did in 1571. Sometimes tenants, or their servants, had cut firewood from a neighbour's hedge. Most frequent of all were cases of hedges not being "on their right course" - attempts to increase one's holding at someone else's expense. Thomas Lowe of Borle Mill, in the tradition of difficult and contentious millers, was presented before each court throughout the 1570's because he had not moved his hedge at Quarry Head; in his case, since he apparently preferred to pay the fines rather than lose the land, there seems little the court could do about it.

Of course the manorial court was not the only means of imposing social behaviour on the villagers: higher courts both lay and ecclesiastical could be used, and will concern us later. The manor court existed in order to regulate the running of the manor and to ensure the relatively smooth operation of a communal system of agriculture, and its records are invaluable in showing us how that system actually worked.

We can divide the 16th century population of Highley into four broad groups, if we bear in mind certain riders. First, we are not dealing with a community dominated by a distinct peasant elite: some families were better off than the majority, but there is no very great disparity, and thus the division between, for instance, yeomen and husbandmen is to some extent an arbitrary one. Second, the issue is somewhat clouded by the individual's tendency to self-aggrandisement

when describing his occupation or status on official documents. Finally, there is the natural bias of our information towards the wealthier classes, who are more frequently mentioned in wills, deeds, etc. It is much more difficult to make any accurate assessment of the numbers and condition of day labourers and servants.

Nevertheless it is useful to make this division, into yeomen or greater farmers; husbandmen or lesser farmers; artisans and smallholders; and day labourers and servants. We have already seen that virtually all men in the village were involved in agriculture to some extent: and at certain times of the year there must have been some movement between these categories, with the smallholder, for instance, supplementing his income by labouring on a larger farm at harvest.

Our first task is to estimate the numbers with which we shall be dealing. The manorial rentals which we have discussed of course do not include all heads of household in the village. By the time of the first of these, in 1587, there were for a start two influential men, Lowe the miller and Strefford the blacksmith, who were not tenants of the manor, and so were omitted.[15] Later, other tenants disappeared from the rentals, notably George Pearson who bought the demesne lands in 1592.

Even more significantly, we know that there were several undertenants on whom these rentals are silent. Some holdings are described as consisting of two, three, or even four messuages. Thus there were at least eight, and possibly ten, undertenants by the 1580's, of whom we can only positively identify one. One other case may give a clue to a more widespread practice:- in 1601 one of Thomas Rowley's two messuages was occupied by his married son William, and other sub-letting among family members almost certainly went on.[16]

Even with its limitations, the 1587 rental gives us 21 names, and a fair idea of relative financial status. A potentially more complete list, because its origins are not manorial, is the Lay Subsidy Return of 1543.[17] Lay Subsidy Returns, records of a national taxation, are notoriously problematic as indicators of total population because they omit the poorer inhabitants who were exempt

from taxation. Nevertheless, the 1543 return for Highley gives 27 names, which represents an unusually high percentage of the adult male population. Hoskins for Wigston and Wrightson and Levine for Terling found that this return was much less full than that of 1524/5, and consequently concentrate on the latter.[18] The 1524/5 return for Highley, on the other hand, named only eight men. The 1543 return is a useful starting point for a consideration of the distribution of wealth in Highley, highlighting as it does the situation at the very beginning of our period, and since each man's name is followed by the value of the estate on which he was taxed.

The list shows no dominating yeoman family at the top, but rather a steady gradation from more prosperous to less. There were four men taxed on £7 or £8, one of them the miller and one the tenant of the demesne lands. Below them is a larger group, assessed on £3-£5: eight relatively comfortably-off families with an income above subsistence level, and consequently with the potential to benefit from the inflation of the later 16th century. Between them, these two groups (44% of the number taxed) paid 75% of the sum levied, 38% by the first group and 37% by the second.

They are followed by a small group taxed on £2, contributing 10% of the total levied. Finally there is the largest group of all, twelve men taxed on 20/- or 26/8d, who among them contribute only 15% of the wealth of the community. In both of these groups we find men whom we know to have been artisans and servants. At the very bottom of the list are two 20/- men whose inclusion here is interesting, for both William Holloway and Thomas Lowe were sons of comparatively prosperous families, and the probability is that they were earning a wage as living-in servants on another farm until such time as they could enter into the family holding - a practice which we know was common in the 17th century.

The accompanying table includes surnames of the taxpayers, for two reasons. Firstly this illustrates the problem of identification which we encounter in subsequent documents: there are six men named Lowe, for example. Secondly, it shows how the proliferation of well-established village families, with downward as well as

upward social mobility, had led to branches of the same family occupying considerably disparate socioeconomic positions.

1543 Lay Subsidy

£7 - £8	Holloway, Lowe, Palmer, Oseland
£3 - £5	Haykorne, Pountney, Pountney, Rowley, Nicholls, Holloway, Palmer, Lowe
£2	Dale, Mynsterley, Lowe, Goodman
20/- - 26/8d	Lowe, Lowe, Nayless, Bysshoppe, Pountney Pountney, Charnocke, Hancorne, no surname, Holloway, Lowe.

The composition of these groups naturally changed during the rest of the century, with some families improving their financial status, and others declining in fortunes or dying out altogether. Some new men came into the village in the 1550's and 1560's to add to the more prosperous groups, while the 1590's brought additions to the cottager and labouring classes.

Let us begin by examining in more detail the wealthiest section of the community, the principal landholders of the village. We must add to our group of 1543 the Harrises, freehold tenants of $1\frac{1}{2}$ virgates of land, who were in Highley by 1568, and the Pearsons who came in 1558 to take over the manor house and demesne lands.

The rentals and surveys extant for the period 1587 - 1603 show a group of principal copyhold and leasehold tenants. Only one rental quotes actual acreages held, and in many ways the amount of rent paid is a more reliable economic indicator. In 1587, four tenants together paid 48% of the total rent due: in 1603 four tenants (though not the same four) paid 47% of the total.

With the addition of principal freeholders, then, we find a group of six or seven families consistently forming what we shall call Category I, the substantial yeomanry of the village. It is instructive to look more closely at one or two of these families, to see by what means they achieved and maintained their position.

In 1543, John Oseland was assessed on a personal estate of £7. He had been granted a 21 year lease of the demesne lands of the manor in 1521, at an annual rent of 34/-. In fact Oseland was still in possession of the manor farm on his death in 1558, and his widow Margery took over, still paying the same rent of 34/-. Margery was not long to enjoy the chief holding of the manor, for on 7th February 1558/9 George Pearson "entered the premises with the permission of Sir John Littleton." Margery brought a bill of complaint against Littleton and his protege which reached the Court of Requests in 1560, alleging that Pearson and Littleton had "beat poor beasts and cattle steading and pasturing on the premises and contrary to all equity and good conscience doth daily threaten vexation and trouble to a poor widow to expel her out of the premises which she is not able because of impotency to resist." [19]

Margery was not as friendless as this would have us believe, for the Oselands were still influential in the area. There were six middle-aged sons of John and Margery still living at this date (see Fig. I), one or two of whom may still have shared the family home until Pearson's intrusion. It is worthwhile tracing the fortunes of these sons as far as possible. One, Richard, settled at Sutton, a hamlet two miles away in the parish of Chelmarsh. Another, Robert, was nominally tenant of a cottage and six acres of land in Highley, but would have spent much time away from the village in his capacity as a yeoman of the guard. On his death in 1577, his brother Edward was admitted as tenant, and seems to have been the least prosperous of the brothers. A fourth brother, John, appears to have left Highley as a young man. A fifth, George, is not recorded as buried at Highley, but lived there until at least 1579. He probably never married, was sole executor of his mother's will in 1566, and in 1569 was sufficiently prosperous to have lent 28/4 to Margery Holloway. [20] Finally there was Thomas Oseland, the village priest since 1554. He was born in 1511 and educated at school probably the Grammar School at Bridge-north) but not university. [21] In addition to his clerical duties, Oseland actively farmed the glebe lands until his death in 1588.

Only one of these sons left a descendant in Highley - John, son of Edward. Since Edward was as we have seen tenant of a

cottage and six acres at a rent of 3/8d (lowest but one of the entire 1587 rental), it is surprising that his son was able in the same year to take over a holding of 70 acres at an annual rent of 28/-. John received only one cow and a silver spoon from the will of his uncle the vicar, but the will (made twelve years before it was proved in 1589) shows that Thomas was in the habit of lending quite large sums of money to family and parishioners, and may well have enabled his nephew to instal himself at Woodend Farm.

John Oseland junior and his wife, apparently childless, still occupied this farm in 1603, after which we lose sight of them completely. By 1618 the farm belonged to Oliver Harris, and one of the chief families of 16th century Highley was no longer represented in the village. The Oselands had been squeezed out of the manor farm by pressure from its lord (for Margery was unsuccessful in her suit, and Pearson stayed and prospered); some sons left the village to make a living elsewhere; they failed to produce heirs; and ultimately their lands were acquired by a rising new generation who would become the 'gentleman farmers' of the 17th century.

Upward mobility, too, was possible: with luck and judgement a man could advance his position from the ranks of the "middling sort" to become one of the most prosperous men in the community. In 1585, John Pountney of the Rea farm died, and his son William was admitted as tenant. John had paid tax on £4 in 1543. In 1564 William had married Ann Holloway, the daughter of Thurstan Holloway of Green Hall (whose father was one of the wealthiest men in the village in 1543, when he paid tax on £8). It would be useful to know where and how William and Ann lived for the first twenty years of their married life - but beyond the fact that they remained in Highley, the existing evidence is insufficient to tell us. After 1585, their fortunes improved. In 1587, William was paying £1 13s 6d per annum rent for the Rea Farm and a meadow which had been acquired to add to it, one of the highest rents in the village at the time. Then in the same year Thurstan Holloway, his father-in-law, died, and William became tenant of the Holloway holdings too. He moved into the Holloway house, leaving his son Thomas at the Rea:- and by 1603 father and son between

them paid £3 9s p.a. rent, or 32% of the total village rental. They held altogether over 212 acres, the largest family holding in Highley. Subsequently Pountney further increased this holding by the acquisition of the lease of a pasture belonging to Christ Church, Oxford, which has originally been leased to his wife's uncle.

Unfortunately, no will or inventory survives for William Pountney, so we have no idea of the wealth generated by this extensive farm or of the range of stock maintained. It was largely a pastoral farm, having only six acres of arable out of its total of 157 acres: so obviously this was not peasant farming, but a commercial enterprise, raising sheep and cattle for profit. A fortunate, or prudent, marriage to a woman without brothers was the foundation for Pountney's success: but he also contributed energy and acumen (and patience) in the acquiring and successful running of such a large farm. (See Fig. II)

Consistently throughout this pre-enclosure period, then, we find a group of about six families in a markedly favourable financial situation. They represent perhaps one sixth of the total population. The composition of the class fluctuated, but its overall numbers remained stable. Wealth in 16th century Highley was derived almost entirely from the land, and its acquisition was vital to increased prosperity. There was a finite amount of agricultural land available: marginal land had largely been brought into cultivation before our period begins. In the inflation experienced throughout this period, and especially after 1590, only the man with a surplus of production could hope to prosper. The subsistence farmer and the artisan could with luck and good harvests (or by increasing the price of their services and goods) only maintain their standards of living.

We must not assume, however, that it was only this most prosperous section of the community who were able to benefit from rising prices by selling surplus produce. Our division into "greater" and "lesser" farmers is in many ways an arbitrary one, and there is a danger of over-emphasising the differences between the position of a man paying tax on £7 in 1543 and one paying on £4 or £5. This second group, which as we have seen consisted at the start of

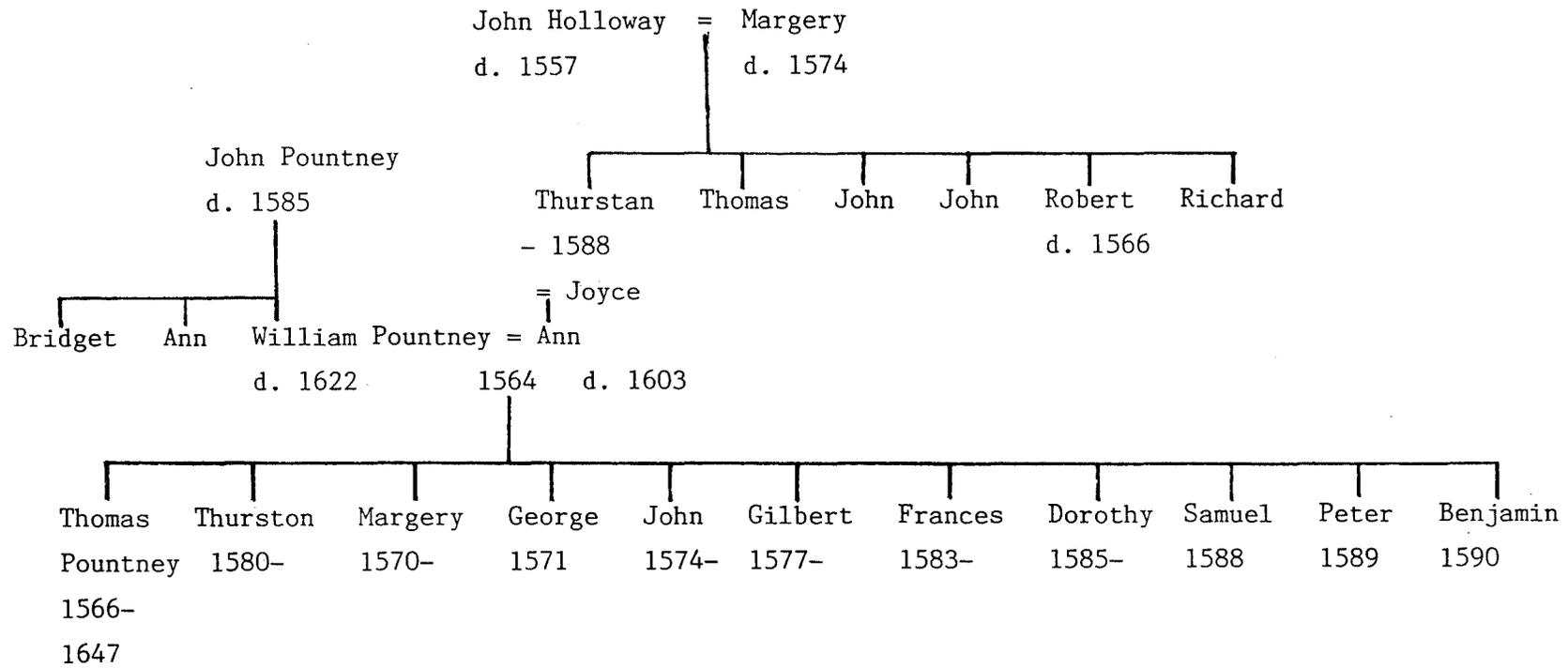


Fig. II

our period of eight men with land or goods to the value of £3 - £5 p.a., could in times of reasonable harvests (and with stable rents) produce a surplus to sell in a rising market and accumulate profits. That this had been the case in the 1580's and 1590's is demonstrated by the ability of so many men in this group to buy their farms when they came onto the market in the early 17th century.

Skipp in his study of the Forest of Arden quotes mean farm sizes for five parishes there in the period 1530-1649 of between 27.9 and 35.1 acres.[22] For Highley we are unable to compute farm sizes before 1603, and even then lack information for three or four. However, we can arrive at an average farm size based on surviving information for 1603 of 38.85 acres, slightly higher than in the Forest of Arden parishes. Bowden calculates that an arable farm (and in Highley a mixed arable/pastoral farming was practised) of 30 acres might provide £14 - £15 p.a. profit in the early 17th century, or a margin of £3-£5 over subsistence.[23]

The men in our second group were generally in possession of farms of between average and twice-average size, which would, except in bad harvests, provide them with a relatively comfortable living. In 1543, this group similarly were taxed on amounts varying from average to twice-average.

This group seems consistently to have made up about a third of the village population, and its composition is more stable than any other group. Only one of the surnames of the 1543 Class II is not found in the rentals of 1600-1603. These were the chief husbandmen of the parish, who whether their land was copyhold or leasehold, held for term of three lives, which alone gives a measure of continuity to the group.

Several of these men were sufficiently prosperous to sub-let part of their holding, or to allow an adult son part for himself; and to keep servants. We have only occasional references to servants in this period: but we know that in the 1620's and 1630's it was common for young men and women from Highley and neighbouring parishes to live in as servants in Highley households, and there is little doubt that the practice was current in the 16th century too. The servants of whom we do find mention during this period (whom we shall consider more closely in due course) worked for men and women in this

second category, as well as in Group I.

A typical family in this Class is the Rowleys of Netherton. (See Fig. III) William Rowley was assessed on £3 in 1543, only fractionally above average. He died in 1569, and the copy-hold farm passed to his son Thomas, who paid the relatively low rent of 9/4d p.a. for the rest of the century. The holding consisted of two houses, 25 acres of arable, 12 of pasture and 6 of meadow: a total of 43 acres. The Rowleys prospered: in the early 17th century the farm was bought, and by the time of Richard's death in 1651 he could style himself "yeoman" and affix his seal to his will, in which he left bequests of £125 in cash to relatives and gifts of corn to poor neighbours and, presumably, employees.

The holdings of these "above-subsistency" farmers consisted of both arable and pasture usually with more arable. Only one chiefly pastoral holding is revealed by the survey of 1603, besides Pountney's farm discussed above. The typical farmer in this group would hold about twenty acres of arable land, in the common fields, about 12-15 acres of pasture; and perhaps five acres of meadow. For this he would pay around 13/- a year in rent. And as we have seen, this rent was stable: all these holdings were copyhold or leasehold for term of lives, or held on very long leases, and their rent therefore could not be increased. Grain prices rose spectacularly in the 1590's, although they had been on the increase since 1570.[24] In 1597 the vicar of neighbouring Chelmarsh felt strongly enough to record in his parish register: "And then was rye sould in Brudgnorth for xvjs. the Stryke." [25]

In the absence of rack-renting or vastly increased entry fines,¹ the opportunity existed for the accumulation of wealth

¹Gilbert Littleton, Lord of the manor from 1590, came to an agreement with tenants which restricted rises in entry fines. Rents remained stable: during the economic crisis of 1596-7, a Littleton family quarrel meant that some tenants paid no rent at all. (ref. Tonks, Littleton Family.)

ROWLEY

23

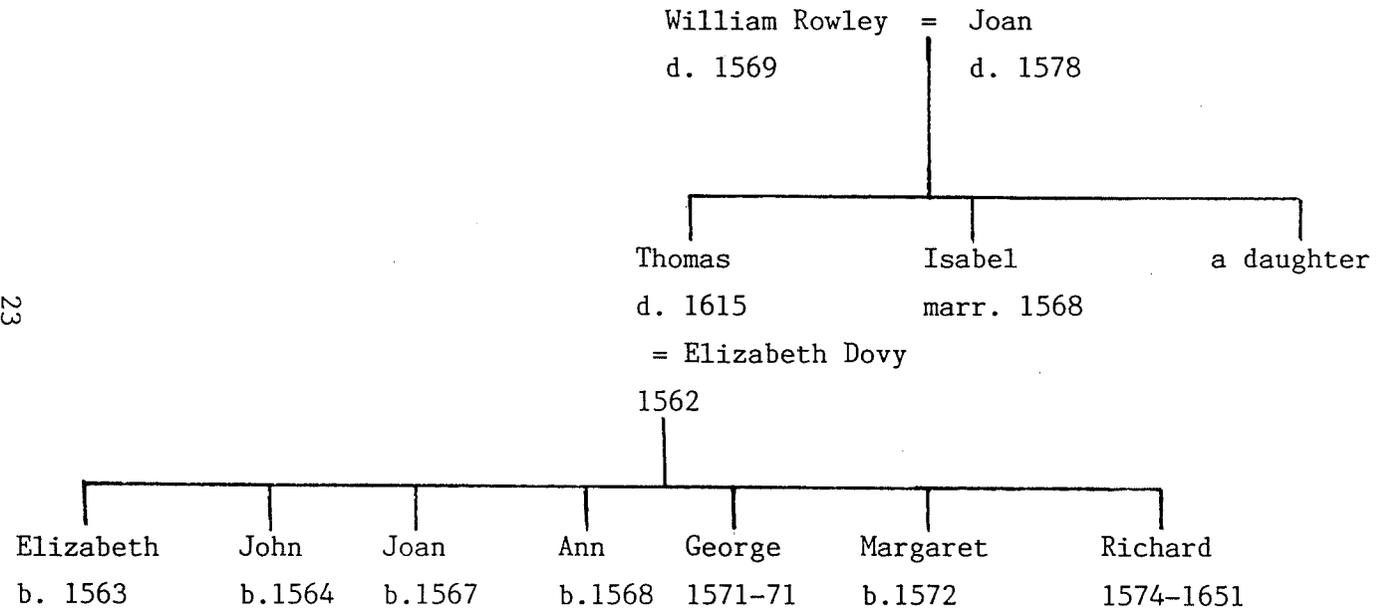


Fig. III

that could lay the basis for the land purchases, house building, and ultimately enclosure, of the early 17th century.

The third group we have designated artisans and cottagers, and should properly include both the four "£2 men" of 1543 and some of those taxed on 20/-. It is difficult to assess the percentage of the total population in this group, for it undoubtedly includes some sub-tenants, but an estimate of one quarter based on the 1587 rental appears reasonable. They contribute around 10% to the total rental of the village in all cases where it can be computed.

The average cottage holding was just under five acres: nowhere near the size required to support and feed a family, although above the figure decreed by law for the minimum land attached to a cottage.¹ As we have noted, these cottagers in many cases paid a disproportionately high rent for their land:- Thomas Charnock paid 13/4d p.a. for a mere 15 acres, for instance, and Anne Nichols 6/8d for three and three quarter acres.

The income from these holdings must have been supplemented by earnings, either from wage labour or from a craft. It is here that the distinction between these men and the labourers of Group IV becomes blurred. Of four men convicted in the manor court of 1609 of selling ale in unsealed measures, three were cottagers and one a labourer; and there must have been several other cottagers practising as shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and so on, of whom we know little. Wills are rarely found from this group, and there are no surviving inventories for the period to reveal the presence of tools of a trade amongst a man's belongings. A tailor and a mason died in Highley in the 1580's, and for the most of this period Thomas Strefford was the village blacksmith. Beyond that we can only surmise as to how most cottagers managed to live. Work would be available on larger farms at harvest, and the barge traffic which was heavy on the Severn between the market towns of Bridgnorth and Bewdley very probably provided some employment.

¹1589 legislation decreed that no cottage should be built with less than four acres of land attached.

Certainly the artisans and cottagers were not favourably placed to benefit from rising prices: not only did they have no surplus crops to sell, but they were forced to buy to live. There is less continuity here than in Groups I and II; cottagers were more likely to leave the village, less likely to be succeeded by sons in the same holding.

One family who did stay throughout our period and well into the 17th century were the Charnocks. In 1543 Richard Charnock (see Fig. IV) was one of the group of men assessed on 20/-, the lowest figure taxed. On his death in 1569 his widow was admitted as tenant of the messuage and five acres of land, copyhold tenure, at an annual rent of 3/4d. Heriot was claimed in goods "because there is no stock", so the five acres was used exclusively for crops, with presumably a plough team borrowed or hired from neighbours.

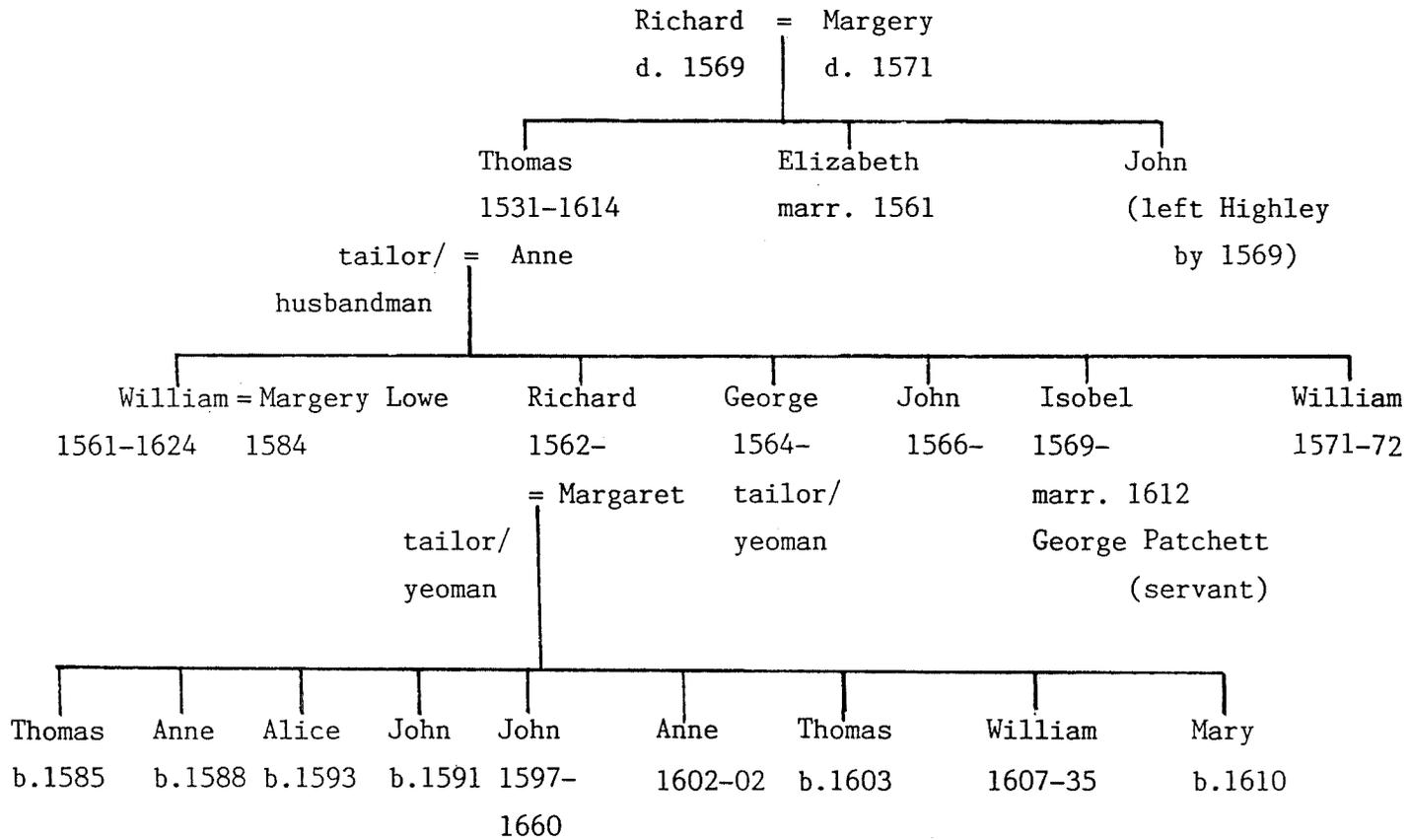
In 1571, when Margery died, her son Thomas came into possession of the tenement "for his own life only". There were still no farm animals to provide a heriot. Thomas was already forty years old, a married man with five children, and the wording of Richard's will suggests that all three generations shared the family cottage.

Some time before 1587, Thomas Charnock acquired more land, for in that year he paid the same rent (13/4d) that he was still paying in 1603 for 15 leasehold acres. The family was still regarded as poor, however, for in 1598 William, Thomas' eldest son, received a charitable bequest as "a poor neighbour" in the will of Thomas Palmer.

We are in a position to know more about how the Charnocks made a living because they, uniquely among Highley families, appear in the Recusant Rolls of the 1590's.[26] Occupations are given here, and their discrepancies are interesting. In 1595, three family members were listed: Anne, wife of Thomas Charnock, tailor; Richard Charnock, tailor; and George Charnock, also a tailor. In 1592, however, George and Richard had been optimistically styled "yeoman"; and in 1596 Thomas appears as a husbandman. Apparently then the family were tailors who also combined to farm the 15 acre holding.

The eldest son, William, is not mentioned in the Recusant Rolls. It is possible that he worked for a time on the farm of John Pountney of the Woodend in Highley, for by the latter's will

CHARNOCK



26

Fig. IV

he is to choose the sheep which form one of the bequests, although receiving nothing himself.

Financial penalties for adhering to the Catholic faith were severe: fines of £80 and £140 were imposed on each of the three Charnocks. They can, however, never have been paid, for such sums were well beyond the means of the family. Unfortunately, we do not know what, if anything, was further done to punish Anne Charnock and her two sons. It may be significant that none of the three is recorded as buried at Highley.

Richard and William Charnock were two of the four erring ale-sellers of 1609. Thus the family was involved in three, if not four, different occupations more or less simultaneously in order to eke out a living. This must have been a familiar pattern for the smallholders of Highley, for at 15 acres the Charnock holding was the largest in this group.

Some cottagers, unlike the Charnocks, did keep stock, though probably not cattle. Humfrey Clare, a cottager who paid 3/8d p.a. rent until his death in 1577, was fined in the court of May 1575 for failing to ring his pigs. Because in the pre-enclosure agrarian system cottagers enjoyed some rights of commons in Highley Wood, they could rear pigs more easily than any other animal. Whatever crops and stock were produced, however, were for home consumption, for these small holders were farming for subsistence and not for profit.

The most difficult group to identify is Class IV, day-labourers and servants. They and their families were the same size as those of yeomen and husbandmen, an assumption that must in due course be tested. They do not figure in the rentals and surveys which are so valuable a source for the 16th century; even in another major source, the court rolls, they are less likely to appear, since all jurors were landholders, and most cases concern land or its inheritance. Our chief source is the parish registers; yet even here labourers and, especially, servants are difficult to trace, for not only are occupations not given, but the more mobile labouring population was more likely to move on before an event needing to be recorded in the registers occurred. Neither did they leave wills, even in the 1550-1580 period when the

practice of will-making in Highley was widespread and extended over a broad social spectrum.

We are left with a class of whom only occasional glimpses surface - like Sybil (no surname) the servant of John Pountney of the Woodend who cut firewood in a neighbour's hedge in 1572. There is no woman called Sybil in the parish registers, and presumably this servant came from a nearby village to live-in for a time. It is curious that whenever servants are mentioned in court rolls (which is rarely) they are identified by Christian name only. It seems safe to assume that when an individual is described as "servant of John Pountney", he or she lived in the master's house. The Act Books of the Bishop's court also provide some instances of individuals, usually women, described as servants. Two of the five women mentioned were similarly not given surnames: of the remaining three only one came from a family resident in Highley. These servants were employed by the Lowes, Pountneys and Harrises - all Class I families.

Only three 16th century testators specify bequests to named individuals actually described as "my servant", though in several other cases small bequests are made to men and women who seem to have been either house-servants or farm labourers. "Servant" is the only occupational description we find applied to women in this pre-enclosure period, and three of the seven named servants in wills were in fact women.

In only one case is a man actually described in the parish registers as "a day labourer". This was John Potter, who came to Highley with his wife and at least one child, shortly before 1592. They had previously lived in Alveley, across the River Severn, and remained in Highley until both John and his wife died in 1630. The family lived in a cottage on the north side of the open Cochshutt Field, and Potter at one stage worked for the widow Palmer at Netherton, from whom he received a one-shilling bequest in 1603.

The parish registers also suggest that other day labourers, family men who did not live-in on the farms where they were employed, also moved into and through the village, particularly in the 1580's and 1590's. Baptisms during these two decades include ten

surnames not previously encountered: these are all families who do not feature in manorial rentals, and who mostly left Highley again before their deaths. They were almost certainly day-labourers, moving from village to village in search of work:- besides John Potter from Alveley, another of these men came from Chelmarsh to the north of Highley. Potter was also described as a labourer in Bishops' Act Books of 1595-1600, where there is also occasional mention of other men who were almost certainly labourers, resident at the time in Highley but also traceable in the neighbouring parish of Chelmarsh.

It is no coincidence that this increased movement of labourers came with the rapid inflation of the 1580's and 1590's.¹ With wages lagging behind prices, the labourer's position became increasingly perilous. He would be more ready to move if any chance of betterment presented itself, or forced to seek employment on the labour market if a smallholding could no longer support the family. Enclosure had not yet begun in Highley, but was under way in several other parishes of the area, and may well have contributed to the pool of landless wage-labourers on the market. The yeomen and substantial husbandmen of Highley, exploiting the buoyant market for surplus produce, were moving beyond peasant farming towards farming for profit, and consequently able to employ more wage-labourers. The tradition of the live-in, unmarried "servant in husbandry" was to continue for at least another two centuries; but by the 1580's it existed side-by-side with the "farm labourer", a family man who lived in a cottage not necessarily near to the farmhouse.

These were undoubtedly the poorest families of the village: we have no details of their income in this period, and no wills from farm labourers or servants to give an idea of their standard of living. What we do have, significantly, is a contemporary indication of who was regarded as "poor" within the community. Several testators

¹It was, of course, a widespread phenomenon, and one which late-16th century vagrancy legislation attempted to regulate. (See P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, The Great Arch [Oxford, 1985]).

of this period left money to "the poor of the parish of Highley"; but some three or four actually specify whom they regard as deserving of charity. In several cases these were widows of cottagers or labourers, and their children. In two other instances, the beneficiaries were men from our list of "new arrivals" of the period 1580-1600. The other men mentioned were cottagers or servants. The one or two shillings each that they received would have been very welcome for the labourer earning 8d a day (the figure suggested by Burnett for agricultural workers at the end of the 16th century).

Other than these charitable bequests, no evidence of provision for the poor in Highley at this period has survived. Certainly the position of the widows of poor men was unenviable, judging by the frequency with which their necessity was acknowledged by more affluent neighbours. Men in Classes I and II were at great pains to ensure that their wives would be provided for after their death, writing careful provisions into their wills for the widow's possession of at least half of the household and farm goods during her lifetime. Widows of these more prosperous men found no difficulty in taking over the running of the farm, and their wills in their turn show them as by no means merely titular heads of household, but exercising real power over the wealth of the family.¹

The elderly yeoman or husbandman controlled the purse-strings until his death, even if he was no longer active in farming. In several cases we find a reversal in the order of names on a holding from one rental to the next: for instance the Charnock entry in the rental of 1603 lists "Richard Charnock and his father Thomas and mother Ann", which in 1601 it had been the more conventional "Thomas Charnock, his wife Ann and son Richard". This would seem to indicate the son

¹In 1569, for instance, Margery Holloway bequeathed household goods, farm stock and "my indenture of Wolstan's Wood during the time of the said lease" - the latter land ("my pasture") to be occupied by her son "if he deale with me as a son ought to deale with his mother."

taking over the actual farming after his father's "retirement". Interestingly, Arensberg found a similar system operating in rural Ireland in the 1930's, and explored the shifting nuances of power within the family which ensued.[27]

The elderly cottager or labourer had no choice but to work as long as he possibly could. The day-labourer or servant who lost his job through ill-health, age or negligence was in desperate circumstances. Towards the end of our period, around the turn of the 16th century, we begin to find references in the parish registers to "wanderers" and "travellers", like Richard Massie a "traveller" in 1592; or Edward Nicholls, "a poor traveller" of 1603. Their numbers in fact increase after the 1601 Poor Law attempted to deal with the problems of poverty and vagrancy.

There is only one family about whom we can assemble enough information to use as an illustration of this class, and they are in some respects untypical. The Bishoppes/Dales were servants who progressed to become cottagers: and in his will of 1636 Thurstan Dale could call himself a yeoman, though probably not with strict accuracy. (See Fig. V) Unlike many other families in this class, they lived in Highley throughout our period.

In 1543 Richard Dale was taxed on 40/-: he was almost certainly the father of Humfrey, who was servant to the vicar, Thomas Oseland. In the latter's will of 1577 he was described as "my old servant" - and a trusted one at that, for his master had lent him 40/-, which was still owing at that time. Humfrey appears to have worked for the Oselands for some time, for he witnessed the will of Margery Oseland in 1566. Humfrey's son Thurstan followed him into the vicar's household. In 1579, Thurstan married Joan Bishoppe, whose father Humfrey had been taxed on 20/- in 1543, and who was herself a servant of the vicar. The couple received bequests of household goods, including a bed, in their master's will. Oseland died in 1587, and we do not know what happened to the couple for the next three years. However, in 1590 Humfrey Bishoppe died, and they came into possession of his "tenement and two parcels of land", which in 1603 amounted to $4\frac{3}{4}$ acres at an annual rent of 4/8d. They were nevertheless still regarded as poor, for Thurstan

DALE / BISHOPPE

32

Richard DALE =
1543 tax on 40/-

Humfrey = Alice
BISHOPPE d.1589
d. 1590
Taxed on 20/-
1543

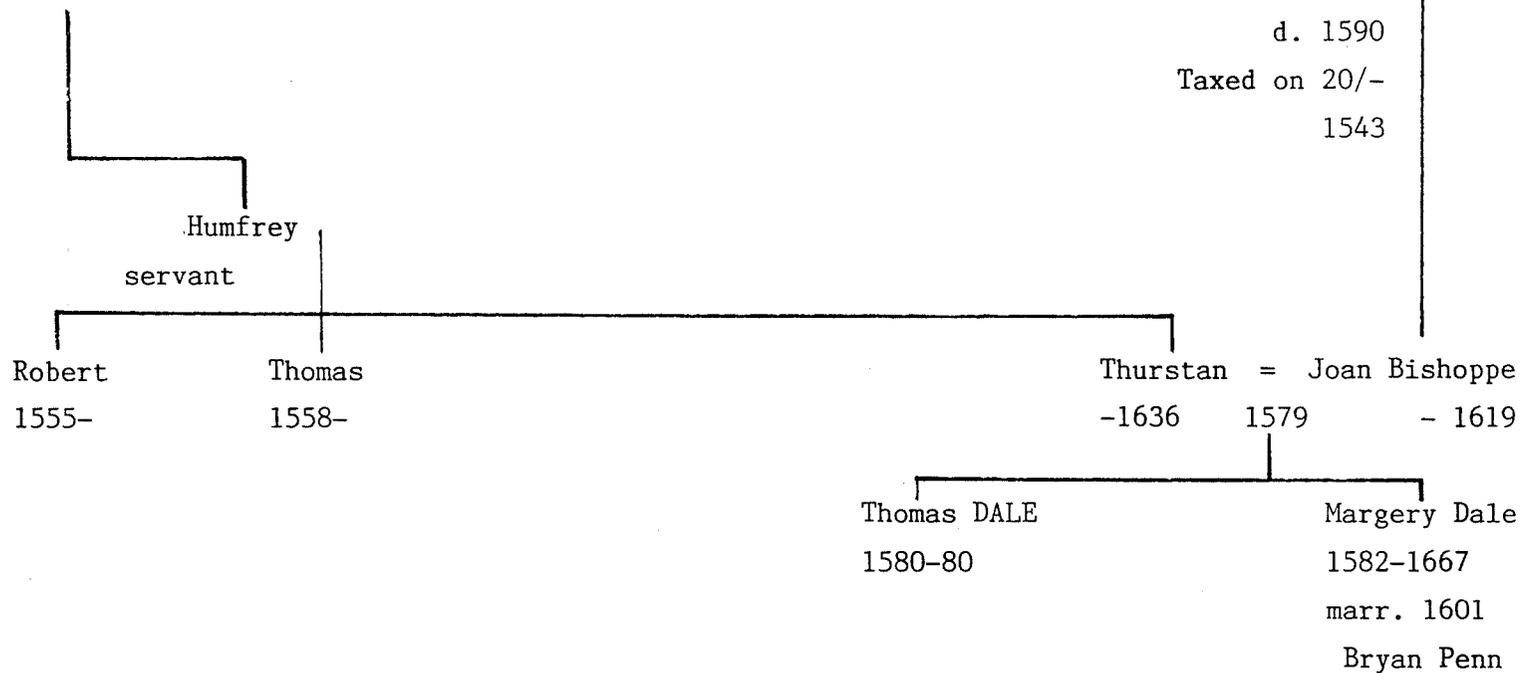


Fig. V

was one of the "poor neighbours" of a 1598 will. He supplemented their income by selling ale, and probably by day-labouring too. However, only one child, a daughter, survived; and she and her husband appear to have lived in the family home after their marriage in 1601.

It would seem that the family's improving fortunes in the 17th century were the result of brewing and, probably, inn-keeping rather than agriculture, for in his will Thurstan listed a brewing cauldron and "treenen barrels": and his grandson was certainly a "victualler" thirty years later.

This will falls outside our present period, but is useful to examine here for the light it throws on the standard of living that could be achieved after a long lifetime of endeavour (Thurstan cannot have been much less than 80 when he died, and was probably older).

No cash is mentioned in the will: all the bequests are of household goods, and corn and grain "whether in barn or field". Three rooms are named, the Hallhouse, the parlour, and a chamber over the hall - suggesting a house of at least four rooms plus a kitchen. The furniture in the house included joined bedsteads, a cupboard and chest, and trestle tables and forms. Dale also possessed several items of pewter and brass. The house was not luxurious by contemporary standards (there is no mention of feather-beds, cushions or even chairs) but was comfortably furnished. Farm stock included sheep, pigs and poultry.

For most servants and labourers, and even cottagers, such relative prosperity was unattainable. Throughout the period, the inhabitants of Highley were aware of the problems of the poor of the community; problems which increased as the 16th century progressed, but which were left to individual philanthropy to alleviate.

Although Wrightson and Levine in their study of Terling found a greater diversity of wealth than we find in Highley (their first category, gentry and large farmers, is comprised entirely of men wealthier than any in Highley) the overall proportions of the four categories into which they divide the village population are strikingly similar to those of Highley.[28] Hoskins in his analysis of the 1524 Subsidy for Wigston, finds a picture even more similar to that in

Highley, for there too was an absence of the dominating wealthy class present in the Essex village.[29] In Highley the gap between richest and poorest was less wide than in many other Shropshire villages with resident gentry. To see what this meant in practical terms, and to see how this distribution of wealth was reflected in daily life, we must turn to look in greater detail at the wills of the pre-enclosure period.

We have examined the distribution of wealth in Highley, and its associated hierarchy, in considerable detail, both for its intrinsic importance to the social structure of the village, and because of its relative accessibility to modern research. We must not, however, assume that it overlaps completely with other possible hierarchies (notably of power and status) within the community. That the link between wealth and status was strong is generally accepted: Wrightson shows how, for contemporary writers, wealth was seen as "an important determinant of social status." [30] He argues that in the late 16th and 17th centuries "social stratification in the villages tended to be dictated by levels of wealth social status and participation in positions of authority followed the same pattern"; and presents several examples to show how yeomen and gentry formed "a sort of informal oligarchy".

While this is broadly true of Highley, there are nevertheless indications that status could depend not only on wealth: other possible factors include length of residence in the village; literacy; family reputation; personal character, and so on. These "status hierarchies" are naturally difficult to assess: much of our evidence is inferential rather than direct, as contemporary records are rarely explicit about an individual's standing in the eyes of his fellows.

One possible indication is to be found in the names of witnesses to wills: it appears to have been the practice to use reliable

neighbours who were not beneficiaries as witnesses. Not surprisingly, the most usual witness was the current incumbent, whether vicar or curate. Nearly all wills were witnessed by the local clergyman, and one listed vicars of other parishes too. Only towards the end of the period (after 1597) do relatives of the testator begin to appear as witnesses.

When we examine the rest of the witnesses, we find that there does seem to be some correlation with our financial hierarchy: principal tenants like George Pearson of the demesne lands and freeholders like Oliver Harris appear more frequently than others. However, another wealthy freeholder - the miller Thomas Lowe - was never called upon to witness a will. It is probably no coincidence that he was a persistent offender in the manor court, with an average of four or five indictments against him per court, far more than any other villager.

These wealthier men could very quickly be absorbed into the community:- Nicholas Bradley began to witness wills in the same year that he arrived in Highley as a "middling" leasehold tenant. By no means all witnesses were principal tenants, however, Humfrey Dale, a servant, witnessed the will of Margery Oseland in 1566, and William Charnock, labourer and tailor, that of John Pountney in 1585. These men were both probably in the employ of the testator's family.

Since most of the wills with which we are dealing exist only in contemporary copies, it is rarely possible to distinguish between signatures and marks, and so we cannot say whether literacy was a deciding factor in choosing witnesses. Witnesses furthermore represent the choice of an individual testator, who might have personal regard (or antipathy) not shared by the community at large. Some names occur so frequently, however, that these men may be assumed to have enjoyed considerable status within the community. They are often - but by no means always - the more prosperous.

Juries at the manor court were supposedly elected by all those attending, and therefore should represent a less personal choice than witnesses to wills. Let us examine by way of example the jurors listed in the court rolls of the 1570's. A jury of twelve men was chosen at each court; and yet in this decade only 16 different

individuals appear. At court after court, a virtually identical list is presented, often following the same name order.

Although as in wills we find some correlation with personal prosperity, the regular jurors were not simply the largest farmers in the community. Three men were cottagers (one later described as "poor") and one an artisan. There are notable omissions from the list, including not only Thomas Lowe the miller mentioned above (whose omission is hardly surprising in view of his record in the courts), but at least three Class II farmers. Clearly some criterion other than wealth or size of farm was being applied, and it seems reasonable to suppose that, in view of the nature of the jurors' task, a reputation for personal integrity formed part of it.

The elected officers of the court - constable, affeerers and tithingman - are not without interest, for while affeerers and tithingmen were always drawn from the ranks of jurors, constables usually were not. The latter post was traditionally a lowly and unpopular one, and here it is given to those who were not considered suitable as jurors, although in some cases their financial position was superior to that of some of the jurors.

The only other chosen representatives of whom we have any knowledge in this period are the churchwardens. Unfortunately the parish registers at this date hardly ever record churchwardens, and so we are left with only occasional mentions in diocesan records. From these it is apparent that low financial status was no bar, as at least one servant acted as churchwarden. For the years 1608-1611, eight churchwardens are named in parish registers, and include four cottagers as well as two yeomen.[31]

Furthermore it would seem that changes in status occurred more slowly than those in finances to which they were linked. In examining the distribution of wealth in Highley we have noted families rising and falling in the financial scale, and the possibilities for fluidity in the social structure of the community must not be overlooked. We have charted the decline in fortunes of the Oseland family: yet Edward and George Oseland, two relatively poor members of what had been the most prosperous village family, feature prominently in wills and court rolls. Just as there are indications that status could linger

after wealth was largely gone, so with William Pountney we find that regard within the community could lag behind financial advancement. Pountney married in 1564; he came into possession of his father's lands in 1585, and his father-in-law's in 1588: yet he witnesses no will during our period, and only begins to appear in lists of jurors in the court rolls of the 1590's.

The one group of men who were excluded from participation in village administration was not the whole category of "labourers and poorer craftsmen" of Wrightson's national picture, but a more narrowly-defined one in immigrant and peripatetic poor. As we have seen, some relatively poor men could and did participate in village affairs: but they are without exception long-term residents, usually born in Highley of established local families. Wealthier men, like George Pearson and Nicholas Bradley, could rapidly establish themselves, but this was not the case with newly-arrived cottagers and labourers.

One factor which was important in determining the social structure of the village (and, as in Pountney's case, advancement within it) was marriage. We shall examine those marriages where one partner originated from outside Highley later when considering geographical mobility within our period. Let us confine ourselves here to marriages between members of Highley families, to see which families were connected by marriage and where, if at all, these alliances cut across the classes arrived at in our consideration of the distribution of wealth.

Two problems complicate our task. The first is a suspected under-registration of marriages in the parish registers (only one marriage is recorded in the first ten years of the registers). Secondly, it is important, though not always possible, to know^{to} which branch of a prolific family a bride or groom belonged. It would be more surprising, for instance, if the Margery Lowe who married William Charnock in 1584 were the daughter of prosperous freeholder Thomas Lowe of Borle Mill than if she belonged (as she almost certainly did) to the smallholding family of Thomas Lowe, waterman.

Bearing these difficulties in mind, however, we can state that most marriages between native villagers were within the same economic group. Fig. VI, which represents all marriages between native

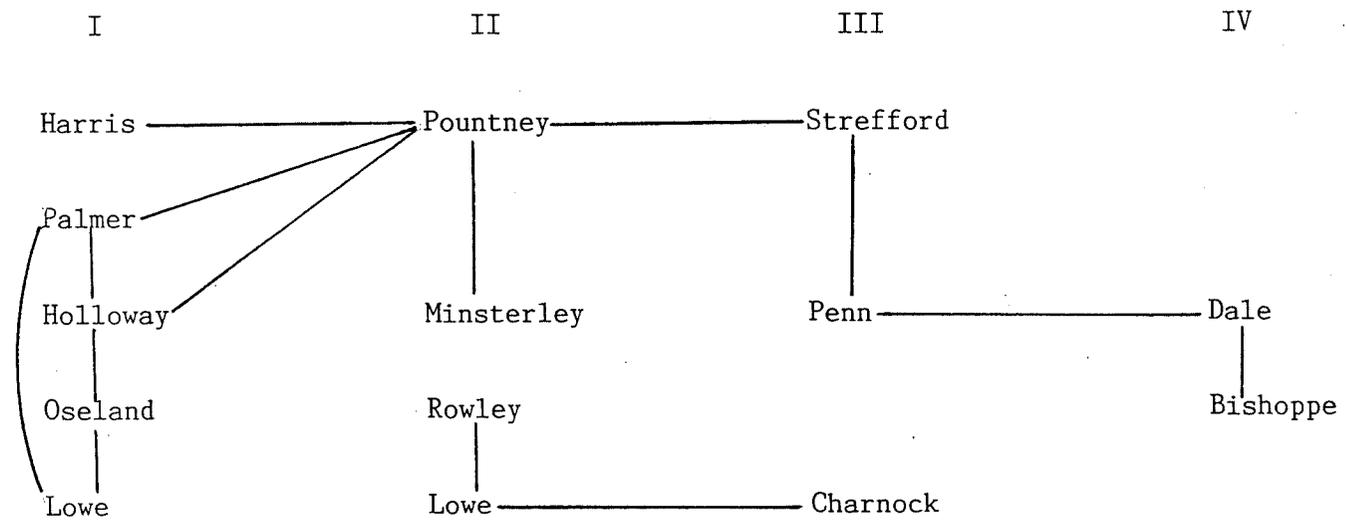


Fig.VI Endogamous marriages 1550 - 1620

partners in the period 1551-1610, illustrates the web of marriage ties within the community. It shows how the half-dozen or so most prosperous families (with one exception) were all linked by marriage. The exception is the Pearson family, who bought the demesne lands in 1591, and shortly afterwards began styling themselves "gentleman". They remained aloof from the village marriage-market and found their spouses elsewhere.¹

Members of Groups III and IV largely married within these groups too, and are connected to the main "marriage network" by gentle gradations. Thurstan Dale and Joan Bishoppe, who married in 1579, were both servants at that time; their daughter married into the family of Penn, cottagers and (later) innkeepers. A Penn married a Strefford (blacksmiths) who were related by marriage to a less well-off branch of the Pountney family.

The full range of kinship ties must be examined later: here it is sufficient to note the absence of any real discrepancy between the financial positions of bride and groom in endogamous marriages: these alliances do not cut across the divisions suggested by the distribution of wealth to any significant extent.

Thus it seems that while a division into economic groups is only one possible way of viewing the social structure of Highley in this pre-enclosure period, it is nevertheless a way which carried significance for the members of the community themselves. Nevertheless it would be a gross over-simplification to assert that an individual's status within the community was invariably in direct proportion to his personal wealth.

We have so far only touched upon the possibilities for social mobility within the existing framework, in our accounts of

¹We see here the beginnings of a phenomenon significant in class-formation in the village society: in the post-enclosure period the lack of participation in the local marriage market and the finding of partners over much greater geographical distances was a characteristic of those families aspiring to the gentry - Pearsons, Lowes and Pountneys.

the fortunes of some individual families. This becomes even more difficult to quantify when we take into consideration status and power within the community as well as financial standing. Furthermore, some of the distinctions - notably that between yeomen and husbandmen - are far from clear. Yeomen were generally (but not always) better off than husbandmen: they were often (but not always) freeholders. Most writers today agree that the prime factor was the amount of land held, but there is disagreement as to how much land a yeoman must hold to qualify as such: Burnett puts the division at about 100 acres, while Wright^son feels that 50 acres was the norm.[32] The truth must be that there was no hard and fast rule, but that local soil types and agricultural systems governed average farm size, which in its turn affected what was felt to constitute a yeoman holding.

Unfortunately Highley wills do not mention the title or occupation of testators before 1600, and so we have no way of knowing who were regarded (or regarded themselves) as yeomen. It seems safe, however, to say that all our Class I individuals, and a few of Class II, would have so styled themselves.

Movement between husbandmen and yeomen would seem to have been largely dependent on the acquisition of more land - by inheritance and marriage as in William Pountney's case, or by purchase of a vacant lease or even freehold. Similarly, a labourer could improve his position if he could inherit a smallholding, as did Thurstan Dale, or buy a cottage like that sold by Ann Nichols (originally inherited from her father) in 1609.

Since, as we have seen, yeoman and substantial husbandman families tended to inter-marry, and were more able in time of inflation to amass cash profits, it is not surprising that the acquisition of land by inheritance or purchase was largely confined to these groups. By the late 16th century, there was little or no marginal land left to be brought into cultivation in the parish. An absentee landlord owned virtually all of the land, most of which was held on long leases or by copyhold for three lives. Thus the prospects for the acquisition of land were not great, and from the very beginning of our period young men left the village in search of advancement

elsewhere. Only rarely do we know their destination. The Bristol Apprentice Book for 1542-1552 records two young men from Highley, William Palmer who became an apprentice hooper in 1546 and John Clare an apprentice joiner in 1550.[33] Certainly other towns, smaller but much nearer, must have been the target of considerable numbers of young men from Highley. There are also frequent suggestions in wills that one or more sons had left Highley and were living elsewhere, often having received a sum of money in lieu of an inheritance to set them up.

In fact primogeniture was not always applied when it came to the inheritance of a holding in Highley. Elder sons, seeing the prospect of working on the family farm until they were perhaps forty or more, had frequently established themselves elsewhere long before their parents' death, and it was in fact frequently a younger son who took over the family farm.

Downward social mobility also occurred, of course. This could be brought about by the premature death of the head of the household; though its effects seem to have been felt most at husbandman and cottager level. Above this level there seems to have been nothing to prevent the widow with the means to hire servants and labourers until her family were grown from running a prosperous farm, as Margery Minsterley did throughout her long widowhood from 1575-1611.

Such movement as did take place seems to have been between our socioeconomic groups I and II on the one hand, and III and IV on the other. This would appear to bear out Wrightson's contention that, although social stratification was well-defined, the gaps between groups were not uniform. In Highley the most discernible gulf was between those who could live from their land, with a little over for profit (by whatever type of tenure that land was held, and whether the individuals thought of themselves as yeomen or husbandmen); and those for whom husbandry was of necessity combined with some other activity.

A total of 24 wills made by inhabitants of Highley between 1544 and 1620 survives. Only four of these were proved in the

Prerogative Court of Canterbury and are to be found in the Public Records Office. The remainder were proved in local diocesan courts and are now at Hereford Records Office. Only one inventory survives for this period, a rather uninformative one of 1560: unfortunately almost no inventories for Hereford diocese survive from before 1660.

However, the wills themselves are a very valuable source for any examination of the community during this period. Our immediate concern is with wills as economic indicators, but they also supply information about family life, social contacts, literacy and religion, among other topics, in a way that no other single 16th century source can.

Virtually all wills of this period were made by individuals in our first two socio-economic categories, yeomen and husbandmen. Only one will belongs to an artisan/smallholder - that of Richard Charnock made in 1569. Among men in classes I and II will-making was very common indeed during this period. Only four men known to have belonged to these two groups have left no will: one of them we know to have died intestate in 1607: but two other omissions (both men who farmed the demesne lands, John Oseland who died in 1558 and George Pearson, died 1596) are surprising, and may indicate lost wills.

Indeed, will-making was so prevalent among these groups that a list of adult male burials from the parish register with no associated will becomes instructive: certain families, like Goodman, Bishoppe, Dallow, Nashe, Nicholls and Clare, are revealed as consistently below will-making class, which corresponds with information from other sources about the financial status of these families. Five of the extant wills were made by women, in all cases widows of men of yeoman or substantial husbandman status.

In all, about 40% of adult males buried in Highley during the period left wills, a much higher percentage than is found in succeeding periods. Although there are, therefore, enough wills to enable us to draw a picture of some aspects of life for almost half the population of the village, the class-bias of the data must be constantly remembered.

In general, these wills display the pre-occupations of a peasant economy. Property is rarely bequeathed, and although cash

bequests are mentioned in 15 of the 24 wills, they usually represent a minor part of the bequests, especially in the first half of the period. Crops and farm animals are mentioned, though perhaps less frequently than one might expect. The majority of the bequests involve household items - furniture, clothing, utensils - that were at the disposal of the testator. In one respect, however, a cash economy based on farming for profit rather than subsistence does seem to have been evolving; for the numbers and extent of debts due to testators is often surprisingly large. These may in a few cases represent sums of money actually loaned, but more often appear to be payments outstanding for goods or services provided.

Before 1580, cash bequests in wills are a minor part of the provisions made: only seven testators (out of 14) left specific sums of money; and in all cases but one these are very small sums. Furthermore in two cases the option is left that the legacy be paid "in money or money worth"; and three other wills mention money only once each. This makes it very difficult to assess an individual's wealth from his will, as merely totalling the trivial sums bequeathed would give a very misleading picture, especially as it seems likely in several cases - and is certain in one or two - that an eldest son has already received his legacy prior to the drafting of the will.

There is evidence of an increasing amount of cash in circulation in the village in the second half of our period, from 1580-1610 (see Fig. VII): sums of money are more frequently mentioned,

	1544-1580	1581-1620
% of wills with cash bequests	50%	90%
% of wills with debts due	42.8%	77.7%
% of wills with debts owing	35.7%	44.4%

Fig. VII Debts in wills, 1544-1620

though still side-by-side with items of clothing and small personal effects; and the sums are larger. Whereas in the first half of the period marks, nobles, angels, shillings and pence were all used as monetary units, in this second half, in all cases but one where amounts are listed, they are in pounds.

In his study of Forest of Arden parishes Skipp found that in the period 1570-1609, 30.2% of probate inventories specified debts due to the testator, which represents a six-fold increase over the earlier period 1530-69.[34] Skipp cites these figures as indications of increased peasant wealth during the period. Fig. VII shows a similar increase in Highley in debts both due to and owed by testators, although the percentages are much greater.

In all, over half the Highley wills list sums of money due to the testator from creditors, usually local people and often members of his family. These lists are both more frequent and more extensive (and the sums of money larger) in the second half of the period. In some cases the reason for the debt is specified: Thomas Lowe the miller was owed 8/5d "for malte" in 1580; and in 1603 Anne Palmer's brother owed her £5 13 4d "for two kine". Sometimes such transactions involved a wider sphere than Highley itself - in 1598 Thomas Palmer was owed 46/- by Gilbert Littleton, son of Sir John and current lord of the manor "for carrying wood out of Higlieis Wood to Severne".

Where the origin of the debt is not specified, it can sometime be deduced. The longest list of debts for the pre-1580 period is that in the will of Thomas Low, 1565, who lists 18 creditors and a total of £15 10s outstanding. Low describes himself as a "waterman", and we may assume that these debts represent payments for carriage of goods on the Severn. They also must have constituted the great majority of Low's capital, for the total bequests in his will are ten pounds to his two daughters, four pounds to his two sons, and "an old heiffer". In another will, that of John Pountney of Woodend, made in 1585, some debts are in kind rather than in cash, and allow us to see the kind of transactions which probably accounted for similar lists of debts in other farmers' wills of the period. Pountney's brother-in-law,

Thomas Potter of Alveley, owed him "ten strike of barley, a strike of oats, three hops of wheat and a stone of tallow". Pountney is careful also to list goods paid for but not received: "I paid for seven trees to the old John Foxall but I have as yet one a way and six trees do yet remain."

Some of the debts do represent straightforward cash loans rather than outstanding payments. The same John Pountney records a debt due from Sir John Littleton of "£5 which I paid to his man to his use"; and in wills of the 1580's and 90's there are mentions of loans "as I have specialty to show". These are not the same small inter-family loans we find elsewhere, but careful business transactions, like that between John Holloway (1611 will) and George Pountney "who oweth me at this instant £44 by bond of four score for payment thereof". Nor are they essentially charitable in origin, like the £15 6 4d due to Thomas Oseland the vicar in 1577 from 16 people, many of whom were poor villagers, including his own servants who owed a few shillings each. By the end of the period villagers in Highley could lend quite large sums in cash on a business basis.

Occasionally we are unable to guess which type of transaction is indicated by a list of creditors: possibly more than one type is involved in longer lists like that of Thurstan Holloway, a class I yeoman who died in 1588. He records 26 debts due, with a total of over £71. Since as far as we know he provided no services for which payment could be outstanding, it would seem that many of these sums were for farming produce sold, as is also the case with the £60 5s owed to Richard Palmer in 1597. Since Holloway and Palmer paid an annual rent of 32/4d and 13/4d respectively, these sums can be seen in some sort of perspective. Whether or not they represent cash gains from the sale of surplus produce, they show the extent to which cash could be amassed by the successful farmer.

Lists of sums owed by the testator are usually less extensive. Only a third of testators list debts they owed, and these are usually of quite small sums. Some individuals, of course, could have been more scrupulous than others about what constituted a debt: probably Thomas Pountney was unusually careful when in his will of

1544 he recorded debts to several in-laws and even to his wife. However, in general the yeoman and substantial husbandman of Highley was more likely to be owed money than to owe it. By the end of the 16th century he was part of a cash economy, with quite considerable sums of money changing hands in return for goods or services, or in the form of cash loans. Several men were at a specific time owed sums that would pay the rent of their farms for fifty years or more. It was the presence of this kind of ready money in the village economy that made possible the buying of freeholds, enclosing of land and farmhouse rebuilding that characterised Jacobean Highley.

However, for most of this pre-enclosure period cash was only one concern of the yeomen and husbandmen of the village. It is only at the very end of the period that we find mention of leases of property. Prior to this, the major preoccupation of testators was with the disposal of furniture and household goods, often including what would seem to modern eyes to be very trivial items. Even Thurstan Holloway, the wealthy yeoman with £71 owed to him, specified the destination of, among much else, his "two meatcloths". It is this concern with the smallest domestic items, and with articles of clothing, which above all else distinguishes the 16th century will from its later counterparts.

Not only does this reveal much about the economy in which men had grown up, and whose terms of reference they still used; it is also a useful substitute for the missing inventories of the period. From the household items mentioned in wills we can deduce much about the standard of living in the more prosperous homes of Highley. Although we lack the completeness of the inventories, this is in part compensated for by our ability to discern what the testator himself regarded as being his most important possessions. Thus we find itemised in 16th century wills utensils which by the later 17th century had become sufficiently commonplace to be subsumed under a general description. Everitt has shown how even the labouring population increased the proportion of their wealth which was invested in household goods during the second half of the 16th century.[35] For the yeomen and husbandmen of Highley, household goods were the outward

sign of their prosperity: although household goods were still strictly utilitarian (there are no purely luxury items), it seems to have been a matter of pride to have more of them, and to use superior materials.

Unfortunately, however, wills provide only an occasional reference to individual rooms in a house, such as is usual in the later inventories, and so we can only guess at the extent and lay-out of accommodation at this period.

Certain items of furniture are regularly mentioned in wills, and none more frequently than beds and bedding. A careful distinction is made between feather and flock beds, and between flaxen and hempen sheets. Margery Oseland (1566) possessed at least four feather beds, several "bolsters and canvases", and flaxen sheets. At the other end of the social scale (for will-making) Richard Charnock (1569) lists only three hempen sheets. Several references are made to a bed "with its appurtenances". We have a hint as to what these might have been in the will of Thomas Oseland (1577) when he left to his servant a flock bed with a bolster, canvas, blanket, a pair of sheets and "a green bed hillinge".¹ Whether the mattress was feather or flock, the sheets hempen or of finer flax, the more prosperous families of the village clearly slept in some comfort, and when they came to distribute their goods to their heirs, thought first of bedding.

Storage appears to have been the second concern in furnishing. The typical family in this will-making group possessed three "coffers", the most usual furniture for storing clothes and linen. Even the relatively poor Richard Charnock had three coffers, a cupboard and a press. There is no mention of any other form of free-standing storage furniture, although presumably wall shelves would have been necessary for kitchen utensils. Tables are rarely mentioned and chairs never. Neither, more surprisingly, are stools or forms. It is tempting to see in this the reflection of a life-style in which there was little leisure time, and where the majority of time spent indoors was for sleeping. However, some seating must have been provided, and there may well be other reasons why it does

¹A hillinge or healing was a coverlet. See J. S. Moore, Goods and Chattels of our Forefathers: Frampton Coterell and District Probate Inventories 1539-1804 (London, 1976).

not figure as prominently as bedding in wills. Wrightson and Levine find no mention of joined furniture (i.e. professionally made) before 1600 in the wills of Terling in prosperous Essex. Similarly in Highley, all furniture listed appears to have been capable of rough and easy construction.

Utensils for cooking and eating are itemised with surprising frequency and minuteness. Thirteen of the 24 wills of this period mention utensils, ranging from quite large and valuable cauldrons to small basins.

The lists are so detailed, and repetition from list to list so common, that we can arrive at an accurate picture of the utensils owned by the average yeoman/husbandman family of the 16th century. There would be two or three brass pots and two or three brass pans; some pewter dishes and some wooden ones; a cauldron for cooking; several small brass dishes and basins; and probably some candlesticks - the latter implying the use, at least occasionally of expensive wax candles rather than the rushlights of the poor. To the poor families of the community, many of these items would be unattainable, but to almost half the population a shelf of pewter and brass was a relatively readily obtainable means of demonstrating affluence.

There are few signs of any other luxuries, however, such as appear in the later 17th century, even in the wealthiest households - no carpets, cushions, timepieces; and only one mention of books, understandably in the vicar's household. It appears that what money was expended on the home went on providing comfortable bedding and eating. We have already seen that the later 16th century saw an increase in the amounts of money in circulation within the village economy; and some of this money must have been spent on improvements to the standard of home comfort. Hoskins finds that "the material standard of living (in Wigston).....doubled between the middle of the sixteenth century and the end." [36] There is, unfortunately, no evidence in the wills of Highley for this kind of spectacular improvement. The pewter vessels and feather beds that elsewhere mark a rise in the standard of living towards the end of the 16th century are already found in Highley, at least among the more prosperous households, by mid-century. If anything, it was quantity (which we have no satisfactory way of measuring in the absence of inventories) rather than

quality of household goods which improved; and we have to wait for the 17th century for any appreciable change in material standards.

The third concern of 16th century testators was with clothing. The usual practice was to specify the "best" coat or gown, the other or others being presumably not worth bequeathing; although occasionally a "second" best garment is listed. The men who mention clothes describe between them what was probably a complete wardrobe for a 16th century farmer, with the exception of shoes or boots:- a coat, or perhaps two; a doublet (on one occasion also "my letherne dublett"); hose; a cloak and a hat. Women's clothing is less often mentioned, but consisted at least of a couple of gowns, petticoats, aprons, kerchiefs and, in one case, a "reband of silke". Curiously, no female outdoor clothes are listed. The very appearance of articles of clothing in wills, right down to hose and kerchiefs, is indicative of their relative value. After 1600, clothes are never mentioned separately in Highley wills, although their collective value was estimated by appraisors for inventories.

The only surviving 16th century inventory for Highley is that of the goods of Margery Pountney, taken in 1560. This is a short and uninformative document compared to the detailed inventories of the 17th and 18th centuries, but is nevertheless interesting. Margery was a widow, and apparently had been left half of her husband's possessions (a common practice) for each item in the short list is prefaced by the words "half of" - her apparel, brass, pewter, etc. Clothes were estimated as being worth 8/- out of a total of £7 2 8d. This is a surprisingly low total if it indeed comprises half the estate of a Class II farmer, although the percentage devoted to household goods, valued at 24/- or 16% of the total, corresponds with 10-15% which Hoskins found to be the norm in Wigston at the same period. These household categories are bedding (10/-), brass and pewter (6/8d), vessels (3/4d), and "half of one loom" (4/-). The rest is made up of farm stock, and represents one of our few guides to the values of farm animals in Highley at this period.

The stock of Margery Pountney's farm in 1560 consisted of five cows, two "year-old beasts", one heiffer, three weaned calves, four oxen, and an unspecified number of pigs. No sheep or poultry are

mentioned. Easily the most valuable item, at £3, is "half of four oxen". This, the minimum size of a plough team, indicates that some arable as well as dairy farming must have been pursued on the holding, in spite of the lack of any grain crops in the inventory. Possibly the estimated values in this inventory are too low, for although the price of cattle more than doubled between 1560 and the end of the century, Margery Pountney's cows at the former date are valued at 12/8d each, while in 1603 Anne Palmer was owed £2 16 8d each cow. However suspect the values of the stock, though, this is the only complete account which has come down to us of the range of stock on a 16th century farm.

Otherwise, wills provide only a known minimum, for although several mention farm animals, these frequently represent bequests outside the main farm stock, whose inheritance went with the farm. In all, eight wills identify specific animals, rather than employing a formula involving "all my cattle, chattels, etc"; and in no case do the bequests appear to represent the whole stock of a farm. The nearest to a complete list is probably that of Thomas Oseland (1577) who includes five cows, a white heiffer, and 13 sheep. Two of the eight wills list only sheep, and two only cattle: but in general the indications are that a mixed husbandry using cattle, sheep and pigs was practised during this period. As we have seen, heriots paid to the lord of the manor during the second half of the century show that usually a farmer's most valuable beast was an ox, and that although some co-operation between neighbours may have been necessary to muster a full plough-team, most farmers were engaged to a greater or lesser extent in arable farming.

