

**PEASANTS AND STOCKINGERS. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE IN  
GUTHLAXTON HUNDRED, LEICESTERSHIRE, 1700-1851.**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester**

**by**

**Rebecca May Carpenter B.A. (Hons), London  
Department of English Local History  
University of Leicester**

**OCTOBER 1999.**

UMI Number: U058464

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U058464

Published by ProQuest LLC 2015. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346



7502091826

X752645101

## CONTENTS.

### Figures and Tables

<b>Preface - Why Countesthorpe?</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>1. Agricultural Change - the decline of the peasant farmer</b>	<b>Page 22</b>
<b>2. The Hosiery Industry - independent producer to putting -out.</b>	<b>Page 41</b>
<b>3. Demographic Profiles of Cohorts marrying 1700-1851</b>	<b>Page 83</b>
<b>4. Responses to Change</b>	<b>Page 124</b>
<b>4.1 Migration patterns within Guthlaxton Hundred, 1700-1851</b>	<b>Page 125</b>
<b>4.2. The increasing burden of poverty and the changing systems         of relief.</b>	<b>Page 138</b>
<b>4.3. Changing patterns of sexual behaviour, pre-nuptial pregnancy         and illegitimacy.</b>	<b>Page 153</b>
<b>4.4. Radical non-conformity and political dissent.</b>	<b>Page 164</b>
<b>5. Countesthorpe in 1851</b>	<b>Page 179</b>
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>Page 193</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Page 196</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>Page 203</b>

## Figures

- |     |   |          |
|-----|---|----------|
| 4.1 | Settlement To. Distances travelled by migrants from parish of settlement to indicated parish of employment, 1700-1815.      | Page 131 |
| 4.2 | Settlement From. Distances travelled by migrants leaving parish of settlement indicated to parish of employment, 1700-1815. | Page 132 |
| 4.3 | Removal From. Distances travelled by those removed from parish of residence indicated to parish of settlement, 1700-1851.   | Page 140 |
| 4.4 | Removal To. Distances travelled by those returned from parish of residence to parish of settlement indicated, 1700-1851.    | Page 141 |
| 5.1 | 1851 Census Data: Household Composition by residence category and occupational group.                                       | Page 185 |
| 5.2 | 1851 Census Data. Comparison between husband's and wife's occupation.   | Page 186 |
| 5.3 | 1851 Census Data. Breakdown of married women's employment by husband's occupation and age group.                            | Page 187 |

### Tables

3.1	Male and Female Age at First Marriage 1700-1851.	Page 93
3.2	Mean Age of Mother at Birth of First and last Child, 1700-1851 Female Age at First Marriage <30.	Page 95
3.3	Intervals between births 1700-1851.	Page 96
3.4	Age Specific Fertility Rates 1700-1851.	Page 97
3.5	Infant and Child Mortality 1700-1851	Page 106
3.6	Endogenous and Exogenous Infant Mortality 1700-1851.	Page 114
3.7	Comparative Fertility by Father's Occupation Cohort Marrying 1800-1851.	Page 134
4.1	Comparison of settlement, removal and poor relief between agricultural and industrial villages, 1700-1850.	Page 136
4.2	Life stage settlements- Guthlaxton Hundred, 1700-1815.	Page 142
4.3	Life stage removals - Guthlaxton Hundred, 1700-1851	Page 156
4.4	Distribution of illegitimacy by decade 1790-1850.	Page 158
4.5	Female Age at First Marriage. A percentage comparison between brides who were pregnant at marriage with those who were not 1700-1851.	Page 159
4.6	Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy/Occupational Links 1800-1851.	
4.7	Birth and residence patterns at Countesthorpe - brides pregnant at marriage 1700-1851.	Page 161
4.8	Birth and residence patterns at Countesthorpe- brides not pregnant at marriage 1700-1851.	Page 161

### The Selection of the Parish of Countesthorpe and Guthlaxton Hundred for Investigation

As the proto-industrial debate has already provided encouragement for a large number of regional studies both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, some justification for the selection of Guthlaxton Hundred and Countesthorpe in particular for a further study of change needs to be offered.<sup>1</sup> The hosiery industry has frequently been cited by both supporters and critics of proto-industrialisation as an example of domestic-based industry which later developed into factory-based manufacture.<sup>2</sup> It was as a result of the, apparent, appropriateness of the model as an explanation for the growth of frame-work knitting, that David Levine selected the most heavily industrialised Leicestershire hosiery village of Shepshed for his study of demographic change.<sup>3</sup> Family Formation In An Age of Nascent Capitalism was greeted with deserved critical acclaim for its application of the relatively new technique of family reconstitution and its clear exposition of the demographic and social consequences of the early stages of industrial change. Yet, in comparison with other Leicestershire villages, Shepshed's demographic profile was extreme. Unfortunately, Levine's thesis rapidly became the established orthodoxy and the experience of Shepshed, the inevitable outcome of the development of the growth of frame-work knitting.

Guthlaxton Hundred covers a wedge shape area of Leicestershire reaching from the outskirts of Leicester to the Warwickshire border and contained, in the eighteenth century, a variety of different types of parishes ranging from small 'closed' agricultural villages to large 'open' knitting villages. Countesthorpe, a medium sized village with a population of 540 in 1801 and situated seven miles to the south of Leicester, represented a typical example of a hosiery village, if it is possible to identify a typical example in a very diverse industry. Countesthorpe was clearly within the orbit of the Leicester merchants, had a long tradition of involvement in by-employment and, as demonstrated by the parish registers and 1851 census return, the majority of the adult population were directly employed in the production of knitted goods.<sup>4</sup> The size of the parish was also important; Countesthorpe was smaller than Shepshed; this enabled the scope of the research to be broadened. Rather than limiting the study to an examination of the demographic consequences of rural industrialisation, I wanted to consider the impact of

---

<sup>1</sup> For example the range of papers presented at the ESTER conference 'Industries before the Industrial Revolution', Pisa, October, 1992 illustrates the continuity of research based on the model of proto-industrialisation.

<sup>2</sup> D.C. Coleman, 'Proto-industrialisation. A Concept too Many ?' Economic History Review, XXXVI (1983).

<sup>3</sup> D.Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> H.O.107/2081.

agrarian change and the wider implications of such developments on the structure of society. These were areas which Levine had been unable to consider when examining Shepshed but were within the longer historiographical tradition of Leicestershire established by Phythian-Adams, Thirsk and Hoskins.<sup>5</sup> Countesthorpe's contiguity to Wigston Magna was a further reason for its selection. The Midland Peasant had pre-figured much of the research into regional social and economic change; a study of a similar parish offered the opportunity to examine Hoskin's thesis in the light of new arguments.

The selection of Countesthorpe for such a study would not have been possible without adequate surviving sources. Few parishes have a complete vestry record for the period before civil administration and Countesthorpe is no exception. The parish registers survive in a relatively complete form within the acceptable parameters of under-registration applied by E.A. Wrigley.<sup>6</sup> The agrarian records which include terriers, enclosure act and award, and Land Tax Assessments are well supported by probate wills and inventories. The latter are equally important in tracing the development of hosiery which, in its early stages, was carried out by the younger sons of peasant farmers. Any study into hosiery manufacture in the nineteenth century is well served by the 1845 Parliamentary Enquiry into the Condition of The Frame-work Knitters. Unfortunately the records of poor-relief do not survive for Countesthorpe, these were burned when the parish church was re-built in 1904, but the County Record Office does hold the surviving settlement and removal records for Leicestershire which provide a basis for analysis of poverty. Leicestershire was a crucial region for the development of dissenting religion and a notorious region in the annals of Chartism. Not only does Thomas Cooper record his visits to Countesthorpe in his autobiography but, the most exciting record of activities in Countesthorpe to survive is an account of Luddite preparations being made for an uprising in 1817. This has further importance as it is accompanied by details of a conversion to Primitive Methodism and demonstrates one of the very few established links between political activism and religious dissent. The 1851 Census Return for Countesthorpe provides a suitable conclusion as it offers a social and economic breakdown of the village and allows a comparison with the pre-industrial village.

---

<sup>5</sup> D.Levine, op.cit., Levine contrasted the agricultural parish of Bottesford with proto-industrial Shepshed; C. Phythian-Adams, Continuity, Fields and Fission: The Making of a Midland Parish. University of Leicester, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, 3rd ser., 4 (Leicester, 1978); J.Thirsk, 'Agrarian history, 1540-1950', in W.G. Hoskins and R.A. McKinley (eds), The Victoria History of the County of Leicester, vol. II (1954); W.G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant. The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village (London, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> E.A. Wrigley, An Introduction to English Historical Demography (London, 1966), Chapter 3.

The East Midlands was one of the most important manufacturing areas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and it was also an area undergoing changes in land use. This study of Guthlaxton Hundred and Countesthorpe in particular allows an examination of those changes and explores the consequences of the movement to pasture and the development of framework knitting for the structure of communities and the disunities within them.

## Introduction.

The process of "industrialisation", indeed the specific meaning of the term, continues to dominate social and economic research focused on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> In recent years the concept of a once-only economic transition, as had earlier been suggested by Ashton, or the five-stage model theory developed by Rostow, has been regarded with scepticism, with historians opting for a more gradualist approach.<sup>2</sup> Discussion has been concerned with the timing of structural change; a problem compounded by seriously deficient statistical evidence for output.<sup>3</sup> Some historians, for example Jonathan Clark, have argued that Britain was never fully industrialised and that too much emphasis has been placed on change as opposed to continuity.<sup>4</sup> Others, such as Alan Macfarlane have attempted to place the ideological origins of capitalism in the fourteenth century or even earlier.<sup>5</sup> Recently, however, such an evolutionary perspective had been questioned by a number of economic historians. Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, for example, have sought to 'rehabilitate the industrial revolution' of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and have concluded that 'The industrial revolution was an economic and social process that added up to much more than the sum of its measurable parts'.<sup>6</sup>

The most recent development has arisen from research stimulated by the proto-industrial debate; the attempt to identify a transitional phase between merchant and industrial capitalism has encouraged historians to isolate agrarian, demographic, capital and demand factors which provided the dynamic for such significant change.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the discontinuities which are stressed in each of these analyses had already been recognised by an earlier generation of historians ranging from Ashton through to Hoskins. The continuity or repeated patterns in the historiography are longer or more persistent than is often assumed.

It is my intention to examine one specific example of industrial change, focusing, as Hoskins did, on a single community and its area to explore the inter-relationship of changing land use and ownership, strategies of family formation, participation in and

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Hudson, The Industrial Revolution (London, 1992), pp. 9-38.

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Ashton, The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (Oxford, 1948); W. W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (Cambridge, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> P. Deane and W. A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> J. C. D. Clark, English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism (Oxford, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> P. Hudson and M. Berg, Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution (Warwick, 1990), p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher (eds), Manufacture in Town and Country before the Factory (Cambridge, 1983).

control of manufacture during a period of growing demand and capital creation.<sup>8</sup> An examination of development in the Leicestershire village of Countesthorpe and its hinterland between 1700 and 1851 may be regionally specific, but the interplay of factors involved will indicate why this village, and others like it, industrialised. Above all, it will demonstrate the major discontinuities inherent in the agricultural, industrial and social context which comprised the transition from communal agriculture to more intense individualised production.

I want to begin my discussion with a more detailed consideration of the historiography of 'industrialisation', to indicate the lines of research I pursued and to suggest some of the general conclusions of the thesis. The review of research begins with an analysis of the model approach of proto-industrialisation and the current theories of agricultural and demographic change. In each of these cases I attempt to highlight areas that are either supported or challenged by the Countesthorpe evidence. Following this, I consider earlier research which interwove similar lines of development, for example the seminal work of J. D. Chambers and, to a lesser extent, the Hammonds.<sup>9</sup> The final area I wish to review is that which relates to the impact of economic and demographic change. Much of my research has been concerned, not only with the process of change, but also the structural consequences of such development. The shifting relationships within local society and the strategies of response developed by discrete interest groups are, in themselves, crucial to an understanding of the process and extent of change.

Perhaps the most fundamental redefinition of the concept of industrialisation to be forwarded in recent years has been posited by E.A. Wrigley. In his introduction to People, Cities and Wealth, and indeed in following essays, Wrigley suggested and restated, an argument which integrates demographic growth and productive output. His thesis is based on the premise that a major shift in the economy only occurred following 'a substitution of inorganic for organic inputs in most branches of industrial production',<sup>10</sup> Changes in land use were necessary, for economic development but were not sufficient in themselves, agricultural productivity had to be increased by the application of fertilisers and industry transformed by new power sources. From this Wrigley argues, 'employment in the transformed industries began to absorb a substantial fraction of the labour force, and when experience showed that the gains in productivity were not once-and-for-all but indefinitely extensible, did the basis exist for average real incomes throughout the

---

<sup>8</sup> W. G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant (London, 1957).

<sup>9</sup> J. L. and Barbara Hammond, The Village Labourer (London, 1911); The Town Labourer (London, 1917); The Skilled Labourer (London, 1919).

<sup>10</sup> E. A. Wrigley, People, Cities and Wealth (Oxford, 1987), p. 10.

economy to rise substantially and progressively'.<sup>11</sup> Problems exist in challenging Wrigley's view as the criticism is one of method as much as argument. The econometric perspective is founded on a questionable statistical base where best-guess real wages are compared with insufficient data on output and estimated population totals. Wrigley may be correct to question theories in which 'the demographic transition is associated with the industrial revolution; major changes in family organisation are presumed to have occurred under the stresses of rapid economic change'. But the proto-industrial model, to which he refers, is based on much more than simply an inter-play of statistics.<sup>12</sup>

The earlier theory of proto-industrialisation developed by Franklin Mendels and extended by Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm was, paradoxically, a very precise model of change and yet one which, it was suggested, could be applied across space and time.<sup>13</sup> The theory of 'industrialisation before industrialisation' or 'manufacture in the countryside' had five main features: industrial change was focused upon a region; manufacture for the market was inter-meshed with agricultural production; the market for the goods was extra-regional; in turn the industrialising region was increasingly dependent on other regions for agricultural produce; and finally urban centres provided capital and expertise for the putting-out system.<sup>14</sup> The theory has been the subject of sustained criticism. Donald Coleman has called it 'a concept too many' and suggested that in promoting proto-industrialisation as a stage of growth towards industrial revolution 'something specific is latched on to something vague'.<sup>15</sup> Further, the theory has concentrated almost exclusively on textiles ignoring the process of industrialisation in manufactures where production was centralised, for example the iron industry.

Although Coleman and other critics have successfully challenged the universal applicability of the model of proto-industrialisation (of the ten regions in England defined as proto-industrial only four moved on to an industrial stage) it is more difficult to dismiss the dynamics of change identified by Medick.<sup>16</sup> Medick argued that the decisive factor that brought about the transition from subsistence production to production of industrial commodities was the desire to compensate for growing insufficiency and division of the land. As the marginal returns of the agrarian subsistence economy sank,

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> F. F. Mendels, 'Proto-industrialisation: The First Phase of the Industrialisation Process', *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII (1972); P. Kriedte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialisation before Industrialisation* (1981).

<sup>14</sup> L. A. Clarkson, *Proto-Industrialisation: The First Phase of Industrialisation* (London, 1985), pp. 15-27.

<sup>15</sup> D. C. Coleman, 'Proto-Industrialisation: A Concept Too Many', *Economic History Review*, XXXVI (1983), p. 446.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

the small holders and the sub-peasant groups increasingly took up industrial commodity production. Families who still retained an interest in the land were cushioned against the worst excesses of the profit-based system, but the landless artisan was forced into working for rates below subsistence level and, wittingly or unwittingly, participated in demographic change.<sup>17</sup> The family involved in rural industry was significantly larger, according to Medick, than those who continued in agriculture, the result of early marriage determined by maximum income opportunities which reached its optimum at a comparatively early age.<sup>18</sup> Yet a closer analysis of the discontinuities identified by Medick between an agrarian economy and one that developed domestic industry does raise further questions.

I would suggest, on the basis of the Countesthorpe evidence, that the presence of handicraft production for distant markets pre-dated the crisis in agriculture identified by Medick, as indeed did early age of marriage, thus challenging the linear nature of the proto-industrialist model. Moreover, I would also argue that the development of hosiery manufacture was dependent upon factors which were specific to that industry. Equally, the frame-work knitters were an industrial wage dependent proletariat in a domestic setting by the early nineteenth century, as a result of being forced to rent their frames. Nor did the industry contain the seeds of its own destruction, it only transferred to steam-mechanised production when alternative employment was available in shoe manufacture. A transition from essentially agrarian to industrial manufacture occurred at a point which is much more consistent with Wrigley's thesis. Yet, only a multi-causal explanation based on the constant interplay of agricultural, industrial and demographic strategies can fully explain the lengthy transition from early manufacture of hosiery in the late seventeenth century to the take-off of mechanised production in the 1860's.

Such findings confirm, as far as hosiery is concerned, the diverse patterns of development which have been identified by other historians. Recognition of different profiles of change challenges the single transitional phase which proto-industrialisation purports to be. Diverse patterns have been identified, in some cases within the same industry.<sup>19</sup> Pat Hudson identified significantly different patterns of development for the woollen and worsted branches of the West Riding based on the original land holding and agricultural systems. Woollen production was centred on better soil where independent artisan producers were able to survive longest; worsted production situated on the north-western

---

<sup>17</sup> H. Medick, 'The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family during the Transition from Peasant to Industrial Capitalisation', in P. Kriedte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm (eds), *Industrialisation before Industrialisation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-61.

<sup>19</sup> P. Hudson, 'Proto-industrialisation: The Case of the West Riding Wool Textile Industry in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981).

poorer soil became part of the system of putting out in which the operatives lost their independence.<sup>20</sup> Frame-work knitting was also far from homogeneous and not only between the lace and hosiery manufacture identified by Chapman.<sup>21</sup> Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire had distinctive patterns of development. These need to be examined, not only in terms of raw materials, changing fashions and merchant capital, but also for land holding structures and systems of agriculture.

During the past fifteen years the concept of an 'agricultural revolution' has undergone a similar revision to that of 'industrial revolution'. In agriculture, as in industry, the revised view stresses gradualism rather than concentrated change instigated by a small number of innovators. Joan Thirsk has stated that 'a multiplicity of farming regions are now recognised, each having its own distinctive path of economic and social change'.<sup>22</sup> Research carried out by E. L. Jones into changing agricultural practices on the lighter soils of East Anglia has had great significance for those assessing the pace and extent of agricultural change in other agrarian regions. Following the drainage of the fenland in the seventeenth century the use of root crops became widespread on large commercial farms facilitating increased output and yields for wheat. As a result the price of cereal crops fell. For farmers on the heavy Midland clay soil, which were especially unsuited to growing root crops and could only produce marginally larger yields of cereal crops, there was a growing impetus to change from predominantly arable to pasture farming. The rearing of stock could provide them with a higher profit return.<sup>23</sup>

The transition from arable to pasture was not fully completed until the early nineteenth century. However, the impact of change in land use and ownership it necessitated and the consequent reduction in employment opportunities had a dramatic effect. As late as the middle of the eighteenth century 237,000 acres out of a total of 560,000 in Leicestershire remained unenclosed, in spite of the wave of sixteenth-century enclosure. Yet, a significant percentage of this had been enclosed by 1770.<sup>24</sup> Michael Turner has identified, in common with H. G. Hunt and T. S. Ashton, a capital incentive for enclosure; yield on consols was low encouraging borrowing and militating against investment of surplus monies. He has also stressed the shortage of land for pasture that could no longer be controlled by stinting and the use of temporary leys.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> P. Hudson, 'From Manor to Mill: The West Riding in Transition,' in M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher (eds), *op.cit.*

<sup>21</sup> S. D. Chapman, 'The Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry', *Textile History*, 3 (1972).

<sup>22</sup> J. Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500 - 1750* (London, 1987), p.11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> H.G. Hunt, 'The Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure in Leicestershire' *Economic History Review*, X (1957), p. 267.

<sup>25</sup> M. Turner, *Enclosures in Britain* (London, 1984), pp. 47-50.

The extent to which changing land use and enclosure resulted in changed land ownership is still not fully resolved. Hunt has argued that the engrossing of land by a few large proprietors and the disappearance of the small land-owner did not precede or facilitate parliamentary enclosure. Rather, the decline of the small farmer was motivated by the depression which followed the Napoleonic War, when those who had purchased their land during the war were unable to ride out the economic downturn.<sup>26</sup> Turner also stresses the consequence of changing economic circumstances in conjunction with enclosure for the small owner-occupier in the early nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> While not going as far as Chambers and Mingay, neither are prepared to support the view of enclosure as 'class robbery' which was suggested by E. P. Thompson.<sup>28</sup>

Analyses of the reasons for enclosure and the consequences of enclosure have mainly been conducted on a regional or county level. As a result, I would suggest, the relationships between agricultural practice, land ownership and manufacture have been understated. The Countesthorpe evidence suggests that farmers responded to the challenge presented by the lighter soils through a variety of measures. Terriers indicate that the use of permanent and temporary leys was common practice in the open fields in an attempt to increase stock rearing.<sup>29</sup> As the balance shifted away from arable the stint was used to regulate production and reserve the rights of common for those who held property, rather than those who had access to pasture through customary rights. A number of landowners were prepared to invest in frames as means of employment for their younger sons, building on the established base of hand knitting and existing merchant links. Contacts with merchants and attorneys also provided sources of finance for purchase of land. In the period before enclosure a number of large property owners had disappeared and the majority of farmers owned parcels of less than 100 acres. The trend was reversed following enclosure; the movement to pasture led to larger land holdings. An insidious process of engrossment occurred as the larger farmers increased their holdings in a piece-meal fashion and as the smaller farmers were forced to relinquish their fields. The dispossessed were forced to support themselves through hosiery manufacture at a much more basic level than those farmers who had diversified at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

---

<sup>26</sup> H. G. Hunt, 'Landownership and Enclosure 1750 - 1830', *Economic History Review*, XI (1959), pp.503-4.

<sup>27</sup> M. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), p. 237.

<sup>29</sup> For Example: R. Tebbs 24-12-1766, L.R.O. DE 1443/20.

Changes which occurred in both agriculture and industry undoubtedly had demographic implications for family formation and mortality crises. Marital and fertility strategies employed by communities as a means to limit population within available resources have been rigorously researched by the Cambridge Group for Population Studies over the past twenty years.<sup>30</sup> However, despite thirty-three parish reconstitutions conducted under its aegis and the seminal Population History of England, its methods and findings have not been universally accepted.<sup>31</sup> Recently the basis of family reconstitution has once again been questioned. Steven Ruggles has suggested that the exclusion of migrants introduced a downward bias to mean age at marriage and life expectancy. Ruggles demonstrated through a micro-simulation, that after redressing the effect of migration on family reconstitutions mean age at first marriage was significantly higher than had been suggested. For example, mean age at first marriage in March (Cambs.) was not 25.45 but 31.60.<sup>32</sup> Ruggles' argument is unlikely to find support among demographic historians who have tried to place reconstitutions within an economic frame-work. Not only did Ruggles make no distinction between marriage-rates between different cohorts, no attempt was made to demonstrate the consequences of changing patterns of migration, or even to consider why and at what age people migrated.<sup>33</sup>

Earlier, Michael Anderson had questioned the representativeness of those captured by family reconstitution. He stated 'demographic events are inherently variable between families and over short periods of time, small numbers of observations mean that computed differences between places and periods may result from random fluctuations rather than reflecting real differences in behaviour'.<sup>34</sup> Following a detailed consideration of the methodology of reconstitution I intend to demonstrate that by placing demographic information within its 'climatic, biological, economic and social context' it will be possible to identify the real differences from the random fluctuations and present a deeper understanding of a parish's development.<sup>35</sup>

Of more serious concern is the argument which underpins The Population History of England. Using material from an amalgam of 12 selected reconstitutions, rather than the 404 parishes, Wrigley and Schofield asserted that the dynamic of population growth was

---

<sup>30</sup> For Example: E. A. Wrigley, 'Marital Fertility in Pre-industrial England', Economic History Review, XIX (1966).

<sup>31</sup> M. Anderson, Population Change in North Western Europe, 1750-1850 (London, 1988), p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> S. Ruggles, 'Migration, Marriage and Mortality: Correcting Sources of Bias in English Family Reconstitution', Population Studies, vol. 46 No. 3 (1992) p. 513.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., passim.

<sup>34</sup> M. Anderson, op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

a fall in the age at first marriage.<sup>36</sup> The original reconstitution of Colyton in Devon conducted by Wrigley challenged the assumption, put forward by Flinn and others, that the rise in population in the eighteenth century was the result of a decline in the death rate.<sup>37</sup> Rather, the Colyton evidence and subsequent reconstitutions were used to demonstrate that the significant factor was a decline in the age of marriage which, in turn, facilitated an increase in the birth rate. Recently this assumption has been challenged by Bridget Hill. She has rightly questioned why such emphasis has been placed on female age at first marriage as an explanation of population increase. She questioned the assumption of Wrigley and Schofield, and the proto-industrialists, that early marriage appeared to be motivated by growing economic opportunities that permitted the establishment of separate households at an earlier age.<sup>38</sup>

Bridget Hill demonstrated the diversity of experience across a range of reconstitutions and differing responses to similar economic circumstances. 'Concentration on the mean age at marriage is apt to conceal very great variations in marriage age both within a community and between different communities at the same moment in time'.<sup>39</sup> Rather she argues for 'an understanding of its (a parish's) economic priorities, a knowledge of local custom and marriage practices'.<sup>40</sup> This is far removed from Wrigley and Schofield's attempt using a range of statistical calculations to identify the nation-wide effects of epidemics, harvest failures, wage-price indices on nuptiality, fertility and mortality. Their explanation based on national statistics was that age at marriage was determined by an approximate forty year time-lag from the wage-price index.<sup>41</sup> This particular conclusion has been widely criticised.

The evidence from the Countesthorpe reconstitution suggests that early age at marriage pre-dates the introduction of frame-work knitting on a large scale into the village. Pressure on land use had encouraged diversification into hand knitting and so had obviated the need to delay marriage. These particular circumstances pertain to Countesthorpe, but low age at marriage was also common in other parishes with specific economic profiles; Terling is but one other example.<sup>42</sup> The fundamental problem with Wrigley and Schofield's mean age at marriage, based on twelve parishes, is that by averaging statistical information from a variety of economically disparate parishes an

<sup>36</sup> E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction (London, 1981), pp. 255-256.

<sup>37</sup> M. W. Flinn, British Population Growth 1700-1850 (London, 1970).

<sup>38</sup> B. Hill, 'Marriage age of Women and the Demographers', History Workshop Journal, 28 (1989), p. 130.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, op. cit., p.426.

<sup>42</sup> D. Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York, 1977), p. 123.

evening out of results occurs, rather than a nation-wide picture. England was not an economically homogeneous unit before the middle of the nineteenth century (indeed never has been), and each reconstitution does need to be seen within its own economic frame-work. When this is done, as in Countesthorpe, the more complex inter-relationships of marital fertility and mortality rates with economic changes can be established and the importance of mortality rates be reconsidered.

In Population Change in North Western Europe, 1750-1850 Michael Anderson argued that there was a clearly discernible fall in the death rate as well as a decline in age at marriage.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Flinn had earlier - somewhat ironically - used the Colyton material as evidence for such a decline.<sup>44</sup> Anderson argued that demographers had rejected a decline in the death rate because it could not explain the whole of population increase, yet neither could a reduction in age at marriage. A decline in the death rate could not provide a total explanation but its significance should not be underestimated. Anderson stated: 'The analysis so far thus provides the following clues; there was a widespread geographical distribution to the decline in mortality, it occurred in almost all social groups; this fall was particularly vigorous amongst the very young; small-pox as an infant killer, declined while lung tuberculosis, a killer of adults probably increased in many areas; extreme mortality crises lessened but smaller localised surges remained'.<sup>45</sup> More recently Alex Mercer has used physiological evidence to demonstrate a significant change in incidence of disease from the late seventeenth century. The most obvious feature of this was the disappearance of the plague and an increase in water born diseases such as cholera and typhus.<sup>46</sup>

It is my intention to demonstrate that fluctuations in mortality were a significant feature of demographic trends during the long eighteenth century. Through a consideration of changes in mean age at death, set against a background of economic change and dislocation, it will be apparent that, in Countesthorpe, mortality, both adult and infant, was an important factor in demographic strategies and population change. The evidence suggested in the Countesthorpe reconstitution, a frame-work-knitting village in Leicestershire, challenges the findings of David Levine and the earlier Shepshed reconstitution. It does this by considering wider factors, in particular the importance of agriculture.

---

43 M. Anderson, op. cit., p.53.

44 M. W. Flinn, op. cit., p. 38.

45 M. Anderson, op. cit., p. 59.

46 A. Mercer, Disease, Mortality and Population in Transition - Epidemiological - Demographic Change in England since the Eighteenth Century (Leicester, 1990), passim.

Levine's work appeared to confirm the findings of Wrigley and Schofield that the primary dynamic in population growth was a fall in age at marriage. (Indeed Shepshed was one of the twelve reconstitutions used by Wrigley and Schofield in their amalgamation). Female mean age at first marriage fell in Shepshed from 28.1 in 1600-99 to 22.6 for the cohort married between 1825-1851.<sup>47</sup> The problem with Levine's conclusions was the weight given to industrialisation as the sole explanation of change. Little attention was paid to agricultural changes or to property ownership despite the fact that there were 27 farmers and 138 agricultural labourers working in Shepshed in 1851, admittedly less than the 533 employed in hosiery, but not an insignificant sector.<sup>48</sup> Enclosure was only considered in passing. Further, Levine failed to explore links between land ownership and investment in frame-work knitting. While he examined infant mortality in some detail it was solely within the dimension of industrial change.<sup>49</sup> He also produced life tables which demonstrated a significant improvement in life expectancy during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, but opportunities to explain these in a wider context need to be explored further.<sup>50</sup> Mortality, unlike fertility, was much more sensitive to climatic variations producing crop shortages and more virulent disease. It was also sensitive to reduction in diet brought about by deliberate changes in agricultural production and price fluctuation. Reconstitutions can only be effective if criteria are considered within the local economic structure. When this is done changes in mortality, and the reasons for them, can be fully appreciated.

It would seem that individual lines of enquiry which examine only one aspect of development, be it industrial, agricultural or demographic can only offer a partial explanation of change. The problem with some of these approaches is that only factors which can be reduced to statistical form are included in the analysis. The danger with a model-based theory, such as proto-industrialisation, is that all examples are tested against an assumed process of development. In the case of proto-industrialisation not only does a teleological approach obtain, but industrialisation is the assumed outcome. Earlier social and economic historians, for example J. D. Chambers and W. G. Hoskins emphasised local conditions and environment in their parochial and regional studies.<sup>51</sup> This is not to say that wider issues were ignored; Hoskins sought, through the example of Wigston Magna, to emphasise the integrity of a peasant culture and to demonstrate that enclosure represented 'the destruction of an entire society with its own economy and traditions, its

---

47 D. Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 45-57.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

51 J. D. Chambers, 'Enclosure and the Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', in D. V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds), *Population in History* (London, 1965); W. G. Hoskins, *op. cit.*

own way of living and its own culture'.<sup>52</sup> I plan to explore the development of the frame-work knitting industry within Leicestershire and to consider its relationship with co-incident changes in agriculture and population size. In doing so the constraints of a model will be challenged and the coalescing lines of development explored.

Frame-work knitting was a domestic industry which relocated in the Midland counties in the late seventeenth century to by-pass the controls of the Worshipful Company of Frame-work Knitters which were so effective in London.<sup>53</sup> Hosiery was successful in the region because of the availability of raw materials, existing experience in hand knitting, available finance and the need to find alternative income. Gravener Henson and Felkin both sought to describe the development of the frame-work knitting industry in the East Midlands principally from the point of innovation in manufacture and attempts at regulation and control.<sup>54</sup> More recently S. D. Chapman has considered finance and merchant control within the context of market demand. Yet the focus of all of these has been the main area of frame-work knitting - Nottinghamshire.<sup>55</sup>

It is my intention to examine differing patterns of development in south Leicestershire, to consider not only why certain villages diversified, but the extent to which they did so and the type of frame-work knitting which they developed. The importance of the wide frames in Countesthorpe and the high percentage of bag-men, in comparison with other villages needs to be explored within the context of local resources and social structure. In some ways this is within the research tradition conducted by J. D. Chambers in the early 1930s. Chambers' work 'Enclosure and the Labour supply in the Industrial Revolution' and Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century attempted to trace the development of domestic industry and to inter-link agricultural, industrial and population change.<sup>56</sup> However, Chambers did not examine the dissimilarities between industrial villages. There are also key areas of Chambers' thesis which are not supported by the Guthlaxton evidence. Central to his argument was the belief that, in the East Midlands, 'the pattern of property distribution remained basically unaltered between 1780 and 1830'.<sup>57</sup> The Countesthorpe evidence would suggest that changes in land ownership which followed on from enclosure were highly significant in shaping the extent of hosiery production. The movement to pasture farming which provided the dynamic for enclosure resulted in

<sup>52</sup> W. G. Hoskins, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>53</sup> F. A. Wells, The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry: Its History and Organisation (London, 1935), p.35.

<sup>54</sup> W. Felkin, A History of The Machine - Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures (1867); G. Henson, A History of the Framework Knitters (Nottingham, 1830).

<sup>55</sup> S. D. Chapman, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> J. D. Chambers, *op. cit.*; J. D. Chambers, Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century (2nd edition London, 1966), pp. 104-133.

<sup>57</sup> J. D. Chambers, Enclosure., p. 316.

reduced employment opportunities. This, accompanied by population increase, provided merchant hosiers with a work force vulnerable to encroachment into their livelihoods presented by frame-rents, Developments in agriculture, most notably the loss of common rights, occurred at the point at which the hosiery industry moved into what can be seen as its second phase - the exploitation of apprentice labour to increase production. standing charges, reduced rates and loss of independence.

The evidence from Countesthorpe would seem to support the arguments presented by the Hammonds in their trilogy The Town Labourer, The Skilled Labourer and The Village Labourer. In highlighting the speed and scope of change they demonstrated the discontinuities attendant on industrial and agricultural development. For them, as for Hoskins, enclosure represented the robbery of the poor. In The Village Labourer, J. L. and Barbara Hammond placed the plight of the labourer in a wider context; 'Enclosure had robbed him of the strip that he tilled, of the cow that he kept on the village pasture, of the fuel that he picked up in the woods, and of the turf that he tore from the common. And while a social revolution had swept away his possessions, and industrial revolution had swept away his family's earnings. To families living on the scale of the village poor, each of these losses was a crippling blow, and the total effect of the changes was to destroy their economic independence'.<sup>58</sup>

From the 1950s a new orthodoxy developed arguing forcefully against the Hammond's belief in the pauperisation of the rural poor.<sup>59</sup> However, in recent years the 'new' orthodoxy has been challenged; latest research has confirmed the findings of the Hammonds. Keith Snell and Ann Kussmaul have individually demonstrated the consequences of changing land use on employment and servant hood. Labourers were forced even further towards subsistence level as enclosure deprived them of additional support.<sup>60</sup> Duncan Bythell has explored the exploitation of the labouring classes in sweated trades such as frame-work knitting and demonstrated the control of the merchant hosiers and bag-men which succeeded in further reducing the status and condition of those forced into domestic manufacture

The major challenge to a gradualist interpretation of change comes, not from a re-assertion of traditional lines of argument, but from a recognition of the cumulative consequences for the structure of society inherent in agricultural, industrial and

<sup>58</sup> J. L. and Barbara Hammond, The Village Labourer. p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> R. M. Hartwell, 'The Rising Standard of Living in England 1800-1850', Economic History Review, XIII (1961).

<sup>60</sup> K. D. M. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor (Cambridge, 1985); A. Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1981).

demographic growth. The 'industrial revolution' was not solely a technological revolution - if it was even that - or a revolution in processes of manufacture.<sup>61</sup> It represented a change in relationships within society and, out of that, revolutions in the systems of support and control. A study of a village within its region, such as Countesthorpe, can demonstrate how changes in property holding and employment relationships affected, for example, traditional migration patterns. A shift in the distribution and direction of resources was also likely to necessitate revisions of the structures of assistance and authority affecting, at parish level, the role of the church and related vestry. Loss of ownership of land and access to resources served to define divisions in society which were further underlined by conflicting interests and aspirations. Such divisions were later to manifest themselves in the development of non-conformist religion, political grouping and even crime. This goes far wider than the narrow skill - based class awareness posited by historians in the nineteen sixties.<sup>62</sup> It, of necessity, recognises friction and inconsistencies within seemingly apparently coherent groups and points up common ground and responses between apparently diverse interest groups.

Traditionally migration analyses have concentrated on the movement between rural and urban areas. In the 1880s Ravenstein suggested that the major migration flow was from agricultural areas to large towns; most migrants were adults leaving the rural location for economic reasons to find employment in urban areas.<sup>63</sup> Clark and Souden argued for some diffusion of skills from industrial towns to the hinterland during the period of proto-industrialisation. However, their focus has been the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries, and although they considered other patterns of migration than the rural-urban one, they were mainly concerned with a pre-industrial society.<sup>64</sup>

The main source for studies of migration patterns have been census returns from 1841 and, for the period before 1834, settlement records which were employed within the administration of parish relief. The use of settlement records is problematical due to the patchy survival of the documentation, but they can be used as indicators of adult migration trends in the period of rural transition.<sup>65</sup> Using the surviving settlement and removal records for Guthlaxton Hundred, I intend to demonstrate a population movement away from parishes which experienced early enclosure and transition to stock rearing. The reduction in employment opportunities and, in some cases, limitations in available housing forced labourers to seek employment elsewhere; frequently in the nearest village

<sup>61</sup> P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*, introduction.

<sup>62</sup> For example: E. P. Thompson, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in P. Clark and D. Souden (eds), *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> For example: K. D. M. Snell, *op. cit.*

which had opportunities in frame-work knitting. The inhabitants of 'open' villages such as Countesthorpe, which experienced later enclosure, were at first cushioned from the need to migrate by a hosiery industry which actively encouraged more operatives.

Removal orders, which were used with greater frequency from the 1790s to return those who were a burden to the parish, suggest a second wave of migration. It would seem that the children of the original migrants, and of the indigenous population, sought employment and higher wages in urban areas. By the second decade of the nineteenth century the hosiery industry was over-stocked and many were returned to the knitting villages. Not surprisingly, therefore, 74.5% of the population resident in Countesthorpe in 1851 had been born in the village and only 5.2% had been born outside Leicestershire.<sup>66</sup>

The removal orders issued between 1790-1834 indicate, first that the majority of adult migrants moved for economic reasons and second, that conditions in the hosiery industry were such that many family incomes had fallen below subsistence level. Yet few detailed studies have been done on poor relief in areas of domestic manufacture. With the exception of J. D. Marshall's study of Nottinghamshire most have concentrated on the agrarian south especially where the old poor law is concerned.<sup>67</sup> The main focus of historians has been the pressure for change which resulted in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 and recently the debate has centred on control of parish relief before and after 1834.<sup>68</sup>

Although Leicestershire was a 'Speenhamland county', so defined by the 1825 Select Committee on Agricultural labourer's wages, a category more associated with the south and east, Guthlaxton Hundred provides us with an opportunity to examine changing patterns of poverty and relief within a mixed area of agriculture and domestic industry. What was important here were the differing costs of relief and the burden on landowners as a result of the expansion of the industrial labour force and subsequent subsistence wages. The question of control over the distribution of relief, magistrates or vestry, seemed less important than who was responsible for payment. Another area which is rarely addressed is that of the strategies adopted by individual groups of workers to mitigate against poor or inadequate wages; much has been said about bread rates and roundsmen systems but little notice has been taken of, admittedly short-lived, friendly societies.

---

<sup>66</sup> H.O. 107/2081

<sup>67</sup> J. D. Marshall, 'The Nottinghamshire Reformers and their contribution to the Old Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, XIII (1961).

<sup>68</sup> P. Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law, Redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987).

Using the poor-law records for both agricultural parishes and those where there was hosiery production I shall argue that the burden of pauperism was not only perceived by its rate-payers to be greater in industrial villages, but that it actually was. The need for a large agricultural labour force at harvest time has traditionally been regarded as a cause of rural poverty for the rest of the year. However a distinction has to be made between predominantly arable and pastoral areas; employment in stock-rearing was not dominated by increased harvest-time demand. By the end of the eighteenth century the early-enclosed parishes had usually limited their labour forces to their requirements, and although seasonal unemployment was not unknown, it was considerably lower than found in the arable south. The parishes which enclosed in the second half of the eighteenth century, the ones which were, in the main, manufacturing villages, had to cope with poverty created by changes in agricultural practices and declining wages in hosiery. The complexity of parish relief in manufacturing villages needs to be stressed further and I intend to examine the consequences, not only of friendly societies and prices on the cost of relief, but of labour supply and changes in market demand.

The historiography of the poor law following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 has been much concerned with the industrialised towns of the north.<sup>69</sup> A study of relief in Guthlaxton Hundred demonstrates how operatives in a more rural location were affected by the change in administration. The consequent increase in wages which occurred in the southern counties did not pertain for those employed in frame-work knitting. The building of workhouses was not the solution to industrial poverty, rural or urban. Rather, as I shall argue, reduction in the cost of relief was achieved at best by erratic administration and at worst by the denial of basic dignities of existence. It was also followed by a shift in opposition; before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act resistance to the system had come from the rate-payers, afterwards the greatest hostility came from those in receipt of relief.<sup>70</sup>

The views of Bentham and Malthus, it has been argued, were adapted to provide justification and ideas for amendments to the Poor Law.<sup>71</sup> The cultural and conceptual consequences for those affected by, as opposed to instigating, change have proved far more difficult to identify. Although, the problem is partly the product of a mainly illiterate group, or one which rarely had recourse to writing down their views, the issue is also beset with questions of definition. E.P. Thompson used Frank Peel's 'oral history' of the Yorkshire Luddites in his analysis of changes in attitude and behaviour which

---

<sup>69</sup> M. E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914* (London, 1972).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>71</sup> P. Mandler, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

occurred due to the introduction of new methods of production.<sup>72</sup> Thompson demonstrated that the changes in productive relationships which occurred in craft-based manufacture resulted in the creation of a working class. The Making of the English Working Class examined the influences which shaped the attitudes of the skilled labourers and reinforced the link between non-conformist religion and political action.

Recently Thompson's thesis has been criticised for its narrow definition of class; that is one based on male artisans.<sup>73</sup> Other attempts have been made to broaden the debate. In complete contrast to Thompson, and with much less success, Edward Shorter examined the impact of industrialisation on the family.<sup>74</sup> Although, it is indeed dangerous to promote a theory of attitudinal change based on scant empirical evidence, it is possible not only to identify changes in behaviour in religious and political participation in the early nineteenth century, but also to suggest that changes in sexual behaviour occurred with the development of new productive relationships. In examining the Countesthorpe evidence for pre-nuptial pregnancy, illegitimacy, and a more assertive participation in religion and political movements, I intend to suggest indicators of newly defined social relationships in the changed economic circumstances of the early nineteenth century.

A considerable amount of research has taken place into the increase in bastardy rates which seem to have been coincidental with developments in manufacture in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century. Attempts have been made, through family reconstitutions, to identify and define women who gave birth to illegitimate babies. David Levine has come closest to placing illegitimacy within an economic context suggesting that it was not 'promiscuity rampant' but 'marriage frustrated'.<sup>75</sup> This was confirmed by the wider-ranging work conducted by Oosterveen, Smith and Stewart which established, through twelve reconstitutions, that bastard bearers were little different from newly-married first-time mothers. Illegitimacy was, it seems, the product of disruptive economic conditions which prevented an anticipated marriage taking place.<sup>76</sup>

Although studies of bastardy include pre-nuptial pregnancy, the rates for which fluctuated parallel to illegitimacy, pre-nuptial conceptions are rarely considered separately. Neither are they adequately placed in their immediate social and economic context, nor, apart from by Shorter, are they seen as representative of changes in sexual attitude. Rather, pre-marital sexual relationships are seen as a result of general employment trends which

<sup>72</sup> F. Peel, The Risings of the Luddites (Heckmondwike, 1895), quoted in E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.* p.570.

<sup>73</sup> P. Hudson, The Industrial Revolution, p.225

<sup>74</sup> E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (London, 1976).

<sup>75</sup> D. Levine, Family Formation, pp. 127-145.

<sup>76</sup> P.Laslett et. al., Bastardy and its Comparative History (London, 1980).

encouraged early marriage and removed preventative barriers . How then are we to explore pre-nuptial pregnancy in Countesthorpe? Much rests on the role of sex in courtship in pre-industrial society and the extent to which agencies of control, principally the church were able to contain 'immoral' behaviour. What needs to be established is the extent to which changes in pre-nuptial pregnancy can be linked to specific economic interest groups. In doing this the 'sentiments approach' will be avoided as will attempts to conflate ideas from inadequate evidence.<sup>77</sup>

The Countesthorpe evidence indicates, I would suggest, that there were distinctive changes in sexual behaviour following agrarian and industrial changes in the late eighteenth century. This is particularly significant as Countesthorpe demonstrates a consistently low female age at first marriage. Low levels of pre-nuptial pregnancy in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century were not linked to circumstances which delayed marriage, although they may well have been linked to opportunities for marriage. What is clearly evident in an examination of pre-nuptial pregnancy rates for the cohort marrying between 1800-1850 is that wives of landless labourers and frame-work knitters were twice as likely as farmer's and frame-owner's wives to be pregnant at marriage. It was the property-less who were also to deviate from the religious beliefs of the Church of England and to seek their own political agenda.

The response of the labouring classes to changes taking place in land ownership and industry have provided a focus for historians from the Hammonds onwards. The Fabian approach was to stress the negative effects of industrialisation, but also to demonstrate that the discontent so engendered manifested itself in the formation of the trade-union movement.<sup>78</sup> The marxist response offered by Eric Hobsbawm, Georges Rudé and E. P. Thompson emphasised a more violent class antagonism.<sup>79</sup> Thompson's Making of the English Working Class, originally planned as an introduction to a study of Chartism, examined the actions taken by skilled artisans to changes in manufacture. Although his work is still regarded as the most important in this field, its narrow base has been questioned. The responses of agricultural labourers, perhaps less coherent but not less significant have been re-examined, most notably by Barry Reay.<sup>80</sup> Responses of women to changes in their agrarian and manufacturing roles have been studied; women's responses, other than the demographic are even more difficult to reclaim than those of

---

<sup>77</sup> M. Anderson, Approaches to the History of the Western Family (London, 1980), p. 85 Comment on Shorter.

<sup>78</sup> S. and B. Webb, The History of Trades Unionism 1666-1920 (London, 1919).

<sup>79</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour (London, 1964); Georges Rudé, The Crowd in History, 1730-1848 (New York, 1964); E. P. Thompson, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> B. Reay, 'The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers: The Battle of Bossenden Wood, 1838', History Workshop Journal, 26 (1988).

working-class males.<sup>81</sup> The proliferation of studies of the actions taken by those who lacked property and control of resources has demonstrated, not just a diversity but a continuum from pre-industrial disturbances and lines of action. Bread riots and the petitioning of Parliament were strategies employed by labourers throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The opportunity provided by a study of a single community over time is to examine inter-related responses to the demands of a changing economy and system of control. This is not only links the decisions taken concerning agricultural and industrial diversification, age at marriage and fertility strategies, but can follow through the altered responses of those affected by the changes which occurred. Some small property owners were able to benefit from enclosure, others were unable to adapt to the changed circumstances; in each case the next response would be different. For example, dissatisfaction with the Church of England was not just the preserve of those who joined the Primitive Methodists; it was also evident in the landowners, petty traders and shopkeepers who founded the Baptist Church. The reactions of those in the community who were unable to prevent enclosure or to press for control of the hosiery industry become clearer. The action taken during the second wave of Luddism can be linked backwards to this, forwards to Chartism as well as being a product of its time. Within this it is important to stress that the responses identified cannot be conflated into a national working-class consciousness. It could be said that such an identity was only possible through national issues and movements. In this period reactions to the Poor Law Amendment Act and the Chartist Movement perhaps come closest to this. Yet, an examination of one group of skilled workers and agricultural labourers in their relationships with those who controlled their livelihood enables us to place reactions within the process of change. A study of a parish through time offers, as Hoskins recognised, the opportunity to people the past.

---

<sup>81</sup> J. Rendall, Women in an Industrialising Society 1750-1880 (Oxford, 1990).

## Chapter One: The Agricultural Development of Countesthorpe from Peasant Farmer to Landless Labourer.

The development of proto-industry is classically associated with 'open' villages, specifically areas where there were numerous small landowners and little control over settlement. Recently the historiography has emphasised that regional patterns of investment, particularly agricultural investment in manufacture were significant for the growth of domestic industry.<sup>1</sup> Agricultural development in Countesthorpe was indicative of such a pattern. The settlement of the village on boulder clay provided more than subsistence farming for at least 38 families by the end of the seventeenth century, but the profitability of the land was challenged by the increased crop yields of lighter soils in East Anglia and the South Downs in the early eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Pastoral farming was intensified but this was limited by the existing open field system. Whilst there is little evidence of engrossment, the larger farmers pressed for enclosure and invested in frames and manufacturing apprenticeships for their younger sons. Following enclosure in 1767 Countesthorpe's larger farmers completed the transformation of the farming system from predominantly arable to pasture. Those who were unable to finance such investment gradually relinquished their land holdings and sought employment in the frame-work knitting industry which was controlled partly by those farmers who had invested earlier, but more commonly by the Leicester hosiers.

The first surviving survey of land holdings in Countesthorpe, in the absence of tithe maps or accounts, is the Enclosure award of 1767. The Hearth tax of 1664 does give indications of property ownership, of the 32 households paying Heath Tax only the Jacksons had six hearths, 2 families were taxed on 3 hearths, 14 on 2 and 15 on 1. Six households were exempt from payment.<sup>3</sup> John Patten argues that the accuracy of Hearth Taxes is variable from county to county and that the correlation between number of hearths and wealth of household is limited.<sup>4</sup> However, in a single village these problems are less acute and as Hoskins suggests they can provide a good indicator of the social structure of a village.<sup>5</sup> Clearly the payment of a tax on hearths cannot be too closely equated with structure of land-ownership, but as a predominantly agriculture village the size of the farmhouse may be a fair indicator of relative distribution of wealth. The structure of land ownership indicated by payment of, and exemption from, Hearth Tax is

<sup>1</sup> For example: P. Hudson, *Regions and Industries*. (Cambridge,1988).

<sup>2</sup> J. Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regional and Agrarian History, 1500-1750*. (London,1987).

<sup>3</sup> Hearth Tax. L.R.O.E/179/251/3. The 1664 Return was used due to the illegibility of the more commonly used 1670 Return.

<sup>4</sup> J. Patten, 'The Hearth Taxes, 1662-1689', *Local Population Studies*, VII (1971).

<sup>5</sup> W. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant* (London,1957), p.195.

one in which property was divided among a substantial group of 'middling' farmers -peasants in Hoskins terms. The number of small dwellings and exemptions indicates a sizeable number of families were dependent on wage-labour.

A limited exchange of land between 1664 and enclosure is indicated by cross referring the hearth tax with the poll books for the elections of 1719 and 1741.<sup>6</sup> Eligibility to vote was based on a property qualification, but this could be buildings or land. Nevertheless the poll books do suggest a high degree of continuity. 60% of those listed in the poll book of 1741 were awarded land at enclosure and 57% of those listed in 1719 or their heirs were awarded land. 41% surname continuity can be traced between those paying on two or more hearths in 1664 and the enclosure award. These basic statistics obscure those known through other sources who were not landowners, such as Feringham Hurd, who had freedom of the City of Leicester in 1730 to trade as a butcher on market days<sup>7</sup> and the Homes family who were resident in Countesthorpe but held land elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Some owners awarded land in 1767 may have owned the land for a continuous period, but were themselves resident in another parish. The poll books only record the voting behaviour of those who turned out, rather than those who were eligible to vote. This suggests a minimum continuity of about 70% between 1741 and enclosure and 67% from 1719. The poll books do not give any indication of size of land holdings, but there seems little to suggest a decrease in the numbers of landowners during the century preceding enclosure which would be indicative of engrossing. This provides one exception, at least, to the broad statements of E.L. Jones who remarks on the high turnover of small farmers on the heavy arable clay lands of the Midlands in the 1690s and second quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The argument for continuity of ownership is supported by the surviving deeds for property exchanges on all mortgages for the period between the hearth tax and enclosure. The enclosure award indicates the survival of parcels of land in multiples of half yard lands. The surviving deeds, while not a comprehensive record, do not support a picture of major exchange in land before enclosure; such exchange being restricted by legislation limiting the direct sale of land. However, they do demonstrate a frequent use of property as a means of raising finance. Of the 63 exchanges noted in the deeds 21 related to the sale or inheritance of land, 42 refer to mortgages of which 11 were the transference of mortgages between lenders. The distribution by decade suggests that three key periods of

<sup>6</sup> Poll Book, L.R.O. L324 SRI.

<sup>7</sup> H.Hartopp (ed), Register of the Freemen of Leicester. (Leicester,1933), p.250.

<sup>8</sup> Poll Book,L.R.O. L324 SRI

<sup>9</sup> E.L. Jones, Agriculture and Economic Growth in England, 1660-1750 (London,1967), p.158.

exchange and mortgage can be identified, the 1720s, 1740s and 1760s. During the 1720s there were 2 exchanges of land and 5 mortgages. Mortgages were also frequent in the 1740s and 1760s with eight and five respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The reasons for taking out mortgages are often difficult to ascertain without supporting evidence. The Gillam mortgage of 1750 may have been used to finance the construction of a new farmhouse in 1751, and the further £100 loan in 1768 used to contribute to the cost of enclosure. Mortgages may have been used to finance extraordinary expenditure, equally they may indicate an inability to secure a sufficient income from land such as occurred when the profit margin was being squeezed by the fall in real wheat prices in the 1740s.<sup>11</sup> This may account for the £200 borrowed by T. Carr in four amounts, before finally selling his land. It can also be argued that land was used as mortgagable property to raise money for manufacture. The Gumleys, for example, raised money on Harton Close for this purpose, their occupation being listed as weavers on the mortgage.<sup>12</sup>

The system of borrowing based on mortgaging property is still under-researched, but the Countesthorpe deeds are evidence of a widespread money market which went far beyond the often petty amounts listed in the probate inventories. The lending of money by gentlemen and spinsters suggests the purchase of annuities. Significant loans were made by those engaged in regional trade and manufacture such as W. Stephens, wheelwright of Anstey and H. Gravesman of Coventry, threadsmen; equally it is clear that money was borrowed from London merchants such as T. Hewett, Great Ormond Street. There is little evidence from the reconstitution study that these links were through family connections. Non-resident landowners such as T. Cooper and J. Adnutt may have had wider links, but it is likely that these loans were arranged as a means of securing a steady income through long term interest for the lenders by local attorneys. Such financial arrangements are similar to those observed by Anderson in his work on the capital market in Lancashire. He saw the local attorney's role as facilitator between a wide range of lenders, London merchants through to spinsters requiring annuities.<sup>13</sup>

The evidence taken from the deeds and material relating to property in general suggests that while farmers in Countesthorpe were experiencing financial constraints due to increased competition from the producers on lighter soils, difficulties were met up to the

---

<sup>10</sup> L.R.O. D.E. 1443.

