

Work, Reward and Labour Discipline in Late Seventeenth-Century England

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In June 1692, Sir Richard Newdigate of Arbury near Nuneaton (Warwickshire) condemned the indolence of one of the agricultural labourers who was employed on his estate. William Suffolk, he noted, 'lyes abed and will not work'.¹ Complaints of this kind were entirely characteristic of an economic context in which, for the first time in well over a century, the fortunes of employers, and especially of landlords, were being undermined by falling rents, stagnant prices and increasing wages.² Because labour was in relatively short supply in late seventeenth-century England, it was believed that 'the very fabric of society could be threatened, not just by rising wages and costs, but by a swelling independence among the working masses, which commonly manifested itself in a refusal to engage wholeheartedly in unremitting toil'. There was, accordingly, a growing consensus, emerging among the propertied elite in the century after 1650, about the 'utility of poverty'.³ Employers, magistrates and political economists alike agreed both in print and in the administration of social policy that 'the higher the wages labourers and artisans received, the less they worked, and that, while low wages bred industry and diligence, high wages bred laziness, disorderliness and debauchery'.⁴ This, then, was a particularly troubling time in the long history of relations between master and man and it presented particular challenges to employers who sought not only to recruit, retain and discipline the labour force but also to incentivise productivity among their employees.

As Keith Wrightson has argued, employers like Sir Richard Newdigate were attempting to discipline their workforce in the context of a highly distinctive labor market—one which was highly localised; differentiated by skill, by gender and by age; and shaped by the seasonal and irregular pattern of the demand for work.⁵ These structural characteristics ensured that 'full-time' employment as modern observers would recognise it was almost unknown: late seventeenth-century labour forces generally consisted only of a very small core of partially-employed workers surrounded by a much larger penumbra of even more casual labour. The

employment found by most labouring people in the century after the Restoration was often 'so precarious and uncertain that they could not give it a name'.⁶

The identification of these characteristics nonetheless raises almost as many issues as it resolves. Historians might identify the structural factors--the seasonality of demand, for example, or the gendered and life-cyclical points of entry and exit--which governed access to labour markets. They might reconstruct the strategies through which employers attempted to control a workforce reputedly more interested in leisure than in labour. They might even speculate about the ways in which labourers may have carved out a certain social and psychological space of their own.⁷ But they are confronted at every turn by the limitations of the evidence for the relationship between work, remuneration and standards of living among the labour force. The sheer irregularity of work makes it nearly impossible for historians to convert wage rates into annual earnings.⁸ Even if it *were* possible, moreover, to calculate the cumulative contribution of wages to the household incomes of a labouring population working in an economy of diversified resources (and some historians have tried⁹), annual earnings mean little in the absence of evidence of household expenditure—on rent, on food, on clothing, perhaps even on those consumer goods which might constitute their material wealth—with the result that the *value* of work to those who actually undertook it in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England remains obscure.¹⁰

It is in this tantalising context that this paper attempts to reconstruct the experience of work among the agricultural labour force employed on a late seventeenth-century gentry estate, that of Sir Richard Newdigate, second baronet of Arbury Hall in the parish of Chilvers Coton, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire.¹¹ The unique combination of evidence generated by Newdigate's impulse to measure his landed, mineral and human resources at Arbury permits more detailed delineation of Wrightson's intuitive sketch of 'lives of labour'. By correlating the remarkable 1684 'census-type listing' (by name, by age, by occupation, by relationship to household head) of the inhabitants of the parish of Chilvers Coton not only with the rentals generated as part of Newdigate's 'great survey' of his estate in 1681-84, but also with a wages book which records

the tasks performed by, and the daily- and/or piece-rates paid to, labourers and craftsmen at Arbury every day of the year for the three years between 1688 and 1691, it is possible to analyse the size, structure and participation rate of the agricultural workforce; the range of jobs undertaken and the skills thought requisite to perform them; and the relationship between work, remuneration and other types of reward. It also invites speculation about the contribution of estate earnings to the household economies of a significant proportion of Newdigate tenants.¹² The paper accordingly speaks to wider issues that have been of perennial interest to students of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century social and economic change: the nature and extent of independence among labouring populations¹³; the character and dynamics of 'paternalism'¹⁴; and perhaps even the standard of living debate.¹⁵ In its focus on an estate employer, furthermore, it offers a remarkable opportunity to analyse relations with the different constituencies--in particular with servants in husbandry; with regularly-employed agricultural labourers and craftsmen; and with the seasonal workforce of women and children--with whom the landed classes had to deal; and to reconstruct the terms on which those dealings were transacted.¹⁶ Fundamentally, however, it seeks to reconstruct in microcosm (and arguably in unprecedented detail) the lived experience of rural labour in late seventeenth-century England.

I: The Composition and Character of the Arbury Workforce

At the heart of the agricultural workforce at Arbury in the 1680s were the ten servants in husbandry who were most regularly employed about the estate. In 1689, these comprised a shepherd, a coachman, a wainman, a postilion, two husbandmen and four husbandry boys.¹⁷ The detailed record of the work that they performed in the autumn of that year indicates, however, that the tasks required of them were far more varied than their formal job descriptions suggest. In the six days he worked during the third week of October 1689, for instance, the coachman Thomas Wright not only 'looked to the horses', but was also responsible for ferrying slates, muck, earth, lime and stubble around various parts of the estate. That same week, the postilion

Robert Sergeant was three days absent in Oxford on estate business but spent another two days with Wright carrying slates and earth. The wainman Edward Bryan, meanwhile, transported deer, horses and cattle to Coventry; carried wood to the great stable; and still had time to perform three days' work winnowing maslin, threshing wheat and harvesting pease. One of the two husbandmen, Richard Edwards, spent five days fetching stone from the Red Quarry at Griff Hollows and a sixth ploughing. One of the husbandry boys, William Wells, spent one day with Edwards at the quarry, another with Bryan at Coventry Fair, a third delivering tiles and fetching wood and three further days threshing oats in the Middle Barn. Another of the boys, Thomas Daniel, spent three days tending the flock with the shepherd William Clark, a fourth harvesting pease, a fifth turning a winnowing frame, and a sixth shovelling muck by the hay ricks.¹⁸

Such examples could be multiplied, the servants in husbandry being delegated to fetch stone, to cart wood and to plough fields as need required. There were no contractual limits on the number of hours or days these men and boys might be expected to work or on the tasks they might be required to perform. With the exception of the coachman Thomas Wright and the postilion Robert Sergeant (each of whom will have occasionally been working on Newdigate business elsewhere), all of them were employed somewhere round the estate during at least fifty weeks in the agricultural year. The estate cash books do not record weekly payments made to them, for they were retained on yearly contracts remunerated at board wages.¹⁹ Newdigate's own household account books, however, reveal that the husbandman George Pearce earned £5-10s. a year, the wainman Edward Bryan £5, the coachman Thomas Wright £4, the shepherd William Clark £4, and the postilion Robert Sergeant £2.²⁰ Several of these rates in fact exceed the statutory annual *maxima* (£3-15s for a husbandman, for instance, or £3 for a shepherd) confirmed by the Warwickshire justices in 1684.²¹ Where he did offer wages in addition to board, therefore, Newdigate was forced by labour shortage into paying above the statutory rate, at least for his adult farm servants. For the youngest of them, however, board was all that was to be had: although the slightly older husbandry boy William Wells received an annual wage of £2-10s (broadly in line with the Warwickshire magistrates' assessment of the remuneration

appropriate for 'an inferior servant man'), three other boys received no wages at all and were rewarded only in clothing, their livery consisting of 'mild fustian' stockings, leather britches, boots, coat, apron and hat.²²