Our supposition that even those not primarily earning their living from farming nevertheless kept some animals and cultivated some land is supported both by these heriots and by items in wills like that of Thomas Low the "waterman" of 1565, whose sole bequest in kind is that of "an old heifer". There is also support for Everitt's finding that the staple of the labourer's or smallholder's stock-farming was the cow, and not the pig as it was to be in the 19th century.[37]

Only two wills mention crops or produce:- in 1558 Richard Pountney left 20 strike of rye to his wife; and in 1585 John Pountney lists 10 strike of barley and one of oats, three hops of wheat, a stone of tallow and a stone of wool. Some of Pountney's crops may represent purchases rather than produce, for his farm consisted almost entirely of pasture land, with only $1\frac{3}{4}$ acres of arable. This is further suggested by the way in which these crops are listed in the will as debts owed to Pountney. If this is the case, it marks another departure from subsistence farming for family consumption, even if an exchange in kind rather than a cash transaction is indicated.

We must not lose sight of the fact that such guidance as wills can provide to economic conditions within the community applies only to its more prosperous members. It is doubtful if there was much brass and pewter in the homes of poorer artisans and cottagers, or many feather beds - or that the head of the household was involved in cash transactions where large sums of money changed hands. We can say, however, that quite a large proportion of the population (probably around 40%) lived in relative comfort. While minor gradations in the type and range of possessions between Class I and II households may be discerned - and were doubtless more readily visible to contemporaries - there seems no very great difference in life-style between the more and less prosperous farmers in this will-making group. The only noticeable difference is in the amounts of cash passing into or through the yeoman households at the top of our economic scale.

The major economic division in Highley would seem to have been not, as in some other 16th century communities of the area, between one or two families of dominant wealth and position and the rest; but between those holding a farm of thirty acres or so (and thus above subsistence-level), making wills, and forming between a third and a half of the village population, and the less historically visible group struggling to support themselves from a combination of farming and labouring activities.

In Highley the changes in the economy that elsewhere are visible in the last quarter of the 16th century only become noticeable in the early years of the 17th century. The end of the 16th century marks a change in the tone and type of wills. Although there would still be the occasional testator who bequeathed brass basins and towels, increasingly provisions were for sums of money and leases

of property. The three wills of the period 1605-1620 illustrate this change: none of them mentions personal or household possessions at all, for they are exclusively concerned with cash bequests and, in one case, with a farm lease for 1,000 years recently purchased by the testator. The farmers of Highley were moving away from a true peasant economy, where household goods were the most important items at their disposal. Succession to a farm could no longer be left to the manor court to ratify, but became the responsibility of the freehold or fixed-term leasehold farmer. Increasing amounts of cash in the village economy meant a corresponding rise in the number of wills dealing exclusively in bequests of money. It is symptomatic of the change in thinking and conditions that after 1600 no Highley testator ever again felt it necessary to determine in his will the destination of his clothing after his death.

The rural economy that underpinned society, and the distribution of wealth within it form a necessary background to the examination of other forces within the community. The economic divisions which we have discussed are only one way of viewing the society, but they are clearly important in any study of other factors.

The beginnings of the polarisation of wealth that accelerated with enclosure can be seen in the 1580's and 1590's. Although we have called this "the pre-enclosure period" in order to contrast life-styles under two different agrarian systems, we should not make the mistake of viewing the years 1550-1620 as static in themselves. This final era of the ancient common-field system of agriculture was in itself a period of change: and it is not too much to argue that without that change, enclosure could not have come about when it did. In fact in many ways certain developments of the late-16th century - the increase in numbers of peripatetic landless labourers, the growth of a cash economy which enabled tenants to buy their holdings - may be seen as part of a cumulative and protracted procedure which we can for convenience subsume under the term "enclosure".

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Chapter Two - Demography

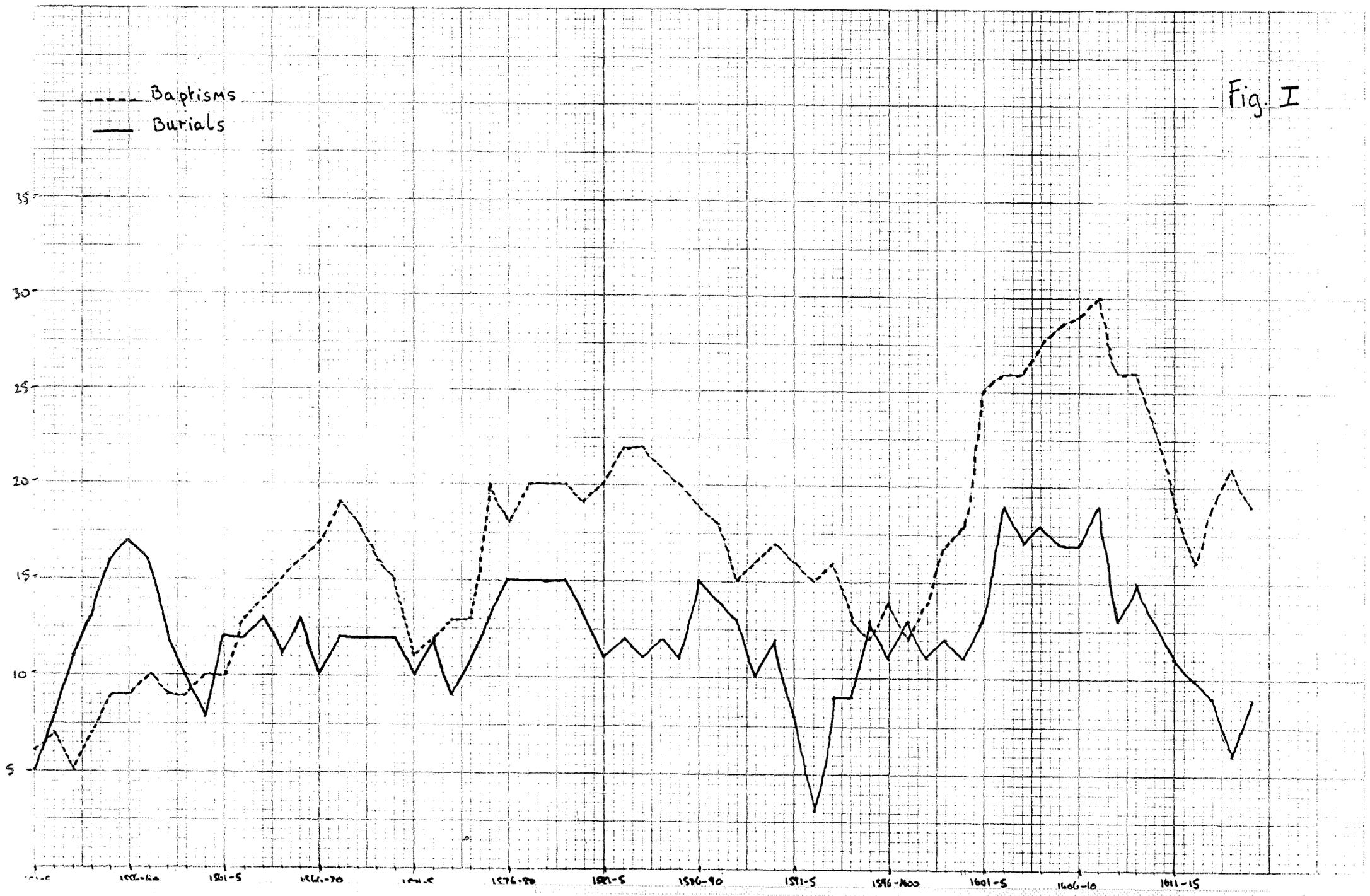
There is no very exact indication of the total population of Highley in the 16th century. The Lay Subsidy Return of 1543 is by far the fullest of the century, and names 27 men. If we assume a mean household size of 4.5¹ this means a total population of 121. However, the last two names on the Subsidy may have been young men not yet heads of separate households, which would reduce our total to 112. A list of tenants of the manor in 1578 names 28 men, again suggesting a population of around 125. Rentals of 1601 and 1603 produce a similar total - yet baptism and burial rates shown by parish registers suggest considerable growth in the village during the second half of the century.

Migration must always be a factor in any consideration of increase or decrease in the size of the community. In the Compton Religious Census of 1678, the numbers of communicants in Highley was 108: if we take the accepted estimate of 40% of the population being too young to be recorded, we arrive at a total estimate of 151 people.[1] Working back from this more-or-less known total, subtracting baptisms and adding burials, we find that by the late 16th century, the population should have stood at zero! Besides exposing the limitations of this method, this amply demonstrates how net immigration must have outweighed emigration.

Migration must be left aside initially, however, as we examine the basic demographic trends of the pre-enclosure period. Overall, the pre-enclosure period appears as one of growth in the community. Fig. I shows baptisms and burials in five-year moving totals, and demonstrates how, for most of the period, the former outnumbered the latter. This was not the case, however, in the early years: it was not until the mid-1560s that baptisms regularly outstripped burials

¹This figure itself is problematic, and is the subject of much discussion. Cf Laslett Household and Family in Past Time p.76 which gives a mean size for households in 100 English communities of 4.75

Fig. I



(see Fig. II where baptisms are shown as a percentage of burials). Real growth, then would appear to have begun in the 1560s from a period of stagnation or even decline. The absence of pre-1550 registers prevents us from ascertaining the length of this period. Dyer's study of Worcester and certain Worcestershire parishes shows a similar pattern in this neighbouring county, in which he demonstrates a mid-century "crisis" which reached a peak in the later 1550s, and only really passed around 1570.[2]

The situation in Highley at this period does seem in considerable measure due to an increase in burials, which reached a peak in the late 1550s not reached again until after 1600. There is no evidence, however, of the sudden and disastrous epidemics noted elsewhere at this time: rather there was a steady rise in deaths of the more vulnerable in the community - the elderly (as shown by wills) and the very young.

Baptisms, too, were fewer at this period than they would ever be again. This may in part be attributed to under-registration in the earliest years of the registers: nevertheless, as Fig. II shows, baptisms in the later 1550s fell as low as 50% of burials.

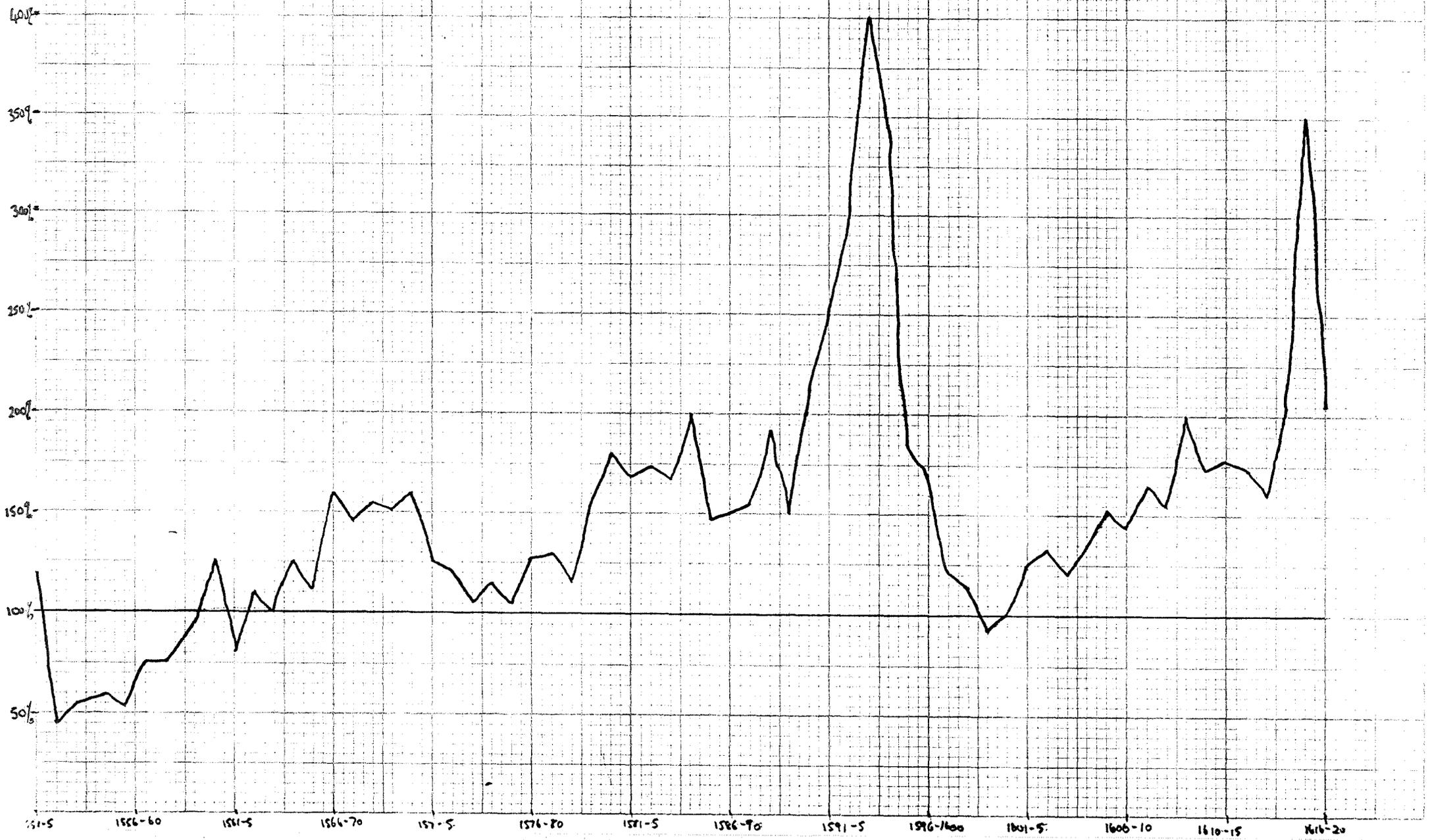
After the mid-1560s, growth was sustained until the late 1590s. Baptisms were regularly 150% of burials, and in the early 1590s exceptionally low burial totals gave rise to a brief period where births outnumbered deaths by 4:1.

In the later 1590s, a period of poor harvests and high inflation, burials increased again (though not to their 1550s level) and baptisms decreased until for a few years rough parity prevailed. After 1600, although deaths continued to increase, they did so at a less marked rate than did births, and at the end of our period, growth was more considerable.

So far, we have only looked at crude aggregative figures, which can only suggest demographic trends and tell us nothing of their causes. A family reconstitution approach allows us to examine these features in greater depth. In this pre-enclosure period, it is possible to reconstitute a greater percentage of resident families than in any other period, for although many young single people left the community, there was less movement of whole family units than at any other time.

Baptisms as a % of burials

Fig. II



We shall begin by examining mortality during the period. Here the parish registers are of limited use, as for most of the period it is of course impossible to compute the age of death of those born before registration begins. It is difficult, too, to arrive at any meaningful death-rate as in most cases we do not know the numbers at risk either in the community as a whole or by age-group. It is possible, however, to study juvenile mortality:- partly because baptism is recorded shortly before burial, and partly because there is a further check in that the formula "John son of John and Joan Pountney" is only used in the case of a juvenile burial.

Fig. III shows juvenile mortality by decade. A distinction is made between infants (less than one year old) and children (under 16).¹

We first notice that in general the first year of life was the most dangerous one, for deaths in the first year regularly outnumber those in the next fifteen. The chief exception to this is in the "crisis" decade of 1551-60, when a disastrously high 28% of live births resulted in death between the ages of one and 16. Fig. IV shows that a third of children born in this decade failed to reach maturity. Subsequently, however, this figure was under 20% until the early years of the 17th century again saw an increase.

The fact that child mortality was, after 1560, always less than 10% of all baptisms would suggest a reasonable standard of health and nutrition in the community. Child deaths are presumably

¹ Some studies (like Dyer's of Worcester referred to above) take 'juvenile' to mean under 21 or even 24. There are two dangers here: firstly we cannot assume anyone over the age of 16 to have been necessarily still living in the parental home and therefore possibly not in the village at all; secondly, one aspect of juvenile mortality is that it removes a potential source of growth - young people of 23 could have, and frequently had, already produced children of their own. All in all, the lower age limit is a much safer and more meaningful one.

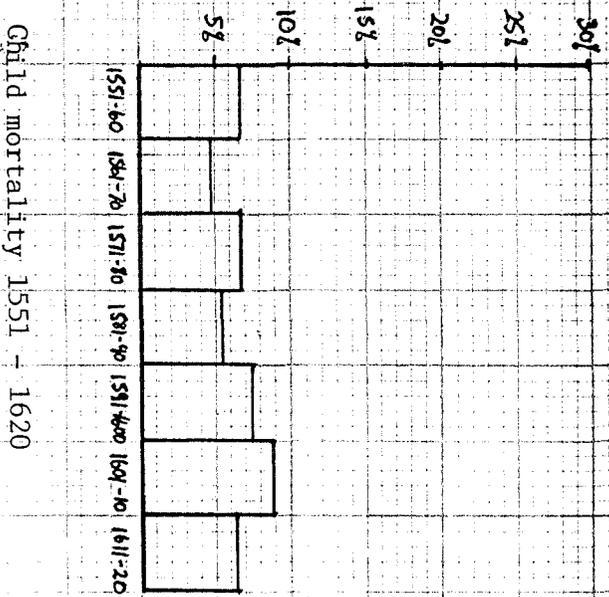
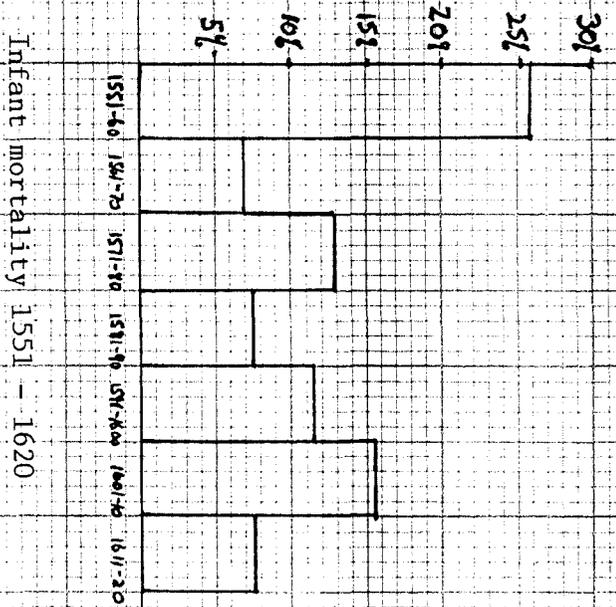


Fig. III

the result largely of infectious rather than degenerative diseases, and the children of Highley seem to have been quite well-equipped to overcome them, after the first few dangerous months of life. In fact, juvenile mortality would appear to have been lower in Highley than the norm at this period. It is difficult to arrive at any assessment of national figures, of course, but the findings of Wrigley and Schofield based on a study of parish figures for the period 1550-1649 suggests that mortality among even the under-tens was more likely to be nearer to 25% of all baptisms.[3] The moderate levels of juvenile mortality found in Highley mean that only a minority of families lost more than one child, and in many cases all children baptised survived to maturity. We certainly do not, after 1560, encounter a situation where parents routinely anticipated the loss of several children.

With adults the situation is less clear. Some indication of life expectancy is given by an examination of age at death by decade of birth. For the cohort born 1571-80 we find an average age at death for those who reached adulthood of 58.0 years. For the cohort born 1581-90, the average is 54.2 years. However, we cannot place too much reliance on these figures as they are obtained from the relatively small numbers of individuals who can be traced from birth to death.

Perhaps a better indication is given by an examination of the wills of the period. Age at death can be ascertained or closely estimated in 30% of these wills, and gives an approximate average of 58 years. The overall impression given by these wills is of testators of fairly advanced years: half of the testators mention married children, and nearly half mention grandchildren. In one case at least, even the grandchildren were themselves married. A synthesis of information from the wills with that from parish registers and other sources is even more revealing. In only one case (out of 23) were the parents of a testator still alive, though in one other a father-in-law still survived. In only four cases were there apparently children under sixteen years old left orphaned - and in all instances one parent still remained. Several testators mention children who were themselves middle aged: Margery Oseland who died in 1566 left a son of 52; Margery Holloway died in 1574, when her granddaughter had

already been married for ten years. These are not isolated instances: seven of the 23 testators in our sample had children aged over 40 at the time of their death, and are unlikely themselves to have been much less than 70. In fact, only six can reasonably be estimated to be under 50 years old (one of them we know to have been 36, almost certainly the youngest).

Although there is a natural bias in wills towards the better off, and towards those who did not die suddenly, enough wills survive for this period to represent perhaps 40% of adult male deaths in the village. They suggest that, having reached adulthood, it was usual to survive into one's fifties, and that an age at death in the late seventies was by no means rare. A couple having children could reasonably expect to see those children to maturity, and indeed to live to see grandchildren. We shall return to the possible effects of this longevity when we examine the duration of marriage in this pre-enclosure period.

It is not possible to determine, of course, of what these older people died. The usual preamble to wills - "being sick and weak in body but of perfect mind and remembrance" - is not much help. However, several wills were made years (up to ten years) before death, suggesting either a temporary illness from which a recovery was made, or a long-term degeneration. Accidents occasionally proved fatal. In 1598 Thomas Palmer was "slaine with his plowe"; and in 1607 a boat returning from Bewdley Fair on St. Andrew's Eve (Nov. 29th) sank and at least two people were drowned in the Severn.

Fig. IV analyses all burials in the period 1551-1610 by month. There is of course the possibility of some overlapping, with those actually dying at the end of one month being buried in the next; but we can assume, especially in summer, no great time-lag between the two events. Not surprisingly, winter burials form a large part of the whole:- 34.5% of all burials were in Dec/Jan/Feb, thus suggesting the influence of climate on mortality. The other is in late Spring - April and May - with a steady decline to a late-summer low point. It is dangerous to read too much into this, but we may well see here the effects of poor nutrition in the season before harvest and before spring stock is ready to slaughter.

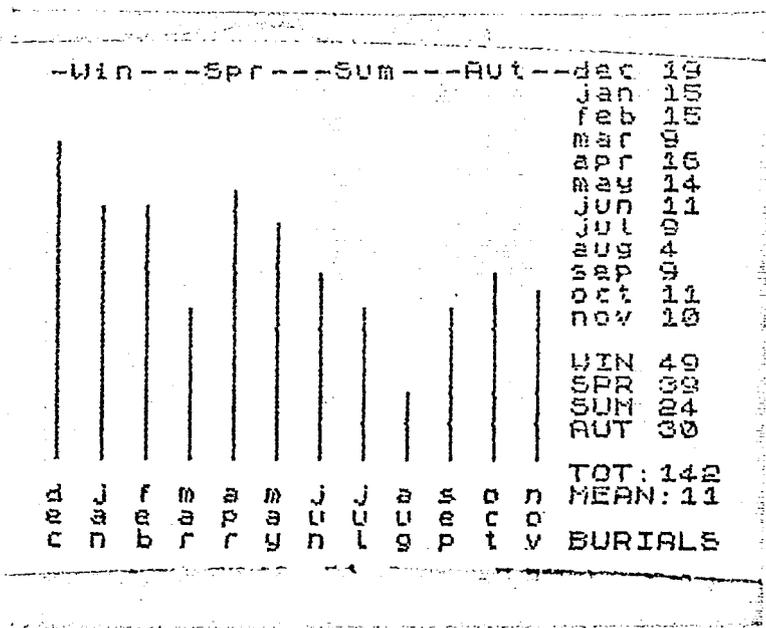


Fig. IV Seasonality in burials

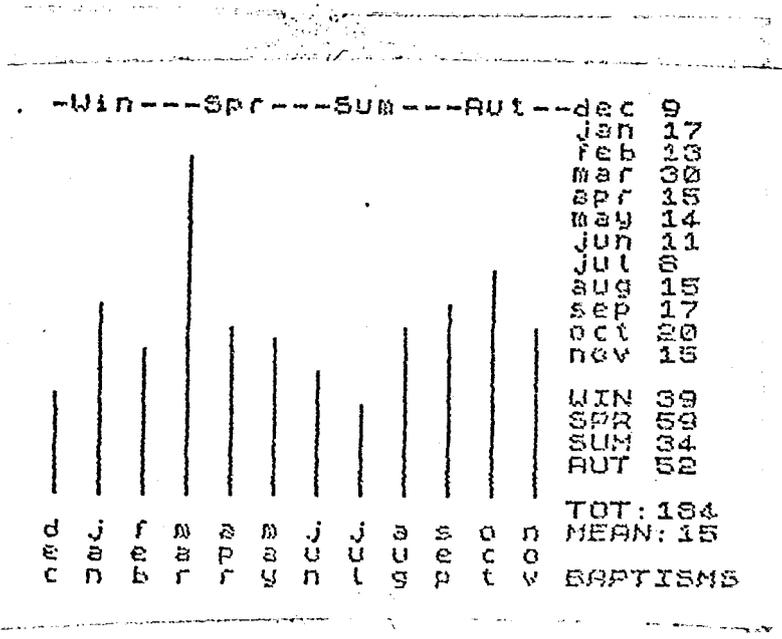


Fig. V Seasonality in baptisms

We can only make a very tentative estimate for the death rate in Highley during this period, because our knowledge of the total population is imperfect. If we assume it to have been between 100 and 125, we find a rate across the period of between 18.4 and 23 per 1,000. The findings of the Cambridge Group suggest a national norm of about 25 per 1,000 for the pre-1640 period.[4] The potential for growth in 16th century Highley, then, with only moderate levels of juvenile mortality, with what appears to be a somewhat lower than average death rate, and with a good chance of those beginning a family surviving to complete it, was considerable.

With the same caveat that applies to the death-rate, we can postulate a birth-rate for the same period of between 25.0 and 31.3 per 1,000. Wrigley and Schofield find that in pre-industrial England, the birth rate was "nearly always" between 28 and 40 per 1,000.[5] The birth rate in pre-enclosure Highley, then, was not particularly high in spite of the apparently favourable mortality situation.

An important factor governing marital fertility would be the age at marriage of couples in the community. Unfortunately, it is only occasionally possible to determine age at marriage in our reconstituted group of families, for several reasons. First, those marrying in the period 1550-80 were mostly born before the commencement of registration in the parish (or in neighbouring parishes, where in general it begins later than in Highley). Furthermore the reconstitutable families chiefly consist of Highley-born men and their extra-parochial brides - whose marriages took place for the most part elsewhere, in the bride's parish.

The average at first marriage for those women of the birth cohort 1581-90 who subsequently married at Highley is 25.0 years. Of marriages taking place throughout our period, 1550-1610, where numbers of marriages for which ages can be determined are less than 20 for women and ten for men, mean ages at first marriage were 28.8 years for women and 29.1 years for men. This does not support more than a tentative supposition that the average age at first marriage overall was mid- to late-twenties.

The mean duration of marriage in our reconstituted group was 35 years. This is a minimum figure, as in some cases (about 30%) the marriage date itself is not known and the duration of marriage has been reckoned from the baptism of the first child to the

death of the first partner to die - a year or two less than the probable actual duration of the marriage. Some marriages lasted over fifty years - one as long as 58 years.

This is a surprisingly long average duration. It supports the impression of relative longevity in Tudor Highley, and has several effects. Few marriages were broken by death during potentially fertile years, thus removing one possible check on marital fertility. In fact the mean fertility span for the period, i.e. the interval between first and last births in the family, was 12 years 10 months. Thus couples were likely, on average, to live together for 20-25 years after the birth of their last child: long enough, as we have seen from wills, to see all children to adulthood. This had an effect on inheritance practices and on migration: an older son could not reasonably expect to inherit a farm much before he was thirty, and many sons, presumably recognising this, left the village in early manhood; set themselves up elsewhere, via apprenticeships or with parental help; and never permanently returned. For example, of the 13 male children born in the decade 1581-90 to established Highley families who survived infancy, only three were buried at Highley. The others are never mentioned again in parish registers, although in four cases wills and other sources tell us that they survived, married and had children elsewhere. There are frequent suggestions in wills that older children had already received their share of the testator's estate, in some cases several years before parental death.

There is little evidence at this period of marriage specifically delayed until the death of a father brought inheritance of a farm. Twenty six marriages of Highley men were examined with this in mind. In ten cases, the information was not possible to determine. Of the remaining 16, only in three cases was the father already dead when the son married; and in none of these is there a direct causal relationship discernible - in one instance the father had been dead for 25 years. Thus in 13 cases the father was still alive at the son's marriage - and the mean number of years which elapsed between marriage and the father's death was 16.4 years. Thus it seems to have been acknowledged that awaiting paternal death, and thus inheritance, before marriage was not a practical proposition. A

man was likely to have adult children of his own before his father died.

The traditional view that inheritance expectations militated against early marriage in pre-industrial society would appear not to hold good for pre-enclosure Highley. This does not of course mean that marriage necessarily was early - such evidence as there is points to mid- to late-twenties. What it does suggest is some measure of dual tenancy, with father and married son (often a younger son) both supporting families from the same holding, and as we have seen suggested in Chap.1, sharing the same house.

When marriages were eventually broken by death, it was the wife who was the more likely to survive. Thirty five marriages of this period yielded suitable information, and in 20 of them it was the husband who died first (in spite of the dangers of childbirth). Re-marriage was, on the whole, not common. Only four marriages seem to have been second marriages for one or both parties - two between widower and widow and two between widower and spinster.

Although instances of re-marriage are few, it does appear that men living in Highley were more likely to marry a second time than were women living in Highley. The average time elapsed between bereavement and re-marriage for men was $2\frac{1}{2}$ years. None of the 20 widows of the sample re-married (though three left the village and may have married elsewhere - less than probable in the case of Ann Nichols who was over 70 when she left). The average length of widowhood, without re-marriage, was 13.2 years for women and 7.6 years for men.

Widows, then, can have felt no compunction to marry for a second time. Either their social and economic position remained quite satisfactory as widows; or men felt no pressure to marry widows for economic reasons. The careful provision for widows already noted in wills would appear to support the former view. Neither do the terms of wills show any disapproval of, or obstacles to, a widow's re-marriage. Thomas Palmer (died 1605) is explicit: "My will is that Isobel my wife shall hold and enjoy my house and living during the term of her natural life And if my said wife do happen to marry again then my will is that she shall pay to my three daughters

..... five pounds apiece towards their preferment."

That widows took a keen and knowledgeable interest in their holdings is shown by their own wills and by court rolls. They were able to take an active part in village affairs, and appear to have been more than nominal heads of household (a situation recognised by the very terms of tenure, which was for the lives of a man, his wife, and son - or occasionally daughter). This applies to the widows of cottagers as well as to those yeomen and husbandmen. It is interesting that when Ann Nichols referred to above sold her cottage in 1609, the court roll states that "Ann Nichols widow and her son John transferred their right and title whence falls to the lord one cupboard and one table being the best of her goods." Ann had been widowed for twelve years, and her son John was a married man of 49 - yet the goods are her goods. In the view of the court she was the head of the household, and responsible for selling the cottage without permission.

Yet women played no part in the public domain: they did not hold parish or manor office. This contrast between private power and public impotence is interesting. It is, of course, common in patriarchal societies for women to be allowed influence in the domestic sphere while being denied it elsewhere.

It was rare for a marriage to be broken early by death in childbirth: only one female death in the whole period can be linked to a baptism, which is a remarkably low figure. In our sample group of 35 marriages, only two appear to have been ended by the death of a partner during productive years; leaving two widowers, one with one child and one with none. (Both re-married, after intervals of four and three years respectively, and had children by their second wives)

Death, then, rarely acted as a brake on marital fertility in the pre-enclosure period. In fact the mean completed family size in this period was 5.7 children, or 5.2 if we include the two childless marriages. Given an average marriage duration of 35 years, this is not a high figure (though it is average for the Tudor period according to the findings of Wrigley and Schofield).

Late marriage may well have been a factor in limiting family size - though in some cases this cannot be the only explanation for a relatively short fertility span. One couple, for example, were

married for 55 years, yet produced children only during the first 14 years; another couple had children for only $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of a 40-year marriage. Conversely, in some cases fertility spans are so long as to indicate that the woman must have been very young when marriage took place: Alice Harris for instance gave birth to her last child 28 years after the first.

Fig.VI illustrates the mean birth intervals between children. The overall mean birth interval for completed families was

Children	Mean interval	Mean interval where these are the last children	No. of women in sample
1st-2nd	27.6	28.0	26
2nd-3rd	32.1	34.5	23
3rd-4th	30.4	30.5	21
4th-5th	34.6	39.0	17
5th-6th	29.6	36.0	13
6th-7th	25.7	28.0	9
7th-8th	32.6	37.6	8
8th-9th	31.8	34.3	5
9th-10th	33.5		2
10th-11th	24.0		2
11th-12th		39.0	2
	(months)	(months)	

Fig.VI

30.6 months (excluding the protogenesic interval), that between marriage and first child). The overall mean interval between the last two births in the families, however, was 35.6 months. This mean figure disguises two quite distinct patterns:- either the last child came at an interval very similar to, or even shorter than, preceding intervals; or there was a very marked increase in the interval between penultimate and last children. This suggests that in some families, a deliberate form of family limitation was in operation.

Fertility was, in general, concentrated into the early years of marriage; subsequently fertility was limited either involuntarily by medical factors, or deliberately. It is difficult to say what these methods might have been. One might expect a natural decrease in fertility (and in sexual activity) with age: yet those women who had seven or more children produced the seventh (when they were presumably well into their thirties) at a shorter interval than any. It looks rather as if some couples made a conscious effort to limit the size of their families, and that others did not.

Those who did not tended to come from the families with larger land holdings. If opportunities for wage-labour were indeed limited in this pre-enclosure society (partly limited, in fact, by the very size of families of larger farmers), the smallholder whose children were more likely to become a strain on limited resources than valuable contributors to family income had a greater incentive to limit their number if possible. The average number of children per family in Class III families (small tenants and cottagers) was below five, while in Class I families (freeholders and the wealthiest tenants) it was 8.5.

There is some evidence to suggest that breastfeeding was used to prolong post-natal amenorrhoea and thus act as a contraceptive measure. Cases were examined where one child in a family died in the first few months of life. The interval between the birth of the child who died and the next child was consistently lower than the mean birth interval - 19.9 months as against 30.6. This suggests that the premature ending of breastfeeding led to more rapid conception; and conversely that conception was usually delayed by the suckling of an infant. We cannot tell from the evidence, of course, whether lactation was deliberately prolonged in the knowledge that it could delay further conception, or whether weaning was governed solely by other factors. Such a commonplace phenomenon, however, can hardly have escaped the notice of interested parties.

Only one case of wet-nursing is recorded during the period: the burial is recorded in December 1599 of "Katherine daughter of Edward Bridgeman" (who is not mentioned elsewhere in any Highley records) "achild whom Bennett Dallow nursed." Bennett Dallow's own

child had been buried in March of that year, shortly after baptism. The practice may, of course, have been more widespread than surviving records indicate.

Illegitimate pregnancies and births may also have been more usual in the village than parish registers show. The registers for the entire period 1550-1610 record only two illegitimate children baptised (or just over 1% of the total). There are indications elsewhere, though, that illegitimate pregnancies, at any rate, were not quite that uncommon in the village, even if birth and consequently baptism took place elsewhere. The Act Books of the Bishop's Court mention occasional cases where Highley men were judged responsible for the pregnancy of women who, although described as "of Highley", have surnames never encountered elsewhere in the extensive documentation of the community. The assumption must be that these are servants, possibly in the household of the man himself. We shall return to the topic of illicit sexual activity later: here it is sufficient to point out that illegitimate births were few during the period - so few as to have no discernible effect on fertility and growth in Highley in the 16th century.

Because of the difficulties already noted in obtaining exact marriage dates in our reconstituted group of families, it is not possible to arrive at any very firm conclusions about pre-nuptial pregnancy. The protogenetic interval is determinable in 13 of the reconstituted families, and has a mean length of 13.7 months. Nearly half of the brides were pregnant at the time of their marriage (if we include two where the interval between marriage and baptism of the first child was a scant nine months). Adding the handful of other cases where this interval is known to our reconstitutable group, the interval is shortened to a mean of 12.1 months and the percentage of pregnant brides rises to 53%.

Interestingly, however, it was rare for this interval to be as low as three months. Even when the bride was apparently pregnant at marriage, an interval of eight months was more usual, suggesting the anticipation of an agreed marriage rather than the arrangement of a marriage to legitimise a known pregnancy. Laslett distinguishes between these two types of pre-nuptial pregnancy.[6] In the

second type, that more common in Highley at this date, he points out that intercourse "may have been in fact an accepted part of the marriage ceremony itself, a process which took several days of even weeks to complete, and in which what happened in church was the public celebration and confirmation."

Fig.V illustrates a seasonal analysis of births in Highley over the period 1550-1620. Baptism could of course be delayed longer than could burial: nevertheless, seasonal trends are discernible. Births reach their low point in June and July, indicating a lowest rate of conception in the autumn months. March has consistently more baptisms than any other month, for which no better explanation than the obvious one of long December nights and Christmas celebrations presents itself.

To sum up the demographic picture in pre-enclosure Highley, then: the population, after a problem decade 1551-60, was growing, with a surplus of births over deaths. This was aided by a relatively low rate of juvenile mortality - indeed as far as we can determine by a reasonably low rate of mortality altogether. Fertility was steady but not particularly high, due to (probably) late first marriage, and to intervals of two and a half years on average between successive births. Wealthier families tended to have more children than did poorer ones, but otherwise there is little difference between the demographic experience as it can be perceived of yeomen and cottagers in this period.

It is the comparative healthiness of the community as a whole which is perhaps the most striking feature of the period. It was unusual for a marriage to be broken by death in its fertile years; couples could reasonably expect to live to see all their children become adults; and most children, far from being orphaned at an early age, grew up with not only parents but also at least some grandparents still alive. The valid comparisons are with subsequent phases of pre-industrial development, and with the early years of industrialisation, however, not with modern conditions. Although no epidemics affected the village during this period, there is some evidence to suggest that the population lived sufficiently close to the margins

of subsistence that poor harvests and the rise in grain prices could have a noticeable effect on both mortality and fertility. Yet the underlying trend throughout the period was still one of growth. The effects of this growth were mitigated, as we have suggested, by emigration; and it is to the extent and nature of this migration that we must now turn.

- 1) G. D. Fletcher, 'Religious Census of Shropshire in 1676'; T.S.A.S., 2nd Ser. I (1889).
- 2) C. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century (Leicester, 1973) pp.44-47.
- 3) R. Schofield and E. A. Wrigley, 'Infant and child mortality in England in the late Tudor and early Stuart period', in C. Webster (ed.), Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, 1979).
- 4) E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, The Population History of England, 1541-1841 (Cambridge, 1982) pp.310-313.
- 5) P. Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations (Cambridge, 1977) pp.128-9.

Chapter Three - Social Relations

It would be wrong to regard pre-enclosure Highley as a closed community with little movement in or out. In fact, although as we shall see a nucleus of settled families continued to be represented throughout the period, there was a considerable degree of mobility amongst certain groups or categories of people. Short-term movements of servants both into and out of the village are almost impossible to quantify: we can say only that they were constant and considerable. Permanent emigration and immigration of both individuals and whole families is somewhat more historically visible, and shows interesting age- and class-specific variations.

Movement of whole families, i.e. husband, wife and their children, is easiest to identify, but least likely to occur. Those whom we might call the "settled" population, tenants of the manor with several years' residence in Highley, were unlikely to leave. Fig.I illustrates how only a small number of those surnames found towards the beginning of our period had vanished by its end. In most cases this can be shown to be the result of families dying out, or continuing to be represented by female members under married surnames. In only two cases do families appear to have sold their interest in land in Highley in order to move elsewhere. This in turn, under the prevalent manorial system, left little scope for families of this type to move in. We have seen how the immigration of George Peirson and his family to take over the demesne lands, even with the support of the lord of the manor, was resisted. Nicholas Bradley, the only other immigrant tenant farmer of the 16th century, was able to buy his lease from an elderly, and presumably childless, widow.

Fig.I also shows an increase in the numbers of immigrant families, who were to remain in Highley for generations, in the second and third decades of the 17th century, when the breakdown of the manorial system gave greater scope for this kind of immigration.

In addition to these settled tenant families, however, the records indicate a substratum of families who are represented by a single entry in the parish registers, and are rarely if ever mentioned in other documentation. In most cases the single entry is a

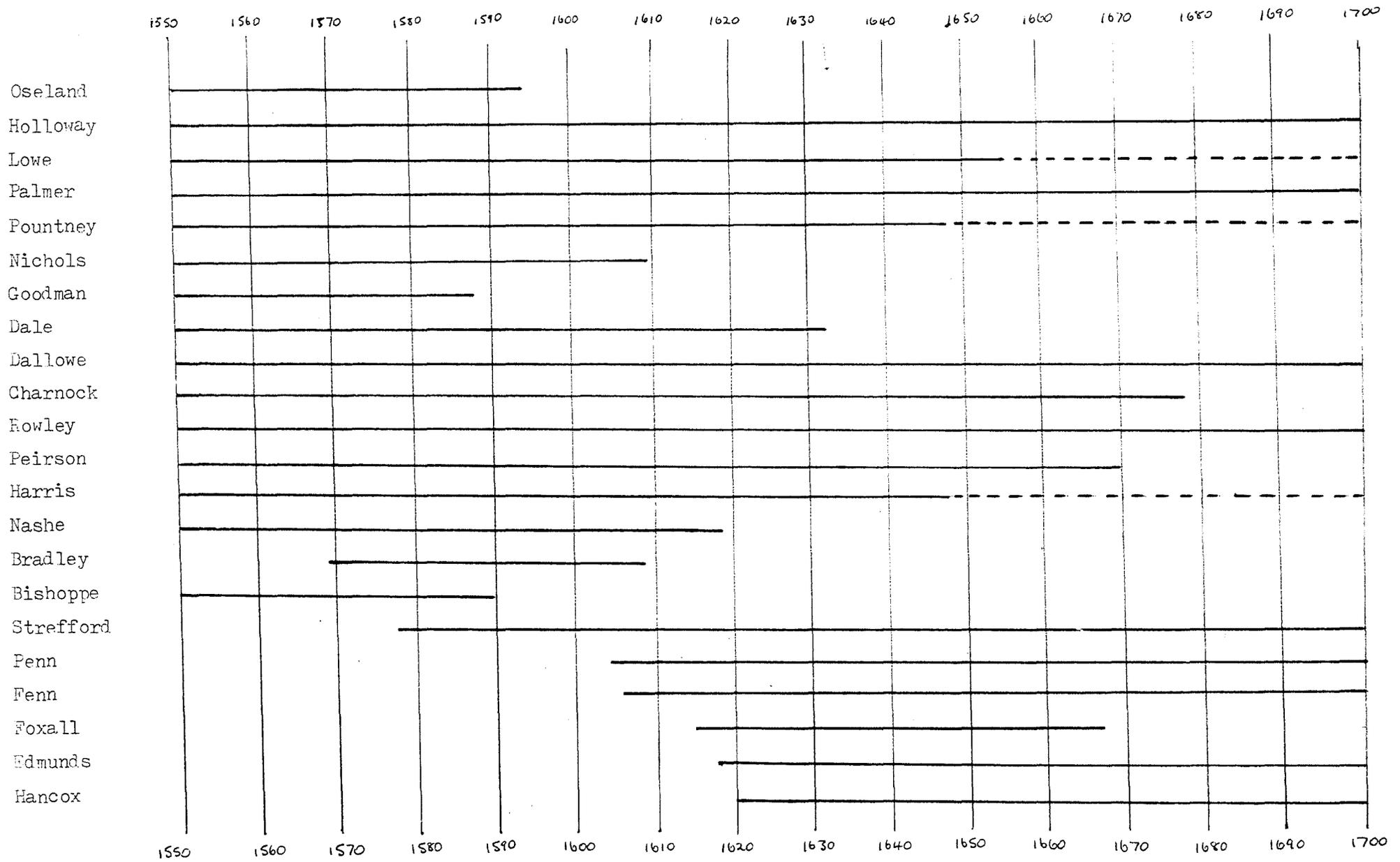


Fig. I

baptism, suggesting a period of residence of less than five years, and perhaps only of a couple of months. These families first appear in significant numbers in the 1570s, and form about one eighth of all baptisms during the period 1580-1620. Sometimes their stay was very short, and they did not qualify as residents at all - as in the baptism in 1591 of "Ann daughter of Richard Massie, a traveller". In other cases, though the stay was less transitory, and the man must have followed some occupation in Highley. It is hard to see what other than wage labourer on the land this could have been.

By the 1580s, then, thirty years before the break up of the common field system of agriculture, there are indications of a landless proletariat, of married men with children rather than living-in servants, engaged in a series of frequent short-distance moves around the south Shropshire countryside in search of work. In only the occasional instance can we trace the steps of these moves. Richard Sheyles married at Chelmarsh in 1572, and the couple's first child was baptised there in 1574. A move to another neighbouring parish may then have followed: by 1580 the couple were in Highley, where another child was baptised. Subsequently the family was living in Earnwood in the parish of Kinlet.[1]

Also occasionally, we learn that these 'single entry' families were recognised as poor by their contemporaries. Thomas Jennyns, whose son John was baptised at Highley in 1595, was bequeathed 12d by Thomas Palmer in 1598 as a "poor neighbour".

Figs. II and III go some way towards illustrating the mobility of families. Fig. II shows numbers of fathers appearing in the baptism register by the decade in which they first occur. Those who remained in Highley until their own deaths are shown to be usually fifty per cent or less of all fathers. However, Fig. III makes a distinction between those fathers who appear in only one entry, and those who baptised two or more children in the parish. By treating separately the 'one-entry' fathers, part of the highly mobile substratum and highly unlikely to remain in the village for the rest of their lives, we see how relatively stable were those who settled for long enough to baptise several children. Until the decade 1600-1609, it was unusual for a man in this category to leave the village before his death.

	New fathers	Buried Highley
1561-70	8	7
1571-80	10	5
1581-90	10	5
1591-1600	9	3
1601-10	14	7
1611-20	12	4

Fig.II

	one-entry fathers	Buried at Highley	Two + entries	Buried at Highley
1561-70	1	0	7	7
1571-80	5	0	5	7
1581-90	3	0	7	5
1591-1600	7	1	2	2
1601-10	3	0	11	7
1611-20	5	0	7	4
Total	24	1	39	30

Fig.III

Thus there would appear to be two distinct types of life experience in the pre-enclosure community. Those who could obtain some land in Highley, even just the four or five acres that went with a cottage, tended to remain there all their married lives. Those who could not would seem to have been engaged in a series of moves every three or four years, or perhaps less, from village to village.

Because landholding families at all levels were unlikely to leave, the opportunities for immigrating families to become settled were limited. Thus we find that most of the 'settled' fathers were themselves born in Highley. Fig. IV shows this pattern, and the way in which it was beginning to change in the second decade of the 17th century, at a time when tenancies were being sold and the common fields enclosed. It is, of course, not possible to carry out the same exercise for fathers before 1581 since baptisms are only available from 1551. However, the surnames of the 'settled' families in this earlier period show them to have been well established at the time of the 1543 Lay Subsidy, and the majority by the 1523/4 Subsidy.

Decade	No. of 'settled' new fathers	No. of fathers bap. at Highley
1581-90	7	5
1591-1600	2	2
1601-10	11	7
1611-20	8	2

Fig. IV

This continuity of residence of landholding families would suggest that there was little emigration from Highley during this period. In fact, as we have seen, emigration was greater on balance than immigration: although no absolute population figures are available for this period, it is clear that Highley grew at a much slower

rate than its demographic situation would allow. Most of this emigration was not, then, undertaken by families, but by individuals.

A consistently large proportion of those baptised in Highley are not mentioned again in any form of parish registration, manorial record etc. (See Fig.V). Jones has argued that many such cases must represent unrecorded infant and child burials:[2] though it must be stressed that we are here of course dealing only with baptised children. Furthermore, where it is possible to check on the survival of baptised children (for instance in the wills of their parents made in most cases many years later) there is very little evidence to refute the view that those children for whom no burial is recorded did indeed survive. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind the possibility that infant mortality rates may have been a little higher, and consequently emigration rates a little lower, than the figures suggest.

Birth cohort	Total surviving	No. not recorded after bap- t.	No. last recorded as adult	No. buried at Highley	% buried at Highley
1551-60	12	10	2	0	0
1561-70	23	11	4	8	34.8%
1571-80	26	15	3	8	30.7.
1581-90	34	21	7	6	17.6%
1591-1600	25	17	3	5	20.0%

Fig.V

Fig.V shows, by birth cohort, numbers of children apparently surviving to the age of 16. A distinction is made between those for whom baptism is the only record, or from a mention in some other source (e.g. a court roll, where Highley residence is unambiguous). The most striking thing about these figures is the very high rate of emigration by young people that they demonstrate. Large

numbers of young people left Highley before they reached marriageable age. Some, like the two young men at the start of our period who went as apprentices to Bristol, may have gone some considerable distance to take up a career.¹ In other cases it was likely that the moves were over shorter distances to spend a few years as farm servants in neighbouring parishes. In either case, these young people married and settled in their new homes, and did not return (at least not permanently) to the place of their birth.

Unfortunately, it is rarely known just where these young people had settled. Testators frequently make plain in their wills that they have adult children living elsewhere, but rarely mention the place by name. One example will suffice. The children of Richard Palmer, one of the most prosperous copyhold tenants of the manor, were born in the 1570s and 1580s. When Richard himself made his will in 1632, he gave some indications of the subsequent career of these children, of whom we should otherwise know little beyond their baptism. One son had married, not at Highley, but was living there with his wife and children. He was the only child to remain in Highley. Two other sons had married and settled elsewhere - we are not told where - and had several children of their own. One daughter had married a man from Alveley, across the Severn, although this marriage is not recorded at Highley, and was living there. Another daughter had married at Highley, and had gone to live in Bewdley, ten miles away, where she had remained with her children in spite of the death of her husband. One son is not mentioned in the will, and must be presumed to have died somewhere other than Highley, though he can be traced there at the age of 22. Finally, another daughter is not mentioned, and had probably died some time after 1598,

¹Hey shows that the woodland parishes of north Shropshire experienced net immigration at this period, as land was cleared and brought into cultivation. [Hey, Myddle]. It is probable that many immigrants came from the more extensively-farmed south-east of the county.

when she is known to have been alive, aged 17. She is not recorded as buried at Highley.

Thus, of the seven children of Richard Palmer, only one settled in Highley and was in turn buried there. The other six all survived childhood, and left the village - four of them certainly to settle and raise children elsewhere. Palmer's family is by no means untypical: rather the number of children settling elsewhere and only remaining in the village would appear to be the norm.

The majority of those leaving later, after marriage, were as one would expect, women. The fact of their having married at Highley itself does not of course preclude their having also spent some time outside the village. Marriage was in fact a prime cause of mobility in the community. Although as we shall see some marriages did take place between couples both born in Highley, exogamous marriage was the rule. Since couples tended to settle in the man's home parish rather than the wife's, women were even less likely than men to end their lives in their native parish. In a sample of 23 reconstituted families, a total of 66 boys survived infancy, of whom 29 were buried in their birthplace. Of the 58 surviving girls, only eight were actually buried at Highley.

Similarly, very few mothers who appear in the baptism register over the period 1581-1620 had themselves been baptised at Highley (see Fig.VI). This "turnover" of women at marriage constituted a major source of migration.

Decade	New mothers	No. bap. at Highley
1581-90	10	3
1591-1600	9	1
1601-10	15	2
1611-20	12	1

Fig.VI

The geographical limits of the marriage market at this date are only partially recoverable. Recording of the parish of origin in marriages in the parish register is incomplete and apparently haphazard. In only eight marriages is a specific parish, other than Highley, mentioned: although scrutiny of the surnames involved reveals a much larger number of marriage partners whose names are not encountered elsewhere in any Highley records.

There are 50 marriages recorded in the period 1551-1620. In 12 of these, both partners were either baptised at Highley or came from known resident families. In a further 12, neither partner appears to be local. In the remaining 26, one partner lived in Highley. Of these 26 marriages, 23 were of a woman from Highley, marrying exogamously. In only two cases were subsequent children of the marriage baptised at Highley, reinforcing the conclusion that settlement in the husband's parish was the norm.

Of the eight instances of a specific home parish of a marriage partner, two are of the neighbouring parish of Kinlet. A further three - Rock, Belbroughton and Ribbesford - are 10 -15 miles away, in Worcestershire. The remaining three, Ludlow, Clee Downton and Onibury, are in west Shropshire, at a distance of 15 - 20 miles. Thus we can at least say that the choice of marriage partner was not restricted to a limited circle of neighbouring parishes: though further evidence, particularly from wills, shows that several Highley women had indeed married partners from, and settled in, nearby villages. Our sample is too small to reveal any class-bias in the distance over which marriages could be made.

A majority of Highley men clearly married women from elsewhere. It is impossible to arrive at any clear idea of the area from which these wives were drawn. In this early period, vicars of other south Shropshire parishes (even where registers survive from this date) were as unreliable as vicars of Highley about recording the parish of origin of bridegrooms. An attempt was made to trace "missing" marriages of men who married exogamously using the International genealogical Index compiled by the Church of the Latter Day Saints, which lists alphabetically by county marriages and baptisms

from the large number of parish registers microfilmed by the church. However, coverage is far from complete, and Highley's proximity to the county boundaries of Staffordshire, Worcestershire and even Herefordshire complicates the search. Surprisingly few of the "missing" marriages were located beyond doubt in the surrounding area - prompting the tentative suggestion that marriages could be contracted over quite considerable distances.

Although the geographical extent of the marriage market remains unclear, it is apparent that marriage played a major part in the mobility of the population of Highley, which was to a certain extent in a state of constant change, of personnel if not of numbers, with the emigration of Highley-born women at marriage, and their replacement by brides from elsewhere.

The personal ties built up by migration between inhabitants of Highley and other communities were not the only points of contact. Lists of debtors and creditors appended to the majority of wills of this period frequently name the home village or town of the individuals listed. These places represent a minimum range of "business" contacts, for as with the marriage records, we find several individuals mentioned with no indication of place even though they are not Highley residents. Fig.VII shows these places and their relative distances from Highley. The majority are located in the neighbouring countryside; villages within a ten-mile radius like Alveley, Billingsley, Chorley and so on. The two links with Frankley arise out of transactions specified to be with the Littleton family. Those places at a greater distance from Highley (like Worcester and Tewkesbury, each mentioned twice), are also on the River Severn, and may represent some degree of involvement in river traffic. Dyer in his study of 16th century Worcester points out that most of Worcester's firewood came down the Severn from the Wyre Forest area, of which Highley marked the northern extent.[3] At least one Highley man was involved in this type of transaction, for in his will of 1598 Thomas Palmer records a debt of 46/- for "carrying wood out of Higleys wood to Severn". Mentions of creditors in the riverside ports of Bewdley and Tewkesbury are found, not unexpectedly, in the will of Thomas Low,

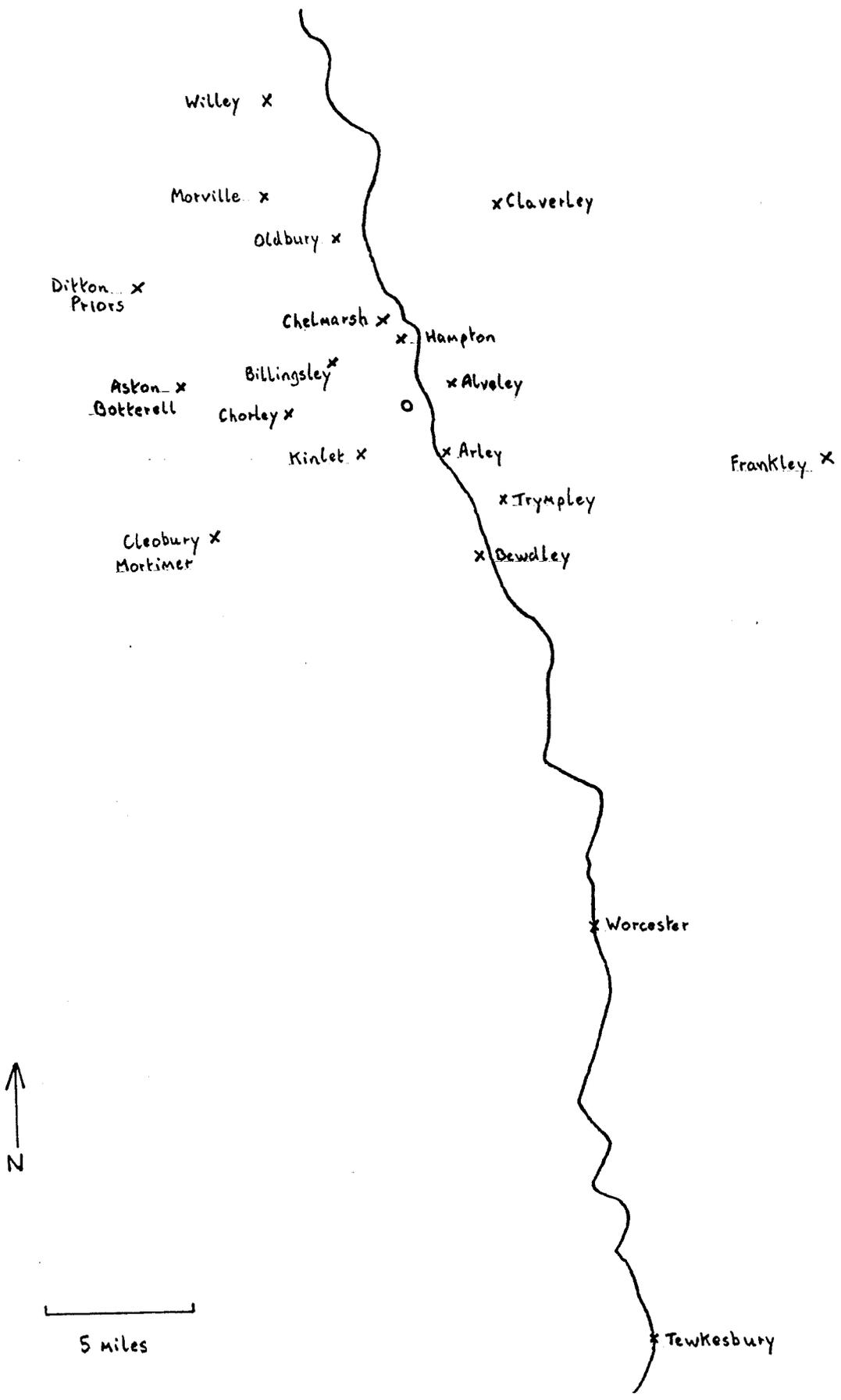


Fig. VII

waterman.

The nature and significance of these financial transactions concerns us elsewhere: here it is the delineation of the social area of the community that is of interest. Financial links appear to have been quite common between Highley and surrounding rural areas of south Shropshire and north Worcs (most of the villages on the sketch map are mentioned several times each), and not uncommon with towns downriver on the Severn. There is no evidence of links outside the west midlands. However, there are no less than 56 names recorded in these lists of debts which do not appear anywhere else in existing Highley records. In a handful of cases (no more than 10% of the total), the name is one which appears in the neighbouring parishes of Chelmarsh, Kinlet or Arley at the appropriate date. In the remainder, the names are completely unknown, and their owners could have lived anywhere. It seems unlikely, however, that the contacts represented here would have varied completely from the pattern established by those cases where places are noted. It is more probable that, were they known, these places would indicate yet more contacts with the towns of the Severn and the villages of its rural hinterland.

Some further evidence of links with a wider community than the village itself may be gleaned from the names of witnesses to the wills of Highley testators. Here, however, inhabitants showed a marked preference for local residents, not only in cases of urgency when availability was the obvious criterion. Of 64 named witnesses of the period, 43 were known inhabitants of Highley and only 21 are "outside" names - and some of the latter may indeed have been temporary residents like farm servants. In only two cases are the parishes of witnesses recorded: they were Cleobury Mortimer nine miles away, and Elmley (Elmley Castle ? near Evesham, about 35 miles).

These specific places mentioned in the extant source material for the pre-enclosure period show that Highley inhabitants could have quite extensive contacts over the surrounding countryside. Although the evidence does not support such a detailed analysis in terms of named places as that for Terling, Wrightson and Levine's

conclusion that "The social area of (Terling)villagers was largely contained within the distance of ten miles and yet, not infrequently, it could be very much larger" holds equally true for Highley.[4]

Even where it is not possible for us to recover data about specific places, the evidence exists to support inferential conclusions about the frequency, if not the range, of geographical mobility and contact. It is sufficient to show that Highley in the 16th and early 17th century was by no means a closed society. Most of its inhabitants had some experience of life elsewhere - landholding men as servants in nearby villages; landless men as part of a round of moves to obtain a livelihood; most women as a necessary corollary of marriage.

At most stages of their lives, individuals had family contacts with other places. It was unusual for both marriage partners to have been born in Highley: the majority of wives had been brought up elsewhere, and presumably still had relatives in their home parishes. Most men had siblings elsewhere, especially married sisters. In later life, couples were likely to have adult children who had left Highley.

Mobility was higher in some groups than in others. Young people, because of demographic pressure on resources and a lack of opportunity presented by systems of land tenure, were the most mobile: to leave was more common than to stay. Landholding families formed a settled core of the community. Families in classes I, II and III were all unlikely to move as a family: cottager and prosperous yeoman were alike in this respect - it was the possession of land itself, not its quantity, that was the deciding factor. Elsewhere (for instance in Myddle in north Shropshire), this was not the case, with lesser farmers more stable than greater. In Highley as elsewhere, though, the landless were highly mobile. Labourers moved frequently, even after marriage, seldom staying long in the village. There was in addition a constant turnover of younger, living-in servants, probably hired on a yearly basis.[5]

There is evidence to suggest an increasing number of migrant families throughout this period: piecemeal enclosure was

beginning in the area, which, coupled with inflation, threw more workers onto the labour market. Fig.I has illustrated the arrival in the early 17th century of some families who would become 'settled' and remain throughout the century: economic circumstances in the 16th century had made this more difficult. The actual number of resident families was not, initially, greatly increased by these new arrivals, because of the dwindling number of branches of older families. What we do find by the end of the pre-enclosure period is a greater range of surnames, and consequently somewhat less involved kinship networks within the community.

The high levels of mobility in 16th century Highley would appear at first sight to be incompatible with a society of dense kinship networks. Terling, for example, exhibited high mobility and loose kinship links; while Myddle did have more complex interrelationships but lower migration levels.[6]

In pre-enclosure Highley, both appear side by side. We have seen that a settled core of families remained in spite of the considerable degree of migration in the community as a whole. Although many adolescents apparently left the village, a number consistently remained (or returned) to marry and settle. In spite of the frequency of exogamous marriage, a sufficient number of endogamous marriages (24% during our period, as shown above) also took place to assist in the build-up of complex kinship networks.

The system of holding land for three lives led to continuity of family if not of individual, throughout the period. It was not necessary to own land in order to pass it on to one's children: unlike the short leases of the 17th and 18th centuries, tenancies in the pre-enclosure period could be inherited, and a son who was one of the named 'lives' grew up in the knowledge that his future livelihood was virtually assured.

This continuity had been a feature of the community in the first half of the sixteenth century, too. Indeed, as far as it is possible to judge from the less informative records of the eighty

or so years preceding the start of our period, mobility levels may well have been lower than in the second half of the 16th century. The 1524 Lay Subsidy return lists nine men but only five surnames: there are two Lowes, two Palmers and three Pountneys. All the surnames were still represented in Highley in 1600. The Subsidy of 1543 names more individuals (in fact, 27), but we still find the same duplication of surname - six Lowes, four Pountneys, three Holloways, and so on. Thus the involved kinship networks which we find at the beginning of our period had been evolved and built up over two or three generations, if not more.

Marriages which took place within the period 1550-1620 between these already interrelated families produced networks so dense as to defy diagrammatic representation. One illustration of the result is that, of the 17 tenants of the manor named in the rental of 1601, only four were not related to any of the others. These include two men who had arrived in the village, with their families, during our period. The remaining were linked by ties of affinity and consanguinity¹ several times over. Indeed, as an example, Thomas Pountney was related, with varying degrees of remoteness, to all the other twelve.

These tenants of the manor were, however, more likely to be interrelated than the remainder of the population of the village. In the absence of a listing of inhabitants of Highley anywhere near this date, an attempt was made to synthesise information from family reconstitutions, wills, manorial records and so on to produce a list of known householders for the year 1600. Almost certainly, this fails to include some of the peripatetic labouring families, who were less likely than others to be part of the kinship networks of the community. On the other hand, it is probable that some relationships existed that are undetected. The list produces 29 householders, of whom 21 were related to at least one other householder. Significantly, of the

¹Basically of blood and by marriage, defined in R.Fox, Kinship & Marriage (Harmondsworth, 1967).

eight who were not related, four were landless labourers or servants.

The fact that these relationships existed, of course, does not tell us how far they were recognised: indeed the modern researcher may well be aware of distant relationships that were only vaguely - if at all - known to those involved. Nevertheless, the majority of landholding families in the community formed dense clusters of relationships, from which the only class to be regularly excluded was the landless labourer.

The degree of recognition of kin is difficult to assess from the available sources. It has become almost a truism of historical sociology that kin recognition in pre-industrial England was both narrow and genealogically shallow.[7] However, the prevailing economic and social structure of the community (as well as varying personal experience) would appear capable of influencing the range of kin recognised. In pre-enclosure Highley, with its tight kinship networks among landholding families, one would expect at least a recognition of some kin beyond the primary links of the nuclear family. Certainly kin recognition would appear to be wider during this period than it was subsequently to be. This is not of course to deny the overwhelming importance of the nuclear family: all testators, for instance, thought first of their spouses and children, where any existed, and made careful provision for them before considering any less closely related kin.

That a network wider than that of the nuclear family was recognised, and could be important, is shown in the actual succession of holdings on the manor. Where there was no son or daughter to take over on the death of a tenant, a more distant relative was admitted instead. In the case of the childless Thomas and Ann Palmer, it was the wife's brother who took over: the unmarried Richard Palmer's holding went to his nephew.

Fig.VIII shows the range of non-nuclear relationships acknowledged in wills: the figures represent the number of wills in which the relationships occur - some wills mention several cousins, nephews, etc. It can be seen that quite distant relations received bequests, including cousins and their children, great-nephews, and so on. Obligation (or affection) towards this wider family was more

Number of wills

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
sister-in-law		stepson	sister	son-in-law	brother-	nephew	brother		godchild
father-in-law		great-	2nd cousin		in-law				
stepdaughter		nephew			niece				
illegit. son					cousin				
spouse's									
niece									
spouse's									
nephew									
'kinsman'									
step-grandson									

06

Fig.VIII Relationships other than spouse and child in wills, 1544-1620.

often felt by childless testators, as one might expect; but this was by no means always the case. The strength of ties of affinity is shown by the number of testators mentioning relatives by marriage (brothers-in-law, for instance, are named as beneficiaries in five wills).

Clearly, although the nuclear family was of prime importance to testators, they also thought of themselves as part of a wider network of kinship, at least when they came to make their wills. There are some indications that it was not only in wills that this extended family was recognised: there are for example several mentions of money or goods which have at some time in the past been lent to brothers-in-law, nephews, etc. A few examples will suffice:-
George Harris 1607 "I lent 40/- in gold to my brother-in-law Thomas Pountney which is to be repaid to my sister Judith".
Ann Palmer 1603 "I give to Richard Holloway my brother's son 8/4d being parcel of the sum of £5 13s 4d which he oweth me for two kine."
John Pountney 1585 "My brother-in-law Thomas Mellichop oweth me 20/-"

There was quite clearly considerable contact between extended family members, even when (as in the case of Thomas Mellichop above) these relatives lived outside Highley. For the most part, however, those secondary kin recognised lived in Highley itself. Links were certainly maintained with adult children living elsewhere, but contact with less close relatives was much more likely to be confined to those living near at hand. Furthermore, although wills do display some awareness of the extended family, we must not lose sight of the predominance of the nuclear family. Of the 23 wills analysed in Fig. I, 13 mentioned spouses and 17 mentioned children.

The kind of mutual support (lending money, supplying stock etc.) which apparently could be found among members of the extended family, was also a characteristic of social relations with neighbours within the community. Indeed, given the degree of inter-relationship in pre-enclosure Highley, neighbours frequently were kin. The two kinds of obligation shade into one another. Did John Pountney (will 1585 perceive a real difference between the debts owed to him by his brother-in-law Thomas Potter, who "oweth me 6/8d, and ten stryke of barley, a stryke of oats, three hopes of wheat and a stone of tallow" and those of (unrelated) Harry Osborne who "oweth me £4 and hath two stone of wooll of mine in his keeping."?

Close contact with neighbours in pre-enclosure Highley was unavoidable. The agricultural organisation itself called for a certain co-operation between neighbours: open field farming was only possible with a degree of common effort, or at the least some synchronisation of activities. The small size of the population meant that the same men were constantly serving together on manorial court juries etc; and also presumably that everyone in the community was well known to everyone else. The lack of organised poor relief in the 16th century made private charity all the more necessary. Wills show an extensive network of loans between neighbours. However, we must not lose sight of the other side of the coin - the long-running disputes over hedges and the fights between neighbours regularly recorded in court rolls show that relations between neighbours were not always characterised by mutual help and concern.

