

# JOHN CARTER OF DENHAM, YEOMAN

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THE yeomen of England have for some time been a popular and not unfruitful subject for historians, so much so that still another article devoted to it can only be justified by the facts that much of the research into the subject has proved inconclusive, and that no Buckinghamshire yeoman has yet been chronicled. A better reason is that one common difficulty in reconstructing the lives of the humbler classes in former times—the necessity of constructing a composite picture from facts separately relating to different men—is here avoided to some extent, since we are possessed of the will, inventory and farm leases of one man, with other later documents to help interpret them. Thus we are able to dispense with the use of analogy, which necessarily mars much work on the subject. We do not wish to claim that John Carter was a typical yeoman, which he certainly was not, being wealthier than the majority of his class; but we have simply tried to present him as he was during the last dozen years of his life.

The sole visible relic of the Carter family in Denham is the monument to the last of that line in the parish church:

In Memory of Mr. Thomas Carter, son of Thos. Carter, by Dorothy his wife, daughter of Wm. Bowyer, of this Parish, Bart. a man truly valued when living, and greatly lamented when dead. He was a benefactor to the Charity School of this Parish, a good neighbour, and a true friend. He married Clare, daughter of Edwd. Alston of Louton in the County of Bucks., Esq. and died without issue, the 13th of Novr. 1735, aged 59: whose ancestors lived more than 300 years in this Parish<sup>1</sup>

This Thomas was great grandson of John Carter; in life he was described as a gentleman, and quartered his arms; he was the grandson of a baronet and son-in-law to an esquire in the days when the title had some meaning. Yet John Carter had at one time been called husbandman—the lower of the two ranks of farmer; his son was content to remain a yeoman, while his grandson considered the family's fortunes sufficiently prosperous to style himself gentleman—and presumably to stop working on his farm—and to marry the daughter of the local squire. Although it cannot be proved, one feels that John was the vital link in the family's progress.

No one of the name of Carter was assessed in Denham for the subsidy of 1524-5,<sup>2</sup> wide though its net was cast, and although a John Carter was assessed at £1 6s. 8d. on wages in Iver, the first to be noticed in Denham was in 1532.<sup>3</sup> A Henry Carter married Alice Alline in Denham in 1580,<sup>4</sup> and these may just possibly have been our John's parents, though there is no way of ascertaining whether he was born in the parish. As he left adult children at his death in 1635, he can hardly have been less than about 50, that is, born in 1585. The

marriage of his supposed parents is just right for making him 50 to 55 when he died. The date of his own marriage is not known. His wife's name was Alice. He was survived by five children: Thomas, who died in 1674; John; Susan; Alice, the wife of John Stanton; and Anne, who married William Cole on 5th May, 1634.<sup>5</sup> This is little enough to know of the origins of a man who, although of no rank or precedence, left a personal estate valued at £824 4s. or, in terms of 1939 values, about £16,500. However, we have a good deal of information about his house, its contents and his farm.<sup>6</sup>

Rusholtes was a two-storey building, and fairly spacious for a farmhouse of the period. The ground floor consisted of an "entry", with a hall, or living-room, on one side, and a parlour, or best bedroom, on the other, as well as the kitchen. Above each was another bedroom, or "chamber". The milkhouse and buttery, i.e., domestic offices, were probably additions to the main structure, perhaps no more than lean-tos, for none had a chamber over it. The "cheese-lought" might have been over one of the chambers, but was more likely above the domestic offices. The position of the "boultinge Roome" is uncertain: it served as a minor meal store.

Going into the house we find in "The Entry betwixt the Hall and Parlour": one saddle and bridle, one pitch forke, two bills, two Axes, one Coulter and shaire w<sup>th</sup> other small Implementes of household stuffe valuett att xs. Here were kept articles of immediate necessity when the farmer set out to ride to market, or to do odd jobs around the house. The plough parts seem to have got into the wrong place—they might have just come from the smithy. Perhaps Carter followed Fitzherbert's advice and spent the long winter evenings repairing his tools.<sup>7</sup>

The Hall, or living-room, stood on one side of the Entry and contained: one table, one forme, two benches, one wainscott cupboard, fower chaires, onc birdinge peece, two lowe Joyne stooles. Other small Implements wh a pewter bason and ewer, and a cupboard cloth w<sup>th</sup> twelve glasses, prised ijli ix<sup>s</sup>.