Staff turnover among the servants in husbandry was relatively high.²³ Apart from the wainman Edward Bryan, the shepherd William Clark and the postilion Robert Sergeant, none of the men or boys employed in 1689-90 had been in Newdigate's service in 1684.²⁴ One of the farm servants in fact left during the course of that year, George Pierce departing at Michaelmas 1689 after a year's service. Whether Newdigate dismissed his farm servants so regularly as a matter of deliberate policy is unclear.²⁵ The experience of Richard Edwards, George Pierce's successor as head husbandman at Arbury is nonetheless suggestive. Edwards had been recruited at Michaelmas 1689 and from 5 October the wages book suggests that he was tasked to work six days a week every week on the Arbury estate. Like many of Newdigate's employees, Edwards moved on after a relatively short period of service, although he apparently completed the statutory year required by his contract. By the autumn of 1691, he had left Chilvers Coton and he and his wife and child were described by the Warwickshire justices as 'poor people' thought likely to become chargeable to the parishioners of Ansley, some four miles to the west. The JPs ordered Edwards and his family removed back to Chilvers Coton, presumably on the basis that his successful completion of a year's service with Newdigate conferred rights of settlement there upon him. There is, however, no evidence that Edwards was ever resident, employed or relieved in Coton after 1691, and it may well be that the parish officers successfully moved him on, by fair means or foul.²⁶ From this perspective, the very high turnover of staff at Arbury may even have been a deliberate strategy on Newdigate's part, designed to ensure that his farm servants did not achieve settlement. This suggestion is lent further credibility by the fact that, unlike Newdigate's household staff, agricultural wage labourers or craftsmen, very few of those who worked as servants in husbandry at Arbury were apparently recruited from the village of Chilvers Coton. Of those resident servants employed in 1684, only 'Robin' Sergeant was a local boy, the seventeen-year-old son of a labourer who rented a house and tiny garden in

the Heath End.²⁷ The rest were almost certainly recruited either through word-of-mouth recommendations from local employers or at the great statute hiring sessions, the most significant of which was held every Michaelmas only nine miles away at Polesworth, where by the 1680s farm servants were doubtless playing increasingly assertive roles in the 'market drama' of wage-bargaining.²⁸

The resident farm servants were nonetheless only the core of a very extensive work force of day labourers who were employed under various terms and conditions around the estate. Analysis of the estate wages book between Lady Day 1689 and Lady Day 1690 in fact suggests that no less than 110 separate individuals were tasked to perform work around the Arbury estate during that year.²⁹ Although by no means all of them were recruited from Chilvers Coton, this number represents about one-in-six of the population of the entire parish. In fact, of the 176 households listed in the Chilvers Coton 'census' in 1684, the heads of twenty-seven (15.5 percent) were employed by Newdigate on the Arbury estate in 1689-90. In fifteen of these cases, moreover, either the wife or the daughter (or both) of the household head was also casually employed; and a further five women and girls were also working in Newdigate's meadows even though their husbands or fathers were not themselves employed at Arbury. All in all, therefore, thirty-two (18 percent) of the households in Chilvers Coton drew all or part of their income from agricultural employment on the Arbury estate, and given the interval between the taking of the census in 1684 and the survival of the earliest wage books in 1689 this proportion is probably a significant underestimate of the gravitational pull exerted by the Newdigates in the local market for labour. It is apparent, moreover, that Newdigate recruited his employees not merely from the residents of the village but specifically from among his own tenants: almost one-third of the seventy-seven householders who rented property from him in 1689-90 found employment on the Arbury estate that year, the majority of them naturally being drawn from the ranks of the cottagers rather than those of the small farmers.³⁰

As Figure 1 suggests, the workforce might usefully be disaggregated into three categories: those *regularly* employed (defined here as those who were employed in forty or

more weeks during the year); those more *casually* employed (who were employed in between ten and forty weeks); and those only *occasionally* employed (who worked in less than ten weeks during the year).

[Insert Figure 11.1 here: requires full page]

Figure 11.1: The Structure of the Arbury Estate Workforce, 1689-90

As might be expected, the twenty-seven 'regular' employees were exclusively male, mostly labourers and craftsmen, though seven of them were (as we have seen) resident servants in husbandry. The thirty-five 'casual' employees included not only another three of Newdigate's household servants whose duties were evidently split between the household itself and the estate, but also a significant penumbra of twenty-one male labourers and craftsmen and eleven women. The forty-eight 'occasional' workers comprised twenty-eight male labourers, several of them boys, and twenty women and girls, most of them, as we shall see, recruited seasonally. Newdigate himself evidently had a clear vision of the optimal size of his labour force. His own notes suggest that, in addition to his farm servants, he regarded sixteen male and four female labourers as adequate for the estate's needs, and accordingly decided at Lady Day 1689 that he could dispense with at least six men. He was, however, concerned to identify alternative roles for those laid off, suggesting that three of them be sent to fell wood at Weddington in Nuneaton and that another three could be employed either by the highway supervisors in mending the roads in the hamlet of Griff or in fencing around the park.³¹ Nonetheless, the tendency for the workforce to grow as the bailiffs recruited more men and women on an *ad hoc* basis entailed further economies. In November 1689, Newdigate noted that he was regularly employing as many as thirty-seven workmen, five of whom he thought could 'go quite off', and a sixth could be put to better use making nails for him. The workforce could be brought down to the more economical number of twenty-six, he thought, if five other men were alternately laid-off and employed.³² In this last proposal, he was anticipating the advice of those eighteenth-century estate stewards who argued that if supplementary labour was required, work should be shared out among as many as possible of those in need of employment.³³

As these notes suggest, the wage-bill proved difficult to control, not least because the recruitment of casual and occasional labour swelled the workforce considerably. Indeed seasonal fluctuations were particularly marked: the average weekly number of workers tasked around the estate was approximately forty-four, characteristically consisting of seven or eight servants in husbandry, thirty male labourers and craftsmen, and five or six women. But this notional profile is a classic example of a meaningless mean, for as Figure 2 shows, there was a distinctly seasonal pattern of labour participation, with the number of employees ranging from a minimum of twenty-eight in the last two weeks of April to a maximum of sixty in the second half of July.

