

ART. XIV.—*The domestic economy of the Lakeland yeoman, 1660-1749.* By J. D. MARSHALL, B.Sc. (Econ.), Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S.

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NEARLY a lifetime ago, our late member Dr Charles Moor published his paper on "The old Statesman families of Irton", using probate inventories to give a convincing and detailed picture of the farming and domestic economy of the yeomen of his parish in the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries.¹ Rather surprisingly, few members of our Society seem to have attempted similar works of scholarship relative to the yeomanry or peasantry of other parts of the Lake Counties. The reason for this is not entirely beyond comprehension; by accidents of administration and circumstances, the probate inventories for the larger part of our region — that outside the Diocese of Carlisle — have been stored at the Lancashire County Record Office, Preston,² at a formerly prohibitive distance from those who have lived and worked in Cumbrian dales. It is to be hoped that motorways and better transport, or some other improvement of amenities, will enable our local scholars to take advantage of these remarkable sources of social and economic history.

It is the purpose of this article to demonstrate the range of information that can be obtained from what, at first glance, appears to be little more than a scrawled and laconic list of possessions folded with the will of a deceased person. Many local historians are, of course,

¹ CW2 x 1910.

² I.e. for the Deaneries of Lonsdale, Kendal, Furness and Copeland, as well as those for Amounderness, the whole of the wills in these divisions having been submitted for probate purposes to the relevant court of the Archdeaconry of Richmond.

familiar with these documents, which appear to represent only a section of the population of a given area at any one time. We have to assume that many of the poorer people in this country died intestate, although it is also true that as regards rural populations, some very poor husbandmen, and even labourers, occasionally filed wills which have been preserved in these collections. Some, at least, of the Preston wills and inventories were lost or damaged before they came into the custody and care of the present-day archivist.³

The copious remaining documents permit us, especially when they are examined together with the fine collection of wills and inventories for the Diocese of Carlisle,⁴ to build up a working notion of the domestic life and economy of that most typical of former Cumbrians, the yeoman or husbandman of early modern times. It must be said at once that the great majority of these documents take an entirely predictable form. They convey the impression of a stereotype, of a profoundly traditional way of life with few basic requirements, little comfort, singularly little aspiration, and a comparative absence of innovation and enterprise. It is only when one examines large samples of inventories, from a variety of geographical areas, and when one is enabled to compare findings from two or more distinct chronological periods, that processes of change begin to appear, and that unexpected subtleties are revealed. The information set out in this article is in fact taken from the results of a comparatively large-scale statistical and other exercise relating to the 18th century as well as the 17th, and some of the findings of this broader survey will be mentioned in outline only. Others are still in the course of testing and clarification. The writer has avoided

³ Cf. B. C. Jones, "Lancashire Probate Records", *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.*, vol. 104, 1953, 66-67.

⁴ At the Record Office, The Castle, Carlisle.

giving information which has appeared in a previously published work.⁵

The absence of serious study of the rural society of 17th-century Lakeland has obliged us too often to rely upon impressionistic observers like Wordsworth, who informs us, *à propos* the domestic economy of the dalesman:⁶

The family of each man, whether *estatesman* or farmer, formerly had a twofold support: first, the produce of his lands and flocks; and, secondly, the profit drawn from the employment of the women and children, as manufacturers; spinning their own wool in their own houses (work chiefly done in the winter season, and carrying it to market for sale. . . .).

We need not doubt that the sheep was an important feature of this domestic economy two to three centuries ago. We may nevertheless feel some surprise at the discovery that this useful animal was less important to the yeoman of the dales than Wordsworth appears to suggest. In the first place, sheep flocks were comparatively small. A dales farmer of the present day may not uncommonly have four or five hundred animals on the nearby fells. The 17th-century average for a yeoman's flock size was nearer fifty animals, and comparatively few farmstead occupiers had more than two hundred. It may be, of course, that the valuers or "prizers" sometimes omitted sheep which were regarded as part of a customary estate or an appurtenance thereof, and if this is so, it remains doubtful how far any calculation of mean numbers is affected. (See Appendix.) Plainly the broad drift of the argument is not, and Lancashire fell and plainland farmers often had flocks of the same small sizes.

The woollen output from a flock of fifty animals hardly represented a major source of income. At the end

⁵ J. D. Marshall, *Old Lakeland: Some Cumbrian Social History* (1971), chap. II, *passim*.

⁶ Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes* (1835 edn.), 90.

of the 18th century, Hutchinson⁷ remarked of the sheep of the Millom district (1794) that "seven fleeces make a stone in weight", and elsewhere, of the Muncaster locality, that "10 fleeces to a stone, value 7s. 10d.". The wool yield of a 17th-century flock can hardly have been greater than that suggested by such statistics. If we take seven fleeces to a stone as a basis for calculation for the earlier period, seven to ten stones of wool are the most that could have been expected from a flock of mature animals. Late 17th-century wool was valued at between 3s. and 7s. a stone, with 4s. 6d. and 5s. a stone as the most common figures.

Of a sample of inventories (1660-89), totalling just over 300, and relating to all the Lakeland deaneries and districts, very few give examples of accumulations of wool held in store to the quantity of more than 20 stones. The inventories are, of course, dated, and much depends upon the time of year at which a valuation survey was made by the prizers, who were usually neighbours with some experience of the work. Some comparatively modestly placed yeomen accumulated small quantities over a period, and John Braithwaite of Longlaith in Sawrey (inventory of 5 June 1672) had wool "old and new" valued at £1. 0s. 0d. If we take accumulations of wool from a sample of cases carrying dates round about or fairly soon after clipping time, we can gain some indication of amounts actually held in stock before sale to the occasional dealer or "brogger".

