

(economy)

THE ECONOMIC WORLD

[The following topics, included below, were discussed in a preliminary way in the early 1980's by Alan Macfarlane]

Fairs ; Market ; Marketing ; Measures ; ;Prices ; Rates ; Revenue ; Shops and stalls
Taxation ; Tithes ; Wages

Overview

[This overview is taken from the report to the E.S.R.C. in 1983 by Alan Macfarlane]

Economic behaviour

We have undertaken a number of preliminary analyses of various aspects of the economy of the two parishes. This has been partly to discover substantive results, partly to estimate the utility and distortions in the records. For example, the manorial rental of 1678 for Earls Colne has been carefully compared to nearby documents, in order to see what is missing and the value of rentals in general. What emerges most clearly from this and other very extensive workings on the land transfers in the manor court roll of Earls Colne, is the care which must be taken in using manorial records. When they are almost all that one has, in the period before 1560 in Earls Colne, it is easy to believe that they reflect the real resident, landholding, population. They have thus been used by some historians to estimate many figures and facts about the society - residence patterns, geographical and social mobility, inheritance practices and even demographic rates. But when the records can be checked against other sources, as we are now doing, it becomes apparent that when dealing with the copyholders we are concerned with people who are often at several removes from the real village population. Many are outsiders, there are many subtenants, many people in the village never owned copyhold property. The manor must again be looked at as a legal entity, a corporation, and not as a real unit which coincided with a group of people living in a certain place.

We have now pieced together complete histories of the transfer of every piece of land and every house in Earls Colne, in so far as records survive, between 1400 and 1850. This framework of tenure can be combined with other records to provide a picture of the local economy. We have made some analysis of the private account books kept by Richard Harlakenden the elder and younger during the years 1603-1640. These give us invaluable information for Earls Colne on the running of the demesne land, otherwise poorly recorded in estate documents, as well as many details about local inhabitants, prices, law cases and other matters. Combined with Josselin's diary, probate inventories and churchwarden's accounts for Kirkby Lonsdale, as well as detailed litigation about property, we are beginning to be able to form some impressions concerning the nature of the economic system.

We may start with the occupational structure and the nature of occupations in these two areas. It is characteristic of many 'traditional' societies that there is only a very limited division of labour in the countryside; the society consists of artisans and skilled craftsmen and merchants who live in the towns and are termed the 'bourgeois', and the peasants or agricultural workers who live in the countryside. In the countryside, each household of family is, as far as possible, occupationally self-sufficient. Peasants will try to do most of the carpentry and mending and making of farm machinery. What we find in our parishes is in sharp contrast to this. There are a host of trades and occupations which are often carried on alongside some farming, or, often, are the major activity of individuals. In the villages there are merchants and tradesmen, artisans and service workers of all kinds, from the start of our records. Such persons are often the wealthiest in the village. Almost all services can be bought for cash. There is a vast and intricate division and specialization of labour which, in itself, provides that organic solidarity which Durkheim believed to be the central feature of 'modern' society. This proliferation of occupations helps to give the parishes their special flavour, with the rich butchers, bakers, alehouse-keepers, weavers and others playing a very important part. It is as if, occupationally, the town and the country had become merged. The markets and the fairs which were held in both towns, alongside the many permanent stalls and shops, were features of this situation. In both areas the cloth industry dominated, but there were numerous other important manufactures as well. The number of shops and the amazing variety of things that could early be purchased in them (as shown in sixteenth century shop inventories for Kirkby), shows that this was already a 'nation of shopkeepers'.

By bringing together all the documents we can investigate the web of exchange and payment, examine the nature and extent of rent, the operations of market prices, the workings of shops and fairs. The impression is that from the start of the documents we appear to be in the presence of a fully monetized economy, dealing with villages within a national market and affected by national pressures. As with power, in economics we are immediately led out of the parishes to fairs and markets in other counties and towns and even to trade to the Baltic, the Continent, the Mediterranean and, later, to the New World and the East. The market was clearly, to use Polanyi's term, an 'instituted process': money, property rights, contracts and exchange alongside a centralized nation state and a common law and culture were the bonds which held people together.