[Insert Figure 11.2 here: requires full page]

Figure 11.2: The Seasonality of Employment on the Arbury Estate, 1689-90

This seasonal pattern is evident for male labourers, who were most regularly employed in harvesting and ploughing in the Autumn: almost a quarter (24.2 percent) of the man-days worked in 1689-90 fell in the nine weeks to the end of November 1689. It was even more obvious, however, in the case of the female labourers. There was a run of eight weeks in November and December, for instance, where no women were employed at all. By contrast, almost two-thirds (65.9 percent) of all the days worked by women fell in the nine weeks commencing 29 June, the period associated with the hay harvest. The busiest week for females was 13-20 July, when twenty-eight women and girls were employed. Of these twenty-eight female employees, only four cannot be identified in the 1684 census. Of the remaining twenty-four, four were wives, and one a widow of Chilvers Coton householders. Nineteen of them, furthermore, ranging in age from eight-year-old Elizabeth Brown to thirty-three-year-old Catherine Atkins, were daughters of residents. The seasonal workforce was, therefore, overwhelmingly recruited from Newdigate tenantry

Some indication of the extraordinary labour power required during the hay harvest is indicated by the distribution of tasks during the week beginning Saturday 20 July 1689. Between them, fifty-nine employees (including seven servants in husbandry) worked 281-

person days that week. To be sure, other tasks--ploughing, gathering tithe, hewing stone, fetching wood--were still being undertaken. Nonetheless, the activities associated with the hay harvest predominated. Twelve (28.6 percent) of the forty-two days worked by resident farm servants were spent fetching, carrying or loading hay. Of the labourers, five men were tasked between them for nineteen days spent mowing specified meadows and a further four struck a bargain for payment to mow three others. A further seven labourers were tasked with helping at or 'topping-off' the ricks, and between them spent seventeen days doing so. The actual hay-making--gathering the wet grass, turning it to ensure that it dried, loading it on to the wains and ricks--fell to twenty-eight women, boys and girls, who between them raked hay for 131 person-days. The fact that the ratio of haymakers to mowers was in excess of 3:1 suggests that, despite the increasing monopolisation of mowing by male labourers, very significant demand for female hay-rakers remained. Paying for the arduous, labour-intensive task of mowing nonetheless proved particularly expensive for Newdigate. It is instructive that the resident farm servants themselves were never asked to mow, possibly because they lacked the necessary skill, strength or experience to do so. Newdigate may even have been guilty of the false economy of deliberately recruiting servants in husbandry who could *not* mow on the basis that they could be hired for slightly lower wages, with the consequence that he had to strike bargains for mowing with day labourers, who were therefore able to negotiate the terms on which they might be prepared to work in his meadows.³⁴

II: Modes of Payment: Piece-Rates and Day-Rates

So how was all this very significant collective effort--day after day spent sawing, digging, ploughing, carting, mowing and raking--actually rewarded? Although the farm servants were (as we have seen) paid fixed board wages, there was considerable flexibility about how the day labourers were remunerated. Depending on the task they were expected to perform, they might be paid for specific jobs either at day-rates or at piece-work rates (that is, 'by [the] great', in the contemporary idiom). Although there was a general consensus that labourers were to be

distrusted and disdained for their preference to subsist in idleness, opinion was divided over whether effort could best be incentivised through piece-rates or wage-rates. On the one hand, Thomas Tusser thought in 1573 that mowers and reapers rewarded at piece-rates would only 'deceive' their employers by 'lingring [the work] out'. Sir Edward Verney, by contrast, protested in 1635 about the 'knavery' of those labourers whose day-rates only encouraged them to 'fidle about' but who might be encouraged to work harder if they were by paid 'by the great'. By the 1660s, the Norfolk magistrate Robert Doughty feared that employers could not secure diligence whichever way they chose to pay: if labourers were paid day-rates, he thought, they would hardly 'do one dayes worke in twoe', but if they were employed at piece-rates 'then on the contrary they will as hastily slubber itt over'.³⁵ These conflicting perspectives complicate the analysis of the relationship between work and reward at Arbury: was the choice of the mode of payment a matter of Newdigate's own determination to incentivise effort, or does it reflect a process of negotiation in which the employees themselves exercised some agency? This question can be answered by a detailed analysis of who was paid, and how, for doing what on the estate between Lady Day 1689 and Lady Day 1690.

Of the 7770.25 person-days worked by non-resident employees that year, almost one-quarter (22.8 percent) were remunerated as piece-work, though the wages book never specifies the piece-rates for specific tasks, which were almost certainly customary. This pattern was, however, far from uniform across the labour force. The women, whether they were employed throughout the year or only casually during harvest, were always paid a daily wage. The overwhelming majority of them were paid 4d. a day, though a small minority earned 3d., a differentiation which does not, curiously, seem to have depended on the age of the employee. Among the men, however, there was considerable variation between piece-rates and day-rates. As might be expected, the craftsmen, including the carpenter Thomas Nash (who was consistently paid a daily rate of 12d. throughout the year) or the mason Andrew Hardy and his assistant Charles Hall (whose daily rates were 18d. and 6d. respectively in the summer and 14d. and 5d. in the winter), were invariably remunerated by the day. Some agricultural labourers

were, however, similarly treated. Thomas Suffolk, for instance, worked almost 96 percent of all the available person-days and was never rewarded at piece-rates. The five men for whom piece-work arrangements were most common, by contrast, were mowers, hedgers and ditchers, each of whom worked between 160 and 200 days a year, approximately two-thirds of them paid 'by the great'.

Complex calculations evidently lay behind the decision to reward effort in one way rather than another, for the same employee might be paid during the same week either at piece- or day-rates depending upon the specific task he was performing. A team of three men who were tasked together in the week beginning 19 October 1689, for instance, were each paid daily wages of 7d. for the two days they spent removing wood and cutting windings in the New Park, but (unspecified) piece-rates for the four days they subsequently spent ditching in the New Park Wood. Some subtle distinctions may have been in play here. In July 1689, the sawyers Richard Nash and his son were paid piece rates whenever they actually felled trees but daily wages whenever they clove wood, a decision which may either reflect a fine judgement about how ineffectively woodsmen could be supervised by the bailiff when they were cutting timber in the woodland as opposed to sawing wood once it had been collected; or the reluctance of sawyers to fell trees on any other terms than 'by the great'. Piece-rates certainly seem to have been retained for specific *tasks* rather than for specific *workers*. Only thirteen (11.5 percent) of the man-days worked by male labourers and craftsmen in the week beginning 20 July 1689 were remunerated as piece-work, all of them in mowing. Mowers were generally employed either at a specially-contracted rate for scything the grass on a particular meadow or at piece-rates per acre of grass cut. A similar situation prevailed with hedging and ditching in the Autumn. Fifty-one (24.2 percent) of the man-days worked by male labourers and craftsmen in the week beginning 19 October were remunerated at piece-rates, forty-two of them in ditching, six in felling trees and three in trenching. Virtually all the other tasks, from craftsmanship such as masonry, carpentry and thatching, through more menial jobs, such as muck-spreading, fetching or cutting wood, digging, pounding hemp and sowing acorns, were paid by the day. What seems

to have been decisive here was the peculiarly masculine property of *skill*: those labourers who had the skills (largely understood in terms of sheer physical strength) required to fell trees or to mow meadows could dictate the terms on which they were employed, while their jobbing colleagues had no such bargaining power.³⁶