<sup>11</sup> M. Turner, Enclosures in Britain 1730-1830 (London, 1984), p.48.

<sup>12</sup> L.R.O. D.E. 1443/8-9.

<sup>13</sup> B.L. Anderson, 'The Attorney and the Early Capital Market in Lancashire', in F. Crouzet (ed), Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1972), p.229.

last quarter of the eighteenth century by borrowing and diversification rather than by selling of property. Joan Thirsk notes this as a significant trend on heavy clay soils, and also comments that the continuation of small farmers may have delayed enclosure in some villages.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, there seems no evidence that the larger land owners were buying out the smaller before enclosure took place. The disappearance of the two Jackson families between 1664, when they were taxed on nine hearths and enclosure, suggests break up rather than consolidation of holdings.<sup>15</sup> As Hunt noted in his study of Leicestershire land ownership 'It would be wrong to say... that the engrossing of land by a few large proprietors and the almost complete disappearance of the small landowner generally preceded or facilitated parliamentary enclosure'.<sup>16</sup>

If the Countesthorpe records fail to support large-scale land exchange prior to enclosure, they do indicate a shift in agricultural practice. The dating, or even existence of an 'agricultural revolution' is still widely debated. Turner, for example, states that 'the main period of productivity advanced was the first sixty years of the eighteenth century'.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of root crops took place following the Restoration in 1660 and their increasing importance during the succeeding fifty years for change of land use has been regarded as an explanation of major changes in production, yields and the market. Turnips were unsuitable for the heavy clay soils of the East Midlands and the observable trend in that region has been from arable to pasture. In the introduction to Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650-1815 E.L. Jones states that the impetus to change from predominantly arable to pasture in the Midland clays was encouraged by the inability of its farmers to adopt the new crops: 'such soils were especially unsuited for growing root crops'.<sup>18</sup> The swing in the ratio of cereal to livestock prices between approximately 1650-1750 inspired a long movement from arable to pasture and increased livestock production.<sup>19</sup> This trend is evident in Countesthorpe from probate inventories and terriers and the stint of 1720.

In The Midland Peasant, Hoskins debates whether the stint for Wigston drawn up in 1707 represented a realistic estimation of the number of animals that farmers either intended to or were able to keep. Rather, he suggested that it was an attempt to restrict the rights of pasture in the common fields to the landowners as the amount of common

<sup>14</sup> J. Thirsk (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales. vol. VI Regional Farming Systems. (Cambridge,1984), p.43.

<sup>15</sup> L.R.O. E/179/251/3.

<sup>16</sup> H.G. Hunt, 'Landownership and Enclosure, 1750-1830', Economic History Review, XI (1958-59,) p.501.

<sup>17</sup> M. Turner, 'Agricultural Productivity in Eighteenth Century England. Further Strains of Speculation', Economic History Review, XXXVII (1984), p. 254

<sup>18</sup> E.L. Jones, Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650-1815 (London,1967), pp. 8-38.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.8.

and waste declined due to increasing population pressure. 'There had been a real crisis: the whole of the balance of open field farming had been upset: and this was an attempt to rectify the damage that unwittingly had been done over the past several generations'.<sup>20</sup> The stint which exists for Countesthorpe, drawn up in 1720 may indicate a growing demand for pasture.<sup>21</sup> The need for a formal statement of rights and enforcement through a system of fines, emphasises the limited land available in Countesthorpe. Farmers in Countesthorpe were limited to 3 cows, 2 horses and 25 sheep per yard land farmed, which was 'half the old stint'. The main purpose of the stint was the protection of the balks and hades, particularly where they were being ploughed up. Balks were essential to protect pasture ground: 'the sheep commons and cow pastures belonging to several yard lands are much impaired and must needs in the process of time be totally spoiled unless restrained'. Turner comments that the problem of the open field system was inflexibility not 'so much within arable farming as in limiting choice between arable and pastoral or mixed farming'.<sup>22</sup> What is also noticeable within the stint is that there is no mention of common rights. Pressure on land and numbers of animals was eroding the traditional system at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In his study of north Leicestershire E.L. Jones noted a marked rise in livestock population and a movement to the higher priced crop, wheat, in probate inventories<sup>23</sup> Hoskins had pioneered the use of probate inventories in his studies of the Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century as a means of assessing changes in technique and prosperity during the developmental period of the peasant gentry.<sup>24</sup> Probate inventories for Countesthorpe illustrate changes in agricultural practice between 1704 and 1737. This can be seen by examining the value and importance of arable crops and the fattening of stock.<sup>25</sup> The highest percentage value of arable goods, (60%) was in the inventory of Jonathon Elliot who died in 1704, whereas that of T. Carr is more representative of the later inventories at 56%. Such estimates made before the fall in relative wheat prices indicate a growing emphasis on pasture which was to be consolidated later. This is partly confirmed by terriers drawn up the year before enclosure. These indicate the widespread use of temporary leys within the open fields, frequent mention of permanent closes and a division of land between 60% arable and 40% pasture. This suggests that Countesthorpe farmers were responding to the fall in grain prices and the shift in income between 1717-

---

20 W. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant, p.240.

21 L.R.O. DE 66.

22 M. Turner, English Parliamentary Enclosure, (London,1980), p.81.

23 E.L. Jones, Agricultural and Economic Growth, p. 43.

24 W. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century', in Essays in Leicestershire History, (Liverpool,1950).

25 Probate Inventories.

1724 which favoured the poorer groups rather than farmers, a phenomenon noted by A.H. John.<sup>26</sup>

Much discussion has taken place concerning changes in crop yields to estimate whether improvement occurred pre-, or post-enclosure. Estimates made by Arthur Young and other observers vary between 8 and 20 bushels of wheat per acre for 1700, (King and Fussell), 14-24 bushels for 1760 (Smith and Young) but the figures for 1800 are more consistent, varying by only 2 bushels at 20-22 (Turner and McCulloch).<sup>27</sup> Overton has used inventories in Lincolnshire to calculate changes in yields. His method, which is based on the assessors' estimated value of the crops in the field plus the costs of harvesting divided by the value of the harvested wheat at the previous harvest does not always produce credible yields even when allowance is made for seed corn.<sup>28</sup> For example, probate assessors valued a field of wheat in Countesthorpe at 40s an acre in 1704, when the price per quarter was £1.43 the previous September, suggesting an acceptable yield of 11.44 bushels whereas in 1709 an acre was still estimated at 40s but the previous harvest price of £0.72 suggests a yield of 5.78 bushels, which seems unacceptable within the same open fields. A longer view suggests that the Countesthorpe fields fluctuated between 10.58 bushels per acre and 12.67. This is at the lower end of the scale of yields suggested by Turner using contemporary estimates and indicates declining productivity compared to the lighter soils especially in East Anglia, which averaged 15 bushels and an increase between 1700-1760 of 0.6% p.a.<sup>29</sup> Equally it is somewhat less than the 15.05 bushels calculated in the one post-enclosure inventory which may justify the enclosers' claims.

The probate inventories also reflect a greater dependency on wheat as a crop rather than barley, a trend noted by Yelling in Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850.<sup>30</sup> J. Elliot's arable production was divided between wheat, barley and beans, 20 acres were sown with beans and 10 each of barley and wheat. While the percentage sown with beans varied little in the years 1704-37, the balance shifted from barley to wheat, some of the later inventories even failing to record any barley. The surviving number of inventories for Countesthorpe for the period 1700-1766 is small and therefore these arguments can only be tentative, but they do indicate trends observable elsewhere.

<sup>26</sup> A.H. John., 'Agricultural Productivity and Economic Growth in England, 1700- 1760', in E.L. Jones (ed), Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650-1815 (London, 1967), p.172.

<sup>27</sup> M. Overton, 'Agricultural Productivity in England in 18th Century. Evidence from Crop Yields', Economic History Review, XXXV (1982), p.492.

<sup>28</sup> M. Overton, 'Agricultural Productivity in Eighteenth Century England. Some further speculations', Economic History Review, XXXVII (1984), p.504.

<sup>29</sup> M. Turner, 'Agricultural Productivity', p.254.

<sup>30</sup> J. Yelling, Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850 (London, 1977), pp.195-196.

Limited but significant steps were being taken to extend pasture and profits, but the perceived restrictions of the open field system and the benefits of alternative structures provided the motive for enclosure. This was particularly the case for those owners who were wholly dependent on the returns from the open fields of Countesthorpe.

Historians have found difficulty in producing a single argument for the reasons for eighteenth century parliamentary enclosure even within the two distinct periods. Countesthorpe's enclosure took place during the latter part of the first phase. For this period Hunt suggested that enclosure was motivated by a recovery in food prices, giving a better return on capital. The villages which enclosed during the first phase were those situated on heavy clay lands which were increasingly uneconomic. Enclosure also brought some diminution of cattle disease and above all the growth of Leicester would have produced a ready market for both grain and meat.<sup>31</sup> Ashton suggested that there was an observable relationship between the yield on consols and the incidence of enclosure. Cheap money not only allowed borrowing to take place, but with low rates of interest there could be a greater return from money invested in enclosure through increased rents.<sup>32</sup> Other identifiable factors are shortage of land for pasture and enclosure of contiguous parishes. While the balance of factors still divides historians, most do stress the importance of the size of land holdings arguing that land distribution was a key factor.<sup>33</sup>

The structure of land holding in Countesthorpe prior to enclosure in 1767 was similar to that of Blaby and Wigston which enclosed in 1766-7. Although the parishes were contiguous and within a radius of seven miles of Leicester, the main emphasis should be placed on the distribution and size of land holdings and the area of common land. Foston, also contiguous with Countesthorpe and situated on similar soil had enclosed in the sixteenth century and experienced depopulation and sheep farming under the sole ownership of the Faunts. Parliamentary legislation facilitated the enclosure of villages where there were numerous owners, many occupying less than 50 acres where the larger owners desired it. Thirty three people were awarded land in Countesthorpe at enclosure. The average size of land holding after enclosure was 48 acres and only four farms were of more than 100 acres without including the glebe allocation. The farms of between 10 and 50 acres were the most common although only 22.1% of the land was held in farms of this size, whereas 74.2% of the land was owned by seven owners in parcels greater than

---

31 H.G. Hunt, 'The Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure in Leicestershire', Economic History Review, X (1957), p.266.

32 T.S. Ashton, An Economic History of England in the Eighteenth Century (London,1955), pp.40-41.

33 M. Turner, English Parliamentary Enclosures , p.169

50 acres.<sup>34</sup> The similarity with Wigston is evident here 24.1% of land in Wigston was allocated in units of 10-50 acres and 67.7% in parcels of more than 50 acres.<sup>35</sup> Where the two differed was in the size of the largest holdings, in Wigston three owners had individual property of more than two hundred acres. In Countesthorpe the largest holding was 140 acres. The difference in the scale of the larger holdings may indicate the closer links with financiers and the extent of industrial development in Wigston compared to Countesthorpe. Wigston experienced an emergence of a peasant gentry as early as the end of the seventeenth century 'who lived in the largest houses, cultivated the largest farms, and were slowly beginning to spread into the professions in Leicester'.<sup>36</sup> These families had access to financial circles and were able to invest in manufacture on a larger scale than the smaller farmers of Countesthorpe.

It would be wrong to suggest that the larger owners, especially those who were non resident were necessarily in favour of enclosure. The main impetus for change did come from within the larger owners although not necessarily the largest. McCloskey dismisses the idea that enclosure was due to a new spirit of commercialism in farming. They were motivated not by specific benefits but, by a 'stream of benefits'.<sup>37</sup> This may have motivated such as T. Gillam who was awarded 100 acres in the enclosure settlement, T. Hastings (70 acres) and J. Young (65 acres). E. Stokes, the incumbent of both Countesthorpe and Blaby, is also listed in the Journal of the House of Commons with the three resident proposers. The journal suggests that there were other unnamed proposers, but also names those who opposed the proposed act of Enclosure, J. Davie a large owner (108 acres) was non resident as was J. Foster (23 acres) and T. Wormleighton (7 acres). The reason for their opposition may have been a reluctance to invest in enclosure or uncertainty about the likelihood of increased rents to offset the initial expenditure, or perhaps they realised the 'potential for economic ruin inherent within enclosure'.<sup>38</sup> For Foster, a gentleman residing in Thurnby and for Wormleighton such holdings were possibly part of a larger package designed to provide a steady income through rent, rather than a potential drain on resources. For them the opportunity for rental revaluation was only 'one element in considered economic or entrepreneurial decisions'.<sup>39</sup> J. Gillam, a resident farmer who also opposed may have been in a difficult financial position, he had to borrow money the following year and sold 23 of his acres in 1785.

---

34 L.R.O. En/AX/83/1.

35 W. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant*, p.311.

36 *Ibid.*

37 D. McCloskey, 'The Enclosure of Open Fields. A Preface to a Study of its Impact on the Efficiency of English Agriculture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII (1972), p.30.

38 J.A. Yelling, *op.cit.*, p.49.

39 M. Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, p.41.

The movement towards pasture on the heavy clays of the East Midlands was part of the growing regional specialisation in agriculture and the concomitant market culture of the eighteenth century. It was the motive force in enclosure in Countesthorpe and the process was clearly complete by the mid-nineteenth century. The specific period during which Countesthorpe became predominantly pastoral is difficult to assess, as after 1750 the number of probate inventories declines and only one survives for land in Countesthorpe. As a result there is little continuous evidence to indicate individual farmer's use of their land before the trade directories and census returns of the mid-nineteenth century. The later material does, however, suggest that the majority of farmers were graziers who, consequently, employed few labourers.

Crop returns supplied to the Board of Agriculture in 1801, the enquiry motivated by a series of poor harvests, suggest that the agrarian balance had shifted in favour of pasture in Countesthorpe. At a time when arable prices were high, only 385 of the available 1,234 acres were sown with crops.<sup>40</sup> This can partly be explained by the difference in yields between Leicestershire and the Eastern Counties, the yield on wheat of 24 bushels an acre and barley at 32 bushels an acre were only two thirds of the return on the lighter soils.<sup>41</sup> There was also a change in crops grown from those indicated in the probate inventories fifty years previously. The acreages of pulses grown was significantly lower; 50 acres or 12.9% compared to the average of 30% listed in the inventories. Although this was high compared to the 2.3% for parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred listed by Hoskins.<sup>42</sup> The percentage of wheat cultivated was much closer to the national average of 27%.<sup>43</sup> Leicestershire's emphasis on beans was reduced by changes in demand motivated by the wider markets and the increasing popularity of wheaten bread.

Further evidence for the regional decline of arable farming is provided by Anne Kussmaul's work on marriage seasonality which indicates a decline in the percentage of marriages celebrated after Michaelmas, on the conclusion of the harvest, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Using the indices for the month of October, these indicate a dropping away from a peak of about 250 in 1740 to a decline of about 185 in 1830, in 56 predominately arable parishes. The 'national' figures, based on Wrigley and Schofield's 404 parishes, show a high point of about 195 in 1550 falling to 145 in 1740 and reaching a low point of about 127 in 1830.<sup>44</sup> The decline in the

40 D. McCloskey, 'The Enclosure of the OpenFields', p.30.

41 M. Overton, 'Agricultural Productivity', p.492.

42 W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Crop Returns of 1801', in W.G. Hoskins (ed), Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History (Leicester,1949), pp.144-153.

43 L.P. Adams, Agricultural Depression and Farm Relief in England (London,1932), p.64.

44 A. Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge,1981), p.98

popularity of October marriages is even more marked in the Midland counties as probably fewer 'living in' servants were hired. The need for 'living in' servants was less in regions concentrating on pasture and the critical period for hiring those who were employed in this form of agriculture was the spring indicating a move from arable to pasture. Marriage seasonality in Countesthorpe indicates a move from arable to pasture and underlines the change in the type of agriculture taking place. Among the cohort in Countesthorpe who married in the period 1700-24 the highest index of 235.6 was for October weddings. The cohort married between 1725-49 were also most likely to marry in the post-harvest period; the highest rate was 256.6 for September. The subsequent cohort married between 1750-1774 experienced twin peaks in April and October, 176.7 and 171 respectively. From 1775 the figures may have been influenced more by marriages between those involved in manufacturing occupations than those employed in agriculture as the percentage of the population who were employed in agriculture declined. For the cohorts marrying in the 25 year periods between 1775 and 1850 the highest monthly rate was for December the rates being, 229.9 , 256.5 and 303.7.

The use of quantitative dates and methods of this sort, debated by some, can be reinforced by more traditional literary evidence on agrarian shifts. In the general view of The General View of Agriculture of the County of Leicestershire made by W. Pitt to the Board of Agriculture in 1809, are the following observations on the consequences of enclosure in Queniborough :the alteration of circumstances by this enclosure may be stated thus:

no more corn grown, nor greater number of cattle kept, or increased produce of butter cheese or beef, no more sheep in number kept, but of better quality with much fewer losses and sold fat instead of lean'. It is of interest to note that less land was now ploughed, and he comments that there was a 'necessity for fewer hands'.<sup>45</sup>

The combined evidence of crop returns and Countesthorpe's marriage seasonality would suggest that the process of increasing investment in pastoral farming, which was economically more suited to the heavy clay soil of Countesthorpe, was completed in the 25 years following enclosure. Pastoral farming and enclosure had much wider implications than change in land use, it stimulated a wide scale change in land ownership. Chambers denies this, in describing Leicestershire as a classic pasture area, he suggests that the pattern of property distribution remained basically unaltered between 1780 and 1830.<sup>46</sup> Research by Hunt into land ownership in Leicestershire challenges this. He argues that the number of large landowners grew in the 50 years after 1780 and that they

<sup>45</sup> W. Pitt, The General View of the County of Leicestershire (London,1809), p.73.

<sup>46</sup> J.D. Chambers, 'Enclosure and the Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds), Population in History, (London,1965), p.305.

increased their estates at the expense of the small farmer.<sup>47</sup> However Hunt states that this change occurred in both open field and enclosed villages and that the important factor was the change in agricultural prices particularly in the period following the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>48</sup> Hunt's analysis is partly supported by Turner's argument, but Turner makes a much stronger link with enclosure, emphasising that high wheat prices during the French Wars facilitated the repayment of loans which the smaller owners had been required to incur to finance the costs of enclosure. The depression which followed resulted in falling prices, but the interest on the loans remained constant at 4-5%, so forcing a sale of property.<sup>49</sup> The change in land ownership which occurred in Countesthorpe is clearly linked to enclosure.

The main evidence used to estimate changing ownership are the Land Tax Assessment returns 1782-1832; these are far from straightforward accounts. Mingay, in attempting to suggest an increase in the number of small farmers following enclosure, argued that the assessments were hazardous after 1798, as those whose property was valued at less than 20s p.a. were excluded from the calculations.<sup>50</sup> Donald Ginter argues that 'land tax cannot produce coefficients which approach precision in measuring inequalities of wealth at the national level in 1798, or any other year'<sup>51</sup> Mingay also criticises the way in which historians interpret the assessments to make acreage comparisons across and within counties, due to the disproportionate taxation paid by smaller owners on their land and tenements.<sup>52</sup> Turner also experienced problems in identifying small land owners from those who held buildings. In addition he noted that the Land Tax Assessments tended to inflate the size of holdings of the larger owners. But, overall he noted that 'gross distortion of the individual's position on the agricultural ladder are rare'.<sup>53</sup>

In a study of a single community different holdings can be identified with a particular individual and much can be gained by cross-referencing sources on a local basis. Broad noted in his study, 'there was a high correlation between acreages listed in the enclosure award and acreage equivalents on the Land Tax Assessments for those who appear on both'.<sup>54</sup> Turner agrees with this, despite the regional or national problems, on a parish

---

47 E.H.Hunt, 'Land ownership', p.503.

48 *Ibid.*, p.504.

49 M., Turner and D. Mills, Land and Property. The English Land Tax 1692-1832. (Gloucester, 1986), p.9.

50 G.E. Mingay, 'The Land Tax Assessment and the Small Landowner', Economic History Review, XVII (1964), p.381.

51 D. Ginter, 'A Wealth of Problems with the Land Tax', Economic History Review, XXXV (1982), p.417

52 G.E. Mingay, *op.cit.*, p.381.

53 M. Turner and D. Mills, *op.cit.*, p.58.

54 J. Broad, Land Tax and Village Communities, quoted by M.Turner and D.Mills, *op.cit.*, p.66.

basis 'land tax can be used with confidence'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, at this level more subtle changes in ownership can be highlighted to illustrate piecemeal sale of land rather than simply identify those who made a single stage transition from land owner to landless labourer.

Land Tax Assessments were calculations based on the acreage of the township and the correlation between value and acreage varies between localities. The estimated acreage/taxation payable for Countesthorpe, based on the total taxation paid divided by the total acreage is 1s 1d per acre and all calculations are based on this. Between Enclosure in 1767 and the first Land Tax Assessments of 1782 the most noticeable change in ownership occurred among the non-resident landowners; only one resident owner cannot be traced either by name or heir in the intervening period, and only 56.5 acres were documented as being held by new owners. The main change in ownership structure occurred between 1788 and 1792 when there is clear evidence for fewer, but larger owners. 17 owners were listed for the last time in 1788.<sup>56</sup> 82% of them owning less than 10 acres, the number of new owners indicated by the 1792 return was significantly fewer and of the nine 58% were owners of less than 10 acres. The decline of those owning less than 10 acres was noted by Martin in his study of Warwickshire where, of the 80 families owning property of less than 10 acres at enclosure in the period 1760-4, only 33.8% of the names survive by 1825.<sup>57</sup> In Countesthorpe some of the property was inherited within the family; E. Heathcote inherited eight acres on the death of her husband in 1790. The underlying trend is one of endogamous engrossment, but at this point it was on a small scale' 17 acres are accounted for not in the sale or inheritance but in the larger amounts of taxation paid by existing owners.

With the exception of the period 1822-32, there were the same number, or fewer, owners listed in each taxation return. The ten owners listed for the first time in 1832 owned fewer acres in total than the 7 owners listed for the last time ten years previously. The increase in the mean size of property was a continuous trend from 1788 (Fig. 3.1). The total number of acres listed as being purchased by new owners was on each occasion smaller than those sold by owners who ceased to be listed; existing owners were clearly taking the opportunity to increase the size of their land holdings. Between the returns of 1798 and 1805 six owners increased their property by a total of 158 acres an average of 26 acres each. All of this was acquired through purchase rather than inheritance. Not all the engrossment of land holdings can be explained by others selling their property in its

---

<sup>55</sup> M. Turner and D. Mills, *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>56</sup> L.R.O. Q.S. 62/85/1-54.

<sup>57</sup> J. Martin., 'Warwickshire and the Parliamentary Enclosure Movement', (unpublished Ph.d.thesis, University of Birmingham, 1965).

entirety; some owners sold land in a piecemeal manner. During the period 1785-1805 this was limited, the largest noted decrease between returns was 20 acres sold by three owners between 1798 and 1805. The most significant decreases in acreage occurred in the period 1812-22., when four owners reduced their total property by 198 acres and 1822-32 when 3 owners sold 178 acres. During the latter period four existing owners increased their holdings by a total of 157 acres.

The key trend indicated by Land Tax Assessments is one of fewer of owners who were increasingly resident in Countesthorpe, who occupied or rented land to tenant farmers and who owned a larger number of acres. In 1785 there were 33 owners listed on the taxation return 66% of whom occupied their own land and 44% who rented it out to tenant farmers. In 1832 25 people (a 25% decrease) paid taxation, 80% of those on land they owned and occupied, 20% on land that was rented out. By 1832 the situation had changed from that observed by Pitt in 1809 when he stated that 'enclosure has been a good speculation for the proprietors'. But he also added 'the occupiers could not have paid their way, had it not been for the late extraordinary prices'.<sup>58</sup>

The trend towards fewer and larger farms was consistent with changes in agricultural practice, a major fall in prices and a marginal reduction in rents following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. Pastoral farming was more commonly carried out in larger units than arable farming and this would necessitate an increase in the average farm size, certainly larger than the average size of farm noted in Countesthorpe at enclosure. Intensification of pastoral farming had clearly taken place in Countesthorpe before enclosure through the use of temporary leys. However owners could not always be allocated in 1767 the land which they had used for fattening stock previously. Yelling observes that in many villages each farmer was given a share of different types of land.<sup>59</sup> It took about six years to bring land to good turf and, as the stocking of beasts cost considerably more than arable, the period before Countesthorpe farmers reached maximum profitability would be protracted, perhaps 20 years with the financial burden of the original investment in physically enclosing the fields. <sup>60</sup> Farmers who were able to invest in this manner would, therefore, be in a position from the mid 1780s to use profits to purchase land being sold by smaller owners. The smaller owners, who were clearly vulnerable by the mid 1780s and were willing to sell were those who may have been unable, or unwilling, to change their farming practice. For owners of less than 10 acres, the main priority would have been feeding their dependants with the demands of the market being secondary to this. Pitt calculated that 'An acre of wheat upon such land will, under good management, over

---

58 W.Pitt, *op.cit.*, p.72.

59 J.A. Yelling, *op.cit.*, p.142.

60 *Ibid.*, p.57.

and above the seed, produce the annual bread of a family of four or five persons, which is suppose to be half their sustenance, living in as a good a style as falls to the lot of the average of mankind...An acre of such land in pasture will not I believe, furnish the subsistence of a single person'.<sup>61</sup> Enclosure required a financial investment, not only in the public costs of £1 an acre, significantly higher than that estimated by Turner of approx. 12s an acre, which had to be paid in 1767, but in fencing and hedging.<sup>62</sup> Such costs were paid for by borrowing, the precluded loans for investment in pasture. The burden of such loans increased as profits were reduced, as a consequence of the fall in wheat prices from the early 1780s. The pressure existed for the smaller owners to sell, at a time at which the larger owners were able to purchase.

The critical period for those owning medium acreages was at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. 'Prices fell; land values dropped precipitously; farming stock became a drug on the market'.<sup>63</sup> The dramatic fall in prices for wheat, precipitated by the ending of the blockade was exacerbated by rising unemployment which increased the poor rate for those eligible to pay. The expense of cultivating 100 acres of land had already increased from £411.75 in 1790 to £771.75 in 1813 as calculated by Adams.<sup>64</sup> Those who had survived the earlier crisis were evidently forced, either to sell entirely, or to sell part of their holding to pay interest on loans. Not all loans were paid off within the original period of 20 years, some mortgages were for 500 years although the repeated 20 year loan was more common. 'Small farmers who had borrowed from the country banks found the financial strain too great and were forced to sell out for what ever they could get'.<sup>65</sup> Some owners were able to retain a viable holding for themselves in the short term, but were then vulnerable at a later stage and were unlikely to provide an adequate living for all their adult sons.

The fall in agricultural prices from 1815 (wheat was at a peak of 106s 6d a quarter in 1813, 72s 3d in 1819, beef 91/2d per pound in 1814 and 71/2d in 1819), and the increase in the poor-rate had implications for those owners renting out their property.<sup>66</sup> As tenant farmers faced increasing hardship they were unable to meet their outgoings and were forced to find alternative income. Some of the tenant farmers were themselves owners, and when profits were declining they would relinquish the rented land on which the outgoings were higher. Rents had increased at enclosure, McCloskey states that the rise

---

61 W.Pitt, *op.cit.*, p.79

62 Enclosure Award, *op.cit.*; M.Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, p.68.

63 L.P. Adams, *op.cit.*, p.64.

64 *Ibid.*, p.35.

65 *Ibid.*, p.69.

66 *Ibid.*, p.66.

in rents had been a 'positive result of enclosure' when long leases had been annulled and rents had been brought into line with prices. When prices fell, rents remained high.<sup>67</sup> As Adams states 'tenants holding land under long leases at rents based on wartime prices, had to sell their stock to pay rents and finally were forced to give up their farms'.<sup>68</sup> One owner in Countesthorpe, William Clark, rented 3 acres from Joseph Humphrey in 1822 in addition to the 17 he owned. By 1832 he had not only relinquished the lease on the Humphrey property, but had reduced his holding to 6 acres. Rents did increase with enclosure, but leases negotiated in the depression from 1815 onwards would not have commanded such high returns. This may be the explanation for why Charles Drugby and Edmund Wigley sold, rather than re-let their land between 1822-1832. This money may have then been invested in manufacture such as hosiery, although this is less likely as this trade too was depressed, rather it may have been used in the wider money markets, the yields on consols began to rise from the early 1820s after experiencing a dramatic fall in 1815.

The sale of land had widespread implications for the structure of the community and for employment opportunities. Chambers argued two fundamental points in 'Enclosure and the Labour Supply', first, that enclosure marked only one stage in the ascendancy of the large farm; it was not a signal for the extinction of the small farm as an economic unit everywhere. Second, that new forms of agriculture in fact increased employment on the land, as for example the introduction of fat stock which required continuous labour throughout the year.<sup>69</sup> The evidence from the Countesthorpe records suggest the opposite, enclosure precipitated the decline of the small farmer and severely restricted employment in agriculture.

At the census taken in 1851, 13 of the residents of Countesthorpe gave their occupation as either farmer and grazier, or gardener.<sup>70</sup> Censuses fail to note whether these were owner occupiers or tenant farmers, but as they occupied a total of 1487 acres, it is clear that the total number of farmers had fallen from the 25 noted in the last Land Tax Assessment of 1832. If the farmers listed in 1851 are cross referenced with the earlier taxation assessment, 7 of those families occupying land in 1851 were listed as owners in 1832 and three of the remaining four were listed as tenants. Clearly engrossment continued after 1832.

---

<sup>67</sup> D McCloskey, *op.cit.*, p.33.

<sup>68</sup> L.P. Adams, *op.cit.*, p.70.

<sup>69</sup> D. Chambers, *op.cit.*, p.321.

<sup>70</sup> H.O. 107/2081.

It is possible to trace the broad changes in land ownership over a period of 200 years and note a movement towards farming directed principally to the market and less towards the support of the community. The changing number and position of those employed on the land is more difficult to assess, in the absence of village censuses, poor relief records, or consistently recorded occupations in the parish registers. Even where occupation is given at the baptism of a child the term 'labourer' is ambiguous and by the baptism of a subsequent child, the father may state his occupation as frame-work knitter. This indicates the difficulty of ascertaining the numbers employed in agriculture, but also the fluidity of employment within a relatively small village in a period of structural transition. The changes in employment were noted by Pitt, in a slightly different context, in 1809 'The village contains a number of tenements occupied by stocking weavers...when trade fails they apply to the parish officers, and if the farmers give them employment they make very indifferent labourers'.<sup>71</sup>

In 'Men on the Land, Men in the Countryside', E.A. Wrigley notes that there was a limited expansion in agriculture between 1520 and 1800, although the population grew by 400% employment in agriculture grew by less than 50%. Between 1811 and 1851 the percentage of adult males employed in agriculture fell from 39% to 25%. However, when the population increase is introduced to the equation, the number people employed in agriculture increased by 40,000.<sup>72</sup> The population in Countesthorpe was growing during this period and 28% of adult males were in agricultural occupations, but the indicators are that the employment opportunities on the land were decreasing.<sup>73</sup>

In the 1851 Census returns, the 13 farmers stated that they employed a total of 45 people. A wider survey of employment gives a total of 43 households headed by an agricultural labourer, three widows employed on the land and 16 resident offspring, living with their parents in Countesthorpe, giving their occupation as farm worker. Ten of the resident offspring lived with fathers who gave their occupation as farmers, although it is unclear whether they were included in the 45 noted employees. The inconsistency in numbers can be explained by a small number of labourers living in Countesthorpe, but working elsewhere, possibly in Foston where residence was restricted. It is also likely that the widows who gave agricultural occupations only found such employment when the seasonal demand was high during harvest.

---

<sup>71</sup> W.Pitt, *op.cit.*, p.73.

<sup>72</sup> E.A. Wrigley, 'Men on the Land. Men in the Countryside., Employment in Agriculture in Early Nineteenth Century England', in L. Bonfield, R. Smith & K. Wrightson (eds), *The World We Have Gained*. (Oxford, 1986), p.295.

<sup>73</sup> Census, *op.cit.*

The opportunities in agriculture were declining for the younger sons of farmers and graziers, who at one time may have been able to secure a living on the family farm. Of the 44 resident offspring of farmers, 22.7% mentioned were employed on the land, 27.3% were listed as scholars, but 50% were involved in frame-work knitting, 12 of whom were under 15. For the children of agricultural labourers the situation was bleaker still, only 7.3% of the resident children followed their father's occupation compared to 3.6% involved in trades and crafts, 23.6% were noted as scholars and 65.5% gave their occupation as frame-work knitter, seamers or bobbin winders.

A significant feature of the 1851 Census for those directly employed in agriculture was that in a total population of 759 only 135 (18.26%) were supported by paid employment in agriculture, the remainder were farmers (10.6%), trade and craft (9.4%) or principally frame-work knitting (52.6%). Pitt commented 'Respecting human labour and employment for the poor, the balance seems to go rather against the enclosure'.<sup>74</sup> Engrossment and intensification of pasture had made participation in agriculture the preserve of an elite. 50% of the farmers occupying more than 100 acres in 1851 were heirs of those who had benefited from the enclosure award. In the intervening period they had increased their land by a significant amount, as others had given up ownership and participation in agriculture. Evidence taken from the reconstitution study allows a detailed examination of those individuals, and their heirs, noted in the enclosure award and the Land Tax Assessments, and suggests why certain families succeeded where others failed.

Of those families listed at enclosure in 1767 who were resident in Countesthorpe, 46.6% experienced either economic stability or increased prosperity, 20% were untraceable beyond the immediate generation and 34% were unable to maintain their position either on the land, or as an employer of labour in trade or manufacture. The prognosis was more favourable for those listed on the first Land Tax Assessment, 56% of whom either remained stable or improved their position, 20% of whom do not appear in subsequent records and 24% whose economic position declined.

An example of those families whose economic standing increased during the period are the Bassetts. In 1767 W. Bassett and his son Richard occupied a total of 49 acres, in 1851 Christopher Bassett and his son William had increased their holding to 568 acres and employed 20 men between them. A similar profile can be noted for the Humphreys, who were landowners in the Land Tax Assessment of 1785, although it is likely that they had been renting property before, as Lebbeus Humphrey gave his occupation as farmer at

---

74 W.Pitt. *op.cit.*, p.73

his marriage in 1760. Between 1785 and 1851 they increased their acreage from 9 to 180 acres. The Humphreys and the Bassetts were both Baptist families and precise details of inheritance are more difficult to ascertain than those who celebrated baptism, marriage and burial in St. Andrew's Church. A correlation between the enclosure award and later evidence suggests that the farmers who were resident in Countesthorpe in 1767 and who improved their position, owned or were tenant farmers of land which was capable of securing a minimum profit even in a harsh economic climate. Occupation of land of more than 50 acres did not guarantee economic survival, if ownership was supported by excessive loans and mortgages, as was the case with T. Gillam.

A smaller land holding of less than 20 acres could be used as a basis for dual occupation and it is apparent that not all those families who were listed either in the Enclosure Award or in the first Land Tax Assessment maintained or improved their position through agriculture. The Bents could be classed as 'small farmers'; according to their first Land Tax Assessment, although it is clear from John Bent's will that he also held property in Blaby. It is likely that he diversified into frame-work knitting before enclosure. His heir John, who inherited the land, 8 tenements, frames and £500 in ready money in 1828 gave his occupation as farmer at the baptism of his children, but at the 1851 census listed his primary occupation as frame-work knitter employing 6 people. Other occupations listed which suggest some maintenance of position were grocer, publican and miller.

For most, the occupation given as frame-work knitter in 1851 suggested a decline in fortunes. the Johnson family could be classed as 'small farmers' on the taxation paid on their house and land in 1785. Josiah Johnson, who gave an agricultural occupation at the baptism of his first child, seemed to find some difficulty in securing an adequate income from the land, as he was exempt from taxation payable on the registration of Samuel, his second child in 1791. He managed to keep a decreasing portion of land in the family from 12 acres to 3 in 1832, but two of his sons became frame-work knitters and the third had a small degree of respectability, if not economic standing, as Parish Clerk. The failure of the Lord family to maintain any economic independence from the small allocation of 4 acres at enclosure is also evident: The three sons of Robert Lord who was last mentioned in the Land Tax Assessments in 1788, although he did not die until 1795, gave their occupations as frame-work knitters. In total 12 of the direct line of those whose position declined and who can be traced, gave their occupations in official documents as frame-work knitters. As Saville has commented 'Nowhere save in Britain was the peasantry virtually eliminated before the acceleration of economic growth that is associated with the development of industrial capitalism, and of the many special features of early industrialisation in Britain none is more striking than the presence of a rapidly

growing proletariat in the countryside'.<sup>75</sup> The economic viability of farmers who were awarded small parcels of land at enclosure, or who inherited similar size land holdings at a later date, was precarious, the period before the French Wars was critical for this group. Ironically, at that time there were opportunities in frame-work knitting. Pauperisation in the hosiery industry became increasingly apparent after 1815.

While the declining fortunes of a number of families can be traced clearly over a considerable period of time, the fortunes of those families at one time resident in Countesthorpe, but who later disappear from the records would also suggest the need to find employment elsewhere. Only a small percentage were likely to own land elsewhere, such as J. Bellamy who was buried in Countesthorpe, but whose will indicated property at Kilby Bridge. The Burley and Heathcote surnames survive in Countesthorpe until the mid nineteenth century, but branches of the families who held land at enclosure in 1767 disappear from the records. Clearly the land exchange took place before enclosure and ownership of property then did not mean continuous residence. However, enclosure and subsequent economic developments had clear implications for those Countesthorpe families involved in agriculture. For many enclosure really was little more than E.P. Thompson's 'Class Robbery', it was played according to the 'fair rules of property', but it secured land in the hands of an increasingly small elite and for many who had been small owners the only alternatives available were to sell their labour in Countesthorpe, or to migrate and find paid employment elsewhere.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> J. Saville, 'Primitive Accumulation and Early Industrialisation in Britain', in J.Saville and R. Milliband (eds), The Socialist Register, (London,1969), p.250

<sup>76</sup> E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963), pp.237-8.

## Chapter Two: The origins and development of the hosiery industry .

### 2.1 Origins of the Frame-work Knitting Industry in Guthlaxton Hundred

The historiographical debate, which in recent years has focused on the appropriateness of the proto-industrialisation model as an explanation of industrial development, has produced a body of research into the regionally based industries of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Much of this research has challenged not only the dynamics of change suggested by Kreidte, Medick and Schlumbohm, but has questioned the definitions of industrialisation inherent in the concept.<sup>1</sup> How far this model is appropriate as an explanation for the development of frame-work knitting between 1640 and 1850 needs to be explored further.

What the regional studies and debate have done is to identify the significant features of those industries which developed from domestic to factory production and to suggest the main dynamics of change. D.C. Coleman distinguished five main features in the proto-industrial model. '1. The unit of reference is the region... 2. The growth within that region of rural industry involving peasant participation in handicraft production for the market... 3. The market for goods was outside the region... 4. There was an essential linkage between proto-industrial activity and commercial agriculture...5. Towns provided the merchants of the putting-out system who directed the manufacturing activity dispersed in the surrounding countryside'.<sup>2</sup> These elements would appear to apply to the development of the hosiery industry as they do to early woollen textile production and the metal-toy industry.<sup>3</sup> What is questionable is the relative importance placed on these features by the proto-industrialists within the contexts of population growth, capital accumulation and technical development. A comparison of the quite different stages of development identified in cotton, hosiery and straw plaiting for example, would seem to challenge the suggested linear development from kauf system to the more advanced verlag system.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For example: J.K. Walton, 'Proto-industrialisation and the First Industrial Revolution: The Case of Lancashire', in P. Hudson (ed), Regions and Industries : A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> D.C. Coleman, 'Proto-industrialization : A Concept too Many', Economic History Review, XXXVI (1983), p.437.

<sup>3</sup> P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, (eds ), Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory, (Cambridge, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.19.

Manufacture in Town and Countryside before the Factory explored the key features and dynamics of proto-industry within the context of specific regions and industries. This demonstrated one of the major problems with the model: in its attempt to offer universality it can explain the problem too generally, and when attempting specificity it fails to be a universally acceptable model. This conundrum is explored in John Walton's study of the Lancashire cotton industry.<sup>5</sup> However, these studies do identify and develop specific factors which are inherent in the proto-industrial hypothesis and may have a significance for the development of domestic production, such as that on which the frame-work knitting industry was based.

The research undertaken by Pat Hudson on the West Yorkshire textile industry explored two specific areas which have a wider application. First she considered the pattern of land ownership in the contrasting areas of woollen and worsted production. She contrasted the existence of the independent rural artisan, owning six to ten acres who combined woollen manufacture with agriculture, with the landless cottager who was part of the putting-out system on which worsted production was based. These discrete systems were themselves the result of differing inheritance systems and agricultural practices. Worsted production was clearly linked with partible inheritance and pastoral farming, whereas the larger surviving land holdings of the artisans were linked to arable production. Second, she considered the importance of capital, both circulating and fixed, in the development of factory production. The mortgaging and sale of land to raise finance was very significant in the woollen sector. The material threshold of entry in the worsted sector was much higher and the control of development was in the hands of the putting-out merchants.<sup>6</sup> Hudson argued that the proto-industrial structure survived until the 1840s in the woollen industry, whereas the transition to factory production in the production of worsted occurred earlier. While using the terminology of proto-industrialisation, she appeared to question it as a model for change from domestic to factory production. She argued that the real weakness 'emanates from the underlying conception of a linear progressive development whereby domestic and dispersed production is seen as inherently inferior to, and destined to be superseded by, the more advanced'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> J. Walton, *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> P. Hudson, 'Proto-industrialisation : the Case of the West Riding Wool Textile Industry in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.52-3.

The frame-work knitting industry has been used as an example of proto-industrialisation, for example, by David Levine, although little detailed work has been undertaken to support this.<sup>8</sup> The hosiery industry appears superficially to follow a linear development from kauf system to verlag system although factory production did not occur until the second half of the nineteenth century, much later than most textile industries. The key factors outlined by Coleman can be identified in this sector. The hosiery industry was mainly limited to the Midland region, with only a small base in London and elsewhere. The majority of frames in Leicestershire were scattered throughout the villages and satellite towns but raw materials and markets were controlled by the merchants resident in Leicester. The market for hose, and other articles produced on domestic frames in the hosiery district, was not only the wider national market, but until the 1820s, Europe and North America. The period in which the frame-work knitting industry underwent its major growth coincided with the transition from arable to pasture in Leicestershire and a growing dependence on other counties for cereal production. The key features of the hosiery industry are allied to those of proto-industry, but only because they are the main feature of domestic industry. A significant question concerning development is already apparent: why did the hosiery industry not enter into mechanised production until the second half of the nineteenth century? Was this the result of something more significant than the technical difficulties of applying steam power to the hand frame? These issues will be discussed later.

The essays and studies produced in connection with the proto-industrial model suggest aspects of change and development which need to be explored more carefully within the context of the hosiery industry. This is true, for example, of population growth. As Coleman suggested, only reconstitution studies can establish whether population growth precipitated proto-industrialisation or whether 'proto' industrialisation leads via earlier marriage to population growth'.<sup>10</sup> The Countesthorpe evidence will be used to demonstrate the co-existence of both explanations in the development of the industry. The importance of this for the pattern of inheritance and the employment of younger sons is clearly critical. Hudson used the contrast between the artisan-based woollen industry and the merchant controlled worsted industry to demonstrate that the development was not linear. The hosiery industry demonstrates the co-existence of the two forms, although the putting

---

<sup>8</sup> D. Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York, 1977)

<sup>10</sup> D.C.Coleman, op. cit., p. 442.

out merchants were in the majority by the early nineteenth century. The importance of capital accumulation and circulating capital needs to be explored further to explain why some artisans became significant employers of labour, but not merchants. Technical changes did take place within the frame-work knitting industry, but the development of wide frames, for example, did not seem, in itself, to precipitate any major changes in the system of production, but served to exploit that was already in existence.

A major problem exists with any explanation of the economic origins of frame-work knitting which fails to distinguish between the different branches of the industry. The extensive studies by Chapman emphasised the diverse nature of the industry and stressed the different patterns of development in Leicestershire compared with Nottinghamshire, significantly in the sphere of investment: 'It seems that the circumstances in which frame-work knitting was introduced to Leicester contrived to exclude the smallest class of capitalists and in this sense at least the structure continued to make a contrast with Nottingham'<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, using the Commission into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters and Felkin's enquiries, it is possible to identify dissimilarities between the three Midland hosiery counties and within Leicestershire itself.<sup>12</sup>

In Leicestershire there were three significant features determining the type of frame-work knitting community: villages can be divided by geographical location, their links with merchant hosiers and the types of frame employed. Villages did not necessarily have the same profile. For example, Countesthorpe was geographically identifiable with Blaby, Enderby, Narborough, Whetstone, Cosby and Broughton Astley as a major centre of hosiery production in south-west Leicestershire<sup>13</sup> Suggestions about the structure of the local industry can be made by using the data given in the Victoria County History of Leicestershire by comparing the number of bagmen in a village with the number of frames employed. A large ratio of frames to bagmen would suggest few remaining independent local employers and thus more direct links with the merchant hosier or his appointed putter-out. It would seem that Narborough had close links with the merchant hosiers, with a ratio of 1:144,

---

11 S.D. Chapman, 'The Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry 1600-1759', Textile History 3 (1974), p. 37.

12 Ibid. ., passim.

13 Victoria County History of Leicestershire, 3 (London, 1954-55), p.3.

Broughton Astley had a ratio of one bagman to 275 frames compared to the ratio of 1:30 frames in Countesthorpe.<sup>14</sup> This would indicate that Countesthorpe had maintained some degree of independence from the Leicester merchants and that bagmen who rented out frames to villagers acted as middlemen between the hosier and the market. The types of frames also differed significantly. Enderby had 350 frames producing fully fashioned worsted stockings. Whetstone was unusual for south-west Leicestershire in having 60 cotton frames as well as 225 worsted, but all produced stockings. Countesthorpe had the largest percentage of wide frames outside the urban centres. In this village the whole production was based on worsted, with 84 frames producing cut up stockings and 130 producing drawers, shirts and pieces.<sup>15</sup>

These significant differences were both a feature of, and products of, different stages of development. The frame-work knitting industry had a discrete identity defined by its regional location and with a national and international market, but its internal differences were the product of more than the vagaries of fashion. The origins of these differences have their existence in the 'peasant economies' of the individual villages, in addition to the extraneous development of technology, trade restrictions and consumer demand. Dennis Mills has attempted to identify the economic profile of the Leicestershire villages which experienced the development of frame-work knitting.<sup>16</sup> He used data extrapolated from the Hearth Tax Returns of 1670, the Poll Book of 1719, Land Tax Assessments for 1780 and 1832, Felkin's Returns for 1844 and the Census Return of 1851. This data suggested that the villages which were most heavily dependent on frame-work knitting in 1844, 'were those which in 1670 had been the largest and had contained a high proportion of poor households'.<sup>17</sup> The correlation with frame-work knitting villages, in fact, showed a strong inverse relationship with wealthier households and a weaker inverse relationship with middling status households. The Leicestershire evidence, Mills argued, challenges the thesis suggested by Rogers, that it was the villages where there was 'a certain measure of wealth (but not great wealth)', which experienced the development of frame-work knitting.<sup>18</sup>

---

14 *Ibid.*, p.20.

15 *Ibid.*, p.20.

16 D.R. Mills, 'Rural Industries and Social Structure. Framework Knitters in Leicestershire', *Textile History*, 13 (1982).

17 *Ibid.*, p.194.

18 A. Rogers, 'Rural Industries and Social Structure : the Framework Knitting Industry of South Nottinghamshire 1670-1840' *Textile History* 13, (1982).

Mills himself was hesitant in accepting the conclusions drawn from this analysis: 'Does this mean that the thesis of the middling rich village, of the small entrepreneur with capital has been refuted? Probably not'.<sup>19</sup> Mills advanced a theory of what he terms the 'ecological fallacy'. The theory would allow the historian to accept the result of the statistical exercise, but at the same time believe that it was a hidden group of middling entrepreneurs who diversified first. In fact there are problems with the data on which the statistical analysis is based, in calculating the density of owners, and thus the relative wealth, of villages in 1780 and 1832, Mills rather surprisingly divided the 1891 acreage by the number of owners listed in the Land Tax Assessments. An examination of these somewhat mismatched figures indicates that he divided the acreage by all owners listed, whether they were taxed on land or buildings. This is a serious error when it is used to define industrial villages, where taxation paid solely on buildings would be a significant feature. Rather than being forced to devise a new 'theory' to explain untenable results Mills should have selected more appropriate data for the task.

If it is possible to question the statistical data, it is also possible to challenge Mills on his failure to explore the distinct phases in the development of the frame-work knitting industry. The early stages were dominated by the independent artisan who owned and worked his own frame, but, while the artisan still existed in the more advanced stages, the majority of the frames were rented. Mills makes no distinction between the different branches of the trade. Had he done so he might have found that his 'poor villages'; may have provided a suitable base economy for putting-out. The 'middling villages' may have supported the independent artisan through to the later stages as an employer of labour, or a bagman.

An alternative line of enquiry was suggested by Mills to explore the economic basis for the introduction of frames in Leicestershire and their early development. Yet it was a line of enquiry which he rejected almost immediately: 'We are still in need of more information about individual frame-work knitters such as that provided by probate and insurance inventories, property deeds, parish registers and marriage licences, but I am not hopeful that such details can further illuminate the search for cause and effect in the proto-industrial period'.<sup>20</sup> Mills does not state why he takes

---

<sup>19</sup> D.R. Mills, *op. cit.*, p.195.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.195.

this view. Clearly, if one attempts either to apply a model, or to explain diverse processes of development through cross-sectional data, presented solely in statistical form, there is little along the suggested lines to be gained. However, an example of one village, while not suggesting universality of application, can help to identify and explain the relationship between a village's economic base and type of hosiery production.

The development of the stocking frame by William Lee in 1589 and his subsequent disappointment in London and Rouen has been well charted by Blackner, Henson and Felkin. The return of his journeymen to London and the foundation of the industry in Spitalfields has also received much attention. The earliest written references to the development of frame-work knitting outside London are often found in probate inventories. The first recognised in Leicestershire was the frame purchased by William Illiffe and set up in Hinckley in 1640, although this might have been preceded by that of George Hogson of Dishley whose inventory of 1660 details a silk stocking frame valued at £25.<sup>21</sup> Felkin estimated that by 1669 there were 50 frames in Leicestershire, a century later there were 7,300 in Midland villages (excluding towns).<sup>22</sup> The Victoria County History of Leicestershire attempted to identify, through probate inventories, those who bought and operated frames in a range of villages and towns. The information is quite consistent for the nine inventories examined between 1680 and 1740. The average frame-work knitter owned three stocking frames, which he worked alongside immediate members of his family.<sup>23</sup> The material is interesting as it suggests a continued link with agriculture, but even the earliest inventory, that of Daniel Vann of 1670, suggests that the four frames, each valued at £10, were of greater economic significance than his three cows and a pig worth £5-9-0.

The Countesthorpe wills and inventories which survive for the period 1700-1770 detail twelve families with frame-work knitting interests. This represents 33% of the surviving wills and inventories.<sup>24</sup> Wills and probate inventories were biased towards the wealthier sections of the population, but they do suggest that a considerable diversification in employment and investment occurred before enclosure in 1767.

21 V.C.H. Leics. 3 p.2.

22 W. Felkin, History of the Machine-Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacturers (London, 1867), pp.465-466.

23 V.C.H. Leics. 3 p.7.

24 L.R.O. PR/T/1763/171.

The profile of the typical Countesthorpe frame-work knitter was similar to that suggested by the Victoria County History. The average number of frames owned was 2.7, the average monetary value of the wills inventories was £67-15-0 and the owners appeared to have maintained an interest in the land. The agricultural interests were variable. Some such as Thomas Lord, who died in 1763, owned only 5 acres, whereas John Elliott who died in 1743 owned half a yard lands, in addition to the four frames he left to his son John.<sup>25</sup>

If the inventories of frame-owning families are compared with a range of wills and inventories of those involved in agriculture, the economic features of the manufacturing families become clearer. For the purpose of comparison twelve wills and inventories were selected belonging to farmers who died at approximately the same date as the frame-owners<sup>26</sup> Problems do exist in drawing monetary comparisons, as inventories only value crops in the field, rather than the value of the land. The land itself was the capital asset of the farmer. By contrast, the capital asset of the frame-work knitter, the frame, was given a value. A number of the landowning wills and inventories do mention yard-lands and closes, and their average value of £281-12-0 is an approximate but useful guideline to the comparative wealth of the farmer. This may suggest that the independent artisans, as discussed, were of the middling range, whatever the economic basis of the village. It is also probably fair to say that the early frame-work knitting families had less ready money than those involved in other spheres.

The interdependence of agriculture and domestic industry is emphasised by the proto-industrialists as a key factor in the development of manufacture. There has necessarily been some retreat from the early position taken by Mendels that proto-industry developed in barren mountainous regions. Kreidte, Medick and Schlumbohm, following Thirsk have suggested that proto-industry developed in regions where animal husbandry and partible inheritance were common. Hoskins outlined the growing importance of sheep farming in Leicestershire in the sixteenth century and the wide scale enclosure which took place.<sup>27</sup> Foston, a contiguous parish with Countesthorpe, was totally enclosed by Anthony Faunt by the

---

25 L.R.O. PR/T/1743.

26 L.R.O. Probate Records, passim.

27 W.G. Hoskins 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century' in W.G. Hoskins Provincial England, (London, 1936).

early years of the seventeenth century. It is apparent that this was only the final stage in a process of change which transformed a village which had supported twenty teams into a depopulated run for sheep. As I have already demonstrated, the increasing emphasis on pasture was also taking place in Countesthorpe, albeit in a more piecemeal and covert manner. There is, however, little evidence of sustained partible inheritance within the land holdings of Countesthorpe either in the surviving deeds, or in the structure of land ownership which existed in 1766 at enclosure.