This very extensive penetration of both the State and of the market economy into rural villages in Essex and Westmorland from at least the fourteenth century is in market contrast to what has been discovered from much of the rest of Europe. The kind of transformations, for example, which occurred in Scotland from the middle of the eighteenth century, and in much of continental Europe from the middle of the nineteenth, seems to have occurred in England before our records begin. Its importance is enormous. The context of a strong central State and very developed division of labour, free market for labour and commodities, extensive use of cash and credit, are all essential features in understanding the mentality and morality of the inhabitants which we shall examine shortly. The developed form of individualistic behaviour which we have argued elsewhere was characteristic of England could not have existed in a vacuum (Macfarlane 1978). Where the State and Market are weak and provide little integration, personal or 'status' ties are used to hold society together - mainly of the quasi-familial type. Here the individual could stand alone because he was working in an already created web of authority and contract.

There are related peculiarities. One is the outstanding and early importance of contractually employed training and labour. The very developed system of apprenticeship and of servanthood, for instance, is in marked contrast to much of Europe where training and labour was provided by non-contractual, family, labour. Throughout our period, in both parishes, servants and apprentices were clearly a very central institution.

One way of looking at the peculiarity is to look at the nature of the relationship between people and land. An analysis of what people in the parishes did, and of their monetary transactions, and hence, ultimately, on the land, a huge super-structure had been erected on it, a vast professional and trading world, so that most individuals spent much of their time in occupations which were not directly connected to land. The land itself had, curiously, become a commodity, an object to be dealt in, alongside other objects such as wool, preferments, membership of a trade guild. Land was a means to an end, like money, and not an end in itself. This is a very different attitude to that in most agricultural societies where land and the family are inter-blended and land consequently has a huge emotional and symbolic value for individuals. There is no hint in any of the many documents we have examined, whether wills, court cases, land transfers, of anything of this attitude towards land. It was mortgaged, bought and sold, rented out, with apparent disregard for its symbolic value. In fact the relationship to the land was but one aspect of a very peculiar attitude towards property as a whole.

Property, as lawyers and anthropologists frequently remind us, is not a thing in itself, but a set of relationships or rights in a thing. There is some peculiarity in the English common law notions of property, seen in the obsession of English law with real estate, which has led to a particular flexibility of the relationship of persons to 'things'. Two points can be singled out here. Firstly, the idea of private, individual, ownership - a concept alien to almost all peasantries - is clearly fully developed in England by 1400. Whether we are talking of copyhold or freehold, the individual and not some wider group 'owns' certain rights in a piece of land or a house. These rights may be conditional and hedged in relation to a lord or the King, but no more than any rights even nowadays are hedged in. We have investigated this topic in some detail, partly drawing on the parish material, in a monograph (Macfarlane 1978).

The second feature is that the flexibility of the concepts of property made it possible to separate a whole bundle of rights in an object and to assign them to different people. In many societies the rights have to be treated as a compact bundle - hence the difficulty or impossibility of leasing, mortgaging etc. In England there were infinite levels and differentiations between ownership, use, etc. This made possible the nested levels of tenancy (subinfeudation) which are such a marked feature of the society. The ownership of a particular house in Earls Colne, for example, might look as follows: King - Lord of Manor - Copyholder - Sub-Tenant - Sub-subtenant. It might well only be the last of these who was resident in the house; most of our documents deal with the top three layers who had financial interest, but regarded the house or field merely as source of rent and perhaps services of a mind kind. The situation is very similar to that today where most of the houses and lands are co-owned by their inhabitants and by banks and building societies which have lent them money. This series of levels of ownership, each one exploiting a resource and in return funnelling rent and services upwards, led to a very instrumental attitude towards land. Rights could be and were bought and sold in almost

anything - a school, the church, a trading company, a wood, a house. People's wealth comes from holding many of these.

This fact, so clear by the later eighteenth century, has been partly discussed by historians in various ways and is supposed to be one of the major products of an economic revolution, the transition to 'capitalism' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But a closer examination of the whole set of documents for two places over a long period gives no sign of such a revolution having occurred at all. With many topics, we could have explained this by the defects of the records. But in this case the records are very largely concerned with just this topic; three quarters of them are concerned with property and property relations. It is difficult to see how such a revolution could have escaped our attention.