Richard Palmer in his will of 1597 left 2/- to his poorer neighbour Richard Dallowe. In 1572, the two men had fought to the point of drawing blood with a sickle. This illustrates neatly the overall picture of neighbourly relations in the pre-enclosure community.

We have discussed the lists of debtors and creditors attached to wills as evidence of the financial circumstances of testators and of the geographical range of their contacts. It remains here to point out that these same lists also show the extent to which neighbours participated in a complicated round of lending and borrowing from each other. Our knowledge of this round is of necessity partial: debts listed represent the situation "frozen" at one particular time - the debts a man had or owed at the time he made his will may or may not have been typical of the rest of his life. Additionally, will-makers form only a sample, and an untypical one at that, of the total population.

Nevertheless, a situation is revealed in which the lending and borrowing of money between neighbours was widespread. The sums involved, at least until the turn of the century, were generally small. Only two debts of more than 40/- between non-kin neighbours are recorded before 1600 (though larger sums were sometimes involved in transactions with people from elsewhere). A majority of 'neighbourly' debts are of the order of 5 - 10 shillings.

Many inhabitants appear on lists of both debtors and creditors. There is no very clear distinction between a 'lending group' and a 'borrowing group': although those owed money tend by and large to come from the yeomen and husbandmen classes, a cottager like William Charnocke also appears on the list. The list of those owing money is longer, and does include more servants and cottagers: but it also contains the names of most of the Class I freeholders and yeomen of the village. The extent of this system of debt is indicated by the fact that 70% of wills of this period detail debts, and that all these include some debts between neighbours.

A high level of lending and borrowing within the community would seem not to have been unusual in pre-industrial England. Margaret Spufford finds evidence of it in the Cambridgeshire fenland villages of the 16th and 17th centuries, and V. H. T. Skipp in the parishes of the Forest of Arden.[8] Of 43 inventories examined by Skipp for the period 1570-1609, 30.2% specify debts due and 9.3% debts owing by the testator. Unfortunately, Skipp does not differentiate between infra- and extra-community debts; or those involving kin and non-kin. Fig. IX sets the figures for Highley alongside those for the Forest of Arden parishes, and shows how debt and credit relationships were even more frequent in the former's case. Fig. X does differentiate between types of transaction. In all, 187 separate transactions are recorded in Highley wills omitting four illegible ones in a damaged will of 1558. Of these only 21, or a little over 11% were with kin of a specified relationship, or a relationship known to be relatively close (this distinction is necessary since, as we have seen, most villagers could claim some form of distant relationship). A further 30% were with non-kin living in Highley, while the majority were with non-kin living elsewhere. The latter figure, while interesting, is somewhat distorted by the long lists of non-Highley debts in the wills of two individuals.

Although some of the debts owed between neighbours reflect what seem to be relations of patronage (like the debts of 24/- and 40/- respectively owed to the vicar by Thurstan Dale "my servant" and Homfrey Dale "myolde servant"), the majority were financial arrangements between equals, presumably for mutual convenience. There is rarely any mention of bonds or any similar official record of these

debts, and no mention of interest. Not only was money lending between neighbours very common; it was also highly informal.

	No. with debts due	No. with debts owing	Total with debts	Total wills/inventories
Forest of Arden 1570-1609	30.2%	9.3%	?	43
Highley 1550-1620	56.5%	43.5%	69.6%	23

Fig.IX

	Kin	Non-kin Highley residents	Non-Highley non-kin	Total
Number of transactions	21	56	110	187
%	11.2%	30%	58.8%	100%

Fig.X Debt transactions, Highley 1550-1620

Sometimes, as a gesture of goodwill, part of a debt could be written off in a will - thus Anne Palmer in 1603: "I give to Anne Richard Dallowes daughter a lambe, and also I do forgeve to the said Richard Dallowe VIIIs which he oweth me."

The more prosperous inhabitants of Highley show^d a sense of obligation towards the poor of the community. Private charity, as indicated by charitable bequests in wills, could take personal or impersonal forms. Sometimes the bequest took the form of a sum of money "to the poor of the parish of Higley", which was presumably administered by the clergy and churchwardens. The most substantial

of this type of bequest was that of Richard Lowe, who is later recorded as having left £10 to the poor of the parish by his will of 1579. This will no longer exists. Instructions for the administration of such bequests could be detailed and precise. The burial of George Harris in 1609 is recorded with the following addendum:

"The said George Harris at the tyme of his deceasse gave to the said Parish of Higley the summe of twenty six shillings and eight pence to continewe in stocke to the use of the same parish, to be sett fourth yearlie by the churchwardens for the tyme beinge, that the encrease thereof might be employed to the best use of the parish at the discreation and by the consent of the best sort of the said parish yerely for ever."

Indeed, the capital from the bequests of Lowe and Harris (and others) of this period was retained (and the interest presumably distributed as we know it was later) until the building of a poor-house in the mid-18th century.

Other testators preferred to make specific bequests to individuals. Where it was made clear that beneficiaries were "my poor neighbour" or "my old servant" the charitable nature of the bequest is obvious. In other cases, we must presume charitable intent where the recipient is not a relative and is known to have been considerably less well-off than the testator. The latter, however, are only a small minority of cases.

The majority of charitable bequests come after 1580, and are basically of two kinds: those to servants and ex-servants, who stood in some kind of personal relationship to the testator; and those to others whose only claim would seem to be that they lived in the same village, and were poor. The latter exhibit a wider sense of social obligation.

The same names crop up several times as "poor neighbours" (the phrase used by Thomas Palmer in his will of 1598), thus giving us, as we have seen, our best guide to those perceived as needy within the community. They usually received one or two shillings each, and sometimes items of clothing or bedlinen.

Those leaving money to the poor of the parish, whether severally or collectively, were all from Classes I and II, not unexpectedly. They also tended to be those with few dependants to provide for - the group who left money specifically and unambiguously to the poor is made up of four unmarried men, one childless man and one childless widow. The sense of obligation towards the immediate family outweighed that towards the wider community, although there is further evidence of a sense of belonging both to parish and diocese in the numbers of bequests to the church of Highley and the cathedral of Hereford.

However, not all relations between neighbours were of a supportive or philanthropic nature. Our knowledge of crime and punishment in Highley during the 16th and 17th centuries is severely curtailed by the loss of early Quarter Sessions records for Shropshire in a fire at the Shire Hall in 1880. No Quarter Sessions papers at all survive from before 1638; and even then coverage is patchy until well into the 18th century.

The county courts, however, were only part of an involved system of judiciary affecting the pre-enclosure society. Ecclesiastical courts dealt with such matters as church attendance, adultery and bastardy. In addition, Highley was subject to two manor courts: that of the manor of Highley itself; and the Court Baron of the borough of Cleobury Mortimer and its liberties, which included Highley and several of its neighbours.

Records of the former court, held bi-annually, survive from 1570-1617, in a series which is incomplete but nevertheless good.[9] Rolls of the latter court exist from 1600-1626, but with more gaps. [10] These courts deal with disputes over land, boundaries and stock; with brewing offences, fights between neighbours etc.

Highley's court rolls show the kind of tensions which existed between neighbours in the pre-enclosure period. The most frequently recorded disputes are over land, and in particular the position of hedges. In virtually every roll of the 16th century (for which 25 survive), orders are made for individuals to move a hedge onto its "right course", and for jurors to investigate the boundaries between certain tenants. Another common offence was the taking of

firewood from the woods and hedges of neighbours.

Frequently, disputes between neighbours flared into violence - there are numerous cases of "affray" recorded. These seem not to have been regarded as very serious misdemeanours, meriting a lower fine than chopping an neighbour's hedge, for instance, although one imagines that when Richard Dallowe and Richard Palmer came to blows with a sickle (1572), or when Thomas Rowley assaulted Richard Goodman with a pitchfork - "striking him on the head and drawing blood" - the consequences could have been quite serious. With one exception, these fights were always between two men only, and seem to have been sudden and unpremeditated. Where weapons are mentioned, they are always such agricultural implements as might be expected to be readily at hand.

The one exception in surviving records is what appears to have been a full-scale fight which broke out between two groups during a village celebration in 1606. The Cleobury Mortimer Court was ordered to investigate "qui pugnavit apud Higley apud le Wake". They found that two groups, of five and six men, had fought, and practically everyone had drawn blood on everyone else. The groups seem to have formed partially along family lines, with two Pountney brothers heavily involved on one side, and Richard Palmer and two of his sons on the other. There is nothing to suggest, however, that this fight was part of a family feud. At all levels of village society men were quick to resort to blows over day-to-day disputes, but there is no sign of long-standing animosity.

The Act Books of the Bishop's Court at Hereford give us some additional insight into social relations and mores in pre-enclosure Highley. After decisions about probate, the most frequent cases brought to court involving Highley inhabitants were sexual transgressions. These were either illegitimate pregnancies, or allegations of extra- or pre-marital sexual relations.

As we have noted from the parish registers, there were few illegitimate births in Highley during this period, compared with the 18th and 19th centuries. However, some cases are recorded in the Bishop's Court which did not result in baptisms of illegitimate children at Highley. This is probably because the mothers were only temporarily resident in Highley, and went home for their confinements - almost

certainly the case where the mothers are described as servants. Of the five illegitimate pregnancies reported to the court in this period, two were of servants, and two others of women whose surnames are not found elsewhere in Highley and who were probably also servants. The cases are worth treating individually for the light they throw on sexual activity in the parish at this date.

One man, John Pountney of the Woodend, was judged responsible for two pregnancies in 1570 - one of Anne Heycocke and the other of Joyce (no surname), his servant. Neither baptism is recorded at Highley, though presumably one of the children is the "base son" for whom Pountney made provision in his will of 1585. In 1570, Pountney was already married, and his wife had given birth to a son in the previous year.

Pountney's near neighbour, the freeholder Oliver Harris was probably not married in 1566 when he came before the courts for "impregnating" Anne Lewys, who may well also have been a servant. The baptism of their son Humphrey is registered, in November 1566, eighteen months before the baptism of another Humphrey, first of the large family of Oliver and Alice Harris. Humphrey Lewis later appears in the parish registers of Chelmarsh. Harris had not married Humphrey's mother, although presumably free to do so.

The two cases in 1600 are less informative. The father is not mentioned in the case of Mary Peerson or Margaret (no surname) ex-servant of William Pountney. Mary Peerson is the exception in this list, as she was the 24 year old daughter of George Peirson, who was already styling himself 'gentleman'. In neither case is there an associated baptism in the parish registers.

The tiny percentage of illegitimate births registered in Highley in this period (1.07%) is strikingly paralleled in the figures for nearby (but larger) Cleobury Mortimer - 1.1% of baptisms in the register before 1640.[11] It would be interesting to discover the incidence of bastardy cases involving Cleobury Mortimer in the diocesan courts if, as in Highley, more cases are recorded than have corresponding baptisms. However, if as was apparently the case illegitimate children were frequently conceived in one place and baptised in another, a study of a larger area of south-east Shropshire would

be necessary before any conclusions about the under-registration of such baptisms could be reached.

Apparently, the circumstance afforded by the presence of living-in female servants, away from their families, provided an opportunity for sexual activity, whether between master and servant or fellow servants who intended to marry but were prevented from doing so. In the majority of cases reported in Highley, the man was already married, and so this cannot have been the intention. Thomas Lowe, for instance, was found guilty of adultery with his servant Matilda Harryes in 1566; Joan Malpas, who was charged together with (married) John Peirson in 1600, was almost certainly his servant too.

These cases seem to reflect short-term relationships. The case of Anne Nashe and John Potter, however, was different. They were charged with immorality at several courts 1596-1600. In their final appearance, Anne's name is given as Anne Nashe alias Potter - although John Potter was certainly married in 1594, and there is no sign of his wife having died in the interim. Indeed, she is probably the Joan Potter whā, with "Eleanor her daughter" was mentioned in a will of 1603. It looks rather as if John Potter (a day labourer) had abandoned one woman in favour of another - and that this became accepted in the community, for although no subsequent marriage is recorded, John Potter and "Anne his wife" were both buried in 1630.

Cases of pre-marital pregnancy where the couple married before the child's birth did not often come to court. We have seen how over half of brides were commonly pregnant at the time of their marriage, which argues a degree of sexual freedom in couples where marriage was already in view. It also argues that personal attraction was at least one factor in the choice of a marriage partner at most levels of village society, in contrast to Stone's findings about the frequency of "loveless arranged marriages" among the gentry.[12]

Those who broke the moral code by illicit sexual activity were made to do public penance three times in specified churches - sometimes having to travel quite considerable distances to do so. The church courts were concerned only with the moral aspects: although presumably much of the motive for bringing the fathers of illegitimate children before the courts was to establish a degree of financial

responsibility, there is no surviving evidence from this period of the enforcement of this responsibility.¹ That some men maintained a sense of obligation is shown by the substantial bequests of John Pountney (above) to his sixteen-year-old bastard son.

We can only speculate about attitudes towards illicit sex and illegitimacy. The consequences could undoubtedly be unpleasant: William Charnock was brought before the courts in 1615 for 'receiving his pregnant daughter, so even basic shelter might be hard to come by for the single mother. The same Alice Charnock tried to conceal the birth of the child, but there was 'a common fame' that it had been secretly buried in a garden.[13] Given the size and nature of the community, it must have been difficult to hide this or any other crime. Since, however, it was up to local officers to report offences to the courts, all cases passed through a filter of village (male) opinion.

Social relations between villagers, then, were regulated by a number of authorities. As we have noted when discussing status in the community, the main criterion for elected office, whether juror, affeerer, constable or churchwarden, would seem to have been settled residence in Highley. Cottagers served as well as yeomen: indeed the number of offices was so considerable, given the small population, that all adult men could expect to serve regularly. The nature of the office frequently imposed some degree of communal activity on villagers. The twelve jurors of the court leet, for instance, were charged at each court to "take a view" of disputed hedges and fences and report to the next court together.

We cannot know what proportion of offences were dealt with by the local officer as arbitrator, or which he chose not to report to a higher authority. It appears, however, as if his main function was to bring misdemeanours to the notice of the courts. Since constables etc. were drawn from all classes save perhaps the very poorest peripatetic labourers, this meant that no wealth-based oligarchy of prosperous residents existed to exercise authority over the rest.

¹Maintenance orders were made by Quarter Sessions, whose records for this period do not survive.

All men, even freeholders, were tenants of the manor and parishioners, and theoretically at least subject to the same laws and conditions.

Contact with migrating family members, and business transactions over a wide area, would clearly be facilitated by the ability to read and write. Unfortunately, the existing data gives us only a very partial view of levels of literacy in the pre-enclosure community.

Reading ability leaves even less evidence than writing: and in the latter case we must rely almost entirely on signatures. Cressy has pointed out that in Tudor and Stuart education, reading was taught before writing, and that no special emphasis was placed on learning to sign one's name.[14] He therefore concludes that being able to do so was "probably roughly commensurate with fluency in reading".

Since 28 wills survive from before 1620, each signed by at least one testator and two witnesses, we should be able to arrive at some idea of literacy in Highley at this date. However, this is not the case. In Hereford diocese, wills were preserved not in holograph but as contemporary copies, with no distinction between a mark and a signature. It is not until the 1630s that wills really become useful for a study of literacy.

We are left, then, with signatures to the few deeds, leases and terriers surviving from the early period. and with some slight inferential evidence.

There is no mention of a schoolmaster at this period among diocesan licences. However, as Margaret Spufford has pointed out, although a licence invariably indicated a resident schoolmaster, at least temporarily, its absence does not prove the lack of any teacher at all.[15] Even before 1550, it had not been impossible for the sons of more prosperous Highley men to receive an education: Thomas Oseland, born about 1514, who became vicar of Highley in 1554, was a local man. He had not attended University, but may well have been educated at Bridgnorth Grammar School, which was in existence by 1503.[16] The George Pountney who was curate at Highley for a brief

period following Oseland's death in 1589, was possibly the George Pountney baptised at Highley in 1557.

Literate clergy probably provided one source of education in 16th century Highley. Oseland left his books to John Tedstill (of Chelmarsh) "if they be for his learning". No other testator in this period mentions books, and the absence of inventories means that we can make no estimate of book-ownership in the community.

We are left, then, with a handful of signatures from leases and terriers - among which we may include the glebe terrier of 1625, since although it is possible that these adult signatories had recently learnt to write, it is far more likely that their education had been acquired much earlier. Indeed it is instructive to look at the literate in relation to their age: Cressy tells us that a man was unlikely to learn to write after the age of 15, and so the decade of a man's childhood is more relevant than the date of the extant signature.

Those autographs that we have show that in the early 17th century fourteen men signed their name and nine made a mark. It must be remembered, however, that these were men called upon to witness documents; literacy may have been a criterion for selection: social class certainly was. Virtually all signatories are from Classes I and II. If we assume that most members of Classes III and IV were illiterate, the overall picture of literacy in the community changes significantly.

However, 14 men at least were literate by our criterion. Of these, two came to Highley as adults, and so were educated elsewhere. Fig.XI shows the remaining 12 by decade in which they were likely to have received their education (broadly between five and fifteen years old).

1550s	1560s	1570s	1580s	1590s	1600s
1	1	3	2	3	2

Fig.XI

This is interesting in so far as it suggests that it was possible to obtain basic literacy throughout our period: there are no very long periods which produced no literate men. However, the sample is too small for any great reliance to be placed upon it.

Even so small a sample shows some tendency for certain families to have more literate members than others. The Lowes of Borle Mill and the Peirsons of the Manor Farm provide several names on our list of literate men - unsurprisingly, given their prominent social and financial status. However, of the sons of Oliver Harris (freeholder) for whom we have evidence, two were literate and one was not. Furthermore, Richard Palmer of Potters, who paid the highest rent on the manor in the rental of 1603, was illiterate. The correlation between wealth and literacy, although indicated, was by no means absolute.

Female illiteracy would seem to have been almost universal. Our list of signatories, although weighted as we have seen in favour of the literate, provides only one female signature and three marks.

It would seem, therefore, that the majority of the population of pre-enclosure Highley was illiterate. Those who could write were almost without exception the sons of the more prosperous landholders of the village. The ability to read may have been somewhat more widespread. Some of those who made their mark in witness to a document did so with an unpractised, smudged scrawl: others, like Richard Holloway, wrote their initials. The latter group may well have had some basic reading ability which stopped short of real literacy.

At least two boys born in Highley achieved education beyond the basic. We have noted the case of Thomas Oseland. Thomas Lowe, son of the litigious miller of the court rolls, is almost certainly the "Thomas Lowe the lawyer" and "Thomas Lowe of Clements Inn" referred to in subsequent Highley leases.[17] His wife Martha was the one literate woman referred to above. These two men remained in or in contact with Highley: there may of course have been other educated sons of the village among those for whom we have no record after baptism.

Thus, whether initial education was received from the vicar, within the family itself, or from a temporary schoolmaster, the

opportunities for some boys to go on to further education appear to have existed. Nevertheless, a man could be a prosperous farmer and play a major part in the affairs of the community without the ability to read and write.

It is similarly difficult to investigate the quality of religious life in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The fact of almost universal church attendance tells us little about the extent and depth of faith. There was little nonconformity in the parish; cases of non-attendance at church appear to have their roots as much in apathy or a disagreement with the vicar as in a clash of convictions. Only one family appears to have adhered to the Roman Catholic faith throughout the 16th century.

Anne wife of Thomas Charnock and her two sons, variously described as husbandmen and tailors, appear in the recusant rolls of the 1590s.[18] By 1596, their fines amounted to £140, sums which they could not possibly have paid. In 1605, one of the sons was brought before the church courts "for a recusant", and excommunicated.

It has been suggested that the wording of religious preambles to wills can be used as a guide to the testator's beliefs. In fact, Highley wills seem in practice to have been drawn up by the current incumbent, and tell us more about what he felt to be a suitable wording than about the individual testator.

The four surviving pre-Reformation wills all follow a similar format: the testator commends his soul "unto Almighty God, the Blessed Lady Saint Mary and all the holy company of heaven". One of these wills was witnessed (and probably written) by Thomas Rushbury, vicar until his death in 1551, and the other three by Thomas Oseland.

By 1565, a format had been adopted which differed only in its judicious omission of the Virgin and Saints - "I commend my soul unto Almighty God my maker and to Jesus Christ my redeemer". Significantly, this preamble was used without alteration throughout the remainder of the life of Thomas Oseland. Early 17th century wills use a slightly different wording, mentioning only God but still emphasising creation and redemption:
"I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God my creator and redeemer." (1605)

Anne Palmer, in 1603, may herself have suggested the addition "..... God my creator, by whose merits I trust to be saved." Otherwise, Highley testators appear to have used the preamble suggested by the writer of the will, with very little personal adaptation.

This is only one example of the relationship between the vicar and his parishioners. Two vicars between them span most of our period: Thomas Oseland (1554-1589) and Robert Barrett (c. 1590-1626). Both men farmed land in the parish as their parishioners did - indeed Barrett was in the forefront of the move to enclose open field holdings. Oseland was, as we have seen, a local man, and apparently held in high regard. He is mentioned in virtually every will during his incumbency as a witness or overseer. In 1557, John Holloway left ten pounds to "Sir Oseland my ghostly father". Oseland certainly lent sums of money to poor parishioners; he may also have taught some local boys to read and write. His burial in 1589 is not only recorded at Highley ("Sir Thomas Oseland the good viccar of Higley was buried") but also in the neighbouring parish of Chelmarsh.

Barrett was not a local man, and does not figure so prominently in wills. The Consistory Court of 1595 records disagreements between Barrett and the Pearson family almost amounting to a feud. George and Thomas Pearson had failed to take communion, and George and his wife Joan were guilty of "going out of the church divers times at sermon time" - presumably to demonstrate that their disapproval was of the vicar rather than the service. The Pearsons had also dug up and carted away soil from the churchyard - a practical if irreverent attitude.[19]

It was the practicalities of religion which impinged most on the life of the individual; the payment of tithe, relationship with the vicar, service as churchwarden. Religious attitudes must have varied from genuine piety to indifference. There is some evidence of both; but for most people all we can say is that they observed religious rites and conventions, and left no record of their faith.

- 1) S.R.O. Childe MSS.56/16 : Court roll of Cleobury Mortimer liberties, 1600.
- 2) R. E. Jones, 'Infant mortality in rural north Shropshire, 1561-1810', *Pop. Studs.* 30(2) (1976).
R. E. Jones, 'Further evidence on the decline in infant mortality in pre-industrial England: north Shropshire, 1561-1810', *Pop. Studs.* 34(2) (1980).
- 3) Dyer, City of Worcester p.54.
- 4) Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety p.76.
- 5) A. Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1981).
- 6) D. G. Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts (Leicester, 1974).
- 7) A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism (Oxford, 1978).
- 8) M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge, 1974).
- 9) B.R.L. H.H.MSS.377989 - 377994.
- 10) S.R.O. Childe MSS.56/15-26 : Court rolls of Cleobury Mortimer liberties, 1598-1626.
- 11) Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love p.139.
- 12) L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (Harmondsworth, 1979)pp.81-82.
- 13) H.R.O. Bishops' Act Books, Box 36, vol. 133.
- 14) D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge, 1980).
- 15) M. Spufford, 'The schooling of the peasantry in Cambridgeshire, 1575-1700', in Thirsk (ed.), Land, Church and People, p. 128.
- 16) J. Richardson, The Local Historian's Encyclopedia (New Barnet, 1977)p.152.

- 17) S.P.L. Misc, Deeds 5300, 5301 : Quitclaim from E. Bradley to T. Lowe, 1623: Quitclaim from W. Bradley to T. Lowe, 1625.
- 18) Catholic Records Society, Records Series, 18 (1916) and 61 (1970).
- 19) H.R.O. Bishops' Act Books, Box 32, vol.82.

THE POST-ENCLOSURE PERIOD
1620 - 1780

This period, from about 1620 to 1780, was one of changes in the basic organisation of agriculture in the village: but nevertheless one in which agriculture remained the livelihood of the great majority of the inhabitants. The timing and details of the enclosure process have had to be reconstructed from a variety of sources such as terriers and leases, because no documentary evidence of enclosure itself exists. Enclosure in Highley was accompanied by the sale of the manor and the purchase of freeholds by many tenants, thus compounding the effects.

After enclosure we find a frequent changeover of farm tenancies, and indeed of ownership as local men became unable to continue as freeholders. Farms were partitioned and individual fields rented out: villagers were sufficiently prosperous to compete for tenancies of small acreages. This instability of tenure is particularly noticeable after mid-century, and indicates some pressure on the land available. This upheaval in the land-market was largely due to the price of land and crops, both of which rose sharply, and possibly also to the after-effects of the Civil Wars (although no Highley estates were compounded).

In the 18th century the land market settled down. The polarisation of wealth which had been accelerated by enclosure finally established a clear farmer/labourer dichotomy, and the absentee landlord became a major feature. This post-Restoration instability followed by 18th century calm accords well with what historians agree was the national picture.

Some of the economic and social changes which are traced in Highley followed trends which have been noted in other rural communities which did not enclose their open fields at a similar date. Nevertheless, enclosure and the sale of manorial holdings did have considerable effects. Although we have seen that there was a class of landless, peripatetic labourers in the area before enclosure, their numbers increased considerably after enclosure. The physical layout of the parish, the nature of agriculture, and the distribution of wealth and power within the community were all affected. In many ways, these changes were more fundamental than those which accompanied industrialisation and the growth of the village in the 19th century,

for Highley in the 17th century was still an exclusively agricultural parish and the lives of virtually all its inhabitants were touched in some degree by enclosure. There were no dramatic immediate results: Highley was enclosed by agreement, and there was no dominant landlord to force smaller neighbours off the land; Highley was not depopulated or given over at a stroke to pasture. Nevertheless, cottagers lost their rights of common and became obliged to rely solely on wage-labour. Geographical mobility among all classes increased, as short fixed-term leases replaced the three-life tenure, and as fewer villagers held sufficient land to keep them in Highley.

Together with the rise of the absentee landlord came the predominance of the parish and its officers as instruments of regulation and administration in the community. The chief farms of the village were no longer owner-occupied by the 18th century, but their tenants enjoyed considerable status and influence in the village. Social distance between most and least affluent, between vicar and parishioners, and possibly between employed and employee grew during this period. As parish governance became increasingly restricted to a self-electing oligarchy, there was a polarisation of influence as well as of wealth (and a greater equation between the two).

These and other developments are traceable in a variety of sources. During this period, we lose the Court Leet rolls and other manorial sources, although ecclesiastical court records continue. This is compensated for, however, by the survival of greater numbers of deeds and leases, notably in the Miscellaneous Deeds collection of the Shropshire Public Library, in the County Record Offices of Shropshire and Gloucestershire. In this period, too, we begin to be able to use parochial sources. At the beginning of this project, these were kept in the parish church, but during the course of research they were deposited in the County Record Office. The earliest Pools Book, detailing payments and disbursements, dates from 1724, but from 1678 we have an excellent series of tithe books, including the Easter Book. This continues throughout the period, for much of that time detailing heads of household and all others in the household of adult age, although the latter are not always mentioned by name. Considerable use has been made of this source, especially for those periods when it is

at its fullest and most informative. Parish papers such as bastardy bonds also survive from the late-17th century onwards.

Quarter Sessions records for Shropshire begin in 1638, although they are by no means complete until the 18th century. Very few Land Tax Returns survive for this period, although one return was located among a collection of private papers in Worcestershire Record Office. The diary of John Higgs, vicar of Highley in the 1720s, was traced to the Bodleian Library. Unfortunately, however, this has been badly damaged, is written in Latin in a crabbed and almost shorthand style, and appears to be mainly a list of appointments recording church services in Highley and neighbouring parishes.

National fiscal records, such as the Lay Subsidies and Poll Taxes continue to be useful, and the Hearth Tax Returns between 1663 and 1672 are a prime source, as is the Association Oath Roll return of 1696. Also in the Public Record Office are sets of very informative witnesses' depositions to a lengthy post-Restoration case concerning payment of tithe. Most of these sources cease in the 18th century.

Between 1660 and about 1740, most wills proven at Hereford are accompanied by probate inventories: inventories from before the Civil War do not survive. Wills of Highley testators proven at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury were also collected, although these do not include inventories.

Thus in this period, too, a wide range of sources was traced and collected in order to provide the fullest possible picture of the social and economic development of the community, and to provide a background for analysis of more usual sources such as parish registers.

Chapter Four - The Village Economy

The enclosure of Highley's common fields was achieved, apparently by mutual agreement of the landholders, in the second and third decades of the 17th century. It seems to have been a relatively peaceable and gradual process, and no deeds recording enclosure were enrolled in Chancery.

A number of factors stimulated the urge to enclose. John Littleton, the lord of the manor, had died in prison in 1601, leaving his widow Meriel heavily in debt. It was suggested in a Chancery court case of 1604 that some estates should be sold to meet these debts, assessed at £10,000.[1] The 1603 survey of the manor of Highley may well have been the result of the need to estimate the value of parts of the estate prior to sale.

This survey records in its margins amounts "agreed with" tenants of each holding. The marginal additions are not dated: however, two leases have survived, both dated 1607, where tenants paid Meriel Littleton the exact sums noted beside their names on the survey. [2] It seems probable that the additions were made in or shortly before 1607. They were not, as Tonks assumes in his thesis on the Littleton family and their estates, sums agreed for the purchase of the freehold, but for 2,000 year leases.[3] In practice, this gave tenure almost as secure as freehold, but there were certain differences: rent continued to be paid, apparently at the same rate as under the previous tenure; heriots and suit of court were still due from leaseholders.

Leases could, however, be sold; and as early as 1610 Richard Holloway sold his lease to Thomas Lowe for a considerable profit.[4] In 1609, Anne Nichols sold her title to a cottage and smallholding - presumably a similar lease, as the sum of £6 13 4d had earlier been agreed for this holding.[5]

In all, the sale of long leases raised over £680, in amounts varying from £6 13 4d to £100. We have seen when examining wills of the later part of the 16th century that there were increased amounts of cash in circulation in the village economy which enabled tenants to purchase these leases. It would also seem, from prices

paid subsequently for the same properties, that Meriel Littleton's straitened circumstances enabled tenants to agree terms favourable to them.

In 1618, Meriel Littleton finally sold the last of her interests in the manor of Highley.[6] Some deeds have survived which record the final sale of the freehold of properties leased earlier, all dated 1618.[7] The sums paid for the actual freehold were considerably smaller than those agreed for the long leases: Richard Rowley, for instance, paid £86 13 4d for his 2,000 year lease in 1607, and only £13 7s for the freehold of the same farm in 1618.[8] Thus a glebe terrier of 1625 was able to note that the parishioners were "all freeholders".[9]

The evidence of these leases and sales suggests that some exchange and engrossing of arable lands had been going on throughout the period. In 1607, some lands were excluded from Oliver Harris's tenement, being then in the occupation of Richard Palmer. It looks as if these two men had exchanged these lands prior to this date. Furthermore, some of the strips appear to have been enclosed already: "one parcel of land about eight ridges lying in a close of the said Richard Palmer".[10]

By 1618, Higley Wood, the common pasture in the north of the parish, had been divided up and apportioned to landholders in lieu of their rights of common according to the amount of land they held. These shares, as mentioned in later transfers of property, varied between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 15 acres: in fact the nine shares which can subsequently be traced account for over half the available 137 acres. Thus if the remaining principal landholders received comparable shares, there was little or no land left for cottagers with smallholdings, although they too would have lost their rights of common.

Our principal source for the actual process of enclosure is the glebe terrier of 1625, in which the vicar, Robert Barrett, outlines the moves he had made to engross and enclose his glebe land. The glebe share of Higley Wood was ten acres, in "one leasowe or pasture lately enclosed out of the comon called Higleyes Wood which was limited and measured out in lieu of the comon of pasture to the said vicarage." The parishioners "did exchange and enclose their comon field lande for theyr more comodious use thereof." Barrett goes on to

specify the exchanges he had agreed to in order to enclose his "dispersed glebe lands". Nine landholders had exchanged with Barrett, so they were also engaged in engrossing and enclosing.

Quality of land appears to have been taken into consideration when these exchanges were made, for they were not always measure for measure. Barrett gave Thomas Lowe all 26 of his strips in Cockshoote Field, which were in dispersed parcels, and Lowe in return gave "two foot for one in measure" of his land situated nearer to the vicarage. The trading in land could be even more involved, as when Barrett made another exchange with Lowe, receiving four strips which he then promptly swapped for a little meadow belonging to John Pierson.

Barrett's chief aim was to gather his glebe lands into closes in the vicinity of his vicarage: he was not entirely successful, for some land remained enclosed, but at an inconvenient distance - and was still situated where Barrett's efforts had left it at the time of the tithe award of 1841. In the process of enclosure, some arable land was converted to pasture. In 1618, for instance, Oliver Harris owned "one pasture about eight ruddes" and "one acre in Rea Field in a pasture enclosed out of Rea Field." It seems, however, that the immediate aim of the complicated manoeuvres detailed in the glebe terrier was, for most landholders, the same as Barrett's - the creation of closes of arable grouped as nearly as possible together and centring on the farmhouse.

The ten men involved in exchanges of glebe land cannot have been the only ones in the village undertaking similar transactions. All the chief landholders must have been involved, for we know that large areas of the common fields were being enclosed by these men. It is doubtful if any strips at all were left. The glebe terrier mentions only four ridges "which do lie open and unenclosed". A deed of 1656 mentions "nineteen ridges or selions in Higley field", so it may be that some vestigial open field was left, although it is equally possible that this represents only a customary form of wording.[11]

Thus the period 1607-25 brought many changes. The tenants of the manor had become first holders of exceptionally long leases, and then freeholders: and had had to find considerable cash sums in order to do so. In 1618 came the sale of the manor itself. There is

no evidence that Thomas Lowe, the new lord of the manor, exercised the same sort of control that the Littletons had done, or even that manor courts were continued. In any case, Lowe himself was a landowner living in Highley, with as much interest as other farmers in the most profitable management of his land. Indeed he may well have been a prime instigator of enclosure. The division of the common pasture of Higley Wood was a major factor in the process of enclosure, and would have had profound effects particularly on those who lost rights of common within it without gaining a viable share of land. The actual exchange and enclosure of arable strips appears to have gone on in a piecemeal fashion over several years, and to have been achieved relatively equably.

As a result, the typical farmer of the community was no longer a copyhold tenant of scattered strips of arable with associated rights of pasturage: from the 1620s he was the freeholder of a more-or-less compact farm, where he could change land-usage and farming methods at will. One of the most significant developments of the next century was the way in which this typical farmer became once again the tenant of an absentee landlord.

At the beginning of our post-enclosure period, then, most householders in Highley were freeholders: certainly the majority of farmers had purchased their freeholds. Some cottagers and smallholders, too, had become owner-occupiers, while others were the tenants of locally-based landlords. This situation did not last for long, however. The process by which lands passed out of the ownership of local residents was a gradual one, and was brought about by families dying out or property passing to a distant branch via the female line, as well as by direct sale. By 1671, for example, the "Mrs Harris" who had inherited Haselwells farm lived "above fourscore miles away", and the farmhouse and lands were rented out.[12] Some families sold up in order to move elsewhere: George Pountney sold Green Hall purchased by his father only twenty years before, as early as 1639, and left Highley.[13] Other men sold their freeholds, but remained as tenants of the property, like William Rowley who sold his messuage, meese place and lands in 1683 but whose family continued as tenants for generations.

Some points of financial crisis can be identified. The large ex-demesne farm of the Peirsons was being eroded from 1660, when its share of Higley Wood was sold, and Churchyard House, the second house of the estate, and almost half the farm lands were first mortgaged and then sold.[14] Sometimes the decline in fortunes could be dramatic: Thomas Lowe had acquired the manor in 1618 and until his death in 1630 steadily accumulated holdings as they became available until he owned at least five houses and associated lands. He became lay appropriator of the great tithes; built himself a seat on the north side of the chancel of the church; and was granted a coat of arms by 1623.[15] He was succeeded by his grandson, also Thomas, who began selling off parts of the estate by 1648, mortgaged the rest in 1653, and was forced to sell altogether three years later.

Thus the two principal landowning families of the village experienced great financial difficulties at more or less the same time. Cottagers similarly found that they could not continue as owner-occupiers: John Penn bought his cottage in 1655 during the sale of Lowe property, but was forced to sell again in 1682. The situation was very similar to that noted by Thirsk at Sherington in Bucks, where "modest freeholders gained ground when manorial lords sold out their interests, and continued to flourish until the 1660s, (when they) were driven out by indebtedness." [16] The same trends were followed elsewhere, when low grain prices encouraged enclosure and conversion to large-scale pasture farming.

In Highley's case, the new landlords were unable or unwilling to create large farms, and mixed farming in small units remained the norm. The absentee owners were in the main local gentry and clergy from the surrounding south Shropshire area centred on Bridgnorth. From 1656 the lord of the manor was Richard Cresswell of Sidbury, five or six miles away. He seems never to have lived in the new house which he had built in Highley: in the 1670s and 1680s his stewards were in residence there and in charge of farming operations. Other absentee landlords were content to lease their property without, apparently, taking much personal interest in it.

Fig.I illustrates the way in which the principal farms of the parish passed out of the hands of owner-occupiers, until at the end of our period virtually all were in the hands of absentee

	1620	1640	1660	1680	1700	1720	1740	1760	1780
Tea									
Woodend									
Haselwells									
Green Hall									
Borle Mill									
Newhouse									
Netherton									
Manor Farm									
Church House									
Greengate									
Schoolhouse									
The Heath									
Potters									

— owned by Highley resident

---- owned by absentee

Fig.I Ownership of principal farms, 1620-1780.

owners. A deed of 1760 itemises the farms from which tithes were due, with their occupiers.[17] Ten of the fourteen farms were in the occupation of tenants or undertenants. A mass of documentation survives from the late 17th century onwards detailing the descent of property and its leasing. For the tenant farmer, the details of the inheritance of title from Mr Bell of Bridgnorth via Mrs Weaver to Rev. Amphlett of Enville in Staffs, for example, probably had little significance, provided that his rent stayed the same.

The way in which farms in Highley were let, often field by field and for short periods of time, is well illustrated by the details of two farms, Haselwells and The Rea, in the mid-17th century. Tithes of these farms, among others, were the subject of a dispute between vicar and parishioners which can be traced through the church courts and central Exchequer records during the period 1667-77.[18] Witnesses who had rented all or part of the farms gave evidence, and although the dates may not be strictly accurate, a sufficient timetable can be reconstructed to show the way in which available farm land was rented out.

Rea Farm

c.1656 Robert Dorsett rented the farm for one year.
pre-1669 John Dallow rented the farm.
1661-71 Thomas Penn rented half the farm.
1668-9 John Mathews rented part of the farm.
1670-1 Ursula Bowen rented the farm (or part)
1672 Richard James occupied the farmhouse.
1677 Richard James and Henry Longmore rented the farm.

Haselwells

pre-1653 Francis Perkes rented the farm.
c.1653-63 Robert Martin rented the farm.
1664 Thomas Dallow rented one meadow.
pre-1669 William Rowley rented one meadow.
1670-1 Richard Wilkes rented the farm.
1672 Robert Dorsett occupied the farmhouse.

One of the chief characteristics of pre-enclosure Highley, the continuity of occupation of a farm by the same family (prompted largely by the system of tenure) has clearly been lost. Of course, not all farms which became tenanted can be assumed to have experienced this kind of turnover of occupants, but Haselwells and The Rea do seem to represent the norm rather than the exception. Leases could be as short as one year, giving rise to the same kind of mobility among landholding families as had previously been confined to landless labourers. A series of leases of Churchyard House survives and names six different tenants during the first half of the 18th century.[19] In addition, separate fields were, as in the case of Haselwells farm, sublet from time to time.

The information about rent that can be recovered indicates that there were very considerable increases over those rates paid by tenants of the manor in the early 17th century. The highest rent on the manor in 1603 had been less than 50/- per annum with the majority at under £1 p.a. By the middle of the 17th century, John Fenn was paying £12 p.a. for a much smaller farm. In 1660, Haselwells cost £20 p.a. to rent, and individual meadows elsewhere in the parish cost between £2 and £6 10s per year. The series of leases of Churchyard House shows how rents rose throughout the first half of the 18th century; and also how undertenants, whose terms of tenure are rarely recoverable, could expect to pay more than the main tenant.

Churchyard House and lands

1701 £15 p.a.
1714 (£27 p.a. sublet)
1715 £19 p.a.
1721 £21 p.a.
1729 £23 p.a.
1745 £21 p.a.
1752 £23 p.a.

Property in the village would never again be sold at the advantageous rates achieved by tenants who bought their freeholds in the early years of the 17th century. Even if we add together the

sums paid for the initial long leases in 1607 and those smaller amounts paid for the freeholds a decade or so later, we still find that property prices had been exceptionally low. In 1639, Green Hall and its lands were sold for £600: unfortunately this is the only farm on the 1603 survey where no sum "agreed for" has been entered. However, no other property commanded more than £100 for the long lease (and probably another £20 for the freehold). Green Hall seems even at a conservative estimate to have trebled its value in twenty years.

Smaller estates, too, could show a profit. John Penn's cottage and small enclosure cost him £45 in 1655 - he sold it in 1682 for £60. A single acre of pasture was sold in 1667 for £14 10s. The profit available was obviously an incentive to the local man to sell: against this must be offset the greatly increased rents which he would then have had to pay. Since most sales were preceded by mortgages or other indications of financial hardship, it would appear that freeholders sold more out of necessity than out of deliberate policy, as Thirsk has noted elsewhere.[20]

Thus the cost of land, now enclosed and therefore more valuable, rose beyond the reach of local residents. The new owners were the rising squirearchy of the wider neighbourhood: in Highley no single landowner emerged to dominate the property market. The demesne lands were broken up into two or three separate farms with different owners. The Lowe family's bid to become squires of Highley failed during the Parliamentary era, and there was also some division of their properties. Richard Cresswell, who bought the bulk of the Lowe estates, was the nearest that Highley had to a squire during our period: but his main residence was always elsewhere, and in the early 18th century the estate was further divided, some land going to Bridgnorth Corporation as a charitable trust, and the rest to another absentee landlord who rented out both house and land.[21]

Highley remained significantly more "open" than other nearby villages with resident gentry. The edges of social stratification within the community are blurred by the rise of the tenant farmer. In the main, occupiers of the largest farms in the village were tenants: the few owner-occupiers were mostly artisans and husbandmen. Nevertheless, a village oligarchy of chief tenant farmers

did emerge during the late 17th century. Economic changes attendant upon enclosure helped to form this group, but it was also given cohesion by the developments in the administrative machinery begun by the Elizabethan Poor Law and reinforced by later 17th century legislation like the 1662 Act of Settlement. These men constituted the parish vestry; they provided the churchwardens and overseers of the poor, and had more power over their neighbours than had their pre-enclosure counterparts. More villagers now looked to them for employment on a long-term basis rather than for a few years in early life. They controlled poor relief payments; were responsible for reporting misdemeanours to the courts; collected rates; administered private charities, and so on. For most of this post-enclosure, "agricultural" period, the characteristic division of village society was between tenant farmer and landless labourer.

We may well designate the years 1620-1780 as the "agricultural period", for farming remained the hub of the village economy throughout. It was clearly well known that coal and building stone lay underground, for several leases from as early as 1618 specifically reserve mining rights: yet there was very little exploitation of mineral wealth during this period.¹ Most men worked on the land at some time of the year or for part of their working day, including blacksmiths, victuallers, tailors and (until 1720) the parish priest. In the absence of resident gentry for most of the period, even the most prosperous men were working farmers. In the absence of organised industry, even artisans and craftsmen continued to have some experience of husbandry either as labourers or smallholders.

The nature of this farming, and the wealth that it engendered, is partly revealed by the series of probate inventories which survive from 1666-1740. Inventories list both household goods and farm stock and crops, and estates itemised vary in value between £357 and £4 17s (both in the 1720s). Fig.II shows the value of those estates where reliable totals are given.

¹A limited amount of quarrying was carried on, described in more detail below.

<u>Value</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% invested in stock</u>
£200+	6	55.2%
£100-200	1	78%
£50-100	5	47%
£25-50	2	19%
£10-25	2	
£1-10	1	

Fig.II

The wealthiest men had, on average, well over half of their wealth invested in farm equipment, crops and stock. The exception is the vicar, John Burton, of whose goods only 34% were tied up in farming (the mean for the others is 60%). Smaller estates, those between £50 and £100 in total, were slightly less dependent on farm stock: and those men whose goods valued less than £50 had only 19% invested in farming or trade equipment. Since basic necessities like furnishings took up an irreducible minimum, poorer men had less money to invest in their means of livelihood - and got a correspondingly smaller return.

Most farmers practised mixed husbandry. Richard Palmer, whose inventory was taken in March 1667, was probably typical of the larger farmer. His crops, growing and stored, were more or less equal in value to his stock. His crops, and the eight oxen of his plough team, were valued at £66, while his 21 cattle, 94 sheep and unspecified number of pigs and poultry were worth £69.

Yelling finds a movement towards pastoral farming among newly-enclosed parishes of north Worcestershire in the 16th century, and a return to arable from mid-17th century.[22] Highley may well have followed the same pattern: some enclosed arable was converted to pasture early in the 17th century: by the time of the first inventories arable was equally as important as pastoral husbandry; by 1730 there are some indications that arable production was beginning to predominate in some cases (in December 1729 John

Pountney had only five cows and four sheep, but had 236 bushels of grain and pulse in store and ten acres of sown winter corn); and in 1752 the terms of a lease had to be specifically worded to prevent the tenant ploughing up pasture land.[23]

Although farmers kept a range of livestock - cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry appear on every farmer's inventory - dairying seems to have been most important. Several farms possessed a dairy with cheese presses and vats, and more cheese than would be needed for home consumption: as many as 200 cheeses in one case. Cattle are often specified as milch cows. A usual herd consisted of 10 or 12 cows and calves and a bull. In addition, teams of oxen were kept for ploughing: farmers had two, four, six or even eight oxen, valued at about £4 each. This, together with ploughs, harrows and chains, represents a considerable capital investment, often the largest sum in the inventory. The market at Bridgnorth specialised in oxen, but also provided an outlet for old dairy animals fattened for slaughter. [24] Highley farmers appear to have bred their own dairy cattle.

Numbers of pigs kept are rarely specified, though most farmers and some poorer men had at least some. Not all farmers in the sample kept sheep, although the majority had small flocks. Wool was stored in only four of the 17 houses surveyed, and all in very small domestic quantities.

Hemp and flax were more important yarns. Enclosed, consolidated farms gave greater opportunity for the cultivation of hemp and flax, which was often undertaken as a sideline by dairy farmers in the West Midlands.[25] From the late 17th century the field name "the Hemyard" begins to crop up quite frequently. Several inventories list "hemp and flax ready dressed" (1692), "hemp and hurden yarn and flax" (1700), and so on.

Another new crop was clover. In 1668, John Mathews mowed ten loads of clover grass at Rea farm.[26] By 1700, clover seed, clover riddles, etc. were commonly found in farmhouses.

In spite of the introduction of new crops, however, wheat, barley and oats continued to be the main crops grown, and most farmers grew all three, with the addition of peas, beans and vetches. In September 1700, Robert Dorsett's newly-harvested crops of "graine

of all sorts", barley, oats and peas were worth £88 10s of his total estate of £248. Records of the mid-17th century tithe dispute tell us that all farmers also made considerable quantities of hay: one witness remembered that in the 1620s Richard Palmer had regularly mowed "upwards of thirty loads of hay each year." [27]

Involvement in agriculture seems to have been virtually universal within the community, even if on a very small scale. Few inventories survive of craftsmen and tradesmen: only four men in the group were not extensively involved in farming. Samuel Jones, a blacksmith who died in 1712, left a total estate of £16 8 6d, of which £6 2 6d was taken up by the anvil, hammers, bellows etc. He also had six sheep worth another £1. The miller who died in 1740 also kept pigs. The poorest man for whom an inventory survives was Richard Hancox, described as a pauper, who was apparently an artisan of some sort, for "tools in the shop" were worth 8/-. His only live-stock were poultry, valued at 1/- out of his total estate of £4 17s.

Combination of agriculture with some other livelihood was by no means uncommon even among men with sizeable farms. Clearly this was the case with Rev. John Burton: but also with John Pountney who died in 1700 owning considerable farm stock and crops, as well as coffin boards, tools, 521b of iron, etc. "in the shop" and more "at his shop down at is mothers".

Information on occupations other than farming or farm labouring is scarce throughout the period. The community always supported at least one blacksmith, and one miller. At several times, too, a tailor is mentioned. Other occupations specified at various times are victualler, sawyer and wheelwright. These men seem to have been providing a purely local service. The "potfounder" (1660-75) and brickmaker (1725) may have been involved in supplying a somewhat wider area. Yet no real industry had developed.

The nearest was the quarrying which went on from about 1720 to 1740. Fortunately, the owner of the land was the vicar, Richard Higgs, and he entered his personal quarrying accounts in the back of the parish Easter Book. The works were not extensive. In 1729 Higgs recorded "Now got this year at Higley Quarry two hearths and some small stone and 15 or 16 flagstones." The hearths were

transported via the Severn to furnaces at Willey, Leighton and Coalbrookdale in the expanding industrial area of the mid-Severn valley.

Highley men were paid for drawing stone to the river (a short distance only), and for making and mending "cars" and "rolls" to carry it. There is no record, however, of who actually quarried the stone, or whether or not they were Highley residents.

River traffic continued to play a part in the village economy: farm produce probably followed stone up-river to increasingly-heavily populated Coalbrookdale. From at least 1740 to his death in 1764, Edward Wilcox owned barges which plied the river. His last was a trow (the largest type of vessel on the river, up to 90 tons and worth in 1758 about £300) called "The Charming Molly".[28] Wilcox was probably the only man of even moderate wealth in Highley throughout our period who did not derive the greater part of his income from agriculture.

The village economy between 1620 and 1780 was almost exclusively agrarian: it relied on the mixed husbandry of relatively small-sized farms, supported by a few tradesmen and craftsmen supplying local needs, and by considerable numbers of landless labourers and living-in servants. We must now turn to examine the distribution of wealth thus engendered in the community and the size and interaction of its socio-economic groups.

It will be remembered that the four divisions which we employed when examining class structures in the pre-enclosure period were: I, yeomen; II, husbandmen; III artisans and cottagers; and IV labourers and servants. Only slight modifications are necessary in the period 1620-1780. Classes I and II still represent the greater and lesser farmers of the community. The craftsmen and tradesmen (with very few exceptions) still may be considered as group III, although the number of smallholders able to support their families from cottage plots with only occasional resource to other occupations declined after enclosure. Group IV, labourers, was greatly increased. Live-in farm service, as we shall see, represented rather a stage in life than socio-economic status, and perhaps we should properly consider young resident 'servants in husbandry' as a separate category.

For the first half-century of our period Class I is easy to delineate. In the 1620s Thomas Lowe, George Peirson and Richard Palmer had acquired considerable property, and were styling themselves 'gentlemen'. To these we must add Oliver Harris who now owned two large farms, and the Pountneys of Green Hall and The Rea. Together with the vicar, they constituted a group of six or seven substantial yeoman families. They were all freeholders, and had all gained a sizeable piece of pasture from the division of Higley Wood (which they often rented out as it stood or with the addition of a cottage) to add to their newly-consolidated farms.

The Lay Subsidy Return of 1628 names only eight individuals: that for 1664 lists seven.[29] The indications are of a fairly constant number of families in this class, comprising some 15-20% of the total population.

As we have seen, the fortunes of many of these families declined after mid-century, and they were replaced by substantial tenant farmers. Since the number and size of farms remained more or less constant, however, the size of the elite group did not change very much even if the men who formed it were no longer 'gentlemen' and freeholders. The Poll Book of 1714 lists seven Highley residents with the necessary qualifications to vote.[30] A single surviving Land Tax Return of 1767 shows nine principal rate-payers.[31] Wills and inventories of the 18th century show that these families enjoyed a personal life-style comparable to the yeomen of the earlier part of our period, in spite of their nominally lower status. The 18th century elite were by and large men who had come to Highley from elsewhere, and whose families rarely remained for more than a generation - often much less.

Perhaps the best guide to social and economic structure at any time during this period is provided by the Hearth Tax returns of the third quarter of the 17th century, for it seems reasonable to infer some correlation between size of house and personal wealth and position.[32] Fig.III uses the 1672 Hearth Tax (which includes exemptions) to demonstrate the size of respective groups at that date.

The number of group I households corresponds very well with our estimates from other sources. These men were those whose

inventories totalled over £200. Their wills mention considerable sums in cash or bonds, and, in the early years, property. Typical is the will of Francis Holloway, which was proved in 1651. Besides his farm stock (four oxen, 15 cows, 68 sheep, 40 pigs etc.) he left legacies of £291 in cash or bonds for debts due to him. George Peirson, who died in 1654, left to his sons two houses and extensive associated lands, and to his two daughters £200 each. Property was usually, but not invariably, in Highley. By the time of his death in 1632, Richard Palmer owned not only his farm in Highley, but also a "house, tenement, tanhousemill, stable closes, gardenspools, places for lying of hides and drying of leather" in Bewdley.

	I	II	III	IV
Hearths	4-7	2-3	1	exempt
No. of households	7	10	12	8

Fig.III

By the end of our period, cash sums bequeathed by tenant farmers could be considerable, although of course there was no property to leave. Joseph Cook's will, proved 1771, mentions a total of £886 in cash bequests alone, besides the unspecified value of farm and household goods and the sums previously given to two of his children who, he tells us, have been "provided for in my lifetime".

There is a discernible qualitative difference between the households of these Class I families and others in the community, whereas in the pre-enclosure period the difference was rather one of quantity - prosperous families in the 16th century tended to own more of the same goods. By the mid-17th century, the wealthiest homes had cushions, carpets, clocks, books; which were rarely if ever found in the homes of the less prosperous. By the second and third decades of the 18th century we find items like "delph plates", looking glasses, warming pans, watches, jewellery, flaxen napkins and silver cups, as

well as more utilitarian items in the houses of yeomen.

The houses of men in this group were quite large: larger than the 4-7 hearths of the tax return might suggest. In the latter, the vicarage was assessed on seven hearths: in 1720 it had in fact 19 rooms, if one includes the cellar, wash house and brew house. Similarly the Palmer family farm, called Potters, paid tax on five hearths in 1672, when an inventory of 1667 lists a total of 15. It seems from these and other examples that only one in three rooms, approximately, could be expected to have fireplaces.

Palmer's inventory gives much information about the daily life of this class I group. Part of the house was used for storing grain, including the main upstairs room which, being over the hall, was reliably dry. This was a common practice, in Highley as elsewhere [33] Five rooms, including the parlour downstairs, were used for sleeping. The hall and lower parlour were eating and sitting rooms: the remaining rooms were used as one would expect - the kitchen for cooking, pantry for storing provisions and cellar for drink. The distinguishing feature of these large, more prosperous houses (besides the greater comfort in their furnishings) was the separation of functions such as storage, cooking and sleeping into their own areas rather than in the multiple-usage rooms of poorer families.

The principal farmers of the village were better able to achieve this greater degree of comfort because many of them had taken the opportunity afforded by the purchase of the freeholds to their property to rebuild or at least enlarge their houses. Surviving architectural evidence points to a general rebuilding in the first half of the 17th century, and occasionally a more precise date can be assigned to the improvements. Thomas Peirson, for instance, dated and initialled the new wing which he built on the family farmhouse in 1629.

Class II, smaller farmers, are represented by those in the Hearth Tax who paid on two or three hearths. In the inventories there is a noticeable gap between those valued at over £200 and the rest, all below £100. The husbandman's estate was usually worth some £60-£80. The hearth tax suggests that there were ten men

in this group in 1672, or 25-30% of the population - a proportion which probably remained quite steady, although in the early 18th century there are signs of a few craftsmen joining this group. In the absence of their wills or inventories we cannot be sure of relative wealth, but the blacksmith and brickmaker who employed living-in servants in the 1720s should probably be included in this category.

A typical inventory of this group is that of William Rowley, taken in 1730. His house was assessed on two hearths in 1672: in fact it had two main ground-floor rooms with chambers over, plus a buttery and a brewhouse. There was certainly less specialisation of usage here than in the homes of the more prosperous: in the absence of a kitchen or pantry, the hall served for cooking and storage of provisions as well as eating and sitting. The main bedroom also provided storage for cheese vats, a saddle and pillion, and so on. Both yeomen and husbandmen (as we may for convenience call groups I and II) show a considerable degree of self-sufficiency well into the 18th century. They made cider, beer and cheese at home, and stored home-reared bacon and beef. Flax and wool could be spun at home. There is noticeably less luxury, however, in the homes of men like Rowley even though his inventory is fifty years later than that of Palmer. Even as late as 1730, Rowley had no non-functional items at all - no books, no cushions or carpets - and the house had no 'best' rooms.

Wills of husbandmen in the first half of the period (up to about 1700) show a greater concern with household goods than do those of their wealthier neighbours. Property, and even cash, are rarely mentioned. Thurstan Dale's will, 1636, is typical of a husbandman's will of the 17th century, where household items like brass pans, bolsters and treen barrels are separately bequeathed as they had been by all classes in the pre-enclosure period. Prosperous yeomen had largely ceased to specify such items by this date. Nearly a century later John Ellis, also a class II husbandman, similarly has only £7 in cash listed among his bequests: but he does not specify his "household goods and implements of husbandry" individually.

Together, the farmers and a few successful craftsmen made up some 40-50% of the total village population for most of this

period. This is further reflected in the poor rate payments of 1754.¹ Twenty-three individual heads of household contributed, comprising a little under half the total by this date. Nine principal landholders paid £1 or more (at what appears to be £1 in the pound) and may be equated with our class I group. The remaining fourteen largely represent this class II group. The indications are consistent that at least a relative degree of financial security was enjoyed during this period by something under half the total population of the community.

The remainder were, in varying degrees, poor. Francis Lowe, a tailor, was by his own admission "but a poor man", as he reported having told the vicar during the tithe dispute of 1668.[34] Yet with his trade, and the "little piece of upland ground" which he rented and from which he made hay and, presumably, grazed a beast or two, he was well-off compared with many of the community. With his ability to supplement his income by at least some husbandry, Lowe was in an increasingly unusual position. The nature of class III, artisans and cottagers, changed after enclosure. The five and six acre holdings, plus rights of common, which had given cottagers at least a measure of self-sufficiency, shrank. First they became less viable with the loss of opportunities for grazing on common pasture or arable. Then the new owners were often reluctant to spare much land to accompany a cottage. In 1653, Thomas Lowe owned five cottages: all had a garden; two also had an orchard; one had "a little meadow" and one "a hemplack".[35] The kind of cultivation possible for these cottagers was clearly severely limited. Three of these five cottagers were in fact among those "poor of the parish" left charitable bequests in a will of 1651. Some of the cottages were newly built on land enclosed out of Higley Wood, and the statutory requirement of four acres of land to accompany a cottage seems not always to have been observed, even before the repeal of the relevant legislation in 1775.[36]

Thus some families who had previously combined a small-holding with some other occupation were now virtually landless. Allen

¹A series of annual parish accounts survives: that for 1754 is one of the more informative, but is basically a random choice.

Fenn, aged 66, described himself as a labourer in 1670, and recounted his memories of the family holding "which is now called Fenn's tenement" and in the occupation of Richard Holloway - that is, part of a larger farm.[37] The $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres of 'Charnockes tenement' became part of the Rowleys' farm by the end of the century. As more cottages were built in the 18th century, the trend continued.

For much of this period, one half of the community virtually employed the other half. The twelve families in one-hearth houses in 1672, together with the eight who were exempted from payment altogether, must have relied on trade or day-labour for their livelihood. Some men combined the two: John Penn paid tax on one hearth, in a house which is elsewhere described as a cottage.[38] In 1670 he called himself a "victualler", but told how two years previously he had worked as a labourer at hay-making.[39] This must have been a common occurrence among men in class III.

One artisan from this group was Samuel Jones, blacksmith, who died in 1712/13. His possessions were valued at £16 8 6d. His sparse household goods totalled only £5 9 6d, and consisted of a bed and bedlinen, table and chairs, a cupboard and chests for storage, a pot and two kettles for cooking, and some pewter utensils. Only one room is mentioned, besides the shop. There appears to have been no cash in the house, for the usual 'money in pocket' is not included, although there is mention of "money due in the shop book". Jones and his wife eked a living from his trade (and his six sheep), but it was clearly not a very prosperous one.

The group of wage-labourers (Group IV), which we have seen was already in existence in the late 16th century, increased during this period. This was partly, though not entirely, due to enclosure. We have seen some of the difficulties facing cottagers and smallholders as a result of enclosure: undoubtedly, those who lost rights which they had held under the common-field system were forced into increasing reliance on wage-labour. Yet other factors, too, encouraged this trend. In the first thirty or more years after enclosure in Highley, wages were low and new freeholders could afford to employ the labourers needed for the initial hedging and fencing of enclosed fields. More labour-intensive crops began to be grown.

The way in which land remained in the hands of several owners, either resident or absentee, resulted in the kind of open society where the movement of labourers was more possible; and the division of Higley Wood and the enclosure of the arable fields provided more potential building land for cottages. Thus the demand for wage-labourers was stimulated at a time when more men were being forced into the labour market.

Even labourers in full-time employment were poor: seasonal lay-offs and the stagnation in real wages kept them so. Not all - or even most - of those exempt from hearth tax payments were elderly or widowed: the majority were family men in employment. By the closing decades of our period, the employed (or unemployed) considerably outnumbered the employers. No new farms could be created - there was not the land - and no industries had yet become established.

Numbers of labourers in the parish are hard to assess, especially as the distinction between cottagers and labourers became blurred, and migration of labourers and their families became even more frequent. There could sometimes, however, be considerable continuity of employment for labourers. William Jefferies, one of the exempt group of 1672, reported two years earlier that he was a 52-year-old labourer, who had worked for the same farmer for eighteen consecutive years.

His group, the poorest in the village, comprised 21.6% of all heads of household in 1672: very close to the figure of 23% exempt in the whole of Shropshire quoted by Wrightson.[40] Most of these men, and some of the one-hearth group too, were or had been labourers.

In the 1720s, 21 burials are recorded as "pauper", which represents no less than 70% of all adult burials during the decade. This of course exaggerates the proportion of the very poor in the community, for many had fallen into poverty only when prevented by age from working. It does, however, demonstrate how widespread poverty in later life had become.

One of these 'paupers' buried during the decade was Richard Hancox, for whom a probate inventory survives. Hancox appears to have been one of those who had struggled on the margins of poverty

for most of his life and only become destitute towards its end (he was 74 when he died), when he could no longer work. He had paid tax on one hearth in 1672, probably for the same "cottage, garden and orchard" rented by his mother in 1653.[41] This was basically a two-up, two-down house, with a single-storey buttery attached, which must have been larger than many in the village. Hancox had apparently carried on some sort of trade, for he still possessed 8/- worth of "tools in the shop". Unfortunately, his household possessions are not separately itemised, though "goods in the parlour", for instance, at 5/- cannot have been extensive. Altogether, including the largest item - wearing apparel and ready money at £1 5 0d, his total estate was £4 17 0d.

Servants were in some respects better off. Resident servants were of two types - domestic and servants in husbandry - although judging by the amount of butter- and cheese-making, brewing and cider-making, flax spinning and so on which was carried out in larger farmhouses, the lines of distinction could be fine. What most writers in fact mean by this division is the same as that noted in 18th century parish books in Highley: "men" and "maids". This begs the question of how much farmwork even outside the home was done by women, a question which for Highley at this period we cannot even begin to answer.

There is some evidence for live-in service in Highley at the beginning of our period, albeit given retrospectively by elderly people in 1668-70. Not enough instances exist for more than tentative conclusions to be drawn, but their testimonies are nevertheless interesting. The most noticeable feature of the subsequent histories of the men quoted is their rise in status: they were all 'yeomen' and all living in neighbouring villages. It does look as if service of this nature was undertaken by the sons of yeomen and husbandmen as well as the poor. The men and women had all been in their twenties at the time they began their periods of service, which in most cases had not been long: where duration is mentioned it was always for two or three years, except in the case of one woman who had been eleven years the servant of the same master. Two women servants (of the three quoted) had also married yeomen after leaving service.

The children of yeomen families appear to have gone less frequently into temporary service in the 18th century, and there are increasing signs of the poverty of some servants. William Harris "poor servant to Mr. Lowbridge" was buried in 1726; Susannah George a "poor apprentice servant" in 1733. Numbers of live-in servants, however, show no sign of any real fall during our period. In 1756, for instance, there were still 20 resident servants in the village, of whom 11 were male. Kussmaul suggests a national figure of 13.4% of the population in service (from a group of 63 listings of inhabitants).[42] In late-17th century Highley, the percentage derived from the Easter Book (which excludes the vicar's household) was 12.2%. It appears to have been a little over 10% at the end of our period. One might expect Highley, with its lack of resident gentry, to have somewhat fewer servants than average. In fact, although about a quarter of all households had servants in the mid-18th century, numbers were not large - no-one had more than three, and one man and one maid was the norm.

The population of Highley divides once again during this period into those with land (whatever the type of tenure) and those without, or with only a garden and orchard. Those with a sizeable farm of perhaps 50 acres or more, even if only rented, could accumulate considerable cash and live in some comfort. The 'husbandman' or smaller farmer was noticeably less well off. Richard Baxter, the Puritan theologian who lived in both Bridgnorth to the north of Highley and Kidderminster to the south, described the hardships of the small farmer in the late 17th century.

"If their sow pig or their hen breed chickens, they cannot afford to eat them, but must sell them to make their rent. They cannot afford to eat the eggs that their hens lay, nor the apples nor the pears that grow on their trees..... but must make money of all. All the best of their butter and cheese they must sell....."[43]

Certainly the husbandman and smallholder in Highley was now part of a cash economy. Usually he had to pay a cash rent; and even freeholders did not have the land to provide the full range of crops and stock needed for self-sufficiency. Thus even the smallest farmer

turned to a cash-crop like hemp, and grew for profit rather than for home consumption. Cash was needed for services as well as for food; the blacksmith with his "money due in the shop book" had to be paid in cash, as did other tradesmen.

The smallest landholders were forced to turn to wage labour. This trend was exacerbated by enclosure when, as we have seen, cottagers appear to have lost valuable rights of common. We must beware, however, of attributing all changes in Highley's economic structures in the 17th century to enclosure. The polarisation of wealth, for instance, was a trend well-evidenced in villages which did not enclose at this date. Certainly the bad harvests of the 1620s and the rising cost of living throughout the first half of the century may well have forced Highley's smallest farmers off the land in any case. What enclosure did do was to accelerate trends already visible in the 16th century: numbers of landless labourers continued to increase; large farmers prospered at the expense of small; and the number of those living in permanent rather than cyclical poverty steadily rose.

- 1) P.R.O. C/30/15
- 2) S.R.O. 1671/ : Lease from M. Littleton to R. Rowley, 1607; Lease from M. Littleton to I Palmer, 1607.
- 3) J. Tonks, 'The Littleton Family and their Estates 1540-1640' (unpubl. M. Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1978).
- 4) S.P.L. Misc. Deeds No.1922 : Sale from R. Holloway to T. Lowe, 1610.
- 5) B.R.L. H.H.MMS.377994 : Court roll, 1609.
- 6) T. F. Duke, The Antiquities of Shropshire (1844).
- 7) S.R.O. 1080/ : Sale from M. Littleton to F. Holloway, 1618; S.R.O. 247/1 : Grant from M. Littleton to O. Harris, 1618.
- 8) S.R.O. 1671/ : Lease from M. Littleton to R. Rowley, 1607; Sale from M. Littleton to R. Rowley, 1618.
- 9) H.R.O. Highley glebe terrier, 1625.
- 10) S.R.O. 1277/Box 6 : Lease from M. Littleton to O. Harris, 1609.
- 11) S.P.L. Misc. Deeds No.428 : Release from T. Lowe to H. Grove, 1656.
- 12) P.R.O. E134 21 & 22 Chas II Hil.29.
- 13) S.P.L. Misc. Deeds No.650 : Sale from G.Pountney to S. Edmonds, 1639.
- 14) G.R.O. G/6 D2153/531-534 : Sales and quitclaims, 1661-62.
- 15) Harleian Society, The Visitations of Shropshire, Vols.I and II (London, 1889).
- 16) J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth century agriculture and social change', in Thirsk (ed.), Land Church and People, p.156.
- 17) S.R.O. 1671/ : Sale from T. Rogers to J. Amphlett, 1760.
- 18) P.R.O. E126/158; E126/406; E134 21 & 22 Chas.II Hil.29; H.R.O. Depositions Box 2 Vol.4.
- 19) G.R.O. G/6 D2153/572-3, 594-7, 604, 626-7, 643, 648-9 : Leases, 1701-1752.