A number of the surviving deeds do detail the creation of marriage portions, but not all these meant the partition of an existing land holding. Let me take, as an example, the property assigned in April 1714 by Bishop Thornton to his only daughter Rebekah at her marriage. At his death she received the whole of his estate.<sup>28</sup> So, in the main, land was passed from eldest son to eldest son, or to the oldest surviving male heir. An example of this was the parcel of land which was purchased in 1751 by Richard Tebbs, who left all his land to his eldest surviving male heir, his grandson, in 1767, who died in 1835 leaving the land to his eldest son, who in turn left his land to his eldest surviving male heir in 1845. This is not to say that no land was subdivided, or that all the land holdings at enclosure were sufficient to support a family. Eighteen of the thirty three owners at enclosure received less than twenty acres. Of these eighteen only three had definite established links with frame-work knitting: John Elliott who owned 17 acres and four frames, having inherited the whole estate of his father, as the only surviving son. Mary Lord and her second eldest son, John who had inherited property from Thomas Lord, who had given his occupation as farmer but had also owned two frames. Involvement in hosiery production was not simply dependent on an insufficiently large land holding, nor did such a land holding mean that families would inevitably become involved in frame-work knitting.

While it is difficult to sustain a case for partible inheritance in Countesthorpe, the link between frame-work knitting and the movement to pasture created by other pressures needs to be emphasised. What also requires stressing is that the hosiery industry should not be regarded as homogeneous. Rather than explaining the development of the Midland's frame-work knitting industry solely within the context of progress from the return of Lee's journeymen to Spitalfields in 1610, it needs to be understood as part of the process of change within an existing and widespread hand-knitting industry. In the 'Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry', Chapman stressed the

---

28 L.R.O. DE 579/4/6/1-2.

impossibility of the early hosiery industry in the Midlands responding to the high fashion silk stocking market. Nottingham, he argued was a week's haul from London, and the frames in the Midland town were unable to provide the exact sophistication of fashion article which was required.<sup>29</sup>

The early woollen frames which were situated in the Midland counties were attracted there by the presence of a hand-knitting industry and the ready supply of long staple wool produced in parishes, such as Foston, which had enclosed in the sixteenth century. An existing system of hosiery production was more important in the earliest stages than the opportunity to avoid the restrictive practices and control imposed by the Worshipful Company of Frame-work Knitters, whose charter was renewed at the Restoration.<sup>30</sup> Chapman used evidence from M.A. Grass to demonstrate the existence of hand knitting in Leicestershire from 1597.<sup>31</sup> He emphasises the continued production of hand-knitted stockings even when frame-work knitting was a significant employer of labour; hand knitting continued because it was cheap, hand knitters in Kendal earned 2s a week at a time when frame-work knitters earned 10s. Hand-knitted stockings were cheap because they could be produced whilst watching flocks, walking to market or sitting around the fireside at night.<sup>32</sup>

As a secondary occupation, and one which did not require capital investment, the existence of hand knitting in specific Midland villages is difficult to establish. We can only proceed by inference. For example, apprenticeship records, and parish registers for Countesthorpe do record the residence of the Grants who were woolcombers. Their earliest residence is noted in the purchase of a house on Willoughby Road by John Grant in 1670, where they remained until 1829.<sup>33</sup> A petition of 1674 from hosiery employers to the Corporation of Leicester explained that the merchants kept in work 2,000 people, 1,000 of them in the surrounding rural areas. They also claim that they used 'great quantities of Oyle and Soap' by employing woolcombers.<sup>34</sup> The actual number employed may have been exaggerated by the merchants for their own particular purposes, but the presence of rural hand knitters in the proximity of Leicester and their links with local

29 S.D. Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.9.

30 *Ibid.*, pp.14-16.

31 M and A Grass, *Stockings for a Queen* (London,1967), quoted in S.D.Chapman, *op.cit.* p.7.

32 S.D. Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.10.

33 A. True, *A Pictorial History of Countesthorpe* (Leicester, 1989), p.3.

34 Petition to Leicester Corporation of 1674, quoted in S.D. Chapman, *op.cit.* , p.35.

woolcombers is implicit. It is possible to argue that Countesthorpe became a centre for frame-work knitting because its agriculture was becoming increasingly pastoral, there was at least one local established woolcomber and importantly it had a tradition of hand knitting and links with the merchant hosiers, resulting from this earlier tradition. To ignore such a hand-knitting context is to miss an important element of continuity in the knitting industry, and I am sure that this is true of other regions also.

The destruction of the majority of the Countesthorpe parish records, at the rebuilding of the church in 1902, limits enquiries into parish apprentices in the second half of the eighteenth century. However, the Register of the Freemen of the Borough of Leicester provides clear links between some of farming families in Countesthorpe and specified trades in Leicester for an earlier period.<sup>35</sup> These are important for two reasons. First they establish links with hosiers in Leicester- for example the apprenticeship of John Heard in 1760 to H. Wood of Leicester, Hosier. Other apprenticeships demonstrate links with the woollen trade: Samuel Heathcote was apprenticed to Simeon Coleman, woolcomber in 1746, and in 1763 Samuel Wastell, whose father was himself a frame-work knitter, was apprenticed to Thomas Grant of Countesthorpe, woolcomber. Another link between Countesthorpe landowners and merchant hosiers is indicated by the £200 borrowed by Thomas Wood from H. Gravener of Coventry, threadsmen between 1711 and 1717. Chapman has noted that the term 'threadsmen' was applied to early merchant hosiers in Mansfield in insurance certificates.<sup>36</sup>

The second significant feature of the early apprenticeship records is that, from the seventeenth century, Countesthorpe landowners were apprenticing their younger sons in the shoe-making industry. Two Countesthorpe husbandmen, William Stephens and Robert King, apprenticed their sons to Leicester cordwainers in 1647 and 1648 respectively. In addition, Robert Hastings, who described himself as a yeoman, apprenticed his youngest son John to a fellmonger in 1733.<sup>37</sup> Such records of involvement in regional trade suggest that as early as the mid-seventeenth century landowners were seeking alternative occupations for their younger sons. The development of frame-work knitting was, therefore, following an established pattern of alternative occupations within a family and had its origins in an existing culture

---

35 H.Hartopp (ed) Register of Freeman of Borough of Leicester (Leicester,1927), passim.

36 S.D. Chapman, op.cit., p.11.

37 H.Hartopp, op.cit., p.422.

and set of family recourses. The introduction of frame-work knitting, as with any other industry, depended not only on an economic motivation, but also on recognition that such an innovation offered a solution to economic problems. Saville stressed the pervasiveness of the market economy and the widespread acceptance of the profit motive and went on to argue that between 1660 and 1740 the 'peasantry' found themselves in particularly difficult times.<sup>38</sup> Prices were indeed low: the Schumpeter-Gilboy index of prices for producer's goods fell from a high of 113 in 1662 and remained below this level until 1697. More importantly, wheat prices were stagnant for the second half of the seventeenth century, especially prior to the 1690's, averaging 36.8s per Winchester quarter for the period 1664-1700.

The situation became increasingly difficult for farmers in Countesthorpe in the early eighteenth century as they faced productivity competition from East Anglia. But even before then, low prices and high taxation has a disequilibrating effect. In the seventeenth century, Countesthorpe, as with many south-west Leicestershire villages, had no waste to bring into production. Had they had any such, land, it could have helped to support the small farmers and their families. Rather than sell out, with the prospect of being wage labourers, there was a recognition that higher returns could be obtained by expanding hosiery manufacture. The purchase of frames was possible for the peasant farmer - as the probate inventories suggest - although £10 was a considerable amount of money. The profits accrued via economic differentiation provided an opportunity for farmers to create some economic independence for their children in a Midland agrarian structure which could not sustain the division of land holdings. The consequences of this for marriage opportunity was profound. It is apparent that even before the main period of the development of frame-work knitting the Countesthorpe mean age at first marriage for men was 25.9 and for women 24.4.

---

<sup>38</sup> J.Saville, 'Primitive Accumulation and Early Industrialisation in Britain', in J.Saville and R. Milliband (eds), *Socialist Register* (London, 1969), p.254

## 2.2 The transitional stage: from independent producers to putting-out.

The development of frame-work knitting in Leicestershire was to a large extent promoted by the presence of a hand knitting industry. Chapman noted the involvement in the machine wrought trade of those such as Pougher and Hammont, who had earlier employed hand knitters. Their existing organisational structures and financial support enabled them to expand and to frustrate the growth of the smaller manufacturer. Stimulated by the master hosier's expertise, the 2,000 who had been employed as hand knitters in 1674 had increased to 13,000 frame-work knitters in 1712.<sup>41</sup>

The definition of 'employment' in the context of frame-work knitting, especially during the eighteenth century, was somewhat ambiguous. P. Head argued in his article 'Putting Out in the Leicestershire Hosiery Industry in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century', that the English Hosiery Industry was organised on a capitalist basis almost from the beginning'. The master hosier, who in Leicestershire was resident in the town itself, bought the yarn and marketed the finished article; the individual knitter collected the yarn and returned the completed garments once or twice a week. In many cases frames were rented out, either by the master hosier, or by others interested in the investment opportunity offered'.<sup>42</sup> In the former case the relationship between the hosier and frame-work knitter would have been direct. However, Chapman argued that 'at the end of the eighteenth century the knitter owning his own frame was still the typical workman'.<sup>43</sup> In such instances the term 'employment' would have been looser. The knitter would have owned and worked his frame but would have been 'contracted' to a hosier through whom he would have had access to yarn and markets for the finished goods.

As the master hosiers increased their capital, made possible by their control of the wider markets through London outlets, the yeomen knitters who owned their own frames represented a diminishing proportion of the whole capital in the growing industry. Countesthorpe's yeomen knitters were subject to trends and pressures which were part of the larger development of the industry, but were unable to control them. The individual

---

41 S. D. Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.37.

42 P. Head, 'Putting Out in the Leicestershire Hosiery Industry in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 37 (1961-2), p.46.

43 S.D. Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.39

experiences of those identified as frame-work knitters in Countesthorpe indicates the changing economic fortunes of the yeoman knitter in the phase of development up to 1785.

The experiences of those involved in frame-work knitting are difficult to establish; their property was portable and, unlike land, did not require a legal deed to record a sale transaction. The Countesthorpe parish registers, too, frustrate any consistent attempt at establishing occupational status; not until the early nineteenth century were occupations recorded as a matter of course. Those designated as 'frame-work knitter', either at marriage, burial or the baptism of their children before the early nineteenth century, may only represent a minority of those who had an involvement in the developing industry. Equally, probate records which list frames make no mention of those who rented, as opposed to those who owned, the means of production. Yet, if it is accepted that those who can be positively linked with frame-ownership are a minority of those who may have had an involvement during the eighteenth century, they can provide some key pointers to the yeomen knitters. They can offer, at least, a partial explanation as to why a number of families had a continuous involvement from the early eighteenth century until 1851. Further, they can offer pointers as to why some families became wage earners and why Countesthorpe frame-work knitters failed to become master hosiers.

There are three identifiable groups of those who had an economic interest in frame-work knitting; those families who diversified early and maintained their interest in the industry; families who also diversified in the first half of the eighteenth century but failed to sustain their financial involvement; and those who only became involved as employers of labour in a later period of development, generally from 1780. Using the reconstitution study, probate records, the census returns of 1851 and surname analysis it is possible to delineate certain main features of the discrete groups.<sup>46</sup> These features include age at marriage, number of surviving children, inheritance patterns, approximate wealth and other economic interests.

Age at marriage is particularly difficult to identify, being dependent on both partners being baptised within the parish studied (or a named parish where it is possible to check the date of baptism). Equally, it is essential that the individual can be clearly identified at each life stage. Of those known families who diversified into frame-work knitting, it is possible to identify twenty eight individual ages at marriage. Of these, six refer to families who had continuous involvement from early diversification up to 1851. It is not possible to say how representative Robert Lord and Mary Langham were, they married in November 1721 at 29.7

---

46 H.O. 107/2081.

and 25.8 respectively. Robert Lord died in 1726 leaving his four frames to his youngest son, who married in 1746 at 23.8 to Sarah Fox aged 20.5. Their only surviving son, Joseph, married in 1774 at 24.3, and his wife was 20.2. The family was still involved in the industry in 1851; Joseph's grandson, William Lord, was listed in the census as a frame-work knitter 'employing 25 people.' The mean age at first marriage for the three couples was 24.6 for the males and 23.4 for the females.<sup>47</sup>

It is unfortunate that the above figures relate to three generations, rather than to a single cohort. However, the high age at first marriage for Robert and Mary Lord was not reflected in the mean ages at marriage for the 13 who can be included in the category of those who diversified early but failed to maintain their ownership of frames. The mean age for this group is quite low for the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, 24.6 and 23.2 for men and women respectively. Joseph Burley married Mary Simpkin in 1731 when they were 24.5 and 21.8 respectively, which suggests that within frame owning families, early marriages may have been common from the first stages of diversification. This seems to be a distinctive feature of such families. If one examines the mean ages at marriage for the cohorts married between 1700-1774, in those families which became involved in frame ownership at a later date, it is on average two years higher, at 26.5 for men and 25.4 for women. The suggestion, albeit tenuous, of these figures is that diversification from agricultural production facilitated earlier marriage. Sons, who were provided with frames by their fathers, would attain a degree of economic independence and a much clearer identifiable relationship with 'his frame' than those who worked on their 'father's land'. This factor, and the ability to reach a high earning potential once apprenticeship was concluded, would enable early marriage to occur.

Early age at first marriage establishes one important feature in the profile of frame-owning families but it does not explain why some families continued and some were forced into more direct employment. The answer to this problem is multi-casual. The most obvious reason for lack of continuous involvement is that the direct line failed. The overall survival rates, for children born to a family in Countesthorpe, bearing in mind that not all were involved in frame-work knitting, indicate that for the cohort married 1700-74, 3.9 were born and 3.1 survived. For the three groups under examination, the group who failed to maintain their involvement had the lowest survival rate: 1.5 male children per family surviving to adulthood and 1.0 female children, compared to 2.3 and 2.7 male and female children in

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

families who maintained their financial involvement. The overall survival rate for the latter group was slightly higher than for the group who diversified late, in which 2.8 males and 1.6 females survived to adulthood.

Of the families who failed to continue their frame-ownership, three lines failed due to the lack of a male heir. The Hastings family ceased direct participation when William Hastings died in 1750 leaving his frames to his widow. The Frosts had no further involvement after the death of John Frost in 1740. Finally, Robert Bellamy's frames disappeared when his two sons failed to produce a male heir. Although only three families can be identified as directly failing, low survival rates did make families' continued involvement in the industry vulnerable. Domestic industry was, above all, dependent upon domestic labour. Larger families allowed greater productivity and enabled the key stages of production, from winding to seaming, to be completed within the household unit. These functions could be executed by non-family members but, as witnesses were to attest in 1845, to sub-contract or employ apprentices would cut into the profit.<sup>48</sup> If the knitter were to try to do all the functions himself, there would be fewer completed garments to take to the master hosier. High output and low unit costs meant that the family was more likely to maintain its economic independence. The alternative was a more direct relationship with the master hosier, renting a frame or working for a small independent frame-work knitter.

The specific economic circumstances, which contributed to individual frame-work knitters failing to sustain their interest in the hosiery industry, are difficult to identify or categorise, although the number of frames owned by the family may have been a key factor. Thomas Lord divided his four frames between four of his sons at his death in 1763, leaving his messuage and tenement to his eldest son Thomas.<sup>49</sup> Thomas, a farmer and owner of land, left his property to his only daughter at his death in 1793. Two of his sons, Anthony and Edward, appear to have left the village between 1763 and 1775. The remaining two sons, William and John, seemed unable to maintain their livelihood. William Lord was exempt from payment of registration fees at the baptism and burials of five of his children between 1787 and 1792, although this may have been due to his position as clerk to the Parish.<sup>50</sup> There is no further record of his three surviving children, none of them married in the village and no will survives. John Lord was also exempt from payment of registration fees by 1792. Two of his daughters had illegitimate children; Elizabeth, described as a frame-work knitter,

---

48 1845, XV Framework Knitters, Commissioners' Reports and Minutes of Evidence.

49 PR/T/1763/171.

50 DE. 1465 1-6

could be classed as a 'repeater,' giving birth to three daughters out of wedlock between 1793 and 1797. There is no clear evidence of the continuing residence of the one surviving son, Joseph, or ownership of frames. The Lords are one example of a family who failed to continue their interest but, their case suggests two main reasons for failure; inadequate means of production and thus insufficient circulating capital.

Robert Lord, who died in 1726, left his property and four frames to his son who was listed in the 1775 Poll Book as owning a house and land in Countesthorpe.<sup>51</sup> His property was left to the son who remained in the village. Joseph's grandson, William Lord, who was born in 1818, was listed in the 1851 census as a frame-work knitter employing 25 people.<sup>52</sup> The ability to maintain optimum production within the family, and to have sufficient capacity to exploit apprentice labour, was the key to continuing economic independence. Frame owners might at first hire extra frames from the master for an apprentice or for members of his family. This was a short-term solution as renting frames from the master hosier tied the knitter and made him vulnerable to being exploited. Yet an insufficient number of frames to occupy and provide for the family could rapidly lead to the status of wage labour, especially if the family had no other means of support.

A notable feature of those who were listed in the 1851 census as employers of labour in frame-work knitting, the majority of whom had only been involved from the late eighteenth century onwards, was the long-term existence of the family surname in the village.<sup>53</sup> Five of the eight surnames were observable in the parish registers before 1720, two more had commenced residence by 1760 and only one, the Boat family, arrived in the early nineteenth century. It is possible that these families had had some involvement in the industry before the last quarter of the eighteenth century but their primary source of support was either agriculture or a trade such as blacksmithing. The Bents, who were employing six people in 1851, have already been mentioned. James Gillam who stated that he employed 12 frame-work knitters in the 1851 census return, had an inheritance of 23 acres and a house from his father.<sup>54</sup> He had been left this by his uncle, who had been ascribed the status of yeoman at his death in 1775. For some there is no information regarding land ownership or direct investment in agriculture, and as this sphere is so well documented, it would suggest that such involvement did not occur. For example, the three Hubbards who between them

---

51 1775 L324 SR1.

52 H.O. 107/2081.

53 Surname analysis based on cross referencing all surviving documentation to establish when families appeared in the parish and when they disappear from view.

54 PR/T/1843/58.

employed 38 people in 1851, appear only in parish registers with no mention in Land Tax Assessments, enclosure award, or Poll Books. However, the timing of their assumed entry into the industry suggests either that they were in an economic position to establish themselves directly with a number of frames or that they demonstrated sufficient entrepreneurial skills to increase their position. By the early nineteenth century, exploitation of frame rents, stinting and short weights often enabled an unscrupulous middleman to establish himself as a small employer.<sup>55</sup>

The original economic standing of those who maintained their independence from early diversification, those families who were reduced to wage labour and those who seemingly came late to the industry, was very similar. As has been demonstrated, their position could be made vulnerable or non-viable due to the number of surviving children and the number of frames to work. The importance of capital could also be critical during periods of depression and restricted markets. It is possible to be more confident about the wealth of those involved in agriculture than about those involved in frame-work knitting, although the suggestions are that the latter had less circulating capital than the former. Few probate inventories exist for the period after 1750 and, although some wills survive, they rarely give a complete account of the individual's wealth. Documentary evidence is insufficient to demonstrate what level of capital was necessary to enable economic survival, or to make the domestic unit lose its independence. It is clear that the organisation of the industry was increasingly in the control of the master hosiers, who were in a position to dictate prices and working arrangements for the individual stockinger and to contain the development of the bag-hosier, or small manufacturer.<sup>56</sup>

The period 1750-1800 witnessed significant development in the frame-work knitting industry. The number of frames in the villages of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire in 1753 totalled 7,300, by 1812 there were 9,583 in Leicestershire villages alone.<sup>57</sup> These statistics point to the growth of the master hosier. His control of the supply of yarn and access to wider markets enabled him to expand production, often using apprentices trained by the local frame-work knitters. A major reason for the rapid growth of the industry in the Midland Counties, offered by Felkin, was the limited control of the Worshipful Company of Frame-work Knitters outside London.<sup>58</sup> The relative impotence of

---

55 P.P. 1845 vol XV Q. 6730

56 P.P. 1845 vol .XV Q. 827

57 V.C.H. Leics., 3 p.3.

58 W. Felkin , op. cit., p.193.

the company and the ineffectiveness of its local courts were particularly significant in the control of apprentices. As early as 1655 a ruling was given that the provisions of the Statute of Artificers did not apply to frame-work knitting, as the invention of the frame post-dated the 1563 Act. The Company of Frame-work Knitters lost a test case in 1728 in its attempt to fine Cartwright of Nottingham for breach of its bye-laws restricting the number of apprentices.<sup>59</sup>

The opportunity to use apprentice labour had its advantages to those Countesthorpe frame-owners who were able to invest in extra frames. Apprentice labour was cheap, and while mastering the frame was a skilled task, it did not require seven years to learn the technique. However, once the apprenticeship was served, the knitter was unable to keep the youth on; a skilled knitter could demand higher wages. The youth was then in a position to rent a frame either from the master hosier or through a middleman and start his own production. The large supply of apprentice labour depressed the price the master hosier was willing to pay, increased his profit margin and restricted the opportunities for the growth of the independent frame-owner. The position of the small owner was undermined, even before the master hosiers recognised the economic advantages of frame rent in a depressed market, by linking frame leasing to a supply of raw materials.

The economic conditions in Countesthorpe and its proximity to Leicester made it ideal for the rapid development of the industry. Early marriage did not necessarily mean more surviving children but it did reduce the period of generational replacement. Significantly, this occurred as traditional sources of employment in agriculture, both in Countesthorpe and the surrounding area, were reduced by the movement to enclosure and pasture. This reduced seasonal labour opportunities and the engrossment which took place following enclosure limited employment further for those who no longer held land.<sup>60</sup> Overseers of the poor, who had to support increasing numbers of families, were quick to apprentice children to frame-work knitters who were looking for cheap sources of labour. The overseers of the poor not only took 'advantage of the expansion of the industry', as the Victoria County History of Leicestershire suggests, but also simulated the expansion with a sizeable supply of labour.<sup>61</sup> The records of Countesthorpe parish apprentices were destroyed but, as not all parish apprentices served within their own community, some records of apprentices indentured in Countesthorpe can be located in other parish records. One such apprentice was Thomas

---

<sup>59</sup> F.A. Wells, The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry (London, 1935), p.38.

<sup>60</sup> Q.S. 62/85/1-54.

<sup>61</sup> V.C.H. Leics, 3 p. 8.

Orton of Belgrave who was apprenticed to William Carr of Countesthorpe, frame-work knitter in 1745.<sup>62</sup> The bulk of the surviving records date from the period 1800-14; South Kilworth alone apprenticed six children to two Countesthorpe frame-work knitters in the period 1808-1814. That the majority of the indentures refer to the period of the French Wars may result from a combination of shortage of adult male labour and more assiduous record keeping. However, it should not obscure the dependence on apprentice labour which had been growing before this date.<sup>63</sup>

Geographically, Countesthorpe was well placed for the hosiery industry to develop. It was sufficiently close to the urban centre and had good transport links, especially following the construction of a turnpike at enclosure.<sup>64</sup> Yet the fourteen mile round trip, which the knitters had to undergo to collect yarn and return finished articles, made it vulnerable to increased control by middlemen, putters out or bagmen. By the end of the eighteenth century middlemen were increasingly common. The middleman would mainly work for one hosier, supervising the frames, distributing yarn and collecting the finished articles for that hosier. For the Countesthorpe frame-work knitter, the long return journey to the master hosier was acceptable when prices for the finished article were relatively high. As the prices paid for the finished article declined, few knitters could afford the time spent going to and from Leicester, so the middleman was able to establish his position.

The distance also seems to have worked to the advantage of 'bagmen' who were noticeably present in Countesthorpe in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The term refers to those individuals who were not tied to a particular hosier but who sold finished goods for the best price they were able to obtain. The bagman, in many instances, was a manufacturer who owned a small number of frames and employed their operatives. The Hubbards, William Lord and William Boat were such men as these. Middlemen, who were pre-eminent in urban centres, also had a role to play in the organisation of the industry in Countesthorpe. By the mid-nineteenth century the majority of those employed in hosiery worked for Leicester hosiers, directly or indirectly, but 127 of the 389 frame-work knitters in Countesthorpe in 1851 were claimed employed by Countesthorpe. <sup>66</sup> The average number of people employed by each was nine but it still demonstrated a degree of independence not common in many

---

62 L.R.O. Misc. 382.

63 F.A. Wells, *op.cit.*, p.71.

64 L.R.O. En/AX/83/1.

65 *V.C.H. Leics.*, 3 p.20.

66 H.O. 107/2081

Leicestershire villages. Economic viability was clearly fundamental but the distance from Leicester seems to have facilitated limited independence for a small number of frame-work knitters who were able to operate on the periphery of the master hosier's orbit. In terms of organisation of labour, Countesthorpe developed, during the first half of the nineteenth century, a structure between the independence of Hinckley and the extremely close ties of Narborough.

### 2.3 The introduction of the wide-frame and changed working practices.

The period 1800 to 1850 witnessed the increasing domination and control of the hosiery industry by the master-hosiers. It was this control which reduced the frame-work knitters to less than wage-slaves, devalued the quality of the product in the market and stifled progress towards mechanisation. Paradoxically, some change and technical innovation did occur during this period: the numbers employed grew rapidly; the price of the product was reduced and the national market, at least, expanded. Yet these developments, which were underpinned by new methods of production introduced by the manufacturers, also alienated the knitter. Indeed, for many stockingers the development of factories with the concomitant discipline would have been an improvement on the relentless degradation which is evident in the 1845 Report.<sup>67</sup>

The term 'poor as a stockinger' dates back to the seventeenth century; poverty is, of course, relative.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, it is difficult to assess when the condition of the frame-work knitter began to deteriorate. The Hammonds contrast two descriptions of the frame-work knitter. The first, a retrospective view, given by Felkin concerning the mid-eighteenth century, presented an idyllic picture: 'the lower orders lived in comparative ease and plenty, having right of common for pig and poultry and sometimes for a cow. The stocking-makers each had a garden, a barrel of home-brewed ale, a weekday suit of clothes and one for Sundays, and plenty of leisure, seldom working more than three days a week.'<sup>69</sup> A bleaker image was created by the evidence given before the House of Commons in 1778-9: of 'pauper children employed to long hours at work which destroyed the nerves and bodily strength of grown men and women, toiling from 5 am to 10 pm, day after day for a pittance of 4s 6d a week... In 1779 the men complained that the masters refused to employ men who possessed

---

<sup>67</sup> P.P.1845 vol. XV, passim.

<sup>68</sup> F.A. Wells, *op.cit.*, p.74.

<sup>69</sup> W Felkin, quoted in J L Hammond and Barbara Hammond, The Skilled Labourer 1700 - 1832 (London, 1920), p.222.

a frame of their own and charged rents even when the frames were idle'.<sup>70</sup> These descriptions, separated by twenty-five years offer pointers to why the condition of the knitter declined. Rights of common had been eroded in Countesthorpe long before enclosure but the disappearance of the small-holder at enclosure (clearly a watershed for Felkin) had an adverse affect on the village economy, The exploitation of young apprentices, as demonstrated by the 1778 evidence, could be seen in Countesthorpe also. But the key to the parlous condition of the adult male worker and the shackles which held him there was the insidious introduction of the frame rent.

The hiring of frames was initially advantageous to the small hosier, who owned one or more frames, because it enabled him to exploit apprentice labour. As the Hammonds state: 'Sometimes a workman would hire one frame only; in other cases he would hire four or five and employ other workmen or apprentices'.<sup>71</sup> The hire of frames, however, left the knitter exposed during periods of economic depression. The period 1790-1810 might, in retrospect, be described as the 'halcyon days of the frame-work knitter' .<sup>72</sup> That the French Wars, a time of 'great depression of trade, low wages, dear provisions and increased taxation', should later be regarded as a prosperous era for the frame-work knitters emphasises the degradation which they were later to suffer.<sup>73</sup> The period from 1811 was one of stark austerity when the individual owner of frames was increasingly squeezed out. This must have occurred to such owners as the Burleys in Countesthorpe. In order to gain from apprentice labour the frame-work knitter hired extra frames, either directly from the master hosier or independent frames brought into production by the middlemen. When demand contracted, the master hosier would only supply yarn for his frame and not supply the stockinger's own. The frame rent of approximately 9d per week ensured that, even in difficult economic conditions, the master hosier's profits were protected. Additionally, where the relationship between the knitter and the master hosier was not a direct one, the middleman often 'stinted'. Given a set amount of yarn by the hosier for his own frames, the middleman would distribute it to provide limited work for the master's own frames and the independent ones. The knitters were forced to pay the rent but were restricted in the amount that they were able to earn. By 1845 this had become one of the major grievances of the knitters.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> House of Commons Committees, quoted in J.L. and B.Hammond, *op.cit.*, p.222.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p .223.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.225.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>74</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.427.

During the early years of the Napoleonic Wars an experienced knitter could earn 14s-15s per week. This income was eroded by the stoppages paid to the master hosier or middleman and was reduced further by the extensive use of the wide frame. Prior to 1811-12, hosiery was manufactured on narrow frames which produced a wrought, or fashioned, stocking. Such production required a degree of skill to shape the calf, heel and foot. From 1812 the wide frame was extensively introduced and by 1844 in Countesthorpe the majority of knitters were operating these.<sup>75</sup> Wide frames enabled the knitter to produce several stockings at a time. These stockings were known as 'spurious articles'; rather than fashioning the garment, the knitter would roughly cut the leg shape and seam it. Such goods could be sold cheaply and until they had been washed, the purchaser was unable to distinguish between a 'cut-up' and the genuine article; immersed in water the cheaper product lost all its shape. The lower production costs and selling price meant that the workers were also paid proportionately lower rates. Evidence given to a House of Commons Select Committee in 1819 described the consequences of the wide frames for the knitter: 'They are forced to work several hours a day more than they did some seven or ten years ago. Some of them three hours a day at least, at an average more than they did; and yet they cannot earn more than half the money they then got'. When the witness was asked whether he attributed the change to any particular circumstance, he answered unequivocally, 'I attribute it principally to cut-up work'.<sup>76</sup> A Bill which sought to prohibit the manufacture and sale of cut-ups was thrown out at its second reading by the House of Lords and an opportunity to improve the condition of the knitters by government legislation was lost. Industrial protective legislation was being widely abandoned at this time.

Between 1812 and 1832 the number of frames in operation in Leicestershire increased by 23%, from 9,083 to 11,200 and by a further 86% to 20,861 in 1844.<sup>77</sup> This was considerably more than the 73% growth estimated between 1753 and 1782. The earlier expansion was during a period of prosperity while the latter occurred during a time of considerable economic dislocation. The return of soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars inflated the number of knitters; during the war men had been attracted into hosiery from less well paid work such as agricultural labour. Overall output doubled between 1812 and 1844 (proportionately less than the 129% growth in the number of frames) but for much of the time the trade was depressed. There were several reasons for this. British hosiery failed to develop and sustain an export market. In 1843 total British exports amounted to 479,621

---

<sup>75</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, part II, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.13.

<sup>77</sup> V.C.H.Leics., 3, p.3.

pairs, compared to the 1.5 million pairs Saxony exported to America alone.<sup>78</sup> Wages in Saxony were slightly higher than in Britain but the unit costs were lower. Changes in fashion exacerbated the situation, as the highly paid quality garments were no longer in demand. As Muggeridge also stated, 'the ladies wear long petticoats now and the gentlemen pantaloons and boots. Neither have occasion for the handsome stockings they were wont to wear in former times when such a habitment was a feature of ton; and when men of lower grade exhibited them to the knee.'<sup>79</sup>

Muggeridge was uncompromising in apportioning blame for the depressed state of the industry in 1844. Changes in fashion and foreign competition were important but 'these influences neither extenuate or justify the apathy of the hosiery manufacturer ;nor warrant the apparent contentment with which he laments the falling off of the trade.'<sup>80</sup> For the knitters there was no contentment, the amount that they were able to earn never recovered. Wide frames, excessive deployment of frames and the depressed market meant lower prices paid to the knitter, from 7s per dozen pairs in 1819, to 4s 9d in 1832, and an average wage of 5s 6d per week in Countesthorpe in 1844.<sup>81</sup> As wages declined, the workers desperately tried to produce more, compounding the lowering of prices. The only area where no decline was evident was in the profits of the manufacturer; and 'the policy of keeping the stockinger poor in order to keep him humble was now thoroughly in force.'<sup>82</sup>

---

78 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, pp.90-91.

79 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.93.

80 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.93.

81 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.41.

82 W.G. Jones, Leicester Stockingers, 1680-1890 (Leicester, 1891), p.1.

#### 2.4 Economic Depression and the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1845.

By 1843 the Midlands hosiery manufacture was so depressed and the circumstances of its workforce so desperate that, following a petition from the stockingers themselves, the government ordered a Commission of Enquiry into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters.<sup>83</sup> In his summing up the Commissioner, Richard Muggeridge, identified the main problems as the organisation and structure of the knitted goods industry:

- 'I. Until a very recent period the workmen were paid wages in goods rather than money and that it is still carried on indirectly... by a large class of employers.'
- 'II. That although there is considerable diversity in the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters, particularly at different seasons in different branches of the hosiery manufacture, they are as a body, in a very depressed and distressed state, from the very low amount of their earnings.'
- 'III. That the leading cause of the low rate of wages earned by the Frame-work Knitters is the disproportion existing between the supply of their labour, and the demand for it; the latter being usually deficient, and at all times very irregular; while there is a constant manifest tendency in the former to increase, and none to adapt itself to the irregularities of demand.'
- 'V. The competition of women and children ... reduces wages generally.'
- 'VI. This excess of supply is powerfully influenced and encouraged by the system of frame rents; which makes it the interests of the employers to spread any given amount of work among a larger number of workmen than is necessary to its performance.'
- 'IX. An improvement in the quality of most of the goods manufactured is essential to increase in permanent demand.'<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.1

<sup>84</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, pp.129-139.

Richard Muggeridge based his conclusions on evidence given to him by manufacturers, middlemen, employers and frame-work knitters, from a range of towns and villages producing hosiery goods in the three Midland counties. No-one was called to give evidence from Countesthorpe. However, much can be explained about the state of manufacture in the village by using both the statistical and oral evidence contained in the 1845 Report and by cross-referencing it with other sources. The 1851 Census Return, White's Trade Directory for 1846 and the parish registers after 1813 all contain valuable information about occupations and conditions. Countesthorpe had a unique profile, but it had features in common with other centres of hosiery production: wide frames, links with manufacturers and middlemen; possible abuse of the Truck Act; and physical degradation and exploitation of its work force, including both women and children.

Muggeridge incorporated statistical evidence presented by the historian, William Felkin, in the introductory section of his report.<sup>85</sup> Felkin's evidence has been criticised, mainly for its omissions (no statistics are given for Broughton Astley, for example), but it gives a clear account of the types of frames within the listed villages. Countesthorpe was enumerated as having 214 frames, all of which were in operation producing worsted goods. Of these, 84 were narrow frames, 130 were wide; 84 produced cut ups and 130 drawers, shirts and pieces. It is surprising that, on the basis of these statistics, Muggeridge did not seek evidence from the Countesthorpe knitters. Countesthorpe had the greatest number of wide frames outside the urban areas. The only village that demonstrated a similar profile was Ruddington, which worked to Nottingham in an entirely different branch of the trade.<sup>86</sup> In Leicestershire, Countesthorpe was ranked 22 out of 117 centres of hosiery manufacture in terms of overall number of frames, but in terms of the number of wide frames, it was remarkably the third largest centre behind Leicester and Loughborough exceeding even places like Hinckley, or Shepshed.<sup>87</sup> 61% of Countesthorpe frames were classed as 'wide' by Henson, a percentage only surpassed by Leicester which had 72%; Loughborough had 52% of its frames described as wide. Geographically contiguous parishes to Countesthorpe, Blaby and Wigston, had 37 (11%) and 100 (18%) wide frames respectively.<sup>88</sup>

William Biggs, a major Leicester manufacturer, stated to Mr Muggeridge that wide frames were 'peculiarly confined' to Leicester 'because the country hands having been used to work

---

85 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, part II, p.4.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

in the wrought-hose branch for a long time are not disposed to give it up; and though it is worse paid ... there is not the disparity that there would be at first sight, because they (the country hands) partly combine agricultural pursuits with their frame work. Another reason is the facility for executing order with dispatch, in consequence of their being close at hand.<sup>89</sup> Countesthorpe was far from being close at hand; the village was further from the urban centre than most. Clearly the consequence of enclosure had reduced opportunities for by-employment, although Mr Biggs' observations may have been based more on experience of the past than information from contemporaries.

There is statistical evidence which suggests that Mr Biggs was not necessarily correct in his observation that wide work was better paid than other branches. Prices paid for work by the manufacturers were not always those paid to the knitter. The demand from the knitters to know the price per piece paid to the middleman/bagman was a recurrent theme in the 1845 report. Of the average wages per village, stated by Felkin to the Commission, Countesthorpe's average per frame of 5s 6d was high, but no higher than Shepshed where there were only 23 wide frames (3% of the total) and Burbage where none of the 450 frames were wide.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the issue of wide-frame work being the most prosperous and attractive to the individual does not, in itself, explain the proliferation of that style of machinery in one village.

Of far greater significance is that, while Countesthorpe was unusual in its percentage of wide to narrow frames, it was equally different in its employment structure. The Victoria County History of Leicestershire suggests that between 1852-1900 there were 8 bagmen and 4 manufacturers in Countesthorpe, proportionately more than villages operating a similar number of frames.<sup>91</sup> From the 1860s the frame-work knitting industry was increasingly mechanised, and the workforce employed by manufacturers in small factories. The bagmen were a feature of the preceding period, when a workshop of more than 8 men employed on hand knitting machines was uncommon. Bagmen were able to operate when the individual knitters worked on rented frames in their own homes or at most, in small workshops. Countesthorpe's eight bagmen were possibly among the 14 respondents in the 1851 census who gave their occupation as 'employer of frame-work knitters'.

---

89 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.856.

90 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.41.

91 V.C.H. Leics., 3 p.20.

As with the earlier period, the definition of an 'employer' was ambiguous; the 14 who classed themselves as 'employers' may have been middlemen. Mr J. Biggs outlined to the 1845 Commission how his 1,000 frames were organised; they were divided between 'at least 90 to 100 (middlemen); but some of them have as high as 30, 40 or 50 frames; still the greater number have but 3 or 5 to 10.'<sup>92</sup> The evidence of William Elliott, himself a middleman, suggests that the relationship between the middleman and the hosier was not an exclusive one. Muggeridge summarised his evidence in the introduction by stating: 'the evidence establishes that almost all of the class called either undertakers, middlemen, or masters, which three terms are synonymous, have a certain number of frames either their own property, or hired by them in addition to those with which they are furnished by the hosier.'<sup>93</sup> The distinction between the middleman and bagman was blurred in the perception of contemporaries. The main distinguishing feature of a bagman was that he owed no allegiance to a manufacturer whereas the middleman owed at least some, even if that relationship was abused. Amongst the 14 Countesthorpe employers there were up to eight who could be classed as bagmen, and at least six who might most accurately be called middlemen.

The majority of references to the organisation of the trade in the 1845 Report stress the significance of the middleman in distributing yarn and collecting the finished articles. Yet there is substantial evidence that, in neighbouring villages to Countesthorpe, the knitters had a more direct relationship with the manufacturer. Evidence from Blaby, dominated by its 285 narrow frames (89%), states that 'the hands principally take the work in themselves from Blaby, which is four and a half miles from Leicester. Mr William Ward, a manufacturer from Smeeton owning 300 frames, when asked by Muggeridge whether he employed an undertaker, answered 'No, I would not have anything to do with undertakers; it is one of biggest evils; I like the hands to keep their prices'.<sup>94</sup> Frame-work knitting in Smeeton and Kibworth, which also worked for Mr Ward, was also dominated by narrow frames with 140 and 102 frames respectively.

Countesthorpe had 130 wide and 84 narrow frames in 1844. In 1851 the work was divided between 288 men, 121 women and 166 children. <sup>95</sup> Of these 127 were claimed to be employed by the 14 indigenous hosiers. As no evidence was given by Countesthorpe knitters

---

<sup>92</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV ,Q.827.

<sup>93</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.66.

<sup>94</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV ,Q.7159

<sup>95</sup> H.O. 107/2081.

it is not clear which of the frames were employed by the Countesthorpe masters - wide or narrow, cut-ups or drawers, shirts and pieces. What seems to be significant is that, being seven miles from Leicester, the middlemen (either local or urban based) were able to develop a greater autonomy. While Countesthorpe was not an independent centre, such as Loughborough and Leicester itself, and was certainly not on the same scale, it shared similar profiles, both in terms of the distribution of wide and narrow frames and the goods produced.

All historians of the hosiery industry and the 1845 Commission Report agree that from 1815 there was a rapid decline in the number of independent frame-work knitters. From then, Mr Biggs explains, 'there had been a gradual reduction of wages and an increasing distress and suffering among the working classes. They have been compelled in most cases to sell their frames, which have thus become, in the course of time the property of the manufacturers, who are at present the principal owners of them.'<sup>96</sup> Mr Biggs ignored the responsibility of the manufacturers for the level of degradation experienced by the work force, but he indirectly emphasises the significance of the 14 small employers in Countesthorpe. If families such as the Lords, Plants and Hubbards had been able to retain a degree of independence in a restricted economic climate, it may have been because they adopted what for them would be the most lucrative branch of the trade.

Wide frames which produced spurious articles had the largest profit margin in knitted goods. The shirt trade, which was the principal branch of manufacture in Countesthorpe was initially advantageous to the knitter when it was introduced in 1796. The prices paid were 10% to 15% higher. This would have been important to those families, such as the Lords, who had retained their independence to that date. Skilful use of apprentices, stinting and frame rents would enable them to maximise their profits. One witness from the shirt trade, James Shaw, recounted a discussion he had with a fellow knitter who was employed by a different middleman: 'We got talking and I made it out that he was getting 2 1/2d a dozen more than I had, and 3d has been taken independently of the 2 1/2d, I have never seen anything of, and that means 5 1/2d altogether; and that was from every dozen; and what more there was I cannot say.'<sup>97</sup> Such techniques would strengthen the bagmen's position even further when prices declined due to a large number of frames coming into this branch of the trade. By 1837 even the shirt trade was depressed but the opportunities for the employers of wide frames was still greater than those in the wrought hose trade. The ability of the

---

<sup>96</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.827.

<sup>97</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.333.

Countesthorpe bagman to protect his profits undoubtedly contributed to their continued existence.

The knitters who were employed by the middleman, or more directly by the manufacturers, seemed to have their working lives circumscribed by practices which continually reduced their ability to support themselves. All stockings complained about frame rent, stinting and payment in truck-stoppages which cut into the worker's already meagre income, but protected the profits of the employer. The statistical material presented to Muggeridge demonstrated that average prices had progressively declined, from 7s 6d per dozen 24 gauge hose in 1815 to 4s 6d in 1841. The average price of wheat was similar in both years, at 65s 7d per quarter in 1815 and 64s 5d in 1841.<sup>98</sup> Muggeridge was aware that earning ability varied by life stage and asked the witnesses to give typical wages. William Biggs a major Leicester manufacturer, gave example of the weekly wages earned by his hands in the shirt branch. These ranged from 4s 6d earned by a twelve year old in February 1844 to 20s 1d by an adult male in April. Such instances, Mr Biggs assured the Commission, were 'clear of all charges and deductions of every kind'<sup>99</sup> The evidence from the knitters suggests that the actual earnings were slightly lower. John Benson who worked through a middleman for Biggs, claimed that his average weekly earnings were 17s but with stoppages of 6s 6d.<sup>100</sup> This was less than the 14s 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d which Mr Biggs claimed that Benson was earning clear of stoppages.<sup>101</sup>

Mr Biggs may not have been guilty of deliberately deceiving the Commission, Mr Gould (the middleman) may have made extra charges than those he passed on to Mr Biggs. John Benson stated that 'I pay 3s a week rent (for the frame); 1s winding, 1s 3d standing and taking in, and the master's profits I cannot say what they are because they will not let us know what they have. There is a profit arising, but what I cannot say. If we were to go to the master and ask him, he would not tell us. that is, in a great measure, where we are oppressed. They get their price - those masters, or middlemen - from the warehouse, and then they just give us what they think proper.'<sup>102</sup>

The decline in earnings from 1815 was blamed on the introduction of wide frames. Undoubtedly the lower quality product manufactured on these resulted in falling prices for all

98 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.36.

99 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 806.

100 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.427.

101 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.806.

102 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.427.

hosiery products. The manufacturers attempt to protect their profits by increasing deductions, especially frame rent, was apparent to the knitters. Frame rent varied between 1s to 5s 9d per week, a great increase from 9d paid in 1812.<sup>103</sup> Mr Benjamin Knight, himself a manufacturer, eloquently expressed the effect of this on the employees. Muggeridge asked him whether 'the frame rents are now regarded as one of the greatest sources of profit?' To which he replied, 'I should think that it is the whole of the profit. There is nothing got unless it is ground out of the poor; no hosier in Leicester can, in an honourable straight forward manner, put any profit in his pocket; it is all done by grinding, it is altogether a grinding system.'<sup>104</sup>

The iniquitous system of frame-rents was further highlighted by statements given concerning the actual value of frames, which varied between £7 - £25.<sup>105</sup> Thomas Smith, a glove hand, estimated that, '£1 a year would amply pay the expense of any narrow frames; that is of wear and tear. I feel confident that it does not take that in some branches; not £1 a year. There are some frames in Leicester paying £7-10-0 a year, only valued at £6-£7.'<sup>106</sup> John Benson claimed that his frame was worth £20, on which he paid 3s per week rent.<sup>107</sup> This would suggest that in a little over 2 1/2 years he could have purchased the frame outright. Mr Biggs took a longer term view of the cost and included re-moulds and interest in his calculations. He estimated the out-goings over a period of 20 years to be £140-2-6, and incomings, at a rent 2s 6d per week and the sale of the carcass at the end of 20 years, to be £191-15-0. This gave a profit of only £51-12-6 over the twenty year cycle.<sup>108</sup> Such complex calculations obscured that in 1844 the market was over stocked with frames and that a demand for new frames had collapsed.

The independent knitter had been progressively forced out of ownership of his frame. He was compelled to rent a frame directly, or indirectly, from a manufacturer. The frame was worth considerably less than the amount he paid in rent - few, if any, gave evidence of Mr Biggs' costly remoulding - and, above all, the knitter was forced to pay rent for periods when his frame was idle. Mr Thomas Wood, a manufacturer, denied this. When asked 'Is it your practice to take the full amount of frame rent, when the frames are fully employed or not?' he replied 'Certainly not. If the hands go out to harvest work, as is also in the case of illness, a

---

103 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.3411.  
104 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.6494.  
105 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.821.  
106 P.P. 1845 vol. XV Q. 46.  
107 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.449.  
108 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.886.

portion of the rent is allowed them, depending of course on the peculiar circumstance of each case.'<sup>109</sup> Many would have attested that the prevailing circumstances were that middlemen, faced with a depressed market, openly spread their limited work between a larger number of frames than was necessary to obtain full frame rents from each.

The over-stocked labour supply made the work force vulnerable to stinting. The knitter's absolute need for income to feed their families, forced them into accepting the situation. Joseph Johnson's experience in this field was typical. In response to the question: 'You state that you pay 2s a week frame rent; have you always paid that?' He replied, 'Yes; and always have paid it whether I have been on full work, or half work, or quarter work, whether sick or well, whether one day little work or no work; or whether there are any circumstances, as there are sometimes, that you cannot do any; the charges have to be paid all the same.'<sup>110</sup> The consequences of stinting for the employee were clearly stated in the introduction to the report: 'The workman, instead of being driven to seek other employment, as he must necessarily do if left wholly unemployed, is kept sometimes for months together on the borders of starvation, with just enough work to prevent him seeking a more extended field of occupation, and too little to maintain himself or his family. Those familiar with the working classes of this country well know that nothing tends to greater demoralisation than unsteady, irregular and ill requited employment'.<sup>111</sup>

Large manufacturers denied that they were responsible for stinting and most of the evidence would suggest that the middlemen were to blame. Forced to return the full frame rent to the master hosiers, they made their profit by spreading the limited work over their own frames. The work might be stinted to the knitter, but the middleman secured his income. Middlemen were notorious for other methods of securing their profits which were, by 1845, criminal. It would appear that for many knitters the Commission of Enquiry was the first indication they had that the Truck system was illegal. Muggeridge stated: 'I seldom found any of the work people at all informed on the subject. In remote country villages, where the system is most rife the greatest ignorance was most usually exhibited'.<sup>112</sup>

It is likely that Countesthorpe was one of the remote villages described by Muggeridge. Of the 14 who gave their principal occupations as employers of frame-work knitters in the 1851

---

109 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.1943.

110 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.1485

111 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.55.

112 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.79.

census, 3 can be firmly identified in White's Trade Directory of 1846 as having alternative occupations. Each was directly involved in selling victuals; William Lord who employed 25 knitters and William Plant who employed 10 were listed as shopkeepers; James Tompkin, who stated that he employed 8 frame-work knitters, was the keeper of the Axe and Square. The Plants and Tompkins were families which diversified into frame-work knitting in the second half of the eighteenth century, the evidence concerning their dual employment would seem to re-inforce the view that, in order to survive with any degree of independence, the knitter was forced to employ unscrupulous methods.

'An Act to prohibit the payment in certain Trades, of Wages in Goods, or otherwise than the current Crown of the Realm', had been passed in 1831 but was widely ignored or circumvented in the Midland Counties.<sup>113</sup> An Anti-Truck Society was established in Leicester and was responsible for a series of prosecutions, although its impact in the rural areas was more limited.<sup>114</sup> It is impossible to prove whether the Countesthorpe shopkeepers forced those whom they employed as knitters to purchase goods from their shops. Certainly they were not prosecuted. However, it would have been unlikely that, in a relatively small community, the knitters would have openly challenged their employers. Muggeridge concluded that 'there is among the working classes a very wholesale dread of what they call "going to the law" they not only fear the expense of the road to it, but the fearful consequences of what failure, and perhaps even success would entail upon them.'<sup>115</sup> Countesthorpe knitters employed by William Plant would have been aware of what happened in Oadby, when an individual successfully gave evidence against his employer; not only was he thrown out of employment but he 'was violently attacked by his brother workmen as soon as he got home and his effigy burnt in Oadby Streets.'<sup>116</sup>

John Middleton, of Huncote, described how the Truck system was operated by his employer: 'You got the ticket from the warehouse, on which was calculated the money you had to receive, then we used to have the shop things put down on one side, and then you received the difference.'<sup>117</sup> The employer made it clear that such an arrangement was not negotiable and stated, when John Middleton did not buy what was regarded as sufficient, 'Why do you not take so many things as you used; we cannot employ you unless you take more.'<sup>118</sup> Such

---

113 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.29.

114 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.963.

115 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.79.

116 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.1916.

117 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.6541.

118 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.6545.

iniquities were common. Perhaps the most extreme example of the Truck system was that quoted by George Kendall: 'When Saturday night came I had to turn out with a certain quantity of meat, and candles, or tobacco, or ale, or whatever I had drawn in wages, to dispense of at a serious loss. I used to take a can of ale to the barber to get shaved with. I used to take my beef at 7d a pound and sell it to the coal woman that I had my coals off for 5d. <sup>119</sup> The Truck system may not have been so extreme in Countesthorpe, but it was a further means, along with frame rents and stinting, by which the bagman/middleman survived a period of depression. For the individual knitter and his family it was one more example of their alienation; the worker had really lost any degree of control over his labour. The frame-work knitter suffered 'expropriation of nature' before the dictation of factory production.<sup>120</sup>

By 1844 conditions in the hosiery industry, especially in rural areas, were so extreme that it is surprising that the stockings were prepared to continue in frame-work knitting. Muggeridge only partly explained the situation when he observed that the knitters were 'given just enough work to prevent them from seeking a more extended field of occupation'.<sup>121</sup> This may have been the case for the urban workers but for the rural employees, such as those in Countesthorpe, the reality was much starker - there was no alternative employment. By 1851 opportunities for employment in agriculture had declined significantly as a result of the expansion of pastoral farming, which had accelerated post enclosure.

Countesthorpe's population in 1851 was 949, of whom 522 were aged over 15, 264 were women and 288 men. Of the 264 women, 121 gave occupations within the hosiery industry, 2 gave agricultural employment and 106 were listed as having no occupation 'outside the domestic sphere. 155 men gave their employment as frame-work knitting with the remaining 133 divided between agricultural labour, trade and craft and farmers. Of the remaining 397 aged under fifteen, 166 were listed as being involved in a stage of hosiery production. Felkin's statistics suggest that there was no unemployment of frames in Countesthorpe but under-employment in hosiery was a major feature, even when trade was relatively buoyant. Over-stocking of the labour supply was itself a result of low wages and stoppages. Only by involving the whole family in production could it survive as an economic unit.

---

119 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.77.

120 J.Rule, 'Labour in a Changing Economy', *Refresh*, 12 (1991), p.6.

121 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, p.55.

Apprenticeship taken out during the period of the French Wars had significant repercussions for over employment within the industry, following demobilisation in 1815. Despite changes to the Statute of Artificers in 1814, the practice of taking parish apprentices was little changed.<sup>122</sup> John Roberts was apprenticed in 1824 at the age of eleven and he explained to the Commission that he 'came from Bedworth in Warwickshire. At the time I came here there was three of us to that master that were apprentices. That caused a great deal of hurt to our trade, because in the county that used to be such a great system to what it has been of late years. I have known men in Cosby at the time I was apprenticed to have as many as four or five apprentices, all fetched out of other counties'.<sup>123</sup> By 1844 the situation had changed dramatically; when Joseph Jayes of nearby Enderby observed that 'there are no apprentices taken now'.<sup>124</sup> The decline in the formal system of apprentices did not mean that children were not employed in the trade. Muggeridge asked John Cooper of Leicestershire whether 'the number of stocking hands has increased of late years?' He replied that: 'as before they have increased in a great way because people have been obliged to put their children to something, for they cannot put them apprentice, and you are obliged to learn them yourself'.<sup>125</sup> In Countesthorpe, children aged five to six began as winders preparing yarn for their parents but, as they got older and younger siblings were able to perform the more basic tasks, they were put to the frames. For many families the 12s earned by a child producing stockings was an essential part of the family budget. John Middleton responded to Muggeridge's question 'do they put their children to the frame very young?' by stating 'as soon as they are able, and before they are able too... they are turning them into the frames at nine to ten years old'.<sup>126</sup>

There are indications in responses made in 1844 that the situation regarding child employment was changing. Robert Spencer of Loughborough, believed that 'if parents can get other employment for them, they would not put them to the frame.' Although he had allowed his eldest child to wind, he was 'looking out for a master of some other description' to apprentice the child to.<sup>127</sup> In an urban area there were greater opportunities for securing alternative forms of employment. In Countesthorpe there were few. This is emphasised by the employment of children listed as resident with their parents in the 1851 census. Where the father was a frame-work knitter, 74.6% of his co-resident children (male and female aged

<sup>122</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.1457.

<sup>123</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.1457.

<sup>124</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.3431

<sup>125</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.1679.