On the other hand, there is some evidence that wage rates were the product of some negotiation. The wages paid to three labourers on 27 September 1689, for instance, were noted as 'towards their bargain for stocking roots in the New Park Wood'; and the remuneration for five days' hedging in April of that year was similarly regarded as part-satisfaction of a 'bargain'.³⁷ *Ad hoc* arrangements were particularly common during the hay harvest when the number of man-hours required to mow the extensive hay meadows was unpredictable and the irregular sums paid probably reflect some give and take. The four men who contracted to mow the Ox Meadow, the Barn Meadow and the Homestead in July 1689 agreed to do so for £1-10s between them, though the fact that the agreement itemises neither the number of acres to be cut nor the time to be taken over the task suggest that these grounds were so deeply inscribed in the mental maps of the workforce that they required no specification. How hard a bargain these men had driven cannot be known, though it is clear that at least one Arbury employee did succeed in arguing up his rate. Newdigate noted in June 1692 that the mason Charles Hall was to be paid a daily rate of 10d. even though this was '1d more than my bargain' with Hall's former master Andrew Hardy.³⁸ Perhaps Hall really had held his hat in his hand but still found the courage to remind Newdigate to his face that his neighbours were prepared to pay more for his craftsmanship.³⁹

Newdigate's position in these negotiations over wages was significantly weakened when his own long-standing and spiralling problems with debt were compounded by a chronic shortage of specie. John Locke regarded this situation as increasingly desperate for employers even *before* the recoinage crisis of 1696, arguing as early as 1690 that money was no longer 'running in the several channels of commerce'. The consequence, he argued, was that 'the farmer, not having money to pay the labourer, supplies him with corn'.⁴⁰ Newdigate's

experience vindicate's Locke's analysis, for by the mid-1690s the Arbury labourers and craftsmen were being 'paid' in tickets which they were ultimately able to redeem only for corn. The earliest evidence of this system dates from July 1695, when twenty tickets, each of 5s value, were issued to four employees, but tickets of various denominations ranging from 2s6d to £2 proliferated thereafter. On 25 October 1695, Newdigate's clerk Obidiah Key explained that he had signed sixteen tickets each valued at 2s6d which he delivered to workmen ('i.e. towards paying this weeks work book'). He explained that he was to pay the money due upon them whenever they were brought to him, and subsequently recorded the specific dates on which he had burnt the tickets redeemed by particular workmen. By that winter, the entire estate economy had apparently been transformed from payment in cash to payment by ticket. On 15 November 1695, Key issued ninety-five more tickets to the cumulative value of almost £10 to twenty-five employees (including both craftsmen and labourers), many of their names being familiar from the wages book of the late 1680s.⁴¹ After the recoinage of 1696, however, it was no longer possible for Key to redeem the tickets in cash, and by that winter Newdigate was effectively paying his employees in corn, which had itself become a very expensive commodity given the difficult harvest conditions of that year. In November 1696, twenty-one employees apparently 'purchased' corn from Newdigate at 3s8d per strike in this way, sixteen of them initially 'paying' 3s6d and remaining indebted for 2d., a transaction which in itself implies that small amounts could not be paid in cash and had to be held over as small debts.⁴² What at first looks like a late flowering of the 'social economy of dearth', motivated by traditional gentlemanly ideals of hospitality, was in fact an early experiment in the truck system which did not become common elsewhere until the mid-eighteenth century, an expedient forced upon Newdigate by the high price of labour and the shortage of coin.⁴³

III: Time-Discipline and Labour-Discipline

Whether payments were made by the piece or by the day, in cash or on credit, there is some scattered evidence that Newdigate attempt to enforce both time and labour discipline on his

workforce. A penny-and-a-half each (almost 25 percent of their daily wage) was, for instance, deducted from the wages of sawyers Bartholomew and Francis Sergeant 'for giving over work on Saturday 2 November 1689 at 3 o'clock'; and 2d. each (an abatement of almost a third) was stopped from the wages of Henry and Edward Smith and of Thomas Clark for coming late to their hedging and ditching work on 13 December 1689. One Tuesday in late January 1690, John Ashby was threshing oats in the Middle Barn but went home 'sick' and was paid only for three-quarters of a day.⁴⁴ When labourers performed piece work, moreover, Newdigate usually insisted that his estate bailiffs monitor their performance closely: thus he ensured, for instance, that Job Morton and Samuel Joyce, who worked four days trenching in Griff Hill Meadow 'by great' in November 1689, 'had their work measured'.⁴⁵

Policing the punctuality, diligence and integrity of his craftsman and labourers was relatively easy. Wages could be abated at the end of the week, and claims about the volume of work completed could be verified on the spot. With his servants in husbandry, however, Newdigate had rather less room for manoeuvre: after all, these men and boys enjoyed some degree of security, being employed on yearly contracts at board wages. This did not prevent him from attempting to set the parameters of acceptable performance and behaviour by a disciplinary system of sanctions and rewards.⁴⁶ Newdigate's account books are replete with examples of farm servants being fined for infractions of this code, with those coachmen or wainmen whose roles took them furthest afield around (and often beyond) the Arbury estate apparently most often falling foul of his insistence on competence and punctuality. The coachman Thomas Wright, for instance, had his wages docked in 1692 to the value of windows broken through his negligence.⁴⁷ The wainman Robert Cholmly seems to have been a serial offender. In May 1696, he was in trouble for leaving ajar a gate at Griff Hill Farm, and in 1697 he was fined four times to the cumulative total of 12s. (about 12 percent of his annual wage). He forfeited 5s. on 18 May for causing three teams another day's work by bringing home plaster that should have been sent to Astley; a further 1s. on 21 May for mistakenly sending a cart to Coton; another 1s. on 31 May for failing to appear promptly with a supply of marl; and finally 5s.

in early September for neglecting his business (riding 'out to the alehouse', for all Newdigate knew) so that oats were not brought home until midday.⁴⁸ Newdigate suspected that idleness and incompetence on this scale were often a consequence of drunkenness, and was particularly severe with those of his farm servants who over-indulged in alcohol. In 1695, accordingly, he fined his long-serving wainman Ned Bryan 10s. for 'tempting James Morris and old Richard Nash to the alehouse and making Nash drunk'.⁴⁹ In the last resort, of course, Newdigate might dismiss these delinquents altogether. Thus Abraham Hans lost his job in 1696 when, having been instructed to purchase thirty-two strike of beans and provided with eleven horses and two husbandry boys for the purpose, he returned home from market with empty wagons.⁵⁰

Despite Sir Richard's best efforts to secure punctuality and efficiency, there is nonetheless some evidence of absenteeism among the estate workforce. In the week 20-26 July 1689, the fifty-nine staff on the payroll should notionally have worked 354 person-days, but over one-fifth of these days were lost to absence, the majority of them on Saturday 20 July when only thirteen (or 27 percent) of the employees turned in for work. The high level of absenteeism on this particular day may possibly have been due to the agricultural demands of the harvest on the employees' own strips, smallholdings and cottage gardens, but is more plausibly explained by the leisure opportunities afforded by the ancient fair at Polesworth associated with the feast of St Margaret. Newdigate's bailiffs would have been far happier with the situation in the third week of October, when only 7.5 percent of the notional maximum number of working days were lost through absence, and these were spread almost equally throughout the week, the majority of them accounted for by children or youths who had presumably been called away to other duties at home. There is, therefore, little evidence of the leisure preferences associated with 'St Monday' among the agricultural workers on the Arbury Hall estate, no one day of the week standing out more than any other in the profile of absenteeism. If many of the workforce really had spent St Margaret's day revelling at Polesworth, the overwhelming majority of them nonetheless reported for work the following Monday.⁵¹ Even though the late-seventeenth century market was not overburdened with surplus agricultural labour, therefore, Newdigate's

employees did not take advantage of their relatively strong position, and patterns of Monday absence were not prominent at Arbury. These labourers were probably too poorly paid in absolute terms to take time off, and even if they were relatively well-off in other respects, the landlord's close supervision of village life meant that rental and working opportunities could easily be restricted if they showed less than willing.