The gap which had emerged between people and things, particularly land, was made possible by various symbolic instruments, the most important was money. Monetized values, whether in the form of actual currency or credit, are something which are held on the fringes of most traditional societies; it is well known that if they enter in too far they destroy a whole cluster of community and family values. Although money is essential in peasantries - principally to pay taxes, rents and for the purchase of a few luxuries and necessities from the outside world, it does not enter into most daily relationships. The situation in both our parishes from the start of the records is completely different. The penetration of cash is complete and spectacular from the very start of the material. The detailed account rolls, manor court rolls, rentals and other documents would not make sense unless we realize the importance of monetary values. Almost everything was given a price and almost everything was bought and sold for cash. Money seems to have penetrated to the lowest levels.

Connected to this penetration of cash we find many unusual features. One of these is the curious pattern of borrowing. In the absence of cash at the village level, a central feature of peasantries through the world is the growth of a class of professional 'money lenders'. In return for cash loans for dowries, taxes, to help before the harvest, such moneylenders appropriate large sums from the peasantry and often take over their land. This kind of money-lender, found well documented in China or India, is totally absent as an institution in our parishes. Of course there was a vast amount of lending and borrowing - but of a different form, which we examine elsewhere.

Another absence is that of 'share-cropping', whereby the owner of the soil takes half the produce and the worker the other half. This is an institution which avoids the necessity for cash as rent and it is very widespread in almost all major agrarian civilizations. It is found in continental Europe in the systems of mezzadria and metayage, but it is curiously absent and, as far as can be seen, has never been heard of in England. The particular concepts of property and widespread cash made it unnecessary. People leased land and paid a money rent instead.

A final feature may be noted, namely the curious system of inheritance of wealth. Two aspects of which may be mentioned in passing. Firstly, there is the stress on passing the property a more or less intact to one person through male primogeniture or entails. In much of the rest of the world, property is equally divided between all children of all sons. Secondly there is the strong right to alienate the property. The property (except where there is an entail, as in some gentry families) belongs to the individual, and not to

the family. Thus he or she may alienate it during life, or leave it by will to non-kin. There is no sign of the 'restraint lignager', which governed property on the continent. In both these respects there is little suggestion in the documents that the fundamental laws of inheritance altered in any important ways during our long period. Of course there were some shifts, as, for example, in the Statute of Uses. But the first impression from a study of numerous transmissions by will and by court transfer, is of the continuity of both rules and practices. A final oddity of the English system was that in cases where property was indeed allowed to go to kin, the rules ensured that it always flowed downwards. The early rule described by Maitland whereby property always descends and never ascends, so that uncles could never inherit from nephews, for example, is an important consideration throughout our period and was in complete contrast to the practices in the Roman Law countries of continental Europe.

Economic morality

There is a vast amount of material in our sources concerning economic morality. the 'moral economy'. This concerns the ways in which economics were embedded in morality and the nature of their changing relationship. What was fair, just, honest and of good report in dealings over money, land and business is chronicled in great depth in our records. Much of the elaborate machinery of law and the system of equity was concerned with the problems of deceit, fraud, unfair dealings and the honouring of contracts. There is therefore ample material, particularly in the church and equity courts, to investigate the subtle and important interconnections between morality and economics. For example, we can study the degree to which the inhabitants of our two villages were bound by what certain anthropologists have called the 'image of limited good', that is the idea that wealth is limited and the increase of one person's wealth means the decrease of another's. We can see whether there appear to be changes in the economic morality, in the attitudes towards borrowing at interest, towards 'fair' rents, towards the moral obligations of property.

This topic takes on a special importance because this is the classic instance, according to sociological theory, of the transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalistic economic morality, and hence we would expect attitudes towards usury, labour and its value, saving and spending, to be transformed. Local records provide some information, though again only a part, for the investigation of these problems.

