

PLAN OF A POSSIBLE BOOK ON EARLS COLNE

Written in c.1980 by Alan Macfarlane, as a possible outline of a book or books on Earls Colne. This was never completed for various reasons, but these plans may give others ideas of topics to pursue.

PHYSICAL

This would constitute a description of the physical stage upon which the events over three and a half centuries would be played out. The metaphor of the stage, with allusions to Shakespeare etc. is a suitable one for a portrait whose high point is the Shakespearean period. It could mean that the former chapter should be called 'Actors' rather than informants, and this chapter the 'stage' (and the next 'the cast'? In any case, the point is that the material world of soil,vegetation,climate,weather,etc. although partially man-made, itself helped to shape the events and thoughts of the people. One could differentiate here between factors which were beyond human control, given by the external world, and those shaped by man.

Among the major material forces outside human control are:
soil -what is it over the parish and how far does it effect crops etc.
altitude - hills and elevations
natural springs/rivers - though these,of course are partly constructed
climate - general long-term features of English climate over the whole period, e.g. 'Little Ice Age'
weather - short-term changes(uniquely documented for a village in Josselin's diary, but also discernible from accounts etc. When were the major droughts,floods, etc. as far as we can see?)
building and other materials - amount of stone,thatch,wood etc.
naturally in the parish
location - distance from ports, major towns, major roads etc.
These are all things which tend to change either not at all, or very slowly, Braudel's deepest structures, rolling over hundreds of years. A description of most of them, except weather, would tend one assumes to be a description for the whole period.

Among the major material forces which are themselves created by an inter-action between the nature and man are the following.
vegetation - the types of major crops, the amount and location of woodland, the amount of vegetables and fruits
settlement pattern - where houses and other buildings were placed and grouped and how this changed over time and what it reflected in terms of social divisions and priorities
field shapes and patterns - how old the field boundaries were and how they and the names given to them changed over time, consolidation and division etc. In these last two subjects we have an absolutely unrivalled set of information arising out of the maps/rolls etc. and the work that has been done on them. We can study the changing

topography of an English village over 350 years in a way that has never been done before.

land use - this would be a combination of the land shapes and vegetation patterns i.e. what was grown where/when and for what purpose. The accounts of the Priory and Harlakenden as well as Josselin's Diary will again provide abundant information on this.

communications -the construction and maintenance of the network of paths, rights of way, roads etc. is of vital importance and there is a vast amount of material, from the disputes over Colneford bridge, in the court leet etc. concerning this. It was vitally important for trade etc. and absorbed a great deal of local energy. It would also be necessary to look at the waterways and drainage and streams.

housing - the size, structure and materials of housing over this period will have a close correlation with the whole mental and social world - e.g. the possibilities of large families, the relations with servants etc. Unfortunately, we have no inventories, but we should still be able to say something about this.

tools and implements - agricultural and artisan's tools, particularly the use of ploughs etc. is of vast importance on the nature of labour organization etc. Particularly in the accounts, there should be hints about this.

furniture and fittings - again the absence of inventories prevents a very thorough examination of this, but there should be something we can say

apparel and clothing - again, the treatment will be modified by the absence of the inventories, but accounts etc. should contain something weights and measures and coinage - these vital indices, necessary for conducting a commercial society, like the roads, needed to be controlled and maintained and there should be something on them.

food and diet- there is some marvellous material here in the early account rolls and probably in Josselin; one should be able to throw some light on the degree to which this is a society on the edge of starvation etc. For the end of the period we have the overseers accounts which would again be very enlightening.

non-human power sources - one major measure of 'growth' is the amount of power available per person. Putting on one side animal and human power, one would try to estimate the amount of power from the wind and water mills which were clearly of such great importance. The control over the mills could well be graphically portrayed through the great riot at the mill, though this would probably be best described in detail elsewhere.

disease - the endemic and epidemic diseases which surrounded the population and had such a great effect on their lives - as can graphically be seen with Josselin - could be treated here or in the chapter on population.

No doubt there are other major physical features omitted, but this includes all the central features of Essex/England described so

vividly in Harrison's Description of Britain, written in Essex in the 1580's. It would be nice to quote Harrison before each section, to give some continuity and a more general picture before entering on the minute detail. By the end of this chapter(s) people should have a strong sense of the physical world, a world that has all but vanished now, though a few features remain. Such a world was as much a result of man as a shaper of man, but the play cannot be understood without the physical setting.

