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**CHANGES IN THE RURAL SPATIAL ECONOMY OF AN ENGLISH  
COUNTY (SOMERSET 1947-1980)**

**Elizabeth A. Mills  
Department of Geography**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the  
requirements for the Degree of PhD in the Faculty of Social Sciences**

**July 1988**

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines changes in the rural spatial economy of an English county during the postwar period. In the highly integrated economies of which Britain is one, such changes may best be understood from an urban systems perspective. A review of recent trends in the urban systems of many advanced industrial nations reveals shifts in the flows of population and employment, previously towards the largest metropolitan centres, towards small settlements and rural areas - a process referred to as 'counterurbanisation'. The literature on counterurbanisation has until recently displayed an urban bias. It is argued that in order both to advance explanation of this trend and to anticipate policy issues in the new areas of non metropolitan growth a rural focus is required. Of particular interest to those responsible for the formulation and implementation of planning policies are the relationships between counterurbanisation and service provision. Hitherto the lack of detailed time series data on services has hampered an investigation of such links. This thesis provides a review and analysis of a unique set of data on service provision in the rural areas of Somerset, collected by H E Bracey, for the year 1950. This provides the base line for the generation of consistent and comparable data thirty years on, and thus for the measurement of service changes against a background of counterurbanisation, increasingly evident in the rural parishes of Somerset and Avon.

This thesis also argues the need for a policy focus in rural geography. It demonstrates the influence which Bracey's work had on rural settlement planning in the postwar period and the contribution which the 1980 follow-up survey has made to local knowledge about rural communities and, more broadly, to the debate on the impacts of rural planning policies and their possible reformulation as counterurbanisation continues.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, particular thanks must go to my supervisor, Professor Peter Haggett for his advice and encouragement throughout, and to Howard Bracey whose pioneering efforts provided an inspiration for this work.

This thesis is dedicated to my father who died before the work was completed.



## DECLARATION

This thesis is the original work of the candidate except where acknowledgement is given, and has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

.....Elizabeth A. Mills.....

Elizabeth A. Mills

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Although this thesis is submitted under my full name, Elizabeth A.Mills, I am usually known as Liz Mills and have a number of publications under this name. Bibliographic references to my work are therefore listed under MILLS L.

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This work of Bracey has been commented upon in some detail because his contribution is regarded as significant. Pause and ask yourself how he has contributed to both the methodology of investigation and the conceptual understanding of relationships between settlements (Tidswell 1976 p.211)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Research Aims**

This thesis examines aspects of change in the spatial economy of one rural area of south west England - the county of Somerset as it was before the reorganisation of local government in 1974.

A particular aim of the thesis is to examine the phenomenon of counterurbanisation - marked by the turnaround, in rural areas, from population loss to gain in recent decades - and ways in which this might be linked to changing patterns of service provision, to the continued existence of settlement hierarchies and to planning policies for rural places.

The vehicle for this study is the survey work of H.E.Bracey, who studied nearly 400 rural parishes in the area in 1947 and 1950, and whose information has been transferred to computer, evaluated and re-analysed to provide a snapshot of service provision and social life in rural Somerset in the period immediately following the second world war. These data are the foundation for a follow-up survey of the same parishes conducted by the present author in 1980. The establishment of this consistent data set provides the basis for both descriptive and analytical examination of changing service patterns and exploration of the relationships between services, population shifts and planning policies.

The following sections of this introductory chapter describe the background to the research in more detail, establishing the academic, historical and policy context for the work. The layout of the thesis is described in the final section.

### **1.2 Changing Rural Services: a Long Term Perspective**

After several decades of intensive research into the growth and decline of rural service centres, firm generalisations about which types of places grow and which decline still remains elusive (Keys 1978 p.22). That change is occurring in rural settlements is self evident, but the pattern is intricate and the models that can be applied appear to be either at too high a level, so that their global view is over-

generalised (Fuguitt 1965, Bell et al 1974) or so local that the explanations appear parochial.

One of the factors contributing to the difficulty is that studies of changes in rural settlements have been conducted over variable and generally rather short periods of time (5 to 10 years is typical). Longer run studies demand data that are rarely available in a consistent and comparable form. But as the tradition of research into rural areas grows, so it is now becoming possible for the researchers of one generation to call upon the survey findings of those who preceded them.

One of the most substantial and virtually unexploited bodies of survey data on which one may now draw is that amassed by H E Bracey just after the war. Between 1947 and 1951, Bracey carried out detailed questionnaire and field surveys in the rural parishes of Somerset and Wiltshire. His objectives, set out in his letter sent in 1947 to the individuals and organisations he contacted, were 'to ascertain the standard of provision of public utility services, the scope of the commercial facilities and professional services, and the extent to which social organisations have been able to withstand the shock of modern forces'. The results of his Wiltshire survey were published in full in a book, Social Provision in Rural Wiltshire (1952), but the Somerset material came into print only in a highly summarised form in a series of papers mainly in British and American geographical journals (Bracey 1953,1956,1962; Brush & Bracey 1955). However, on his retirement Bracey deposited in the Department of Geography at Bristol University a considerable volume of unpublished material, including the original survey returns from nearly 400 of Somerset's rural parishes, together with correspondence and maps. Sadly the archival material for Wiltshire has not survived.

In 1979 the Social Science Research Council (now the Economic and Social Research Council) provided funds to re-examine Bracey's material and to update it by means of a follow-up survey. It is on that research project, carried out principally by the present author, that this thesis is based.

### **1.3 The Changing Rural Community**

Over the years since Bracey's first survey the 'shock of modern forces' to which his letter refers has intensified. Best and Rogers (1973), Green (1971) and Rogers et al (1985), among others, document some of the postwar changes in the

economic and social structure of English rural life: most importantly population growth (although some remote and upland settlements still experience depopulation); the decline in agricultural and other primary sector employment while employment in manufacturing and, lately, services, has increased in both absolute and relative terms; rising affluence; an increase in the time available for personal leisure and recreation; improved communications; and greater personal mobility as car ownership has become more widespread - rural residents are no longer restricted in their range of movement by the need to travel on foot or bicycle.

Best and Rogers describe the changing functions of many small settlements in response to 'the breakdown of the traditional rural economy'. Though many villages have lost their traditional roles, for example as agricultural markets, they have acquired new ones as the preferred place of residence of the new population of the countryside.

Whereas the town dweller once regarded the country as bereft of civilisation and culture and the home of 'rude mechanicals', he now views it more as a desirable retreat from urban stresses and a place to which he can escape in his retirement, if not before (Best & Rogers 1973 p.146)

Rural areas are no longer viewed as 'backward retreats of an otherwise advanced nation' but increasingly as 'an essential part of urban life and society'(Best & Rogers 1973 p.147). There has been continuing debate as to whether the increased integration of rural communities into the national economy and consciousness render the terms 'urban' and 'rural' obsolete (see for example Pahl 1966a, Burie 1967 and Cloke 1977).

These changes, variable in their impacts, have not been experienced painlessly, however. In particular, the loss of services such as schools, public transport and shops, which Bracey himself recognised as a problem (Bracey 1970), has attracted considerable attention, especially since the publication in 1978 of the Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils' report The Decline of Rural Services, although the factual basis against which this discussion has been conducted has often been disappointingly partial. For example, the loss of a rural school has been argued to cause a domino-like collapse in the other important amenities of village life, despite a lack of evidence to support this (see University of Aston 1981). Also of concern has been the contribution which service loss has made to the incidence of rural deprivation (see for example Shaw 1979 and Cloke 1983 pp 37-41 for a summary of the issues).

Documentation and measurement of 'modern forces' and their impacts have been the concern of rural geographers. The following section describes their changing interests and growing links with rural planners who for the past 40 years have both influenced and responded to the patterns discussed here.

#### **1.4 A New Focus for Rural Geography**

Broadly, rural geography has seen a shift of emphasis since the 1950s away from concern with patterns of land use and agriculture towards questions of resource management, social welfare and policy.

As Cloke points out, in the other social sciences, particularly rural sociology, rural research was traditionally directed towards migration, depopulation and community structure and particularly towards situations of decline. Typical research targets were the rural communities of Northern England whose economies were previously based on coal mining.

British sociologists...have tended not to be particularly interested in the social implications of nonmetropolitan...growth. The...tradition of community studies has concentrated either on small rural villages, where the attempt has been made to describe as fully as possible the social structure of the village, or on urban and especially inner city areas with its discovery of urban villages (Mackay et al 1979 p.26-7)

Stacey's (1960) study of the impact of industrial development on the community of Banbury provides one major exception.

During the 1970s geographical expertise began to be applied to a number of specific rural issues, among them, for example, housing (Dunn et al 1981) and accessibility (Moseley 1979). Such studies focussed on the needs of rural communities and, to an increasing extent, on the links between rural problems and policy. In particular, geographers began to question current planning policies for rural settlements and there has been a growing debate in the literature on the relative merits of long standing policies which stress the concentration of investment in selected centres (or key settlements) against those which favour dispersal (see for example Cloke 1980b). A major criticism of the way in which key settlement policies have been implemented highlights the failure of local authorities to adopt a coordinated approach to rural issues.

Developments in rural geography to some extent mirror these policy debates: to a growing extent the study of rural issues is being conducted from a multidisciplinary standpoint and is concerned more with the effects of broad socioeconomic change than with the study of specific issues such as transport or education from narrow disciplinary perspectives. The persistence of rural deprivation and the promotion of economic development, in particular, demand an integrated approach to problem solving.

For a long time, geographers have been more concerned with urban issues than with rural and it is really only during the 1970s that rural studies showed an upturn (Cloke 1980a). The tendency has sometimes been to apply analysis derived in urban settings to the study of rural areas and there remains a danger that the special characteristics of rural areas will be swamped by the adoption of frames of reference that, although general, have been derived from an urban perspective. More recent work on rural change recognises and to some extent corrects this tendency.

However, Cloke (1980a) argues that rural geography still suffers from a lack of both theoretical and methodological direction and he suggests that the more explicit adoption of an 'applied' approach to the study of rural issues may advance matters. It is particularly important to gain an understanding of how both central and local government policies impact upon the rural scene. He cites Harrison & Larsens' (1977) call for 'an "applied interface" between geography and planning, which incorporates a compromise between "scientific research" and "applied programmes..." 'and goes on to argue that geographers' involvement with policy formulation and implementation should be even more radical: 'geographers and planners should harness and integrate their research resources' in order to tackle rural issues.

This is not to say that all research should be of a strictly applied nature, but rather that we should recognise the increasing importance of policy-making and plan implementation in rural areas. This recognition, when allied to an evident need to emphasise social matters in the countryside (so as to counterbalance the currently prominent economic considerations), points to the advisability of close cooperation with planners in order to achieve effective and pragmatic analysis of rural trends and policy development, and to allow rural geographers to gain admission to the policy implementation process (Cloke 1980a p.20)

The research described in this thesis goes some way to meeting these objectives.



In addition it provides a basis for the examination of a fundamental theoretical issue which remains to be addressed, and this too has implications for policy. To what extent do urban systems trends currently being observed in the advanced industrial nations herald a breakdown in 'traditional' settlement hierarchies? Increasing population mobility and the move towards an integrated society threaten to undermine central place formulations on which British settlement planning has been based for almost 40 years. There is an urgent need for planners and geographers to look for a new way forward.

### **1.5 The Research Task**

The following chapters describe the re-examination and updating of Bracey's postwar surveys of Somerset, the major empirical research effort on which this thesis is based, in the light of changing social and economic patterns and of changing research emphases within rural geography which have been briefly introduced here.

The establishment and analysis of a consistent body of data for nearly 400 rural parishes provides a unique opportunity to examine the processes of postwar change in one area which has been subject to many of the pressures consequent on increasing integration of the urban system.

Part I of this thesis examines postwar changes in the space economy. Chapter 2 establishes an urban systems framework within which trends in the space economy can be discussed, going on to examine recent changes in the urban systems of advanced industrial nations, particularly Britain. It focusses on counterurbanisation - the loss of population and jobs from the major cities and renewed growth in rural areas which formerly experienced depopulation. The chapter considers the various explanations for counterurbanisation, stressing the links with policy. Chapter 3 goes on to argue the need for a rural perspective on the observed changes, in order both to achieve a better understanding of the trends and to appreciate their implications for rural growth areas, to a large extent neglected in the highly urbanised societies of the industrial West, where the consequences of outward movement from the major cities have been the major concern.

Rural growth may be economically beneficial but puts pressure on the physical environment. And since migration streams are demographically highly selective,

social and cultural impacts may be substantial and long lasting. To an increasing extent, rural residents are functionally urban. Changes in the size and composition of the population have implications for service provision - and in turn for applied rural geography.

Bracey's research, described in Part II, was conducted at a time when the major population movements were from rural areas to urban, the main centres of economic activity, and from smaller places to larger. Urbanisation and centralisation were the dominant trends. Theoretical developments (Chapter 4) stressed the importance of the central place and its relationship with a more rural hinterland. Early postwar settlement planning, established in an atmosphere of optimism about the role that government agencies could play in building a successful economic future while at the same time conserving agricultural land, drew freely on the work of Bracey and his academic contemporaries. Bracey's specific concern was to contribute to local planning in Somerset through the derivation of a settlement hierarchy based on indices of service provision - shorthand assessments of the service importance of rural centres. His indices were derived from a very detailed study of services and social activities in the rural parishes, but only a fraction of the information he collected was utilised in his analytical work. Chapter 5, concerned with data assembly, describes and evaluates the material available, while Chapter 6 presents an account of the service and social characteristics of these rural parishes which is in some ways complementary to Bracey's analysis. Despite a number of shortcomings inherent in the data Bracey collected, it is readily apparent that the information provides a sound basis for a re-examination of the same parishes 30 years on.

The third part of this thesis is concerned with the establishment of a set of comparative data for the rural parishes in 1980. Chapter 7 describes the design and execution of the follow-up to Bracey's surveys and the building of close working ties with the local planning authorities and community councils of Somerset and Avon. Chapter 8 presents a descriptive analysis of the data generated in this way and draws comparisons with conditions in the parishes in 1950.

Part IV focusses on the changes which have occurred in the 30 year period under review. First, Chapter 9 describes population trends in the area, presenting census evidence that counterurbanisation is indeed a feature of the rural parishes in the study area. Secondly, Chapter 10 reviews policy developments during the postwar period, highlighting the contribution of Bracey's work to the derivation of

settlement hierarchies. It stresses the continuing contribution which rural geography can make to the local planning process. Between them, Chapters 9 and 10 provide detailed information on the context of change. More systematic analysis of the service data using multivariate techniques and linking service changes to population shifts and planning policies is reported in Chapter 11, which concludes with some pointers for further work.

The final chapter draws together some of the major points made in this report and discusses some of the wider social, theoretical and policy issues arising from the observed turnaround in population trends.

## **PART I POSTWAR CHANGES IN THE SPACE ECONOMY**

This part of the report establishes a theoretical framework for the empirical material presented in later chapters.

Chapter 2 argues that rural settlements are most usefully discussed within a general urban systems framework in which changes in rural settlements may be related to trends in the space economy as a whole. The second half of the chapter presents an account of recent trends towards counterurbanisation in the urban systems of the industrial west, trends which were to some extent unanticipated by geographers and policy makers alike.

Chapter 3 examines counterurbanisation from a rural perspective and suggests that the existence of a unique data source for one rural area provides an opportunity to test hypotheses regarding both the phenomenon of counterurbanisation itself and its implications for service provision, social change and 'traditional' settlement hierarchies.

## 2. URBAN SYSTEMS CHANGE : AN URBAN PERSPECTIVE

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to establish a framework within which aspects of postwar change in one area of South West England may fruitfully be examined. The systems approach - widely accepted by geographers as a means of describing and analysing spatial patterns and problems - provides a useful starting point.

Since this thesis is concerned with changes in the spatial economy of a predominantly rural area it may seem paradoxical to open with a discussion on urban systems. However, the term 'urban' as used here has a broad meaning, referring to clusters of human settlement at all size levels. The villages under study in this report, though located in an area defined as rural, constitute the 'lower limb' of the urban hierarchy, and increasingly fall under the influence of major centres at higher levels.

In the highly integrated societies of the advanced industrial nations, of which Britain is one, it is no longer meaningful to seek uniquely 'rural' or 'urban' explanations for settlement trends. And while local factors may be important in determining detailed variations in the observed patterns, explanations for changes in settlements at all levels in the hierarchy are most usefully sought in factors operating at the regional, national or even international level.

The systems approach, stressing both the interdependence of settlements and the need to understand the processes underlying urban development, is essentially a dynamic one, providing a framework within which changes over time may be assessed. Section 2.2 considers this approach in more detail.

This is followed by a literature-based overview (drawing on Mills 1985) of recent changes in the urban systems of advanced industrial nations in North America, Western Europe and elsewhere, focussing on trends in the spatial distribution of population and economic activity, and particularly on the net movement of population from urban to rural areas, a process now referred to as counterurbanisation.

Some of the explanations which have been put forward to account for counterurbanisation since it was first observed during the 1970s are examined. The majority of these explanations may be described as 'urban centred'. This is not surprising since the consequences of counterurbanisation have been most evident in

the major cities and a great deal of government urban policy has been directed towards alleviating the problems they pose. These links are highlighted in Section 2.3.

## 2.2 An Urban Systems Framework

Human settlements are not isolated but are interdependent, located within regional or national boundaries. As a first step, therefore, it is useful to conceive of an urban system: a set of interdependent settlements comprising a region or nation. The 'objects' of the system are the villages, towns and cities of varying sizes and hierarchical position, nested together within hinterlands of different size and character and linked together by flows of people, goods, capital and information. While these links are essentially economic in nature, the environment within which the system operates - and which in a sense activates the links - is both social and cultural.

It has long been recognised that urban systems display certain regularities. To describe and investigate these there is a need to define and measure the units of the system and the relationships between them, not least to allow some comparisons from one nation to another. Early approaches to the description of the structure of urban systems included, for example, central place theory formulations as developed by Christaller (1966) and Losch (1954) (touched upon in Chapter 4, below) and research to test the rank size rule (reviewed by Carroll 1982), followed by attempts to classify cities using multivariate analysis. More recently there has been a move away from these rather static analyses towards a much stronger focus on the functional links between centres and between a centre and its more rural hinterland. The urban system is seen as made up of functional or nodal regions, each centred on a city, in which the city integrates the economy of its region. This view has been useful in assisting a move towards a more widely accepted definition of what constitutes an urban region, and most advanced industrial countries now use some definition of the 'extended city' as a basis for organising information about areas judged as urban. Examples include the United States' Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) and the Standard Metropolitan Labour Area of the UK. (See Champion, Coombes and Oppenshaw 1983 for a recent discussion.)

Urban systems are not static but are constantly changing. To understand their growth and development processes it is important both to discover the pattern of interdependencies amongst the places within the system and to assess how far the system is open or closed to outside influences, for 'the more open the economy, social

structure and culture of a given country to outside influence, the more international events must be considered in the analysis of that country's urban system' (Bourne & Simmons 1978 p.vi). The advanced western economies discussed later in this chapter have been characterised by Pred (1977) as 'high internal interaction, low closure' - that is, highly integrated internally and highly open to international influence - in contrast to the urban systems of many Third World countries, particularly those with a colonial past, which may be described as 'low internal interaction, low closure', and those of Eastern block countries where 'high internal interaction, high closure' is more typical.

Urban systems exhibit a tendency to become more and more complex over time as more intricate links develop between the component parts, largely in response to broad socio-economic changes.

As an urban system matures, the intensity of integration among places makes all locations respond increasingly to common problems - the Depression...the energy crisis, climatic change are just a few examples. Each event is spread throughout the urban system by various means such as taxes, prices and industrial linkages, and through a common cultural response enforced by powerful national institutions and the communications media. (Bourne & Simmons 1978 p 89)

While it is common to hear this process referred to as 'maturing', it may be misleading to assume that all urban systems follow typical paths to maturity, and it may be particularly risky to suggest that Third World countries will follow some 'urban industrial' route, coming to display urban systems characteristics at present common in the First World. For while most Third World countries are currently displaying continuing population centralisation, this is occurring in an historical and technological context quite different from that in which Western Europe experienced rapid concentration of population: the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, currently widely accepted thinking holds that nations pass through a series of stages of economic development, each stage displaying particular spatial patterns of population concentration or dispersal within the urban system (see Morrill 1980). A pre-industrial phase is characterised by dispersed economic activity and population, a second, or industrial, phase by the attraction of the focus of industrial growth and labour away from the rural periphery towards an urban core, and later, post-industrial, phases by population deconcentration and dispersal as non-metropolitan areas become the favoured locations for economic growth. While there seems to be a tendency for Third World countries to display the characteristics typical of pre-industrial or industrial stages, it is suggested that a number of advanced

industrial nations, led by the USA, have, in the last 10 or 15 years, entered a post-industrial phase.

Although there exists a broad consensus on ways of describing urban structure and a widespread belief in the value of some international model of urban systems development, there is far less agreement about the processes, not necessarily explicitly spatial, that drive the system. Perhaps the most common view of urban systems change is that derived from neo-classical economics. This holds that the growth and development of a settlement system represent an accumulation of individual decisions affecting the location of people and jobs, in which the availability and distribution of information are crucial variables. Differential growth rates among urban centres are seen as reflecting competitive advantages in location, accessibility and the mix of local economic activities, all of which may change to reflect changing national circumstances. Individual towns and cities often do not maintain the same set of functions over long periods of time. For example, major ports may suffer a loss of trade as international markets shift. Other views of urban systems processes stress the importance of the decisions of institutions and government which may outweigh those of individual actors. (For a full discussion of these and other views see Bassett & Short 1980).

There is a tendency, in the geographical literature, for the terms 'urban system' and 'economic system' to be used almost interchangeably. For Lloyd & Dicken (1983), for example, the 'objects' of the economic system are 'all those activities and institutions that perform a role in the operation of the economy' - farms and factories for example - while towns and cities 'around which most economic activities ultimately focus' are also 'objects' of the economic system, simply 'at a higher level of aggregation' (Lloyd & Dicken 1983 p.11). However, it may be argued that while the economic system and urban system are inextricably linked, the urban system is not simply the spatial expression of an economic system. Discussions on the long term viability of metropolitan areas now focus less on the traditional economic factors - the location of mineral wealth, fuel sources and labour supply, for example - than on the less tangible capacity for innovation and invention, and on the importance of amenity. Behavioural factors are assuming much greater explanatory importance. In the advanced industrial nations, at least, the widely accepted stage model of urban systems change, soundly rooted in economic theory, is in need of modification as new information becomes available. In particular, in countries where the growth of population and jobs is no longer associated with the largest urban centres it no longer seems appropriate to assume that cities and towns are the key organising units of the economy. In systems terms, the current developments seem to indicate both changes in



the nature of the links and the rising importance of the environment of the system as a factor influencing systems change.

As Robson (1977) has pointed out, it is becoming essential to distinguish between urbanisation, by which increasing proportions of a nation's population are drawn into cities, and what has been called the urban process, by which increasing proportions of people, irrespective of whether they live in cities, are involved in ways of life that are more urban than rural. In the past, when the friction of distance was much greater than it is now, the city's effects were largely restricted to the area within its boundaries, so that urbanisation and the urban process operated in areas that overlapped. But in today's developed world the two are not coincident. Urbanisation is diminishing while the urban process continues apace. According to Robson, advances in communication have 'pulled apart the tightly-bounded town' as the compact, rather unspecialised pre-industrial city has been replaced, firstly by the functionally specialised industrial city and more recently by the much looser post-industrial city. In a situation like this, the terms 'urban' and 'rural' may come to have little real meaning.

For the moment it remains the case that in the still highly urbanised societies of the USA and Western Europe the impacts of national changes are felt most in urban areas. As Hall has pointed out, 'if the nation catches a cold, the cities may fall prey to pneumonia' (1984a p.78). The attention of both academic researchers and policy makers has accordingly tended to remain focussed on urban issues.

With each phase of urban systems development comes a particular set of problems. Many of these problems are ones of adjustment, the result of the high degree of inertia which exists in the urban system. Changing the urban fabric - particularly the bricks and mortar - to meet new patterns of need is a slow process. Population characteristics change more rapidly, although it must be recognised that different groups in the population are differentially affected by change, and respond differentially to it. Groups characterised as 'deprived' may in some analyses be seen as failing to make the adjustments needed to maintain or improve their levels of social welfare.

Policy makers, whether intentionally or intuitively, may be seen as adopting some perceptual model of how the urban system is working in order to intervene on society's behalf to tackle the problems produced by systems change (recognising of course that policy interventions themselves contribute to the way in which the system is driven). Although many areas share difficulties which are broadly similar, there is

no one set of problems 'typical' of urban or of rural areas. The identification of problems itself presents difficulties, since it is highly dependent on the value systems of both those affected by the problems and those seeking to identify them, and it is frequently the case that policy makers focus their attention only on those problems which they perceive as amenable to solution by governments. At local government level policy makers may be preoccupied with attempts to take direct ameliorative action to help those people or areas worst affected, for example through grants for environmental improvement. It is generally at central government level, where action must be strategic rather than tactical, that policy makers have a particular opportunity to find 'access' or 'leverage' points at which to intervene in the operation of the system itself and thus to manipulate it so that it functions 'more efficiently' or 'with greater social benefit'. Third World governments, in particular, have sought to act in this way, formulating national policies for urban settlements with the aim of stimulating or spreading the benefits of economic development, although often without great success.

First World commentators and policy makers typically seek to identify problem areas and it is pertinent to ask what kind of city or region we should call 'distressed', and indeed whether attention should be targeted on specific areas at all. For, as Moseley (1980) has pointed out, problems which are typically thought of as distinctively 'urban' or 'rural' may in fact appear very similar to the disadvantaged residents of both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

To understand changes in the urban system of an advanced industrial nation, therefore, it is necessary to take a broad view. An examination of national, even international, trends is likely to prove valuable in setting the scene for more detailed investigations of the changing characteristics of individual areas.

### **2.3 Recent Changes in the Urban Systems of Advanced Industrial Nations: Events, Explanations and Implications**

This section provides a review of the evidence for the proposition that the decline of the older industrial cities and the relative growth of rural areas in advanced industrial nations is part of an international trend towards population decentralisation and non-metropolitan growth, a trend now labelled 'counterurbanisation', whose end product is seen by some as 'nothing less than an urban civilisation without cities' (Berry 1976). These population trends are intimately linked with changes in employment, and these also are briefly described in the sections which follow.

These changes, long in the making but relatively recent in their impacts, seemed to take many commentators by surprise. For many years it was usual to assume that urban change followed a path towards greater and greater concentration in larger and larger cities. This assumption arose in past years of rapid urban growth when 'urban problems' - overcrowding, traffic congestion, pollution, housing stress - were viewed as the (temporary) costs of agglomeration. In Britain it was feared as early as 1901 that London would stretch from the Solent to the Wash, a fear that underlay the planning debates of the middle decades of this century (Young & Garside 1982). In both Britain and the USA the assumption was the same: progression towards Megalopolis (Gottman 1961), impeded only by the relative costs of location and the politics of urban containment.

In the USA, analysis of the Censuses of 1970 and 1980 and of other indicators of population change shattered this assumption, giving weight to Berry's (1970) prediction that by the year 2000 AD the US would not see, as some writers continued to suggest, three vast metropolises containing more than half the nation's population, but rather an inversion of the spatial patterns displayed in 1960. Against a background of increasing real incomes and growing leisure time, growth impulses would 'trickle down' from larger places to smaller, eventually 'infusing dynamism into even the more tradition-bound peripheries'. The cities, Berry predicted, would become the political bases for the nation's poor while the wealthy and leisured would 'find homes and work among the most remote environments of hills water and forest', as the environments historically the least valued became the most desirable.

In the USA, at least, these statements have more than a ring of truth in the early 1980s, and experience there may provide some pointers for the future of urban settlement in other parts of the developed world.

### **2.3.1 The USA**

#### **(i) Population and employment shifts**

Postwar population changes in the USA show four major features. The first of these is a very marked slowing down in the overall rate of population growth. Since 1970 the annual growth rate has been less than 1 per cent, so that the nation is nearing a state of zero population growth.

The second is pronounced change at regional level. In terms of annual rates of change, the West has been the fastest growing region since 1950 and the South the second fastest, although the South has made the largest absolute gains. Between 1970 and 1975 the South grew by more than 5 million people, more than the combined growth of the rest of the country, and nearly 1 in 3 Americans now lives there. However, both the North Central and North East census regions - encompassing the old industrial heartlands of New York, the Pennsylvania coalmines and the iron ore fields of Lake Superior - have grown at rates below the national average (Weinstine & Firestone 1978).

Since the population is scarcely growing through natural increase, interregional migration is the most important factor in population redistribution. The North East and North Central regions are the main areas of out-migration, and between 1970 and 1976 the North East became a region of net out migration for the first time. Since 1970 the South has been a heavy gainer through migration, in complete contrast to the situation in the early 1950s when the South showed a heavy net migration loss (Sternlieb & Hughes 1977). The 1980 census showed that while over half the southern states showed net out-migration between 1960 and 1970, between 1970 and 1980 only Washington DC did so. Table 2.1 summarises the regional population shifts between 1960 and 1980.

The third major population trend is encompassed in shifts at metropolitan level. Between 1960 and 1970 most of the largest metropolitan areas still experienced quite substantial population increase. However, during the early 1970s many SMSAs, particularly those with populations greater than 2 million, began to show decline; the little population growth that did occur between 1970 and 1975 was concentrated in the small and medium sized SMSAs to a much greater extent than it had been in the 1960s. Again the regional dimension is apparent: all 37 SMSAs with the most rapid growth in the first half of the 1970s were located in the Mountain states of the West and in the South. Of the 16 largest cities which lost population between 1970 and 1978 all but Los Angeles and San Francisco are located in the regions of population loss - the old industrial heartland of the North/North East.

Within metropolitan areas the central cities tended to lose population during the 1970s while the suburbs grew at a rate exceeding the national average (Muller 1976, Schnore & Klaff 1972). Suburban growth is a familiar feature of postwar America, but between 1970 and 1980 a further dimension was introduced: non-metropolitan areas - which contain about a quarter of the nation's population - experienced faster growth than the suburbs (Long & De'are 1983). This, then, is the fourth major feature of

TABLE 2.1 USA REGIONAL POPULATION CHANGES 1960-1980

|                      | Percent change<br>1960-1970 | Percent change<br>1970-1980 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| US Total             | 13.4                        | 11.4                        |
| Northeastern States  | 9.8                         | 0.2                         |
| North Central States | 9.6                         | 4.0                         |
| Southern States      | 14.3                        | 20.0                        |
| Western States       | 24.2                        | 23.9                        |

Source: Hauser (1981)

recent population change in America's urban system; the rate of urbanisation has fallen. The fraction of the nation's population now living in areas classed as urban is no longer increasing. Instead, rural areas, many of them well outside the commuting range of the major cities, are the fastest growing regions.

To summarise, against a background of slower national growth the US has seen a change in long-standing patterns of migration. Movements into the 'heartland' of the North/North East, especially from the South, have been reversed. Rates of growth and decline vary both by region and by size of city, with the most dramatic declines in central cities and in the largest cities, especially those of the North East. In striking contrast, almost none of the metropolitan areas of the South and West lost population up to 1980, though even here the suburbs, and increasingly the non metropolitan areas, did better than the central cities. Berry has provided a useful comment on these population events:

To those who wrote about 19th and early 20th century industrial urbanisation, the essence was size, density and heterogeneity in an atmosphere of continuing growth. 'Urbanisation is a process of population concentration' wrote Hope Tisdale in 1942, 'it implies a movement from a state of less concentration to a state of more concentration'. But since 1970 American metropolitan regions have lost population to non-metropolitan territory. A new low -slung, far-flung pattern is emerging as we move from a state of more concentration to a state of less concentration. ie as a process of counter-urbanisation runs its course. (Berry 1976 )

In the USA the areas of fastest population growth are also economically the most buoyant, and there has been considerable debate about whether population movement or employment shift happens first and which trend underpins the other (see for example Steinnes 1982). Since 1950 employment growth has been much higher than the national average in the South and West, especially in the Mountain states, and lower than average in the North East and North Central census regions. Until 1970 regional differentials were not especially marked, mainly because this was a period of national economic expansion, but since 1970 the economy as a whole has declined and for the first time there has been an absolute loss of jobs from the North East, mainly a reflection of the huge loss of jobs from New York (Norton & Rees 1979). Regional shifts of manufacturing employment have been particularly dramatic. For example, the North East lost over 781,000 manufacturing jobs between 1960 and 1975, a decline of nearly 14 per cent, but the South gained 1.5 million manufacturing jobs over the same period, a gain of over 40 per cent.

## (ii) Accounting for the shifts

The search for explanation of these trends in industry and employment has centred on elaborating the characteristics of an area (which defies precise definition (Browning & Gesler 1979) but which includes the South and West) known as the Sunbelt - usually contrasted with the Frostbelt - the industrial north (Perry & Watkins 1977). Explanations range from the very specific (the availability of low cost energy and mineral resources, the existence of pools of low cost, non-unionised labour, and the 'civic boosterist' activities of city governments (Angel 1980, Cobb 1982), less concerned than those in the Frostbelt with the environmental consequences of growth, to the more general (improvements in transport and communications technology, high levels of federal spending, especially on defence, which tend to benefit locations in the South and West). More overarching interpretations stress the shift towards service employment in the economy as a whole, held to benefit the Sunbelt more than the North East (though see Dicken & Lloyd 1981 for arguments against this view). It is also argued that fundamental to these regional changes is a general shift in innovative capacity to the South and West, reflected in the rapid growth of high technology industry in areas formerly regarded as peripheral - and that this indicates a transfer of the so-called 'seed bed' function away from the old industrial cities of the 'heartland' - and particularly away from the inner cities.

These regional trends are mirrored at metropolitan level. Employment opportunities have shifted, along with the population, out of the city cores to smaller towns and rural locations. From 1975 to 1979, a period of limited economic expansion in the country as a whole, the number of jobs in non metropolitan territory rose faster than the number in metropolitan areas, and there was also an increase in the variety of jobs available in the more rural parts.

The exodus of manufacturing has attracted particular attention. High land values and tax rates, transport difficulties, shortages of skilled labour and obsolete premises are among those factors which have tended to push manufacturing out of the cities. Investment in technologically advanced plant and machinery may require a firm to search for a more spacious site, while advances in communications and transport have led more directly to an evaporation of the advantages of central locations. These changes in manufacturing location have been accomplished more through the closure of inner city factories and the establishment of growth firms in suburban and non metropolitan locations than through the migration of companies.

Locations outside the urban cores also offer advantages for service activities. The original prestige and linkage attractions of the central business district have become less crucial, at least for the more routine functions, than such factors as the improved quality of life that the suburbs or small towns have to offer young executive staff. These trends have been encouraged by processes of merger, rationalisation and vertical integration of functions in large companies, many of which now have headquarters in the largest cities, non metropolitan production plants, and research and development departments in high amenity locations (See Scott 1982 for a full discussion).

Although economic arguments tend to dominate the search for explanations of the decentralisation of the US population, others have been advanced (Beale 1982, Berry 1976). For example, rural growth has been attributed to such diverse causes as an upsurge of interest in outdoor recreation, the retirement plans of America's increasingly elderly population, and the housing demands of the baby boom generation. Common to these types of explanation is a concern with the images and preferences of migrants and reliance on the principle of consumer sovereignty. All recognise the importance of advances in transport and communications which have lessened the isolation of the far flung rural areas (Morrison & Wheeler 1976). Some writers argue that these trends represent a 'rejection of urbanism' or 'rural renaissance' (Alonso 1977), since, after all, the country is 'the real home of American values'.

### **(iii) Decentralisation and urban problems**

Closely linked to these trends towards decentralisation are the problems of the central cities, where a 'lack of economic value' (Sternlieb 1971) describes the predicament of both the cities and their citizens. Outmigration has been selective: the younger, more able and affluent have moved out while a poorer, older, less skilled and increasingly dependent population has remained. During most of the postwar period, black people have found it difficult to leave the inner cities, hemmed in by the lack of public housing in suburban areas and discrimination against them in the private housing market. Unemployment also has a racial dimension, with much higher rates among non white groups.

At a time when urban populations are becoming increasingly dependent on government aid, city governments are experiencing dwindling incomes as residents and businesses move out. Since to raise local taxes may further encourage the loss of



people and firms, cities have struggled to keep taxes down, arguing that the federal government should provide greater finance.

Probably the most serious problems in the urban areas of the United States are those of poverty, race and unemployment. One further problem has recently been attracting a great deal of attention: the state of the infrastructure of the US urban system (see for example Patton 1984). The problem is worst in the older, larger cities and is held to be an important factor encouraging the outward movement of households and firms.

These problems are compounded by the lack of funds with which to attempt solutions. Patton touches upon another important effect of the recent population shifts: changes in the balance of political representation and in the power to bid for federal funds. In the USA, seats in the House of Representatives, along with federal revenue, are allocated on the basis of population size. Frostbelt cities - those with the greatest problems of urban decay - are losing out to more prosperous places in the South and West:

Even if the US Congress provides funds for rebuilding decaying infrastructure, major locally-funded needs will remain. Furthermore, frostbelt cities are generally in worse shape than Southern and Western cities, but there is no guarantee that they will receive all the federal help they ...need. With the shift of Congressional power to the US South, and with population growth beginning to strain capital facilities there, competition for this federal dollar will certainly increase (Patton 1984 p.241)

#### **(iv) The links with urban policy**

Here it is useful briefly to examine the relationship between government urban policy and urban systems change in the USA. The revitalization of the cities has been an issue for US public policy since the end of the second world war. However, 'traditionally...federal domestic policies have dealt not with the causes of city problems but with their pathologies - crime, housing, abandonment and fiscal insolvency - which collectively came to be called 'the urban crisis'' (Hill 1983 p.212). In the 1960s and '70s the government pursued area-based programmes to tackle urban poverty. Early concern was to eliminate slum housing, and it is frequently argued that the slum clearance programs of the '50s and '60s made problems worse by reducing the supply of low cost housing in cities and displacing thousands of poor, mainly black, residents. The early '70s saw a new policy line as the demands of private businesses, increasingly to be found in the suburbs and beyond, began to make themselves felt. The view that 'social and physical problems associated with urban

decay were caused by the loss of economic vitality from the urban core' gained acceptance (Strickland & Judd 1983 p.158). The cornerstone of the new urban policy is the 1974 Community Development Act with its focus on revitalization rather than redevelopment, and on the encouragement of the middle classes back to the inner cities.