Nothing very remarkable here. A severely furnished room in which the only concessions to comfort were four chairs, very likely what we should call kitchen chairs. As the work of local craftsmen, they were probably in the Windsor style. Not so many years earlier seating would have been confined to stools and forms.<sup>8</sup> Glasses, too, were something of a novelty in the farmhouse.

Across the Entry lay the Parlour or principal bedroom, furnished with: one Joyned bedstead, w<sup>th</sup> curtaines and vallence of greene sea, curtaine rodde, two bowlsters, one fetherbedd, one strawebedd, one greene rugge, two blankettes, one table and frame, tenn stooles whereof one small, one Court cupboard and cupboard cloth of greene cloth freinged, two lowe quishion chaires greene cloth fringed, sixe mingle colured quishions, one Bench, one bason and Ewer of pewter, one carpett.

Clearly a boudoir this; the most comfortably and, at £13, most expensively furnished room in the house. Given the prevailing colour—as is rarely done in inventories—one can easily picture this room as it was more than three hundred years ago. The presence of the additional straw palliasse reminds us of the importance of the curtains around the great bed for securing the privacy

of the master and mistress. Bedding does not seem to have been abundant, but when one sinks into a feather tick, top covering declines in importance. In passing, one wonders what made so many stools necessary.

Other ground-floor rooms were quite possibly mere appendages to the basic hall and parlour. In the "Kitchin" were found:

three kittles, one brasse pott, three skilletts, one great brasse panne, fower dripping pannes, fower spittes, three pott hookes, one pott hanger, two cobirons, one fier shovell and tounge, one dresser board, one kneading trough, one powdringe trough with fower fitches of bacon therein, fower great bowles, sixe tubbs, one choppinge knife and choppinge board, two Iron peeles, three pewter platters, one porringer and divers other small Implements.

All this was valued at £13.

The "Milhouse" seems, despite its name, to have been more of a store-house than anything else. Its contents, worth £4 10s., were:

One planke table and forme, one other small table, two powdringe tubbes, fower and twenty bowles and wooden kivers, one basket, two frying pannes, one dripping panne, one brasse mortar and pestle, one butter cherne, sixe cheese fates, two great Jugge pottes, seaven shelves and Benches, and other small lumber.

In the other store, the Buttery, were:

seaven tubbs, one Brasse pott, one brasse candle sticke, one brasse chaffingdishe, one brass warminge panne, one pewter saltseller, two leather bottles, one stand for beere, two blacke drinking pottes and other small Implements—xl<sup>s</sup>.

Above stairs were three Chambers or bedrooms. That over the hall was furnished with:

One joyned bedsted, trucle bedd, one featherbedd, one flockbedd, one strawebedd, one bowlster, five pillowes, one coverlett, three blankettes, one table and frame, tenn stoolles, one Bench, one lowe wainscott Chaire, one wicker chaire, one court cubbard, w<sup>th</sup> green cupboard cloth, one carpett of striped stuffe, one wainscott chest, one common prayer booke,—xj<sup>l</sup> x<sup>s</sup>.

The "Middle Chamber", presumably that over the "Entry", held:

One bedsteed, one flockbedd and bowlster, one greene rougge, one quilt, two blankettes, one small table and frame, one presse, three chestes, one Joyne stolle, one deske, one welchooke, one longe bowe, w<sup>th</sup> other lumbar,—vj<sup>l</sup> x<sup>s</sup>.

The "Chamber over the Parlour" was, like the one next to it, plainly furnished with:

one bedsteed w<sup>th</sup> curteyns and vallence of lincey woolsey, one fetherbedd, three blankettes, two boulder, fower chestes, one close stoole, one other bedsteed, one flockbedd, one feather bowlster, one flock boulder, one coverlett, two blankettes,—vij<sup>l</sup>.