IV: Agricultural Wages, Household Economies and Standards of Living

The bulk of those regularly employed by Newdigates' bailiffs were agricultural labourers, who performed a remarkably wide range of tasks: a preliminary list based on close analysis of the wage books for late July and late October 1689 would include digging, ditching, haymaking, hedging, levelling, mowing, muck-spreading, ploughing, pounding hemp, sowing, threshing, trenching, and woodcutting, to say nothing of the more generic tasks of assisting the various craftsmen or fetching or loading various raw materials such as clay, coal, muck, stone or timber, or building materials such as tiles or wood. Except when they were performing those tasks characteristically remunerated at piece-rates, Newdigate's labourers were generally paid daily rates of 10d. during the harvest and 7d. at other times. These rates also exceeded the statutory *maxima* reaffirmed by the Warwickshire justices in 1684, although they fell well short both of the wage rates in agriculture calculated by Peter Bowden, who suggested that average daily earnings across the year had risen to just over 11d. by the first decade of the eighteenth-century; and of the daily earnings of labourers in Terling (Essex) who were earning a shilling a day in the period 1680-1700.⁵² Even during the harvest, therefore, Newdigate was probably paying something like 20 per cent less than the market rate. What these rates meant in terms of annual earnings is more problematic. Wrightson and Levine estimated that a labourer who found work for 220 days a year (that is, four days in most weeks and five days in some) in late seventeenth-century Essex would have earned a total of about £11, a sum which fell substantially short of the £13-14s probably required annually to support a family of five, though an equally industrious tailor (earning £12) or carpenter (£16-10s) would have fared slightly

better.⁵³ In fact, only thirteen of Newdigate's employees (nine of them labourers) in fact exceeded the Wrightson and Levine threshold of 220 days' labor. For the small minority who were able to get work five days a week in most weeks, therefore, it seems that relentless long hours remunerated at customary rather than at market rates was evidently the characteristic way of making a living at Arbury. Thomas Suffolk, for instance, was paid 6d. per day for assisting the shepherd and making hay in July and 4d. per day for fetching tiles, stubble and pease in October. Despite the fact that he worked 305 man-days (96 per cent of the notional maximum) for the Newdigates in 1689-1690, he cumulatively earned only £3-12s.10d. Abraham Checkly, by contrast, worked 294 days (almost 93 per cent of the maximum), and earned only £6-1s-10d, a sum which in and of itself did not go far towards meeting the expenditure of a household which contained not only his wife but two teenage children.⁵⁴ As will become clear, however, the discussion of these earnings in isolation from other factors is highly misleading. Suffolk was unmarried and give-or-take £3-£4 was an invaluable supplement to the household income of his mother and father; and Checkly not only paid nominal rent but could also draw on the earning power of his wife.

Since there is no extant probate material for any of these labouring men (and almost all of them probably had goods of too little worth to justify the taking of a post-mortem inventory), one can only speculate how they made shift to support their families.⁵⁵ William Cox, who worked on the Arbury Estate for 275 days at the daily rate of 10d. in the summer and 7d. at other times and therefore earned just short of £9 from Newdigate in 1689-90 was able to supplement this income through the legitimate exercise of common rights associated with his cottage and two-and-a-half-acre homestall in the Paradise End. As a cottier, Cox could claim the right to keep two cows and a calf, a horse and foal and five sheep on the commons. If he exercised them himself, Cox might annually earn somewhere between £14 and £20 from the dairy produce of his cattle.⁵⁶ Although at least two other regular Newdigate employees, the labourer and nailmaker Thomas Knight jr, and the carpenter Joseph Smith, had plausible claims to common rights, it may well be that many others pastured their animals illegally.⁵⁷

More decisive than the availability of common rights, however, was the value of subsidised rent. A significant proportion of Arbury employees were tenants of Newdigate and many of them were cottiers paying nominal rents of below 20s. a year.⁵⁸ Thomas Knight jr, for instance, worked for Newdigate for 252 days at either 10d. or 7d. per day earning almost £8 in the calendar year and yet was paying an annual rent of only 1s.. William Mortimer was slightly less industrious, working for 160 days (the majority of them at piece rates) on the estate, but only having to find annual rent of 2s.⁵⁹ Indeed, only two employees on the Arbury Hall estate--the labourer John Atkins and the mason Andrew Hardy--were paying Newdigate annual rents of over £2. In villages like Chilvers Coton, where landlords exerted very considerable control over the demand for labour, labourers' wages could be set at relatively low customary rates precisely because employees might be housed at the landlord's convenience in tied cottages for which they paid only peppercorn rents.

Tenure of Newdigate-subsidised property therefore conferred the opportunity to generate, though the effort of several family members, very substantial contributions to the household income of a labouring family. This is best illustrated through the case of Abraham and Alice Checkly, both of whom worked regularly on the Arbury estate in 1689-90. Abraham was 41 in that year and (as we have seen) he worked 294 days--levelling, digging, cutting and loading and wood, helping at the hay ricks, and fetching slates--being paid 10d a day in harvest and 7d in the winter. His wife Alice worked 104 days on the estate, mainly in haymaking, for which she was paid a daily rate of 4d. At a time when they were leasing a house and garden in the Heath End from Newdigate for an annual rent of only 6s.10d., the couple were therefore between them earning almost £11 from employment by their landlord. In light of these preferential arrangements, it is little wonder that in November 1687 Abraham Checkly had opened negotiations with Newdigate about renting 'a piece of ground about £3 or £4 a year'.⁶⁰ In many respects, therefore, Chilvers Coton functioned as an estate village within which Newdigate's labour and rental policies were inextricably intertwined.⁶¹ When their peppercorn

rents and preferential leases are taken into account, regularly employed labourers might, it seems, make a tolerable living from working at Arbury.

The most obvious beneficiaries of Newdigate's demand for work, however, were the skilled craftsmen, who naturally fared rather better in terms of wages, and for whom the evidence of the rewards of labour is rather more robust. Probate material survives for two of the craftsmen most frequently employed on the Newdigate estate. The carpenter Thomas Nash was aged 54 in 1689 and he was paid 12d. for each of the 231 days he worked—mending gates and horse-rails, repairing wheelbarrows and coaches, building shelves and making furniture—on the Arbury Estate. His annual aggregate earnings from Newdigate's bailiff alone therefore amounted to well over £16 and he had a further three months' earning power to deploy elsewhere if he chose to use it.⁶² Perhaps he worked for other employers, but he almost certainly worked his own land, described in 1684 as 'a middling farm' (probably in excess of thirty-four acres) which he leased from Newdigate at an annual rent of 30s. When he died in 1701 at the age of 67, his inventory, with a total valuation of over £136, listed consumer goods to the value of almost £19; livestock, including seven horses and four cows, worth almost £32; and agricultural produce worth £40. All this suggests a material wealth of over £111, which places him securely in the upper quartile of the entire Chilvers Coton probate sample for the period 1600-1750.⁶³ The mason Andrew Hardy did almost as well out of his employment at Arbury, although given that his daily rate was not consistent over the year, his aggregate earnings are more difficult to calculate. Nonetheless, he worked 160 days on the estate, earning either 18d. or 14d. per day, and therefore had an annual Arbury income of £9s-15s. When he died in 1702 aged 59, he left an inventory valued at £313, itemising over £13 worth of consumer goods; almost £33 worth of livestock (including two horses, twelve cattle and fifteen sheep); and £14 worth of agricultural produce. His household was clearly very active in dairying, since he owned forty cheeses cumulatively worth some 36s. Shortly before his death, he had in 1699 been able to expand his holding from the small farm in the Arbury Demesne he had rented from Newdigate in 1684 to property with an annual rental value of over £8.⁶⁴ Although he was owed