Meanwhile, despite the programmes of the '60s and '70s, poverty, substandard housing, and large scale structural unemployment remain common in US cities; and the worst problems are shifting steadily outwards to the new slums of the inner suburban rings. The most recent government view is that the major problems of poverty and race will be solved only by general economic recovery, not the targeting of funds to specific areas, so that the main thrust of policy now is to let the market solve the problems of the urban system: a stance known as the New Privatism. Inherent in this policy shift is a new way of thinking about the urban system:

What is new about the current style of privatism in America is that it represents a departure from the earlier objectives of urban policy and that it reflects a fundamental change in the prevailing view of the relationship between cities and the national economy. The overriding purpose of the New Privatism is not urban regeneration but national economic recovery. Moreover, it is no longer assumed, as it was for the first three decades after the Second World War that national recovery depends upon the prosperity of the large urban centres nor even that it will result in the revival of flagging city economies. Recovery is now seen as possible only through improvements in market efficiency... The function of national urban policy is now to facilitate the adaptation of the...landscape to the perceived requirements of post-industrial economic growth and to encourage local communities to accept responsibility for dealing with the local impacts of national adaptation. In sum, economic recovery must take precedence over the fortunes of particular...places. (Boyle & Rich 1984 p.26)

In a sense national government is turning its back on the urban crisis, instead seeing it more valuable in the national interest to assist only those with the best chances for growth - a policy stance known as triage. This stance is likely to benefit those non metropolitan areas which are now the favoured locations for population and employment far more than did past rural assistance programmes such as those provided under the 1972 Rural America Act. This Act aimed to 'revitalize rural America' so as to achieve 'a more balanced distribution of people', but commentators have generally failed to link present rural growth with these programmes: 'the evidence does not suggest that such efforts were the cause of the growth of the rural areas in the 1970s'. Instead it appears that present rural growth is, among other things, 'an unanticipated result of a number of other policy decisions by both the state and federal governments' (Bradshaw & Blakely 1979 p.26-7). Urban policy is one of the policy areas now acknowledged as important in this respect.

### **2.3.2 Canada, Australia and Japan**

Although no other country has produced systematic analysis of changes in the urban system on quite the US scale, there is a growing body of evidence on trends in other parts of the world. Canadian experience provides an interesting comparison with that of the USA, for although Canada logically forms an extension of the US urban system (Yeates & Garner 1980) there are some differences in the observed patterns. In the mid 1970s it was recognised that internal migration had 'shifted away from the...major metropolitan areas...toward medium sized cities and to smaller centres just outside the metropolitan region'(Bourne & Logan 1976 p.136) and more recent census analysis has revealed more dramatic changes in population dispersal as rural areas which formerly experienced net out-migration gained population for the first time (Hodge 1983). There was substantial growth in Canada's small towns and villages during the 1970s, attributable both to continued suburbanisation around the country's metropolitan areas and to the migration of population to towns and villages well beyond the metropolitan orbit.

Yet there is no consensus that Canada is experiencing counterurbanisation exactly on the US pattern. Rather, trends in Canada have been seen as very similar to those in Australia, with considerable movement of population from major urban centres, but continued metropolitan growth resulting from foreign immigration and the pursuit of more interventionist urban policies, including a more restrictive land use control system. Typically, the Canadian city is more compact than its counterpart in the USA, with much greater density of population and housing (Edmonston et al 1985) . Higher land costs in urban areas have made 'the suburban alternative more costly..., leading to a more efficient and denser utilization of land', while high levels of accessibility in the core areas of Canadian cities are 'a function of the greater reliance on public transport systems' rather than on private cars (Edmonston et al 1985 p. 217). Congestion, rather than decay, has been the major problem, and the racial dimension, so striking in the US, is much less marked in the metropolitan areas of Canada and Australia.

Recent research in Australia may require an updating of these views. The 1981 census has confirmed not only the trend towards population deconcentration at the national and state levels but 'for the first time this century' an increase in both the absolute and relative size of the rural population, though population increase has not been enjoyed by the most peripheral areas which are still isolated by sheer distance from

the major metropolitan areas (Hugo & Smailes 1985). Generally the smallest centres have tended to experience rapid growth. Hugo & Smailes identify since 1976 a negative correlation between the population size of centres and their growth rates.

In Japan, still experiencing a high rate of population growth, high concentration of population and economic activity is still evident, although since 1970 there have been signs of decentralisation within the largest metropolitan zones as suburban growth has begun to exceed that in central city areas. Vining and Kontuly (1978) refer to 'a sudden and precipitous drop in net migration into Japan's three major metropolitan regions', and a corresponding rise in net migration into peripheral regions, including the islands, during the mid-1970s.

Witherick's (1983) analysis of Japan's population trends from the 1970, 1975 and 1980 censuses demonstrates that 'the 1970s... emerge as an important turning point, during which there were initiated new and potentially far-reaching spatial trends'. There are 'clear indications of active urbanisation taking place outside the Japanese core'(p.97), though growth is located very much in the cities of the periphery rather than rural areas. It remains difficult to ascertain the reasons for 'this apparent awakening in the periphery', although the implementation of the 'Third Comprehensive National Development Plan,...launched in the second half of the 1970s to achieve a more even spread of development and urbanisation throughout Japan'(p.108) may have had some influence.

At metropolitan level, only the two largest cities (Tokyo and Osaka) have begun to show absolute population loss, though others show 'a persistent reduction in their rates of growth'. All of the 10 largest cities have demonstrated inner area loss and suburban growth during the 1970s, and in Tokyo, at least, this trend may have been strengthened by three successive master plans which since 1958 have 'sought to encourage decentralisation from the heart of the metropolis'(Witherick 1983 p.111). While residential trends have been towards dispersal, however, employment remains concentrated in the city cores.

Commentators have suggested that the trends observed in the USA are likely to be experienced eventually in all the countries described here; present differences are attributable mainly to lags in the process of urban systems development.

### 2.3.3 Western Europe

#### (i) Evidence for outward movement

Change in Europe has, on the whole, been less evenly documented than in North America, not least because of variations in the statistical bases of the various nations, with different geographical units of data collection and different census dates. Until 1970 Europe presented a very varied picture, failing to demonstrate a tendency towards decentralisation on the American model, yet experiencing a movement of population from inner city cores to suburban rings in some metropolitan areas. There was a change in the early 1970s when the process of decentralisation within metropolitan areas accelerated, but there remain important differences between one part of Europe and another.

Recent evidence on migration trends in Western Europe has been reviewed by Fielding (1982) who concluded that neither Western Europe as a whole, nor any country in Western Europe, had yet made the straightforward change, observed in the USA, from a situation in which net migration is positively correlated with settlement size (in other words, in which a process of spatial agglomeration is in operation) to the reverse. Nevertheless, he concluded that there was enough evidence of change in the patterns of migration to assert that urbanisation had ceased in most of Western Europe and that counterurbanisation was 'emerging as the dominant force'.

The decentralisation of population was most marked, in the early 1970s, in the larger urban areas of Britain (considered in more detail below), West Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the Low Countries. In the Netherlands, for example, the three largest cities - Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague - together lost about 110,000 people to suburban locations between 1971 and 1974. In Scandinavia these trends have been rather less apparent. In Sweden and in France, as in Canada and Australia, foreign immigration into the major metropolitan areas remained strong, at least until the mid 1970s, bolstering the position of these largest cities. This factor has been less important in France since strict government controls on immigration were established in 1974.

In France, recent analysis of the 1982 census results (Ogden 1985) has revealed not only continued net outflow from the major cities, especially Paris, but reversal of the longstanding loss of population from many of the most rural parts of the country. Some very remote areas continue to experience decline, but Ogden suggests that this may be due 'more to an excess of deaths over births than to outmigration'(p.24).

Regional shifts are also apparent, with losses from the north and north east and gains in the south and south east, especially along the Mediterranean coast and in Brittany.

According to Ogden, 'urbanisation is diffusing outwards so that the fastest growing areas are now those at the bottom of the urban hierarchy and rural districts on the edge of urban and industrial areas' (Ogden 1985 p.24). Indeed, many of the communities which have gained population recently are in localities known in France as la troisieme couronne: 'the third circle of urbanisation around the second circle of suburbs that surrounds the first circle of the old, historic cities' (Schabert 1985 p.69). Ogden concludes that France is now 'conforming to some extent to the rapidly developing international pattern of counterurbanisation', though the continued rural decline in areas 'beyond the reach of urban influence...contradicts to some degree the American model' (p.34).

Southern Europe seems at first completely to contradict USA experience, with continued centralisation, at least until the late 1960s. Again, however, the early 1970s brought something of a change, and while the metropolitan cores continued to grow, the 'rate of core growth dramatically slowed, and the rings by this time were growing twice as fast' (Hall & Hay 1980 p.227). There was then little evidence of a transfer of people back to rural areas, although evidence from Italy tentatively suggested a reversal in rural-urban migration as the southern immigrants of the 1960s returned home from the stagnating 'industrial triangle' of the north between Genoa, Turin and Milan (New Society 15 June 1978).

Further detail on European trends has been provided by a cross-national study into the Costs of Urban growth (CURB), the general aim of which has been 'to study the financing of urban systems and to evaluate the costs associated with urban change' (Van den Berg et al 1982 p.v). This study examined change in 189 functional urban regions (delineated mainly on the basis of journey to work flows) in 14 countries in Eastern as well as Western Europe. In 1975 these regions contained over 115 million people, approximately 31 per cent of the total population of the countries studied.

Having classified the 189 urban regions into different population size groups, the CURB teams examined population trends in urban places of different sizes between 1960 and 1970, drawing a number of parallels with US patterns. For example, 'in the US the share of urban places with more than 250,000 inhabitants dropped from 43.2 per cent in 1960 to 39.9 per cent in 1970; in the 14 CURB countries together it dropped from 35.0 to 31.7 per cent in the same period' (Van den Burg et al 1982 p.63). Between 1960 and 1970 there was continuing population centralisation in the

largest urban regions in the countries of Eastern Europe, while those of Western Europe displayed a varying tendency towards decentralisation. In 7 of the 14 countries it was the case that the lowest population growth rate was associated with the region containing the country's largest city.

At regional level European patterns of urban growth or stagnation often transcend national boundaries:

In general regions of fastest urban growth are to be found east of the line running from Sardinia to the regions in Western Poland; other rapidly urbanizing regions are to be found on both sides of the Alps, and in France along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. Another group of rapidly urbanizing regions is located in the Benelux countries. The urban population in the north of Europe, on the contrary, grew only slowly. (Van den Burg *et al* 1982 p.67)

The CURB study findings are set firmly within the framework of an evolutionary model of urban systems development. Table 2.2 classifies each of the countries by stage of development over three time periods : 1950-60, 1960-70 and 1970-75 and illustrates the 'progress of national systems along the urbanization, suburbanization, desuburbanization road' - progress which 'accelerated dramatically during the period 1970-1975'. Only Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland are not observed to change from one stage of urban development to another.

There remain considerable differences between Eastern and Western Europe in terms of the stages of urbanisation reached. In the East, where the large urban agglomerations are still growing, urbanisation started later than in the West and is taking place within a different social, economic and technological context:

While the urbanization of Western Europe was characterised by industrial growth preceding the growth of tertiary employment...urbanization in Eastern Europe is occurring not only within a different social milieu but in a quite different historical context. The level of technological diffusion, population mobility and economic interdependencies are markedly different from those pertaining during the industrial revolution of Western countries (Van den Burg *et al* 1982 p.97).

European employment trends are more difficult to ascertain, being still more varied than population patterns, but the available evidence for the early 1970s suggested that employment decentralisation was not then especially marked, at least in mainland Europe, and an important feature seemed to be the continuing strength of Europe's industrial heartland, in contrast to that of the USA. Hall and Hay (1980 p.228) considered that only in Britain - and to a limited degree in the Franco-German coalfield and the Ruhrgebiet - was there 'more serious evidence of the decline of the

TABLE 2.2 CHANGES IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES  
BY DOMINANT STAGE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, 1950-1975

| Dominant stage                      | Period                                            |                                                               |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | 1950-1960                                         | 1960-1970                                                     | 1970-1975                                       |
| Urbanization                        | Sweden<br>Bulgaria<br>Denmark<br>Hungary<br>Italy | Bulgaria<br>Hungary                                           | Bulgaria<br>Hungary                             |
| Urbanization/<br>Suburbanization    | Yugoslavia<br>Poland<br>Austria<br>Netherlands    | Yugoslavia<br>Sweden<br>Poland<br>Italy<br>Austria<br>Denmark | Poland                                          |
| Suburbanization                     | Switzerland<br>GB<br>Belgium                      | France<br>Switzerland<br>FRG<br>Netherlands<br>GB             | Austria<br>France<br>Italy<br>Denmark<br>Sweden |
| Suburbanization/<br>Desurbanization | -                                                 | Belgium                                                       | GB<br>Netherlands<br>Switzerland                |
| Desurbanization                     | -                                                 | -                                                             | Belgium                                         |

Source: Van den Berg et al (1982) Table 7.10 p 91



older industrial-urban regions'. Results of the CURB study were less sanguine and showed, for example, that like many British cities, Vienna, Copenhagen and The Hague, at least, displayed 'heavy losses of jobs in the core, growth in the ring, and some losses from the functional urban region overall' during the 1960s, although others, for example Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Zurich and Basle, showed core increases in employment.

In the current atmosphere of much slower economic growth the relocation of activities from major urban agglomerations to medium sized towns has become a much more significant feature of the European scene. Keeble *et al* (1983) have provided some evidence of an urban-rural shift in manufacturing employment, intensifying since the onset of the recession in 1979, in the countries of the EEC. Rising unemployment has particularly affected the largest cities. The number of unemployed is now greater in some of Europe's major cities than in areas previously regarded as more peripheral. In the Netherlands, for example, there are far more unemployed in the West - the urban areas - than in the traditionally depressed areas of the North' (Van den Berg *et al* 1982 p.xix). In 1984, Rotterdam had an unemployment rate as high as 20 per cent.

Explanations for the decentralisation of population and jobs from European cities bear many similarities to those advanced in the US, and the consequences of outward movement, too, are similar. For example, as the outward migrants are mainly those in higher income groups the cities have experienced a fall in the income of the urban population and a declining tax base which has undermined public service provision. Van den Berg *et al* regard crime and cultural decay as an inevitable consequence of the loss of the cities' economic role: 'cultural and social bloom in the midst of absolute economic downfall is not a regular feature of our society' (Van den Burg *et al* 1982 p.44).

## **(ii) Policies for re-urbanisation**

Policy responses to urban problems have varied from country to country. According to Van den Berg *et al*, 'urban policy has never been corrective' (p.xxii) but has tended to strengthen broader trends. Britain and the Netherlands have pursued decentralisation policies aimed at solving the problems of urban agglomeration and the lack of economic activity on the periphery. In general, however, the countries of Western Europe seem to be strong advocates of urban revitalization, tending to favour investment in housing, commercial development and transport. Hall (1984a) has

pointed to the relatively healthy state of German cities which he attributes not to 'the better state of the German economy', nor to postwar reconstruction, nor to the fact that German cities tend to be relatively small, although these are all important, but rather to city governments' 'conscious effort to preserve and enhance the quality of urban life'.

Although strongly in favour of reurbanisation policies, Van den Berg et al are less optimistic about the possibilities:

In Western Europe, both local and central governments have woken up to the possibility of turning the tide in their large cities and restoring their image, by rehabilitating the existing housing stock, introducing urban renewal programmes, improving the traffic situation, creating pedestrian zones, and upgrading the social infrastructure. Whether such measures will persuade more people to stay in the cities and also entice people from outside...is hard to say. The trend towards...desuburbanisation...seems too general and so strong that only through the application of a most vigorous policy could significant results be expected (1982 p.40)

To conclude this discussion of urban systems trends in Western Europe the case of France is instructive. In comparison with other European countries France saw particularly rapid urban development during the early postwar years as the country experienced what is referred to by planners as urbanisme sauvage, accomplished through the large scale demolition of old neighbourhoods and the construction of modern apartment blocks, activities now aptly known as la renovation au bulldozer (Schabert 1985). Widespread rural desertion, the decline of central cities and uncontrolled sprawl on city outskirts characterised the French urban system of the late 1960s. Schabert describes the emergence of discussion, against the background of these problems, during the 1970s, of possible future forms of French urbanised society, culminating in the establishment of a new urban policy which includes specific practical measures for urban renewal. Recent slow down in the rate of population loss from the inner cities, revealed by the 1982 census, has been attributed at least in part to the visible success of these revitalization efforts. As Schabert concludes (p.69),

the new urban policy in France was instituted in order to stave off a further decline of the inner cities and to revitalize them, to control urban growth, and to steer the process of urbanisation in France toward a form of society urbanized on a human scale.

Although Schabert does not go so far as to identify a causal link between these government actions and observed trends towards counterurbanisation, he sees the recent policy responses as 'very much in tune with the evolution of French society',

offering the instruments for 'regaining a balance between the country and the city', between 'the process of society and its urban form'(p.70).

#### **2.3.4 Britain**

##### **(i) A new map of growth and decline**

In Britain the recent shifts of population and employment have been so marked that it may be appropriate to speak of 'a new map of growth and decline - a map that is almost the obverse of the map of a hundred years ago, and that is dramatically different from the map of even twenty years ago' (Hall 1984b p.161). A hundred years ago huge areas of rural England - East Anglia, the East Midlands, the South West peninsular - and much of mid and North Wales, were losing population as people moved to the areas of industrial growth - the cities. But in the 1970s and 1980s the most dynamic parts of the country have been the rural peripheries. Although some of the outward movement represents New Town development, 'there seems little doubt that the movement is now into genuinely rural areas, outside the commuting spheres of the big cities' (Hall 1984b p.162).

The dominant population trend in postwar Britain has been one of accelerating decentralisation. In the 1950s population moved from urban cores to suburbs within commuting hinterlands, then, in the 1960s, to outer metropolitan rings with weaker links with urban cores. While the cores grew slowly during the 1950s, in the '60s their relative decline was transformed into absolute loss. In the case of employment the pattern is repeated after a time lag - during the 1960s employment too began to decentralise, following the population trend. The cores lost half a million jobs while inner metropolitan rings and, to a lesser extent, outer rings, increased their share of employment, reversing the previous pattern of employment concentration and presenting a complete contrast to patterns displayed in the previous decade (Drewett *et al* 1976, Hall & Hay 1980, Kennett & Spence 1979).

As in America and the rest of Western Europe, the fortunes of individual cities and regions have varied widely. Generally, the largest cities have experienced the largest declines of both population and employment, and the strength of this negative relationship has increased over time, thrown into sharp relief by the continuing fall in the birth rate. Greater London lost 472,000 people, Merseyside 92,000 and the West Midlands and Greater Manchester 60,000 each in the six years from 1971 to 1977 (New Society 18 Jan 1979 p.141).

The 1981 Census showed that every large city in Britain had suffered substantial losses of population during the '70s and that it was a case of 'the bigger the city the bigger the loss'(OPCS 1981a p.9) In England the largest percentage decreases between 1971 and 1981 were for Inner London and Birmingham, about 18 per cent each, while Liverpool and Manchester suffered declines of 16 and 17 per cent respectively. Scottish cities experienced similar changes, and in Glasgow the population fell by 22 per cent, from 982,317 to 763,162 (Young & Mills 1983). While similar trends were in evidence in all the large cities, smaller urban centres such as Norwich and Durham showed slight population increases, and the New Towns, especially Milton Keynes, continued to show strong growth. In general, though, the percentage gains were not in urban areas at all but in non metropolitan places.

At regional level, until the early 1970s the established population trends in Britain were losses from northern England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and relative gains in the Midlands, South and South East. In the early '70s there was a shift away from 'the drift to the South East' as it was known, in favour of a new pattern - losses in the urban cores and gains in the rural periphery (Rees 1979 p.125). The three fastest growing regions between 1971 and 1981 were Wales, with a net gain of 2.2 per cent, the South West, which grew by 6 per cent, and East Anglia with an increase of nearly 12 per cent. These are the three regions which do not contain large urban concentrations.

Preliminary analysis of the 1981 Census revealed that remoter rural areas had experienced faster population growth between 1971 and 1981 than they had done during the previous decade, overtaking the more accessible rural areas. 'Smaller centres on the fringes of metropolitan areas gained jobs and population in the 1960s while the metropolitan cores declined. During the 1970s places...distant from the urban cores enjoyed the growth - a characteristic now labelled "counter-urbanisation" ' (OPCS 1981a p.6). OPCS were cautious of interpreting these findings as evidence of 'a rush to the country', pointing out that in terms of absolute numbers the gains in rural areas were modest and that growth might be due just as much to a reduced outward flow of migrants as to greater in-migration. However, they concluded (p.8) that it was likely that more detailed analysis would reveal population growth to be 'strongly associated with the smaller towns and accessible settlements in the countryside - the areas most suited to economic growth in recent years'.

In continuing analysis of the 1981 Census Champion (1981a,1981b) confirmed a turnaround from population loss to gain in the 1970s in the remoter rural areas,

especially those furthest away from the main centres of population: areas like the Scottish Islands, Powys and Grampian. However, growth was not continuous over the decade. Instead there was a burst of growth between 1971 and 1973, then stabilisation, which Champion (1983) attributes to the slower rate of population growth nationally and a reduction in population migration.

In the late 1970s and early '80s the 'drift to the South East'- swamped by the urban-rural swings of the early 1970s - appears to have re-asserted itself, as the North West and West Midlands have become net losers of population and jobs and as the South East, which lost population in the early 1970s, is once again a net gainer. A slow down in the population loss from Greater London may be a contributing factor. In 1981-83 the loss from London was only about half what it was in the years 1971-73.

However, while the movement out of the inner cities may have slowed, in the rural growth areas there is little suggestion that counterurbanisation is a spent force. Rather it seems that this growth is no longer fuelled by loss from the city cores but by loss from places further out - the metropolitan fringes and the larger free-standing cities like Plymouth and Bristol.

#### **(ii) Accounting for non metropolitan growth**

As in the US, explanations for population shifts stress the close links with trends in employment. The larger and older cities have experienced, in addition to population loss, the most rapid manufacturing decline, and falling employment in manufacturing industry is seen as both a cause and a consequence of 'the inner city crisis'. While these trends are commonly held to be inevitable features of what has been called 'the de-industrialisation of Britain' (Goddard 1983) - employment in manufacturing is in decline at national level and the cities, the traditional locations of industrial activity, are suffering most, while the recent increase in service sector employment is not sufficient to compensate for this - Fothergill and Gudgin (1982), focussing on patterns of manufacturing employment growth rather than decline, argue instead that Britain is experiencing not so much de-industrialisation as counter-metropolitan forces. They have identified a strong urban-rural contrast in the growth of manufacturing employment, with the most buoyant growth in non-metropolitan areas and in small towns. Keeble's (1984) evidence reinforces these arguments.

A range of complex explanations has been put forward to explain these changes. Reasons most often cited for the growth of manufacturing in less urban places include the lack of space for expansion in the older cities and the availability

of cheap, non unionised labour in more rural locations. It is also suggested that, since many growing industrial enterprises are in 'high technology' sectors which seek locations in amenity-rich non-metropolitan areas, Britain, like the USA, is witnessing a shift in innovative capacity away from the inner cities to more peripheral locations, although the spatial distribution of research and development and high technology companies is in fact closely linked to central government spending on defence, which impacts in particular on non-urban locations in southern England (Boddy & Lovering 1984, Breheny *et al* 1983, Law 1983). To commentators who have documented recent growth in Scotland the development of North Sea oil is seen as an important stimulus to growth (see Jones 1984, although he argues against this view). Massey & Meegan (1983) consider, in addition, spatial impacts of the processes of technological advance, industrial rationalisation and intensification (changing work practices to increase productivity). These changes are bringing a new 'geography of jobs' very different from that of, for example, the 1930s, an era with which the current recession is often compared.

**(iii) Urban problems and policy responses: reinforcing decentralisation trends ?**

In parallel with these shifts in population and employment Britain has seen shifts in the definition of urban problems and in responses to them. Government policies may themselves have encouraged the outward movement of population and jobs from the major conurbations.

In the late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth, concern focussed on the effects of urban growth and in particular on problems of slum housing and environmental health (see Cherry 1981, 1984). During the 1930s and '40s, rapid suburbanisation, underpinned by rising real income, the demand for better housing, and improvements in transport, was a major problem, judged undesirable because it was often unplanned, it used up valuable agricultural land and it brought an increase in commuting since most people still worked in the city centres. By 1940 it was recognised that a strategic land use policy was needed so that congestion in the old overcrowded housing areas in the central cities could be relieved without further suburbanisation.

Government's response was to derive policies to contain the cities by means of green belts and to disperse population to self-contained centres outside the metropolitan orbit, leaving behind a 'balanced' community with 'room to breathe'. By the late 1960s slum clearance had become a major activity, with about 70,000 demolitions a year in England and Wales, mainly in the largest cities. Since not all the residents

displaced by slum clearance could be rehoused within the city boundaries arrangements were made to disperse overspill populations to the New and Expanded Towns (Hall et al 1973).

What have been the effects of these policies of containment, dispersal and redevelopment ? Their role in encouraging the outward movement of population and jobs remains a matter for debate (see for example Fothergill, Kitson & Monk 1983, Foreman-Peck & Gripaios 1977, Lawless 1981). In general they are seen as encouraging rather than initiating what is a more general trend.

Dispersal policies are seen to have encouraged social polarisation because the outward movement of population has not, after all, been 'socially balanced'; not even the New Towns around London have done much to rehouse the most disadvantaged Inner London residents, since they have mostly taken the better-off families from the outer boroughs. Those remaining behind in the redeveloped public housing estates are often trapped there by local authority transfer rules or simply by the unavailability of public housing in the outer areas. Along with land use zoning, redevelopment policies have also encouraged firms to close down or to move out with the population.

Green belt policies, it is argued, have forced people to move further from the city cores than they might otherwise have done, severing people from their workplaces and thus encouraging the decentralisation of employment. The restrictions on the development of green belt land have encouraged the inflation of land and property values within the urban cores, in turn further encouraging the outward movement of households and firms, and have inflated house prices within the green belts themselves. While green belt policies remain in force (although they are threatened as pressure for housing and industrial development in the favoured rural areas increases), large scale urban redevelopment has given way to policies for rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and planned decentralisation has all but ceased as the New Town development corporations are gradually wound up.

The conception of urban problems has changed considerably over this period. As decentralisation became an established feature of the British urban system the old urban cores emerged, during the 1960s, as highly disproportionate concentrations of the poor and deprived: the unemployed and unskilled, the elderly, single parent families and ethnic minority households, 'left behind' by the decentralisation process and trapped in a 'culture of poverty'. The problems of urban areas were seen to reside in the characteristics of the inner city residents and much attention was given to efforts to break the 'cycle of deprivation'. The government sought to redirect

resources to concentrations of disadvantage - areas of special social need - through policies of positive discrimination. Then, in the early 1970s, against a background of recession and rising unemployment, a number of experimental urban projects and programmes (including, for example, the Inner Area Studies), reinforced by the analysis of the 1971 census, brought a change in the definition of urban problems. By the late 1970s the government had moved to the view that urban problems are inherently economic rather than social - the result of the progressive loss of industrial employment from the cities. As the 1977 White Paper, Policies for the Inner Cities declared, 'the decline in the economic fortunes of the inner cities lies at the heart of the problem.

Under the government's main instrument of urban policy, the 1978 Inner Urban Areas Act, financial resources are still targeted on those areas judged as most disadvantaged (according to census based indicators of, for example, unemployment, population density and housing stress) although the funds are intended to lever private sector investment rather than directly to alleviate the problems of the worst deprived residents themselves.

In a recent extension of efforts to locate urban problems in Britain, Begg & Eversley (1987) have pointed to an inner/outer gradient of deprivation, worst at the centre, within each urban agglomeration, although in some cities, such as Glasgow and Knowsley, there are growing problems outside the inner areas, in peripheral housing estates (see also Sim 1984).

Begg & Eversley have summarised the links between population change and the location of 'urban' problems. According to their analysis, the faster the rate of population decline in an area between 1971 and 1981 the worse the deprivation there in 1981. Conversely, the areas of fastest population growth are also those which show the highest incidence of favourable indicators. Especially close relationships were found between population growth and indicators of high social class, and one of the most significant conclusions is that the deep divide between affluent and poor areas of the country is liable to worsen. The reason is the highly selective nature of outmigration: 'The greater the rate of loss, the more unfavourable the social composition, since only the better-situated can leave' (Begg & Eversley 1987 p.36). The loss of 'potentially strong elements in the population' encourages the decline of investment; decisions about industrial location and residence interact to accelerate the outflow of job opportunities and of those best able to take advantage of them.



In this discussion of the links between government policy and the decentralisation of population and jobs from British cities the effects of regional policy - 'taking work to the workers' -, much debated in the literature (for example by Moore, Rhodes & Tyler 1977), have not been considered. Regional policy, it may be argued, has had little direct impact on the loss of population and jobs from the largest cities and their growth in non metropolitan locations. These trends have been apparent in all regions, whether assisted or not. As Fothergill & Gudgin (1982) have shown, the urban-rural composition of the regions has had a far greater impact on regional manufacturing employment shifts than has government regional policy. Even where regional policies have encouraged manufacturing industry into the Assisted Areas, the smaller towns in these areas have benefited more than the largest cities (Goddard 1984 p.61). And in any case, as Hall comments, 'regional incentives, in contrast to five years ago, ... are now restricted to the urban disaster areas' (1984b p.166). On the other hand, other policy instruments such as the activities of the Location of Offices Bureau may have 'successfully lubricated a market when dispersal was already taking place' (Goddard 1984 p.58).

In the more peripheral rural areas, reduced depopulation has been attributed at least in part to the 'holding action of planning policies for those areas' (Woodruffe 1976) and to the programmes of such bodies as the Development Commission, the Development Board for Rural Wales and, in Scotland, the Highlands and Islands Development Board. These have aimed to reduce the outward movement of younger people to the towns. It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the turnaround in population observed in remoter rural areas to the effects of such programmes. As Moseley comments, while bodies like these 'usefully intervene to counter aspects of rural deprivation' (1984 p.155), their budgets are small and their direct impacts limited.

Thus while links may readily be drawn between the long standing policy focus on the problems of urban areas and recent trends towards the decentralisation of people and jobs to more rural locations, regional policies and policies specifically aimed at rural revival tend to be given little weight in the counterurbanisation literature. Moseley points, in addition, to a relatively neglected topic for rural geographers - the impact of the 'massive spending authorities such as the Post office, the Regional Water Authorities and the county council education committees' (Moseley 1984 p.155) in underwriting growth in particular non metropolitan areas. Further, there is now an increasing awareness of the perhaps 'unintended' consequences of government policies for, for example, energy and defence, which serve to reinforce the decentralisation trends (see for example Herington's (1984) discussion of the priorities of the

Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport, and Shaw's (1980) comments on changing central government perspectives on rural land use).

As Hall (1984b) has commented,

the geography of intervention is currently, and in large measure, a geography of reinforcing the trends.... The effective policy is: Britain needs growth wherever it happens - and it happens in the small towns with good amenity...the best bet is that the trends of deconcentration and of counterurbanisation ...will continue, [and] that public intervention will continue...to back them (p.166).

Academic commentators are now warning that the turnaround may have increasingly undesirable effects in the long term. In their study cited above Begg & Eversley (1987) concluded that as long as there are high rates of population and job outflows brought about by the interaction of private decisions and public policy,'the polarization of areas will continue to sharpen'.

## 2.4 Discussion

The urban systems of the advanced industrial nations described in this chapter display a number of common features:to varying degrees, decentralisation of population and employment from the major cities and, more recently, growth in small towns and non metropolitan areas.

Those who have sought to bring some organisation to recent trends in population and employment and to account for them have found it useful to construct some descriptive model of stages of urban systems development . Hall & Hay (1980), for example,suggest that 'all industrial nations fit somewhere on to a path of urban evolution but at very different points along it' (p.26). They envisage four stages in the development of the urban system in any industrial nation. Population first concentrates into metropolitan areas but centralises within them. Secondly, concentration continues but decentralisation of people begins in the larger metropolitan areas. Thirdly,'the outward movement of people begins to wash outside metropolitan boundaries while jobs too begin to move out with a time lag effect. Finally, metropolitan areas (particularly the older and larger ones) tend as a whole to stagnate and decay, as people and jobs move out to the inter-metropolitan peripheries'(p.26). According to this model, the USA is the first nation to reach 'stage four', with Britain close behind. Various countries of Europe, Canada, Australia and Japan lag behind at present but may come to experience similar trends in the future.

Models like this provide useful frameworks for discussion, highlighting the need for analysis at societal scale, but the processes which underlie these trends within urban systems are still not well understood. While non metropolitan areas are acknowledged as the destination of outwardly mobile people and jobs, their designation as 'inter-metropolitan peripheries' and the lack of discussion of their attributes demonstrate the urban focus of such models and, it may be argued, limit the avenues of explanation so far sought.

This chapter has described the outward shifts of population and jobs and some of the explanations for them very much from an urban perspective, stressing the links between these shifts and certain urban problems. In the countries considered here, policies intended to alleviate these problems may in addition have reinforced the decentralisation trends. In the early 1980s, in both the USA and Britain, government policies may be characterised as seeking to encourage growth 'wherever it wants to go'. In the main this means the non metropolitan areas.

The literature on counterurbanisation is currently heavily weighted towards urban areas. Much less emphasis has been given to rural-based explanatory factors and to the consequences - both positive and negative - for the rural areas. It is now appropriate to turn away from the declining cities towards the areas of rural growth. To do so may allow both an increase in understanding of the processes of counterurbanisation and an identification of new opportunities and problems of which policy makers should be aware. These themes are explored in Chapter 3, which follows.

### **3. COUNTERURBANISATION : A RURAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues the need to consider urban systems trends from a rural perspective. To do so may both advance understanding of the process of counterurbanisation and suggest a new focus for policy concern.

In Chapter 2 various explanations for counterurbanisation have been considered. Although economic explanations predominate, others which stress social or more aesthetic factors have been advanced and it is important to try to reconcile them. To achieve this requires a broadening of view, to take in changes at all levels in the settlement hierarchy. Section 3.2 considers recent progress towards this end. Section 3.3 goes on to speculate on the implications of renewed growth for pressured rural areas, both accessible and remote, while section 3.4 discusses the links between counterurbanisation and service provision and suggests a need for further detailed research (section 3.5).

#### **3.2 Advancing Explanation**

Hugo & Smailes (1985) have summarised the major hypotheses for counterurbanisation and have focussed in particular on three. The first is the 'expanding urban field' approach (touched upon in Section 2.2, above), which postulates a continuation of the suburbanisation process and the extension of the commuting fields of major cities as the friction of distance is reduced by advances in transport and communications technology and by the improvement of infrastructure. The second is the 'behavioural approach' which focusses on the increased ability of individuals to realise their residential preferences for rural and small town lifestyles. (According to Beale (1982), the trends towards population decentralisation are 'economically facilitated' though 'socially motivated'.) And the third is the 'structural hypothesis' which sets the population turnaround in the context of change in the economic structure of society as a whole. This last is consistent with those approaches - both marxist and neo-classical - 'which view migration as fundamentally a response to economic change, in contrast to the 'behaviourist' approach which places emphasis upon the motivations of individual migrants operating within a relatively unconstrained environment' (Hugo & Smailes 1985 p.16).

Hugo & Smailes suggest that in Australia, at least, the evidence provides support for all three mechanisms of systems change. And following the review of events in other advanced industrial nations summarised in Chapter 2 it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that these three - frequently invoked by academic commentators elsewhere - are just as valid in other parts of the developed world. Gauging the relative importance of each explanatory factor, however, is problematic.

For several years after these decentralisation tendencies were first noted there was considerable confusion in the literature in attempting to explain them as authors tried to apply either a list of possible ideas at one spatial level or one or two key hypotheses for change at all spatial levels. This confusion of analysis may have contributed both to the so-called 'clean break debate' (was counterurbanisation simply suburbanisation 'writ large' or did it represent a complete break with past urbanisation trends ?) and to the split between those who favoured structural explanations, seen as on the political left, and the 'behaviourists', favouring consumer sovereignty arguments - typically viewed as more liberal politically. While the structuralists were criticised as mechanistic, the behaviourists were accused of ignoring economic and social realities which prevented individuals from exercising choice of location.

It seems that two factors, in particular, have contributed towards these differences of view. The first has been the scale on which the work to identify the trends has been conducted: analysis has been carried out using national census data and trends have been identified first at regional, then metropolitan, level. More detailed work at local level has been relatively scarce. Secondly, since the countries described here are highly urbanised (in that a high proportion of their national populations reside in areas defined as urban), problems seen as linked to the relative decentralisation of people and jobs have been most visible in urban areas.

The outward movement of population from the largest cities has now been in evidence for some time. The more recent development has been growth in remote rural areas which previously displayed net outmigration. These two aspects of counterurbanisation have now begun to be discussed separately (Wardwell 1980, Jones *et al* 1984), and have even been given distinct labels. Randolph & Robert (1983), for example, use the term 'decentralisation' to describe the expansion of

urban fields and 'deconcentration' to describe growth in the 'lower limb' of the settlement hierarchy.

A number of writers (in particular Champion (1981a & b), Hodge (1983) and more recently Moseley (1984) and Cloke (1985)) have argued for a shift in focus away from urban areas to rural. They stress the need for detailed study of the smallest rural places in order to achieve a better understanding of the processes of counterurbanisation, which may be due as much to positive attributes of rural areas (pull factors) as to negative characteristics (push factors) of urban locations. This is especially relevant in a situation where relative growth in rural areas may be due just as much to a reduced propensity on the part of existing residents to move towards the towns as to outmigration from urban centres. However,

As with other theoretical notions of growth distribution....,the concept of counterurbanisation tends to be viewed from an urban perspective with use being made of urban centred explanations of change. There have been relatively few attempts to reverse the viewpoint by seeking explanations of regeneration and counterurbanisation from a rural perspective (Cloke 1985 p.14)

Smailes & Hugo's (1985) detailed case study of a small rural area of South Australia, along these lines, has enabled them to disentangle the factors at work. They conclude firstly that overspill - the expansion of metropolitan fields beyond the censal definitions of urban areas - cannot explain the rapid growth of small rural settlements remote from the major metropolitan centres, thus providing some support for those who have argued that counterurbanisation represents a clean break with the past. They further conclude that while structural factors are particularly useful in explaining changes at metropolitan level, especially the loss of population and jobs from the largest cities, - 'providing the key motive force for the turnaround' - they are less successful in explaining population growth in the very smallest rural centres. Behavioural factors (location choices related to lifestyle rather than monetary concerns) achieve increasing importance in explaining inward movement lower down the settlement hierarchy.

It may be that Australia's general lack of medium sized urban centres - the traditional choice of location being described as 'Sydney or the bush' - has made it possible for Hugo & Smailes clearly to differentiate between these essentially overlapping explanations. In the other advanced industrial nations such clarity has not been so readily achieved. In particular the interaction between population and employment trends and government policies designed to address the problems of the urban system does not emerge from the work on Australia, yet it provides an

important part of the explanation of changes in the other countries discussed in Chapter 2.