A Chamber "over the Kitchen" seems to have been partly a workroom, having, in addition to "flockbedd and boulder", "blankett and coverlett", "three

lynnen wheeles, one woollen wheele, thirteene pownd of toe, two baskettes" worth, with the furnishings, thirty shillings.

The "Cheeslought" may have been situated over the chambers, or one of the offices. Despite its name, it bore the character of a miscellaneous store, with its

two plankes, two Inch boardes, one oatmealtubb, one firkin, five dozen of trenchers, one butter pott and divers other severall Implementes and small lumbar, wth one woolbaskett and some wooll therin—xli<sup>s</sup>.

The "boultinge Roome" contained:

One Bultinge of hutch, one busshell of meale, two busshel of malt—xvs.

One characteristic of the yeoman class was that the only respect in which they permitted some display of affluence within the home was their stock of pewter and linen, and then to a limited extent only. And John Carter, considerable as was his wealth even for a yeoman, had not, like some of his brethren, indulged in a few silver spoons. His pewter was indeed not unimpressive:

Fowerteene faire platters of the bigger sort, one charger, three plates, three salt sellers, tenn small dishes, one small bason, three porringers, Eleaven sacers, fower small dishes, two pewter windowe pottes, three pewter candle stickes, three dozen of spoones, two chamber pottes, one pewter bottle, one muskett, one brasen bason, valued att vli j<sup>s</sup>.

Linen consisted of

Eighteene pare of towen sheetes fower flexon pillowe beers fower dozen of flexon napkins five flexon towells, one towen table cloth, sixe pare of flexon sheetes, sixe fine holland pillowbeers, fower flexon towells, five table clothes flexon, one holland sheete, two towen table clothes and some other small lynnens valued att xxli viij<sup>s</sup>.

This completes the contents of the house except for "the Testators wearinge apparell and money in his pursse—vjli xiijs 4d. Item the reddy money in the house—vijli." The keynote all along has been modesty, not so the farmyard.

#### IN THE GRANIARY

ITEM of wheate and otes thirteene quarters, pease twenty busshell, beanes Eleaven busshell, I(tem) twelve sakes, a corne shovell, five corne rakes, one pitchforke, fower peashookes, five wedges, one sith, five sickles, two wribitt awgers, one hand sawe, and other Implementes valued att—xvli xs.

#### IN THE WHEATE BARNE

ITEM one Bay <sup>e</sup> and a small stacke of wheat and Rie ...	...	...	...	...	lii
ITEM one Stacke and one killice of beanes ...	...	...	...	...	xvli
ITEM One Bay of Pease ...	...	...	...	...	xxli
ITEM one cauch of Tares ...	...	...	...	...	xli <sup>s</sup>

### IN THE OATEBARNE

ITEM three partes of a Bay of Oates ... ..	xiiij <sup>li</sup> vj <sup>s</sup> viij <sup>d</sup>
ITEM one cauch of pease and Tares valued att ... ..	xxx <sup>s</sup>
ITEM one Cauch of heay ... ..	xl <sup>s</sup>
ITEM fower fanns and one Busshell ... ..	x <sup>s</sup>
ITEM one cocke of heay ... ..	xli

### IN THE YARDES AND OUTHUSES

ITEM Eight bease, fower calves and two Bulls ... ..	xlii
ITEM two sowes, three shutts and two fatt hogges ... ..	viij <sup>li</sup>

### IN THE STABLE AND YARDES

ITEM Eight Geldinges and Mares and their harnessse gere	xlii
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### IN THE CARTEHOUSES

ITEM two longe cartes wth shodd wheeles, two duncartes one of them shodd wheeles ... ..	xli
ITEM fower plowes wth one pare of wheeles with tacklinge belonginge, fower harrowes, one sead rodd ...	ij <sup>li</sup> viij <sup>s</sup>

### ATT REDHILL IN THE BARNE THERE

ITEM one sacke of Barly and fower quarters of malte, a makinge valued att ... ..	xli
ITEM fiftie and three Ewes, hogges and wheathers valued att ... ..	xxli