the enormous sum of £247 on bonds and desperate debts, his material wealth of almost £65 compares very favourably with other craftsmen, and puts him in the top third of the sample.⁶⁵ These characteristics sit very comfortably with what has recently been discovered about the material culture of the middling sort of people who constituted the 'chief inhabitants' of rural communities in late seventeenth-century England.⁶⁶

Of the living conditions of the labour force more generally, however, it is difficult to be so precise. Perhaps most instructive are the housing arrangements of a significant cluster of Newdigate employees who rented his cottages in the Heath End, effectively the sink estate of the village, extending for a quarter of a mile towards Arbury at the western fringes of the Chilvers Coton common field system.

[insert Figure 11.3 here: requires full page]

Figure 11.3: The Households of the Heath End, Coton Town, 1684

The manorial jurors of 1684 had noted that the houses of the Heath End were 'mean tenements inhabited by indifferent persons of which 3 or 4 are very poor' although they conceded that 'the land which belongs to them is, as most Gardens and Homsteads are, very good'. Twenty-two cottages and houses were huddled either side of the street, twelve of them occupied by tenants of Newdigate paying rents of less than 20s a year. Six of Newdigate's most regular employees in 1689-90--the labourers Abraham Checkly, Thomas Knight, Robert Sergeant and William Mortimer and the sawyers Francis and Bartholomew Sergeant--lived here. Five of their six cottages had been exempted from payment of the hearth tax in 1670. The properties of Knight, Mortimer and Robert Sergeant were described as houses and little garden places for which they paid rents of only a shilling or two per year; and Checkly's as a house with a lean to with a little garden for which he paid 2s6d. Although neither of the two Sergeants who felled trees for Newdigate were included in the list of cottiers, both were by 1689-90 paying nominal rents of 18s.4d. and 19s.6d. respectively. None of these properties had gardens exceeding a few hundred square yards, and conditions must have been impossibly cramped. Bartholomew Sergeant, for instance, lived in a one-hearth cottage with his wife and six children aged between 9 and 24;

and William Mortimer shared his one-hearth cottage with a wife, two children aged 23 and 18, and a parish orphan aged 10. All these men enjoyed a relatively short walk of less than a mile to the Arbury estate, and one wonders how they felt each morning when they headed for work. For as they passed through the park gates into the 'polite landscape' of Arbury Hall, dominated by its Christopher Wren-designed stable block and its manicured gardens, to say nothing of its thirty-two chimneys, they were quite literally entering another world, one in which their perceptions of both time and space were likely twisted almost entirely out of shape.⁶⁷

V: Conclusion

How, then, might we characterise the relationship between Sir Richard Newdigate and the men, women and children who worked on his estate; and what does that relationship tell us about the management of agricultural labour by a late-seventeenth-century employer? To be sure, our understanding of the politics of agricultural employment on the Arbury demesne is skewed by the partial nature of these remarkable sources which by definition offer us only an elite view of the labour market. The voices of Newdigate's labourers are largely silenced by the very fact of their subordination. Despite the astonishing quality of the archival material, analysis of the implications of the Arbury wages and account books for rural social relationships necessarily remains speculative. On the one hand, Newdigate's significant degree of oversight of the living and working arrangements of his labour force suggests that he might have been able to exercise very extensive powers of control, perhaps even coercion, over his tenants and employees. His access to multiple sources of authority--as landlord, as employer, as poor-rate payer--gave him ample opportunity to manipulate the markets for housing, land and labour. On the other hand, however, there is abundant evidence that he had to bend over backwards to recruit labourers and to secure their diligence. When they worked for him, they rarely needed to work full time, and in the days not spent on the estate they might carve out an independent space of their own which might constrain Newdigate's freedom to manoeuvre.

Our account must also necessarily take account of personal factors. Newdigate evidently had a preference for micro-management. Although there was an estate bailiff (Henry Biddle, earning £9 a year by 1689) whose responsibility it was to record the performance of agricultural and building work at Arbury, Newdigate himself took a very close personal and discretionary interest in supervising the labour force.⁶⁸ This was evidently a habit of long-standing. On the morning of Saturday 7 October 1682, for instance, he recorded that he had risen at 6am and, pausing only for morning prayer, set his household and farm servants in motion: 'Sent Joseph White to Walsall to see for lime; [the coachman Richard] Drakeford to Arley to get a team to go with my 2 [teams]; [the brewer] Tom Tomson to Rugby with [the] lame [horse] Ophthene; [the butler] George [Nott] to Griffie about the highways; [the land agent Robert] Johnson to Coton to send Francis Kinder to Coventry for the [manorial court] paines; [the postilion] Jack Clark to fetch Coal; Thomas Musson to sow wheat; [the labourer] John Harris to plow for barley; [the wainman] Ned Brian to carry mud for barley; Robin Cox to carry brick etc for [the mason] Andrew [Hardy], with each a team; shewed Andrew [Hardy] where to build a root house; and employed the other workmen'.⁶⁹ Only then, after sending these men scurrying through and beyond the Arbury estate, did Newdigate stop to have breakfast.

There were equally, however, structural issues in play which complicated Newdigate's exercise of authority over his workforce. The sheer size of the estate and its concomitant demand for agricultural labour, compounded by the geographical origins of so many of those to whom he paid wages, meant that he had to be very careful about how his labourers were treated both during and after their employment. Getting the best performance out of the estate workforce was problematic. It seems likely that Newdigate and his bailiffs were forced to pay piece rates rather than daily wages to incentivise the improved performance of certain agricultural tasks--especially mowing, hedging, ditching and tree-felling--required of his labourers. Where he did pay daily rates, he was able to keep them at customary rather than market levels, but was only able to do so because so many of his labourers were his own tenants living in tied cottages at nominal rents. He did attempt to inculcate punctuality in the labour

force, occasionally docking the wages of those day-labourers who started work late or left early, and fining his farm servants heavily if they were incompetent, idle or drunk. In all these respects, Newdigate's workforce was subject to discipline both of their time and their productivity.