In Britain, as in other countries, the shifting requirements of industry, whether following or leading the workforce, and whether or not encouraged by policy, do not tell the whole story. Retirement migration has been acknowledged as an important contributor to counterurbanisation (see for example Law & Warnes 1981) and detailed research in remote areas of rural growth, particularly in Cornwall (for example by Perry 1983) and in Scotland (Jones 1984) is demonstrating that 'environmental and quality of life considerations have influenced the migrants more than economic factors' (Jones 1984 p.4, and see also the review of several studies brought together by Perry, Dean & Brown 1986). However, there remains further scope for research on the factors influencing recent growth in particular locations.

### **3.3 Implications of Growth in Rural Areas**

Urban problems have been a long standing policy concern of governments in most industrial nations and it is both highly plausible that policies have themselves reinforced decentralisation trends and unsurprising that concern for the implications of counterurbanisation has been focussed upon the cities. The question 'have cities a future?' (Hall 1984b) is increasingly heard and debated. Less attention has been paid to the consequences of counterurbanisation for the rural areas.

In Britain, at least, the recent study of rural areas by human geographers has typically focussed on the problems of depopulation, loss of community and the decline of services (see for example the summary by Martin 1976). Issues of rural regeneration in remote areas have 'scarcely begun to be addressed'(Cloke 1985 p.15).

As Van der Laan has pointed out,'the urban fringe and peri-urban areas are the regions at which research has been directed', a reflection of the traditional tendency for commentators to model the growth of rural areas as 'a suburbanisation process' (1984 p.52). Van der Laan goes on to argue that since the most recent developments in rural areas reflect 'the integration of rural areas into large scale urban systems' attention must now be broadened to include growth areas outside the commuting range of large cities.

Work of this type has recently advanced considerably in the USA (see for example Clawson (1976) and the volumes edited by Brown & Wardwell (1980), Hawley & Mazie (1981), and Weber & Howell (1982)), where the impacts of new population growth in remote rural areas seem to fall into three broad groups: economic, environmental and social, though these are to some extent overlapping and occur in different ways in various types of non metropolitan location.

Wherever it occurs, in-migration puts strains on the social, economic and service delivery systems of rural communities. As Dailey & Campbell ask:

Are the rural communities structurally adequate to receive these newcomers ? What are the community consequences of changes in population characteristics ? Is the population revival beneficial to non-metropolitan communities ? (1980 p.234).

In those non metropolitan places which are now the favoured locations for industrial innovation and expansion, growth is generally viewed as beneficial, both for the local economy through multiplier effects and for the national economy, though there are difficulties in meeting the infrastructural needs of rapid industrial and commercial development. Patton cites the example of Joliet, a small town south west of Chicago, which has grown rapidly, experiencing on the way 'severe capital plant problems because some components of the infrastructure either do not exist or were not properly installed' (Patton 1984 p.238).

Infrastructure requirements change with changes in population and industry. Responding to decentralisation poses particular problems for inherently inflexible services of this type which it has always been more cost effective to provide in centralised locations.

There is, in addition, increasing concern for the impact of large scale growth on the physical environment. In some areas of the USA an 'environmentalist backlash' has begun. Many more remote areas have a history of anti planning attitudes, and in places which previously experienced decline the turnaround has taken people by surprise. Local government must now find ways of dealing with severe pressures on the natural environment. This problem is demonstrated, for example, in the Ozark-Ouachita Uplands (Dailey & Campbell 1980) where problems such as the loss of timber for residential construction, the seepage of sewage into lakes and traffic congestion as the numbers of visitors and new residents rise have brought calls for a halt to new growth. Here 'planners must



face the challenge of maintaining economic prosperity while protecting the amenities of the region'(Dailey & Campbell 1980 p.229).

The effects of inward migration on community life are complex and more difficult to assess than the economic impacts. The tendency for newcomers to differ from established residents in socio-economic, demographic and cultural background brings different perceptions of social life and priorities (Stinner & Toney 1980) and may even lead to conflict.

Dubbink's study of the small towns of Bolinas and San Juan Capistrano in California:

...portrays rural culture, whatever it might once have been in these places, as being submerged by a rapid influx of new and more cosmopolitan settlers. The newcomers bring in ideas that are radical, in terms of local traditions...(Dubbink 1984 p.406).

Here the newcomers 'imported the idea that the towns should be treated as...rustic backgrounds for sophisticated lives lived in a country setting' (Dubbink 1984 p.406) and sought to prevent further development. They were at odds with the indigenous farming population, literally more down to earth, who held the view that the influx of newcomers had already destroyed the rural small-town character of these places and that further development could only be of economic benefit.

For the most part, however, in the rural areas of the USA:

the nonmetropolitan migration turnaround has tended to be viewed as a success story. The problems attendant on rapid unanticipated growth have been eclipsed by the pervasiveness of the view that growth is indicative of rising social welfare (Wardwell & Brown 1980 p.2)

How far is this true in the British case ? Areas of rural growth in Britain seem to divide into the two broad types distinguished in the USA. First are those located within range of major cities, under pressure for housing to accommodate both commuters and, more recently, the expanding workforces of certain types of industrial and commercial firms, themselves seeking sites in high amenity locations outside the urban areas. Second are the more remote, often coastal, areas popular for retirement and for those seeking more relaxed lifestyles.

'In recent years there has been no shortage of research on expanding villages and communities within commuting distances of large cities' (Woodruffe 1981 p.170). In the context of the present report it is of interest to note Bracey's Bristol

area study of 'the adjustment of mainly urban families to life in new rural-urban fringe neighbourhoods' (1964 p.ix). Best known, however, is the work of sociologists such as Pahl (1965,1966) and Radford (1970), which has demonstrated that in-migrants may typically be described as the mobile, property-owning middle classes, often of higher socio-economic status than the established residents, and that of Newby, which has shown that 'many of the controversies and conflicts which permeate contemporary rural life stem either from this fundamental change in the social composition of...villages or are exacerbated by it' (Newby 1979 p.153).

As Woodruffe has commented,

Scores of studies have been made of individual settlements and many of these have concentrated on the modifications of the socio-economic structure and the differences, sometimes the divisiveness, between newcomer groups and the so-called local population (1981 p.170).

Recent detailed work from East Anglia (reported in two volumes edited by Moseley 1978,1982) has provided further evidence of the impact of newcomers on the social life of rural communities, particularly through their involvement in local organisations (see for example Coles 1982).

In the more remote rural areas, too, much depends upon the characteristics of the migrants themselves. Dean, Brown & Perry (1984) have examined the characteristics of in-migrants to one remote rural area - West Cornwall - and have speculated on both the social and economic impacts of population redistribution. While retirement migration is important, 'a majority of adult migrants are economically active'...tending 'to be better qualified and to have higher occupational status than non migrants'. And Smailes & Hugos' description of 'small family business operators and self employed persons entering the small...settlements ' (Smailes & Hugo 1985 p.23-4) applies also to West Cornwall. Jones (1984), in his examination of the phenomenon of long distance migration from England to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, has concluded that retirement migration, though a factor, is not especially important. And interviews with more than 300 incoming households 'revealed that nearly two thirds of the households had been in professional, managerial and allied occupations'(p.15). Thus while much attention has been focussed on the migration of the elderly to coastal and environmentally scenic areas , and concern has been expressed about the ability of health, social, welfare and transport services to meet their needs, the

economic impacts of growth are, in fact, likely to be favourable. Perry (1983), examining migration to Cornwall as a whole, comes to similar conclusions.

However, as Perry points out, the social impacts of growth in remote locations may still not necessarily be desirable. He quotes Forsythe's (1982) study of inward migration to a small community in the Orkney Islands. This community lost population until the mid 1960s but by 1981 newcomers made up one third of the population. The newcomers were generally younger and of higher socioeconomic status than the original residents and mostly English:

Land and housing prices quadrupled, pricing some locals out of the market. The newcomers, although attracted by a traditional pastoral image of island life, were not interested in actual customs and traditions. They tended to dominate meetings and committees, formulating a Development Plan for the Island which was resisted and opposed by locals (Forsythe 1982, quoted by Perry 1983 p.20)

It is now well appreciated that the inward movement of population to rural areas brings changes in population size and composition which are bound to be sociologically significant for rural communities, especially those which are most remote and which previously had very small population bases. In addition it is recognised that the sheer increase in numbers may pose problems for the provision of basic services such as water supply and sewerage. Demands for housing may also cause problems, since it is frequently the case that property prices rise beyond the reach of long term residents, especially the young, the elderly and those on low incomes. (For a full discussion see Phillips & Williams 1982.)

The planning literature provides evidence of concern not so much for the sociological consequences of population growth in these locations but for the physical impacts of new development, whether for housing, industry or commerce. Herington (1984) has addressed the problems of growth in the outer areas of metropolitan regions: pressures for land, financial resources and infrastructure, and he argues the need for a renewed commitment to urban containment. These pressures are particularly well appreciated in Berkshire where the Secretary of State for the Environment instructed the county council to allocate land for 8000 more homes than had been proposed in the county structure plan. In areas like these, the pressure on rural land may give rise to conflict between local and conservationist interests and those of central government, seeking 'to override local interests and balance conservation against national economic prosperity' (The Times 24 Jan 1983). Alternatively, local authorities,

traditionally equipped to operate in situations of growth rather than decline, and mindful of the need to sustain employment, may contribute to growth pressures by taking an active role in local economic development, for example by offering 'greenfield' sites for industry. (For a recent review of local authority activities in this field see Mills & Young 1986.)

In both remote and outer-metropolitan rural growth areas, the new population patterns bring new challenges for policy makers and administrators. In particular, interventions may be needed to counter or deflect market forces, where passive responses to market indications were formerly sufficient. It is important to consider whether the responsible bodies possess the legal, financial and analytical capacity to respond appropriately, and to manage such changes.

In the British case a number of questions need to be answered. There remains a need for detailed examination of recent population trends and their economic, environmental and social consequences at local level. One question, in particular, has not yet been addressed except in the most general terms: if counterurbanisation is indeed occurring, what are the implications of this trend for service provision ?

#### **3.4 Counterurbanisation and Service Provision**

The counterurbanisation literature contains many pointers to the fact that certain types of service industry are decentralising from the major urban centres. Often cited in this respect in the US literature, for example, are private sector consumer services (such as entertainment, hotels and repair services) retailing, and some business services such as estate agencies, along with health and education (Noyelle 1983). While the appearance of certain types of services in suburban locations and small towns, along with the associated growth in service employment, is well documented (for example by Marquand 1983), however, the degree to which they are reaching smaller and more remote communities is less often discussed (Menchik 1981). It is more often the case that studies of remote communities stress the loss of services rather than gains.

Although it has frequently been argued that the loss of particular services may accelerate the loss of population from a village, little detailed evidence exists on the relationship between the continued existence or new provision of certain services in villages, usually within the framework of some local policy for the

location of rural facilities and new development, and the growth of population there. Although a number of surveys of rural facilities, mostly carried out by county planning departments, have recently been reported (see Packman & Wallace 1982 for a summary), most notable among them for its comparability with the present study being that by Norfolk County Council, Services in Rural Norfolk 1950-80, there has been little attempt specifically to examine the relationships between service provision and counterurbanisation trends.

Work on the Southampton SMLA, brought together by Mason & Witherick (1981) reports one of the few attempts to consider both social aspects of the decentralisation of population and employment and recent changes in service provision in an accessible rural area. Here, retailing and other population-based services have moved from the urban centre towards the periphery, but these services have become more concentrated spatially and are located in the larger villages and small towns of the area rather than in small places. Drawing on a 'census' of facilities published by Hampshire's County Planning Department, Mason & Witherick comment that:

This rationalisation has meant that many of the more rural parts of the SMLA periphery have been progressively deprived of certain amenities, such as the village shop, the local doctor, the branch post office and the bus service, ...thereby posing problems for the elderly and for those who lack access to a car.

The indications so far, then, are firstly that immigration may occur despite service loss (Dunn 1976) since newcomers tend to be highly mobile and can do without local services, and secondly that, for similar reasons, service loss may continue despite immigration (Shaw & Stockford 1979). The hypothesis has also been advanced that immigration may accelerate service loss as young local families, unable to compete in a housing market inflated by incomers, are replaced by older and wealthier immigrants who do not patronise local services in the same way. Alternatively, it is suggested, these immigrants may in future begin to demand new services as they become more elderly and less self sufficient, or simply because they expect local authorities to provide the same level of service previously enjoyed in the towns.

Turning specifically to the question of planning for rural service provision, policy makers have long relied on concepts, derived largely from the geographical literature, which stress the existence of 'natural' settlement hierarchies (discussed in Chapter 4, below). As counterurbanisation continues, and particularly as mobile in-migrants continue to exercise freedom of choice in their patronage of rural

services of various types, traditional settlement hierarchies in which services are concentrated in central places serving a surrounding hinterland may begin to break down. This has already been observed in Canada (for example by Dahms 1980 and by Hodge & Qadeer 1983) and in the Netherlands (for example by De Bakker 1984). Hodge and Qadeer demonstrate renewed growth in many small and remote Canadian settlements, arguing that these changes are so fundamental as to require 'a redefinition of settlement system concepts such as hierarchy, distance decay and central place thresholds' (Hodge 1983 p.19).

In these countries, many small settlements have begun to function almost as 'linked neighbourhoods' of 'a dispersed city'. A number of small places 'collectively provide the needed goods and services to the residents of rural districts...[as]...a complex of towns and villages' (Hodge 1983 p.27). Hodge attributes this largely to changes in consumer behaviour, noting that rural residents no longer conduct, for example, their shopping, in ways that correspond to 'the hierarchical arrangements envisioned by central place theory'. The residents of one community may, for example, 'shop for groceries in their nearby village, patronise a restaurant in another, and buy building materials in yet another'. Furthermore, as rural consumers 'shop around', a business may develop a reputation which enables it to draw customers from many miles away, regardless of the notional population threshold of the activity. According to Buursink,

geographical hierarchy in the sense of functioning of centres and nesting areas, held together by centralistic patterns of consumer trips, is only recognised at the scale of regional service centres. Below that, hierarchy is not apparent (Buursink 1975).

Hodge concludes that:

the evidence ...seems to point to the existence of a new rural spatial format in highly developed societies. It implies a great deal of autonomy...for...rural residents,...a spatial manifestation of the social, economic and cultural integration of...society (Hodge 1983 p.27).

Trends like these call into question traditional approaches to rural settlement planning, and an important question for policy makers in the immediate future must be how far these trends may be detected in Britain. On the whole, British writers have not reported empirical observations of settlement 'clustering', though Martin (1976) reports that a sharing of services is visible in 'Peak District villages along the Derwent Valley'.

Instead, they have tended to note the appearance of such patterns elsewhere and to argue that key settlement policies, rigidly applied, have prevented their emergence in this country.

A few counties (such as Gloucestershire) have begun to try planned clustering, in which services, residential development and job opportunities are spread amongst a group of villages treated as one unit. As McLaughlin (1976) commented, however, the successful implementation of such policies requires particularly detailed knowledge of rural communities and their interactions, the acquisition of which, despite recent advances, may be a task regarded as beyond the capacity of many local planning authorities.

### **3.5 The Need for Further Research**

The difficulty in examining the links between counterurbanisation and service provision, and in identifying possible changes in rural settlement hierarchies as urban system shifts continue, lies in the lack of detailed time-series data which would enable these changes to be assessed. However, recent work in Somerset and south Avon - an area which contains both districts relatively close to the major cities of the region, under pressure for housing and industrial development, and more remote rural places - provides a unique opportunity to address these questions.

Bracey's surveys of rural Somerset carried out in 1947 and 1950 and a follow up survey of the same parishes in 1980 provide the basis for a longitudinal examination of changes in service provision and social life in one non metropolitan area of England, changes which are likely to be closely linked to population trends and to changing policies. The availability of this information should allow some measurement of the extent of counterurbanisation trends locally and some progress towards an examination of the relationships between counterurbanisation and rural services.

## **PART II A STARTING POINT: SURVEYS OF SOMERSET'S RURAL PARISHES IN 1947 AND 1950**

This part of the report describes the re-examination and preliminary re-analysis of a mass of historical survey material, undertaken with the aim that this might provide a basis for the investigation of the economic and social changes, especially those related to service provision, which have occurred in one rural area of England during the postwar period. The original material - questionnaire returns, maps and letters - is that collected by Dr H.E. Bracey, formerly of the University of Bristol, during his surveys of rural Somerset in 1947 and 1950.

Before going on to describe Bracey's empirical work and some of his findings it is important briefly to set his work in its historical context (Chapter 4), for he was both an early contributor to the developing literature on urban systems and highly aware of the links between policy and the differential development of rural settlements. Bracey also saw that academic geographers had a part to play in influencing the development of settlement policy, a theme which is elaborated later in this thesis.

The task of handling the information Bracey amassed is described in Chapter 5, which provides some insight into both the quantity and quality of the information available. Chapter 6 presents a selective account of the rural parishes of Somerset as they were in the years immediately following the second world war as revealed by Bracey's studies. This substantial body of work provides a firm basis for a fresh look at the same parishes 30 years on, described later, in Part III.



#### **4. BRACEY'S STUDIES OF SOMERSET IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

In placing Bracey's work in its historical setting, two distinct but overlapping contextual strands are apparent. The first is the theoretical context within which Bracey was working: his was a pioneering contribution to the study of settlements as central places. The second is the more general policy context in which geographers found themselves in the early postwar period. As Johnston (1980, p.14), amongst others, has pointed out, this was a time of 'growing involvement of the state in many sectors of economy and society', when 'there was a great opportunity for academics to participate in planning activities'. For geographers, and not least for Bracey, 'town and regional planning offered such opportunities'.

##### **4.1 Central Place and Social Provision: the Theoretical Context**

Amongst British geographers the 1940s and early 1950s saw a focussing of inquiry on the relationships between town and country. Work of this type was informed by earlier American studies which drew attention to the servicing of the rural population as an important element in the growth of urban centres (Brunner and Kolb 1953; and see Galpin's 1915 work on Walworth County, Wisconsin for a very early example). It was an American writer, Jefferson, who, in 1931, was probably the first to coin the term 'central place' function to describe the role of a town in servicing a rural population (Marshall 1969, Morgan 1981).

In Britain, Dickinson (1934) described the 'two way relationship' between an urban settlement and its surroundings. The countryside:

calls into being settlements called urban to carry out functions in its service...The town, by very reason of its existence, influences ...its surroundings through the spread of a network of functional connections (Clark 1982 p. 9).

This type of thinking represented a considerable advance both on studies of the site and situation of towns and the influence of these factors on the fortunes of individual urban areas, common before 1950, which reached something of a climax in Taylor's (1949) study of over 200 towns, and on attempts to define geographical regions as areas with common characteristics. From these earlier

types of work, and from the recent interest in the functional relationships between town and countryside, came attempts to delineate the spheres of influence (also known as hinterlands or umlands) of centres of varying size and character, perhaps best exemplified by Smailes's study, The Geography of Towns (Smailes 1967, first published in 1953).

#### 4.1.1 Delimiting 'spheres of influence'

The most common way to delimit spheres of influence was to map the areas served by various urban activities. In most studies, information was gathered in the urban settlement, looking 'outwards ...towards its surroundings'. Bracey, however, whose work is described in detail below, went on to 'invert' this method 'by examining the countryside independently of the town'(Johnson 1967 p.83)

As Johnson pointed out, despite its attractions, a considerable amount of fieldwork and other enquiries were required to produce a satisfactory result using Bracey's approach, and so various short cuts for delimiting spheres of influence continued to find favour, for example those using only one measure, like newspaper circulation (Park and Newcomb 1933, Haughton 1950) and bus timetables (Green 1950). Clarke (1982) cites in addition a number of French studies which made use of indices of commuting (Chabot 1938), food supply (Dubuc 1938) and phone calls (Labasse 1955).

According to Smailes (1967), Green's method was 'a short cut to provide town and county planners with an approximate ready indication of the spheres of influence of urban places' (p.137). Green made use of the fact that a cheap and competitive system of public transport could be relied on to establish where most people wished to make most journeys. His method was:

elegant, objective, and produced intuitively reasonable patterns which generally stood up well to testing by questionnaire. Indeed Bracey's (1952) work on Wiltshire was quoted by Green in support of the broad accuracy of the bus service method of defining urban hinterlands (Morgan 1981 p.9).

In Somerset however, Green drew attention to the lack of congruence of hinterlands as defined by bus services and those determined using questionnaires and put this down to the difficulties faced by some bus operators in finding economic routes for their services.

Bracey's work in Somerset was to allow in particular the study of zones of overlap between the sphere of influence of one town and that of another, of some importance 'in a highly urbanised country where transport is relatively flexible and towns are close together' (Johnson 1980 p.87). As Smailes put it:

The boundaries that separate adjacent service centres are zones rather than lines, zones of overlap where duplication and alternative provision are possible, and zones of vacuum, where there is a virtual absence of provision ...There is reduced participation in central services and progressive recession of urban influence as one service after another becomes ineffective with increasing remoteness from an urban centre (Smailes 1967 p.141).

Johnson went on to contrast the development of hinterlands of market centres in rural areas with those typical of industrial towns. The tributary area of an industrial town, he said, would be 'much more restricted' and also 'less clearly defined' since an 'intensive' industrial town might not have 'the full range of urban services appropriate to its size'. These 'missing functions' would be supplied from other centres. Also the industrial town might be 'less able to resist competition from other towns, if only because it is likely to be a more unattractive place to visit on a weekly shopping expedition' (Johnson 1980 p.87).

Johnson also describes geographers' complementary and 'parallel interest ...in the classification of cities according to the specialization of their services', since 'from the discussion of hinterlands' it is obvious that 'the larger the city, the wider the range of services, goods and functions that it is likely to provide' (Johnson 1980 p.92).

#### **4.1.2 The identification of settlement hierarchies**

By the 1930s, American writers had begun to distinguish hierarchies of urban centres offering services at various levels of specialisation and requiring the patronage of 'threshold' populations of varying sizes. Hoffer (1931), for example, noted the development of three types of rural trading centre:

First, there is the primary service centre, a small town offering goods that are well standardized and frequently demanded. These towns are usually under 1000 in population. Secondly, there is the shopping centre, a town which, in addition to convenience goods, offers goods in speciality stores. Such places may vary from 1000 to 5000 in population. Finally, there is the terminal centre, which is large enough to offer the most specialized kinds of services. These centres are usually the larger cities in a State or other area.

A local population of perhaps '2500 to 3000' could provide:

A good local school system, divided half between town and country. This figure would permit the effective service of specialized shops, doctor and dentist, two or three churches, a railroad depot and bus depot and a library.

Kolb's (1923) work was more elaborate. Using a check list of functions he identified a settlement hierarchy made up of five classes of centres and charted changes in the hierarchy over a period of nearly forty years in the State of Wisconsin, noting in particular that, even in this early period, communities in his study area were becoming increasingly specialised in terms of function yet more highly integrated one with another as time went on.

R.E. Dickinson's (1932,1934) studies of settlements in East Anglia represented an early British attempt at the descriptive classification of service centres. Towns were grouped at four levels using such factors as the presence of banks, cinemas and secondary schools and the turnover of livestock markets. Later, Smailes (1944), in attempting a hierarchical classification of urban centres in the whole of England and Wales on the basis of several factors which he deemed typical of the 'true town', refined the criteria somewhat. 'At least three banks, a Woolworth store, a secondary school, a hospital, a cinema and a weekly newspaper' made up what Smailes called the 'trait complex' of the 'fully fledged town'. Settlements which did not have all the services were described as 'sub towns' and 'urban villages', while 'cities' had in addition department stores, specialized hospital services and an evening paper. At the top of the hierarchy were the 'main cities' which, as well as all these, had a university, a daily morning paper and the regional or national headquarters of companies and government departments.

Similar studies in other areas used slightly different criteria suitable for local circumstances. But all had as a central focus the grouping of places:

into distinct categories, so that it was possible to speak of an urban hierarchy, with settlements at one level of specialization being clearly distinguished from those at the next level (Johnson 1980 p.93).

These ideas were not accepted without question. Did a hierarchy exist in reality or had these categories 'simply been produced by the various methods of classification used'? Did reality 'consist of a continuum of various sized urban settlements with no clear functional break between them' or did central places

'fall naturally into distinct categories'? (Johnson 1980 p. 93). Later research evidence (for example that presented by Berry and Garrison (1958), and, for the south west of England, by Barker 1972) was to support the existence of urban hierarchies, at least at the sub-regional scale, and the ideas were formalised in the Central Place Theory of Walter Christaller (Christaller 1933, translated by Baskin 1966). Christaller's work and the subsequent modifications and empirical testing of his theory are not detailed here since they are well covered in the literature (see for example Clark 1982, Lloyd & Dicken 1983). But one aspect is of particular relevance to this discussion: the influence of central place ideas in planning and in particular on the development of key settlement policies in rural areas, including Somerset.

## **4.2 The Policy Context**

Two main themes stand out in placing Bracey's work in the context of the public policy discussions of the 1940s. First is the extensive discussion of the delimitation of administrative boundaries current during the interwar and early postwar years. The second is the concern to establish a new framework for town and country planning, culminating in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

### **4.2.1 Administrative boundaries**

The development of the system of local government areas in England and Wales from the Poor Law of 1834 to the Local Government Boundary Commission of 1945 was reviewed by Lipman (1949). In 1834, to administer the Poor Law, parishes were grouped into Unions by drawing a circle, 'taking a market town as a centre, and comprehending those surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market'. The market town was the place 'where the medical man resided, where the Bench of Magistrates was assembling, and generally speaking the town that supplied the general wants of the district':

As Lipman explains, 'the application of a scientifically deduced principle to the delimitation of areas and their formation along the lines of uniformity and convenience' was a 'phenomenon virtually unique in the history of English local government'. Clearly those delimiting the old Poor Law Unions deliberately grouped town and country together into one administrative unit, even if in the process many of the new Unions transgressed the old county boundaries (Morgan 1981 p.2).

In the 1930s and '40s, a period of rapid social and economic change, it became increasingly apparent that the existing administrative frameworks were out of date (for a discussion see for example Peake 1930). There were many anomalies in the administrative boundaries inherited from 'an age before motor transport' and 'fitting ill with the present day facts of social geography' (Smailes 1967 p. 146). Major discussions were needed to establish 'some principles for redefining local government areas so that they better conformed to the contemporary social and economic needs' (Morgan 1981 p. 3).

Clearly these objectives were influenced by the academic discussions of this period on the links between town and country as well as by the widely held view that local government areas should reflect a community area or 'social unit' focussed on a particular central place. Bracey himself put forward a plea for the revision of local authority administrative boundaries so as to reflect what he called 'local association', and he further argued for the selection of common administrative centres, since,

the selection by official and voluntary bodies of different centres in the same area as HQs for their administration or assembly militates against the promotion or maintenance of a local consciousness (Bracey 1952 p.184).

As Dickinson (1942) commented, 'in the new pattern of administrative areas 'the town, the city, the metropolis itself and finally the region, will be aggregates of social units'.

It is now a main task for the social sciences to investigate in selected regions such questions as the actual character of the warp and woof of community relations in rural areas, the inter-relations of town and countryside and the range of influence of the metropolitan city over the towns and country round it.

Foreshadowing the overspill battles of the 1960s between the cities and the shires, (fully described by Hall *et al* 1973), Smailes argued strongly for the reform of British local government, including 'a drastic revision' of the administrative areas set up in the nineteenth century.

The highly developed urban integration of life makes the urban field [Smailes's term for the town and its hinterland] the real unit of modern community structure...whereas the local government system...is based upon a rigid dichotomy of urban and rural. The assumed antithesis of town and country has been stamped upon it...The larger concentrations of population have been abstracted from the old counties and set up as County Boroughs, and often built up areas have likewise been set apart from their surroundings to form Urban Districts ...[and] residual Rural Districts. The whole system divorces town from country along artificial and arbitrary lines of cleavage inflicting upon British local government the curse of gnawing struggle between the urban and rural authorities (Smailes 1967 p. 147).

Smailes went on to make a plea for a return to the principles used by the Poor Law Unions, concluding (p.149) :

Towns do not exist in vacuums, cut off from the contiguous areas along clear-cut municipal boundary lines. On the contrary, they are always intimately related to areas larger than the mere sites they occupy. Town and country are indivisible, both geographically and socially, and the establishment of the fundamental facts concerning their interrelations is a condition... of success in the social and economic planning to which we are committed.

#### **4.2.2 A new framework for town and country planning**

To many, including Bracey, the late 1940s were the starting point for rational planning of the new postwar society, and while it would not be appropriate here to detail the history of urban planning in Britain (aspects of this have been covered in Chapter 2, and for a full account see, for example, Hall *et al* 1973 and Cherry 1974,1984) it is useful to summarise a number of pertinent features.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, growth of interest in planning had been marked by legislation extending, over the years, to embrace country as well as town. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 specifically extended the responsibilities of local authorities to rural land as well as urban, although only permissive powers were available.

The period since the Industrial Revolution had seen increasing concentration of population and industrial activity in larger urban centres, advances in transport technology had encouraged the growth of suburbs in the interwar years, and the problems of urban sprawl were paramount. Particular fears surrounded the loss of agricultural land (fears fuelled, in the 1930s, by the findings of Stamp's Land Utilisation Survey of Great Britain) and the impact of longer, more expensive

journeys to work in a situation where employment opportunities were still mainly concentrated in the towns. These questions, among others, were reviewed by three major inquiries conducted during the 1940s, familiarly known as Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt (discussed in detail in, respectively, Hall 1985, Wibberley 1985 and Parker 1985) on whose findings the town and country planning system which came into being in the late 1940s was largely based.

The Barlow Commission, set up in 1937 to enquire into the distribution of the industrial population and the social, economic and strategic disadvantages arising from the concentration of working people in large built-up areas, reported in 1940, recommending *inter alia* the redevelopment of congested town centres and dispersal of population away from them. In 1941 the Uthwatt committee recommended a central planning authority, state control of development, compulsory purchase by local authorities and major revisions to the laws on compensation and betterment. This led to the establishment of a Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

However, it is perhaps the Scott Report on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (Ministry of Works and Planning, 1942), in which 'changing rural conditions and viewpoints were first given official recognition' (Best & Rogers 1973 p.148), which has had the most lasting direct influence on postwar trends in Somerset, certainly so far as planning for the rural communities is concerned. Of particular relevance in the context of the present study is the attention given to services and amenities in drawing up postwar plans, which may be attributed to the Scott Report's indication that rural residents should not be disadvantaged in these respects. This view was later formalised in the Ministry of Town and Country Planning's Circular 40 (1948) which advised planning authorities to include the social and economic functions of the large settlements in their pre-plan surveys (Clove 1983 p.79). For these reasons,

...planning authorities went to great lengths to accurately record and analyse the number of shops, places of worship, village halls, health facilities, educational facilities, and the presence or lack of utilities such as sewerage, electricity and water supply (Woodruffe 1976 p.17).

It is also important to note here the optimistic view of what physical planning could achieve, prevalent in the immediate postwar period, and rooted in the social and intellectual movements of the first half of the twentieth century which had in common the view that social conditions were to a significant extent a product of the physical environment.



This argument led to visions of a utopian society characterised by stability, health and affluence that would live in the planned city...Primary emphasis was placed upon land use as a means of achieving, indirectly, a set of loosely defined and highly idealistic social objectives (Clark 1982 p. 188).

In the euphoric period after 1945 there seemed, in Britain:

the genuine possibility of reshaping the social fabric of the nation and there was no lack of confidence amongst the relatively new profession of planners that the objectives were both legitimate and realistic (Morgan 1981 p. 6).

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act established a framework of land use throughout the country and made virtually all development subject to the permission of the local planning authorities. It required all local authorities to produce Development Plans based on detailed surveys of their areas, essentially inventories of the situation at the time. Each plan would set a series of reasoned objectives and, if approved, would form the basis of all decisions about development and land use for the future. As Bracey commented, this legislation represented an attempt at 'the creation of a new framework of social provision and participation'. Aspects of the plans produced for Somerset are discussed later, in Chapter 10.

#### **4.3 Bracey's Surveys : Aims, Methods and Findings**

Although, as Bracey noted, 'one of the major tasks of town and country planning is to raise rural standards' (Bracey 1952 p.xviii), the lack of knowledge of the areas for which plans were to be prepared was a serious obstacle to the achievement of these aims. One problem centred on the desire of administrators to acknowledge a general concern on the part of villagers that 'the typical village way of life should be preserved' (p.xvii). The satisfactory definition of 'a typical village' proved elusive. According to the Scott Report (para 20), 'the typical English or Welsh village has a corporate life of its own which can be and should be one of its attractive features'. Bracey asked whether this was true. Or was village life instead as described in a report by the Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute in 1944 (Orwin 1944)? They found that in North Oxfordshire 'every village may be said to consist of a majority of socially inactive and apathetic people with a small active group'. R.E. Dickinson, in his article in Sociological

Review 1942, reported the results of a study of villages, mainly in East Anglia, where most villages had a 'a population insufficient to support an adequate range of services', casting doubt on the notion that villages were somehow self contained and independent communities.

Quite apart from the definitional problems of this type the sheer lack of information about rural areas which made it difficult to generalise about their characteristics. As Bracey commented,

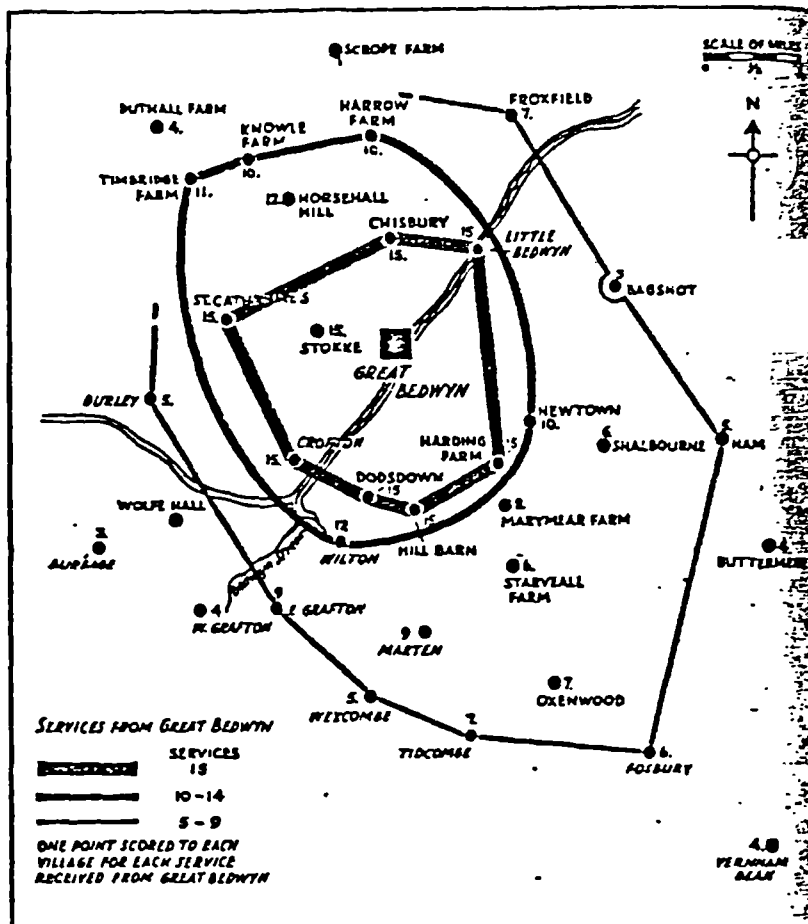
One of the most serious obstacles in this field is, indeed, the incompleteness of our present knowledge of places and people. This is particularly true of villages and small towns, whose individual populations may be small, but which together house six or seven million persons (1953 p.xvii).

The main aim of his early postwar work, first in Wiltshire and later in Somerset, was to develop what he termed an 'index of social provision' which would help to identify aspects of typical village life and to provide a means of assessing the standard of rural services. Of particular interest to current research in rural geography is Bracey's concern with the effectiveness of the local authorities in providing services of various types. In describing his survey of Wiltshire, he commented:

The applications of such a survey, in spite of its obvious limitations, are many. Villages which lack essential services can be identified. Scores for public utilities should emphasise differences between progressive and backward local authorities, though in some cases a low index may simply reflect the inadequacy of local resources in the past. Low scores for commercial services coupled with a low index of accessibility may suggest improvements in public transport services (Bracey 1953 p.xviii).

Bracey's first investigations took place in the village of Great Bedwyn in Wiltshire. In this first study Bracey identified the location of all relevant services, retail outlets and professional services but also asked people in all the surrounding villages and hamlets where they went for services that were not available in their own settlement. One result of this detailed investigation was an empirical verification of the distance decay effect (see Map 4.1). People living near but not in Great Bedwyn used it for nearly all their needs - but people in more distant villages, with a greater choice of centres, used Great Bedwyn less. The variation in the intensity of interaction was expressed quantitatively. With the generally low level of private car ownership, with petrol rationing and with the great importance of the bus, the picture which emerged was 'one painted in primary colours' (Morgan 1981 p.12) and one could be fairly confident that the findings

MAP 4.1 GREAT BEDWYN AS A CENTRE FOR COMMERCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



GREAT BEDWYN AS A CENTRE FOR COMMERCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. The services included are: grocer, baker, butcher, daily and Sunday newspapers, coal, meal, jobbing building repairs, threshing, wheelwright, postal delivery, telephone, undertaker, doctor, nurse.

SOURCE: Bracey (1952)

about spatial behaviour in a particular settlement would apply (far more than today) to most of the people who lived in it.

The Great Bedwyn findings were first published in Bracey (1951). They also form a valuable appendix to Social Provision in Rural Wiltshire, published in 1952. Here Bracey reported the calculation of his index of social provision for settlements in the county as a whole. In order to construct his index Bracey first drew together information from secondary sources (such as public libraries, departments of public health and bus companies). He then supplemented this information by sending out a comprehensive questionnaire to every parish in Wiltshire in order to establish where its inhabitants went for services that were not available locally. The result, amongst other things, was the definition of complex service areas around the major towns and the clear recognition that catchment areas for different services were not coincident. Further, by measuring the 'intensity of urban influence as it was experienced in villages' (Smailes 1967 p.87) Bracey was able to show that there was a 'core area' surrounding a centre over which it exercised almost complete hegemony and that surrounding the core area there was a peripheral area within which the centre's influence waned in the face of competition from other centres. Beyond that was the area in which the centre had virtually no influence at all.