### IN THE HENHOUSE

ITEM sixteen henn and a cocke wth their coopes ...	xviij <sup>s</sup>
ITEM three geese and a gander ... ..	viij <sup>s</sup>
ITEM seaven duckes and one drake ... ..	vijs
ITEM in the yarde more two Cribbs, two cowe Rackes, three Sheepe Rackes, wood, Broome and other small Implementes ... ..	xxx <sup>s</sup>
ITEM twenty nine acres of wheat and Rye vpon the ground valued att ... ..	lxv <sup>li</sup>

ITEM debtes due to the deceased att the time of his decease by severall persons as appereth by their severall Bondes

Sum total viij<sup>c</sup> CCLXXX<sup>li</sup> xxiiij<sup>li</sup> iiij<sup>s</sup>

two severall leases of the farme and landes called Rusholtes wth thapurtenances valued cli

One other lease holder of Richard Nicholas valued att 20s.

Appraisers: Edmond Biddle, John Biddle, John Stanton, Thomas Abbott.

Like another and celebrated yeoman, the father of Bishop Latimer, John Carter had no land of his own, but rented it, mostly for terms of twenty-one

years. The nucleus of his holding was the farm called Rusholtes, with which went a small-holding called Redhill, situated in the part of the parish of that name. This he leased in 1523 from Peter Windesore, Esq., of Thames Ditton in Surrey, and Thomas, his eldest son. The lease was possibly a renewal, since the deed notes that he is already in occupation. But more probably it means that he had moved in before it was executed, for when he did renew it less than two years later, the earlier lease was recited. Thirty years later this land was estimated to contain 150 acres,<sup>10</sup> possibly including 10 ac. that he had leased from Windesore on 2nd October, 1622, described as 7ac. in Longe furlonge, 2 ac. in Mainfeilde, and 2 ac. of meadow in Southmeade, for which the rent was 40s. per annum. Then on 1st May following he took a little copse called Ridinges, formerly Idle Springe, 3 ac., at a rent of 13s. 4d. This was also stated to be in his occupation. This land cannot be definitely traced in later deeds, but when his son Thomas renewed the lease of Rusholtes in 1641 the rent settled happened to equal the sum of the rent of his father's leases, though naturally we must allow for the possibility of some change in values.

Assuming, then, that the two smaller pieces were indeed absorbed into Rusholtes, John Carter's land at the beginning of the farming year 1623-4 was as follows:

			£	s.	d.
Rusholtes and Redhill	...	137 ac.	rent	21	6 8
Parcel of Alderbourne	...	10		2	0 0
Ridinges	... ..	3		13	4
				<hr/>	
Total	...	150 ac.		£24	0 0
				<hr/>	

At about the same time he also seems to have taken a lease of Richard Nicholas of Pynnar, yeoman, of 5 ac. of meadow and arable called Little Wells, and 8 ac. of meadow and arable called Heringcroftes; but we have no other information as to his occupation of these.

The rents of these show considerable variation, the parcel of Alderbourne averaging 4s. an acre, Ridinges roughly 4s. 5d.; but the large farm averages rather under 3s. 1½d., assuming it was only 137 acres. Naturally, the larger quantity would include some poorer land, tending to lower the overall value, but the leases of it state that a down payment, or fine, was also paid. For the renewal of 1641 this was £80, and, since the rents were in all cases similar, comparable amounts were probably involved in the transaction of 1523 and of 1525 when new leases were made to take effect on the expiration of the existing ones. In some parts of England it was usual at this time for a lease to be made for a large fine—sometimes paid in instalments—with a small annual rent: Carter's commitments seem to have occupied a position between that and the modern one where the annual rent is the only form of payment. But however paid his rent does not seem excessive, even though there is insufficient information to show what the normal level of rent was for the time and place. However, he did undertake to perform a service for his landlord, whose place of abode made it inconvenient to do it for himself, namely to:

looke to the woodes and springes of the said Peter Windesore namely . . . Gosome springe Swilly springe Parke springe Greate springe and Mountfitcheth springe and all other his springes woodes and Timber trees standinge and groweing . . . within the parishes of Denham and Langley and [for] better preservacion therof to doe his and their best indeauors in conuenient and reasonable sort to saue preserue and keepe them and euery of them from hurt of biteinge of Cattle and from Cuttinge and spoileinge of all manner of persons. . . .