These managerial aspects aside, the Newdigate archive discloses in unparalleled detail the lived experience of rural labour in late seventeenth-century England. Most labour markets in the early modern period were, of course, imperfect and the agricultural labour market at Arbury was more imperfect than most, for the presence of a very substantial landed employer generated significant distortions in the relationship between work and reward.⁷⁰ In an environment like Arbury, labour could not be an autonomous commodity which might be bought or sold for the highest price. Its worth was inextricably entwined with other factors of production, especially land and its associated rental value. In particular, the tied cottages in which so many of Newdigate's labourers were housed formed part of the raft of entitlements conferred when a labourer joined the Arbury workforce. In this sense, calculations of annual earnings among the agricultural workforce at Arbury (and elsewhere) are meaningless unless they take account of the negligible rents paid by so many of his employees.⁷¹ This was doubtless a pattern reproduced across many estate villages by the early eighteenth century, but it is a valuable reminder to historians of living standards and industriousness that rental property was no less significant a commodity than labour time in the balance of resources between employer and employee.

The Arbury estate wages book is no less revealing of the considerable flexibility of the agricultural labour market in late seventeenth-century England. The casual contemporary identification of, and historical reference to, so many of Newdigate's employees as 'farm servants' or as 'labourers' conceals a very wide variety of tasks performed by, of skills inherent within, and of modes of payment negotiated among, the workforce. Newdigate himself characterised the work done at Arbury as so much 'getting and threshing', a generic description which entirely fails to do justice to the range and complexity of the labour performed by men,

women and children around the estate.⁷² The farm servants, especially the husbandry boys, were jacks-of-all-trades, required (often in conjunction with day labourers) to thresh, to plough, to fetch and to carry as need required. Singly and occasionally with assistants, the masons and carpenters exercised their craftsmanship with sufficient elegance to earn Newdigate's respect and the likelihood of regular work in the hall, the gardens and the park for years to come. In twos or threes, especially in the early summer and autumn, teams of skilled labourers hedged, ditched, felled and mowed on piece-rate terms which guaranteed them at least some control over the speed at which they worked; and they might even be able to name their price when it came to bargaining over the contract for the performance of a specific task. More commonly, the unskilled male labourers simply put in the hours throughout the year in digging, fetching and carrying, confident in the knowledge that so long as Newdigate was resident at Arbury there would always be demand for their brawn and stamina. And in July and August, the meadows of the estate were the site of a genuinely communal effort as a score or more of women and children raked hay for dozens of farm servants and labourers to load it onto wains and ricks.

The late seventeenth-century agricultural labour market was undoubtedly, therefore, both segmented by skill, by gender and by age; and distorted by the highly seasonal nature of demand. The activities associated with the Arbury Hall hay harvest are, nonetheless, a powerful reminder that in the face-to-face world of local social and economic relations such distinctions might, on certain occasions at least, count for very little. At a time when labour was in relatively short supply, Newdigate and his bailiffs desperately needed all this collective effort. In negotiating with him over terms (and over the associated entitlements--including preferential rents, generous common rights and seasonal working opportunities for their wives and children), his employees might both exercise significant agency over when and at what rates they might work. And at the end of long hard week, they arguably enjoyed a standard of living which just might, from the perspectives either of their grandparents or their grandchildren, even have seemed enviable.

HINDLE/Endnotes

¹ [W]arwick [C]ounty [R]ecord [O]ffice, CR136/V17, p. 227 (1692).

² Margaret Gay Davies, 'Country Gentry and Falling Rents in the 1660s and 1670s', *Midland History* 4 (1977), 86-96. Christopher Clay, 'Landlords and Estate Management', *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. Volume V, 1640-1750: II. Agrarian Change*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Cambridge, 1985), II, pp. 230-32; D.R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People: The Estate Steward and His World in Later Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 54-55; John Broad, *Transforming English Rural Society: The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600-1820* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 141-42.

³ John Hatcher, 'Labour, Leisure and Economic Thought before the Nineteenth Century', *P&P* 160 (1998), p. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁵ Wrightson, *EN*, pp. 308-20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 312-13.

⁹ Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, 'Old Questions, New Data, and Alternative Perspectives: Families' Living Standards in the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Economic History* 52 (1992), 849-80.

¹⁰ Wrightson & Levine, *Terling*, pp. 36-42.

¹¹ This paper is part of a wider project to reconstruct the social topography of this particular rural community on the basis of this source. See Steve Hindle, 'Fiscal Seigneurialism in Late-Seventeenth-Century Warwickshire: Sir Richard Newdigate and the "Great Survey" of Chilvers Coton', *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-86: His Life, His Writings and His County*, ed. Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 164-86; *idem*, 'Below

Stairs at Arbury Hall: Sir Richard Newdigate and His Household Staff, c.1670-1710' *Historical Research* 85 [no.227] (2012), 000-00.

¹² The Newdigate family archive is WCRO, CR136. The most significant sources for this study are CR136/V12, pp. 64-73 (occupational 'census-type' listing, 1684); V109, V101, V12 (the three volumes of the survey of the manor of Griff and Coton, 1681-84); and CR 1841/6 (estate wages book, 1688-91).

¹³ Alexandra Shepard, 'Poverty, Labour and the Language of Social Description in Early Modern England', *P&P* 201 (2008), 51-95; Peter King, 'Social Inequality, Identity and the Labouring Poor in Eighteenth-Century England', *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800*, ed. Henry French and Jonathan Barry (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 60-86.

¹⁴ E.P. Thompson, 'The Patricians and the Plebs', in Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991), pp.16-96; Peter King, 'Edward Thompson's Contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies: The Patrician-Plebeian Model Re-Examined', *SH* 21 (1996), 215-28.

¹⁵ See, most recently, Gregory Clark, 'Farm Wages and Living Standards in the Industrial Revolution: England, 1670-1869', *EcHR* 2nd ser. 54 (2001), 477-505.

¹⁶ The only comparable studies are those of Elizabethan Stiffkey (Norfolk): see A. Hassell Smith, 'Labourers in Late Sixteenth-Century England: A Case Study from North Norfolk', *C&C* 4 (1989), 11-52, 367-94.

¹⁷ WCRO, CR1841/6. The following discussion of servants in husbandry takes no account either of the household staff (including the dairy maids) who worked within Arbury Hall itself or of the four or five staff who worked in Sir Richard's gardens. Cf. Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981); Hassell Smith, 'Labourers in Late Sixteenth-Century England [Part I]', pp. 14-18.

¹⁸ WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (19-25 October 1689). cf. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.35-42.

²⁰ WCRO, CR136/V84, p.546 (Lady Day 1689).

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- ²¹ *Warwick County Records*, eds. S.C. Ratcliff, H.C. Johnson, and N.J. Williams (9 vols., Warwick, 1935-64), VIII, pp.92-93.
- ²² WCRO, CR136/V90, pp. 118-23, 66, 220, 711.
- ²³ It was higher still among his domestic staff. See Hindle, 'Below Stairs'.
- ²⁴ WCRO, CR136/V12, pp. 64-73 [no.175].
- ²⁵ On fifty-one week hirings designed to prevent settlement, see K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 73-77.
- ²⁶ [Edwards].
- ²⁷ WCRO, CR136/V101, pp. 23-24, 25-26; V109, pp. 66-67, 78-79; V12, pp. 64-73 [no.74].
- ²⁸ For the enduring significance of the Polesworth hiring fair which regularly attracted several thousand servants, see William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties* (2 vols, 1796), II, pp. 17-18; Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 60, 161. Cf. Michael Roberts, "'Waiting Upon Chance": English Hiring Fairs and their Meanings From the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1988), p. 137.
- ²⁹ WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (23 March 1689-22 March 1690)
- ³⁰ WCRO, CR136/V84, pp. 530-31.
- ³¹ WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (25 March 1689).
- ³² WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (8 November 1689).
- ³³ Clay, 'Landlords and Estate Management', p. 241.
- ³⁴ Michael Roberts, 'Sickles and Scythes: Women's Work and Men's Work at Harvest Time', *HWJ* 7 (1979), pp. 9, 11, 13, 16-17, 22; idem, 'Sickles and Scythes Revisited: Harvest Work, Wages and Symbolic Meanings', *Women, Work and Wages in England, c.1600-1850*, ed. Penny Lane, Neil Raven and Keith Snell (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 97-98. The classic contemporary description of the mechanics of the hay harvest is D. M. Woodward, ed., *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell 1642* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 33-44.
- ³⁵ Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry* (1573), fol.54v; F.P. Verney, ed., *Memoirs of the Verney Family During the Civil War* (2 vols, 1892), I, p.128; Norfolk Record Office,