POPULATION

Having described certain key actors/informants in the first chapter, we then looked at the physical stage. Within that changing landscape over the three hundred and fifty years there was a rapidly fluctuating population. This could be looked at as the total cast. Many were transients, some lived out their whole lives in the bounded area, others had families long resident there. By combining the methods of family reconstitution and other sources it should be possible to establish generally some features about the population. Among these would be the following:

the likely totals of population at various points in time: in the absence of census and listing we have to work from indirect cross-sections such as the hearth tax, association roll etc. Before such cross-sections it is even more difficult to be precise about the population since we have to infer from things like annual totals of baptisms, wills, manorial transfers etc. A good deal of the analysis will be devoted to establishing how accurate such methods are when compared to each other. Are we dealing in a parish which is trying to support growing numbers of persons, or where the population continues to drop in the fifteenth century and then rises in the late sixteenth, to remain stable? Can we use any of the eighteenth century documents to indicate the total population, or can we use the number of houses etc?

Even more difficult to ascertain, though some rough attempt should be made to do so, is the age and sex structure of the population at various points in time. A great deal will be influenced by the proportion of children, imbalances in the sex ratio etc. But it may be impossible to do much here.

As regards fertility, it will again be necessary to see whether analysis of parish registers can be trusted to give evidence on this of a believable character. If it can, one would obviously look at age-specific marital fertility rates and investigate any evidence that natural fertility was being controlled through birth control etc.

For mortality, there are the same problems. But the value of the computer should be great here in some preliminary analysis of seasonal/age and sex-specific mortality patterns over time. It might even be possible to work out something on occupational/wealth/residence correlations with mortality patterns, continuing work we have

already done. This would tie in with the section on endemic and epidemic disease in the previous chapter. We also have the interesting check of Josselin's diary to help establish the accuracy/cause of death of parish register entries. I think there is also something to be found in the overseer's accounts.

As for nuptiality, there are considerable problems as we know in getting enough marriages. Are there significant numbers of 'consensual unions', or what? But if it is possible, it would be worth documenting changes in the age at first marriage, widow re-marriage rates etc.

The difficulties of establishing the demographic patterns are largely caused by the very high geographical mobility rates of the parish. A study of geographical mobility is hence crucial. We have begun this elsewhere, but should be able to look at such things as: what proportion of persons born in the parish lived there for their whole life or married there; how many people moved out and then came back later in life; the effects/operations of the settlement laws; the ages at which people tended to move and the distances; the degree of endogamy and marriage distances.

In view of the poor quality of the data, it is probably not worth going into the elaborate statistical analysis which, in any case has been done much more efficiently by the Cambridge Group. Our main concern would really be to see the limits of historical demography in a parish such as EC with high mobility and to give a sense of the over-all population.

ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION

Having looked at informants, the physical world and demographic patterns, we could turn to how people earn a living. There is extremely rich material here since, by combining all the records, we should be able to say a great deal about what people did and how they were controlled. One way of breaking this up would be to look at the main spheres of activity. Among these would be:

agriculture: the organization of agricultural labour, payments, numbers of types of labourer, contracts, rewards, types of task etc. The account books, both of the fifteenth century and Harlakenden, as well as Josselin, would give special material on this which could be combined with the more general material in the court leet/baron, overseer's accounts etc. This might be the place to consider wage labour and labour mobility in general.

artisans: we know that EC had an important indigenous cloth-working population and a study of them, combined with the many others small artisans (leather-workers, tanners, etc etc.) would be necessary to give a good picture of the place.

retailers: here one would consider the very important group of butchers, bakers, shop-keepers in general and especially publicans and alehouse keepers. It would be nice to explore this group right through the period. Under this heading could be considered the marketing and trading in goods

in general, the market and fair, the controls over buying and selling, the provision of credit and loans etc.
service industries: the important role of millers, blacksmiths etc.
would need to be looked at, who they were, how many of them were there.
bound labour: the central feature of servants and apprentices and the meaning of 'bondsman' would come in here.