The clip was gathered in by late June or early July. Occasionally, it could be substantial; hence, William Sawrey of Coniston Waterhead, according to his

⁷ Hutchinson, *History of Cumberland* (1794), I 532, 570. See also P. J. Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (1962), 37, which estimates that the sheep of Lancashire and Yorkshire, at these periods, could produce a fleece weighing from 2 to 3 lb. The Crosthwaite Lamb Book (1724) in the Benson papers at the Record Office, Carlisle (D/Ben 1/332) gives large numbers of examples of fleeces averaging 2 lb. each in approximate weight.

inventory of 12 July 1672, had "beasts, sheep and horses" to the value of £87. 10s., and had wool valued at £12. 10s., i.e. well over 60 stones. But William Keene of Keene Ground, Hawkshead (inventory of 25 July 1674) had a flock very much nearer the average size,⁸ valued at £5. 16s. 8d., and had only 7s. worth of wool in store. Leaving the Furness Fells, we can examine the inventory of William Grayson of Cross (?canonby), Cumberland, dated 16 September 1679, who had a sheep flock of somewhat above the average value, in this instance £9. 3s. od., and who had £3. os. od. of wool in stock. The majority of examples, however, are furnished by High Furness inventories, perhaps because that district had connections with the Kendal woollen market. John Braithwaite of Far Sawrey (with an inventory of 5 March 1671/2) had a sheep flock which must, by prevailing values, have counted about 150 animals, and in that spring of his death he had wool worth £3. 6s. 8d., a stock representing twelve or thirteen stones, and roughly equivalent to his likely total clip. Infirmary or illness could have prevented its sale during the winter months. John Scale of Whaitehead in Hawkshead parish, whose goods were valued on 27 August 1670, had a smaller than average flock, entered as worth £3. 6s. 8d. and comprising perhaps 25 animals according to age and condition; and Scale's store of wool was assessed as worth £1. os. od. only, doubtless the total clip from this small flock. But it cannot always be assumed that the wool in store came from a yeoman's own animals, and Thomas Godmonde of Swingill Bank (Swinklebank), Longsleddale (11 September 1674), had 60 sheep, valued at £10. os. od., but no fewer than 55 stones of wool in his possession at his death. This quantity was in two separate lots of doubtless differing qualities, with 15 stones assessed

⁸ A sheep, according to age and condition, was valued at between 2s. and 4s. In some instances the sizes of flocks are given in the inventories.

at 75s., or 5s. a stone, and 40 stones valued at a total of £10. 5s. od. The name of Godmonde appears in Kendal trading circles at this period, and it may be that Thomas was collecting wool for a member of his family elsewhere.

As Wordsworth says, spinning was a family activity,⁹ and it may be significant that the most marked concentration of spinning wheels, if we may add together the wheels mentioned in the inventories of our Lakeland sample district by district, was in Furness Fells. Even so, the wheels are mentioned only in one inventory in three in High Furness (1660-89), and in thirty per cent of instances in Furness and Kendal deaneries (hill situations only). This, of course, was the territory most familiar to Wordsworth himself. Throughout the region as a whole, the emphasis was undoubtedly on woollen spinning, although it is sometimes forgotten that flax and hemp were widely spun, especially in the coastal and southern districts. A casual (if not statistically "random") sample of 89 inventories for Kendal and Furness deaneries, 1663-81, produced 35 instances of obvious involvement in spinning or weaving, with wool or woollen yarn mentioned 18 times, hemp 18 times, and linen or flax three times. The hemp was used not only for rope and for the fabrication of the crude harness of the age, but for coarse shirting and sacking (harden). An examination of 33 inventories from townships along the Cumberland coastline (1660-86), brought six mentions of "line" or lint, nine of hemp and seven of wool.

If the Lakeland yeoman was deeply interested in the spinning of yarn for the cloth trade, then he might

⁹ It should be borne in mind that the womenfolk in a family may have had wheels which were counted as their own property. The inventories of single women or widows, where they occur, do not invariably show spinning wheels as their possessions. The wheels which occur in male inventories are—as in the above case—useful in showing relative geographical concentrations. It may be that many were overlooked by the prizers.

have been expected to keep two or three stones of wool, or a stock of hemp or flax, in hand for his family's use or for ultimate making up into cloth by private arrangement. Yet of all the inventories surveyed, only half a dozen include mention of yarn to the value of more than £1. os. od., and five of these were of obvious weavers, with "studdles" or loom frames among their possessions. In any case, the quantities of wool required for home spinning would not be large and in September 1686 Robert Kelsick of Egremont, the owner of a flock of sheep of more than average size, had a spinning wheel and cards, and a stone of wool worth 4s. 6d. This is probably what a family would have required to keep them occupied during much of the winter. John Stainton of Dalton-in-Furness (inventory of 30 September 1680) had 25 sheep "young and old", "wool and woollen and hempen yarn" valued at 10s., and linen and woollen cloth assessed at £1. 6s. 8d. Here we have a hint of the accretion of value which might be achieved through the hard work of the husbandman and his family, by using the small amount of raw material available from his diminutive sheep flock, a parcel of flax-growing territory and a hemp-garth. In this case there is no mention of studdles or a loom.

As one examines successive sets of entries of this character, the picture which emerges, by and large, is that of a subsistence economy with only very small quantities of material or produce available for conversion into cash. The domestic textile industry seems to have been very effective as a creator of income and employment only in an area within about twenty miles' radius of Kendal; the yeoman and husbandman in other areas had to seek other forms of by-employment, and some of these are discussed below. Meanwhile, the average income from the manufacture and sale of yarn, or the growing of wool, cannot have

exceeded £2. os. od. to £3. os. od. annually to a family or farmstead during this period.¹⁰

The trade in cattle offered brighter prospects. In so far as a man could break free from the shackles of a subsistence economy by agriculture alone, then the raising, wintering or fattening of cattle might well enable him to do so. But to enter this trade, he had to have ready cash, and so, once more, he had additional reason for entering a trade or by-employment if he sought to amass some small capital for the purpose. But the yeoman's cattle were also his most prized assets whether he sought to turn them into cash or whether he needed them as a source of food, and generally speaking, he had more money invested in them than in his sheep. His posthumous valuers here spoke with one voice. Cattle were almost always more highly valued *in toto* than sheep, except in the cases of estates in the remoter dales and higher fells — and even there, cattle were to be found in fair numbers. Of a sample of 300 hill yeomen (taken in two groups, 150 for the period 1660-89, and 150 for the period 1720-49), 87 per cent of the grand total had cattle, and 70 per cent had sheep. A "hill" yeoman in this and similar instances is one whose township is for the most part over 400 ft. above sea level. Surprising though it may seem, it was more common to encounter a hill yeoman who had cattle, but no sheep, than it was to meet one who had sheep but no cattle. Most small yeomen, or customary tenants, had a cow or two, just as a great many hill farmhouses had a dairy, milkhouse or buttery. Cows were expensive by the standards of the period, and were valued at from 30s. to 60s. each, the equivalent of ten to twenty sheep