While the Wiltshire data were being interpreted Bracey had already begun the task of compiling data for Somerset in his 1947 and 1950 surveys which are the starting point for this present study. The first publication of some of the findings was in Bracey 1953. The 1947 Somerset survey was essentially the same as that conducted in Wiltshire, with the addition of a number of questions about, for example, various social organisations, the presence or absence of a parish council and types of local industry and employment. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to each rural parish, where it was completed by a head teacher, vicar, parish councillor or the secretary of a local voluntary organisation. Bracey asked about 36 types of service and constructed his index by simply giving the parish a point for every one it possessed, and this gave a fairly crude measure of how well each place was served. The index exposed the poverty of services in many areas and the need for good transport facilities and it allowed Bracey to identify a hierarchy of settlements - 'a broad pattern comprising service centres of varying size, importance and function spaced at significant distances from each other'.

Using basic correlation methods Bracey also discovered that while service provision was partly a function of settlement size, much of the observed variation

between parishes remained to be explained. The elusive 'missing' factors he termed the 'service function' of a settlement (Bracey 1952 p.151-153). This analysis allowed him to identify not only many small places in which provision was 'lower than expected' but also large settlements where provision was 'greater than might be expected' in terms of their population size. These larger places, he deduced, were playing a 'natural' role in serving the more scattered populations of the surrounding rural areas.

Despite these achievements, however, Bracey acknowledged that his index suffered from a number of limitations. For example, each item in the index was assigned one point, irrespective of the number of service units (for example one point was awarded for one grocer or three), no allowance being made for outlets such as village shops that performed multiple roles. There was no attempt to weight the items, so, for example, a school, a village hall and a football club were notionally of 'equal' importance. It was also difficult to obtain 'complete, or accurate, up-to-date information with regard to the number of...establishments' and complications were introduced 'by different sizes of establishments and services and the fact that they operated for both urban and rural residents' (Bracey 1953 p.96). However, the most important limitation, perhaps, was that the index did not differentiate very well between parishes which had more than 2000 people, because these mostly had all the services in the list. And in Wiltshire, at least, in the 1940s less than half the population lived in settlements of fewer than 2000.

Bracey therefore decided that he should modify his index and so, in 1950, he resurveyed the Somerset parishes using a different form, this time asking about the 'places commonly visited' for shopping, visits to solicitors and other professionals, social events and so on. The letter that accompanied the second survey is revealing:

You will see from the enclosed sheets that I am still concerned with the study of rural social provision in Somerset. When you helped me some time ago by filling up a questionnaire, I explained that one of my main aims was to try to measure the 'service' importance of towns and villages, that is, the degree to which every-day services and amenities are provided by the countryside or by the towns.

I have come back to this problem recently and I think that I have at last got somewhere but I shall have to test my idea carefully before I can set it out in print. This means a completely fresh examination of the Somerset material already collected.

The questionnaire used in the second Somerset survey, in 1950, was much more complex than the earlier version (Appendix 2). Here we may note that Bracey was in direct contact with Smailes: his second questionnaire bore a remarkable similarity to the one applied by Smailes in his national study of spheres of influence in 1949. Smailes used:

a standardised questionnaire regarding the centres upon which the inhabitants depended for various services. The detailed questions fell into nine groups, relating respectively to education, medical and profession services, retail distribution, cinema and other entertainment, local newspapers, agricultural markets and supplies, journeys to work and accessibility to urban centres by public transport services (Smailes 1967 p. 136).

Among the towns, Smailes's inquiry:

provided evidence to what extent the equipment of services suffices the needs of the local inhabitants and to what extent they look in turn to larger towns for special features. Answers to the questions what town is commonly visited on Saturdays or market day for shopping and what larger towns, if any, are visited occasionally for special shopping prove highly significant in this respect (Smailes 1967 p.137). (emphasis added)

The new index which Bracey calculated, the 'index of centrality' was an 'indirect' method of assessing the service importance of towns or villages, applicable in particular to settlements with populations greater than 2000. He remained convinced that the original index of service provision, based on a direct count of shops and other services, was of value in assessing the service importance of the less well populated places (Bracey 1953 p.96).

To enable the calculation of the 'index of centrality', fifteen services were picked out for special attention. These fell into four groups: clothing shops (gents' outfitting, boots and shoes), household goods (hardware, electrical, radio and furniture), medical services (doctor, dentist, optician and dispensing chemist), and other professional services (bank, solicitor, chartered accountant and auctioneer). One point was allotted to each centre for each parish using it for a particular service. As in the case of the index of social provision, the scores were unweighted. Despite Bracey's selection of the parish as the unit of inquiry because it was 'the smallest unit for which any population figure is available' (Bracey 1953 p.97), population size was not built in to the early indices, though parish population was later used to weight the service importance of towns in Wiltshire (Bracey 1956). There was also no attempt to weight the services by frequency of

use. The maximum parish score was 15 points which might all be allotted to one centre or divided between several. Note that:

in his research design Bracey acknowledged and allowed for the fact that villages use more than one town, as in the shared principle of the Christaller model, and that towns were thus competing against each other' (Tidswell 1976 p.209).

Addition of the scores for each centre provided some measure of its centrality, that is its importance as a centre for the surrounding rural area. The index resulted in a hierarchy of settlements reflecting the sphere of influence of each centre.

In later work, reported briefly in Brush & Bracey (1955) and more fully in Bracey (1956), Bracey refined the list of items for the index and used only 4 'higher order' groups of services: medical supplies and services, shopping, business and professions, and entertainment. This time, each parish had only 4 points to award to the various centres commonly visited. This index was applied in 6 southern counties in the UK, the data for the 5 counties besides Somerset being 'drawn from the questionnaire sheets of the 'Spheres of Influence Inquiry'...circulated by A E Smailes and Mrs R Fox from University College, London' (Bracey 1956 p.39).

Bracey's methodology attracted considerable comment. For example, Johnson (1967) described Bracey's method as 'fairly limited in its application', arguing that it was best suited to regions 'in which villages housed a high proportion of the rural population rather than to areas of scattered rural settlement' (a point borne out by comments from Bracey's respondents and raised in Chapter 5, below). It was also best suited to an examination of the spheres of influence of certain kinds of small towns - those 'directly concerned with serving surrounding rural areas'. However, it succeeded in focussing attention 'on those aspects of a town's social and economic provision which are expressly designed for the surrounding rural population' and on a practical note, in contrast to the more usual approaches to delimiting spheres of influence by asking town-based services for the location of their customers, it had the advantage 'of avoiding the necessity of obtaining information from busy and often reticent shopkeepers' (Johnson 1967 p.83).

With hindsight a number of further points may be made. For example, Bracey clearly sought 'to eliminate errors based on subjective judgement' (1953 p.97) yet his methods relied upon a number of what appear to be highly subjective decisions made by Bracey himself or by his respondents. On what basis did he select the services for inclusion in the indices? We may speculate that he was

influenced in his choice by the services stressed as important by the Scott Report and by those chosen by his academic contemporaries. Educational services were not included in the 15 and 4 point indices, however, and in this respect Bracey's method of determining the service hierarchy in English counties differed, for example, from that used by Brush in Wisconsin. No length of residence or other stated criteria were used in the choice of respondents beyond Bracey's own estimation of who was likely to provide reliable information, though once the data had been collected he did carry out checks on the questionnaires with the help of representatives of the Rural District Councils and County Council, adding secondary data from, for example, Kellys Directories. Bracey himself acknowledged that 'ideally there should have been many questionnaires for each village, but this was not practicable'(1953 p.96). As the analysis presented later (in Chapter 5, Appendix 6 and Appendix 7) reveals, the questions themselves were frequently ambiguous, especially in the 1950 survey. And in the analytical stage of his work Bracey's method of grouping the parishes on the basis of data he collected and the delineation of 'intensive','extensive' and 'fringe' areas of influence he candidly described as 'arbitrary' (1952 p.99).

Nevertheless,Bracey's methods represented a considerable advance on those of his contemporaries and they served his purpose well, enabling him to identify an 'essential order in the landscape' (Tidswell 1976 p.211).

Some of the findings for Somerset, based on the 15 point index of centrality, are illustrated in Table 4.1, which includes all centres with an index of 10 points or more. This shows the clear dominance of the county town of Taunton, well ahead of Yeovil, with Bridgwater next. Bath has a low index and is placed fourth, despite its large population size, and similarly Weston-super-Mare is placed eighth. Bracey concluded that the size of the population of Bath and Weston-super-Mare had very little to do with their provision of services to rural areas. These results demonstrated the problem of defining discrete levels in any form of hierarchy. Six towns (Taunton to Minehead) stood out above all others as rural service centres, but 'from Wells downwards' the intervals in the ranking were small and there was 'no definite break'(Bracey 1953 p.98).

The study also clearly showed the phenomenon Bracey had identified earlier in Great Bedwyn - the existence of an intensive core, an extensive periphery and a fringe - concentric bands of decreasing affiliation around each major centre (see Map 4.2 and Table 4.2). Only sixteen Somerset towns had intensive areas in which they were the dominant rural service centres. 'Intensive area' scores for Taunton

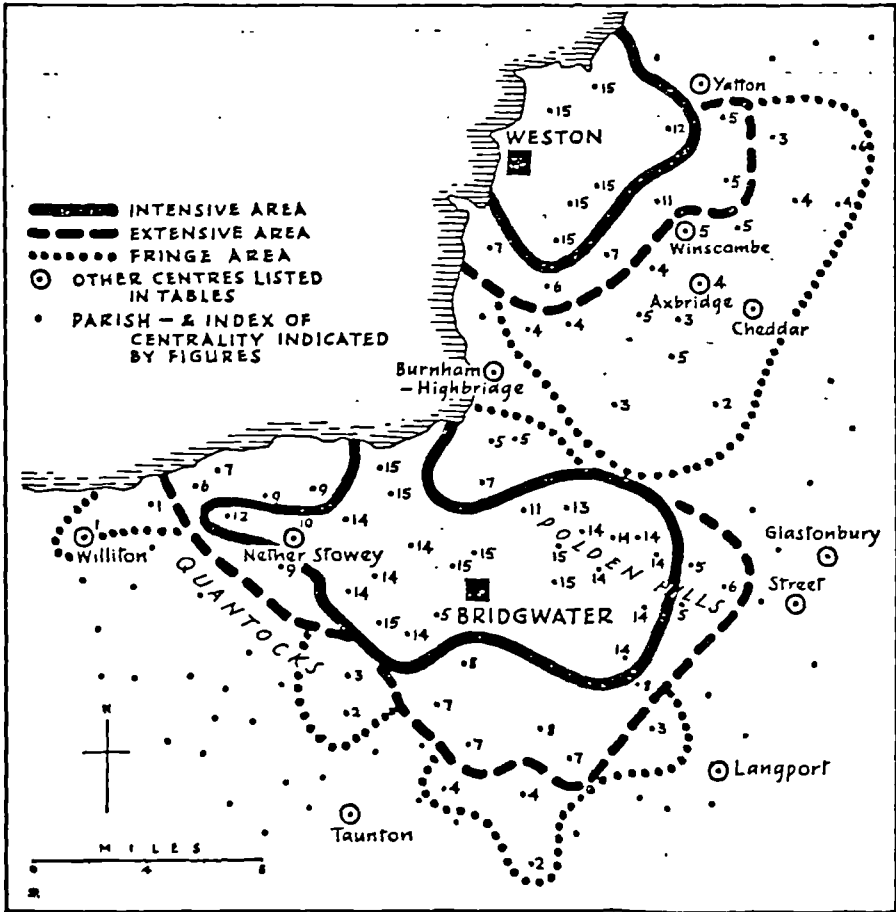


TABLE 4.1 INDEX OF CENTRALITY SCORES FOR SOMERSET

| Service Centre         | Population of Centre | Index of Centrality |              |       |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|
|                        |                      | Shopping            | Professional | Total |
| Taunton M.B.           | 33,613               | 453                 | 362          | 815   |
| Yeovil M.B.            | 23,337               | 370                 | 336          | 706   |
| Bridgwater M.B.        | 22,221               | 253                 | 251          | 504   |
| Bath C.B.              | 79,275               | 230                 | 179          | 409   |
| Frome U.D.             | 11,116               | 156                 | 161          | 317   |
| Minehead U.D.          | 7,400                | 121                 | 132          | 253   |
| Wells M.B.             | 5,835                | 95                  | 93           | 188   |
| Weston-super-Mare M.B. | 40,165               | 101                 | 73           | 174   |
| Ilminster U.D.         | 2,610                | 68                  | 101          | 169   |
| Wincanton              | 2,357                | 71                  | 96           | 167   |
| Crewkerne U.D.         | 3,838                | 66                  | 77           | 143   |
| Chard M.B.             | 5,218                | 61                  | 81           | 142   |
| Shepton Mallet U.D.    | 5,131                | 63                  | 70           | 133   |
| Wellington U.D.        | 7,298                | 46                  | 69           | 115   |
| Glastonbury M.B.       | 5,081                | 50                  | 65           | 115   |
| Burnham U.D.           | 9,136                | 41                  | 54           | 95    |
| Castle Cary            | 2,178                | 42                  | 39           | 81    |
| Norton-Radstock U.D.   | 11,934               | 29                  | 49           | 78    |
| Wiveliscombe           | 1,219                | 27                  | 42           | 69    |
| Langport-Huish         | 1,528                | 17                  | 44           | 61    |
| Wilton                 | 2,000                | 27                  | 33           | 60    |
| Street U.D.            | 5,300                | 30                  | 25           | 55    |
| Clevedon               | 9,467                | 25                  | 29           | 54    |
| Dulverton              | 1,502                | 16                  | 31           | 47    |
| Chew Magna             | 1,255                | 5                   | 32           | 37    |
| Keynsham U.D.          | 8,277                | 11                  | 20           | 31    |
| Bruton                 | 1,663                | 10                  | 19           | 29    |
| Somerton               | 2,076                | 6                   | 19           | 25    |
| Portishead U.D.        | 4,454                | 9                   | 16           | 25    |
| Porlock                | 1,366                | 10                  | 9            | 19    |
| Axbridge               | 1,250                | 7                   | 11           | 18    |
| Yatton                 | 2,720                | 8                   | 10           | 18    |
| Martock                | 2,246                | 8                   | 9            | 17    |
| Cheddar                | 2,900                | 8                   | 9            | 17    |
| Winscombe              | 2,600                | 8                   | 8            | 16    |
| Stoke-sub-Hamdon       | 1,716                | 4                   | 8            | 12    |
| Nether Stowey          | 604                  | 4                   | 8            | 12    |
| Nailsea                | 2,664                | 4                   | 7            | 11    |

SOURCE: Bracey (1953) Table 1, p 98

MAP 4.2 INTENSIVE, EXTENSIVE AND FRINGE AREAS OF WESTON-SUPER-MARE AND BRIDGWATER



SOURCE: Bracey (1953) Fig 1 p 99

TABLE 4.2 INDEX OF CENTRALITY : DISTRIBUTION OVER SUBDIVISIONS OF SERVICE AREA

| Service Centre         | Index of Centrality | Intensive Area      | Extensive Area      | Fringe Area         |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                        |                     | (per cent of index) | (per cent of index) | (per cent of index) |
| Taunton M.B.           | 815                 | 37                  | 40                  | 23                  |
| Yeovil M.B.            | 706                 | 31                  | 43                  | 26                  |
| Bridgwater             | 504                 | 63                  | 32                  | 5                   |
| Bath C.B.              | 409                 | 46                  | 34                  | 20                  |
| Frome U.D.             | 317                 | 50                  | 45                  | 5                   |
| Minehead U.D.          | 253                 | 45                  | 41                  | 14                  |
| Wells M.B.             | 188                 | 31                  | 42                  | 27                  |
| Weston-super-Mare M.B. | 174                 | 38                  | 24                  | 38                  |
| Ilminster U.D.         | 169                 | 9                   | 86                  | 5                   |
| Wincanton              | 167                 | 34                  | 46                  | 20                  |
| Crewkerne U.D.         | 143                 | 19                  | 63                  | 18                  |
| Chard M.B.             | 142                 | 11                  | 87                  | 2                   |
| Shepton Mallet U.D.    | 133                 | 9                   | 78                  | 13                  |
| Wellington U.D.        | 115                 | 12                  | 77                  | 11                  |
| Glastonbury M.B.       | 115                 | 12                  | 75                  | 13                  |
| Burnham U.D.           | 95                  | 31                  | 56                  | 13                  |
| Castle Cary            | 81                  | —                   | 63                  | 37                  |
| Norton-Radstock U.D.   | 78                  | —                   | 82                  | 18                  |
| Wiveliscombe           | 69                  | —                   | 59                  | 41                  |
| Langport-Huish         | 61                  | —                   | 80                  | 20                  |
| Wilton                 | 60                  | —                   | 83                  | 17                  |
| Street U.D.            | 55                  | —                   | 57                  | 43                  |
| Clevedon U.D.          | 54                  | —                   | 59                  | 41                  |
| Dulverton              | 47                  | —                   | 71                  | 29                  |
| Chew Magna             | 37                  | —                   | —                   | 100                 |
| Keynsham U.D.          | 31                  | —                   | 56                  | 44                  |
| Bruton                 | 29                  | —                   | 73                  | 27                  |
| Somerton               | 25                  | —                   | 25                  | 75                  |
| Portishead U.D.        | 25                  | —                   | 95                  | 5                   |
| Porlock                | 19                  | —                   | —                   | 100                 |
| Axbridge               | 19                  | —                   | 20                  | 80                  |
| Yatton                 | 18                  | —                   | 58                  | 42                  |

N.B. Other service centres have only fringe area scores.

SOURCE: Bracey (1953) Table II, p 100

and Yeovil were 'not as high as their indices of centrality might lead one to expect' (Bracey 1953 p.100), each experiencing competition, but their fringe scores showed that each was used by a large number of villages for a few services.

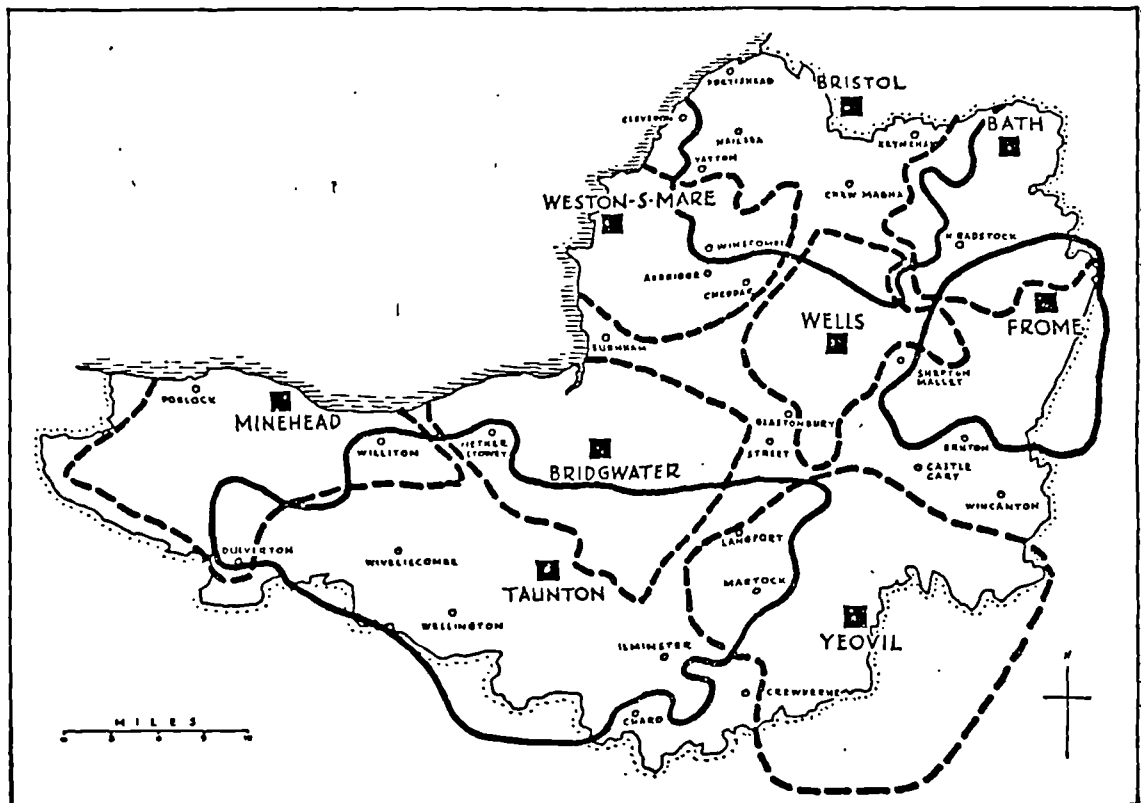
In the later application of the reduced index to several counties of southern England (Bracey 1956) Somerset's first ten towns occupied the same positions relative to each other as they had done in the earlier investigation and their scores by both methods were very similar. Again there was no clear break between different levels but Bracey managed to distinguish what he termed 'higher district centres', the most important group, from lesser 'lower district centres'. Each of the former was a centre for between twenty-five and thirty villages. Shopping services were concentrated in the top third of the centres, while medical and business services were found more frequently in the lesser centres.

Bracey used this observation to distinguish 'higher' from 'lower' district centres, drawing a line of separation between them when the scores for shopping no longer exceeded those for professions. Tables 4.3 and 4.4, showing, respectively, higher and lower district centres distinguished on this basis, list all the towns with rural components of centrality greater than 25.

Bracey's discovery of a distinction between 'shopping areas' and 'professional areas' of the main towns is of some interest. In Somerset at least, while the shopping areas of the first 8 towns frequently overlapped (Map 4.3) their professional areas only infrequently did so (Map 4.4). They had 'shopping areas larger than their professional areas, for they [had] captured much of the shopping trade of smaller country towns, but less of the professional custom' (Smailes 1967 p.142).

Spatially, higher order centres were on average 21 miles apart, with a rural service area of at least 100 square miles, serving a rural population of at least 20,000. In Somerset Bracey identified tracts of country that were characterised by a relatively thinly distributed population and remoteness from larger centres, and which were generally served by closely spaced lower order centres. Here the lesser towns retained something of their significance from the pre-bus era. As Bracey wrote 'the maintenance of the medieval spacing of market towns - four to six miles - into the twentieth century appears to have made it difficult for a single centre to attain a higher status' (1956 p.49). His findings in this respect confirmed earlier work by Dickinson (1932 and 1934) in East Anglia.

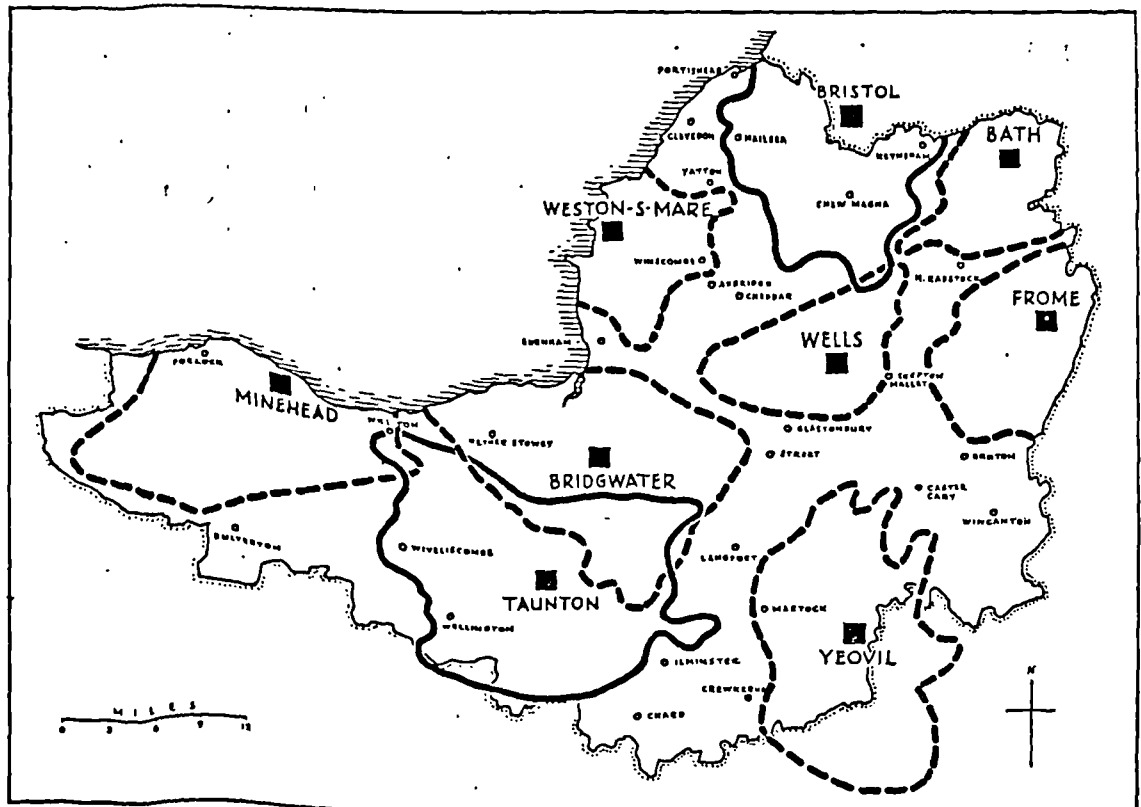
MAP 4.3 SHOPPING AREAS OF EIGHT SOMERSET TOWNS AND PART OF BRISTOL



Note The boundaries enclosed all places taking five of the following seven services: gentlemen's outfitting, ladies' outfitting, footwear, hardware goods, electrical goods, radios, furniture.

SOURCE: Bracey (1953) Fig2, p 102

MAP 4.4 PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AREAS OF EIGHT SOMERSET TOWNS AND PART OF BRISTOL



Note The boundaries enclose all places taking five out of eight of the following services: doctor, dentist, optician, dispensing chemist, bank, solicitor, chartered accountant, auctioneer.

SOURCE: Bracey (1953) Fig 3 p 103

TABLE 4.3 HIGHER DISTRICT CENTRES IN SIX ENGLISH COUNTIES: RURAL COMPONENT OF CENTRALITY AND SCORES FOR SERVICES\*

| Center                   | County | Rural component of centrality | Service scores                |                      |          |               |
|--------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------|---------------|
|                          |        |                               | Medical supplies and services | Business professions | Shopping | Entertainment |
| 1 Taunton.....           | Som.   | 284                           | 56                            | 58                   | 84       | 86            |
| 2 Dorchester.....        | Dorset | 267                           | 70                            | 70                   | 73       | 54            |
| 3 Salisbury.....         | Wills. | 264                           | 44                            | 56                   | 91       | 73            |
| 4 Yeovil.....            | Som.   | 261                           | 50                            | 44                   | 76       | 91            |
| 5 Newbury.....           | Berks. | 242                           | 52                            | 60                   | 68       | 62            |
| 6 Banbury.....           | Oxford | 209                           | 54                            | 54                   | 61       | 50            |
| 7 Oxford.....            | Oxford | 189                           | 34                            | 45                   | 60       | 50            |
| 8 Andover.....           | Hants. | 185                           | 42                            | 46                   | 48       | 49            |
| 9 Bridgwater.....        | Som.   | 172                           | 40                            | 42                   | 40       | 44            |
| 10 Basingstoke.....      | Hants. | 171                           | 38                            | 38                   | 52       | 43            |
| 11 Devizes.....          | Wills. | 170                           | 34                            | 39                   | 55       | 42            |
| 12 Reading.....          | Berks. | 156                           | 24                            | 32                   | 50       | 50            |
| 13 Winchester.....       | Hants. | 154                           | 34                            | 33                   | 47       | 40            |
| 14 Swindon.....          | Wills. | 147                           | 21                            | 27                   | 46       | 53            |
| 15 Blandford.....        | Dorset | 131                           | 31                            | 30                   | 33       | 37            |
| 16 Bath.....             | Som.   | 130                           | 24                            | 29                   | 41       | 36            |
| 17 Chippenham.....       | Wills. | 128                           | 29                            | 30                   | 36       | 33            |
| 18 Bridport.....         | Dorset | 119                           | 27                            | 25                   | 35       | 32            |
| 19 Frome.....            | Som.   | 107                           | 25                            | 25                   | 27       | 30            |
| 20 Petersfield.....      | Hants. | 101                           | 18                            | 19                   | 37       | 27            |
| 21 Witney.....           | Oxford | 97                            | 22                            | 20                   | 32       | 23            |
| 22 Sherborne.....        | Dorset | 97                            | 24                            | 22                   | 28       | 23            |
| 23 Wimborne Minster..... | Dorset | 95                            | 21                            | 22                   | 23       | 22            |
| 24 Alton.....            | Hants. | 89                            | 24                            | 22                   | 24       | 21            |
| 25 Minehead.....         | Som.   | 84                            | 17                            | 16                   | 21       | 29            |
| 26 Trowbridge.....       | Wills. | 83                            | 16                            | 18                   | 26       | 23            |

\* One point is scored to each centre for each village using it for each service. The maximum village score is 4 points which may be allotted to one centre or divided between several.

SOURCE: Bracey (1956) Table 1, p 39

TABLE 4.4 LOWER DISTRICT CENTRES IN SIX ENGLISH COUNTIES:  
RURAL COMPONENT OF CENTRALITY AND SCORES FOR SERVICES

| Center                  | County | Rural<br>component<br>of<br>centrality | Service scores                         |                         |          |               |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|
|                         |        |                                        | Medical<br>supplies<br>and<br>services | Business<br>professions | Shopping | Entertainment |
| 27 Bicester.....        | Oxford | 82                                     | 23                                     | 23                      | 18       | 18            |
| 28 Wantage.....         | Berks. | 82                                     | 22                                     | 22                      | 19       | 19            |
| 29 Thame.....           | Oxford | 78                                     | 22                                     | 22                      | 21       | 13            |
| 30 Shaftesbury.....     | Dorset | 78                                     | 19                                     | 19                      | 19       | 21            |
| 31 Farringdon.....      | Berks. | 77                                     | 21                                     | 19                      | 14       | 23            |
| 32 Chipping Norton..... | Oxford | 74                                     | 18                                     | 16                      | 17       | 23            |
| 33 Marlborough.....     | Wilts. | 68                                     | 19                                     | 20                      | 17       | 12            |
| 34 Malmesbury.....      | Wilts. | 68                                     | 20                                     | 19                      | 13       | 16            |
| 35 Warminster.....      | Wilts. | 67                                     | 20                                     | 18                      | 12       | 17            |
| 36 Weston-s-Mare.....   | Som.   | 62                                     | 10                                     | 8                       | 21       | 23            |
| 37 Southampton.....     | Hants. | 60                                     | 5                                      | 6                       | 29       | 20            |
| 38 Wells.....           | Som.   | 60                                     | 14                                     | 14                      | 17       | 15            |
| 39 Wincanton.....       | Som.   | 60                                     | 15                                     | 14                      | 12       | 19            |
| 40 Abingdon.....        | Berks. | 59                                     | 16                                     | 14                      | 16       | 13            |
| 41 Henley.....          | Oxford | 56                                     | 14                                     | 14                      | 13       | 15            |
| 42 Weymouth.....        | Dorset | 55                                     | 12                                     | 12                      | 14       | 17            |
| 43 Pewsey.....          | Wilts. | 55                                     | 16                                     | 15                      | 5        | 19            |
| 44 Sturminster N.....   | Dorset | 55                                     | 18                                     | 21                      | 16       | ..            |
| 45 Ilminster.....       | Som.   | 54                                     | 14                                     | 19                      | 11       | 10            |
| 46 Wareham.....         | Dorset | 52                                     | 13                                     | 17                      | 14       | 8             |
| 47 Shepton Mallet.....  | Som.   | 52                                     | 13                                     | 14                      | 10       | 15            |
| 48 Calne.....           | Wilts. | 51                                     | 15                                     | 15                      | 9        | 12            |
| 49 Wallingford.....     | Berks. | 50                                     | 11                                     | 14                      | 12       | 13            |
| 50 Crewkerne.....       | Som.   | 50                                     | 12                                     | 12                      | 12       | 14            |
| 51 Chard.....           | Som.   | 47                                     | 12                                     | 12                      | 11       | 12            |
| 52 Romsey.....          | Hants. | 46                                     | 13                                     | 13                      | 10       | 10            |
| 53 Wellington.....      | Som.   | 46                                     | 14                                     | 11                      | 9        | 12            |
| 54 Didcot.....          | Berks. | 40                                     | 11                                     | 9                       | 8        | 12            |
| 55 Watlington.....      | Oxford | 40                                     | 13                                     | 11                      | 5        | 11            |
| 56 Fareham.....         | Hants. | 38                                     | 2                                      | 6                       | 15       | 14            |
| 57 Ringwood.....        | Hants. | 37                                     | 6                                      | 7                       | 14       | 10            |
| 58 Norton-Radstock..... | Som.   | 35                                     | 8                                      | 11                      | 4        | 12            |
| 59 Burnham-on-Sea.....  | Som.   | 34                                     | 9                                      | 8                       | 8        | 8             |
| 60 New Alresford.....   | Hants. | 34                                     | 13                                     | 11                      | 2        | 8             |
| 61 Maidenhead.....      | Berks. | 32                                     | 7                                      | 8                       | 9        | 8             |
| 62 Hungerford.....      | Berks. | 30                                     | 11                                     | 7                       | 6        | 6             |
| 63 Glastonbury.....     | Som.   | 29                                     | 8                                      | 8                       | 8        | 5             |
| 64 Burford.....         | Oxford | 28                                     | 11                                     | 12                      | 2        | 3             |
| 65 Gillingham.....      | Dorset | 28                                     | 7                                      | 9                       | 5        | 7             |
| 66 Lymington.....       | Hants. | 27                                     | 7                                      | 4                       | 10       | 6             |
| 67 Windsor.....         | Berks. | 26                                     | 5                                      | 6                       | 9        | 6             |
| 68 Fordingbridge.....   | Hants. | 26                                     | 8                                      | 7                       | 5        | 6             |
| 69 Castle Cary.....     | Som.   | 26                                     | 7                                      | 6                       | 6        | 7             |
| 70 Street.....          | Som.   | 25                                     | 9                                      | 4                       | 4        | 8             |

SOURCE: Bracey (1956) Table II, p 40



Later comparisons between southern England and Wisconsin (Brush & Bracey 1955) proved instructive (see Table 4.5). Although the two areas differed considerably in density of population, with an average rural density in England of 182 per square mile compared with 30 per square mile in Wisconsin, and though the villages and towns in England were up to ten times more populous than in Wisconsin, the grading, functions and patterns of distribution of the service centres were remarkably similar. Higher order centres occurred at a mean distance of 21 miles from one another in both areas, while lower order centres were found to be located at a mean distance from one another (or from centres of a higher order) of 10 miles in Wisconsin and 8 miles in England. Higher order centres had service areas of 129 and 128 square miles in Wisconsin and England respectively; lower order centres had service areas of 32 and 48 square miles respectively. And while higher order centres tended to form clusters or tiers with few or no centres of lower order next to them, lower order centres were found in rows or belts hemmed in by the service centres of higher order centres and crowded close to one another.

In his early papers (1953,1956) Bracey described the value of subdivisions of the settlement hierarchy below the level of 'lower district centres' as 'questionable' (1953 p.104). Below the 'lower district centre' level were simply 'other centres, which discharge some service functions for surrounding villages, but which are clearly places of minor importance and not of urban status' (Smailes 1967 p.143).

In later work, however, Bracey allowed that 'there are further identifiable downward levels in the hierarchy of rural central places' (1962 p.169). Here he returned to the idea of a simple count of services as a means of distinguishing between centres. In his paper for the IGU Symposium in Urban geography he distinguished, instead of 'higher' and 'lower' district centres, which included towns, 'first-order' and 'second-order' villages (towns were excluded) using, initially, simply the number of shops present in each. First order central villages were those with 20 shops or more, while second order central villages had between 10 and 19. He added a third category: third order central villages which had between 5 and 9 shops, though he commented that the three orders tended 'to overlap or shade into each other' (1962 p.181).

To assess how far these places performed 'central functions' Bracey also used the 1950 Somerset data on both the number of professional services these centres contained and the number of parishes served by visiting tradesmen based in each.

TABLE 4.5 AVERAGE POPULATION, SERVICE AREAS AND INTERCENTER DISTANCES,  
SOUTHWESTERN WISCONSIN AND SOUTHERN ENGLAND

|                                         | HIGHER-ORDER CENTERS        |                                        | LOWER-ORDER CENTERS            |                                       |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                         | 19 Towns,<br>S.W. Wisconsin | 26 Higher Dist.<br>Centers, S. England | 73 Villages,<br>S.W. Wisconsin | 44 Lower Dist.<br>Centers, S. England |
| Median population <sup>a</sup>          | 2,515                       | 13,850                                 | 400                            | 5,080                                 |
| Mean population                         | 3,330                       | 25,950                                 | 480                            | 12,425                                |
| Mean size of service<br>areas (sq. mi.) | 129                         | 128                                    | 32                             | 48                                    |
| Mean population of<br>service areas     | 2,440                       | 21,080                                 | 610                            | 7,180                                 |
| Mean intercenter<br>distance (mi.)      | 21                          | 21                                     | 10                             | 8                                     |

SOURCE: Brush & Bracey (1955) Table 1, p 563

He was then able to refine his criteria somewhat: a first order central village generally had '20 shops and five professions, one of which should be a solicitor', while to acquire status as a second order village a place should have '10-19 shops and three professions' (Bracey 1962 p.172). Third order central villages often had general stores performing multiple roles, and Bracey speculated, in addition, that their general 'air' suggesting 'a service function', despite few shops, might be due to their ability to attract passing custom (p.173-4). Map 4.5 shows the distribution of first, second and third order centres in Somerset.

The publication of findings of this kind led Bracey to be seen as a pioneer of the empirical testing of central place theory. However, Bracey himself was well aware of the realities which limited practical applications of these theoretical formulations. He took care to set his work within the context of the social, demographic and economic changes which bore upon the areas he studied. And although, in the present study, Bracey's early postwar work has been taken as a starting point, it should be noted that he too was concerned with how the rural settlement hierarchy might have changed in the years prior to his first surveys. For example, he noted that 'since 1920' there had been 'a drastic modification of the ...pattern of service centres' (1956 p.48), due especially to changing local government functions, the advent of the railways and changes in patterns of industry.