But this can hardly be considered a very onerous duty, particularly since the lease of Rusholtes permitted him the best of the bargain:

Free libertie to Fell cutt digg or grubb vp all the Trees bushes shrubs and fures groweing or beinge in or vppone on Close parcell of the demised premises commonly called the Furzey Close adioyninge and abuttinge southweast vppon the Brooke which runneth from Fulmer conteininge by estimacion seaven acres be it more or lesse and to occupye and vse the said Close from tyme to tyme to his the said John Carters best vse and comoditie and allsoe with Free libertie att all tymes seasonable and conuenient duringe the continuance of this present demise to sell cutt carry away and convert to his owne vse withoutt any accompt thereof to be giuen the Coppice called the grove adioyninge to a Grownde called Barnes in the occupation of Edmund Biddle Richard Hubbert and Mathew Baker or somme or one of them . . . conteininge by estimacion six acres be it more or lesse the said John Carter and his heires leauinge and preseruinge sufficient stadles stores and standills in or vppon the said Coppice accordinge to the Statute and with libertie allsoe for the said John Carter and his assinges to digg and take more earth murrier earth or any other soyle in vppon or out of any part or parcell of the demised premisses to be employed and bestowed in or vppon the premisses or somme parte thereof for the betteringe and soyleinge of the same landes or groundes and not otherwise EXCEPT . . . the bodies and trunkes of all great trees and Tymber trees nowe beinge and groweing or which hereafter att any tyme shall be and growe in or vppon the premisses saue only vppon. . . . Furzey Close . . . and the Grove. . . .

This land was not part of Rusholtes. "The Statute" was the Act for the Preservation of the Woods, 35 Henry 8 c. 17, by which he was obliged, briefly, to leave on every acre of coppice or underwood felled twelve standards of oak, which were to stand until they measured twelve feet square within three feet of the ground, and to protect them by fences or otherwise. If the number of oaks was insufficient they might be completed with elm, ash, asp or beech.

Beyond this the leases contained no conditions other than the tenant's general undertaking to maintain good husbandry. In fact, he seems generally to have had the best of the bargain.

Provided the rent was punctually paid John Carter was now assured of occupation until 1665, and, so far as is known, tilled the farm undisturbed until his death about 1st February, 1635. The last years of his life are as obscure as the first, except that he acted as one of the assessors for Denham for the subsidy granted to the King in the Parliament of 1624,<sup>11</sup> and was

himself rated 8s. on an income of £3 a year from land. Although as a leaseholder not entitled to vote, there is no reason to suppose that he had any political objection to paying the tax. Rather was he more likely to be glad to pay it and get on with his work, free from the freeholder's liability to be summoned to distant Buckingham to elect knights of the shire. Elections at this time—in 1624, 1625, 1628 and 1629—were tiresomely frequent!

The 150 ac. of Rusholtes and Redhill were distributed as follows.

	Uncertain	Arable, meadow or pasture	Meadow or pasture	Arable	Meadow	Wood
Meadow Cross Close			3			
Longfeild ... ..		18				
Old House Close ...		18				
Coppice ... ..						10
Lower Close ... ..		6				
Fursey Close and Hedgerows ... ..		13				
The Moores ... ..			15			
Beane Feild ... ..	4					
Broome Feildes ...		21				
Randolls Close ...		3				
Idle Spring or Gravel Wood ... ..					9	5
In Maine feild ...				2½		
In Long Furlong ...				14		
Redhill ... ..	8½					
	12½	79	18	16½	9	15

