CHAPTER TWO

THE ASSISTED IMMIGRANTS AND THE WORLD THEY LEFT

I tell you what it is Sir; we are starving each other: we be too thick in our place: the best of us can’t earn what will find us bread for our children and ourselves, let alone the clothing and the rent: when we be gone ‘twill be better for they we leave.

Dorset rural labourer; emigration applicant, 1849. 1

‘... you gentlemen must know that our case is very bad, and that we have not near victuals enough. How would you like to sit down with your wife and young children four days in the week to not half bread and potatoes enough, and the other three days upon not half enough boiled swedes, and but with little fire to cook them with?’

Jacob Baker’s speech; as reported in the Devizes Gazette, Feb., 1850.2

In February 1850, near the end of yet another long and pinching winter in England’s chronically depressed rural south, an incident occurred in Devizes, some twenty miles north-west of Biddenden and Ludgershall. A skilled rural labourer named Jacob Baker tried to address the many wealthy farmers who met in the Wiltshire town to protest against the perceived consequences of the recent introduction of Free Trade.3 The forty year old farm labourer, who was the father of a large family, had hoped to explain and thus alleviate the precarious circumstances of his family which typified those of his whole suffering ‘class’. The members of the North Wiltshire Protection Society were surprised and displeased at Baker’s temerity, and as a member of that class, he was denied permission to speak. However the attempt to silence the labourer backfired when, fortuitously, his speech was published in a local newspaper by a journalist who was present at the well-publicised meeting.4

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., pp. 69-72, 74. The reasons were probably political, the meeting being dominated by farmers and chaired by the most prominent of them. They feared and resented the pro-Free Trade politics of the district’s putative principal landowner, Lord Bruce. When the Protection Society opposed his original
Wiltshire-Hampshire and Adjacent Counties showing Towns familiar to the Everett brothers.

Key: B = Biddesden
T = Tidsworth

The Devizes Gazette’s action had important immediate and long-term results. First, wider currency was given to Baker’s account of his struggle to survive in the prevailing conditions which afflicted southern agriculture in the decades after 1815. His predicament and the publicity given to his unusual action led to the family’s assisted emigration to South Australia in the next year. But even more importantly, publication of Baker’s unexpected outspokenness meant that the historical record gained a rare, first-hand account of the life and opinions of a member of the deprived and normally silent nineteenth-century rural labouring population. Having begun with an outright plea for relief from semi-starvation, Baker stressed both his versatility and his reliability.

... I am a poor labourer out of work, and with no prospect of any constant work until mowing... I can have a good character from my former masters, and you won’t repent giving me a job. I am what is called a hedger and ditcher and copse cutter, but I can plough, reap, thrash and mow, with any man. I am also a rough carpenter, and can make ladders, gates, and common buildings. I can kill and cut up pigs, sink wells, and make roads, I can do your garden, and have done a deal of tree-planting and quick mounds. I can mend my children’s shoes and make my own clothes, and occasionally earn sixpence from drawing teeth. Now gentlemen, is it not a shame that I should be out of work and in this distress? and I defy any man to bring any charge against me for dishonesty, drunkenness or idleness.

The timing of the incident was important. As the first half of the nineteenth century ended, Britain was preparing to celebrate her emergence as the world’s first industrial nation with a triumphant display at the Great Exhibition. Nevertheless, as the ‘hungry forties’ came to an end public awareness and concern were growing as the social and economic consequences of the phenomenon became increasingly clear. It was becoming equally clear that while the adverse effects of the success of the cult of political economy, and the ‘two nations’ it had created, were most obvious in the burgeoning manufacturing districts, the gap between rich and poor yawned widest in the arable south, where the mores and institutions of the ‘Old Society’ remained politically and socially paramount. Public concern was
generated by the severe problems of the 1840s. The severe economic downturn of the early 1840s was followed by famine in outlying regions of the British Isles and, at the end of the decade, by heightened concern about the decreasing profitability of wool and wheat; the traditional staples of southern farming. In each of the post-war decades successive governments had conducted several protracted commissions of enquiry into conditions within agriculture. The highly informative *Select Commission into Women and Children in Agriculture*, which was tabled in 1843, was among the more influential. Public concern in the difficult 1840s also saw respected London newspapers such as *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* conduct lengthy, in-depth investigations into the problems which threatened the deindustrializing rural south and its glutted, static and chronically-disaffected workforce.

In 1850 John Caird began his extensive two-year survey into conditions within English agriculture. When this seminal volume was published in 1852 it detailed the stark contrast between the wages and living standards of agricultural workers in the counties of the dynamic industrializing north and those in the stagnant, agricultural south. Fears grew that England’s south would experience a repetition of the successive demographic disasters which had overtaken similarly under-developed and over-populated areas of Scotland and Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s.

But only the degree of public concern was new. By 1850 England’s governing classes had been grappling for over half a century with the consequences of continuous demographic, technological, organizational and attitudinal change which attended the conversion of a predominantly agricultural and proto-industrial society into the urban-industrial model from which the developed world is now emerging. These complex interrelated changes and the socio-economic problems they precipitated deepened the problems of the three difficult decades after 1815, as economic recession and industrial stagnation.

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10 *The Times*’ articles appeared throughout the 1840s; the *Morning Chronicle*’s series ran from Oct., 1849 to Oct., 1850.
12 Famine, which was inherent in their subsistence economies, recurred in each decade between the 1790s and 1850 in pastoral Ireland, the Scots’ Highlands and the Western Isles. The most severe famines, which followed the introduction of ‘scientific farming’ and the increased dependence upon the potato, struck Scotland in 1837-8 and 1847-52, and Ireland from 1845-47. The widespread failure of the crop in both countries from the mid-1840s was followed by devastating famine and disease and the subsequent decimation of the populations.
replaced the high prices and rampant inflationary effects of the long wars. The impact was greatest in the arable and mixed-farming, deindustrializing counties of the rural south-east and south, where returns from the predominantly cereal, market-oriented monoculture fell sharply after 1813. The situation deteriorated throughout the 1820s as successive British governments attempted unsuccessfully to curb the spiralling costs of maintaining the ever-increasing, under-employed and increasingly restive rural population in these counties. Rural unrest reached crisis-point with the outbreak of the ‘Swing Riots’ in the winter of 1829-30. Having quelled the riots and visited draconian punishment upon the rural malcontents, the newly-elected Reform Parliament of 1832 turned its attention to the problems in the south.

A long and detailed county-by-county investigation resulted in the passage of the New Poor Laws in 1834. Several related elements were adopted by a government which was determined to reduce the cost of poor relief by limiting the poor’s access to benefits. The administration of relief was placed under central control. Parish workhouses were aggregated into larger, single ‘unions’ which served whole districts and, with the introduction of the principles of ‘less eligibility’ and of ‘self help’, severe restrictions were placed on the ability of the able-bodied and ‘deserving’ poor to access relief. A further important amendment permitted parishes to use public funds to assist eligible paupers to emigrate to designated overseas colonies. This seminal decision came at the end of a decade of investigation into the potential benefits offered by emigration. From the mid-1820s the government had increasingly favoured this stratagem. The mind-set encouraged official acceptance of E.G. Wakefield’s theories which, when modified, formed the basis of Britain’s colonial policy until the 1860s. Emigration was seen to benefit Britain in two important ways. In a happy ‘marriage of philanthropy, socio-political concern and self-interest’ emigrants would

14 Armstrong, op. cit., p. 62; Kent and Townsend, op. cit., pp. 59-60. For the distorting effects of the wartime boom-prices and the patchy nature of the post-war recession in agriculture.
15 Counties worst affected included Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Essex, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire and Dorset.
simultaneously ease the glutted labour-market at home and assist in the creation of viable overseas markets for British manufactured goods.19

New South Wales appeared to be an ideal focus of assisted emigration, a process for which wealthy colonial pastoralists had been lobbying for almost a decade.20 By the mid-1830s the colony was prospering as the wool-boom promoted the rapid ‘occupation’ of the hinterland by middle-class immigrant pastoralists, most of whom, like the Everettes, were backed by English and Scottish ‘family-and-kin’ investors.21 From the late 1820s, the increasing numbers of these free-settler ‘sojourners in a strange land’ meant that the nature and outlook of colonial society was changing. Opposition to the convict system and to the preponderance of ex-convict labour increased throughout the 1830s and culminated in the cessation of transportation to New South Wales in 1839.22 The amendment to the New Poor Law in 1834 therefore seemed to offer a neat solution to the government’s British and Australian problems. Whilst easing the burden of domestic over-population, assisted emigration would address the colony’s severe and chronic shortage of suitable rural labourers by providing a reliable bonded labour-force for the plethora of new grazing runs. Like the convicts before them, England’s deprived agricultural labourers would benefit Britain by their absence. The telling words of the Dorset applicant which introduce this chapter indicate that this was as clear to the prospective emigrants as it was to their political masters.

With Jacob Baker, this unknown man can be seen to represent and to speak for the distressed and proletarianized southern rural labouring populace. Though almost certainly unknown to each other and deriving from different levels of the finely-graded ‘labouring orders’ each had been ‘pushed’, or rather driven, by grinding and unrelenting poverty to seek to emigrate. In responding to the ‘pull’ implicit in this last resort, each showed that he was

21 S.J. Butlin, Foundations of the Australian Monetary System 1788-1851, Sydney, 1968. pp. 225-228. passim. Butlin states that between 1830 and 1835 wool exports from New South Wales doubled, and doubled again between 1836 and 1840. The finance for this enormous increase in production came mainly from private English investors, albeit with the tacit approval of the English government. Bank loans made by subsidiaries of English banking houses in NSW increased by 600-700 per cent in the first half of the 1830s, quadrupling again between 1836 and 1839.
neither dispirited nor bereft of hope. Although their words and grammar were ‘polished’ before publication, the dignity and honest self-respect inherent in their tone rings unmistakably clear.