¹⁰ This survey does not overlook the fact that an income could be obtained from the sale of lambs or mutton. The replenishment of the flock was a main concern of the yeoman, and mutton was not especially favoured as a meat; it does not receive mention once in 600 inventories. It was probably included under the general category of "flesh". "Beeffe" is mentioned in a variety of instances.

apiece. The ubiquity of the cow meant that the yeoman and his family occasionally enjoyed cream, unskimmed milk and butter. An Ackenthwaite yeoman (September 1669) had among his possessions a "pott of butter" valued at 4s. The inventory of John Kilner of Witherslack (1679/80), includes a churn, valued at 1s., and that of Robert Kellat of the same place, two churns and a maund (wicker basket), valued together at 5s. (1682/3). Meanwhile, the numbers of animals indicated either by monetary totals, or by actual breakdowns of the individual herds into separately specified beasts, show clearly that the Lakeland yeoman commonly provided accommodation for six to ten beasts, and sometimes more. Examinations of hay values, studied in relation to successive dates in the winter months, show that the hay-loft was kept reasonably full until the harsh months of February and March, and that the local yeoman, like the Alpine peasant, was a well-organised and dedicated cow-keeper who guarded and collected his hay supplies most zealously.

Cattle herds were not of course homogeneous, any more than were sheep flocks. They were made up of animals which had different values and functions, from young calves right through to the draught oxen which were still utilised in the 17th century, but which had given way to horse traction by its close. Hence, Francis Briggs of Lyth (20 June 1671) had "a youke of oxen £7. os. od.", as did Francis Bowes of Lowwood in Witherslack (26 June 1671), in his case worth £7. os. od. Such instances become increasingly rare during this period. The ownership of ox-teams by individuals, meanwhile, has much bearing on the areas of land under cultivation, and this last topic is discussed below. The inventories sometimes oblige us with a complete breakdown of a deceased man's herd. It has been possible to analyse a total of 38 of these breakdowns, comprising some 293 animals in all during

the period 1660-1749. Of all the animals separately distinguished, kine or milch cows, *whys* or *queys* generally, with heifers, made up 55 per cent of the grand total; steers or stirks, i.e. young bullocks, 22 per cent; and calves, 13 per cent. *Whys* or *queys* were young cows as yet uncalved or under three years old, and the basic word-form is evidently related to *kye*, and reflects the Middle English or Scots dialect.¹¹

There was, then, an emphasis on dairy stock, and there is no sign of any special interest in the wintering, agistment and fattening of young beasts. The 18th century, however, brought fairly frequent references to *black cattle*, usually a laconic way of referring to animals purchased from Scots drovers. The regular movement of herds or droves from the Highlands began to influence the rural economy of northern England, and reflected the development of a national economy; animals fattened in the north found their way to southern or London markets.¹² Allusions to black cattle, which were sometimes Irish or Welsh in origin, are rare in 17th-century Lakeland inventories, but they do occur, and they are significant, for the trade was beginning to gather strength even then. Hence Thomas Bankes, a poor husbandman of Adgarley in Plain Furness (inventory of 3 April 1672), had *black bease* valued at £6. os. od. Somewhat earlier, in 1662, 18,574 cattle had passed through Carlisle paying toll, many of them on their way south.¹³

The 18th century saw general increases in the numbers of sheep and cattle held by the individual Lakeland yeomen. The samples so far taken suggest that hill yeomen gained proportionately more in their holdings of livestock than their plainland colleagues: horses, too, were extensively traded and were owned in increasing numbers. However, the yeoman or

¹¹ Cf. Wright, *English Dialect Dictionary*.

¹² For a general survey, K. J. Bonser, *The Drovers* (1970), *passim*.

¹³ A. R. B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland* (1952), 169-170.

husbandman¹⁴ was very far from being an outright pastoralist or stockbreeder. His basic or subsistence economy demanded that he should be a mixed farmer, growing his own food and selling any surplus, just as he grew his own hemp and flax. His domestic organisation and farm work rested upon family labour, and we must deduce that labour supplies offered few problems before the middle of the 18th century, in that migration from the countryside was taking place at a low level only. There were accordingly fair numbers of hands available to undertake not only the preparatory tasks in domestic textile production, but also the more time and labour-consuming work in the arable fields near the farmstead.

The area of land actually cultivated was of course small in absolute terms; but there was much more land under the plough than is the case at the present day, in the higher dales at least, and to this extent the appearance of the Lakeland landscape has changed considerably. The main subsistence crop was of course oats, and most deceased yeomen had some quantities of standing oats or oatmeal. But bigg or bere, a species of barley, followed it closely in quantity or monetary value, and "barley" is also recorded fairly frequently as a crop.¹⁵ It was never written down *additionally* to bigg in the same inventory, however, and appears therefore to be a synonym. Rye and wheat are recorded only very exceptionally.

The calculation of quantities and acreages is much hindered by the prizers' habit of lumping together "corn and hay" in the same entry. At other times, a clearer picture emerges. Francis Briggs of Lyth (20 June 1671) had "5 acres good meadow 4 - 0 - 0", and also "6 acre and halfe of oats 8 - 10 - 0". These were,

¹⁴ Inventories and wills use these two titles without much discrimination.