Maine feild and Long Furlong were the common fields of the town, but since his holdings in each were so different it would seem that the medieval system of tillage was no longer observed in Denham; but, in any case, much the greater part of the farm was enclosed and not subject to common management. The important thing is, if there were only 16½ ac. of permanent arable and 27 ac. of permanent grass, were the 79 ac. of "arable, meadow or pasture" in an uncertain state, or given to convertible husbandry? The beginnings of ley or convertible husbandry are obscure. There is good evidence of its employment by the beginning of the eighteenth century, as well as of the cultivation of clover and other grasses which characterises it. In Caroline times the existence of leys is often noted—Shipton Lee in Quainton<sup>12</sup> provides a local example—but the actual sowing of grasses is not, even though the ploughing up of grassland and the laying of arable to grass was certainly practised. Inconclusive though the accumulated evidence is, it must be observed that, unless the frequency with which land is described as "arable and pasture" means that it had no permanent utilisation, it must denote a deplorable, indeed incredible, carelessness on the part of surveyors in general; a conclusion which



is easily refuted by the evidence of their exacting standards. The use here of the conjunction "or" in place of "and" is, I think of some significance, for whilst "and" can mean that part of a field is ploughed and part grass, if "or" does not imply alternation of use it is simply a diplomatic substitute for "don't know"! It is true that we are here considering a conveyance, a type of document notorious for the formalisation of descriptions. But it is to be noted that the acreage and utilisation is given in detail, and the obvious source of such data is the man best acquainted with them—the cultivator.<sup>13</sup>

After this digression we may decide to credit John Carter with being a progressive farmer who did not expect land to produce the same results year after year without some form of regeneration. The parcels in the common fields had, of course, to be kept under the plough; the best meadow land was probably on wet ground; the Moores sound like rough pasture that would have been unprofitable to till.

The meaning of names is more apparent in that of "Idle Spring or Gravel Wood", at this time containing 9 ac. meadow and 5 ac. wood; but at some time entirely wood. The land at Redhill was probably all, or nearly all, grass, since the inventory recorded little beyond the 53 sheep there.

Although John Carter's inventory is very full and detailed, it has one flaw: it was made in mid-winter when the only standing crops were the 29 ac. of autumn-sown wheat and rye, whilst the contents of the barns show that barley, oats, pease, beans and tares were also cultivated. Naturally, we should like to know the acreage allotted to each. The contents of the barns can shed no light on the problem, since by this time of year much would have been sold or otherwise consumed. What they do show, however, is the profitableness of grain growing, for the value is upwards of £120. The nearness of London must have had a marked effect on the prices of farm produce in the district.

To calculate the total cropped acreage calls for rather more data than we possess. The 29 ac. of winter corn might be matched by similar amounts of spring corn and fallow—totalling 87 ac. arable. But the cultivation of pulses, and the probable employment of ley courses, suggests that Carter would have reduced the proportion of fallow from the customary one-third or one-half of the arable land. This might be done within our hypothetical 87 ac., it might go beyond it: in either case it is unprofitable to speculate.

A glance at his livestock will show that John Carter's main object was the cultivation of grain. His "Eight bease" were probably cows; in all, there were only 14 cattle and 7 swine. The work on the farm was done by horses: oxen had clearly been superseded here. The number of poultry was rather more impressive. Sheep were no more numerous than could be expected on an arable farm of these dimensions, to provide manure. Certainly, the fleeces of fifty of the small animals of the period could not make the sale of wool anything more than the merest sideline. Our final conclusion is that this farm was rather more specialised than was customary at this time. For many cultivators, the inadequacy of transport made it imperative for them to be "all-rounders"; indeed, it was, from the commercial point of view, often advantageous to be in a position to market several commodities. But in Denham, connected by water with the capital less than twenty miles distant, the obvious

course was to concentrate on the production of breadstuff, especially when the supply of food for the city was often a matter of concern to the ministers of the Crown.