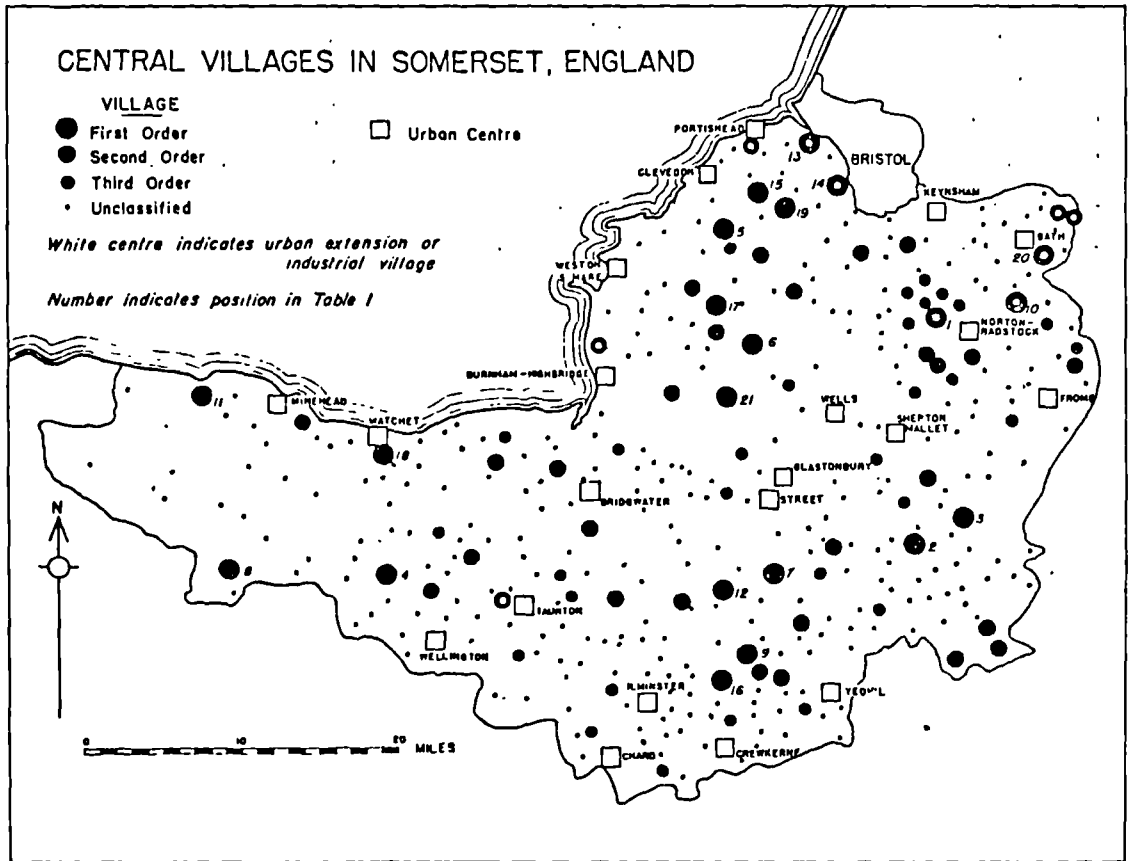
His work was conducted against a background of change in the distribution of population and industry:

In the early phases of the Industrial Revolution most Wiltshire towns experienced increases in their populations through immigration..., most rural areas, on the other hand, can point to substantial decreases during the same period (Bracey 1952 p.181).

Then, as now, migration was selective. Bracey expressed concern for the 'declining numbers, lack of suitable leaders' and 'absence of initiative' (1952 p.184) in many rural communities. Even at this time, however, not all rural areas were losing population:

It is true that these tendencies may be observed in some villages, but may there not be other tendencies which exert an influence in the opposite direction? Recent estimates show that many rural districts in the West of England are experiencing inward migration - in some for the first time for over a century (Bracey 1952 p.184).

MAP 4.5 CENTRAL VILLAGES IN SOMERSET



SOURCE: Bracey (1962) Fig 1, p 176

It seems that counterurbanisation may have come early to this part of the world. While Bracey acknowledged that these inward movements were most probably linked to the effects of wartime dispersal of industry and population, he attributed the trend at least in part to 'dissatisfaction with town life' and welcomed the associated influx of 'new blood' to village life. However, even in the areas of limited growth there remained serious disparities between urban and rural standards of service provision. 'Without a generous sprinkling of small towns and larger villages', Bracey wrote, many 'urban' services would be 'difficult to secure' for rural residents.

The question of the most advantageous location of services so as to best serve the rural population was clearly of some importance to Bracey, especially since at the time both planners and academic commentators drew close links between the quality of service provision and the quality of life. Alongside his derivation of a hierarchy of settlements is the notion of the existence of some 'optimal' pattern of service centres which the 'community has an obligation to provide'(1952 p. 183). He talked of the ways in which surveys like his might assist 'the more logical apportioning of services' (p. 149). Interestingly from the point of view of current rural planning debates he saw the possibilities of both 'clustered' and 'concentrated' approaches to service provision. In an unpublished paper on Somerset written as early as 1939 he commented :

Where any of these towns are grouped fairly closely - eg Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne; Wells, Shepton Mallet, Street - does each remain as a separate entity or can any division of labour and interdependence be fostered, and so by increasing the total population to be served make possible a raising of the general standard perhaps in quality as well as quantity ? (Bracey 1939 p.21)

Yet his work is most often seen as providing a justification for the adoption of policies concentrating services in selected major service centres or 'key' settlements and it is to this question that the following section of this chapter turns.

#### **4.4 The Links Between Theory and Planning**

The examination of the early postwar plans for Somerset which follows later, in Chapter 10, gives some indication of the impact of Bracey's work on the local planning scene, while in Wiltshire his work 'was used as a direct input to the Wiltshire County Council Plan' of 1953 (Clope 1983 p.58).

In more general terms, however, it is important to ask how far Bracey and his academic contemporaries exerted an influence on postwar rural settlement planning. Cloke (1983), in a wide ranging discussion, goes so far as to describe their influence as 'formative', particularly in relation to detailed aspects of settlement planning. In particular, the common academic tendency to categorise settlements along the lines explored by Bracey and others was taken up by the postwar planners who proceeded to make 'critical resource allocation decisions on the basis of these categories' (Cloke 1983 p.42), although academic writers did not claim that the allocation of settlements to particular categories implied some degree of suitability for future growth. And as Cloke (1979) has pointed out, while Bracey and his academic contemporaries distinguished several orders of service centre, planners typically directed their attention towards only the first or second order settlements.

Later central place theory formulations, to some extent supported in rural areas of southern England by Bracey's work, exerted a strong influence on planners and administrators to whom 'the concept of a hierarchical settlement pattern containing "natural" service centres which, if supported by the planning process will continue to serve hinterland rural areas' (Cloke 1979 p.59) was a considerable prop. Linked concepts, including most particularly the existence of population thresholds for various services, the possibility of achieving economies of scale by concentrating resources in a few selected large centres, and growth centre ideas, according to which growth effects would spread to rural hinterland populations, were used to underwrite policies which concentrated resources in a few key settlements, not always with beneficial effects.

Woodruffe's views are perhaps somewhat at odds with those of Cloke, since he argues that the 'planning of rural settlements...has not had a sound theoretical background and the development of theory in geography has not greatly aided the planning process' (Woodruffe 1976 p.7). He argues that key settlement policies might have had greater success if planners had made more careful use of central place theory, rather than making selective use of only some of its principles: 'key settlements tend not to have a particular slot in the hierarchy of central places, nor have their service areas or spheres of influence been carefully defined or measured' (Woodruffe 1976 p.6). As it is, 'the fundamental classification of settlements have been much closer to the work of Dickinson and Bracey' than to 'that of Christaller'.

As Cloke (1979) has commented, however,

At the time of the Development Plans, planners perceived a logical progression from the identification of existing rural centres to the continuing support of these centres as the focus for investment in rural areas. In effect, many planners were attempting to build up certain key settlements into the ideal central-village model whereby additional service provision in one central location would benefit a wide rural hinterland. The early Development Plans' emphasis on existing central places thus not only set the pattern for...planning in rural areas, but also had some considerable bearing on the introduction of key settlement policies which stress the importance of a centre's ability to service its surrounding area (p.42-43).

A detailed discussion of key settlement policies for rural planning would be inappropriate here, since Cloke (1979,1983) has more than done justice to the topic. However, both Somerset and, more recently, Avon, have pursued policies of this type - originally influenced, it may be strongly argued, by their adoption of Bracey's research findings - and any interpretation of postwar rural change in these counties must take them into account.

Cloke describes the reasoning behind resource concentration policies of this type as, at the very least, 'dated' (1983 p.62) and argues that 'by pursuing policies of selected growth, rural settlement planning has induced problems of deprivation and polarisation' in both key and non-key settlements (p.44).

These issues are further discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis. At this stage it is appropriate simply to note that 'theory and practice have been inextricably linked in the formulation of key settlement policies in some counties' (Cloke 1983 p.168), and not least in Somerset.

#### **4.5 Some Concluding Comments**

Bracey himself remained justifiably sceptical about the effects of planning on village life. He commented on the accelerating pace of change in rural areas, becoming firmly convinced, especially following his work in the USA, of the wide ranging effects that increasing personal mobility, more leisure time and higher incomes would have on the rural economy (Bracey 19 Feb 1980, in a personal communication). Yet, while the increasing mobility of the rural population was noted, Bracey pointed out how really very immobile was the English country housewife with young children. Without a car, and with relatively

costly fares to meet a visit to town, the central village with a range of shops and services still had much to offer.

The concluding remarks in Bracey (1962) are of some interest in the light of this present study:

Over the last half century many rural traditions have been modified or discarded, the influence of position has frequently been negated (sic) by increased mobility, and initiative has often been stifled by, sometimes necessary, bureaucratic controls. But, in general, inertia, particularly the inertia of customer habits, has determined that in the pattern of central villages what has been shall be. We can only guess at the ultimate design which will emerge when the spending power of each rural household has increased to enable it to possess a family car with an extra one for Dad or for junior. From my recent experience in the United States, my knowledge of the English character and habits and in the light of present-day planning trends, I would conclude that the tendency to greater centralisation of services would continue for many services. But, I am reminded that the corner shop, which is economically so inefficient, has continued to hold a place in the...scheme of retail distribution both here and in the United States...I see no reason why the village shop and the central village, the heart of a rural neighbourhood, should not be part of the rural way of life in twenty or even fifty years time....We have not, as yet, reached the stage where the countryside is served by the town (1962 p.180).

The changes which have occurred since this was written, measured using his own data as a starting point, demonstrate the accuracy of Bracey's observations. The following chapters examine his data in the light of the several themes discussed here.



## **5. ASSEMBLING THE DATA FOR 1950**

This chapter is concerned with the assembly of data from the two surveys of Somerset conducted by Bracey, the first in 1947 and the second, using a different questionnaire, in 1950.

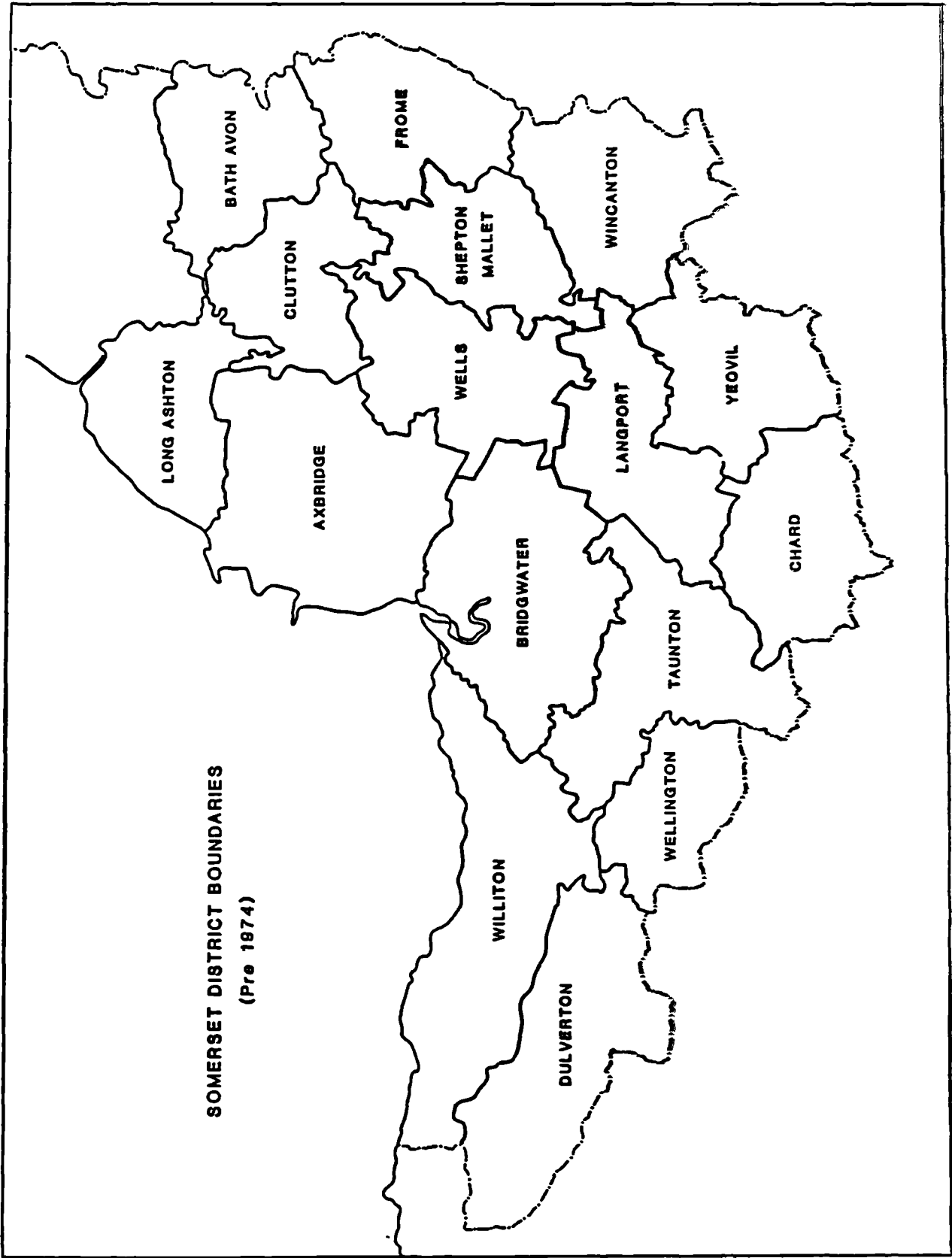
The coding scheme used to convert the information into a numerical form for computer analysis is contained in Appendix 5. In general the preparation of the data for computer analysis was a difficult and time consuming task, not least because of the difficulty of deciphering many of the replies. Several clerical assistants were employed as coders at various times and their help was gratefully acknowledged in the report to SSRC (now the ESRC). The descriptive analysis of the data has been carried out using various facilities of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The following sections describe the geographical and parish coverage of Bracey's two surveys, the availability of qualitative as well as quantitative material, the addition of further variables to the data set, and some of the limitations of the data, emphasising the mechanics of data handling. Together they form a necessary preliminary to the discussion of Bracey's survey results, summarised in Chapter 6, and to the description and analysis of changes occurring in the parishes between 1950 and 1980 (Chapters 8 and 11).

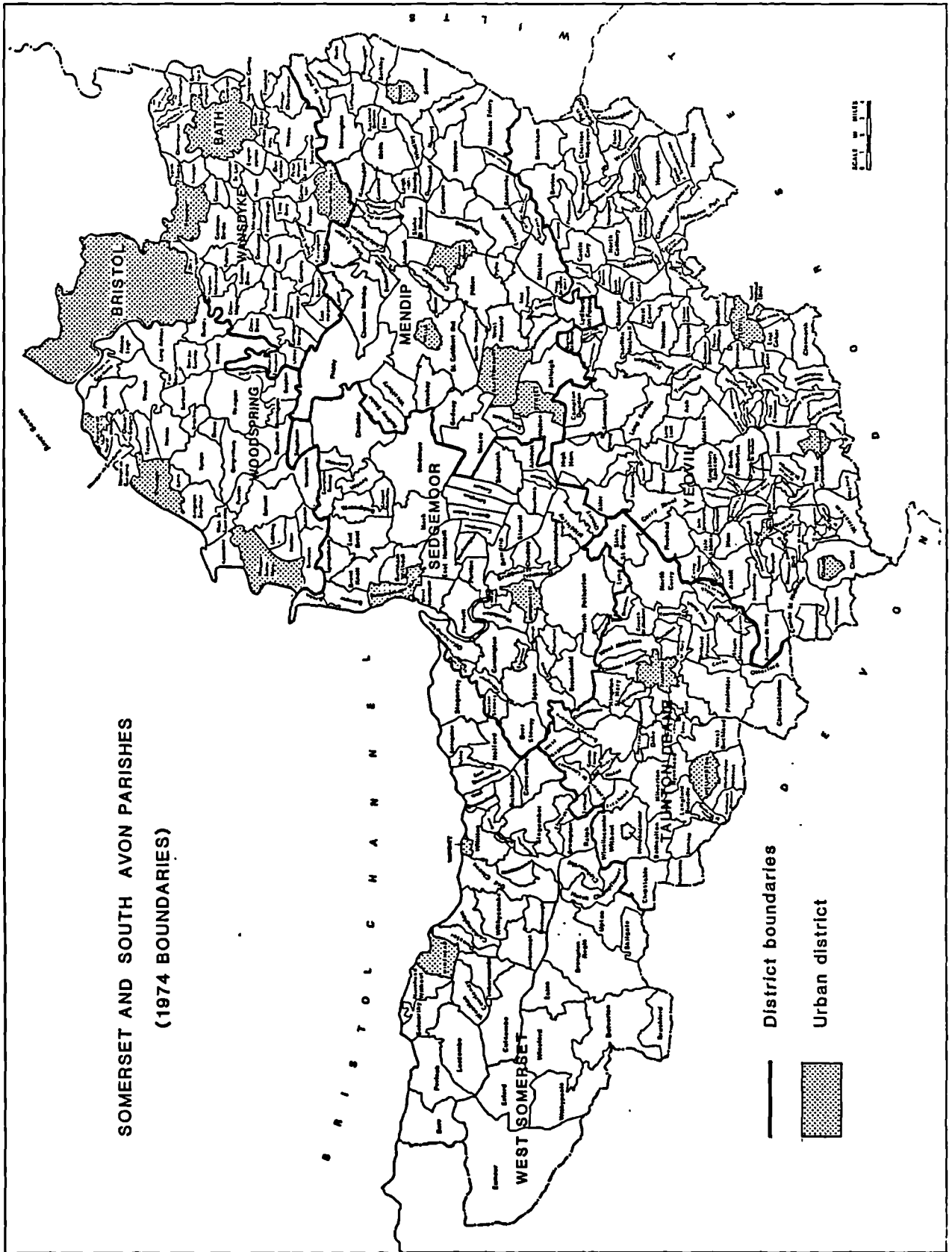
### **5.1 Geographical Coverage and Character**

The area covered by this study is that surveyed by Bracey - the county of Somerset as it was before the reorganisation of local government in 1974 (Map 5.1 and overlay). Since 1974 the southern part of the area remains the county of Somerset while districts to the north have been included in the new county of Avon.

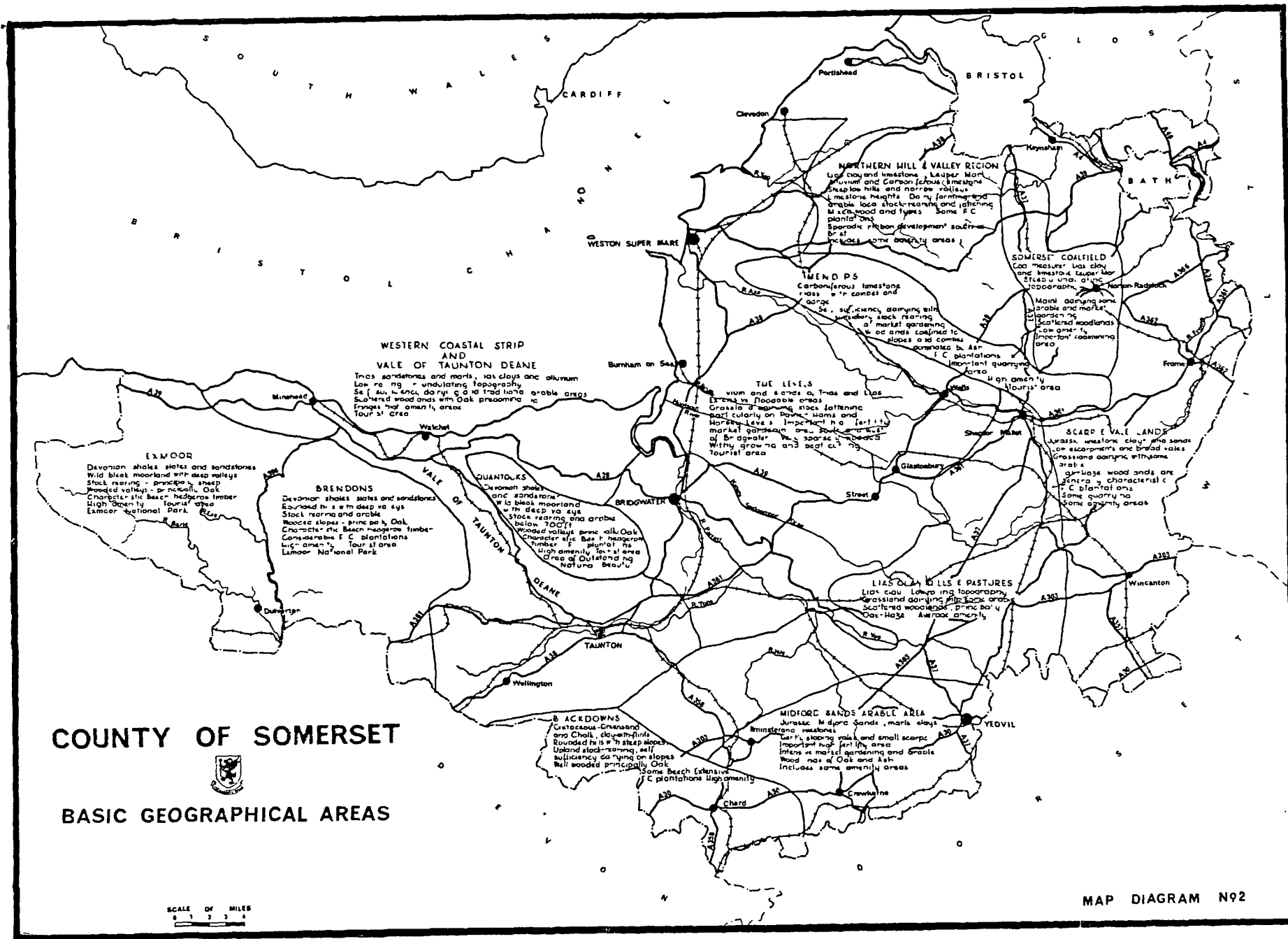
The area, described in detail by Walker (1972), is geologically and scenically varied and primarily agricultural in character. Map 5.2 shows the main geographical areas as set out in the First Review of the County Development Plan (Somerset County Council (CC) 1964a). These include part of Exmoor, the Brendon Hills and the Quantocks in the west, where recreation and tourism have long been features of the economy; the agriculturally rich Vale of Taunton Deane



**SOMERSET DISTRICT BOUNDARIES**  
**(Pre 1874)**







Source: Somerset CC (1964a)

flanked by the Blackdown Hills in the south west; the mid-Somerset levels - a low-lying area of fenland, broken by the low ridge of the Polden Hills, the Isle of Wedmore and Brent Knoll; the southern and eastern area of lias clay and scarp and vale scenery similar in nature to the Cotswold country of Gloucestershire; and in the north the Mendip Hills and the 'hills and valleys region extending to the river Avon' (Walker 1972 p.5), within easy commuting range of Bristol and Bath.

The rural parishes which Bracey set out to survey in 1947 exhibited a wide range of settlement types, from the compact, nucleated villages typical of the south east of the county to the scattered settlements of the uplands. (These patterns are discussed at some length in Swainson 1935 and 1944.)

## **5.2 The Parish as the Unit of Analysis**

Since Bracey's surveys included only the rural civil parishes and excluded administratively defined Urban Districts, the analysis excludes market centres such as Frome and Chard as well as the large towns of the area such as Bristol and Taunton.

Information has been assembled for 378 rural parishes to a 1950 baseline. In nearly 98 per cent of these, questionnaires are available for both 1947 and 1950. However, in one case (Buckland Dinham in Mendip district) only the 1947 form is to hand and in other cases the quality of information is poor, although available for both years. In assembling the data a number of places had to be discarded. These include, for example, Bishopsworth on the outskirts of Bristol, and Weston, adjacent to Bath, which Bracey himself decided not to use since they were properly described as urban areas. Also, it has been necessary to amalgamate the information for several parishes which experienced boundary changes between Bracey's two surveys. These changes are described in detail in Mills (1981a), reproduced as Appendix 3.

In order to number each of the 378 parishes uniquely a four digit code has been devised. In each parish the first digit in the code refers to the district in which the parish is located. These are the districts designated at the 1974 reorganisation of local government boundaries. The districts have been numbered alphabetically, as follows:

1. Mendip
2. Sedgemoor
3. Taunton Deane
4. West Somerset
5. Yeovil
6. Wansdyke
7. Woodspring

The last two districts are located in the new county of Avon.

Within each district the parishes have been numbered alphabetically using three digits for each. For example, Ashwick, the first parish alphabetically in Mendip has the code 1001. This parish numbering system has been used for both the 1947/50 and 1980 data sets. In the descriptive accounts of services and social life elsewhere in this thesis, reference is frequently made to the distribution of facilities by the districts as designated in 1974, since this is of contemporary interest to those concerned with service provision. In addition, the use of the districts provides a shorthand way of indicating the geographical spread of services.

Table 5.1 shows the distribution of parishes surveyed by Bracey by the local authority district in which they were located in 1974. Nearly 80 per cent are located in Somerset.

In interpreting the findings for Bracey's surveys a variable describing the Rural District (RD) in which each parish was located prior to the 1974 reorganisation has also been included. The boundaries of the old RDs are depicted on the overlay to Map 5.1. The distribution of parishes by old RD is shown in Table 5.2.

In general the new districts are made up of groups of RDs split between the new districts. For example the new district of Taunton Deane is made up of Taunton and Wellington RDs, while West Somerset consists of all the parishes formerly in Dulverton and Williton. A full list of the parishes included in the 1950 analysis appears in Appendix 4.

In 97 per cent of the cases assembled for this analysis the information refers - as far as it is possible to tell - to the civil parish. In a further 2.6 per cent of cases (10 parishes) information is available for more than one village and has been drawn together into one set which refers to the parish as a whole. In one case (East Huntspill) the coverage of the questionnaires was unknown.

TABLE 5.1 DISTRIBUTION OF PARISHES BY 1974 DISTRICT

|               | No. | %     |
|---------------|-----|-------|
| Mendip        | 54  | 14.3  |
| Sedgemoor     | 50  | 13.2  |
| Taunton Deane | 46  | 12.2  |
| West Somerset | 40  | 10.6  |
| Yeovil        | 111 | 29.4  |
| Wansdyke      | 42  | 11.1  |
| Woodspring    | 35  | 9.3   |
| Total         | 378 | 100.0 |

TABLE 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF PARISHES BY OLD RURAL DISTRICT

|                | No. | %     |
|----------------|-----|-------|
| Axbridge       | 29  | 7.7   |
| Bathavon       | 24  | 6.3   |
| Bridgwater     | 36  | 9.5   |
| Chard          | 27  | 7.1   |
| Clutton        | 21  | 5.6   |
| Dulverton      | 11  | 2.9   |
| Frome          | 17  | 4.5   |
| Langport       | 24  | 6.3   |
| Long Ashton    | 20  | 5.3   |
| Shepton Mallet | 20  | 5.3   |
| Taunton        | 32  | 8.5   |
| Wellington     | 14  | 3.7   |
| Wells          | 14  | 3.7   |
| Williton       | 29  | 7.7   |
| Wincanton      | 31  | 8.2   |
| Yeovil         | 29  | 7.7   |
| Total          | 378 | 100.0 |



Bracey acknowledged that there were problems in choosing the parish rather than the village as the unit of data collection and analysis, but opted for the parish since it was, and indeed remains, the unit to which most 'official' data refer:

Country people live in villages or in the open country. They are counted for Census purposes and served by local authorities with certain public utility services on a rural district and parish basis. Most village services provided by private enterprise are enjoyed by the whole parish which may, however, in the case of large parishes comprise more than one nucleus of habitations. Much of the information was obtained through official sources and was arranged to a parish pattern. For these reasons the analysis has been made on a parish and not a village basis. (Bracey 1952 p. 68).

The use of the parish as the unit of analysis continues to pose problems in interpreting the changes observed between 1950 and 1980, and letters from respondents to both Bracey's surveys and the 1980 update show this to be of more than academic concern.

### **5.3 Additional Variables**

In order to provide a context within which Bracey's survey information may be examined, two variables extracted from secondary sources have been added to the 1950 data set.

The first is the population of each parish at the 1951 census. In crosstabulations of population data with the survey variables (which appear in Appendix 6 and 7) the population figures have been grouped into a number of size classes according to a procedure based on a geometric progression (described by Haggett 1981). An account of the population characteristics of these rural parishes is contained in Chapter 8.

Secondly, a systematic picture of agricultural employment in the survey parishes is provided by the 1950 June Returns to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, from which the number of Whole Time Farm Workers has been extracted. These figures include full time farmers or partners, directors, salaried farm managers, and both male and female workers, whether family or hired labour. It is of interest to note in passing that they also include members of the Women's Land Army, disbanded after the 1950 harvest. In order to crosstabulate the

information on farm workers with other survey variables the data were grouped into the classes shown in Table 5.3

In addition, variables derived directly from Bracey's data have been added to provide a shorthand way of describing some of the changes observed between his two surveys. Numerous parishes apparently lost or gained facilities between 1947 and 1950. While some of these were explicitly described by the respondents on the 1950 form or in letters in response to Bracey's inquiry in 1950 as to whether the findings for 1947 still held, others emerged from the questions themselves. It was decided to record the loss or gain of up to 5 facilities. The downgrading or upgrading of facilities, for example the loss or addition of certain bus routes, as well as, for example, the complete closure of a school or building of a new hall, were included as changes in facilities.

As Table 5.4 shows, 301 facilities were recorded as being lost between Bracey's two surveys. The largest group referred to social activities and represented nearly 37 per cent of responses. There were also 31 school closures, together representing over 10 per cent of the facilities recorded as lost. Most of those closed were junior or all age schools.

The Multiple Response facility in SPSS, used to generate these results, includes a calculation of the number of occurrences of an item (in this case a parish facility) by the number of respondents, giving in this case the number of facilities lost per parish - the third column of Table 5.4. Typically, each parish lost almost 2 (1.81) facilities, most commonly a social group, shop or artisan service.

Parishes in all population size groups and in all districts lost facilities. However, the area which is now West Somerset experienced a particularly large number of losses, including, for example, 4 of the 5 post offices closed, 29 per cent of the shop closures, 85 per cent of the professional services lost and one third of the downgraded bus routes.

Gains were more numerous than losses overall; a total of 492 were recorded (Table 5.5). Again the largest group, over 38 per cent, referred to social activities, followed by shops or artisan services which accounted for 30.5 per cent of the gains mentioned. There was also an appreciable increase in bus services. Overall, each parish gained just over 2 (2.15) facilities, though parishes with very small populations did less well.

TABLE 5.3 WHOLE TIME FARM WORKERS 1950

| Farm workers | Number of<br>parishes | Per cent<br>(adjusted) |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 - 25       | 145                   | 38.5                   |
| 26 - 50      | 152                   | 40.3                   |
| 51 - 75      | 50                    | 13.3                   |
| 76 - 100     | 20                    | 5.3                    |
| 101 - 125    | 7                     | 1.9                    |
| 126+         | 3                     | 0.9                    |
| No data      | 1                     | -                      |
| Total        | 378                   | 100.0                  |

TABLE 5.4 FACILITIES LOST 1947-1950

|                          | Number | Percent of responses | Losses per parish |
|--------------------------|--------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Post Office              | 7      | 2.3                  | 0.04              |
| Shop or artisan service  | 78     | 25.9                 | 0.47              |
| Professional service     | 26     | 8.6                  | 0.16              |
| Bus                      | 9      | 3.0                  | 0.05              |
| Train                    | 2      | 0.7                  | 0.01              |
| Church                   | 2      | 0.7                  | 0.01              |
| Pub or Hotel             | 9      | 3.0                  | 0.05              |
| Cinema                   | 7      | 2.3                  | 0.04              |
| Library                  | 9      | 3.0                  | 0.05              |
| Doctor                   | 2      | 0.7                  | 0.01              |
| Junior school            | 11     | 3.7                  | 0.07              |
| Secondary/grammar school | 2      | 0.7                  | 0.01              |
| All age school           | 15     | 5.0                  | 0.09              |
| Other school             | 3      | 1.0                  | 0.02              |
| Adult education          | 4      | 1.3                  | 0.02              |
| Hall                     | 4      | 1.3                  | 0.02              |
| Social group             | 111    | 36.9                 | 0.67              |
| Total responses          | 301    | 100.0                | 1.81              |

166 valid cases

TABLE 5.5 FACILITIES GAINED 1947-1950

|                          | Number | Percent of responses | Gains per parish |
|--------------------------|--------|----------------------|------------------|
| Post office              | 8      | 1.6                  | 0.04             |
| Shop or artisan service  | 150    | 30.5                 | 0.66             |
| Professional services    | 4      | 0.8                  | 0.02             |
| Bus                      | 53     | 10.8                 | 0.23             |
| Train                    | 5      | 1.0                  | 0.02             |
| Church                   | 4      | 0.8                  | 0.02             |
| Pub or Hotel             | 14     | 2.8                  | 0.06             |
| Cinema                   | 18     | 3.7                  | 0.08             |
| Police station           | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Fire station             | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Library                  | 14     | 2.8                  | 0.06             |
| Doctor                   | 2      | 0.4                  | 0.01             |
| Dentist                  | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Chemist                  | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Junior school            | 8      | 1.6                  | 0.04             |
| Secondary/grammar school | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Other school             | 1      | 0.2                  | 0.00             |
| Adult education          | 4      | 0.8                  | 0.02             |
| Hall                     | 11     | 2.2                  | 0.05             |
| Social group             | 189    | 38.4                 | 0.83             |
| Other, eg employment     | 2      | 0.4                  | 0.01             |
| Total responses          | 492    | 100.0                | 2.15             |

229 valid cases

There is undoubtedly a great deal of room for error in attempting to deduce a service loss or gain from the information available, not least because the wording of Bracey's questions was not the same at the two survey dates, and because the amount of detail recorded varied. Also, picking out the changes required considerable vigilance during the coding process and this was likely to vary. Thus the results reported here should not be taken as more than a suggestion of the changes which were taking place in rural parishes in the closing years of the 1940s.

However, two particular observations are worth making. Firstly, it is to be stressed that 'changes' is a more appropriate term than either 'losses' or 'gains'. Secondly, the examination of changes in the parishes between Bracey's two surveys serves to reinforce the point that patterns of service provision and social life in rural communities can shift considerably over only relatively short periods of time.

#### **5.4 Qualitative Material**

In well over 100 parishes surveyed in 1947 and 1950, material additional to the questionnaires is available in the form of letters or simply as notes written on the backs of the survey forms. Many of these comments, which are extremely wide-ranging in their content, have been incorporated in the descriptive accounts elsewhere in this thesis, but a few general points may be made here.

Firstly, respondents to the 1947 and 1950 surveys remarked on the difficulty of identifying the area to which their answers were supposed to refer - the village or the civil or ecclesiastical parish - and respondents in parishes which had no identifiable settlements were particularly at a loss since their parishes were 'not of the ordinary kind'. Also striking was the number of comments, often critical in tone, to the effect that the questionnaire failed to encapsulate the 'true' nature of the parish to which it referred, and the 1950 form, especially, posed problems of interpretation. Many of the respondents found it difficult to complete and wrote covering letters pointing out that the form had been completed 'to the best of their abilities'. Many commented that they had found it necessary to write a letter since they had been unable to convey the information which seemed to be required using the form alone.

These comments are valuable for identifying and illustrating problems related to the survey design since they tended to be supplied most often in cases of difficulty. Many of the comments come from parishes with large populations, but there is also a district bias: the highest percentage of parishes supplying additional information was found in West Somerset where about half of the parishes did so, while in what is now Yeovil district very few respondents wrote letters. It may be tentatively suggested that Bracey's questionnaires were better suited to the parishes characteristic of the area around Yeovil than to those in West Somerset which tend to be larger in area and to have a more scattered settlement pattern. Some examples of the ways in which respondents' comments were useful in identifying problems with Bracey's questions are included in section 5.5, below.

Most of the qualitative material taking the form either of the explanation of replies or of complaints about the quality or lack of facilities referred to parish services. The questions on social activities, on the other hand, prompted a very large number of rather different comments, referring frequently to activities shared between various places and also to the dependence upon particular individuals such as the vicar or headteacher. It should be noted in this connection that Bracey's choice of 'pillars of society' as respondents is clearly reflected in the type of comments made, vicars, headteachers or parish councillors tending to respond in characteristic ways. Finally, many of the comments revealed a concern for the rural communities under examination and a hope that the research work would lead to an improvement in their lot.

## **5.5 Data Limitations**

### **5.5.1 Some problems with Bracey's questions**

Preparation of Bracey's data for computer analysis necessarily involved a detailed examination of the questions he asked and the ways in which his respondents answered. While some of the questions were relatively straightforward others were less so and the use of the data they generated requires some care. A detailed discussion of each question used in the generation of the data is contained in Appendix 6 and 7, but it is useful to summarise some of the main points here.

Many of the questions asked simply about the presence or absence of a service in a parish and there is no indication of the extent of the service. For example, it is not possible to estimate how many homes in a parish were supplied with mains

electricity or gas since Bracey asked only for the names of the companies supplying these. Similarly, respondents were not asked to report multiple occurrences of facilities such as telephone kiosks or bus stops.

In other questions Bracey was more concerned with the availability of a service to local residents than with whether or not it was located within the parish boundaries. Some of his questions on public transport are of this type. He was concerned with ease of access to the nearest town (in fact to up to three towns or parishes in the 1950 survey), particularly for work, shopping trips and recreation. He asked simply for the 'nearest' bus stop and railway station, and about services available from these stops and stations to the 'nearest town'. The services described are not assumed to be located within the parish to which they refer. The respondent for Milton Clevedon (in Mendip District) made the following comment which perhaps illustrates this point:

I am glad to notice that you ask for the nearest bus stop. A parishioner in Langport parish was asked on a form he had to fill up in applying for petrol where the nearest tram stop is. The answer to that is, I think, Southampton.

Milton Clevedon, incidentally, had 'no transport whatsoever' and was served by the stop in Evercreech, one and a half miles away.