- 20) Thirsk, 'Seventeenth century agriculture', in Thirsk (ed.), Land, Church and People, p. 157.
- 21) S.R.O. 1080/ : Sale from R. Cresswell to Bridgnorth Corporation, 1709.
- 22) Yelling, Common Field and Enclosure, pp.183-6.
- 23) G.R.O. G/6 D2153/648 : Lease from T. Weaver to R. Adams, 1752.
- 24) P. R. Edwards, 'The cattle trade of Shropshire in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', Midland History, vol.vi (1981).
- 25) Thirsk, 'Seventeenth century agriculture', in Thirsk (ed.), Land, Church and People, p. 171.
- 26) P.R.O. E134 21 & 22 Chas.II Hil.29.
- 27) P.R.O. E134 22Chas.II Mich.7.
- 28) S. Davies, Bewdley and the Severn Trow (Bewdley Museum Information Sheet, ND).
- 29) P.R.O. E179/167/201; P.R.O. E179/255/32.
- 30) Pole Book for the County of Shropshire (Shrewsbury, 1714).
- 31) W.R.O. Bearcroft Papers 705/95.
- 32) P.R.O. E179/255/24; E179/255/35.
- 33) P. Eden, Small Houses in England 1520-1820 (London, 1969).
- 34) P.R.O. E134 21 & 22 Chas.II Hil.29.
- 35) S.R.O.1671/ : Mortgage of property by T. Lowe, 1653.
- 36) Richardson, Local Historian's Encyclopedia, p.35.
- 37) P.R.O. E134 22 Chas.II Mich.7.
- 38) S.R.O. 1080/ : Sale from T. Lowe to J. Penne, 1655.
- 39) P.R.O. E134 22 Chas.II Mich.7.
- 40) Wrightson, English Society, p.148.
- 41) S.R.O. 1671/ : Mortgage of property by T. Lowe, 1653.
- 42) Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry.
- 43) Quoted in J. F. C. Harrison, The Common People (London, 1984) pp.137-7.

Chapter Five - Demography

The first indications of a possible total population size in the post-enclosure period date from the second half of the 17th century (the 1642 Protestation Return for Highley does not survive). Hearth Tax Returns and the Compton Religious Census of 1676 all indicate a population of about 150. These sources, and the additional parish Easter Book, are examined in more detail below: they are remarkably consistent in the estimates they provide.

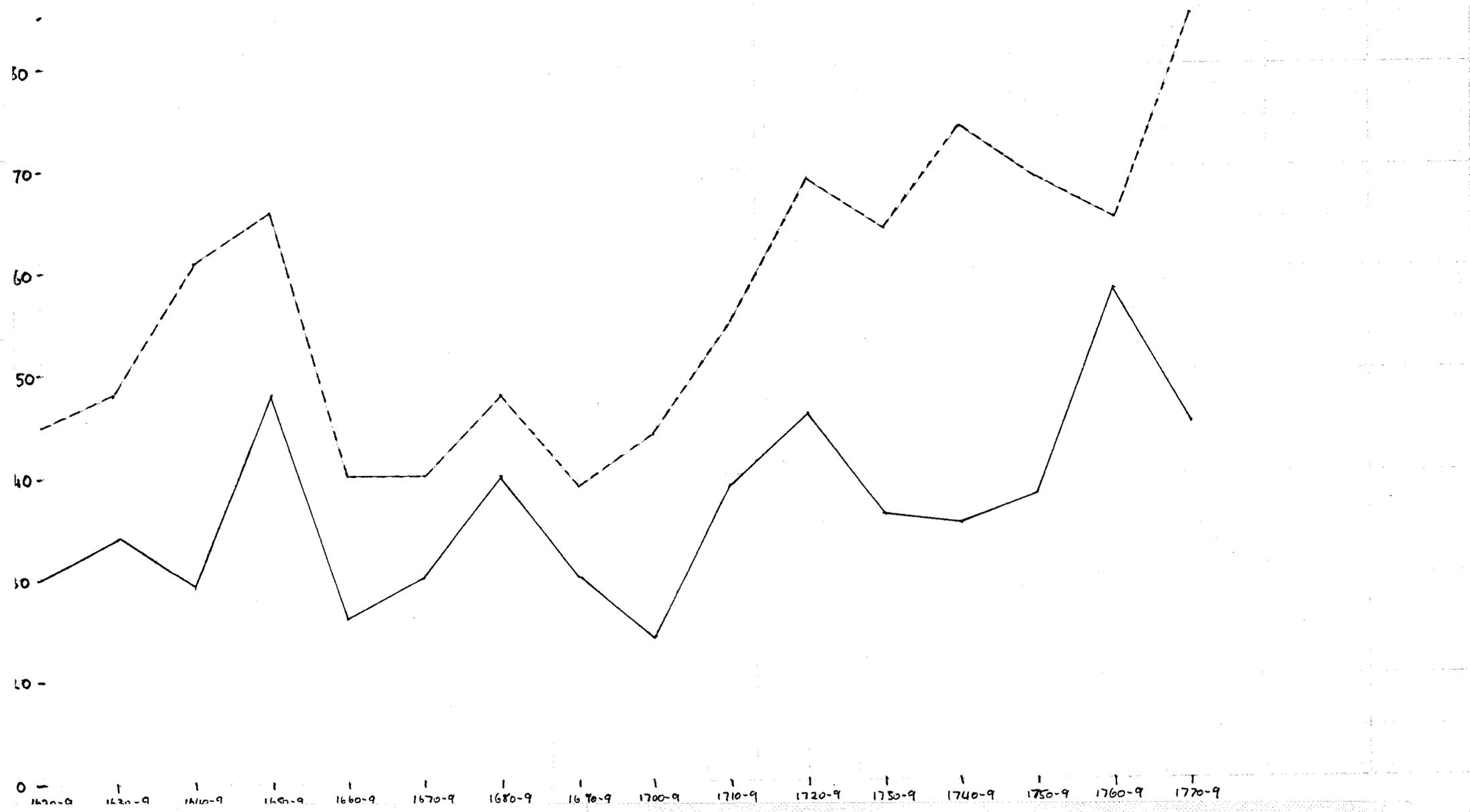
Eighteenth century sources are fewer. There are no central fiscal returns as there are for the 17th century; and the parochial sources on which we must rely in their absence, while unusually full, cannot be regarded as absolutely exhaustive, especially as mobility increased during the century. We have already seen the dangers of working from a known population total to a projected one by simple addition and subtraction:- in this case working back from 1801 would give a projected total in 1780 of 357; when in fact the population in 1801, after considerable immigration in the last two decades of the century, was only 274. Working forward from a total of 150 in 1680 produces an even more inflated estimate of 370. Thus the demographic potential for growth in the community was again severely curtailed by emigration.

The indications are that in fact the total village population did continue to grow slowly during the 18th century, and had probably reached 200 or a little more at the end of our period.

Fig.I shows a consistent surplus of births over deaths (the figures are simple decadal aggregates). The two come closest together in the late 17th century, when growth was slower than at any other time. There is no mid-century deficiency in the Highley registers, as is so often the case; the peaks in both baptisms and burials during the Commonwealth cast some doubt on the efficiency of immediate post-Restoration registration. The most rapid growth came towards the end of our period. Baptisms reached their peak in the 1770s, and were nearly double the total of burials. It is interesting that, immediately before industrial development in the village, Highley was an expanding community, with ever-increasing pressure

Fig. I

----- Baptisms
——— Burials



upon existing resources.

The period for which we can best estimate a birth rate, based on a population of 150 in the late 17th century, was, then, a period of relative stagnation; this is reflected in an annual birth rate 1670-89 of 29.3 per 1,000, with the death rate not far behind at 23.3 per 1,000. There was, however, no single decade when burials exceeded baptisms, although the 1720s and 1760s saw increased burials. This pattern, of growth before 1640, stagnation in the second half of the 17th century, and renewed and increasing growth after 1720, fits very closely the national trends observed by Wrigley and Schofield.[1]

Family size (see Fig.IX on p.161) has been computed as a mean size of completed families in the reconstitutable group over the period. This, surprisingly, shows a fall in marital fertility in the second half of the 18th century. As a check on this figure, we can arrive at a rough figure for family size by dividing the numbers of baptisms in the period by the number of marriages: by the first method we reach a figure of 4.18 mean family size in the period 1740-79; by the second, 4.12. Thus it seems that marital fertility was indeed falling in a period of growth, and at a time when, as we shall see, age at first marriage was also falling. One explanation for this, and for the decrease in burials (except in the 1760s) may be that many of the immigrants to Highley at this period were young, fertile couples. Furthermore, we must not forget that, our baptism totals also include extra-marital fertility: the increase in illegitimate births during this period will shortly be discussed.

In all, 109 couples baptised children at Highley in the first half of our period, 1620-1700; and 154 in the second half. This reflects partly in increase in total population, but also increased mobility, as more couples in the second period "pass through", baptising one or two children and then moving on. Thus by no means all of these 263 couples form reconstitutable families. In the pre-enclosure period, although migration by young individuals was considerable, we found only a small substratum of these transient couples. In the post-enclosure period, this group was considerably increased: 48 of the 109 couples mentioned in the baptism register between 1620

and 1699 were neither born nor buried in Highley. In the earlier period, this mobile group seemed to be landless labourers: in the 17th century this was also frequently the case, as the end of copyhold tenure and the increase in numbers of labourers after enclosure prompted this kind of movement. There was also however, more movement of landholding families than there had previously been.

Fig.II details mean birth intervals in reconstitutable families, with this long period divided in two equal halves. The mean of means over the whole period is 32.6 months between successive births. In the first half of the period, intervals were on the whole slightly longer than in the 18th century (mean of means 34.7 months). Fertility throughout was higher in the early years of marriage, as one would expect. A chief difference between the two sets of figures, however, is in the first interval, that between first and second children. In the 18th century this was a full half year, on average, less than in the earlier half of the period. The interval between the last two children in a family, however, which was significantly longer than the average interval in the 17th century at 42.8 months, fell in the 18th century to 34.2 months. This suggests partly that more marriages in the second period were broken by death during their fertile span; but also raises the possibility that there was less deliberate limitation of family size in the later period.

As in the 16th century, we find that the shortest intervals followed the death of the previous child in the first weeks of life. This is the case in virtually all instances where a birth interval is less than one and a half years.

Mean birth intervals were longer than those of the pre-enclosure period, and completed family size on average smaller. In the 17th century, large families were less frequent than they had been: in the whole 17th century group, there is only one family of ten children, and one of nine. In the 18th century, a very small minority of couples once again produced very large families - hence the decrease in birth intervals after the eighth child, for these couples were of necessity producing children at a faster-than-usual rate, otherwise the 13-child family would have taken over thirty years to complete.

	Interval (months)	N	Interval (months)	N
1st-2nd	32.1	47	26.1	63
2nd-3rd	30.3	44	31.5	55
3rd-4th	31.7	36	32.5	39
4th-5th	35.2	27	33.5	30
5th-6th	36.1	19	34.9	21
6th-7th	33.5	12	32.4	13
7th-8th	36.4	7	26.8	8
8th-9th	43.0	2	29.0	7
9th-10th	39.0	1	29.7	4
10th-11th			38.5	2

Mean Birth Intervals 1620-99 Mean Birth Intervals 1700-79

Fig.II

Yeoman families, who had had the large families of the pre-enclosure period, no longer did so. Presumably, with the availability of labour and the changing nature of agricultural production, they no longer felt the same compulsion to provide a family workforce. Artisans and labourers, whose family size in the 16th century was closer to the 17th century norm, made up an increasing proportion of the total population.

In the 18th century, the few very large families (one of 13, one of 12, two of 11, and so on) were produced not by farmers but by artisans and labourers. In spite of these exceptions family size was if anything somewhat lower in the second half of our present period. Noticeably more couples had only one or two children - only 39 of the 63-couple sample had more than three children, in spite of a generally lower age at first marriage. Early death of one of the partners accounts for some of these small families, of

course, as does the concomitant number of second marriages, often contracted at a mature age. In addition, however, some couples who survived for thirty years after the completion of their family still only produced two or three children.

A considerable proportion of marriages was indeed a second marriage for one or both parties. Of the 63 male partners in the reconstituted group 1620-99, eleven were married twice. As a result of late marriage and second marriage to a younger woman, some men continued to father children into old age. Henry Pountney, born in 1580, baptised the last of his 17 children by two wives in 1649, while the Rev. Giles Rawlins mentioned in his will "my child yet unborn" - a daughter baptised in 1678, six months after her father's death at the age of 76.[2]

For much of our period, late age at first marriage was a limiting factor on marital fertility. Fig.III shows mean age at first marriage for men and women. The relatively late age at marriage at which the evidence for the pre-enclosure period hinted was continued in the 17th century, and even increased somewhat. Age at first marriage for women was steadily around 27 years until the second part of the 18th century, when it fell noticeably. For men in the 17th century the mean age was even higher, rising as high as 33.7 years in the late 17th century.

	1620-59	1660-99	1700-39	1740-79
men	30.2	33.7	27.0	27.2
women	27.4	27.4	27.9	23.2

Fig.III Mean age at first marriage, in years.

The fall in marriage age for men began earlier than that for women, in the first half of the 18th century.¹ Kussmaul has

¹To increase numbers in our sample of male age at marriage, those Highley-born men who married in neighbouring parishes and brought brides back to the village have been included where the marriage is traceable in printed parish registers of the International Genealogical Index of the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

suggested that falling marriage ages may be the result of a decline in numbers of living-in servants, who had economic incentives to delay setting up home as day labourers.[3] This is a suggestion which will be further explored when we come to examine servants in more detail.

A further limitation on family size was the frequency with which early death interrupted the fertile span of a marriage. If we examine only those cases where the death of a parent occurred less than three years after the birth of a child, we find 22 instances in the 17th century alone - although in the pre-enclosure period this was an unusual occurrence. In 12 of these 22 cases, it was the husband who died (as we have noted, men's greater fertility span meant that some of these husbands were by no means young). Of the ten wives who died in these marriages, only one appears to have done so directly as a result of childbirth.

In the period 1700-79, there were 21 marriages interrupted in this way leaving a youngest child of less than three. In 12 instances the man died first, and of the nine women, three died during or immediately after childbirth.

The surviving widows and widowers, left with small children, had a clear incentive to remarry. Of the ten widowers in the 17th century group, seven are known to have re-married, and to have done so quite rapidly - after a mean interval of less than two years. Of the other three, one left the village, and another died himself within four years of his wife's death. The picture with widows at this time is less clear - only two of the twelve re-married at Highley, but several left Highley (which was usually not their native place), either to re-marry elsewhere or to return to live nearer their own families. The picture is similarly obscured by migration in the 18th century: almost half the widowed did not remain in Highley. Of the ten who did, five re-married and five did not. There is a suggestion that rapid re-marriage was less urgent (or less possible) than it had been, for although the sample is small, the re-marriages took place after a longer interval, an average of $4\frac{1}{2}$ years after bereavement.

These interrupted marriages also meant that there were

considerable numbers of young orphans in the community: children who had lost at least one parent. They were not, of course, the only orphans. With age at first marriage high, and fertility continuing well into middle age, especially for men, children under 14 were frequently deprived of one parent if not both.

Marriages were, on the whole, shorter than they had been in the pre-enclosure period, for although we still find the occasional marriage of 40 years or more, such frequency of death in the earlier years of a marriage clearly affected mean duration; and even when both partners survived to complete childbearing, a duration of 25-30 years was the norm.

In the period 1620-99, we can arrive at a figure for duration of marriage in 52 cases, including some minimum durations where the baptism of a man, and of his children, and the burials of husband and wife are traceable, but the marriage took place elsewhere. In these cases the marriage duration has been reckoned from from the birth of the first child, the real figure being a year or more greater. The mean duration of actual marriages in this period was 23.2 years; and of all including minimum figures was 22.5. Thus, as we have seen, second marriage was frequent. Given reasonable longevity, some, like Henry Pountney whose first marriage lasted for 25 years and second for 27, achieved two 'average' marriages in their lifetime. A long first marriage did not preclude re-marriage by the surviving partner: Alan Fenn's first marriage lasted for 44 years, the longest in the period; yet he re-married four years before his death. Others faced a long widowhood. Richard Strefford's first marriage lasted for only two or three years, and produced one child. He re-married, and died shortly afterwards, at the age of 30, in 1672. His widow, left with one child of her own and the daughter of her husband's first marriage, lived until 1706.

Between 1700 and 1779, a total of 51 'exact' marriages had a mean duration of 23.4 years. (the figure was 23.6 including 'minimum' durations). There were more long marriages during this period, as one might expect with age at marriage decreasing: nearly a quarter of the marriages in our group lasted for forty years or more. This is off-set by considerable numbers of marriages broken

by death after five years or less.

Throughout the post-enclosure period, then, the average marriage lasted for 23 years or so: considerably less than in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The elderly widowed showed an increased tendency to re-marry. The chief difference, however, was in the numbers of families which contained step-brothers and sisters, and even occasionally children who were no blood relation at all to the head of the household.

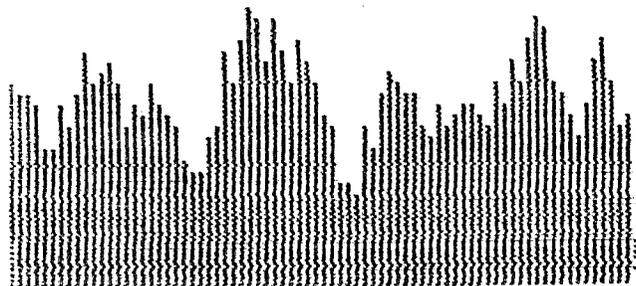
We have postulated a death rate of 23.3 per thousand in the late 17th century, which accords very well with Wrigley and Schofield's finding that death rates in "pre-industrial England" were usually between 22 and 27 per thousand per annum. There are no sudden peaks in burials during our period of a sufficient magnitude to suggest epidemics of any kind. Fig.IV shows five-year moving totals throughout the period, which indicate raised levels of mortality in the 1720s and 1760s. At neither period, however, did burials exceed baptisms.

Leaving aside for the moment juvenile mortality, Fig.V shows mean age at death (by decade of death) for all those over 15 for whom age can be determined. Interestingly, this figure is highest in the difficult 1620s, marked elsewhere by outbreaks of death from disease and malnutrition, and falls to its lowest in the last decades of the 17th century. During the 18th century, figures for age at death are increasingly difficult to compute, as fewer of each death cohort can be traced back to baptisms. (The dotted lines on Fig.V represent decades where totals are particularly low.) Generally speaking, the trend was a falling age at adult death during the 17th century (from a pre-enclosure high), and a rising age at death during much of the 18th century.

These mean figures conceal considerable variations; deaths in the late teens were by no means uncommon, while several people throughout the period survived into their late eighties.

In the 17th century there was little difference between ages at death of adult men and women:- a mean age of 55.5 years for women and 55.9 for men. However, considerably more women died in middle age than did men. 21.4% of women whose age at death is known died in their forties, while only 7.9% of men did so. More women

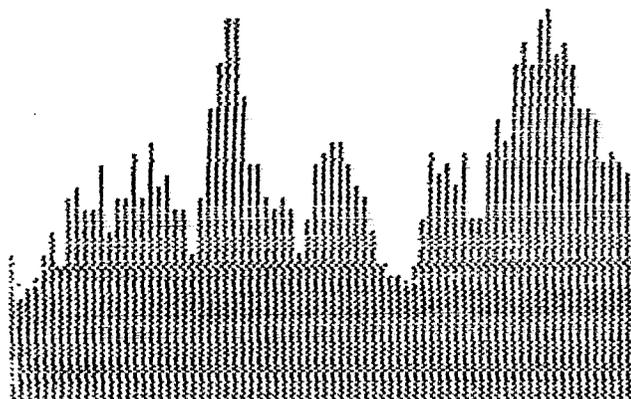
1620-1629 = 10
1630-1639 = 14
1640-1649 = 10
1650-1659 = 10



1620s

1650s

1680-1689 = 15
1690-1699 = 14
1700-1709 = 14
1710-1719 = 15



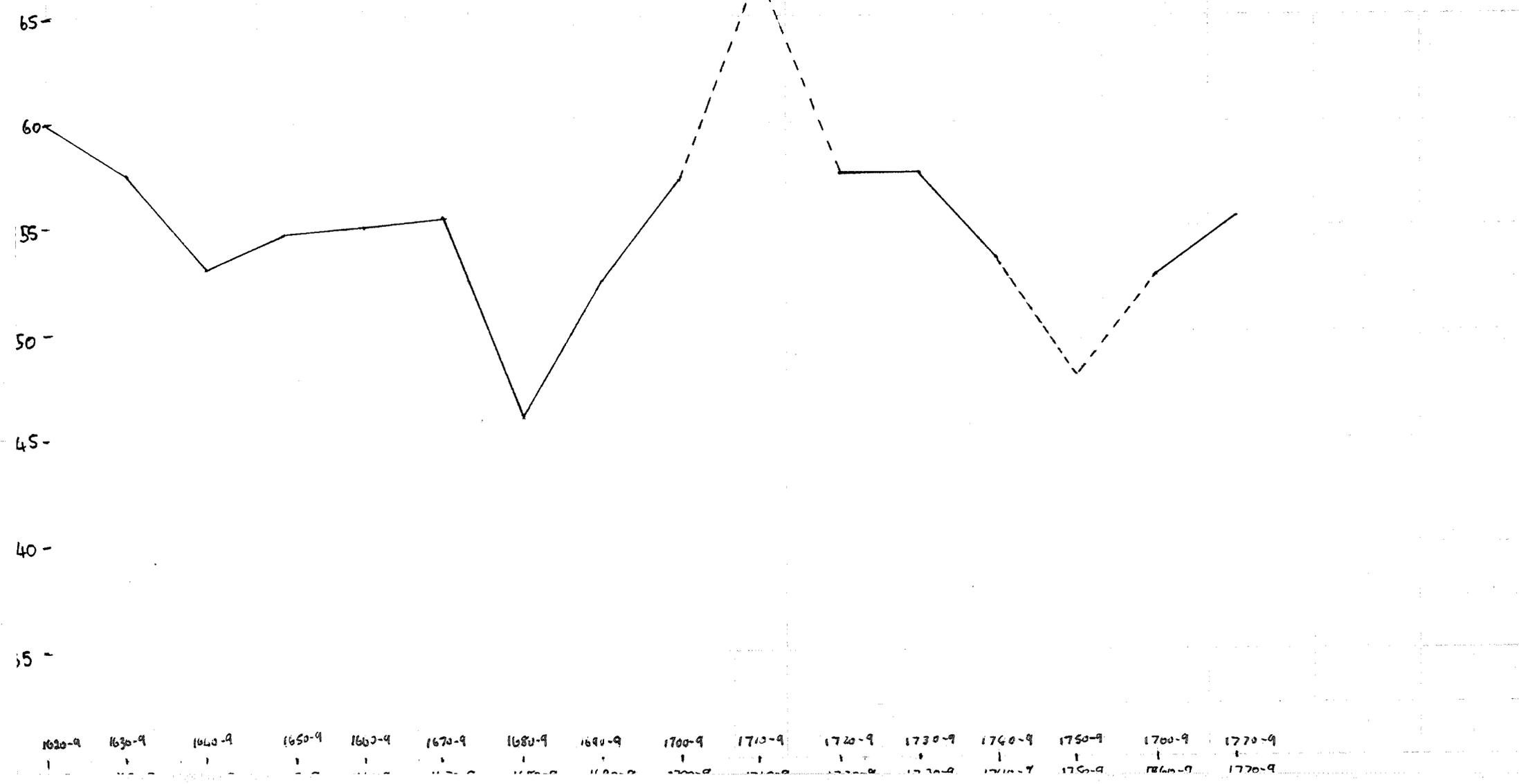
1700s

1760s

Fig. IV 5-year moving totals of burials

Mean age at adult death

Fig. 5



than men reached extreme old age, on the other hand.

In the period 1700-79, men averaged 60.5 years at death, while women only achieved a mean of 52.4 years. Women were again at greater risk in the middle years of life, with 41.5% of all female deaths occurring under fifty but only 21.5% of male deaths.

As in the pre-enclosure period, it is rarely possible to determine the cause of death. Death in childbirth was a hazard for women, but not a major one. It is likely that the considerable numbers of women who died in middle age died from gynaecological causes and anaemia, possibly exacerbated by malnutrition. Some families had more than their share of early deaths, possibly as a result of the spread of an infectious disease like tuberculosis within a family: as with the three sons of Thomas Lowe, who all died between 1623 and 1629, in their early thirties.

Some deaths by accident are recorded. Francis Dovey in 1733 was "killed with a Gunn-shot accidentally", a perennial hazard in an agricultural community. Drownings, in a parish bounded on three sides by waterways, were also not uncommon. The young and the old were especially at risk: Thomas Hancox, for instance, who "drowned accidentally in the Borle Mill Pond" was eighty years old at the time. Coroner's Inquisitions are only found in Quarter Sessions papers from the second half of the 18th century. Those that do fall within our present period show drowning as the major cause of sudden death in the parish. Between 1770 and 1775, four cases of drowning at Highley required inquests - three of the drowned men had fallen from barges on the Severn, and a fourth had gone out with his brother in a small boat which capsized.[4]

Only one violent death is recorded in our period. In 1685, Oliver Harris was "slain at Bridgnorth Fair upon St. Luke's Day". Although no further record of the event has come to light, this does not sound like accidental death.

Nevertheless, there were some long-livers: several men and women (especially the latter) survived to 85 and a few, like Joan Palmer who was married in 1637 and lived until 1706, were almost certainly more.

For most of the period, then, those who survived to the age of 16 consistently achieved a mean age at death of around 55

years. Of course, actual life expectancy at birth was considerably lower than this, because of the levels of juvenile mortality.¹ Fig.VI distinguishes between infant mortality - under one year - and child, up to 15. At the beginning of this post-enclosure period, in the 1620s, juvenile mortality was high(24.3%), continuing the rise already noted from a low-point in the 1580s. A second low was reached in the second half of the 17th century, before juvenile mortality increased to something approaching (though never quite attaining) its previous highest levels.

	1620-0	1630-0	1640-9	1650-9	1660-9	1670-9
infant	16.2%	12.0%	15.6%	11.8%	5.4%	7.3%
child	8.1%	-	4.6%	3.3%	2.7%	4.8%
	1680-9	1690-9	1700-9	1710-9	1720-9	1730-9
infant	10.2%	9.5%	6.8%	16.3%	11.5%	14.0%
child	-	2.3%	4.5%	5.4%	4.3%	6.2%
	1740-9	1750-9	1760-9	1770-9		
infant	12.1%	11.5%	16.9%	5.8%		
child	5.4%	4.3%	4.6%	5.8%		

Fig.VI Infant and child mortality as a % of those baptised.

In his study of the demographic situation in seventeen parishes in the industrial area of Shropshire centred on Coalbrookdale for the period 1711-60, Sogner found juvenile mortality percentages considerably higher than those of Highley, largely because his figures for child mortality are much greater.[5] In Highley, infant mortality

¹It is of course possible to compute mean life expectancy at birth, but the figure is over-pessimistic because, as links are obvious when baptism and burial are chronologically close, age at death figures are unduly weighted by juveniles.

far exceeded that of children throughout: although the possibility remains that further under-15s may have died elsewhere after leaving the village - which may explain Sogner's higher figures if individuals were traced over the seventeen parishes. This is not made quite clear: it seems rather that children were counted as such if recorded as son or daughter of a named individual. In Highley registers, this would give a considerably inflated figure, as those so recorded were frequently in their late teens or twenties. One would expect the rapidly-growing industrial centre of the county to be less healthy than a small, exclusively rural community.

Nevertheless, Highley's relatively 'good' juvenile mortality levels meant in practical terms that, with a mean family size of four or five, at all periods except the later 17th century, all couples must face the prospect of losing one child. Fig.VII illustrates this by showing all juvenile mortality as a percentage of baptisms throughout the period.

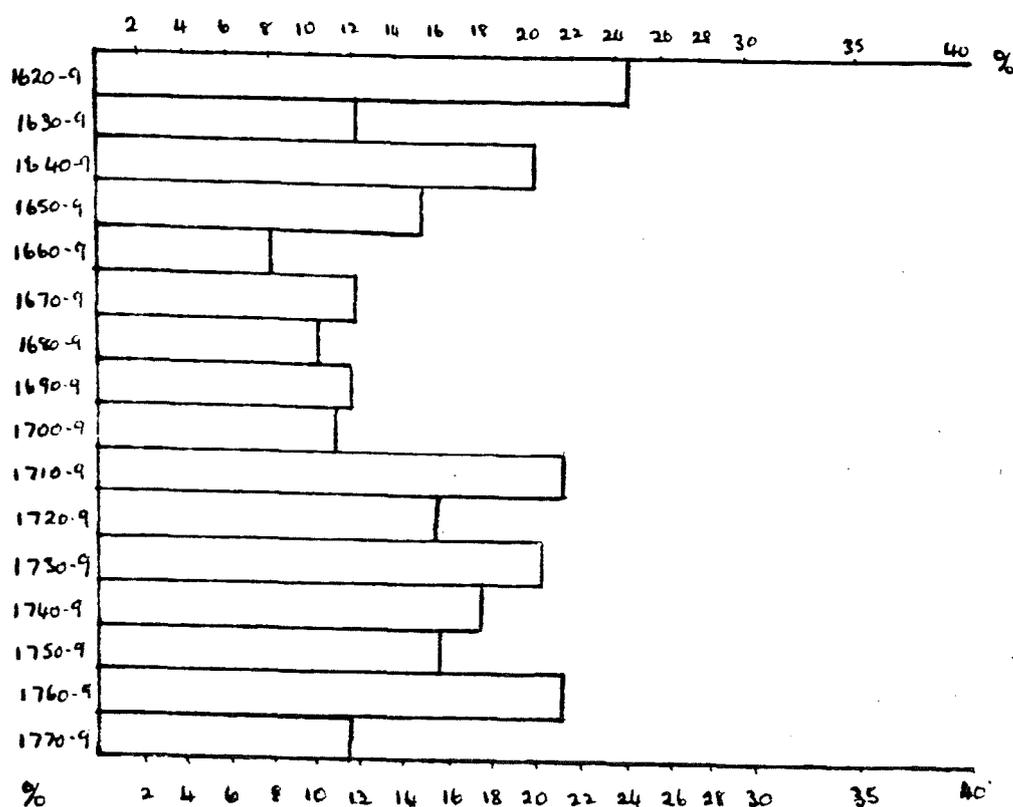


Fig.VII Juvenile mortality as a % of those baptised.

A comparison of Fig.VII with Fig.V reveals a degree of inverse correlation between adult and juvenile deaths - the decades with a higher percentage of the latter tended to be those when adults lived longer. Sogner in his much larger study found a similar relationship, with juvenile burials declining when adult ones increased.

Thus demographic aspects for most of this period were not as favourable as in the pre-enclosure period. Most people did not live as long, and were more likely to lose a marriage partner. There were more widowed and orphans in the community. Children were born at increased intervals, possibly because of poorer general nutrition levels. Juvenile mortality levels were only slightly lower than in the 16th century at their best, and for much of the 18th century were worse.

To judge some of the impact of these demographic factors on the community, it is necessary to look in more detail at actual households. In the first part of our period, this is practically impossible: however, from 1678 the vicar's Easter Book survives.[6] This does not provide a comprehensive listing of inhabitants; it does, though, list almost all heads of household by name, and the other resident adults by description - including living-in servants. This, together with parish registers, witnesses' depositions and the Hearth Tax returns, enables us to form a good idea of the village population size and household composition in the late 17th century.[7]

The Easter Book continues into the 19th century, with varying degrees of reliability and completeness. It is somewhat complicated to use, for not everyone paid their dues every year: several people paid two or even three years at once. Therefore we must consider a span of two or three years, rather than one single year. Furthermore, four families known to be resident in the 1680s, besides the vicar himself, were not included - probably on the grounds of poverty, as all four were exempt from Hearth Tax payments on these grounds. The very poor were, it seems, excluded from the Easter Book throughout. Because of these limitations, the Easter Book is most valuable for those periods when other corroborative evidence exists.

An attempt was made to enumerate the total population of Highley in 1680, using Easter Book entries 1680-82 together with the parish registers. As children under communicant age are not included in the former, all children under 15 born to couples on the listing (and not buried before 1680) were added, as were the four poor families not on the listing. While this method cannot of course claim complete accuracy, it does provide numbers in striking agreement with estimates based on the 1672 Hearth Tax return and the Compton Religious Census of 1676.[8] The latter gives a figure of 106 adults: the c.1680 compilation has 105. The actual number of children in the 1680 compilation is 42, or 28.6% of the total. Wrigley and Schofield have pointed out that many estimates of population reached by working from the Compton Census on an assumption that children made up 40% of the total are too high, and find that 30% is a much more usual figure in the late 17th century.[9] This certainly seems to have been the case in Highley. The total population derived from the 1680 head-count is 147.

The 1676 figures do not give any indication of the number of households in the parish. The 1672 Hearth Tax return, together with exemptions, lists 37 households. Our compilation has 38. This would mean an average household size of just under four (3.86 on 1680-2 figures). Laslett suggests a "fairly constant" mean household size of 4.75 in pre-industrial England, while speculating that in smaller communities it was probably somewhat higher.¹ Household size in late-17th century Highley, then would seem to have been somewhat lower than the norm. A partial explanation for this is the absence of any very large gentry household. The 'Squire' did not actually live in the new house he had had built, but merely kept a steward and servant in residence at this date.

Of the 38 households in 1680, 27 were headed by a married man. Six heads of household were widowed and five (all men) were single. The majority of households contained children under 15: twenty of the 38 householders had baptised children in the previous

¹Though there is little to support this view in the table of 100 parishes appended to his essay 'England: the household over three centuries' in Household and Family in Past Time, ed. P. Laslett and R. Wall (Cambridge, 1972).

fourteen years, although the Easter Book is silent with regard to them. 'Adult children', as it were, are mentioned - and have been presumed to have left home if they are not. Seven households contained children over 14: sometimes these are listed by Christian name, on other occasions merely as "son" or "daughter". These were not necessarily adolescents. Thomas Dorsett aged 25 lived at home, for instance, as did Richard and Thomas Hancocks who were in their late twenties. Adult daughters, as well as sons, were sometimes in the parental household well into their twenties.

Not all households consisted of parents and children alone. In four cases, elderly parents were part of their sons' households, though not the head of it. In all cases, the son was married, which appears to be a significant distinction. Where widowed parents lived with single children, whatever their age, it seems to be the parent who is nominated head of the household. The four three-generation families are clearly defined as having a resident grandmother or grandfather (in fact two of each) who is mentioned after both the head of household and his wife.

Similarly, another four householders had resident siblings, who are also listed last. Sometimes this arrangement appears to be of long standing, as with Thomas Hancocks, a single man of 52, who lived with his 60 year old brother, sister-in-law and their three adult children. In other cases it would seem that the householder had been recently elevated to that status, like Francis Holloway aged 26 and newly married, whose father and unmarried 24 year old sister also lived with him.

There were a total of 18 living-in servants in 12 households. Although the vicar's family is not enumerated in the Easter Book, it too may safely be assumed to have had at least one living-in servant, and probably more. Therefore 13 out of 38 households had resident servants - ten female and eight male. These servants are rarely named, unfortunately. Of the half-dozen who are, only two were Highley-born - a man of 21 and a woman of 29.

Four of the households apparently consisted of a single individual, all men. Two of these single men subsequently married; the other two bachelors were Thomas Edmunds aged 25 and Thomas

Pearson, 49, neither of whom seem to have done so. The adult spinster was presumably in a more difficult position, and usually had to live in the parental home. Margaret Matthews, however, chose to live with her married brother although both her parents were alive and living in Highley. One single woman, Elizabeth Comby (who was a relative of the previous vicar's widow) appears to have been a lodger in the household of John Smith. Otherwise, rather surprisingly, there are no indications of lodgers.

Households typically consisted of parents and children, although at some stage they could be expected to contain an elderly grandparent or adult sibling. About a third of households in Highley also included servants at this date. There are indications that the nuclear family was the goal, and a more extended family grouping was born of economic necessity. Where circumstance permitted, married children formed their own households: indeed, there is no instance of two married couples living in the same household.

The age-structure of the community is difficult to recover with any accuracy. The presence of the 43 children can only be conjectural; of the 105 adults, eighteen were servants whose ages are generally unknown; and of course not all of the remainder were born at Highley. However, in most cases the ages of children, or of a spouse, enable us to assign those whose exact birthdate is unknown to an age-band with reasonable confidence.

Fig.VIII illustrates the results. Although with so many riders this age-structure diagram must be approached with caution, it nevertheless has some interesting features - not least the relative youth of the community. The 15-19 group is very small. It appears that young people of this age were likely to be away from home, probably often working as servants elsewhere. This group would presumably be greatly increased if we could include in it the unnamed servants, who are the only individuals omitted from the diagram. The 20-29 group is the largest. It contains those in two distinct situations; married couples, sometimes immigrants, with young children; and unmarried adults living with parents, several of whom (especially women) would leave the village upon marriage. There were very few old inhabitants: indeed mean age at death for the decade 1680-89 was the lowest of the century. It appears, then, that 30%

of the population in the late 17th century were children, and altogether over two-thirds were under 40.

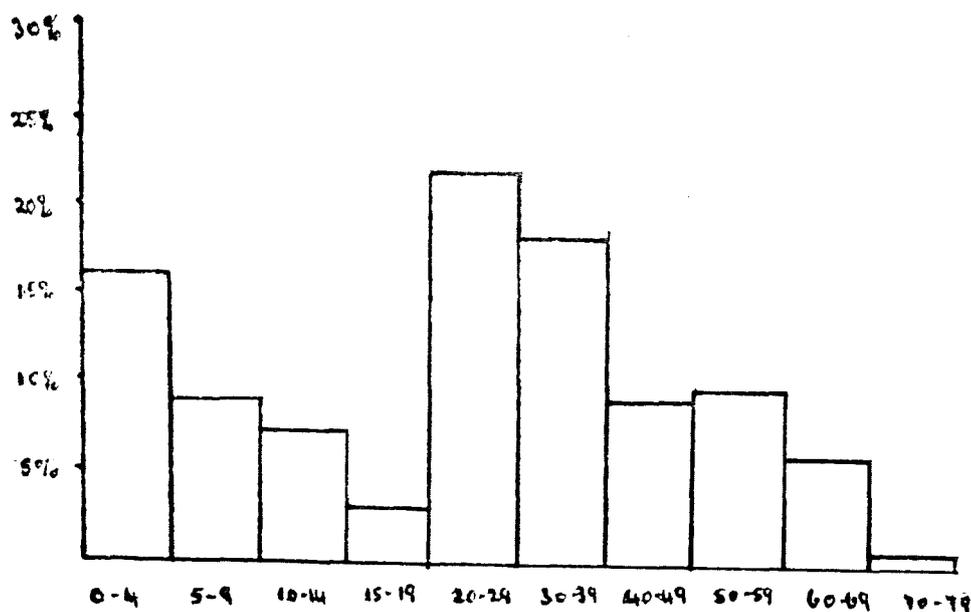


Fig.VIII Age-structure c.1680

The small percentage of elderly - about 7% were over 60 - was not unusual. Laslett finds that the percentage of over-60s rarely exceeded 8% until the 19th century.[10] Because of late marriage and prolonged fertility, some over-60s still had children at home: the youngest child of William Jeffrey (born 1617) was only four years old in 1680. Others, as we have seen, had moved in with married sons. The position of the elderly depended to a certain extent on economic status, and we shall re-examine our listing with regard to social structure and mobility at a later stage.

The wealth of data for this period enables us to shed some light on questions arising from the demographic background which for most other periods we cannot answer. For instance, we have seen that marriages were quite often broken by death, leaving young orphaned children. Usually only one parent was lost, but occasionally

children were deprived of both parents. Consecutive Easter Book entries show what arrangements were made in one case where this happened.

Oliver Harris of Woodend Farm was killed at Bridgnorth Fair in October 1685. Less than two years later, in August 1687, his widow died, leaving their four children, Elizabeth aged 18; Mary, 14; Richard 11, and George aged seven. Their maternal uncle Edmund Palmer moved into Woodend Farm where he lived with three of the children. Mary moved in with her grandmother and another uncle, at the Palmer family farm. This arrangement continued until 1699 when Richard Harris, then aged 23, married. In 1700 Richard and his wife, and Elizabeth and George all lived together. Edmund Palmer, now aged 48, had moved out, presumably at the time of Richard's marriage (and, incidentally, now free of family obligations he himself married).

This kind of help by the extended family must have been a relatively common occurrence, although the desire to keep on Harris' farm affected the particular arrangements made. It seems that such circumstances could also delay marriage - Edmund Palmer married at 48, immediately he had discharged his duties to his nieces and nephews. Elizabeth Harris, too, in charge of the domestic side of the household, was unmarried at 31 when her brother married.

The majority of the population did, eventually, marry. Of the 32 over-40s in 1680, for instance, 23 were married and seven widowed. Only two people had never married, both men.

Decreasing family size, and increased birth intervals which ensured that all children of a family rarely lived at home together for any length of time, meant that large households were rare. Three men headed households of seven, including children and servants: otherwise five is the maximum. For the same reasons, and because of infant mortality levels, no family had more than four children under 15.

Our compilation based on the Easter Book shows the cyclical nature of household structure: the couple with young children may be joined by an elderly parent, and the household is then at its largest; older children leave perhaps before the youngest are

even born; young adults, especially sons, may well return for a time in their early twenties before marrying and setting up their own home; the couple probably have children at home until they are into old age; when widowed, the surviving partner may well move in with the married son in his or her turn. All these stages of development can be seen in the households of Highley c.1680.

The Easter Book is never quite so full again during our present period. However, at certain dates it can profitably be combined with other sources to give at least an impression of population growth and household size.

The Easter Book for 1696-7 can be used in conjunction with the Association Oath Roll of 1696, which lists 36 male subscribers to the Oath.[11] Not all signatories were heads of household, although the great majority - 29 out of the 36 - were. A combination of the two sources produces a total of 40 households. Extended family groupings were still very much in the minority:- four households had resident widowed parents, two had adult siblings of the head, and one contained nieces and nephews. Nine families had living-in servants - 14 servants in all. A total of 15 adult children is listed, noticeably predominating in more prosperous families.

A head-count of individuals suggests a total population at the end of the 17th century of 145, no larger than the 1680 population, which is compatible with the demographic stagnation previously noted. This would give a mean household size of only 3.6. The birth rate during the 1690s, assuming a population of 150, was only 26 per 1,000 p.a., and this is reflected in the small household size and in the proportion of children in the community, which had fallen to only 27%.

This, then, is the position in the late 17th century. The population of Highley can confidently be assessed at around 150, perhaps slightly lower than it had been in mid-century. Households were relatively small and predominantly nuclear, only 10-15% having other resident kin at any one time. The addition of servants to the household was more usual than that of members of the extended family. Not all adolescents left home, though to remain was more usual in landholding families with a farm to run. The complete absence of

dual-couple households suggests that upon marriage young couples set up home separately, only later providing a home for a widowed parent.

Our conclusions for the 18th century are more tentative. The number of those exempted from payment of Easter dues on the grounds of poverty appears to have grown in the early years of the century: the Easter Book for the years 1706-8 yields a list of only 24 households. At least six householders known to be resident were omitted on these grounds, as well as two for unknown reasons. With the vicar's own household, this gives a minimum total of 33. This list contains 82 adults: parish registers show that in 1708 they would have had 48 children under 15. This would indicate a total population of only 130, and a mean household size of almost exactly 4. This total seems suspiciously low, and it may be that a few individuals who were very poor and not mentioned in parish registers have been missed. On the other hand, natural growth had, as we have seen, been very low at the end of the 17th century, and net emigration had previously been high enough to offset a considerably greater natural growth rate. Growth was beginning again, if the proportion of children in the community is a guide: children on our list form 36.9% of the total population.

Family groups were even more exclusively nuclear in this listing: none of the 24 Easter Book householders had resident siblings, and only two shared their homes with elderly parents (in one case, Henry the widowed father of Thomas Wilks, who had lived with his son's family for at least ten years, had re-married, and his wife had joined the household. This is the only instance of two married couples living together apparent from all the listings.)

Adult children are only specified in the households of the more substantial farmers of the village. They were mostly in their twenties, but could be considerably older - the two sons of Joan Palmer were in their sixties, though their mother, in spite of her very advanced age, was the nominal head of the household.

Seven of the 24 households were headed by a widow (3) or widower (4). Five households consisted of an individual living alone including, for the first time, a woman - Margery Charnock, a 56 year old spinster who had lived as a servant in the household of

John and Alice Person until the death of the former in 1700.

Our next opportunity to compile a listing with any confidence is for 1726. Firstly, the Easter Book is fuller than usual for this year, and also includes a list of individuals paying tithe eggs which includes some otherwise exempt. In addition, the earliest Poors Book to survive begins in 1724/5 and lists poor rate levies collected as well as those to whom relief was given. The compilation produces 47 households (or 44 if the four people called Edmunds, all related, and assessed in the Easter book separately did not, in fact, live alone but shared a home), and a total population of 165.

Reference to Fig.I reminds us that baptisms had increased markedly in the first quarter of the 18th century. In fact in the 1726 list the percentage of children is exactly 40% of the total.

The now familiar pattern of parents-plus-children households was continued, with virtually no extended family households. There were, however, more people living alone than previously, possibly a reflection of the increased death rates in the 1720s. The adult children (and one nephew) still at home were, in eight out of ten cases, young men from farming families whose labour was useful there. Additional labour was provided by 16 servants, nine of them men.

The numbers of people living alone keep the mean household size below four (3.75 on 44 households). The largest household was that of Benjamin Pountney, which consisted of the head, his wife, Luke Bennet a "manservant", nephew John Pountney, 19 year old son Benjamin, and three younger children aged between five and 14 - a total of eight.

The community, then was apparently growing in spite of an increase in burials in this decade. With an estimated population of 165, annual death rate was still below 30 per 1,000, and birth rate over 40.

Listings in the rest of the first Easter Book, which end in 1765, are less satisfactory. The best is that for 1743, which even so is noticeably less thorough than 17th century entries,

frequently being confined to the head of household and his wife. There are, for instance, only seven servants recorded. Supplementing this list with information from poor rate receipts and disbursements, we arrive at figures which can only be taken as a guide to population totals. The compilation produces a suggested total of 160, of whom 37.5% were children.

By the end of our period, the total village population was probably closer to 200. A head-count based on parochial data for 1767, which includes no servants or adult children, totals 171. Certainly the increased growth rates of 1740-60 could be expected to result in an increase in population. In the last decade of our period, growth was at its greatest. A population of 200 would mean that in the 1770s, Highley experienced a death rate of 22.5 per thousand p.a. (on the low side of the normal range of 22-28 reported by Wrigley and Schofield); while birth rate at 42.5 per 1,000 was at the very top of the nationally-observed range.[12]

This accelerated growth at a period immediately before industrial development in Highley must be born in mind when we come to examine the nature of that development, for although extractive industries such as Highley's are necessarily dependent on geology, Levine has shown how demographic factors were capable of influencing the timing and pattern of industrialisation.[13]

We have seen that baptisms of illegitimate children in Highley in the 16th and early 17th centuries were very few. Fig.IX shows illegitimacy ratios for the period 1620-1779: ratios which are consistently higher than for the pre-enclosure period. Just as in the earlier period Highley displayed illegitimacy figures at odds with nationally-observed trends, so in this period - or at least in the 17th century - the figures are at variance with those observed elsewhere.[14] Parishes studied by Laslett, Oosterveen, Levine, Wrightson and others display a peak in illegitimacy around 1600, and a trough in mid-17th century, before a marked rise in the second half of the 18th century. Of these characteristics, Highley displays only the latter.

	Age at marriage (women)	Bridal pregnancy	Marital fertility ¹	Illegitimacy ratio
1620-59	27.4 yr	22.2%	5.06	4.1%
1660-99	27.4 yr	27.3%	4.44	5.4%
1700-39	27.9 yr	23.8%	5.4	3.4%
1740-79	23.2 yr	17.9.	4.18	8.1%

Fig.IX

In a small parish, numbers involved are necessarily low. Nevertheless, Fig.IX demonstrates consistently high illegitimacy ratios, and when we consider that these represent only those cases recorded in the parish registers, we see that this ratio is in fact a minimum figure.

In fact registration of bastardy appears to have been reliable throughout this period. Where documentation other than the parish register survives relating to bastardy cases, the relevant baptisms are without exception found in the register, with an indication of illegitimacy. This indication is usually the addition of the word 'base' followed by the name of the mother only, though occasionally (and in the first half of the 18th century regularly) the name of the 'supposed' or 'reputed' father is added.

In the period 1620-1659, the illegitimacy ratio was 4.1%. There is no sign of a decline in illegitimacy during the Interregnum, during which period registration of baptisms in general is at least as good as before 1640, and if anything rather better than after 1660. It has been suggested that the usual falling-off of illegitimacy at this time may in fact have had more to do with changing registration practices than with Puritan controls on sexual behaviour.[15] If so, then Highley's ratio may not be so unusual.

¹Number of children per completed family.

The low point in the illegitimacy ratio for the parish was in the first forty years of the 18th century (though Highley's 'low' could well have been a 'high' in other less bastard-prone areas), when Highley's ratio of 3.4% compares with a national rate, as indicated by Laslett, climbing steadily towards 3%.[16]

Between 1740 and 1780, the period immediately before industrial development in the parish, Highley's ratio climbed to 8.13%, a figure only reached nationally in the second half of the 20th century. Significantly, it was in this period that age at first marriage for women fell from a consistent mean of 27 years to only a little over 23. (See Fig.III.) This inverse ratio between age at marriage and illegitimacy indicates that we cannot look to late marriage as a possible explanation of rising bastardy ratios. Neither does the evidence support the view that illegitimate fertility merely followed the trend of legitimate. Fig.IX shows that marital fertility was in fact somewhat lower at times of higher illegitimacy.¹

The remaining column of Fig.IX details pre-nuptial pregnancy. These figures are interesting, although because sample sizes are generally small and because Highley's experience seems again at odds with national trends, so far as they have been established, where bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy rates follow very similar patterns, any conclusions must be tentative.[17]² Taken in conjunction with the figures for the pre-enclosure period when, it will be remembered, illegitimacy was very low but bridal pregnancy much more frequent, they do, however, support the hypothesis that what we see here is a change in moral regulation within the community.

¹These figures are discussed on page 139 above

²However, Quaife reports a similar inverse relationship between bastardy and bridal pregnancy in the parish of Aller in Somerset in the 17th century. (G. R. Quaife, Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives, London, 1979).

In the pre-enclosure period, sexual activity before marriage was commonplace at all levels of village society: Pountney, Palmer and other Class I brides were pregnant as well as those from cottager families. In the later 17th and 18th centuries, pregnant brides were not only less usual, but were also from poorer families. This argues a change in mores among the village elite of tenant farmers, and an increase in their ability to enforce this morality on the rest of village society. At the same time, as is detailed below, illegitimacy became increasingly confined to women who had more than one bastard, or who came from 'bastardy-prone' families: in other words, those who were not 'respectable'. Thus what had been a village-wide morality became, like much else in the community, increasingly dichotomised.

So far, then, our statistics have told us more about what were not causes of illegitimacy than what were. The high, and rising, bastardy ratios were not linked to late first marriage: rather the reverse. They can not be explained in terms of generally rising fertility. To gain any further insight we must supplement the figures by reference to the individuals involved in illegitimacy.

The mothers of illegitimate children in Highley may be divided into three categories. The first are what have come to be called 'sparrows': those women who, apart from the baptism of their child, are not mentioned elsewhere in the registers, and whose surnames are not encountered in the parish. Secondly, there is a group of 'one-off' mothers - women either born or long-term resident in Highley, who had one illegitimate child, and whose families had no known links with other illegitimate births. The final group is comprised of 'repeaters', women who had more than one bastard; those who were themselves illegitimate; or whose close relatives had also produced bastards.

Group A, those mothers who are not recorded elsewhere, form 27.5% of all mothers of illegitimate children throughout the period. Although their surnames are not met in Highley, they are found in other surrounding parishes. Sometimes we can even specify the home parish of these women. Elenor Leme, who baptised the first illegitimate child at Highley for over forty years in 1611, is

recorded in the Act Books of the Bishop' Court as of Chelmarsh, the next village to the north.[18] An agreement between the parish officers of Highley and those of nearby Stottesdon records that the latter will provide for the child of Sarah Goodman, who was baptised at Highley in 1779.[19] These women were almost certainly servants, temporarily employed and resident in Highley.

Group B, the 'singleton' mothers, are another 27.5% of the total. They were either baptised at Highley, or known to be resident there with their families. This group cuts across class divisions: daughters of yeomen as well as labourers are included, although there is a bias towards the less well-off. There is also a tendency for numbers in this category of women from otherwise 'respectable' families to dwindle in the 18th century, especially those from landholding families.

The largest group, C, is that of the 'bastard-prone'. Firstly, there are the repeaters. 38.5% of all illegitimate children in the period were born to mothers who had more than one bastard. Their contribution to the increasing illegitimacy ratios is crucial; in a small parish, just one woman producing two or three children can affect the overall ratios; furthermore, the evidence shows that repeaters made a major contribution to the increased rate in the later 18th century. Exactly half of all illegitimate children in the period 1740-79 were born to repeating mothers, and no less than 70.8% to mothers in Group C as a whole.

Besides repeaters, this group includes women who were themselves illegitimate, like Ann Bennet, baptised in 1730 daughter of Mary Bennet alias Jones (probably illegitimate herself), who in turn baptised a bastard in 1751. Sometimes the link from mother to daughter is carried on by subsequent, legitimate children - as with Mary Lowbridge who had an illegitimate daughter in 1729, then married, and whose legitimate daughter Ann Wilcox had a bastard in 1773.

Only close relationships between mothers has been used as a criterion for membership of this group, for at least in the 17th century kinship networks were still sufficiently dense for links of some kind to be demonstrable between the majority of the population. Even so, some families can be shown to have had more than their share

of bastard-bearers. Sisters Anne and Alice Charnock produced three at the beginning of the period; then their first cousin Mary Charnock in 1653, and niece Margery Charnock in 1679. The Charnocks were relatively poor artisans and cottagers, but not of the very poorest level in the community. The Wilcox family referred to above were farther up the socio-economic scale, being barge-owners and farmers, and yet display a similar tendency to produce (and marry) bastards. Fig.X illustrates these links.

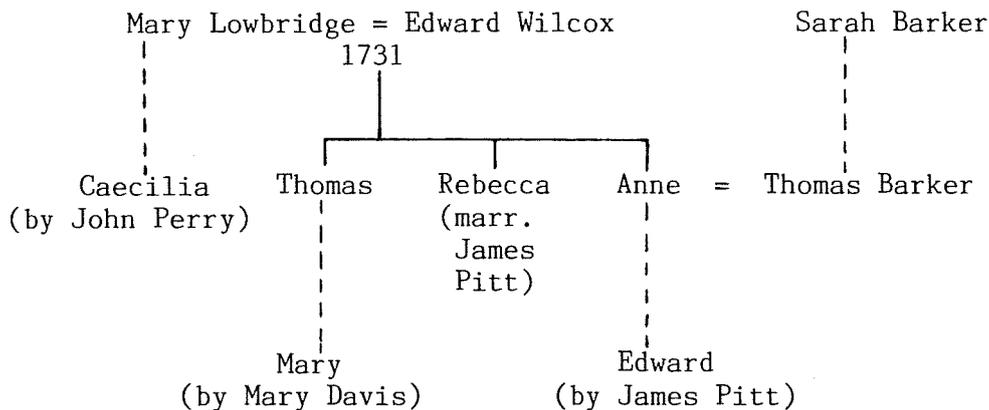


Fig.X

Mary Lowbridge initially appears as a 'Group B' mother, from a relatively prosperous farming family (her father is referred to as 'Mr. Lowbridge'); she had an illegitimate daughter by one man when clearly not much more than twenty; two years later she married a different man - Edward Wilcox, a well-to-do bargeowner. Her youngest daughter Ann, however, also had an illegitimate child, by her own brother-in-law, a relationship which besides being adulterous was also incestuous (brothers- and sisters-in-law being at the time within the proscribed relationships for marriage). In 1777 Ann Wilcox married, when already pregnant, Thomas Barker, who was illegitimate himself and who, as a child, had been a parish apprentice in the Wilcox household. The Overseers' Accounts for 1761 record payments "to Owner Wilcox for Barker base child".[20]

Therefore, although those families exhibiting a succession of bastardy links were often poor, it was clearly not only poverty which placed families at risk. Where poverty does seem to have been universal was among the repeaters. All those whose children were born after the commencement of the earliest extant Overseers' Accounts in 1725 appear as receiving parish relief. In the 17th century Mary Moore, who had baptised four illegitimates at Highley and almost certainly was the mother of a fifth¹ was buried in 1670. It was recorded that she was "a poor wandering woman who died in the parish". This was clearly not true, in the sense that "wandering" was usually used in the registers to signify a stranger who was really passing through: her first child was baptised eleven years earlier. Perhaps the parish authorities wished to disclaim responsibility for a woman who was notorious, and may actually have supported herself by prostitution.

The subsequent careers of mothers of all groups are difficult to follow. Axiomatically, we know nothing more of the 'sparrows'. We cannot say whether those women who had borne a bastard were less likely than average to marry, because migration rates are too high for us to determine the statistical likelihood of any woman marrying. Only one repeating mother subsequently married at Highley, although in most cases the deaths of these women did take place in the parish (far more frequently than other mothers of bastards). Having had more than one illegitimate child appears to have been a barrier to eventual marriage, even if having made one 'mistake' was not.

No Overseers' Accounts for the 17th century survive to help us follow the careers of those women who had illegitimate children during the first part of our period. The Charnock sisters mentioned above were apparently living together in 1632, when they received a charitable bequest from the will of Richard Palmer: if any degree of opprobrium attended bearing illegitimate children, it did not extend to withdrawing charity. Nor did it routinely result in appearance at the church courts, for only a small minority of bastardy

¹John Moore, "a poor boy of this parish" was apprenticed in 1671, although his baptism is not recorded at Highley.

cases of the period appear in the Bishop's Act Books.

After 1725, we know that single mothers, particularly repeaters, were supported by the parish, often for most of their lives - as was Mary Bennet alias Jones who had illegitimate children in 1730 and 1733, and received poor relief until her pauper burial in 1784. There is evidence that these women lodged in the homes of local farmers, in which case the parish payment went directly to the head of the household, depriving the woman of autonomy over even this meagre income.

The potential claim on parish funds made Overseers keen to establish the mother's parish of settlement (after the Act of Settlement, 1662). When Ann Walford, who had accompanied her parents on their move to Abberley in Worcestershire, returned to Highley and became (or already was) pregnant in 1759, letters were exchanged establishing that Abberley would pay for ensuing expenses. As we have seen, a similar arrangement was made with Stottesdon parish in the case of Sarah Goodman in 1779. This is interesting as it appears to contradict the view that pregnant single women were always removed to their place of settlement; in south Shropshire this was not invariably the case, provided suitable financial arrangements were made.

'Singletons' were more frequently supported by their families, and apparently subsequently more likely to marry, and therefore less the concern of Overseers. The parish officers' involvement was purely financial: their chief concern was to establish responsibility for the child's maintenance, and of prime importance in this was to discover the identity of the father.

Unfortunately the parish register records fathers of bastards in less than a third of all cases, and no Highley bastardy cases have survived in the depleted Quarter Sessions records. Even when the name of the father is known, it does not always help us to establish the kind of relationship within which conception occurred - frequently the men were resident in other, nearby parishes, not Highley. Other cases are more enlightening: some do appear to have been instances of 'frustrated courtship'¹ - where both parties were legally

¹The term is used by Levine, who sees most illegitimacy as a result of 'marriage frustrated'. D. Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism, London & New York, 1977.

free to marry, and may have been prevented by circumstances from doing so. William Goodyear, for instance, was 22 when he fathered Sarah Davis's child in 1745: he eventually married (a different woman) nine years later, when his economic circumstances had presumably improved. Youth was not always the reason for failure to marry, however: William Foxall was a widower of 63 in 1653 when Mary Charnock (age 41) had his child, and he was certainly able to marry the following year, choosing a different bride.

In fact there is no record of a couple subsequently marrying after producing an illegitimate child, although one would expect some instances of this if indeed most bastards were conceived between couples intent on marriage but prevented by outside circumstances. Another problem with the 'frustrated courtship' explanation is that sometimes parish pressure on the father, in the form of a maintenance order, produced a marriage. There are two cases in the early 18th century where this happened, for instance, when marriages followed indemnity orders naming the men and took place two and three months before the birth of the child. It looks as if personal disinclination rather than economic circumstances had initially prevented marriage in these cases.

Furthermore, not all couples were free to marry or enter courtship. Thomas Wilkes, for example, who fathered a child in 1733, was a 35 year old married man with five legitimate children, and Ann Wilcox (above) obviously did not hope to marry her sister's husband. There are no indications of long-term irregular liaisons in Highley during this period: the repeaters in the period for which fathers are named had children by different men.

In several cases it may well be that the loss of a job, lack of available housing, parental disapproval, etc. prevented an anticipated marriage. The average age of women at first illegitimate child (a mean of 26.9 years before 1740 and 22.0 after, on an admittedly small sample) supports this view to a certain extent, as it shows that women were bearing illegitimate children at, or slightly below, the age at which they would have been seeking marriage partners. But in some cases couples clearly entered sexual relationships with no prospect of marriage; and in other cases it seems that a marriage was possible, but agreed to only reluctantly by one or both parties.

The illegitimate children themselves frequently vanish, with their mothers, from parish data. Numbers were buried as infants, but a death rate for bastards alone is impossible to compute given the very high mobility of their mothers. Those who remained were frequently made parish apprentices, often at a very early age. Thomas Barker's mother married and left Highley in 1759, when he was six years and one month old. Thomas did not accompany her (to Neen Savage, six or eight miles away) but, as we have seen, was in the household of Edward Wilcox in 1761. Apprentices could be sent a considerable distance: John Moore in 1671 went to Pitchford, 25 miles away in central Shropshire. Only a tiny minority of illegitimate children baptised at Highley actually remained there until their own, adult, deaths.

Bastardy ratios, then, were high throughout this period, even by the standards of Shropshire, which is acknowledged to have been an area of high illegitimacy.[21] Some illegitimacy resulted from adulterous relationships: in other cases there does seem to have been a disruption of courtship, for whatever reason. It is tempting to view the post-enclosure increase in bastardy as at least in part a reflection of increasingly unsettled economic conditions for the poorer inhabitants. Numbers of landless labourers increased, mobility was high, and the likelihood of marriage being prevented by economic factors increased.

Not all illegitimacy, however, can be explained in terms of the pauperisation of the labouring poor. Certainly most single mothers were poor, especially repeaters, but by no means all. Some poor families were never involved in illegitimacy, while others of similar, or higher, economic status were particularly bastard-prone. The latter are not sufficiently numerous or inter-connected to allow us to postulate the existence of a 'sub-society', but there does seem to be some factor other than the purely economic which made them particularly at risk.

Church courts continued to deal with bastardy cases, secular courts were increasingly involved, and parish officers could and did order maintenance payments from the father - and in view of the claims made even so on rate-payers by bastard children they were

likely to have encouraged marriage, to say the least. In the later 18th century, fewer brides were pregnant but more illegitimate children were born, which may indicate a growing resistance to these pressures, as well as a continuation of what appears to be a 17th century shift in attitudes towards the acceptability of pre-marital sex, especially as a growing proportion of mothers were repeaters, and were less desirable as brides in consequence.

Whatever its causes, the consequences of illegitimacy for the community as a whole were considerable, for payments to single mothers and the expenses of maintaining and apprenticing bastard children formed a major part of all parish expenditure on poor relief in the 18th century. Throughout this post-enclosure period, illegitimacy must have been viewed by the majority of the community as a serious problem.

- 1) Wrigley and Schofield, Population History pp.161-2.
- 2) J. Foster, Alumni Oxoniensis (Oxford, 1891).
- 3) Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry.
- 4) S.R.O. QR 83/23;79/10 : Coroner's inquests, 1770-75.
- 5) S. Sogner, 'Aspects of the demographic situation in seventeen parishes in Shropshire 1711-1760', Pop. Studs., XVII (1963-40).
- 6) S.R.O. 4123/Ti/1 : Easter Book, 1658-1726. In fact the entries 1658-78 do not refer to Highley but to the incumbent's other living.
- 7) P.R.O. E179 255/35 : Shropshire Hearth Tax, 1672.
- 8) G.D. Fletcher, 'The religious census of Shropshire in 1676', T.S.A.S., 2nd Ser. I (1889).
- 9) Wrigley and Schofield, Population History p.570.
- 10) Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love p.194.
- 11) P.R.O. C213/212 : Association Oath Roll for Highley, 1696.
- 12) Wrigley and Schofield, Population History pp.174-185.
- 13) D. Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York & London, 1977).
- 14) P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. Smith, Bastardy and its Comparative History (London, 1980).
- 15) K. Wrightson, 'The nadir of English illegitimacy in the seventeenth century' in Laslett, Oosterveen and Smith, Bastardy.
- 16) Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love p.113
- 17) Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love pp.129-30.
- 18) H.R.O. Bishops' Act Books, Box 35, vol. 134.
- 19) S.R.O. 4123/P/53-61 : Bastardy bonds, 1671 1823.
- 20) S.R.O. 4123/P/1 : Overseers' Accounts, 1724-61.
- 21) Laslett, Oosterveen and Smith, Bastardy pp.29-36.

Chapter Six - Social Relations

In this post-enclosure period, status within the community was closely associated with wealth; and wealth was in turn dependent upon the possession of land. The amount of land held was much more important than whether it was owned or rented. In fact the elite group which had emerged by 1700 were almost all tenant farmers. The increased importance of the parish as an administrative unit meant that this group, which provided the parish officers, had considerable influence within the community. In addition, they were direct employers of labourers who were increasingly dependent on wages alone.

For most of our period, the landlord/tenant relationship was the basis of many social relationships in Highley. Principal tenant farmers sub-let individual fields, and sometimes whole farms. In addition, most labourers and cottagers now rented their houses from local landlords; and in the case of the former, accommodation began to be 'tied' to the job, adding a new dimension to the relationship. However, the same chief farmers and local landlords were themselves the tenants of absentee landlords, with whom they had to negotiate terms for the renewal of leases, and who controlled to some extent the uses to which they could put their land.

Certain important parish offices like churchwarden and overseer of the poor were increasingly restricted to the most prosperous section of the community. Churchwardens provide the best example of this. In the early part of our period, the churchwardens could be yeomen, husbandmen, artisans or cottagers: as they had been in the pre-enclosure period. In the 1620s and 1630s, a rota system appears to have operated which depended on houses, not individuals: William Perks, for instance, served in 1634 "for the house he lives in", together with Richard Harris "for the Wood End." Thus women, if heads of household, were included, but appear not to have served - in 1628 the warden was "Francis Dovey for Elizabeth Low, widow". Elderly men, too, nominated younger relatives in their place - Brian Penn was warden in 1632 for his father-in-law. Interestingly, the wealthiest villagers appear also to have preferred to nominate someone else to serve their year as warden, as did both Thomas Lowe or Borle Mill and Thomas Pountney of

the Rea. The office seems to have been regarded as much as an imposition as a privilege at this date.

Unfortunately, churchwardens are not recorded between 1637 and 1679. By the last two decades of the 17th century, the office had become almost exclusively the preserve of the principal farmers of the village - only one man of the 15 who served during this time, on a rota which resulted in a year in office every nine years, was not a farmer. By the end of our period, the size of the group eligible for this office was even more curtailed: of the twenty churchwardens between 1763 and 1772 (the last complete decade of our period for which wardens are recorded) only ten men were called upon: the same men head the list of tithe payments and Land Tax returns during the same period. The same shrinking of the group drawn on for the office of churchwarden is apparent in the other offices, notably overseer of the poor: churchwarden is merely the best-documented.

This elite group was virtually self-electing, for in the 18th century the parish vestry, which consisted of about a dozen chief landholders, appointed wardens and overseers from their own ranks. At the meeting held on 9th April 1765, the vestry described itself as comprising "the major part of the inhabitants of the said parish" - which numerically it certainly did not.[1] The same attitude is displayed in the memorandum in the parish register of 1678. The Rev. Giles Rawlins had left money "to be set forth yearlie by the Churchwardens" for "the best use of the poor of the Parish at the discretion of the best sort of the said Parish".

The "best sort" in their role as churchwardens had more influence in village affairs than might at first appear. One of their duties was to present cases to the church courts, and there are signs that if the churchwardens were unwilling to proceed, offences went unpunished. In 1771 the case against Thomas Wilcox was dismissed, in spite of his having admitted fathering an illegitimate child, because the churchwardens did not appear.[2] In 1748 Thomas Brewer and Thomas Dorsett were cited by the vicar for refusing to present John Hill to the court for offences which were part of a disagreement between Hill and the unpopular vicar.[3]

Although Quarter Sessions records for this period are

largely lost, odd survivals do indicate that only men from this same group were elected jurors. The few surviving mentions of parish constables date from the early 19th century but show that this office too was organised on the basis of a rota of principal farms in respect of which their occupiers served for one year.

However, it was in their role as overseers of the poor that "the best sort" exercised most influence. They collected the parish poor rate, and of course decided the destination and amount of parish relief paid to individuals. In addition they were responsible for applying the conditions of the Act of Settlement, and could (and did) examine paupers and order their return to another parish. They questioned unmarried mothers and imposed maintenance payments on the fathers of their children; they were responsible for arranging the apprenticeships of pauper children; in short, there were for the poor few areas of life which the overseers could not regulate.

We shall examine the operation of parish relief of the poor in greater detail: here it is sufficient to point out the range of powers and responsibilities which became concentrated into the hands of a group of men which for most of our period comprised only 20% or so of all heads of household in the community.