One final point may be noted with respect to the crop which John Carter sowed but did not live to reap: twenty-nine acres of wheat and rye valued at £65. Taking the price of wheat at 30s. to 40s., this value cannot refer to the cost of the seed which, sown at the rate of four bushels an acre,<sup>14</sup> could not have been more than £30, allowing for a rather higher price for seed wheat. It must, therefore, be an estimate of the coming crop, and, as such, anticipates a yield of a little over eight bushels a quarter. This seems very small, roughly four and a half hundredweight, or about one-fifth of the average yield of wheat in England today. But it is singularly difficult to reach a definite general conclusion as to grain yields earlier than the eighteenth century, and more so for particular regions. The numerous agricultural text-books of the period are usually vague on the subject. Of modern authors, Lord Ernle claims that the yield of wheat had been raised to over sixteen bushels by about 1600,<sup>15</sup> while M. K. Bennett, on examination of a large mass of evidence, doubts whether it significantly exceeded eleven bushels throughout the period 1450-1650.<sup>16</sup> The present writer has noticed that the valuations of standing crops in inventories are usually conservative, which is understandable, since it is notoriously difficult to estimate agricultural production, and the object of these documents was to protect the estates of the deceased from excessive claims. Much would depend on the standard of husbandry, and on the soil: "Both meadow and arable lands [of the Thames valley] give a very satisfactory return for good management in a damp season; but in a hot dry one, both soon burn, and the yield is very meagre."<sup>17</sup> The most that can safely be said is that eight bushels an acre was considered the minimum yield for wheat in Denham.

The value of Carter's personal estate was apportioned as follows:

				£	s.	d.
Household goods	...	...	...	91	3	0
Clothes and cash	...	...	...	14	13	4
Farm stock	...	...	...	327	7	8
Leases	...	...	...	101	0	0
Credits	...	...	...	290	0	0
				£824	4	0

This shows that domestic comforts comprised less than one-ninth of his wealth, and were less than one-third the value of his working equipment and stock-in-trade. Ready money accounts for at least £8—itemised separately—but is a small percentage of the whole, but this is not remarkable, as it would be neither safe nor profitable to hold large sums of ready cash. Reserve capital must be sought in the last two items. Something has already been said about the purchase of leases: the two of Rusholtes were appraised at £100, and that of the land held of Richard Nicholas at 20s., both figures being probably underestimates. From what we have already learned about these leases shows them to have been definite investments. The nature of the £290 of "debtes

due to the deceased att the time of his decease by severall persons as appereth by their severall Bondes" is less certain, since the bonds have long since been paid and cancelled. But two observations may be made: namely, that credit plays a big part in agricultural economy, and that large debts debit and credit, are a constantly recurring feature of inventories of the period. Some part of this total would represent corn sold by the deceased and yet to be paid for: he may have dealt in seed, payment on which would be deferred until after the harvest. Some part might be straight loans, possibly connected with the bad years of 1629-31, when crops largely failed and there was widespread distress. Whatever the true facts behind this bald entry, its size, coupled with the fact that it is typical of many prosperous yeomen—and sometimes of smaller men too—serves to show that the rural economy of the seventeenth century was far from primitive, and that the investment of savings and borrowing of capital, though conducted on a largely local basis, was probably every bit as common as the modern method of borrowing from a national joint stock bank, and buying the shares of an industrial or mercantile concern with world-wide interests.

On 10th July, 1634, John Carter made his will, commending his "Soule into the handes of Almighty God that gave it me my Creator Redemmer and mercifull Saviour by whose pretious death and passion I hope to be made partaker of eternall and everlastinge life", and desiring to be buried in Denham Church. If these sentiments are indicative of his religious belief he conformed to the Church as established. The Independent might be expected to make some statement of his personal standpoint; the Presbyterian some reference to the Calvinist doctrine of salvation. But, at best, the prefaces to wills are doubtful guides to the testators' convictions.

In disposing of his temporal possessions, his principal concern was for Alice, his wife. To her went the best part of the contents of the Parlour and the chamber over it, a good selection of pewter ware, and linen, including most of the flaxen stuff, and also "sixe henns, one cocke, one barrowe hogge, and one sowe hogge, and one stocke of Bees. . . ." In addition to this ample provision in kind, she was to have a life annuity of £6 from their son Thomas during the term of the lease of Rusholtes, as well as the sum of £10 payable within six months of John's death. Moreover, she and the younger children were to be entitled to live with Thomas at his expense for a whole year after John's death. Thomas, the eldest son, as residuary legatee, inherited all the business interests which, as we have seen, were considerable.