¹⁵ "Barley" is recorded at Dragley Beck (1671), Pennington (1675), Headhouse, Cartmel (1671), Burton-in-Kendal (1682), Stainton (1670), and Waberthwaite (1691).

of course, customary acres, representing up to nearly twice the area of a present-day acre measure. We must deduce that an acre of oats, at this period, was worth in the region of 30s. It is not surprising that Briggs had the "youke of oxen" referred to above. Another yeoman to whom reference has been made, Thomas Godmonde of Longsleddale (11 September 1674), had oats and bigg growing at his farmstead to the value of £10. 0s. od. — the Swinklebank farms, one of which was formerly occupied by this man, cannot have seen as much arable land in their vicinity for many decades. Richard Garlicke of Preston Patrick (6 June 1672) had oats, bigg and pease growing to the value of £17. 10s. od., and Robert Sanderson, of Pennington, Furness (24 May 1675), had corn growing to the value of £10. 10s. od. and barley and oats "in the house" assessed at £4. 10s. od. Again, an inventory, this time from the Furness area, gives a link between value and acreage; William Stables of Roosebeck, Furness (29 August 1668), had two acres of corn assessed at £2. 6s. 8d.

Out of 225 yeoman inventories for Copeland, Kendal and Furness deaneries in the period 1660-89, no fewer than 75, a total which included a modest number of yeomen in hill situations, had cereals in their inventories to the value of more than £5. 0s. od.¹⁶ This is exactly one-third; another third had such stocks or crops to the value of over £2. 0s. od. This strongly indicates that up to two-thirds of a fairly large sample of the population had between four and eight modern acres

¹⁶ Values are often given by measure; Christopher Burns, of Bouth, Furness (10 June 1665), had seven bushels of oats valued at 11s. 8d., and Thomas Simpson, yeoman of Dalton-in-Furness (26 April 1669) had 20 bushels of bigg valued at £5. 0s. od. There are enough examples of this kind strongly to indicate that yeoman often accumulated a surplus for sale. Mr B. C. Jones has pointed out that it should be borne in mind that acreages could vary according to the measure used. In the Eden Valley generally, a 7-yard perch was used for calculating the acre, but a 6½-yard perch in S. Westmorland. A 20-gallon bushel was used at Kirkoswald for barley, bigg and oats. A 16-gallon bushel was in use there for other grain. Carlisle measured corn in a 24-gallon bushel, but rye was frequently measured in an 18-gallon bushel.

of arable land; for the calculation takes no account of land devoted to flax and hemp cultivation, or to peas, beans and potatoes. The significance of this for the appearance of the landscape will be apparent. The earlier land tax lists¹⁷ show that a Lakeland township or administrative division might have twenty to fifty separate properties, large and small farmsteads or cottagers' holdings, within its bounds. If we allow one to four customary acres of arable land to each of these, either in the form of strips or dales within townfields scattered about a dale's hamlet, or in irregular shaped closes near each farm, then 100 to 400 modern acres of such land, in multi-coloured patches in a dale bottom or in sheltered corners, would create a striking visual patchwork. These deductions are strongly corroborated by the evidence of the schedules attached to the Westmorland Corn Rent maps (i.e. tithe maps),¹⁸ which show that many a close and paddock in such situations was at one time growing crops, as was land which is now swallowed up by bracken.

The more general economic significance of this is considerable also. The traditional estimate has it that one (modern) acre of oats could keep one family alive for a year, and the prices and quantities recorded in the inventories strongly indicate that in reasonable climatic conditions, even the very modestly placed yeoman (e.g., the man with an inventory of under £40. os. od. in total value, who perhaps represented the majority of his fellows) had a chance of forming a surplus of grain for sale. The bigg or barley was often used domestically, as the inventories make clear, for malting and brewing, but the increased liveliness and spread of local markets must have encouraged bulk sales to maltsters. The foregoing, of course, are not the only crops mentioned, and *The Account Book*

¹⁷ E.g., the land tax lists for N. Lonsdale (1746) under DDCa at the Lancs. R.O.

¹⁸ At the Westmorland Record Office.

of *Sarah Fell* shows that a wide range of vegetables was available to the cultivators of south-western Lakeland. "Pease" and beans are regularly mentioned, and were sometimes grown in quantity.

Potato culture commenced early in West Cumberland. On 7 March 1664, the inventory of Christopher Gaitskell of Ponsonby contained the following items:

Beanes, pease, hempseed, lintseed and potetis 0 - 8 - 0

The Fells of Swarthmoor grew potatoes¹⁹ — they are mentioned in 1674 — and between 1742 and 1746 they appear in a succession of West Cumberland inventories, at Dean, St Bees, Bootle and Bigrigg. They did not reach the inner dales until much later, and were probably used for animal feed. They had not yet become the staple food of the industrial masses. Generally, the references to vegetables are so scanty as to encourage the belief that small quantities were grown by housewives for specific kitchen purposes. There is little indication of vegetable cash crops.

This brings us to the broad and fascinating subject of the bearing of foods, and of their nature and quantity, on the quality of life itself. The inventories are apt to give an impression of an unbendingly frugal existence, with little variety and luxury. Perhaps this is because the purpose of the valuers was that of identifying and assessing the main articles in a man's household. Small quantities of assorted foods could not be easily valued, and were soon disposed of. Chance and unusual references to food are therefore not necessarily indicators of the rarity of the items to which they relate. Other possessions, despite their intrinsic usefulness or conventionality, were regarded as of little value. Poultry, for example, seem to have been customarily valued at no more than a penny or two apiece. "Poultererie" only rarely amounted to more

¹⁹ N. Penny (ed.), *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (1920), entry for November 1674, p. 155.

than a couple of shillings in value, and they usually came to be placed in a sort of postscript or miscellany at the foot of the list, with, for example, the following semi-poetic result:

Hamer & pincers & poultrie 0 - 3 - 0
(Preston Patrick, 1672).