<sup>126</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.6580.

<sup>127</sup> P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.7496

over 5) were said to be employed in the same trade, with 2.4% in trade or craft and 0.6% employed in agriculture. More surprising is the fact that 65.5% of the children of agricultural labourers and 24.5% of those whose fathers were involved in trade or craft occupations were also employed in an aspect of hosiery production. Yet, only 7.3% of the resident offspring of agricultural labourers and 16.3% of trades and craftsmen were stated as following their father's occupation.<sup>128</sup> In Leicester and Loughborough the manufacturers may have been pressurising the parents to put their children to the frame, whereas in Countesthorpe families did this from necessity. Only by supplementing their meagre incomes could they subsist. The only form of employment for the children was in frame-work knitting but, by allowing unskilled children to perform such tasks they both devalued the craft and lowered the wages.

The trend towards lower wages had been observed in hand-loom weaving where, as Muggeridge quoted 'occupations, in which the labour of women and children bears a large proportion in value to that of able bodied men, are in peculiar danger of being encumbered by a supply of labour increasing in greater proportion than the demand for it'.<sup>129</sup> Female labour compounded the worsening conditions in the frame-work knitting industry. Edward Broughton of Narborough observed that there 'are a great number more women employed in the frames than formerly'.<sup>130</sup> Muggeridge was very interested in female employment, because of the supposedly detrimental consequences of this for family life. Evidence given by witnesses suggested that greater female participation was the result of two factors, viz., the 'lowness of wages which induces the operatives to allow their wives to go into the frames' and the advent of new technology.<sup>131</sup> John Geary of Anstey explained that before 1810, very few women worked in the frame 'at that period they got their bread by spinning and knitting; and then what we call the jennies came up, and since then they have taken to the frame'.<sup>132</sup>

43.4% of women in Countesthorpe aged over 15 gave employment in frame-work knitting as their occupational status in the 1851 census return. The vast majority of these were seamers rather than knitters. This was a feature of the proliferation of wide frames. Robert Spencer noted that 'not a great many women are employed in the frames in Loughborough; I should think a score at the outside. The most women I have seen in stocking frames is at Barwell

---

128 H.O. 107/2081.

129 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, p.101.

130 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.3376.

131 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.1598.

132 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.3216.

near Hinckley'.<sup>133</sup> As noted previously, 56% of the frames in Loughborough were classed as wide by Felkin, whereas Barwell operated only narrow frames producing exclusively cotton fully fashioned hose.<sup>134</sup> There would have been less opportunity for women to find employment as seamers in this branch of the trade but the physical operation of a narrow frame would not have presented any obstacles. Cut-ups, drawers, shirts and pieces produced in Countesthorpe would have been dependent on women to seam the finished articles. Several witnesses referred to the difficulty involved in operating wide frames. Charles Jarratt from Loughborough stated clearly that 'it requires a strong man to work a wide frame'.<sup>135</sup> Female labour was very adaptive and was dictated by the predominant male type of production. Where men operated narrow frames and seaming was less significant, women supplemented the family income by working a frame. In Countesthorpe, where seaming costs would have been high, women tended to do such work.

In all branches of hosiery manufacture female and child labour and their wages were essential to maintain the family. In 1844 the majority of families, especially with children under fifteen, operated as an economic unit. This was, however, far removed from the independent artisan structure which had existed in the mid eighteenth century, when families first diversified to provide their dependants with a means of supporting themselves. William Goodman, of Blaby described his economic unit: 'I have one daughter and her husband and their three children living with me. Their aggregate earnings never exceed 7s 6d first hand, and they have all the charges to pay and five to keep out of the remainder. They are not able to get any meat, nor to buy any clothing; the extent of their living is mostly milk, which they purchase in the morning for breakfast and dinner, and a little coffee in the afternoon'.<sup>136</sup> William Goodman and his family paid 1s 6d rent per week for the house they divided between them, in which they had two beds and five blankets. Descriptions such as the one given by William Goodman are constantly repeated in the report.

Frame-work knitters were forced to work long hours in periods when they were not stinted. Thomas Warner, employed in the shirt branch, gave evidence that he had to work from 5 in the morning to sometimes 11 at night.<sup>137</sup> But this was necessary if they were to support their families, even working 18 hours a day only secured Thomas Warner 16s -17s a week, first hand. The combination of low wages, poor diet and long hours resulted in physical

133 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.7491.

134 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Part II, p.4.

135 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.7547.

136 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.6680.

137 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.596.

deterioration. Dr Shaw, who was physician to the Leicester Infirmary and Fever hospital, stated that 'in physical powers I consider the frame-work knitters much below the average of even the manufacturing districts in the north. Their complaints generally assume the character of stomach complaints - dyspepsia of a low kind; that is the prevailing disease'.<sup>138</sup> In part, such problems were general to Leicester because of its poor water supplies and water borne illnesses. Shaw dismissed suggestions made in connection with the findings that this was exacerbated by drunkenness. He considered 'Leicester to be more respectable than most towns'. The basic causes of ill health were clearly expressed in Dr Shaw's summing up. When asked by Muggeridge whether health conditions in frame-work knitting had changed in recent years, he replied that, in former times, 'they got better wages, as I understand, and had more regular habits, and consequently they were enabled to obtain good sustenance, working at a very fair rate of remuneration, with comparatively less labour'.<sup>139</sup>

There is little doubt that the frame-work knitters were exploited by the bagmen and manufacturers is in little doubt; that the majority of stockings were forced into acquiescence in order to maintain their existence, whatever the cost, cannot be disputed. The consequences of this for the development of the hosiery industry were clearly stressed by Muggeridge when he stated that 'if we compare its (the hosiery industry's) slothful, if not positively retrograding progress with the extra-ordinary and gigantic strides which most other branches of British manufacture have made in the present century, the contrast is striking and remarkable'.<sup>140</sup> He dismissed the charge that progress was retarded by difficulties in applying steam power to the frame - this would be 'quite easy'. Muggeridge was more prepared to consider the problems created by foreign competition and changes in fashion but, whilst 'all these influences no doubt have had some effect; they neither extenuate, nor justify the apathy of the hosier or manufacturer'.<sup>141</sup>

Before the 1850s the master hosiers were not prepared to invest their profits in new forms machinery. Such investment would not have realised a return commensurate with those achieved by paying the hands depressed prices. Nor were the manufacturers compelled to develop factories to maintain discipline of the work-force and to prevent embezzlement. The bagmen and middlemen made their profits at the expense of the individual knitters, not the masters. While there were obvious outbursts of violence against the masters, the knitters,

---

138 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.3057.

139 P.P. 1845, vol. XV, Q.3071.

140 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.91.

141 Ibid.

working in their own houses, were forced to work so hard that they had little strength or opportunity to challenge the system. Only when the hands had a choice of occupation, as they had following the development of the boot and shoe industry in the later nineteenth century, would there be any motivation for change. The dynamic for mechanisation in the hosiery industry thus came from external demands for labour from other sectors, that is, from outside rather than within hosiery.

How applicable then is the term proto-industrialisation to the hosiery industry and the example of Countesthorpe? Frame-work knitting developed in Countesthorpe from an existing basis of a hand knitting industry. Those involved had access, through the Leicester merchants, to a national if not international market. This emphasises a problem raised by many critics of proto-industrialisation, as to when the particular phase actually began.<sup>142</sup> Certainly it is difficult to date it from the introduction of the mechanical frame, that is, to stages of technology *per se*. Equally, the introduction of mechanical frames appears to have been a response to population pressure on land resources during a period of agricultural change. This marked a transition from the female dominated hand craft to the technologically advanced frame operated mainly by men. The introduction of frame-work knitting did occur at the beginning of a period of regional specialisation in agriculture but not an advanced one, as tends to be promoted by the 'proto-industrialists'. Also, while the opportunities for earlier marriage clearly existed once frame-work knitting became established in the village, the indicators are that a decline in the age at marriage pre-dated the first significant period of take-up of the frames. There is a much clearer continuum in the early eighteenth century with a pre-proto-industrial society and organisation than the theories of proto-industrialisation might suggest.

The organisation of frame-work knitting in Countesthorpe was originally based on the kauf system but by 1844/51 the verlag system predominated.<sup>143</sup> Yet the division between the two was less clear. Several artisan families survived and flourished, playing a central role in the putting-out system as either middlemen or bagmen. These were described in their own right by contemporaries as 'manufacturers', they had little access to the larger markets but they maintained control over their production in a manner that was not possible for the major manufacturers.

---

<sup>142</sup> D.C. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p.40.

<sup>143</sup> Kauf system was characterised by independent producers who bought raw materials from a merchant and sold finished goods to him. Verlag system was characterised by the loss of independence where merchants owned the frames and put out work.

A major tenet of proto-industrialisation is that the rural work force had access to land 'unlike the later wage-dependent proletariat'. Employers, it is argued, were able to pay their knitters subsistence wages as they could provide part of their own food needs. There is little evidence of this in Countesthorpe where many common rights had been removed long before enclosure. Those families which can be identified as having an agricultural and a frame-work knitting interest polarised rapidly post-enclosure. They either used the land to establish themselves as employers of labour or degenerated into wage-dependent members of the proletariat. There was still some arable production in Countesthorpe by the late eighteenth century but the predominantly pastoral system had little demand for seasonal labour. It is difficult to argue that frame-work knitters in Countesthorpe were able to supplement their income to any significant degree on three weeks labour at harvest time and very restricted access to allotments. The frame-work knitters in Countesthorpe, and many other hosiery villages were an industrial wage dependent proletariat within a rural setting.

Pat Hudson has identified as a unique feature of proto-industry that labour was not yet fully separated from the means of production.<sup>144</sup> To describe the frame-work knitting industry in such terms would be incorrect. During the period 1815-1860 the majority of the stockings in the village operated machinery which they did not own and complied with systems of production over which they had little control. This must be seen in its own terms as a distinct phase of manufacture; fifty years is too long to describe as 'transitional.'

Kreidte, Medick and Schlumbohm argue that the proto-industrial phase was transitional because it contained the seed of its own decline.<sup>145</sup> They argue that as the industry developed, it became spread over too wide a geographical area and that the cost of maintaining such a productive network became prohibitive. This was not the case within Leicestershire. Costs were absorbed by the knitters, not the manufacturers. Nor was discipline a problem for the hosiery manufacturers. Stockingers had little scope for embezzlement, or for not producing the requisite amount. The bagmen/middlemen ensured that quotas were achieved and successfully controlled many aspects of the employees' lives through the truck system and manipulating prices.

The transitional nature of proto-industry is further explained by suggesting that the putting-out system enabled the manufacturers to accumulate profits which they later invested in

---

<sup>144</sup> P.Hudson, 'Proto-Industrialisation', *Refresh* 10, (1990), p.4.

<sup>145</sup> P.Kreidte, H.Medick, and J.Schlumbohm, *Industrialization Before Industrialization*, p. 137.

further mechanisation and factory construction. There is scant evidence that the master hosiers were prepared to invest their profits in technological advancement before 1860. It was in the interests of the manufacturers and the middlemen to maintain the system which secured their profits, albeit at the knitter's expense. Only when it was no longer possible to employ labour on subsistence wages were they motivated to mechanise and apply steam power.<sup>146</sup>

Recently there has been a retreat from advocating a full acceptance of the proto-industrialist theory. Pat Hudson has suggested that it is unlikely that an industry which fulfils all the criteria will be identified. Rather, she argues, one should see the proto-industrial theory as a frame-work for further enquiry; proto-industry has provided a stimulus for much research in the 1980s.<sup>147</sup> Yet a danger exists that proto-industrialisation becomes an accepted short-hand theory for explaining all manufacturing developments in the eighteenth century. While it is not possible to divorce developments in the hosiery industry from the wider changes in markets and organisations in the period 1700-1850, not to suggest that every manufacturing village need to be examined on its own, a close examination of one parish and its hinterland demonstrates the danger of trying to impose an extraneous structure.

The key factors in the development of frame-work knitting in Countesthorpe seem to have been shaped, up to 1800, by the agrarian structure. The tradition of hand knitting in the area, with established links to Leicester merchants and the presence of woolcombers in the community, provided a foundation and structure for an alternative occupation. This was necessary when pressure on land, due to a population increase, meant either migration or restrictions on marriage. Frame-work knitting expanded in Countesthorpe as a result of an increasing population, supplemented by apprentices from elsewhere. It was an artisan-based industry until the Napoleonic Wars when independent knitters in Countesthorpe either lost control of the productive process or co-operated with the major manufacturers in their increasingly despotic methods. The change was imposed from without, not from within, although Countesthorpe provided the necessary preconditions. The village had little to offer in terms of alternative employment, a situation exacerbated by the consequence of enclosure. It had a strong tradition of frame-work knitting with a group of key families in a position to fill the role of middleman between knitter and the manufacturer. These families' continued existence was significant to the structure and organisation of the industry in Countesthorpe - without them it is unlikely that it would have been dominated by wide frames in 1844. But,

---

<sup>146</sup> F.A. Wells, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>147</sup> P.Hudson, *Refresh*, p.4.

by 1800 the real control of the market belonged to the manufacturers who, with the co-operation of the middlemen, reduced the stockings to wage slaves. The knitters no longer owned their own machinery or controlled their production and were forced to do the master's bidding for scant wages. The period 1815-60 was not a period of transition; it had clear links with the domestic industry, dominated by the independent knitter, which had preceded it, and it had observable links with the small factories which followed it. But, it had a distinct organisational structure and means of production which exploited the rural workers in their own homes; it had many of the key elements of the factory system without steam mechanisation. For the knitters of Countesthorpe there was no alternative but acquiescence. For the minority, the elite, there were opportunities to increase their standing, but all groups were dependent on market forces and the price the manufacturers were prepared to pay.

### Chapter Three: Demographic Change in Countesthorpe, 1700-1851.

#### 3.1 The Historiography of Population Calculation.

In The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction, published in 1981, E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield attempted to construct a theoretical model of the interaction between fertility, nuptiality and mortality.<sup>1</sup> This was then used to explain population changes, especially the growth of population in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Wrigley and Schofield's thesis that it was changes in nuptiality and the age at first marriage, and the consequent fluctuations in the gross reproduction rate, which were responsible for population growth rapidly became a new orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> It is very difficult to fully assess a model which is based on such complex variables and computations, each part of which attains a fundamental importance for the subsequent calculations. However, the technique of back projection using the census data from 1871, statistics from 404 parishes, the critical application of Farr's English Life Tables and a Swedish migration schedule (in the absence of an English one), has probably come as close to establishing the population of England at quinquennial stages between 1581 and 1871 as it will ever be possible to achieve.

The mechanisms used to explain the significant rise in population from c.1770 and the gradual rise over the previous 60 years are more questionable. A fundamental problem lies in the original choice of the 404 parishes, which were far from representative. For example, only 13% of the aggregate parishes had populations of fewer than 400 inhabitants, compared to the national figure of 58%.<sup>3</sup> As was pointed out by the authors, 'a bias of this kind, if uncorrected, is likely to lead to faulty demographic conclusions'.<sup>4</sup> To remedy this imbalance a set of weighting factors was applied to the series so that the 52 of the 404 parishes whose population numbered less than 400 were multiplied by 4.509, while those parishes with populations over 5000 were multiplied by 0.491. This was an arbitrary procedure. It may indeed have had some validity in terms of gross numbers, but the issue of representativeness was still not addressed; the 52 small

---

<sup>1</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, The Population History of England 1541-71: A Reconstruction (London, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> J. Rule, The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850, (London, 1986) p.380.

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, op.cit., p.49.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

parishes selected by Wrigley and Schofield were a minority of the 5,800 parishes of such population size in 1811.<sup>5</sup>

The question of typicality goes further than the number of inhabitants; it raises issues concerning the internal dynamics of growth. The Leicestershire parishes included in the study are dominated by small market towns and large parishes such as Wigston and Shepshed which later became industrialised. Bottesford, controlled by the Manners family, is included but the predominant type of community, those which experienced domestic industry within a continuing agricultural framework, are virtually ignored. The study does set out to present national trends and 'pays little attention to regional or more local demographic history'.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, it has been argued, 'it obscures as much as it reveals, smoothing out the sequence of events at the regional and still more the parish and family level - where the ultimate interactions take place'.<sup>7</sup>

The apparent problems with using aggregative data to explain changes in fertility were met by integrating statistical evidence from a series of reconstitution studies. These too raise the issue of representativeness. The parishes were originally chosen for study as they demonstrated the consequences of a specific economic profile, whether it be framework knitting, a single dominant land-owning family or the developing market of London.<sup>8</sup> They were not chosen to be representative of general trends, nor do they include any small parishes. The practice of averaging the individual rates from several parishes is also problematical. An example can be made of infant mortality. Wrigley and Schofield combine the data from twelve parishes to demonstrate that the peak period for infant mortality was 1700-49, when rates of 168 and 148 per 1000 livebirths were experienced by males and females respectively. This figure, while important, obscures a wide variation in local rates. The rates for Gainsborough were 284 and 245 per 1000 for male and female infant mortality, whereas in Hartland they were 85 and 75.<sup>9</sup> Averaging may illuminate some supposedly 'national' trends but it fails to indicate the precise factors which underline the individual trends and figures.

This problem is even more pertinent to the discussion of age at marriage and fertility. Wrigley and Schofield stated 'reconstitution data on the age at first

---

5 Ibid., p. 49.

6 L. Bradley, Review of 'The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction' Local Population Studies, 27 (1981), p.53.

7 Ibid., p. 61.

8 They were chosen as representatives of a type - to cover all economic variations,

9 E.A. Wrigley and R.Schofield, op.cit., p. 249.

marriage suggest that nuptiality changes were highly important in influencing fertility changes in the early modern period'.<sup>10</sup> They demonstrated a fall in the age at first marriage for men from 28.0 in 1600-49 to 25.3 in the period 1800-49, and for women from 26.0 to 23.4 over the same time span. These too obscure a wide variation. The mean age at first marriage for men in Terling only varied by one year and two months and women by seventeen months over the three centuries - 1550-1850, moving from 25.9 to 24.7 and 24.5 to 23.0 for men and women respectively. In Colyton male age at first marriage reached its lowest point of 26.8 in three cohorts, 1600-49, 1700-49 and 1800-49; whereas the female age at first marriage only dropped significantly to 24.4 for the last cohort 1800-49, having been at a high point of 29.4 in 1650-99.<sup>11</sup> Bridget Hill has questioned the importance placed on decline in female age at first marriage as an explanation for a rise in population during the last decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> She believes that a range of marital and fertility strategies can be observed ranging from a strategy where childbearing before marriage was common such as in Culceth to areas of the county where marriage was delayed through farm service.<sup>13</sup>

On the one hand Wrigley and Schofield recognised this diversity when they stated that they were not prepared to 'read too much into the relatively small movements in marriage age before the eighteenth century, as twelve parishes are too few to give confidence that small changes in marriage age were the same countrywide'.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the same parishes were used to provide 'strong evidence of a major fall in marriage age between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth century'.<sup>15</sup> The figures were then used with age specific fertility rates to demonstrate that 'there was remarkably little change in age-specific marital fertility and that nuptiality changes were responsible for the change in the gross reproduction rate'. However, age specific marital fertility rates do demonstrate a change, especially in the 20-24 age group where the rate rose from 348 in 1550-99 to 411 in the period 1750-99. The argument that this age group is the least reliable when calculating marital fertility, due to the small numbers involved, is not entirely satisfactory; the data used was not statistically insignificant.<sup>16</sup> Of greater concern

10 *Ibid.*, p. 255.

11 D. Levine, *Family Formation in An Age of Nascent Capitalism* (London, 1977), *passim*.

12 B. Hill 'The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers', *History Workshop Journal*, 28 (1989), p.129.

13 *Ibid.*, p.143

14 E.A. Wrigley and R.Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.256.

15 *Ibid.*

16 D. Levine, *op.cit.*, p.114. Figures for Colyton all except 2 cohorts based on 100+ years at risk

is the variation between age at marriage and age-specific fertility for this group. In Colyton the highest age-specific fertility rate of 579 was for the cohort married at 29.4 in the period 1650-99 whereas a lower rate of 333 was calculated for the cohort married between 1750-99 when the mean age was lower at 26.3. In Terling, where the female age at marriage was consistently low, the lowest age-specific fertility rate was 377 when the age at marriage was also near its lowest at 23.8 and the highest 427 when the age at marriage was at its highest at 24.5.<sup>17</sup> This in itself raises a further question about the relationship between the age in marriage and subsequent marital fertility rates. Levine argued that low age at first marriage could be compensated by a decline in marital fertility to achieve a stable population. He suggested that in later eighteenth and early nineteenth century Terling such a balance was not achieved.<sup>18</sup> The uncertainty between fertility rates and age at marriage requires further investigation; it is not sufficient to argue that 'it is remarkable that although back projection identifies a rise in fertility as the principal agent of population growth, in doing so it proves to be paying tribute to the primacy of nuptiality in directing the course of events'.<sup>19</sup> A community's ability to control population size through both age at marriage and marital fertility requires more examination than is actually provided by Wrigley and Schofield.

In Chapter Ten of the Population History of England, Wrigley and Schofield attempted to explain the economic variants affecting nuptiality, fertility and mortality. The main determinant in the movement to lower age at marriage was considered to be the development of an industrial economy. The pre-industrial economy was regarded in Malthusian terms where 'productivity per man and per acre is either stationary or rises only very slowly and rapid population growth spells disaster'.<sup>20</sup> As England industrialised and agricultural productivity increased it experienced a fertility-dominated low pressure system controlled by fluctuations in real wages. This was a sophisticated system described as 'dilatatory homeostasis', by which there was a long delay between a fall in real wages and a fall in fertility. A lag of up to thirty years was suggested between a rise in real wages and a decline of age at first marriage has been regarded as excessive by other demographers.<sup>21</sup> Wrigley and Schofield do suggest a need for further

---

17 *Ibid.*, pp.123-4.

18 *Ibid.*, p.125.

19 E.A.Wrigley and R.Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.453.

20 *Ibid.*, p.451.

21 M Anderson, Population Change in North Western Europe, 1750-1850 (London,1988), p.72.

verification in this argument: 'one might have greater confidence in the validity of this conclusion if it could be verified regionally'.<sup>22</sup>

The assumptions made concerning the pre-industrial and the industrialising economies, with the emphasis on national rather than local trends also seems to ignore some essential variants. The ability of the individual community economy to develop forms of support other than large areas of virgin land seems to be virtually ignored. Limited local trade and manufacture surely had some impact on the family and village economy between the subsistence forms of farming which were still probably quite common in 1541 and the more strictly wage-based economy of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. Equally the pressure and economic consequences of enclosure in the different localities does not seem to be considered. These factors were responsible not only for changes in marriage opportunities and motives to delay marriage, but also the community's inability to supplement income through loss of common rights.

Wrigley and Schofield set out to analyse national population trends and arrive at national population estimates, and in doing so the local statistical evidence was subsumed within a putative overall picture. Perhaps it is wrong to criticise the result by substituting an alternative agenda and for problems which the authorities were aware of. Yet the interplay of the individual factors was so crucial that it would seem questionable to iron over regional trends in explaining the 'national development'; local trends were the result of local factors. It would seem from responses to The Population History of England that the development of demographic findings at 'regional, parish and family levels where ultimate interactions take place', would reveal more of the complex relationship between population changes and economic fluctuations'.<sup>23</sup>

Since E.A. Wrigley first conducted a reconstitution of the parish registers of Colyton in Devon, almost thirty similar studies have been undertaken to identify the individual interplay of economic and demographic trends in differing types of community. This method of analysing population change has been questioned, notably by Michael Anderson in Population Change in North-Western Europe, 1750-1850. Several criticisms made by Anderson concern the mechanisms of reconstitution. He argued that reconstitution studies could only be as good as the surviving registers and that those which did survive may not be typical. The

---

<sup>22</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R.Schofield, op.cit., p.453.

<sup>23</sup> L. Bradley, op.cit., p.61.

insufficiency of the registers is also highlighted; it is generally recognised that by 1750 5% of births were not recorded by the Church of England and that by 1800 the figure was 20%. Similar deficiencies are apparent in burial registers : in 1750 approximately 93% of burials were recorded, but by 1800 it is estimated that only 75% were.<sup>24</sup> (Data on age at marriage is also affected by clandestine, or custom, marriages before Hardwicke's Act, although formation of families often becomes apparent, even in these cases, on the baptism of the first child).

Anderson made more far reaching criticisms of reconstitution studies when he argued that the reconstitutable minority were not necessarily typical of the population as a whole. A theme which has recently been given further consideration by Steven Ruggles who has argued that by not including those who migrated from a parish , age-specific rates at have been depressed.<sup>25</sup> Anderson stated 'demographic events are inherently variable between families and over short periods of time, small numbers of observations mean that computed differences between places and periods may result from random fluctuations rather than reflecting real differences in behaviour'.<sup>26</sup> The latter criticism is serious as it does, for example, seem to question the reliability of the small changes in age at marriage thought to be central to the explanation of population growth.

Anderson also suggested that 'it is insufficient simply to observe change, demographic information must be related to its climatic, biological, economic and social context'.<sup>27</sup> If a reconstitution study is completed as part of a wider socio-economic study of a parish it is possible to identify the 'real' differences from the random fluctuations. For example, the responses of key families to changes in agricultural or industrial practices can be isolated. A study of property ownership, settlement records and a surname analysis can aid the identification of the resident population from the transient inhabitants and go some way to challenging the notion of a reconstitutable 'minority'. Anderson did not mention that some analyses do incorporate different data. Although, he was correct when he argued that it is difficult to calculate the numbers at risk within a community, so that death rates are difficult to compute, as is the proportion never marrying.<sup>28</sup> Age at

---

24 M. Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.14.

25 S.Ruggles, 'Migration, Marriage and Mortality: Correcting Sources of Bias in English Family Reconstitutions', *Population Studies*, 46 (1992).

26 M.Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.16.

27 *Ibid.*, p.10.

28 *Ibid.*, p.16.

marriage requires that a family be in observation for approximately 25 years, and therefore be relatively long term residents. However, calculations of infant and child mortality rates require much shorter periods in observation, as does the interval between births. E.A. Wrigley laid down certain ground rules for the conduct of a family reconstitution which included the optimum size of a community and the annual counts of baptisms and burials. A parish should not be too large so as to make the identification of individuals confusing, a significant problem in most English parishes which had a small number of surnames and a limited choice of christian names. Nor should it be so small to make the statistical results unreliable and influenced by a small number of extreme cases. Wrigley's ideal parish had a population of 1-2,000 with at least six marriages and twelve baptisms a year - if possible these should ideally be about 8 and 18.<sup>29</sup> When studying a community of this size some of Anderson's criticism can be avoided by building up more extensive knowledge of individual families and understanding their life decisions within the context of their wider experience.

Anderson's criticism of typicality does have some basis. The two parishes which were reconstituted by Levine in Leicestershire were deliberately the most extreme of their kind.<sup>30</sup> Bottesford, an example of a 'closed' village, was controlled by the Manners family; yet aristocratic landholdings were not typical of many Leicestershire villages. Shepshed, used to explain the consequences of proto-industrialisation on the family unit, demonstrated extremes of population density not experienced in any other frame-work knitting village. The atypicality of these villages is apparent from a brief consideration of the limited selection of data included in the Victoria County History of Leicestershire.<sup>31</sup>

Such criticisms as these do not invalidate the results of Levine's work, but the danger does exist that the demographic rates calculated from the Shepshed data will be taken as the inevitable outcome of domestic industry. Some of the trends identified in Shepshed may have a wider significance, but the ability to apply these further is restricted by Levine's focus on the consequences of domestic based industry to the exclusion of other factors. In establishing the social and economic background to demographic change in Shepshed, Levine spent only three pages explaining the development of the village up to the point when

---

29 E.A. Wrigley (ed), An Introduction to English Historical Demography (London, 1966), Chapter 3.

30 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.16.

31 The Victoria County History of Leicestershire, 3 (London,1954), pp.156-175.

'machine operators were reduced to the status of dependent labourers'.<sup>32</sup> Much of these three pages contains generalised information concerning the development of the frame, only one paragraph is given to considering that 'rural industrialisation often became important where an impoverished peasantry was unable to subsist on agricultural income'.<sup>33</sup>

In his conclusion, Levine stated: 'the main finding of this study, then, is that undermining a traditional economy and replacing it with one where capitalist agriculture or proto-industrialisation held sway had identifiable demographic implications'.<sup>34</sup> This was undoubtedly true, but the issue of the demographic change which undermined the traditional economy was not considered. Levine examined the demographic implications, not the inter-relatedness of change. This is most obvious in his failure to examine agricultural change - the enclosure of the common fields was not considered. The agricultural labourers were used as a contrast to the framework knitters but their own economic position was ignored. Equally the knitters and agricultural labourers were regarded by Levine as two homogeneous groups to be contrasted with each other. There was little detailed examination as to how the agricultural labourers were affected by the presence of domestic industry. Neither was there any real recognition that males were not exclusively knitters or labourers but shifted between a variety of occupations, depending on individual and more general economic circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

There is, therefore, scope for further enquiry into demographic change in the frame-work knitting industry and to discuss the wider networks. Countesthorpe is a suitable village to study, being one of the larger hosiery villages in Leicestershire. It also experienced early diversification, yet retained a significant agricultural base into the nineteenth century. The parish registers are complete, within the recognised limitations of non-conformity and under-registration. The village was small in terms of Wrigley's recommendations. Countesthorpe's population was 525 in 1801 and at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were, on average, nine baptisms and seven burials per annum. The number of baptisms met Wrigley's requirement of twelve per annum by the mid eighteenth century. The registers only record basic information, name of infant, father's full

---

32 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

33 *Ibid.*, p.19.

34 *Ibid.*, p.87.

35 *Ibid.*, p.83. He does however state that 'the reader should bear in mind that the line of distinction between frame-work knitters and 'others' is not as sharp as might be expected. Some labourers and, to a lesser extent, some tradesmen and craftsmen were involved in the stocking trade as knitters or seamers'

name but mother's christian name only at baptism. Names of bride and groom at marriage were seldom given and rarely, before the statutory requirement of Hardwicke's Act, was there any indication of parish of residence. At burial only the name of the deceased was given, except for cases where it was a child, when the name of the father was often given. In some cases an approximate age was stated, if it was considered remarkable, for example if the deceased was over eighty. If the cause of death was notable, a fall from a horse, a murder or from an outbreak of small-pox that also was recorded.

The decision was taken in this research to avoid calculations that were based on estimates of population 'at risk'. Such analyses are achieved only by the application of inappropriate life tables or migration schedules based upon foreign examples. This may be acceptable for national estimates but it is questionable where smaller samples are concerned. Additionally, calculations were avoided which were based on a series of assumptions. That is to say where a calculation such as life expectancy was based on limited evidence and the application of extraneous statistics. The danger of this is illustrated by Chris Wilson's calculations of marital fertility. When attempting to determine fecundity he had to make estimates concerning how soon after marriage the first baptism would occur, what the delay between birth and baptism would be, what percentage of brides would baptise their first child in the parish of origin and what percentage of brides would never bear a child. The last estimate was itself dependent upon knowing how many brides there were in a parish. Each of the decisions involved an estimate, but the calculation was presented in definite statistical form.<sup>36</sup> Family reconstitutions need to observe certain parameters: 'Family reconstitution is invaluable but it has limitations. In particular, unless population mobility is low it cannot produce statistics which require knowledge of numbers 'at risk'. It thus provides good information on infant mortality, but not on the death rates of adults, allows estimation of average ages at marriage but not of proportions ultimately marrying, and is little help at determining the population of a community'.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2. The Demographic Profile of the First Cohort, 1700-1749.

Recent research by Wrigley and Schofield has 'emphatically removed the burden of explaining population increase from mortality to fertility'.<sup>38</sup> They have

---

<sup>36</sup> C.Wilson, 'The Proximate Determinants of Marital Fertility in England 1600-1799', in L.Bonfield, R.M. Smith, and K. Wrightson (eds), The World We Have Gained. (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>37</sup> M.Anderson, op.cit., p.16.

<sup>38</sup> J. Rule, op.cit., p.380.

identified age at marriage as the means by which an individual community could checks. The national increase in population from the second half of the eighteenth century represented a re-assessment of resources in the context of wages; with urbanisation the population was less directly dependent for employment upon limited agricultural work.

Evidence to support this line of explanation was provided, among others, by David Levine. In his analysis of the Shepshed reconstitution, he argued that falling age at marriage was a result of the development of the framework knitting industry. Young men and women were able to achieve their highest earning potential in their early twenties and there was no incentive to delay family formation.<sup>39</sup> The evidence is not entirely consistent across his research. The reconstitution of Terling demonstrated a much earlier decline in age at marriage : the first cohort marrying between 1550 and 1624 had a female age at marriage of 24.5; this figure was not exceeded before 1851. Levine explained Terling as a localised example, the result of the development of a more commercially based agriculture stimulated by the proximity of the London market.<sup>40</sup> Yet the two reconstitutions demonstrate that age at marriage did not fall uniformly in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Countesthorpe reconstitution data suggests that female age at marriage was low even before the widespread take up of machine-based hosiery production. (Table 3.1). While agricultural production in the village was undergoing change, the pressures for greater pastoral farming were increasing within the framework of the open field system. It was not predominantly commercial based farming as in Terling. Leicester itself was growing but its primary importance to Countesthorpe was not as a market for surplus agricultural produce, although there is evidence that it fulfilled that function, but as a centre of organisation for the hosiery trade.<sup>41</sup>

---

39 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.58.

40 *Ibid.*, p.122.

41 H.Hartopp (ed), *Register of the Freemen of Leicester, 1196-1770* (Leicester,1927), p.250

Table 3.1 Male and Female Age at First Marriage 1700-1851.

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Male.				
1700-1749	20	25.9	7.4	26.0
1750-1799	59	26.2	5.3	24.8
1800-1851	134	23.6	3.2	23.3
Female				
1700-1749	22	24.4	4.3	22.3
1750-1799	54	23.5	4.2	22.8
1800-1850	160	23.2	4.5	22.2

While the evidence for the hand-knitting industry is, by its nature, difficult to establish, the presence of wool-combers in the village and references to the large number of hand-knitters within the villages surrounding Leicester would suggest that many Countesthorpe inhabitants supplemented their income in this manner.<sup>42</sup> Hand-knitting was not the exclusive preserve of women, all members of the family were capable of producing such garments, both during the evening and while performing other tasks. The finished articles would be marketed by the Leicester merchants and further supplies of materials collected from them, providing a supplement to agricultural income. By this means the pressure on agrarian resources would be less extreme. Hand-knitting had sufficient flexibility to be extended during periods when there was little employment on the land and contracted during harvest-time. It could produce income equivalent to commercially based agriculture and facilitate early marriage.<sup>43</sup>

Once the introduction of machine made hosiery occurred in Countesthorpe the trend towards earlier marriage was intensified. Thirteen identifiable families, who diversified into framework knitting in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, demonstrated low mean ages at first marriage for both men and women of 24.6 and 23.2 respectively. This contrasted with the later age at first marriage of those not involved in hosiery production of 26.5 for men and 25.4 for women.

<sup>42</sup> S.D. Chapman, 'Genesis of British Hosiery Industry', *Textile History*, 3 (1974), p.35.

<sup>43</sup> See my earlier chapter on frame-work knitting.

The type of land ownership in Countesthorpe before enclosure may also have encouraged by-employment in frame-work knitting. The predominant form of land-holding was 20-70 acres owned by a peasant farmer, although a significant number owned smaller areas. Wage-labour was not uncommon in Countesthorpe, yet a more typical experience was either for the farmer to utilise the labour of his own family, or to employ the labour of those who were unable to support their family on their own land.<sup>44</sup> Such an economic base was ideal for the development of domestic industry; families were tied to the community by their landholding but needed, and were able, to supplement their income through hosiery production. The income generated by this would only represent a small addition but it would remove the uncertainty which retarded age at marriage in such places as Shepshed. In Shepshed half the land tax between 1780 and 1832 was paid by one owner. The remaining land was divided into small parcels and much of it, Levine suggested, was uneconomic.<sup>45</sup>

Age at first marriage in Countesthorpe was considerably lower than the national average for the cohort marrying between 1700-1749. The twelve reconstitution studies used in The Population History of England gave a mean age at first marriage of 27.5 for males and 26.2 for females.<sup>46</sup> Wrigley and Schofield linked fertility tightly with age at marriage, although the actual relationship between the two is not fully explained. Age specific rates were not considered to have changed sufficiently to explain an increase in population. In 1685 the birth-rate per 1000 of the population was 33, in 1710 it was 28.5 and in 1780 it was 35. The respective mean ages at first marriage for women were 26.5, 26.2 and 24.9.<sup>47</sup> An increase in the birth rate occurred but the trend did not always follow that of age at marriage. A problem would seem to be that the data used to calculate the population of England was too unwieldy to explore more complex aspects of childbearing.

---

44 See my earlier chapter on agriculture for reference to land holding at enclosure.

45 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.15.

46 E.A. Wrigley and R.Schofield *op.cit.*, p. 255.

47 E.A. Wrigley, 'Population Growth: England, 1680-1820' in A.Digby and C.H. Feinstien (eds), New Directions in Economic and Social History (London, 1989), p.110.

Table 3.2. Mean Age of Mother at Birth of First and Last Child - 1700-1851.  
Female Age at First marriage < 30. (Numbers in Brackets).

Cohorts	1700-49	1750-99	1800-51
Marrying			
First	24.47 (20)	23.39 (41)	22.46 (102)
Last	33.28 (19)	35.80 (41)	33.64 (38)

The reconstitution evidence from Countesthorpe suggests that although age at marriage was low, the period of childbearing could be controlled to limit family size and to keep the population within resources. For the cohort marrying between 1700-1749 the mean age at birth of the first child, for those women who married before their thirtieth birthday, was 24.7 and the mean age at birth of the last child was 33.28. (Table 3.2) This gave an average childbearing period of 8.58 years, significantly shorter than for the second and third cohorts. Childbearing was also more concentrated for women married during this period, the intervals between the births of the first three children was the lowest of all three cohorts (excluding the interval between marriage and birth of first child). The cohort married between 1800-1851 experienced shorter intervals only for the fourth and last two children. (Table 3.3). By dividing the average childbearing period by the intervals between births it is possible to suggest the average number of children born to the cohort would be 4.7.

This relatively low level of reproduction, within the context of early age at first marriage is emphasised by age-specific fertility rates which were substantially lower for this cohort than for those marrying later. (Table 3.1). For those under 25, the rate of 398 per 1000 years at risk was 15.8% lower than the 416/1000 for those married between 1800-49. Even more significantly the rates for those aged 30-34 and 35-39 were respectively 10.1% and 33.6% lower for the first cohort than the last. The dramatic decline in childbearing for the post-35 group suggests a possible attempt at family limitation based on a concept of completed family size.

Table 3.3. Intervals between Births 1700-1851.  
(Numbers in Brackets)

Cohorts	1700-49	1750-99	1800-51
Marrying			
Marriage - 1st	15.7 (31)	15.7 (76)	8.6 (90)
1st - 2nd	22.4 (27)	28.5 (62)	30.1 (82)
2nd - 3rd	26.8 (25)	33.7 (49)	31.5 (63)
3rd - 4th	31.0 (24)	35.9 (40)	28.7 (53)
Last 2	39.8 (16)	43.1 (30)	33.4 (40)

E.A. Wrigley attempted to demonstrate evidence of family limitation in Colyton between 1647-1719. The critical evidence used by Wrigley was the interval of 50.7 months between birth of the last two children and low age-specific fertility rates. (Table 3.3).<sup>48</sup> In Countesthorpe the interval between baptisms of the last two children was 39.8 months, comparable to the two cohorts in Colyton which were not noted for family limitation. Although the age-specific marital fertility rates are not the same for each age-group for Countesthorpe and Colyton, they do appear to be at a similar level for those aged between 30-34 and 40-44. (Wrigley and Schofield argue that figures for the age group 20-24 are least reliable where age at marriage was high, as it was in Colyton for this cohort).<sup>49</sup>(Table 3.4)

<sup>48</sup> E.A. Wrigley, 'Marital Fertility in Colyton - A Note', *Economic History Review*, XXXI (1978), p.430.

<sup>49</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.254.

Table 3.4 Age -Specific Fertility Rates 1700-1851.

Cohort/Age	Years at Risk	Children Born	Rate/000
1700-1749			
Under 25	55	22	398
25-29	80	26	323
30-34	90	25	278
35-39	79	17	217
40-44	75	8	107
45-49	54	1	19
1750-1799			
Under 25	119	50	422
25-29	174	61	351
30-34	186	39	210
35-39	177	37	210
40-44	140	17	121
45-49	132	5	38
1800-1851			
Under 25	206	95	461
25-29	304	109	358
30-34	262	80	306
35-39	169	50	290
40-44	103	12	116
45-49	80	1	13

Wrigley selected the last birth interval as an indicator, as 'extended last birth intervals result from errors after intended family size has been reached and birth control is in practice'.<sup>50</sup> This is based on the assumption that the use of birth control results in considerably longer last intervals. The theory of family limitation based on the extended last interval, first suggested by Wrigley, has been much debated. Richard Morrow has examined the Colyton data within the context of fertility schedules produced by Coale and has suggested that the figures lie within the range of natural fertility rather than demonstrating fertility control.

50 E.A. Wrigley, 'Marital Fertility', p.430

Morrow argued that natural fertility was at a much lower level than for earlier and later cohorts in Colyton. This he ascribed to the consequences of the plague.<sup>51</sup> Such explanation has few implications for the cohort marrying in Countesthorpe 40 or more years after the plague. Nor does Wrigley's later suggestion concerning clandestine marriage appear to be applicable.<sup>52</sup>

In an early article Hoskins noted a similar low level of baptisms in Wigston Magna. Hoskins was fortunate in having available the figures for non-conformist baptisms as well as parish registers. Using the cumulative total he compared the 634 births between 1601 and 1630 with the 755 between 1700 and 1730. Although the number of recorded events had increased so had the number of families, but not in the same proportion. As Hoskins stated 'the inescapable conclusion is that while the number of families had increased by about a half, the number of births had risen by somewhat less than 20 per cent'.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately we do not have evidence on age at marriage for Wigston Magna, but the suggestion that delayed marriage resulted from new marriage strategies was an unlikely explanation for this sharp fall in baptisms. Rather, in both communities there may have been an attempt to restrict family size due to the pressure on land and the movement to pasture.

Further evidence for an attempt to control family size is provided by the average number of children born and surviving to families marrying during this period. On average 4.6 children were born and 3.6 children survived per family. It is very difficult to prove that family limitation was being practised in any community and the evidence from Countesthorpe and Wigston Magna is tenuous. However, low-level marital fertility rates cannot be ignored, nor can shortened child-bearing periods. While it is not possible to definitively demonstrate that deliberate family limitation was employed as a fertility strategy the possibility of restriction should remain.

The population of Countesthorpe was, in the pre-enclosure community, likely to live longer than the subsequent cohorts. If they were helping to support aged parents couples may have been more conscious of some need for family limitation. The mean age at death for those adults dying between 1700-49 was

---

51 R. Morrow, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', *Economic History Review*, XXXI (1978), p.423.,

52 E.A. Wrigley., 'Marital Fertility' p.434.

53 W.G. Hoskins, 'The Population of an English Village, 1086-1801: A Study of Wigston Magna', in *Provincial England* (London,1963), pp.203-204.

high, female mean age at burial was 56.38 and 61.2 for males, the female age being somewhat lower than the male, due to a number of cases of death in childbirth or in the post-partum period. Countesthorpe, in common with the nearby parishes used by Wrigley and Schofield, experienced a mortality crisis in 1730 as a result of poor harvests and high bread prices which affected those on the margins, most notably the old and the young.<sup>54</sup> However living conditions within the village were not overcrowded and by-employment in the knitting industry compensated for low wages and seasonal labour. It could be suggested that, in contrast with the later cohorts, those living in the village between 1700-49 were relatively prosperous.

The population of Countesthorpe was expanding during the first half of the eighteenth century, in spite of restricted family size and not only because of a slightly longer life expectancy. The analysis of surnames suggests that in-migration to the village was exceeding out-migration. Up until 1725 the surnames appearing in the reconstitution study and therefore the surname analysis tended to be the established families, landowners such as the Youngs and Grants. Only a small number of itinerant families whose residence in the village was for less than a generation appear, such as the Chamberlains and the Rubathems (also listed as Rubadubs). Twenty-five of the forty families who were listed in the period 1700-25 remained in the village until the end of the century.

Between 1725 and 1750 twenty four families entered the reconstitution study for the first time; for some of these, perhaps only the Gamble and Illiffes is there any indication that the family was resident in the village but entered observation late.<sup>55</sup> A number of these immigrant families, for example the Riddingtons and the Herberts, remained in the village until the 1851 census, if not longer. Eight of the 24 families remained for less than a generation. In the absence of occupational descriptors it is difficult to state whether these were labourers, or had other skills and trades such as William Jones who was listed as a schoolmaster. It is likely that the migrants were attracted into the village by the nascent framework knitting industry as well as by the opportunities for labouring in the fields. Peter Laslett observed a similarly migrant population in Clayworth and Cogenhoe.<sup>56</sup> Countesthorpe's profile as an 'open' village would imply that there

---

54 E.A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.682.

55 The families are mentioned in the parish registers pre-1700 and the Illiffes held land at enclosure.

56 P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, 1977), p.99.

was little enforced opposition to settlement; sixteen of the migrant families remained to see their offspring establish families of their own in the community.

Early eighteenth century population was mobile: 32.6% of the surviving male children and 55.4% of the surviving female children born to those couples marrying in the period 1700-49 left the village in search of employment or marriage partners elsewhere. Of the estimated 3.6 surviving children from each family this would suggest that 0.92 girls and 0.63 boys from each family left the village, leaving 0.75 and 1.31 respectively, in the community. This indicates above generational replacement, as more than half of those boys who survived to adulthood and 38.4% of the girls who survived, married and stayed in the village. In many cases the marriage partner came from outside the village. Marriages from the Countesthorpe register and evidence from elsewhere suggests that in 42.8% of the marriages both partners were from Countesthorpe and in 21.9% of marriages one partner came from outside. In 35.3% of families 'formed' (a card created on the baptism of more than one child) neither partner is identifiable as a Countesthorpe resident.

The evidence suggests that the population in Countesthorpe was increasing in the first half of the eighteenth century and that the interplay of factors was more complex than the simple equation of birth and death rates. In-migration was an important factor, whether families moved into the village as a unit or as individuals. This influx had an impact on the birth rate, there was a small but noticeable increase in the annual figure of baptisms from 8.5 to 11 between 1723 and 1735 (based on a five year moving average). A decline in mortality can no longer be used as a full explanation for a rising population; insufficient improvements in diet, living conditions or medical practices had occurred to explain any but minority changes in population. Wrigley argued 'that expectation of life rose by little more than 20% during the long eighteenth century'.<sup>57</sup> In fact nationally, expectation of life at birth fell in the 1760s and had only returned to its 1701 level by the early nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> The relatively high life expectancy and low level of child mortality in the first cohort would have added to the population of the village.

---

<sup>57</sup> E.A. Wrigley, 'Population Growth', p.111.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3 Demographic Profile of the Second Cohort, 1750-1799.

The cohort married in Countesthorpe during the period 1750-99 experienced the tumult and upheaval that was consequent on the process of enclosure and the related development of the frame-work knitting industry. W.G. Hoskins summed up the process: 'To a large extent what happened in Wigston is what happened in all those other villages up and down the Midlands, notably the wholesale conversion of arable to pasture, the engrossing of farms by large graziers at a much enhanced rent, the displacement of the peasant farmer, and the final collapse into ruins of the peasant society which had prevailed for so long over so wide an area in England'.<sup>59</sup>

Enclosure destroyed the common basis of village society. Up until 1766 farming practices in Countesthorpe had been agreed by the majority and the right of the individual was necessarily less important than the wider interests of all. George Bourne described the peasant existence before enclosure in Change in the Village: 'It was the essence of the old system that those living under it subsisted in the main upon what their own industry could produce out of the soil; and materials of their own countryside...as a general thing the parish where the peasant people lived was the source of the materials they used and their well-being depended on knowledge of its resources'.<sup>60</sup> The disappearance of the common land and open fields removed the support which had existed for the landless and the small land-owner alike, and destroyed the buffer which had protected them from adverse economic fluctuations.

Hoskins believed the demand for enclosure to be a result of the demographic trends which, as in Countesthorpe, had been experienced by the previous generation. 'The problem of the rising population was much too large to be solved in a piece-meal fashion. An additional amount of arable had been squeezed out of the commons but in the end the village had merely succeeded in upsetting the balance of open field farming'.<sup>61</sup> Recent research has emphasised the development of regional specialisation and explained the movement to pasture farming on the heavy Midland clays as a response to the competitive yields and prices achieved on the lighter East Anglian soils. Pasture farming which required enclosed fields for selective breeding and animal husbandry could not support the

---

<sup>59</sup> W.G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant (London, 1956), p.261.

<sup>60</sup> G. Bourne, Change in the Village (London, 1912), p.117.

<sup>61</sup> W.G.Hoskins, op.cit., p.240.

increasing population of the village in the same manner as the arable-based open field system.

Employment in Countesthorpe may have been more regular in the period after enclosure, although seasonal labour did not disappear entirely - reapers were needed for harvesting on remaining arable land but the predominant form of agriculture in the village soon became the grazing of stock and sheep, which unlike dairy farming were not labour intensive. The consequence of enclosure which had the most far reaching significance was the removal of the benefits which inhabitants of the village could gain from the land. After 1766 the day labourer and the landless frame-work knitter could no longer supplement their income through means such as gleaning, gathering firewood and, if they still retained a vestige of customary rights, the keeping of a cow.<sup>62</sup>

The consequences of agrarian change are evident in the demographic rates. The data for age at first marriage is inconclusive, demonstrating a slight fluctuation. The mean age at first marriage for males increased for the second cohort from 25.9 to 26.2 years, but the median age fell from 26.0 to 24.8. The reverse can be seen in female age at first marriage, the mean age fell by just under a year from 24.4 to 23.5, but the median increased by six months from 22.3 to 22.8. It would be difficult to relate such inconclusive evidence to economic changes. Equally age at marriage is perhaps most responsive to long-term trends. The consequences of enclosure on age at marriage were long term. The problems of viability of land holdings (especially when coupled to significant loans) manifested themselves on a longer time-scale. The long term trend was engrossment and a decline in the number of owners who were able to support themselves on the land. The delayed marriage of the landowners affected in this manner would be reflected in the cohort marrying between 1800-51. The immediate prospect for labour and paid employment would be one of some opportunity. Chambers has made much of the potential for increased employment post-enclosure. Work was available in hedging and ditching and the construction of roads but it was, by its very nature, limited.<sup>63</sup> Employment was also available in Countesthorpe through apprenticeship in the framework knitting industry, although this would only be available for the younger generation. The short-term experience in Countesthorpe

---

<sup>62</sup> In 1687 Robert Heathcote held the tenancy of a cottage which had the right to pasture a cow. Quoted in S.Knight and H.Schultka, *Countesthorpe: A Leicestershire Parish Before and After Enclosure* (Leicester, 1991), p.33.

<sup>63</sup> J.D. Chambers, 'Enclosure and the Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution'. in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, *Population in History* (London, 1965), p.32.

for those contemplating marriage was that employment was available and property ownership little changed.

The underlying problem created by enclosure was the disappearance of gleaning and access to firewood. This was critical for those who were employed seasonally and on low wages, and for those who owned insufficient land to support themselves. The general trend in the cost of living was upwards from a relatively low level in 1780. The increase was significant in the period immediately after enclosure in Countesthorpe, in 1766 the Phelps-Brown, Hopkins index stood at 111, twenty years later 125 and by 1796 - 173. The cost of living had doubled nationally, this had a deleterious effect for those in Countesthorpe who, after 1766, were unable to supplement their declining wages.<sup>64</sup>

David Davies, Rector of Barkham in Berkshire noted the changed circumstances of the poor in the post-enclosure period: "The depriving the peasantry of all landed property has beggared multitudes... Instead of giving to labouring people a valuable stake in the soil, the opposite measure has so long prevailed, that but few cottages, comparatively, have now any land about them. Formerly many of the lower sort of people occupied tenements of their own ... On these they raised for themselves a considerable part of their subsistence, without being obliged, as now, to buy all they want at shops... Thus an amazing number of people have been reduced from a comfortable state of partial independence to the precarious condition of hirelings, who, when out of work, must come immediately to their parish'.<sup>65</sup> The labourers in Countesthorpe were, especially in the long term, more fortunate than those in industry. But for the majority of the villagers, who in 1766 were dependent in the main on the land, the immediate results appear to have been manifest in rising mortality.

The annual returns of burials in the decade 1760-70 demonstrate a typical pre-enclosure entry in the parish register of approximately eight per annum. The entries from April/May 1766 (from the Enclosure Act and when commissioners were appointed) show a dramatic rise: sixteen people were buried in 1766, eleven in 1767 and twenty in 1768, indicating perhaps the vulnerability of the population to the deprivation of additional support in the immediate post-enclosure period. By 1769 the annual number of burials returned to its pre-enclosure level, although ten years later it rose and maintained a plateau at an average of twelve.

---

<sup>64</sup> E.H. Phelps-Brown & S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the prices of consumables compared with builders' wage rates', in E.M. Carus-Wilson, *Essays in Economic History*, vol. II (London, 1962).

<sup>65</sup> D. Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered* (London, 1795), p.56-57.

Wigston Magna, contiguous with Countesthorpe, demonstrated a similar pattern in its burial registers. In 1766 a record of 74 burials was achieved, followed by 64 in 1767 then a fall in 1768 to 45 rising to 60 again in 1769. By 1770 the burial rate returned to a normal level with 23 deaths recorded. Hoskins interpreted these rates as indicative of an outbreak of typhus. He suggested that such an epidemic would have been exacerbated by 'two years of high corn prices, coupled with the increasing congestion of the village as the hovels and cottages of poverty stricken framework knitters cluttered up the lanes and bits of open ground everywhere'.<sup>66</sup> He might have also considered that the resistance of the old and young was affected by changes brought about by the parish's enclosure award of 17 November 1766 which followed the administration of the open fields by the appointed commissioners.

Eight of those who died in Countesthorpe in 1766 were adults but only one of them - Henry Ralphs - can be linked to property ownership. The majority would seem to have been immediately vulnerable to the lack of support once offered by the common fields. Their diet before the enclosure of the common fields would have been supplemented by gleaning to eke out bread and additionally they may have benefited from rabbit or small game. A notable feature of the apportioning of land at enclosure in Countesthorpe was that most landowners were awarded land adjoining their existing farm houses, this would have made the practicality of small game trapping and gathering firewood more difficult for the labourers. Access to enclosed land was covered by the laws of trespass, as was deviation from public roads.