The hierarchical structure of village society, and the way in which it was largely determined by the occupation of land, is illustrated even in the layout of the parish church. A plan survives (undated but c.1780) showing how by the end of our period large pews at the front were reserved for particular farms (not individuals), with a careful gradation to smaller pews for lesser properties, and finally "cottage seats" at the very back. Various faculties were granted by the Bishop's court to allow prominent parishioners to re-arrange pews in order to enlarge their own even when, as in 1757, this meant moving the pulpit and the font.[4]

Throughout our period, these chief farmers continued to employ live-in servants, with whom their relationship was often quasi-paternal. In reply to the bishop's Articles of Inquiry in 1716, the churchwardens stated that "the Parishioners duly send their children and servants to be instructed by the Minister". We still find instances well into the 17th century of servants' Christian names only

being used; for example one servant was described as "Margaret the servant of Thomas Harris" in the same way that his daughter would be designated "Margaret the daughter of Thomas Harris".

Servants worked, ate and slept in close proximity to the family, at least during the first half of our period. The witnesses' depositions recalling the 1620s and 1630s show how servants worked alongside their master, asking him questions: Christopher Rowley was hay-making with Thomas son of Richard Palmer his master, and asked him "what there was to be set out" (in tithe). They were privy to the master's conversations: James Powis heard the vicar "demand tithe hay of George Peirson, who said he had but little hay and could not well spare it". All servants quoted, even the women who might be expected to be more narrowly concerned with domestic matters, knew exactly how much their masters paid for different types of tithe, and several had been sent to take tithe payments in cash to the vicar. Although it is only details concerning tithes which have come down to us, they do illustrate something of the relationship between masters and their resident servants in the 17th century.

Some of these servants must have been very young, perhaps thirteen or fourteen years old. Clearly the master/man relationship was different in the case of the increased numbers of farm employees who were labourers, often married men, living in separate accommodation - although here the continuity of employment could presumably affect the nature of the relationship, as in the case of William Jefferies who had "served Mr. Lowe for eighteen years together."

Private charity, which had been a feature of pre-enclosure society, appears to have declined during the first fifty years of our period. Giles Rawlins' bequest to the poor of the parish in 1678 mentioned above was the last of this type of charitable bequest. Similarly no bequests to individual poor recipients were made after 1651, when Richard Rowley left corn to eight poor villagers. Since such bequests had previously been quite common, this cessation would appear to mark a change in the attitude of the more prosperous towards the poor of the community. The cohesive social structure of the pre-enclosure period had been undermined by the increased stratification of village society and, above all, by the high levels of geographical

mobility among tenant farmers. Similarly, no bequests to individual servants are found after the 1670s. It may be no coincidence that the same period saw a hardening of official attitudes, with the 1662 Act of Settlement designed to regulate the movement of the poor from parish to parish. By the late-17th century in Highley, the emphasis in poor relief was firmly on institutionalised provision rather than private charity.

Although some parish-organised system of poor relief must have been in operation during the 17th century, records of it do not survive.¹ The first detailed accounts begin in 1724, by which time poverty was perceived as a problem in the community. Highley parish officers used the Act of Settlement from the beginning to rid themselves if possible of those likely to be a charge on the parish: indeed even before the Act, in 1657, a dispute between Highley and neighbouring Alveley over which parish was responsible for Ann Jenkins, a poor widow, had reached the court of the Quarter Session at Shrewsbury.

We have seen how numbers of poor had risen until, in the 1720s, a considerable proportion of all adults buried were recorded as paupers. These were not all in regular receipt of parish relief, however: in 1725, for instance, only two individuals claimed payments (of 10d a week) throughout the year. The majority of payments made by the overseers until about 1760 were "casual" - occasional amounts for coal or house rent for widows, or small allowances not in cash at all but in goods like a peck of malt or clothes or shoes. The parish also lent goods: "Lent widow Crowther a pair of sheets three weeks" (in 1741). Sometimes occasional payments were made to men who were too ill to work - "when he was sick". Paupers were buried and parish apprentices clothed out of the poor rate: for instance in 1744 Margery Malpas was buried at parish expense and her illegitimate son John provided with "shurts, a pair of clogs, pair of shuse, stockens, pair of briches", presumably prior to being apprenticed.

¹J. Hill, A Study of Poverty and Poor Relief in Shropshire 1550-1685 (unpub. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1973) shows that elsewhere in the surrounding area parish relief was well-organised by mid-century.

During this period, 1724-c.1760, most payments were made to the elderly and infirm, widows and single mothers. There are a few signs, however, that younger men were beginning to be in a position to claim parish relief. In 1752 the overseers "paid Barker over his pay 1/1d".

Nevertheless, total payments hardly ever exceeded £20 per annum until the 1760s, when a steady rise began. In the last year of our present period, 1779/80, total payments in poor relief were £35 14 3d. The rise was largely due to an increase in the number of "pensioners", those in regular receipt of cash payments, usually of a shilling a week. In accordance with the 1697 Settlement Act, these paupers wore a distinguishing badge on their clothing ("badging the poor" cost 2/- in Highley in 1761). In addition to cash payments, however, paupers had still to appeal to the overseers for fuel and clothing and for ex gratia payments when they were particularly "in want". They were not allowed a fixed "pension" over which they had complete control, but were obliged to make several representations a year to the parish officers and to receive some relief in goods rather than in cash.

To supplement the money available, and to use the capital of 16th and 17th century bequests to the poor, it was decided in 1744 to purchase two acres of land, where Robert Evans, a local brickmaker and builder, built "a substantial dwelling house", very soon divided into two.[5] Rents arising from these cottages were used to buy bread which was distributed to the poor in church on Sundays (provided that the recipients attended the service and took the Sacrament if available). Although these houses were known as The Poores Houses, they seem at no time during our period to have been used to accommodate poor people, but merely to provide a regular return - a rent of £2 1s p.a. - on the accumulated capital.

Every attempt was made by the "best sort" running parish affairs to minimise the burden of poor-relief on those paying the poor rate; single mothers were questioned to discover the identity of the child's father, who was then obliged to pay maintenance of, usually, a shilling a week; families and individuals likely to become chargeable to the parish were 'examined' to ascertain their place of settlement, and could be deported like the Deuxhill family who were returned to Stottesdon in 1682 or the family of Thomas Beetley, miller, sent to

Kidderminster in 1726. Appeals were made by the parish against relief orders imposed on them: in 1764, for example, the vestry meeting of eight farmers decided to send the overseer to Shrewsbury Quarter Session "to appeal against an order granted for the relief of Margaret Shinton to pay her 10/- a week." This must be the order for "the payment of 10/- weekly to an impotent poor woman afflicted with foul disease" which was quashed in 1764 as a result of the appeal.[6] In fact no-one received anywhere near as much as ten shillings a week: two shillings seems to have been the absolute cash maximum during our period.

Ironically, letters and journeys involved in removing paupers, appealing against relief orders and disagreeing with other parishes' overseers about responsibility are expenses which figure prominently in each set of accounts. Provision for the poor was seen as a burden by the 50% of heads of household who contributed to the poor rate, and by the overseers for whom the job meant considerable time and trouble. For the poor it meant frequent appeal to the authorities and little opportunity to exercise personal control over budgeting. It provided a lever for social control: those who did not attend church, for example, did not receive bread.

It must also be remembered that those in receipt of parish relief were only the very poorest: there could also be hardship amongst those who did not qualify. A change of circumstances, old age or bereavement, could very easily bring destitution. Thomas-in Childs was the daughter of a man who rented the Lord of the Manor's chief farm; she never married, and after the death of her parents received parish relief for at least thirty years until her death (and pauper burial) in 1752. Richard Esps had rented the same farm, yet came "on the parish" in old age.

Landless families had always been the more vulnerable to poverty in old age, and during this period numbers of landless, whether artisans or labourers, increased. Increased illegitimacy in the 18th century meant that a significant number of paupers were single mothers and their children. Men temporarily unemployed or unfit to work added to the numbers of occasional claimants. Although amounts were never large (other Shropshire parishes often spent much more.[7])

the period 1725-1780 saw a 400% increase in expenditure on poor relief in Highley. In this whole period between enclosure and industrialisation there appears to have been a change in attitude away from individual philanthropy towards communal responsibility. The attitudes of the poor themselves, with their "P" (for pauper) badges, public doles of bread, and so on, can only be conjectured.

Thus one aspect of "good neighbourliness" - private charity - would have appeared to have declined in importance during this period. Another feature of the pre-enclosure community had been the system of small informal loans of a few shillings or even pence in which most villagers took part. After 1620, these small loans either ceased to take place, or were no longer regarded as worth recording in wills. In their place we find (in wills of wealthier men) debts for larger sums assured by a formal bond: in 1651, for example, Francis Holloway was owed £40, in two bonds of £20 each. This more formal network of larger debts covered a wider area than that of casual small debts had done: creditors mentioned were from towns and villages largely within a ten-mile radius, though rarely from Highley itself. Similarly, when Highley properties were mortgaged in the 17th century, the mortgagors were residents of neighbouring villages such as Alveley, Stottesdon and Chelmarsh.

This formality of "business" contacts increased considerably during this period: besides bonds and mortgages, the more prosperous villagers were involved in carefully drawn-up marriage settlements, leases and sub-leases to fields and farms, deeds of sale of property, and so on. As we shall see, the increase in formal contracts of one kind and another was of necessity paralleled by a rise in literacy levels.

Some Highley men had business interests outside the village. Richard Palmer at the time of his death in 1633 owned a house and tannery in Bewdley. In 1764, Edward Wilcox, a bargeowner, was building a house at Abberley in Worcestershire, and also owned property across the Severn at Alveley. He would also, of course, have had dealings with those whose goods he transported on the river.

We must not forget the importance of the Severn to communications in this period. River traffic was considerable: in 1756 there were 75 barges operating out of Bridgnorth, and a further

ten based between Bewdley and Bridgnorth.[8] In the 1770s alone, four bargemen drowned in separate incidents at Highley. Some villagers may have worked as bargemen, if only temporarily: certainly several had small boats which they used on the river. George Steward and his brother went out late one night in 1773 in their boat to search for coals (presumably fallen from laden barges coming down from the mid-Shropshire coalfield): George was drowned when the boat capsized.[9] Two farmers were charged in 1771 with poaching after they had used a boat and nets to catch salmon fry in the Severn. During this period, the Ship Inn, also owned by the Wilcox family, was established to take advantage of trade from the river. Highley was in fact situated beside the main artery for trade and communication in Shropshire.

Although business contacts between Highley inhabitants and elsewhere were both more frequent and more formal than they had been in the pre-enclosure period, the geographical area encompassed remained on the whole similar. Men travelled to, or had links with, towns and villages up and down the Severn, and with other villages within a radius of ten miles or so. Attendance at Archdeaconry headquarters at Ludlow and Quarter Sessions at Shrewsbury sometimes necessitated longer journeys, particularly for parish officers: otherwise long journeys seem only to have been undertaken in exceptional circumstances, like the "four years or so" that William Jefferies had spent "in the late King's army" during the civil wars. This absence of any mention of long journeys is surprising in the light of the frequency with which the people of Myddle at the same period seem to have travelled to London, for example.[10]

Some contacts with people living elsewhere were not to do with business: they were simple friendships. "Friend" as a description of, for instance, a beneficiary in a will, was a term not found in the pre-enclosure period. Friends first appear around 1630 in wills (the first to be so described is the "loving friend Mr. Francis Dovey" in the will of Alice Harris, 1628). For the will-making class, friends to some extent replaced the more distant kin and close neighbours when it came to choosing overseers and so on. They usually lived in other nearby villages rather than in Highley itself. It is tempting to see in this phenomenon an increase in importance to the individual of selected relationships rather than those pre-determined by

kinship or even by geographical proximity. At the end of our period, in 1771, two friends of Joseph Cook were appointed as his executors and in fact were given virtually complete authority over his estate and its disposal: clearly for Cook friendships were important relationships.

Perhaps as a result of increasingly marked social stratification within the village, Highley yeomen turned increasingly towards "horizontal" social contact with other yeomen in the surrounding area rather than "vertical" friendships within their home parish. These friends attended social events together, and visited each others houses. In 1723 the vicar, Richard Higgs, went to the horse races at Tettenhall with a group of friends.[11] In 1668 Richard Weaver, a seventy-one year old yeoman of Kinlet, went to visit William Rowley, whom he had known for many years, when Rowley was on his deathbed. They talked of local news, including the current dispute between vicar and parishioners.[12]

The records of this dispute offer further evidence of social contacts during the mid-17th century, Witnesses from several neighbouring parishes testified to their knowledge of Highley, its farms, customs and inhabitants. Men who had once lived in Highley but had moved away were re-called to testify, often from quite considerable distances (like Leominster in Herefordshire and Churchill in Worcestershire, for example). Contact between these men and people in Highley seems to have been maintained in the meantime, at least to the extent that their current whereabouts were known.

Of course, not all relations within the community or with the neighbourhood were friendly: disputes and quarrels, and even fights, continued. In the absence of court rolls after 1618, our knowledge of disputes between neighbours in this period is less than in the 16th century. The end of strip-farming removed one frequent source of discord: we have seen how frequently quarrels arose over land boundaries in the pre-enclosure period. However, the church courts of the 17th century still detail feuds and fights between villagers. In 1682, John Matthews was presented for "striking wounding and hurting with a bill one John Lyde, servant of Rev. Mr. John Burton" in the churchyard. We are not told the cause of the fight, but like those noted earlier, it

appears to have been spontaneous, and occurred virtually on Matthews' doorstep.

In the early part of our period, one source of discontent was the rhymes and jokes which some villagers told against others: in 1622, for example, Thomas Charnock had "raised a foolishe scandalous rime to the offence of divers of the parishioners". Some members of the community were regarded, at least by the "better sort", as disreputable, and condemnation of, and gossip about, them reached the courts. Catherine Lawrence was presented for being "a very idle and lewde person" who drank (presumably in the ale-house) during the time of church services. In 1615 there was "a common fame" that Alice Charnock had been delivered of an illegitimate child which had then been buried in a garden. There seems to have been no supporting evidence: indeed "lying under a common fame" (of having an illicit affair, bastard child, etc) was regularly the justification for presentation at court.

Quarrels between vicars and parishioners, severally or collectively, were a common occurrence. We have already mentioned the dispute between all the principal landholders and the Rev. Giles Rawlins, which dragged on from c.1667 to Rawlins' death in 1678. The parishioners insisted that tithe hay had customarily been paid not in kind but as a cash "composition": the vicar wanted to collect in kind. All sorts of extraneous charges were subsequently brought in, but this remained the kernel of the disagreement. One of the parishioners described Rawlins as "a contentious man" who "quarrell'd with divers poore men and undertennants about theire custome and constrain'd them for feare of suits to alter the same." [13] Certainly the surviving evidence suggests that Rawlins had behaved unreasonably. In any event, the quarrel was long, bitter and divisive.

There was also discord between Rev. Richard Higgs and his parishioners in the mid-18th century. He was accused in the diocesan court of fathering the bastard child of Elizabeth Pountney, widow, and retaliated by accusing her of not having paid her Easter Offerings for the previous six years. This seems to have marked the beginning of a series of disagreements between Higgs and the rest of the parish: he presented John Hill to the courts, and the churchwardens for not having done so themselves. Higgs in turn was reported for

having failed to hold services at the appointed times; for "vain Cursing and Swearing"; and finally for "going down on his knees in his own house on the Sabbath day calling upon God that a Curse should fall on some of his Neighbours and afterwards praying a curse might fall upon the whole Parish in General." [14]

In 1764, Elizabeth Coomby, widow, was found guilty at Quarter Session of attempting to defame another vicar, Dr. Fleming, by alleging that he had sexually assaulted her. [15] Whether this was part of a similar feud, an attempt at blackmail, or even a genuine grievance, it is impossible to guess, as no evidence survives.

Thus quarrels between neighbours were by no means infrequent, and were if anything even more likely between villagers and someone, like the vicar, in a position of authority. It is possible that less violence arose from these disputes than had been the case in the 16th century, but the changed nature of the evidence in the post-enclosure period prevents any firm conclusions - fights may well have continued unreported in the absence of manor courts.

The nominal ownership of the manor of Highley changed hands frequently during our period, always to absentees after Thomas Lowe sold it in the 1650s. No records of manor courts have survived: probably none were held, for they are not referred to elsewhere in any way. In any case, they had primarily been concerned with regulating communal agriculture. Ecclesiastical and county courts continued to exercise social control. So, more arbitrarily perhaps, did the local oligarchy which as we have seen was in charge of administration at parish level, as well as reporting (or deciding not to report) misdemeanours to the courts.

The church courts were primarily concerned with church attendance, sobriety and propriety. They continued to order public penance for the mothers (and occasionally fathers) of illegitimate children, or for those "living incontinently". Pre-marital sexual relations could be punished even after marriage. Those who worked, or set their servants to work, on a Sunday, even at haymaking or harvest were liable to be punished. Similarly, drinking, shooting or

playing football or "chuck" on Sundays were punishable offences.¹

Excommunication, the most severe of the penalties imposed by the court, had the effect of cutting the offender off from all social or familial contact. Several villagers were accused in the 1620s of eating and drinking with Walter Holloway: they had answered that they had immediately ceased to do so upon learning that he was excommunicate.

The courts dealt only with those cases brought before them by the parish officers, who were, of course, eager to protect their own interests by regulating the behaviour and movements of the poor to reduce where possible the burden on the poor rate. The economic motives for the prosecution of illegitimacy, for instance, are clear.

Other forms of social control were exercised, however, whose motives are much less clear-cut. The regulation of social contacts - eating and drinking together, gossiping, etc - and the condemnation of drunkenness, "lewd" or merely "idle" behaviour, is best viewed as an attempt by "respectable" society to control "low" society, even when there was no direct financial threat to the former.

Sanctions at local level were used in addition to those imposed by the church courts (or by the Quarter Sessions, whose records only survive in numbers for the last few years of the present period). Many individuals depended upon discretionary payments by Overseers of the Poor, a potential lever for the control of their conduct. The parish stocks were in use until at least the 1750s. National legislation implemented by local officers provided for the regulation of one very important aspect of behaviour - the freedom to move at will from place to place.

There is almost too much evidence of physical mobility in the 17th and 18th centuries: parish registers, fiscal listings and parish administrative records present a mass of changing names as

¹Although their sanctions may have lost force by the 18th century (when penances were commuted by a cash payment), the church courts continued to operate throughout this period.

individuals and families arrived, left and died out. Any attempt to qualify and illustrate the degree of mobility must be partial. Some sections of the community may have been more mobile than others, and certainly some are less historically visible. It is easier to trace the careers of men than of women (who change their names at marriage and rarely feature in lists of heads of household). Yet men, who were less likely to move as a result of marriage, were probably less highly mobile. In 1672 only 41% of heads of household in Highley had been born in the parish: only 45% were natives in 1779. However, the great majority of these individuals were men; and the percentage was almost certainly less for women.

Furthermore, some of even the "static" 40% would move later in life, leaving little more than a quarter of the inhabitants who lived out their lives in the village. We lack a complete listing of inhabitants before the 19th century to enable an exact figure for those who had moved at some time to be established: but all the indications are that mobility rates in Highley accorded well with findings elsewhere. Clark found that in the period 1660-1730, 70% of men in rural areas had moved at some time in their life, and 75% of women. For example, 70% of all inhabitants of Cardington in 1782 had been born elsewhere.[16]

Fig.I shows the numbers of children baptised at Highley and surviving childhood, by birth cohort. The most noticeable feature of the table is the consistently high "disappearance rate", of those who are never recorded again in Highley after their baptism. The cohort of 1620-9 had the lowest percentage of emigrants in this category - 59%. Thereafter the figure was never below 60%, and the cohort of the period 1690-1710 reached a peak of 79% emigration. Thus a large proportion of those born in Highley continued to leave in early life - they did not marry, bear children or die in their native parish, nor remain long enough to be mentioned in any other documentation (except occasionally in wills, which cannot be taken as an indication of residence in Highley: indeed another place of residence is sometimes specified). This continues the pattern of early emigration noted in the 16th century, when the mean of means for those not recorded after baptism was 63.4%.

Decade	No. in cohort	Last rec. as infant	Last rec. as adult	Buried Highley	% bur. Highley
1620-9	27	16	1	10	37%
1630-9	43	33	3	7	16.2%
1640-9	48	38	4	6	12.5%
1650-9	47	30	6	11	23.4%
1660-9	35	24	3	8	22.8%
1670-9	34	22	5	7	20.5%
1680-9	37	28	6	3	8.1%
1690-9	33	26	3	4	12.1%
1700-9	29	23	1	5	17.2%
1710-9	44	28	9	7	15.9%
1720-9	51	35	5	11	21.5%
1730-9	51	36	6	9	17.6%
1740-9	60	37	16	7	11.6%
1750-9	58	40	11	7	12%
1760-9	54	40	10	4	7.4%
1770-9	66	43	17	6	9%

Fig.I

In the pre-enclosure period, however, most of these young emigrants left as adolescents, and their parents remained behind. In this period, and particularly in the 18th century, increasing numbers left while children as part of the family unit, for there was, as we shall see, much greater movement of whole families. For most of the period the percentage of those born in the parish who remained into adulthood - to marriage or child-rearing ages - before leaving remained small, even though this figure includes women marrying at Highley and then leaving. Most female children baptised at Highley did not in fact marry there. Interestingly, however, the numbers in this category rise amongst those born after 1740: this may reflect an improvement in the registration of marriages after 1754, or an increased willingness to move even after marrying and having children.

This movement of whole families is reflected both in the rising numbers of those leaving in adulthood, and in the very reduced proportion of those who were both baptised and buried in Highley. With the exception of the 1620-9 cohort, which again appears as the most stable, those born and buried in the parish were never more than a quarter of the total and usually considerably less. Thus we can gain some idea of the extent of migration among those born at Highley: two thirds regularly left in childhood or adolescence; other went as adults, leaving only some 10-20% to be buried in their birthplace.

However, not all migration involved those who had themselves been born in Highley: some people moved more than once in their lives, and for them Highley was a more or less temporary place of residence. Fig.II illustrates another aspect of migration. It lists numbers of "new fathers" by decade, i.e. those men who first brought a child to be baptised in that decade. Consistently less than one third of those men had themselves been born in the parish:- the mean of means for the 17th century is 31.8%, for the 18th century only 26.7%. Furthermore, less than half of these men, on average, remained in Highley until their deaths. This represents one significant difference from the picture in the 16th century, when over half of the "new fathers" remained until their deaths, while an even clearer majority had been born in the parish themselves.

Throughout the period, the baptism register includes those whom we may call "transients" - those couples who baptised one or at most two children in Highley but are never subsequently mentioned as resident in the village, or buried there. Fig.III shows that there were some transients in every decade, with a clear peak in the 1630s, although the 1620s, 1700s and 1760s had very few. Between 1630 and 1639, nearly forty percent of all couples baptising a child were transients. They were most probably labouring families, employed on short-term contracts.

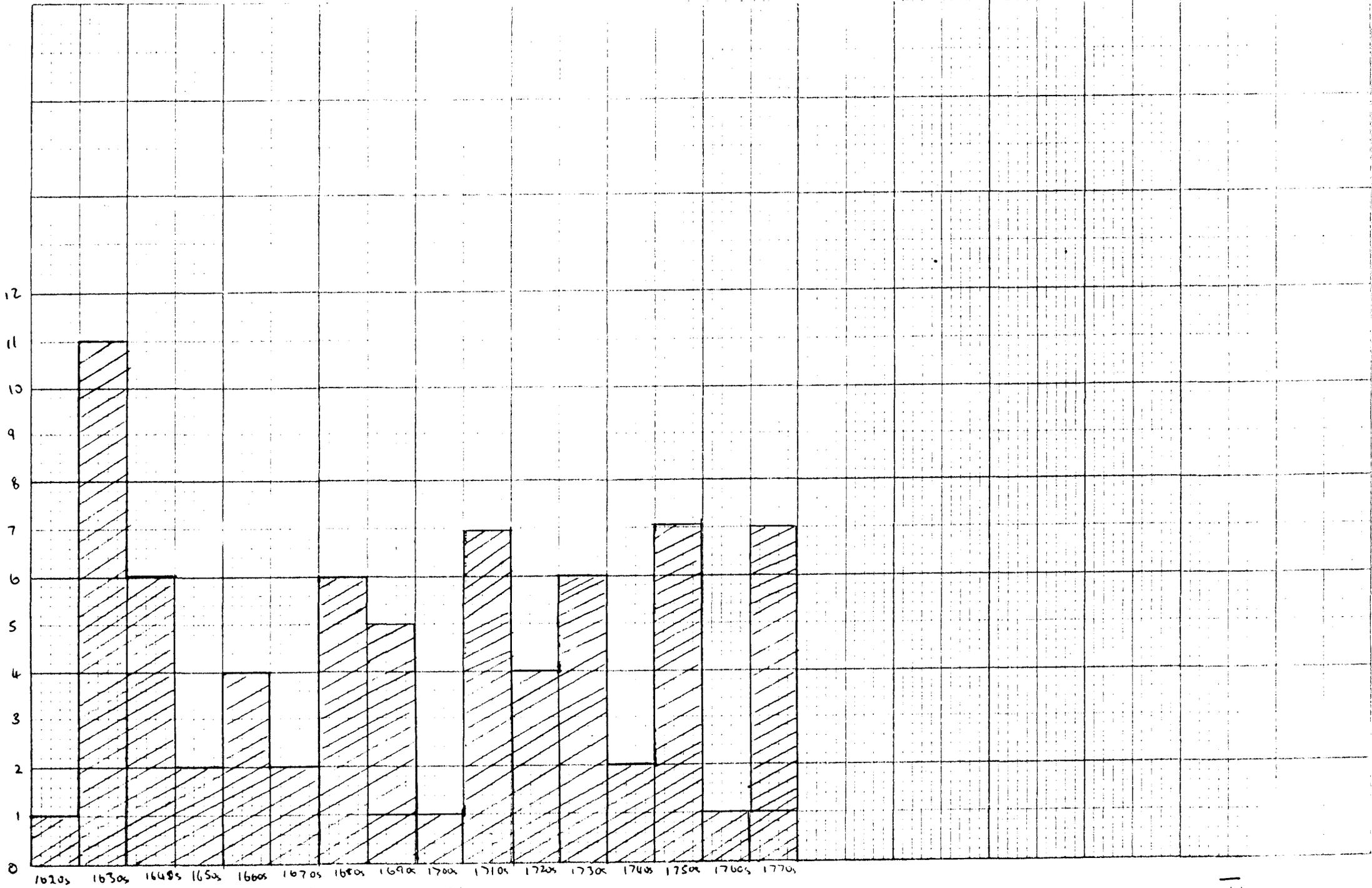
Although we cannot place too much reliance on fluctuations from decade to decade because of the small size of overall numbers, nevertheless certain periods, notably the 1620s and 1630s, do seem to exhibit certain characteristics on all our tables. It is therefore worth looking at these decades in more detail. The 1620s

seem to continue the pre-enclosure pattern, where migration rates were high among adolescents, but where those who settled in Highley showed a marked tendency to remain there for life. There were also very few transients during this decade. Enclosure, however, was well-advanced by mid-decade, and one might expect increased mobility as a result. In fact the real increase in migration came during the 1630s: numbers of transients increased dramatically; 76% of the children baptised left in childhood or adolescence; and only 31% of the "new fathers" recorded remained in Highley until their deaths.

Decade	No. of 'new' fathers	No. bapt. Highley	% bapt. Highley	No. bur. Highley
1620-9	14	7	50%	7
1630-9	19	6	31.5%	6
1640-9	21	8	38%	11
1650-9	14	5	35.7%	8
1660-9	8	2	25%	3
1670-9	12	4	33%	9
1680-9	14	3	21.4%	6
1690-9	11	3	27.2%	2
1700-9	10	5	50%	4
1710-9	17	1	5.8%	4
1720-9	21	6	28.5%	14
1730-9	20	5	25%	12
1740-9	16	5	31%	7
1750-9	26	3	11.5%	8
1760-9	17	8	47%	10
1770-9	20	3	15%	8

Fig.II

Some of these transients were described as "wanderers" or travellers" - part of what Clark calls "the multitude of poor migrants on the tramp" in decades before the Civil War.[17] Some may



TRANSIENTS

1620 - 1779

Fig. III

have been undertaking long-distance migration, like the parents of Richard Woodefinde, an infant who was buried in 1637/8, "whose father and mother were wanderers" and who would seem to have abandoned the child. Others travelled around the area for some years: Thomas Evans and his wife were described as "wandering people" when they baptised a child at Highley in 1634, and again when they baptised another in the adjoining parish of Chelmarsh in 1642.[18]

Other transients, while not vagrants, stayed only a very short time, apparently in labouring jobs. Twenty-eight "new fathers" are recorded between 1630 and 1639. Of these, only eight were both baptised and buried at Highley (altogether 11 had been born there and ten would be buried.) The mean period of residence of the remaining men, as indicated by parish registers, was 3.7 years.¹

Some of this increased mobility was undoubtedly due to national rather than local causes. The late 1620s had been a particularly difficult time: the poor were likely to have been suffering from the results of bad harvests and rising grain prices.[19] Local factors, however, also contributed to the situation. We have seen how even in the pre-enclosure period there were signs of a group of mobile labourers and their families in the area. As Highley joined the move to enclose, numbers in this group increased. Enclosure created, at least initially, a demand for more labour: it also ultimately increased the numbers of those forced to depend upon labouring for their livelihoods.

After the Restoration and the 1662 Act of Settlement, which restricted the movements of the poor, vagrants more or less ceased to be recorded, although short-stay labourers were a feature of the rest of our period. Mobility also began to increase higher up the social scale. In the pre-enclosure period, when farms had been held for terms of three lives, an heir remained to inherit the property. As more farms fell into the ownership of absentee landlords who let them on much shorter leases, we begin to see the movement on a much

¹This figure should be taken only as a guide. A minimum of one year was recorded although in some cases ("travellers" etc) the stay was certainly less. Furthermore, some couples may have lived childless in Highley for some time before moving.

larger scale of families of yeoman and husbandman class. The depositions of witnesses in the tithe disputes of the years around 1670 include brief biographies. Nineteen of these witnesses gave evidence of having lived for some time in Highley although they had subsequently moved elsewhere. Of the 15 Highley residents called, only four had been born in the parish and lived there "for the most part" ever since. Although some witnesses had spent time in Highley as servants (an often invisible group whom we must not forget when assessing levels of mobility in the community) the majority had been in some landholding capacity. The Easter Book lists of householders exclude, it will be recalled, the poorest in village society: they include all the principal farmers of the parish who would in the earlier period have represented the most stable element of the community. Easter Book entries demonstrate that in the 18th century there was considerable movement even among these groups.

Only half of the families in Easter Book lists of 1696-8 were still represented (either by the same individual, a widow or son) ten years later. Thirty years later, in 1726, only twelve of the original 35 families were still present: a figure which by 1743-4 had fallen to six. In less than fifty years, 83% of the families of the late-17th century listings had completely disappeared.

Those families who left (or occasionally died out) were replaced by immigrants. Twenty new families appeared between 1706-8 and 1726, a period of considerable movement, as also indicated by the drastically reduced percentage of "new fathers" born at Highley for the decade 1710-19 in Fig.II. Fifteen years later, only half of these new families remained, but they had been joined by 13 more arrivals. The turn-over of whole families, even among the more prosperous sections of the community, was clearly considerable. At least twelve of the twenty new arrivals between 1708-9 and 1726 rented substantial properties, and belonged to a group which before 1620 would have been extremely unlikely to move as a family from a parish in which they had settled.

The Settlement laws rarely presented a problem for this group. They were unlikely to become a charge on the parish, at least until old age, and in any case usually rented property worth

more than £10 p.a. Occasionally the movements of tenant farmers can be traced around the district. Robert Adams, probably baptised at Chelmarsh in 1719, lived in Billingsley from 1742 to the end of 1751.[20] He may well have rented a farm there on a nine-year lease. Early in 1752, he took up another nine-year lease on Churchyard House at Highley.[21] Five children had been born to Adams and his wife at Billingsley, and a further one at Highley. He did not live to renew his lease or to move on, however, for he died in 1757.

Occasionally even men who had occupied considerable premises could fall into difficulties when they moved. Thomas Beetley was in Highley for "almost two years" around 1726, renting the Borle Mill for £20 p.a. He, his wife and three children had then gone to Kidderminster, where by 1729 they were likely to become chargeable to the parish. It was established that Highley had been their last place of settlement, although they do not seem to have been removed there at once, for no more children were baptised at Highley until 1737.[22]

Labourers and servants continued to make frequent moves, in spite of the settlement laws. The young single farm worker, whether live-in servant or farm labourer, had few problems in moving. Witnesses' depositions show how servants came from the immediate neighbourhood to work in Highley in the 17th century. The same pattern continued to the end of our pre-industrial period: the examination of John Venables in 1773, for instance, states that he had previously lived in Kinlet, but that his last place of settlement was at Stottesdon, where he had worked for two consecutive years. He was "an unmarried man not having children", and clearly worked his way around the district wherever work became available.[23] It is interesting that by 1773 there seems to have been no work for him in Highley.

Married men with children were theoretically in a more difficult position: parishes would be less willing to have them gain a settlement. The steady numbers of transients, however, suggests that labouring families were able to move from parish to parish, although they ran the risk of removal in the case of illness or unemployment. As wives automatically gained a settlement via their husbands, the practice of a couple setting up home in the husband's parish was

reinforced. Although no longer the prime cause of adult mobility, marriage was still a major reason for moving, especially for women.

Nevertheless, Fig.IV shows a considerable increase during the period in numbers of endogamous marriages. No figures are presented for the period 1690-1720, for during that time the vicar seems to have been operating a "marriage shop". Numbers of marriages rose dramatically, especially after 1700 when 15-20 couples married per year rather than the usual one or two. In the first decade, 1690-99, home parishes are usually stated, at least for bridegrooms: after 1700, this is rarely the case. Most of these marriages took place by licence, and couples came from all over the Shropshire part of the diocese of Hereford. Rev. Burton may have been a surrogate, able to grant licences, which would have initially drawn couples to Highley. He also, however, seems to have been less than scrupulous about marrying couples within the prohibited seasons like Lent.[24] Between 1700 and 1720, when Burton died, it is practically impossible to differentiate between "normal" marriages and these extra ones. To include all marriages performed during this period in our table would be very misleading.

	Both	Bride only	Groom only	Neither
1620-89	18.4%	50%	15.7%	15.7%
1720-55	35.4%	35.4%	6.2%	22.9%
1756-80	69.7%	25.5%	4.6%	0

Fig.IV % of marriage partners resident at Highley

In the 17th century, only 18.4% of all marriages were between partners both of whom were living in Highley at the time of marriage. In the final years of our period, after the new format for registration introduced after Lord Hardwick's Marriage Act of 1753, practically 70% of all marriages were endogamous. We must make some allowances for possible over-estimation as a result of the new format:

a space for place of residence was left on the printed page, and occasionally it seems that "this parish" was entered with more regard for convenience than accuracy. Even so, considerably more Highley residents chose partners from their home village than was previously the case. There are several possible reasons for this. The village population had increased, thus providing a greater choice of marriage partner within the community. Furthermore kinship networks had become much less dense, which meant that choice of partner was less restricted by degrees of prohibited relationships. Flandrin found that in rural France the proportion of endogamous marriages rose significantly in larger villages.[25]

In marriages where only one of the partners came from Highley, it was usually the bride who was the local inhabitant, as was the case in the 16th century. It was unusual for a man to bring his bride to his own village for the wedding itself, although the couple frequently returned to the man's home to live afterwards. Some of these marriages of Highley men to women from elsewhere can be traced in the registers of surrounding parishes as indicated on the sketch map, which illustrates the geographical area drawn upon for marriage partners. Parishes where a Highley partner was married are indicated in black. While naturally not exhaustive, this does indicate something of the area of the marriage market. Home parishes of those marrying a Highley partner at Highley itself are marked in red.

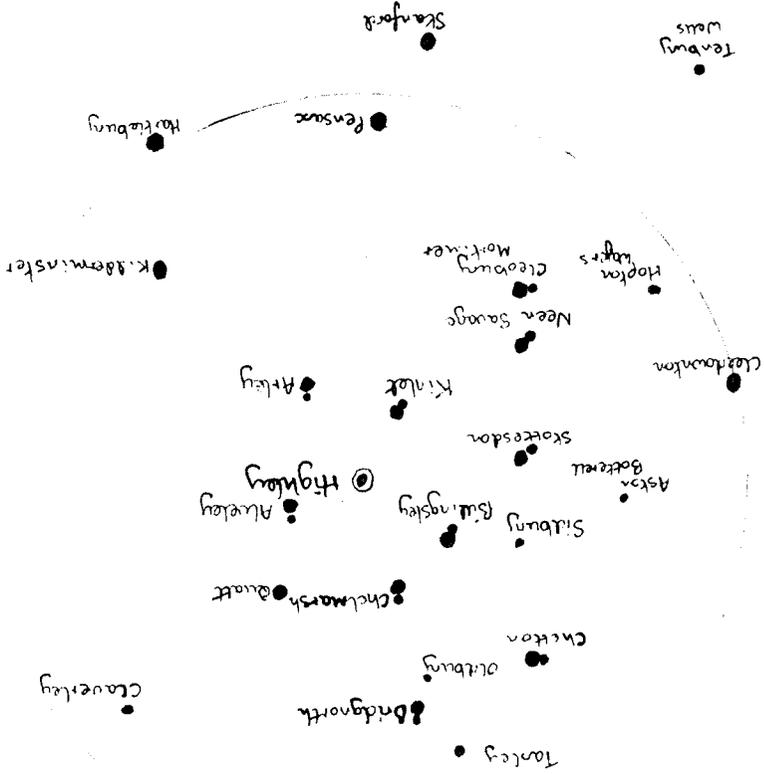
The map shows an "inner ring" of parishes within a ten-mile radius. The nearest of these, those bordering on Highley, supplied several marriage partners each. Others towards the fringes of the inner ring, like Claverley, Tasley and Cleedownton, provided only one each. The parishes outside the ten-mile ring should also include three others at even greater distances:- Rewl in Gwynedd; Newport in north Shropshire; and Kingscliff, Northants

Those who married partners from within the inner ring might be of any social class: all these parishes were within reasonable walking distance and within the area drawn upon for servants, for instance. In fact the same area comprises the usual extent of business and social contacts, and the movement of farmers and

5 miles



Staree
Pore



Ludlow
Stankon
Lacy

Church
Stilton

Fonbury

• Donington

Birmingham

labourers alike. Those who took partners from a greater distance, however, were almost exclusively from our Class I, prosperous yeomen. The bride from Rewl married Robert Lowe of Borle Mill in 1620; Martha Peirson of the demesne farm married a grazier of Kingscliff; John Pountney of The Rea married Elizabeth Fownes of Stoke Prior in Worcestershire and eventually settled there himself. Curiously, the geographical area drawn upon appears to shrink in the later part of the period: not only were there more endogamous marriages, but the area of the marriage market itself was more confined to immediately neighbouring parishes. This may have been largely due to the decrease in numbers in this class: the tenant farmers of the 18th century did not aspire to the gentry as did the Lowes and the Pountneys of the early 17th century.

Whether they moved before or after marriage, most young people born in the village did as we have seen leave long before their deaths. There is little evidence of the ultimate destinations of those last recorded as infants. Wills of their parents sometimes record them living in other nearby parishes, but more frequently there is no indication of their whereabouts. Occasionally even the parents themselves seem unsure. In 1723 John Ellis left a small bequest to his son Thomas "if he come again into this countrey within the space of three years". In this case, no contact seems to have been maintained between Thomas and his family, probably because of the distance over which he had moved: those who moved within "this country", which we may take to be roughly equivalent to our ten-mile ring, usually did maintain some contact if they left family in their native place. John Roberts in his will of 1627 left money to the poor of Chelmarsh, his birthplace, and bequests to his brother and other relatives still living there. Bequests to the poor of a native parish, rather than to specific relatives there, seems to indicate a sense of identity with the place in spite of years of absence. John Pountney, who had lived in Stoke Prior for some years before his death in 1655, still left money to the poor of Highley in his will.

Physical mobility, then, increased during this pre-industrial period. After the changes brought about by enclosure and in prevalent types of land-tenure, there was greatly increased mobility among all classes. With the end of the three-life tenure,

fewer holdings passed from father to son; and shorter leases meant that farmers and their families were much more likely to move in middle life than previously. Those who owned their farms could, like the Pountneys of Green Hall, sell up and move elsewhere. This was also the case with some artisans and cottagers who were forced to join the more mobile group of wage labourers. The demand for labourers increased after enclosure, and attracted some families to the village. There were seasonal variations in this demand, however, as well as longer-term fluctuations caused by economic conditions and changing agricultural methods. There seems to have been a pool of labouring families who moved regularly around "the country" as work became available, as well as numbers of servants, drawn from the same area, who spent some time working in Highley. In the early part of our period at least, this cyclical movement was accompanied by some longer-distance migration by those forced to vagrancy.

As a result of these levels of migration among all sections of village society, probably only a quarter of residents at most periods would have been born in Highley. While marriage remained one of the major reasons for immigration, it was no longer the prime cause that it had been in the 16th century. Emigration by juveniles remained common (sons had even less incentive to stay on with fewer prospects of inheriting a tenancy), but increasingly through this period we find whole families arriving, staying a few years and moving on. One indication of this is that by the mid-18th century only four of the families resident in 1620 were still represented in the village: Lowes Pountneys, Fenns and Rowleys. All occupied a lower position in the socio-economic scale than their forebears had done. Mobility among farming families also resulted in a decline in the importance of settled residence in the community as a status criterion. Wealth was increasingly the determinant of influence. Highley's relatively "open" nature, the tradition of mobility, and the existence in the area of a pool of labour ready to move in search of work, are factors which contributed to its suitability for industrial development.

Such high mobility levels naturally weakened kinship networks within the community, which were not nearly so strong by the late 17th century as they had been in the 16th. Since so much migration

was over a relatively short distance, however, it did mean that a more extensive network of relationships linked Highley with other parishes in the district. John Matthews, for example, who died in 1716, mentioned in his will a brother living in Arley, Worcs., and a kinsman of Enville, Staffs. He also had a married daughter who had moved away from Highley, a daughter-in-law whose own family lived in neighbouring Billingsley, and so on.

Kinships networks had already become less dense by the time of the 1672 Hearth Tax returns: the 35 named individuals had 29 different surnames. In fact, even including relationships by marriage, 19 of them were not related to any other on the list. Fourteen men were related to one other, and only three - Stephen Edmunds, his son and son-in-law to two or more.

It appears that a greater number of second marriages and the increase in endogamous marriage had strengthened kinship ties somewhat by the end of our period. We can arrive at a compiled list of 44 heads of household (which very probably omits one or two short-term residents) in 1779. The list contains 33 different surnames; and although 21 of the individuals were apparently unrelated to any other, twelve were related to one other and eleven to more than one. Many of these relationships, especially in the "two or more" group, were of affinity: there are never more than two instances of the same surname, but brothers- and sons-in-law make up a considerable number of those related. There still remained, however, about half of the population who were not related to anyone else in the community outside their own nuclear family.

When we turn to the recognition of kin, we find that this nuclear family was the basic unit in pre-industrial Highley. We have seen when examining the composition of households that by far the most usual family grouping was of parents and children only. At some stage the family might expect to include an elderly parent, and occasionally an unmarried brother or sister shared the home of a married sibling for some time. This predominance of the nuclear family is reflected in the range of kin recognised in wills, which was even narrower than that of the pre-enclosure period.

A total of 34 wills has been traced for the period 1620-1779, excluding inventories and administrations. of these, 23

mention sons, and 23 daughters. Spouses are mentioned in 21 wills, and grandchildren in 14. For most testators, provision for the immediate nuclear family was the over-riding concern. Testators were predominantly male, so the spouse is usually a wife. References to "my well-beloved wife", "my loving wife", and so on, may have been recognised formulae, but there are other signs of care for and confidence in one's wife. Humphrey Harris, speaking on his deathbed in 1632, said to his wife Elinor "I do leave unto thee all that I have." Wives were frequently made executrix, and given considerable control over the future disposition of the estate. Elizabeth Pountney in 1692 was to receive all her husband's property for her lifetime, and to dispose of it to their children "as to her shall seem meet and convenient". Husbands were careful to provide accommodation for their widows wherever possible: in 1727 Thomas Lowe, a tailor, left to his wife "the upper part of my dwelling house" with half the garden and half of a small beanfield adjoining it. He (like some other testators) was also concerned to return to his wife "the goods which I had with her and which she brought to my house when we were married". In this case, Elizabeth Lowe had worked with her husband, and part of the business was clearly regarded as her own affair: she was to receive "all her shop goods" and to pay all her own debts.

We saw how in the pre-enclosure period widows continued to run the family holding, and to be regarded as heads of household in all listings. Wives were regularly the second "life" on a three-life tenancy, and thus their position was relatively assured. This continued to be the case for the widows of freeholders. Joan Palmer appears as head of household on all parish and fiscal listings until her death in 1706 at the age of 85 or more, although her middle-aged sons had in fact been running the farm for most of her 40-year widowhood. It seems to have been more difficult for the widows of leaseholders to continue on a farm, however, and in the 18th century the widows of relatively prosperous men were sometimes reduced to dependence on parish relief, like the Widow Brooks whose husband was at one time tenant of Borle Mill.

Having provided as well as possible for their spouse, most testators concentrated on bequests to their children. Some children had already received their share before the will came to be written. Joseph Cook in 1771, for instance, makes this clear: he

gave one shilling to his eldest son "as he was provided for before". Unmarried daughters, too, usually received more money than married ones, suggesting that the latter had already received a marriage portion. In one case, however, a son does appear to have been cut off with the proverbial shilling. John Matthews in 1716 included a terse bequest "to my son one shilling", without naming the young man or adding any other details. His executors, for good reasons of their own which they did not state and which were almost certainly connected with this disinheritance, refused to act. We have already seen in the case of Thomas Ellis how contacts could be lost between parents and children when the latter moved.

Sons-in-law were mentioned in nine of the wills, sometimes in the role of overseer in the absence of a son, although daughters too could be given this responsibility. Judith, the youngest daughter of Alice Harris, was made residuary legatee and executrix of her mother's will of 1628, although her older brothers were still living in Highley. Thurstan Dale in 1632 left most of his possessions to his grandchildren, and chose a granddaughter as executrix. Particularly careful provision was made for unmarried daughters. They were expected to exercise some personal choice in the selection of a husband, provided that this choice met with the "consent and good liking" of the executors. This presumably reflects the normal degree of parental influence in the matter. Marriage portions were regarded by testators as vital, and equity between daughters desirable. John James in 1741 left £30 each to his two single daughters, and in a clause addressed to his son-in-law, tells him to "take to yourself (four pounds a year) till it come to the value of thirty pounds."

Younger children were a special anxiety. Humphrey Harris's final spoken instruction was to "desire his wife to be good unto his two daughters." George Harris, who died in 1654, left one third of his estate to his wife for her maintenance, and the remainder to bring up his young children until they reached 21. Grandchildren, too, if they had lost one or both parents, received special provision. Richard Palmer in 1632 made extremely detailed arrangements for the apprenticeship of his grandson, the child of his widowed daughter.

Relationships within the family seem, on the evidence of wills, to have been generally warm. Sons-in-law were usually regarded as part of the family, and the step-daughter of Thomas Strefford in 1633 received his whole estate. There is one case of disharmony within the family in these wills, however, besides the disinherited son mentioned above; and one with no possible ambiguity. Joseph Cook, who died in 1771, had clearly quarrelled with his son-in-law Samuel Wilcox: possibly he had never approved of the marriage, for neither he nor his wife witnessed it, and their daughter was living away from home when it took place. In any case, Cook placed £100 with his overseers and instructed them to pay the interest to his daughter and not to Wilcox so that it should not be "subject to the debts control or management" of Wilcox.

Wills are, of course, an incomplete guide to degrees of affect within the nuclear family. In the absence of letters and journals, however, they are the most personal documents we have, and point in the main to caring relationships between spouses, and between parents and children.

Mentions of kin outside the nuclear family are comparatively rare. Nephews and cousins are mentioned in two wills, and a brother, sister, niece, uncle, brother-in-law and sister-in-law in one each. In six wills we find unspecified "kinsmen" - the exact relationship being unknown or regarded as unimportant. The range of kin recognised has shrunk, even from the 16th century. As we noted earlier, the more distant kin were replaced increasingly in this period by friends. In the main the testator of the 17th and 18th centuries neither expected his distant kin to administer his affairs or assist his widow and children, nor felt himself obliged to leave some of his possessions to them at his death.

In spite of high mobility in the community, the increasing stratification of village society, and a decline in some of the aspects of neighbourliness that we noted in the pre-enclosure period, some ideals of social relations remained. The concentration on the nuclear family and the increased importance of self-selected relationships - both of which may be seen as indicative of increased individualism - are reflected in the memorial inscription of Elizabeth

Cook, who died at the very end of our period. Her admirable qualities were listed in order of importance: "She was a loving wife, a tender mother, a sincere friend, and a good neighbour."

Evidence regarding the quality of religious and intellectual life during this period is slight. Any assessment of the extent and importance of literacy in the community is attended by two basic difficulties: insufficient evidence survives to enable any quantitative assessment, except towards the end of the period; and such evidence as there is reveals in the main only the ability or inability to sign one's name - an unreliable guide to reading capacity.[26]

For the period before 1700 we are forced to rely almost entirely on signatures on wills and inventories, leases, and some parish chest material. The Association Oath Roll of 1696 reveals less than might be hoped about literacy, as it is not always possible to differentiate between those who signed for themselves and those who did not. Similarly, some wills exist only in contemporary copies which present the same difficulties. Signatures show thirty literate men and twenty illiterate between 1620 and 1699. Of the nine female signatories, eight were illiterate.

	Male Signatories 1620-99	Male Signatories 1700-79	Bride- grooms 1756-79	Brides 1756-79
Literate	60%	58.5%	53.5%	25.6%
Illiterate	40%	41.5%	46.5%	74.4%

Fig.V

Among men we see the beginnings of class-bias in literacy. In the pre-enclosure period, illiteracy was found among the

more prosperous farmers, as well as the less well-off. As the 17th century progressed, men of this class became increasingly (though not universally) literate, while the ability to write remained unusual among tradesmen and smallholders. Our list of signatories, composed as it is of parish officers, testators, landholders, etc., does not reflect the true state of literacy in the community: it does indicate, though, that the majority of the male "better sort" could at least sign their name. Women remained almost universally illiterate.

In the 18th century, proportions of literate male signatories were similar: there were 31 who could sign and 22 who made a mark. There were still those major farmers, like William Jordin who occupied Cresswell's manor house, who could not write; but in the main men from the higher socio-economic groups could write (and almost certainly therefore read) by mid-century.

The first satisfactory evidence of literacy in the community as a whole comes in the new-format register for marriages, which in Highley began in 1756. All brides and grooms, and generally two witnesses, either signed or made their mark in the register. Between 1756 and 1779 there were 23 literate bridegrooms and 20 illiterate. By this date, illiteracy was generally a sign of lower status among men. This was not the case for women: their situation was as it had been for men in the earlier period - literacy indicated a higher social class, but the absence of it showed nothing. Thirty-two brides were illiterate and only eleven could sign - six of these in the last six years of the period. Women's literacy seems to have followed the same pattern as men's, but with a considerable time-lag.

There is some further evidence of literacy in these registers, from the signatures or marks of witnesses. If we omit the parish clerk, who witnessed several marriages, we are left with 26 literate males to 12 illiterate, and no fewer than 11 literate women out of 16. This is a less reliable indicator than the signatures of brides and grooms: witnesses were chosen, and literacy could well have been a criterion for the choice: indeed, especially in the case of women, this appears to have been clearly so. From other evidence, it is untenable that over half of a randomly-chosen group of women in the community could sign their names.

The uses of this literacy are hard to determine. Five probate inventories and one will mention books, though titles are never specified. The only case where books were of considerable value was that of the vicar, John Burton, whose study contained books, a desk and a table to the total value of £13 10s. The need to read and write was becoming more pressing for better-off parishioners during our period. Increasing amounts of administration were performed at parish level, and while it was not essential for a churchwarden or overseer to be literate, it was clearly advantageous. In practice, in the 18th century, an illiterate officer would be paired with one who could deal with the necessary paperwork.

In the 16th century, wills were dictated to the parish priest: by the 18th century some men were writing their own. John James, a wheelwright and landholder, writing his will in 1741, departed from the usual formula to address his son-in-law directly and to deal in similar conversational style with the disposal of the rest of what he called his "personable estate". Literacy was by no means the prerogative of the clergy by the 18th century: John Higgs, vicar from 1720, safeguarded his privacy by keeping his diary and personal accounts in Latin, and made occasional notes in his tithe accounts in Greek.[27]

Tradesmen found literacy an advantage. We have already mentioned the "shop-book" of the blacksmith Samuel Jones listed in the inventory of his goods taken in 1716: other literate tradesmen, like Thomas Lowe, tailor, and John Penn, victualler and parish clerk, presumably also kept business records. No private letters of this period have come to light, but we may assume that another use of literacy was communication with relatives living at some distance.

It is far from clear how this literacy was acquired. Such schools as there may have been in Highley were short-lived. Only one has left any record: in 1637-1639 Daniel Trowe was presented at the church courts for teaching a school without a licence. There were ten boy pupils in 1639. This is the only school of which record can be traced. In 1716 the churchwardens reported "We have no person that keepeth a school in our parish." [28] A small cottage in Highley known as "Schoolhouse" was so called by 1759, and was presumably the site of a small school at some earlier date.[29] The acquisition of

education was for most village boys a rather hit-and-miss affair. One boy might learn to write while his brothers did not, presumably as the availability of local schooling allowed. His sisters, for most of our period, apparently would not have attended school at all.

Throughout this period, there is no indication of any religious nonconformity in Highley. The returns of the Compton Religious Census of 1676 state that there were "no Papists, no nonconformists" in the parish. The answers to the Bishop's Articles of Inquiry of 1716 similarly report "We have no Dissenter of what Persuasion soever in our Parish, or any Meeting of Dissenters that we know off." [30] The occasional presentments at church courts for non-attendance at church seem to indicate a lack of enthusiasm for services, rather than religious dissent.

The frequently stormy relationships between vicar and parishioners already outlined owed more to secular causes than religious differences. In fact parishioners seem to have taken changing shades of religious opinion in their stride: when Giles Rawlins was ejected at the end of the Civil War, his replacement was Robert Durant, one of the signatories to Richard Baxter's Worcestershire Association of the 1650s, many of whom were, like Durant, removed at the Restoration, and who later chose official Nonconformity. [31] Parishioners giving testimony in the court cases of the 1660s reported that they had found Durant "godly", "honest" and of "good reputation", and it seems that no repercussions followed this change in the direction of religious leadership in the parish. Parishioners appear to have been largely indifferent to the doctrinal position of their vicar.

Rawlins, Durant and John Burton between them spanned the period from 1635 to 1720. In some ways they retained something of the involvement in village life of their pre-enclosure predecessors. They lived in the parish, and farmed their glebe lands. Rawlins made an extensive list of his farm implements in 1675 which runs to 53 items and shows concern with day-to-day farming. Burton's inventory lists considerable stock and crops on the vicarage premises. But all were university-educated men, and not locally born as Thomas Oseland had been. This increasing social isolation was accompanied in the 18th century by absenteeism. The churchwardens of 1716 could report that

"our Minister resides personally upon his cure", but after the death of John Burton in 1720, this ceased to be the case.

Subsequent vicars rented out most of the vicarage house and lands, and visited Highley only for church services. John Higgs records in his diary travelling to Highley from his home at Quatt to preach, and for burial and baptism services. He was succeeded by his son Richard, who also held more than one living and was not resident. Dr. Fleming, the final vicar of our period, was another pluralist, and active in county administration. The social (and literal) distance between priest and people in the 18th century was immeasurably greater than it had been in the 16th century.

We have no way of assessing the religious convictions of these later vicars: some drafts of what are probably sermons by John Higgs survive, but seem to be copied from 17th century published works. The will of John Burton is unusual in being the only Highley will to include no religious preamble of any kind. Certainly the amount of pastoral care that these vicars could offer was limited by circumstances, even supposing they wished to provide it. Relations with parishioners seem to have been distant at best, and at worst to have deteriorated to the point where, as we have noted, Higgs cursed his whole flock. As for the parishioners, their nominal conformity must have encompassed many degrees of faith: none felt moved to depart from the Established Church, but whether this is witness to satisfaction or apathy it is impossible to tell.

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THE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD,

1780 - 1880

The century after 1780 has been called the 'industrial period'. Quarrying was developed very early in the period; but the major industrialisation came after 1800, when coalmining in particular was greatly expanded. Fig.I charts the size of the village population in census years from 1801 to 1881, and shows how population nearly doubled between 1801 and 1811 as numbers of coal miners arrived in the community. Mining remained the chief industry until shortly after 1830: thereafter Highley once again relied upon agriculture as the staple of its economy. But quarrying continued; small mines and forges outside the parish boundaries were still in operation; and for a time around 1860 Highley housed large numbers of navvies building the Severn Valley section of the Great Western Railway. At the very end of our period, in the late 1870s, coalmining was revived, exploratory shafts were sunk, and finally in 1879 Highley Colliery was opened.

The changes in the community brought about by industrialisation were swift and extensive. In 1801, 19 of the 61 families were supported by 'manufacture and trade'. These were local craftsmen, some quarrymen, and the first coal miners. By 1811, 49 families were in manufacture and trade, and only 30 in agriculture. There was a similar ratio (54:42) in 1821: but by 1831 agriculture again predominated by 43 families to 19.

Thus within our industrial period we have phases of maximum industrial activity, and others of stagnation. The first thirty years of the 19th century are particularly interesting as they saw such large-scale immigration, and a fundamental change in the village economy. Yet Highley was never a mining village in the way that those villages built as virgin settlements around pits in larger coalfields were. It was a rural community half of whose number were, for a time, coal miners. The miners found an existing community, with its own social structure, its church, houses and crafts. Without neglecting to consider the impact of this immigration on Highley, we must nevertheless remember that the existing population in many ways continued to live much as before.

In fact during this period of industrial expansion Highley had two apparently disparate social systems operating in parallel. The points at which they impinged on each other were surprisingly few. The miners lived close to the pit, at a distance from

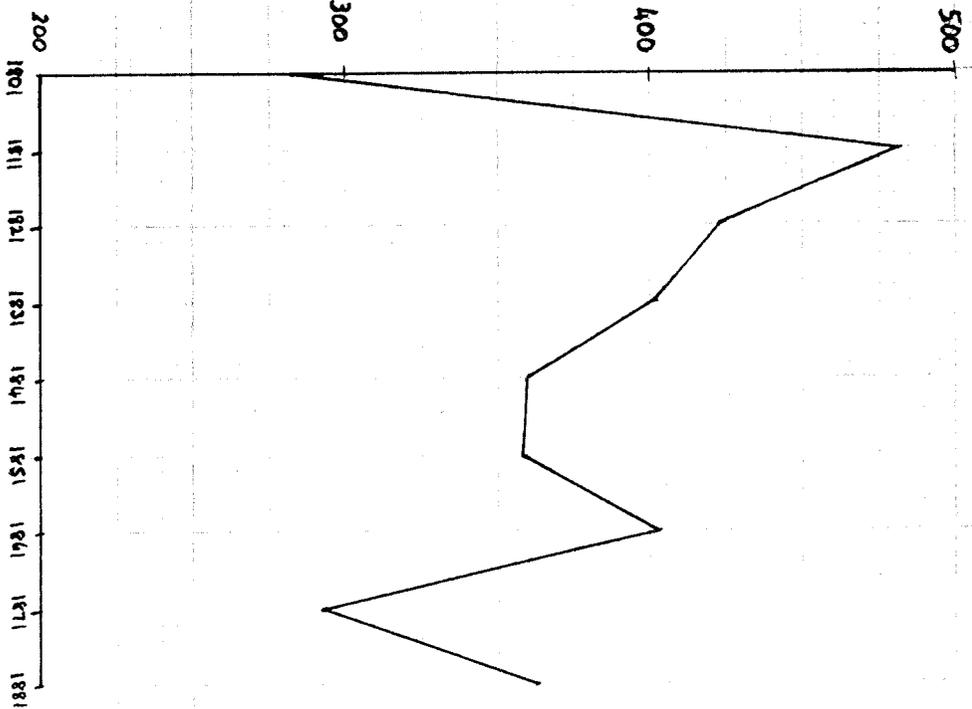


Fig I Population of Highley 1801-1881

the village centre which was significant if not great. Their community at Stanley had its own public house under the control of the colliery owner, and its own tradesmen. The colliery issued its own banknotes. The miners had their own hierarchy - owner, manager, clerk, faceworkers, craftsmen and so on. The way in which numbers of miners were brought in apparently from other areas of the owners' operations argues a degree of paternalism in the management of the industry.

The startling lack of cases involving miners brought before the Quarter Sessions further suggests that social control was an internal matter, with the management regulating the behaviour of its workforce by some system of sanctions within the industry.

Even coroners' inquests show the same dichotomy in village society: jurors at inquests on non-mining inhabitants were farmers, craftsmen and labourers. Those called for inquests on miners were generally other miners. Miners did not hold parish office, and they rarely claimed poor relief. Indeed, one reason for the very short periods of residence of most miners may have been that they were deliberately given short contracts in order to prevent them gaining a settlement in Highley, as happened elsewhere in the Shropshire coalfield. Thus miners who could not work were removed to their original place of settlement.

There was very little inter-marriage between the two halves of the community. Furthermore, there was almost no movement between agricultural and industrial employment: hardly any local men were employed in the coal mines, and at the closure of Stanley Colliery practically all the miners left the village.

Yet Highley never quite returned to its 18th century state. There had been changes in the agrarian community, too, with the polarisation of wealth begun in the 17th century continuing, and increased numbers of landless labourers also contributing to greater geographical mobility. In fact, with as we shall see a constant turnover of population, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from outside Highley's usual 'catchment area', the decline in the influence of the church, the parish and its officers and greatly weakened kinship networks, it might be open to debate whether we can properly speak of a 'community' of Highley at all in the 19th century.

Certainly it was no longer a community like that of the 16th century: inter-dependent, inter-related and largely self-regulating. Inhabitants of Highley in the 19th century were unlikely to be tied to the place by the inheritance of land or its tenancy. Poor Law administration and social control ceased to be the responsibility of locally-appointed residents.

Nevertheless, in many ways the village retained a sense of identity. Most men who lived in Highley worked in Highley, and were employed by other local men. Increasingly during the 19th century goods and services could be obtained without leaving the village. It was still not possible to walk to Alveley or Arley across the Severn and, until the opening of the railway, links with market towns were poor. Village children attended school in Highley, and adults congregated at church or in one of the village inns. Towards the end of our period, village football and cricket teams were formed. In short, in spite of the great changes which had taken place in village life and social relations since the 16th century, the concept of Highley as a community remains valid for the study of this industrial period.

For this period, a greater range of sources exists than for any previous period. In the early years, parochial material is at its fullest. The Easter Book continues to 1830, and we are able to compare its numbers with households enumerated by the census. The Poores Book detailing payments to individual paupers unfortunately stops in 1800-01, but removal orders and pauper apprenticeship indentures survive in considerable numbers from the first twenty years of the 19th century. Payments of tithe, too, are recorded until the 1830s.

Parish registers become more informative after 1813, when, for instance, father's occupation is recorded at baptism, and age at burial. Marriages after 1837 similarly record occupations and ages as well as father's name.

County sources improve during this period, as it is only after 1780 that surviving coverage of Quarter Sessions becomes at all complete. This off-sets the loss of diocesan courts, which ceased to function around the start of the period. Wills, too, are

less helpful because will-making was increasingly confined to the upper-middle class whose numbers in Highley by this date were small. Because of the increased movement of tenant farmers, surprisingly few actually died in Highley, and consequently there are very few wills for this period.

It is in national sources that we find the chief increase. The census figures from 1801-1831 and, most important, the enumerators' detailed returns from 1841-1881, are extremely valuable. The Tithe Award Map and Apportionment reveal much about landholding and the physical framework of social life in the village. After mid-century, trade directories add a useful dimension. Parliamentary committees made regular inquiry into education and poor relief, and the religious census of 1851 gives our first assessment of church attendance.

Then there are the 'special sources'. The Marcy Hemingway solicitors' collection housed at the Shropshire Record Office contains deeds, leases and correspondence from most of the period. Archdeacon Plymley toured his Ludlow archdeaconry in 1793, commenting on each parish, and a 19th century copy of his findings is in the British Library. Plymley also wrote the General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire which was published in 1803. Twenty acres of land in the parish was owned by Christ Church Oxford, and detailed correspondence and surveys relating to this land survive in the Christ Church archives. This is especially fortunate since this land was developed in the first phase of Highley's industrialisation.

Because sources in the 19th century are so numerous, it is rare to find any real attempt to synthesise data from varying sources: for instance to trace actual burials between consecutive censuses rather than to compute a statistically probable death rate. It is here that the small parish comes into its own. Some sample sizes are indeed small - but this would seem an acceptable trade-off in return for the much more detailed picture provided by such record linkage.

Chapter Seven - The Village Economy

During this period, the development of extractive industries brought considerable changes to the economic, social and demographic structures of Highley. It is, however, difficult to pinpoint the exact date of the beginning of this development, for the earliest surviving evidence, from the 1790s, describes coal-mining and quarrying activities already in progress.

Other parishes in the surrounding area experienced some degree of industrialisation from about 1780. Quarries and a coal pit were being worked at Kinlet and Stottesdon at this date[1], and coal miners are mentioned in the parish registers of Chelmarsh from 1774. At Billingsley, the vicar recorded in March 1796 the baptism of a child of John Brown "at this time resident in the parish with many others, who came from the north of England to attempt Opening a Colliery." [2] A furnace for smelting iron ore was also opened here, on the other side of the Borle Brook from Highley, in 1796 or shortly after.[3]

Two other forges were built in the area, and both had connections with mining developments at Highley. That at Eardington, five miles away, was built in 1778.[4] A later owner also held the lease of what we shall see was one of the most important industrial sites in Highley. The forge at Hampton Loade, a mile up-river from Highley, was built in 1796 by John Thompson, who in the early years of the 19th century was co-proprietor of Stanley colliery.[5] Coal from Highley was certainly used at Hampton Loade.[6]

Thus in the last two decades of the 18th century, Highley was surrounded by new industrial enterprises. A vital stimulus to this development was the opening in 1772 of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal, which linked the Severn at Stourport with the industrial Midlands - a link which was extended in 1779 with the construction of the Dudley and Stourbridge canals. This south-east corner of Shropshire now lay on the main route between the industrial centres of Coalbrookdale and the Black Country.

The coal, and most of the stone, mined at Highley lay

in deposits close to the river, where two wharves were constructed for the transfer of minerals to lighters. A railway led from one of these to the ironworks and colliery at Billingsley and was in use by early 1797.

Much of our information about quarrying and coal-mining in Highley before 1800 comes from the estate papers of Christ Church, Oxford, which owned twenty acres of land at the confluence of the Severn and the Borle Brook.[7] There is a series of surveys of and correspondence about the estate beginning in January 1797, when Dr. Henry Macnab and his brother-in-law George Johnson were already operating a quarry and coal mine. Reference is also made to two other apparently well-established quarries in the parish in January 1798.[8]

Macnab's coal mine was producing 50 tons of coal a day in 1797: he had built himself a house near the Severn and the terminus of the Billingsley railway, and wished to build cottages for miners nearby.[9] In 1803, the wharf and railway (and presumably the coal mine) were not working and Macnab and Johnson were in financial trouble, their bankers having foreclosed on the mortgage.[10] Some time after this date, the "beneficial interest in the lease" was made over to George Stokes, who since 1789 had been co-owner of Eardington forge. [11] Presumably the colliery continued to operate to provide coal for the forge until 1812, when Stokes, Macnab and Johnson were all bankrupt.

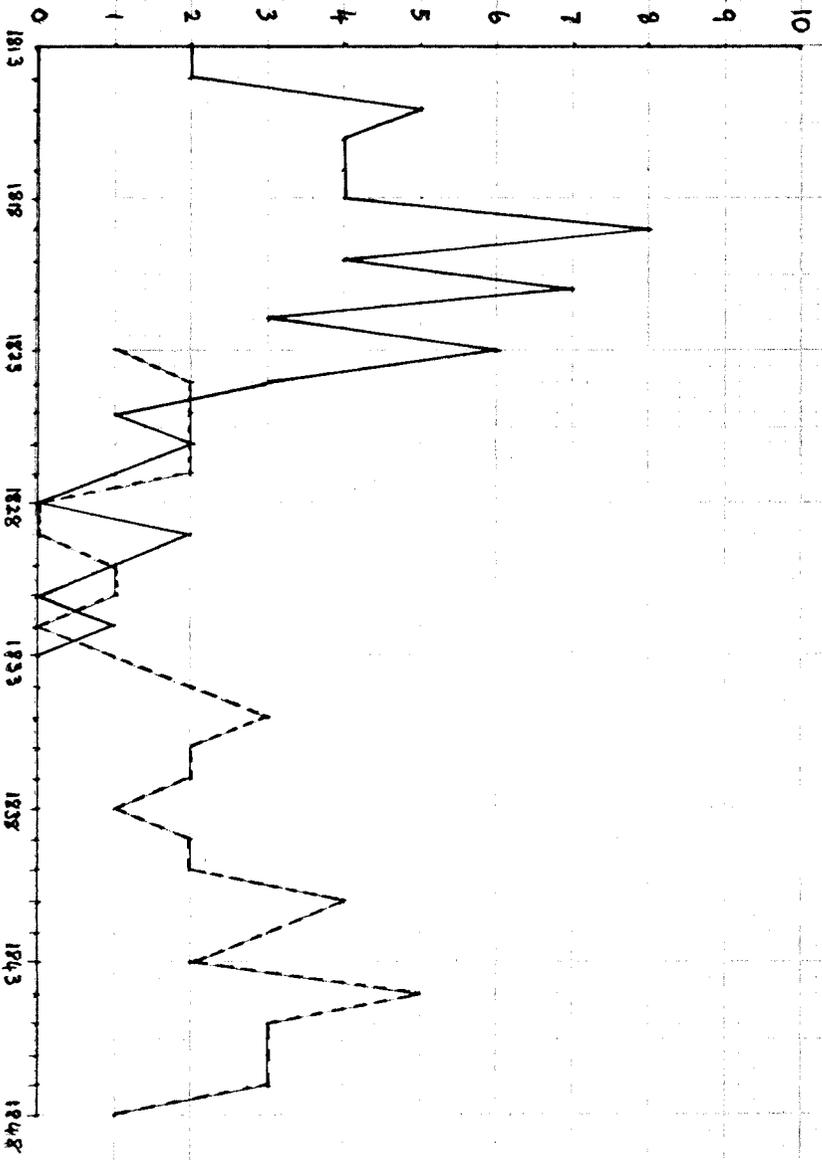
Meanwhile another mine had been opened a short distance up-river from Macnab's. This was known as Stanley colliery, and was in operation by 1804, when George Sheffield was killed by a fall of earth there.[12] This pit too appears to have been begun at least partly to fuel a local forge. In 1807 it was owned by John and Benjamin Thompson, who had built Hampton Loade forge ten years earlier. [13] Benjamin Thompson had children baptised at Highley in 1808, 1809 and 1811, and so it would seem that he lived in the parish and supervised the colliery.