It is incontestably true that nobody engaged in poultry farming on any scale — although a Brigham yeoman (1737/8), who had 3s. 4d. worth of poultry, may have been an incipient entrepreneur in that field but also true that keeping these birds was a deeply-rooted custom. They appear in the very earliest inventories for the region, i.e. in the mid-16th century, and were undoubtedly part of the mediaeval farming scene. Moreover, grudgingly valued as were these occupants of the farmyard, their creations, eggs, were regarded as special delicacies in the period. Some charming if incidental light is shed on this subject of taste and valuation by the diary entries of a Holm Cultram man (1667). James Jackson described, in the April of that year, the gifts offered by neighbours on an important family occasion, the building of a new house. No fewer than fourteen different neighbours offered a quarter or two of veal, and the next most popular gift was a cup of butter, salt or white, or perhaps a pot of milk. Other neighbours, however, offered a score or two of eggs, salmon, or even ale.²⁰

Salt butter is occasionally mentioned in the inventories, and the preservation of foods was an ever-present preoccupation. Fresh meat and fish, when they appeared, were no doubt at a premium; it seems to be quite untrue, however, that large-scale animal slaughtering took place in the back-end or autumn. In the first place, hay was stored in adequate quantity during the winter, and, no less important, the inventories show no appreciable diminution of livestock

²⁰ F. Grainger, "James Jackson's Diary", CW2 xxi 113-114.

during those months. Some cattle were unquestionably slaughtered, and the "beef-tub" receives mention in some lists of possessions. Bacon is very commonly itemised, and yet very few swine or pigs were kept by the individual yeoman; at most, he had one or two as an organic part of his household economy. Hence, William Green of Grasmere (29 April 1669) was in good company in keeping a "pigg", valued at 2s. 6d. Few yeomen went to the lengths of John Grigg of Milnthorpe, a member of an outstandingly resourceful Quaker family,²¹ who had "swine great and little" to the value of £3. 2s. 6d. (inventory of 12 March 1672/3). This is an unusually early instance of large-scale bacon production in our region, and the valuation suggests that Grigg, whose son Joseph was one of Westmorland's leading entrepreneurs, had fifteen or twenty of these animals.

James Jackson's mention of salmon — which was of course keenly sought by countrymen and poachers — brings us to the subject of fish in general. The local population at large seems to have been not unacquainted with salted herrings, and Sarah Fell recorded (1677) that a barrel of these fish cost 17s. 6d. But fresh fish would be caught or bought when this was possible. In the inventory of Robert Kellat of Wither-slack (17 January 1681/2) is a reference to a small quantity of "Flounders", and elsewhere in the nearby coastal districts, Thomas Boulton of Newbarns (28 February 1671/2), and Thomas Berry of Flookburgh (13 November 1672) had fish in store to be entered by the prizers. Since some of the yeoman neighbours of men like this were also fishermen, it is not surprising that such food should have been available. On the other hand, the writer cannot recollect one instance of fish appearing as a food more than a very few miles from the sea. Most of the references to fruit,

²¹ J. Somervell, *Some Westmorland Wills* (1927), 14-16.

too, relate to the south-western Lake District, and the reason for this is harder to discern. In 1681, John Neilson of Sizergh Fellside had an orchard waiting to be listed as one of his possessions, and Ralph Partridge of Clappersgate (1732) possessed "Aples" to the value of 13s. 4d. In 1687, William Addison of Towerswood, Cartmel, who was a fisherman, had "Aples growing". Richard Hirdson of "Furness Fell" (13 September 1689) had apples worth 6d., and Thomas Fell of Ulverston (14 January 1680/1) had both cider and apples, together valued at 2s. 4d. Yet another Cartmel man, William Atkinson (2 November 1670), had apples valued at 16s. od., and there are several other instances in the Cartmel and Witherslack areas. Were the damson orchards, which still grace some of the older southern Lakeland farmsteads, there in Restoration times? They are not mentioned in these documents.

Honey was a main sweetening agent as well as a special delicacy, and both Tudor and Stuart inventories contain frequent references to beehives. But, like pigs, they are not always mentioned with regularity, and it may be that the prizers of a deceased villager's or dalesman's possessions ignored the skeps in the garden in many instances. The bees and their hives were more highly valued than pigs or poultry; what is certain, however, is that few yeomen can have traded in honey, any more than they can have traded in fresh eggs.

We are left, then, with the near-certainty that the annual farming income of the yeoman was often limited to two or three pounds from the sale of wool or yarn, markedly larger sums (if he had the initial capital) from the sale or wintering of cattle, and two to five pounds from the disposal of his grain surplus. None of these sources of income was other than precarious — animal disease or bad weather conditions could easily destroy his slender capital — and so he might often be

compelled to seek other income by employing himself in a craft or trade. Although, like the peasant throughout the world, the local yeoman would often purchase more land if he could, perhaps by acquiring a vacant customary tenement, there is evidence that he liked to accumulate capital for family purposes and especially for providing his children with patrimonies. A mere subsistence economy gave him few opportunities to do this; and to break away from it was difficult. The slowly developing industries, rural and coastal, of the region as a whole began to place more opportunities in his grasp in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. At the same time, his still profoundly traditional way of life, with its few opportunities for wasteful expenditure, assisted the accumulation of capital; even in the 17th century, a substantial minority of yeomen, as we shall see, had money out on loan to others.

The most resourceful men, then, sought by-occupations. In some parts of the Lake District, this was not an easy quest, and of the inventories examined, about eight per cent show clear evidence (often corroborated by a reference in the deceased man's will) of such a by-occupation, the majority of these cases occurring either on the Cumberland coast or in Furness.

The following examples may be illuminating. William Benson of Dragley Beck (14 April 1675) was a yeoman of substance who had moneys out on loan to the value of more than £112. He had a flock of sheep, several cattle, and an estate at Osmotherley near Ulverston as well as a house and parcels of land near the coast. However, he had a special reason for living near the sea, for he was the owner of a salt pan, valued with a store of salt at 12s. He had a spinning wheel with "cards and weighs", and had been spinning both woollen and hemp yarn. In addition, he had a few books, and was obviously a literate as well as a

resourceful man. His neighbour William Salthouse (inventory of 11 March 1671/2), also of Dragley Beck, specialised much more largely in the salt trade, for he had a house by the sea, a saltcote and three saltpans, as well as parcels of land, a moss dale and "cow closes" (this according to his will of 17 January 1671/2). He grew barley, pease and oats, and, like his fellow salt-boiler, he produced hemp yarn. He had moneys out on loan to the value of £87. These men were, or had been, diligently taking advantage of the solid, inelastic demand for an essential commodity, and each had far more money invested than was common.