Few people in England starved to death in the eighteenth century and no-one in Countesthorpe appears to have done so as the result of enclosure. But the fall in nutrition which most labouring families experienced even more severely during 1767-8 was sufficient to expose those who were already vulnerable to infection and earlier death than could have been expected in normal conditions. The consequence of enclosure would have been the same as extremely high prices. In effect the deprivation of food sources would mean that a limited amount of income had to be stretched to purchase extra food. As Wrigley and Schofield noted: 'extremely high prices had a contemporaneous effect on mortality'.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> W.G. Hoskins, *The population of an English Village*, p.203

<sup>67</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.354.

Eleven of the twenty who died in 1768 were adults, five of whom were listed as widows, two had husbands living and four were adult males. A cause of death was given only for Ann Cox and her daughter Ann March who were both buried in the same grave having died of smallpox. It is unlikely that the other deaths were the result of the same disease as no further mention is made of this and the deaths were spread throughout the year. Smallpox was mainly an infant killer, it returned to parishes every six to eight years and very rarely killed anyone over that age, implying a near universal exposure to the infection.<sup>68</sup>The more likely causes of death were air-borne infections and pneumonia which would be more deadly when resistance was lowered; four of the adults were buried in December and January when additional problems would have been created by cold and shortage of free firing. J.L. and Barbara Hammond quoted D. Davies to emphasise the significance of the loss of right to cut firing: 'He estimates that a man could cut nearly enough in a week to serve his family all year'. The expense of purchased fuel varied from '£1 15s 0d up to £4 3s 0d with an average of £2 8s 0d per family'.<sup>69</sup>

Three of the adults who died in 1768 can be linked with property ownership and may have died with or without enclosure having taken place. Matthew Holmes was a weaver and owner of the manor house, Robert Bellamy, a frame-work knitter and owner of frames, Emmit Elliot was the widow of a farmer and frame-owner. Only Hannah Thornton can be linked to the property-less class, her husband had been a day labourer. The remainder cannot be linked with property ownership and this would suggest that they were employed in occupations which may have required an additional supplement to provide adequate resistance.

An accommodation between population and resources may, as Wrigley and Schofield argued, have been secured by 'wide quiet fluctuations in fertility', but demographic rates were also subject to sharp mortality spasms where economic conditions were such that resources were too expensive for the population to afford. The crisis in mortality 1766-68 was equal to that of the harvest failure of 1730; it was 'a clear cut example of the devastating effect of food shortage'.<sup>70</sup>That a similar level of mortality occurred in Wigston Magna, a contiguous parish, over the same period, emphasises the consequences of enclosure.

---

68 M.Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.59

69 J.L. & B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer 1760-1832* (London,1920), pp.76-83.

70 E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.354.

The national decline in life expectancy between 1755 and 1775 can be observed in the Countesthorpe reconstitution. The average age at death for the adult females married in the period 1750-99 was 46.5, almost ten years younger than for the previous cohort. For males the decline in the mean age at death for those in the second cohort was 50.2, more than ten years lower than for the previous group whose mean age was 61.2. If a woman married in 1750 at the mean age for the cohort of 23.5 and attained a mean age of 46.5 she would die in 1773 having experienced the effect of enclosure. For those married in the last decade of the eighteenth century, dying in the 1820s there would have been the further burden of depression and high food prices accentuated by the French Wars. The underlying trend for the whole cohort would have been a reduced standard of living and therefore lower life expectancy.

Table 3.5 Infant and Child Mortality, 1700-1851

Cohort /Age	At Risk	Number Dying	Rate/000	Survivors
<b>1700-1749</b>				
0-1	315	43	137	1000
1-4	272	26	95	863
5-9	246	9	37	841
10-14	237	10	42	810
<b>1750-1799</b>				
0-1	562	95	169	1000
1-4	465	43	93	831
5-9	417	9	22	754
10-14	403	9	22	737
<b>1800-1851</b>				
0-1	981	139	142	1000
1-4	810	65	80	858
5-9	638	22	35	789
10-14	535	8	15	761

Infant and child mortality was also different from that experienced by the cohort marrying between 1700-49.(Table 3.5) The rate for those dying during the first twelve months of life increased for the second cohort from a rate of 137 per 1,000 live births to 169/1000. (Table 3.6) Overall the number of children who survived

to adulthood declined from 810 to 737 per 1,000 born . The susceptibility of children during their first month of life has been differentiated from those infants dying later in their first year. The former were more likely to die from complications at birth, congenital defects and because of poor maternal health than as a result of external conditions such as disease, improper care and malnutrition. For the second cohort in Countesthorpe the rate for both increased, the endogenous mortality from 83 to 94 per 1,000 and exogenous from 59 to 83 per 1,000. These figures were higher than for those of the comparable cohort in Shepshed where the figures were 88 and 75 respectively. Levine makes much of the large increase in infant mortality experienced by the cohort in Shepshed married between 1825-49 when the exogenous rate rose from 79-137. This he describes as the result of the 'proto-industrialisation of Shepshed and the concomitant rise in population density in the village which created a less healthy environment through a deterioration in external conditions governing the health of children and infants. Problems created by an unhealthy, insanitary environment were compounded by the breakdown of these infant's physical defences against infection and disease caused by a less adequate diet'.<sup>71</sup>

Table 3.6. Endogenous and Exogenous Infant Mortality, 1700-1851.

Endogenous	At Risk	Dying	Rate/000
1700-49	315	26	83
1750-99	562	53	94
1800-1851	981	63	58
Exogenous			
1700-49	289	17	59
1750-99	509	42	83
1800-51	924	82	89

The rise in infant mortality in Countesthorpe, both endogenous and exogenous, suggests that there were long term consequences in the fall in nutritional levels experienced post-enclosure. The increase in endogenous mortality may have been caused by deficiencies in maternal diet. Contemporary accounts which relate diet to rises in infant mortality are unavailable, but an enquiry into the consequence of unemployment in the health of inhabitants of the North East in 1935 noted an

---

<sup>71</sup> D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.69

infant mortality rate of 114 in Jarrow compared to 32 in Purley. Deaths from diphtheria, tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia were all significantly higher in the depressed areas where there was subnormal nutrition.<sup>72</sup>

Recently Peter King has argued that 'throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the vast majority of labouring families in central and eastern England not only had access to the gleaning fields but also used that access to great effect. Gleaning was not a marginal activity in most grain-growing parishes'.<sup>73</sup> It is necessary to stress that gleaning could only be important in arable areas, the experience of Countesthorpe and contiguous parishes was significantly different. All over Leicestershire the immediate effect of parliamentary enclosure was the conversion of the greater part of what had been open-field arable to permanent pasture. Hoskins estimates that in the open field days 'about a fifth, or perhaps slightly more, of the land had been in grass'. Following enclosure two thirds of the parish was under pasture.<sup>74</sup> Under such conditions gleaning was insignificant 'there was not enough corn raised to employ the local mill or enough to feed even the inhabitants of the village themselves'.<sup>75</sup>

It is difficult to estimate how the lack of access to the open fields would affect the nutritional basis of the diet of the poor in terms of necessary vitamins, minerals and calorie content. David Davies described the impoverished weekly diet of a typical labouring family in Barkham consisting of a man, his wife and three children as 'three gallons of flour to make bread, 3.2lb of bacon, 1 1/2 oz of tea, 1lb of sugar, 1/2lb butter and 1/2lb of cheese'. This would give a calorific total of 35,763. The recommended daily intake for a labouring man has been calculated as 3,400 calories and 2,822 for a woman giving a combined weekly requirement of 43,554 calories. These were amounts suggested for adults in 1936 by Dr M'Gonigle and are based on comparable labouring families. This would suggest that the diet in 1797 was demonstrably inadequate, if it is estimated that the three children would require between them 4,420 calories daily; they would require a total of 30,900 per week, meaning the family diet would be deficient by 38,691 calories.<sup>76</sup> A study of the impoverished working classes in the early twentieth century indicated that it was common for the husband to receive a greater share of the available food. His health was vital to secure the family's income and

<sup>72</sup> S. Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars* (London, 1980), p.32.

<sup>73</sup> P. King, 'Customary Rights and Women's Earnings: The Importance of Gleaning to the Rural Labouring Poor, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, XLIV (1991), p.474.

<sup>74</sup> W.G. Hoskins, *Midland Peasant*, p.262.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> D. Davies, *op.cit.*, p.11.

livelihood.<sup>77</sup> Yet this was achieved at great physical cost of other members of the family. For many families in Countesthorpe low levels of nutrition would have been the norm and the likely result would have been a weakened health of the mother and a more vulnerable infant. This would have been critical in the first month and first year when breast feeding and weaning occurred.

The childbearing experience of the second cohort differed markedly from the first. The period of childbearing was considerably longer: the mean age at the birth of their first child for mothers married under the age of thirty was 23.9, and the last child was born when the mother was 35.8, giving an average period of 11.9 years. The intervals between baptisms was also longer than for those married between 1700-49. By dividing the total period by the birth intervals the evidence would suggest that the average mother produced 5.1 children during her fertile period. The actual experience of those families in the reconstitution study was lower than this; 3.9 children were born of whom 3.1 survived to adulthood. The discrepancy may be explained by differing age-specific fertility, which increased for those under 30 but was lower for those after that age. (Table 3.3) The difference may have been compounded by the increased percentage of women dying during their childbearing period. 20% of female burials for the cohort married between 1700-49 were of women between the mean age at marriage and 45; for the second cohort the percentage had increased to 35%. While not all the mothers died in childbirth or in the post-partum period, the strain imposed by subnormal nutrition, childbearing and breast feeding may have reduced fertility in the later years and contributed to earlier death.

J. Bongaarts considered the effect of malnutrition on fecundity in third world countries and concluded that chronic moderate malnutrition has only a minor effect on fecundity, but a sudden drop in the level of nutrition, as would have been experienced in the post-enclosure period, could result in a fertility decline and an increase in the death rate.<sup>78</sup> In extreme cases this can result in a 50% decline in fertility and a 50% increase in the death rate in the period approximately nine months after the reduction in the diet.<sup>79</sup> As already has been suggested there is some evidence of this in the death-rate in Countesthorpe. The evidence for the effect of such malnutrition on baptisms is less clear. In 1765 the last year before enclosure, 13 infants were baptised, in 1767, which would correspond with the

---

<sup>77</sup> G.C.M. M'Gonigle & J Kirby, *Poverty and Public Health* (London, 1936), p.168.

<sup>78</sup> M. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (London, 1913), *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> J. Bongaarts, 'Does Malnutrition Affect Fecundity', *Science*, (1980), p.568.

nine month period after the first fall in diet, 8 children were baptised. Bongaarts did not discuss the transition period between a sudden decline in diet and the re-adjustment to a lower level intake, although he suggested that amenorhea could persist for some time.<sup>80</sup> The findings may explain why lower rates of reproduction should be prominent in the post-enclosure period. It also goes some way to explain why the chronic moderate malnutrition experienced by the third cohort did not have such obvious demographic consequences.

For the children born to those marrying between 1750-99 the prospects were favourable for those who survived to adulthood. Whereas, the labouring population were adversely affected by the changes which occurred between 1766-70, the younger generation were able to find apprenticeships in the framework knitting industry. This would seemingly be more secure than seeking agricultural positions during the transition to pasture. It is almost impossible to estimate precisely the number of frames in Countesthorpe before the detailed census compiled by Felkin in 1844 which gave a total of 214, or 1.32% of the total frames in Leicestershire villages.<sup>81</sup> If this percentage was applied to the previous totals given for the Leicestershire villages in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century it would give, as a very rough estimate, a possible 35 frames in 1753 and 126 in 1812. The early figure would appear consistent with the number of frames listed in the available probate inventories.<sup>82</sup> The estimates are an indication of the scale of development and potential for those able to become involved in the industry between 1753 and 1812.

A 357% increase in the number of frames located in Countesthorpe between 1750 and 1812 would explain the increase in the rate of inter-marriage within the village and high rate of continued residence. 42.8% of the families established in the period 1700-49 were between Countesthorpe partners, whereas this figure had increased to 55.9% for those marrying between 1750-99. 59% of the surviving male children of the second cohort remained within the village to form their own families, a small increase on the 56.3% of the previous generation. The increase

80

*Ibid.*

81

The calculations are based on statistical evidence given for the frame-work knitting villages in the *Victoria County History of Leicestershire*. This gives details for villages for which there is evidence of frames in the periods: 1700-50, 1751-1800, Blackner's and Felkin's returns. Only three main centres do not have a listing for the period 1751-1850, Burbage with 450 frames in 1844, Castle Donnington, 110 in 1844, and Dunton Bassett in, 120 in 1844. The overall calculation may be balanced by the 25 villages which had a listing 1751-1800 but do not appear in Felkin's return. The totals of frames given for Leicestershire villages are: 1753-7,300 for Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire villages; 1812- 9,583 for Leicestershire villages.

82

V.C.H. Leics.3.

in the number of females remaining resident in the village was more evident; for the first cohort 38.4% of surviving females married and remained in the village, by 1750-99 the percentage had risen to 54.5%. This suggests changing employment opportunities for those born between 1750-c.1810 who would have been seeking employment or apprenticeship from 1765-1825. Some may have secured residential employment on farms in the locality, many more were likely to have been some apprentices in the hosiery industry. The majority of the latter would have learnt the trade within the village and rented their own frame when skilled. The apprenticing of girls did occur but many of them would have been employed in seaming. As the framework knitting industry developed in the region there was little motivation to widen the employment horizons. This in itself would have restricted the opportunity for selecting a marriage partner from outside.

During the period 1750-99, thirty-two new surnames appeared in the parish registers and twenty-eight surnames disappeared. The distribution of new families entering the village demonstrates that in-migration increased mainly between 1775-99, when 23 new families entered the community. Only seven families took up residence between 1750-63 and none entered the village during the main period of enclosure between 1763-1773. Enclosure would have deterred many from entering the community when the process of change was most radical.

Levine argued that there was 'little evidence that the growth of the industrial labour force was significantly aided by the in-migration of peasants dispossessed by enclosure for pasture. Indeed just 12 out of the 127 Leicestershire in-migrants came from the rural eastern and southern parts of the county'.<sup>83</sup> The rural peasants dispossessed by enclosure did not need to undertake a journey of more than 15 miles to find employment in Shepshed, opportunities were opening up in the southern and eastern parts of the county; Broughton Astley, Cosby, Blaby, Countesthorpe and Wigston all experienced in-migration. Hoskins observed that : This inflow is probably connected with contagious enclosure of Leicestershire parishes throughout the century and their almost invariable conversion to pasture for large-scale grazing. The displaced people of these parishes drifted to towns like Leicester and Hinckley where the framework knitting industry was growing rapidly'.<sup>84</sup> The growth of the framework knitting industry in Countesthorpe enabled young people to find employment and establish families within the village. For the older generation enclosure represented the end of the old order,

---

83 D. Levine, *op.cit.*, p.37.

84 W.G. Hoskins, *Midland Peasant*, p.212.

for the younger generation the hosiery industry offered employment and increased opportunities for early marriage.

#### 3.4 Demographic Profile of the Third Cohort, 1800-1851.

The cohort marrying between 1800-51 has been used in previous studies to assess the demographic impact of industrialisation and urbanisation.<sup>85</sup> In the frame-work knitting industry this group were affected by both a growth in numbers employed and the increasing deprivation associated with the subsequent depression. Levine attempted to demonstrate, through the study of Shepshed, the specific consequences of proto-industrialisation by contrasting the experiences of frame-work knitters and other inhabitants of the village.<sup>86</sup> While the task of analysing differing demographic responses by employment category is facilitated by the standard form of recording details in the parish registers from 1813 and the data given in the 1851 census. The process is beset by several problems and issues - for example identifying the specific factors in domestic industry which had demographic implications. In addition a problem exists in distinguishing agricultural labourers from framework knitters - employment could be fluid, especially in times of depression. Equally, it was common for the head of household and members of his family being employed in different sectors.

It was possible to identify in Countesthorpe, from occupations stated in the parish registers and the 1851 census, 80 families of frame-work knitters, 19 frame-owning families, 27 trades families and 39 families where the husband changed occupation, mainly between labouring and framework knitting. The statistical results are most confident for the frame-work knitters. It was considered valid to use these findings as they reflect socio-economic experiences and were not erratic in their results but the potential for statistical deviation must exist. A similar problem was noted by Levine when he decided to group as 'others', farmers, labourers, shoemakers, carpenters, millers, bakers and so on' on the basis that meaningful information could not be presented for any other occupational group but the knitters.<sup>87</sup> To suggest that such diverse groups had any sense of uniformity other than not being framework knitters, assumes more than could be sustained. Rather it would be preferable to exclude those for whom there was

---

85 D.Levine, *passim*.

86 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.83.

87 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.83.

insufficient evidence. On this basis the farmers and agricultural labourers were excluded from the Countesthorpe analysis. This meant that it was impossible to consider the hypothesis that those whose land-holdings were reduced by the long-term consequences of enclosure married later. The families who were identified in occupational groups could be used to explore any differences in demographic experience and expectation between occupational groups.

The key trajectory of the argument presented by Wrigley and Schofield and Levine is that proto-industrialisation and industrialisation were accompanied by a substantial deviation from the pre-industrial pattern of relatively late marriage for both men and women: 'the frame-work knitters maintained a high pressure reproductive strategy'.<sup>88</sup> The Countesthorpe evidence suggests that a low age at marriage had been the norm from the early eighteenth century; therefore age at first marriage for the last cohort, while demonstrating a number of occupational influences does not attain the importance which others have suggested.

The mean age at first marriage for the third cohort demonstrated the lowest ages for both men and women of all three cohorts. The mean ages for males and females were 23.6 and 23.2 respectively. When considering employment categories the knitters demonstrated the lowest age at first marriage for males and the female mean age was the second lowest; the women marrying frame-owners were on average one month younger. Those who were most likely to change their occupation experienced the highest age at first marriage for males and the second highest for women, although the wives of trades people were six months older. (Table 3.7)

---

88 Ibid., p.80.

**Table 3.7 Comparative Fertility by Father's Occupation. Cohort Marrying 1800-1851**

	N	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Frame Owners	19	23.1	22.0	23.4	36.6	6.0	5.1
Knitters	80	22.9	22.1	23.8	33.9	5.2	3.9
Trade & Craft	27	23.0	23.1	23.8	34.4	5.4	4.6
Changed Occupation	39	23.3	22.7	23.9	39.3	6.0	4.2

- (1) Male Age at First Marriage.
- (2) Female Age at First Marriage.
- (3) Mother's Age at Birth of First Child.
- (4) Mother's Age at Birth of Last Child.
- (5) No. of Children Born.
- (6) No. of Children Survive.

The age at first marriage for males was very close for all occupational groups demonstrating a deviation of only five months which would be undermined by the statistical validity in such a small sample. Such closeness could be expected in Countesthorpe which had a tradition of early marriage. The frame-owners were able to marry early, as were the tradesmen, for optimistic reasons. The evidence from the Parliamentary enquiry into the condition of the frame-work knitters stressed that those who controlled the supply of raw materials to the frame would secure their income and opportunities by diverse means.<sup>89</sup> The shopkeepers in Countesthorpe also used a variety of methods to protect their profits.<sup>90</sup> Equally the relatively low ages at marriage for those employed as frame-work knitters and those whose employment was rarely stable, for example Richard Ward who was listed in the parish registers between 1814-24 as labourer-framework knitter - labourer - framework knitter, the analysis would be pessimistic. S. Laing suggested in 1844 'evidence abounds of the tendency to improvident marriages amongst the distressed population of the manufacturing districts,..(he) had nothing to look forward to - no hope of being able to better his condition by restraint - no definite period of establishment in life as a master workman or independent proprietor, to mark a prudent and customary era of marriage - all the natural

<sup>89</sup> See my earlier section on frame-work knitting

<sup>90</sup> Several were fined for light weight measures. For example: Mary Ringrose, Thomas Hubbard, grocers, and Edward Payne, baker. *Leicester Journal* 22.4.1836.

checks on the instinctive appetite are withdrawn, and he marries as a matter of course, as soon as he feels in inclination'.<sup>91</sup> There was little to restrain the frame-work knitter from marrying shortly after the completion of his apprenticeship, he would have attained near his highest earning potential and would be in a position to rent a frame from a manufacturer or bag hosier. There was little reason to wait, a wife and children would be able to perform functions such as winding and seaming for which otherwise he would have had to pay.

The closeness of the age at marriage by the occupational groupings emphasises the importance of the socio-economic context and underlines the marital strategy of the community, rather than regarding the individual employment category in isolation. But a clear distinction must be made between the date and timing of marriage which was subject to delay in adverse economic conditions, and the marital experiences of childbirth and child-rearing which were by their nature long term. Such experiences demonstrate strongly divergent patterns between occupational groupings in the Countesthorpe evidence.

The age at which mothers gave birth to their first child reflected the closeness of age at marriage, the average age for the cohort was 22.5 for females who married under thirty and 33.6 for those marrying after this age. The occupationally based statistics demonstrate only a six month difference between wives of frame owners, who gave birth for the first time at 23.4 and those whose employment changed, giving birth at 23.9: (Table 3.7). The age at which mothers gave birth for the last time demonstrates a wide difference. Frame-work knitters had the shortest child bearing period of 10.1 years and those whose occupation changed, the longest at 15.4, giving birth at 33.9 and 39.3 respectively. The frame owners and trades people whose economic situations were seemingly more secure had child bearing periods of 13.2 and 10.6 years.

The experience of the Countesthorpe frame-work knitters was similar to that of their contemporaries in Shephed. Framework knitters continued, despite the worsening economic situation, to marry at an early age but restricted their childbearing period. Levine argues that there was a positive incentive to marry early - to concentrate fertility into the early years of marriage as, 'the nature of the labour process made it inefficient for him to work alone, he needed help at a number of stages in his work. To do everything by himself meant that the

---

<sup>91</sup> S. Laing Jnr., National Distress: its courses and remedies (London, 1844), pp.74-80.

stockinger had to pay for this work in the currency of his own labour'.<sup>92</sup> Most advantage could be gained by concentrating the childbearing period in the first ten years of marriage. Thomas Riddington and his wife Mary provide a typical example, they married in October 1811 when Thomas was aged 22.9 and Mary 20.3. They had four children, the first only three months after the wedding. Three of the four children survived to adulthood continuing their involvement in the industry, although by the time the eldest son, Joseph, married in 1831 at the age of 19.3 his opportunities for continued employment in the hosiery industry were less secure and at the baptism of his later children he was listed as labourer.

Joseph Riddington and his father provide a contrast in the child-bearing/rearing experiences of those who were continuously involved in the hosiery industry and those who changed occupation. Thomas Riddington completed his family at the age of 36.8 and his wife at 34.4, although the marriage did not end until his death in 1838 at 49.9. Such a strategy would ensure that he had sufficient help in the domestic situation and had surviving sons to support him should he live longer than he was able to support himself; the ability to earn declined with age. At the time of the 1851 census Mary Riddington, aged 59, was managing to support herself as a seamer; she was living close to her youngest son Lebbeus but maintained a degree of independence in her own residence.

Joseph Riddington, who changed occupation, was also typical of his occupational grouping demonstrating an extended period of childbearing. His first child was also born three months after the wedding; eight children were born in total over a period of 17 years, the last child was born when Ann, his wife, was 39.3. Joseph's child-bearing strategy was quite different from his father's and his contemporaries who were continuously knitters. General labourers such as Joseph Riddington, whose income was uncertain, were motivated by the potential extra incomes which could be provided by their offspring. When the census was taken in 1851 all eight children were listed as still living at home and all except the youngest, aged 2, had employment. The three youngest boys were winders, the eldest three boys were framework knitters, and Elizabeth, aged 7, was a seamer.

The offspring of labourers and their wives could find employment in the knitting industry. 65.5% of the children of labourers were employed in part of the hosiery industry, as apparently were 32% of their wives. Levine does not attempt to explain why the demographic experience was different from the knitters', except

---

<sup>92</sup> D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.80.

in terms of the 'industrial revolution unleashing tides of economic opportunity'. Such an interpretation seems inappropriate when considering those such as Joseph Riddington.<sup>93</sup> A more reasoned explanation would be to argue that those who changed their jobs were economically the most vulnerable, even more so than the knitters who were in their turn exploited by the bag hosiers and manufacturers. The knitters experienced meagre and declining wages but could accommodate their family within domestic production and did not exceed the number of children who could add positively to the families output. Those for whom employment was less secure sent their children out to work, perhaps for elderly knitters or for those who had no family and so brought money back into the household. By the time the older children were earning, the mother would be bearing the younger (at longer intervals than the knitters). By the time the youngest were in useful employment the eldest would be establishing their own families.

Those villagers who may have benefited from Levine's 'new capitalist opportunities', the frame-owners and the trades people demonstrate slightly different childbearing experiences. The frame-owners had a mean childbearing period of 13.2 years with an average birth interval of 26.4 months. The trades people had both a shorter childbearing period and birth interval. The experience of the trades people was similar in some respects to the knitters. Although they were self employed rather than employed, they were not employers of labour on the same scale as the frame-owners or even the farmers. Only four trades and crafts people were listed as employing labour in 1851: the two Chapman brothers who were bricklayers employed four between them. A carpenter employed three, and a cordwainer employed the same number, two of whom were apprentices.<sup>94</sup> Most trades people would be unable to find work for a large family, indeed it would be unwise to train too many in the same trade. The Chapman brothers, might have had opportunities for building houses in this expanding village, but blacksmiths had limited scope in a village.<sup>95</sup>

In 1846 Countesthorpe had one blacksmith, two bakers, three butchers, two hairdressers, four milliners, two tailors, three shoemakers and eight shopkeepers; in a community of 900 people there was probably little scope for more.<sup>96</sup> This is

---

93 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.80.

94 HO 107/2081.

95 E.A. Wrigley, *Men on the Land Men in the Countryside; Employment in Agriculture in Early Nineteenth Century England*, in L.Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K.Wrightson, *op.cit.*, p.299.

96 W. White, *History Gazetteer, and Directory of Leicestershire* (Sheffield 1846), p.379.

made clear in the 1851 census return : 24.5% of the offspring of those whose father was employed in trades and crafts were listed as having employment in framework knitting. Nathan Clowes' demographic experience, if not his personal life, was typical of the trades people, and one can take him as an example.<sup>97</sup> He was a butcher and general dealer who married Elizabeth Cox in December 1838 when he was 24.5. Elizabeth was 18.5 at marriage and gave birth to first child two months after the wedding and completed the bearing of seven children ten years later. The eldest child, Joseph was aged 13 in 1851 and was listed in the census as a frame-work knitter, William, Betsey and Fredrick aged 11, 9 and 7 were listed as scholars.

The frame- owners had a longer child-bearing period and gave birth to more children. Employment could expand for such families in a way that it could not for those involved in trade and manufacture. In 1851 the Countesthorpe frame-owners employed a total of 127 people, this included members of their own families. The Hubbard family was a clear example: William Hubbard, listed as employing 12 frames in 1851, married in August 1800 at 21.9 to Mary Richardson aged 19.3 (unusually for her cohort, but not for her economic grouping, she did not give birth within the first nine months). The child bearing period was longer than some of her contemporaries, lasting 21 years; during this period she gave birth to seven sons, six of whom survived. One of the sons, Job, was also an employer of labour in 1851, employing seven frames. The ownership of frames by William would enable him to train his sons and to provide the financial backing to enable them to employ others. In such economic circumstances there was less pressure to limit family size.

The infant and child mortality rates for Countesthorpe declined for the third cohort, except for those aged between 5-9 which demonstrated a small increase. The overall survival rates were much better than for the second cohort, although not as high as for those in the first half of the eighteenth century. (Table 3.5). The experience of Countesthorpe was significantly different from that of Shepshed. Average wages are an inadequate explanation for better life experiences as those for both knitters in Countesthorpe and Shepshed were relatively high (within the context of the low wages earned throughout the framework knitting industry ).<sup>98</sup> The more likely explanation for lower rates of infant and child mortality in Countesthorpe was that there was comparatively little

---

<sup>97</sup> Nathan Clowes was convicted on three occasions for assault and was acquitted on a charge of manslaughter in 1836.

<sup>98</sup> P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.41. Countesthorpe and Shepshed average wages were 5s 6d each.

over-crowding in the parish. The household composition, by occupation of the household head, suggests that framework knitters had an average occupancy of 4.7, the labourers of 4.4 and those involved in trade and craft had a low density of 3.7. This was significantly lower than the figures for Shepshed which had 4.9, 4.6 and 4.7 respectively.<sup>99</sup> Levine noted that multi-occupation of household was common; but in Countesthorpe only three houses were shared, in each case by two related families. Housing in Countesthorpe was not overcrowded and this may, in part, have mitigated the problems of inadequate diet.

The differing pattern of child bearing and rearing experienced by the occupational groups was accentuated, and in part explained, by the differing infant and child mortality rates. The highest rate of infant and child mortality was experienced by those whose employment was most precarious and the lowest rate was found among the frame-owners. Both groups had a mean number of children of six. Of the six children born to the frame-owners 5.1 survived to adulthood. Of the six born to those in changing occupations 1.8 died and 4.2 survived; the mortality rate was double that of those who were able to support themselves by renting out frames. The diet of the framework knitters was poor and inadequate. William Goodman of Blaby described the diet of his daughter and husband and their three children to the Parliamentary Commission : 'They are not able to get any meat nor to buy any clothing; the extent of their living is mostly milk which they purchase in the morning for breakfast and dinner, and a little coffee in the afternoon'.<sup>100</sup> The only other food was bread. Such a diet was similar to that considered by Bongaarts who concluded that very poor diets over a long period of time had fewer physiological consequences than a sharp fall in nutritional levels. This may explain why the mortality rates for those whose occupation fluctuated was more extreme.<sup>101</sup> This trend would have been intensified after 1834 when there would have been little relief available to aid such families in periods of temporary distress, except that available within the workhouse.

Joseph Mawby, who drifted between employment, and Ann Cox were married in 1823 and had five sons and four daughters over a nineteen year period. Two of the girls and two of the boys died before the age of two. A similar pattern was experienced by Thomas Lord and Elizabeth Smith who married in 1805. Of their five sons and four daughters only four survived to adulthood. The provision of an adequate environment, both in terms of housing and diet, would have been most

99 D.Levine, *op.cit.*, p.50.

100 P.P. 1845 vol.XV, Q.360.

101 J.Bongaarts, *op.cit.*, p.564.

precarious for this group, but for them having children to aid in support of the family would have been even more necessary. Of Joseph Mawby's resident children in 1851, three were employed as frame-work knitters; he himself was listed in as returning to agricultural labour. A contrast is provided by Anthony Elliott who was listed in 1851 as employing 8 frames. Of his nine children only one died, and he was killed, aged 20, in a fight with Nathan Clowes ; five of the surviving children married and established families in the village.

The infant and child mortality rates of the frame-work knitters was somewhat better than that of those whose occupation changed, but was still high - 1.3 children dying out of the 5.2 born. The knitters would have been affected by the poor diet, although the strain on resources would have been less if family limitation was practised and the number of dependent children restricted. The experiences of knitters could vary widely. John Burley and his wife Elizabeth married in 1813 and all their six children attained adulthood, three of them establishing families by 1851. Not all knitters were able to support their families so successfully; John Tilley clearly had to resort to poaching to provide additional but necessary, supplements to the family diet.<sup>102</sup> His wife gave birth to seven children during their ten-year marriage, three of whom died in infancy and only one remained to establish a family in the village.

While the four groups demonstrated distinctive childbearing profiles, they were all residents of a community in which the hosiery industry provided employment, either directly or indirectly. 31% of the wives of agricultural labourers and 60% of their resident children under the age of 15 were employed, at the time of the 1851 census, in the framework knitting industry. The expectations and experiences of such groups would have been significantly different had such employment not been available. The occupation of the head of household might determine the main income, stability and security of employment, but without the opportunities which hosiery provided, the agricultural labourers may have changed their marital strategies. Without the knitting industry the implications for poor relief would surely have been profound.

The hosiery industry also had a major significance for in-migration and continued residence in the first half of the nineteenth century. 53% of families formed in the third cohort were between Countesthorpe partners; 67.4% of the residents of

---

102 J. Tilley was listed in the Burial Register as a poacher at his death in 1838.

Countesthorpe aged over 15 in 1851 had been born in the village. Such evidence emphasises the employment opportunities within the parish, which was most pronounced among the frame-work knitters: 78.7 of the frame-work household heads and their wives had been born in Countesthorpe. Such evidence also suggests that for those who had learnt the skills of framework knitting there was little to be gained by seeking employment elsewhere. Conditions in the Leicester frame shops seemed little better and the living conditions would have been more crowded.<sup>103</sup>

The surname analysis suggests a high degree of in-migration during this period. Forty-eight surnames appeared in the registers for the first time, but many were transient. Twenty-four of these remained in the village for less than a generation. The census evidence suggests that the agricultural labourers were the most likely to be born elsewhere and employed either as day labourers, or hired at the annual hiring fair.<sup>104</sup>

In the mid nineteenth century the population in Countesthorpe was growing by between 10-15 per annum and much of this growth was self generated: by the 1840s the average annual total of baptisms was 29.8 and 10.1 for burials. The mean age at first marriage was the lowest of all three cohorts, fertility rates were also the highest and overall survival rates had improved. More children survived in the last cohort than in the preceding 100 years. On one level it is possible to argue that the demographic profile exhibited in Countesthorpe in 1851 was the result of the development of the framework knitting industry, but that industry was itself partly the cause and the result of previous demographic trends. By 1851 Leicestershire villages were either predominantly agricultural or predominantly industrial. Countesthorpe was the latter but its population development had been determined up to the mid-eighteenth century by its agricultural profile.

In his essay on the determinants of marital fertility, Chris Wilson states three basic conclusions about marital fertility based on the findings of Wrigley and Schofield:

1. Marital fertility was virtually unchanging in the two centuries from 1600-1800.

---

<sup>103</sup> For example: P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.51.

<sup>104</sup> W. White, *op.cit.*, p.401.

2. Regional variation in marital fertility was modest, identifying England as an area of unusual homogeneity.
3. Family limitation played no significant role in determining fertility patterns.<sup>105</sup>

Such assumptions were useful to Wilson enabling him to state that 'it is legitimate to combine data from different parishes and different periods into larger bodies of data since this will not disguise underlying differences'.<sup>106</sup> A comparison of the marital fertility rates for four of the parishes used suggests a greater degree of regional variation and change across time than Wilson related. (Table 3.1) The rates for the 30-34 age group of the cohort 1700-49 varies from 359/1000 exhibited in Bottesford to 215/1000 in Colyton. Colyton ranged from 215/1000 in 1700-49 to 320 for the cohort married between 1800-49.<sup>107</sup> 'National' figures enable one to posit a wider picture and broadly identify when changes occurred. They do not always allow the historian to explain the significance of minor fluctuations in trends. Aggregated parish figures also emphasise the importance of general trends, affecting matters such as marriage, rather than revealing the fine tuning that took place within the separate parishes in which all rates-age at marriage, life expectancy and child mortality were more demonstrably interdependent.

A demographic study of a single parish such as Countesthorpe cannot make bold claims as an indicator of 'national' trends, nor should it be used as a typical profile of a village undergoing 'proto-industrialisation'. Yet it does have a significance beyond the parochial and not only as part of the total national picture; it does identify specific demographic strategies and responses to economic trends. Countesthorpe illustrates that early age at marriage pre-dated the development of the framework knitting industry, and was facilitated by the presence of hand knitting. Age at marriage remained relatively stable for the cohort affected by enclosure and the growth of domestic industry, and the child bearing period was extended. This was under-scored, not by increasing prosperity, but by increased mortality due to possible changes in diet and land use from 1766. The experience of those marrying in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the majority of the population were dependent either directly or indirectly on the hosiery industry, was shaped by both earlier expectations and contemporary conditions. Age at marriage remained low for all sectors of the community, but survival rates

---

<sup>105</sup> C. Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.204.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> D.Levine, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

showed wide differences between those who owned the means of production and those who were dependent on their own labour.

Economic changes can be assessed in finest detail through an examination of the demographic responses of individual communities and occupational groups within them. Domestic industry developed regionally, enclosure - while contagious - did not have a simultaneous effect throughout the country; the agricultural revolution, if it occurred at all, took place over 150 years. Industrialisation did not affect all sectors equally, it was divisive and disequilibrating. A study such as this does reveal the ultimate reactions at parish and family level.<sup>108</sup>

---

108 L. Bradley, *op.cit.*, p.61.

#### Chapter Four : Responses to the increasing proletarianisation of the labouring classes.

The theme of poverty and the alienation of the labouring classes is a consistent one in this study of Countesthorpe. The process of structural change which occurred during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was disequilibrating both for those employed on the land and for those renting frames to produce knitted goods. As a consequence of enclosure and industrial development, even former property owners found themselves and their families in a state of immiseration. The causes of this have been partially explained by examining agricultural, industrial and demographic change, but the condition of the dispossessed was also shaped by population movement and the responses of the administrative system.

The purpose of this chapter, which is sub-divided into four key sections, is to examine, first the migration pattern, within and between agrarian and industrial parishes, in Guthlaxton Hundred; second, to consider the response of the Poor Law to the changing needs of both, before and after 1834; third, to examine a consequence of poverty and the changing structure of society - illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy - which offers an insight into attitudinal change; finally, and more optimistically, to consider the action taken by the working classes in Countesthorpe to effect change, either through political radicalism or religion.

#### 4.1 Migration patterns within Guthlaxton Hundred, 1700-1851.

From 1662 onwards mobility in England was determined not only by personal choice and availability of employment but also by the laws of settlement. The first act, passed in 1662, confined the receipt of relief for paupers to their original place of settlement. A head of settlement could be conferred by parish of birth or by occupying property of a value in excess of £10. From 1691 the former category was replaced by one which stipulated a full years employment in a parish. Until 1795 a person might be removed from his chosen parish to his place of settlement if he seemed likely to become chargeable on the poor rate or if he became chargeable. From 1795 he could only be removed when actually claiming relief.<sup>1</sup> The laws of settlement have been interpreted in many ways; originally they enabled parishes to off-load as many paupers as possible, yet they also contained within them the ability to control mobility and an increased power for the magistracy. The system was highly bureaucratic. As parishes - especially where there were few landlords - were increasingly reluctant to enable the labouring classes to gain settlements, the legal right to settlement became, conversely, more important. By the late eighteenth century paupers were claiming relief not in their native parish, or in their fathers', but in their grandfathers'.

Disputed claims on settlement were decided by magistrates following a lengthy examination. The details of a person's apprenticeship, employment, wages and mobility recorded in these have provided an important historical source for regional studies. <sup>2</sup> Too few survive, however, to provide a firm basis for analysis of mobility within a small area. For a more local study settlement certificates and removal orders indicate shifts in population, both within an area and outside the immediate locality. Such certificates were issued to those moving to another parish guaranteeing the right to relief. Removal orders were taken out by the host parish against those who might be, or after 1795 were, chargeable on the parish into which they had moved.

The use of settlement documentation does present a variety of problems. Although the system was highly bureaucratic, there is evidence to suggest that its organisation was not always efficient or consistently implemented. Movement into areas of rapidly increasing employment was not rigidly controlled and the demand for certificates from the authorities

---

1 Paul Slack, The English Poor Law 1531-1782 (London, 1990), p.3

2 K.D.M. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor, Social Change in Agrarian England 1660-1900 (Cambridge, 1985).

was likely to be lax. The laws could never have been enforced, for example, as far as the population of London was concerned.<sup>3</sup>

The records which survive are most likely to be from organisationally efficient parishes. The Overseers at Sutton Bonnington in Nottinghamshire recorded all settlements and removals in the village between 1698-1833 into a single register.<sup>4</sup> This level of efficiency is almost unique. The largest surviving number of records in Guthlaxton Hundred is from Lutterworth which had a salaried Overseer of the Poor. Where settlement records survive they were most commonly found in a bundle in a parish chest. Although two copies of each document were made - one for each parish concerned - they do not survive in a complete form. In some cases individual certificates would be lost, in others all records destroyed. In Countesthorpe the records of the Overseer of the Poor were burnt in 1904 when the parish church was rebuilt. Yet, while the documentation which survives is far from complete and may not be entirely typical, sufficient survives from each parish to establish certain patterns of mobility. Removal orders only concern a single move, whereas it is apparent from the examinations that migration often occurred by stages.<sup>5</sup>

However, settlement certificates and removal orders can be used to assess movements which were a response to the growth of domestic industry and the increasing commercialisation of farming. As the majority of the population migrated for employment, the places to which they moved would seem to be those with greater opportunities whereas the ones which they left may have had fewer openings. Equally, removal orders were most likely to be issued by parishes either experiencing contracting employment opportunities or wanting to restrict in-migration. For this study all the surviving settlement certificates and removal orders relating to parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred, and located in the Leicestershire Record Office, were examined and sorted on parish name, date, type of documentation, sex, marital status and occupation (where known).<sup>6</sup> This information was then used to establish trends in migration linked to economic developments occurring in the individual villages between 1700-1851.

Settlement certificates and examinations are not the only sources which have been used by historians in the attempt to describe mobility. Peter Laslett was the first to challenge the widespread assumption that the pre-industrial population was static by using the parish

---

3 P. Clark and D. Souden (eds), *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p.33

4 J.D. Marshall, 'Nottinghamshire Reformers', *Economic History Review*, XIII (1961), p.382

5 P.Clark and D.Souden, *op.cit.*, pp.16-17.

6 L.R.O. Settlement Certificates and Removal Orders.

listings of Clayworth and Cogenhoe.<sup>7</sup> Tranter and Schofield used a similar source - the detailed description of the families of Cardington in Bedfordshire - which included information concerning the residence of offspring when they had left the village.<sup>8</sup> David Souden used family reconstitution studies to estimate migratory patterns from a single village.<sup>9</sup> Keith Snell has questioned this approach, disputing the reliability of parish registers in identifying residence over time.<sup>10</sup> Peter Clark used the evidence of 7,047 witnesses to Church Courts between 1660-1730 to provide an analysis of migration in pre-industrial southern and eastern counties.<sup>11</sup>

Most historians use the laws propounded by E.G. Ravenstein in the 1880s as a basis for study, if only to challenge some of their inherent assumptions.<sup>12</sup> Ravenstein argued that the majority of migrants moved only a short distance and that, as migrants moved out, their places were filled by migrants from more remote areas. Each migration current produced a compensatory counter current. Ravenstein suggested that longer distance migrants tended to go to towns and that the urban born were less likely to migrate than the rural born. As a result of this, large towns grew more by migration than by natural increase. According to Ravenstein's laws, most migrants were adults. Females were more migratory over shorter distances, males over longer. Above all, the major causes of migration were economic and determined by those changes which encouraged flow from agricultural areas to large towns and which were further stimulated by transport improvements.<sup>13</sup>

In their introduction to *Migration and Society in Early Modern England*, Clark and Souden suggest that the period between 1650-1750 witnessed increasing immobility due to a decisive advance in real living standards. They also emphasise the importance of the settlement laws, arguing that these may have moderated the 'push forces' in popular society, encouraging

7 P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love* (London, 1965), pp. 155-8

8 N.L. Tranter, 'Social Structure of a Bedfordshire Parish', *International Review of Social History*, XVIII (1973). Also - R.S. Schofield, 'Age Specific Mobility in an Eighteenth Century Rural English Parish', P.Clark and D.Souden, *op.cit.*

9 D. Souden, 'Moves and Stayers in Family Reconstitution', *Population in Local Population Studies*, 33 (1984)

10 K.D.M. Snell, Parish Registration and the Study of Labour Mobility in *Local Population Studies*, 33 (1984).

11 P. Clark, 'Migration in England During the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', in P.Clark and D.Souden, *op.cit.*, p.220.

12 P.Clark and D.Souden, *op.cit.*, p.19.

13 *Ibid.*, p.21.

people to stay at home.<sup>14</sup> Clark and Souden re-affirm the importance of economic trends in the operation of the settlement laws, as well as the influence on mobility, and suggest that enforcement was often stricter where economic growth and demand for labour were limited. Little attention was paid to the laws in the rapidly growing industrial cities except in times of trade crisis.<sup>15</sup>

In his subsequent essay, Clark explores further the differences between those born in rural parishes and those born in towns and cities. Urban dwellers travelled an average of between 20-35 miles compared to rural migrants who moved 10 -25 miles. Urban dwellers tended to travel more at an earlier age than rural dwellers; the majority of the former re-located between the ages of 11-30 whereas the latter moved between 21-40.<sup>16</sup> Roger Schofield's study of age-specific mobility (using the Cardington data for 1782) suggested that the sons and daughters of agricultural labourers were likely to find employment in towns. Out-migration was common-place - two out of three of the children of the previous generation had left the parish to found families elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, only 25% of both males and females continued to live in the parish after marriage. Many of the offspring of Cardington residents moved to towns such as Bedford or to London. Girls were more likely to remain longer in the village due to domestic opportunities in lace-making. Of those employed as servants 33% were employed in Bedford and one girl in seven went to London. Only 15% of the girls moved to the capital at marriage with 33% of married male children living in London.<sup>18</sup>

Generally, the evidence from southern counties would support widespread mobility occurring at adolescence and based upon a system of servant-hood. An individual's horizon was greater than the parish in which he was raised but was often within 5 miles of his home. There is little evidence to suggest a north-south movement of population which had been observed before 1640. When longer distance migration took place, the flow was from country to town and there was determined by the communication network. Where migration was within a rural area, and the majority of movement post-1660 was localised, there is some evidence to suggest that migrants moved from one type of agricultural village to another with the same

---

14 *Ibid.*, p.32.

15 *Ibid.*, p.33.

16 P. Clark, *op.cit.*, p.223.

17 R.S. Schofield, *op.cit.*, p.256.

18 *Ibid.*, p.261.

profile. That is to say, migration took place between pastoral parishes or between corn growing areas.<sup>19</sup>

The migratory relationship between rural parishes in which there was little employment other than that on the land and parishes in which domestic industry developed requires further exploration. (By-employment did exist in Cardington but the issue of rural industry as a factor in mobility is not fully explored, perhaps because lace making was mainly a female occupation). This study will consider whether migration was of a different magnitude in frame-work knitting centres compared to agricultural villages and whether the industrial villages acted as a magnet for labour from rural areas as the towns appeared to do in a wider context.

Guthlaxton Hundred, which in 1846 consisted of 49 parishes, 22,000 persons and 64,000 acres of land, presents an interesting contrast of predominantly frame-work knitting villages and those which were almost exclusively agricultural.<sup>20</sup> The hundred forms a wedge shape 17 miles in length linking Leicester with the Warwickshire County boundary. The predominant soil type is clay. This varies from fertile clay, which tended to provide good pasturage as at Cottesbach (enclosed in 1607), to a mixture of clay and gravel, such as at Kimcote, where there was proportionally more arable land (although the balance still favoured pasture).<sup>21</sup>

The 49 parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred have been sub-divided into thirteen predominantly agricultural parishes and eighteen where there was a significant frame-work knitting presence. For the 1841 and 1851 censuses a number of parishes were grouped together. For example, Misterton was linked with Poultney and Walcote. Such connections are observed in the following analysis. Four parishes have been excluded from the calculations: Aylestone and Knighton, as the former was partly in Sparkenhoe Hundred and the latter as it was absorbed into the Borough of Leicester. Foston and Westril and Starmore were not included as their populations of 41 and 8 respectively may have biased the calculations.<sup>22</sup>

The categories used are broad, For example, the frame-work knitting villages varied in frame density from Oadby where there was one frame per 3.1 inhabitants to Peatling Magna where

---

19 P. Clark, *op.cit.*, pp. 231-6.

20 W. White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Leicestershire* (Sheffield, 1846), p.371.

21 *Ibid.*, p.338.

22 *Ibid.*, p.371.

there were 10.26 people for each frame. The population density of the agricultural parishes ranged from Cottesbach where there was one person per 15.25 acres, to Broughton Astley where the comparable figure was 3.45. Yet each group had a homogeneity not solely derived from its agriculture/hosiery profile. The agricultural villages were, with the exception of all but three parishes, enclosed by the last quarter of the seventeenth century, having a median enclosure date of 1665. The villages where there was domestic industry did not enclose until over a century later. The median date for this group was 1766. Only three frame-work knitting villages were enclosed before 1700.<sup>23</sup> I will argue that these groups demonstrate different settlement profiles each shaped by its agricultural base and the development, or not, of alternative employment. That more people took out settlement certificates from agricultural villages than settled in them and that more settled in frame-work knitting villages than left is perhaps the most obvious distinction, but not the only one which exists.

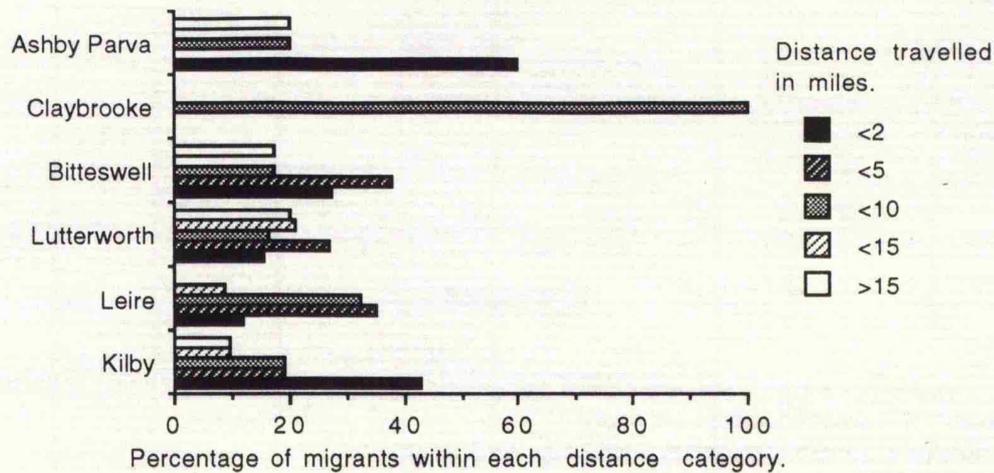
Evidence from settlement documentation suggests that Guthlaxton Hundred experienced a net increase in population through migration between 1690 and 1832. While the material may have an inherent bias - documentation may have been more necessary for journeys over a long distance - the disparity between people migrating into and out of the area cannot be so simply explained. Of the settlement certificates which survive, 31.7% concerned a move between the 49 parishes. 18.1% of certificates enabled a resident family to travel outside the area and 49.5% of the certificates were from families moving into Guthlaxton from outside.<sup>24</sup> It is unfortunate that the certificates are not consistent in detailing occupation. Where such information is given it is generally because it is unusual or of a specific type: soldier, sailor, deserter, ribbon weaver. Nevertheless, it is possible to posit from the statistical evidence that because employment opportunities were favourable, Guthlaxton Hundred was attracting labour from other areas of Leicestershire and rural Warwickshire. Labourers were re-locating, sometimes only small distances, due to the developing hosiery industry.

---

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 371-423.

24 L.R.O. Settlement Certificates

**Fig.4.1 Settlement To. Distances travelled by migrants from parish of settlement to indicated parish of employment, 1700-1815.**



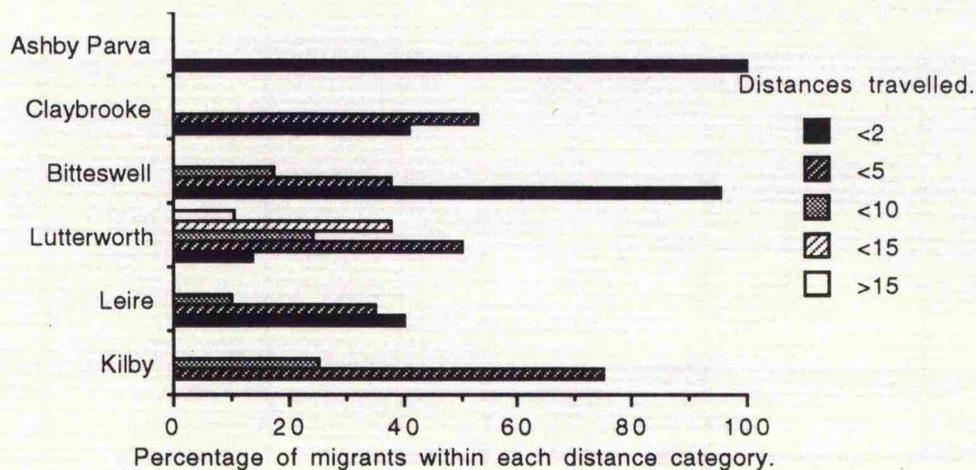
The figure for out-migration was low. Examination of parishes to which migrants leaving Guthlaxton Hundred went fails to establish any significant trends. There is some suggestion of migration to hosiery villages within the orbit of Hinckley manufacturers. Some migrants moved to Leicester, others moved to market towns such as Harborough and Uppingham. Few moved to agricultural villages outside the Hundred.

Further examination of distances travelled by families and individuals seeking employment reinforces the trends observed in the broad migratory patterns. (Fig.4.1) Detailed analysis was carried out of three different types of centres of frame-work knitting; Kilby which experienced a population growth of 59.9% between 1800-51 and had a frame density of 6.58; Leire which expanded at a slower rate of 24.8% over the same period and had a frame density of 10.15; and Lutterworth, the main market town in the south of the Hundred which had a frame density of 23.65.25. Of the 21 certificates issued to those settling in Kilby, 61.8% were issued to people relocating within a five mile radius, a slightly smaller proportion of the migrants to Leire travelled a similar distance. (47.1%) In both cases only a small percentage had relocated from a parish over 15 miles away. In the case of Lutterworth the migrants tended to travel longer distances. 42.1% came from villages within a five mile radius, but 20.2% of its 163 immigrants travelled from parishes more than 15 miles distant. Although the results may be biased by the differential survival of settlement documentation, the general trends have a validity. They suggests a weak inverse relationship between frame-density and

25 Frame density was calculated by dividing the population figure for 1801 by the number of frames to calculate no. of inhabitants per frame. The higher the figure e.g. Lutterworth 23.65 the fewer frames per head of population

distance travelled which may not be significant. Lutterworth, as a market town, offered a wide range of occupations in addition to the 107 employed as frame-work knitters. The town supported a significant number of boot and shoe makers and straw hat makers, in addition to the usual range of trades people found in a market town. It is likely that few would be attracted by work in agriculture since in 1832 only 70 were so employed. That Leire attracted slightly fewer migrants than Kilby from within a five-mile radius may be due to geographical position. Leire is much more central in the Hundred and amongst the hosiery villages. It would have been one of several possible places for those relocating from agriculture employment to have settled. Kilby, which is in the extreme east of the division, attracted migrants from the agrarian villages in Gartree Hundred such as Newton Harcourt, Tur Langton and Husband's Bosworth.