Anyone who considers the English material in any kind of perspective, e.g. compared to the hereditary occupational castes of India or the absence of wage labour and rural merchants/artisans in many parts of traditional Europe will be struck by the highly developed and widespread non-agricultural sector. Agriculture may have supplied the raw material, but there were a host of others transforming and moving about this material. The distances goods travelled and the ways in which they were transformed should make a fascinating study - in which the account rolls will be especially important.

With all our documents it should be possible to see what proportions of the population were engaged in various occupations at various points in time. In order to make the analysis more concrete, it might be worth providing a detailed profile of the life of one person of each major occupational category.

Thus one would deal with farming and other manufacturing techniques, accounting, trade and traders, commerce and exchange, prices, money, marketing and markets.

PROPERTY

In many ways this could be regarded as both the most complex and the most important chapter. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, since Marx and before, we have realized that property, which is another word for the relations of production, is of crucial interest in understanding societies and particularly capitalist society. Secondly, it is clear to anyone who has read at all widely in English history that property relations were considered by the inhabitants themselves as of fundamental importance. This is apparent whether one looks at law (e.g. Coke etc) or at political philosophy (Harrington, Locke etc.). It is also shown by the fact that perhaps ninety per cent of the material that survives for EC concerns property - namely most of the court rolls, rentals, wills etc. Since it is over the supposed revolution in property relations that the debate over the origins of capitalism is fought, this is a further reason for dealing with it with some care.

There are numerous ways in which one could break up this huge topic. One could look at the main types of tenure by which real estate/chattel goods were held:
leasehold and leasing
copyhold and customary
freehold

One could look at the major ways in which rights in objects were transferred between people:

mortgages

inheritance

sale

One would have to look at the ways in which disputes over property were resolved and rights were preserved. This would take one into the enormous files of the court materials, deeds etc.etc. For chattels one would have to include wills & ecclesiastical courts.

One would certainly have to look at the working out of these abstract principles in practice. Who owned what, when, for how long etc. Here the massive amount of work that has already been done on land-ownership patterns, reconstructing the history of each landholding and each house could be fitted in and would give an unrivalled portrait of changes over a long period. Shifts in the nature of chattel property could also be investigated through wills. Obviously this would tell us a great deal both about the development of concepts of absolute property, as opposed to communal property, and about the changing distribution of property.

One topic which would have to be investigated in some detail would be the meaning of 'lordship', the concept of the 'manor' and the rights in 'incorporeal things'(e.g. presentation to the living, rights to appoint the schoolmaster, tithes and other church rights). Unless one realizes and documents the fact that we are dealing with a vast bundle or tangle of property rights, held in a complex way by the lord of the manor, in which there are both rights and also duties on the part of the lord, it will be impossible to understand the way society worked. All this is excellently illustrated, fortunately, in the various types of dispute over property which Roger and Richard Harlakenden engaged in. The major types of disputes were:

ownership of the manor:Harlakenden vs.Oxford

lease of the mill:Harlakenden vs Oxford

demesne of the manor: Harlakenden vs.Aylmer

hop-grounds: Harlakenden vs.Sibthorpe

presentation to school: Harlakenden vs Oxford

presentation to living: Harlakenden vs.Oxford

tithes: Harlakenden vs.Oxford

copyholders rights: Harlakenden vs.Partridge

maintenance of bridge: Harlakenden vs.villagers

timber in Colne park: Harlakenden vs.Ive

copyholder's rights: Harlakenden vs.tenants

There are also other,smaller, disputes and indications of disputes in many other sources.

COURTS

It is possible that this chapter should come before that on property etc.

It would be about the machinery of law and justice - what is generally known as adjectival(Austin) or procedural law. How the system operated, rather than the substantive norms which it enforced. Again, it is an extremely important subject since the twin pillar of the system, alongside property was the law. Indeed, since nothing else could have operated without the legal structure, it is possible to consider it as determining property, trade etc. Naturally, as with all other topics, it is impossible to understand the situation in EC without considering the wider web of ties within which it was caught. One possible way of starting to break down the institutional machinery would be to look at the four major legal systems which were interlocked but separable.:

common law: this stretched down from King's Bench and Common Pleas, through the Assizes and Quarter Sessions, down to the court leet and court baron. No one has ever brought together a large part of the surviving records from all these sources for one place, so that it would be unique chance to test the interconnections and accuracy and nature of the legal system.

equity: here one could combine the marvellous Chancery material with that in Requests, Star Chamber and Court of Wards.

customary: this is basically the customary side of the court baron, local variants on common law.

canon law: the archdeacon's and bishop's courts, enforcing mainly morality.