Though desperate, Jacob Baker and his fellows were not demoralized. In attending and in seeking to address the meeting, Baker was driven by intolerable circumstances to exercise his cherished traditional ‘rights’ under the Old Society. He clearly believed in his right to speak and that, once outlined, his problems would receive attention. However he must also have known the risk that he was taking. At forty years old he would have reached young adulthood during the years of Swing and full maturity during the ‘martyrdom’ of the unfortunate men from Tolpuddle in Dorset. The severity with which actual or merely perceived popular protest was punished cannot have escaped him. Nevertheless, Jacob Baker seems to have been motivated by the same widely-held conviction of the mutual obligations within paternalism which had driven the ‘Swing’ crowds to overt action. Furthermore, as a mature, skilled and law-abiding family man, he appears to have come from the same hitherto ‘respectable’ and respected level of the rural labouring orders. The survival of his intended speech is therefore particularly valuable. Not only is it a first-hand account of his family’s desperate circumstances, it provides us with an understanding of the attitudes and mind-set of the southern rural labourers. Joseph Baker’s moving *curriculum vitae* also shows the type of people who were chosen to emigrate, and the level of rural labouring society from which, like the Swing protesters before them, they came.\(^{23}\) To succeed in their application they had to be both ‘respectable’ and ‘deserving’, and thus morally and financially worthy of assistance. In qualifying to emigrate they proved that, though impoverished, they did not come from the most utterly destitute levels of their depressed occupational group.\(^{24}\)

As neither man appears to have been part of a migration chain the chance of a better life offered by migration seems to have ‘pulled’ them to this last resort. In an era of safe, affordable and readily-available long-distance travel, it is hard to comprehend the restricted world in which these men and women lived and the magnitude of their decision to leave it for an unknown, unimaginably-distant land. Significantly, the Baker family’s emigration was

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\(^{23}\) Kent and Townsend, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

\(^{24}\) Haines, ‘Emigration’ *op. cit.*, p. 20.
delayed for some time by his wife’s reluctance to agree to his decision. Who could blame her? Not only had she just given birth to her ninth child, but hers was a world whose scope was determined by the size of one’s parish, whose bounds were learnt and drawn by regular walking; and where ‘outsiders’ and thus ‘foreigners’ lived in the villages beyond those which adjoined one’s own. This was brought home to Cobbett when he lost his way near Tangle.

... I rode up to the garden-wicket of a cottage, and asked the woman, who had two children, and who seemed to be about thirty years old, which was the way to LUDGERSHALL, which I knew could not be more than about four miles off. She did not know! ... ‘Well, my dear good woman’, said I, ‘but you have been at LUDGERSHALL?’ –‘No.’ ‘Nor at ANDOVER?’ (six miles another way)-’No.’ -‘Nor at MARLBOROUGH?’ (nine miles another way) –‘No.’ –‘Pray, were you born in this house?’ –‘Yes.’- ‘And how far have you ever been from this house?’ –‘Oh! I have been up in the parish, and over to Chute.’ That is to say, the utmost extent of her voyages had been about two and a half miles!.... This was a very acute woman, and as well behaved as need to be.

A quarter of a century later the Morning Chronicle’s investigator found the situation remained unchanged and that not only the labouring orders but the rural merchants and artisans displayed an ignorance of conditions beyond their immediate vicinity of ‘a degree which must be witnessed to be fully comprehended’. He continued...

...Ask any of them what are the circumstances of the labourer in the parish adjoining his own, and separated from it not by a barrier of impassable hills, but by a low, fertile ridge, well intersected by good roads, and in nine cases out of ten the answer will be, ‘Well, sir, I have lived here these twenty years, but never thought of askin’ particularly.

When considering the origins, circumstances and attitudes of the assisted immigrants under discussion, it must be remembered that while poverty and distress were structured into southern rural labourers’ lives throughout the nineteenth century, regional differences in well-being were evident at every level, from county and district down to parish, village and individual employer. Furthermore, within each of these environments, particular circumstances and levels of skill determined the individual labourer’s experience. His age,

28 Morning Chronicle, 29th October, 1849, p. 4
habits and demeanour, the level and diversity of his skills, his marital status, and the ages and size of his family all directly affected his employment prospects and thus determined the depth of his poverty and his eligibility for relief. They were also to affect his ability to escape his predicament through emigration. 29

It has been estimated that, by deliberate colonial intention, half of the 100,000 British people who received assisted passages to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land between 1832 and 1850 were English. 30 Of these the majority came from the depressed southern counties. 31 All government-assisted emigrants from the United Kingdom, whether they were assisted directly by the governmental agency, by the private philanthropy of individuals and organizations, or by colonial ‘remittances’ were either self-selecting or willing to be chosen. 32 Furthermore, no coercion or penalty beyond the loss of deposit was applied for last minute changes of mind. 33 Despite the fears of moralists ‘at home’ and the complaints of their disgruntled colonial masters, only a few were recruited from the workhouse. 34 There are many indications that, though impoverished, they were neither demoralized nor did they come from the most immiserated and destitute cohort of agricultural workers. They remained hopeful of, and prepared to act upon, the chance to better their lives. 35

The prospective immigrants had first to be deemed eligible by their local authorities who followed the colonial government’s rigid specifications. Occupation, health, parental age and the number and age of any children were all considered. Success justified the outlay of a considerable deposit, which usually amounted to c.£10 in cash, a sum which, from the 1840s, was equivalent to more than half the annual wage of a southern agricultural

29 British Parliamentary Papers: Select Committee into the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, 1843, pp. 71-72. [Hereafter BPPSC. ‘Women and Children’.] For examples of women’s work, during peak periods, being a stipulated element of the male ‘breadwinner’s’ wage. The use of the male pronoun is therefore once again deliberate.
31 Schultz, op. cit., p. 297.
33 Ibid, p. 18.
34 Ibid. p. 13. The scheme initiated by Earl Grey, which operated for a short time in the late 1840s was the ‘major exception’ to the rule which banned recruitment from the workhouses. Designed to answer the severe colonial shortage of domestic servants, the scheme permitted the recruitment and assistance of approved occupants from Irish and English workhouses. Even here, ‘selection was strictly controlled and many women were disappointed, having entered the workhouse in hope of a passage to Australia’.
labourer.\textsuperscript{36} Payment of this deposit and the cost of the clothing and equipment which were essential requirements for embarkation entailed considerable expenditure, averaging c.£17 per family.\textsuperscript{37} The regulations for 1851 listed the minimum requirements and those responsible for their provision.\textsuperscript{38}

The Commissioners supply Provisions, Medical Attendance, and Cooking Utensils at their Depot and on board the Ship. Also, new Mattresses, Bolsters, Blankets, and Counterpanes, Canvas Bags to contain Linen, &c., Knives and Forks, Spoons, Metal Plates, and Drinking Mugs, which articles will be given after arrival in the Colony to the emigrants who have behaved well on the voyage. The Emigrants must bring their own Clothing, which will be inspected at the Port by an Officer of the the Commissioners; and they will not be allowed to embark unless they have a sufficient stock for the voyage, not less for each Person, than-

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<th>For Males</th>
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Without assistance such an outlay would have been impossible for men like Jacob Baker, who had spent all their working lives in an industry which depended on the existence of a vast pool of static and seasonally un- and under-employed labour. Even those few who were fortunate enough to have annual employment would have found the cost prohibitive as the most privileged ‘constant’ men seldom earned more than £20-£26 p.a. (8s. to 10s. per week).\textsuperscript{39} Such assistance was provided either by the parish and/or by one, or more usually by a combination of several private and public charitable individuals or bodies.\textsuperscript{40} The Baker family’s emigration to South Australia was organized and funded by the Wiltshire Emigration Society, which was set up by Lord Bruce when the parishes near his estate at Savernake refused to participate in his original scheme on the grounds of its excessive costs.\textsuperscript{41} The men and women who were to form Oller’s core workforce arrived with the combined assistance of the government, their parish and of the Everett brothers. Acting from motives which were principally economic but perhaps also philosophically based, the

\textsuperscript{37} Haines, ‘Emigration’, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 26.
\textsuperscript{40} Baker, op. cit., pp.77, 78.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, pp. 68-70.
brothers participated in the colonial government’s ‘remittance’ or ‘bounty’ scheme.\(^{42}\) They advanced the necessary cash deposit whose cost, as we shall see, was later deducted from the wages of the assisted immigrant.\(^{43}\) Thirty years later, a possibly somewhat peeved John Everett remarked upon the success achieved by the previously penniless Everett-assisted immigrant employee who now described himself as a grazier. However very few, if any, donors acted for purely-altruistic reasons as emigration assistance was considered to be less expensive than maintaining the surplus poor at home. Nevertheless, in a society dedicated to the principles of ‘self-help’, the granting of such assistance testifies to the quality of the selected immigrants.\(^{44}\)

The application process provides further evidence of their quality, and of the extent of their literacy.\(^{45}\) The prospective emigrants were either privately recruited, as were those who went to Ollera, or they acted in response to the advice of others who preceded them, or to recruiting agencies’ advertisements and lectures and/or to the wealth of ‘pro-emigration’ literature which characterized the period.\(^{46}\) However, all prospective immigrants needed to satisfy the colonial government’s complicated and specific criteria. Their detailed applications had to be accompanied by references from three presiding middle-class parish officials who judged each applicant’s moral fitness and ‘respectability’. The crucial determinant was the applicant’s ability to subsist ‘honourably’ outside the workhouse, thus proving his resilience and his respectability. Having qualified at the local level as a member of the ‘deserving’ poor, the applicant then had to pass muster with the central authorities, whose responsibility was to satisfy the stringent specifications of the particular colonial government. Age, occupation and skills, the ages and number of children in the family, and

\(^{42}\) Haines, ‘Idle and Drunken’, op. cit., p. 8. ‘(Many) more than half’ of the assisted immigrants to New South Wales in the nineteenth century came under colonial-government sponsored schemes.

\(^{43}\) List of Immigrants aboard the Ship Java’, arr. 1853. State Records New South Wales, Reels 2136, 2465. [Hereafter, NSW Shipping Lists]; After c.1850 a ‘Remarks’ column was added to the details of each assisted immigrant’s arrival. While not always completed, those which show the arrival of Ollera employees bear this comment. ‘Mr. Everett paid £3 for self and family.’

\(^{44}\) Haines, ‘Idle and Drunken’, op. cit., p. 18.

\(^{45}\) Haines, ‘Emigration’, op. cit., p. 46.