These are large topics and even first impressions could fill many pages. One general impression that comes through strongly is the degree to which from a very early period there is a moral system governing economic behaviour, certain actions and attitudes are just, right, praiseworthy, but this morality changes in only small ways through the centuries. That is to say, it is difficult, certainly at the local level, to find evidence of a revolutionary transformation of economic morality. We might have expected at the start of the period to have witnessed economic behaviour embedded in social and religious constraints. We would have expected many 'capitalistic' practices and attitudes to be forbidden and penalized, for example the central feature of interest and acquisition. Gradually, as in the descriptions of Weber and Tawney, the rules should be changed so that people were now 'free' to pursue their economic objectives. As the rules changed, so we might have expected a shift in the nature of the game. People who had before tried to maximize social and ritual goals, perhaps, would now try to maximize economic profit in a 'rational' way (in Weber's sense). At the same time we would have expected a

transformation of a moral economy appropriate to peasantry, with communal and family restraints, to one based on the individual.

Yet, in so far as we can see behind the documents, there is little trace of this revolutionary shift. It is difficult to see any obvious universal movement, with all the rules and ends of behaviour changing. At the start, it would seem, land and labour were treated as commodities on the market. Their use and acquisition were, of course, subject to rules about what was acceptable, and hence economics, as it always is, was embedded in morality. But it was not an embedding of a different kind from that today - in other words there was not a sea of kinship or religion which prevented accumulation. The same rules that governed behaviour in the fifteenth century, as far as we can see, were those that governed it in the eighteenth.

Having said this, it is important to distinguish the continuity of the rules from the varying outcome over time. The game having been played out over a very long period, the outcome was a different society, with a different set of social relations. But what it is difficult to find is a gradual separation out of economics. There were still rules as to what was right, fair and just, as there had been at the start of the period, and people still took account of these rules. Indeed the rules were so basic that they did not usually need to be stated since they were assumed to be universal, obvious and 'natural'. Thus the Lord Chancellor in Chancery interpreted these rules in the eighteenth century largely as he had done in the fifteenth century, though the country was obviously now a large imperial power and much more wealthy. The Church had lost some of its power of course, but it is difficult to find evidence that we have moved from the economic morality of a 'peasant' to that of an industrial/capitalist society. If this impression is confirmed by the nature of village records, it will necessitate considerable rethinking of many stereotypes.

FAIRS

One of the more dramatic occasions upon which goods were bought and sold was the fair. There are some 41 references to 'fair' or 'fairs' so far in our data, so there should be something we can say about the annual village fair on March 25th set up in the early medieval period. What, one wonders, was sold here? How long did it continue active? How many people from where came? What sort of disorders were associated with it? Why, one wonders, was there a presentment by the QSR in 1599 that 'there was a fair kept and held at Earls Colne on the 25th day of Mach last past, upon the Sabbath day, contrary to the Statute'.? Should it not have been held at all, or not on the Sabbath? Josselin mentions the Colne fair twice, according to our index: 'this day I warned Colne to keep a sober fair, lord awe them if it be they good pleasure'(25/3/55) and 'a sweet day for Colne fair'(1669/70). There may be other references - it would be worth looking under that date each year to see if Josselin attended.

Earls Colne fair was, of course, only a relatively small one - part of a huge set through which vast quantities of commodities moved

Josselin himself mentions his 'people' going to Ely fair in 1678 and the following year he sent his hops up to Stourbridge fair. We have interesting earlier references to fairs nearby in Harlakenden's account books and, presumably, in the fifteenth century account rolls. These larger fairs must have been a nightmare to organize and regulate, with their own courts etc.

MARKET

This would cover the topics to do with actual buying and selling of commodities. It may need to be broken down into such topics as buying, selling, the market place etc. It would cover regulations concerning where things could be bought and sold. For example, acts made it illegal to buy and sell horses except in open market, and the court leet in 1510 was ordered to present any tawers who 'buy their skins in any other place than in town or markets'. Likewise, the leet was to present 'any retailers or forstallers that lie in the way to buy corn or any other victual at the towns end or in any other place to make the price thereof dearer...'. Indeed all the regulations about engrossing (hoarding goods when they were cheap and then keeping them until prices went up) and regrating (selling at an over-price), need to be dealt with here. What evidence is there about all this in the EC material? There are 29 references to 'engross' etc. in the data so far, and some 75 to regraters spelt in various ways. It would be most interesting to see how the legislation changed relating to these offences and how strictly it was observed by the various officials. Furthermore, what could be sold between private individuals, what had to be brought into the open market? Could one prosecute someone if there were no witnesses? Where was the market? There seems to have been an idea that 'towns' constituted some kind of market? Did EC continue as a sort of buying/selling space even after the formal market with stalls had disappeared?