The coastal areas of the region seem to have offered more in the way of opportunities for enterprise than did those inland (later, the rise of water-power industries was to redress the balance to some extent), and part-ownership of a fishing or other vessel, or fishing activity of some kind, was yet another avenue for the resourceful. Richard Simpson of Roosebeck, Furness (9 April 1678) owned a "Fourthe Pte of a Botte" valued at 5s. Elsewhere, Robert Grayson of Moresby (27 February 1671/2) had a share in a fishing boat as well as the occupation of an estate with corn, hay and five cattle and a few sheep; he, however, had little money on loan. Another Grayson, also of Moresby, had fishing nets and yarn together valued at 5s. But Robert Kay of Workington (5 June 1685) had shares in two vessels amounting to £60, as well as "Books and instruments for sea". Each of these men owned or occupied land in addition. However, the West Cumberland yeoman might also go underground as well as on the sea in order to augment his income, and miners of the Whitehaven area were often denominated "yeomen" during the 17th century.²²

²² W. H. Makey, "The Place of Whitehaven in the Irish Coal Trade" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 1952), 205-206.

More than this: colliers or miners at Harrington and St Bees were following their trade and keeping black cattle at the same time, although these examples belong to the early 18th century. The connection between the small yeoman or farmer and the iron ore pits of Furness and Cumberland was also in process of establishment. As early as 1679, one William Lamb of Egremont had acquired the right to transport iron ore from a dealer or owner of pits in that district, and there was a debt due to him "From Mr Addison for Leading Iron Oare 2 - 10 - 0" (inventory of 15 September). According to the late Alfred Fell, "A farm or piece of land, with so much carting guaranteed to the tenant, always brought in a high rent",²³ this in the Furness district, when the charcoal iron furnaces there were in full production. That yeoman estates augmented in value near coal and iron workings is beyond doubt, and Christopher Hare, yeoman, of Preston How, St Bees, had in his will of 27 August 1738 the following suggestive entry: "A Meadow Commonly called Sea-Cole-Ing holden by lease under the Grammar School of St Bees 45 - 0 - 0." Thomas Gibson, yeoman, of the Ginns, Whitehaven (5 January 1746) had acquired no fewer than three freehold messuages and tenements in the Ginns area, situated on or near "the old Coalway". His carts and cart gear were valued at £8. os. od., a sum far in excess of the cost of a farm cart, or cowp, which might be reckoned as worth over £1. os. od. in exceptional circumstances.

Other yeomen pursued the advantages and employments of the iron and associated trades in a different milieu, so that William Sawrey of Coniston Waterhead (3 December 1679) had "coards of coal wood coarded and uncoarded £8 - 0 - 0", and Christopher Burns of Bouth had "coal wood" worth 12s. (inventory of 10 June 1665). Other yeomen took an interest in quarry-

²³ Alfred Fell, *The Early Iron Industry of Furness* (1908), 302.

ing or building; Robert Greenwood of Milton near Heversham (9 October 1682) had a "stone cart", and Myles Atkinson, of Low How, Bampton (7 May 1684) had a "great hammer and gavelock", the latter term signifying a crowbar. Other men were blacksmiths or carpenters, as well as farmers, like one Mansergh of Burton-in-Kendal (22 June 1672), who had smith gear to the value of £13. os. od. (This latter practitioner was probably a professional metalworker, however, and George Braithwaite of Hawkshead Hill who had sheep and cattle (13 January 1673/4), and whose smith gear was valued at a mere £1. 10s. od., was perhaps more the part-timer or amateur). Robert Barker of Morland (13 May 1664) was one of a small but perhaps significant group whose prizers identified "work tooles", in this instance worth £1. 1s. 4d., among their possessions. Since Barker, before his death, had had "wood sowed and unsowed" among his goods, we must assume that he was a part-time carpenter. Just as some yeomen must have taken advantage of the need for the services of masons, carpenters or waller, so others began to develop by-occupations based upon agricultural work and materials. Tanners were increasingly common, especially in districts like High Furness, where there was plenty of oak bark, and references to bark, bark-houses and bark troughs, as well as leather, are not wanting. Leonard Keene, of Keene Ground, Hawkshead (24 April 1661) was of this calling, and had "unwrought sheepe pelts in the lime pitts 0 - 7 - 0". He was, however, a man of diverse interests.

These activities were doubtless followed during slack times in agricultural activity, or when sons and daughters could work around the farmstead. There were, of course, many instances whereby the farming activity was ancillary to the craft occupation, and only an unusually astute man would increase his wealth and land when actually following a trade. The

inventories themselves indicate that many of the craftsmen/yeomen were poor men, and as so often happened, the road to success was more likely to be that of astute moneylending or commerce.

We can, indeed, learn that a substantial and perhaps significant minority of the yeoman group was enabled to save money, which was sometimes put out at interest in considerable sums at a man's death. The mortgages, bonds and specialities into which yeomen put their savings may not, in some cases, account for all of the latter, but the totals given in the inventories, taken in large and widely distributed samples, are certainly indicative of the numbers who could save large and small sums. Likewise, a man's debts tell us a good deal about his problems.

Data from these sources strongly suggest an entirely credible conclusion, namely that the majority of yeomen could save very little. Individual cases provide pitfalls; deceased men with a few worldly goods occasionally turn out to have been the owners of more than one tenement or estate. But the majority indicate their situations plainly enough. Out of 400 inventories of 17th-century yeomen from all main districts of the Lake Counties (1660-89), 93 or under one-quarter, died with more than £25 to their credit in bonds, specialities or mortgages, although about one-half of this group had considerably more to their credit than that arbitrary sum. Another 54, just over one-eighth, died substantially in debt and had more than £25 owing to other persons. The remainder had apparently saved little, or left this world owing comparatively little. In these respects, there was no very great difference between hill and plainland yeomen; there were comfortably placed yeomen in the remoter dales as well as in south Westmorland and Plain Furness. Although this subject calls for a more extensive and larger-scale, as well as a more sophisticated analysis

than has been possible here, it can also be observed that a similarly large sample for the early 18th century (1720-49) shows every indication that savings, as well as herds and flocks, increased substantially. In other words, we have been examining a still rather static rural world which was at the very eve of a period of development. There is as yet no evidence that the wealth became very widely spread between the mid-17th and the mid-18th century, but there was certainly economic growth of a sort.