The younger children received money legacies according to their situations. Susan and John got £120 each, the former having the prior claim. Alice and Anne, who had married John Stanton and William Cole respectively, received only 20s. apiece, but they would have had dowries at their marriages. Should Susan or John predecease their father, their legacies were to be divided equally amongst their surviving brethren.

The sum of 30s. was left to be distributed at the discretion of the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the parish amongst the poor of Denham. At a time when charitable bequests were still, to all intents and purposes, *de rigueur*, this inconsiderable part of a sizeable estate seems nought but a gesture

for propriety's sake, but the present-day tax-, rate- and national-insurance payer can be sympathetic, since the poor rate—the true ancestor of all later local imposts—was an innovation in Carter's day.

The only other payments were 10s. each to William Wimsey the elder, of Hillingdon, and Edmond and John Biddle, of Denham, all fellow yeomen, for their trouble in overseeing Thomas Carter in his execution of the will. They also witnessed John's signature, or rather his mark, for he was illiterate. A few months later, 3rd February, 1635, the Biddles, together with John Stanton and Thomas Abbott, had the melancholy duty of appraising the value of his goods a few days after his death.

Alice survived her husband less than two years, dying towards the end of October, 1636. Thomas took over the farm, taking a further twenty-one-year lease in 1641, and purchasing the freehold of Rusholtes and Redhill in 1656 for £750, or £5 per acre, since the property was computed at just 150 acres. He himself died in 1674, having remained a yeoman, though his son, Thomas styled himself "gentleman", as well he might seeing that he married Dorothy, daughter of Sir William Bowyer, sometime lord of Denham manor, and a member of a not unimportant family. With their son Thomas, who quartered his arms, the line of Carter came to an end in Denham in 1735; in some ways an appropriate date, for they had spanned the period of the greatest affluence of the yeoman class which was soon to disappear from the rural scene. By the will of Sir Thomas, this last family estate reverted to his mother's family from whom it was, within a few years, purchased by Benjamin Way of Denham Place, also lord of the manor, who, by the end of the century, was the only considerable landowner in the parish. In the same way, countless other yeoman properties of moderate size were merged into great landed estates during this century, creating a kind of rural society which John Carter can scarcely have imagined, or would have wished to, since his kind had no place in it.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lipscomb *History of Bucks*, IV, 456.

<sup>2</sup> *Bucks. Record Society*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Bucks Record Office, B.A.S. deeds, 158/29 (Denham).

<sup>4</sup> Phillimore and Gurney: *Buckinghamshire Parish Registers*, VII.

<sup>5</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Bucks. R.O., D/W, 6/1-6/7, etc.

<sup>7</sup> *The Boke of Husbandrie* (ed. Skeat, 1882), pp. 15, 33.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth while comparing conditions in Leicestershire as described by W. G. Hoskins in *Essays in Leicestershire History*, pp. ?

<sup>9</sup> The "bay" was a more or less standard unit of building, about 16½ ft. long. Unfortunately, it is impossible to make anything but a wild guess at its cubic capacity.

<sup>10</sup> In 1737 the acreage of Rusholtes alone is given as 139—D/W, 6/46.

<sup>11</sup> MS. in Bucks. R.O.

<sup>12</sup> Bucks. R.O. ST. 1. Ley farming in the seventeenth century is discussed by the writer in "Farming in Sussex, 1560-1640", in *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, XCII, 81-7; and R. Lennard in *Rural Northamptonshire under the Commonwealth*, pp. 57-60.

<sup>13</sup> Difficulties in classifying land according to utilisation are described by L. D. Stamp in *The Land of Britain—Its Use and Misuse*, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> According to such little evidence as there is of actual practice, Fitzherbert, *temp.* Henry VIII, advised sowing two bushels per acre—*The Boke of Husbandrie* (ed. Skeat, 1882), p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> *English Farming, Past and Present*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>16</sup> "British Wheat Yield for Seven Centuries", in *Economic History*, III, 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Victoria County History, Bucks*, I, 398.