MARKETING

One of the most important functions of local government throughout this period was the regulation of the market. By the 'market' is meant something much bigger than merely the formal market and market-place. It means the control of all matters to do with the buying and selling of commodities. This therefore encompasses topics such as prices, wages, measures, standards, payment for services, shops and stalls, buying, selling, storage, hygiene etc. as well as the actual supervision of the market-place and fairs. Since each of these is potentially a large subject - as large as games or inns, for example, it would probably be best to treat them as separate files. But it should be remembered that they all fit together.

MEASURES

As well as regulating the prices, it was essential to regulate the measures very carefully. In many societies there is very considerable difficulty here for over even very short distances the measures of weight, volume and size vary very considerably - as in France up to the end of the nineteenth century. One of the interesting features of England from very early on was the uniformity of the standard measures, later the 'imperial' measures which, like a standard time and language helped to create an efficient and interconnected trading empire. Thus, though there was considerable variation over time, there was also much continuity. How did this work in EC? The three major ways to measure produce were: by area, length and weight), by dry volume(bushels and strikes) or by liquid volume(gallons, pints). It was the duty of the court leet, among others, to ensure that there was no tampering with these. In the 1510 articles, for example, the following were to be presented: 'All brewers and tapsters that keep not the assize and sell in unsealed measures. Any that use double measures, i.e. a great measure to buy and a small measure to sell with.' Are there any presentments for this, or any indication of the inspection of weights and measures? Any cases at the quarter sessions or elsewhere? What changes were there in the measures over the period?

PRICES

The regulation of prices, particularly of the staples of bread and ale, is of central importance. The effectiveness of such regulation and the shift in prices over the period will be well indicated in our records. Not only do we have the account books and account rolls and Josselin's diary, but also the regulations in the court leet and quarter sessions. The general concern at the level of the court leet is shown in some of the articles of enquiry. In the 1650 edition the leet were ordered to enquire: 'whether any baker, brewer, butcher, cook, tipler &c. do take excessive gain or no: also whether they conspire, covenant, promise or take an oath not to sell victual but at a certain price, & present the same'. It will be interesting to see whether this was adhered to, or whether there were presentments. It will probably be best to deal with this under the various major items that were sold.

BREAD AND GRAIN

The regulation of the price of grains and of baked bread is of crucial importance in the averting of hunger and disorder. How was this achieved in EC? One would have to establish what the main grains that were eaten were - presumably wheat for bread and barley for beer throughout. Was this imported into the parish and from where? How much would the population need to consume? What regulation was there of the prices of bread? There should be material in the Quarter Sessions. For example, in the Q/SO

2 p.25lv. in 1687 the prices of wheat, rye, barley or malt, buck wheat, oats, Pease and beans were all carefully specified, though these were imports into the country. Is there other evidence? Can we construct some sort of local price index?

The next stage was the conversion of this grain into flour. Here again there was control, for the millers were to be presented in the court leet if they charged excessive amounts for doing this. Do we have such presentments, and can we say anything about milling in the village? Was all grain ground in the village mills, or any at home on querns?

Finally, the flour was turned into bread. Who could do this was strictly controlled again. For example, inn-keepers were ordered (1650 rules) 'An innkeeper may bake his bread for horses in his house in any thoroughfare town which is no city where no common bakers dwell, and if he bake and not make the same according to the prices of grain, it is to be published in leet'. Is there any evidence that people baked in their own houses or in communal ovens - or was all the baking done by professional bakers? Who were these bakers, were they full-time, how many of them were there? My guess is that already the division of labour had proceeded much further than in many 'peasant' societies and people went out to buy bread for cash. Hence the need to control the price of bread, as well as grain, which absorbed a great deal of attention. This is where a careful examination of the working of the assize of bread would be necessary.