**Fig.4.2 Settlement From. Distances travelled by migrants leaving parish of settlement indicated to parish of employment, 1700-1815.**



Of far greater significance is the contrast between migration to hosiery villages and out-migration from the agricultural villages. Three of the latter villages were examined in detail. (Fig 4.2) Bitteswell was enclosed in 1674, its population grew by 19.1% between 1801 and 1851 and it had a population density of 3.48 acres per person. Claybrooke, enclosed in 1681 had a lower population density of 4.73 and population growth of 50.9% over the same period. Ashby Parva had the lowest population density of 7.38 but a population growth of 28.1%, it was enclosed in 1665. In each case all the migrants moved less than five miles. Of those who left Bitteswell, 95.5% moved under two miles, the majority of them to Lutterworth, and the remaining 4.5% moved between two and five miles. The migrants leaving Claybrooke were more evenly divided, 41.2% journeyed less than two miles, mainly to Ullesthorpe. The

remaining 58.8% remained within five miles of their place of settlement, moving to Leire, Lutterworth, Wigston and some to Bitteswell. All migrants from Ashby Parva moved less than two miles, several of them to Ullesthorpe.

Although the number of cases of out-migration from the three agricultural villages is smaller than the number for in-migration to the industrial parishes, 43 compared to 218, a trend is clearly apparent. Migration out of agricultural villages was generally to the nearest place where employment was available. This confirmed the conclusion drawn Levine when commenting that there was little evidence of migration to Shepshed from the rural areas of South Leicestershire.<sup>26</sup> (In fact, two families are recorded as settling in Shepshed from the Guthlaxton Hundred and three were removed from there to Lutterworth.) Families or individuals from agricultural villages did not need to move long distances when employment could be found locally in the hosiery industry. This supports Ravenstein's argument that most migrations was, by preference, over short distances.<sup>27</sup>

However, the development of domestic industry appears to undermine another trend observed by Ravenstein, namely, a compensatory current of migrants into villages.<sup>28</sup> This did not occur in the short term in Guthlaxton Hundred. Parishes in the southern counties, such as Cardington, may have attracted offspring of families from elsewhere to be servants in husbandry and who later remained to form their own families.<sup>29</sup> Although agricultural villages in Leicestershire also experienced migration facilitated by the annual hiring fairs, long-term opportunities for employment in this sphere were restricted by the growth of pasture farming based on sheep and stock-rearing. The policy of offering employment for less than a year would not have required a settlement certificate.

---

26 D. Levine, Family Formation in An Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York, 1977) p.37.

27 P.Clark and D.Souden, op.cit., p.19.

28 Ibid.

29 R.S. Schofield, op.cit., p.256.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Settlement, Removal and Poor Relief between  
Agricultural and Industrial Villages. (1700-1851)

	<u>Agricultural</u>	<u>Industrial</u>
Total removal from	77	164
Total removal to	49	230
Total settlement to	36	417
Removal from	24	316
Mean Poor Rate in the £ 1803	4s 8d	7s 10 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d
Mean percentage of inhabitants claiming relief 1803	11.8%	17.3%
Per capita expenditure on Poor Relief 1813	14s 10 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d	17s 10 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d
Mean percentage of inhabitants claiming relief 1813 (figure does not include dependants)	7.4%	7.1%
Mean Population Growth 1801-1851	25.4%	56.5%
Median date of enclosure	1665	1766

Agricultural villages lost more inhabitants by out-migration than they gained. (Table 4.1) 77 settlement certificates were issued from the agricultural villages compared to 36 to those who settled in them. This information is in itself somewhat misleading as 29 of the settlement certificates to agricultural villages were to Bitteswell alone. Bitteswell's records are the most comprehensive of all the villages in this category and the parish seems to have experienced more in-migration than out. The reason for this would seem to be its geographical location. Situated one mile north-west of Lutterworth residents could find employment in the market town and not be chargeable on the parish. Overseers in Bitteswell do not appear to have been efficient in restricting settlement. In fact, nine families/individuals were removed from the parish compared to eighteen removed to it.

164 persons/families left parishes where employment in hosiery existed in order to reside elsewhere, the majority settling in other centres of hosiery manufacture. Many moved to

Leicester and its environs - Evington and Belgrave - or to the knitting villages around Hinckley such as Burbage. Of the ten settlement certificates issued by the overseers in Leire, all but one was for less than five miles, a pattern repeated exactly in Kilby. The evidence from Lutterworth suggests a somewhat divergent pattern: 48.2% of the settlement certificates were for parishes more than ten miles away. Almost half of the settlement certificates from Lutterworth were to comparable market towns - Uppingham, Rugby and Harborough. Movement to places offering similar employment opportunities would explain the longer distances involved.

Several trends are therefore observable in the migration patterns. Most migration was inter-village rather than between town and countryside. Peter Clark has suggested that there was a movement of skills from centres of urban manufacture to satellite villages.<sup>30</sup> This is only partially supported by the evidence. During the eighteenth century thirty-one surviving settlement certificates were issued from Leicester parishes to towns and villages in Guxlaxton Hundred where hosiery was manufactured. (No surviving certificates were issued for agricultural villages.) There are fewer surviving settlement certificates for those moving to Leicester. This would be expected due to the laxer application of the settlement laws in a rapidly expanding urban area.<sup>31</sup> But the existence of fifty-six removal orders from Leicester suggests that an interpretation based on skills being disseminated from towns to villages is not entirely supported by migration evidence. The development of the industry in Leicestershire suggests that villages turned to domestic manufacture earlier than Leicester. Equally, the control over knitters imposed by the manufacturers and bag-hosiers would mitigate any need for physical re-location of skilled artisans. It would seem that Leicester knitters may have been attracted by better conditions in the villages and village knitters attracted by the possibility of higher wages in the town. The conclusion that most migrants moved to towns is not supported by the Guthlaxton evidence, although it does suggest that urban dwellers were less prone to move than rural workers.

While migration was principally inter-village, with some movement between centres of hosiery manufacture, the majority was from agricultural villages to industrialising ones. The agricultural villages, most of which experienced enclosure in the mid-seventeenth century, had transformed their agricultural base and completed consolidation of land holdings by the early to mid eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> The extreme reaction of the labourers in Cottesbach to

---

30 P.Clark and D.Souden, *op.cit.*, p.24.

31 *Ibid.*, p.33.

32 W. White, *op. cit.*, section on Guthlaxton Hundred details changes in land use since enclosure

enclosure in 1607 was not typical, but the reduction of the population and the conversion of the land from arable to stock-raising does typify changes taking place elsewhere. Three of the agricultural villages experienced a net loss of population between 1801 and 1851 and only three attained the national average of population growth.<sup>33</sup> Agricultural change, which was both a reason for and a consequence of enclosure, restricted employment opportunities on the land in Leicestershire. The residents of Guthlaxton Hundred were more fortunate than their contemporaries in the southern counties because in Leicestershire alternative employment could be found in villages only a short distance away. The manufacturers and bag hosiers were prepared to rent a frame to anyone who could operate it and, in the case of wide frames, the training was limited.<sup>34</sup>

Ravenstein's argument that most migrants were adults was not supported by the evidence from Cardington where young people aged between 15 and 22 gained positions as servants. Servanthood did not require a settlement certificate; indeed employment for more than a year could give right of settlement. An annual hiring fair was still held in Luttworth each Michaelmas and many would find employment in the traditional way.<sup>35</sup> However, mobility patterns in the hosiery industry were different: offspring of knitters would generally be employed within the home and only set up independently at marriage. Pauper apprentices were indentured, often before adolescence, to masters who were prepared to take them on. Other knitters entered the industry at a later stage, turning to knitting when other opportunities were scarce.

Table 4.2. Life Stage Settlements, Guthlaxton Hundred (1700-1835)

	Number	Percentage of Total certificates	Comparable % of total population (1)
Single Females	30	5.3	13.8
Single Males	99	15.6	14.0
Married Females(2)	1	0.2	30.5
Married Males	440	77.1	30.8
Widowed Females	4	0.7	6.2
Widowed Males	0	0.0	4.6

(1) Figures taken from the 1801 Census Return for Leicestershire.

(2) The majority of married women were included on their husband's settlement certificate.

33 Census returns 1801-1851

34 F.A. Wells, The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry: Its History and Organisation (London, 1935), p.79.

35 W. White, op. cit., p.401

Certificates record the movement mainly of married men and their families. (Table 4.2)  
77.1% of settlement certificates which survive for Guthlaxton Hundred relate to the migration of married men and women. This is higher than the combined percentage of men and women listed in the census of 1851 which was 61.3%. Unmarried men were only slightly over represented, 15.6% of certificates compared to 14.0% of the population.<sup>36</sup> It would appear that widowed males and females and single women were less likely to move to employment outside that available as servants. Married men, the majority accompanied by wives and children, were most likely to seek such authorisation to migrate. Due to the necessity of supporting a family they would have had the greatest need.

---

36 Census return 1801

#### 4.2. The Increasing Burden of Poverty and the Changing Systems of Relief

The historiography of the Old Poor Law has focused almost exclusively on the contentious issue of relief in the so-called 'Speenhamland counties', in particular the southern agricultural areas.<sup>37</sup> Such explorations, motivated in the main by the criticisms implicit in the 1834 Poor Law Report, have concentrated on the issue of rural under-employment and its consequences for the cost and nature of relief. J.D. Marshall attempted to redress the balance through his study of Nottinghamshire reformers, although even this set out to examine the changing attitudes and systems of administration which underpinned relief from 1834.<sup>38</sup> It is not possible within the context of this thesis to offer a complete analysis of the operation of the system of relief either before or after 1834, nor to examine the issue of control, the current area of debate.<sup>39</sup> The key issues to be considered here are the differing experiences and inter-relationship of agricultural and proto-industrial parishes and the relative cost of poor relief for each.

Leicestershire was classed as a Speenhamland county by the Select Committee on Agricultural Labourers in 1824.<sup>40</sup> By 1832, 17% of parishes in the county replying to the questionnaire issued by the Royal Commission, were giving allowances in aid of wages. 16 parishes were using bread scales or the labour rate, although 33% were giving child allowances and 11% using the roundsmen system.<sup>41</sup> Viewed against the national picture, Leicestershire was below average in all categories except 'allowance in aid of wages'; only in Wiltshire did more parishes give allowance in aid of wages. In agricultural villages nationally, the practice of granting relief in aid of wages declined with the general fall in food prices in the later 1820s; other solutions were more applicable to sporadic or seasonal unemployment. In Leicestershire unemployment existed, with some seasonal fluctuations in both industry and agriculture. More serious in hosiery villages was the pervasive problem of low wages. The practice of stinting was far from new when it was raised during the 1845 Parliamentary Enquiry into the Condition of Frame-work Knitters. Frame rent may not have been so high in the 1820s but there were clear examples of knitters unable to feed their families even when in employment and consistently seeking help from the system. Select

37 J.D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law, 1795-1834 (London, 1969), pp.15-17.

38 J.D. Marshall, 'Nottinghamshire Reformers'.

39 For example: P.Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law, Redivivus', Past and Present . 117 (1987); D. Eastwood, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law', Past and Present . 127 (1990)

40 Select Committee Agricultural Labourers' Wages... 1824.

41 J.D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law, pp.40-41.

Vestries, such as at Wigston Magna, objected to subsidising the profits of manufacturèrs but they were frequently over-ruled by the magistracy.<sup>42</sup>The relationship between employment and relief in Guthlaxton Hundred was more complex than in the classic rural regions.

It is unfortunate that only Lutterworth of all the parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred was requested to complete the detailed questionnaire compiled by the Commissioners in 1832. To overcome this deficiency the returns made to Parliament in 1804 and 1818 have been used to assess the scale and structural nature of pauperism in the individual parishes. An overview of poverty in the period 1700-1832 is provided by an analysis of removal orders. The latter are particularly pertinent indicators as ,from 1795, removal was only possible when an individual became chargeable on the parish, and before that any removal order would itself have rendered chargeable the person removed.<sup>43</sup>

Removal orders are not an entirely unbiased record. Removal was expensive, not only in the cost of transporting individuals and families, but also in the heavy legal cost incurred in disputed cases. (It was common for a parish overburdened by poor relief to resist the return of further claimants).<sup>44</sup> In some cases it may have been less expensive for the host parish to cover temporary relief. Relations between certain parishes were poor and the incidence of removal orders in these cases tended to be proportionately higher.<sup>45</sup> Equally, removal orders would not be used for those who voluntarily returned to their place of settlement; this may have been common where small distances were involved.

---

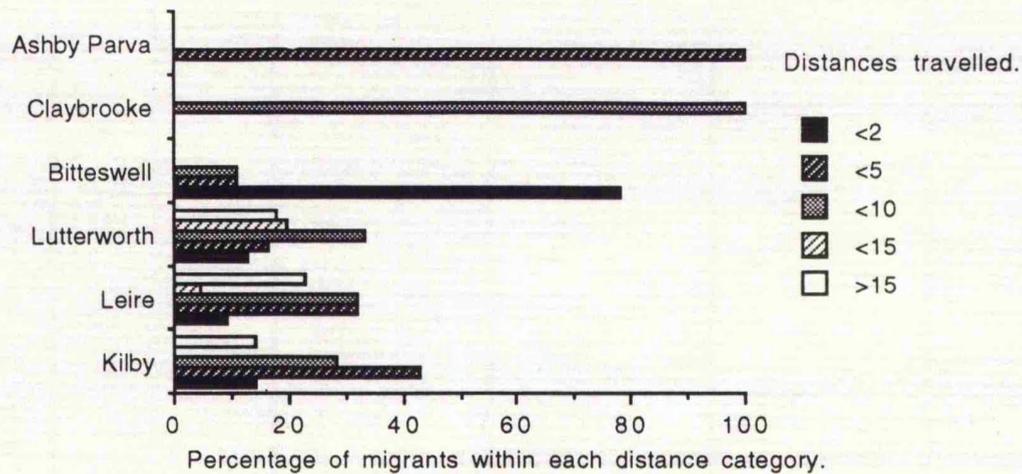
42 Select Committee on the Poor Laws vol V (1818).

43 J.S. Taylor, *Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution* (Palo Alto, 1989) p.21.

44 *Ibid.* Taylor quotes numerous examples of Overseers sending payments to distant parishes to maintain claimants in the short term.

45 For example: the removals between Lutterworth and Monks Kirby in Warwickshire.

Fig.4.3 Removal From. Distances travelled by those removed from parish of residence indicated to parish of settlement, 1700-1851.



(Distances travelled are given in miles)

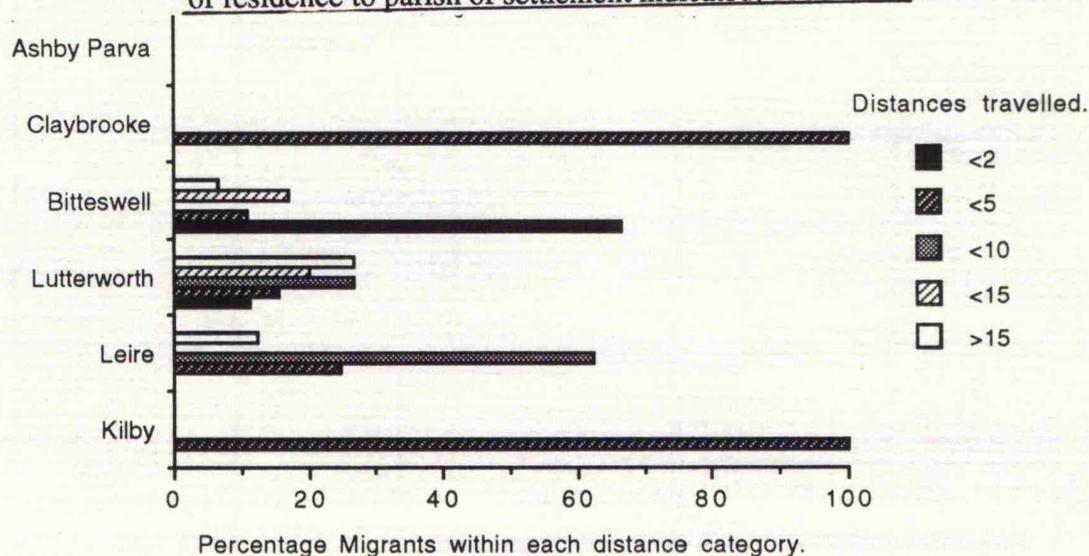
An analysis of distances travelled by those removed from and to villages demonstrates a somewhat different pattern from that observed in settlement; longer distances were involved. (Fig.4.3) All those settling in Leire in the eighteenth century had relocated less than ten miles. From 1791 onwards more than a quarter (27.3%) were removed in excess of 10 miles. The pattern was less apparent in Kilby: 42.8% were removed distances over 5 miles compared to 38% who had settled from within this distance. 57.5% of those who had settled in Lutterworth had travelled over five miles compared to 70.0% who were removed from there. In Bitteswell, an agricultural village, all settlement certificates were to parishes under five miles away but 23.4% of those returned to the parish came from ten miles distant. This would seem to suggest that orders for removal were more commonly taken out where there were larger distances involved and where the individuals were reluctant to return. Overall migration patterns indicated in removal orders between Guthlaxton Hundred and other parts of Leicestershire (and beyond) mirror those established by the settlement certificates: 27.9% of removals concerned two parishes within the Hundred; 33.6% of orders were from parishes outside the Hundred returning those who were, in the main, chargeable; 38.6 detailed people being removed from Guthlaxton to outside.

Figures for agrarian villages demonstrate that more were removed to such parishes than removed from them. 49 certificates were to this type of village whereas only 24 were from them. The latter is not surprising because following early enclosure, employment would

have contracted and, either deliberately or not, available habitation would be limited.<sup>46</sup> The majority of settlement certificates from agricultural parishes were issued in the period up to 1776. With the greater commercialisation of agriculture, especially the movement to pasture, less employment would have been available. The number of labourers required would be seasonably consistent and removal would have been rare.

The low figure of 49 removals to agricultural villages (17% of all removals, significantly less than the 32% recorded for settlement certificates) would appear to indicate that many of those who originally left agricultural villages in the first wave of migration, precipitated by changes in land use, had established themselves in frame-work knitting villages. Families and individuals who were removed in the period from 1800 were more likely to be removed within a network of hosiery villages. They were from a later generation; sons and daughters who had moved to urban areas. Removal in Guthlaxton Hundred in the period from 1790 was much more clearly associated with centres of industry.(Table 4.1)

**Fig. 4.4 Removal To. Distances travelled by those returned from parish of residence to parish of settlement indicated, 1700-1851.**



316 of the surviving removal orders were issued by parishes where frame-work knitting was prevalent, compared to 230 orders removing people to such places. (Fig.4.4) The majority of those removed to hosiery villages were removed from other centres of the industry, often large towns such as Leicester. Of those returned to Blaby, 28 certificates were from centres such as Leicester, Hinckley and Whetstone; 6 from agricultural villages and 4 from distant

46 P. Clark, 'Migration in England', p.239.

towns such as Northampton and Lambeth. Of those removed from Blaby 16 were returned to places where there was a significant knitting industry and 12 to parishes where there was no tradition of knitting. Similar patterns are observable in Leire and Kilby: 47% of those removed from Leire went to other knitting villages, 14.3% to towns and 38.1% to agricultural villages. The number involved in removal from Kilby were smaller but five of the seven were returned to other knitting villages.

All of these removals were in the critical period from 1795 when knitters found it increasingly difficult to meet increased prices with meagre wages. The return of soldiers from the Napoleonic campaigns who were willing to earn even small amounts at the frame increased the labour supply and devalued wages further. They were taken on by hosiers who were prepared to rent out equipment for the sake of the frame-rent. Additional overstocking of the labour supply by apprentices spread the available work even more thinly and forced families to seek supplementary relief. As in the agricultural counties, Speenhamland remedies were the response to low wages, not the cause. Indeed, the return submitted to the 1832 enquiry may underestimate the number of villages giving allowances in aid of wages if, as it would seem, poverty was a greater problem in the industrial villages than in those which had made the transition to fully-fledged commercial agriculture.<sup>47</sup>

Table. 4.3 Life Stage Removals - Guthlaxton Hundred (1700-1850)

	Number Of records	Percentage of records	Comparable % of total population
Single Females	106	19.7	13.8
Single Males	101	18.7	14.0
Married Females <sup>2</sup>	32	6.0	30.5
Married Males	275	51.2	30.8
Widowed Females	21	3.9	6.2
Widowed Males	3	0.5	4.6

1) Figures taken from the 1801 Census Return for Leicestershire.

(2) The majority of married women were included on their husband's settlement certificate.

An examination of removal by life-stage, which makes no distinction between agricultural and industrial villages, illustrates the vulnerability of certain sectors of village communities. (Table 4.3) Whereas 77.3% of settlement certificates had been issued to

married couples, only 51.2% of removal orders were concerned with the same category. Married women, often deserted by their husbands, suffered less well - 6% of the removal orders were issued against women. Overseers may have been reluctant to remove whole families but they showed no reluctance to remove single people and once again, women fared less well. 15.6% of settlement certificates were issued for single men and 18.7% of removal orders were directed against them. Single women, some of whom may have been pregnant, were much clearer targets for removal. Whereas 5.3% of settlement certificates had been given to single women, almost 20% of the removal orders returned unmarried women to their parish of settlement. Evidence given by the Wigston Vestry to the 1832 Commission emphasises the scale of bastardy which parishes were having to support. Wigston supported 20 illegitimate children; three mothers each had two children. Parishes were extremely wary of harbouring single women as any bastard born would be their liability, even if the mother had settlement elsewhere.<sup>48</sup>

The structures of removal by life-stage may reflect opportunities within the hosiery industry. Married men with children would have been vulnerable; the dependency ratio in such villages was high. But children may have been able to earn a little. Equally, parishes where these families had settlement were often willing to send money for temporary relief rather than have them returned to an economic situation where there were even fewer opportunities for obtaining employment.<sup>49</sup> Single men and women were economically more vulnerable. They may have been near the peak of their earning potential in gross terms but finishing costs and overheads in terms of rent (both frame and house) were high.<sup>50</sup> Many may have been taken on as apprentices and, once they were able to demand full payment, masters would replace them with further apprentices. Wigston rate-payers clearly identified the problem: 'the magistrates have allowed men little better than paupers to take as many as five or six apprentices, who they are neither able to feed, nor even to teach a trade.'<sup>51</sup> If, as David Eastwood suggests, the key objectives of parish officers were 'the alleviation of distress and the preservation of order', these might best be achieved by the removal of the unattached and the relief of the stable.<sup>52</sup>

---

48 J.S. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p.20.

49 *Ibid.*

50 P.P. 1845 vol.XV, pp. 50-52.

51 S.C. on the Poor Laws, V, 1818

52 D. Eastwood, 'Governing Rural England', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), p.76.

The burden of removal was proportionately higher in industrial villages, than in agricultural villages. On average, agricultural villages spent 51/2d per capita of their poor law expenditure on removal including the expenses of overseers and other officers in 1804. The comparable figure for those villages where there was domestic industry was 61/2d. Peatling Magna had the highest expenditure, spending in 1804 a total of £23.2s.3d in suits of law, removal of paupers and expenses of overseers - a per capita expenditure of 2s 81/2p. Blaby had the lowest expenditure at 4 3/4d per capita.<sup>53</sup> Although these figures are relatively low, the extent of removal increased during the subsequent fifteen years and the number of orders would seem to confirm a distinction between agricultural and industrial villages. While the cost of basic food stuffs was high across the country - Napoleon's blockade preventing the importation of cheap wheat - the burden was greater for industrial villages. In agricultural villages landowners complained of increasingly high poor rates but they were cushioned by high profits and the payment of less than subsistence wages. In industrial villages farmers argued that they were forced to subsidise the hosier, whose piece rates were insufficient to support a family, but who did not have to pay the poor rate.<sup>54</sup> Further examination is, however, necessary to support a general observable trend that pauperism was a greater burden in hosiery villages than agricultural.

The most comprehensive information for the relief of poverty within parishes is to be found in the detailed returns made to Parliamentary Select Committees in 1804 and 1818 which detailed the cost of maintenance of the poor.<sup>55</sup> The information required by the two separate enquiries was not consistent. For example, in 1804 overseers in each parish were requested to give five specific details of the number of children of persons permanently relieved outside the workhouse (both under five years old and those aged five to fourteen years of age). A further calculation was made as to how many paupers were above sixty years of age or disabled from labour by permanent illness or other infirmity. In 1818 fewer distinctions were made; numbers of paupers were given for three classifications - out of workhouse, in workhouse and those relieved occasionally. There seems to have been little account taken of dependants. Additionally, the Webbs argued that the returns for 1802-3 'represented, not the numbers simultaneously on relief on any one day, but the total numbers of different persons... repeatedly applying for relief during a part of the year.'<sup>56</sup> It would seem that this may have

53 Abstract of Answers and Returns... Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor, VIII, 1803-4, p.260

54 J.D. Marshall, 'Nottinghamshire Reformers', p.387.

55 Abstract of Answers and Returns., *op.cit.*, p.260.

56 S.and B. Webb, English Poor Law History, PartII. The Last Hundred Years, vol.II (1929), p.1039.

applied to those relieved occasionally but that the numbers on permanent out relief reflected the scale and extent of pauperism. The difference between the two may be partially explained by the requirement of the 1818 return to give evidence for three years 1813, 1814, 1815, whereas in 1804 the evidence was mainly, although not entirely, concerned with the preceding year. Nevertheless comparisons between the two can be drawn and, more importantly, the significant differences between agricultural and industrial villages identified.(Table 4.1)

Little detailed research has been conducted on the differing burdens of poor relief in counties where domestic industry was prevalent in the period prior to the Amendment Act of 1834 . Only J.D. Marshall has suggested, after studying overseer's accounts for Nottinghamshire, that per capita expenditure for agricultural villages was less than for the county as a whole, implying that in urban centres and manufacturing villages the burden was greater.<sup>57</sup> In 1803 the poor rate in the pound charged by agricultural villages ranged from 3s 6d in North Kilworth to 6s 6d charged in Shawell.<sup>58</sup> This reflected the percentage of the population dependent on relief in each parish. Although Claybrooke had the lowest pauper percentage at 7.3%. North Kilworth was relatively low at 8.3%. Shawell undoubtedly had the highest pauper host with 18.9% of the population claiming relief which is a figure comparable with the percentage unemployed in the classic Speenhamland county of Buckinghamshire for the same year. The mean pauper percentage of the population for agricultural villages was 11.8% similar to the national average for England and Wales<sup>59</sup> A significant difference is found in villages where there was employment in the hosiery industry; both the average poor rate and percentage of the population claiming relief were higher, there was also a wider range of experience. The poor rate ranged from 2s 8d levied in Peatling Magna to 12s charged in Willoughby; the mean being 7s 10 1/4d. Bruntingthorpe had the lowest percentage of paupers at 6.7% and Willoughby the highest at 27.8%. Countesthorpe had the third highest percentage with 21.5% of the population dependent at some point during 1803 on poor relief. In Whetstone the comparable figure was 26.1%. The mean percentage for industrial villages was 17.3% a figure more in common with predominantly agricultural counties in the south of England than the pastoral villages within the same area. The data challenges the assumption that the presence of by-employment led to a lower poor rate and fewer inhabitants dependent on relief.

---

57 J.D. Marshall, 'Nottinghamshire Reformers', p.386.

58 Abstract of Answers and Returns, *op.cit.*, p.260.

59 J. D. Marsahl, *The Old Poor Law*, p.34.

In Bedfordshire poverty was highest in villages where the only employment available was on the land. The main difference between agricultural villages in the south and the Midland counties was not only the availability of alternative employment in neighbouring villages but also the type of employment available. Arable farming in the south necessitated a large labour force during harvesting in August-September, at sowing in early spring and, until the widespread use of threshing machines in the late 1820s, in manual threshing during the winter months. Employment was inevitably seasonal but, until the more common use of harvesting gangs, the size of the resident population was, to a large extent, determined by the need for labour at harvest time. In Leicestershire employment in agricultural villages was less seasonal. More labour was required at harvest time on whatever acreage was still cultivated but even frame-work knitters were not adverse to such labour.<sup>60</sup> Stock and sheep rearing required a more constant labour force than arable farming and therefore the cost of poor relief was kept relatively low.

The reason for high expenditure in certain agricultural villages, compared to low rates in others, is difficult to ascertain. Although North Kilworth had enclosed late in 1765 compared to Shawell in 1665 new farming patterns would have been established by 1803. In neither parish was the Lord of the manor resident and both had allotments for labourers to support themselves. Shawell's high percentage of paupers is confirmed, rather than explained, by a low rate of population growth in the period 1801-11. 0.5% population growth was not the lowest in the Hundred. (Ashby Magna, Bitteswell and Frowlesworth had net losses) but their percentages of pauperism were all in excess of 12%. As Huzel suggested, out-migration was noticeably higher from parishes where unemployment was significantly higher <sup>61</sup> North Kilworth was dominated by farmers who rented their land while Shawell had some owner occupiers. It can only be suggested that high levels of pauperism reflected an inability to restrict habitation commensurate with employment opportunities.

A high level of poor relief in industrial villages was particularly surprising as, despite dislocation of trade, the war years were, arguably, very prosperous for the hosiery industry. S.D. Chapman quotes the recollections of an 'old hosier' of Leicester who recorded in his memoirs in 1841: 'The period ... from 1800 to 1810 was the most flourishing period of trade within my recollection ... the demand for hosiery during the whole of these years was very great, it was impossible to fully execute all the orders received ... I was sent repeatedly by the

---

60 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 1943.

61 J.P. Huzel, 'The Demographic Impact of the Old Poor Law. More Reflections on Malthus', Economic History Review, XXXIII (1980), p.378.

firm I represented to most of the country villages throughout the county (Leicestershire) where there were any stockings made ... I have frequently given advances of 3d, 6d, 9d and in some cases 1s per dozen'<sup>62</sup> It is probably fair to assume that the memory of an old hosier writing from the stand-point of 1841 may have regarded the period 1800-10 as an idyllic one for the trade. Equally, high rates paid to bag hosiers and middlemen, or even independent shops, may not always have been passed to the hands.<sup>63</sup>

F.A. Wells, in The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry, does not overstate the prosperity of the knitter. Rather, he examines the problems of an unregulated industry, changes in fashion and the introduction of new machinery. Trade may have been buoyant in the period 1800-10 but problems were developing. Fancy stockings such as plaited, embroidered and warp-vandyked hose went out of fashion around 1800; demand for fancy silk mitts and gloves declined. F.A. Wells states that 'these changes threw a large number back on plain work, so that the trade in all three branches of wool, silk and cotton soon began to show signs of distress.'<sup>64</sup>

The situation was exacerbated by the overcrowded state of the industry caused by unregulated apprenticeship. In 1805 workers in Nottingham, Derby and Leicester complained to the Frame-work Knitting Company of the 'many oppressions they suffered through the illegal practices of unfair tradesmen who kept as many as ten apprentices and would teach adults for a small premium.' In his introduction to the 1845 Report Muggeridge noted that, during the period 1800-10, the hosiery industry 'attracted workmen from other less well paid branches; and many young agricultural labourers, and parish apprentices were added to their numbers; - which was further facilitated by a large increase in the amount of frames, created mainly through the inducement of frame rents... these combined circumstances so increased the supply of labour, that it became equal to, if not exceeding the demand, and in a short period wages began sensibly to decline'.<sup>65</sup> Frames were, in almost every case, rented and, with a decline in demand, materials were stinted across a larger number of frames than the work could support simply to protect profits through frame-rent.

---

62 S.D. Chapman, 'Enterprise and Innovation in the British Hosiery Industry, 1750-1850', Textile History, V(1974), p.29.

63 P.P. 1845 vol. XV Q.67.

64 F.A. Wells, op.cit., p.79.

65 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.26.

By 1812 the knitters had a further complaint - that of 'fraudulent work' ; cut-ups - lower price articles which sold more cheaply than the fully fashioned article.

Piece-rates may have been relatively high in the first decade of the nineteenth century, compared to the low levels to which they later sank, but prices were also comparatively higher. It is entirely feasible that the high level of poor relief and pauperism evidenced in 1803 was the result of knitters having to supplement their wages (deductions having been made for frame rents etc.) from parish relief to enable them to feed their families. The Phelps-Brown Hopkins index of prices of consumables averaged 1474 for the decade 1800-09 compared to 1136 for the depressed 1840s.<sup>66</sup> Although prices paid to knitters in 1842 were between 30-40% lower than those which had been paid in 1811 (compared to a 23% fall in prices), the rates paid between 1800-10 may have been insufficient to support a family.<sup>67</sup>

Superficially, the poor law figures for 1813 suggest a sharp decline in pauperism. The mean for industrial villages was 7.1%. However, if dependants had been included on the same basis as 1803, the percentage would have risen to 15.8%, only slightly lower than that observed ten years previously. Significantly the differential between agricultural and industrial villages had been eroded. The percentage of unemployed in agricultural parishes had increased to 16.4%, reversing the trend observed in 1803. It is impossible to estimate to what extent the warnings stressed by the Webbs concerning the nature of the 1802-3 statistics should be offered as an explanation. <sup>68</sup>However, one would expect that nay problem created by double counting would have been equally applicable to industrial and agricultural villages. It is somewhat surprising that an industry which had so recently been affected by the introduction of the wide frame and cut-ups - the spurious goods which undermined confidence in fully-fashioned products and resulted in Luddite outrages-should not have had a more noticeable increase in the cost of poor relief in the hosiery villages of Guthlaxton Hundred. Other factors may explain why the cost and scale of poverty grew at a slower rate in those parishes where employment in hosiery was available.

The most significant difference between the returns for agricultural and industrial villages in 1818 was the recorded number of friendly societies. Only two agricultural villages recorded

66 E.H. Phelps-Brow and A.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Price of Consumables Compared with Builder's Wage Rates', in E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed), *Essays in Economic History* vol. II (London, 1962). P.P. 1845 vol. XV, pp.27-48.

67 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, pp.27-48.

68 The Webbs argued that the returns for 1802-3 'represented, not the number simultaneously on relief on any one day, but the total number of different persons... repeatedly applying for relief during a part... of the year.', quoted by J.D.Marshall, *The Old Poor Law*, p.32.

such membership; Ashby Magna where 28.1% of household heads belonged to a friendly society and Kimcote where the figure was 8.7%. In contrast, eleven of eighteen hosiery centres had significant presences and of those eleven the mean percentage of membership was 15.5% of household heads. In four villages over a quarter of household heads belonged to a friendly society; the lowest figure was for Arnesby with 4.8% of household heads. There is a clear indication that knitters were protecting themselves against adversity and this may have depressed the demand on the poor rates.

The importance of friendly societies is even more apparent during the economic depression which followed Napoleon's defeat. In almost all hosiery parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred less money was spent in 1815 than had been in 1813; fewer paupers were relieved permanently and occasionally, both in and outside the workhouse.<sup>69</sup> Countesthorpe was quite typical: the amount spent specifically on relief of the poor declined from £634 in 1813 to £440 in 1815. While there was a minimal decline in those relieved permanently (from 57 to 53, if one includes both those inside and outside the workhouse), there was a significant decline in those relieved occasionally (from 24 to 12). Such a decline could have resulted from an improvement in demand for hose or lower food prices but in the prevailing economic conditions both were unlikely. Schemes of self-help could aid those who were temporarily unable to support themselves rather than turning to parochial relief. Although J.D. Chambers questioned the continuing appeal of such societies when relief was available, evidence given to the Parliamentary Enquiry in 1818 illustrates that the decline in numbers of paupers was matched by an increase in membership of such societies; in Countesthorpe the numbers participating increased from 53 to 70 between 1813 and 1815.<sup>70</sup>

Efforts made by frame-work knitters to protect their wages by forming societies for obtaining Parliamentary Relief and by striking in 1818, 1821 and 1824 had little success. Wages were improved for months at most before hosiers broke the agreements. The stockings, dispirited by the struggle, failed to exploit the repeal of the combination laws in 1824.<sup>71</sup> Wages could not be improved by the stockings where the hosiers exacerbated and, in many cases, created the problem. Although the hosiery trade was affected by a serious depression in 1825 and again in 1837, trade especially in the worsted branch, 'enjoyed fairly steady prosperity'.<sup>72</sup> The real disease was that the industry was over crowded with workers. 'Even

69 S.C. on the Poor Laws, V, (1818).

70 J.D. Chambers, *Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1931), p.243.

71 F.A. Wells, *op.cit.*, p.103.

72 *Ibid.*, p.109.

if numbers had remained stationary, the introduction of wide frames would have rendered some superfluous; but there was a constant and manifest tendency for numbers to increase'.

<sup>73</sup> Low wages, depleted by frame rents and shop charges were insufficient to support families. As the demand for parochial relief, met by the magistrates' scale, increased, parishes attempted to relieve the burden through removal. Surviving removal orders average 15 per year between 1815 - 19 and stabilise at 10 for the succeeding decade. While removal of those chargeable on the rates to their parish of settlement was a short-term solution to an individual parish's problem, it failed to provide any real solution to the burden of relief.

By the mid-1820s more removals were to endogenous hosiery villages than to either agricultural parishes in the Hundred or to places outside. During the severe depression 1818-19, 60.6% of the surviving Guthlaxton removals were to agricultural villages or, more commonly, parishes outside the Hundred. By 1825 the balance had shifted, 62.6% of removals were to the knitting villages, often from neighbouring hosiery parishes.

Increasingly, rate-payers began to believe, as David Eastwood argues, that 'the wages of labourers ceased to be a reward for industry and became a basic entitlement, dependent only upon legal residence.'<sup>74</sup> Whether the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was inspired by 'middle-class innovators and investors... based upon a theory of individual behaviour which withdrew all collective guarantees except the irreducible one of survival' or represented a shift in power from the rural middle classes to the larger landowners, the individual rate-payers in the frame-work knitting villages welcomed a decline in the cost of relief.<sup>75</sup>

Following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 the parishes in Guthlaxton Hundred were divided between two Unions; the southern one was centred on Lutterworth and the northern based on Blaby. The Blaby Union was formed in 1836 and comprised 22 parishes in total, eleven of which were in Guthlaxton Hundred (including Countesthorpe) and the remainder in Sparkenhoe. White's Directory for 1846 suggests that the new system achieved the aim of cutting expenditure on poor relief, at least in the short term: 'the average annual expenditure of this district, on the poor, during the three years preceding the formation of the Union, was £9,143, but the expenditure in 1838 was only £6,604'.<sup>76</sup>

---

73 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, p.26.

74 D. Eastwood, 'Governing Rural England', p.99.

75 Debate summarised by P.Mandler, *op.cit.*, p.131.

76 W.White, *op.cit.*, p.378.

The Poor Law Amendment Act did not make the building of workhouses mandatory but, in common with other Unions, Blaby was prepared to finance such an institution.<sup>77</sup>The workhouse, situated in Enderby at the extreme edge of the Union, cost £4,400 to build and was able to accommodate 200 inmates. No records survive for the workhouse for the nineteenth century and the most detailed evidence for the implementation of the Poor Law in Guthlaxton Hundred is to be found in the Parliamentary Enquiry into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters.<sup>78</sup>

Some historians of the Poor Law have found it possible to argue that the system initiated by the Amendment Act of 1834 was a continuation of the system it replaced while others have stated that it denied the individual anything but basic existence. Replies made to Muggeridge in 1845 suggest the latter. However, outdoor relief was still available in some circumstances, not just for those who were sick. J. Brown, a knitter in the wrought-hose branch, stated: 'therefore wages have altogether been brought down so low, that I might almost say half the stockings are obliged to have relief from the parish on that account'.<sup>79</sup> Amos Foxon's evidence was more representative. He painted a bleak picture of the consequences of the 'New Poor Law': 'The fact is, as we are at present, if we decline to take work on account of the lowness of the wages offered for it, be they what they may, we have no alternative but to go into the house, and break up our homes, and take our families with us.'<sup>80</sup> In both cases it would seem that the Poor Law Amendment Act was no solution to the fundamental problem of low wages, as it appeared to be in the south. Rather, it perpetuated and exacerbated the deprivation experienced by knitters in an over-stocked trade. The overwhelming evidence supports a corrosive affect on standards of living and morale of the new system.

The Poor Law Amendment Act was designed to reduce the overall cost of the relief of poverty. The evidence of William Hutchings suggests that it reduced the burden on landed-property owners, failed to shift the burden of expenditure on the merchant-hosiers but taxed the small stocking-makers: 'And since the introduction of the Poor Law Bill my shop has been charged 6d to the poor-rate, whether it has full work or not - 6d every levy. It is my opinion, and has always been, ever since the Poor Law has been introduced into the country, that it has been a great evil; and the reason why I say so is this, because when the men used to be out of work formerly, before the introduction of the Poor Law Bill, the overseer used to

---

77 *Ibid.*  
78 P.P. 1845 vol. XV.  
79 P.P. 1845 vol.XV, Q. 1398.  
80 P.P. 1845 vol.XV, Q.4053.

take them upon the parish, and find them work, and give them so much a day; one part they used to have from the farmer they worked under, and the other from the rate ... Since the new system... they will offer the men tickets to go to the workhouse: there is no other relief.'<sup>81</sup>

Witness after witness remarked on the affect of the 1834 Act on wages. Richard Benskin from Shepshed stated 'There is nothing better adapted than the New Poor Law to enable the manufacturers to practise ... impositions on us, because it forces us to take the work out at almost any price we can get it.'<sup>82</sup> Thomas Cave reinforced this: 'I could not think of breaking up my home with my wife and two or three children, so that I was obliged to take work at a price so low that it has grieved me to the heart to say I would take it, because I knew that I could not live upon it.'<sup>83</sup>For the majority of knitters there was no alternative but to accept the rates offered by the hosiers or to go to the workhouse: 'a man will sooner submit to any prices that his master will offer him'.<sup>84</sup> Yet such a course of action was not easy, as Hutchings continued: 'And then his poor wife and children suffer under the greatest privations of life, because when he has done his work, he has nothing to support his wife and family with; his furniture, his bedding, the little he has got, are wearing away, and there are no resources coming in to replace them,; and all the articles that are useful and necessary to a family which he once might have had are wearing away, and he has nothing to replace them, until all is gone, and his lot becomes a mass of wretchedness and ruin.'<sup>85</sup>

By 1845 it would seem that the degradation of the knitters was complete. Stockingers worked long, irregular hours for meagre wages which provided only a starvation level of food. They lived in hovels with little furniture other than the frame and dressed in clothes they were ashamed to be seen out in.<sup>86</sup>Yet the majority preferred such an existence to the alternative which was to go into the 'Bastille'. Frame-work knitters has been exploited in the late eighteenth -early nineteenth centuries but they had been protected, to some extent, by the parish rates. What the Poor Law Amendment Act achieved was the replacement of a compassionate, if costly, system of relief by one which denied basic dignities. The reduction in the cost of relief was secured, in Guthlaxton Hundred at least, by the immiseration of whole communities.

---

81 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q.6961.

82 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 6011.

83 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 1698.

84 Ibid.

85 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 6961.

86 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 7542.

#### 4.3 Responses to Poverty. Changing patterns of Sexual Behaviour: Pre-nuptial Pregnancy and Illegitimacy.

Family reconstitution studies have provided many useful pointers to the changing percentage of births both born and conceived outside marriage. Three relatively discrete periods have been identified by the Cambridge Group: an early high between 1540-1639; a low period 1640-1739; and a late high between 1740 and 1839.<sup>87</sup> The latter period has become the focus of research, co-inciding as it does with the take-off of domestic industry and early industrialisation. Both contemporaries and some historians have made bold claims for the corrosive effect of economic change on traditional structures and morals.<sup>88</sup>

The distinctiveness of unmarried mothers has become a central issues in an explanation of illegitimacy, Karla Oosterveen, Richard M Smith and Susan Stewart examined the typicality of bastard bearers in terms of employment, background and age of mother. Their research was based on reconstitutions of 12 English parishes demonstrating a variety of economic bases. The bastard bearers were found to have been most clearly identified with the labouring classes rather than other economic sectors. The evidence also suggests that the mother's age at the birth of their first illegitimate child followed the same trend as those giving birth to their first child within marriage. Illegitimacy, it was argued, was the result of adverse economic fluctuations which intervened between anticipation and realisation of marriage: 'many illegitimate first births may have been conceived in the process of courtship which had not resulted in marriage.'<sup>89</sup>

The question of moral codes and attitudes to sex is not fully addressed by Smith and Oosterveen. To do so would involve implicit value judgements based on very little documentary evidence. Shorter has been less reluctant. He regards the changes in sweeping terms and claims that the rise in illegitimacy was due to 'the willingness of young unmarried women to abandon traditional chastity and instead go out with different men, have sex before

87 K.Oosterveen, R.M. Smith and S.Stewart, 'Family Reconstitution and the Study of Bastardy: Evidence from Certain English Parishes', in P.Laslett, K.Oosterveen and R.M. Smith (eds), Bastardy and its Comparative History. (London, 1980), p.87.

88 D.Levine, op.cit., Chapter 9.

89 K. Oosterveen and R.M. Smith, 'Bastardy and the Family Reconstitution Studies of Colyton, Aldenham, Alcester and Hawkshead', in P.Laslett, K.Oosterveen and R.M. Smith, Bastardy, p.108.

marriage and pre-occupy themselves generally with personal happiness.<sup>90</sup> Shorter has been criticised for his analysis 'which, however superficially plausible, is largely based on posited connections between the historical events of increasing paid employment of women and rise in illegitimacy, without any attempt to document the intervening motivational process involved'.<sup>91</sup>

Shorter's theories may have found approval with contemporaries. The moral degeneration of the labouring classes was a consistent theme of evidence given to parliamentary enquiries in the first half of the nineteenth century. Witnesses to the 1845 enquiry into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters were quick to point out the moral laxity of the knitters in particular. In almost every case the commentator demonstrated sympathy with the appalling conditions in which the knitters lived and showed little surprise at what they regarded as the ensuing depravity, William Biggs, a major manufacturer, stressed the link between poverty and immorality: 'Hunger and distress are fast destroying all honesty in one sex, and all chastity in the other.'<sup>92</sup>

More significantly, the Reverend Longhurst of Earl Shilton stated: 'all the manufacturing girls are married in the family way; they never think of coming to be married till they are close to their confinement. I am sometimes in trepidation lest they should be taken ill whilst I am marrying them at the altar ... Frequently they will have a child before they come.'<sup>93</sup> The final point prompted Muggeridge to enquire: 'What is the inducement to marry under such circumstances?' Longhurst replied: 'It is a sort of honour among them. I think the man generally married the woman if he has had a child by her (that is, if he considers himself the father of the child), even though it be not born in wedlock; but they generally manage to get the marriage completed before the birth'.<sup>94</sup>

In Approaches to the History of the Western Family, Michael Anderson stated that it may never be possible to provide a full explanation of changes in sexual behaviour in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Some progress could be made if we knew more about 'who had illegitimate babies, where and in what context'.<sup>95</sup> Were those who gave evidence to the 1845 Commission correct to identify such behaviour with those employed in the hosiery

90 E.Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (London, 1976), p.260.

91 M. Anderson, Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914 (London, 1980), p.58.

92 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 1821.

93 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 5211.

94 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 5212.

95 M.Anderson, op.cit., p.58.

industry to the exclusion of other labouring groups? How far was it a recent phenomenon? Why should marriage be anticipated? Anderson's requirements may be filled in part by a comparison of the profile of bastard bearers with mothers giving birth within wedlock, examining the demographic and economic characteristics of each. It also requires a more detailed examination of those pregnant at marriage, many of whom were almost bastard bearers. The main parameters of illegitimacy, which was a nationally observable trend, may not be described by the examination of a single parish but indicators may be identifiable.

Estimates of pre-nuptial pregnancy and illegitimacy are difficult to calculate before the mid-eighteenth century. Clandestine marriage was common before 1753 and only one of the four accepted forms of marriage was conducted in a church following the publication of banns.<sup>96</sup> Forms of marriage which were dependent on common rites are automatically excluded from calculations based, at a minimum, on date of marriage and baptism of first child. It is uncertain whether the baptism of a child of a consensual union might appear in the baptismal register as an orthodox entry before 1753 but afterwards be listed as an illegitimate birth.

A more serious problem arises from the increasing delay between birth and baptism. The traditional practice of baptising a child on the Sunday after birth had fallen out of use by the early nineteenth century by which time a mean interval of at least one month is calculated between birth and baptism.<sup>97</sup> Such a delay has serious implications for the calculation of pre-nuptial pregnancy: Chris Wilson attempted a definition of pre-nuptial pregnancy: 'the choice of a cut off point is not always obvious ... the problem arises because the time from conception to delivery is not identical in all pregnancies. Leridon has suggested the following distribution as a suitable approximation: 2% of births in the seventh completed month after conception, 23% in the eight completed month and 9% in the tenth. <sup>98</sup> The combination of uncertain length of gestation and delay in baptism has led, for the analysis of the Countesthorpe data, to the exclusion of all babies baptised in the ninth month after marriage.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy and illegitimacy became increasingly common in the period after Hardwicke's Act in 1753. However, the Act is not a sufficient explanation in itself for the increase in children baptised within nine months of the parents' marriage and those listed as

---

96 R.A. Houston, *The Population History of Britain and Ireland 1500-1700* (London, 1972), p.18.

97 C. Wilson, 'The Proximate Determinants of Marital Fertility in England, 1600-1799', in L. Bonfield, R.M. Smith, and K. Wrightson (eds), *The World We Have Gained* (Oxford, 1986), p.214.

98 *Ibid.*, p.214.

illegitimate. Hardwicke enforced conformity and encouraged more diligent registration but pre-nuptial conception did not reach a plateau. It continued to rise into the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Table 4.4 Distribution of illegitimacy by decade 1790 - 1850

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Percentage of Illegitimate Births</u>	<u>Illegitimate births/ total births.</u>
1790-1799	6.9	(11/160)
1800-1809	8.6	(14/162)
1810-1819	5.9	(12/215)
1820-1829	4.1	(11/266)
1830-1839	3.4	( 9/262)
1840-1849	8.6	(24/279)

Illegitimacy in Countesthorpe followed a similar pattern to other parishes experiencing a growth in domestic manufacture. Table 4.4)<sup>99</sup> Bastardy was uncommon in the period before 1750; no illegitimate children were baptised between 1700-37 and only two during the following eleven years (1738-49). A relatively low level was maintained until 1780; only six bastards were registered during this period. Illegitimacy became a significant demographic feature from 1790. Examined by decade the percentage of illegitimate to legitimate births demonstrates two peaks: the first between 1800-9 when 8.6% of births were outside wedlock and a similar decadal level was achieved during 1840-9. A change in demographic behaviour is also reflected in the percentage of brides pregnant at marriage. Only 11% of brides in the first cohort were pregnant at marriage: of the brides married between 1750-99, 38.9% baptised their first child within nine months. At least 48.6% of brides in the third cohort married when they were already pregnant.

The chronology of increased illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy was consistent with the take-off and growth of domestic industry. In the early eighteenth century frame-work knitting was the preserve of the propertied classes (although hand knitting was a widespread by-employment). By the third quarter of the eighteenth century frame-work knitting was a significant employer of labour; sixty years later it was the main employer of the labouring classes. David Levine has argued that the development of proto-industry reduced the enforced waiting before a couple had a sufficient economic basis to marry. 'In proto-industry one did not have to wait for a position to become vacant because with this mode of

<sup>99</sup> D.Levine, op.cit., pp.127-145.

production the number of productive units could expand virtually without limit.<sup>100</sup> The traditional apprentice and journeyman system had imposed a hiatus between sexual maturity and economic independence. Domestic industry enabled couples to anticipate marriage and indulge in pre-nuptial sexual relations.

The economic and social consequences of enclosure after 1766, particularly the dislocation of land holding and the decline in the stability of certain families, may have resulted in frustrated marriage or unorthodox sexual relations. Twelve females who gave birth to children outside wedlock in the period after 1766 were linked with property owning families. Six of these gave birth to their bastards before 1817 and six afterwards. Of those children born before 1817 four were born to two daughters of John Lord. He had inherited land from both his father and uncle but had sold it in a piecemeal fashion and had become a frame-work knitter by c. 1790.<sup>101</sup> Only two of the females involved were directly lined to frame-owners; Jane and Sarah, the daughters of Josiah Root, gave birth to natural daughters in 1834 and 1843 respectively. Most property in this context was in petty trade and craft.

Twenty two of the bastard bearers had no property links. The median date at which this group gave birth was 1822. However, ten of the births were registered during the depression suffered by the hosiery industry in the late 1830s and 1840s. Definite links between these women and frame-work knitting is clearer, if not conclusive. Five of the women were themselves listed in the parish registers as frame-work knitters. From the occupational listings on the family reconstitution forms it is clear that nine of the bastard bearers' fathers were frame-work knitters; one father was listed as an agricultural labourer and one was both an agricultural labourer and a frame-work knitter. The occupational status of eleven of the fathers of bastard bearers is unknown, although it is likely that these were predominantly frame-work knitters. While agricultural labourers were the most mobile of occupational groups, such employment was contracting in Countesthorpe due to the transition from arable to pastoral farming. More families were attracted to the village by increased opportunities in the hosiery industry.

---

100 *Ibid.*, p.128.

101 D.E. 1465 1-6.

Table 4.5 Female Age at 1st Marriage. A percentage comparison between brides who were pregnant at marriage with those who were not (1700-851)  
Numbers of cases given in brackets.

<u>Cohort</u>	<u>1700-49</u>	<u>1750-99</u>	<u>1800-51</u>
Brides pregnant at marriage	20.7 (2)	22.9 (17)	22.6 (57)
Brides not pregnant at marriage	24.7 (17)	23.4 (20)	22.7 (43)

Levine's theory that illegitimacy was a feature of frustrated marriage may have some validity for this group. 102 Not only were the births concentrated in the trade depression but also the age at which mothers gave birth to their first child either inside or out of wedlock was consistent. The mean age at birth of the first child for brides was 22.46 and for bastard bearers 22.30. (Table 4.5) However, the correlation between trade depression and rises in illegitimacy can be over emphasised; the difference between 2 or 4 illegitimate births per annum can make the difference between illegitimacy rates of 6% and 16%. (Unfortunately Levine does not give his raw numbers for Shepshed.) Illegitimacy may have been a consequence of trade depression; it may well have had much to do with poor relief or attitudes to sex and marriage.

The decision to indulge in pre-nuptial pregnancy on a much wider scale than the previous generation needs to be seen in a cultural, as well as an economic, context. More couples appear to have enjoyed sexual relations before marriage in the period after 1750 than in the preceding fifty years. Demographic historians such as Peter Laslett have observed that, when age at marriage was high, bastardy and pre-nuptial pregnancy rates were low. Laslett argues that marriage was only anticipated by sexual relations when there were clear indicators that marriage would take place.103 Age at marriage in Countesthorpe had been low for the first cohort but bastardy had been minimal and pre-nuptial pregnancy relatively low. The higher rates for the second cohort indicate either, that earlier pre-nuptial pregnancy had been concealed by clandestine marriage, or that a shift in attitude to pre-marital sex lagged by a generation from a fall in age at first marriage. The timing of the increase in first births conceived outside wedlock coincides with the transition in the hosiery industry from manufacture carried out by those who owned frames to a more widespread employment of

102 D.Levine, op.cit., Chapter Nine.

103 K.Oosterveen, R.M. Smith and S.Stewart, op.cit., p.87.

apprentice labour and rented frames. It was a transition which changed productive relationships and may have had more than an economic impact on family formation.