\(^{46}\) R.Haines, ‘Indigent Misfits or Smooth Operators? Government-Assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia 1831-1860,’ Australian Historical Studies, No. 108, 1997, pp.12-13. The literature was diverse and widely disseminated, depicting Australia as a ‘Garden of Hygeia’ for the poor. Dickens’ Household Words, which was an important medium for the spread of such information, also indicated the degree of literacy possessed by, or available to, the immigrants. J.M. Powell, Mirrors of the New World: Images and Image-Makers of the Settlement Process, Connecticut, 1977; Canberra, 1978. passim.
the health of all its members were considered. The assisted emigrants were therefore neither dispirited nor, despite Madgwick's early judgement, 'shovelled out'. By any standards they were poor, but they were also carefully-selected, resourceful, versatile and competent. Decades of hardship and bitter experience 'at home' had equipped them with the attitudes and skills essential to pioneering on the Australian frontier.

The Ollera records permit us to gain insights into the lives and experiences of one such group. These were the fifty or so people whose passages to Australia were assisted by the English and Australian 'branches' of the Everett family enterprise. Having been recruited by an English Everett brother, these men, women and children arrived in Australia at intervals over almost two decades between late-1840 and mid-1858. Their importance to Ollera's, and later Tenterden's, success far outweighs their number, for they formed the core around which the Everett brothers assembled their permanent workforce.

With their descendants, the assisted immigrants from Wiltshire brought essential skills, immediate legitimacy and generational stability to the paternalist management system which the brothers transferred from Old England to New England. In so doing they made an important contribution to its success. It is to their lives that we must now turn, their Wiltshire that we will examine. Their places of origin, their living and working conditions, and, in particular, their ability to gain employment will be considered, as will their probable links to the Everetts of Biddesden. Discussion of this representative group's background may help us to understand the motives and attitudes of the thousands of people who came to Australia as 'boat people' in the nineteenth-century. While individually their stories have been restricted to family lore and local folk-memory, these 'economic immigrants' were vitally important to Australia's socio-economic and political development. But with rare exceptions, their inferior social status and their barely-functional levels of literacy have relegated most of them to 'the dark side of the landscape' of history.

We must first examine the vital statistics of the group as a whole. In this we are fortunate as much statistical information is available on those who entered New South Wales.

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48 Madgwick, op. cit., pp. 95-98, 141-42.
as assisted immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{50} A foxed and brittle, single-sheet document, which is contained in the Ollera Papers, aided greatly in the search for those who came to Ollera from Wiltshire. The valuable document’s faded state, complicated ‘copperplate’ script and archaic rendering of the letter ‘J’ as ‘I’, indicates that it was probably written by the elderly Edwin Everett in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. It lists the names of those whose immigration to New England was sponsored by the Everetts in the two decades after 1839.\textsuperscript{51} Though the list has proven to be incomplete and to contain some minor inaccuracies in the arrival dates given, it has been particularly helpful. Not only could the individuals’ origins be traced and the connections between them be identified, but the remarkable longevity of their employment at Ollera was apparent. (See Appendix A below.)

More than forty people, most of whom were Anglican, have been positively identified as Everett-assisted immigrants to New England between 1840 and 1858.\textsuperscript{52} Only two married couples and their children were of different denominations, one family professing itself to be ‘Protestant’ and the other ‘Methodist’.\textsuperscript{53} Only seven of the adults in the group were single. Of these, six were young men while the other was a nineteen-year-old woman who travelled as part of her married brother’s family. The remainder comprised married couples most of whom had children. Twenty-seven of the immigrants were male and twenty were female.

Seventeen of the males had reached working age. The majority of these were young adults, twelve being aged between twenty-one and twenty-nine. The remaining five included two who were in their mid-to-late thirties; one, Daniel Reeves, was aged forty; and two were youths, one of whom, Daniel’s twelve-year-old son William, had reached the minimum

\textsuperscript{50} NSW Shipping Lists. State Records of New South Wales contain the following information: name, occupation, religion, age ability to read and/or write, birthplace, parents’ names and place of residence. [Hereafter SRNSW]


\textsuperscript{52} While the arrivals of only thirty-eight Everett-assisted immigrants can be documented, no trace has been found of the arrivals of at least five other men to whom references are made in John Everett’s letters to his siblings. Four of these men, Sam Dudman, Jem Mundy Joseph Cook and John Yeats arrived between 1841 and 1846. Though sponsored by the Everett brothers the fifth man, who is referred to only by his surname, arrived at some unspecified time in the mid-1850s. An acquaintance of Cummings, he neither began work on Ollera nor repaid the cost of his passage to Australia. Ollera Station Records, Letter, John to Rev. Charles, 30\textsuperscript{th} February, 1857, UNERA, A103:V3052/4. ‘George Booth’s son has never repaid my £10. Charley Cumin [who asked at my direction] was unable to get it’.

\textsuperscript{53} NSW Shipping Lists, SRNSW., Entries for Ships Royal Consort, Nov. 1840; Reel31, Vol.35; Sir Edward Page, Dec. 1842; Walmer Castle, Reel 2135, 2458; Blonde, Reel 3136; 2459; Java, 1853, Reels 2136, 2465; Speedy, 1856, Reel 2137, 2471; Switzerland, Reel 2138, 2478.
working age for boys.\textsuperscript{54} The remaining males included two boys aged nine, two aged five and an infant. Of the seventeen men and youths who had reached working age, eight stated that they could both read and write, six that they could read but not write, and three that they could neither read nor write. However the extent to which the immigrants were fully literate must remain open to question.

Twenty females accompanied their menfolk. Of these thirteen were adults, one of whom died ‘in harbour’.\textsuperscript{55} Eight of the survivors were in their twenties and two were in their thirties, while the remaining two were aged nineteen and forty-seven (Mrs Jane Reeves).\textsuperscript{56} Only one of the surviving women could neither read nor write, two could read but not write, while the remaining six could both read and write. There were seven female children of whom only three, an eleven-year-old, a seven-year-old and a newborn, reached Sydney. Three infant girls from two families died at sea.

The high death toll among the infants who arrived in 1853 highlights the very real dangers inherent in the long sea voyages the immigrants endured in the first half of the nineteenth century. The average length of the voyage to Australia was four months, and in the cramped, stuffy and continually damp confines below-decks the infectious diseases of childhood could take a heavy toll. Recognizing this, the English immigration officials often rejected applications from families containing very young children.\textsuperscript{57} Nevertheless, of the nine Olera-bound children aboard the \textit{Java}, of whom seven were aged three or under, four died, most likely from measles. They included a three-year-old boy and three girls, one aged three and the others aged one. The remaining baby girl was born during the voyage.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54} NSW Shipping Lists, Ship \textit{Walmer Castle}, arr. 30\textsuperscript{th} December, 1848, \textit{SRNSW}, Reels 2135; 2458.
\textsuperscript{55} NSW Shipping Lists, Ship \textit{Java}, 1853, \textit{SRNSW}, Reels 2136, 2465. She was Mrs Jane Phillimore, aged twenty-six, whose two baby daughters also died at sea.
\textsuperscript{56} In categorizing the women’s ages I have used the same age-boundaries as for the men.
\textsuperscript{57} Haines, ‘Emigration’, \textit{op. cit}, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{58} NSW Shipping Lists, \textit{SRNSW}, Reels 31, Vol. 35; 2136, 2465.
Arrival Dates of Everett-Assisted Immigrants from Wiltshire, 1840-1848.\(^{59}\)

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<td>Royal Consort</td>
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<td>1842</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Walmer Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blonde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Speedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table above shows the majority of those who left Wiltshire arrived in one of three years; 1848, 1849 or in 1853, the year which saw the heaviest intake. Several related economic elements determined the timing of the immigrants’ arrival and the numbers within each contingent. Although labour-shortages continually plagued the Everettts until the late 1850s, their needs were at their most critical between 1848 and 1856, when the station was becoming fully productive. Ollera’s predicament matched that of the colony as a whole. The onset of severe economic depression in 1842-3 and the financial instability of the mid-1840s caused government to suspend assisted immigration into New South Wales between 1844 and 1848.\(^{60}\) Soon after its resumption, the perennial shortage of rural labour was exacerbated and made general by the discovery of gold in 1851. The successive ‘rushes’ which followed persisted in New England until the last years of the 1850s and recurred throughout Australia until the end of the century.

The occupations and ‘native places’ of the group remain to be examined. Of the seventeen working-age males, six identified themselves as shepherds, and the rest as farm labourers. Tellingly, only two of the nine adult women were, or had been, employed. Mrs Maria Canning and Mrs Martha Cotterell stated that they were household servants. But while there are evident similarities in the age, religion, standards of literacy and rural background of the immigrants it is when we consider their places of origin that the homogeneity of the group becomes most obvious. Of the eleven families and three single men who have so far been traced, ten came from the two dormitory villages closest to Biddesden. Nine of these families came from Ludgershall, the other from Tidsworth. One family and one other single

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59 Despite careful and continuing research the arrivals of three of the men who arrived at Ollera between 1841 and 1846 and whose names are on Edwin’s list cannot be found. They were, Sam Dudman, Joe Cook and John Yeats.

man came from the nearby town of Andover. One of the remaining single men came from Faccombe, an Everett-owned manor, while the other was recruited by the Halhed brothers.

**Places of Origin of the Ollera Assisted Immigrants, 1840-1858**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wiltshire</th>
<th>Hampshire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludgershall</td>
<td>Andover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John &amp; Maria Cannings</td>
<td>Daniel &amp; Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thos &amp; Martha Cotterell</td>
<td>Reeves &amp; 3 sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; 2 children</td>
<td>Chas. Cummings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jos. &amp; Martha Coombs</td>
<td>Daniel Hutton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; 3 children</td>
<td>Alfred Marsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edw. &amp; Sarah Lansley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Phillimore &amp; family (d.v)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac &amp; Mary Spicer &amp; children (d.v)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thos &amp; Charlotte Reeves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James &amp; Emma Reeves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Reeves &amp; wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are other important indications that the Ollera immigrants were closely linked to each other and also to members of the Everett family from Biddesden. Shared surnames indicate either evident or probable family relationships, while all those who have so far been traced can be linked directly or indirectly to one or more of the Everett brothers. The connections between the immigrant families and their links to members of the Everett family can best be explored chronologically.