Aylsham MS 304, unfol. ([undated memorandum on] '5 Eliz c. 4'). To 'slubber' up, or over, a task was to perform it in a hurried or careless manner. *OED* sv 'slubber' v.3a

³⁶ John Rule, 'The Property in Skill in the Period of Manufacture', *The Historical Meaning of Work*, ed. Patrick Joyce (Cambridge, 1987), pp.99-118; Joyce Burnette, *Gender, Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (Cambridge, 2008), pp.154-57.

³⁷ WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (5 April 1689, 27 Sept. 1689).

³⁸ WCRO, CR 136/V17, p.227 (22 June 1692).

³⁹ Cf. Wrightson, *EN*, p.326.

⁴⁰ John Locke, *Some Considerations of the consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money* [2nd edn, 1696], repr. in Patrick H. Kelly, ed., *Locke on Money* (Oxford, 1991), p. 237. Craig Muldrew, "'Hard Food For Midas": Cash and its Social Value in Early Modern England', *P&P* 170 (2001), p.107.

⁴¹ WCRO, CR136/V168, reverse pagination [unfol.]: 'An account of tickets signed by Ob: Key'.

⁴² WCRO, CR136/V17, p.316 (November-December 1696). On high corn prices in the mid-1690s, see Andrew B. Appleby, 'Grain Prices and Subsistence Crises in England and France, 1590-1740', *Journal of Economic History* 39 (1979), 865-87; Peter Bowden, 'Appendix III: Statistics', in *Agrarian History, V*, ed. Thirsk, II, pp. 829-30 (table 1).

⁴³ John Walter, 'The Social Economy of Dearth in Early Modern England', reprinted in John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 124-80; cf. John Rule *The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth-Century Industry* (1981), p. 138; Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850* (1986), pp. 64-5, 110; Craig Muldrew and Stephen King, 'Cash, Wages and the Economy of Makeshifts in England, 1650-1800', *Experiencing Wages: Social and Cultural Aspects of Wage Forms in Europe Since 1500*, ed. Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz (New York, 2003), pp. 165-66; Beverley Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life: Gender, Practice and Social Politics in England, c.1600-1900* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 89-90, 96-97, 102.

⁴⁴ WCRO, CR1841/6, unfol. (8 Nov. 1689, 12 Dec. 1689, 27 Jan. 1690).

⁴⁵ WCRO, CR1841/6 (13 Nov. 1689).

⁴⁶ This system also applied to his household servants. Hindle, 'Below Stairs'.

⁴⁷ WCRO, CR136/V17, p.148 (May 1692).

⁴⁸ WCRO, CR136/V90, p. 1051 (7 May 1696); V17, pp. 441 (26 May 1697), 587 (16 Sept. 1697).

For the docking of the wages of farm servants elsewhere, see Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁹ WCRO, CR136/V17, pp. 302-3 (21 Jan. 1695).

⁵⁰ WCRO, CR136/ V17, p. 405 (1696),

⁵¹ Cf. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 373-74; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*, pp.94-95.

⁵² Peter J. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Wages, Farm Profits and Rents', *Agrarian History, V*, ed. Thirsk, II, p. 5 (table 13.3); Wrightson & Levine, *Terling*, p. 41.

⁵³ Wrightson & Levine, *Terling*, pp. 40-41; Wrightson, *EN*, pp. 317-18.

⁵⁴ This calculation (and all those that follow) assumes that 'harvest' wages were paid only in eight of the 52 weeks of the working year. These earnings would have been higher still if Newdigate had chosen to distinguish not only between harvest wages and winter wages, but also between non-harvest 'summer' wages and winter wages, though he does not seem to have done so. Cf. Clark, 'Farm Wages', pp. 478, 481.

⁵⁵ Margaret Spufford, 'The Limitations of the Probate Inventory', *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk*, ed. John Chartres and David Hey (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 139-74; Tom Arkell, 'Interpreting Probate Inventories', *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, ed. Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (Oxford, 2000), pp. 72-102.

⁵⁶ WCRO, CR136/V109, pp. 73-77. For estimates of the value of these common rights, see Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, Cows, Common Rights and Parliamentary Enclosure: The Evidence of Contemporary Comment, c.1760-1810', *P&P* 171 (2001), 95-126.

⁵⁷ WCRO, CR136/V109, p. 73.

⁵⁸ Cf. M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett and B. Afton, *Agricultural Rent in England, 1690-1914* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.79-80.

⁵⁹ Although Wrightson and Levine allowed as much as £1 a year for rent, they conceded that the Terling housing stock *might* have included 'tied cottages with negligible rents' of the kind which predominated in Chilvers Coton. Wrightson & Levine, *Terling*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ WCRO, CR136/V84, p. 450.

⁶¹ See the essay by H. R. French in this volume.

⁶² Nash's earnings were therefore analogous to those carpenters in late seventeenth-century Terling who (just as he did) found work four days in most weeks and five days in some. Wrightson, *EN*, p. 317.

⁶³ [L]ichfield [R]ecord [O]ffice, inv. Thomas Nash, carpenter (25. Sept. 1701). For the categories of 'consumer goods' and 'material wealth' deployed here, see Tom Arkell, 'Introduction: Part I', in Arkell, ed. *Warwickshire Hearth Tax Returns*, pp. 94-97.

⁶⁴ LRO, inv Andrew Hardy, yeoman (28 Mar. 1702).

⁶⁵ Cf. Donald Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 241-42 on the high level of debts owed to building craftsmen such as masons.

⁶⁶ H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), pp.141-200, esp. p. 164 (table 3.3).

⁶⁷ Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1995); Jonathan Finch, 'Pallas, Flora and Ceres: Landscape Priorities and Improvement on the Castle Howard Estate, 1699-1880', *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape*, ed. Jonathan Finch and Kate Giles (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 19-37.

⁶⁸ In 1684 there had been two bailiffs resident at Arbury Hall: 31-year-old James Dowell and 22-year old Samuel Moore. WCRO, CR136/V12, pp.64-73 [no.175].

⁶⁹ WCRO, CR136/B1306B (7 Oct. 1682).

⁷⁰ John Langton, 'Proletarianization in the Industrial Revolution: Regionalism and Kinship in the Labour Markets of the British Coal Industry from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25 (2000), 31–49.

⁷¹ An argument which undermines the conclusions of Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁷² WCRO, CR136/B2502H.