Human beings, as economic historians are apt to forget, are not mere abstractions and quantities, and it is the merit of the probate inventories that they tell us many small and revealing things about people and their problems three centuries ago. So, indeed, do the wills of these long dead inhabitants of the dales and coastal districts. We have made some of our generalisations; let us have a look at the struggles and aspirations of individuals.

A great many Lakeland yeomen mortgaged their properties. There is no evidence that they often did this because of the pressure of creditors; as far as is known, the desire to provide patrimonies for children, and the desire to acquire parcels of land, probably provided the most powerful forms of motivation. Lump sums of the size needed for the purchase of a few fields not infrequently appear in the lists of debts or credits. Hence Richard Barwick of Over Cark, Cartmel (inventory of 13 May 1673) had £30 to his credit, a sum described tersely as "morguages". Sometimes a man would seemingly invest almost the whole of his savings in a loan of this kind; Nicholas Lambe, of Farthwaite Gill, Ennerdale, invested £42. 8s. od. "by William Peile upon a Mortgage", this out of total credit moneys or savings of £44. 6s. od. (7 January 1675/6). A richer peasant would also lease land quite extensively to smaller men, and William Knipe of

Grizedale (inventory of 8 February 1652/3), who had several hundred sheep and a variety of bought lands and tenements, had the following owing to him among various bills and bonds:

Debts oweing unto him	
By a lease from Willm Chamney	13 - 0 - 0
by a lease from John Fisher	24 - 0 - 0
by a lease from Robert Rawlinson	8 - 0 - 0
by a lease from Robert Rawlinson	5 - 8 - 0

Perhaps the majority of the mortgage agreements had an origin other than mere land hunger; they were meant to provide for the sons and daughters of a family when the patrimonial farmstead passed to the eldest son or to the main heir, who was then expected to provide the patrimonies of his brothers and sisters out of that estate, a total sum of anything between fifty and two hundred pounds. (Sometimes the total sum was considerably larger, but the majority of wills and inventories suggest the range mentioned). Where payment was difficult, then the heir to the estate could raise a mortgage on part of the family land. The problem was then the burden of interest, which the inheriting son had to pay, and the principal, which had to be worked off during his most active lifetime. The agreed interest rates did not follow price movements generally, and the burden increased with falling prices. But an even greater problem was that of an unexpected death, as the following example, taken from the 18th century, will show. The latter calamity could result in a huge problem of administration for the former heir's mother, sisters or brothers.

In July 1737, John Benson, yeoman of Brown Bridge End, Tilberthwaite, died and bequeathed his freehold messuage and tenement to his son John, on the understanding that the son would bear the charge of patrimonies to his three sisters, a total of some sixty pounds. Less than a year later, John, the young

heir, died. During the intervening months, the moveable property on the estate had gained a little value, so that John (or his sisters) had some twenty additional sheep and also several more cattle. But the estate was now burdened with a debt of sixty pounds, whereas before it had been free from debts and mortgages. John Benson's mother was left with the problem of administering the estate, as a bond of administration (28 August 1738) at the Lancashire Record Office clearly shows. Incidents of this kind caused the break-up or change of ownership of a good many established family properties or customaryhold estates, and only a minority stayed in the same family name for more than two or three generations.

Other difficulties faced the small yeoman, and one which was constantly recurrent was that of the manorial fine, payable at the change of occupation of the property or at the death of the lord of the manor. The inventory of William Kendall of Lowca (16 March 1665) refers to "A fine compounded for, 1 - 1 - 4", and comparatively small though this sum may seem, its true magnitude can be measured against the comparatively tiny sources of income described earlier in this article; it would amount to the entire income from a small sheep flock for a year. Yet another burden was that of the heriot, a major article taken from a manorial tenant at the death of his lord — and this could weigh even more heavily. Hence, John Lewthwaite of Rowlandground, Whicham (inventory of 20 June 1672), had among his liabilities a "harriot cow 2 - 3 - 4", and Anthony Leece of Hill, Millom, was similarly oppressed; "The harriott 2 - 0 - 0" (29 September 1671). Similar sums laconically recorded show that the tenant's best cow, or at least one of his most valuable animals, was taken by the lord's steward or was liable to be so.

In addition to unexpected deaths, or the exactions

of manorial lords, the finances of many a family might be miserably disorganised by prolonged illness on the part of its head or its members. Some such catastrophe had visited the farmstead of Richard Bradshaw of Natland (inventory of 12 July 1676):

to the Apothecary at Preston	15 - 0 - 0
to the Doctor	15 - 0 - 0

This man, or his family, could at least afford fairly expensive treatment. Francis Hunter, husbandman of Lindal-in-Furness (inventory of 11 June 1726), had total possessions amounting to a mere £26. 15s. 9d., and yet illness had forced him into debt of this relative magnitude:

To Nicholas Newby for dyett	7 - 1 - 0
To the same for attending Francis Hunter at his sickness	1 - 0 - 0

The small yeoman could only with difficulty afford to meet such unforeseen charges, especially when he was at best a somewhat unenterprising or inert man of business. Some of Francis Hunter's acquaintances had defaulted on payments in the distant past:

Robert Casson for Cattle sold 13 years agoe	13 - 14 - 3
James Kendall, a pauper for a heifer about 13 years agoe	3 - 5 - 0