The immigrant stream began in late 1840 with the arrival from Ludgershall of John Cannings 35, his wife Maria 38, and their children Sarah 11 and William 9. John Cannings’ arrival was of seminal importance to the success of the Everett’s venture as it set the pattern for Ollera’s future core-workforce. Cannings, whose mother was Martha Reeves and whose brother worked on the Biddesden estate, was an experienced and good shepherd whose immigration had been discussed and planned by John and William Everett in 1838.⁶¹ John Cannings was put in charge at the head station (the homestead), while, by late 1842, his son Billy was shepherding a ‘small’ flock. Mrs Cannings’ maiden name was ‘Dudmin’, and all three of these surnames are etched deeply into Ollera’s history. Maria Cannings, who was for several years the only European woman at Ollera, was the Everetts’ housekeeper. With Sarah’s help she cooked, washed and, performed general domestic duties. Though John

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Cannings’ contribution was an unqualified success, relations with the female member of his family deteriorated within a few years. These events and the light they throw on their employers’ attitude towards their staff will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, however, let us share John Everett’s satisfaction with John Cannings. In a letter to his brother William in January, 1841, Everett anticipated that ‘under [Cannings] careful management I hope we will have a good lambing’ and that soon ‘we will have some pleasure in looking at our sheep’. His hopes were not disappointed.

In the next year, 1842, two young men who would also make a significant long-term contribution to the station’s success arrived at Ollera. One was the as yet elusive Samuel ‘Deadman’. His unusual surname which, according to the particular Everett who heard and recorded it is given either as Deadman or Dudman, suggests that this young, single man was related to Maria Dudmin Cannings. Their shared surname appears more than coincidental, especially when the close relationships between the other bounty immigrants whose details have so far been identified are considered. However the absence of this long-term and trusted employee’s name from Edwin’s list suggests that the Everettts did not sponsor his immigration, of which no record has so far been found.

The other young man was Daniel Hutton, 21, from ‘Eckfield’ (Heckfield) in Hampshire who was linked to the Halhed brothers. He brought with him a number of English sheep with which the two sets of brothers hoped to improve their flocks. Hutton therefore seems not to have been the ‘emigrant boy’, whose arrival John Everett anticipated in a letter to his Sydney agent, Dawes, in 1841. Instead, it is probable that this young man was James (Jem) Mundy, whose case and probable exclusion from the list will be discussed in the next chapter. A few years later, in 1846, Daniel Hutton married sixteen year-old Sarah Cannings, founding a family which later became free selectors at Wandsworth and whose descendants still prosper in the Guyra district and on the Darling Downs. Sarah’s first child, a son who was the first European baby to be born on the property, became a source of wonder and delight to Ollera’s Aborigines.

62 In the interests of consistency and greater clarity I will refer to this man as Samuel (Sam) Dudman.
64 Ollera Station Records, Everett Notebook, Letter to Dawes, 1841, UNERA, A103:V2351
65 Personal conversations with Mr. John Hutton, ‘Fernhill’, Black Mountain, via Armidale, and with Mr. Ken Hutton of Toowoomba, Queensland.
At some time before 1846 the Everett brothers brought two more young men to Ollera. As yet Edwin’s list, which is arranged chronologically, remains the only record of their sponsorship and of their arrival. Although the names of Joseph Cook and John Yeats are first recorded among Ollera’s workmen in 1845-6, it seems probable that their emigration was arranged prior to the start of the depression of 1843 and before assisted immigration was suspended. Cook and Yeats were respectively shepherd and watchman to an Ollera flock until the early 1850s when they were lured away by the promise of more lucrative work as itinerant shearsers. While by the early 1850s Yeats had become one of the local carriers, in 1856, Joe Cook died in an accident on the Rocky River goldfields.

The next group of Everett assisted immigrants whose arrival has been traced reached Sydney aboard the Walmer Castle in December, 1848. These were Thomas Cotterell, a farm labourer and his wife Martha, a household servant. Both aged twenty-three, they came from Tidworth, the village immediately south-west of Ludgershall. They were accompanied by Martha Cotterell’s brother William Tarrant and his family. William worked for many years in the Upper Hunter region, but in the 1860s at least one of his sons was employed at Ollera. The childless Cotterells created a second-generation link in the network of immigrant families when they bequeathed their considerable holdings at Wandsworth to a niece and a nephew of Martha’s, each of whom was the child of an Everett-assisted immigrant workman.

The first of the four related Reeves families whose immigration was assisted by the Everett brothers also arrived on the Walmer Castle. Daniel Reeves, an experienced shepherd aged forty, brought with him his wife Jane, aged forty-seven, and their sons Thomas, aged twenty, William, aged twelve, both of whom were shepherds, and Evan, aged nine. They gave Andover, seven miles (11.5 kms) from Biddesden, as their ‘native place’ and they may also have been related to William Cannings, whose mother’s maiden name was Reeves.
so, this and their much needed expertise may have overcome any official objections to the
parents’ ages, which were at, or above, the upper limits recommended by the Board.

A year later, in December, 1849, the Blonde brought two Everett-sponsored
immigrant workers to Sydney. These young single farm labourers came from Faccombe in
northern Hampshire, where each man’s parents lived. While Alfred Marsh aged twenty-four
was born there, his twenty-eight year old shipmate Charles Cummins gave Andover as his
‘native place’. Each of these men had a relative in the Hunter Valley; Cummins a brother and
Marsh a cousin. The record shows that each of these men contributed £2 towards the cost of
his passage.72

The next arrivals comprised the largest single group of immigrants whose arrivals
were assisted by the Everetts. Of the six families, all but one became long-term employees at
Ollera-Tenterden. The group, which consisted of fourteen people from five families who
came from Ludgershall, reached Sydney on the ship Java in 1853.73 All were farm labourers.
Two of the men, Joseph Coombs, thirty-one, and Edward Lansley, twenty-seven, were
brothers-in-law, Mrs Sarah Lansley being Coombs’ sister. Mrs Margaret Coombs, aged
thirty-one, had three children, Mary Anne, seven; Henry, five; and Frank, two. Twenty-four
year old Mrs Sarah Lansley had one child, a two year-old son William. The two families
were provided with a ‘comfortable hut and a good garden’ at New Valley, an isolated Ollera
shepherdng station which the Everetts apparently first leased and later bought from George
Wyndham of Dalwood in the Hunter Valley.74 In the letter ‘home’ in which he described his
intention to settle the related families together John included Coombs’ wry comment on the
arrangement,

*We intend building another hut at Coombs station for Lansley the wives are sisters (sic)
and we think they will be pleasant company for each other- if they falls out, as Coombs
remarked, they must fall in again.*75

Two young married couples who shared a surname also arrived in Sydney aboard the
*Java*. They were James and Emma Reeves, aged twenty-two and twenty-three respectively,
and Thomas and Charlotte Reeves, whose respective ages were twenty-three and twenty-five.

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72 NSW Shipping Lists, *SRNSW*, 1849, Reels 2136, 2459.
73 NSW Shipping Lists, *SRNSW*, Reels 2136; 2465.
74 Ollera Station Records, Everett Letters, John to Rev. Charles, 16th August, 1853; Edwin to John, 1856,
*UNERA*, A103:V3052/7; in which the intended purchase is mentioned.
The fact that the men came from the small community of Ludgershall suggests a family relationship, although the young farm labourers were not brothers and only James is identified as Daniel Reeves’ nephew.\(^{76}\) Also aboard *Java* were Isaac Spicer, a farm labourer and his wife Mary Anne, both of whom were aged twenty-five. Their two small children, three year old Henry and one year old Fanny, died on the voyage. The remaining member of the *Java* contingent had an even sadder story for all the members of John Phillimore’s family died on board ship. While the twenty-six year old farm labourer’s wife Anna ‘died on board ship in harbour’, his two small daughters, Mary, three and Eliza, one ‘died on the voyage’.\(^{77}\) In these circumstances it is perhaps understandable that Phillimore, whose sister worked in Rev. Charles Everett’s household, should be the only member of the *Java* group who did not remain on Ollera for many years. According to the letter which John wrote about the new arrivals ‘[Phillimore] appears a willing good man’, so is it overly sentimental to suggest that the loss of his whole family made it impossible for him to remain at Ollera longer than the two years it took him to ‘work off’ his sponsorship? John Everett’s failure to mention the unfortunate man’s loss also says much about the gap which, however good the relationship between master and man, yawned between the classes.\(^{78}\)

The last shepherd the Everetts brought to Ollera from Wiltshire reached Sydney on the *Speedy* in 1855. George Cook, aged twenty-two, travelled with his wife Caroline, twenty-nine, their one-year-old son Henry, and George’s nineteen year old sister Rebecca Cook.\(^{79}\) The last of the immigrants on Edwin’s list arrived in 1858. They was John Reeves aged twenty-two. His brother James Reeves and his wife had worked at Ollera since 1853.\(^{80}\)

All of the bounty immigrants on Edwin Everett’s list whose immigration details have so far been identified were linked either by family or by place- or county-of-birth, and by occupational experience, while only two of these families did not identify with the Established Church.\(^{81}\) However this religious conformity is unsurprising when we consider the close ties which existed between the clergy and the governing oligarchy in nineteenth century rural England. Not only did the resident clergyman, with the magistrate, play an

\(^{76}\) NSW Shipping Lists, Ship *Java*, 1853, *SRNSW*.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.


\(^{79}\) NSW Shipping Lists, Ship *Speedy*, 1855, *SRNSW*, Reels 2137, 2471.

\(^{80}\) NSW Shipping Lists, Ship *Switzerland*, 1858, *SRNSW*, Reels 2138, 2478.

\(^{81}\) These were the families of John Cannings, who were recorded as ‘Protestants’ and Thomas Reeves, who were entered as ‘Methodists’.
important role in parish affairs, but he was also often a younger son or subordinate relative of the district’s presiding gentleman. As such he exercised both official and spiritual control over the lives of those within his bailiwick. Of the five Everett brothers who remained in England three were clergymen. With their older brother William, two of these men, Rev. Thomas and Rev. Charles Everett appear to have played a vitally important role in the selection of Oller’s immigrant labourers.

Though evidence of direct links between them is not fully proven, a strong synchronicity is identifiable between the places of origin of the assisted immigrants and the residences of three of the Everett brothers. Though he was not heir to the estate, William lived at Biddesden, probably as estate-manager, until the mid-1850s. While as we have seen the Cannings family’s emigration had been under discussion before John’s departure, William probably was responsible for the recruitment of the rest of those who emigrated from Ludgershall and Tedworth, although Charles was also at Biddesden in 1843. From about 1844, Charles had the ‘living’ at Kingston Lisle, which is very close to Fcombe in Hampshire. By 1851 he held the living of Fcombe parish, occupying Netheron Rectory. It seems more than coincidental that in these years this parish, which was in his family’s gift, sent two of its young single men to Oller as rural labourers. The unfortunate John Phillimore, who gave Ludgershall as his ‘native place’, also had a link to Rev. Charles and Netheron, for his sister ‘lived with’, that is was part of, the clergyman’s household. Thomas Everett also occupied two Hampshire parishes in these years. In 1845 and 1846 he was at Fordingbridge, while by 1851 he occupied a parish near Andover, and may therefore have had some ‘say’ in the recruitment of Cannings’ relative, Daniel Reeves. The possibility of a relationship between Mrs Cannings and Sam Dudman has already been suggested. Daniel Hutton’s family had a connection to the Halhed brothers, who were themselves distantly related to the Everetts.