It would appear that in EC the lords of the manors had the 'assize of bread', which Maitland(581-2) says was 'much more rarely' held than the assize of beer. It would appear that this was 'the power of enforcing the general ordinances which from time to time fix the prices' at which these articles were sold (according to Maitland). Who enforced this? Was there an equivalent to the aleconder? And what were the presentments like? The fact that the word 'bread' occurs some 167 times in our preliminary word list, as compared to 102 times for ale suggests that there is indeed an assize here. From this material, is it possible to see who the people are? Are there any patterns in the presentments - e.g. in difficult years of grain shortage? Does it look as if the breaking of the assize is being used as a kind of tax?

ALE

Elsewhere we will have looked at the alehouses themselves and their keepers. Here, however, we will concentrate on the actual price of ale. This is again a topic on which there is a great deal of information, for EC manors had an 'assize of ale', with specific officers, aleconners, who were to enforce it. This was a matter of examining the price at which ale was sold. It appears that brewing ale was a very widespread and lucrative business in EC. The number of 'alewives' in the earlier court leet is immense. During the period the brewing may have gradually become concentrated into certain big brewers, for the number of alewives declined. A small bi-occupation for

women was thus destroyed. But while in its height, the brewing was regulated. Again it would be worth seeing who the alewives were, whether presentments followed a pattern, whether the presentments were a kind of surrogate licensing or tax system. The difficulty of enforcing the system is seen in the constant presentment of aleconners.

MEAT AND FISH

Earls Colne lay within the most heavily meat-consuming belt of north-western Europe and it is clear that meat consumption was very considerable, for most of the population. The regulation of meat prices, however is less well documented. Do we have anything on prices - presumably something in Josselin/Harlakenden? We should be able to assemble a list of butchers. There is also a great deal on fish and fishmongers in the parish - especially in the early account rolls. The importance of fish in the diet cannot be over-estimated.

OTHER FOODSTUFFS

The control of other foodstuffs, milk, vegetables, fruit, etc. was clearly also desirable. Do we have anything on this - either the standard or other prices at any time, where the stuff came from etc.? The word milk, for example, occurs 22 times in our thesaurus. Fruit and vegetables are briefly alluded to in Josselin/Harlakenden. Did the prices set by the Justices cover these articles?

CLOTH

Earls Colne was in the centre of the area of the 'new draperies' and even before then had been an area of wool production. Wool and its various derivatives were therefore of extreme importance. What control was there of wool prices and of the various processes? In order to sort out this important matter, it will be necessary to work out how the wool trade worked in this part of Essex, the various stages from sheep's back through spinning, weaving, to making up. How much of this was done in the village - and was cash paid for each product, or merely wages? The main analysis of this will be undertaken under the section on the 'organization of production'. But it should be possible to see what prices were at some of the stages of the process.

LEATHER

Another important non-food product was leather - for shoes, books, containers etc. What can we find out about the prices in the various stages, from skins to finished articles? The word 'leather' occurs 29 times in our sample - are prices attached to any of these?

OTHER GOODS

Do we have either price series or any information about the

regulation of any other goods - for instance in Josselin or the account rolls or books? There would seem to be some excellent material in the fifteenth century account rolls about all this, down to the tiny prices of small articles. There is incidental material in things like the value put on articles stolen - e.g. from Josselin's son's shop. It would be nice to know what was sold and bought in the village. Unfortunately, there are no inventories like the magnificent one for a Kirkby Lonsdale shop for the later sixteenth century.

RATES

Again this is something of an anachronistic concept. What one is talking about is the raising of money at the local level which would then be put back into the village in the form of local services - lighting, highways, education, the provision for the poor etc. I know too little about this to be able to say much, but it should be possible to say a good deal about this, at least in the eighteenth century when we have the overseer's and others accounts. But presumably money was being raised before that time? How was it raised and how much was raised? Who collected it from whom? Did only landholders have to pay, or all the population? How high was the assessment? Where was the money kept? The whole basis of the modern welfare and local social services system would need to be examined. In doing this one would be providing the detailed working of the system described in general by the Webbs.