Little can be discovered about the early years of Stanley colliery: it may have begun some years before 1804. By 1807 a steam engine was in use to lower colliers (two boys and a man were killed during this operation in 1807 and 1808) and to wind up coal, and the workings would appear to be quite extensive.[14] There may

have been other short-lived mining ventures in the parish in the early years of the 19th century. A piece of land near the Borle Brook and the workmen's cottages at New England on the Billingsley side of the parish, for instance, had belonged before 1802 to George Johnson, the partner of Dr. Macnab, and by 1810 was purchased by George Stokes, the Eardington forgemaster.[15] The Tithe Award Map of 1839 shows what appears to be the same piece of land, called "Coalpit Leasow".

After 1812, however, Stanley colliery appears as the sole survivor, with its scale of operations continuing to increase. In 1813, William Hughes and Joseph Gritton were joint owners, and even issued their own banknotes.[16] Cottages were built to house the colliers at Stanley, and the pit continued to flourish well into the 1820s. The baptism register begins to record fathers' occupations only in 1813, well after the establishment of coalmining industries in the parish, and provides at best a partial indication of their decline. Fig.I shows the number of "collier" fathers annually recorded, and though of course there were an unknown number of colliers who were not the fathers of young families, it does seem to indicate a decline in coalmining after 1825. The decrease in population in 1831 (although not great) was officially attributed to the closing of a colliery.[17]

Some miners who worked outside the parish continued to live in Highley, but in the village itself coalmining on a commercial scale ceased until the sinking of Highley pit in 1878. Quarrying, however, was a longer-lived activity. We have seen how a little quarrying "at Severnside" was being done in the 1720s and 1730s. The increase in river traffic and the new potential markets opened up by the canal links of the 1700s seem to have played a large part in the development of the industry, particularly quarrying, based on Stanley - "at Severnside". This area of the parish, about a mile from the village centre and on the river, had been mainly used as meadowland, and had only one or two houses until the last quarter of the 18th century. About 1775 the Ship Inn, owned by one of the sons of Edward Wilcox, bargeowner, received its licence here to cater for the river trade. It seems that Samuel Wilcox, another son, began quarrying on his nearby land shortly afterwards.



Crude annual totals of fathers employed

Fig. I

in coalmines ———

in quarries - - - - -

The earliest record of his activities is in 1797, by which time the quarries described sound well established.[18] They are probably the quarries noted by Plymley as operating in the parish in 1793.[19] There were two: one of grey building stone, and one of red sandstone which was sent to Birmingham for grinding gunbarrels, and making cider presses. Demand and prices were both high, and the works quite extensive, although unfortunately we are not told how many men were employed.

Another quarry belonged to the Rev. Samuel Burrows, vicar of Highley, and supplied a hearth stone to the Silvedale Iron Company near Stoke, which travelled by way of Stourport, also in 1797.[20] No other records of this quarry have come to light.

The quarry about which we know most is that on Christ Church land also run by Dr. Macnab. This was in operation by May 1797, when Macnab was called to account by his landlords, who had not given permission for its opening. Macnab's house had already been built using this stone, and 1500 cu.ft. had been sent to Bewdley for the construction of Thomas Telford's new bridge there. Forty men were currently employed in Macnab's quarry alone, although probably not all lived in Highley itself. By 1804 the quarry was no longer in use, although it may well have been opened up again later.[21]

Other quarries continued, however, throughout most of our period. We shall look at individual quarrymen later: for the moment it is enough to point out that the census returns show a decline in quarrying in the second half of the 19th century from a high point probably in the 1830s and 40s, as suggested by Fig.I. (Quarrymen were rarely recorded as such before 1823.) In 1851 there were 14 quarry labourers in Highley; in 1861 and 1871 only seven; and by 1881 there were just five.

Highley stone was used extensively to build local houses, as well as the bridge over the Severn at Bewdley. In 1839, it was even suggested that the new Houses of Parliament might use stone from Highley, although this apparently did not happen.[22] Cider presses in the neighbourhood, as well as further afield, came from Stanley quarries, and some of these large circular grinding stones can still be seen lying in the river at one of the original landing stages. The Coalbrookdale Company also purchased sandstone for furnace hearths from Highley.[23]

By 1800, then, a busy industrial centre had grown up in Highley, largely at Stanley on the Severn. Several quarries and at least two coalmines provided employment: cottages were built for the workers; a public house served both locals and the bargees passing through the parish, whose numbers were further increased by the opening of a tow-path along the river in 1800. In the early years of the 19th century, industries were developed and the population grew: other job opportunities were provided, especially at Stanley, which had its own blacksmith, carpenter, cordwainer and so on by 1820.

The Census Reports of 1801-1831 illustrate this growing involvement in "manufacture and trade" (as opposed to "agriculture" and "other"). In 1801, only 19 of the 61 families were engaged in industry and trade: the majority still earned their living from agriculture. By 1811 the position had changed: there were now 49 "industrial" families and only 30 "agricultural" ones. A similar situation was reported in 1821. The use of categories appears to have changed in 1831, when 24 families are entered as "other" instead of the usual two or three. In fact, because of the decline of Stanley colliery, there was apparently a rough equivalence between those families in agriculture and those in trade and industry.

Figs. IIa to IIc illustrate by means of pie-charts the changing picture of male employment between 1815 and 1844, based on the "father's occupation" entry in parish registers. This is, of course, an imperfect measure as some occupations, notably farmer, might well tend to be under-represented in the age-group of men having children. It is, however, the best guide available to employment in the pre-census period, and the chart for 1835-44 accords well with the figures for all employed males obtainable from the 1841 census returns.

The charts clearly show the decline in importance to the village economy of coal-mining, the greatest single employer (because some "labourers" during this period were not exclusively agricultural workers) in the years between 1815 and 1824. They also illustrate the growing importance of quarrying, and the relatively small but stable proportion of those earning their living from river traffic. Finally, the charts remind us of the continual agricultural underpinning of the economy, with the two occupations of farmer and agricultural labourer providing a major source of livelihood throughout.

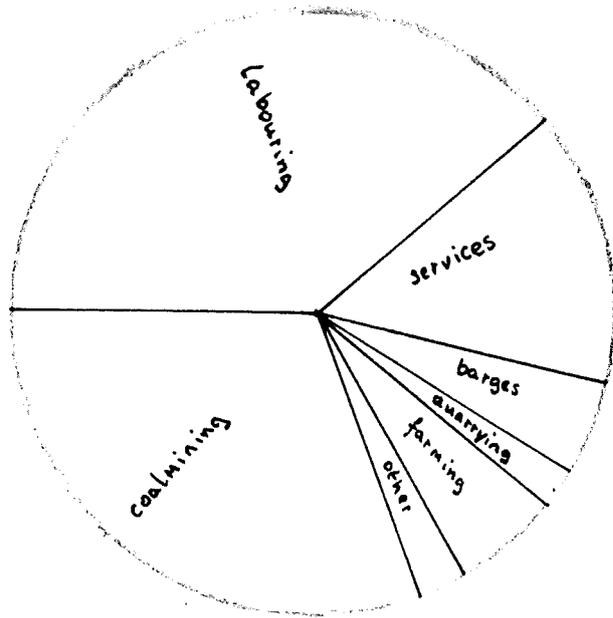


Fig.IIa

Male employment
1815-24

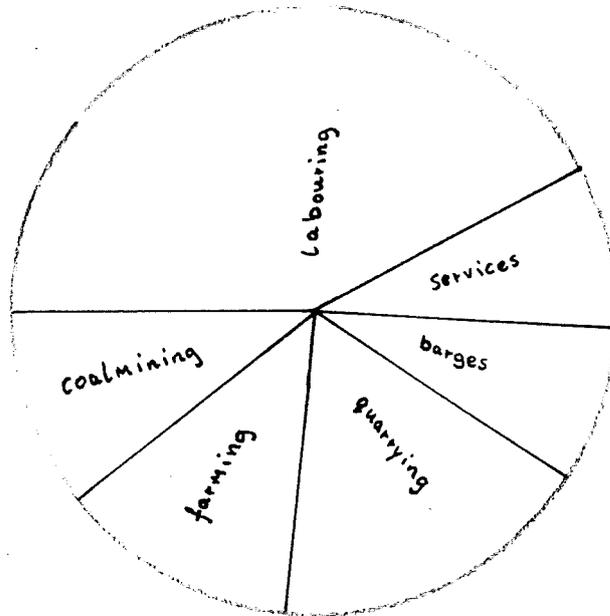


Fig.IIb

Male employment
1825-34

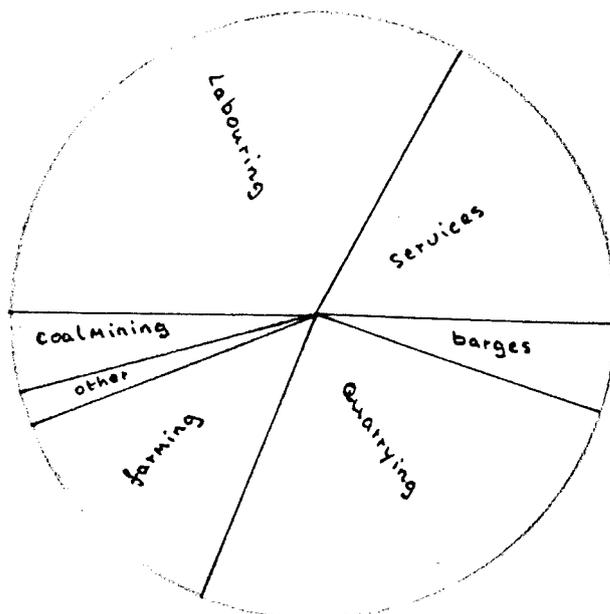


Fig.IIc

Male employment
1835-44

From 1841 it is possible to be more precise about the nature of male employment. Fig.III shows numbers in the main categories of male occupation from census returns 1841 to 1881.[24] Numbers involved in agriculture remained high, falling off only towards the end of our period. "Male servants" too were largely living-in farm hands. The large number of railway workers in 1861 were engaged on the construction of the Severn Valley Railway which opened in 1862. Quarrying and coalmining continued to provide employment, although the latter in particular on nothing like the previous scale (most coalminers lived on the fringes of the parish and probably worked outside it). In 1879 the Highley Mining Company began working a new pit, and this is reflected in the greatly increased number of colliery workers in 1881. Some occupations listed under "services" were also quasi-agricultural, like miller, tree-feller and sawyer.

	Agric.	Quarry & coal	services	railway	servts.	ret. & prof.
1841 ¹	67	9	23	-	23	3
1851	59	20	26	-	11	2
1861	68	9	23	59	1	4
1871	58	12	20	3	3	6
1881	42	63	17	3	5	3

¹In 1841, some apparent quarrymen are entered as "labourer" indistinguishable from agricultural labourer, and therefore included with the latter.

Fig.III Male occupations 1841-1881

The village economy supported a range of trades. One result of the considerable increase in population² was a demand for

²See Fig.I p.217 above

new housing. In 1801, there were 48 houses in Highley: ten years later there were 85. Most of the new additions were short terraces of cottages. Their construction must have provided work for several, and the increased housing stock enabled the village to support its own glazier, plumber, joiner and bricklayers as well as builders. The increased population provided work for a growing number of shoemakers and blacksmiths, for a tailor and a weaver, and several female dressmakers. There was, however, very little retail trade until the very end of our period. After 1815, a butcher and a chandler are occasionally mentioned, and in the census period a small grocer. Three public houses were opened in the 1840s, presumably as a result of relaxed licensing laws introduced in the 1830s.[25] For the most part, goods that could not be produced in the home had to be brought in from outside the village.

We have stressed the extent of Highley's industrialisation in the early 19th century, but we must beware of overlooking the continued importance of agriculture to the village economy. Even at the height of industrial activity, between 1811 and 1831, some 35%-50% of families were employed directly in agriculture. Pits and quarries, with their associated new housing, were largely confined to one area of the parish, and did not occupy large tracts of productive farm land. After the decline of coalmining in the 1830s, agriculture was again the main source of employment until the new colliery opened in 1879. Bagshaw's Directory for 1851 called Highley "a pleasant rural village noted for its extensive orchards and the excellency of its cider", although noting the presence of several stone quarries in the parish.[26]

Size of farm is consistently stated only on the census returns of 1851 and 1871. At the former date, one large farm of 480 acres occupied a third of the farmed land in the parish. There were a further five farms of more than a hundred acres: the remainder were either of the smallest viable size - 24-40 acres - or smallholdings of less than ten acres which were combined with another occupation. This represents some degree of engrossment since the beginning of the century, when most of even the larger farms seem to have fitted the norm for the county of 50-100 acres described by Plymley in 1803.[27]

Plymley regarded the small farmers of Shropshire, those with twenty or thirty acres, as "the most wretched and poorest in the community". Certainly they were in a less favourable position than larger farmers to profit from the vastly increased grain prices during the Napoleonic Wars. Prices in local markets soared during the 1790s: the vicar of neighbouring Chelmarsh recorded that wheat was sold at 9s 6d a bushel in 1783, and at £1 1s a bushel in 1795.[28] We shall examine later the effects on the poor of these price rises: their effect on local agriculture was stimulating. In 1801, the vicar of Ditton Priors, a few miles to the north-west of Highley, reported that in spite of high prices and apparent grain shortages "our opulent farmers have stacks of old wheat by them now they care not how high the price of corn is, the higher it is the more their gain." [29] Sir William Childe at Kinlet Hall in the next parish was an innovative and "improving" farmer at the beginning of the 19th century, and some of his methods percolated into the surrounding parishes.[30] At least one threshing machine, drawn by three horses, was in use in Highley by 1816.[31] It was probably at this time that some conversion to arable was undertaken: the proportion of arable to pastureland in 1851 was certainly greater than it had been in our earlier periods. Archdeacon Plymley does not record the acreage of arable in his observations of 1793, but it was clearly important to village agriculture for he notes in detail the prevailing rotation of crops. This was either wheat, barley, clover, wheat or wheat, turnips, barley, peas, wheat: that is, a 3- or 4-course rotation depending on whether or not clover was grown.

The post-war depression was also felt in Highley. In 1817, the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church were told that the coal mine and quarry on their estate were not working, although operations might resume "when there is more money in the country".[32] It was probably during this period that the engrossing suggested by the 1851 farm-size figures took place, as smaller farmers found increasing difficulty. The amalgamation of holdings in the hands of a few prosperous families is shown also on the Tithe Award of 1839.[33]

By 1871, two large farms of over 400 acres each dominated village agriculture. Interestingly, however, six farmhouses were uninhabited - three of which fell into disrepair and were later demolished, while a fourth became two labourers' cottages. This suggests

a decline in agriculture by 1871, which is a little early to be attributable to the "great depression" of the 1870s, which in any case was much less severely felt in Shropshire than in many other counties. [34] Saul points out that corn producers were much more badly affected than dairy and livestock farmers.[35] In fact, wheat prices had begun to fall in the 1860s, and it is tempting to see in Highley's case an adverse outcome of conversion to arable.[36] Certainly such a marked decline in the numbers of farms cannot be safely regarded as coincidental: clearly farming had become a less attractive prospect, for whatever reason.

Because of the census returns, we are able during the latter part of this period to make some estimation of the contribution of women and children to the village economy. Fig.IV gives numbers of women in employment as stated in census returns, as well as showing how many of these women were domestic servants. Women (i.e. age sixteen and over) with a job became more frequent during the second half of the 19th century, but were still a minority. Those in domestic service were usually young and single, in the 16-30 age group. Most other work open to women was also based on domestic crafts: nurse, housekeeper, and so on. There were also a few charwomen. Sewing provided other occupations: there were several dressmakers, a mantua-maker, shirtmaker and lacemaker. Virtually the only other female occupations were teaching or shop- and inn-keeping. Women agricultural workers are rarely mentioned, although other women probably worked on the land occasionally, for instance at fruit and potato picking. Other women may also have done part-time work, like laundry, not recorded as a full-time occupation.

Census returns also show a decline in the numbers of children in full-time employment. All employed girls were in fact domestic servants, and their numbers declined from eight in 1841 to zero in 1881. The youngest recorded girl "in service" was nine, although the majority were fourteen or fifteen years old - their mean age was exactly 14.

Numbers of boys in employment similarly decreased, from 13 in 1841 to five in 1881. In 1841 and 1851, boys of nine and ten are recorded as farm servants. Later, most working boys were at

least twelve, and several were in occupations which acknowledged their youth: apprentice shoemaker, postboy, ploughboy, and so on. In 1881, when there was renewed coalmining activity in the village, three boys were employed as miners, but all were 15 years old. Younger boys had been used in the earlier mines. Samuel Bright, who was killed by falling while descending a pit-shaft in 1807, was only eleven years old.[37] William Garbett, killed at Stanley colliery in 1820, was only ten.[38] There is no record of women miners at Highley, although women as well as boys were working underground in the E. Shropshire coalfield until The Mines Act of 1842.[39]

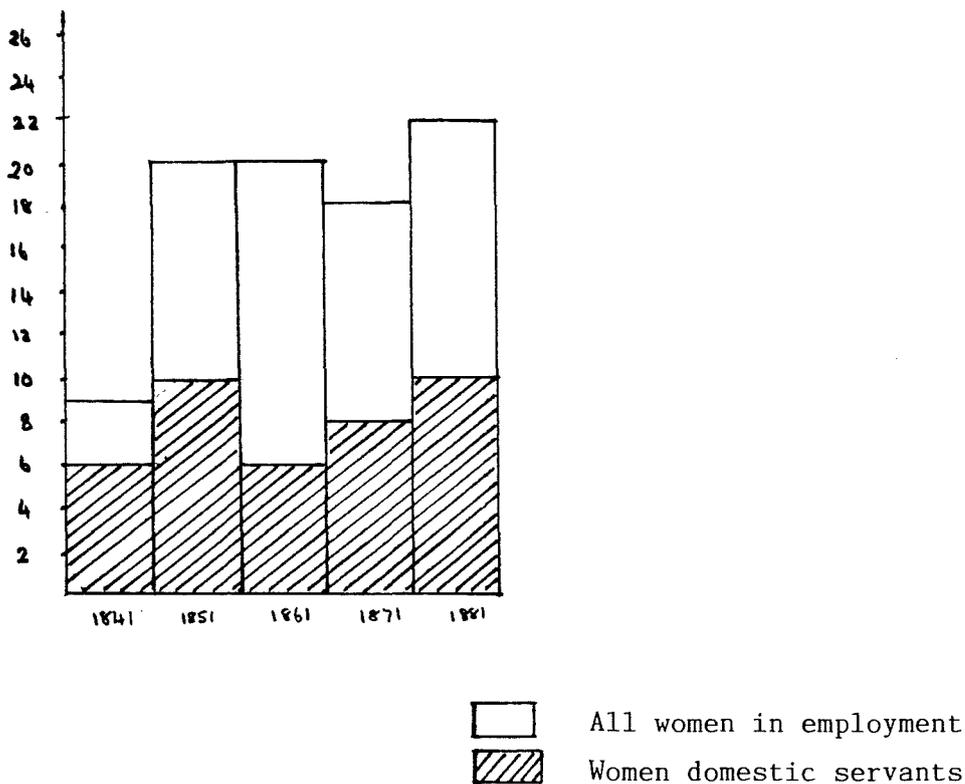


Fig.IV

By, 1842, there was no mining in Highley: neither did the Factory Acts of 1833 onwards (confined until 1867 to textile industries) have a direct influence on employment in Highley. They are, however, indicative of a growing general concern with child employment which, together with the better provision of schooling in the village,

may have contributed to this decline in child labour.

Clearly the agricultural and industrial elements of the village economy cannot be completely separated. The evidence suggests that coalminers in Highley formed a separate, usually immigrant group, who did not, as did the miners of rural north Worcestershire, combine mining with seasonal agricultural work.[40] Nevertheless, their presence provided increased scope for local tradesmen and probably, as was the case in the E. Shropshire coalfield, the higher wages paid to miners had some effect on the wages of agricultural workers. Rev. Plymley in 1803 noted that the best agriculture in the county was practiced in industrialising areas, where the price of land and crops was pushed up by the presence of a ready market. However, partly because of the sporadic nature of industrial activity during our period, agriculture in Highley was never swamped - geographically or economically - by industry. The Tithe Award Map and Apportionment of 1839 show a basically farming community, with some of the signs of the first phase of mining development already fading from the landscape. The second phase, beginning in 1879, was to have an even more drastic and lasting effect on the community.

In the pre-enclosure period, when a rough equivalence between the amount of land held and degree of wealth enjoyed could be assumed, it was relatively easy to discern the financial hierarchy of the rural community. This became more problematic after enclosure, when the rise of the absentee landlord in particular presented a complication. This remained the case during the industrial period, and was compounded by the emergence of a whole new group of industrial workers and tradesmen.

A small group of substantial farmers, usually tenants, remained the village elite. Fifteen men between them contributed virtually all of the Poor Rate for 1799.[41] Those who are shown in the Easter Book (to 1830) as having resident servants comprise a similar-sized group, varying between eleven and thirteen.[42] Here the chief farmers were joined by the coalmasters: Dr. Macnab in the 1790s, Benjamin Thompson after 1800, William Hughes around 1815. Industrialisation, however, swelled the group by only one, or at most two, at

any time. The great majority of incomers were manual workers. Thus the size of the elite group relative to the population as a whole shrank, from about 21% at the turn of the century to 13% in 1811 and 1821, and less than 12% in 1831. In the "census period" from 1841 to 1881, after a brief rise in mid-century which owed more to the decline in numbers of industrial workers than to any increase in absolute numbers, the percentage of men in this prosperous group continued steadily to fall. (See Fig.V)

There were also more internal variations in prosperity within this Group I than had been the case in our earlier periods. Although some farms continued to be owned by absentee landlords, one of the most significant developments in the pattern of landholding in Highley throughout the whole period covered by this study was the reversal of the trend towards absentee ownership brought about by the rise in the fortunes of the Jordin family.

William Jordin was born at Neen Savage in 1715: he came to Highley shortly before 1752, and married there two years later. In 1754, he was already one of the largest contributors to the Poor Rate. He rented Cresswell's house at Netherton and the Borl Mill Farm, and by 1767 also owned a smaller property. In 1779 he was renting some lands belonging to Bridgnorth Corporation and a portion of the great tithes of the parish, as well as the other properties.[43] Then in the same year Jordin bought the Newhouse estate. Thus at the beginning of our present period his family was one of the wealthiest families in the community - possibly the wealthiest, although the difference between them and other Group I farming families was not great (Joseph Cook, for instance, paid more in tithe in 1779 in respect of the old demesne estate).

William Jordin continued to add to his property, for instance buying two cottages and land near the Borl Mill. By the time of his death in 1796 there was a considerable estate to be handed on to his sons William and Thomas. (See Fig.VI) In the favourable economic circumstances of the war years, both sons prospered. As was the case during the inflation of the late 16th century, Highley's chief farmers were able to profit from high prices. However, in most cases they were tenant farmers, whose landlords were able to raise rents in

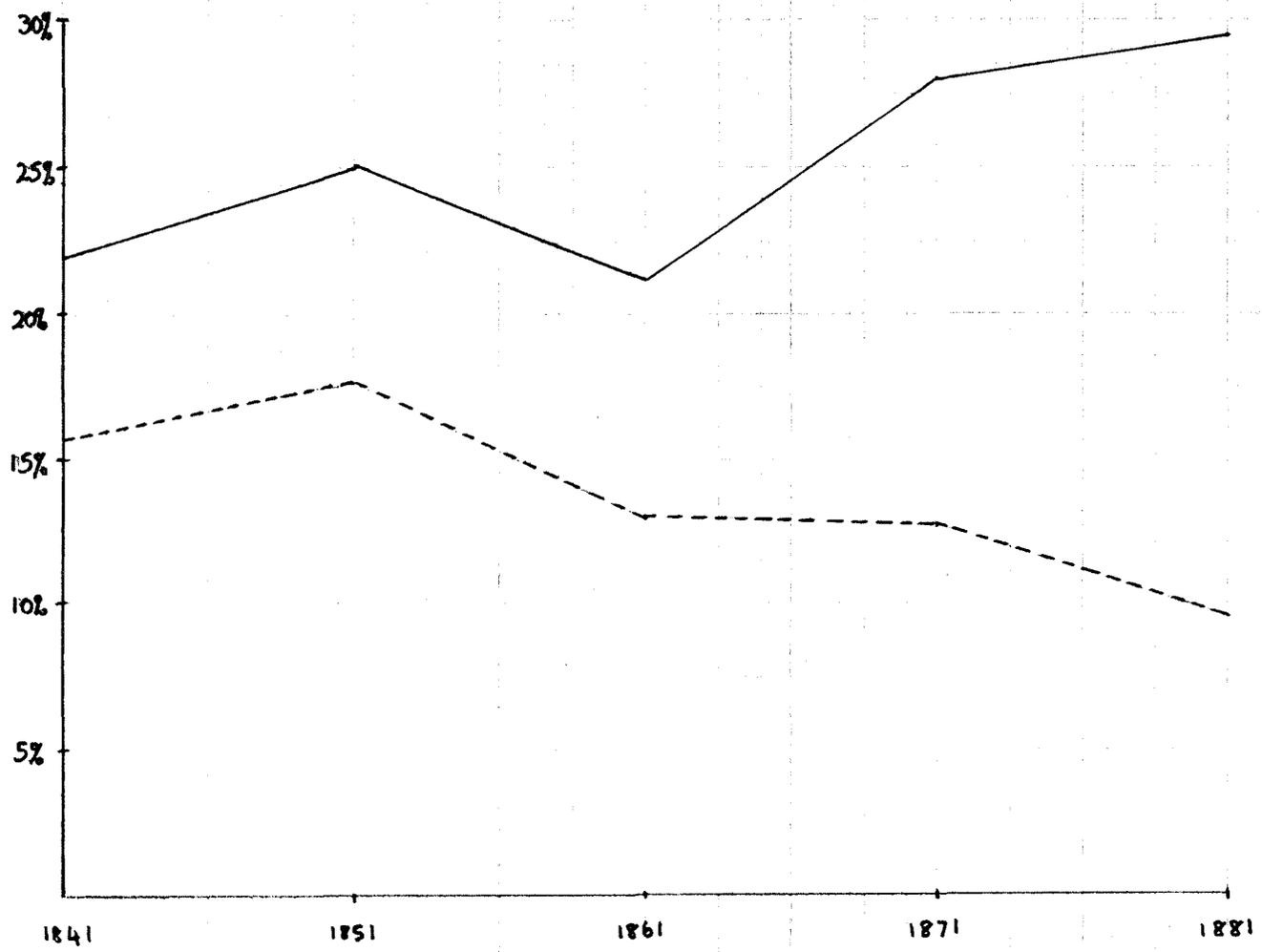
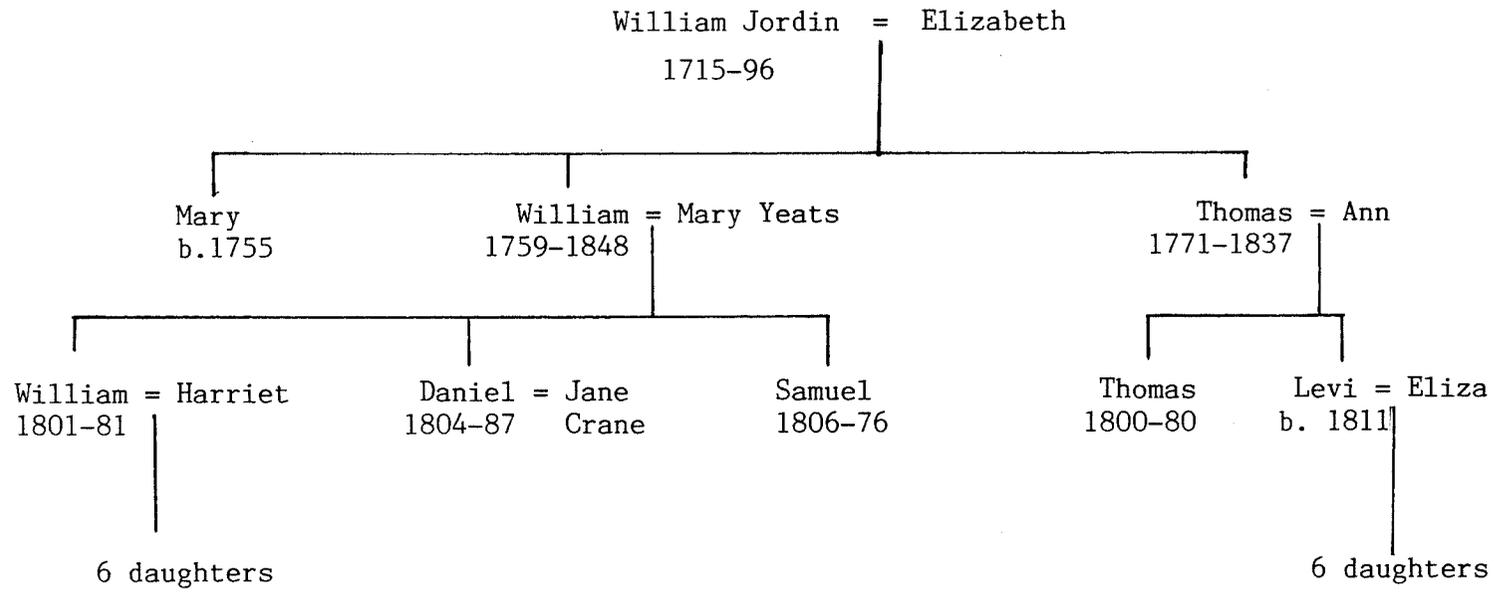


Fig.V Group I and Group II households as a percentage of all households 1841 - 1881

Fig. VI The Jordin Family



a way that had not been open to the Littletons in the earlier period. Nationally, in fact, most tenants' rents doubled during the Napoleonic wars.[44] The Jordins were already owner-occupiers of at least a substantial portion of their holdings, and could afford to buy more when they became available. William, the elder son, bought cottages and land in 1803, 1808 and 1821.[45] Thomas built a new house at Nether-ton in 1799, the year of his marriage, and bought more land in 1808.

Thus in the 1820s and 1830s when the economic conditions for farmers were less favourable, the Jordins were better able than their neighbours to withstand any slump, and were able to proceed with enlarging their estates at the expense of the smaller tenant and owner-occupier. By 1834, William had bought Higley Farm, the ex-demesne; he paid tithe on four large farms, and was Lord of the Manor. Thomas paid tithe on two farms and two large parcels of land. The main(Newhouse) estate was mortgaged for £5,000 in 1833 - possibly to fund this expansion, for there is no other evidence of financial difficulties.

By this time the brothers had two adult sons each. Thomas died in 1837, and William made over the Newhouse estate to his elder son, another William. Thus by 1840, it was the four Jordin men of the third generation who occupied among them almost half the farmed land of the parish.[46] This kind of elevation in the status and wealth of one family at the expense of their neighbours, brought about by a combination of acumen and circumstance, was a feature of the period in many regions.[47] Elsewhere, new rising gentry like the Jordins profited from the depression by buying out landlords who could no longer find tenants for their farms.[48] For the community as a whole, the most important feature of the Jordins' rise was that they remained resident in the village.

The census of 1841 shows six Jordin households (two in different halves of the same house) employing thirteen resident servants and a governess. William Jordin the younger (1801-1881) was described as Lord of the Manor and principal landowner in a directory of 1851: in 1856 he was listed under "gentry".[49] For almost the first time in its history, Highley during the second half of our period had a resident squire. In 1851, William and his brother Samuel, living

in the manor house at Netherton, farmed 682 acres, nearly half of the parish total. William took an active part in village affairs: he was instrumental in setting up the village school in 1863, for example. In the last years of his life, he agreed to rent land to The Highley Mining Company for the renewed coalmining activity which changed the whole structure of the community after 1880.¹

The Jordins' position of pre-eminence in the community coincided almost exactly with our present period. They were never more than minor gentry, and were never able to exert the kind of influence exercised by their titled neighbours in surrounding parishes like Kinlet. Nevertheless, their rise represented a significant change in the distribution of wealth and influence in Highley. Their position in village society was never challenged. By 1836, only ten men living in Highley had the qualifications necessary to vote, including the vicar and three members of the Jordin family. There were also three members of the Wilcox family who, although never reaching the status of the Jordins, established themselves in this leading group throughout our period.

The Wilcoxes, too, owed the beginnings of prosperity to one man, the bargeowner Edward Wilcox who died in 1764: but unlike the Jordins they did not rely solely upon agriculture for their advancement. One branch of the family (all of whom lived at Stanley, the new centre of industry and commerce in the parish) continued to operate barges; another combined farming with quarrying; while a third ran the Ship Inn. Together with the occasional coalmasters, and the vicar, the Wilcoxes were the only members of this prosperous group of a dozen or so families who did not derive all their income from the land.

The next group is less easy to define. In it we must include those smaller farmers whom Plymley regarded as in "the most wretched" straits, and whose income may indeed have been less than that of the more successful craftsmen and tradesmen. In fact Group

¹William's heir, in the absence of a male descendant, was John Beddard, who had originally been his farm manager. When the estate, which represented only the property of the elder branch of the Jordin family, was finally broken up and sold in 1945 it consisted of 572 acres of land and 28 houses.

II includes all those, like innkeepers, shoemakers and blacksmiths, who carried on a trade, sometimes in addition to farming a small-holding, as well as those farming less than about thirty acres. Both small farmers and village craftsmen at the beginning of our period probably had an annual income of between £30 and £50 per annum.[50]

The percentage of men in this category rose during the 19th century. Some farms shrank or were broken up as the large landowners acquired more property, thus leaving more small farmers. In 1851, nine of the nineteen farmers held 30 acres or less, with a mean farm size of 15 acres. The men with five or ten acres could not support a family by farming alone: in fact two were also agricultural labourers, one a cordwainer, and one a maltster. Half the farmers on the 1881 census had a mean farm size of only 13.4 acres. The dichotomy between large landholders and those eking out, or supplementing, a living - which had been exacerbated by the post-war depression - remained marked.

The largest rise in this group, however, was in the number of those providing the increased range of services expected as the century progressed. After mid-century, these included a sub-postmaster, a station-master (after 1862), a marble mason, and always three or four innkeepers, in addition to the butchers, blacksmiths and shoemakers recorded throughout the period. The small farms and businesses were nearly all family-run. In many cases, sons followed fathers in the family trade. Where this was not possible, there are distinct indications of a desire to avoid "sinking" into labouring occupations: the son of Thomas Walford, a small farmer in 1861, did not work on the family farm, but was a blacksmith. Similarly the sons of William Kirkham, an innkeeper in 1851, were an apprentice blacksmith and a postboy. With this Group II being apparently largely self-recruiting, there were correspondingly few opportunities for labourers, either agricultural or industrial, to join its ranks.

Fig.V shows numbers in both Group I and Group II as a percentage of all households during the census period. Both percentages dropped in 1861 because of the additional presence in the village of large numbers of railway navvies. Thereafter, however, although the proportion of Group I households, as we have remarked, steadily fell, that of Group II households rose until in 1881 they comprised

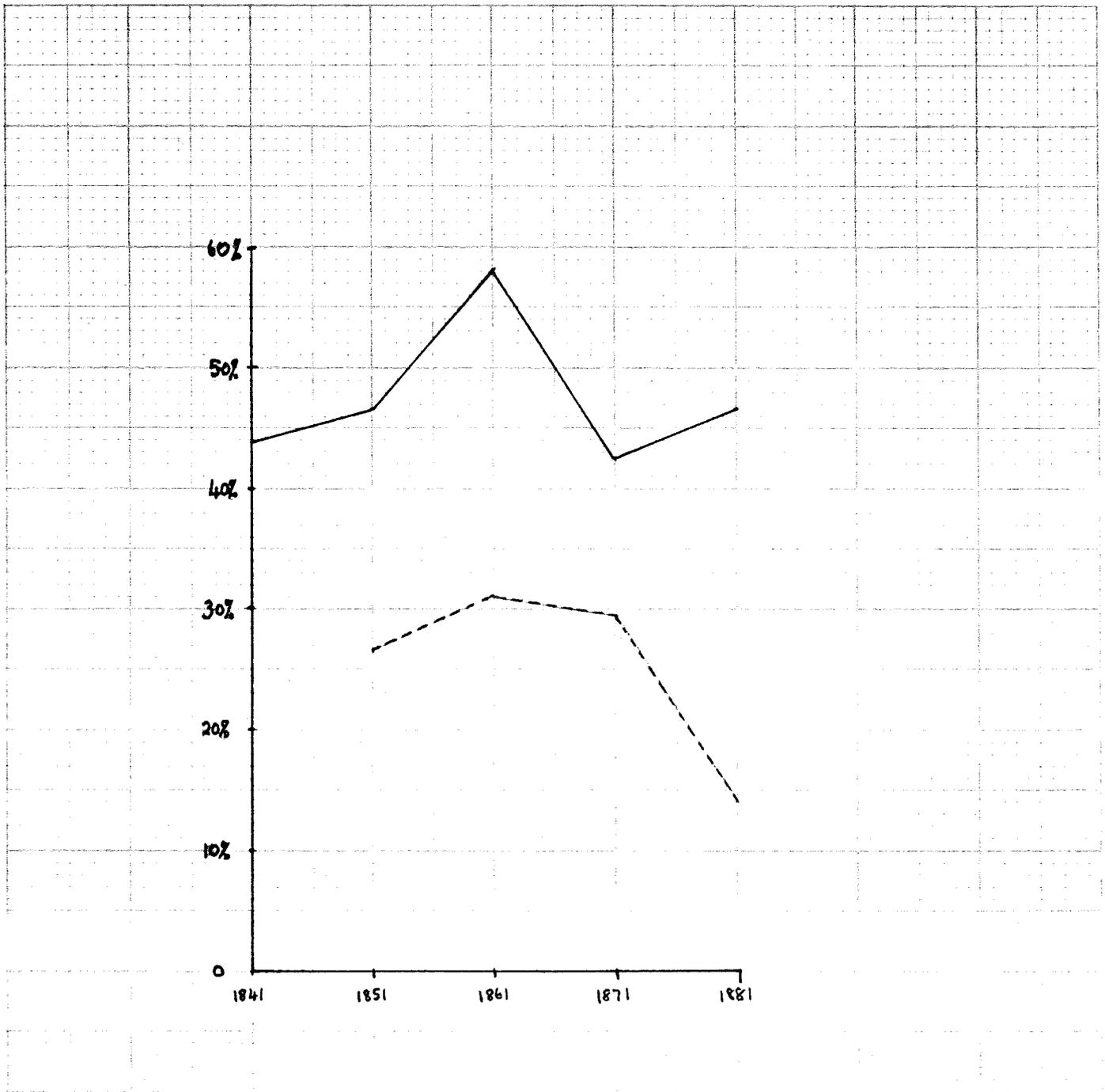
nearly 30% of all households. Both groups combined, however, never made up more than 40% of the total during the census period: during the "industrial" decades earlier in the century it was almost certainly considerably less. The majority of men in Highley remained labourers, working on farms or in the collieries and quarries. The Easter Book of 1818 lists 88 householders: in only ten cases is it not possible to discover occupations (although two were almost certainly colliers and another two farm labourers). Six of the householders were widows. Of the remaining 72, forty-eight men were colliers, agricultural labourers or "labourers on barges" - exactly two thirds of the total.

Fig.VII shows the proportion of heads of household in the census period who belonged to Group III, the labourers. In fact, it under-represents this group somewhat, as several widows with no occupation headed households otherwise composed of labourers. Fig.VII also indicates the percentage of heads of household who were agricultural labourers, as this category was until 1881 the largest subdivision of the group.

The most noticeable feature here is the sharp decline in the percentage of agricultural labouring heads of household in 1881, when the opening of a new coalmine was already having an effect on the occupational structure of the community. Fig.VIII, however, gives a better indication of the level of male employment in agricultural labouring overall, for a disproportionate number of farmworkers were not heads of household.

One reason for this was the persistence of the tradition of the live-in "servant in husbandry". Easter Book entries between 1793 and 1830 show a fairly consistent ten or twelve resident "men" on village farms, rising in 1807 as high as 18. In 1841, as noted above, there were 23 male servants living-in. After mid-century, numbers declined markedly. We saw in the pre-enclosure period how married labourers began to replace live-in servants: yet the tradition of service lingered well into the 19th century. It was only in the second half of the century that the old order finally gave way.

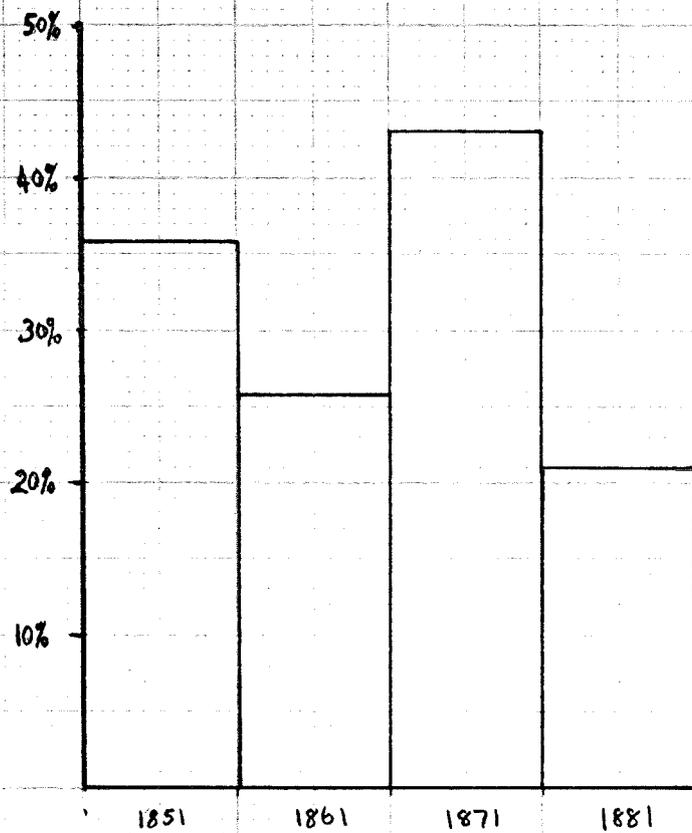
Most of the live-in male servants of the census period were young: the mean age of those recorded in 1841 was 22.5 years



— % of heads of household in Group III

- - - - - Agricultural labourers as a % of all heads of household

Fig.VII



Agricultural labourers as a % of all employed males

Fig.VIII

(although ages were given only to the nearest five years for adults). All were unmarried. When a resident farmworker married, he left to set up a home of his own, becoming an "agricultural labourer" rather than a "male servant"; and probably also accepting a reduction in his standard of living.[51]

Throughout our period, however, the majority of farm labourers were non-resident. Some distinctions are drawn in census returns between types of farm work, although for the most part those specialists distinguished as such were carters and wagoners, and a shepherd. Few farms in Highley were large enough to employ a range of specialist workers, and most agricultural labourers must have performed a range of tasks. In fact, there are indications that not all farm labourers living in Highley in the later years of our period actually worked there. By mid-century the decline in industry had left vacant housing; four houses stood empty in 1841 and, after the temporary pressure of the railway navvies had eased, at least ten in 1871. It is probable that houses existed for more families than the village economy could support. In 1851, when farmers entered on their census returns the number of labourers they employed, there was a total of 28: yet 42 men and boys gave their occupations as agricultural labourer. By 1881, when less labour-intensive farming methods had reduced the numbers of farmworkers needed, a maximum of 18 would seem to have been employed in Highley itself, although 28 agricultural labourers lived in the village.

In 1793, farm labourers in Highley were paid 8d a day plus their keep.[52] In addition, most of them kept a pig, which had replaced the cow as the poor man's only stock. Four shillings a week, with or without mid-day meals, was a very poor wage, and inflation forced it up, although probably not in line with rising prices. By 1803, Plymley assessed the average agricultural worker's wage in Shropshire at seven shillings a week rising to nine shillings during harvest.[53] This was below the national average of ten shillings a week estimated by Burnett.[54] Agricultural wages continued to rise (if less quickly than prices) during the Napoleonic Wars: in Highley there was the added stimulus of alternative industrial employment. In addition, some labourers had large gardens whose produce could

supplement the family diet. Their wives and children, too, could add to family income by part-time work. In September 1827, for example, the wife of Richard Dodd, a labourer, spent the whole day "leasing" - gleaning - and returned home only at seven p.m.[55]

Even so, agricultural labourers and their families lived in relative poverty for much of their life-cycle: the young couple had small children who could not yet contribute to the family income; the older man could find his wage cut as infirmity, especially the rheumatism which particularly affected farm workers, curtailed his ability to work. Much payment was on a piece-work basis, and the elderly labourer could not hope to earn as much as in his youth. Labourers were not able to retire, however, and had to work as long as their health permitted:- in the census returns we find several farm workers aged between 70 and 78.

It is difficult to compare the relative financial positions of farm workers and coal miners, the other major group of labourers during our period. Benson points out that variations in wage rates between areas, and between the different types of mining employment, make any estimation of miners' wages a problematic one. [56] As a guide, he finds that the better-paid miners in small coal-fields at the beginning of the 19th century were earning twelve to fifteen shillings a week. It is probable that coalminers were paid a little more than farmworkers in Highley, as they were in the E. Shropshire coalfield, in order to attract workers in spite of the appalling conditions of work.[57] Miners, on the other hand, would seem to have had fewer opportunities to supplement their earnings than had farm labourers. The factors which helped to keep labourers poor - large families and a decline in earning potential with age - may be regarded as even more characteristic of coalminers. This, however, must be examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

Certainly coal mining seems to have been largely a young man's industry. By the start of the census period, there were few colliers left in Highley, but all those remaining were relatively young. In 1881, with the second phase of mining having begun, the 51 coal miners in Highley had a mean age of only 28.1 years. In all probability, the colliers of the first industrial phase had been

similarly young men. Of those miners working in Highley between 1813 and 1825, it is possible to discover the ages of less than a dozen: all but one were under thirty when first recorded.

In contrast, the quarrying workforce was not only diminishing in size, but was also aging. In 1851, the mean age of quarry labourers was 42; in 1861 and 1871 it was 53.1 and 52.4 respectively. In terms of wages, there was probably little difference between labouring in a quarry or on a farm: certainly by mid-century quarrying was no longer attracting young men into the industry.

There was almost no movement between the three chief types of employment in Group III. Most of the coal miners moved on when Stanley Colliery closed: few of them had been recruited from the labouring population of the village in the first place. With one exception, those agricultural labourers recorded between 1813 and 1820 who remained in Highley until the census period twenty or thirty years later continued to be employed as farmworkers. In 1871, there were nine employed sons living with farm labouring heads of household: eight of them were following their fathers' occupation.

If there was little movement within Group III, there was virtually no upward mobility from it. Apparently only one man (the exception referred to above) progressed from farm labourer to farmer during our period. In 1819, Thomas Edwards was a labourer living at Netherton: by 1821 he had taken over as tenant at Woodend Farm, now reduced to just over 30 acres. Unfortunately, there is no evidence as to how this came about. Most men who began their working life as labourers, however, ended it in the same way.

At the end of this working life, there was a real possibility of joining our final group, paupers. Detailed records of individual recipients of parish relief cease in 1800/01. Thus only in the first twenty years of our period can we see just who were the official poor. A majority of claimants at this date were women. Widows, unless their husbands had been among the most prosperous, were particularly vulnerable; mothers of illegitimate children, too, frequently needed parish relief. In some cases, spinsters whose parents were dead fell "on the parish": their ages ranged between 16 year old

Elizabeth Charles in 1785/6 and the sisters Ann and Sarah Wilks, aged 68 and 59 in 1800/01. Women without a male provider, then, were in a particularly difficult situation.

During this period, several of the male claimants are known to have been elderly, like 76 year old Thomas Detton in 1784/5, or too ill to work, as in the case of Richard Wall, aged 54, whose illness and subsequent burial are recorded in relief payments in the same year. Group IV also at this date included some young men, either unemployed or with wages in need of augmentation in the crisis years of the 1790s. The mechanics of poor relief will concern us later; here we must note that the official poor were composed principally of the elderly and infirm, and those women and children with no male support.

After 1801 there is less evidence of the composition of this group, although its size is noted in Parliamentary enquiries of the 19th century. In 1803, it was reported that 17 adults and 14 children received payments on a regular basis, and six adults occasionally.[58] This accords well with the last detailed parish accounts of 1800/01, when a total of 32 individuals received relief. Thus at the beginning of the 19th century, one in eight of the village population depended at least in part on parish relief payments. The size of the group does not seem to have increased at the same rate as the overall village population, probably because most incomers were men in employment and their families. Parishes receiving considerable numbers of miners were also careful not to give settlements, which meant that the newcomers could if necessary be removed to their place of origin.[59] Some orders of removal were certainly implemented against miners and their families of Highley.[60]

Parliamentary returns for the years around 1815 show a decline in the number of paupers in Highley although it is not clear whether or not children were included in the figures[61] The percentage of the total population in the group at this time fell to between 5% and 8% if the returns are accurate, although others may have received casual relief.

In 1834, Highley became part of the Cleobury Mortimer Union as a result of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and most paupers

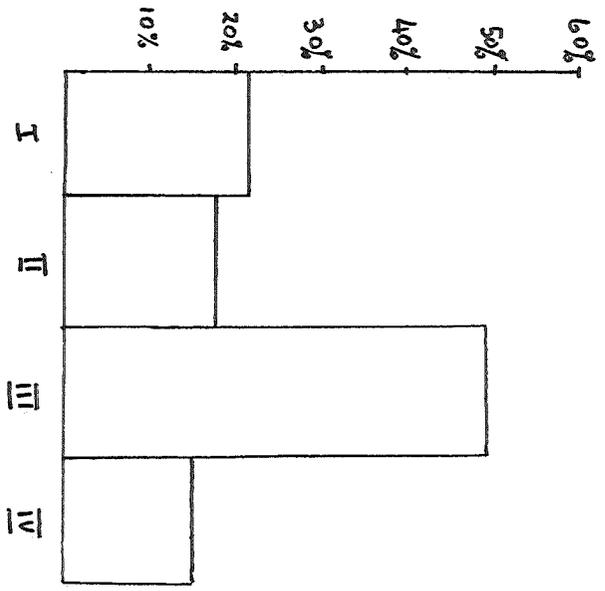


Fig. IX a

1799

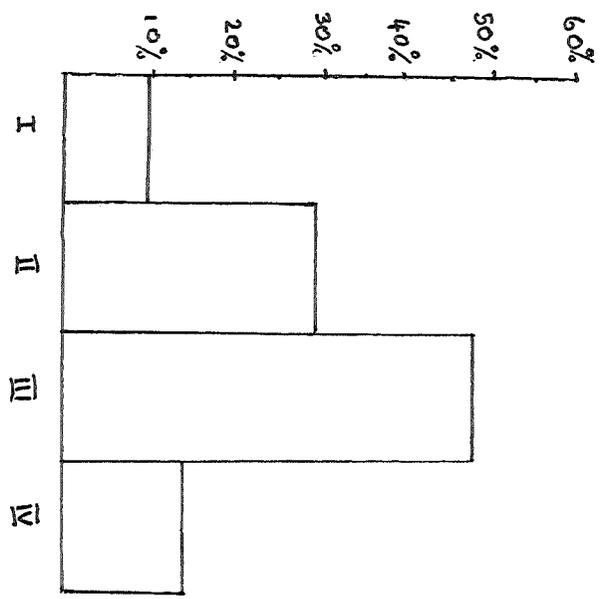


Fig. IX b

1881

Fig. IX Socio-economic structure 1799 and 1881

were sent to the workhouse there instead of being supported by outdoor relief. Thus numbers in this poorest group actually living in the parish declined, although Highley's own Workhouse Cottages were apparently sometimes used to provide rent for charitable purposes, and sometimes as temporary accommodation particularly for single mothers and their children. Those for whom "workhouse" is recorded as place of residence in the burial register make up 11.2% of all burials during the period 1835-1850, though this is likely of course to over-represent the proportion in the population as a whole.

Thus it appears that something under 10% of the village population were officially paupers for most of our period, rising to 12½% around 1800. Those in receipt of poor relief were not, of course, the only poor in the community. Changing criteria might have affected the size of the group as much as changing circumstances of its members. In fact the majority of the labouring population probably lived in some degree of poverty.

Fig.IX can do no more than provide an indication of the overall changes in the distribution of wealth during our period. Firstly, it is not always possible to distinguish in every case between labourers and small craftsmen in the 1799 Easter Book listing which provides the basis for Fig.IXa. In 1881, the census returns upon which Fig.IXb is based do not give information specifically about paupers: Group IV is made up of heads of household who were widows living alone, with young children, or lodgers. Nevertheless, certain broad outlines of the shifting economic balance are illustrated, the chief of which is the rise in numbers of the "middle class" - small farmers and local tradesmen - at the expense of Group I, whose numbers declined largely on account of the increasing predominance of the Jordin family.

Thus the polarisation of wealth in the community which was a feature of the post-enclosure period continued in a modified form. More families fell in the socio-economic scale than rose: those who did rise did so spectacularly. In terms of land held - and probably wealth - William Jordin junior came to replace half-a-dozen farmers of the pre-industrial period. No long-term resident of Highley got rich from industrialisation, although one of its effects may

be seen in the proliferation of crafts and trades in the 19th century. During the first thirty years of the century, the influx of colliers broadened yet further the base of the economic pyramid of the community.

By the mid-point of our period, ownership of land in the parish was more or less divided between the Jordin family on one hand, and a few absentee landlords on the other. The last of the small tenements which had remained owner-occupied after enclosure were finally sold - usually to the Jordins.¹

The classic division of the 18th century (in Highley as elsewhere) between farmer and labourer remained; but in the 19th century it was complicated by further divisions between Squire and farmer; by the availability of industrial as well as agricultural labouring employment; and by the growth in numbers of small tradesmen in the community.

¹In 1801, for instance, William Jordin bought a cottage from John Pountney which had originally been bought by Henry Pountney at the break-up of the manor in the early 17th century.

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- 4) B. Trinder, The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire (Chichester, 1973).
- 5) Trinder, Industrial Revolution.
- 6) N. Mutton, 'The forges at Eardington and Hampton Loade', T.S.A.S., LVIII (1965-8).
- 7) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84 : Leases, correspondence and surveys relating to Woolstan's Wood, Highley.
- 8) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/163 : Surveyor's report, 1798.
- 9) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/143 : Memorandum of survey, 1797.
- 10) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/170 : Letter from C. Pocock to J Bennett, 1803.
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- 12) S.R.O. QR 222/82 : Inquest on George Sheffield, 1804.
- 13) S.R.O. QR 236/125 : Inquest on Richard Steward, 1807.
- 14) S.R.O. QR 231/78, 231/85 and 236/125.
- 15) S.R.O. 1671/ : Conveyance from C. Morris to F. Pitt, 1846.
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- 18) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/144 : Letter from G. Johnson to R. Holmes, 1797.
- 19) B. L. Add. MSS 21018 : undated copy of notes by J. Plymley, 1793.
- 20) Keele Univ. Lib. S.V.141 : Minute of book of Silverdale Iron Co.
- 21) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/174 : Survey, 1804.
- 22) W. Page (ed.), Victoria County History of Shropshire I (2nd ref.)

- 23) Dr. B. Trinder in a letter, 8.11.1983.
- 24) P.R.O. HO/107/923, HO/107/1985, RG/9/1847, RG/10/2739, RG/11/2627 : Highley census returns, 1841-1881.
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- 26) Bagshaw, Directory of Shropshire.
- 27) J. Plymley, A General View of the Agriculture of Shropshire (1803).
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- 29) J. P. Dodd, 'The state of agriculture in Shropshire 1775-1825', T.S.A.S., LV(1) (1954).
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- 41) S.R.O. 4123/P/2.
- 42) S.R.O. 4123/Ti/2.
- 43) S.R.O. 4123/P/2.
- 44) P. Horn, The Rural World 1780-1850 (London, 1980).

- 45) S.R.O. 1671/ : Deeds of sale between W. Jordin and T. Gitton, 1803; W. Jordin and J. Williams, 1808; W. Jordin and Messrs. Dyer, Pitt and Craig, 1821.
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Chapter Eight - Demography

The great increase in overall population after 1800 has been described in the introduction to this section. Highley's population doubled in size as a result of industrial developments in the early years of the 19th century, before falling back to a level not much higher than that of the late 18th century. Such massive immigration and subsequent emigration clearly affected the demographic structures of the community.

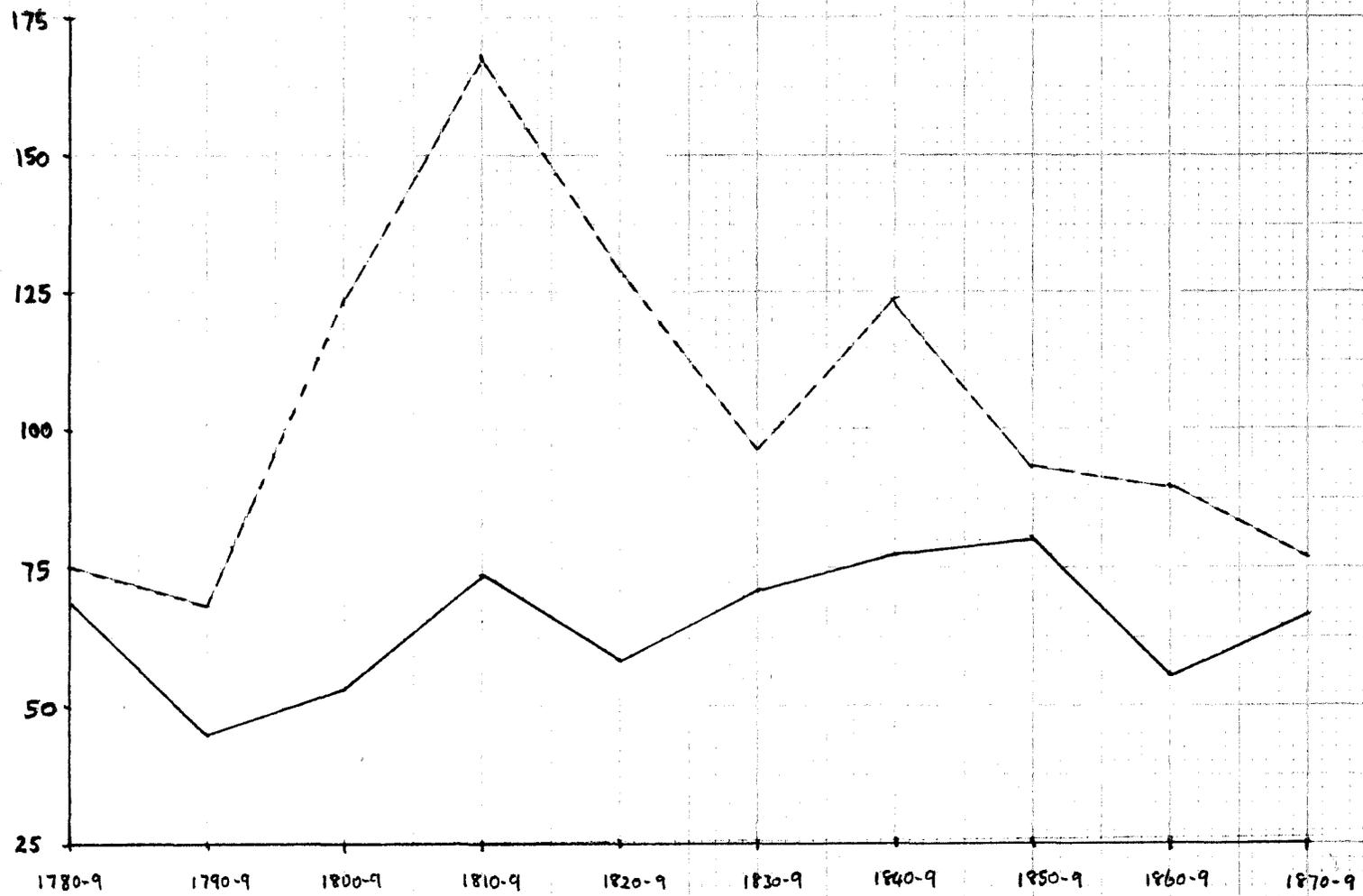
Fig.I, with its sudden peak in baptisms between 1800 and 1819, shows one aspect of this. The graph charts simple decadal totals of baptisms and burials throughout our period. Totals for both baptisms and burials fell somewhat during the 1790s, although we know that some industrialisation was under way. Burials fell more than baptisms - the natural trend of the community was still towards growth even before immigration. In the early years of the 19th century, burials increased much less markedly than baptisms, reflecting the change in age-structure in the community brought about by the influx of miners. Indeed, burials in the 1850s, when the total population was less than three-quarters of its 1811 peak, exceeded those of the decade 1810-19. In the last years of our period baptisms were decreasing and the two totals again approaching parity: as we shall see, Highley was at this time an aging community, and deaths may actually have outstripped births for the first time in three hundred years had the second wave of miners not arrived from shortly before 1880.

During the years of expansion, Highley displayed very high fertility rates. Fig.II shows rates of baptism per 1,000 (which never quite equalled birth rates, especially after the opening of the Methodist chapel in 1816) - both actual in census years and estimated on mean population size at consecutive censuses per decade.

It should be stressed that figures for individual years, though precise, represent a short-term situation open to several distorting effects.

As one might expect, the birth rate - for which this is clearly a minimum figure - went up during the decades of

Fig. I



Baptisms and Burials 1780 - 1879

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immigration, to more than 35 per 1,000. Many of the newly-arrived miners and their wives were apparently of fertile age. This rate was not sustained: during the rest of our period (except for a temporary rise in the 1840s) the birth rate gradually fell.

1790-9	1800-9	1810-9	1820-9	1830-9
28	35	37	33	27
1793	1801	1811	1821	1831
27.9	36.4	55.9	33.0	27.2
1840-9	1850-9	1860-9	1870-9	
34	24	26	24	
1841	1851	1861	1871	
27.7	22.2	46.6	27.3	

Fig.II

The death rate figures are also consistent with this picture of an influx of largely young immigrants. Fig.III shows these figures, again computed using a mean of two census figures as a population estimate for the decade to arrive at annual rates per thousand.

1790-9	1800-9	1810-9	1820-9	1830-9
18.75	15.1	16.3	14.0	18.6
1840-9	1850-9	1860-9	1870-9	
21.4	21.1	16.0	20.4	

Fig.III

After 1800, the death rate fell markedly and remained low during the period of industrialisation. The only other period with a comparably low death rate was the 1860s, when the railway navvies for a time had a similar effect on age structure. The "natural" agricultural community had a lower birth rate and a higher death rate because all ages were represented: immigration by a young working group skewed both figures.

During this period we are not able to make the same use of figures for completed family size as in earlier periods. First, the greatly increased mobility, particularly among colliers, reduces the size of our sample and questions its typicality. Second, since all baptisms and the burial of at least one of the partners must be available to designate a completed family, the absence of post-1880 records further reduces numbers in the 1830-79 half of the period. Nevertheless it is interesting to note a mean completed family size between 1780 and 1829 of 4.75, rising thereafter to 5.3. This fits one stereotype - that of the large Victorian family - but appears to contradict the contemporary view of the coalminer and his brood of children.[1] In fact Yasumoto in his study of Methley, Yorkshire, in the early 19th century, found no significant difference between family size of miners and of agricultural labourers.[2]

Circumstances in Highley do not allow us to determine whether or not miners' families were larger than those of the agricultural population. It is possible, however, to compare mean birth intervals (not related to position in family) for both sets of workers. During the period of the miners' residence, 1800-1830, their children were baptised at a mean interval of 28.2 months, while for the children of agricultural labourers the mean birth interval was 31.1 months. Thus it would seem that miners' wives had their children at shorter intervals, and families may have been slightly larger.

Among the population as a whole, fertility was rising in the early 19th century: birth intervals were somewhat shorter than in the pre-industrial period, and completed family size increased in spite of the frequency with which marriage was interrupted by the death of one of the partners and the consequent incidence of second

and third marriages.

After 1830, mean family size increased further, in spite of a lengthening of mean birth intervals to 30.5 months and a rise in the age of first marriage. One reason for this was, as we shall see, an increased duration of marriage. Furthermore, although most women had reached their mid-twenties before they began to bear children, they continued to do so into middle age. Fig.IV shows the distribution of age at last child in those cases where it can reliably be determined.

<u>AGE</u>	<u>N</u>
35	2
36	1
37	0
38	0
39	1
40	4
41	4
42	6
43	3
44	1
45	3
46	0
47	4
48	0
49	2

Mean = 42.4 years

Fig.IV

Both age at first marriage and its average duration clearly affected marital fertility. In the first half of our period we must rely for age at marriage on the ages of those partners identifiable as having been baptised at Highley. Thus we have a sample of

29 men and 32 women, whose mean age at first marriage was 26.7 years and 23.8 years respectively - very similar to the average in the period 1740-79. Industrialisation did not, apparently, have the effect of further lowering marriage age, which had already declined sharply after 1740. During the second half of our period, ages at marriage are recorded at some periods, notably 1838-45 and after 1860. Thus we have a larger overall sample of 38 men and 54 women. Age at first marriage rose to a mean of 28.4 years for men and 25.2 years for women; a significant rise which suggests that the economic stagnation in the community did delay marriage.

In fact, in spite of marrying later, couples in the second half of our period were on average married longer: mean duration of marriage in the first half was 25.4 years, but 28.7 years in the second, despite the exclusion of some lengthy marriages which continued beyond 1880. Thus in the mid-19th century, marriages lasted on average five years or more longer than they had done in the post-enclosure period. Some couples were married for a very long time indeed: several marriages of over fifty years are included. Edward and Susanna Harris, for example, were married in 1769, and remained married for 56 years until the latter's death in 1825 at the age of 88.

Yet during our period 47 marriages are known to have been broken by the premature death in youth or early middle age of one of the partners, during the fertile period of the marriage. A majority (60%) of these prematurely-ended marriages were in the first half of the period, when they helped to lower completed family size.

In 39 of these 47 marriages it was the wife who died. In ten cases, the evidence suggests death in childbirth or its immediate aftermath. Possibly other deaths, too, were the result of problems with pregnancy: in the ten probable cases a child was baptised in the month of the mother's death - a miscarriage, for instance, would not be included. Although numbers of women at risk had increased considerably with the growth in population, it does appear that child-bearing had become more rather than less dangerous in Highley: it is hard otherwise to explain the very marked discrepancy between numbers of women dying between the ages of 20 and 40 and

numbers of men dying at this age.

Several young men were therefore left with small children to care for. Thomas Barker's first wife died in June 1790, the month in which the couple's sixth child was baptised. His second wife died in March 1794, at the time of the birth of their second child. Thomas married for a third time in November 1795. Other widowers left with a young family were similarly quick to re-marry. This was not always solely to obtain a housekeeper: all three of Thomas Barker's wives were pregnant when he married them.

Some of the 39 young widowers apparently left the village: very occasionally others themselves died within a couple of years. But 29 of them re-married; many, like Thomas Barker, did so as quickly as possible. The interval between bereavement and re-marriage is known in 22 cases: eight young widowers re-married within one year, nine within two years, and only five after more than two years. Some, indeed, were married again within three or four months. This raises questions about the quality of marital relationships: it also highlights the very real difficulties of a man having to work long hours without a partner to care for his children.

These, of course, were not the only widowed in the community: marriages were frequently broken after their fertile period. Thus second and third marriages were quite common. During the period 1838-1879, when marital status of brides and grooms was recorded, 18% of all marriages were registered as second marriages for one or both parties.

When we consider not only orphans but also the illegitimate we see that numbers of children living with only one - or perhaps neither - of their natural parents were considerable.

We have pointed out the declining death rates during the decades of industrialisation. This is not to suggest that Highley became a healthier place because of industrial development. Fig.V shows mean age at death for those aged over 15, as well as mean age at death overall. Figures before 1813 are calculated on the basis of family reconstitution; those after 1813 on stated age at burial.