Not all of the connections between the Everetts and the assisted immigrants who became their future core workers can be found in the records. However for these people

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83 While the modern twin towns are called North and South Tidworth, in the nineteenth-century the much smaller villages were called Tedworth, which is the nomenclature used by the Everettts of Biddesden House. For clarity I have maintained the chronological difference in terminology.
85 See above, p. 73 Hamilton letter in Cane, *op. cit.*, p. 53
circumstantial evidence of such links can be found. The close coincidence of the presence of the clerical Everetts in parishes from which these immigrants were recruited is highly suggestive.

We must now consider the Wiltshire that the immigrant labourers knew, and the conditions which would cause them to leave it. A detailed discussion of their living standards will permit us to draw conclusions about conditions in England’s rural south and later to assess the degree to which they benefited from their translocation. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of southern rural workers’ living standards will be addressed. Wage rates, prices, changed employment practices and the availability of alternative work will be considered, as will the availability and standard of rural labourers’ housing, their diet and their ability to save. The impact of changing societal attitudes and of governmental attempts to ameliorate the problems in the rural south will also be addressed.

Let us begin with Ludgershall, whence the majority of the assisted immigrants from Wiltshire came to Ollera. That twenty-five people should choose to emigrate from a town with a population of less than six hundred provides a clue to the depth of poverty and deprivation in Ludgershall and its surrounding district. Although the borough returned two members of Parliament until the parliamentary reforms of 1832, Ludgershall, whose parish contained 1,789 acres (724 ha.), was ‘one of the smallest [boroughs] in Wiltshire’. From the start of the eighteenth century the town neither grew nor ‘developed any institutions of self-government’. Comments upon the place were universally unfavourable. In 1757, it was described as ‘a poor thatched village’. Its ‘mean’ housing was criticized in the 1760s and both ‘gaol fever’ and smallpox were common causes of death until well into the nineteenth century. In the mid-1770s the current (Webb) lord of the manor described the principal town in his domain as ‘beggarly’. Little had changed by 1826, when Cobbett’s scathing description of the town and its inhabitants echoed this opinion. A local contemporary rhyme maintained that,

88 Ibid, p. 121.
89 Ibid, p 121.
At Ludgershall the beer is small and very, very thin,
At every door there stands a whore, to call her culy in.\(^{50}\)

It therefore seems unlikely that its ‘tenants’ could afford many ‘cattle’ to graze on the town’s common, a right which they possessed until its eighty-three acres were enclosed in 1853.\(^{91}\)

However, despite the adverse criticism it attracted, Ludgershall’s poverty was far from unusual, for surely only dire necessity had driven the eighty-two year old man whom Cobbett watched as he scythed ‘the short grass’ of the inn at nearby Everley. It is instructive that while Cobbett noted the difficulty of the task and the man’s obvious lack of expertise, he was not disturbed by the scene, instead he envied the old man’s strength.\(^{92}\) Nevertheless the vignette encapsulates the district’s dilemma.

While in 1706 Ludgershall’s sole clothier had employed between one hundred and fifty and two hundred spinners, the loss before 1750 of the town’s textile industry meant that agriculture had become the only means of employment in the surrounding district.\(^{93}\) The adverse impact of the mechanization and concentration of the then prosperous southern woollen industry on the outlying rural areas was already apparent by 1792 when the rector of nearby Collingbourne Ducis explained the gravity of the situation in a letter to the authorities.

… the women and children who used… in these parts of Wiltshire to be employed in spinning are now almost all totally out of work owing (sic) to those execrable spinning jennies which have enabled clothiers who do not consider the extent of the evil, to spin at home the wool they use. Picking stones for the road has been for the last fortnight the employ of our spinners…\(^{94}\)

While the far-reaching changes to the ownership and use of land, to farm sizes and to hiring practices which were underway in these decades played a major part in agriculture’s success in feeding England’s rapidly increasing population, ‘scientific’ farming for the market exacerbated the employment problems which afflicted the arable south-east and south. When southern agriculture’s war-induced ‘bubble’ burst in 1813, high grain prices and general inflation were replaced by the harsh realities of the post-war decades. The recurrence of severe economic depression at roughly ten-year intervals after 1815-16 brought

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\(^{50}\) *Ibid*

\(^{91}\) *Ibid*, p. 119.

\(^{92}\) Cobbett, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-272.

\(^{93}\) V.C.H. Wiltshire, Vol.XV, p. 128.

‘unparalleled poverty, misery and degradation’ to many rural labouring communities in the arable and mixed-farming counties of the south.95

The Everetts of Biddesden were not immune from the difficulties faced by farmers and landowners. In the notebook journal through which he kept John informed for some months after the brothers’ departure in mid-1838, William reported that the family had been unsuccessful in its attempt to sell two adjoining farms, Red House and Roundaway, which lie a couple of miles south of Tangle. They were to be offered again for lease.96 Farm rents fell by an average of ten per cent in the difficult post-war decades as landowners tried to retain efficient farmers, and to stem the flow of surrendered leases.97 In the immediate aftermath of Swing many farmers negotiated rent and tithe reductions in return for higher wages for farm labourers.98 However the agreed new maximum of 10s.0d per week, which still fell short of the 12s.0d demanded by the Swing crowds, was short-lived. From the mid-1830s until the mid-1850s wages in Wiltshire averaged around 8s.0d per week and, in the arable ‘Chalk’ districts, regularly failed to reach that modest level. The diminishing returns from sheep and wool husbandry were further eroded by consistently high poor rates which, even in the 1780s, had been set at one-quarter of the typical farm’s rent. Wiltshire’s rates, which in 1869 amounted to £130,000, remained very high into the last quarter of the nineteenth century.99

For all but a fortunate few southern rural labourers, long periods of un- and underemployment were therefore structured into their working lives as population growth far outstripped the opportunities for employment. Though declining from the peak growth-rates of 1811-1820, the population of the rural south rose consistently throughout the century, increasing on average by about ten per cent in each decade between 1850 and 1911.100 Unemployment and under-employment were both seasonal and cyclical. Except in the ten peak-season weeks of haysel and harvest, many rural labourers’ chances of getting regular work decreased sharply in the decades after 1815. Although Ludgershall, like many of the

95 Ibid, p. 63.
96 Ollera Station Records, Diary of William Everett, June.-Dec, 1838, UNERA, A103: V3053/15.
97 Thompson, op. cit., p. 233-4.
more remote close parishes in the Chalk districts, failed to match the dramatic rises in population which characterized the rural south for more than a century after c.1760, the proportion of its total inhabitants relieved under the Old Poor Law remained high. An average of seventy-nine people or one out of every six of its inhabitants obtained such assistance between 1813 and 1815. In the twenty years until 1835 when the local authority became part of the Andover Union, an average of £400 per annum (c.16s. per head) was spent on poor relief. 101 At the start of the 1850s Caird itemized the average costs of maintaining the poor in South Wiltshire, and recorded the percentage of its population which received outdoor relief. While the poor rate averaged 2s 3¾d per £1 of property rents, and expenditure per head was 10s 5d, just over sixteen per cent of the population was in receipt of relief. 102 However, while this percentage is undoubtedly significant, it greatly under-estimates the number of people who were actually in need, for many unfortunates who failed to satisfy their parish’s strict guidelines for the distribution of aid were denied access to such assistance. Even those who qualified for aid found that the scale of relief had decreased to more than half that of 1795. By the 1840s even the weight of the indispensable quartern loaf, upon which most relief scales were based, had fallen significantly from 8lbs 11¾ ozs to 8lbs.103

The experienced shepherds like John Cannings and Daniel Reeves who left Wiltshire for Olera would, when lucky enough to have been hired at a nearby Michaelmas fair, have been among the fortunate few rural labourers whose particular skills gave them the chance of a full year’s work.104 Carters, experienced ploughmen and most other horse-handlers, and those who tended the estate and its grounds were other ‘constant’ men included in this category of workers.105 However even for these men uncertainty was inescapable, as many farmers evaded the responsibilities and the costs to their community which were entailed by annual hiring. By devising strategies which restricted the hiring term to eleven months they avoided granting ‘settlement’ rights to the employee.106 This cherished traditional right

101 V.C.H. Wiltshire, Vol. XV, p. 129
102 Caird, op. cit., p. 514.
103 Morning Chronicle, 27th October, 1849, p. 5
106 W.A. Armstrong, op. cit., p.112.
carried with it the right to poor relief, which could only be gained through birth in the parish or by completing twelve full months of satisfactory employment therein.  

As a ‘constant’ man whose duties precluded him from the higher wages obtainable at hayseason and harvest time, the shepherd was usually paid 1s to 2s a week more than the agricultural labourer.  

He often obtained his cottage and ‘potato ground’ rent-free and received a bonus payment of £1 in lieu of harvest work.  

Often, too, he was employed directly by the estate rather than by the individual tenant farmer, a circumstance which may, in Cannings’ case, explain the Everett brothers’ greater familiarity with and generally friendly references to his family.  

As a trusted employee of the estate the shepherd was responsible for a large flock which combined sheep belonging to several farmers, and which were grazed and ‘folded’ together. He supervised the positioning and repositioning of the flocks and the fair distribution of their valuable manure to the participating tenant farmers. He also oversaw the common grazing land of the manor and controlled access to the watermeadows which it contained.  

In a tradition which was continued and extended in Australia, during the critical lambing period he often ‘bedded down’ in the fields beside his flock.  

Such experiences must have lessened, albeit only slightly, the ‘culture shock’ caused by the vast distances, extreme isolation and unaccustomed hardships of life on the colonial frontier.

The shepherds’ wages and employment conditions closely resembled those of the carters, for which there are details from Dorsetshire in 1842.