The discussion of substantive matters concerning property would have been done elsewhere. That concerning morality - as shown in ecclesiastical and equity courts above all - would also be best dealt with elsewhere. Probably this would be the place to deal with what were known as pleas of the Crown, that is to say mainly to do with the keeping of public order. While it might be necessary to treat this separately, one might look into patterns of felonies and misdemeanours. The active court leet of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would enable one to make some guesses at the patterns over three centuries.

Needless to say, one will be able to go behind the figures to say something about the people involved. It should also be possible to see something about the detection methods, how much concealed etc. Josselin will be useful here, in order to give some idea not only of what is missing in other records, but of the general reaction to crimes, misdemeanours etc. Many general topics from violence, feuds, patronage etc. should be illuminated. The general degree to which the law was available to all;; the degree to which there was freedom within the law; the concept of equality before the law, all these and others could be examined.

On the interlocking of the courts and the procedure of the courts it should be possible to incorporate a certain amount from the

introductions to the microfiche.

GOVERNMENT

It may be that there is no need for this as a separate chapter because it has already been absorbed by the chapters on property, courts, informants. It grew out of the chapter on 'power' which we originally thought of. It would cover the problems of the integration of the state with the locality, the workings of local government, the nature of local officials, the means of social control, the collection of taxes etc. etc. One of the interesting features of England at this time is the high degree of integration, yet combined with very considerable local autonomy - light taxes, no standing army, yet uniformity etc. How this was achieved and how mirrored in one place would be worth examining.

This would be the major place to deal with public efforts to regulate and redistribute wealth. Thus one would deal with taxation and rates and what they were used for, and particularly the treatment of the poor - poor rates, settlement, apprenticeship, removals and the whole origins of that peculiar institution the 'welfare state'. Taxation used for other purposes, e.g. a standing army/navy, for improving communications etc. would also be dealt with - one of the very peculiar features as compared to many societies was the very low level of personal taxation. What were the reasons for this?

RELATIONSHIPS

This could well turn into a series of chapters since it deals with vast topics such as class, kinship, gender, each of them deserving detailed treatment. But as a start we can differentiate several major criteria upon which human beings have created inequalities/hierarchies/relationships. The aim will be to see in what contexts and in what degree each of these principals were important, can one talk of a 'class' based village, or a 'kinship' based one etc.

The first listed criteria is class, that is the relation to the means of production. This will already have been partially dealt with under property and it may not be necessary to go into it in great detail. But something more needs to be said about things such as the language of class, the nature of movement within the hierarchy, the degree of consciousness of 'class' and the degree of opposition/exploitation. If this was a 'capitalist' society, was it also a 'class' one? It is likely that it will be found that 'class' is not a very appropriate tool for this analysis, though it will still be worth seeing what proportion of the population were members of different wealth groupings.

The second criteria is 'status' - that is something like the idea of 'estate'. The categories most commonly employed at the time, 'yeoman' 'husbandman', 'labourer' etc. were clearly those of status/estate. The complex hierarchy was one of estates, but not the three simple

estates of peasants/lords/burghers of many other cultures, but an infinite gradation. How people achieved and ascribed these statuses will be worth investigating and the precise meaning of such terms. This will border on the whole question of 'honour' and 'prestige' which has been of much concern to anthropologists, particularly of south European societies.

The third axis upon which people are distributed is power. Here one would look at patron-client relations, the exercise of power by various officers, the power given by wealth etc. The degree to which education, physical strength, etc. gave one power would be interesting to analyse. There are plenty of case studies to show the strange way in which the exercise of naked power was prevented; Harlakenden defeated his superior the Earl of Oxford, but was in turn bested by his inferior Henry Abbott.

Another principal for differentiation is gender. The roles and statuses and occupations of males and females are well illustrated in the documents. What did women do? What property could they hold? To what extent were they in the control of their husbands? How were they treated and how did they treat men? The wills, chancery cases and ecclesiastical courts give marvellous information on this, which has never been put together and used. A combination of the economic and social data should be possible.