A charge for grazings or agistment — land turned over to the use of others' beasts — was often entered in the lists of credits or debts, perhaps because the grazier lacked ready cash and the money was often difficult to collect. An exhaustive survey of the inventories (which, of course, are filed to a total of thousands of items) would probably reveal that these problems grew with the rise of the cattle trade in the 18th century, and such examples of grassing debts as the writer has noticed nearly all belong to the period 1720-49. Miles Benson, of the Gale, Melmerby (November 1732) was evidently a large-scale grazier

or lender of land for that purpose, and his position near one of the great drove routes may explain much:

Item mony due for Grassings	14 - 0 - 0
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But Benson was a relatively affluent man. John Bell, of Randalinton, Arthuret, was a man of less substance who had evidently been going through a desperately bad patch (20 September 1732), and his debts included:

Grazeing	0 - 6 - 6
Servants	2 - 0 - 0
Herd	0 - 6 - 3
Rent & arrears	
Rent & Tythes	16 - 0 - 0

References to unpaid servants' wages are not infrequent. The unhappy Francis Hunter had of course defaulted:

To Margarett Postleth ^b for wages	0 - 10 - 0
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The prizers of the goods of Arthur Bell of Stapleton (17 January 1672/3) seem to have entered the deceased man's own comments, or at least those of his wife:

For my madden's wages 1^l and a pare of showes
For 6^l to Bel owen on ye Last two yeare of y^e
payment of y^e Lease.

Accumulated indebtedness for rentals is of course fairly common, and future surveys should of course notice the years in which these are most prevalent, and the emphasis in the farming within a given district. Moneys owing to the local blacksmith appear from time to time among the liabilities and these illustrations give examples within the foregoing categories: John Simpson of Roosebeck (9 April 1678) owed John Goad of Gleaston the sum of £2. 2s. od. "for Land rent", and the same man owed Richard Simpson of Leece, Smith, the sum of £4. 10s. 6d. "for farm gear". This last is quite an extraordinarily large debt, for farm gear was rarely valued at such a sum, and usually amounted to less than £1. os. od. in total value in

almost any inventory. Perhaps Simpson had been investing in improved equipment on a large scale. Much farm gear was of wood with a minimum of iron.

Although this was a relatively static world in many respects, there was scope for speculation, investment and enterprise, and frequently the results for the yeoman were fatal ones, if only because inexperience, natural and climatic hazards and disease or illness told against him in the end. Indeed, the itch to do business or to invest small sums of money is very evident in the long lists of minor debts and credits which make such fascinating features of the better inventories. Generally speaking, the local yeoman was in the habit of lending small sums of money to his neighbours and relatives, and the development of family reconstitution projects may help us to identify the persons in these patterns of lending and borrowing more exactly. The Leonard Keene of Keene Ground, Hawkshead, to whom allusion has been made, displayed a fascinating list of debts (1661), and these show fairly wide business connections. He owed money to a Dalton-in-Furness man, Thomas Tyson, "for Corne", a very large sum to his father-in-law Thomas Satterthwaite (£14. 10s. od.), a small sum to an Ulverston man, and, one of the most fascinating items, a debt to "Mr Thomas Sands of Kendall". This was Kendal's most affluent and remarkable alderman, the founder of a famous charity and hospital there, born the illegitimate son of a local (Satterthwaite) woman, and a stalwart in the parliamentary cause. Keene no doubt knew him personally, for Sandes was no snob, and he remembered the country people among whom he had been raised.²⁴

Even the man of relatively humble circumstances, i.e. the man without any tenement or estate at all, might endeavour to improve his lot through a little

²⁴ Will of Thomas Sandes, 11 July 1681, Lancs. R.O.

speculation, like Thomas Briggs, servant to Mrs Layburn at Witherslack (23 March 1681), who evidently operated a malt kiln in his spare time, and who bought and sold stock in a small way:

Owing to him for malt	5 - 4 - 0
Owing to him for 5 Sheep sould	0 - 17 - 9
More for wool at Stephens	3 - 12 - 0
More for lambs wool	1 - 10 - 0

It will be evident that these documents embrace a great range of economic and social history. It has been a feature of the local historical studies of recent years that students have at last begun to understand the demographic possibilities of parish registers, and to apply methods of prising loose their hidden wealth of information. We may also hope that a more systematic study of the probate inventories will bring its rewards

APPENDIX.

As has been indicated (see page 192 above), it may conceivably be the case that the prizers or valuers omitted some sheep, the ‘heaf-going’ or upland animals attached to customary estates, from their calculations. It is certainly possible that heaf-going sheep were omitted from some inventories, because they were the property of the heir to an estate and not of the executors; they would, in other words, be bought and sold with the tenement. However, too much should not be made of this possibility. Where it has been feasible to check the sizes of sheep flocks given in other sources (e.g., the lamb and tithe books in the Benson papers at the Record Office, Carlisle, relating to 18th-century flocks in central and western Cumberland), then the clear indications are that the mean sizes of flocks obtained from large samples of inventories in those areas correspond very closely to the actual numbers given for other purposes in these other sources. There was considerable variation in flock sizes according to district; the figures sometimes ran into several hundreds in a flock in the central fell district of Cumberland, especially in the mid-18th century. In the coastal and southern areas, the flocks were much smaller, and the results of a survey, by Mr Owen Ashmore, of Lancashire probate inventories (described in *The Amateur Historian* (Autumn, 1959) give flock sizes which are comparable with many of those in

the non-Lancashire parts of southern Lakeland. Many of these instances relate to places which had no immediate "heaf" or open common or waste, i.e. of great magnitude, as in the fell districts. The case put in the present article is that the former Lakeland yeoman's or farmer's dependence upon sheep has been greatly exaggerated, to the point of entering into mythology, and this view will be retracted only if very detailed evidence is available to the contrary.

It should also be remarked that prizers sometimes greatly under-valued items of farm property, as is evident from an examination of contemporary account books like that of Sarah Fell; generally, however, the valuations correspond roughly to market prices for (e.g.) cattle, while falling somewhat below them. The prices themselves, in a large-scale survey, are less significant than the trends actually shown in the inventories as a whole, which of course followed more general price movements in their peculiar way.