I pay my carter 9s. a-week; he has two pints of ale a-day, and his breakfast on a Sunday; he has a sovereign ..[£1.1s.0d]... extra wages at harvest, as he can’t do task work like the other men; he has 16 perches of potato-ground, without paying rent...; he also has grist of half a bushel of wheat a-week, which is worth 6d. a-week more to him.  

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112 Caird, op. cit., pp. 81-82.  
113 BPP. SC ‘Women and Children’, p. 88. Using the Imperial measurement for a perch of 5½ yds (c. 4 ½m) this is equivalent to 88 yds (c. 70.5m) of land.
Here as always however, wages were set by the individual employer. In the nearby parish of Whitchurch a carter whose conditions were otherwise identical was paid only 7s in cash per week.\textsuperscript{114} We know the wages and conditions under which shepherds were employed in May, 1838 at Chute Lodge, a 200 acre farm which adjoined the Biddesden estate. As part of his final preparations for departure, John Everett spent a busy day with the farm’s owner, who appears to have been a close friend of the Everett brothers. In a small leather-bound note book which is now in the Ollera Station Collection John recorded, in page after page of meticulous detail, an exhaustive list of wage rates, labour costs per hour and per quantity, stock prices, and tips on farm management and on animal husbandry.\textsuperscript{115} For example, for the shepherds, the following details are recorded.

\textbf{Shepherds work}

Wages from 8s to 12s per week and usually have 2£ to 5£ over… [i.e. as a bonus?...] at the end of each Year, and sometimes their victuals, and Beer, during the Lambing Season, and generally are allowed 6d. per week to keep their Dog.

Cutting lambs costs 1s per score
Do. off their tails 3s. Do.

Washing sheep, 6d per score, and Beer allowed, about 2 quarts per man

Every 100 sheep will require three men to shear them well, and if done by Measure will cost 2s.6d. per score with Beer and sometimes Victuals…

… Shepherds are sometimes allowed to sell young lambs, but this is a very bad plan as they very often sell too many and even when their Master wants some\textsuperscript{116}

However by the late 1840s the 8s.0d to 10s.0d a week which ‘constant men’ received in the previous decade was being eroded. By 1850 wages-rates in twenty-one southern counties had fallen to only 65 to 85 percent of their level in 1833.\textsuperscript{117} Wages consistently lagged behind prices, which, despite having fallen sharply in the depressed post-war years, were still an average of 30 per cent higher in 1840 than they were at the outbreak of the French wars.\textsuperscript{118} In 1849 there were widespread rumours of a further general reduction in wages which appeared justified by events at Wiltshire’s hiring fairs. The wages on offer to both ‘constant’ men and to the relatively few young farm servants who still ‘lived in’ fell from 8s.0d to 7s.0d per week, and were expected soon to fall by another shilling. Those who

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 90.

\textsuperscript{115} Ollera Station Records, Journal of John Everett, UNERA, A103; V3053/10.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.


sought work had no alternative but to accept this meagre pittance.\(^{119}\) Not only were there many more eager applicants for the available positions but even the mildest protestor was deemed ‘saucy’ and thus merited immediate dismissal and ‘blacklisting’. Even those farmers who paid higher wages than their neighbours offered no real alternative, as they sought to reduce costs by employing fewer workers.\(^{120}\) Employment opportunities, like access to poor relief, had therefore become an important and effective mechanism of social control.\(^{121}\)

If the more highly-skilled ‘constant’ men were suffering, the agricultural labourers who comprised the vast majority of rural workers in Wiltshire were in an even worse position. In 1850-51 Caird noted that while many rural labourers in the Wiltshire ‘Chalk’ received 7s.0d per week, wages of 6s a week were not uncommon.\(^{122}\) Agricultural wages in the arable districts of Wiltshire had therefore returned to, or had fallen below, their level in 1770. The *Morning Chronicle*’s investigator, who was appalled by what he saw, found that in 1849 ‘[the labourers] were convinced… that their circumstances are so low and abject that it would be impossible to push them further [down]’.\(^{123}\) He reported that in some districts farmers had ‘combined’ to pay their labourers fortnightly at the rate of 6s cash and 6s-worth of ‘grist’ corn. By paying in ‘grist’, the ‘tailings’ which were otherwise all but unsaleable, the farmer at once reduced his cash outlays and increased his profits; *all at the labourers’ expense*. Similar ‘extras’ or payments in kind were made in the form of equally-unsaleable cider and even by distributing the meat from dead or diseased stock.\(^{124}\) The profits which resulted from such stratagems were considerable. In 1843, it was reported that, if able to be sold at market, ‘tailings’ were worth only 1s.0d per bushel, whereas their value ‘in kind’ was estimated to be 5s.0d–6s.0d.\(^{125}\) One can only agree with the *Morning Chronicle*’s man, who wrote,

> When I was informed that in Wilts, proverbial for the low scale of its wages, the labourers were better off as a class than some of their neighbours, I could not avoid ejaculating — ‘God help them elsewhere!’\(^{126}\)

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\(^{119}\) *Morning Chronicle*, 27\(^{th}\) October, 1849, p.5.

\(^{120}\) Ibid.


\(^{122}\) Caird, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

\(^{123}\) Ibid.


\(^{126}\) *Morning Chronicle*, 27\(^{th}\) October, 1849. A generation earlier Cobbett had reached a similar conclusion. He believed that the Chalk-lands labourers were ‘the worst used people on the face of the earth.’ Cobbett, *op. cit.*, p. 320.
It must be stressed, however, that when considering the wages of agricultural labourers in the arable south of England throughout most of the nineteenth century both ‘average’ and ‘weekly’ are artificially-imposed concepts. Wages were generally paid by the ‘piece’ or the ‘lump’. Payment was made by the task, by the day or by the hour and no concession was made for illness, bad weather or even for a rare national holiday.¹²⁷ In 1849 the Morning Chronicle reported that the stated wage of 8s.0d per week for rural labourers in Suffolk was ‘a perfect delusion’. Their actual earnings were closer to 4s.0d a week.¹²⁸ To add to the hardship, wages quoted as weekly were often actually paid fortnightly.¹²⁹ Thus labourers’ actual earnings fell far short of the declared rates.¹³⁰

Employment opportunities were also highly seasonal and the wages paid varied accordingly. Work was most plentiful between April and November and both opportunities and returns reached their maximum during the harvest weeks of late summer, when double rates applied and whole families took to the fields.¹³¹ It was upon these lucrative weeks that most rural labouring families depended for their cottage rent, and for the purchase of such necessary and expensive items as shoes, clothing and household necessities.¹³² The post-harvest weeks were just as critical to the ‘outdoor’ labouring family’s subsistence. By diligent gleaning, which could return grain worth twice the harvester’s weekly earnings, his wife and children could enable the family to survive the winter.¹³³ Throughout the harsh winter months many families earned ‘no wages at all’, and in late autumn and early spring unemployment was common. Consequently in 1849 it was calculated that in Berkshire and Wiltshire the annual earnings of a typical rural labourer could not exceed 7s 6d per week.¹³⁴

The intricacy with which tasks were graded and rewarded according to the skill needed, the season involved and the number of workers per task can be seen in the invaluable preparatory list which John Everett compiled in mid-1838. Employment opportunities also

¹²⁹ Morning Chronicle, 27th October, 1849. p. 5.
¹³¹ Morning Chronicle, 27th October, 1849. p. 5; Ollera Station Records, Notebook of John Everett, 1836-48, UNERA, A103:V231.
¹³⁴ Morning Chronicle, 27th October, 1849. p. 5
varied according to the age, skill, and marital status of the male worker and to the number and ages of his children. Above all, however, opportunities and payments varied at the behest of the individual employer. Everett’s Chute Lodge list details the multiple tasks which he could expect his farm labourers to perform. Each task had its particular payment for a stated amount of work.\textsuperscript{135} The following extract shows the fineness of the grading involved.

\begin{quote}
\textit{\ldots Labourers Work}
Wages from 7s to 10s per Week
Boys Wages from 2s to 4s per Week
Womens from 3s to 4s per Week
[\textit{U}]sually work from 6 till 6 and are allowed two hours in each day for their meals, have Beer and double Wages during the harvest and then work as long as their Masters require.
Turnip and Bean hoeing is done at from 5s to 10s per acre, the first time, and from 3s to 5s per acre, the second time, and should always be done twice
Reaping from 6s to 12s per acre
Mowing and taking up corn from 2s3d to 3s per acre
Mowing field Grass, from 16d to 20d per acre
Mowing meadow and Sainfoin Grass, from 2s 6d to 3s 6d per acre, and sometimes have Beer
Hay trussing from 12d to 15d per ton
Thrashing Wheat, from 16d to 2s per sack
A Labourer will usually thrash 1 sack of Wheat per day…If he does a good days work
\end{quote}

These were among the many tasks for which the experienced farm labourers who were brought to Ollera by the Everett brothers in the 1840s and 1850s would have possessed the skills. That almost to a man they remained for many years in the Everetts’ employ proves that neither party was disappointed.

Wages and the availability and seasonality of work opportunities were therefore crucial determinants of living standards, for in the 1830s and 1840s many skilled rural labourers remained unemployed for six or more months of the year.\textsuperscript{136} Young single men were most likely to be worst affected. Even when they were hired, they received much lower wages than all married men.\textsuperscript{137} Whenever possible families were maintained outside the workhouse, for maintenance ‘indoors’ consistently far exceeded the cost of ‘outdoor’ relief. Young unemployed single men were more likely to be admitted to the workhouse.\textsuperscript{138} Those

\textsuperscript{135} Olleria Station Records, Notebook of John Everett, 1836-48, \textit{UNERA}, A103:V231.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, 27\textsuperscript{th} October, 1849.
\textsuperscript{137} BPPSC ‘Women and Children’, pp. 76, 81.
who gained a modicum of ‘outdoor’ relief through two days of road-mending earned no more than 3s and were debarred from paid work for the rest of the week. As a result there was a powerful incentive for people to marry young and to produce a large family of dependent children. In this way they could qualify for assistance from the parish.