The questions on public transport illustrate another problem: many of Bracey's questions were not very precise and it was left to the respondents to interpret them as best they could. For example, in posing the question 'How far is the nearest bus stop?' Bracey neglected to mention from where this distance should be measured. Was it, for example, from the main centre of population in each parish (assuming also that there was only one such centre) or from the respondent's place of residence? Whether the distance given referred to, for example, road distance or to distance 'as the crow flies' is also unknown. And there was no guidance at all for the respondents whose parishes or villages contained more than one bus stop as to which one they should choose.

The respondent for Claverton parish, on the outskirts of Bath, reported that the nearest bus stop was 'close' and that the number of buses each way 'varies for different sectors' of the parish. She went on to explain that:



The parish of Claverton is large in area, and scattered, in so far that there are three separate sectors or hamlets. These comprise the village (Claverton) situated in the Avon valley on the main Bath-Warminster Road. One and a half miles to the north and situated on the Down, overlooking Bath, is the Wansdyke area of Claverton Down, and one mile to the south east is the Flatwoods area of Claverton Down (overlooking the Mendips). Amenities enjoyed by one hamlet are therefore not necessarily available to the others.

Bracey also asked about the 'numbers of buses each way' to the 'nearest town' on different days, and it is in these terms that the results are expressed. However, there are two major sources of confusion here. The first concerns the naming of the 'nearest town' in Q F1 of the 1947 form. The public transport services detailed in the remainder of Question F are presumably supposed to refer to the town named in F1 but in some cases more than one town was visited for various services and different transport services were available to each. It might also have been the case that the nearest town was not always the one commonly visited for work, shopping and other pursuits investigated by Bracey. For example, in North Cadbury parish (Yeovil district) the 1947 questionnaire names Yeovil as the 'nearest town' and then lists two buses each way on week days and four on Saturdays. In the 1950 questionnaire, however, it appears that these services referred to links with Wincanton rather than Yeovil, while there were other 'frequent services' to Yeovil, and, in addition, to Castle Cary. At Somerton, where Yeovil, 11 miles away, was named in the questions on transport, it was the case that 'Street (6 miles) is actually the nearest town but is very little used locally'. The respondent for Wincanton declined to answer the questions on transport to the 'nearest town' altogether, considering Wincanton to be a town in its own right.

In other cases the respondents seem to have had difficulty understanding the questions at all: those on tradesmen delivering to the parishes were particularly impenetrable and the replies correspondingly difficult to decipher. This information was collected by Bracey in the 1950 survey. Alongside the name of each shop or service (grocery, meat etc) he asked respondents to record the 'Tradesmen delivering these commodities at least once a week from other towns and parishes', asking specifically for the number of tradesmen and the place from which the goods were delivered. (Note that he excluded milkmen from the survey, and also that deliveries which might have occurred less frequently than every week were also omitted).

Because of the very confused nature of the replies, an attempt at detailed coding of this information was not thought to be worthwhile in terms of time and

computer space available. In the event, an attempt was made to deduce the total number of delivery services and, for up to 10 tradesmen in each parish, to note the type of service and tradesmen's place of origin.

Further difficulties rise from the fact that Bracey sought information about a particular service in different ways in each of his two surveys. His treatment of health services provides an example. In his 1947 questionnaire Bracey asked about health services in each parish as part of the question 'Professional and similar services'. The 1950 survey was slightly different in that he asked for the number of doctors with a surgery in the parish rather than simply for the presence or absence of a surgery, and for the names of up to four places from which doctors visited the parish. In 1947 but not in 1950 he asked on how many days the service was provided. For dentists, opticians, dispensing chemists and nurses he asked for the number in the parish in 1950 together with the names of up to three 'other towns and parishes commonly visited for these services'.

The question on hospitals, in particular, yielded quite different information for the two survey years. The 1947 questionnaire did not ask whether or not there was a hospital in the parish but which hospital was 'usually used', presumably by the majority of residents of the parish. Answers to this question tended to name particular establishments. The 1950 survey, in contrast, provides the names of towns or villages in which the hospitals were located, together with the number of hospitals in each parish. In coding the information on hospitals an attempt was made to retain both types of information, although the names of other towns and villages visited were omitted at this stage. The 1950 survey gave information on the presence or absence of a hospital, and where there was a hospital in the parish the 1947 survey was helpful in establishing whether or not that hospital was 'usually used' or whether it was some other type of establishment such as a home for the mentally handicapped.

In the case of hospitals, both the 1947 and 1950 questionnaires have been used to generate the coded replies. Questions on child welfare clinics, in contrast, were confined to the 1947 survey and more than one respondent queried their omission from the 1950 form.

### 5.5.2 The 1950 data as a basis for comparisons with 1980

Since it was the intention to examine changes between 1950 and 1980, it was desirable to adopt a coding frame suitable, as far as possible, for both years. This was easier for some services than for others.

The questions on shops illustrate some of the difficulties. For example, in examining service changes over time it was desirable to know how many outlets were in existence at the time of each survey. Bracey did not ask for the total number of shops and it was necessary to deduce this using the information on the 1950 forms. ( In fact Bracey's (1962) classification of small rural service centres was based mainly on total numbers of shops and so he must also have had to deduce this information some time after conducting his 1947 and 1950 surveys.) In this task the phrasing of the questions made it difficult to avoid instances of double counting and it is therefore possible that over-estimation of the number of outlets has occurred in some places. Information on 'counters in other shops' was discounted except where it was useful in identifying a general store. Some of the services which Bracey may have treated as shops were not included in this count but were reclassified so as to achieve compatibility with the 1980 information. Blacksmiths, for example, were recorded as 'industries' and undertakers as 'professional services'. Laundries and coal order depots were included as shops where they occurred in particular parishes, but this information tended more often to refer to the location of depots for tradesmen providing a delivery service to the parishes. On the other hand, garages, chemists, post offices, cafes and restaurants and 'premises with sign "teas" ' were included in the count of shops though treated separately by Bracey. In the case of post offices it was impossible to distinguish, from Bracey's information, post offices which were part of other shops. It is possible that post offices were more likely to be separated from general stores in 1950 than is the case now. The information on 'off licence premises (including grocers etc)' was more difficult to handle, as it was generally impossible to tell whether these were separate premises (unlikely in 1950) or part of public houses or shops. This information was therefore rarely included.

A particular problem arose in counting and classifying shops which supplied a range of goods and services, and several respondents had difficulty in reporting them. The respondent for South Petherton, for example, pointed out that it was difficult to tabulate all the commercial services since many of these were 'duplicated in the various shops'. Perhaps the best illustration of the problem

comes from Winsham, in Yeovil district, a parish which had five separate shops, described as follows:

The bigger grocery and provision shop also sells a little drapery, a little stationery, and few boots and shoes. The smaller grocer is the wife of the baker and confectioner and also sells drapery and hosiery. The second small baker also has a small grocery trade. The newsagent also deals in cars, cycles and radio sets - i.e. we fetch our own newspapers and periodicals from one of the local garages (there is no delivery). One of the general shops deals in hosiery, tobacco, sweets and mineral waters chiefly, while the other one is the one associated with the small bakery business.

Dealing analytically with services of this type was just as much a problem in carrying out the 1980 re-survey as it must have been in Bracey's day.

While it was the intention to make a much fuller examination of Bracey's questionnaires than he himself had done, practical limitations on the amount of detail that could be converted into machine-readable form meant that it was necessary to be selective in the use of some aspects of the material. In interpreting the findings of this research it is important to bear this in mind. The selective use of the information on tradesmen delivering has already been described. In that case the doubtful quality of the data was the overriding factor in deciding to limit the amount of detail recorded. Elsewhere the information was simply too voluminous to record in full. In the case of shop types it was decided to record up to 20 using a 'multiple response' framework. Thus in parishes which had fewer than 20 shops the results are likely to have a high level of accuracy since each shop in the parish could be allocated a unique code. Fortunately a very high proportion of cases - nearly 89 per cent - fell in this category. However, in parishes which had more than 20 shops the coding procedure adopted was to take one example of each shop type occurring in the parish and then to allocate further shops in any remaining spaces in proportion to the total number of shops of each type in the parish. For example, if there were twice as many general stores as bakers in the parish then general stores and bakers should have been recorded in the available spaces in the ratio 2:1. However, in the case of parishes with a full range of food shops (at least one of each type of the food stores shown on the coding scheme), a combination code for 'full range of food stores' was used and up to 19 non food shops and services were recorded in the remaining spaces, again recording shops of different types in proportion to their occurrences in the parish whenever more than 19 were present. The use of this fairly complex procedure meant that, although there were certain coding rules, decisions still had to be made about which shops to include, and this problem was

exacerbated by difficulties in reading the replies, especially in parishes where shops were most numerous and respondents had been short of space in recording all the stores. In particular, there may be a systematic bias towards the recording of food stores, which appeared at the top of the coding scheme and also at the head of Bracey's 1950 question on shops, while services such as laundries appear later in both schemes.

A further, rather different, example of the necessarily selective use of information is provided by the section of the 1947 questionnaire headed 'Places of Assembly' in which Bracey asked about halls and other meeting places. He singled out the village hall for detailed investigation, with questions on, for example, ownership, construction, seating capacity and facilities available, while other public rooms were listed by name, controlling organisation and seating capacity. The following section, on social organisations, asked where the various clubs and societies met and where such activities as dances and whist drives were held, so that an indication of the use of each hall is provided. In the 1950 questionnaire the emphasis was different. Bracey investigated a wide range of clubs and societies but not where they met, and in investigating halls he asked simply for the number in the parish.

In recording the information on halls use was made of both of Bracey's surveys to arrive at an estimate of the situation in 1950. First the number of halls in a parish was counted, then details on hall type and ownership or management for up to 7 halls were recorded. Information on hall size, heating, construction and facilities was omitted. In this case the decision to restrict the amount of detail coded was based on a consideration of the main lines of investigation to be followed in later analysis. The detailed information about halls was judged to be of only marginal interest.

In practice, of course, considerations about the quality, scope and relevance of the material all tended to come into play in planning the way in which each piece of information would be handled.

Finally, in using Bracey's questionnaires as the base line for identifying changes in the parishes thirty years on it is important to note that the character of some services has changed so much that what was meant by that named service in 1947 or 1950 meant something quite different by 1980. The information on libraries provides an illustration of this point.

Bracey's 1947 questionnaire asked, under Places of Assembly, whether or not there was a County Library Branch in a parish. In the 1950 survey, information on libraries was collected under the heading 'Educational Organisations'. The use of the term 'branch library' to refer to the libraries in existence in the late 1940s is potentially misleading to the researcher working in the 1980s, since a 'branch library' in 1980 was a much more substantial facility. In the 1940s most were simply stocks of books held in village centres, halls or schoolrooms. Usually the building housing the library and the staff to run it were supplied by the parish or by such organisations as Toc H, the Friends (Quakers) or the Red Cross, while the County Library service supplied the books, changing the books at regular intervals. For example, at Blagdon village hall the book collection was changed twice a year.

Bracey also asked whether there was a Private Circulating Library. Several private libraries were in operation, including, for example, parish libraries founded by the clergy and added to by legacies, the so-called 'twopenny libraries' operated by newsagents and the larger company libraries operated, for example, by Clarks and by Boots the Chemist. Mobile libraries, so common in 1980, are quite different and were not a feature of the service in 1950.

It is essential, both in interpreting Bracey's material afresh and in examining trends in the thirty years following his study, to bear in mind the changing character of the services under investigation.

## **5.6 Some concluding comments**

This chapter has been concerned with the practicalities of data handling. It has also highlighted some of the problems that arise in attempting to make use of an historical data source such as that provided by Bracey. In this study there are three particular areas of concern : the phrasing and occasional imprecision of Bracey's questions - a problem for both his respondents and those interpreting the replies; some lack of comparability between the 1947 and 1950 surveys; and the desire to achieve comparability between Bracey's findings and the results of a follow up survey conducted in 1980. The last of these three posed particular problems of research design.

Reservations about the quality of some of the material collected by Bracey may be sufficient to cast doubt on certain of the observations he himself recorded. In

reporting the findings for 1950 and in making use of variables generated from Bracey's surveys in the analysis of changes between 1950 and 1980, it is important not to lose sight of these reservations and to be aware of how each piece of data was derived.

These caveats notwithstanding, the data set assembled for 1950 is extremely rich, as the following chapter shows.

## 6. THE PARISHES OF SOMERSET IN 1950

This chapter presents an account of services and social life in the rural parishes of postwar Somerset based on the data extracted from Bracey's two surveys.

As Chapter 4 has already indicated, Bracey's own analysis of the findings was limited by his main objective - that of calculating indices of social provision, and later of 'centrality', - in order to identify a hierarchy of rural central places (Bracey 1953). He returned to his data set several times as interest in central place studies grew. He briefly discussed the relationship between services and parish population, particularly in his 1962 paper where he considered patterns of service provision in areas of population decline and increase (Bracey 1962). He also considered the location of rural service centres vis à vis the towns of the area (Bracey 1953).

However, in his concern to standardise his findings, to produce a 'yardstick' by which to measure the social service importance of rural settlements, Bracey used only a small selection of the variables at his disposal. He had little interest in reporting the results of his surveys in a more descriptive way; and although he illustrated his articles with particular parish examples (especially in Bracey 1962) and occasionally included a comment from a respondent, on the whole the great mass of information he collected, particularly that referring to social life, remained unexplored. (This observation was confirmed by Dr Bracey in a personal communication of 19 February 1980.) The reports (Appendix 6, Appendix 7 and Mills 1982a) on which this chapter is based represent a first attempt at just such an exploration.

It should be noted that Bracey's detailed information on parish industries, which provides some insights into the economic life of the area, and on housebuilding in the parishes between 1931 and 1947, is excluded from this account, although it appears in Mills (1982a).

Services are considered in the first part of the chapter, while later sections describe social and sporting facilities and social life. Together they go some way towards meeting the wish 'to ascertain the standard of public utility services, the scope of the commercial facilities and professional services, and the extent to which social organisations have been able to withstand the shock of modern forces' set out in the letter accompanying Bracey's 1947 questionnaires.



## 6.1 'The Standard of Provision of Public Utility Services'

In the late 1940s it was common for public utilities to be provided by a number of small companies, and the coverage and quality of services showed a great deal of spatial variation. In general those northern parts of the study area adjacent to Bristol and Bath, now in south Avon, were better served than elsewhere.

Most of the parishes surveyed by Bracey had mains electricity and water in 1947, but only just over a quarter had mains sewer to most houses (Table 6.1). Even fewer places - those close to Bristol, Bath and Taunton where town gas was generated - were supplied with mains gas. Not many lacked a regular refuse collection, though the frequency of the service varied considerably by local authority area.

Respondents frequently wrote in some detail about water and sewerage services, mostly to complain about their absence or about the patchy nature of supplies, disguised by the overall parish figures. For example in Luxborough (West Somerset), where there were 'pumps in the houses and pipes in the road', it was the case that:

several farmers have had water pipes laid on to farms and cottages privately and water rate is payable to the individual farmer. These houses have flush lavatories but most of the village cottages have a cesspool.

At Stoke St Mary, adjoining the borough of Taunton, piped water was available to houses nearest the town but outlying parts of the parish depended on wells. A scheme had been 'prepared to bring water to the village and provide sewerage as soon as circumstances permitted'.

In some places the lack of sewerage was identified as a 'pressing' or 'chief' need, occasionally, as at Butleigh (Mendip), providing a major obstacle to new housing development. At Kewstoke, near Weston super Mare, the sanitation was described as 'primitive'. But perhaps the most graphic description of the problem was provided by the respondent for Stocklinch, near Chard, who commented simply, 'the sewerage system wants looking into and bringing up to date'.

TABLE 6.1 PUBLIC UTILITIES IN 1950

| Parishes with:                                            | Number | Per cent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Mains electricity                                         | 304    | 80.4     |
| Mains gas                                                 | 92     | 24.3     |
| Piped water                                               | 335    | 88.6     |
| Mains sewer                                               | 100    | 26.8     |
| Regular household refuse collection<br>(at least monthly) | 343    | 91.5     |
| Public phone box                                          | 310    | 82.2     |
| Post office                                               | 307    | 81.4     |
| Police station or cottage                                 | 103    | 27.8     |
| Fire station                                              | 49     | 13.1     |
| All parishes                                              | 378    | 100.0    |

In some cases respondents were able to report improvements in utilities between 1947 and 1950. At Badgeworth (Sedgemoor), for example, the situation in 1947 was as follows:

The sawmills, the garage at Biddisham and two private houses generate their own power and light and ...there are about 8 houses supplied with electric light by the North Somerset Electricity Co. The village was canvassed about a year ago with regard to having electric light, but we have heard nothing further.

By 1950 the respondent was able to comment enthusiastically: 'I must tell you that there is now electricity in the village'.

Bracey also considered public telephone call boxes, post offices, police and fire stations under the heading of Public Utilities. About 80 per cent of the rural parishes reported both post offices and call boxes in 1947/50. However, police and fire stations were much less numerous, and two thirds of the parishes were without either service.

## **6.2 'The Scope of Commercial Facilities and Professional Services'**

### **6.2.1 Shops and deliveries**

Despite the difficulties in dealing with Bracey's material on shops, discussed in Chapter 5, it is possible to build up a detailed picture of local retail provision.

Fewer than 10 per cent of the parishes reported no shops in 1950 (Table 6.2). Just under half had between 1 and 5 shops, and a total of 70 per cent of parishes had between 1 and 10.

The most common type of shop was the grocer/general store, representing just over a third of the responses (Table 6.3). The second most frequently cited shop type was the post office (15 per cent), followed by the cafe (7.3 per cent). Most striking is the preponderance of food shops at the time of Bracey's surveys : together they made up almost half the shops recorded. The larger the parish, in population terms, the greater the range of shops located there , as Appendix 6 demonstrates.

TABLE 6.2 NUMBER OF SHOPS AND TRADESMEN DELIVERING 1950

| Shops        | Tradesmen   |     |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |   | All Parishes<br>No.<br>Percent |      |
|--------------|-------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|--------------------------------|------|
|              | None        | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 |       |       |   |                                |      |
| None         | 1           | 3   | 18   | 9     | 4     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 35                             | 9.5  |
| 1-5          | -           | 7   | 47   | 68    | 41    | 8     | 3     | -     | -     | - | 174                            | 47.3 |
| 6-10         | 1           | 4   | 29   | 28    | 16    | 5     | 1     | -     | -     | - | 84                             | 22.8 |
| 11-15        | -           | 3   | 7    | 6     | 2     | 1     | 1     | -     | -     | - | 20                             | 5.4  |
| 16-20        | -           | 1   | 10   | 2     | 1     | 1     | -     | -     | -     | - | 15                             | 4.1  |
| 21-25        | -           | 1   | 3    | 5     | 2     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 11                             | 3.0  |
| 26-30        | -           | -   | 3    | 3     | 3     | -     | 1     | -     | -     | - | 10                             | 2.7  |
| 31-35        | -           | -   | 3    | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 3                              | 0.8  |
| 36-40        | -           | 1   | -    | 2     | -     | 1     | -     | -     | -     | - | 4                              | 1.1  |
| 41-45        | -           | 1   | -    | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 1                              | 0.3  |
| 46-50        | -           | 2   | -    | -     | 1     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 3                              | 0.8  |
| > 50         | -           | 1   | 4    | 2     | 1     | -     | -     | -     | -     | - | 8                              | 2.2  |
| All Parishes | No. 2       | 24  | 124  | 125   | 71    | 16    | 6     | 368   | 100.0 |   |                                |      |
|              | Percent 0.5 | 6.5 | 33.7 | 34.0  | 19.3  | 4.3   | 1.6   | 100.0 |       |   |                                |      |

TABLE 6.3 TYPES OF SHOPS 1950

|                           | Number | Percent of responses | Shops per parish |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------|------------------|
| Grocer/general store      | 652    | 33.1                 | 1.91             |
| Post Office               | 290    | 14.7                 | 0.85             |
| Cafe                      | 144    | 7.3                  | 0.42             |
| Shoes/shoe repair         | 117    | 5.9                  | 0.34             |
| Garage                    | 109    | 5.5                  | 0.32             |
| Baker                     | 99     | 5.0                  | 0.29             |
| Butcher                   | 92     | 4.7                  | 0.27             |
| Hairdresser               | 88     | 4.5                  | 0.26             |
| Haberdasher/wool/tailors  | 77     | 3.9                  | 0.23             |
| Confectioner/news/tobacco | 75     | 3.8                  | 0.22             |
| Hardware                  | 41     | 2.1                  | 0.12             |
| Electrical                | 28     | 1.4                  | 0.08             |
| Fruit & vegetables        | 24     | 1.2                  | 0.07             |
| Fishmonger                | 14     | 0.7                  | 0.04             |
| Chemist                   | 13     | 0.7                  | 0.04             |
| Dairy                     | 6      | 0.3                  | 0.02             |
| Household                 | 6      | 0.3                  | 0.02             |
| Clothing                  | 2      | 0.1                  | 0.01             |
| Laundry                   | 2      | 0.1                  | 0.01             |
| Garden/nursery            | 2      | 0.1                  | 0.01             |
| Other food shop           | 8      | 0.4                  | 0.02             |
| Other non food shop       | 44     | 2.2                  | 0.13             |
| Full range food shops     | 35     | 1.8                  | -                |
| All shops                 | 1      | 0.1                  | -                |
| Total responses           | 1969   | 100.0                | 5.66             |

342 valid cases

The computerised data suggest that there were 8 major shopping centres (Cheddar, Wedmore, Wiveliscombe, Porlock, Bruton, Castle Cary, Wincanton and Paulton) each with more than 50 shops. However, these results differ from those given by Bracey (for example in Bracey 1962) where the maximum number of shops recorded in a parish was 44 (Paulton) and where the list of the 8 largest shopping centres omits Wedmore, Porlock and Wincanton but includes, in addition, Yatton, Somerton and Dulverton. While Wedmore and Porlock occur lower down Bracey's shopping hierarchy, Wincanton is not mentioned since Bracey regarded it as an urban service centre:

Wincanton alone among the villages listed had an index greater than 100 and enjoyed an intensive area where it reigned supreme as a service centre (1962 p.170).

These discrepancies are probably due mainly to the inclusion in the coded data set of outlets providing services (such as hairdressers and shoe repairers) which together made up almost a quarter of the shops reported by type. Bracey referred to these as 'artisan services'. He included some of them in his own counts of shops but omitted others, and although his procedure is described in Bracey (1962) it is not always possible to be certain, in the case of a particular parish, exactly what was included and what was not.

Shopping facilities were for the most part augmented by delivery services provided by visiting tradesmen, and these were sometimes very numerous, including principally food, newspapers, coal and laundry services. All but one of the parishes with no shops at all had delivery services, and deliveries were reported even in the very largest rural shopping centres.

In 370 of the 378 parishes there is some record of the goods and services provided by up to 10 tradesmen delivering to the parish (Table 6.4). Typically each parish was visited by about 9 tradesmen. By far the most frequently cited service was the grocer, with 23.5 per cent of the coded responses, closely followed by the baker and butcher, each with about 20 per cent of the replies. On average there were about two grocers, bakers and butchers per parish. Less common were the mixed fresh goods salesmen, for example the baker selling fruit and vegetables or the grocer selling fresh meat and fish. There were also relatively few deliveries of non food items such as ironmongery and paraffin, but this may reflect the fact that Bracey was concerned only with deliveries which were made at least once a week.

TABLE 6.4 TYPES OF TRADESMEN DELIVERING 1950

|                             | Number | Per cent of responses | Tradesmen per parish |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Grocer                      | 783    | 23.5                  | 2.12                 |
| Baker                       | 673    | 20.5                  | 1.82                 |
| Meat                        | 666    | 20.0                  | 1.80                 |
| Wet fish                    | 343    | 10.3                  | 0.93                 |
| Coal                        | 224    | 6.7                   | 0.61                 |
| Laundry                     | 217    | 6.5                   | 0.59                 |
| Papers                      | 165    | 4.9                   | 0.45                 |
| Fruit & vegetables          | 100    | 3.0                   | 0.27                 |
| Fish and chips              | 101    | 3.0                   | 0.27                 |
| Grocer, fruit, & vegetables | 32     | 1.0                   | 0.09                 |
| Fish, fruit & vegetables    | 8      | 0.2                   | 0.02                 |
| Ironmonger/paraffin/gas     | 7      | 0.2                   | 0.02                 |
| Baker, fruit & vegetables   | 4      | 0.1                   | 0.01                 |
| Baker, meat & fish          | 2      | 0.1                   | 0.01                 |
| Baker & grocer              | 5      | 0.1                   | 0.01                 |
| Grocer, meat & fish         | 3      | 0.1                   | 0.01                 |
| Other non food              | 4      | 0.1                   | 0.01                 |
| Other food                  | 1      | 0.0                   | 0.00                 |
| Total responses             | 3338   | 100.0                 | 9.02                 |
| 370 valid cases             |        |                       |                      |

### 6.2.2 'Professional and similar services'

Professional services in general tended to cluster together in the larger shopping centres. Very few rural parishes had them and it is difficult to make generalisations about their distribution. However, banks tended to be more numerous than accountants, solicitors, estate agents/auctioneers or veterinary surgeons (Table 6.5), and where they were available most of these services were provided on a full time rather than a part time basis.

The category 'other professional services' generally refers to undertakers. Here a much higher proportion of parishes in the study area - over one third - had at least one. Often this service was part time for it was common for the undertaker to have another occupation. For example, in Ruishton, near Taunton, the undertaker was also a blacksmith and wheelwright, while in Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath, the undertaker was also a builder. In Durston (Taunton Deane) the respondent said that 'a carpenter in the village is also an undertaker like his father before him'.

Bracey also treated health services under the heading of 'professional and similar services' in 1947. Here the re-analysis of his material confirms that, like the other professional services, health services tended to cluster in the largest rural centres. Only four rural parishes had hospitals: Butleigh, Corston, Paulton and Wincanton. However, about a third of the parishes had doctors surgeries in 1950, most of them providing a service on 6 or 7 days a week. Other health services were scarce. For example, about 91 per cent of places had no dentist or chemist and 97 per cent had no optician. Clinics were more numerous than other health services, particularly in the less well populated parishes, but they were not particularly frequent, most being held once a month or less often. There is little information as to what organisations ran them, although at Ditchheat (now in Mendip District), at least, the clinic was 'run by the Commandant of the Red Cross' and 'used for the distribution of orange juice, cod liver oil etc'.

In general, those parts of the study area which are now part of Avon did better than elsewhere as far as health facilities are concerned, while the area around Taunton did particularly badly.

In coding Bracey's data on health it was decided not to make use of the information on district nurses. This decision was based partly on the desire to achieve comparability with data to be collected for 1980 which was to exclude the



TABLE 6.5 PROFESSIONAL AND SIMILAR SERVICES 1947/50

| Parishes with at least one: | Number | Per cent |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------|
| Bank                        | 43     | 11.4     |
| Accountant                  | 12     | 3.2      |
| Solicitor                   | 21     | 5.6      |
| Estate agent/auctioneer     | 17     | 4.5      |
| Veterinary surgeon          | 17     | 4.5      |
| Other professional service  | 127    | 33.6     |
| Doctor's surgery            | 121    | 32.0     |
| Dentist                     | 33     | 8.7      |
| Chemist                     | 35     | 9.3      |
| Optician                    | 10     | 2.7      |
| Child welfare clinic        | 63     | 16.8     |
| Hospital                    | 4      | 1.1      |
| All parishes                | 378    | 100.0    |

TABLE 6.6 PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN 1950

| Parishes with:                                 | Number | Per cent |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Bus stop within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile             | 282    | 79.2     |
| >10 buses each way on week days                | 123    | 35.4     |
| Railway station with 5 miles                   | 325    | 87.4     |
| >10 trains each way on week days               | 30     | 20.3     |
| Sunday bus or rail service                     | 180    | 61.2     |
| Car hire                                       | 280    | 75.5     |
| Special local transport on market day/Saturday | 65     | 17.9     |
| All parishes                                   | 378    | 100.0    |

district nurse since the service was available to all residents on the recommendation of a general practitioner. However, with hindsight it might have been valuable to include the district nurses in the analysis as they perhaps represented an important source of local medical help in many of the parishes without other health services. In Bickenhall (Taunton Deane), for example, the respondent commented that the 'district nurse (a very efficient one) attends to all needs in the village and lives in the next village and is on the phone'. In general the telephone was seen as an important link between the rural parishes and the various health (and other professional) services. As the respondent for Godney remarked, 'The telephone is of course a great boon as doctors, nurses and veterinary surgeons can often be obtained in about a quarter of an hour'.

### **6.3 'Transport to the Nearest Town' : Access to Services Outside the Parish**

In 1950 most rural parishes had a bus service within half a mile and a railway station between half and five miles away (Table 6.6). Buses, usually run by local private operators, were more numerous than trains, although over 60 per cent of the parishes had fewer than 10 buses a day or a less than daily service. For the most part transport services were not restricted to weekdays, although some days had more frequent services than others. About 18 per cent of the parishes for which information exists had some kind of extra or special transport services on market days or Saturdays, often, it seems, provided through the residents' own efforts. For example, Brewham had a bus to Frome on market day, while at Chaffcombe, near Yeovil, the respondent reported, 'The parish council has recently inaugurated a service to operate on Thursday (Chard market day) and Saturday'. This service was 'a privately owned bus but not run by a local resident'. In Sedgemoor and Mendip there were isolated instances of parishes reporting the use of private cars; Pylle, Over Stowey and Puriton provide examples. At Over Stowey this took the form of 'self help among friends with private cars', while at Puriton it was reported that 'farmers use their own transport to oblige friends who have none'. In addition, at a time when private car ownership was not widespread about three quarters of the survey parishes reported some kind of car hire service.

A number of respondents also mentioned seasonal variations in the frequency of bus services. For example, at Wootton Courtnay buses ran 'from the garage in the village to Minehead 3 days a week in winter, twice a day every day in summer'. The service at Tickenham was half hourly in winter but every 15 minutes in

summer, and there were problems during fine summer weather when the buses were filled at Bristol or Clevedon and did not stop to pick up would-be passengers waiting at Tickenham. The respondent considered that a 'Clevedon to Nailsea' bus would help their 'desperate' situation.

Public transport was clearly an important issue at the time of Bracey's surveys and there were many complaints about the inadequacy of local services - both in parishes which obviously lacked transport and in those which, from the information reported on the questionnaire, seemed relatively well served. In Exmoor parish, for example, the largest settlement was Simonsbath. Here there were no buses at all - in fact the nearest stop was said to be five and a half miles away. The respondent made a modest suggestion: 'a bi-weekly bus service to South Molton, [named as the nearest town and 11 miles from Simonsbath], would be a great asset; here it is possible to get a further service to Barnstaple'. At Yeovilton, also relatively badly off for transport, there were buses 'only for work people; people from Yeovilton walk to Ilchester for the bus to Yeovil. People at the other end of the parish, Bridgehampton and Speckington, catch the Yeovil bus at West Camel'. At Stawell, relatively well served, with several buses daily to Bridgwater and back, the bus service was 'generally considered inadequate'.

There is some indication of changes in bus services over time, often bringing improvements but in some places reducing the availability of local transport. Whitestaunton parish provides an interesting example:

During the War the Long Distance Bus Company ran 2 buses daily between Chard and Honiton, serving the village. Last Autumn these were cancelled and the Southern National arranged one bus service on Thursday, market day, between Yarcombe (in Devon) and Whitestaunton and Chard. The villagers have no means of doing their shopping. They have to walk to Chard (4 miles). I was able to get to school on these daily buses during the war. The village is not served as well in peacetime, and the people feel very strongly on the matter.

It is of interest to note that some parishes which lacked all other facilities did have a very good bus service. These were generally located close to the larger towns, and two examples suffice.

The first is Bradford on Tone, near Wellington and Taunton, where the respondent wrote:

I wish you to know that we are situated so near and have such an excellent bus service that it is very easy for villagers to enjoy the amenities provided educationally and socially by the neighbouring towns of Taunton and Wellington.

The second is Newton St Loe with a '10 minute service' to Bath and Bristol. Here 'a very frequent bus service to two readily accessible cities may be taken as the main reason for the large number of negative answers' elsewhere on the questionnaires.

#### **6.4 Educational Facilities**

As noted in Chapter 4, Bracey's original inquiry did not include a special interest in education. In his 1947 survey he treated the school simply as a 'place of assembly'. In 1950, however, he sought more information on both schools and other educational services.

Overall, 22 per cent of the rural parishes surveyed by Bracey had no school in 1950 (Table 6.7), and in the areas that are now West Somerset, Yeovil and Wansdyke districts over a quarter of the parishes had none. In particular, parishes with small populations rarely had schools. The majority of the parishes, however, - 78 per cent - had at least one school, usually a junior or all-age school. All-age schools were especially numerous in West Somerset where there were fewer junior schools than elsewhere.

Secondary modern and grammar schools were not often found in the rural parishes (only 14 reported them) and children over 11 years old usually went to school in towns. For example, children living in the rural parishes of what is now Taunton Deane district travelled to Wiveliscombe, Wellington and Williton to attend secondary modern schools, and to Taunton and Wellington for both secondary modern and grammar schools. In West Somerset, children attended secondary modern schools at Williton, Dunkerton, Wiveliscombe and Minehead, and grammar school at Minehead, Wedmore, Taunton or Bridgwater. Educational facilities for adults were also not a feature of the rural parishes. Only about 15 per cent reported them, most frequently classes provided by the County Evening Institute or Workers Educational Association (WEA).

TABLE 6.7 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES IN 1950

| Parishes with:                              | Number | Per cent |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| No school                                   | 83     | 22.0     |
| At least one school                         | 295    | 78.0     |
| Junior school                               | 242    | 64.0     |
| Junior school <u>only</u>                   | 222    | 59.8     |
| All-age school                              | 55     | 14.6     |
| All-age school <u>only</u>                  | 46     | 12.4     |
| At least one secondary or<br>grammar school | 14     | 3.8      |
| Adult education classes                     | 55     | 14.6     |

Thus while opportunities for primary education appear to have been good in Somerset rural parishes in 1950, more specialised secondary and adult education facilities were scarcer and in all probability (since there is no survey information on places visited for adult education) largely restricted to the towns.

It is particularly important to set these findings within the context of changes in education brought about by the 1944 Education Act. Many of Somerset's schools were to close because they could not be brought up to the high standards required by the new building regulations. In addition, the Local Authorities' obligation to provide primary and secondary schooling in separate establishments and to supply school transport where necessary were especially significant. A number of all-age schools apparently remained at the time of Bracey's second survey. For example, schools at Enmore and Exmoor parishes were described as all-age schools in 1950 although both were scheduled to become junior schools under Somerset Education Committee's Development Plan for Primary and Secondary Education (1952 Amendment). The school in Exmoor parish was to be maintained although it had only 1 class of children. Here the headmistress, the respondent for the parish, commented:

As head teacher I should stress the fact that after leaving school at the early age of 14 or 15 years there is no opportunity for any further education.

The headmaster at West Bradley, where the all-age school was still operating in 1950, commented, 'school not yet reorganised'. This school was in fact due to close and the children were to attend a new County school at Baltonsborough. Other all age-schools had by 1950 become junior schools. At Crowcombe, for example, the all-age school reported in 1947 had become a junior school to be maintained by the Local Authority and older children were attending secondary schools elsewhere.

The separation of primary and secondary education, with the secondary schools being provided almost exclusively in the towns, attracted a good deal of comment from Bracey's respondents, many of whom were head teachers. At Crowcombe, in West Somerset, for example, the head had retired by 1950 but filled in the second questionnaire for the parish, commenting as follows:

I find that the senior children go to Williton Modern school, or Minehead Grammar school, or Bishop Fox's or Huish Grammar school in Taunton; it rather tends to end youth activities locally. Parents are apt to go to the towns where their children attend school, and shop and meet their children.

Other head teachers commented on the wider effects of school closure. At West Quantoxhead, also in West Somerset, where the junior school was to close altogether, the children were to go to East Quantoxhead and Kilve County School. The headmaster wrote:

Our village is I am afraid rapidly turning into one for retired and aged folk. I have only 12 children now in a school which 50 years ago numbered over 70 on books. The younger people with children are gradually being accommodated in the new housing at Williton ... Such changes in a few years tend to change the entire character of a village. I shall be retiring shortly after 20 years in this school and it is really sad to see the decline in village life and activities.

At Chillington the headmistress painted a gloomy picture of the village in the 1947 questionnaire:

The school is scheduled for closure...I am sorry to paint such a sombre picture of what seems to be a dying village (there are 15 pupils here - and the number will be down to 11 in 1948) but these are the facts.

But by 1950 things had changed. Although Chillington school had indeed been due to close under the 1952 Development Plan (the children were to attend a new school at Dowlish Wake), the new headmistress who was Bracey's respondent in the 1950 survey reported that the school now had a 'total roll [of] about 36 to 40' and served Dowlish Wake, Cudworth, Kingstone and Allowenshay.

Evidence from Stockland (now in Sedgemoor) seemed to suggest that school closure and subsequent transport of children to schools outside the parish did not necessarily bring decline:

We were once described in a Sunday paper as a dying village because our school is closed, but a bus takes our few children to Combwich or Storgursey; several go to Bridgwater and about half a dozen small ones to St Hilda's school, Otterhampton. We consider we are not large in numbers but very much alive in our social activities.

The existence of close links between local schools and the social life of the parishes, especially through the leadership of school teachers and the use of school

buildings for social activities, is one of the findings to emerge in the following sections.

## **6.5 'The General Standard of Social Provision'**

In this section halls and other meeting places and public open space available in the rural parishes of Somerset are considered along with the various social organisations which owned, managed, maintained, used, promoted and enjoyed them. Although Bracey's questionnaires asked about these various aspects of village social life in a number of distinct sections, it is in reality very difficult to separate, for example, the social club from the village hall it managed or the sports field from the cricket club which owned it. Activities such as dances and whist drives, separately itemised by Bracey, were run by a wide variety of groups, usually to raise funds to build new halls or to purchase new playing fields.

### **6.5.1 Halls and other 'places of assembly'**

The majority of Somerset's rural parishes - about 87 per cent - had at least one hall in 1950, and over a third, mostly those with relatively large populations, had more than one. The village hall was the most frequently cited hall type - 37 per cent of the halls detailed were village halls - followed by the church hall (21 per cent). However, halls run by schools and by organisations such as the Women's Institute (WI) or Royal British Legion were also numerous.

Of some interest is the extent of private ownership of halls and 'rooms in other buildings' which reveals something of the patronage of local social life by the landed gentry. At Wayford, near Chard, the respondent was the resident of Wayford Manor who, in answer to the question 'Other Public Rooms?' replied 'one room at my house', said to be the venue for, for example, fortnightly whist drives. A further example from Whitestaunton parish illustrates this point:

The parishioners have for many years been agitating for a village hall. At present they are granted the use of the Manor Room owned by Col. Couchman, for 4-6 functions during the winter. The school building is much too small. This is also owned by Col. Couchman, who has been very good in allowing the use of his property. This, of course, cannot be used at any time.