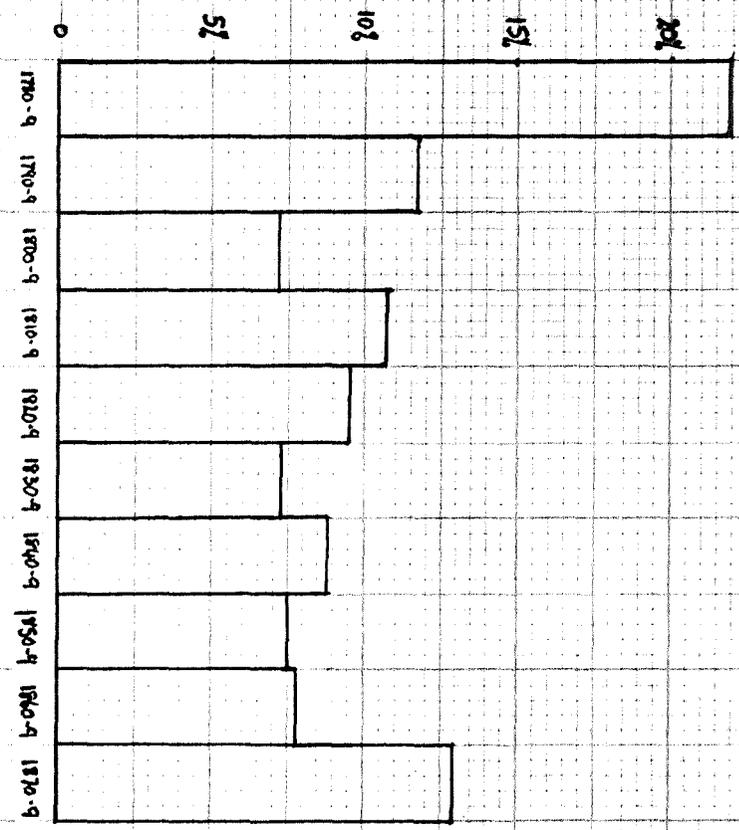
1780-9	1790-9	1800-9	1810-9	1820-9	
58.8	53.3	51.7	49.75	55.3	Adults %
24	20	24	35	37	N
28.5	31.1	29.4	24.2	36.1	All %
51	35	44	75	57	N
1830-9	1840-9	1850-9	1860-9	1870-9	
52.6	58.8	60.2	59.4	56.4	Adults %
52	47	57	37	51	N
39.3	36.8	43.2	41.0	43.2	All %
71	77	81	55	67	N

Fig.V Mean age at death 1780-1879

Both adult age at death and, most noticeably, overall age at death declined during the industrial period, and rose steadily after 1830. The situation was at its worst during the decade 1810-1819, when coalmining was at its height: average life expectancy at birth was less than 25 years; and even those who reached adulthood could barely expect to live to fifty.

The figures for overall life expectancy are of course very much affected by the incidence of juvenile mortality. Figs.VI and VII make a distinction between the percentage of those baptised who were buried as infants (less than one year old) and children (1 to 15). The decades of industrialisation were the first ones in which child death took over from infant death as the prime cause of juvenile mortality. After a high of 22% in the 1780s, infant mortality was generally around or below 10% - a more favourable situation than that throughout almost all of the previous period since the mid-17th century. Deaths of children under 15, however, rose, culminating in a peak of 17.7% of all children baptised in the decade 1840-9. The evidence suggests an epidemic, or series of epidemics (perhaps of measles or diphtheria) in this decade, when burials of children aged

Infant mortality 1780 - 1879



Child mortality 1780 - 1869

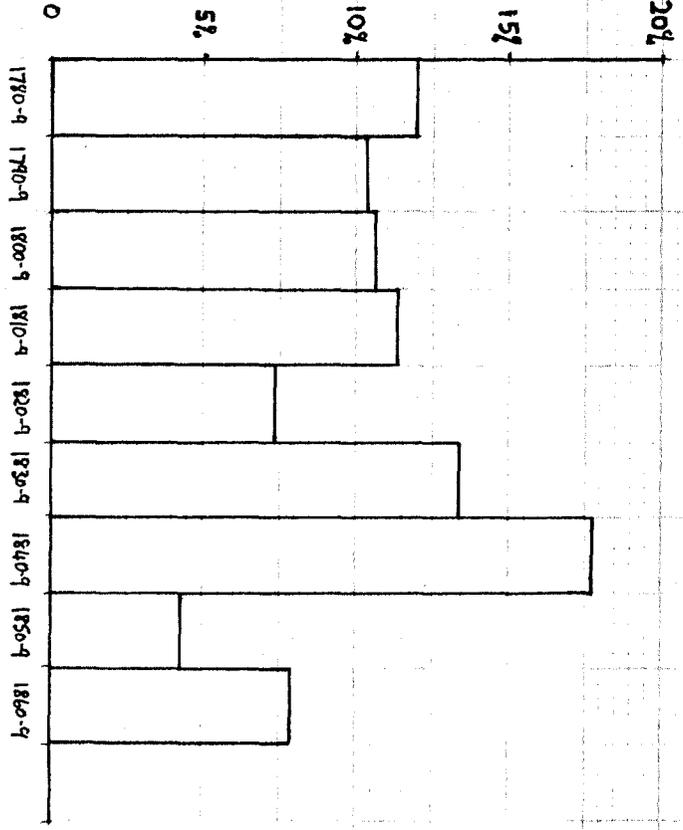
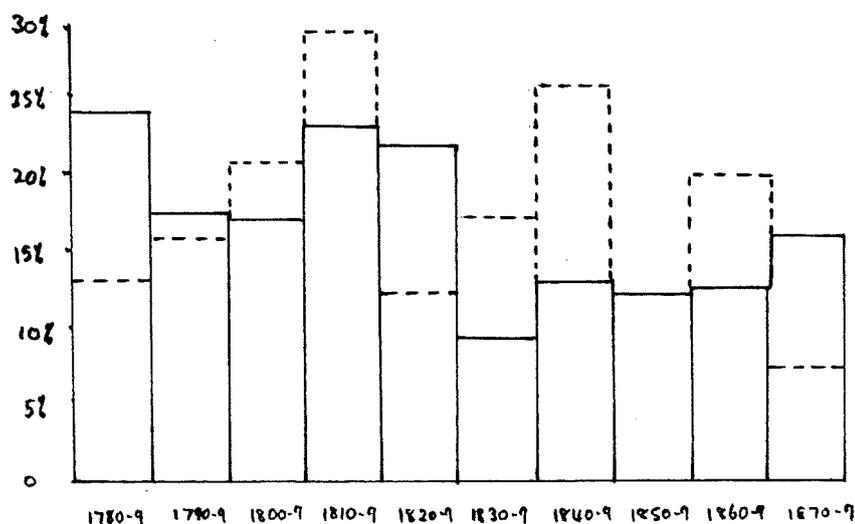


Fig. VI

1-14 made up 26% of all burials (and infants made up another 13%). Some years were worse than others: of the eleven burials in 1848, seven were of children.

The growth in population in the early 19th century did not, then, lead to a rise in infant mortality. Because of their high mobility, it is difficult to assess accurately the level of child mortality among miners' families: Fig.VII uses only those children baptised at Highley and traceable to burial. If we use a different measure, however, we find that child burials formed a significantly greater proportion of all burials during the first industrial period, as illustrated in Fig.VII.



Infant and child burials as a % of all burials

Fig.VII

It appears that children (rather than infants) were more at risk at the height of mining, and again during the 1840s - although of course a 'young' population would naturally increase the proportion of those dying young. The significant change from patterns of juvenile mortality in earlier periods was the way in which deaths of children became more frequent than those of infants. One in every five or six children born continued to die before the age of 15: most families could still expect to lose a child and, increasingly, a child

of perhaps six or nine years old rather than a new-born infant.

From the beginning of our period, some medical care was available: a midwife and a doctor were called to paupers at parish expense; other poor were paid to "sit up nights with" the sick. In 1784 the parish paid for the inoculation of Richard Meredith and his family.[3] Yet no practising doctor was resident in the village during our period, and medical care for those not claiming poor relief was prohibitively expensive - the Meredith family's inoculations cost 15/-, probably two weeks' wages for most. The ability to pay for medical attention was not always enough: the daughters of Squire William Jordin succumbed in succession to what oral tradition insists was tuberculosis - four of the six are known to have died young.

Coroner's inquests into sudden deaths cover not only accidents, but also the surprising number of cases where people dropped dead in orchards, fields and barns. Not all these sudden deaths were of the elderly: Thomas Guest, found dead in an orchard in 1821 was 35 years old; Thomas Lowe died of an 'apoplectic fit' in a barn in 1786 at the age of 44.

There continued to be quite frequent fatal accidents: sixteen are recorded in inquests of the period 1800-1830 alone, and there are indications of others. For example, locals still spoke in 1947 of an accident at an unspecified date in which a party of ironworkers from Eardington and Hampton Loade forges were drowned at Highley when their barge capsized on its way to Bewdley Fair.[4] This accident, which must have taken place during the first half of the 19th century, is very reminiscent of that in 1607 when another group drowned going to Bewdley Fair.

The Severn continued to be a source of fatal accidents: men fell from barges and were drowned, or simply slipped and fell in. Certainly more fatalities occurred on the river than on the roads: but the volume of traffic on the river was much larger. Children died in domestic situations; scalded by boiling water, burnt when their clothes caught fire, or in one case drowned in "a stone cistern".[5] The elderly, like the young were vulnerable to accident. In 1828 William Cheshire, aged 78, fell down the steps of the Borle Mill and died; 67 year old Thomas Walford fell in a pond and was drowned.[6]

But the greatest increase during this period was in accidents at work. Between 1805 and 1820, nine men and boys died in this kind of accident, seven of them in coalmining. Pit accidents were of two kinds: some died by falling down the shaft while being raised or lowered on a 'trunk'; others when coal or earth crushed them in small roof falls. Mining was a more hazardous occupation than agriculture (although one boy was killed by a threshing machine in 1816), and must have given rise to several serious injuries as well as to recorded fatalities.

During our period, most families lost either a parent or child during their formation; juvenile mortality remained as high as in earlier centuries, even as late as the 1870s; and with a mean age at adult death in the first half of the period touching its lowest point since the 1670s, marriages lasted a shorter time than they had done in most previous periods.

Some contemporaries maintained that working-class grief at bereavement was short-lived and shallow:

'The sorrow of the children is vehement at first, but soon wears off; the poor man will feel it much more because he will find his own comfort so much connected with his loss. But happy is it that people in the lower ranks of life are not possessed of the same sensibility as their superiors.....'[7]

In the absence of evidence from the 'lower ranks' it is idle to speculate on the nature of grief in the community; there is a danger of confusing necessity with volition, and of too readily concluding that people in the past were 'not possessed of the same sensibilities' as ourselves.

The demographic evidence all points to a change in the age structure of the community after 1800, brought about by wholesale immigration. Unfortunately, we can only assess age structure with any accuracy for the census period after 1841. Fig.VIIIa to VIIIe illustrate the situation in the census years.

One feature of all diagrams except for that of 1881 (when mining was once again attracting immigrants) is the small percentage of those in the 15-19 age group compared with the other five-year spans of childhood. We have seen how adolescents regularly left

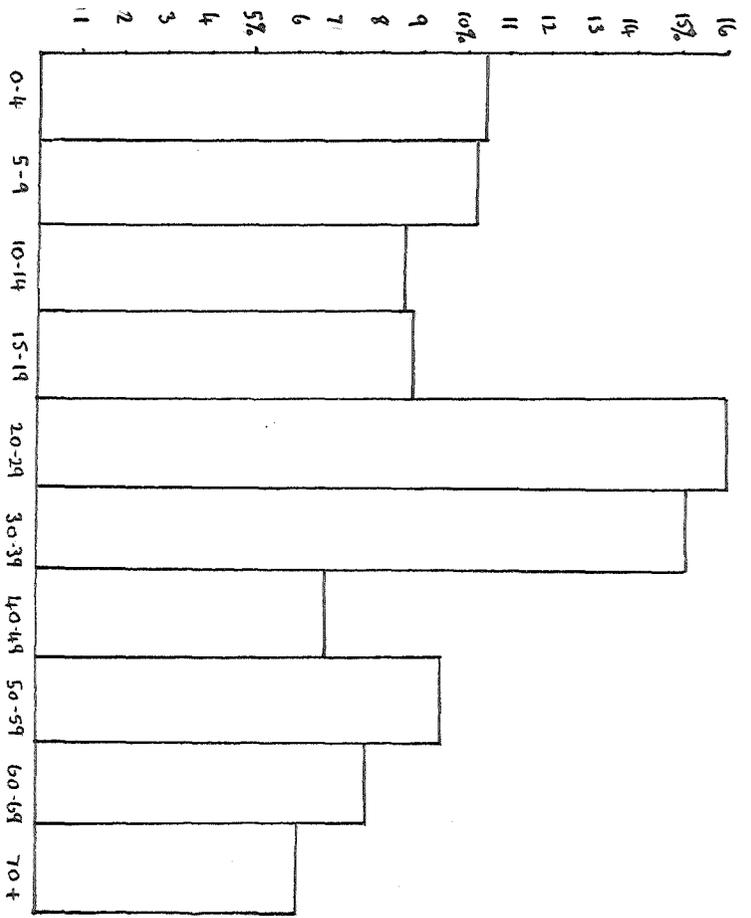


Fig. VIII a

1841

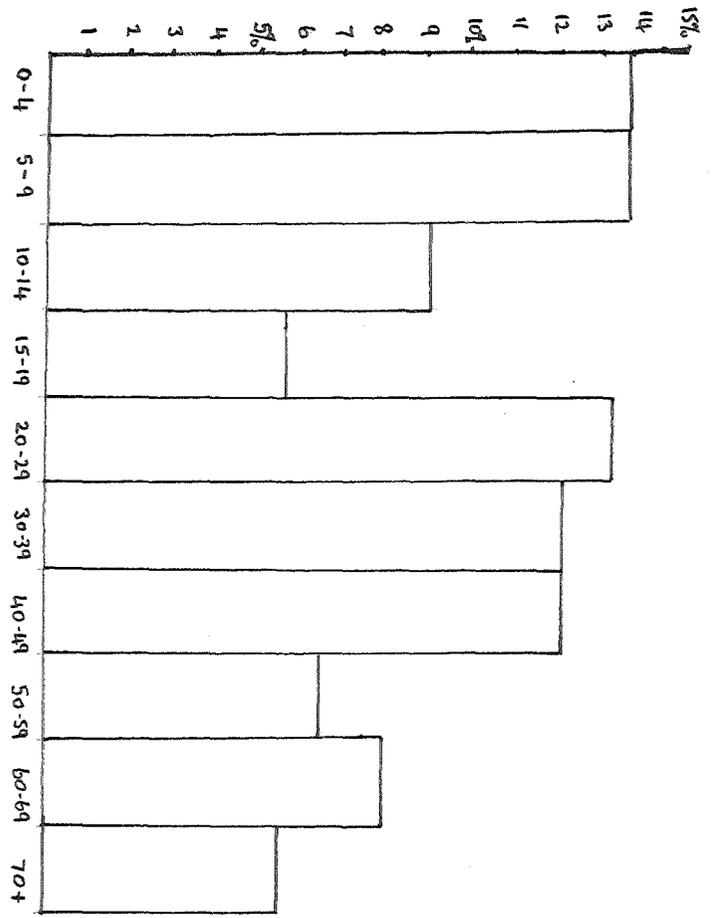
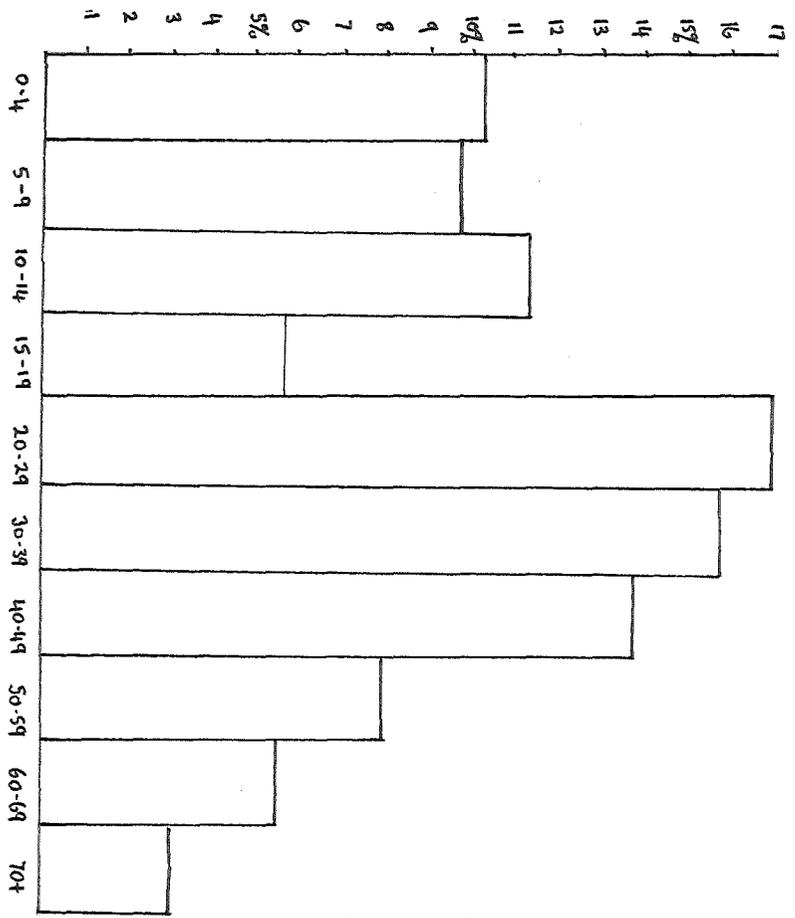


Fig. VIII b

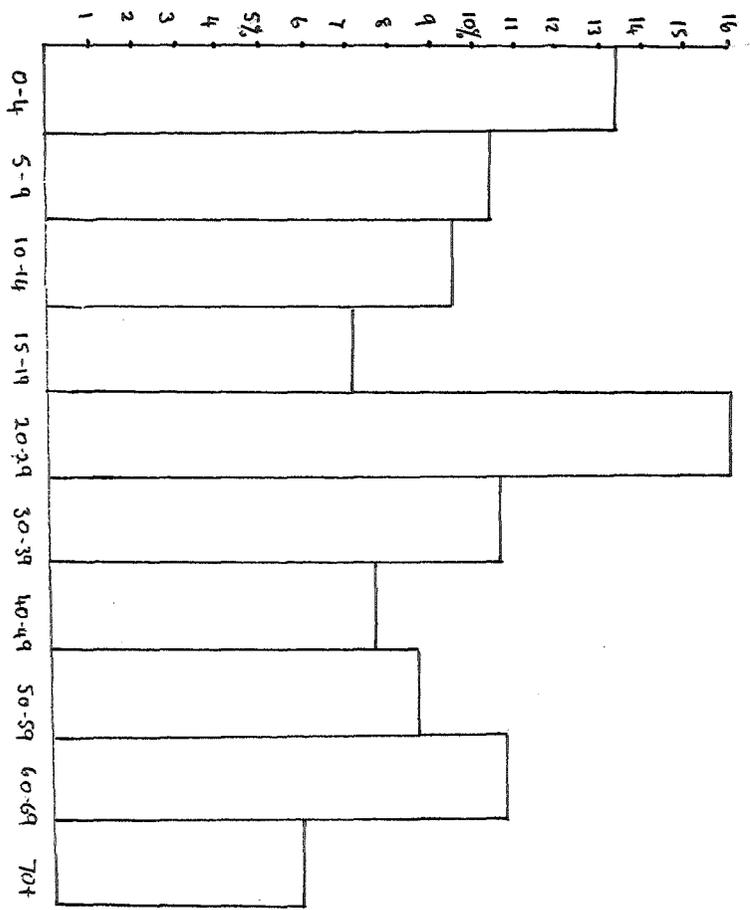
1851

Fig. VIII c



1861

Fig. VIII d



1871

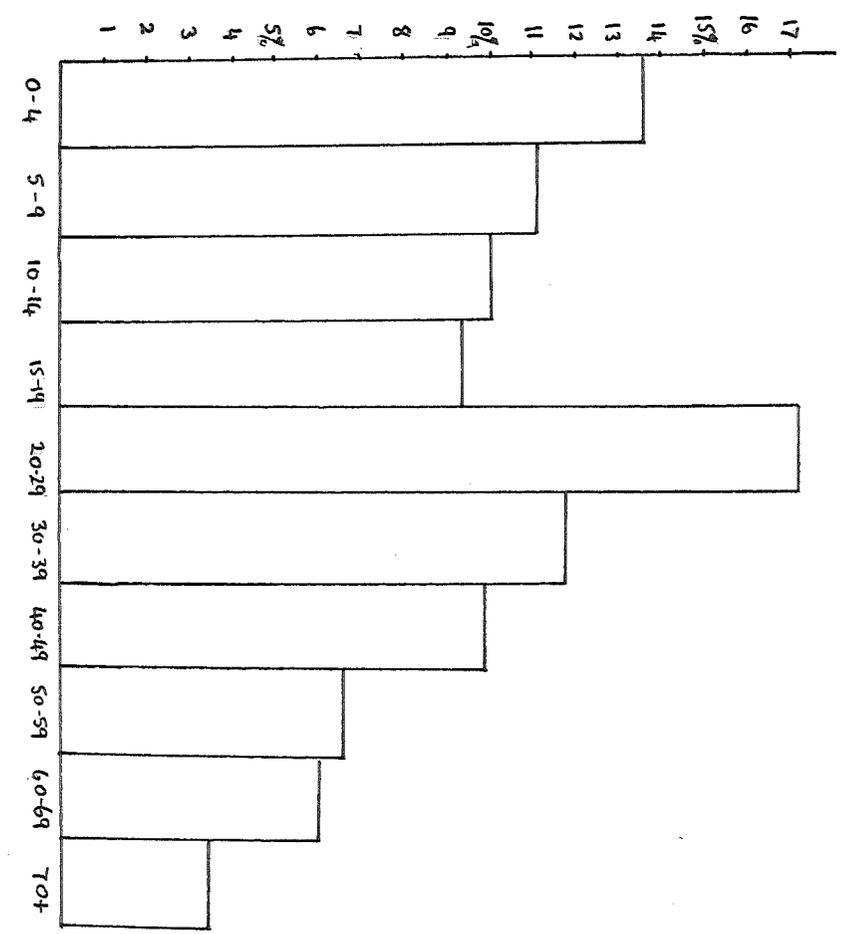


Fig. VIII

1881

the village in search of work: in 1841 this was to some extent offset by the numbers of young 'servants in husbandry' resident in the village who had been born elsewhere. But with the decline of this kind of service, Highley experienced a more marked net loss of young single people. This 'swapping' of adolescents between villages seems to have been common since at least the 16th century: about mid-century it began to break down, with consequent effects on Highley's age structure.

Throughout, the largest group (of adults) was of those aged 20-29: in many cases married agricultural labourers were replacing younger live-in servants. The greatest fluctuations are seen in the proportion of those aged over fifty, which rose to 25% in 1871 at a time of economic decline, and fell to 16.2% by 1881 with the arrival of coal miners and their families.

In 1841, after the falling birth rates of the 1830s, less than 30% of the population were children under 14 - the smallest percentage of any of the census years. The birth rate increased in the 1840s, and one explanation of this can be seen in the large numbers of those aged 20-40 in the community. Its effects show in the 1851 diagram, where, in spite of higher juvenile mortality rates in the 1840s, an increased proportion of the population were children under nine. Otherwise, the population in 1851 was not such a predominantly young one: there was a smaller percentage in the fertile age groups, and more elderly.

In 1861, the large numbers of navvies affected the age structure; a large proportion of the population (46.6%) was in the main working age groups between 20 and 50. By 1871 we find a community more weighted towards higher age groups. The diagram for 1881, although it represents a point only two years into the second phase of mining, begins to show something of the changes which almost certainly took place even more markedly in the early years of the century. Highley was a much younger community than it had been ten years previously. Nearly two thirds of the total population was under thirty years old. The proportion of 15-19 year olds increased as local employment opportunities improved: young families arrived, with the result that 35% of the population were children under 14. If it

were possible to construct similar diagrams for the years between 1800 and 1830 (and mobility prevents even tentative representations in this form) they would probably show the characteristics of the 1881 situation in an even more marked way.

Demography and immigration affected the size and structure of households during this period. In 1793, according to Plymley, there were 29 houses in Highley for the 215 inhabitants.[8] The census of 1801 reports that there were 48 houses and a population of 274 - an increase in mean household size from 4.4 to 5.7 in eight years. Pressure on housing was clearly great: provision of housing lagged behind the arrival of industrial workers, and no new houses had in fact yet been built, in spite of Dr. Macnab's plans to build cottages for his miners and quarrymen.[9] The first miners must have found lodgings with local families, as we know many of the railway navvies and colliers of the later 19th century did. In fact, the 48 houses of 1801 housed 61 families: at 4.5, the mean family size remained much the same as before, and the increase in household size was due almost entirely to the sharing of accommodation.

By 1811 the pressure on housing had been relieved somewhat by the building of numbers of new houses - the housing stock rose in ten years from 48 to 85. Most of these were brick or stone short terraces built at Stanley or at New England on the Borle Brook: none still survives. Thus by 1811, in spite of the great increase in population, most families had their own house - 86 families inhabited the 85 houses. Fig.IX shows mean household size throughout the period.

1793	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
4.4	5.7	5.7	5.9	4.8	4.3	4.5	5.0	4.3	5.2

Fig.IX

These figures, however, hide one discrepancy between 1801 and 1811.

Although household size remained the same, family size jumped from 4.5 to 5.6. The evidence suggests that the first immigrants shared accommodation with local residents to whom they were not related; and that when houses became available they filled them with families larger than those of the agricultural population. In 1881 we see that miners frequently were accommodating members of their extended families, who subsequently set up home on their own, and it appears that much the same thing happened in the first decade of the 19th century. This is further suggested by the fact that although the total population fell by 60 between 1811 and 1821, the number of separate families increased from 86 to 97.

Mean household size only reached five at times of considerable immigration; the decades of industrialisation, the 1860s when the railway navvies were present, and in 1881 when the second wave of miners had begun to arrive. At other, 'normal', times it was $4\frac{1}{2}$ or below. This, though, is still higher than mean household size in the late 17th century. Industrialisation in Highley, far from reducing households from large extended-family groupings to nuclear family units, had at least in some stages of its development an opposite effect. Lodgers and distant kin were far more likely to be present in households at times of industrial expansion.

At such times there was much overcrowding. The new houses built between 1801 and 1811 were small, with at most two bedrooms, and existing housing was in many cases old and probably dilapidated. The result was living arrangements like those detailed in a Quarter Sessions case of 1827.[10] Sarah Botfield, a widow, slept at the house of her nephew Thomas Botfield. Botfield, his aunt, his wife and children all slept in the same room. Sarah Botfield was probably also accompanied by her seven year-old illegitimate daughter. In another house in the same row (of ten cottages at New England), the home of Lewis Jones, William Jones and his father John shared a bed which also included on the night in question George Detton of Chelmarsh.

It is only during the census period that we can accurately assess household composition. Even then the 1841 census is of little use as relationships to the head of household were not stated.

Prior to that, the Easter Book for 1818 suggests that a minimum of 10% of households contained lodgers or adult extended family members (excluding servants), although by this date Easter Book listings had become less comprehensive. The list of 1793, which can be checked against Plymley's figures, is better, and shows an overwhelming majority of nuclear families, of a married couple and sometimes unmarried adult children (younger children were not included). Thirty of the 49 families were of this type. A further seven heads of household were widows (with or without children), and six were widowers. Only six households were not of the basic nuclear type. In only one case was an elderly parent specified as resident. Three single women apparently lived alone, two with children. The remaining two households consisted of three elderly sisters living together in one case, and two elderly unmarried brothers together in the other.

The nuclear family similarly predominated in the census period. From 1851 to 1881 a majority of heads of household were, as one would expect, married men. Their proportion declined from nearly 75% in 1851 to under 65% in 1881. Conversely, the percentage of households headed by widows and widowers rose, from 16.5% in 1851 to 24% in 1881. In each census a handful of single men - between seven and 10% - headed households. Most of these were men well into middle age, who in fact never did marry, and who were more likely to come from the farming class than any other. Single or married women heading households were rare: women were only likely to head households when widowed.

In most cases, identifying the head of the house must have been straightforward: but occasionally such identification is enlightening as to familial authority. Often, a widowed mother was designated as head even if her children were middle aged, as long as they were not married. But sometimes a single son was regarded as head, as with Richard Rowley, aged 23 in 1851, who lived with his 61 year-old mother. Presumably the matter was decided by economics. For even a widow with son, daughter-in-law and grandchild in the house could still be classed as head if, like Elizabeth Lewis, aged 69 in 1861, she was a shopkeeper with an independent income.

Usually elderly men retained their position whatever their marital status, but occasionally there are signs of a son taking

over from his father as the latter aged. In 1871, Henry Barrett, a single man of 22, was head of a household which also contained both his parents. His father was 71, and presumably no longer earning.

In the census period we are able to classify households according to their composition. Fig.X shows percentages of households in each of four categories: 'nuclear', containing a single individual or married couple with or without children; 'Three-generation', where either a grandchild or elderly parent is also present; 'wider kin', where other relatives such as siblings, nieces, nephews, etc, are included; and 'non-kin residents' where the household includes unrelated lodgers, nurse-children, and so on.¹

	Nuclear	Three-generation	Wider kin	Non-kin Residents
1851	57.3%	12.2%	18.3%	12.2%
1861	48.7%	4.9%	14.6%	31.7%
1871	61.8%	14.7%	13.2%	10.3%
1881	44.3%	7.1%	18.6%	30%

Fig.X

For most of the period, a majority of people lived in simple nuclear households. However, three-generation and extended family units were by no means unusual. A wide range of relatives was housed - uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and most frequently unmarried brothers and sisters.

As in the first half of the period, unmarried siblings frequently set up home together: Decimus and Caroline Burrows shared a

¹Servants are excluded here as numbers of servants and servant-keepers are dealt with elsewhere.

home all their lives, in spite of several moves of house. In other cases, single individuals lived with married siblings, often on a long-term basis. Samuel Jordin lived all his life with the family of his elder brother William. Throughout this period, several households contained unmarried brothers, brothers-in-law or uncles of the head: it would seem that single men, with their earning capacity, were more welcome than single women, for whom domestic service remained almost the only alternative.

Because of the high incidence of both second marriages and illegitimacy, a significant proportion of nuclear households contained children who were in fact the step-children of one of the couple. Similarly, an orphaned or illegitimate child might be housed by its grandparents: in other cases a child might live with its grandparents to relieve pressure on accommodation at home and to help the elderly. Letitia Robinson, aged ten, lived with her grandmother in 1861 although her parents and four younger siblings lived elsewhere in the village.

The proportion of households containing lodgers rose at times of increased employment, in 1861 and 1881. The figures for 1881 are interesting as they probably echo the situation during the early years of the century. Numbers of nuclear families were fewer than at any time, including 1861 when the navvies were present. Not only was the percentage of households with unrelated lodgers high: so too was that of households with a wider range of kin, as extended families lived together until separate accommodation could be found.

Thus although the nuclear family unit was preponderant throughout the period, it was far from universal. Three-generation households, the result of supporting an aged parent or providing a home for married (or unmarried) children and their offspring, were quite frequent. Perhaps surprisingly, these were outnumbered consistently by households containing more distant relatives: even in times of no undue immigration or pressure on housing. Highley's inhabitants shared their homes with a range of kin as well as, in many cases, lodgers and servants.

Of course, for many families these arrangements were cyclical: a young couple might begin by sharing a parental home, then

become a nuclear family, and end in the household of a married child, or alone. In fact, not many people did live alone. There were never more than three single-person households in any census. Those who remained unmarried tended, as we have seen, to live with other family members. Because women continued to bear children well into their forties, most elderly widows (who outnumbered widowers) still had unmarried offspring at home well into their old age. Other old people moved in with married children, or took in lodgers. We must not forget, though, that over this picture of familial care for the elderly falls the shadow of the Workhouse, where presumably some of the unsupported elderly had gone. Nevertheless, as in the first half of the period, overcrowding would seem to have been more of a problem than loneliness.

Overcrowding there undoubtedly was, although pressure on housing eased after 1830 (except in 1861) until the late 1870s. The largest households were in the main those of the better-off: farmers could provide employment for their children at home, as well as keeping resident servants. The size of labourers' households changed with the family's life-cycle. One random example will illustrate the extent of these changes over time. The abbreviated census details of the household of John Burgess illustrate the evolution of one labouring family, a pattern which was often repeated.¹

1841	1851	1861
Sarah Gardiner, Widow 60	John Burgess 40	John Burgess 50
John Burgess 25	Mary Burgess 30	Mary Burgess 46
Mary Burgess 25	Thomas Burgess 16	Thomas Burgess 26
Thomas Burgess 6	John Burgess 13	John Burgess 23
John Burgess 4	Joseph Burgess 11	Joseph Burgess 20
Joseph Burgess 1	Caroline Burgess 9	George Burgess 12
	Eliza Burgess 6	Benjamin Burgess 9
	George Burgess 4	Mary Ann Burgess 5
	Benjamin Burgess 6m	

¹ Ages are as stated on census returns.

1871
John Burgess, Widower 60
Mary Ann Burgess 15

1881
John Burgess 69
Benjamin Burgess 28
Eliza Burgess, Daughter-in-law 36
Bertha Burgess, Granddaughter 10m

The Burgess household of ten in 1851 was in fact one of the largest in any census return: few families retained their offspring so long, but the elder children here were sons who tended not to leave as early as girls going into service. Seven or eight was the usual maximum household size for a family at any stage of its development, unless there were servants or lodgers present.

Numbers of lodgers rose at times of work-related immigration after 1841. Some households in 1861 had as many as seven navvies and their dependants lodging with them. Immigrants in 1881 were less numerous and less temporary, but even so several households had three or four lodgers. The situation must have been very similar in the 'boom' years at the start of the century.

Thus although the nuclear family unit of a married couple plus their unmarried children was the most frequent household type, there is evidence to suggest the existence of a supportive network of kin where the elderly, the illegitimate, the orphaned or simply the unmarried could hope to find a home. Lodgers who were not apparently related to the family were taken in to households already large for the accommodation available. Because couples produced children over a period of fifteen or perhaps twenty years, it was likely that the eldest, especially if they were girls, had left home before the youngest were born. In spite of this, and of the numbers of new houses built shortly after 1800, households during this period were on the whole larger than they had been in the pre-industrial period.

The influx of miners early in the century clearly affected the demographic structures of the community. It lowered the average age of inhabitants and thus increased fertility. Without a disastrous rise in infant mortality, Highley was expanding through natural growth as well as through immigration. However, it was not until

the second half of the 19th century that we find any improvement in terms of age at death and juvenile mortality over the situation two hundred years previously. The miners of the first industrial phase died younger than the agricultural population, at a mean of 15.5 years between 1813 and 1830, as opposed to 39.8. It is tempting to attribute this to industrial conditions, overcrowding, or poorer standards of nutrition and hygiene: but if as we have suggested the mining population was comprised largely of those under about 50, one would expect a lower mean age for those who did die.

After the departure of the miners, the rate of natural increase slowed, and a declining birth rate in an aging population, together with emigration, brought about a decrease in total population. Demographically, the period between 1850 and the late 1870s may best be compared with the last years of the 17th century.

Clearly the composition of the community - socially, economically and demographically - changed with the coming of industry. Migration was a key factor in Highley's development in this period, and it is to this mobility and its effects on social relations within the community that we must now turn.

- 1) Laslett, Family Life, p.65.
- 2) M. Yasumoto, 'Industrialisation and Demographic Change in a Yorkshire Parish', L.P.S., 27 (1981).
- 3) S.R.O. 4123/P/2
- 4) B. Waters, Severn Stream (London, 1949) p.162.
- 5) Lee (ed.) Quarter Sessions Rolls, p. 245.
- 6) Hill. (ed.), Quarter Sessions Rolls 1820-1830, Apr. 1828 ; Apr. 1827.
- 7) J. Skinner, Journal of a Somerset Rector 1803-1834 (Oxford, 1984) p.248
- 8) B.L. Add. MSS.21018.
- 9) Ch. Ch. MS. Est.84/163 : Surveyor's Report, 1798.
- 10) Hill (ed.) Quarter Sessions Rolls.

Chapter Nine - Social Relations

We have already seen that Highley's population was by no means a static one, even in the 17th and 18th centuries when agriculture provided almost the only employment. The coming of industry greatly increased the degree of mobility for it brought large numbers of immigrants who were for the most part short-stayers, without stemming the flow of young single emigrants who continued, as before, to leave the village.

Fig.I indicates the numbers of children born at Highley (and apparently surviving childhood) by birth cohort, distinguishing between those who were last recorded at baptism, last recorded as adults, or actually buried at Highley.¹ The vastly increased size of the 19th century birth cohorts indicates the rapid expansion of the village population, due almost entirely to immigration.

<u>Decade</u>	Last rec. as infant	Last rec. as adult	Buried Highley	No. in cohort
1780-89	35	13	6	54
1790-99	43	12	6	61
1800-09	82	8	17	107
1810-19	110	15	7	142

Fig.I Children baptised at Highley

In the 19th century, with its censuses and other listings of inhabitants, we are better able to trace those adults who

¹It is impractical, here and in Fig.II, to consider decades after 1820 as burial records after the end of our period in 1880 were not used. Furthermore, the opening of a Methodist chapel in 1815 may have had an effect on numbers of baptisms.

remained in the village. In spite of this, we still find that over 75% of those children born between 1800 and 1819, when industrialisation was at its height, were never recorded again in Highley after their baptism. They either left the village in childhood with their parents, or alone as adolescents. In fact of the 110 children of the 1810-19 cohort who were not recorded again, only 23 appear to have left alone - that is with parents and/or siblings still resident in the village. The remaining 87 left with their parents. Thus although young adults still left to find work or to marry elsewhere, much larger numbers left as children when their families, some of whom spent only a couple of years in Highley, moved on.

This is a fundamental shift in emigration patterns, and one which we noted beginning in the post-enclosure period, when the loosening of ties with landholdings meant that whole families moved more than they had done in the 16th century. Industrialisation, however, with its demand for a specialised labour force, and with the short-term nature of some of its ventures, made the migration of families vastly more frequent. This is further illustrated in Fig.II, which shows the numbers of 'new' fathers recorded by the decade in which they first baptised a child at Highley, together with the number of fathers who were themselves baptised or buried in the parish.

<u>Decade</u>	No. of 'new' fathers	No. bapt. Highley	No. buried Highley	No. neither bap. nor bur.
1780-89	24	3	6	16
1790-99	19	2	8	10
1800-09	54	7	18	35
1810-19	62	2	8	53

Fig.II 'New' fathers from baptism register

The first interesting point about the table at Fig.II is the relatively low number of new fathers in the decade 1790-99, although we know that quarrying and some coalmining were being carried on, the former in particular for most of the decade. This suggests

that the quarrying workforce was, as we have already suggested, largely recruited from local residents. Some of the 40 men employed in Dr. Macnab's quarries in 1797 must have worked in Highley while continuing to live in neighbouring parishes, for a workforce of that size represents perhaps two thirds of all men of working age in the village at the time.[1]

The main influx of immigrants came after 1800, although the village population did rise from 215 to 274 between 1793 and 1801. We have noted earlier how those born in the later decades of the pre-industrial period (1750-79) showed a tendency to remain in Highley to adulthood: it may be that the beginnings of industrialisation led to an increase in population initially because of a temporary slowing down of emigration rather than massive immigration. In the first two decades of the 19th century, when coal-mining took over from quarrying as the chief industry, large numbers of immigrants arrived. Of the 62 new fathers recorded in the decade 1810-19 only two had themselves been baptised at Highley. Furthermore, few of these men remained in the village for any length of time. Less than 13% of the new fathers of this decade were themselves subsequently buried at Highley - compared with a mean of means in the 18th century (1700-79) of 45.4%.

In Chapter Six we defined 'transients' as those couples baptising one or at most two children at Highley, and with an apparent residence in the village of three years or less. Fig.III shows numbers of transients by decade during the first half of our present period. Interestingly, the number of transients was lower during the 1790s than it had been in most earlier decades of the 18th century, which supports to some extent our suppositions about the nature of the workforce in early industrial developments. After 1800, numbers of transients rose sharply, reaching a peak between 1810 and 1819, when two-thirds of all new fathers were in fact very short-term residents. There must in addition, of course, have been other transients who did not baptise a child during their brief stay in the parish. Of the 86 heads of household in the Easter Book for 1818, for example, 16 are not mentioned in parish registers. In addition, the servants and lodgers not recorded by name were probably largely single short-term residents.[2]

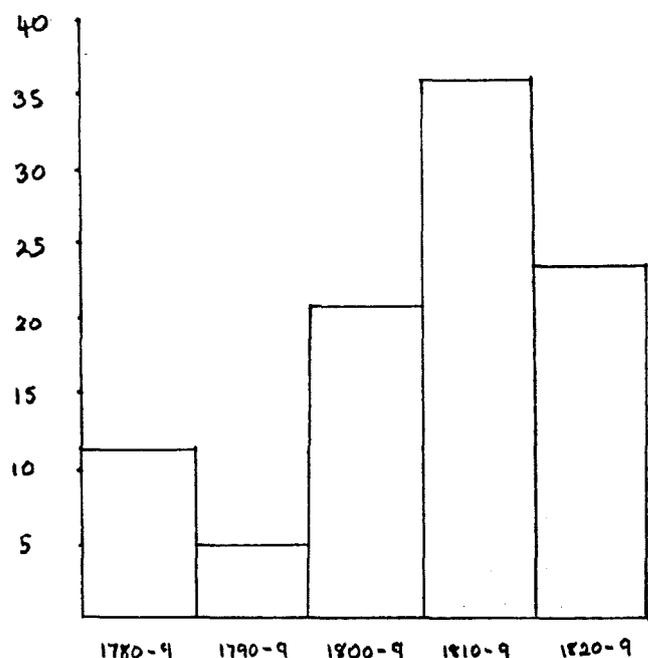


Fig.III Numbers of transients 1780-1829

The Easter Book listings from 1793 to 1830 supply a further indication of the extent of mobility during the period of industrialisation. They reinforce the picture of relative stability between 1780 and 1800 presented by Figs.I to III. Of the 53 named heads of household in 1793, forty were still in the village in 1799. Only eight families appear to have left Highley: five heads of household had died but were followed by sons or widows.

By 1807, the total population had leapt from 215 in 1793 to perhaps 400. As before, a nucleus of about 40 families remained. However, since 1799 thirty new families had arrived, many of them the transients of Fig.III. Several of these new arrivals are known to have been colliers: probably the great majority were. There is little evidence as to the place of origin of these immigrants. Some had previously worked in mines in neighbouring Billingsley and Arley parishes. Others came directly from the E. Shropshire coal-field, like Luke Hartshorn who came from Broseley, and was sent back

there by the parish officers in 1817.[3] Some of the men who had previously worked at Billingsley had come "from the north of England" - some from the mining areas of the north-east, like George Johnston of "Biker near Newcastle-upon-Tyne" who was buried at Billingsley in 1800.[4]

Sometimes apparently related families arrived together. Four couples surnamed Yeats appear in the baptism registers between 1800 and 1805, none of them natives of Highley. Similarly, Edward Geary, John Geary and Thomas Geary all first baptised children in 1809 or 1810: none had been born in the parish, and none appears to have remained there more than two years.

Because in the early years of the 19th century several small mines and forges were working in this south-east corner of Shropshire, men could move from place to place as economic or geological factors made one mine less attractive, or the prospect of better housing or conditions appeared elsewhere. The miners of the large coalfields are known to have been constantly on the move between pits.[5]

By 1818 coalmining in Highley was at its peak. Of the 86 heads of household listed in the Easter Book of that year, 40 had arrived since 1807, while 22 of the 71 heads of household of 1807 had left (only three had died in the interim). As Fig.III shows, levels of transience remained high during the 1820s. With the gradual decline of coalmining towards the end of the decade, emigration began to outstrip immigration. Less than 40% of the families listed in 1818 were still represented in 1830.

Throughout this period, a shrinking nucleus of 'original' families remained. Twenty-two of the 53 families of 1793 were still represented 25 years later, and only 11 by 1830. There was, however, a turnover of about half the village population every ten years or so, with even more short-term immigration not revealed by our Easter Book sampling. Large numbers of immigrants - mostly coalminers - helped to double the population between 1790 and 1810. Coalmining families were less likely to remain for any length of time than other groups, although there continued to be some transient agricultural labourers, and short leases still meant a high turnover of tenant farmers.

Except in the very earliest stages of its development, it seems that very few locals were recruited into the coalming industry. In his history of the industry in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Flinn quotes a 19th century opinion that colliers must be recruited as boys of less than 13 or 14, otherwise they "never will become colliers".[6] This certainly seems to have been the case in Highley: only three Highley-born colliers can be traced, one of whom was eleven years old when he died in the pit. Mining seems to have had its own specialised workforce who were brought in when the industry developed, and which left no room for the entry of local adults.

Quarrymen are unfortunately indistinguishable in the parish register from labourers until the mid-1820s. From then until the beginning of the census period, 18 quarrymen were recorded. This group was often recruited locally: most of the 18 were born in the neighbourhood - four in Highley itself, five in Chelmarsh, two in Alvelely, one in Billingsley and one in Bewdley. Half the group remained in Highley for more than twenty years, and none was a particularly short-term resident. Furthermore in several cases sons succeeded fathers as quarrymen. Thus quarrymen were in general a much more stable group than coalminers, and quarrying provided more employment for locally-born men than did the much more extensive coalmining industry.

The advent of mining brought dramatic increases in levels of mobility in Highley: but as we have seen there was already considerable migration into and out of the purely rural community, and agricultural workers appear not to have become any less mobile after industrialisation. Coalminers were drawn into the village in large numbers, and most stayed a relatively short time. By the early 1830s, hardly any were left. Most miners were accompanied by wives and children, and this movement of whole families represented a major change from migration patterns in earlier centuries. Nevertheless, Highley-born young people continued to leave to work elsewhere: their employment opportunities in the village were less enhanced than might be supposed from the scale of industrial development.

During the census period, we are of course better able to assess mobility of all inhabitants, not just heads of household or

those featuring in parish registers, and we are able to add an actual geographical dimension because for the first time we have relatively reliable information about the birthplace of immigrants. The 1841 census is less satisfactory than later ones because it lacks this information, merely stating whether an individual was born in the same county or not: in a parish like Highley so close to the county boundary, this tells us almost nothing about distances travelled. Thus Fig.IV shows the percentage of all those over 15 years of age born in Highley itself, within a radius of ten miles, and more than ten miles away, only for the years 1851 to 1881.

	In Highley	Less than 10 miles away	More than 10 miles away	Total
1851	33.2%	36.8%	29.9%	99.9%
1861	21.6%	28.8%	45.3%	95.7%
1871	31.9%	32.5%	33.5%	97.9%
1881	24.7%	26%	45.5%	96.3%

Fig.IV Birthplaces of Adults 1851-1881

Regularly less than a third of all adults living in Highley had actually been born there. There was still considerable movement within the ten-mile radius that we saw was a significant area in earlier periods. There was also, however, some immigration from a wider area, especially after the coming of the railway in 1862. The presence of railway navvies in 1861 and coal miners in 1881 accounts for the rise in the percentage of longer-distance migrants in those years.

The railway navvies were drawn from all over England and Wales. Although temporary, their presence must have had a profound effect on village society as their numbers were large. Navvies and their families accounted for 106 of the village population of 407 in 1861. The navvies themselves were born in 23 different counties of England and Wales, and one in Ireland (in addition to some unidentifiable place names, and nine men who did not know, or choose to divulge, their birthplace). These counties ranged from Yorkshire in

the north to Somerset and Surrey in the south; from Wales in the west to Suffolk and Norfolk in the east. Only three were relatively local men from south-east Shropshire.

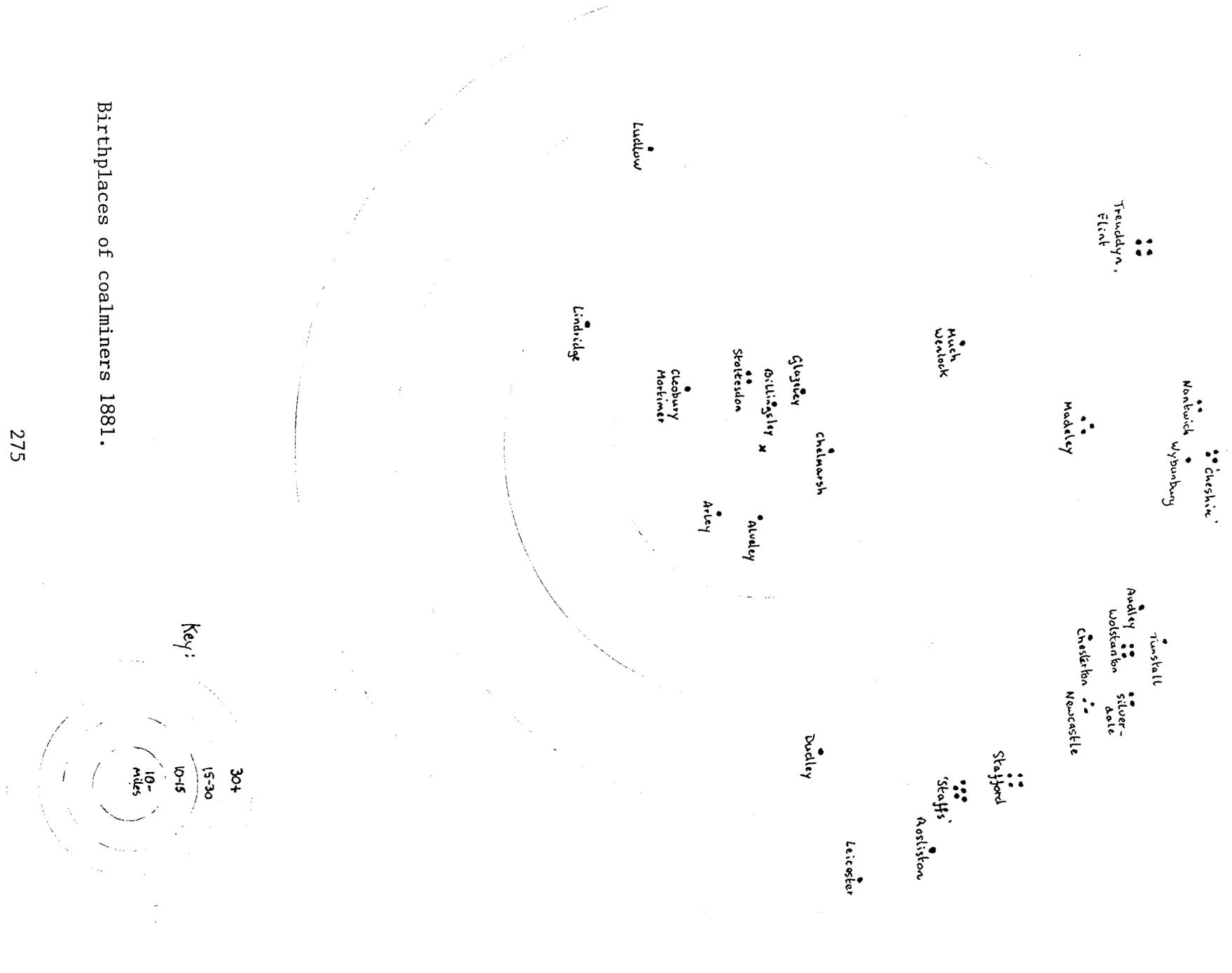
Birthplaces of wives and children of navvies show that the men had travelled widely before arriving in Highley. From the birthplaces of his children, for instance, it seems that George Walter, aged 33 and born in Buckinghamshire, had previously worked at Doncaster, Caerphilly, and in Worcestershire. John Thompson, born in Norfolk, had lived at Wednesbury in Staffs, Breconshire and Cardiff, all within the previous eight years. Seven of the children of navvies had been born in France. Gangs of British navvies first went to France to build the Paris and Rouen railway in 1841, and many stayed on until the 1850s constructing other railways in Normandy and Brittany.[7]

Children's birthplaces also suggest that some members of the Severn Valley Railway construction gang had worked and travelled together. The majority, however, had not, and had been gathered from all over the country for this job. They clearly lived an itinerant life, and many were either unmarried or unaccompanied by their families.

The impact on the community of such a group of immigrants must have been great. Navvies' drunkenness and rowdyism were legendary, although we have no evidence of disturbances they might have created in Highley.[8] Some managed to get vacant cottages: others lived in a specially-built barrack house at Stanley: but many more lodged with local families. These were men who had travelled all over the country, and sometimes overseas, and their impact on a local population who had in the main been born less than ten miles away was clearly great.

Some navvies were in Highley by 1859: the Severn Valley Railway was opened in 1861. Perhaps the 106 railway-linked immigrants of 1861 represented a short-lived peak in their numbers. Nevertheless, for something like four years, a quarter of Highley's population was made up of "strangers".

The coal miners of 1879 onwards who affect the birthplace table in 1881 represent a different kind of immigration. Coal-mining in this second phase continued until 1969, and the families of



Birthplaces of coalminers 1881.

some of the immigrants of 1881 are still represented in Highley. In all, 126 of the total population of 363 were coal miners and their families. Not all miners were immigrants: six of them, mostly young men, had been born in Highley itself. The majority of the 58 miners, however, had come from elsewhere. A handful was drawn from the surrounding rural parishes like Glazely and Billingsley. Another small group came from places where there was already a mining industry established, within about 20 miles of Highley, like Madeley, Dudley and Lindridge. The majority, though, came from further afield, some from Flint and Cheshire, and the largest group from the area of the Potteries in Staffordshire. (Shown diagrammatically in the 'map').

In addition, the birthplaces of these men's families show that many of them had previously worked in the Potteries. Eighteen miners' dependents were born at Silverdale near Stoke-on-Trent, and a further twelve within a mile or two. Matthew Henry Viggars who was a director of the Highley Mining Co. was also the owner of Knutton Manor Colliery in Silverdale, and in fact the first housing built in Highley for this generation of miners was named Silverdale Terrace. Clearly a nucleus of miners was brought in from the company's other area of operations.

In fact the 1881 census shows some of the characteristics which, we have surmised, applied to the first phase of coal-mining in Highley. Some related family groups had arrived together. Frederick Evans was born in Flint, although he had subsequently worked at Silverdale. His younger brother Norman and sister Alice lived with the family in Highley, and next door was Richard Evans, also born in Flint, who had also been living at Silverdale. Elsewhere in the village was the family of Joseph Evans (born Flint) whose children, including the nine-month old baby, were born at Silverdale. Thus almost certainly four brothers, with the families of three of them, had been previously in the Potteries together before coming to Highley. Similarly, it is difficult to believe that Isaac, Noah and Jabez Lawton, all born at Wolstanton, were unrelated.

Another similarity was that although some local men were recruited into mining, they were all young. Typical were the two sons of Benjamin Lucas, who was not himself a miner, aged 15 and 19.

Significantly, the young locals were described as 'colliery labourer' not as 'collier' as were the immigrants, and it is probable that they were not employed underground but on surface work and construction. The skilled miners were all brought into the village from elsewhere.

In the 'normal' years of 1851 and 1871, a third or less of the adult population had come to Highley from a distance of more than ten miles - and many of these were born less than fifteen miles away. Fig.V shows these longer-distance migrants by socio-economic group. Group I has a much larger percentage of these migrants than of the population as a whole. Professionals like the vicar were likely to travel greater distances, and farmers too were prepared to travel to take up a farm. Small tradesmen and craftsmen, whom Pamela Horn finds amongst the most highly mobile in rural society, appear at Highley to have been no more likely to move than agricultural labourers.[9] Farmworkers, as we shall see, moved frequently within the ten-mile radius, but less often from further afield. Group III, however, also includes servants who were quite regularly brought from considerable distances.

	I	II	III	IV
1851	20	13	32	1
1861	15	21	26	2
1871	20	16	30	3
1881	8	18	24	2

Fig.V Longer-distance migrants by socio-economic group

In some cases this can be explained by a knowledge of family circumstances. In 1851, for instance, Elizabeth the widow of the Rev. Samuel Burrows employed a servant born at Ombersley in Worcestershire. We know from other sources that her eldest son was at the time vicar of Ombersley. Similarly in 1871 William Jordin

employed a farm bailiff born at Hartlebury in Worcestershire, which was also the birthplace of his wife Harriet Jordin.

Some servants were joined by younger relatives, a prudent measure to ease the start of a girl's life 'in service'. In 1871 Emma George aged 22, born at Stottesdon, lived in at the Jordins', as did 12 year old Mary George, also born at Stottesdon. Most female servants had been born in the rural parishes around Highley, although by the last decade of our period there are signs that the populous Black Country to the east was beginning to provide some domestic servants. Male 'farm servants' were more likely to originate outside the ten-mile area, like Austin Waldron, a single man of 50 in 1851, who was born in Ireland.

Group IV was, as we have noted, a small percentage of the total population during the census period as the majority of the very poor were living in Cleobury Mortimer Union workhouse rather than in Highley itself. Very few of those paupers who are recorded originated from any distance away from the village.

The surrounding area of south Shropshire still provided a significant proportion of Highley's adult population. Agricultural labourers in particular were likely to travel within this radius, particularly before the coming of the railway in 1862. Fig.VI shows the birthplaces of agricultural labourers, and comparison with Fig.IV shows how consistently more were born in Highley than was the case with the adult population as a whole. In the later years of the census period, we find more labourers from outside the immediate area. Fig.VII provides a diagrammatic representation of the birthplaces of labourers from the census of 1871. As with servants, there are indications that farm workers were brought in by an employer who had connections with a particular area. Jesse Lane, a principal farmer of 1871, came from Kineton in Gloucestershire. As Fig.VII shows, a concentration of farm employees also came from that area: there was a shepherd from Ford, a couple of miles from Kineton, two single labourers from 'Gloucestershire', and a waggoner with two small children born at Willersey in the same small area. Since immigrants from Gloucestershire were otherwise rare, it looks as if Lane had brought his own workforce with him. In the main, however, agricultural

labourers were, even as late as 1871, the least likely group in the community to travel (or to have to travel) long distances to find work. Even so, they were not as static as those cited by Horn in Buckinghamshire villages where three quarters or more of the agricultural labourers had been born in the parish in which they worked.[10]

	In Highley	Less than 10 miles away	More than 10 miles away
1851	35%	42.5%	22.5%
1861	45.7%	42.8%	11.4%
1871	40.6%	29.7%	29.7%
1881	44.4%	26%	29.6%

Fig.VI Birthplaces of agricultural labourers

So far we have examined only the birthplaces of Highley's adults, since these are easier to relate to occupations and give a better indication of voluntary migration. It is worth, however, briefly considering the proportion of all inhabitants born locally, as this enables us to compare Highley with other mid-19th century communities. In the two censuses unaffected by large-scale immigration, 1851 and 1871, the percentage of the total population born in Highley was 48.7% and 42.7% respectively. In the much larger, industrialised town of Preston in 1851, Anderson found 48% of the population were native to the town.[11] In Horsham, Sussex, on a ten percent sample, 45.6% were natives in 1851; there, as in Highley, this percentage had declined somewhat by 1871.[12]

Thus Highley was by no means unusual in its high degree of mobility: in 1851 and 1871, however, Highley was not a rapidly-developing textile town or a Sussex town with easy transport links to London and the coast: at these dates it was a chiefly agricultural village far removed from any sizeable town. Yet migration was frequent: at both dates about a third of the inhabitants had been born in a nearby village, and those from further afield rose from 21.7% in 1851 to 26.2% in 1871.

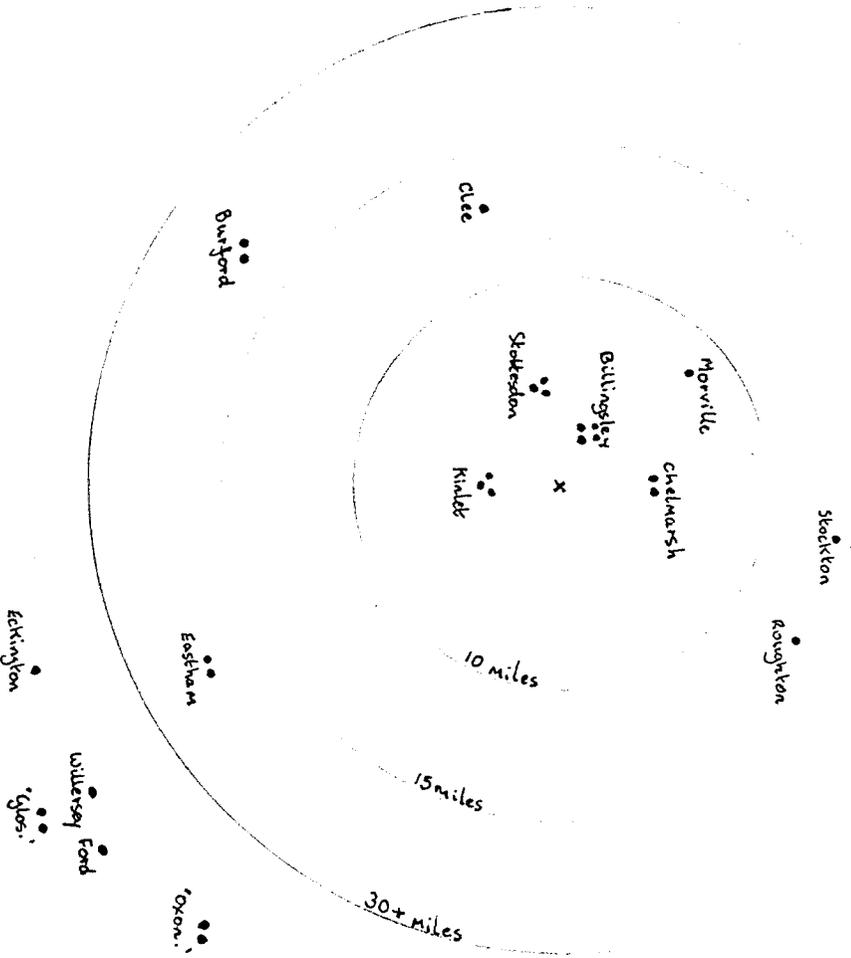


Fig. VII 1871 - Birthplaces of agricultural labourers

This immigration was counterbalanced by considerable emigration. Although 75% of the survivors of the birth cohort of 1830-39 were still in Highley in 1841, for example, only just over 30% were still resident by 1851. Adolescents continued to leave in numbers: only 10% of those born 1830-34 (and therefore past adolescence) remained to 1851. Coalmining in the first half of our period had brought unprecedented levels of immigration and of turnover: but the rural and largely agricultural community of the second half was also highly mobile. After 1830 until the arrival of the navvies, net emigration outweighed immigration. If we work from the 1831 population figure of 404 and assume no migration, growth in the community as shown in baptisms and burials should have meant a population by 1841 of 428 - in fact it was 360. Similarly between 1841 and 1851, the actual population declined by one, rather than increasing by 35.¹ Highley with only minimal industry was, like so many agricultural communities in the mid-19th century, a village in decline, in terms of size. This is made clear if we omit the navvies and coal miners from the census totals.

1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
404	360	359	301*	293	237*

Although the available sources do not allow a direct comparison, it seems that the turnover of population in the later 19th century was as high as in the first half of our period. Fig.VIII shows that after a (relatively) stable decade between the censuses of 1841-1851, it was usual for two-thirds of the inhabitants to have vanished from the listing on the next census. Using parish registers in conjunction with census returns, it is possible to distinguish between numbers who had died in the intervening decade - a remarkably consistent percentage - and those who had merely left. Regularly over half the village's inhabitants could be expected to move every ten years.

¹If we consider that some Nonconformist baptisms were probably not included (though numbers were not large at these dates), we see that net emigration was even greater.

	1841-51	1851-61	1861-71 ¹	1871-81
Died	12.1%	11.8%	11.6%	11.6%
Stayed	41.3%	28.9%	35.9%	31.4%
Left	46.6%	58.8%	52.4%	57%

¹Omitting railway navvies

Fig.VIII

Much of this emigration was by young people aged between 12 and 20, who had always been likely to move. Whole families of all classes, though, were also highly mobile. Fewer Highley residents actually owned land in the parish than at any time since enclosure: farming families, with the exception of the landowning Jordins, moved at least as often as any other.

For some families, Highley was one stop on a circuit of villages within the ten-mile radius. Judging by the birthplaces of his children George Bill and his wife had been in Bridgnorth in 1862, Worfield in 1864 and 1866, and Shifnal in 1868 before moving to Highley by 1870. Craftsmen as well as labourers could be highly mobile: William Walford, a shoemaker born at Highley and living there in 1871 had nevertheless had children born at Eardington, Glazeley and Billingsley before returning to his birthplace. Tenanted farms changed hands frequently: Hazelwells had a different family in residence in each census year except 1871, when it was empty (although a further, fifth, resident was there in 1870).[13]

A final indication of the levels of migration throughout our period is the very few families who continued to be represented in Highley from 1780 to 1880. In fact of those families listed in all sources 1779/80, only two could still be traced in the village a hundred years later. One of these, the influential Jordins, died out in that year. Highley had experienced a virtually complete turnover of population during our period.

The most spectacular migration was of the large numbers of coal miners drawn into Highley in the first half of our period. But individuals born in the village, and families never involved in industry, continued to move. The new developments employed few local men, and throughout the period young men left to obtain work elsewhere far more frequently than they stayed. Young women, too, went 'into service' in other villages and towns: some worked in Highley itself, but the majority of servants in the village were in fact born outside it. Tenant farmers moved often, and over considerable distances. Their labourers were more likely to come from the immediate neighbourhood, but were no less mobile.

A nucleus of families remained for more than one generation, though hardly any for more than three. Those who owned land, like the Jordins and Wilcoxes, were more static than tenants. Some labourers and craftsmen lived all their lives in Highley, and were succeeded by their sons and even grandsons. These, however, were the exceptions, for not only did adolescents leave, as they had done from the 16th century, but the trend towards whole-family migration that we noted increasing in the 18th century accelerated in the 19th. Very few families indeed were tied to Highley by ownership or long-term tenancy of land. Some men probably left agriculture to work in towns now more accessible than ever before: after 1862, Birmingham was only an hour or so away by train.

On the whole, between about 1830 and the late 1870s, more people left Highley than arrived. Without the opening of the new coal mine in 1879, Highley would have continued to decline in size into the twentieth century, as did neighbouring Billingsley and Kinlet. As it was, there was a new influx of miners which showed many of the characteristics of the earlier immigration. This time, however, mining activity was to be sustained, and the population would double before the end of the century, and increase more than five-fold in the twenty years after that.

Parish registers suggest an extremely high level of endogamous marriage during this period. Before 1830, no less than 82.6% of all marriages were between partners supposedly both 'of Highley'. Between 1830 and 1880 this fell somewhat to 72.4%. Undoubtedly endogamous marriage was more frequent than in earlier centuries: the village population was greater than at any time in its past, and this, together with weaker kinship networks within the community, considerably increased the choice of marriage partner available.

However, we should be suspicious of some of these 'endogamous' marriages, particularly during the first half of our period. Between 1780 and 1829 ninety marriages were apparently between partners both living in Highley. Yet 37 of these marriages produced no children baptised at Highley. Some of these marriages may of course have been childless, or between Nonconformist couples: but in the great majority of cases the couples are never again recorded as resident in Highley in Easter Book or census listings, or at burial. In two-thirds of these marriages neither party had been baptised in the parish, and their surnames are not otherwise encountered there. In the remaining third, a Highley-born partner married an apparent 'stranger'. Thus although these marriage partners might have fulfilled the three-week residence rule before their wedding, they do not seem to have been genuine inhabitants.

Even in the remaining 53 cases, where at least short-term residence followed the marriage, it is doubtful if both partners had been living in Highley for long prior to it. In 29 of these marriages, neither partner had been born in the village. However, if we assume that these marriages were truly endogamous and that those followed by further mentions in Highley were not, we find that less than half of all marriages were endogamous between 1780 and 1829. Later in the 19th century, particularly after 1860, the marriage register appears to be more reliable with regard to place of residence.