Families with several children whose little boys were not yet old enough to work were hit hardest by poverty. They were caught in a ‘poverty cycle’ whose worst effects, barring accident, ill-health or the death of the ‘breadwinner’, would not recur until the onset of old age and infirmity. In 1849 the Morning Chronicle’s investigator reported upon one such family which contained seven children under the age of eight. His initial reluctance to credit that the man, who supported his family on 7s.0d-8s.0d per week, could not afford the 4d a week charged to ‘educate’ his two elder children soon changed to horrified agreement. For them much more than schooling was unaffordable. So too were such ‘luxuries’ as medicine for the children when sick and sugar to sweeten the family’s 2ozs of tea per week. On occasion ‘salt butter… not fit to grease a waggon (sic) with’ replaced the tea ‘when we are ill or our stomachs are dainty’. This was the budget for the family of nine...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>1s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>0s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon</td>
<td>0s 5d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>5s 0d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soda, soap, etc</td>
<td>0s 5d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>0s 8d</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8s.0d</strong></td>
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Little wonder then that, with parental approval and despite observers’ criticism, many small boys began work at age seven or eight. For 3d a day (1s 6d a week) they worked a twelve hour day, either ‘waiting upon’ their fathers, scaring birds, tending poultry or gathering firewood. By age ten to twelve ‘according to strength’ they could earn 2s 6d a week leading the plough horses, performing odd jobs and assisting at the hay harvest. Youths aged thirteen and fourteen earned from 3s.0d to 3s 6d a week holding the plough, working in the stable or driving the team. From the age of fifteen or sixteen when they began mowing, reaping, hedging and ditching, they earned up to 5s.0d or 6s.0d a week. At eighteen, when

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140 BPPSC ‘Women and Children’ 1843, p. 81.
141 Morning Chronicle, 27th October, 1849, p. 5
142 BPPSC ‘Women and Children’, p.33.
they were approaching full adult capability, they earned between 4s 6d. and 6s.0d.\textsuperscript{143} From a light-hearted comment in William Everett’s notebook we know that young Billy Cannings’ life was following this path. In mid-1838 aged seven, though apparently ‘needing to grow a great deal’ he was already assisting his father, who was ‘teaching his boy the ways of sheep’.\textsuperscript{144} Although girls generally remained longer at school than their brothers, when seasonal work in the fields was available for women many small girls aged eight or nine became full-time child minders of their younger siblings or, at 1s.0d a week and their keep, of their neighbours’ children.\textsuperscript{145} For families where ‘every farthing earned by any member’ made a significant difference to their lives there was no alternative to the employment of small children.\textsuperscript{146}

Women and children were increasingly relegated to the most menial and lowly-paid agricultural tasks at the seasons in which the demand for labour was at its peak. Mature women and girls over the age of seventeen picked stones, spread manure, hoed and weeded the newly-planted crops in the poorly-paid spring season. While most ‘followed after’ their men at hay sel and harvest some skilled women reaped or bound the sheaves.\textsuperscript{147} However by 1841 the census returns showed that women comprised only a small percentage of the workforce in the arable southern counties.\textsuperscript{148} When they could find work women earned only about half of the adult male wage.\textsuperscript{149} In 1842-3 it was estimated that in the Wiltshire Chalklands their daily wages, which varied according to skill, were: 7d a day in early winter, 8d in spring, 8d to 10d at hay sel and 1s ‘and beer’ in the harvest weeks. However when employed for the full week even highly-skilled women appear to have earned less, as ‘lump’ sums of 4s for harvest work and 4s 6d to 5s for women reapers are given in the same official report.\textsuperscript{150} Field work was considered appropriate work for both pregnant women and nursing mothers but inappropriate, on the grounds of propinquity, for adolescent girls.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, pp. 31, 32.
\textsuperscript{144} Ollera Station Records, Notebook of William Everett, 1836-48’, UNERA, A103:V231.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} BPP, SC ‘Women and Children’, 1843, op. cit., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{148} Snell, op. cit., p. 57 (footnote).
\textsuperscript{149} Humphries, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
\textsuperscript{150} BPP. SC. ‘Women and Children’, 1843. pp. 6-7, 56.
\textsuperscript{151} op. cit., p. 10.
Women’s work in the agricultural south was always supplementary and represented an invaluable component of the ‘family economy’. Gleaning was the most valuable source of supplementary income in agriculture for women for it guaranteed their families’ subsistence in the winter.\textsuperscript{152} It was also perhaps among the most exhausting ‘outdoor’ tasks that women undertook. At Calne in 1843 Mrs Smart, the wife of a stone-mason who worked ‘irregularly’ for 15s.0d per week, gave evidence that with the assistance of her daughters aged ten, fifteen and eighteen, she had gleaned six bushels of grain in three weeks. By undertaking long hours of back-breaking work, often in wet clothing, they could collect grain worth the equivalent of three weeks’ work by her husband.\textsuperscript{153} Leaving home at two in the morning and returning when the day’s work ceased at seven in the evening, the women gleaned crops within a radius of seven miles from their home. Little wonder that in the process Mrs Smart had ‘strained herself’ through such hard, but essential effort.\textsuperscript{154} However, although the practice persisted throughout the nineteenth century, gleaning was increasingly converted from a customary ‘right’ into an arbitrarily-dispensed and restricted privilege.\textsuperscript{155} The loss of this valuable customary right, one of the few which southern rural labourers retained after enclosure, impacted heavily upon their living standards.\textsuperscript{156}

The abject poverty to which the majority of southern agricultural labourers were reduced in the decades after 1815 was nowhere more apparent than in the state of their housing. Constant and unparalleled population growth had seen cottage rents almost double in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Thereafter the problem worsened as farmers and landowners, in an attempt to reduce the cost of maintaining the growing numbers of resident poor, took the deliberate decision to demolish or neglect their stock of rural housing. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s successive governmental reports found a ‘universal’

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 65-66.
\textsuperscript{156} J. Humphries, ‘Enclosure, Common Rights and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, \textit{Journal of Economic History}, No. 50, 1990. pp. 18, 32-33. Such customary rights included grazing rights for a cow, pig or poultry on common lands; fuel-gathering ‘by hook or by crook’, turf-cutting and foraging for berries, nuts and windfalls in woodlands, and most importantly, gleaning after harvest.
shortage of rural housing.¹⁵⁷ The squalor was at its worst in the overcrowded ‘open’ villages, in which, in the 1820s, Cobbett found ‘wretched hovels’...little better than pigsties’.¹⁵⁸ Twenty years later several surgeons reported to the government on the deplorable conditions that existed in their district on the border of Wiltshire and Dorset.¹⁵⁹ Typhus, tuberculosis and other diseases of over-crowded, unsanitary and ill-ventilated housing were common.¹⁶⁰ Both Studely and Stourpaine were by-words of immiseration, while from Blandford a businessman described the conditions in the surrounding villages.

...At Milton Abbas ... on the average, at the late census, there were thirty-six persons in each separate house. The houses there...each [contain] two dwellings with four rooms. In most of these dwellings there are two families, ... on the average a family of nine to every two rooms. ... Kingston is another village where there is a similar want of accommodation, and where you may see open stagnant drains, pools, and filth of all descriptions.¹⁶¹

Change could only have been for the worse after 1838, when an investigator reported tersely: ‘No pity can be too great for a labourer with sickness in a small crowded cottage.’¹⁶² In 1842 Mary Cox described how, at seventeen, the six members of her family had shared two rooms of a four-roomed house with a couple and their three children.¹⁶³ In the 1850s Somerville protested at the high rents charged for derelict housing in the arable south, where, from their weekly wage of 7s.0d to 8s.0d, labourers paid 1s 2d to 1s 4d (£3 or £3.10s per annum) for jerry-built or ‘crumbling clay and wood’ tenements without gardens.¹⁶⁴ These substandard living conditions persisted into the last quarter of the century when Richard Jefferies described similar overcrowding. Two or three families either shared a dilapidated and subdivided farm cottage or occupied ‘converted’ sheds and outhouses.¹⁶⁵ Even in 1893, a governmental inquiry into rural housing found that ‘[the] number, size and comfort of rooms, sanitary conditions and water supplies [remained] sadly deficient’. Throughout the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 87.
¹⁶³ BPP. SC. ‘Women and Children’, 1843, p. 90.
nineteenth century therefore, the ‘systematic waste’ of the labour force in the agricultural south persisted.\textsuperscript{166}

The poor quality and meagre quantity of the food available to rural families in the agricultural south provided further evidence of their destitution. Throughout the nineteenth century bread remained one of the two principal components of the southern labourers’ diet. At the century’s start it accounted for about sixty per cent of the average family’s budget.\textsuperscript{167} This bread was almost always shop-bought and badly-baked from the inferior ‘crammings’ which were the residue of the milling process.\textsuperscript{168} In 1849 it was calculated that a typical labourer could provide only about half of the amount necessary to satisfy the needs of his family, ‘even when I have work’.\textsuperscript{169} By then potatoes were the other ubiquitous part of the labourers’ diet as were ‘immense quantities of cabbage’ or the despised turnips which were the hallmark of destitution.\textsuperscript{170} Very little meat was included in the diet and when it did appear it was used as a ‘taste’ or garnish. It was never fresh, as ‘butcher’s meat’ neither ‘kept’ nor was it affordable. In 1863, Dr. Smith’s comprehensive survey found that most male agricultural labourers in the south consumed less than seven ounces per week.\textsuperscript{171} Their female dependents seldom tasted any and, from accepted necessity, most mothers ate least of all.\textsuperscript{172} When, as a Sunday treat the male ‘breadwinner(s)’ tasted meat, it invariably comprised a couple of ounces of the cheapest, second-quality bacon which, because of the lack of both adequate cooking facilities and sufficient fuel, was often eaten raw.\textsuperscript{173} However parents with few children or those whose children could contribute to the ‘family economy’ could afford to add cheese to the monotonous staple diet of poor-quality bread, potatoes and garden vegetables, usually cabbage. Potatoes were eaten cold or made more ‘edible’ by the addition of fat and/or ‘pot liquor’, the water in which the cabbage was boiled.\textsuperscript{174} Lost access to the commons and farmers’ reluctance to ‘break bulk’ meant that milk was almost entirely absent

\textsuperscript{166} Somerville, op. cit., p. 127.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., pp.26-27.
\textsuperscript{170} Jefferies, op. cit., p. 79; Morning Chronicle, 28\textsuperscript{th} November, 1849. p. 5.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., pp.26-27.
\textsuperscript{172} Morning Chronicle, 29\textsuperscript{th} October, 1849. p.5. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., pp. 26-27.
from southern labourers’ diets. The nourishing oatmeal which was the staple diet of their better-paid and infinitely better nourished northern counterparts to whom their performance was compared unfavourably, was thus rendered inedible.\(^{175}\)

In the early 1850s Somerville recorded details of a Berkshire labourer’s diet and working conditions. The man breakfasted on bread as he walked the two miles to the fields. While he ate his lunch of bread and water from the nearby ditch those who had only one or two days’ work went without. His evening meal consisted of yet more bread and garden vegetables, including nettles, and lard or butter. From his wage of 8s.0d a week he paid 1s.0d in rent for his house and garden. Nevertheless he remained philosophical.