REVENUE

It was necessary to raise the resources to provide the local and central services for the village community. Basically these resources consisted of five different things. Firstly, there was money raised through subsidies, hearth taxes etc. which was taken from the local community and funnelled off to the centre for the Crown's needs. Secondly, there was money raised from the local community which was then redistributed at the local level, mainly to the poor - the equivalent of modern rates. Thirdly, there was money raised through the church organization, partly for the upkeep of the church, but also for education and charity. Fourthly, there was money raised through fines and rents in the manorial system, part of which went to the Crown, part of which was used to provide certain local benefits, for example a court, upkeep of bridges etc. Finally, there were resources of a non-monetary kind, in other words services. The main types were labour for war - i.e. conscription and musters, labour for road repairs, and labour for carrying out of non-paid village offices. Each of these five types of revenue raising, its changes, distribution, size etc. needs to be examined separately.

SHOPS AND STALLS

It will be interesting to see what regulation there was of shops and stalls. How many of these public vending places were there in Earls Colne and what did they sell? Is there any evidence of shop licensing? It appears that the number of market stalls declined very rapidly - from being a busy market town in the fifteenth century, the trade went indoors into shops. Are there any traces of market stalls by the time of Josselin? Presumably, however, these places needed to be regulated in the same way as alehouses. Certainly their prices, standards etc. were controlled, but were there other regulations?

TAXATION

It is important not to impose too modern a concept of 'taxation' here. On the whole, the Crown was expected to live of its own in this period - from its own demesne, from the profits of justice, from customs etc. Thus regular 'taxation' was not accepted. But periodically the Crown found itself unable to meet certain emergencies, principally wars, and gradually even found a deficit in its normal accounts. Hence it needed to raise special revenue. Partly through the absence of a large central bureaucracy, partly through the absence of a standing army, the amounts that had to be raised were by European standards very small. A very detailed analysis at the local level, probably never attempted before, will show exactly how much of the total produce went out of the community to the centre. How much went, when, from which people? Here it would be necessary to describe the whole system of subsidies etc. Although it has not been possible to mine the vast exchequer records properly, it should nevertheless be possible to say quite a bit about how much revenue was raised, on what principles. This should throw up some interesting results on firstly the probable fact that the money was raised from the middling rather than from the very poor; secondly, that the proportion of people's income or wealth that went on taxation was tiny, relative to today or most societies.

It will also be necessary to see how the money was actually collected; is there evidence of avoidance and evasion, who had the responsibility etc? The marvellous material in Fleming's archive, though for another area, makes it tempting to concentrate on the raising of the hearth tax as a case study - and one could see how far it conformed to the situation in EC.

TITHES

This general title covers all the revenue raised by the church in order to make it possible for it to function in the local community. A good deal of this, of course, went into salaries for the clergy, upkeep of buildings, etc. but a certain amount would also be used for more secular services. In theory the Great tithe went to the church, while the little tithe (check) was for the maintenance of the poor. Many of the collections were also for various charitable, i.e. social service, works, and special 'briefs' were sent round to help with particular emergencies in other parishes. In Josselin and elsewhere there is a considerable amount of material on what was raised and how much, though it will be necessary to look at general manuals in order to see what the tithing rates were. Were there any other major ecclesiastical incomes - for example from fines in the church courts, which were often used for charitable purposes, or from rents, charitable bequests, churchwardens rates etc? There will be considerable overlap with 'rates' here, for many of the earlier collections made by the church were gradually appropriated by the state.

WAGES

If it is the case that a considerable part of the labour force in EC throughout this period were part-time or full-time wage labourers, the regulation of wages - that is money payment for services - is crucially important. The main categories of wage labour would be: servants, agricultural workers, artisans (blacksmiths, coopers etc.) and artificers (cloth and other workers). Do we know anything about how much they were paid and how this varied over time? The Statute of Labourers just before the start of our period set out some of the general rules, but there is a vast amount of further statute and other law concerning wages. There is some extremely interesting material on the whole question of wages and wage-levels for EC in the early account rolls and in Harlakenden's accounts. General rates for the county can be found in the quarter sessions for Essex as a whole: for example, 'rates of wages for all manner of artificers, labourers, & servants' were set on 25/4/1661 (book, p.188). How far did these conform to the levels in EC? It may be possible at the local level to check the degree to which wage levels kept up with prices. Certainly, we are likely to find that wages were very carefully regulated throughout the period. But were people presented for paying too much or too little? I do not recall an example.