Table 4.6. Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy/Occupational Links 1800-51  
Number of cases given in brackets.

<u>Occupation of Husband</u>	<u>Percentage of Brides Pregnant at Marriage</u>	<u>Not Pregnant at Marriage</u>
Framework Knitter	60.0 (50)	41.0 (39)
Agricultural Labourer	9.8 (8)	9.5 (9)
Labourer/Knitter	9.8 (8)	7.4 (7)
Trade	3.6 (3)	4.2 (4)
Crafts	7.3 (6)	7.4 (7)
Farmer	2.4 (2)	4.2 (4)
Hosiery		
Employer	6.1 (5)	10.5 (10)
Professional	0.0 (0)	1.1 (1)

Unfortunately, the main occupational data for Countesthorpe relates to the period after 1813, therefore any analysis of the links between pre-nuptial pregnancy and employment has to be based on the third cohort married between 1800-51. Of those for whom data exists for occupation, date of marriage and birth of first child, there is evidence to suggest that those linked to frame-work knitting were more likely to be pregnant at marriage than not 56% of those who could be positively identified as frame-work knitters were pregnant at marriage. (Table 4.6) While frame-work knitting was the most common employment in the village, the knitters comprised 60% of those pregnant at marriage compared to only 41% of those who baptised their first child ten or more months after the wedding. A further 9.8% of those pregnant at marriage had some connection with hosiery through changing occupations compared to 7.4% in the same category of those not pregnant. The cumulative totals are 69.8% of those pregnant having had some employment in frame-work knitting compared to 48.4% of those who did not. Employers of knitters did not follow the same pattern; only 33% of women married to bag-men and employers of frames were pregnant at marriage. Their experience was more consistent with property owners, 30% of those who owned some property, ranging from shop-keepers to farmers, married having already conceived their first child.

An analysis of the mean number of children born to those pregnant at marriage and those who were not pregnant suggests divergent experiences. Those who were pregnant went on to bear more children: the mean number of children born for first and second cohorts was 4.3 and 3.3 compared to 2.9 and 2.6 for those who were not pregnant at marriage. (The material

for the third cohort is less reliable as the totals are depressed by those who had not completed their families). Those who were not pregnant at marriage may have been generally less fertile than those who baptised less than nine months after the wedding. They too may have been indulging in pre-marital sex but, due to low fertility levels, did not conceive. The reasons for their failure to conceive may have been shaped by individual physiologies. Women on low levels of subsistence, demonstrated by impoverished diets in the post-enclosure period and those on nutritionally poor diets as a result of low wages as frame-work knitters, may have suffered from foetal wastage through miscarriage at any stage up to birth. The key stage necessary for the demographic historian to have a record of a bastard birth; for a woman to appear as not pregnant at marriage there has to be only the registration of marriage and the baptism of a child more than nine months later. There are no records of miscarriages and few of still births. Women prone to miscarriage were also likely to experience fewer successful conceptions within marriage.

Migration evidence demonstrates that those who indulged in sex before marriage, either resulting in a premature marriage or in bastardy were not a group apart. Nor were they a transient population. The residence information for bastard bearers is consistent for the two cohorts experiencing significant levels of illegitimacy. For the cohort giving birth between 1750-99, 60% of the unmarried mothers were identifiable by a baptismal entry in the parish registers, 13% were definitely migrants and the family links are uncertain for 27%. The figures are almost identical for the third cohort; 62% of the bastard bearers were born and baptised in the parish, 13% were sojourners and 25% had possible links with the parish. For those pregnant at marriage the percentage of those baptised and resident in the village remained constant at 42.9% , 41.2% and 42.2%. The percentage of sojourners was relatively low; none could be identified for the first group, this increased to 23.5% for the second contracting to 10.8% for the third.

Table 4.7 Birth and Residence Patterns at Countesthorpe (1700-1851)  
Number of cases given in brackets

Cohorts marrying-	<u>Brides - Pregnant at Marriage</u>		
	<u>1700-49</u>	<u>1750-99</u>	<u>1800-51</u>
1. Born and Resident	42.9 (3)	41.2 (14)	41.2 (35)
2. Born but Resident elsewhere	0.0 (0)	5.9 (2)	26.5 (22)
3. Not born but Resident	57.1 (4)	29.4 (10)	20.5 (17)
4. Sojourners	0.0 (0)	23.5 (8)	10.8 (9)

Table 4.8 Birth and Residence Patterns of Countesthorpe (1700-1851)  
Number of cases given in brackets.

Cohorts marrying	<u>Brides - Not Pregnant at Marriage</u>		
	<u>1700-49</u>	<u>1750-99</u>	<u>1800-51</u>
1. Born and Resident	34.2 (13)	35.8 (19)	39.0 (30)
2. Born but Resident elsewhere	7.9 ( 3)	5.7 ( 3)	23.4 (18)
3. Not Born but Resident	42.1 (16)	50.9 (27)	28.6 (22)
4. Sojourners	15.8 ( 6)	7.5 ( 4)	9.0 ( 7)

1. Brides born in Countesthorpe and who registered a minimum of two subsequent events.
2. Brides born in Countesthorpe but who only presented one child for baptism.
3. Brides for whom no baptismal record exists but who registered a minimum of two subsequent events following the marriage.
4. Brides for whom no baptismal record exists and who only presented one child for baptism.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy is perhaps a more reliable indicator of a community's sexual practices than bastard bearing. (Tables 4.7 and 4.8) 57.4% of those who were pregnant at marriage in the third cohort were born and resident in the parish compared to 27.9% who were immigrants and 14.8% who were sojourners. This is remarkably consistent with the residence at birth stated by women on the 1851 census return, 55% of whom were born in Countesthorpe. By the third cohort pre-nuptial relations would appear to have been indulged in by the majority of those employed either as knitters or, decreasingly, as agricultural labourers. There does, however, appear to be a significant difference between those who employed labour and those who were themselves employed. Women married to men involved in trade, farming, or renting out frames were on average twice as likely to give birth to their first child more than ten months after the marriage than to be pregnant at the wedding

ceremony. Pre-nuptial pregnancy was most likely among knitters, agricultural labourers and those who oscillated between the two occupations. This category of employed labour was approximately a third more likely to be pregnant at their wedding than not.

Pre-marital sex was not confined to frame-work knitters, but it was a feature of a local economy in which hosiery was predominant, and those involved in the production of knitted goods were more likely to indulge in such practice. Bastard bearers have been the focus of much attention yet in many respects they were little different from those who can be defined as pregnant at marriage.<sup>104</sup> Indeed many bastard bearers married the father of their first bastard shortly after the birth of the child. Even amongst those who bore more than one illegitimate child, eight married compared to nine who did not. Of those eight, only two failed to marry the father of the bastards. Of those women giving birth to illegitimate children, who can definitely be identified with the labouring classes, seven women went on to marry, compared to nine who did not. (None of them married a man who was known not to be the father of the child.) Daughters of petty property owners demonstrated a similar profile: of the ten, five married and five appear to have remained unattached; two who married did so to a man known not to be the father.

Contemporaries may have exaggerated the immorality of the knitters when they spoke of their rejection of Christian ethics. The behaviour of the knitters may have had more to do with non-attendance at church than increasing immorality. The conventions of sex and marriage before 1750, for many of the labouring classes, were vague and based on custom rather than established religious orthodoxy. The Church of England formalised the celebration of matrimony at the same time as the traditional property and custom basis of agriculture was destroyed with the enclosure of the village.<sup>105</sup> For many the Rector was identified with the property owning classes.

The level of pre-nuptial pregnancy began to rise for the second cohort and, while there is no evidence directly linking pregnant brides with non attendance at religious worship, the links between economic changes and changing attitudes to marriage are too strong to ignore. Witnesses to the 1845 Enquiry into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters may have over-

---

<sup>104</sup> See, *Bastardy and its Comparative History*

<sup>105</sup> Hardwicke's Act of 1753 drew a distinction between church marriages which were legally valid and irregular unions or clandestine marriages which were based on custom. The enclosure of Countesthorpe which tied land use to legal ownership and replaced community custom post-dated Hardwicke by fourteen years.

emphasised the scale and immediacy of the change in peoples attitudes. That knitters, in the main, appear statistically as pregnant brides rather than bastard bearers suggests a respect for the basic Christian rites. Changing work practices and increased degradation did lead to a falling off in attendance at the weekly church services.<sup>106</sup> Anderson has cautioned against expecting attitudes to sex to remain constant over time.<sup>107</sup> Contemporaries, not just observers of frame-work knitting, recorded a change in sexual practices in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup> It is possible to posit that changes in the means of production such as that of domestically produced hose (but also in villages where economic relations were changed by enclosure) were sufficient to determine a change in sexual practice and a re-definition of accepted 'morality' amongst the labouring classes. Pre-marital sex and formal celebration of marriage could co-exist within this new definition. Yet, for the property owners and the establishment, this was at variance with an accepted code of behaviour.

---

106 P.P. 1845 vol. XV, Q. 8264.

107 M.Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.59.

108 P. Gaskell, *Artisans and Machinery* (reprinted London, 1968), p.20.

#### 4.4 Responses to Poverty . Radical Non-conformity and Political Dissent

The term 'poor as a stockinger', coined in the eighteenth century, had failed by the mid-nineteenth century to capture the degradation of the knitter's existence.<sup>109</sup> Ben Rushton's description of one distinct section of the poor holds much greater validity: 'they were the poor who had striven and worked hard all their lives, but who had been made poor, or kept poor by the wrong doing and oppressions of others ... (whose) life was made one desperate struggle for mere existence'.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable reaction of the frame-work knitters is that, in spite of their impoverished diet and quality of life, their long hours of labour and insufficient wages, they fought against the forces which oppressed them. From the late eighteenth century the stockingers lobbied Parliament to protect their wages by statute. Machinery was destroyed between 1811 and 1817 to prevent erosion of wage rates and the quality of manufacture.<sup>111</sup> The stockingers converted to Methodism which, amongst other things, challenged the moral supremacy of the established church. Strikes were organised to force the hand of the hosiers and finally the knitters turned to Chartism, a national movement which seemed to promise them control of the legislative machinery.

The most difficult task faced by historians has been to reconcile these differing responses. What were the links between physical action and parliamentary pressure, between radical - if not revolutionary movements - and nonconformity? The Hammonds stressed the diversity between the attempt to achieve parliamentary protection of wages led by Gravener Henson and physical action taken during the main phase of Luddism. <sup>112</sup> (Equally they emphasised the response of Wesleyan Methodists in their open hostility to those favouring political working class movements.) E.P. Thompson, while subscribing to the Hammond's interpretation of Luddism as a struggle for control of the means of production and the essential freedom of the worker, argued for the close links between the Sherwood Lads and those representing the cause in London. <sup>113</sup> Equally, Thompson outlined the importance of involvement in the Primitive Methodist Chapel for several of the leading Midland Chartists. <sup>114</sup> Previously, Elie Halevy had argued that Methodism and revolutionary

109 F.A. Wells, *op.cit.*, p.76.

110 Quoted in E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.439.

111 *Ibid.*, pp. 604-628.

112 J.L. and B. Hammond, *op.cit.*, p.235.

113 E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.556.

114 *Ibid.*, p.439.

movements were diametrically opposed. Indeed his main thesis had been that Methodism prevented revolution in England in the 1790s. 115 Hobsbawm has rejected such a view. While arguing that the Wesleyan Methodists were anti-radical and high Tory, he demonstrated that the Methodist movement was both too small and located in the less militant areas. More recently, Hobsbawm has retreated from the position he had taken in 1957 which argued against direct links between radicalism and Methodism. He now states: 'Mr Thompson ... gives numerous examples of radical and even revolutionary Methodists. I am inclined to accept his view that revivalism sometimes or often "took over just at the point where 'political' or temporal aspirations met with defeat". 116

A further problem lies not only in establishing ideological links between the spiritual-passive response and that which advocated direct action but also in identifying those individuals who were prepared to adopt both responses in their attempt to challenge the control of the establishment. The problem is, in part, created by the nature of the sources available to historian. The majority of knitters were only semi-literate and were unlikely to leave any written testimony of their activities. The Luddites were by their very nature a secret society. (The veracity of oral evidence collected by Frank Peel in the late nineteenth century for the activity of the croppers in Yorkshire has been much debated and still appears inconclusive.)<sup>117</sup> Nothing comparable survives for the activities of the Luddites of the East Midlands. Newspapers provide details of attacks and trials but these were written from the viewpoint of an unsympathetic establishment and, as with Home Office Reports, only deal with extraordinary events.<sup>118</sup> Countesthorpe is very rare, if not unique, in having a documented link between working-class agitation in 1817, the arrival of Primitive Methodism in the village and the conversion of from one to another. From this evidence links can then be established with support for the Chartist movement as detailed in newspaper and Home Office accounts.<sup>119</sup>

Luddism as a movement was united by its ritual, methods and its concentration in the skilled trades of weaving, cropping and knitting. It was in these trades that skills, rates and working practices were threatened by the adoption of machinery which could be operated by the semi-skilled. It was, however, geographically and chronologically diverse even within the same

---

115 E. Halevy, A History of the English People in 1815 (London, 1949).

116 E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (London, 1964), p.33.

117 F. Peel, Risings of the Luddites, Chartists and Plug Drawers (London, 1880).

118 H.O.79.3 f.31.

119 For example: The Northern Star; Leicester Chronicle; H.O. 41/19.

industry. The main phase of machine breaking in the East Midlands began in Nottingham in March 1811. Riots continued in north-east Nottinghamshire for several weeks; by November frame-breaking had spread to parts of Leicestershire and Derbyshire and continued until February 1812. This was the work of small disciplined bands. Luddism appeared to cease as the hosiers had agreed to better rates, troops were stationed in the areas affected and were prepared to enforce the law which made frame-breaking a capital offence. The main thrust of the knitter's action was then directed towards constitutional agitation pursued by Henson and other leaders in London.<sup>120</sup>

Much of the machine breaking and discontent was located in the fancy-work areas of knitting. These were immediately affected by the de-skilling of wide frames which could produce 'spurious articles' at cheaper rates and so force down prices in general. The plain knitting villages, especially the worsted area were less affected, indeed may have experience a brief short term benefit. Large, one of the leaders pressing for Parliamentary redress, complained that support was uneven and that the Leicester knitters were lacking in enthusiasm. He stressed that worsted hose manufacture was not as badly affected as Nottingham cottons and as a consequence : 'There is not half a dozen good fellows in the town'.<sup>121</sup> If there was a reluctance to support parliamentary action as trade was reasonable, it is unlikely that frame-breaking would have occurred in such villages as Countesthorpe at that point'

By 1817 the situation in the worsted areas had deteriorated considerably. This coincided with the break up of the knitters union. Preparations were made in many manufacturing districts for an armed uprising. The main thrust of activity in Leicestershire began with an attack on Heathcote's factory in Loughborough. Although Heathcote and Boden were manufacturers of lace, it would seem that much of Leicestershire's hosiery industry was affected.<sup>122</sup> Jem Towle, one of those executed for his part in the attack, had argued against there being a well organised network of Luddites with depots of arms. This, as Thompson argues, was misleading. Thomas Savage, also executed for his part in machine breaking, argued that 'Ludding and politics were closely connected.'<sup>123</sup>This would seem to be supported by the reported drilling and arming taking place for an insurrection in June.<sup>124</sup>

---

120 E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.584.

121 *Ibid.*, p.588.

122 W.Felkin, *op.cit.*, p.231.

123 E.P.Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.628.

124 H.B. Kendall, *The History of Primitive Methodism* (London,1819), p.222.

The evidence for such activities in Countesthorpe is quoted in The History of Primitive Methodism published in 1919 but which includes a lengthy extract from a contemporary account made by Rev. George Herod of the events of 1817. 'At a large village, eight miles south-east of Leicester, (Countesthorpe) the Levelling system took deep root in the minds of the working classes and a sub-committee was formed; and with their frequent meeting, their correspondence with other places, their drilling for fighting and collecting for ammunition, scores of families were so reduced as to be almost in a state of starvation. A barn belonging to one of the committee was converted into a store-house for ammunition'.<sup>125</sup> Although Herod's account may include some exaggeration of the 'wickedness' of the inhabitants of Countesthorpe as a counterpoint to their later salvation, it does suggest that the activities were far from ad hoc. The rising organised and led by Brandreth at Pentridge on the night of 8th/9th June has gained most attention but it was not the only place to rise, elsewhere several hundred clothing workers from the Holmfirth Valley advanced on Huddersfield and reform leaders were arrested throughout the West Riding.<sup>126</sup>

The involvement of the government spy, Oliver, in such activities has tended to obscure the widespread discontent which encouraged many to believe that insurrection was the only response. Oliver may have convinced many that an uprising could succeed but he could not create the conditions which encouraged skilled men to organise and arm. The knitters in Countesthorpe were not brought to a state of starvation by the collection for ammunition but by low rates, high prices, the employment of youths and the return from the war of many former stockingers. A similar situation was noted in Hinckley when 'on May 16th 1816, the Overseers and guardians ... informed the Home Secretary that "one half of the frame-work knitters and other mechanics are, at this time, out of employment and that, very shortly, the other half will be in the same dreadful situation."<sup>127</sup> As Hobsbawm has made clear, machine breaking in the hosiery industry was not directed against the machinery itself. In this case the wide-frame, rather than destruction of such property, was used as a form of collective bargaining to prevent the further erosion of existing rates and practices. Hobsbawm regarded such machine-breaking as 'simply a technique of trades unionism in the period before, and during the early phases of, the Industrial Revolution.<sup>128</sup>By offering an overview and

---

125 ibid., p.223.

126 E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p.725.

127 R.F. Wearnmouth, Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England 1800-1850 (London, 1937), p.33.

128 E.J. Hobsbawm, op.cit., p.8.

analysis Hobsbawm established a tradition of machine wrecking in the hosiery industry from 1778 through to 1817.

Although there is no firm evidence that machine breaking actually took place in Countesthorpe in 1817 there are clear links with a parallel tradition, that of animal maiming. As Herod explained 'Sometime before the general expected rise, one man, possessing an unpleasant feeling against a neighbour who was a farmer, determined to have revenge, and this he sought by one night maiming a number of his sheep, - expecting that on the night of the ninth of June, 1817, the general rise would take place, and that he would be lawless.'<sup>129</sup> John Archer has identified the difficulty of interpreting widespread incidences of animal maiming which took place in the nineteenth century. He suggests, as Herod indicates, that many may have been the result of revenge, often against an employer.<sup>130</sup> But equally he argues, that 'animals were seen as legitimate targets of protest.' I would suggest this was the situation in Countesthorpe in 1817. John Hall to whom the sheep belonged was a major landowner who had benefited from enclosure. It is likely that it was for his position in the village society that Keene, Morton and Burley, three frame-work knitters, (not one individual as mentioned by Herod) attacked his animals. It was not the petty revenge of an individual, nor a dispute between an employer and employee, but a planned attack by a group of distraught knitters.

Herod's account becomes somewhat romanticised when describing the trial: 'He (rather than they) was apprehended for the crime he had committed, and examined before the magistrates, when he was committed to Leicester goal to take his trial at the assizes. His trial lasted a considerable time and the jury found him guilty of the offence.'<sup>131</sup> The account in the Leicester Journal for Friday April 3rd 1818 is somewhat more prosaic: 'T. Morton, J. Keene and T. Burley were charged with killing 19 rams, the property of J. Hall of Countesthorpe. This trial, which from its atrocity, excited great interest lasted only a short time'. The real victim of the crime appeared to be Thomas Burley who was 'sentenced to be executed on 18th May next'.<sup>132</sup> Morton and Keene were found not guilty after Burley signed a deposition when in front of the magistrates to the effect that he had committed the offence, and then refused to give evidence at the trial. Morton and Keene were admonished by the judge on

129 H.B. Kendall, op.cit., p.223.

130 J.Archer, 'A Fiendish Outrage? A Study of Animal Maiming in East Anglia ,1830-1870', Agricultural History Review, XXXIII (1985), p.155.

131 H.B. Kendall, op.cit., p.223.

132 Leicester Journal, 3.4.1818.

their narrow escape and Burley heard his 'awful and impressive sentence with perfect indifference'.<sup>133</sup> It is unclear whether Burley was executed or transported for his involvement. He disappeared from the village and his wife Elizabeth began to co-habit with Thomas Sparrow by whom she had at least two children. Morton and Keene returned to Countesthorpe where Morton, at least, appears to have maintained his radical interest.

The fate of the individual protesters is of less concern than the general response of the village, although links exist between the two: the conversion to Methodism was led by the brother of Thomas Burley. Burley, Herod states, 'felt so indignant against the principal witness, that he came to the determination that if his brother were hanged he would be revenged on this man, by waylaying and shooting him'.<sup>134</sup> However, 'in the interim a Primitive Methodist missionary preached at a village about two miles from the place where the brothers had resided; there the one who contemplated homicide heard the gospel and was awakened to a sense of his situation. The night after, the preacher took his stand in Countesthorpe, and in his discourses all the leading men belonging to the Levellers in that village were convinced of sin, of righteousness and of judgement to come ... The barn which contained ammunition for the Levellers was converted into a place of worship, and in it we dispensed the Word of Life, in our turn for three years.'<sup>135</sup>

Hobsbawm was suspicious about such claims made by the Methodists. 'Examples of villages abandoning "levelling" doctrines are quoted. This claim cannot be taken very seriously'.<sup>136</sup> In the case of Countesthorpe the evidence would appear to support the claim. The Ranters' meeting held in Countesthorpe was part of the Midlands Revival of 1817-20 led by John Benton which converted many to the Primitive Methodist faith. Nor was the conversion of many of the leading levellers in the community unexpected. The overthrow of the existing system, for which they had planned, had failed to materialise and one of their number was in prison awaiting execution, while a further two had been released after a very narrow escape. Equally, the attractions of Primitive Methodism were strong. R.F. Wearmouth describes the Primitive Methodists as 'Breathing the spirit of the age and being comprised mostly of the poorer portions of the community'.<sup>137</sup> Hobsbawm recognised this point 'the Primitives were not simply a working class sect; they were pre-eminently a village labour sect... the

---

133

*Ibid.*

134

H.B. Kendall, *op.cit.*, p.224.

135

*Ibid.*

136

E.J. Hobsbawm, *op.cit.*, p.31.

137

R.F. Wearmouth, *op.cit.*, p.7.

Primitives, like all working class sects, functioned best in small congregations in which the nearest equivalent to simple democracy of the believers could operate, and the greatest degree of lay participation could obtain'.<sup>138</sup>

Primitive Methodism reflected many of the attitudes of the 'Levellers' of 1817.<sup>139</sup> The movement, which had been established in 1812, was fiercely democratic in its organisation and anti-establishment in its beliefs. Although much of its spleen was vented against the established church thesis, by implication, was also directed against those who attended and supported it. The Methodists were able to provide a role for the 'Leveller' leaders. For example, Thomas Burley was listed as No.28 on the 1822/23 Preachers Plan for the Loughborough Circuit.<sup>140</sup> The organisational system of the Methodists reflected the 'Leveller's' organisations (and prefigured that of the Chartists) and was designed to keep adherents in the fold. As Wearmouth describes 'The class leader occupied a very important position in the life of the local society. He was a kind of spiritual advisor to a number of selected people, he was expected to meet them as a group once a week, give them instruction and advice... Each individual member was taught to regard him as a friend and a shepherd of souls. If they were sick, he had to visit them. If they were negligent in spiritual matters he must rebuke them or exhort them as occasion demanded'.<sup>141</sup>

The Primitive Methodists offered the frame-work knitters the support and organisation which was later offered to factory workers by trade unions. It also enabled them to escape their secular problems and refocus their expectations on later redemption. Although, as Hobsbawm argued, 'theology hardly entered consciously into the teaching of the Primitives,' the religious appeal must not be entirely dismissed. 'The religion of the poor seemed to require a sharp contrast between the gold of the redeemed and the flame shot black of the damned'.<sup>142</sup> Primitive Methodists firmly believed in the philosophy of the Book of Ezekiel that one should 'exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high'. If this was not achieved in the earthly sphere, once in the after life God would fulfil his promise and 'overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it to him'.<sup>143</sup> Primitive Methodism promised that which, for the majority of frame-work knitters, was

<sup>138</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959), pp.137-8.

<sup>139</sup> The term 'Leveller' is used by Kendall to differentiate the outbreak of machine breaking in 1817 from the earlier Luddite 'outrages'. It is used here to emphasise the political aspects of the 1817 activities.

<sup>140</sup> H.B. Kendall, *op.cit.*, p.238.

<sup>141</sup> R.F. Wearmouth, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>142</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p.136.

<sup>143</sup> E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.431.

unattainable: a significant improvement in conditions and a reversal of their fortunes. It used propaganda to inspire its members and strict discipline to keep them faithful and, unlike the plans for June 8/9th 1817, it could not be shown to have failed, or at least in the short term. A fundamental tenet of Methodism was hope.

The experience of Countesthorpe would appear to confirm the analysis of E.P. Thompson who pointed out 'the conclusion that "Methodism advanced when Radicalism advanced and not when it grew weaker" does not necessarily follow. On the contrary, it is possible that religious revivalism, took over just at the point where "political" or temporal aspirations met with defeat'.<sup>144</sup> He added 'the suggestion is tentative. To take it further, we should know more about, not the years of revivalism, but the months: not the counties but the towns and villages.<sup>145</sup> The inter-relationship between political agitation and religious revivalism in Countesthorpe is, on one level, unique but on another, it is a single example which may have wider significance.

The concept of a 'radical tradition' has remained, to a large extent, in the abstract. Late Victorian trade union leaders could be clearly identified by their Methodist origins. Some attempt has also been made to place the leaders of the Chartist Movement, who rose to prominence in the 1840s, in a non-conformist background. Joseph Skevington, the leading Loughborough Chartist, had served an apprenticeship on the local Methodist circuit. Links between Luddism, Methodism and Chartism have been harder to demonstrate. The existence of a Chartist group in Countesthorpe can be established through the autobiography of Thomas Cooper. (Cooper was the leading Leicester Chartist until his arrest in 1842.)<sup>146</sup> The strength of local support was also noted in the pages of the Northern Star; on the 9th of July 1842 it noted: 'Mr Cooper preached at Countesthorpe on Sunday morning and took down 20 names towards forming an Association.'<sup>147</sup> Less than a month later the same newspaper reported 'Mr Cooper visited Countesthorpe on Tuesday night and enrolled 25 members bringing up the number of the newly formed association to 70'.<sup>148</sup> Support for the radical movement did not disappear with the arrest of Thomas Cooper, indeed collections were made for his legal expenses. More importantly, Chartist meetings were being held in both Countesthorpe and Blaby at the last major outbreak of Chartist disturbances in 1848.<sup>149</sup> The

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.428.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.429.

<sup>146</sup> T.Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper (London, 1872), p.174.

<sup>147</sup> The Northern Star, 9.7.1842.

<sup>148</sup> The Northern Star, 6.8.1842.

<sup>149</sup> J.F.C. Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester', in A.Briggs (ed), Chartist Studies (London,1959), p.117.

most notable took place in late June 1848 when, in spite of a heavy downpour of rain, 200 people listened to a speech in Countesthorpe by George Hubbard, described as a 'physical force Chartist'. Violence erupted despite, or because of, the presence of 50 police and specials and George Hubbard was taken into custody.<sup>150</sup>

George Hubbard, who was bound over to keep the peace, illuminates much of the history of radicalism in Countesthorpe. Hubbard, aged 31 in 1848 and therefore too young to have taken part in the action of the Levellers in 1817, was married to Mary Morton, the daughter of Thomas and Ann Morton. Thomas Morton had been acquitted for his involvement in the sheep maiming incident which had been the focal point of the earlier disturbances. Thomas Morton's family's life pattern was a classic example of those on the fringes of society: Mary was the only daughter to marry but two of her sisters, listed, like their father, as frame-work knitters, had given birth to illegitimate children. In October 1834 his youngest son, also named Thomas, had been sentenced to two months hard labour for stealing a shirt from Abraham Wright. It is impossible to position Thomas Morton firmly in the Methodist congregation, indeed it is difficult to state whether such behaviour would have been tolerated. However, his youngest brother Edward had had his marriage to Elizabeth Jones recorded in Arnesby Primitive Methodist Chapel Register in 1828. Edward later became a Methodist minister in Rochdale.<sup>151</sup>

George Hubbard too had family links with Methodism. His uncle Robert, who continued to reside in Countesthorpe, married Lavinia Smart at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Arnesby in 1820.<sup>152</sup> Countesthorpe was a small place and family networks were particularly close; Robert and Lavinia Hubbard lived next door but one to George and Mary Hubbard in Little End.<sup>153</sup> Non conformist registers are much less complete than those of the Church of England and it is entirely possible that George Hubbard had at some point been an active member of the Primitive Methodists. What is clear are the direct personal links that existed between Luddism, Methodism and Chartism and, to a lesser extent, behaviour which might also be construed as anti-establishment.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of George Hubbard's involvement in the Chartist movement was his occupational background. He was described in the Leicester Chronicle at the time of

---

150 Leicester Chronicle, 7.10.1834.

151 Arnesby Primitive Methodist Chapel Registers.

152 Ibid.

153 H.O. 107/2081.

his arrest as a 'stocking-maker'.<sup>154</sup> This term was not entirely inter-changeable with 'frame-work-knitter' or 'stockinger'. In fact, George Hubbard was listed in the 1851 Census Return as owning 15 frames.<sup>155</sup> It is probable that at the time of his arrest he could be described as a 'bag-man', that is to say, one who bought raw materials from the merchants in Leicester and sold his finished goods where he could obtain the best rates. But unlike other bag-men he did not have alternative means of support such as a grocery shop or a public house.

It is not possible, within the scope of this thesis, to review the vast historiography of the very diverse Chartist Movement. Rather, it is my intention to explore why the radical movement received such support in Countesthorpe. J.F.C Harrison's argument that 'the main dynamic of Leicester Chartism was the condition of the frame-work-knitters' provides a focus and an explanation of Hubbard's involvement.<sup>156</sup> While bag-men might be guilty of the worst excesses of exploitation, they were also vulnerable in periods of severe depression when merchants were unwilling to purchase finished goods from them. At such times the merchants were unable to market the work produced on their own frames. Chartist leaders were often drawn from the class of small shopkeepers and skilled men such as shoemakers.<sup>157</sup> That George Hubbard should have become a prominent local leader due to his own economic precariousness, his position within the local community and his radical tradition is perhaps understandable.

Political Radicalism, embodied in the Working Men's Association which formed the basis of the Chartist Movement throughout the country, became an active force in Leicester from 1836. There appear to have been three main factors which encouraged frame-work-knitters to support a movement whose programme was based on universal suffrage, vote by ballot and triennial parliaments: the failure of the attempt to form a union in 1834; a further dramatic decline in wages and the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act.<sup>158</sup> It is possible that knitters in Countesthorpe attended rallies in the town before the formal establishment of the society in the village in 1842. Thomas Cooper has been credited (or credited himself) with increasing the numbers of active Chartists by his organisation in the town and preaching in the villages. However, the condition of the knitters which guaranteed him such success was more important. The most famous incident in Leicester Chartism - 'the

---

154 Leicester Chronicle, 17.6.1848.

155 H.O. 107/2081.

156 J.F.C. Harrison, op.cit., p.121.

157 Ibid., p.122.

158 See, A. Temple-Patterson, Radical Leicester (Leicester, 1954)

Battle of Mowmacre Hill' - was the result of a general strike in the hosiery industry in 1842 which occurred during Cooper's absence.<sup>159</sup>

There has been much debate as to the extent to which Chartism was a political or an economic movement and, in many ways, the discussion has been inconclusive. It is likely to remain so if it is considered only in terms of the national leadership and the national action involved in the presentations of the petitions in 1839, 1842 and 1848. Economic problems were the conditioning circumstances in the Leicestershire Frame-work-knitting centres in 1842 but the local movement was political in aim. Cooper described the knitters in 1842: 'employ had ceased for thousands, and that for months, the distress was appalling ... the crowds of poor applying for relief at the Board of Guardians became so great, that a mill was set up at the Union House as a test of willingness to work.'<sup>160</sup> Reports of Chartist activity declined during the mid-1840s due to a slight improvement in trade and better harvests and came to the fore again with the depression of 1848. This is not to say that the Chartist organisation and societies disappeared in more prosperous periods, but rather, that mass support was more forthcoming in times of hardship.

The desperate conditions experienced by the knitters were such that there seemed little hope of achieving any redress without a major shift in the balance of political power. Every previous attempt to seek parliamentary regulation of prices and quality had failed and there seemed little possibility that the knitters' interest would be served by a parliament dominated by the propertied interest. The Poor Law Amendment Act, which for many knitters had presented a stark choice between the workhouse and starvation rates, had been passed by a newly reformed House of Commons increasingly wedded to the theory of *laissez-faire*. As Gammage noted: 'In a period of adversity the masses look on the enfranchised classes, whom they behold reposing on their couch of opulence, and contrast that opulence with the misery of their own condition. Reasoning from effect to cause there is no marvel that they arrive at the conclusion - that their exclusion from political power is the cause of our social anomalies.'<sup>161</sup> It is for this reason that Edward Royle argued that Chartism was a political movement: 'something remarkable happened in the 1830s and 1840s to enable political radicals to exploit the severe economic and social distress of early industrial Britain and thus

---

<sup>159</sup> J.F.C. Harrison, *op.cit.*, p.112.

<sup>160</sup> T.Cooper, *op.cit.*, p.405.

<sup>161</sup> R.C. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1854* (London,1854), quoted in G.Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge,1983), p.100.

produce the first large-scale politically conscious movement among the emerging working classes.'<sup>162</sup>

In Countesthorpe the movement was so successful not only because of the economic conditions and the harshness of the system of poor relief but also because the political radicals adopted methods and means which mirrored the existing structure of Primitive Methodism. The Chartist preachers operated within an existing culture, if to serve temporal rather than spiritual ends. Methodism had been able to take root in Countesthorpe because a formal organisation and commitment to joint support already existed. In the same way the Chartist movement used similar methods of disseminating ideas as the Methodists. As Wearmouth pointed out Chartism used mass meetings to address and attract followers: 'from 1839 to 1850 the Chartist Camp Meeting remained the most regular and important form of political propaganda among the lower classes.'<sup>163</sup> Thomas Burley's brother had, along with other Countesthorpe Luddites, been converted to Methodism at such a mass meeting where the power of the speaker's words was reinforced by the heightened expectation of the crowd. It was to a similar meeting that George Hubbard expressed his view that the only possible means of achieving the aims of the Charter was by physical force.

Yet perhaps the most important form of Chartist activity, if the least noticed, was also based on a Methodist example, namely, the class meeting. The classes which were held by Thomas Cooper in Leicester went beyond the normal expectation of Chartist meetings in that he attempted to educate the knitters.<sup>164</sup> The meetings held in Countesthorpe were more likely to have followed the general pattern of weekly meetings attended by the twenty members at which a subscription was collected and the Northern Star read aloud to those unable to read. The specific rules for conduct of class meetings were often amended by the national organisers but it is likely that this was the means by which the movement maintained its presence in the village during the 1840s.<sup>165</sup>

It was possible earlier to demonstrate the coincidence of the failure of the 'Levellers' and the establishment of Methodism. It is more difficult to demonstrate the relationship and relative support between Methodism and Chartism. Individuals such as the Hubbards can be identified and parallels drawn between organisations but it is not clear whether the 75

---

<sup>162</sup> E.Royle, *Chartism* (London, 1986), p.91.

<sup>163</sup> R.F. Wearmouth, *op.cit.*, p.111.

<sup>164</sup> T.Cooper, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>165</sup> E.Royle, *op.cit.*, p.86.

members of the Chartist Movement were, or had been, Methodists. Some members of the Methodist congregation can be identified but the Chartists remain nameless.<sup>166</sup> However, the suggestion remains, because of the example of Joseph Skevington and George Hubbard, that the local links between the two movements were strong. It might be said that the political aims of the Chartist Movement complemented the spiritual ambitions of the Methodist Chapel. A local Chartist tract included, and denounced, by Muggeridge in the 1845 Enquiry into the Condition of the Frame-work Knitters would seem to reinforce this in its style, language and ambitions:

'Christian Slaves!' - Are your only obligations, submission to, and quiet endurance of oppression! Was Christ such when he overthrew the tables of the money-changers in the temple; when he denounced the parsons of the day as 'hypocrites' - as like to 'whited sepulchres' - as making men 'two-fold more than the children of hell than before?' Is it possible that the parsons are just as bad now as then? - Is it not time?'

'Trades of England! - bound in one common interest by your daily vocation, and incessantly struggling against the rampant attacks and power of blood - stained capital - if you combine, it is condemned as conspiracy - if ye beg, ye are imprisoned seven days for vagrancy - if you resist deductions (robbery) in your wages, you are transported, as Dorchester labourers or the Glasgow spinners, to be classed with burglars and murderers, in a penal colony. Slave-Tradesmen! - Is it not time?'

"Tyrants - oppressors of the slaves of the empire - be just and fear not! But persist in your present fatuous policy and, 'louder than the bolts of heaven, will the wild cry of justice or revenge, career along the political firmament; it will boom yet more terrifically than even when the Bastille fell; and with it, simultaneously, will the fierce flash of the people's displeasure fall upon you, like a fell simoon, to scorch, to scathe, - we hope not to destroy. - Tyrants! is it not time?'<sup>167</sup>

The rhetoric of the tract mirrored that of the most effective non conformist sermons. Religious analogies were used to great effect and the arguments were reinforced by biblical symbolism

---

<sup>166</sup> The names of many Chartists were recorded in the accounts of the Chartist Land Company when they purchased shares in the lottery for land holdings. Malcolm Chace has used this source successfully see: 'The Chartist Land Plan and the Local Historian', The Local Historian (May, 1988). However, no-one from Countesthorpe is listed among the 20,000 share-holders; one assumes that the reality of agricultural life was all too clear to stockingers in the village. It may also have been difficult for many to afford shares which cost £2.10.0.

<sup>167</sup> P.P. 1845 vol.,XV, pp.119-120.

"Jeshuran has waxed fat and kicks" Oh! Famine stricken frame-work knitters! - Is it not time?'<sup>168</sup> As J.F.C.Harrison states, "Methodist thought and attitudes were assimilated into Chartism. Life for the working man was not to be lived in separate compartments; his religion and his social and political strivings had to be harmonised. Nor was this a very difficult task, for religious sanction for most radical opinions could be found in the New Testament.'<sup>169</sup>

That George Hubbard was noted as a 'Physical-force Chartist' also underlines the Methodist-Chartist links. Few historians would subscribe to R.G. Gammage's discrete camps of 'moral' and 'physical force' Chartists. Equally, it would be foolish to suggest, on the basis of a single reference, that all those in Countesthorpe who supported the Chartist movement favoured violent means. Nevertheless, 200 people were prepared to attend the meeting at which Hubbard advocated such a strategy. The motto 'peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must' was most clearly identified amongst those Chartists who, like Joseph Rayner Stephens, had strong links with Primitive Methodism.<sup>170</sup> The right to arm was justified by scriptural texts and recognised by the Chartist convention of 1839. Although the national leadership subsequently retreated from advocating violence, and by the mid-1840s gradualism had become part of national Chartist policy, at local level the support for a more forceful approach remained.

In May 1848 local disturbances were reported by the Times: 'The authorities have for some time been aware that the Chartists at Bradford, Halifax, Bingley and other towns in the Riding, were arming and enrolling themselves in clubs'.<sup>171</sup> Thomas Frost reported the events in London of the evening of 15th August 1848 which ended in failure but which had high aims 'I have since been informed that the flag of revolt was to have been first unfurled at this spot, upon which barricades were to have been erected - the beginning of a series to have been extended on every side from the centre - until the insurgents were able to hem in the seat of the Court and Government.'<sup>172</sup> In Countesthorpe and in the rest of Leicestershire, there appeared to be little comparable organised action. Yet, the mood seemed to favour a similar drastic approach. Demonstrations were held in Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley, Earl Shilton, Wigston and Countesthorpe during the week of the presentation, of the final

---

168

*Ibid.*

169

J.F.C. Harrison, *op.cit.*, p.140.

170

Quoted in E.Royle, *op.cit.*, p.57.

171

D.Jones, *Chartism and the Chartists* (London,1975),p.158.

172

*Ibid.*

charter but, although there was an air of expectancy, no major uprising occurred. This may have been the result of a large police presence: Harrison quotes the precautions in Loughborough where '500 specials, together with yeomanry and dragoons, in addition to the normal police force' attempted to maintain law and order.<sup>173</sup> Such containment was reinforced by the 50 specials deployed at the meeting addressed by George Hubbard.<sup>174</sup>

Nationally, the Chartist movement lost direction following the failure of Parliament to accept the third charter presented on 10th April, 1848 but it appears to have remained a significant force at local political level in Leicester until 1852. There is no further evidence of activities in Countesthorpe after June 1848 yet it would be a mistake to believe that the members of a movement who had clearly recognised that the House of Commons would not grant universal suffrage as a right, would disappear overnight. The radicals may have lost the support of a national movement but, locally, they were part of an on-going radical political tradition.

---

<sup>173</sup> J.F.C. Harrison, *op.cit.*, p.118.

<sup>174</sup> H.O. 41/19.

Chapter Five: Countesthorpe in 1851 - An examination of household function and strategies adopted in response to changes wrought by enclosure and the development of the hosiery industry.

The discussion so far has been concerned with the process and agents of change; how, and in what ways agricultural innovations, population development and the growth of industry inter-acted in Countesthorpe and its hinterland. It is worthwhile, in conclusion, for us to consider what that transformation meant in terms of the structure of the community. How different was Countesthorpe in 1851 from the village which we first observed in 1700? I intend to use the household unit, or family, as the focus for this analysis, not only has it been the subject of so much recent debate, but it responded to and was shaped by the wider changes that occurred.<sup>1</sup>

Hans Medick has positioned the family at the centre of the proto-industrial debate. While acknowledging the importance of the seminal work of Peter Laslett who demonstrated the continuity of family structures, Medick has stressed that historians should focus on the changing function of the nuclear family rather than regarding it as a 'resilient and enduring structural element within the genesis of industrial capitalism'.<sup>2</sup> He stressed that it is only within the context of the process of capitalist industrialisation that 'the structural function of household and family in the transition from traditional agrarian society to industrial capitalism can be adequately assessed'.<sup>3</sup> For Medick the emergence of a numerous, under employed class of small peasants or landless rural dwellers was an essential pre-condition for the development of industrial production.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, through a putting-out system, the family unit combined manufacturing with consumption and reproduction. Production was located in the home, the ganze-haus, and within which each family member had a role.<sup>5</sup> The proto-industrial family was a nuclear family within a long tradition, what set it apart was the continued residence of offspring whose productive role was essential to the family economy. 'With the birth of children, the parents become poor; with their maturation they become rich; and with their marriage, they fall back into misery'.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Levine, 'Industrialisation and the Proletarian Family in England', Past and Present, 107 (1985); H. Medick, 'The Proto - industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of the Household and Family During the Transition from Peasant to Industrial Capitalism', Social History, 3 (1976); E. Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (London, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> H. Medick, 'The Proto-Industrial Family Economy', op.cit. reprinted in P. Thane and A. Sutcliffe (eds), Essays in Social History vol. 2 (London, 1986), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

David Levine has also considered the impact of industrialisation on the nuclear family within the English context. Levine's overall argument emphasised the flexibility of marriage-driven family formation and he argued that the labour inputs provided by wives and children were crucial determinants of proletarian incomes, both when manufacture occurred in the home and later in factories.<sup>7</sup> The central problem with the theses put forward both by Medick and Levine is the exclusive importance given to families where the head of household was involved in manufacture. Medick refers to the 'transition from land-intensive agrarian production to labour-intensive craft production'.<sup>8</sup> He demonstrates how decreasing levels of subsistence, engineered by the putting-out merchants, forced families to involve all members in manufacture to the exclusion of agricultural production. Seemingly, once the peasants were landless and the male-head returned to the household the influence and dependence on agriculture disappeared; the family became a cohesive unit of manufacture shaped by the needs of merchant capital. The reality was somewhat different. Some households were integrated and cohesive units of production, others used female and child labour from households headed by agricultural labourers.

Richard Wall has argued that investigation of the household and its changing function needs to extend beyond relational, age and marital status and to have a new perspective on work patterns of family members. Wall presented a more flexible model of an adaptive family economy and argued that proto-industrial, household based labour could co-exist within a wage economy.<sup>9</sup> Wall used the 1851 census for Colyton to explore the applicability of his theory. And examined household composition and life-cycles between different occupational groups. From this he concluded that 'the families of mid-nineteenth century Colyton were faced with more than simple choice between all their members working in home industries, or all leaving to follow the dictates of their employers.'<sup>10</sup>

To test fully the theses of Medick, Levine and Wall and to offer an alternative analysis, a clear comparison needs to be made between the economy and household structure in 1700 and again in 1851. Was Countesthorpe dominated by a class of small peasants in 1700, and indeed was this the most important factor shaping change as Medick suggested it should be? Equally did Countesthorpe by 1851 fulfil the proto-industrial criteria of an

---

<sup>7</sup> D. Levine, 'Industrialisation', p. 176.

<sup>8</sup> H. Medick, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> R. Wall, 'Work, Welfare and the Family: An Illustration of the Adaptive Family Economy', in L. Bonfield, R. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), *The World we Have Gained* (Oxford, 1986), p. 265.

<sup>10</sup> R. Wall, *op.cit.*, p. 294.

impoverished 'ganze -haus' dedicated to the manufacture of hosiery? Or was the situation both in 1700 and 1851 more flexible than the proto industrialisation thesis suggests?

Problems exist in describing household formation and form in pre-industrial England in the absence of a contemporary census. No account of membership of households survives for Countesthorpe and family reconstitution and wills cannot provide a house by house survey for a particular year, as is provided for Cardington and Cogenhoe.<sup>11</sup> However, by piecing together information from surviving parish records we can gain an insight into household structures and assess the changes wrought by wide scale domestic industry. In order to draw a comparison with the evidence contained in the 1851 Census a 'dummy census' for 1751 was conducted using the family reconstitution forms. Only families and individuals who had a recorded event both before and after 1751 were included. Clearly, an exception was made for migrants who were recorded as such if they had no further entry themselves, and either a sibling or parent had a further entry. Using this method it was possible to estimate who was resident in the parental home at a given date (December 31, 1751) and who had either left to marry, appeared to have left the village for work elsewhere, or were under the age of fourteen. A somewhat generous estimation was made as to the age at which a child was likely to leave home: fourteen was selected as the cut-off point. Some children would have left home at an earlier age but this was considered the age at which children would be most likely to enter farm service.<sup>12</sup> The estimated households cannot make any provision for the residence of an older or younger generation, but there seems to have been little tradition of this either in Countesthorpe or elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

In 1751 Countesthorpe was primarily, but not exclusively, an agricultural village. Surrounded by open fields its population was primarily located in a nucleated settlement to the east of the parish church. The open-field system was already under strain mainly from those who wished to increase their profits by greater involvement in the rearing of stock and sheep.<sup>14</sup> Equally diversification had already taken place, originally through hand knitting and by the early eighteenth century through frame-work knitting. Countesthorpe could be described as an open-village, land was divided among approximately 34 owners, the vast majority having access to less than 100 acres; there were also those who had no land and were employed as labourers.<sup>15</sup> Such an economy

---

<sup>11</sup> P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (London, 1977).

<sup>12</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 236.

<sup>13</sup> H.O. 107/2081; P.Laslett, *Family Life*, Chapter Two.

<sup>14</sup> Countesthorpe Stint L.R.O. DE66.

<sup>15</sup> Hearth Tax 1664 L.R.O. E/179/134/322.

had a peasant base. Clearly land-ownership was not vested in an elite and access to land was for the majority almost as important as ownership. Common rights as well as employment linked the majority inhabitants of Countesthorpe to its open fields. Families supplemented their income through them by gleaning and employment for those with insufficient land

The average household size in 1751, based on 70 families with the requisite residence in the village, was 3.8. This can be broken down further: 1.8 persons were parents, 1.4 were children under fourteen and 0.6 were older off-spring who remained in the parental home but were not married. (Some of the latter were to marry later but at that stage were unmarried.) It is of course entirely possible that some of these adolescents did not experience continued residence but left for employment elsewhere and then returned, although the Cardington evidence suggests that this was uncommon.<sup>16</sup> Of the 108 offspring who were above the age of fourteen, forty-three (39.8%) remained in the family household, twenty (18.5%) were already married and had formed households of their own and a significant number, forty-five (41.7%), had left the village and were never to return. As I have already suggested those who were classed as remaining were perhaps only a little above fourteen and would eventually leave the parental home, marry and live in Countesthorpe.

The figures suggest a small household size and a high percentage of offspring leaving the parish. This reinforces the overall analysis of the first cohort which demonstrated that 11.4% of male children and 6.5% of female children who survived beyond fourteen died in the village unwed, remaining one assumes for some considerable time in the parental home. Equally, 32.6% of males and 55.4% of females who survived to adulthood left the village altogether. The household of William Heathcock could be given as an example. Of the seven surviving children born to William and his wife Anne following their marriage in 1720 the eldest two sons, William and James, were already married by 1751, Thomas, John and Elizabeth were still living at home, but were over the age of fourteen and were later to marry and remain in the parish. Mary and Samuel aged twenty-five and eighteen in 1751 had only their births recorded in the Countesthorpe parish register and presumably sought employment and residence elsewhere. William Heathcock's brother John had four of his seven children leave the parish before marriage and only two remained in Countesthorpe.

While the majority of households were based on the family unit, glimpses of family relations gained from wills made by those who had property to dispose of suggest that

<sup>16</sup> R. S. Schofield, 'Age-Specific Mobility in an Eighteenth Century Rural English Parish', in P. Clark and D. Souden (eds), *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p. 256.

some households may have comprised persons other than the immediate family. When Robert Hastings, a farmer and grazier, died in 1758 he left all his goods to his son Thomas and £100 to Elizabeth Needham, his niece, for when she married or reached the age of 21. The size of the bequest to Elizabeth may indicate that he had taken care of her following the death of her parents.<sup>17</sup> Although, it is difficult to go beyond particular examples to make generalisations about typical behaviour, most of these 'shifts in household composition' would seem to have been in the nature of *ad hoc* adaptations to particular circumstances'.<sup>18</sup>

Often, provision was made for the widow, if the heirs were still children, as in the case of Robert Lord, frame-work knitter, who died in 1726. This suggests that the household may have been headed by a widow who would look after the property until the child reached 21.<sup>19</sup> But in some cases the widow was given ownership, and presumably occupancy of, the property for the remainder of her life. The will of Anthony Elliott, who died in 1743, stated that his widow should be allowed to remain in the family home alongside their son and his wife - the eventual recipients of his property and half yard land.<sup>20</sup> George March, also a frame-work knitter, who died in 1762 left his property directly to his son but stated specifically that his widow 'shall have that part of the house which I now inhabit separate from that which my son dwelleth in'.<sup>21</sup> Not all wills were specific as to the future dwelling of the widow, that of John Young simply directed that his widow must be 'taken care' of.<sup>22</sup>

Medick has distinguished the proto-industrial family as a cohesive unit whose primary function appeared to have been production.<sup>23</sup> Within this all members of the family would be involved in some form of manufacture; other roles would have been secondary to this. Yet we know little about the sexual division of labour within households before domestic industry became the norm. Certain suggestions can be made from what is known of the component parts of the economy of Countesthorpe in the first half of the eighteenth century. In households where the primary source of income was from the land the father would either work his own holding and/or, depending on the amount owned, work as a day-labourer for those who needed occasional help. Women were also required as extra labour on the land, particularly at harvest time when, before the replacement of

---

17 L.R.O. PR/T/1758/128.

18 K. Wrightson, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

19 L.R.O. Wills 1726.

20 L.R.O. Wills 1743.

21 L.R.O. PR/T/1762/170.

22 L.R.O. PR/T/1750/233.

23 H. Medick, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

the sickle by the scythe, they performed the task of cutting the corn.<sup>24</sup> Although animals were kept on a commercial basis for stock and for wool in the open fields of Countesthorpe, some would also provide milk for domestic butter and cheese. Women would also have a prominent role in the processing of pigs. Evidence for the importance of women's role in the production and sale of such items in Leicestershire is found in the role played by women in 18th century food riots.<sup>25</sup> It was commonly women, rather than men, who forced factors to sell the goods at fair prices.

In households where by-employment was practised frames were often worked by sons while the father devoted himself to the land.<sup>26</sup> In the period before enclosure and the take up of frames, hand knitting was carried out by both men and women.<sup>27</sup> It was carried out at the same time as other tasks, be it walking to market, minding the flocks or looking after children. Miranda Chaytor has complained that 'much demographic history has been written as though the experience and the interests of the sexes and generations were identical'.<sup>28</sup> It would be incorrect to assume that they were, but it is possible to suggest that there were perhaps more sustained links between the roles of men and women, in agriculture and in hand knitting, than is often stressed.

Marriage fulfilled both an economic and a cultural function in addition to its most basic reproductive role. The monetary opportunities presented by the production of hose allowed a tradition of early marriage and the formation of independent households to be established in Countesthorpe. As Bridget Hill has argued, marriage was not only affected by economic factors in an attempt to match resources and population - levels of out-migration suggest that was not entirely the case - rather, the decision to marry was influenced by societal experiences and expectations. The involvement of men and women in the hosiery industry may have both allowed and encouraged a cultural norm of marriage between those of a complimentary early age. Hand knitting did not only provoke different marriage strategies, it forces us to question our definition of a simplistic peasant economy and to address the impact of rural manufacture at a stage prior to that recognised by the proto-industrial model.

By 1851 the economic basis of Countesthorpe had been transformed, not only had the open fields been enclosed and, in the main, converted to permanent pasture for stock rearing, but a significant proportion of the population was supported exclusively by

<sup>24</sup> M.Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes; Women's Work and Men's Work at Harvest 'Time', *History Workshop*, VII (1979), p.19.

<sup>25</sup> D.E. Williams, 'Midland Hunger Riots in 1766', *Midland History*, vol. III 4 (1976), p. 268.

<sup>26</sup> L.R.O./PR/T/1763/171.