‘I be many a day here with a hungry belly; but, thank God, I be’nt the worst either, for I ha’ work and eight shillin’ a week, and out o’ that we get a bellyful once a day, if not sooner, we get it in the evening.’\(^{176}\)

The paucity of the southern diet explains the popularity of ‘luxuries’ like tea and sugar which increasingly replaced the more-nutritious ale. Although the very small quantities of these expensive items which could be afforded each week were eeked out by ersatz replacements, burnt bread crusts for tea and treacle for sugar, these ‘luxuries’ were deeply offensive to the middle class observers who balanced their sample budgets in exquisite and impossible detail.\(^{177}\) However, even when pared to the bone, those compiled in the late 1830s still necessitated incomes far in excess of those available to the labouring families for whom they were intended. One example which was presented to a governmental enquiry in 1838 was based on an annual income of £32.18.0d.\(^{178}\) It required the labourer to earn 11s.0d a week, a sum which was available to very few of the families at which it was aimed and which was by Cobbett’s earlier reckoning still far below the amount needed for an adequate quality of life.\(^{179}\)

Substandard housing and a subsistence diet also explain the marked regional discrepancies in the height of boys who enlisted in the military in the 1870s. Floud and his co-researchers found that the average height of recruits from the rural south was one inch

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\(^{175}\) Burnett, op. cit, p. 32.

\(^{176}\) Somerville, op. cit, pp. 119-120.


\(^{179}\) Cobbett, op. cit., p. 387.
(2.5 cms) less than those from the agricultural north. The outcome of a century of sustained and increasing deprivation was also made starkly evident by similar research, which found that the heights of convicts transported to Australia in the 1830s were significantly below those of their fathers who were born in the 1780s. Dietary inadequacy and low wages were compounded by the rigours of the ‘poverty cycle’ which was at its most acute when growing children were below working age. Although he blamed ‘over walking’ and working at too young an age, one of the Blandford surgeons who reported to the 1842 commissioners noted the frequency with which boys suffered from ‘consumption, glandular enlargement, rheumatism and bone and joint problems’. All were as likely to have been the caused by rickets induced by prolonged malnutrition and by overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions as they were by over-exertion. In 1850 the journalist from the Morning Chronicle summed up the conditions he had found during his long and detailed investigation. In a few terse and telling words he concluded that he had made ‘a sentimental journey in search of the horrible’.

These then were the living and working conditions that each successive party of bounty immigrants who came to Ollera would have left; this was their Wiltshire. However it must be repeated that in gaining assistance to leave, they proved both their worth and that they did not come from the most disadvantaged and degraded level of the labouring ‘orders’. Instead their roots seem to have lain in the group about whom an official wrote... ‘The better class of poor feel deeply [their] degradation’, and they remained sufficiently resourceful to seize the chance to improve their lot. As with all subordinated and subjugated groups of people the record contains very few first-hand accounts of their thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Most accounts were written by educated outsiders. Therefore, though close, even those written by those officials and journalists who were sympathetic and whose observations carry the ‘ring’ of truth, remain ‘second hand’. Even when speech and opinions were directly reported they had, in the process, been filtered through the mind (and had thus become

183 BPPSC ‘Women and Children’, 1843, p. 82.
184 Morning Chronicle, 30th March, 1850.
subject to the opinions and biases) of the observer, who remained, despite his empathy, more-educated, better-off and above all part of another world; the distanced ‘outsider’.\textsuperscript{186} While all who reported upon conditions in agriculture in the decades after 1815, agreed unanimously upon the depth of poverty and immiseration suffered by people in the rural south, many officials varied widely in their opinions of the people themselves. While all noted their inability to save, most observers ‘blamed the victim’.\textsuperscript{187} They found them to be disinterested in furthering their skills, lazy, immoral, generally untrustworthy and prone to drunken behaviour. Nor was their ‘work too hard for them, even when they [lacked] enough food’.\textsuperscript{188} Other more perceptive and less judgemental reporters recognized that when adequately-paid work was provided they remained ‘as willing and industrious as ever’.\textsuperscript{189} Like Cobbett in the previous generation, the Rev. Sydney Godolphin Osborne found that southern labourers were valued far less than the animals they tended and that their ‘crimes’, were those of deep deprivation.\textsuperscript{190} His fellow vicar agreed that in his parish,

\begin{quote}
‘the character of the people is patient, enduring, thankful and civil, but either from extreme poverty, or the habit from earliest youth of seeking their fuel in the woods or fields, they are rather given to pilfering’.\textsuperscript{191}
\end{quote}

This comment is crucially important for, despite its apparent mildness, it reveals the magnitude of the gap in experience and understanding which yawned between ‘masters’ and ‘men’ in the rural south. Almost certainly charitable and benevolent, the vicar nevertheless saw only what he wanted and was allowed to see, for an appearance of deference, obedience and gratitude was the ‘due’ which the agricultural labourer, the ‘retainer’, was expected to pay to a paternalist master. The deferential mask which the stereotypical ‘Hodge’ and his family presented to his ‘betters’ was lifted very rarely. Only an ‘insider’ like Joseph Arch, who began life as an agricultural labourer and rose to prominence in the 1870s first as organizer of the first successful rural union and later as a parliamentarian, could reveal their real attitudes towards their situation. ‘A smooth face and a smooth tongue was what their

\textsuperscript{186} Bushaway, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 118, 126.
\textsuperscript{189} BBPSC. ‘Poor Laws’, 1834, Vol. VIII, Q. 37, p. 579.
\textsuperscript{190} Cobbett, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 311-312; BBPSC. ‘Women and Children’, 1843, pp. 75, 76.
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 79-80. Emphasis added.
benefactors required of them, and they got both. As we shall see, under the vastly different conditions Ollera’s Wiltshire immigrants encountered in New England, some felt secure enough to discard the mask of compliant obedience.

However it is in the final few words of the vicar’s comment that the full extent of the disparity between the contesting cultures was revealed. What the governing classes chose to regard as ‘pilfering’ and a crime, the labourers and their families saw as a customary right. Not only were furze gathering, turf-cutting and the collection of windfalls essential sources of both fuel and sustenance in the relatively treeless ‘Chalk’ district, they had a long-established legal basis. By continuing to exercise their customary rights to conduct such activities and similar seasonal ‘doles’ and boundary processioning/possessioning’ in the years after enclosure, the labouring population in the rural south sought to maintain the collective record or ‘memory’ of their communities. When both parties honoured their obligations under paternalism and thus to customary society, which remained deeply rooted in rural mores, an uneasy peace was maintained. But when a landowner who was either a convert to ‘political economy’, an absentee landlord or both, failed to honour his side of the unspoken bargain inherent in paternalism protest activities would ensue.

In the decades after Swing such action was usually covert. Poaching, sometimes for cash but more often an essential source of food for the family, was ubiquitous. Carefully-targeted arson, or its threat, was as widespread in Wiltshire as it was effective. In the later 1830s and throughout the 1840s it was employed against farmers who concentrated too much upon ‘piece’ workers. However, and more rarely, the judicious use of overt, non-violent action could be just as effective. In February, 1850, labourers at West Lavington held a peaceful, one-day ‘strike’ against the reduction of wages to 6s per week. By showing ‘real strength’ in withdrawing their labour at a time which threatened their landlord’s profitability, they revealed the fragile but nevertheless tacit mutuality of interest which existed between many landlords and their labourers. By intervening in the dispute and reducing rents to retain existing wages, the targeted landowner negotiated a solution which was agreeable to both his

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193 Bushaway, op.cit, p. 126-127. The deep significance of boundary perambulation in customary society is shown by the confusion or conflation of the name given to the act by the people of Hurstbourne Tarrant in Hampshire. In ‘processioning’ their boundaries they were ‘possessing’ the resources that lay within them.
194 Hopkins, op. cit., passim.
farmers and his labourers.\textsuperscript{196} Between the two extremes of protest behaviour lay such activities as ‘rough music’ and ‘club’ law. While these have often been interpreted as pointers to the emergence of ‘class’ allegiances, it is more likely that they were important signs of the retention of customary attitudes and behaviours.\textsuperscript{197} The controlled respect which characterized the protest activities of rural crowds before, during and after Swing was therefore perhaps more an assertion of their customary right to protest than a demonstration of deference to authority.\textsuperscript{198} The appearance of compliance was what mattered.

The unbridgeable gap in understanding and empathy which separated the ‘governors’ from those they governed is evident in the attitudes of even the most dutiful and responsible resident paternalist landowners. John Everett provided an example. In the letter in which he informed his brother of the Java group’s safe arrival, while he mentioned the relationship between his brother’s housemaid and the bereaved Phillimore, John mentioned neither the loss of the man’s whole family nor the deaths of the Spicer’s children.\textsuperscript{199} Even when the prevalence of childhood death in the mid-nineteenth century is taken into account, the omission surely remains significant. Nor was the mind-set of the sympathetic author William Howitt any different. In his account of rural life in the south in the period, he says of the rural labourer... ‘He is as much of an animal as air and exercise, strong living and sound sleeping, can make him \textit{and he is nothing more}.’\textsuperscript{200} Although Howitt was correct in his judgement that they were ‘mighty useful animals in their day and generation’, his lack of understanding is evident in his assumption that the labourers enjoyed all these amenities in ‘the hungry forties’.\textsuperscript{201} However the last word on attitudes must be left to the southern farmer who, with brutal frankness, told Somerville that, ‘[I] do with [my] labourers as [I] do with [my] potatoes’. Somerville went on to explain that, like his potatoes, the farmer ‘pitted’ his workers...

‘... he did not keep all the potatoes out for use every day; and he did not, like some farmers, try to find work for the men all the year round. When he did not need them he put them in the workhouse until they were needed.’\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, pp. 219, 220. Bushaway, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 119, 120.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{199} Ollera Station Records, Letter, John to Rev. Charles, 16\textsuperscript{th} August, 1853, UNERA, A103;V3052/4
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Somerville, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 383.
VIEW OF OLLERA STATION IN 1840, probably by John Everett.