Nevertheless, even if only 50% or a little less of all marriages were actually endogamous, this represents a considerable increase over previous periods. Where places of origin are mentioned,

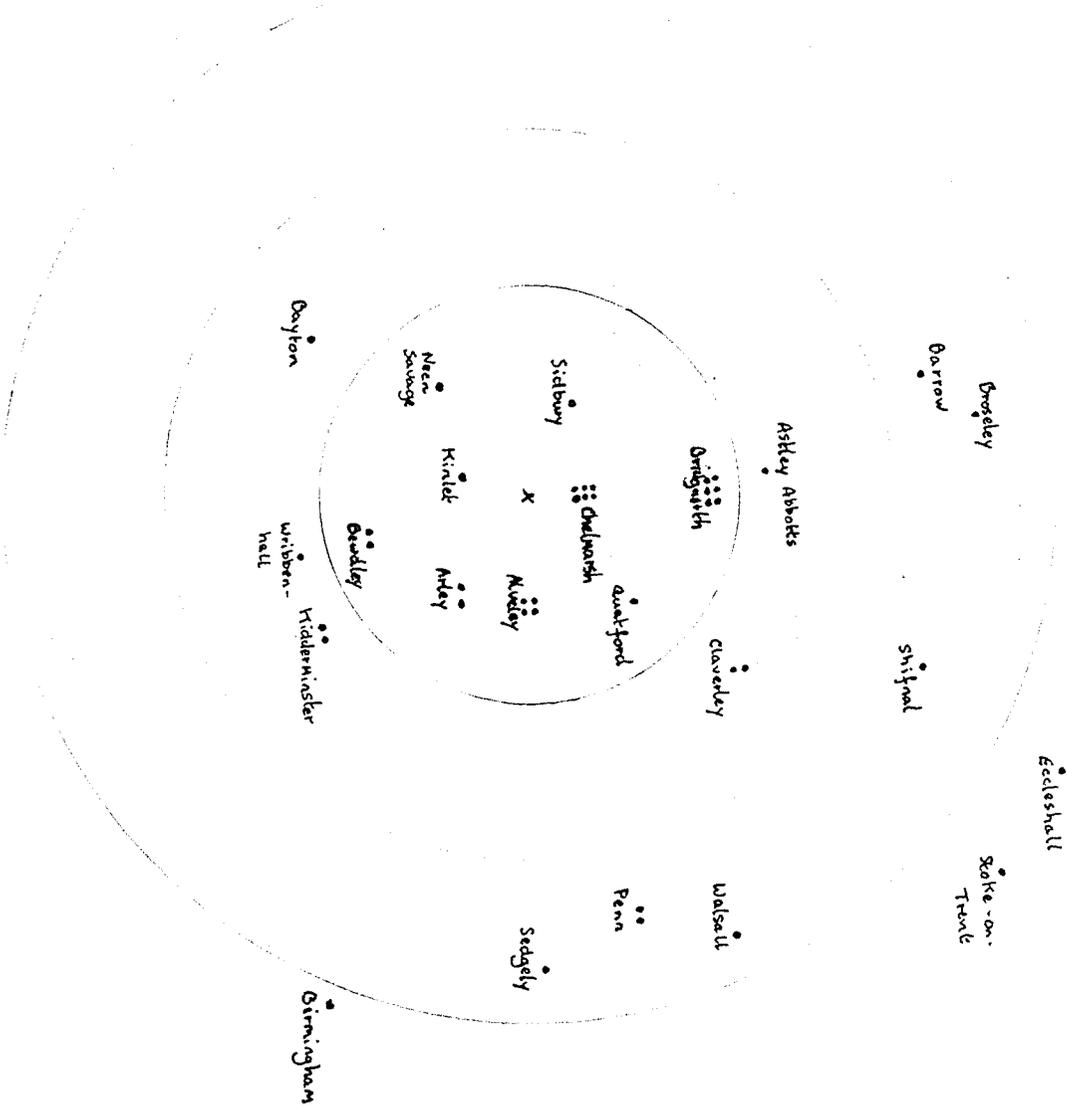
they indicate a widening geographical area drawn upon for marriage partners. Increasingly, industrial towns to the east of Highley are mentioned, like Penn in Wolverhampton (twice), Sedgely, Hockley, Birmingham and Walsall. Distances involved could be greater, like the groom from Dublin and the bride from Tewkesbury. Towns in north Shropshire and Staffordshire which had not figured prominently in the 17th and 18th centuries now did so - such as Eccleshall, Broseley, Shifnal, Stoke, and so on. Possibly because of industrialisation and better communications, more marriage partners came from towns rather than villages: even local towns (Bridgnorth with six, Bewdley three, and Kidderminster two) provided more partners than before. The neighbouring villages which had previously been drawn upon continued to be so, but to a lesser extent.

The most noticeable feature of the sketch map which plots these places of origin and shows their direction from Highley as well as a diagrammatic indication of their distance, is how many partners came from the industrialised east rather than the rural west, except in the case of neighbouring parishes. This may have been simply because the east was much more heavily populated; but it does indicate a shift away from market towns like Ludlow and Shrewsbury, and greater links with centres in the growing Black Country.

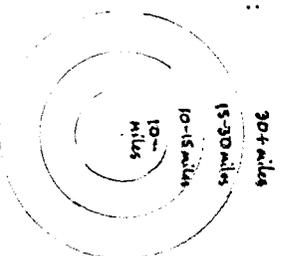
There seems to have been little inter-marriage between the colliers of the early 19th century and local women. Most miners seem to have arrived in Highley with wives and children. Only seven known colliers married in the parish. None of their brides was born at Highley itself, although two came from Billingsley and one from Arley. The two from Billingsley were in fact sisters, born in 1796 and 1799, and at the time of their marriage were living in Highley with their father who was himself a miner. In the main, however, miners' wives were not born locally, either in Highley or its immediate neighbourhood. They were either brought from the immigrant's home area, or themselves the daughters of temporary (and therefore probably mining) residents.

In spite of the short duration of their stay, some railway navvies and their families did marry locals. In 1861 Ann

Teikesbury



Key:



Page of Highley married William Smith, a 'navigator' from Norfolk who was lodging in her family's house. In the same year, Mary Munro married an 'excavator' who, according to the census, lived next door to her family.

The miners of the second phase of development barely had time to settle in Highley before the end of our period. However, it is interesting in the light of our surmise that early miners brought wives from their previous homes to note that in 1879 Samuel Rhodes, a miner of Highley, married Susanna Leigh of Wolstanton, Staffs - an area in which we know many miners had previously been working.

Migration was still regulated to some extent by the operation of the laws of settlement. Those who became chargeable to the parish were frequently despatched to their place of settlement. A considerable number of removal orders has survived, and Quarter Sessions abstracts reveal others that were disputed.[14] The ability to move paupers over often long distances was one of the more powerful tools left to the parish officers in their attempt to reduce the burden of poor rates and exercise a measure of social control.

It was occasionally implemented from the beginning of the period: the depression of 1816-17, however, brought a spate of removals: five orders survive for 1817 alone. Two categories appear most at risk; the mothers of illegitimate children, and labouring men and their families. The latter must have been unable to work either through illness or, as seems probable in the post-war years, because work was no longer available.

Sometimes distances involved were considerable, and show that even agricultural labourers did sometimes travel relatively far. In 1812, John Price, labourer, his wife and six children were removed to Abbey Dore on the border between south Herefordshire and Wales.[15] They had 'come to inhabit' the parish of Highley, and had not been there for long for none of the children - not even the 11 week old baby - was baptised at Highley. Curiously, Elizabeth Ashwood was in the same year removed to Ewyas Harold, about a mile away from Abbey Dore, although apparently unrelated to the Prices. Jane Baynham was sent back to Church Eaton near Stafford; and John

Hughes and his family removed to Peopleton, between Worcester and Evesham.

Not all removal orders were immediately carried out. The Prices were allowed to remain until Mrs Jane Price was sufficiently recovered from her 'extreme illness' to travel. Elizabeth Ashwood was first ordered to be returned to Morville in Shropshire in December 1811: this order was withdrawn, and in January 1812 that for Ewyas Harold drawn up. It seems that removal orders were obtained for single women when their pregnancy was known, but that they in fact only left after the birth - a more humane attitude than that shown in parishes where pregnant women were harried over the parish boundary to prevent a potential pauper child from gaining a settlement.[16] Elizabeth Ashwood was still in Highley in April 1812 when her illegitimate son was baptised. Ann Fenn was ordered on 3rd August 1811 to go to Deuxhill, Salop, although her child was baptised at Highley in September.

Some removals were either never carried out or were rescinded: the family of William Walford, ordered to Enville, Staffs, in 1784 were still in the village in 1785 and 1789, and apparently stayed until at least 1801.

Implementing orders of removal could be very expensive, since at least one overseer had to accompany the paupers and hand them over at their destination. In 1815, for example, expenses of removals cost the parish £53.

Poor relief was an increasing problem for parish administrators from the beginning of our period. Inhabitants told Archdeacon Plymley in 1793 that poor rates for the parish amounted to about £80 a year, although within memory they had been only £20 to £30 a year.[17] They were quite right. In the year to Easter 1776, £24 19s 6d had been raised: in the first year of our present period, overseers spent £35 14s 3d. By the mid-1790s, as Plymley was told, the poor rate averaged over £80 a year.

Yet worse was to come, as rising prices brought increased problems for the poor. In 1796-7, the total expended leapt to £159 10s: in the early years of the 19th century, over £250 per annum was needed. A peak was reached between 1813 and 1818, when

the figure was regularly over £300. Such high poor rates, besides indicating hardship among the poor, helped to force the small freeholder, already in difficulties, off the land altogether in some cases.¹

In 1790 and 1792, payments to paupers were 'contracted out': two local men received £48 a year to be responsible for 'the maintenance of the poor'. [18] The scheme may not have been successful, as it was soon discontinued. Indeed, it is hard to see how it can have worked, for there was no workhouse, and the majority of paupers were not capable of much work. Expenditure was also rising so quickly that agreeing a contract in advance would have been hazardous, and the only way for the contractor to have made a profit would seem to be by cutting the amount of relief paid. It was probably fortunate for the village poor that the experiment seems to have been short lived.

The last year for which detailed records of payments survive is 1800-01. These accounts are worth examining for the light they throw on how the poor rate was spent. Weekly 'pensioners', who received poor relief regularly throughout the year, got amounts varying from 1/- to 4/- a week, with a norm of about three shillings - less than half a labourer's wage. In addition, they received small payments for coal and clothing as the need arose. As well as her weekly payments, Martha Steel was given 'a sheet and cloth to mend her bed-tick' (probably in advance of her lying-in), 'a pair of cards', cloth for a shirt and smockfrock for her son, a shift, two petticoats, shoes and housecoal. Altogether, including paying for her journey to Bridgnorth and for someone to 'fetch the midwife to' her, Martha Steel cost the parish about £12 9s in the first 39 weeks of the

¹We know that small freeholders in Highley did sell out, although there is no direct evidence that poor rates were responsible. Elsewhere, however, this was certainly the case. [Horn, Rural World, pp.73-4].

financial year. She was by no means the only recipient - at least another half-dozen women received similar ex gratia payments throughout the year.

Some claimants were not regular recipients: they were given small sums at odd times when 'in want', or had their rent paid. Other expenses in 1800 included doctors' bills, expenses or overseers' journeys, money for relieving vagrants and wounded sailors, for drawing up indentures, and the county rates.

Altogether, £254 was spent, which represented a per capita expenditure of 18/6d for the whole village. Parliamentary reports indicate that expenditure was almost exactly the same in 1802-3.[19] At this time, 13.5% of the total population received relief - considerably more than the national average of 8.6%.[20] Yet few able-bodied men received relief. 38% of all recipients were children: a further 32% were elderly. Of the remaining 30%, detailed returns indicate that a majority were single mothers. Highley's problems were not caused by the necessity of subsidising unemployed or underpaid agricultural labourers, as they were in the 'Speenhamland' parishes. Industry was already present to push up agricultural wages, and those labourers who did not have a legal settlement in Highley were removed at the first sign of problems. Some men did receive relief, usually occasional: but Highley had a higher than usual proportion of elderly paupers¹: high levels of illegitimacy also contributed significantly to expenditure.

Numbers of claimants remained broadly similar in 1813-1815, although children were no longer included in figures returned.[21] Because the total population had increased, however, per capita expenditure fell to around 13/- before rising to its post-war peak of 15/3d in 1818. Nevertheless, because of the nature of immigration, the burden of the poor rate fell on a group whose size had not significantly increased and who, because of falling grain prices after 1815, were less able to carry it.

¹32% were over 60, as against 10-20% in the 'problem' counties of the rural south.[22]

After 1818, expenditure fell steadily throughout the 1820s, though since we do not know the numbers of claimants, it is unclear whether this was because of a fall in their numbers, or whether expenditure was being cut back in the light of falling prices. The decrease was dramatic: only £112 6s was spent in 1832, and only £85 12s in 1834. The community was certainly spending less per capita - only 5/7d in 1832, less than at any previous time since the early 1780s. It is unlikely that numbers of paupers declined so rapidly or so much: we must therefore assume that amounts distributed were severely curtailed.

It is only in the early years of our period that we can see the mechanics of the system of poor relief. Numbers of paupers had certainly increased since the mid-18th century. They also received more money per week - two or three shillings instead of 9d to a shilling. There were also far more incidental and administrative expenses: journeys, letters, indentures, court appearances took up far more of the available money than they had done fifty years earlier.

If the system had become more cumbersome, it also retained some flexibility. Payments were made as need became apparent. Money was collected in the same way: Plymley reported that 'each farm is called upon to pay a certain sum as often as money is wanted, there being no regular mode of assessment.'¹ Whether or not this was a more humane system than the more remote bureaucracy that superseded it in 1834 is debateable: local officers could exercise their discretion and were in a position to detect and relieve distress. They were also, however, given very considerable powers over their neighbours and employees: one of the two overseers in 1800-01 was Dr. Macnab, quarry-operator and coalmaster. The size of the group which provided the overseers and churchwardens continued to shrink in absolute terms as well as relative to the population as a whole. The demarcations between this group and the rest of the population must have been reinforced by the necessity to make frequent appeals

¹In fact the Overseers Accounts indicate that there was a regular mode of assessment, although collection may well have been irregular as Plymley states.

for poor relief, to argue the need for a new petticoat or mattress-cover.

The immediacy of the system, one of its potential and quite possibly actual strengths, also gave scope for resentment on both sides of the divide between contributor and claimant.

Whatever the tensions generated in the community by the administration of the old Poor Law (and numbers of removals and apprenticeships, vastly increased poor rates and so on indicate that they grew during the early years of the 19th century), the new Poor Law of 1834 fundamentally changed the situation. The powers of the parish, which had steadily grown and been concentrated in the hands of an ever-smaller oligarchy, were severely curtailed. In one important respect, Highley's autonomy was weakened. It became part of the Cleobury Mortimer Union of parishes; its poor relief was administered from Cleobury; and the workhouse there was to house many of its paupers.

In this respect, at least, the poor were less fortunate. The old system, for all its potential humiliations, kept them in their own homes, within their own community. Local charities still existed into the 1820s to distribute bread to those in need (provided that they attended church and took the Sacrament when it was available); and small acts of private charity and mutual aid were still possible.

We do not know what proportion of Highley's paupers entered the Union workhouse. The old, the sick and the disabled went when they could no longer be looked after or look after themselves. Sometimes this could be long postponed: Nancy Bennett, a 'pauper' (presumably receiving outdoor relief) lived alone in 1851, aged 81. She was buried in 1859, however, from the workhouse. In the case of those with physical or mental handicaps, the workhouse was the only alternative when relatives were unable or unwilling to care for them any longer. Richard Kirkham, an 'imbecile', lived with his widowed stepmother in 1871. In 1877 she re-married and left Highley. Two years later, Richard, aged 26, died in Cleobury workhouse.

Until 1865, the cost of maintaining the poor of the parish, whether domiciled in Highley or Cleobury Mortimer, fell to

the parish itself.[23] Since as we have seen Highley was largely a parish of labourers and small tradesmen, expenses were probably still high. The decision-making, however, was no longer in the hands of the more prosperous section of the community. Besides losing powers of administering and collecting poor relief, and of moving paupers to another village or even county, the parish officers also were no longer responsible for the apprenticing of pauper children.

There is evidence for this practice from the 17th century, but the best surviving documentation is for the first twenty years of the 19th century. A total of 22 indentures survives from 1783 to 1818, involving 21 children - twelve girls and nine boys.[24] A third of these children are known to have been illegitimate, and of the 12 girls, three later had illegitimate children at Highley themselves. Some of the legitimate children were orphans, like Elizabeth Barker, apprenticed at twelve in 1804, both of whose parents were dead. Her half brother, whose mother remained alive, was apprenticed in the same year, aged eight. It was not only orphans and fatherless children who were apprenticed, however. The two children of George and Eleanor Ashwood were apprenticed in 1790 and 1793: one remained in Highley for more than twenty years although the parents had apparently moved away.

The minimum, and most usual, age for apprenticeship was eight, although some children were not apprenticed until eleven or twelve. Most children were apprenticed to local farmers - the same group who provided overseers and other parish officers. Thus the paternal role of the village elite in the affairs of the poor was reinforced. The 'trade' that these children learned can only have been domestic service in the case of the girls, and farm labour for the boys. In 1793, Plymley was told that the children of the poor were 'occasionally taken upon Honour', but more usually bound apprentice: according to their masters they made 'but ... indifferent servants'.

Some children were sent out of the parish. John Wall was apprenticed to a carpet weaver in Kidderminster in 1802; Samuel Barker to a moulder of Bridgnorth in 1818; others to farmers in Kinlet and Arley. Those children who remained in Highley, where a

parent or other relative might still be living, were in a better position than those sent to towns even if they did not actually learn a trade. After forty days, the town or village where the apprentice was sent became his or her place of settlement, and it would have been difficult for him to return to Highley had he wished.[25]

The parish apprentices were not the children of miners. In fact, the influx of miners in the early years of the century had little effect on the system of poor relief: miners came because there was employment for them, and were rarely destitute. If a miner became unable to work, he and his family could be removed to their original parish. Miners did not contribute to, or claim from, the poor rates, and thus were not a part of one aspect of the interaction between sections of the agrarian society.

In other respects, too, they seem to have been set apart from the social framework of the community. If the existing poor relief system hardly affected them neither, to judge from existing evidence, did other measures for social control. The manor court was briefly revived around 1820, and two court rolls survive.¹[26] They deal with similar matters to those before their 16th century counterparts - encroachments, soiling the town well, ringing pigs - and read as if the community they regulated was similarly unchanged. There is no mention of any industrial activity.

More surprisngly, there is hardly any evidence of disputes between, or crimes committed by, miners in the Quarter Sessions records. Either miners were more law-abiding than their agricultural neighbours or, as seems more likely, control within the mining community was left to its leaders. Certainly the Quarter Sessions do not record any upsurge in crime or disturbance accompanying industrialisation.

One dispute, in 1814, did involve the joint owner of Stanley Colliery, Thomas Gritton, who was allegedly assaulted by Jasper Neth, a labourer. Neth was found not guilty, but was judged

¹It is assumed that this was a revival (and not a continuation), probably on the initiative of the new Lord of the Manor.

to have been assaulted by Gritton and two other men, who were in fact his clerk and 'engineer'; that is, the rest of the colliery management.[27] Unfortunately, no other details of the incident survive: but it may be significant that the only case to come to court involved colliery management rather than miners, and was not a matter internal to the mining community.

Most other crime which got to the courts was petty theft. In 1808 Edward Pugh, chimney sweeper (and occasional pauper, born illegitimate in Highley in 1761) served one month in prison in Shrewsbury for stealing 1/2d worth of hay.[28] John Turner, labourer, in 1819 was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for stealing two £1 notes.[29]

Sentences could be harsh: in January 1828 Thomas Botfield was sentenced to seven years' transportation for poaching.[30] This was the first time that such a severe sentence was given for poaching in Shropshire.[31] Harsh game laws, of course, reflect the gulf between landless and landowners, and the determination of the latter to protect their interests. Botfield was unlucky, in as much as eight men were involved in an organised raid, and he was the one who was caught. Apparently Botfield served his sentence and actually returned to his wife and family in Highley, for there is an eight-year gap between births of his children.

In another case, a boy of eleven received a sentence of one month, without hard labour, in the House of Correction for larceny. This was a lighter-than-usual sentence, presumably in view of the child's age, although in law no distinction was made. This was an opportunist and thoughtless crime, but the case is interesting as it shows 'community policing' in action.[32] The boy, Richard Broom, had broken into a labourer's house by reaching through a broken casement which had been mended with paper. He had thrown a mirror out of the house, dressed himself in the labourer's shirt, hat and corduroy breeches (leaving his own rags behind), and walked off with a silver watch. Several people had stopped Broom; one examined the watch, which Broom then threw away; another, seeing and possibly recognising the clothes, took the boy to the labourer from whom he had stolen them. A third sent a young employee to recover the watch

and return it. The case hardly needed to have gone to court: probably other cases were dealt with by the community in just such a way without going further.

The impression given by Quarter Sessions records is of a community where it was difficult to escape undetected; where petty theft or an occasional fight or poaching expedition were the main extent of crime. Society seems to have been less violent than in the 16th century, when manor courts recorded frequent assaults. Since the nature of the legal system and of our surviving evidence had changed considerably, however, we cannot be sure of this: it may simply be that mechanisms for dealing with this kind of minor disturbance had ceased to be official.

With the decline of the church courts, there was less regulation of morality. Illegitimacy concerned the parish authorities only when they were likely to have to support the child. Efforts were made to make the father contribute to its upbringing, and some maintenance orders survive. Samuel Crane, for example, was ordered in 1818 to pay £1 6 3d towards the delivery of Martha Clinton's child, and 1s 3d towards its maintenance thereafter: Martha was to pay 9d a week, unless she took care of the child herself.[33]

Before turning from crime to examine illegitimacy in more detail, it is worth noting two 'deviant' families who feature in court cases for petty crime and in illegitimacy, and who demonstrate the links between poverty and both.

Thomas Botfield, the transported poacher, lived with his wife and children, his aunt and her illegitimate daughter. His own eldest son or stepson was also apparently illegitimate. The Botfields married in 1825, three years before Thomas was convicted. The diagram shows the recurring links with illegitimacy within the family.

Two of John Jones' daughters had illegitimate children; a third married a man who had fathered a bastard by another woman. A son, George, married two women both of whom had had illegitimate children by other men. Interestingly, the two eldest Jones sisters were the only local women known to have married coal miners.

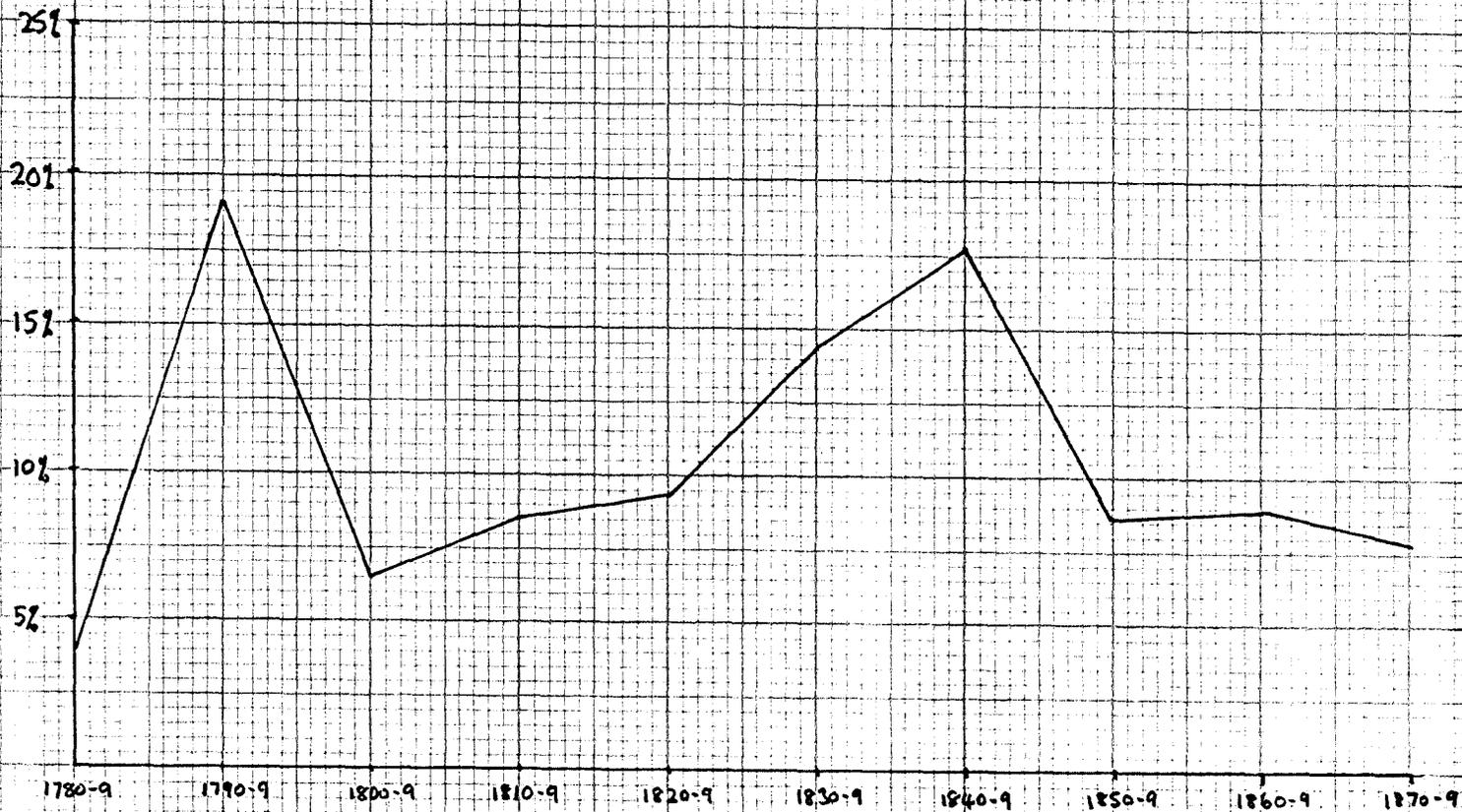
This is not to imply that poverty, illegitimacy and crime always went together. But in the case of these two neighbouring families, the links are strong. If there was a sub-culture in the community, they were certainly part of it.

During this period, illegitimacy levels exceeded even the high rates of the mid-18th century. Between 1780 and 1880, illegitimate baptisms made up more than ten percent of the total. Some families were indeed more prone than others to illegitimacy, but it was by no means confined to families like the Joneses and Botfields. In spite of industrialisation, the illegitimacy ratio in the first half of the period, at 9%, was lower than the 12.1% ratio in the second half. Shropshire is recognised as an area of high illegitimacy[37], but these rates are consistently double the national average.[38]

Fig.IX shows decadal illegitimacy ratios throughout the period, and highlights the fluctuations which lie behind the overall figures. In the 1790s, illegitimacy figures soared: nearly one in five of all children baptised was illegitimate. The influx of coal miners cannot be blamed for this 'explosion', for as we have seen maximum industrial expansion came only after 1800. In fact during the decade 1800-09 the ratio fell back to 6.5%. This fall was not due only to increased numbers of legitimate births on this decade, for absolute numbers of bastards also decreased.

After 1830 - and the decline of industry - illegitimacy again increased, reaching a high-point in the 1840s. Laslett's national sample also reaches a peak in this decade, approaching 7%.[39] Highley in the 1840s experienced a illegitimacy ratio of 17.7%. Thereafter the ratio fell to 8 or 9% for the rest of our period.

Industrialisation, then, seems if anything to have decreased the frequency of illegitimacy. It is tempting therefore to relate illegitimacy to economic opportunity in the parish: industrial



Illegitimacy ratios 1780 - 1879

development provided employment, and fewer couples were perhaps prevented from marrying by adverse economic circumstances. Yet we have noted how few local men were absorbed into mining, and how poor relief records suggest that hardship was as acute after 1800 as before. Food prices remained high, and in addition the pressure on housing became intense as total population grew. The 'frustrated courtship' explanation for illegitimacy and its necessary relation to economic conditions probably played a part in reducing illegitimacy - a 'knock-on' effect from industry may have improved agricultural labourers' opportunities - but it cannot in local circumstances account completely for the abrupt reversal of the trend of the 1790s. To arrive at a more complete picture, it is necessary to investigate both individual cases of illegitimacy and attitudes towards conventional sexual morality within the community.

A total of 88 women had illegitimate children baptised at Highley between 1780 and 1879. Only 13.6% were 'repeaters' having more than one child. This was a comparatively low proportion, and did not alone account for the rise in illegitimacy.[40] The problem of studying repeaterdom in any single parish remains, however, for there is evidence that some of Highley's 'singletons' had in fact had children in other parishes. Susanna Rogers, for example, was baptised at Highley in 1769 and had an illegitimate son there in 1797. Five years previously, though, she had baptised another illegitimate son at Arley.

Thirty-six (41%) of the mothers were singletons, who had only one child at Highley, and who had no other close family links with bastardy, although their families are known to have been resident there. A further twenty-five (28%) appear in the registers only at the time of their child's baptism: some were described as 'of Kinlet' or 'of Kidderminster'; others were servants in the parish at the time. The third group, 27 women of the 'bastard-prone', comprised 31% of the total, and included besides repeaters those women who were themselves illegitimate or whose sisters also bore bastards.

In 28 cases, single mothers subsequently married at Highley, although in only half of those cases is it possible to determine if their marriage partner was the father of their child. In

fact only five women later married the father, while nine married a different man.

The five cases of marriage between couples who had already produced one or more illegitimate children are interesting. Two of them were between farmers and their servants, where financial considerations do not seem responsible for delaying marriage. In one instance, marriage took place a month after the baptism of the child, and could presumably have occurred before it had both parties so desired. The remaining two couples clearly only regularised a long-term relationship when they married. Mary Botfield had had four children by John Norwood when they married in 1850: Mary Barker and John Stanley married in 1846 when their second child was about to be born.

Such non-marital relationships may not have been uncommon. Elizabeth Harris (who had an illegitimate child in 1847) was described in the 1851 census as an 'agricultural labourer's woman': she lived with Joseph Yeats, a widower. Next door, Drusilla Walker, living with two of her illegitimate children and the daughter of another, was described in the same way, although no adult male was recorded in the same household.

Pre-marital sexual activity was common. Fig.X shows how bridal pregnancy had increased from its 17th and 18th century levels to reach those of the pre-enclosure period. Unlike the earlier period, however, the 19th century saw high levels of pre-nuptial conception accompanied by high rates of illegitimacy.

	Pregnant brides N	All brides N	% pregnant	illegit. ratio
1780-1829	30	56	60.7%	9%
1830-1879	23	40	57.5%	12.1%

Fig.X Bridal Pregnancy

Of all brides married at Highley who subsequently had children there, between a half and two thirds were pregnant at the time of their

marriage. A majority of all young single women in the village became pregnant: in many cases this was followed by marriage. In others, for whatever reason, it was not. Pressure to marry did not always prevail, even in circumstances where there seems to have been little impediment to marriage. In other cases, marriage was never in prospect. George Jarman married in May 1837; in June his wife had a baby; in July another, single, woman bore Jarman's child. Obviously he cannot have intended to marry both women: one wonders by what criteria his final choice was made.

Other fathers, too, were themselves repeaters. John Rowley fathered an illegitimate child in 1837 when he was 19 years old. He did not marry the mother. In 1840 he had another child by Charlotte Broom whom, eventually, he did marry. The brothers Samuel and Edward Wilcox fathered three acknowledged bastards, continuing what amounted to a family tradition of illegitimacy outlined in Chapter Five.

Fig.XI shows mean age at first child for single mothers, together with mean age at first marriage. As we have seen, the latter, after falling sharply between 1740 and 1779, remained relatively low during the first half of our period but rose considerably after 1830.

	Mean age at first child	N	Mean age at 1st marriage	N
1780-1829	23.0 yr	26	23.8 yr	32
1830-1879	22.0 yr	26	25.2 yr	54

Fig.XI

Before 1830, single mothers produced their illegitimate children at around the same age as others married, lending support to the view that disrupted courtship played an important role in illegitimacy. Yet in the second half of the period, when marriage age rose, age

at first illegitimate child fell, leaving a shortfall of over three years between the two figures. In this half of the period, we find some single mothers of 14 and 15 years old, whose marriage cannot have been immediately in view. This may reflect a lowering of the average age of menarche for girls in the second half of the 19th century.[41] It certainly shows sexual activity at an earlier age than is ever recorded in previous centuries.

During the 19th century we are better able to trace these illegitimate children and the arrangements made to provide a home for them. Sometimes their mother married and the child was absorbed into the new family. Censuses indicate that where the husband was in fact the father of the child that child (or children) took his surname after the marriage. In some instances, the husband was not the child's father, and here the child's (i.e. the mother's) surname was retained. In 1836, for example, Elizabeth Addies had a son, George, by George Jones of Shifnal; in 1839 she married John Price, and in 1841 'George Addies' lived with the couple and their daughter. Similarly the household of Thomas and Ann Pritchard in 1871 included 15 year old William Watkins, and so on. The relationship of these children to the head of the household is given as 'step-child' or 'wife's son'. Thus the position of the child was stressed by this use of a different surname.

There is evidence, however, that the child was genuinely absorbed into the family. Thomas Walker became part of the household of George Jones when Jones married his mother in 1851. Thirty years later, when his mother had been dead for ten years and Jones was re-married, Thomas Walker still lived with the new family.

It was quite common for other relatives, usually grandparents, to take care of the child. In 1800 Ann Williams received poor relief payments for clothing 'her grandson' - the four year old illegitimate son of her daughter. From the census period there are several examples of illegitimate children living with their maternal grandparents but without their mother. In 1841, nine year old Thomas Morris and his grandfather of 75 were both lodgers in a local gamekeeper's household. Occasionally the child remained with grandparents even though the mother had married and was living

in Highley. Other relatives, too could occasionally provide a home for the child. Francis Bentley, baptised in 1843, lived with his (maternal) uncle's family in 1851.

These relatives who took over responsibility for the child were without exception its mother's family: there is no record of the father of an illegitimate child, or his relatives, taking care of the child (unless he had subsequently married the mother). Maintenance payments could be exacted, but in the main bastards were the responsibility of the women who bore them, not the men who fathered them.

With illegitimacy so frequent during our period, very many people had 'bastardy links'. Of the 359 inhabitants in 1851, no less than 127 are known either to have been illegitimate, to have had an illegitimate child, or to have been the parent or child of someone who had. When we consider that there must have been others, perhaps not long resident in Highley, whose links cannot be traced in the same way, as well as the numbers of couples who were married only weeks before the birth of a child, it becomes apparent that a majority of the village population had close personal experience of extra-marital conception and its consequences within their own immediate family.

This raises the question of attitudes towards bastardy. If personal experience of illegitimacy was so widespread, what degree of social stigma can have attached to it? Less, one might suppose, than in a community where pre-marital conception was relatively infrequent, as it had been for instance in the early 18th century Highley.

It looks as if the success of attempts to regulate village sexual morality had broken down during this period. Pre-marital sexual activity was now clearly more widely tolerated: one interpretation of the long-term trends in moral regulation in Highley is offered in the conclusion.

Chambers argues that sanctions had to be abandoned in the late-18th century in the face of soaring numbers of illegitimates.[42] Certainly illegitimacy in Highley rose at the same time as church courts ceased to punish offenders, but if there was a causal link, it

could just as easily have operated in reverse. We cannot explain Highley's very high illegitimacy rates during this period by any one single cause. Economic opportunity had some bearing on illegitimacy levels, but it cannot provide a full explanation. Industrialisation, and the consequent arrival in the parish of large numbers of coal-miners, which might have been expected to raise these levels, in fact lowered them.

Illegitimacy had begun to increase from about 1740, and once high rates were established they were to a large extent self-perpetuating. Those who were themselves illegitimate were more likely to bear bastards in their turn. Social attitudes towards sexual morality, too, must have been to some extent determined by the kind of widespread links with illegitimacy which we have described. If, as seems likely, the church had exercised any influence over sexual morality, this influence waned with the secularisation of social regulation in the 19th century.

The church itself, as well as the parish as an administrative unit, declined in influence during this period. Non-attendance at church ceased to be punishable, and many took advantage of this to absent themselves from services. The vicar was a less authoritarian figure, especially once the vexed question of tithes had been settled. Furthermore, the parish church was no longer the only place of worship in the village.

A Methodist chapel was built in 1816, on land in the north of the parish bought in 1815 from George Pitt of Green Hall by a consortium of local farmers.[43] Only one of these, Joseph Steward of Borle Mill, was a resident of Highley itself. A 19th century history of Methodism in the area gives an account of Mr. Steward's part in the organisation of Nonconformity in the village, but supplies very few dates.[44] Steward had apparently attended 'cottage meetings' in the district, a principal centre being at The Bind Farm in Billingsley, while continuing to attend church and play the organ 'which he had given to the church'. This must have been after 1807, when

Joseph Steward in fact contributed five guineas to the £46 collected for a new organ.[45]

His son George, who later became a Methodist preacher in Kidderminster and elsewhere, remembered attending meetings in farm-houses in the area before the chapel was built, when he was 'about fourteen' - in fact rather less, as he was baptised in 1803. Eventually a split with the Established Church took place (somewhat acrimoniously, with the vicar preaching 'against schism' and the parish clerk attending chapel services 'as a spy'), and Highley's own Wesleyan Methodist congregation was established.

Thus, although the beginnings of Methodism coincided with industrialisation, the links one might expect between the two are not apparent. The first Methodists were local farmers, not miners: Steward was a substantial landholder, as were those inhabitants of neighbouring parishes who were his fellow trustees. The miners seem not to have been drawn to the chapel in large numbers: indeed it was built as far from their centre at Stanley as was possible in a small parish, and attendance would have involved a steep uphill walk of two or three miles.

Numbers in the congregation were never large. The Bind Farm had a membership of 23 in 1811, many of whom seem not to have lived at Highley but who formed the nucleus of the congregation at the chapel built there. In 1833 Highley's chapel had 22 members, but numbers then declined until 1842 when 'there was a revival', and in 1846 total membership was 36. In fact 37 people attended the afternoon service on 30th March 1851, although the average congregation was only 30.[46] By 1856, however, membership was down to ten.

Methodism continued to languish during the rest of our period: at the end of the 19th century it was reported that the chapel was 'two miles from the village and people care not to walk'.[47] The timing of prayer meetings in the early years - 5 a.m. on Sunday mornings - must have been discouraging.

Registers of the chapel appear not to survive. A total of nine burials took place there throughout the 19th century, and marriages were not permitted. Thus it is only in baptisms that the registers of the parish church were likely to have been affected.

Even here, the influence was not great, since several of the 20 or 30 members lived outside the parish, and other Methodists named in the 19th century account who can be traced on census returns had no children. In fact if we examine the 1851 census return (since Methodism was at its height in the 1840s) for those children whose place of birth was stated as Highley, and synthesise these with the parish register, we find that only seven of the 92 children concerned were not baptised at the parish church. In several cases siblings of the child were baptised. So, allowing for some degree of parental confusion about place of birth of each child in a mobile family, it seems not only that Methodism had a very small effect on baptism records, but also that baptism in the parish church was still almost universal.

Attendance at church services, though, was far from universal during most of our period. In 1793 services were held twice each Sunday, although unfortunately we are not told how many usually attended.[48] Communion services were held at Easter, Christmas, Whitsun, Michaelmas and, reflecting the agrarian nature of the community, before harvest. Numbers attending were usually between three and ten. Similarly, prayers were read on Saints' Days 'when a sufficient congregation assembles, which is not often the case'. Attendance at regular services may still have been quite high, but there was clearly little religious fervour.

The religious census of 1851 states that 80 people attended morning service on March the 30th - 22% of the population. Thirty-five people were at the afternoon service, but some of these may have been stalwarts also present at morning service. In the afternoon, 20% of the village population were at church or chapel. Allowing for duplication, probably not much more than one in three attended a religious service that Sunday. This reflects a very different situation from that in earlier periods, when non-attendance at church had been an offence punishable by the church courts. The courts had gone, and in any case their sanctions of penance or excommunication would no longer have had the same force.

The church was doubtless very important for many: but its services had become optional, and it was no longer central to the lives of the majority. For over half the period, from 1790 to 1843,

the vicar of Highley was Rev. Samuel Burrows. Like his predecessors, he was university-educated and of upper-middle class origins. Unlike them, however, he lived in the village and was a part of local society: he employed local servants, and took parish apprentices: he seems to have supervised the farming of the 92 acres of glebe land, at least for part of his incumbency. Some of his children remained in Highley, as farmers, for the rest of our period. His successor, Samuel du Pre, also lived in Highley for nearly forty years, having first come as Burrows' curate. There was thus considerable stability in the incumbency. The Vicarage, with the Jordins' house at Netherton, was consistently one of the largest households in the village, employing several servants. Since the turnover on most other farms was rapid, the Vicar and the Squire did indeed dominate socially throughout the 19th century.

When he arrived after years of absentee incumbents, Burrows was something of a 'new broom': there were repairs to the vicarage, and the glebe lands were fenced at a cost of £1000; the church was re-seated with new pews; and the new vicar donated a marble slab and communion table, arranged for a new organ, and supervised other improvements to the fabric of the church. As we have seen, his zeal seems not to have been matched by that of his parishioners. There is no record of disputes between parishioners and either Burrows or du Pre, in contrast to the history of disagreements in the 17th and 18th centuries, although we must remember that the possibilities for conflict decreased as the influence of the church in daily life waned.

The church, for all its declining influence, did retain some hold over education. Sunday schools preceded the first official village school, which was itself a Church of England school. In fact the first school of which there is record in this period was taught by the parish clerk, an ex-blacksmith whom Plymley described as 'an intelligent man', in 1793. In 1814-18 James Tew, a 'school-master' lived in Highley, although nothing is known of any school he might have held. Certainly there was none in 1819, when Mr. Burrows reported that although the poor were without the means of education, they were 'desirous of having them'[49] By 1835 there were two schools,

both small and funded by parents, which taught 23 children between them. In 1864 William Jordin gave the land and supervised the establishment of a school for the children 'of the labouring and manufacturing classes.' In 1874 this school had 30 pupils and one teacher, the wife of a local wheelwright. By the end of our period average attendance was reckoned to be 40 per week; and for the first time a trained teacher was in charge.[50]

Thus before 1864 the provision of education was irregular, and its standard probably variable. Other schools probably flourished for a short time. William Homer, a farmer and schoolmaster in 1851, had one resident pupil, aged nine.¹ Also in 1851 the wife of a highway labourer gave her occupation as schoolmistress: she was probably in charge of a 'dame school' like those of the 1830s. Four daughters of William Jordin were living in 1841 not with their parents but in another of the Jordin properties together with their aunt and a teacher.

In view of the paucity of organised educational provision in the village, a surprisingly large number of children were described in censuses as 'scholars'. The category was not included in 1841, but thereafter numbers of children at school usually exceeded the number of places available for them. In 1851, for instance, there were apparently 39 'scholars'; in 1861 there were supposedly 30. It is doubtful if all these children, especially those aged only three, really were regularly at school. The situation is clearer at the very end of the period: the 1881 census lists 65 schoolchildren, while in 1880 there were 56 children on the roll although less than three-quarters of them usually attended at any one time. The Education Act of 1870 had clearly had some effect on school attendance, although it was still not as universal as might have been hoped. Presumably children were classed as 'scholars' if they ever attended school, however

¹This was Alfred Baldwin of Stourport, father of the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin. An oral tradition of the elder Baldwin's education in Highley persisted into the 1960s.

infrequently. This discrepancy between numbers of children actually attending school and numbers of those stated by their parents to do so suggests that at least the theoretical desirability of school attendance was recognised.

It is interesting to look at literacy within the community in the light of this changing availability of schooling. Signatures of brides and grooms in the marriage register are our best guide to universal literacy throughout the period. Fig.XII shows the changes in male and female literacy in 20-year periods.

	1780-99	1800-19	1820-39	1840-59	1860-79
Male	44.8%	37.7%	38.4%	42.1%	64.9%
Female	31.0%	22.6%	30.7%	36.8%	64.9%

Fig.XII Percentage of brides and grooms signing register.

The effects of better provision of education after mid-century, and especially of the village school in 1864, are clearly seen: in the last decades of our period, for the first time, over half of those marrying (who were generally young, and a majority resident in Highley) could sign their names. It was only at this time, too, that women caught up with men. Although the gap had been narrowing, the education of boys took precedence over that of girls until schooling became regularly and cheaply available.

The other main feature of Fig.XII is the noticeable decline in literacy levels which accompanied the coming of industry. A general decline in literacy has been noted during the period 1780-1820.[51] In Highley, too, there was some decline in the last two decades of the 18th century: but Highley's 'low point' was in the decades of maximum industrial expansion after this, and must be largely attributable to local conditions. All the known miners who married at Highley (or indeed who formed juries at inquests or were otherwise called upon to sign an existing document) were illiterate. The miners, with their tradition of beginning work by the age of

seven or so, were unlikely to have received much education. The availability of work for local-born boys may have similarly affected their chances of attending school. The 37.7% of bridegrooms who could sign their name contrasts sharply with the 53.5% who were literate in 1756-79. Female literacy, which had lagged behind male throughout, also declined until at the peak of industrialisation less than a quarter of brides could sign the register.

Until the last few years of the period, then, Highley was a largely illiterate society. Even as late as 1880, over a third of those marrying (and presumably more of the older generation) were unable to write. Class-bias in literacy becomes more visible during this period: we no longer find the illiterate farmer or parish officer after the 1790s. Even in mid-century, however, it was possible for tradesmen such as blacksmiths and shoemakers to carry on a successful business without being able to write or, presumably, to read. For the children of the 'labouring and manufacturing classes', who throughout our period formed the majority, the first access to cheap and organised elementary education did not come until the 1860s. The effect of this revolution in literacy on the social life of the community should not be under-estimated.

- 1) Ch. Ch. MS Estates 84/158.
- 2) Salop R.O.4123/Ti/2.
- 3) Salop R.O.4123/P/11-26.
- 4) Parish Registers of Chelmarsh, Neenton and Billingsley, third pagination, p.36.
- 5) M. Pollard, The Hardest Work Under Heaven: the life and death of the British coal miner (London 1984).
- 6) M. W. Flinn, The History of the British Coal Industry Vol.2 (Oxford 1984).
- 7) T. Coleman, The Railway Navvies (London 1976) pp.203-4.
- 8) Coleman, Railway Navvies.
- 9) P. Horn, 'Victorian villages from census returns', The Local Historian, 15 No.1 (1982).
- 10) Horn, 'Victorian villages'.
- 11) M. Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire (Cambridge 1971).
- 12) D. Constable, Household Structure in three English Market Towns (Reading 1977).
- 13) Kelly's Directory of Shropshire (1870).
- 14) Hill (ed.) Quarter Sessions Rolls 1820-1830.
- 15) Salop R.O.4123/P/11-26.
- 16) G. Taylor, The Problem of Poverty 1660-1834 (London 1969) p.28.
- 17) B.L. Add. MSS. 21018.
- 18) HC XIII (1803).
- 19) Salop R.O.4123/P/2.
- 20) J. D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law 1795-1834 (London and Basingstoke 1973) p.33.
- 21) Reports of the Select Committee on the Poor Laws, HC VI (1817); HC V (1818).

- 22) Marshall, The Old Poor Law.
- 23) M. E. Rose, The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914 (London and Basingstoke 1974) p.36.
- 24) Salop R.O.4123/P/29-42. Apprenticeship indentures, 1783-1818.
- 25) Taylor, The Problem of Poverty, pp.27-8.
- 26) Salop R.O.1671/: Court Rolls 1819 and 1822.
- 27) Salop. R.O. QR 259/162; QR 259/158.
- 28) Salop R.O. QR 234/9.
- 29) Salop R.O. QR 280/
- 30) Salop R.O. QR 313/182-9,228.
- 31) Hill (ed.) Quarter Sessions Rolls 1820-1830, *Introduction*.
- 32) Salop R.O. QR 312/76-8,118.
- 33) Salop R.O.4123/P/53-61: Bastardy bonds and maintenance orders, 1671-1818.
- 34) S.R.O. 4123/P/2.
- 35) S.R.O. QSCP vol.39 : Calendar of Prisoners.
- 36) Hill, Quarter Sessions Rolls.
- 37) P. Laslett, Family Life, p.136.
- 38) Laslett, Oosterveen & Smith (eds.),Bastardy, p.14.
- 39) Laslett, Oosterveen & Smith, Bastardy , pp.16-17.
- 40) Laslett, Oosterveen & Smith, Bastardy, p.88.
- 41) Laslett, Family Life, pp.214-232.
- 42) J. D. Chambers, Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England (Oxford, 1972) pp.73-76.
- 43) S.R.O. 1671/ : Deed of sale between George Pitt and Joseph Steward et al., 1815.
- 44) J. F. Wedley, A History of Methodism in the Stourport Circuit (Stourport, 1899).

- 45) S.R.O. 4123/ : Subscription List, 1807.
- 46) P.R.O. H.O.129/355 : Places of Worship Census, 1851.
- 47) Wedley, History of Methodism.
- 48) B.L. Add. MSS. 21018.
- 49) H.C. 1819, vol.IX ; H.C. 1835, vol.XLII.
- 50) P.R.O. ED.7/102 : Public elementary schools: preliminary statements.
- 51) M. Laqueur, 'Literacy and social mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', P & P.64,(1974).
M. Sanderson, 'Literacy and social mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', P & P.56, (1972).

In conclusion, we can consider some of the broader issues arising out of this study. Some social phenomena have been seen to be enduring : patriarchal relations in family life and in employment characterised the whole period, and for most of it the nuclear family unit predominated. There was, however, a great deal of change in Highley in the two hundred years before industrialisation, as well as after it. The demographic situation in the parish deteriorated in the 17th century, as did the circumstances of women. The polarisation of wealth in the same period had profound social, as well as economic, effects, which can be detected in areas such as geographical mobility, moral regulation and the relief of poverty.

In fact, this study casts doubt on the homogeneity implied in the use of terms such as 'pre-Industrial' or 'traditional' England. Laslett's lost world is chronologically vague : the Industrial Revolution is seen as the great divide separating modern society from a traditional society that had existed in a condition of basic stasis since - when? [1] Much of Laslett's evidence is drawn from the later Stuart period. Detailed examination of social and economic change in Highley shows the danger of extrapolating from the 17th century even to the 16th, and suggests that industrialisation may not have been the only or even the chief instrument of change in a dynamic and organic process.

Of course, Laslett acknowledges changes in demographic and social experience over the pre-Industrial period : yet he contends that certain fundamentals remained constant - the familial base of all social contact, the stability of relationships, the 'classlessness' of society. In Highley, however, we have seen how some fundamentals of pre-enclosure society (which matches more closely with Laslett's picture than do our other periods) were changed during the 17th and 18th centuries, while others, notably patriarchal relationships, survived, and were even reinforced by, industrialisation. For Highley, enclosure and its subsequent developments were at least as significant a watershed as later industrialisation.

We therefore can properly only use the term 'pre-Industrial' to refer to that period immediately prior to Highley's own industrial development : to do otherwise is by implication to ignore the very significant differences between, for instance, the early and late 17th century which have been revealed by this study.

In Laslett's 'traditional' world, 'every relationship could be seen as a love-relationship' - between man and wife, parents and children, master and servants. This is as far to one pole as Stone's 'low-affect' society is to the other. [2] Yet Stone does acknowledge and attempt to chart changes in familial relationships in his pre-industrial period, 1500 to 1800. He finds an increasing warmth in family relationships from the late 17th century, and attributes this to 'affective individualism' - the sense of self and the importance of personal relationships. In Highley, 'affective individualism' took a different form : it brought about a shift in emphasis away from extended-family relationships towards those self-selected, economically-horizantal friendships which began to characterise wills from about 1630.

In one respect, however, Highley accords with Laslett's view : the patriarchal nature of many social relations was an enduring characteristic. To some extent, this was imposed from a national level, where the household was the common unit of taxation for much of our period. This was reinforced at local level : Easter dues were collected from 'John Pountney, his wife, son, daughter, two men and a maid.' The church demanded quasi-paternal relations with live-in servants, making the head of the household responsible for the catechising of his servants, and for their behaviour while under his roof. As wage-labourers began to replace live-in male servants, one might expect a decline in the importance of paternalistic relations. In fact, contrary to conventional sociological paradigms, this appears not to have been the case. Patriarchal relations not only persisted, but were in some ways strengthened, and wage labour was structured through them.

Labourers lived in tied cottages for the whole of their working life (whereas live-in service had been for most a temporary stage of their life-cycle); they received part of their wages in the

form of food and drink as late as the 19th century. The loss of cottager holdings made the labourer much more dependent on his employer, who in addition from the late 17th century onwards had more power over the life of the labourer and his family in his role as churchwarden or overseer.

Right to the end of our period, in the late 19th century, agriculture was organised on patriarchal lines. Both resident servants and farm labourers were brought into the village by their employers, some following their master over considerable distances. Even industrial development, contrary to Laslett's view, did not end the 'old order' in this respect. The way in which extended-family groups followed mine owners from one enterprise to another, even as late as 1880, argues a paternalistic aspect to the organisation of the industry. Mine owners owned, too, their employees' houses, and appear to have exercised a considerable degree of social control over them. The almost complete absence of miners from Quarter Sessions cases in the early 19th century is one of the more remarkable findings of this study. Paternalism in coalmining is well-evidenced elsewhere : Austrin and Beynon find that it was central to the organisation of the industry in the Durham coalfield. [3]

Charities were organised by employers in their role as local administrators, distributing bread to the 'deserving poor'. The village school was the gift of the Squire for the children of the labouring and manufacturing classes. It was not only the semi-peasant system of the 16th century which utilised the 'employer-as-father' concept as a means of social organisation : capitalism, whether agrarian or industrial, also structured its labour relations on the same implicit basis.

Alice Clark concluded that for women it was 'the triumph of capitalist organisation' that brought about a downgrading of their status in the 17th century. [4] The experience of women in Highley accords well with this view : capitalism there was not first manifested in industrialisation, but appeared with the absentee landlord/tenant farmer/landless labourer nexus of the later 17th century. Prior

to the breakdown of the manorial system, women had been allowed a measure of autonomy by the three-life conditions of tenure. They inherited tenancies from husband or father, were expected to attend the manor court, and at least nominally took on the responsibilities and privileges of the head of household. Widows in pre-enclosure Highley were less likely than their successors to re-marry, which argues a measure of economic freedom.

The decline in cottager holdings, the increase of wage labour, and the decline in self-sufficiency in the post-enclosure household combined to reduce the importance of women's contribution to the family economy. Short leases on farms made the economic position of widows (even those of landholders) more precarious. Barbara Todd finds that in Abingdon (as in Highley) the majority of claimants of poor relief were women. [5] She also finds, however, that women in the Buckinghamshire town were more likely to re-marry in the 17th and 18th centuries than previously, while in Highley the opposite was the case. In Highley, employment opportunities for women did not increase in the 17th century, as they apparently did in Abingdon. Even industrialisation brought little change for women, for mining and quarrying offered them no opportunity. The economic position of a miner's wife was probably little different from that of the wife of a labourer: both less rewarding and secure than that of the wife of a tenant of the manor.

Women's position deteriorated in less obvious ways, too. The expanding role of the state, and its employment of officers at local level further divorced women from spheres of influence. Their role in the public domain had been limited: now it was non-existent. Furthermore, the offices from which women had been excluded assumed an ever-increasing influence over daily life.

The widespread illiteracy of women was less important in the pre-enclosure period when male literacy itself was very restricted. From the 17th century, male literacy became more universal as it became a more necessary qualification for participation in public life. Women, however, remained largely illiterate, and were thus doubly excluded.

The private sphere, where women enjoyed what little influence they had, suffered a downgrading of importance relative to the public sphere from which they were excluded. It is only at the very end of our period, in the later 19th century, that we begin to see any amelioration in women's position, when female literacy at last caught up with male, and when a very few opportunities for employment other than in domestic service began to arise.

In demography, as well as in the position of women, the study of Highley exposes another common fallacy - the idea of constant amelioration, a climbing graph of improvement leading to modern conditions. Laslett's 'past time' and 'earlier generations' were characterised by frequent bereavements, re-marriages, deaths of children, and a high incidence of orphans. In Highley, this is only true of the period after enclosure : previously, mean duration of marriage had been unexpectedly high, and second marriages rare. As far as can be ascertained, those who reached adulthood enjoyed considerable longevity. This is not to suggest that pre-enclosure Highley represented some kind of 'golden age', either demographically or socially. To modern eyes, rates of infant mortality, for instance, were unacceptably high, and social structures inegalitarian, if less so than they were later to become. Yet the contrast between Highley in the 16th and 18th centuries highlights the spuriousness both of historical extrapolation and of preconceptions of 'progress'.

Women were not, of course, the only losers in the patterns of social and economic differentiation that developed after enclosure. Pre-enclosure Highley was in many respects more egalitarian than it was to be for the rest of the period under study. Status was not entirely equated with wealth : length of residence in the community and personal qualities also provided a measure of status. Besides, the numbers of local officers required - manor court jurors, tithingmen, affeerers, churchwardens, constables and so on - were such that most adult males could expect to serve regularly. At the manor court, poor men lodged complaints against their wealthier neighbours. All those

with land, however little, were forced into at least some co-operation and social contact by the demands of communal agriculture.

In wealth, differences were largely those of degree. Some men had more land and possessions than others (and felt an obligation towards their poorer neighbours accordingly), but their wills show little qualitative difference between the lifestyles of, say Class I and Class III households. The most prosperous did not exercise a great deal of control over their neighbours except via the processes of the courts. Even resident service did not, at this date, present the sharp social differentiation that one might expect. We have pointed out how men stood in paternal relationships to their servants : indeed, young servants were likely to be of the same social class as their employer himself, and his own children to be servants in another, similar, household.

Although there were many gradations in the hierarchy of the village social structure, we can agree with Laslett that Highley was a 'classless' society, in the sense that a sharp divide between groups each defending its own collective power was absent. Where we cannot agree is with his view that this classlessness survived until industrialisation.

From the end of the 16th century in Highley we see the formation of an under-class on the margins of society. Because land tenure and length of local residence were qualifications for participation and status within the community, the peripatetic labourers who began to appear - and whose numbers greatly increased after enclosure - were excluded from spheres of influence. They were the one transient element in an otherwise stable society, where immigration at any other point on the social scale was rare.

The continuation of the open-field system retarded the emergence of the poor as a class, for the amount of wage labour needed was limited. But by the second half of the 17th century the landless labourer was an important component of village society. The decline of small landholders sharpened the dichotomy between

landed and landless, as a result of which the stratification of village society became more clearly defined.

Wealth became a more important determinant of influence : and at the same time, that influence became more direct as landholders gained more power both as employers and as administrators. The emergence of the village oligarchy in the 17th century is one of the most significant developments in the history of social relations in Highley, for it imposed patterns that were to survive until the wholesale proletarianisation and sweeping administrative reforms of the 19th century finally weakened the power of the ruling group. Its origins were economic : with most farms held on short leases and with consequent increased family mobility, length of residence and a sense of belonging in the community could hardly remain valid criteria for membership. Thus wealth became the over-riding criterion, and the polarisation of wealth which followed enclosure had left a clearly defined group of 'the better sort'. The cohesion of this elite group was further enhanced by the pattern of state formation : changes in the administrative machinery brought about by national legislation (especially the Elizabethan Poor Law and the 1662 Act of Settlement) gave increased powers to local officers who, in Highley, were drawn from a much reduced pool.

Laslett sees the crucial division as between gentry and non-gentry, contending that those below gentle status took no part in real decision-making. In Highley, as we have seen, real influence rested with the village elite - to decide whether or not to report misdemeanours to the courts; to implement legislation which, even if decided at national level, relied upon local enforcement for its effectiveness; to vote in Parliamentary and local elections. In practice, the division between ruling and ruled came lower down the social scale, and still hinged upon the holding (rather than ownership) of land.

Wrightson and Levine argue that this class became in the 17th century divorced from their poorer neighbours, and identified more closely with the preoccupations and aspirations of the gentry and clergy. The widening of this gulf, and the way in which it was created

both by economic factors and by the operation of the administrative machinery of the state, is amply illustrated in 17th and 18th century Highley. [6]

Writing of the century after 1580, Wrightson describes the tensions caused by the 'contradiction between individualistic agrarian capitalism and the ethics of traditional social obligations.' [7] In Highley, these tensions appear to have been resolved in two ways. As we have seen, traditional social obligations were utilised in the regulation of labour by both agrarian and industrial capitalists, via the exercise of paternalism. In other ways, the village elite shifted the focus of their social obligations towards the poor collectively rather than individually, and ultimately were satisfied to fulfil obligations via the channels of official parish administration. The reciprocal, deferential attitudes of the poor must consequently have been affected, although in the absence of wills and other direct evidence this must remain conjectural.

In the 19th century, wealth was increasingly confined to a smaller and smaller group, and we can discern a growing social distance not only between landed and landless, but also between chief landholders (who were, significantly, more likely to be land owners) and others. The picture is further complicated by the emergence for the first time of prosperous men whose wealth was not derived solely from the land. Furthermore, a group of craftsmen and tradesmen who did not farm land now formed a more significant proportion of the population. In fact our categories, Classes I to IV, which previously had an empirical reality, now had less purchase. The financially elite group, whose social distance from the rest of the community was considerable, had now shrunk to the Squire, the Vicar, and two or three prominent farmers or, occasionally, industrial entrepreneurs. This kind of sharpening distinction was noted by Cobbett, who wrote that 'When farmers became gentlemen their labourers became slaves'. [8] In fact, in Highley, the shrinking in size of the elite group, relative to the population as a whole, meant that village society was more

homogeneous than it had been since the 16th century : wealth could no longer be exactly equated with land, and most men were 'labourers', whether in fields, mines, or workshops.

With the decline in the power of local office which in particular followed the 1834 reform of the Poor Law, the elite group lost influence in village terms, and were forced to look to a wider sphere. Thus a cohesive element in village society disappeared : the weakening of the powers of the local oligarchy inevitably changed the nature of social relations within the community, and brought greater links with a wider area. This was accompanied by improvements in transport and communications. The elite group still exercised considerable influence over their own employees, but in other ways the development of the state and its preference for professional administrators and a more readily-accountable bureaucracy meant that the parish official lost influence qua parish official, although he could of course seek it elsewhere at Union or County level.

The greater social differentiation in the post-enclosure community is one of the more significant findings of this study, for it has links with many other observed social phenomena. Increased geographical mobility of whole families, rather than of individuals, meant that wealth, and particularly the amount of land held, became an overriding factor in determining status. Kinship links were thus weakened not only by mobility itself, but also by the sharpened social differences which made landholders look to 'horizontal' relationships rather than those often more 'vertical' ones with wider kin who had sunk down the social scale.

Local office demanded a measure of literacy, and we begin to see a bias in male literacy towards this 'ruling' group. Nowhere is the sharper social differentiation within the community better illustrated than in the changing relations between vicar and parishioners, where the 'ghostly father' and fellow-peasant of the 16th century was replaced by the absentee authority-figure of the 18th century.

Although the evidence from one small parish must of nec-

essity be such as to demand caution in its interpretation, it looks as if the upper classes as they evolved in Highley's society also made some claim to moral differentiation. In the more subtly graduated social structure of the pre-enclosure period, a village-wide morality appears to have held sway. While illegitimacy was not condoned, there appears to have been a general toleration of pre-marital sex leading to marriage. Pregnant brides were common, and found at all levels of village society. The new village elite which rose after enclosure seems to have developed its own mores, which precluded pre-marital sex : thus we find not only a fall in the numbers of pregnant brides, but also that these brides and the mothers of illegitimate children were increasingly confined to the poorer classes. The labouring classes may not have subscribed to this morality, but the village oligarchy now possessed the means to attempt a more or less successful imposition of it upon them. Those who resisted were increasingly drawn from a group who were 'not respectable' : and it may be significant that this group can also frequently be seen to resist other forms of social control.

By the 'industrial' period, numbers in the ruled and ruling classes had become too disparate, and too many of the mechanisms for moral regulation were being removed from the hands of the rulers for middle-class morality to be able to prevail. Once again, a more homogeneous society produced a more nearly universal morality - one which apparently tolerated pre-marital sex and found illegitimacy an unfortunate but unavoidable corollary of it.

This is a crude and over-simplified view of the trends in attitude towards illicit sex in Highley throughout the period. Nevertheless, it suggests that illegitimacy in particular may profitably be related to a context wider than the narrowly economic. The changes in the incidence of illicit sex in Highley certainly seem to relate more closely to changes in the patterns of social structure and the mechanisms of moral regulation than they do to the more straightforward measure of economic opportunity. This in turn suggests that the

study of illegitimacy in England could with profit look to a wider social context than has hitherto been generally the case. The Highley figures also suggest that it is essential to examine the two best measures of illicit sex - illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy - in conjunction.

Although the pre-enclosure period was characterised by dense kinship networks, we find little evidence that the basic family unit was anything other than nuclear. After enclosure, kinship networks were weakened by the increased^s mobility which followed changes in inheritance patterns and the proletarianisation of a significant proportion of the village population. Kinship links were further eroded by the polarisation of wealth which brought economic and social disparity between family branches : we have seen in wills the shrinking range of kin recognition. From the post-Restoration period when household composition begins to be historically visible, the nuclear family unit predominated in Highley.

'Pre-industrial' Highley was not, in any of its stages examined here, characterised by levels of geographical mobility as high as those established by Laslett for post-Restoration Clayworth. [9] Yet at the same period, family mobility in Highley was very much more frequent than it had been in the 16th century. It would be interesting to know a little more of Clayworth's economic background and of its earlier mobility levels before we use its late-17th century experience as evidence of patterns of mobility in England in previous periods.

After 1780 Highley shows unprecedented levels of mobility. Nevertheless, there are indications that the extended-family group may in fact have been more rather than less frequent. In spite of the beginnings of a decline in numbers of resident servants, mean household size was higher than it had previously been. Both phases of mining development seem to have encouraged immigration by related groups, especially of married siblings who, at least initially, would appear to have shared a home. Anderson found that in mid-19th century Preston, industrialisation had strengthened kinship links and encouraged the formation of extended-family households. [10] Anderson's findings, together with those from Highley, raise the interesting possibility that

the extended-family household, and other kinship support systems may have been the working class's way of coping with industrialisation, and with other 19th century developments such as the decline of other formal and informal parochial support systems, as opposed to a pre-industrial 'survival'.

The work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (and of Laslett in particular) has successfully exploded the myth that the extended family household was the norm in England. Their work, however, has largely been concentrated on periods before the 19th century. The myth may well have arisen from direct observation of working class kinship networks, and the automatic 'back-projection' against which this study is so concerned to warn. Jane Humphries has argued that the persistence of the working class family is the response and defence of the proletarianised worker to industrial capitalism. [11] Both Humphries and the Cambridge Group may be right : the extended-family group may be not so much a residue of pre-industry as a creation of 19th century circumstance. The evidence from Highley certainly supports this view.

A central problem in a study of this kind, which seeks to chart the process of local change in the light of local economic and social conditions, is that of establishing causality. It is tempting to view such phenomena as, for example, deteriorating demographic experience in the 1620s, or declining literacy in the early 19th century, solely in terms of changes taking place within Highley : whereas in the case of the two examples cited we know that national experience appears to follow similar lines. Nevertheless, a detailed study of this kind, which provides an economic context, can hope to supply further evidence for the national debate on such topics. It is clearly impractical for the student of, for instance, literacy to research this kind of detailed context for every locality from which his evidence is drawn. It is similarly impossible within the scope of this project to elicit and comment upon all links between all social and economic phenomena. The study of Highley presents material which, it is hoped, will

prove useful to researchers in other fields by attempting to look at the development of the community as a whole, and by providing the data for other connections to be made.

It does not, of course, claim to have used every possible source : there is undoubtedly further material on Highley, particularly in central court and Assize records which it has not been possible to recover within the time-scale of this project. No study of a historical community can lay claim to being exhaustive. Furthermore, no study of one small parish can do more than raise interesting questions about, and add further contributions to, national debates - it cannot on its own prove or disprove general theories. The areas touched on in the conclusion - the importance of the rise of the village oligarchy particularly to moral regulation, the effect of industrialisation on family formation - are of necessity of a speculative nature.

In one conclusion, however, we can be firm. The breakdown of the manorial system in Highley and the enclosure of its open fields had profound effects on everyday life in the community, on its distribution of wealth and power, on geographical mobility, and on the whole range of village social relations. Furthermore, involvement in these changes was universal. Extensive industrialisation, although it clearly affected several aspects of life in the community, did not turn the world of the farmer or farm labourer upside down. Although we can with validity speak of 'pre-industrial' Highley, we must also think in terms of pre-enclosure Highley - and probably, although it is outside the scope of the present project, of pre-Reformation or pre-Black Death Highley too.

Today Highley is in a 'post-industrial' phase : its last coal mine was closed in 1969, and the village is largely a dormitory for those who work in the West Midlands conurbation. Very few of those who live in Highley work in the village. In 1980, only 31 people (of a total population of 3,000) were employed full time in agriculture in the parish. Secondary education has not been available in the village since 1959 : the local railway closed in 1963. There is an elected

parish council, but in effect decisions are made and implemented at Rural District Council headquarters at Bridgnorth or at County Hall in Shrewsbury. The concept of 'community' which we saw as remaining valid in the 19th century has very little purchase today, except among a nucleus of the survivors and descendants of those who came to Highley in the half-century after 1880 to work the mine. They see a dichotomy between themselves and the newcomers, the 'strangers'. Hardly any of the pre-1880 families are still represented in the village, although where they are the values of the 19th century can sometimes be seen to have been preserved. In 1982, one old lady reported that her aunt (the daughter of a Jordin mother) had been the 'lady of the manor' until the 1960s. Since the last time that the lordship of the manor had any profound empirical significance in Highley was in 1618, this is indicative not only of the survival of ancient forms, but also of the way they were re-invented and utilised by the minor gentry of the 19th century.

Thus we make no large claims for the generalisability of the study : in some respects Highley may well have been unique. Studies of individual parishes can, however, in several and more especially in total, elucidate obscure areas of social experience in the past, and seek, like Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling, 'to give a more human face to the broader processes and interpretative abstractions of historical change'.

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- 6) Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p. 17
- 7) Wrightson, English Society, p. 60
- 8) Quoted in E.P.Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth,1968) p.256.
- 9) Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love.
- 10) Anderson, Family Structure.
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