A further principal of natural differentiation is that of age. What can we tell about the relationships between the old, the middling and the young? Is there anything we can say about the treatment of children, of adolescence, of the married and of the old? Is there any evidence of the youth groups which played such a large part in many parts of Europe? Are there major aging rituals, any age grades/categories? Do the age groups overlap in living, leisure etc? Is there evidence of oppositions/conflicts in any of the documents? What seem to have been the categories of age that people applied?

A principal which is partly natural and partly artificial is kinship. Again there is a great deal of information and many interesting questions to ask. One could look at household composition - though this would be scanty without listings. One could look at the degree to which kinship was important in economic dealings. The nature of inheritance. Kinship conflicts and kinship norms and expectations. Changes in naming patterns of kin and changes in kinship terminology. The residence patterns of kin. Labour organization and kinship. Any evidence of preferential or prescribed kin marriages. Whether kinship was important in legal disputes or in political quarrels. What, in effect, one would be looking at is the workings of a bilateral kinship system over a long period.

Relationships with those who are physically nearby are often very important, especially where kinship is weak. An investigation of neighbourliness and neighbours, of ties which bound them as well as matters over which there were conflicts, would be worthwhile. The presence of informal and formal associations, for example juries and views or any other associations. The patterns of pledging/witnessing etc. could be investigated from this angle.

Friendship is the final obvious form of relationship. It might include 'pseudo-kinship' relationships such as godparents. It might overlap with neighbours and kin. But it is basically concerned with personal choice on the basis of liking.

Thus in this chapter one would be looking at the bonds of society, what held it together and what divided it. Was it in Tonnies dichotomy 'community', that is blood, sentiment, place, or was it 'association', that is contracts, money, markets, class? Was it 'status' in Maine's sense - that is ascribed features, as in the caste system, or was it 'contract', freely entered into relationships of a more temporary kind? All this will become very apparent through the analysis of legal cases as well as the other materials.

MENTALITY

This would be an attempt to study the way in which villagers thought. Among the general themes to be explored would be the possible presence of 'subcultures', or 'popular cultures', of a clash between a 'Great' and a 'Little' tradition in thought and religion of the kind that has been found in most peasantries, including those in southern Europe. Three major areas for analysis would be:

education and literacy

the provision in the village and elsewhere of primary and secondary and university schooling, the grammar school and petty schools; analysis of the ability to write and to read; any evidence of books or of other reading matter (e.g. chapbooks, broadsheets - see Josselin); the importance of literacy in local life; the ability of the non-literate to use a basically literate system (e.g. Mrs. Partridge); analysis of hand-writing of various scribes; signatures to documents; knowledge of affairs in the country and in Europe (as Josselin); the vicar and schoolmaster as educators; mathematical/accounting abilities of villagers as shown in accounts; a gap between 'literate' and 'illiterate' culture?

religion and ritual:

among the topics to be looked at would be; the symbolism of religion; religious nonconformity - heresy and nonconformity, especially the Quakers; patterns of non-attendance at church; sacrilege and sanctity;

the Priory and its history and influence; the church and its upkeep and finances; the religious personnel - vicars and others; attitudes to death and the after-life (as shown in wills/tombs/diary/graves; the various rituals/ceremonials (life-cycle rituals at birth, marriage, death: rituals of the Christian year such as Easter, Xmas, Lent, Carnival: rituals of the agricultural year such as Plough Monday, Rogation, Harvest home etc.: rituals of social relations such as in courtship, greeting, law, sealing of contracts and sales etc.); sacrifice and prayer; God and the Devil and spirits; the degree and nature of overlap between the natural and supernatural orders. The records of the ecclesiastical courts, wills and Josselin's diary are the obvious sources for this analysis, which might also include something on spiritual kinship (godparenthood); fate, necessity, causation, accident and purpose, astrology.

concepts and the structure of thought:

there are many topics here; the sense of humour of the villagers; patterns of speech and language, especially oratory and the use of language in formal settings; changes in grammar and vocabulary over the period; attitudes to night and day (nightwalking, witchcraft, ghosts); attitudes to natural objects (animals, birds, vegetation), to the human body and its parts, to space/boundaries, to time and history and change, to the connection between pain and sin, to colours and their meaning. Although local documents only throw light indirectly on many of these topics and it will be essential not to stretch the evidence too far, or to infer much from absences, nevertheless, in combination with the diary/account book and the depositions, it may be possible to say something under a number of these heads. Again one will be exploring the effects of writing/marketing/religion on people's thoughts. Was there a 'folk' culture, with proverbs, folk tales, folk music, a separate world of fantasy and thought, which co-existed alongside the 'official' culture?