Significantly, a further comment on the same questionnaire read, 'Col. Couchman has filled in this form'.



A wealth of information from a large number of parishes records efforts to provide still more halls or to improve existing meeting places. At Huntspill (Sedgemoor), for example, the parishioners lacked space for social functions:

A social and sports club have recently purchased a hut and are raising money to enlarge and equip it as a social centre for the village. This will be an addition to the C of E hall and the Methodist schoolroom which already house four voluntary organisations.

And at Long Load, now in Yeovil District, the respondent commented:

There is a strong church hall committee which organises whist drives, dances, and a summer fete and winter fair each year. It is hoped to build a church hall and Sunday school so that the day school may not always have to be used.

Fund raising was often a gesture to mark the end of the war and to welcome home men returning home. At Kingsdon, near Langport :

There is a project on hand at the present to build a village hall, and over £1000 has been raised in two years. This is a Welcome Home Fund, and it was decided at a village meeting to build a hall and give ex-soldiers a life membership ticket, entitling them to go to public functions free, instead of making a distribution of money in the usual way.

Other 'places of assembly' investigated by Bracey included churches, public houses (including 'beer houses') and hotels, libraries and cinemas.

All but one of the rural parishes (Sharpham) had at least one church in 1950 and almost 65 per cent had more than one. There is no indication of the size of congregations or frequency of church services but the large number of church organisations mentioned elsewhere on Bracey's questionnaires suggests a considerable church-going public.

Eighty per cent of the parishes had a public house or hotel and these provided meeting places for many of the social organisations recorded, particularly those for men.

Libraries were widespread - well over three quarters of the parishes had one - although, as noted in Chapter 5, most of the parishes said to have 'branch libraries' in fact had fairly modest collections of books. In many places however, particularly those in which the library was based in a school, the adult reading

public was not very large. A comment from Chillington in Yeovil district, illustrates this point:

The school is scheduled for closure and, when that happens, it may be possible to convert the present building into a library (but at present, with half a dozen exceptions, we have no adult reading public).

Cinemas, too, were fairly widespread in the study area in 1950, being available in most of the towns of the area and in some of the better served rural parishes. In addition, 56 parishes reported some kind of cinema service, typically a filmshow once a week, perhaps more often in winter, held in a village hall.

#### 6.5.2. 'Local open space'

Many of the parishes apparently lacked open space facilities in 1947. Only 51 of the 377 parishes for which information was available (13.5 per cent) had a school playing field, about 20 per cent had a park or recreation ground, and surprisingly, perhaps, common land was not widely reported, occurring in only 19 per cent of the places surveyed.

However, though the respondents were at pains to point out that these could not accurately be described as parks, recreation grounds or playing fields, there were numerous cases in which local landowners, particularly farmers, provided fields for sports use. At Kingsdon, for example, it was noted that 'the children and young lads play in a field by kind permission of a farmer, although it is not technically a playing field'.

Particularly striking was the number of parishes in which the provision of a sports field, play ground or similar facility was a matter of some priority. At Wootton Courtnay (West Somerset), where a cricket club was already well established and there were hopes of starting a football club, the respondent commented, 'it is to be hoped, when purchase of the playing field [is] completed, to have bowls, tennis etc. It is a good field extending to almost 5 acres'. Similarly at Nunney, near Frome, land had been bought 'and vested in the Parish Council for a village playing field'.

In several places the playing field was intended as a war memorial. In Long Sutton (Yeovil) it was the case that:

A special committee - the Long Sutton Peace Memorial Committee - is at this time working to raise funds for ...playing fields. The site in fact has been purchased and in the autumn steps are being taken to lay out the playing fields.

In Kingston St Mary, near Taunton, there was a similar project:

As part of our local war memorial scheme we have a field of 3 acres or less which we are going to equip as a childrens' playground (when equipment is obtainable) and as a sports ground for the school children.

### **6.5.3 Social organisations: 'a healthy virile social life' ?**

In his questionnaires Bracey distinguished between social organisations for young people and those for adults. However, a further division is appropriate - that between males and females - since many of the groups were for boys or girls, men or women.

For young people, youth clubs were more numerous than, for example, scouts or guides. They tended to be organised on a parish basis while more specialised groups such as scout packs drew members from a number of different places. Youth clubs frequently met in school or church halls. Scouts and guides were more likely to have a hall of their own, although in many places they used the village hall. The scout pack at Stoke St Michael (Mendip) was less fortunate than most and had to make do with the vicarage garage.

Church organisations for young people were more common than those for adults but both types usually met in church halls. Of the other adult groups, the WI and Royal British Legion were most widespread, the WI meeting mainly in halls within the parish in which the branch was reported and the British Legion more often outside the parish, and often in a pub. The various sporting activities also emerged as a major feature in the social life of the rural parishes; cricket, football, rifle shooting and fishing were particularly widespread. Almost a third of the parishes had some kind of music or drama society, or a listening or discussion group, and parishes with larger populations had political clubs, mostly branches of the major political parties. In addition, nearly 83 per cent of parishes had either a parish council or a parish meeting in 1947. While no specific questions were asked about their activities, other parts of the 1947 questionnaire

gave some indication of these. In particular, parish councils were often responsible for efforts to raise funds to provide social or sporting facilities.

As well as the groups identified in Questions 21 to 24 of Bracey's 1947 questionnaire and referred to above, such diverse activities as rabbit, pig and food production clubs, gardening, beekeeping, chess clubs, craft groups (such as the smocking circle at Batcombe), wartime groups like the 'Welcome home the boys committee', and classes for needlework and dancing were widely reported.

In some cases the establishment of these groups would have been the result of outside intervention and their purpose was not merely social. For example, as Kempe reported in his contemporaneous study of a village in Herefordshire:

During the war an official from the Ministry of Agriculture gave a talk in Much Marcle on the advantages which a Pig Club could provide. Some members of the audience thereupon decided to form a club and there are now 50 members. A whist drive was held in order to obtain some working capital, and advantages are obtained from buying pig food in bulk with the discount for prompt payment. The Club meets once a month when members pay for their food (Kempe 1948/50 p.24).

To Bracey, dances and whist drives were telling indicators of social activity. In the 1947 questionnaire he asked whether these events were held regularly in the parish, by whom they were sponsored and where and how frequently they were held. Bracey's use of the word 'regular' is immediately thrown into question. As one respondent commented, 'though not "regular", dances and whist drives are very frequently held'. In fact nearly 55 per cent of the rural parishes had both dances and whist drives at least occasionally and a relatively high proportion, nearly 38 per cent of parishes, held both types of entertainment regularly, usually in village halls. These were popular events and people often travelled long distances to attend them. At Oare, on Exmoor, for example, there were 'very large dances, socials and whist parties ...folks come from all over the moor'.

The sponsorship of both dances and whist drives varied widely - from individuals (Mr and Mrs Pember at Berkeley) to organisations (the Church Entertainment Committee at Buckland Dinham, the Young Conservatives at Chewton Mendip, the Miners Welfare Committee at Chilcompton, the Pigeon Club at Holcombe, and the Nursing Association, Cricket Club and British Legion at Doultling, to name but a few). In a great number of places these activities provided not only entertainment but an important source of income for village projects. The respondent for Buckland Dinham put it in a nutshell:

The dances and whist drives are usually arranged to support church funds when the need for money arises. As the church is usually in need of money they are fairly frequent.

In fact dances and whist drives were most often held in the winter months. At Long Sutton, for example, whist drives were 'to be given up during the summer until haymaking and harvesting are over'. At a more general level it can be said that the winter was the time when most halls had their heaviest use.

During the winter months the village hall [at Carhampton] is opened every night (except Sundays) for the males of the village over 14 for games etc. such as billiards, table tennis, darts - unless the hall has been booked for a dance, meeting or whist drive.

And winter was the time at which parishes which did not have a hall felt this lack most keenly. At Godney, near Wells, where the parish council was pressing for the use of the redundant school building as a venue for social events, 'previous to the war, dances etc. were held on an average monthly during the six winter months'. The respondent went on, 'as I have pointed out to the authorities concerned, the use of the school for the village is the most important factor for the encouragement of social amenities, especially during the winter'.

## **6.6 Services and Social Life: 'Withstanding the Shock of Modern Forces'?**

This report of services and social and recreational facilities and organisations existing in Somerset in the immediate postwar period is based on a set of questions designed initially to provide an input to Bracey's calculations of indices of social provision and of centrality. In fact very little of this information was used by Bracey, and it is clear that the material collected additionally provides a glimpse of rural life over a wide geographical area.

Several themes seem to run through these results. Firstly, in the case of services, it is apparent that for nearly all the facilities examined there is variation by both parish population and district, more populous places and those located in the north of the old county of Somerset, now south Avon, tending to contain more numerous services than elsewhere. Shops, professional and health services, especially, clustered in the largest rural centres, as Bracey described.

Secondly, although respondents made many remarks about, for example, public utilities and public transport, it was perhaps the place of the school in village social life that attracted most comment.

Thirdly, and of relevance to current debates on the possible 'clustering' of rural settlements as a planning strategy, there was a common tendency for parishes to work together in groups to provide both social clubs and facilities of other kinds, and a number of examples illustrate this:

The parish of Alford is very small, and in many cases Lovington, (which is another small parish about one and a half miles away) and Alford work together eg. Women's Institutes, cricket club, youth movement, and the school forms a centre, as Lovington, Alford and Hornblotton each have a third share in it ...Castle Cary is another centre, and in many things Alford is grouped with Castle Cary eg. British Legion, Red Cross, etc..

Similarly,

Thurlbear, Orchard Portman and Stoke St Mary are run as one village. The Rector is in charge of the three parishes. Stoke St Mary has the hall, cricket club, public and police station...

In some groupings of parishes one village stood out as a centre for the surrounding area. At Batcombe (Mendip) the respondent commented:

The village is a centre for many others. The youth club has members from Wanstrow and Upton Noble and our dances attract 200, with 30-40 at dancing class.

At Bickenhall, near Taunton, the parish room served the adjoining parishes of Staple Fitzpaine and Curland, all of which were under the Rector of Staple Fitzpaine. This was a sociable district:

There is a vigorous Women's Institute held in the parish room which is attended by the adjoining parishes and is known as Bickenhall and District Women's Institute. There has recently been formed a Drama Club. They have only given one performance, but with great success. The British Legion is going strong and its headquarters are at Staple; again this is for the three parishes, as is also the youth club which is a mixed one for boys and girls. Dances and whist drives are held in the Parish Room at fairly regular intervals and there is a wonderful spirit of cooperation between all the inhabitants of the parishes to make every event a success.

Fourthly, it is apparent that while some parishes were particularly lively others struggled to provide the most basic social activities. Problems arose, for example, in parishes with a widely scattered rural populations.

Simonsbath [in the parish of Exmoor] is not sufficiently populated to form any societies - there could be a community centre provided that it could be organised so all ages could be catered for. There is decided interest and a 'latent' talent in music, drama and dancing, but regular meetings are difficult owing to long journeys and difficult country, and very rough weather experienced.

Transport to social activities was a problem in certain parishes, but rural residents seemed willing to undertake quite difficult journeys for the sake of an evening out. The comment from Otterford (Taunton Deane) was typical of several:

Dances are frequently (once a month or so) held...at the village hall which is in Bishopswood. The young people walk or cycle up to 5 miles to dances and the Evening Institute which is held at Otterford School.

Above all, although this may be to some extent a result of Bracey's choice of respondents, the role of key individuals in promoting and organising various activities and the ways in which this role appeared to be changing in the late 1940s are apparent.

There is evidence from a number of the questionnaires that vicars, in particular, were expected to provide social leadership. At Enmore, near Bridgwater, the respondent reported that a new rector had just arrived: 'I feel sure that he will try to improve the social amenities of the parish. The late Rector was 85 years of age and had poor health'. Both Winsham, near Chard, and Weston in Gordano, close to Bristol, lamented the loss of their vicars.

The Vicar of [Winsham] parish died in February 1947 aged 84. A new one has been offered, and has accepted, the living, and it is hoped the social life of the village will revive with his coming. The youth club and boy scouts once flourished but have lapsed for want of leaders.

Weston in Gordano's respondent commented in a similar vein:

During the war, under the late Rector who died in October 1945, the village was united. There were ARP services, fire service with trailer pump, special constables and members of Nursing and St. Johns Ambulance Brigade who were attached to Portishead. Had he lived various youth services were to be revived. The village lacks a leader now.

For their part, vicars, and to a certain extent headteachers, were aware of their responsibilities. Bracey's contact for West Bradley (Mendip) had previously been the headmistress of Baltonsborough School, 'where for 18 years' [she states frankly] 'I took the lead in the social life of the village'. In addition to setting up

a hall fund she 'formed a very strong branch of the Women's Legion which is run on the lines of a social club and WI combined'. She was obviously about to start on West Bradley. As she went on, 'West Bradley has none of these up to the present and shows very little desire for social life of any kind'. However, 'I am still Chairman of the Baltonsborough committees and hope to interest West Bradley in the same'.

Several of these pillars of the community seemed to be battling to inject some social spirit into their respective parishes. The Vicar of Cothelstone wrote at some length:

When I first came here I tried to form a Sunday School but attendances (of 13 children) were so spasmodic with no support from parents that I gave it up. My predecessor had no success either. Apart from the whist evenings which are popular I think the bulk of the inhabitants are quite content with their radios, an occasional 'talkie' at Taunton, and the men enjoy a 'glass' at the 2 or 3 pubs in Bishops Lydeard.

The role of local landowners or squires in patronising the social life of a parish has been touched upon above. In many cases the provision of a suitable building or room was perhaps more usual than close involvement in the organisation of activities, but at Butleigh Wootton, near Wells, at least, the parishioners seemed particularly dependent on the local squire:

Butleigh Wootton estate is still owned by Lord St Audries and comprises 5 farms and about 30 cottages, with three privately owned houses. It is quite possible that before long some village activities will be started but for so many years the populace has depended on the squire and the inhabitants have not yet found their feet since the squire died and the court has been empty...

Such arrangements were obviously not very satisfactory. There were signs of change and in some parishes both the tendency to rely on the church and the longstanding patronage by the local gentry were being called into question, while at the same time broader national changes were having an effect locally. A long letter from Crowcombe (West Somerset) illustrates the mood of change, as this extract shows:

With modern transport and farmers etc. having cars it has tended [sic] to end this idea of a village community around the local church. Too, the welfare state has tended to bring to an end that link between the village folk and landlords whereby charities, gifts of coal/blankets used to bring people together. I think this is a good thing.



Overall, the information on social life reveals that the parishes varied widely from the very rural and isolated, with local residents too few in number, too widely scattered or too busy on the farms to run clubs, or else heavily dependent on the local squire or vicar for leadership, to those with flourishing social groups, often run by committees drawn from several neighbouring parishes, making ambitious plans for still more halls, playing fields or events.

In general the findings echo Bracey's for Wiltshire where he found that:

in certain villages the general standard of social provision is much below that which is usually considered desirable for satisfactory living. It is equally clear that some villages have developed healthy, virile social life in spite of relative isolation, small numbers, and a general lack of those amenities usually considered essential to such growth (Bracey in his 1947 letter to respondents).

Together, the information presented here provides a sound basis for investigating responses to 'the shock of modern forces' in a follow-up study conducted 30 years later, in 1980, described in the following chapter.

### **PART III THIRTY YEARS ON : THE 1980 SURVEY**

The following two chapters describe the design, execution and findings of the survey intended as the follow-up to Bracey's early postwar work. Chapter 7 describes the research methodology, stressing the interactive nature of the approach, while Chapter 8 presents a snapshot of the parishes in 1980 and draws some contrasts and comparisons with the 1950 picture. These chapters inform the more analytical work reported later, in Part IV.

## **7. DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE 1980 SURVEY : AN INTERACTIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

This chapter describes the follow up to Bracey's surveys, carried out by the present author during 1980 and 1981. While the major aspects of survey design stem directly from Bracey's, the follow-up study adopted a more explicitly interactive approach to the work, and was carried out in close cooperation with parish representatives and other local agencies.

### **7.1 Aspects of the Survey Design**

The study from which the data used in this thesis have been extracted had the following formal objectives:

- (a) To monitor changes in public services, commercial facilities, professional services and social organisations over the period 1947-51 to 1980-81 for the 395 parishes in Somerset and Avon for which full information exists;
- (b) To relate these changes to the broad context of economic and demographic change in rural England and to the spatial reorganisation which has accompanied them; and
- (c) To identify the sequence of service withdrawals in rural areas.

This was to be accomplished, following the re-examination of Bracey's historical source material, by means of a follow-up survey which would allow the generation of variables directly consistent with those derived from the 1950 information and collected in the same kind of way. The design of the survey, to be conducted in 1980, was, therefore, subject to a number of constraints and several major features of the research design stem directly from Bracey's methodology.

#### **7.1.1 The questionnaires**

The first concerns the questionnaires themselves. The use of a simple reproduction of one of Bracey's own questionnaires, assuming that a decision could be made as to whether the 1947 or 1950 version was most suitable, was not seriously considered. Many of Bracey's questions gave rise to problems of interpretation, as indicated in Chapter 5, and it was desirable to find ways of rewording them without bringing about the collection of quite different information.

To ensure a useful response there was, in any case, a need to pose questions of relevance to present-day conditions in the parishes. It was decided to request more detail on, for example, employment and voluntary organisations. Further, Bracey analysed his questionnaires by hand. Design of the updating survey was carried out in the knowledge that the data, mostly categorical in nature, would be subject to computer analysis; the structure and layout of the form are therefore quite different from Bracey's.

It was also necessary to try to define more precisely than did Bracey the geographical areas to which the questionnaires referred, and so a map of the parish was included on the front of each one (see Appendix 8). Lastly, the aims of the updating exercise were much broader than those of Bracey. He was concerned specifically to construct his indices of social provision and centrality and to arrive at a hierarchy of settlements, although he hoped that these would prove helpful in identifying key aspects of rural life. The later study was to focus on the preparation of a 'then and now' picture of rural services and social activity, going on to examine ways in which this picture had changed, although the lines of explanation to be sought might be similar to those touched upon by Bracey. Thus the 1980 questionnaire necessarily represented something of a compromise.

#### **7.1.2 The respondents and other contacts**

Secondly, since it was the intention to replicate Bracey's work, a further constraint was provided by his choice of parish respondents - usually the vicar or the headteacher of the local school. While the dangers of bias inherent in seeking out 'pillars of the community' as respondents were recognised, the information collected would be 'factual' in nature, requiring respondents to have a good knowledge of their local areas and to be able to draw on the local knowledge of others if their own proved inadequate. Further, the questionnaire would be time consuming to complete. Thus a premium was placed on the motivation and reliability of the respondents. Most of those contacted for the 1980 survey were parish councillors or members of village hall committees or of the Womens' Institute who filled in the forms in cooperation with their committees.

Thirdly, because of the nature of the information to be collected - for example on health services and schools, and because of the need to find a means of cross checking the data collected via the questionnaires, a wide variety of other sources,

particularly the local authorities, would have to be tapped and contacts established. In addition, then, not only did the project present a valuable opportunity to examine the processes currently at work in the two counties; it would be possible to provide feedback to both respondents and professionals contributing to the survey and perhaps to make some positive contribution to the local pattern of service provision; even, following Bracey's example, to the 'quality of life'. Time was therefore invested in establishing a network of contacts throughout the study area, a network which remains in operation.

### 7.1.3 Action research ?

Since the nature of the project precluded any kind of sample survey along statistical lines it was decided instead to focus on building a close working relationship with the respondents, whom it was necessary to contact personally, so as to generate, it was hoped, reliable and detailed quantitative information from what was to be essentially a qualitative research approach.

The problem of 'investigator effect' was of some concern, particularly in the risk that the project might impact upon the very processes which it aimed to measure, since by asking the respondents about rural services, inviting them to think about the issues involved and perhaps, for example, inviting them to judge whether they were better or worse off in a particular parish than elsewhere, the project would be bound to raise 'local consciousness' to a certain extent. However, instead of attempting to minimise or discount this effect, as Bracey perhaps did, it was decided instead to build upon it in a positive way to improve response rates and the quality of the information collected.

Concerns of this nature led at an early stage to a broader consideration of the role of the social scientist in carrying out projects of this type, and it is appropriate here to turn briefly to a consideration of the implications of adopting an interactive approach to survey design and implementation.

Fairweather and Tornatsky (1977) in Experimental Methods for Social Policy Research commented that:

Historically, scientists have perceived their social role as that of inactive observers of social and physical nature. It is a role that emphasises detachment, an objective search for 'truth' and an explicit disdain for applied areas of human knowledge. (Fairweather & Tornatsky 1977 p.15).

This traditional role, they argue, is constantly reinforced by the scientific community, who seem to hold the view that 'pure research' has some intrinsic value of its own but that it may somehow be instrumental in bringing about change in society when it is made available to the applied technologists. There is evidence to suggest, however, that if researchers are concerned to see change for the better, and particularly if they are anxious to avoid the misuse of their research findings by those who wish to use them in an applied sense, they should take a more active role.

Laue (1978) argues, more cynically, that all human action (including the doing of research) is both value-laden, in that it requires choices among alternatives, and political in its effects:

Any social scientist claiming to be 'neutral' in anything other than the strictest technical sense is naive, misinformed and/or devious (Laue 1978 p.172-3).

In an extension of this argument Laue asserts that all the activities of the social scientist are a form of intervention. All intervention is value-directed and there are no neutral intervenors. Far better to recognise that the role of the social scientist is both value-laden and interventionist.

Arguments like these are a characteristic feature of those social scientists who profess themselves practitioners of 'action research'. Action research, which itself encompasses a number of research styles (for example, consumer research, operational research, designing and improving management systems), aims:

not simply to provide a detached assessment of some aspect of performance, but rather to set up a dynamic interaction between the social scientist and the practitioner as part of the ongoing experimental process (Lees 1975 p.4)

According to Clark (1972):

action research is a type of applied social research differing from other varieties in the immediacy of the researcher's involvement in the action process. It aims both to contribute to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework.

This is not to abandon social science skills such as rigorous questionnaire design and the use of statistical methods of analysis. It is to accept the responsibility of contributing to organisational improvement and simultaneously studying the process.

There are, of course, considerable methodological problems in research of this nature, often arising from the different points of view held by people with whom the researcher involves himself. The Home Office funded Community Development Project (see Town 1973 for a discussion) provides many examples of the possible pitfalls. But this is not to deny that certain aspects of an action research approach may be helpful in research projects of a more traditional type. And although the approach is more usually associated with work carried out during the 1970s it may certainly be argued that Bracey, in his close links with the early postwar planning process, was engaged in action research of a sort.

#### **7.1.4 Boundary changes**

Another aspect of the survey design to give cause for concern was the choice of the civil parish rather than the village as the unit of data collection. The parish was chosen mainly because of the need to compare the 1980 results with Bracey's and because parish boundaries are relatively well defined while those of villages are not. Also, other data required in the analysis, notably the census returns, are available for parishes. However, the collection of data on a parish basis is problematical in several respects, as Bracey acknowledged. One particular problem is worth noting here.

Any historical study based on local authority areas seems bound to encounter the problem of boundary changes which occur between stages of the research. The problem is likely to be worse the longer the time span covered. The most fundamental boundary change to take place in the study area was that associated with the creation of the new County of Avon in 1974. However, the effects of this at parish level were relatively minor compared with several earlier changes, mainly to deal with the effects of urban growth from, for example, Taunton and Yeovil, or to reflect the growth of individual villages. The growth of Peasedown St John, designated a parish in 1955 and taking in areas of Camerton, Dunkerton and Wellow, is a case in point. The practical research problems arising from the boundary changes which occurred between 1947 and 1980 and the operational decisions taken in order to deal with them are described in detail in Mills (1981a), reproduced as Appendix 3.

## 7.2 The pilot study

A version of the questionnaire for the 1980 re-survey was tested in 11 parishes of south Avon during April and May 1980. This exercise, together with the results, is reported fully in Mills (1981b) which includes a copy of the questionnaire and of letters sent to the respondents. The questionnaire contained a map of the parish to be surveyed, but sufficient forms were supplied to enable the respondent to complete one for each separate village in the parish. As the covering letter explained:

In our survey we wish ultimately to record all the services and organisations in each parish ... However, many of the parishes contain more than one village and we are anxious not to lose the distinctions between these, while also recording more scattered services which lie outside the main villages. We should therefore be most grateful if you could fill in one of the attached questionnaires for each village or hamlet in the parish of ..... [the name of the parish was entered here] that is, .....[and the names of villages here], making a note of any more scattered services, such as isolated garages or pubs, which exist in the parish.

A stamped addressed envelope was enclosed and a target return date specified. It was stressed that comments on the method of data collection and on the questions themselves would be especially welcome.

The sample of pilot parishes was not statistically representative, their selection depending on administrative considerations and on the ability to contact respondents who were willing and able to help. Nevertheless a useful geographical spread of parishes, demonstrating a variety of conditions, was obtained, from North Stoke, which had few services and was said to be 'a little lonely', to Backwell with its busy shopping centre and growing population.

In one of the parishes two respondents were recruited so that some check of the information could be made. The two returned answers that were broadly the same, although there were small variations in detail, especially on the topics of shop closures and mobile shops, as Mills (1981b) describes. Other slight differences were apparent in the answers on social organisations, and these probably reflected differences of personal interest on the part of the respondents. For example, one seemed to have greater knowledge of church activities than the other. The pilot survey report went on to recommend that at least two respondents



be located in each parish in the main survey to provide an informal way of checking the data. However, it was also apparent that field checks on the accuracy of the information, and also verification of the location of services of various kinds using information from the providers of these services, would be advisable.

Copies of the questionnaire were sent for comment to various local organisations including the County Planning Departments of both Avon and Somerset and the Avon and Somerset Community Councils but no substantial changes were suggested. In keeping with the interactive style of the research a summary of the pilot survey results was made available to all those who had taken part and their comments noted in finalising the design of the questionnaire for the main survey.

On the whole the response to the pilot survey was enthusiastic. All those contacted replied, and the respondents went out of their way to solicit information from friends and neighbours or, more formally, from local employers, where they felt their own knowledge was lacking. Several of them made helpful suggestions on the design of the questionnaire, commenting on areas of difficulty or ambiguity, although these proved to be few in number. Others made suggestions about further subjects for study. In the event the only question to require re-design on the basis of the pilot survey findings was that for postal services and shops; there was a need to clarify the information on post offices which were also general stores, and there were so many instances of shops which provided a very wide range of goods and services that instead of asking for the number of grocers, butchers or other shop types it seemed more expedient to ask for a list of named shops and an indication of all the services each shop supplied. It was anticipated that this would work well in places which had up to, perhaps, 10 shops, but that larger shopping centres might require field visits to avoid placing too onerous a burden on the respondents. The revised questions are shown in Appendix 8.

Brief analysis of the replies to the pilot survey uncovered several major issues which were to emerge in later analysis of the main survey. Even in this limited exercise there were indications that issues raised by the respondents to Bracey's survey as long ago as 1947 remained in the forefront of concern. Public transport, for example, was a matter for extensive comment, although the pilot survey returns revealed a greater variety of 'alternative' local provision than did the 1947/50 forms.

Other answers however, gave an indication of major areas of change. In retailing, the decline of the specialist food shops and their replacement by single outlets selling a variety of goods was suggested by the pilot survey returns, as was the general lack of retail type services such as laundries. Only the hairdresser seemed to be flourishing in 1980. Respondents made frequent references to the difficulties faced by small rural retailers, while at the same time reporting, in answer to the question 'To which main centre (or centres) outside the village do local people go to do their weekly shopping?', that supermarkets on the fringe of Bristol were popular shopping locations. It was recognised that this question, included to provide a comparison with Bracey's questions on 'places commonly visited', was unlikely to provide reliable detailed data because of the inability of the respondents to speak on behalf of the population of a whole village or parish in what is essentially a very personal activity. However, since this question asked respondents to distinguish between shopping trips made by car and those made by public transport it was anticipated that it would provide some additional transport information and responses to the pilot survey revealed that this was indeed likely to be the case.

The 'catch all' question on problems, 'What are the most serious problems in the village?', not one of Bracey's concerns (although his respondents quite often wrote of them anyway), was included specifically to give respondents the opportunity to voice any complaints they might have, having first, it was hoped, provided the data needed for the comparative study. However, the pilot survey returns suggested that this question might generate more useful information than might have been expected. The answers from the 11 parishes fell into 4 broad groups: (a) transport, (b) deficiencies in the supply of retail facilities, (c) problems facing younger members of the population (particularly in relation to housing, jobs and social life), and (d) problems for the elderly, mainly related to their mobility. Each of these topics has received fairly wide coverage in the literature and is deserving of further study on its own. Encouragingly, however, keen as they were to point to local problems, the respondents were also at pains to stress that in most rural parishes 'an old fashioned spirit of good will' still prevails.

One further point is worth making with regard to the pilot survey. It pointed, at an early stage, not necessarily to massive service loss, as had been suggested by such publications as The Decline of Rural Services (Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils 1978), but to organisational changes in service provision and to the effects of national legislation on service supply. Contact would clearly be needed with the agencies providing services - for example with the police and

health and education authorities in the public sector and with representatives of private sector providers such as Chambers of Commerce, estate agents and banks. This contact would be needed not simply to verify information provided by respondents in the parishes but to interpret patterns of service change observed between 1950 and 1980.

However the main aim of the pilot survey was to facilitate the design of a questionnaire which would allow the updating of information collected in Bracey's early surveys and which might be administered with some confidence in all the rural parishes of south Avon and Somerset. In this respect it proved to be a useful exercise.

### **7.3 The Main Survey of Avon and Somerset**

Links were established with the Community Councils of both Avon and Somerset at an early stage in the project, primarily to learn of potential respondents since the Community Councils work closely with parish councils and with such local organisations as Womens Institutes. The lack of systematic local information of the type to be collected and the considerable practical implications which this work might have immediately became apparent. Although the planning departments of both counties had carried out various data gathering exercises, most of the information related to only a few facilities, mainly shops. Surveys carried out as part of the structure planning process (described later, in Chapter 10) focussed on one service or another and were not always parish based.

A major exception was a Community Facilities survey, organised jointly by Somerset Community Council and Somerset County Planning Department. When contact was first established with Somerset Community Council this survey was still in progress and no analysis of this information had been carried out. Lacking the resources to do this themselves, the Community Council made the original questionnaires available for use in updating the information from Bracey's studies. The sections which follow (drawn from Mills 1981c) describe this survey in some detail and indicate the use made of the information it provided in preparing data for the rural parishes of Somerset in 1980.

### 7.3.1 The Thatch community facilities survey

Early in 1979 the Community Council for Somerset and officers of Somerset County Planning Department mounted a joint information-gathering exercise via the Community Council's magazine Thatch. The magazine contained a pull-out questionnaire on community facilities (reproduced in Appendix 9), to be returned to the editor. As the preliminaries on the first page of the form indicated, it was hoped that a completed questionnaire would be received 'from a representative of every Parish Council in Somerset'.

For its part, the Community Council aimed to collect more detailed material than had been gleaned during the preparation of the Standing Conference of Rural Community Council's (1978) report, based on survey work in the south west of England, including Somerset. From the County Council's point of view the distribution of the questionnaire was very much part of the public participation phase of the structure planning process for the county, and the first page of the form contained a statement of the County Council's concern with 'the problem of declining rural services', together with a description of the structure plan's proposed settlement policy 'designed to tackle these problems'.

To the county planning department the survey represented a serious attempt to learn more about services in the rural parishes. It was seen as part of a continuing process of data collection and revision, feeding into the policy monitoring activities of the County Council. It is on the question of what the questionnaire was intended to measure that one may take issue with the planners who designed the form.

They stated:

It is proposed to undertake this survey on a regular basis and over time the results will indicate the extent to which rural deprivation is a growing problem, requiring a review of the Structure Plan policies.

It may be argued that the Thatch questionnaire was in no way designed to measure the extent of 'rural deprivation' as it is most usually defined since the form was simply a device for obtaining a record of the facilities available in each parish or village, although the questions towards the end of the form invited comments on 'problems'. In fact an important influence on the questionnaire design was the desire to collect information compatible with that collected by the

Planning Department in a number of earlier, less comprehensive, surveys of facilities, in particular of shops.

The term 'rural deprivation' is more appropriately applied to individuals rather than to communities, and the first paragraph of the preliminaries to the questionnaire, with its mention of the people most affected by the problems of declining rural services, indicates that the planners appreciated this. Yet the planners' influence on the affluence or well being of individuals is limited and so their approach is characteristically restricted to fields in which they have powers to act - transport, services, housing, and, to some extent, industry and employment.

More generally, the note accompanying the questionnaire offered little encouragement to the rural settlements, referring to 'the restriction upon resources' that would 'limit the scope for action', and the continuing emphasis on urban areas in bidding for resources was readily apparent.

There are problems in calculating a response rate to the Thatch survey. As a first step the Community Council aimed for a response from parish councils, all of which receive copies of Thatch magazine. However, individual subscribers to the Community Council and all village hall committees also receive Thatch so that the initial contacts for the survey were wider than parish councils alone. Response was slow and in an effort to increase the coverage the Field Officer contacted WI branches throughout the county, giving special attention to places which had not yet responded. Although the WI response was apparently good, there was a shortage of the printed survey forms and the limited resources of the Community Council allowed the photocopying of only the centre double page of the form, the section judged to be of most value since this asked questions of a mainly factual nature about services in the parishes. Thus many WI members were denied the opportunity to comment on parish problems, shortages of facilities, housing development, self help schemes and employment, although a number of them wrote letters commenting on conditions in their parishes. The WI branches did not receive the explanatory note accompanying the questionnaire, although the Field Officer explained the purpose of the survey to them.

The Community Council also used the short photocopied version of the questionnaire as a reminder to those parish councils which had not responded to the initial survey, and some of them used this more limited set of questions in

replying, so that some parish councils, too, did not answer the questions on the last page of the form.

There is a further problem in that although the questionnaire was intended to reach parish councils the questions themselves were phrased in terms of villages. This was against the wishes of the Community Council who would have preferred the questions to be asked on a parish basis. In general, unless the respondents indicated the areas to which they were referring the area covered by each set of replies cannot be known for certain.

Very few parishes returned a questionnaire by the suggested closing date of 25th May 1979, but forms continued to arrive at the offices of the Community Council throughout 1979 and early 1980. Thus there is a problem in establishing a date at which the findings in general could be said to apply, although the date at which each parish return was made is recorded. The problem is common to all the findings in this project, Bracey's included.

By September 1980 replies had been received from about 80 per cent of the rural parishes in the county, most of them completed by parish councils or by WI branches, and no analysis of the returns had been carried out, although the Community Council found them a valuable source of information on individual parishes or villages. The planning department of Somerset County Council asked only for the results collected in the middle section of the questionnaire, apparently having no interest in the more qualitative questions on the back page (arguably those which could point to problems of rural deprivation) regarding them as properly the concern of the Community Council.

### **7.3.2 The Thatch questionnaires and the main survey**

The Community Council made the Thatch survey questionnaires available for use in the present project and an assessment of their content was carried out using a sample of the forms. Detailed comments on the questions and the responses to them are contained in Mills (1981c).

It seemed that in spite of the problems of the research aims and coverage noted above, and a number of problems of detail regarding the design of certain of the questions, the returns contained much of the information required to update Bracey's data. Also, since it was necessary, in following up Bracey's work, to contact, among others, parish councillors and WI members, it was felt to be

unwise to re-survey all those parishes so recently approached, thus possibly evoking a poor response. It was concluded that the returns of the Thatch Community Facilities Survey represented a useable data source, and that, with the exception of a 5 per cent sample of parishes to be re-surveyed as a check on accuracy, the fresh survey should be limited to those parishes not covered by the Thatch questionnaire, a total of 80 parishes in Somerset and 82 in south Avon.

Following the pilot survey of 11 parishes in south Avon, the south Avon parishes were successfully surveyed during August and September 1980. The Somerset parishes (84 of them rather than 80, since a number of people who had heard of the work volunteered to survey their own parishes afresh despite the fact that the Thatch survey had already covered them) were contacted during the period September to December 1980. A total of 235 questionnaires was distributed over 82 parishes. There were in general two respondents per parish and each respondent was sent sufficient questionnaires to cover every distinct settlement in the parish (where the extent of each settlement was in doubt respondents were consulted about how the parish might be 'divided up' for the purpose of data collection), together with a stamped addressed envelope. Returned questionnaires and other material were stored in specially designed parish envelopes.

The questionnaires from the 5 per cent sample of parishes selected as a check on the Thatch returns provided information which matched well with that already collected. However, confidence in the Thatch survey began to decrease as the coding progressed. The very detailed systematic work involved in this process (as compared with the more rapid assessment of a relatively small number of forms previously carried out) revealed that an unacceptably large number of the Thatch forms were of doubtful validity. It was therefore judged necessary to proceed to a third survey phase, carried out during March and April 1981, to obtain better information for a further 89 Somerset parishes.

Of the total of 395 parishes included in the update of Bracey's surveys, 143 (36 per cent) were covered by the Thatch survey only. These are listed in Appendix 9. There is considerable variation by district. No Thatch questionnaires were used in the Avon districts of Wansdyke and Woodspring, but in Mendip and Yeovil 50 per cent of the parishes included in the 1980 analysis are covered only by information collected via the Thatch survey. In Sedgemoor and West Somerset the figures are 48 and 46 per cent of parishes respectively, while in Taunton Deane a slightly smaller percentage of parishes, 26 per cent, relies on the Thatch survey

only. In analysing the survey returns it is apparent that much of the missing data refers to parishes for which only Thatch survey information is available.

All the remaining parishes were covered by our own or by both surveys. As detailed work on the findings progressed it became apparent that the information available from even these 143 parishes was not of the same detailed quality as that collected through our own efforts. Once the 1980 re-survey work had begun it became clear that the willingness of local residents to respond to the survey had been underestimated and that the fear of evoking a poor response by contacting the same people twice over had been unfounded. The third survey phase ran especially smoothly, so that it was regretted that it had not been extended to all 395 places. However, by the time this conclusion had been reached there were insufficient resources (of both time and finance) to accomplish this, especially since the 143 Thatch responses had by then already been coded.

Where the Thatch survey proved to be extremely valuable was at the questionnaire design stage, since it pointed to the sorts of issues of particular relevance to the rural residents as well as to the Community Council and County Council. It suggested those questions which were most difficult to phrase or which might pose problems of interpretation. This meant that questions on, for example, travelling shops could be worded so as to avoid some of the pitfalls apparent in the Thatch survey, which thus acted as a kind of pilot to our own.