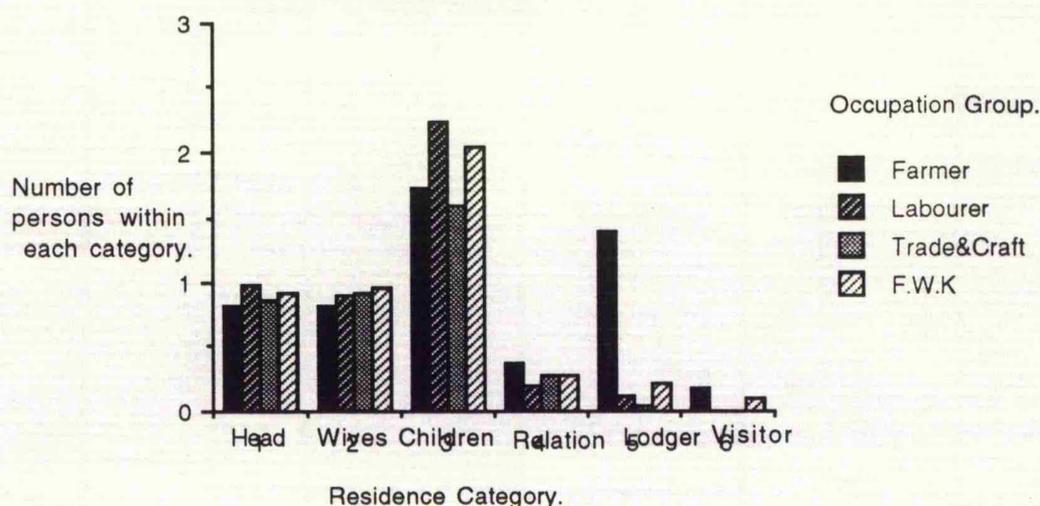
<sup>27</sup> G. Walker, *Costume of Yorkshire* (1814), plate XXXI.

<sup>28</sup> M. Chaytor, *op.cit.*, p.30.

hosiery manufacture and not by agriculture. David Levine has portrayed Shephed, which demonstrated a similar employment profile to Countesthorpe, as a clear example of a proto-industrial economy.<sup>29</sup> His detailed study of household functions and form supported Medick's thesis of an increasingly pauperised family unit that utilised the labour of all able family members in production for merchant-controlled extra-regional markets.<sup>30</sup> It is my contention that (as has already been suggested for the earlier period) such a view is over-simple. This is not to challenge the importance of manufacture, rather, as I intend to show, it is to emphasise its more extensive penetration into households including those where the primary income came from sources other than hosiery. By 1851, 146 of the 212 households (69.9%) in Countesthorpe had some link with frame-work knitting, either through the head of household, wife, off-spring, resident relation or lodger.

A major weakness with the Medick/Levine argument is that it understates the necessary, and integral, part played in manufacture by women and children in households where the father's occupation was given as labourer. Involvement in agricultural production was much reduced from the period before the take-off of industry. Wages for labourers were kept low, amongst other things, by the presence of hosiery in the village. The adaptive family economy in Countesthorpe, whether it was deemed 'frame-work knitting' or 'labouring', had to utilise all available labour. To ignore the continued relationship between industry and agriculture distorts our understanding of both the household and community economies.

**Fig.5.1 1851 Census Data: Household Composition by residence category and occupational group.**

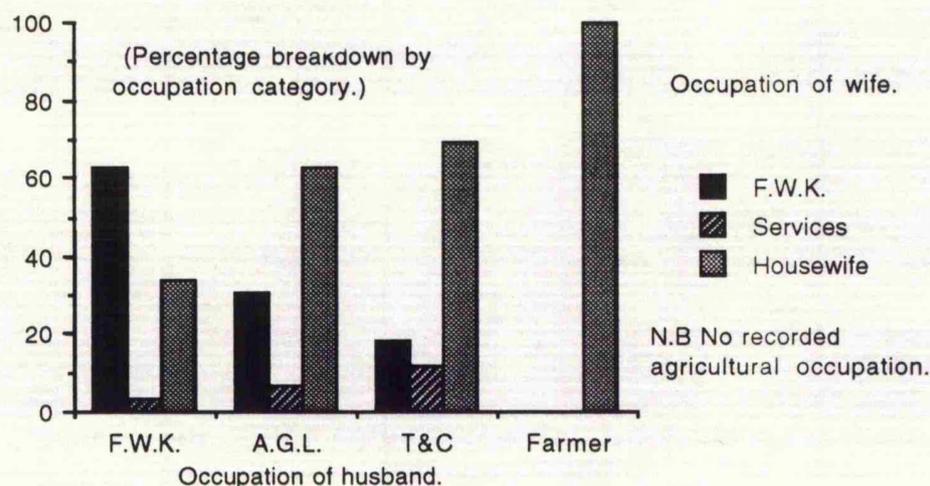


<sup>29</sup> D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York, 1977), pp. 45-57.

<sup>30</sup> H. Medick, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

By using the 1851 census as an analytical basis it is possible to be much more definite about the distinctions in household size and function between those employed in hosiery and those where the household head was either employed in agriculture, or self employed as farmers, tradesmen or craftsmen. From 1851 it is no longer necessary to make tentative suggestions concerning household membership, rather it is possible to calculate precisely what proportion of the household was composed of relatives and non-relatives.<sup>31</sup> This information, which is presented in (Fig.5.1), offers a first indicator of a village economy significantly different from the household occupational differentiation suggested by Levine for Shepshed.<sup>32</sup> If we look at family, rather than household size, it is apparent that labourers in Countesthorpe had proportionately more resident children than those where the household head was involved in frame-work knitting, 2.23 compared to 2.03. In Shepshed the balance was reversed, 2.13 to 2.21.<sup>33</sup> Nor was there a significant difference created by the addition of relatives and lodgers who, it might be argued, could supplement the 'ganze haus' with their labour. In Shepshed the completed household size for labourers was 4.60 compared to 4.95 for frame-work knitting families, in Countesthorpe the frame-work knitting household was only 0.04 persons greater at 4.46 compared to 4.42 for labourers. The closeness of the total household size between the two employed categories suggests that there may have been links that are not exposed simply by considering the household as 'a type' determined by the occupation of the male head of household.

**Fig.5.2 1851 Census Data. Comparison between husband's and wife's occupation.**



Designated rank, occupation or profession listed for women in the census has presented problems for those attempting to establish patterns of female employment. (Fig.5.2)

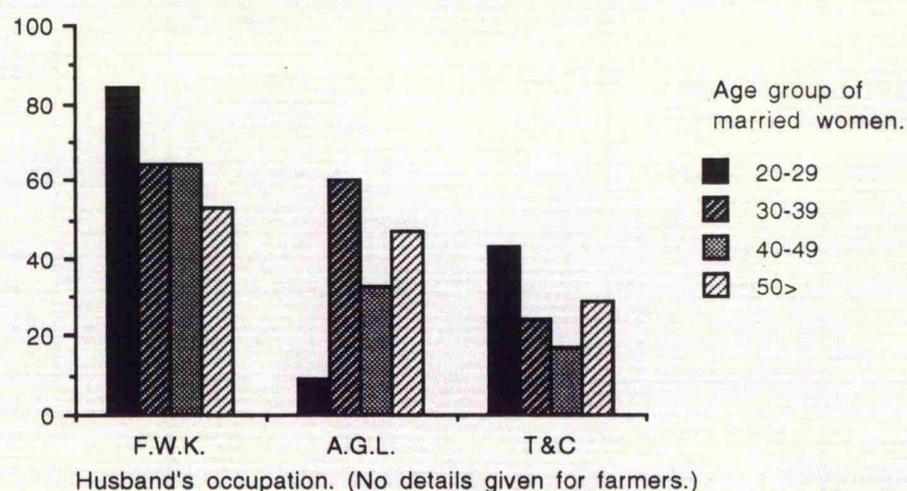
31 H.O. 107/2081.

32 D. Levine, Family Formation, p. 50.

33 Ibid.

Some women were indeed reluctant to give any form of employment and in other cases the timing of the census did not allow for women to indicate their involvement in agriculture.<sup>34</sup> For women whose husbands were employed in frame-work knitting we find the expected pattern: 66% were also listed as seamer or knitter in their own right, only 3% were involved in crafts or trade and 31% were classed as housewives. Of the 41 women married to labourers the proportions were reversed, 64% were housewives, 4% employed in trade or crafts, but 32% earned extra money as seamers. Although the majority of the wives of men involved in trade and craft were housewives, 20% were also employed in hosiery.

**Fig.5.3 1851 Census Data. Breakdown of married women's employment by husband's occupation and age group.**



The census further allows us to establish the age profile of wives. (Fig.5.3) While only 9% of the wives of labourers who were aged between 20 and 29 were employed in hosiery, 42% of those aged above 50 were similarly employed. By comparison, 77% of knitter's wives aged 20-29 were employed in the same areas as their husbands and 53% of those aged 50+ were so occupied. This illustrates the difficulties of older men employed as labourers compared to those who were frame-work knitters; as a man aged his physical strength declined, for a frame-work knitter this created problems, for a labourer it meant that he was less attractive for employment paid on a daily rate. It was necessary for his wife to add to the family purse. Many wives of labourers may have welcomed some employment when their children were young but, unlike the women married to frame-work knitters, they did not have another adult in the home to share child-minding.

Unlike Shepshed, Countesthorpe had few examples of residential multi-occupation which Levine suggested was a feature of a proto-industrial economy; decreasing subsistence

<sup>34</sup> 1851 Census H.O. 107/2081, based on residence on 30th March 1851.

levels forcing families to share accommodation.<sup>35</sup> The breakdown of household membership for Countesthorpe does suggest that, rather than two families sharing; individual families would seek economic support through relatives and lodgers. (Fig.5.1) The statistical analysis seems to suggest that knitters in particular utilised this extra support. Eighteen frame-work knitting households included relatives in the 1851 census compared to 8 labouring homes, three professional and four trades or crafts. Eleven frame-work knitting homes had lodgers, whereas three labouring homes and five trades and craftsmen had non-relatives in the house. (The figures do not include servants who were mainly the preserve of the professional classes and farmers.)

The statistical breakdown does obscure the age and occupation of the relatives and lodgers. A closer examination reveals that only 15.4% of the lodgers were resident in a household where the head was a male frame-work knitter and they themselves had a hosiery -related occupation. A further 19.2% lived with a widow who was a seamer and, in most cases, the lodger too either seamed or wound bobbins. 0.8% were either apprentices or directly employed by the household head, 11.5% of lodgers had no occupation and in 13.1% of cases there was no link between the occupation of household head and lodger. The occupation of relatives is even more clear cut: eighteen had no occupation at all, fifteen had hosiery links, four were paupers, one a charwoman and one a gentlewoman. Some households had both relatives and lodgers. The situation presented would seem more complex than that inherent in the proto-industrial model. Not only did the increasingly impoverished frame-work knitter supplement his income through lodgers or relatives, labouring households were also faced with supplementing their income in the same way.

The household of John Lucas may be quoted as a typical example. Lucas, who was 59 and an agricultural labourer, first appeared in the Countesthorpe parish registers in 1817 at the baptism of a daughter, Mary. (His wife, Phoebe, gave her place of birth as Countesthorpe in the 1851 census but there is no record of the marriage. It may have been the case that she went into farm service elsewhere and returned with her husband after the wedding). John and Phoebe had five children, three of who died in infancy. There is no further record of James, born in 1821, or Thomas who was aged 18 in 1851. Other members of the household were Elizabeth Lucas, niece, aged six who had no occupation and Mary Elliott who was a seamer and had been born in Countesthorpe thirteen years previously. Phoebe Lucas was also listed as a seamer. By 1851 John Lucas would have been a relatively old man and would have been increasingly dependent

---

<sup>35</sup> D. Levine, *Family Formation*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> M.Anderson, *op.cit.*, Chapters 9 and 10.

on income other than that which he could earn on a day-rate basis. Phoebe would have been able to provide additional support by seaming for knitters who did not have such support within their family. Mary's rent would have helped further. It is uncertain whether Elizabeth's parents would have been able to provide for her keep.

William Hubbard's household was perhaps a more classic example of the 'ganze haus' suggested by Medick. However, Hubbard was an employer of frames, perhaps a bagman, rather than one who was forced into decreasing subsistence by others. He does illustrate how an owner of frames could utilise the labour of his household. Hubbard was 74 in 1851 and had been widowed four years previously. Both William and his wife Mary had been born and married in Countesthorpe, where they had also baptised seven children and buried one. Of the surviving offspring, three were married by 1851, one of whom had settled in the village and formed an independent household. The second eldest son, Thomas, had left the village but Daniel (47) and Job (44) remained at home. Daniel was listed in the census as an agricultural labourer, whereas Job was a frame-work knitter. Also remaining at home was George who had been born in 1816 and who had married Sephela Peet in 1843. George was also a frame-work knitter and presumably Sephela kept house as she had no designated occupation. Also living in the Hubbard household was Samuel March, aged 21, born in Countesthorpe and giving his occupation as frame-work knitter. It is unlikely that, at 74, William would have worked a frame but he was able to employ three, possibly four, frames within his own household or family. The remaining eight would have been rented out to knitters in their own homes. Equally, there was no one in the Hubbard household to seam or wind. Both of these tasks would have been done elsewhere in the village enabling other households, not necessarily hosiery ones, to supplement their incomes.

The most common form of household in Countesthorpe in 1851 was one based on the nuclear family and one that had some link, either through mother or offspring, if not directly through the head of the household, to the hosiery industry. The conditions of employment in frame-work knitting resulted in depressed migration. The people living in Countesthorpe in 1851 were most likely to have been born there. 53.3% of marriages for the cohort married between 1800-51 (for which we have records) were between two Countesthorpe people. Of the 522 inhabitants of Countesthorpe over the age of 15 in 1851, 67.4% had been born in the parish, 7.8% had been born in contiguous parishes, 17.7% had been born elsewhere in Leicestershire and only 7.1% were from outside. The frame-work knitters, of all the occupational groupings, were most likely to have been born in Countesthorpe. 78.7% of those living in a household where the head was a frame-work knitter were born in Countesthorpe. This compares to 58.8% in farming households, 56.4% in those involved in trade and craft, and 52.1% where the household

head was an agricultural labourer. Only 5% of frame-work knitting head of households were born outside Guthlaxton Hundred compared to 13.5% of agricultural labourers, 7.5% of those involved in trade and craft and 6.3% of farming heads of households.

A discussion of migration patterns has already taken place but this breakdown is useful here to reinforce two key aspects of the presence of frame-work knitting in the village. First, the level of out-migration from (and indeed in-migration into) the village was low; of the children born to the cohort marrying between 1800-51 only (approximately) 110 of every 1,000 children born left the village. There was little reason to migrate when only the same occupations were available elsewhere either in frame-work knitting or, decreasingly, on the land. Second it suggests that, even in a community where there were few shared homes and where the majority of homes lacked lodgers or relatives, family networks existed. Michael Anderson conducted a detailed study of family networks using the 1851/61 censuses for Preston, Lancashire from which he demonstrated family clusterings within an urban environment.<sup>36</sup> With only 214 households and low levels of migration, Countesthorpe would be likely to exhibit close family residence patterns, but it is clear that multi-links between key families can be established. Families appeared to have actively chosen to live in proximity to their relatives<sup>37</sup>.

However, certain patterns are apparent: 28.3% of couples marrying between 1800-25 and remaining within the village lived near to at least one offspring. Of these, the commonest relationship was that of parents and son; 94% of the cases were male oriented. Equally, relationships between siblings demonstrated a male bias; 30.0% of Countesthorpe males still residing in the village lived near to a brother compared to 10.6% of females who lived close to a sister. This bias was not simply the result of an increased likelihood of males staying within the parish. Although the percentage of females remaining was only 73.3% of males, in the observed residence links the female/female link was only 35.3%

---

<sup>37</sup> The major problem which confronts the historian in attempting to establish family networks from the 1851 census is the basic organisation of the material. Calculations have to be based on the enumerators schedule rather than street numbers, it may have been the case that the census collector went up one side of the road and back down the other, or crossed over at certain points. The following calculations were based on relatives within an upper limit of ten houses on the final books although few went beyond five. The material was also cross referenced with the family reconstitution forms. These too had a built in disadvantage by 1851; the presence of non-conformist chapels and under-registration makes it difficult to calculate precisely how many married and surviving children a couple had who might be residing in the village.

of the male/male link. Anderson used autobiographical and oral testimonies to suggest that, in Preston, families provided each other with social support.<sup>38</sup> I would suggest that in Countesthorpe, dominated as it was by domestic industry, families could also help with the manufacturing process. In the absence of qualitative data for Countesthorpe such suggestions can at best be tentative, but we might examine one family in particular who had multiple links. Elizabeth Immings lived at 30, Little End and gave her occupation as seamer. Elizabeth had married Thomas, a frame-work knitter in 1803 and had been widowed in 1850. She had given birth to eleven children, ten of whom survived. Of the seven surviving sons, four lived within six houses of Elizabeth and one son still lived at home. All were frame-work knitters. Of the wives of the three married sons: one was a frame-work knitter, two were seamers; (the remaining son was a widower). Among the offspring of these families there were five winders and two frame-work knitters. As a family group the Immings could provide all the functions necessary to produce a finished hosiery article.

Factors other than personal choice were likely to affect where people lived. It is clearly impossible to ascertain from parish register entries whether offspring married when housing became available close to their parents, or whether they simply moved into whatever housing was available. It is, however, probable that those renting out the houses would give preference to couples whose family had a good record of paying rent promptly. There is also a possibility that middlemen also owned property that they would rent out to those whom they employed. An example of this can be found in Hubbard's yard. William Hubbard, whom we have already seen was an employer of labour, was also a property owner. Four of the remaining six houses in Hubbard's yard were rented out to families employed in hosiery. Significantly the heads of two of these households were not born in Countesthorpe and may have moved into the village to work for an employer who could also provide accommodation. It may be possible that other yards, such as those on Jackson's Lane, or Cox's Lane, were built by hosiers specifically to house knitters. They may also have been prepared to provide accommodation for offspring when they wished to form a separate household.<sup>39</sup>

By 1851 the hosiery industry was firmly rooted within the domestic environment of Countesthorpe. Families had adopted strategies for maximising income in an economy based on decreasing subsistence rates. Child and female labour not only performed very necessary functions in the production of knitted goods, it also supplemented low wages in both agriculture and industry. Lodgers were taken to provide added income even in homes where the household was not headed by a frame-work knitter. Relatives shared

<sup>38</sup> M. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.62

<sup>39</sup> H.O. 107/2081 - proprietor of houses.

accommodation, sometimes supplementing the manufacture of the family, but in some cases because the relative had no other home available.

Although the evidence from Countesthorpe blurs the traditional distinction between those employed on the land and in manufacture, the distinction between wage-earners and the landed elite is thrown into sharp relief. The peasant farmer had entirely disappeared by 1851; Countesthorpe's enclosed fields were farmed by men who had little in common with those who, in previous generations, would have held a small stake in the land. Only eleven of the 214 households by 1851 were headed by farmers. Their wives were exclusively housewives. The offspring of farmers were either employed on the farm (45.5%) or were scholars or farmer's daughters. Although, farmers had the smallest family size (3.4) they had overall the largest household, comprising as it did of 0.38 relatives, 0.17 visitors and 1.39 non-relatives. Servants would have 'lived in' with farmers before the advent of domestic industry, but few of the offspring of Countesthorpe's families would have had such an option open to them by 1851. Stock rearing had very different labour requirements from the arable production that had dominated the pre-enclosure fields. Day labour was cheap and flexible for farmers. The presence of frame-work knitting and the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 ensured that high seasonal agrarian unemployment did not mean high rates for the occupiers of land. Pre-industrial England had not been without ranks but the disappearance of the common interest embodied in the open fields and the exploitation of manufacture had resulted in a divided and, at times, hostile environment.

### Conclusion.

Frame-work knitting was able to develop in Countesthorpe, as it had elsewhere in the midland counties, because of the tradition of hand-knitting, merchant networks and the availability of a labour force unable to support itself entirely from the land. Yet, the Countesthorpe evidence does also offer a different perspective on domestic industry and its integration within the community. Frame-work knitting did lead to the imiseration of those who were forced to rent their frames. Wrigley suggests that the knitters became too poor to buy frames because, in an organic economy, production and markets could only be extended by cutting wages.<sup>1</sup> For Wrigley only the development of a mineral-powered technology could reconcile the market demand for cheap goods and allow wages to increase. However, an examination of the development of frame-work knitting in Countesthorpe demonstrates that the desire to secure profits for the merchants and bagmen was more significant than the demands of the market for cheap goods. Otherwise mechanisation would have occurred earlier.

The knitters at first colluded with the attempt to produce cheaper goods by condoning the excessive use of apprentice labour in the second half of the eighteenth century. This helped to ensure that they were in no position to resist the introduction of wide-frames and cut-ups. By the second decade of the nineteenth century the merchants were dependent on the frame-rents charged and the stoppages made from the stockinger's wages rather than on the retail value of the goods they produced. Equally, it would be incorrect to limit the economic influence of domestic industry solely within the manufacturing sphere. For proto-industrialists, such as David Levine, those involved in agriculture were separated from the industrial base.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the Countesthorpe evidence demonstrates the integrated nature of the village economy and the continuing influence of agriculture on household formation and function in the industrialising parish. The example offered by Countesthorpe of agrarian and industrial development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has thrown into relief many of the issues which are the subject of current historical debate. Any study of a community and its hinterland can only present a partial explanation of developments which, necessarily, must be examined further on a regional or a national basis. Nevertheless, Countesthorpe does present a number of key indicators for the development of domestic industry and the emergence of a society divided by class interests.

---

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wrigley, Continuity, Chance and Change (Cambridge, 1988) pp. 92-4.

<sup>2</sup> D. Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York, 1977).

Domestic industry developed in response to the difficulties experienced by farmers who were unable to compete with increased yields and lower prices achieved on the lighter soils of East Anglia. Although yields did increase on the heavy clay, it was by an insufficient margin to make arable production competitive. A need to supplement inadequate incomes rather than the ability to support a larger population within the locality made the peasant farmers and labourers diversify into the manufacture of hose. Little engrossment of land took place within the open fields of Countesthorpe between 1700 and enclosure 67 years later; agricultural experimentation was attempted through the use of leys but land-holding was too widespread for a major shift to occur within the existing land-holding structure. Forces for change were accelerated by the rapid movement to stock-rearing made possible and attractive to those who could afford to invest in and develop the enclosed fields. For the majority of peasant producers there was little hope of retaining their small holding; the heavy burden of mortgages taken out to finance the process of enclosure and restocking proved overwhelming. In such circumstances the opportunities presented by frame-work knitting may have seemed advantageous indeed.

Previous demographic studies of defined 'proto-industrial' areas have concentrated on the impact of industrialisation on fertility.<sup>3</sup> The Countesthorpe evidence suggests a more complex interplay of factors affecting population growth. Early age of female marriage in Countesthorpe was an established tradition; the product of hand knitting within an agrarian economy. However, both family size and age distribution within the wider population were affected by more than age at marriage. Equally, the impact of enclosure and agricultural change on mortality cannot be ignored. The differing demographic experiences and expectations of labourers and knitters, compared with trades-people and frame-owners married between 1800-1851 illustrates the continuing diversity created by economic deprivation.

Current historiography spurns the rather restricted class analysis suggested by those writing in the 1960s; the working class was broader and more complex than the skilled male artisans of the northern textile regions.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the development of interest groups within the community of Countesthorpe challenges the concept of an awareness of commonality first demonstrated by the middle-classes. It may well be the case that the urban bourgeoisie were first to articulate their separate culture and aspirations but the processes of social change evident in the development of the hosiery industry produced distinct interest groups. The importance of out-migration from agricultural parishes where employment was contracting as a result of the move to pasture should not be

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1968).

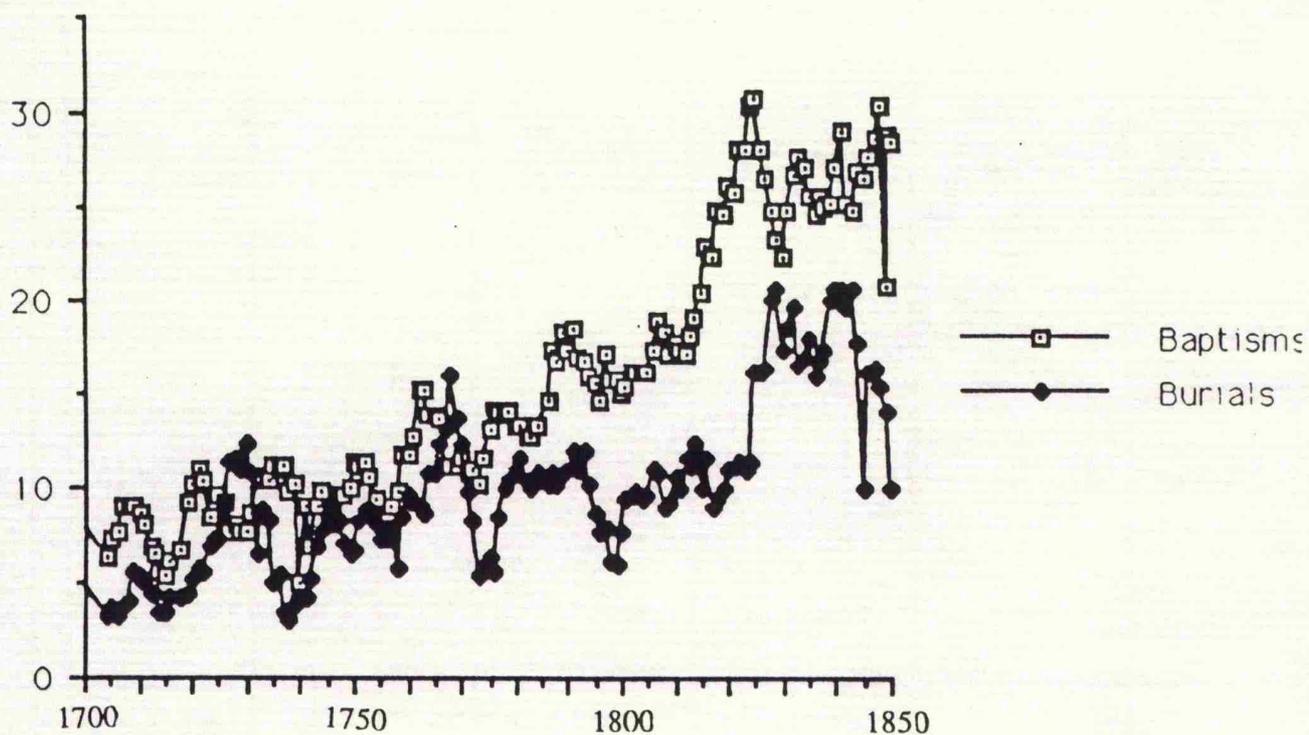
underestimated in the creation of a property-less class. Following further financial difficulties, the dispossessed might reject the existing mores and traditions of society and develop their own. Bastardy, pre-marital pregnancy and Methodism had both economic and cultural roots which were shared by those who migrated to Countesthorpe from elsewhere and by those who had experienced the upheaval of enclosure within the parish. The demonstration of their separateness from those who represented the agencies of control, embodied for instance in the financing and administration of poor relief, can be seen in the political action taken in 1819 and in the 1840's. The labouring classes were not an homogeneous whole in Countesthorpe by 1851 but it is clear that interest groups encompassed both those who were primarily agricultural labourers and those who lived by the frame.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Guthlaxton Hundred was a region in transition. From being primarily agricultural its village communities either diversified either in to pasture and stagnated, or developed a manufacturing base and grew. Hosiery shaped productive roles and household formation and function but there remained a powerful inter-action with the immediate agrarian base. Farmers and hosiers were able to take advantage of the available employment and low rates of pay offered by the renting of frames. The consequences of such changed economic roles affected virtually every belief held and action taken by the labouring and property owning classes in Countesthorpe and in the surrounding region. Yet , contrary to the argument of proto-industrial historians, it was not a system which contained the seeds of its own decline; change occurred through further diversification. Guthlaxton Hundred continued to be dominated by hosiery manufacture until well into the twentieth century. But it continued in a different form; its predominantly female work-force experienced and continued a tradition of exploitation. Domestic Industry was not a discrete period separated from the past, nor did it necessarily pre-figure an industrial future. It both developed out of agricultural change and remained part of it.

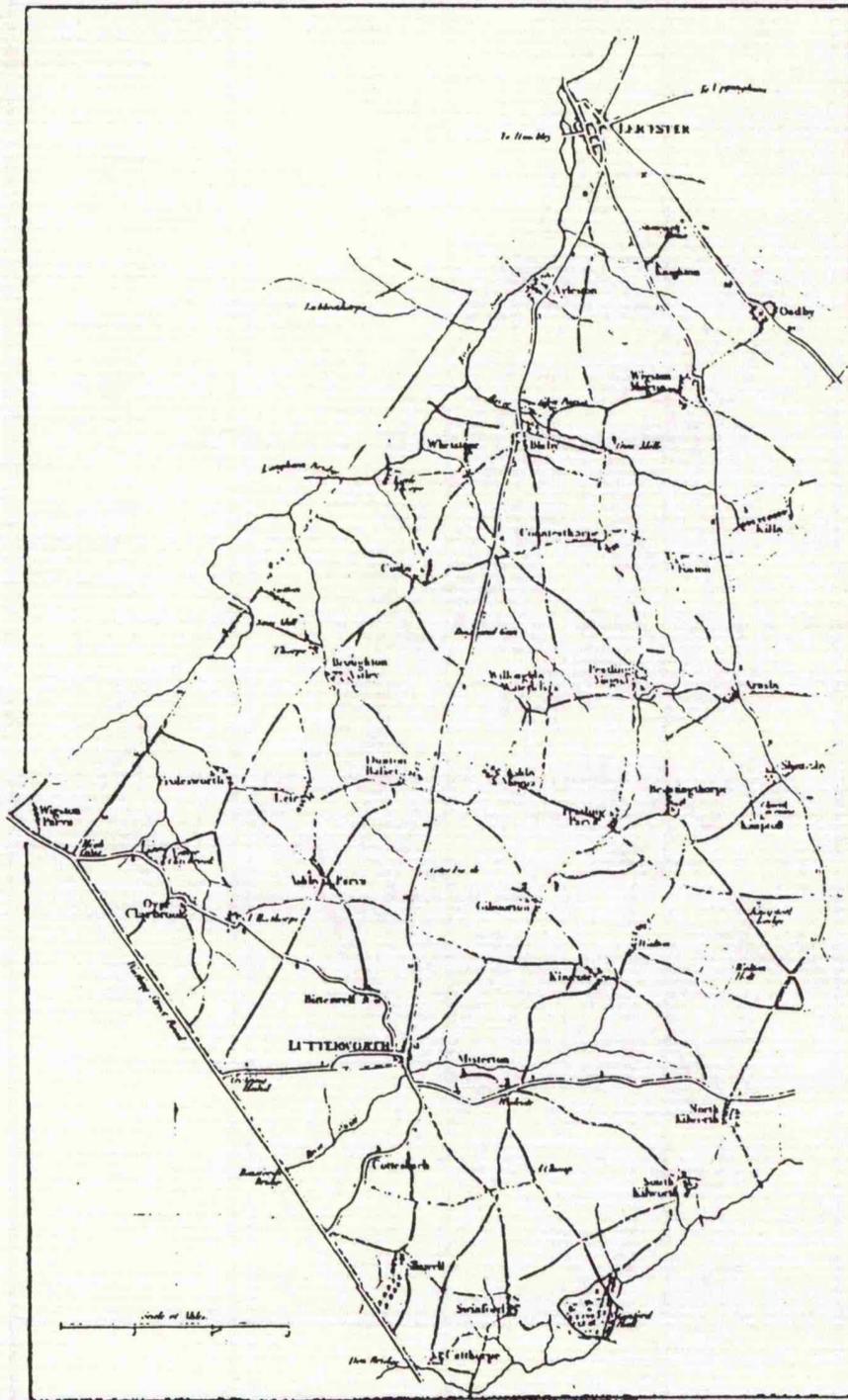
APPENDICES.

- (I) GRAPH : FIVE YEAR MOVING AVERAGE, COUNTSTHORPE BAPTISMS AND BURIALS.
- (II) MAP OF GUTHLAXTON HUNDRED (1795).
- (III) MAP OF COUNTSTHORPE BEFORE ENCLOSURE. (1766)
- (IV) MAP OF COUNTSTHORPE AFTER ENCLOSURE. (1767)
- (V) RECONSTITUTION OF COUNTSTHORPE - METHODOLOGY.

(I) FIVE YEAR MOVING AVERAGE OF COUNTSTHORPE BAPTISMS AND BURIALS.  
1700-1851.



(II) MAP OF GUTHLAXTON HUNDRED IN 1795.



From : J.Nicholls, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester. Vol.IV, part i





## APPENDIX V. RECONSTITUTION OF COUNTSTHORPE - METHODOLOGY.

The aim of the Countesthorpe reconstitution was to identify the broad changes affecting the community during the key period of agrarian and industrial change. Additionally, there was an inter-related aim of identifying demographic changes among discrete interest groups, for example: farmers; labourers and frame-work knitters.

The parish registers for Countesthorpe were considered reliable within accepted terms of under-registration. In 1851, when under-registration was most likely to occur due to decline in church attendance and the growth of nonconformity, 15.3% of those listed in the census who gave their place of birth as Countesthorpe were not listed on the reconstitution forms. The vital event central to family reconstitution - the date of marriage - was made more straightforward by the multi-volume index of 'strays' produced by the Leicestershire Family History Society.<sup>1</sup> This exhaustive search of English parish registers provided numerous out-of-parish marriages which, in turn, enabled the precise calculation of age at first marriage for Countesthorpe-born brides and grooms.

The analysis of the reconstitution material was complicated by the very patchy recording of occupations in the parish registers before Rose's Act of 1813. While conscious of the need to avoid introducing a bias into the calculations, I made use of other sources to identify occupations. Probate wills and inventories, poll books, deeds and mortgages were used for the period before 1813, and trade directories and the 1851 Census were used to supplement the nineteenth-century material. The earlier evidence was principally limited to property owners, but it did facilitate a comparison of frame-owners' and farmers' age at marriage for the earlier cohorts (1700-1800). Calculation of age at marriage for non-property owners was compromised by insufficient occupational records. The majority of the calculations for example, infant and child mortality, age-specific fertility, were conducted on a parish basis without making occupational comparisons before 1813, although some demographic features were examined within property-owning groups, for example the number of children born to frame-owning families in the eighteenth century.

The small size of the population of Countesthorpe, 540 in 1801, did limit the range of possible statistical calculations, but it did encourage greater confidence in the nominal

---

<sup>1</sup> H. Burskans (ed), Strays Index, (I-V), Leicestershire Family History Society (1984).

record linkages which were made. The Elliotts and the Lords each had a relatively large number of family groups within their surname sets, with twenty-five and thirty-one reconstitution forms respectively. The range of first names, coupled with the spacing of births, prevented many problems from arising for calculation of age at marriage and family formation. For example, among the Lords there were two pairs who were difficult to separate due to the nearness of baptism dates, which had later consequences for age-at-marriage. Of the thirty-one male Lords who headed the reconstitution forms, the burial date was unknown for only six and this was due mainly to out-migration.

The process of reconstitution is facilitated for scholars by the detailed instructions given by E.A. Wrigley in An Introduction to English Historical Demography.<sup>2</sup> This and A Glossary for Local Population Studies were my main guides for conducting the family reconstitution of Countesthorpe.<sup>3</sup> Using photo-copies of the parish registers obtained from Leicestershire Record Office I was able to transfer the material directly onto the reconstitution forms. Where a link was not certain this was noted on the photo-copy and numerous checks were made to tie up disparate vital events. This deviation from the more complex procedure suggested by Wrigley was made possible by the small size of the cohorts, for example when compared to Shepshed or Colyton. The other main deviation from the analysis as recommended by the Cambridge Group was my decision not to exclude marriages from calculation of age at marriage where the baptismal date of only one partner was known. The advantages and disadvantages of this could be discussed at length, but to judge from discussions I have had with others involved in such work, for example, at the ESTER CONFERENCE (1992) on *Industries Before Industrialisation*, my procedure is one that is now quite widely employed.

---

<sup>2</sup> E.A. Wrigley, An Introduction to English Historical Demography (London, 1966), pp. 96-160.

<sup>3</sup> L. Bradley, A Glossary for Local Population Studies, Local Population Studies Supplement No.1, (1978)

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Manuscript Sources.**

Leicestershire County Record Office.

#### **Countesthorpe Records-**

Parish Registers, D.E. 1465 1-6  
Countesthorpe Stint ,D.E. 66.  
Terrier of R.Tebbs, D.E. 1443/20  
Enclosure Act, En/AX/83/1  
Enclosure Award, D.E. 1465/83  
Land Tax Returns, Q.S. 62/85/1-54  
Probate Wills 1700-1850  
Inventories 1700-1780.  
Mortgage and Leases related to transactions involving land in Countesthorpe.D.E.  
472/1/1-21,  
D.E. 1443/1-41, D.E. 579/1-92.

#### **Guthlaxton Hundred. General Records.**

Settlement Certificates and Removal Orders are listed on a name index for the whole of Leicestershire. Index includes names of relevant parishes, date of certificate/order and details of individual/family involved.

Poll Books 1719 L324 SRI, 1741 L324 SRI, 1775 L324 SrI

#### **Public Record Office.**

Hearth Tax Returns, E/179/251/3, E/179/134/322  
Census ,H.O. 107/2081.  
Reports of Chartist Activities, H.O. 41/19  
List of Share-holders for the Chartist Land Company, B.T. 41/474/2659, 41/475/2659.

#### **Newspapers-**

Leicester City Libraries-

The Leicester Chronicle, 1830-1848.  
The Leicester Journal1816-1848.

The Brotherton Library, University of Leeds-

The Northern Star, 1840-1848

#### **Government Reports-**

Abstracts of Answers and Returns... Relative to the Expense and maintenance of the Poor, VIII, 1803-4.  
S.C. on the Poor Laws, V,1818.  
S.C. on Agricultural Labourers' Wages, and the Condition and Morals of Labourers in that Employment, VI, 1824.  
Extracts from Information Received by Poor Law Commissioners, 1833.  
Poor Law Report, XXVII-XXXVIII, 1834.

Report from the Commissioner Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of The Framework Knitters, XV, 1845

**Pre - 1900 Publications**

**Cobbett, W.**, Rural Rides (1830).

**Cooper, T.**, The Life of Thomas Cooper, (new edition 'Leicester, 1971).

**Davies, D.**, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered (London, 1795).

**Eden, Sir F.M.**, The State of the Poor, 3 vols. (1779).

**Felkin, W.**, A History of Machine-Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures (London, 1867).

**Ferrers, Rev. J.B.**, Observations on the Present Administration of the Poor Laws (1832).

**Henson, G.**, A History of the Framework Knitters (Nottingham, 1830).

**Pitt, W.**, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicestershire (1809).

**R.F.**, Observation on Pauperism (1832).

**White, W.**, History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Leicestershire (Sheffield, 1846).

**Post - 1900 Publications**

**Adams, L.P.**, Agricultural Depression and Farm Relief in England 1813-1852 (London, 1965)

**Anderson, B.L.**, 'The Attorney and the Early Capital Market in Lancashire', in F. Crouzet (ed.), Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1972).

**Anderson, M.**, Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire (Cambridge, 1971).

'Household structure and the Industrial Revolution; Mid Nineteenth-Century Preston in Comparative Perspective', in P.Laslett & R. Wall (eds.) Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge, 1972).

Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914 (London, 1980).

Population Change in North-Western Europe, 1750-1850 (London, 1988).

**Ashton, T.S.**, The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (Oxford, 1948).

**Berg, B.**, The Age of Manufacturers (London, 1985).

and P. Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', Warwick Economic Research Papers, 351 (1990).

- Blaug, M.**, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', Journal of Economic History , XXIII (1963).
- Bongaarts, J.**, 'Does Malnutrition Affect Fecundity? A Summary of Evidence', Science , 208 (1980).
- Bradley, L.**, A Glossary for Local Population Studies. Local Population Studies Supplement No. 1, (1978)
- 'Review of The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction', Local Population Studies , 27 (1981)
- Briggs, A.**, (ed.) Chartist Studies (London, 1959).
- Brundage, A.**, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Reappraisal of the Revolution in Government', English Historical Review, LXXXVII (1972).
- Burskans, H.**, (ed), Strays Index ,1-IV, Leicestershire Family History Society, (1985).
- Bythell, D.**, The Sweated Trades (London, 1978).
- Chambers, J.D.**, Population, Economy and Society in Pre-industrial England (Oxford, 1972).
- 'Enclosure and the Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution', in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds.) Population in History (London, 1965).
- Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of life and labour under the Squirearchy (London, 1966)
- Chapman, S.D.**, 'The Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry 1600-1750', Textile History, 3 (1972).
- 'Enterprise and Innovation in the British Hosiery Industry, 1750-1850', Textile History, 5,(1974).
- Chaytor, M.**, 'Household and Kinship: Ryton in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', History Workshop Journal, 10 (1980).
- Church, R.A., & Chapman, S.D.**, 'Gravener Henson and the Making of the English Working Class', in E.L. Jones & G.E. Mingay (eds.), Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1967).
- Clark, G.**, 'Yields per acre in English agriculture, 1250-1860: Evidence From Labour Inputs', Economic History Review, XLIV (1991).
- Clark, J.C.D.**, English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 1985).
- Clark, P., & Souden, D.**, (eds.), Migration and Society in Early Modern England (London, 1987).
- Coleman, D.C.**, 'Proto-industrialization : A Concept too Many?' Economic History Review , XXXVI (1983).
- Crouzet, F.**, (ed.), Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1972).
- Deane, P., & Cole, W. A.**, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (Cambridge, 1969).

- Dunbabin, J.P.**, Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain (New York, 1974).
- Eastwood, D.**, 'Governing Rural England' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Oxford, 1985)
- 'Debate on the Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', Past and Present, 127 (1990)
- Emmison, F.G.**, 'Poor Relief Accounts of Two Rural Parishes (Northill and Eaton Scoton) in Bedfordshire, Economic History Review, III (1931).
- Eversley, D.E.C., & Glass, D.**, Population in History (London, 1965).
- Flinn, M.W.**, British Population Growth 1700-1850 (London, 1970).
- Ginter, D.E.**, 'A Wealth of Problems With the Land Tax', Economic History Review, XXXV (1982).
- Gonner, E.C.K.**, Common Land and Enclosure (London, 1912).
- Halevy, E.**, England in 1815 (London, 1949).
- Hammond J.L. & B.**, The Village Labourer 1760-1832 (London, 1911).
- The Town Labourer (London, 1917).
- The Skilled Labourer (London, 1919).
- Harrison, J.F.C.**, 'Chartism in Leicester', in A. Briggs (ed), Chartist Studies (London, 1959).
- Hartopp, H.**, Register of the Freemen of Leicester (Leicester, 1927).
- Hartwell, R.M.**, 'The rising Standard of Living in England 1800-1850', Economic History Review, XIII (1961).
- Hay, D., Linebough, P., Rule, J., Thompson, E.P., Winslow, C.**, (eds.) Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England (London, 1975).
- Hill, B.**, 'The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers', History Workshop Journal, 28 (1989).
- Hobsbawm, E.J.**, Labouring Men (London, 1964).
- Industry and Empire (London, 1969).
- Primitive Rebels (London, 1971).
- Holderness, B.A.**, 'Open and Close Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', Agricultural History Review, XX (1972).
- Hoskins, W.G.**, (ed.) Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History (Leicester, 1949).
- Essays in Leicestershire History, (Liverpool, 1950).
- The Midland Peasant (London, 1957).
- Provincial England (London, 1963).

**Houston, R., & Snell K.D.M.**, 'Proto-industrialization? Cottage Industry, Social Change and Industrial Revolution', Historical Journal, 27 (1984).

**Hudson, P.**, 'Proto-industrialization: The Case of the West Riding Wool Textile Industry in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', History Workshop Journal, 12 (1981).

'From Manor to Mill: The West Riding in Transition', in M.Berg, P. Hudson & M.Sonniescher, (eds.), Manufacture in Town and Country Before the Factory (Cambridge, 1983).

Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain (Cambridge, 1989).

The Industrial Revolution (London, 1992)

**Hunt, H.G.**, 'Land-ownership and Enclosure 1750-1830', Economic History Review, XI (1958-9).

'The Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure in Leicestershire', Economic History Review, X (1957).

**Huzel, J.P.**, 'Malthus, the Poor Law and Population in Early Nineteenth Century England', Economic History Review, XXII (1969).

'The Demographic Impact of the Old Poor Law: More Reflections on Malthus', Economic History Review, XXXIII (1980).

**John, A.V.**, Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918 (Oxford, 1985).

**Jones, D.V.**, 'The Poacher: A Study in Victorian Crime and Protest', Historical Journal, XXII (1979).

**Jones, E.L.**, (ed) Agriculture and Economic Growth in England (London, 1967).

& G.E. Mingay, (eds), Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1967).

**Knight, S.J. and Schultka, H.**, Countesthorpe: A Leicestershire Parish Before and After Enclosure (Leicester, 1991).

**Kriedte, P., Medick, M., & Schlumbohm, J.**, Industrialization before Industrialization (Cambridge, 1981).

**Kussmaul, A.**, 'Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1981).

**Laslett, P.**, The World We Have Lost (London, 1973).

Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations (Cambridge, 1977)

& Wall, R., (eds), Household and Family in Past Time (Cambridge 1972),

& K. Oosterveen and R. Smith, Bastardy and its Comparative History (London, 1980).

**Levine, D.**, Family Formation in An Age of Nascent Capitalism (New York., 1977).

- 'Industrialization and the Proletarian Family in England', Past and Present , 107 (1985).
- McCloskey, D.**, 'The Industrial Revolution 1780-1860: A Survey; in R.C. Floud & D. McCloskey (eds), The Economic History of Britain since 1700 (Cambridge, 1981).
- 'The Enclosure of Open Fields: Preface to a Study of its Impact on the Efficiency of English Agriculture in the Eighteenth Century', Journal of Economic History , (1972).
- Macfarlane, A.**, The Origins of English Individualism (Oxford, 1978).
- Marriage and Love in England 1300-1840 (Oxford, 1986).
- McKeown, T., & Brown, R.G.** 'Reasons for the Decline in Mortality in England and Wales During the Nineteenth Century', Population Studies, 16 (1962).
- Mandler, P.**, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', Past and Present , 117 (1987).
- Marshall, J.D.**, 'Nottinghamshire Reformers', Economic History Review, 13 (1959).
- The Old Poor Law. 1875-1834 (London, 1973).
- Martin, J.M.**, 'The Cost of Parliamentary Enclosure in Warwickshire,' in E.L. Jones (ed) Agriculture and Economic Growth in England (London, 1967).
- Mathias, P.**, 'Agriculture and Industrialization', in P. Mathias & J.A. Davis (eds), The First Industrial Revolution (London, 1989).
- Medick, H.**, 'The Proto-industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family During the Transition from Peasant to Industrial Capitalism', in P. Kreidte, H. Medick & J. Schlumbohm, Industrialization before Industrialization, (Cambridge, 1981)
- Mendels, F.**, 'Proto-industrialisation: The First Phase of the Industrialisation Process', Journal of Economic History, XXXII (1972).
- Mercer, A.**, Disease, Mortality and Population in Transition - Epidemiological - Demographic Change in England since the Eighteenth Century (Leicester, 1990).
- Mills, D.**, Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain (London, 1980).
- 'Rural Industries and Social Structure: Frame-work Knitters in Leicestershire, 1670 - 1851', Textile History, 13 (1982).
- Mingay, G.E.**, 'The Land Tax Assessments and the small landowner,' Economic History Review, XVII (1964).
- Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1968).
- Morris, R.J.**, Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution, 1780 - 1850 (London, 1979).
- Morrow, R.B.**, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England : A Reappraisal', Economic History Review, XXXI, 1978.

- Munsche, P.**, Gentlemen and Poachers: the English Game Laws, 1677 - 1831 (Cambridge, 1981).
- Overton, M.**, 'Agricultural Productivity in Eighteenth-Century England: Some further Speculations', Economic History Review, XXXVII (1984).
- 'Re-estimating Crop Yields from Probate Inventories', Journal of Economic History, 50 (1990).
- 'Estimating crop yields from probate inventories: an example from East Anglia', Journal of Economic History, XXXIX (1979).
- Patten, J.**, 'The Health Taxes', 1662 -1689', Local Population Studies (1971).
- Perkin, H.**, Origins of Modern English Society 1780 - 1880 (London, 1969).
- Phelps - Braun, E.H. & Hopkins, S.V.**, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables Compared with Builders' Wage Rates', in E.M. Carus Wilson (ed.), Essays in Economic History, Vol 2 (London, 1962).
- Phythian-Adams, C.**, Continuity Fields and Fission: The Making of a Midland Parish, University of Leicester, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, 3rd ser., 4 (1978).
- Pinchbeck, I.**, Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850 (London, 1969).
- Pollard, S.**, The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain (London, 1965).
- Poynter, J.R.**, Society and Pauperism: Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834 (London, 1969).
- Presnell, L.S.**, Country Banking in the Industrial Revolution (Oxford, 1956).
- Pugh, R.B.**, The Victoria County History of Leicestershire (London, 1954-55)
- Randall, A.**, Before the Luddites (Cambridge, 1991).
- Reay, B.**, 'The last rising of the agricultural labourers: The Battle of Bossenden Wood, 1938', History Workshop Journal, 26 (1988).
- Rogers, A.**, 'Rural Industries and Social Structure: The Frame-work Knitting Industry in South Nottinghamshire 1670 - 1840', Textile History, 13 (1982).
- Rose, M.E.**, The Relief of Poverty, 1834 - 1914 (London, 1974).
- Royle, E.**, Chartism (London, 1986).
- Rostow, W.W.**, The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (Cambridge, 1960).
- Rowlands, M.**, 'Continuity and Change in an Industrialising Society: The Case of the West Midlands Industries', in P. Hudson (ed), Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain (Cambridge, 1983).
- Rude, G.**, The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730 - 1848 (New York, 1964).

**Ruggles, S.**, 'Migration, Marriage and Mortality: Correcting Sources of Bias in English Family Reconstitution', Population Studies, 46 (1992).

**Rule, J.**, The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850 (London, 1986).

**Schofield, R.S.**, 'Age-Specific Mobility in an Eighteenth Century Rural English Parish', in P. Clark and D. Souden (eds), Migration and Society in Early Modern England (London, 1987).

'Did the Mothers Really Die?' Three Centuries of Maternal Mortality', in L. Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), The World We Have Gained (Oxford, 1986).

**Shorter, E.**, The Making of the Modern Family (London, 1976).

**Semmel, B.**, The Methodist Revolution (London, 1973).

**Snell, K.D.M.**, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660 - 1900 (Cambridge, 1985).

'Parish Registration and the Study of Labour Mobility', Local Population Studies, 33 (1984).

**Slack, P.**, The English Poor Law, 1531 - 1782 (London, 1990)

**Souden, D.**, 'Movers and Stayers in Family Reconstitution Population', Local Population Studies, 33 (1984).

**Saville, J.**, 'Primitive Accumulation and Early Industrialisation in Britain', in J. Saville & R. Milliband (eds), The Socialist Register (1969).

**Stevenson, J.**, Popular Disturbances in England 1700 - 1870 (London, 1979).

**Stone, L.**, The Family Sex and Marriage in England, 1550 - 1800 (London, 1977).

**Sturt, G.**, Change in the Village (London, 1912).

**Taylor, J.S.**, Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution (Palo Alto, 1989).

**Temple-Patterson, A.**, Radical Leicester (Leicester, 1954).

**Tate, W.E.**, The Parish Chest (Cambridge, 1946).

**Taylor, A.J.**, (ed), The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1975).

**Thirsk, J.**, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F.J. Fisher (ed), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge, 1961).

'The Field Systems of the East Midlands', in A.R.H. Baker & R.A. Butlin (eds), Studies of the Field Systems of the British Isles (Cambridge, 1973)

(ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales (Cambridge, 1984).

**Thomis, M.**, The Luddites (Newton Abbott, 1970).

- Thompson, E.P.**, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963).
- 'Time, Work-discipline and Industrial Capitalism', Past and Present , 38 (1967).
- 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', Past and Present, 50 (1971).
- Tilly, C.**(ed), Historical Studies of Changing Fertility (Princeton, 1978).
- Tranter, N.L.**, 'Social Structure of a Bedfordshire Parish', International Review of Social History, XVIII (1973).
- Population and Society, 1750 - 1940 (London, 1985).
- True, A.**, A Pictorial History of Countesthorpe (Countesthorpe, 1989).
- Turner, M.**, 'Agricultural Productivity in England in the Eighteenth Century: Evidence from Crop Yields', Economic History Review, XXXV (1982).
- 'Agricultural Productivity in Eighteenth-Century England: Further Strains of Speculation', Economic History Review, XXXVII (1984).
- English Parliamentary Enclosure (Folkestone, 1980).
- Walton, J.K.**, 'Proto-industrialization and the First Industrial Revolution: the Case of Lancashire', in P. Hudson (ed), Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain (Cambridge, 1989).
- Wearmouth, R.F.**, Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England (London, 1937).
- Webb, S.&B.**, The History of Trades Unionism 1666 - 1920 (London, 1919).
- Wells, F.A.**, The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry (Newton Abbott, 1972).
- Williams, D.E.**, 'Midland Hunger Riots in 1766', Midland History, 4 (1976).
- Wall, R.**, 'Work, welfare and the family: An Illustration of the Adaptive Family Economy', in L. Bonfield, R. Smith and K. Wrightson, The World We Have Gained (Oxford, 1986).
- Wilson, C.**, 'The Proximate Determinants of Marital Fertility in England, 1600 - 1799', in L. Bonfield, R. Smith & K. Wrightson, The World We Have Gained (Oxford, 1986).
- Woods, R.**, 'Fertility in England: A long-term perspective', Population Studies, 45 (1991).
- Wilson, G.J.**, 'The Land Tax Problem', Economic History Review, XXXV (1982).
- Wrightson, K.**, 'Household and Kinship in Sixteenth Century England', History Workshop Journal, 12 (1987)
- and Levine, D., Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525 - 1700 (New York, 1979).
- The Making of an Industrial Society: Whitham 1560 - 1765 (Oxford, 1991).

**Wrigley, E.A.**, Family Limitation in pre-industrial England', Economic History Review, XIX (1966).

An Introduction to English Historical Demography (London, 1966).

'Clandestine Marriage in Tetbury in the Late Seventeenth Century', Local Population Studies, 10 (1973).

'English population history from family reconstitution: summary results 1600 - 1799', Population Studies, XXXVII (1983).

Men on the Land and Men in the Countryside: Employment in Agriculture in Early Nineteenth Century England', in L Bonfield, R. Smith & K. Wrightson (eds), The World We Have Gained (Oxford, 1985).

People, Cities and Wealth (Oxford, 1987).

Continuity Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England (Cambridge, 1988).

and R. S. Schofield, The Population History of England 1541 - 1871. A Reconstruction (London, 1981).

**Yelling, J.A.**, Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450 - 1850 (London, 1977).