MORALITY

This chapter would try to deal with ethics; what people thought to be right and wrong, and the degree to which their behaviour conformed to such principles. Of course, again it overlaps with the chapters on relationships and on mentality (especially religion), but for a start we can treat it as a separate subject. It is an area which has hitherto been impossible to study from local records since the central sources are either missing or have not been used - they are the ecclesiastical courts, equity courts, private papers (diary and accounts). Hence one will look in vain in recent 'village monographs' for a treatment of this in more than the odd sentence. There are many topics which it would be worth investigating:

sexual morality; shame and virginity, sexual obscenity and decency, sexual symbolism and joking etc. This is a very well-documented area thanks to the ecclesiastical courts and would begin to explore the

question of whether this was an 'honour and shame' culture, with stress on masculinity; boasting about conquests, ribaldry.

economic morality; is there a 'moral economy' in Thompson's sense, with a notion of fair prices and fair dealings, a 'traditional grid' of customary behaviour; what was the attitude to money-lending and borrowing in general, towards usury, towards time as money; what was the attitude toward promises, bonds, contracts, agreements; was there an image of 'limited good' in which the economic pie was seen as limited and hence anyone gaining would be at someone's expense - and hence developed ideas of envy; what was purchasable - what concepts of economic immorality such as corruption, buying favours, fiddling accounts and court rolls, purchasing favours and justice; ideas of charity and economic responsibility for one's neighbours and others further off (church briefs etc.); ethics of saving and accumulating and storing; pressures to distribute and give away. There is a vast amount implicit in the material on all this. One would be testing the general Tawney/Weber thesis of the shift in economic morality from a distributive, non-monetized, peasant system, to a fully integrated market system, where money is the measure of man's worth. theft, poaching and the morality of property. Rackrenting and rent, raising prices and price change, profit and exchange.

personal morality; ideas of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour towards members of the family (as in equity Partridge case), of 'good' and bad use of language (gossip, slander, destruction of reputation, swearing); of universal or personalized standards of truth - lying, deception, falsehood, honesty, 'truth', an Englishman's word..., oaths; ideas of legitimate and illegitimate use of physical force - cruelty to the weak, children, animals, women etc.; ideas of 'fair play' and 'play' and 'sport' in general; the use of threats of violence and of 'protection'; the morality of life - suicide and murder; the responsibility of a person for a widening circle of others - his own family (amoral familism), fellow villagers (the size of the 'moral community'), outsiders and visitors, those living outside the village - a closed or open moral world? Pledging range. The range of mystical/moral interdependence - cursing and witchcraft; ideas of the difference between personal and public morality, public service and duty, the suppression of private interests in the public good; ideas of the 'honourable' man - sources of prestige and esteem; the concept of the 'reasonable' and 'just' man; different moralities for different subsections of the population - e.g. poor, servants, women etc? The whole world of 'customary' and established norms and behaviour - what is right and fair - embodied in common law and customary law and the teachings of the church.

Another set of plans...

PLANS OF A POSSIBLE BOOK(S) ON THE HISTORY OF EARLS COLNE

Alan Macfarlane, written in c.1980: rough draft

It is necessary that the volume(s) have some unifying themes, not only between the various sections in each chapter, but between the chapters. There are various possible ways of providing this (cf. the dramatic unities).

a. the focus on a place - the world of Earls Colne over the centuries. This will indeed be present, but given the fact that EC was obviously no real unit, no real 'community' in any sense, this will not be strong enough in itself. Furthermore, if one were forced to rely on this as the unifying feature by itself it would mean a. that one could not afford to use evidence from outside EC - e.g. from other places, or from literary/legal sources - for this would detract from the dramatic unity.

b. unity created by time - this is what usually holds together history books, watching either a sequence of events, a story or plot, or watching major shifts in institutions. Again there would be something of this here for we would be interested in major and short-term changes at various levels. But again there are problems about taking this as the central organizing principle. Firstly, it would be impossible to follow a series of 'events', except for very short periods such as the Harlakenden disputes. An approach suitable for political history will not work with economic, geographical, demographic etc. changes which either move too fast (e.g. births/marriages/deaths) or too slow (e.g. climatic change). Another difficulty is that just as concentrating on the community as focus over-emphasises the community, artificially re-ifying it, similarly reifies change. It tends to force the historian into inventing rapid change or 'development' even where it does not exist in order to make his material develop/interesting. Thus to write the work as a 'history of Earls Colne', divided even within chapters or sections by time would probably not be satisfactory, though of course at times one will compare fifteenth century to eighteenth century EC. etc.

c. unity created by individuals - this would be the biographical approach, taking, for example, the Harlakendens either individually or family, or Josselin, and watching them at the centre of the events and tides of change. This, of course, is par excellence the approach in drama and novels and it can be extremely effective on a moderate scale. Among the problems for using it for our study here is that dealing with a period of 350 years in principle, it would force one to deal with very short time periods - in the case of the Harlakendens, just the middle century, and in the case of Josselin even less. Even the Earls of Oxford would be too short and in any case we know too little about them.

d. unity created by social dramas - this would combine several of the above. It would be a good way of unifying the legal and

political, and even some of the property material. But a great deal, e.g. in mentality, the material world and property, would still fall outside any social drama, even the major one at the centre of the period.

e. a possible approach, which is still hazy in my mind, but might be more fruitful, is as follows. While combining elements of all the previous four - i.e. making EC the centre of one's analysis, elaborating what changes there were over time, providing biographies where possible and analysing social dramas, all this would be subordinated to a deeper unity. This unity would be provided by trying to create a strong and positive portrait of what an English village and more generally English society was like over these centuries. Often this can only be done by comparing it with one's expectations and by comparisons of what it might have been like - i.e. against an ideal model of what 'pre-industrial' or 'peasant' societies are supposed to be like. Let us assume that we can create a package of features which tend to be associated in most non-industrial societies - some of these in terms of concepts of property, the family, marriage and demography, violence and crime and banditry, have been elaborated in 'Individualism' and 'The Justice...'. It is strongly implied there that there are connections - banditry and certain patterns of violence are connected to a certain type of legal system which is in turn related to a certain economic system. But let us go further. Let us take seriously the central anthropological hypothesis that everything is linked to everything else in some incredibly complicated way - that ploughs, certain forms of stratification, certain marriage payments, the status of women etc. etc. are all somehow interconnected, for example. If this is so and we have the six central fields of interest in relation to EC (material world, economic world, legal and political, social relationships, mentality, morality) we would clearly try to see the interconnections. It would be repetitive and probably impossible to examine each in relation to each of the others, 6 to the power of 6 is a large number and once we took into account that each.

PLEAS OF THE CROWN

It would be appropriate at a first level to follow the classification of pleas of the crown which was maintained by contemporaries, an emic analysis. One such classification is that in Hales' Pleas of the Crown. Only certain of these will be taken out, as appropriate.

A. Immediately against God.

I. Heresy

II. Witchcraft

B. Immediately against Man.

I. Capital

Treason

High

Petty

Felonies

a.by Common Law

i.against the life of man

1.felo de se

2.homicide

3.murder

4.manslaughter

ii.against the goods

1.larceny

2.robbery

iii.against the habitation

1.burglary

2.arson

iv.against the protection of justice

1.breach of prison

b.by Statute

1.buggery

2.rape

3.abduction

4.cutting tongue or eyes

5.stealing records

6.multiplication of gold or silver

7.hunting with disguises

8.bigamy

9.coining

10.gipsies

11.forging a deed

12.servants embezzling or wasting goods

II. Offences not capital

a.by Common Law

by an officer

neglect of duty

bribery

extortion

by a common person

i.breach of peace

1.affray

2.riot

3.forcible entry

4.barretry

5.riding and going armed

ii.deceit

iii.nuisance

1.public bridges

2.high-ways

3.inns

4.ale-houses

b.by Statute

forgery

perjury and subornation

ingrossing,forestalling and regrating

matters of religion

1.reviling sacraments

2.not coming to church

3.nonconformity