Additionally, the comments made by some of the respondents to the Thatch survey proved very helpful. Since the survey was essentially 'by invitation', many of those filling in the questionnaire must have been highly motivated to reply. It was therefore with some surprise that it was found that many of the replies seemed to have been hastily completed, with many of the questions left blank. Without a considerable 'back up' effort by the planners it was left to the Community Council, with much good will but with limited resources, to try to improve the responses. Overall, the WI branches, approached more personally by the Field Officer, seem to have gone to greater trouble than the parish councillors in their efforts to provide accurate and complete information, but they were denied the chance to comment on those questions which the first contacts in the survey, usually parish councils, most often left unanswered.

It is a measure of the local communities' need for information of the type collected in this update of Bracey's work that the Community Council, lacking computing facilities of their own, in 1980 entrusted their entire survey effort to



the University of Bristol Geography department for analysis. Particularly valuable was the assistance of a Community Council volunteer based in Taunton who coded some of the data. His impressionistic account of problems in the rural parishes, based largely on the responses to questions on the last page of the Thatch questionnaire, appeared in an article in a later issue of Thatch (Smith 1980 p.23).

Thus, although it may be concluded that it might have been better to survey the parishes afresh, using the Thatch returns as a check on our own information rather than as a primary data source, there remained a strong obligation to inform Somerset Community Council of the findings.

It should be noted that in 1983 the County Planning Department, using a form based on the Thatch questionnaire, carried out a further survey of facilities to which 274 parishes responded. Their analysis took account of findings from the middle section of the 1979 Thatch forms and referred also to survey work undertaken by the County Council in 1966. A summary of the findings appeared in Thatch (Gray 1984). This concluded that while losses of facilities appeared 'less dramatic' in Somerset than in such counties as Cornwall and Devon there was 'no room for complacency': 'the County Council proposes to monitor the situation through regular surveys' (Gray 1984 p.6).

### **7.3.3 Extending the work to Northavon**

Early in 1980, Avon Community Council expressed an interest in extending the parish survey to the greater part of the County of Avon. They were joined in this by officers of Avon County Planning Department, themselves aware that information on the location of facilities of various types, collected by the County in 1976, was in need of updating. In June 1980 agreement was reached to proceed to a joint survey of the rural parishes of the districts of Northavon and Kingswood (not part of Bracey's Somerset study area) with the proviso that this should not begin until the survey work in south Avon and Somerset was complete. (While contacts with the planners were part of the research design there was no historical precedent for such close cooperation and there was a concern that in the study area itself the university should remain clearly detached from the local planning authority). It was agreed that the same questionnaires would be used, extra copies being printed by the County Council, while the Community Council would locate parish contacts and administer the survey in cooperation with the university. It was agreed that this new survey phase would begin in mid

September 1980. Returns would be made to the Community Council, who would then supply to the planners only the information on facilities. Names and addresses of respondents, comments made to the Community Council or the university, and details of local firms, in particular, remained confidential to the Community Council and university and were not to be supplied to the County Council. It was further agreed that the university would allow the planning department access to the corresponding information on facilities for the south Avon parishes, with similar safeguards covering the confidentiality of certain of the information.

By pooling resources in this way it was possible to cover the large district of Northavon in a short space of time. The district of Kingswood was more difficult to investigate because much of it is urban in character, forming part of the outskirts of Bristol, but here too there was some progress. By January 1981 the Countryside Committee of the Community Council (of which the author remains a member) heard that an 85 per cent response had been achieved from the Northavon and Kingswood questionnaires. It was noted that, in addition to the replies to the questions themselves, much additional information had been offered by the respondents, especially on rural employment issues. And especially valuable to the Community Council were the detailed descriptions of self-help schemes in the villages. Eventually all 37 target parishes in Northavon returned information. The questionnaires were brought to the university for coding (although the coding itself was carried out by Community Council volunteers) and the information added to that for the study area.

#### **7.3.4 Survey responses and data preparation**

Table 7.1 summarises the 1980 survey activity and indicates the high responses achieved through this method of survey. Rates of over 80 per cent (calculated on the basis of respondents contacted rather than parishes) were typical, as the Progress Reports to the funding body indicated.

Data preparation was a very time consuming task, extending over a number of months. The coding scheme is reproduced in Appendix 10. The questionnaires, designed for self completion, were not pre-coded. Although there were several questions to which standardised responses could be made, most were expected to generate very varied replies. Also, the questionnaires were fairly lengthy (though the reduced size made them seem less daunting) and it was considered that the addition of numbered codes might discourage the respondents and thus jeopardise

TABLE 7.1 1980 SURVEY SUMMARY SHEET

|           | A<br>Total rural<br>parishes | B<br>Parishes<br>contacted | C<br>Parishes<br>returning | D<br>Usable returns<br>from Community<br>Facilities<br>survey | E<br>Parishes<br>surveyed<br>through<br>field visits | F<br>Total parishes<br>surveyed<br>(cols. C,D,E) |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Somerset  | 315                          | 173                        | 166                        | 143                                                           | 4                                                    | 313**                                            |
| S. Avon   | 82                           | 82                         | 80                         | -                                                             | 2                                                    | 82                                               |
| Northavon | 37                           | 38*                        | 37                         | -                                                             | -                                                    | 37                                               |
| Total     | 434                          | 293                        | 283                        | 143                                                           | 6                                                    | 432                                              |

Notes

\* Parish of Patchway judged to be essentially urban in character and discarded.

\*\* Parishes of Wiveliscombe and Wiveliscombe Without were amalgamated and made one return, and the same was true of Seavington St Mary and St Michael. The number of rural parishes was therefore reduced from 315 to 313.

the response rate. In this we may have underestimated the respondents. With hindsight it might have been more efficient to precode the forms, although this would have meant still greater divergence from Bracey's original designs.

Once coded, the data were keyed in to the university's computer and then 'cleaned' using both computer methods for carrying out logical checks and the voluminous secondary data provided by such varied bodies as local authorities, the police, the library services, the building societies and British Telecom, among others.

Appendix 11 contains examples of parish listings which provide a suitable means for supplying information to outside organisations such as county and parish councils in a standardised and readily comprehensible form which preserves the confidentiality of respondents.

Broad results of the 1980 survey, including, where appropriate, comments on the design and handling of individual questions, are presented in Chapter 8, which follows. A more analytical approach to the data assembled for both 1950 and 1980 follows later, in Chapter 11.

#### **7.4 Evaluation of the 1980 survey method**

It remains in this chapter to comment on the way in which the 1980 survey was conducted.

Firstly, the survey generated an enormous amount of local interest and goodwill. With hindsight, it would have been preferable to have counted on this and to have re-surveyed all the parishes using the form designed specifically to update Bracey's information, rather than being concerned about possible response problems in following on the heels of the Thatch survey. The availability of this information did bring some financial savings, but at the expense of a systematic pattern of missing values on some variables, as the analysis of the data reveals.

The establishment of personal links with the parish contacts, though perhaps an anathema to academic purists, produced a very high response rate, much higher than is usual for a postal survey. It seems that attempts to minimise investigator effect would have in any case been in vain. Letters were received from respondents who said that they had enjoyed taking part and that they had learnt

more about their parishes or met more people locally. They expressed a high degree of interest in the outcome of the survey, and in some cases continued to notify the university of changes in the parishes long after the questionnaires had been returned. While this level of interest was unquestionably of value, it did have its drawbacks in terms of the time needed to answer queries and also to address local meetings, for example of Womens Institutes, in the study area.

As a result of the close cooperation with the Community Councils and County Planning Departments the university acquired complete coverage of the rural areas of both Avon and Somerset, establishing a basis for comparative work, and cementing in the process local links that continue to provide a basis for further research.

At the same time, representatives of the local communities were able to extract and store detailed information about the parishes in the areas they cover. As well as acquiring an overview of its area, Avon Community Council saw a great improvement in its network of local contacts and a raising of its profile amongst the parishes. The planners of Avon, for their part, gained much more detailed information about services than was previously available, at a crucial stage in the structure planning process. The County Planning Department and Avon Community Council went on to resurvey the Avon rural parishes in 1984 using a substantially similar form (Appendix 12) and to monitor changes since 1980. However, it must be said that certain phases of the work, particularly the joint exercise in Northavon, brought problems as well as benefits for the geography department, particularly in the tendency of the County Council to claim greater credit for the work than was justified.

In reflection it is useful to turn again to the literature on action research for a comment from Clarke (1972):

The researcher should recognise his own value position. He should also recognise that he may inevitably be drawn into the drama of turbulent community and human conflicts and be forced to protect his integrity. There are special risks and burdens in this type of research and each researcher probably must determine for himself whether he wishes or is able to accept them.

In this study, it may be argued, the risks and burdens have been worthwhile.

## 8. THE PARISHES IN 1980 : A DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the results of the 1980 survey and draws some broad comparisons with conditions in 1950. Services and social activities are examined, along with open space and recreational provision, in all the rural parishes of the study area for which 1980 data are available, a total of 395 places. Although data for Northavon were also collected (see Section 7.3.3, above) they are not included in the analysis.

As in the case of the 1950 data, it was thought valuable, initially, to report the results in as full a form as possible without, for example, the deletion of a parish from the 1980 data set simply because Bracey did not survey it.

This is partly because, as the previous chapter has stressed, the information gathered is of more than academic interest. It has already proved to be of considerable practical use to the community councils and county planning departments locally, and Chapter 10 goes on to describe this. It is important to present the findings in a form accessible to those with a general interest in rural communities and working papers so far produced (Mills 1982b, 1982c) have examined public utilities (including postal services) and mobile services in some detail with this in mind. The paper on mobile services was prepared as a direct contribution to a project on Mobile Services in Rural Areas conducted at the University of East Anglia (Moseley and Packman 1983).

In addition, however, the successful interpretation of more analytical work on changes between 1950 and 1980 (presented later, in Chapter 11) depends to a large extent on an understanding of the data collection processes which have generated the information and an appreciation of the strengths and limitation of the material available.

The following sections, then, provide a brief account of the results generated by the 1980 survey exercise. As in the case of the 1950 data, the data for 1980, to which variables relating to, for example, population, agricultural employment and planning policies have been added, have been subjected to descriptive examination using the facilities of SPSS. In nearly three quarters of the 395 parishes information is available simply for the parish, but in 80 parishes a more detailed breakdown of the information for individual villages could be provided.

## 8.1 Services

### 8.1.1 Public utilities

Although the 1980 survey form included questions on postal and telephone services and on police and fire stations (though these last two were grouped under Public Facilities in the 1980 questionnaire and are discussed in section 8.1.8, below) no questions were asked about the other utilities: electricity and gas supply, mains water, sewerage and refuse collection. It was assumed that data on particular parishes could be collected without undue difficulty from the statutory undertakers and district councils, and that individual respondents to the survey would be unlikely to have such a detailed knowledge of the distribution of these services as would the authorities providing them. However, the extraction of information from the statutory undertakers on a parish by parish basis proved to be a much more complex task than had previously been suspected, attempts to discover settlements not served being especially difficult. On the other hand, a number of the respondents commented on problems relating to these services - in particular to problems of sewerage and land drainage. With the help of the accounts of these services provided by the planning departments of Avon and Somerset County Council, along with information provided by the statutory undertakers themselves, it is possible to present a general account of the provision of these services within the study area, enlivened by comments made by those answering the survey, and to draw some broad comparisons with the situation at the time of Bracey's investigations. Working Paper 2 (Mills 1982b) presents this account in full, but the findings are summarised here.

Although there remain isolated farms or industrial concerns which generate their own supply, the parishes of Somerset and south Avon were well supplied with mains electricity by 1980. There were no comments from respondents to suggest that electricity supply or the lack of it posed problems. There was only one comment on supplies of mains gas, although major areas of Somerset and Avon do not receive mains supplies and are not likely to do so.

Water supplies showed some geographical variation, with supply problems for which information is available being largely restricted to West Somerset parishes. In 1947, 11 per cent of the survey parishes had no piped water at all, while in 19 per cent of the places surveyed residents had to rely on standpipes or on other sources of water such as wells. In 1980 there was only one parish, Cudworth in

Yeovil district, in which it was suggested that there was no mains water supply, although several received piped supplies from springs.

In contrast, the sewerage system still leaves much to be desired (Map 8.1 provides an illustration) and in the 1980 survey this was identified as a serious problem in some places, although the rate of connection to the mains must have been higher than the 27 per cent of parishes reported to be connected in 1947. In 1980 many settlements in the study area continued to rely on cess pits and septic tanks. While there is survey evidence to suggest that in 1947 the lack of sewerage was occasionally an obstacle to housing development, in 1980 the restrictions on development posed by undercapacity of the sewerage system were well documented.

Little can be said about household refuse collection in 1980. However, it may be noted that no comments were received to indicate that the refuse collection system posed problems. Much more in evidence were problems of refuse disposal, several parishes reporting problems with litter or tipping of refuse.

Information on public telephones was available for about 63 per cent of the parishes, the great majority having at least one public telephone in 1980. Fifteen parishes did not have one, and most of these had no phone in 1947 either. It may be assumed that provision has increased since that date, although in parts of the study area, particularly West Somerset, fewer parishes had public telephones in 1980 than in 1950. The large number of missing cases in the 1980 survey makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions.

The most striking feature of change in the telephone service is the much greater proportion of households which now have their own telephones. During the post war period the telephone system in the south west has grown rapidly and this area has a higher rate of household penetration than is the case nationally. In those parts of the study area for which this information is to hand, over half the telephone exchange areas have rates above the regional average of 70 per cent. While in the years preceding Bracey's surveys there is evidence to suggest that private telephones were more common in towns than in the country, in 1980 the percentage of households with their own phones, at least in the Bristol Telephone Area, was higher in rural than in urban exchange areas. This may be a reflection of, amongst other things, the greater need for a telephone in the countryside where other forms of communication pose problems, apparently in contrast to the situation before the second world war when, for example, the village shopkeeper



was 'well served both by travellers and deliveries'. Also, it is suggested that of the rural settlements themselves the largest, most 'urban' places rather than the smaller, more remote villages, are most likely to have a high percentage of households without telephones.

The 1980 survey asked, in Question 1, whether or not there was a post office in the parish. If there was no post office the respondent was asked to state whether or not there had previously been one and, if so, the year of closure. A number of respondents in parishes which did have a post office in 1980 used this question to indicate that the parish had previously had more than one, together with a date of post office closure. In addition, respondents were asked to give details of any special local postal arrangements.

Since so many sub post offices are combined with other businesses, further detail was collected in Question 4, on shops, which named the first shop as the post office and asked respondents to identify the goods and services it provided. In the case of the 143 parishes for which only Thatch survey information is available it should be noted that the post office was included in the question on offices, which asked respondents to distinguish between a 'Post office (part of a general store)' and a 'Post office (not part of a general store)'. No other detail on postal services was collected in these 143 places.

The results demonstrate that just over 74 per cent of the parishes surveyed in 1980 had at least one post office, compared with 84.4 per cent of those surveyed in 1950, a fall of 10 per cent in the number of parishes served (Table 8.1). About 1 in 8 of the survey parishes experienced a post office closure during the 30 years to 1980, and approximately 50 closures may be reasonably well pinpointed. However, a number of places gained a post office and in fact the pattern of post office provision is changing constantly as offices are re-staffed or services moved when postmasters retire or the volume of business changes.

About half the parishes with no post office in 1980 had not previously had one. These tended to be among the least populous places in the survey. Overall, parishes with small populations were relatively unlikely to record a post office in either 1950 or 1980.

Most post office closures reported in the survey took place during the 1970s, although it should be noted that in all questions asking about closures respondents would be likely to remember recent events more clearly than earlier ones. The

TABLE 8.1 POSTAL AND TELEPHONE SERVICES IN 1950 AND 1980

|                | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|----------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| No post office | 60   | 15.9 | 377 | 101  | 25.6 | 395 |
| Post office    | 317  | 84.1 |     | 294  | 74.4 |     |
| No phone box   | 67   | 17.8 |     | 15   | 6.0  | 249 |
| phone box      | 310  | 82.2 |     | 234  | 93.9 |     |

N = number of parishes responding

TABLE 8.2 NUMBER OF SHOPS IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes<br>with: | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|-------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                   | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| No shops          | 36   | 9.5  | 378 | 82   | 20.9 | 392 |
| 1 - 5             | 179  | 47.4 |     | 230  | 58.7 |     |
| 6 - 10            | 85   | 22.5 |     | 42   | 10.7 |     |
| > 10              | 78   | 20.6 |     | 38   | 9.7  |     |

N = number of parishes responding

later closures affected even quite populous places, and this is especially true of closures in parishes which previously had more than one post office.

Of the 395 survey parishes just over half had a post office/general store and nearly 10 per cent a post office selling non food goods. About a quarter of the parishes had a post office and no other shop. Almost three quarters of the individual post offices identified were combined with general stores selling food, while in nearly 14 per cent of post offices the postal services were combined with the sale of non food items. Thus a total of about 88 per cent of post offices in the study area were run in conjunction with other businesses, a percentage somewhat higher than the national figure and also higher than that for the south west identified by Taylor & Emerson (1981), 83 per cent. The true figure for the study area may be even higher since in 5 per cent of the survey parishes there were no details of post office type.

Less than 30 per cent of the parishes, mostly amongst those with the smallest populations, reported special postal arrangements in 1980, and the great majority of these simply referred to additional services provided by the local postman: services such as the collection of mail from outlying residences, the collection of pensions and the delivery of newspapers. These services seemed to depend very much on individual postmen and did not seem to be found in particular in places without post offices. However, there is a suggestion that other special postal arrangements - especially, for example, part time opening of post offices or the provision of facilities in a village hall - come into existence when a post office closes. And these more unusual arrangements may become more common as efforts are made, both by the Post Office and by local communities, to retain village sub post offices threatened with closure.

A number of respondents were conscious of this threat in their own parishes. Elsewhere, parishes without post offices felt the lack of this facility and respondents were likely to suggest a need for a post office/general store, especially to serve pensioners.

### **8.1.2 Shops**

The period 1950-1980 has seen a fall in the total number of shops, the decline of the specialist food shop and the rise of the multi-purpose retail business. In 1950 less than 10 per cent of the parishes had no shops (Table 8.2). In 1980 21 per cent had none, and in general the number of shops per parish had also fallen. About

59 per cent of the parishes had between one and five shops in 1980, and a total of nearly 70 per cent had up to 10, while 4 places had more than 50. Seventeen places reported that they had a full range of food shops and 2 had all the shop types listed. Of some interest are the 13 parishes with community shops. In 1950, food shops made up about 46 per cent of the total (Table 8.3). In 1980 they made up only 26 per cent.

By far the most common shop type is now the grocer/general store or post office/general store, followed (in descending order of occurrence) by the hairdresser, antique shop, cafe and newsagent/confectioner. Many of the multipurpose stores aim to provide a wide variety of additional services, including, for example, coach bookings, photographic processing and agencies for dry cleaning and shoe repairs.

Responses to the question on shop closures and re-openings reveal that in 1980 36 per cent of parishes had experienced recent shop closures and about 22 per cent of these had lost more than one shop. Many of the food shops which had closed had been replaced by, for example, hairdressers and antique shops or converted into private houses.

Question 3 on the 1980 form asked how many garages there were. In 1950 32 per cent of parishes had a garage. In 1980 about the same percentage still had one but about a quarter had more than one, in 3 cases more than 5. As many as 41 garages, 71 per cent of the total, located in just over a quarter of the parishes, provided some retail services. Twenty two parishes reported that they had no garage in 1980 but that they had previously had at least one, and 21 of them noted the year in which the last garage closed. More than half had closed since 1971.

### **8.1.3 Travelling shops**

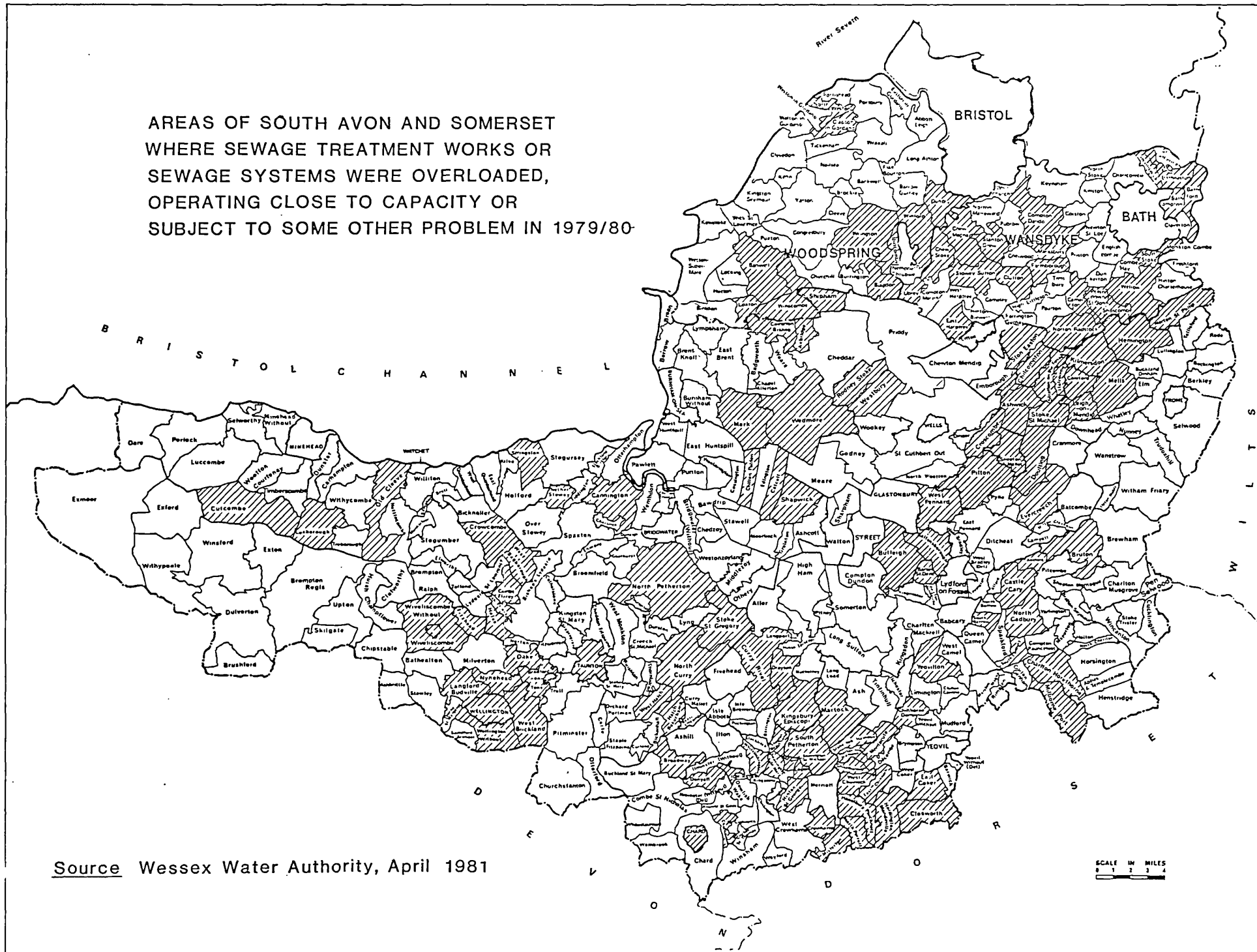
In 1980, as in 1950, the majority of rural parishes in the study area had mobile retailing services, either deliveries or mobile shops. However, the number of parishes without a mobile service increased from 2 (0.5 per cent) in 1950 to 25 (6.7 per cent of the total) in 1980 (Table 8.4). Also, there was a dramatic fall in the number of deliveries or mobile shops per parish, although this may have been exaggerated by under-recording in the 1980 survey and also by the failure to ask in detail about deliveries as well as travelling shops.

TABLE 8.3 SHOP TYPES IN THE RURAL PARISHES IN 1950 AND 1980

|                                     | 1950                          |                  | 1980                          |                  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
|                                     | Percent of all reported shops | Shops per parish | Percent of all reported shops | Shops per parish |
| Grocer/general stores               | 33.1                          | 1.91             | 16.3                          | 0.73             |
| Post Office                         | 14.7                          | 0.85             | 21.9*                         | 0.98             |
| Specialist food shops (eg butchers) | 12.3                          | 0.71             | 10.4                          | 0.47             |
| Cafes                               | 7.3                           | 0.42             | 6.1                           | 0.28             |
| Shoes/shoe repair                   | 5.9                           | 0.34             | 1.5                           | 0.07             |
| Hairdressers                        | 4.5                           | 0.26             | 9.0                           | 0.40             |
| Haberdashers/wool/tailors           | 3.9                           | 0.23             | 0.4                           | 0.02             |
| Electrical/Household/Hardware       | 3.8                           | 0.22             | 5.2                           | 0.02             |
| Confectioner/news/tobacco           | 3.8                           | 0.22             | 4.6                           | 0.21             |
| Chemist                             | 0.7                           | 0.04             | 2.1                           | 0.09             |
| Clothing                            | 0.1                           | 0.01             | 3.4                           | 0.15             |
| Laundry                             | 0.1                           | 0.01             | 0.8                           | 0.04             |
| Antiques/gifts                      | -                             | -                | 6.9                           | 0.31             |
| Garden/Nursery                      | 0.1                           | 0.01             | 1.3                           | 0.00             |
| Farmshop                            | -                             | -                | 2.1                           | 0.10             |
| Jewellery/leather/sports            | -                             | -                | 1.3                           | 0.06             |
| Community shops                     | -                             | -                | 0.9                           | 0.04             |
| Street market                       | -                             | -                | 0.1                           | 0.00             |
| Other non food                      | 2.2                           | 0.13             | 4.3                           | 0.19             |
| Full range food/all                 | 1.9                           | -                | 1.3                           | 0.06             |
| Total responses:                    | 1969                          | 5.66             | 1401                          | 4.49             |
| Number of parishes reporting:       | 342                           |                  | 312                           |                  |

\* includes post office/general stores

AREAS OF SOUTH AVON AND SOMERSET WHERE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS OR SEWAGE SYSTEMS WERE OVERLOADED, OPERATING CLOSE TO CAPACITY OR SUBJECT TO SOME OTHER PROBLEM IN 1979/80



Source Wessex Water Authority, April 1981

TABLE 8.4 NUMBER OF TRADESMEN DELIVERING IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:                | 1950 |      | 1980 |      |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
|                               | No.  | %    | No.  | %    |
| No tradesmen                  | 2    | 0.5  | 25   | 6.7  |
| 1 - 5                         | 24   | 6.5  | 239  | 63.7 |
| 6 - 10                        | 124  | 32.8 | 106  | 28.3 |
| > 10                          | 218  | 59.2 | 5    | 1.4  |
| Number of parishes responding | 368  |      | 375  |      |

TABLE 8.5 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:             | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|----------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                            | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| Bank                       | 43   | 11.4 | 378 | 42   | 10.8 | 388 |
| Building Society           | -    | -    |     | 22   | 5.7  |     |
| Accountant                 | 12   | 3.2  |     | 18   | 4.6  |     |
| Vet                        | 17   | 4.5  |     | 16   | 4.1  | 386 |
| Solicitor                  | 21   | 5.6  |     | 23   | 5.9  | 389 |
| Estate agent               | 17   | 4.5  |     | 29   | 7.5  | 389 |
| Other professional service | 127  | 33.6 |     | 34   | 8.7  | 391 |

N = number of parishes responding

The reduced number of tradesmen delivering or mobile services is obvious from a comparison of the types of service in 1950 and 1980, since the number of responses was only 1584 in 1980 compared with 3383 in fewer parishes in 1950. In 1950 the most commonly cited service was the grocer, with 23.5 per cent of responses. However, in 1980 grocers made up only 5 per cent of responses (although when grocers selling other foods are added the percentage rises to 10.5). As the 1980 survey included milkmen and the 1950 survey did not, milkmen may be removed from the list and the percentages of responses recalculated. Grocers then account for 6.8 per cent of the responses (14.2 per cent if those selling mixed foods are added) while bakers account for the largest percentage, 22 per cent. The number of grocers recorded declined from 783 in 1950 to 79 in 1980. This figure should not be taken as anything more than an indication of a trend, however, since in neither survey is the amount of multiple counting (in the sense of one tradesman visiting a number of parishes) known. Further analysis of the 1980 data, which includes the name of tradesmen in many cases, may throw some light on this.

Most other types of mobile retailing service show a decline in the number recorded, although some have been more dramatic than others. For example, 217 instances of laundry service were recorded in 1950 compared with only 11 in 1980. In 1950, over 18 per cent of responses were accounted for by newspaper, coal and laundry services. In 1980 they accounted for only 7.3 per cent (about 10 per cent if milkmen are discounted).

In contrast, the number of instances of ironmongery, paraffin or calor gas deliveries has risen dramatically from only 7 in 1950 to 148 in the 1980 survey, but this may reflect Bracey's intention to record only deliveries made at least once a week. In 1980, fewer than 5 per cent of recorded tradesmen visited less often than once a week.

While it is difficult to know how far the observed changes in retailing in the thirty years since 1950 are a product of the research design and coding difficulties, the changes are broad ones and, it seems, unlikely to be merely the artefacts of data collection techniques.

#### **8.1.4 Professional services**

The 1980 questionnaire asked how many of a number of professional services had premises in the parish. Respondents were asked to give details of part time or



mobile services, but not to include people who might live in the parish but work only elsewhere. The types of service listed included banks, building societies, solicitors, accountants, estate agents or auctioneers and veterinary surgeons, and there was also a category to record 'other professional services'. As in the case of Bracey's data on professional services, the number of services in a parish was recorded, along with information as to whether the service was full time, part time or mobile. Space was allocated to record up to six of each type of service.

As Table 8.5 shows, about 11 per cent of parishes had a bank in 1980 as they did in 1950. However, in the majority of rural parishes with banks in 1980 the service was only part time. Additional information on the distribution and frequency of banking services in the area was provided by a number of the clearing banks. Lloyds Bank, for example, operated full branches at several of the rural parishes in 1980 (Winscombe and Nailsea in south Avon, and at Axbridge, Cheddar, Langport, Somerton, Williton and Wincanton in Somerset), but most of their rural outlets were sub branches opening at restricted times during the week.

The number of parishes with at least one accountant has shown a slight increase in the thirty years since Bracey's survey. There has also been a small increase in the number of parishes reporting a solicitor. Estate agents or auctioneers were slightly more common than some of the other professional services in 1980 and there has been an increase in their numbers since 1950. Building societies did not feature in the 1950 survey data, but in 1980 nearly 6 per cent of rural study parishes reported them. Over half the parishes reporting building societies had more than one, including one (Somerton) with 6. It is fairly common, in the rural parishes, to find branch agents of building societies located in firms of accountants, solicitors or estate agents, and so it is not surprising to find that many of the parishes with, for example, an estate agent, also have a building society. In Wedmore, Nailsea and Congresbury, for example, building societies are located in estate agents' offices, while in Chew Magna and Cheddar solicitors operate branch agencies of building societies. Only 6 rural parishes (4.1 per cent) had a vet in 1980, about the same percentage of parishes as in 1950.

'Other professional services' were reported in 34 parishes, a considerable decrease on the number falling in this category in 1950. However, there has been a change in the type of service reporting in this category. While in 1950 most 'other professional services' referred to undertakers, found in over a third of rural parishes, in 1980 this group included architects (for example at Carhampton, Old

Cleeve, Martock and Nailsea), bookmakers (North Petherton and Paulton), surveyors (Bathampton), consulting engineers (Farmborough, Nailsea), and a driving school at Yatton. Undertakers, more usually referred to as 'funeral directors', were reported, for example, at Beckington, Banwell and Yatton.

In 1980 it was still the case that the most populous parishes and those with a substantial number of shops were most likely also to have professional services. The centres identified as being well supplied with professional services in 1950 were generally the same as those identified in 1980 (for example, Cheddar, Wedmore, Wiveliscombe, Dulverton, Williton, Castle Cary and Langport) although more minor centres such as Axbridge, Bruton, Chew Magna and Nailsea have emerged while others such as Monkton Combe no longer stand out. However, it is evident both from the survey data and from information supplied by the banks, estate agents and other professional concerns themselves that most branches are not in rural parishes at all but in towns.

Thus although some rural parishes have lost professional services, there has been, if anything, a slight increase in the percentage of rural parishes reporting them, together with a broadening of the range of services available, although it is now no longer usual for rural parishes to have their own undertakers. Some, such as architects and consulting engineers, are likely to provide a highly flexible service.

#### **8.1.5 Health services**

Information on health services was collected in Question 9. As was the case in 1950, hospitals were rarely found in these rural parishes - only 2 reported a cottage hospital and 9 some other hospital - but 17 (just over 4 per cent) had a health centre (Table 8.6).

Information on doctors' surgeries in 1980 is available for 385 of the 395 study parishes, and in 72.5 per cent of these there was no surgery, an increase of just over 4 per cent in the number of parishes without this service as compared with the 1950 data. In 3 parishes the doctors' surgery was held at a health centre.

Though there is no information on the frequency of doctors' services in 1980, there is information on whether or not the surgeries had dispensaries and in about 40 per cent of the parishes with surgeries a dispensary was also provided. This was especially true of the parishes of Yeovil and West Somerset districts.

TABLE 8.6 HEALTH SERVICES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:                       | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                                      | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| Hospital                             | 4    | 1.1  | 378 | 11   | 4.6  | 238 |
| Health centre                        | -    | -    |     | 17   | 4.5  | 382 |
| Doctors surgery                      | 121  | 32.0 | 378 | 103  | 26.8 | 385 |
| Dentist                              | 33   | 8.7  |     | 26   | 6.8  | 382 |
| Dispensing chemist                   | 35   | 9.3  |     | 30   | 9.1  | 329 |
| Optician (own surgery/<br>clinic)    | 10   | 2.7  |     | 8    | 3.4  | 237 |
| Clinic                               | 63   | 16.8 | 376 | 74   | 31.0 | 239 |
| Other health services                | -    | -    |     | 28   | 11.6 | 242 |
| Chiropodist (own surgery/<br>clinic) | -    | -    |     | 24   | 10.0 | 239 |

N = number of parishes responding

Over 93 per cent of parishes had no dental surgery in 1980. Only 26 parishes (nearly 7 per cent) reported them, a fall of about 1 per cent in the number of parishes with a dentist since 1950. While some parishes have lost a dentist, others gained. Parishes with a dental surgery in both 1950 and 1980 include Cheddar, Wiveliscombe, Dulverton, Williton, Bruton, Castle Cary, Langport, Martock, Somerton, Wincanton, Batheaston, Chew Magna, Backwell, Easton in Gordano, Long Ashton, Nailsea, Winscombe, Wrington and Yatton. Those which had a dentist in 1950 but not in 1980 include, for example, Evercreech, Holcombe and Kilmersdon (in Mendip) and Milverton (in Taunton Deane). Those which have gained dentists since 1950 include Ashwick, Wedmore, Bishops Hull Without, West Monkton, Dunster, Ilchester and Milborne Port.

Of the 10 parishes reporting an optician, 7 had an optician with a surgery. In 2 cases the optician was said to make home visits and in 1 the optician attended a clinic. Although chiropodists were not reported in the 1950 survey it was decided to include them in the 1980 study. As in the case of opticians information was available for only 60.5 per cent of cases. The chiropody service seemed more widespread than that provided by opticians and most made home visits. Both the opticians and chiropody services are highly mobile, although opticians are more likely to visit clinics or surgeries than patients' homes.

Just less than one third of parishes for which information was available reported a clinic in 1980. In all, 74 clinics were noted. Of these, 54 (73 per cent) were infant clinics, 9 (12.2 per cent) ante or post natal clinics and 3 (4 per cent) clinics of other types such as dental or chiropody services. For 69 of these clinics there is information as to where they were held. Nearly half (48 per cent) were held in village halls and a further 20 per cent in halls of other types. Sixteen (23 per cent), reported in the most populous parishes, were held at doctors' surgeries and 6 at health centres, or in other places. It is still the case that most clinics, especially infant clinics in halls, are held monthly or less often. Clinics held in doctors surgeries or health centres - typically for ante natal care - are usually held weekly.

A summary of the changes in clinic services since 1950 is not straightforward since the 1950 survey asked only about child welfare clinics while the 1980 study includes information on clinics of other types. In 1950, 63 parishes (17 per cent) reported a child welfare clinic. In 1980, 54 parishes had an infant clinic. This represents 23 per cent of the parishes for which information is available but it is clear from the absolute figures that there has been a decrease in the service rather

than a rise and the apparent percentage increase is due to the much larger number of missing cases in 1980 than in 1950. The decrease in the number of infant clinics may have been offset by a rise in the number of clinics of other types, although we cannot be certain of this.

#### **8.1.6 Transport**

A contraction in public transport services between the two survey dates is readily apparent. Sixty five per cent of the parishes reported a regular bus service (buses stopping within half a mile of the village) in 1980 compared with over 75 percent in 1950 (Table 8.7). Of these nearly one fifth were without a daily service or reported some other limitation, and 5 parishes had only a few buses a day. In just over 200 parishes for which information on bus operators was available the majority (80.5 per cent) were run by the major bus companies in 1980 - Bristol Omnibus or Western National - although 20 per cent of the parishes had services only via private operators.

About 8 per cent of places had a coach hire service and 14 per cent a taxi or car hire facility, although, as many respondents pointed out, these services are available via the telephone so that it scarcely mattered, in terms of convenience, whether they were based locally or not. Not unexpectedly, given the post war rise in private car ownership, the number of parishes with taxis has fallen sharply. Special local transport arrangements, much more numerous in 1980 than in 1950, were reported in almost half the rural parishes, and many had more than one type of service. Most common were the school or works bus, minibuses or local car sharing schemes.

#### **8.1.7 Educational facilities**

The 1980 questionnaire asked whether educational facilities were to be found in the parish and was more detailed on this matter than the Thatch form. In all, 9 educational variables were generated.

To these have been added information on school openings and closures provided by the local education authorities and further variables indicating the status of the parish in Somerset County Council's Development Plan for Primary and Secondary Education (1952), the response to the 1944 Education Act. The Plan reveals, for example, that 25 per cent of the infant schools, 25 per cent of junior schools, 29 per cent of secondary schools and as many as 91 per cent of junior/infant schools

TABLE 8.7 PARISHES WITH TRANSPORT FACILITIES IN 1950 AND 1980

|                                                            | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                                                            | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| Regular bus service*                                       | 305  | 75.5 | 347 | 257  | 65.2 | 394 |
| Coach hire                                                 | -    | -    | -   | 33   | 13.6 | 242 |
| Car hire or taxi service                                   | 280  | 75.5 | 371 | 55   | 23.2 | 237 |
| Special local transport arrangements (excludes trains '47) | 55   | 15.1 | 363 | 140  | 45.9 | 305 |
| Rail service within 5 miles                                | 325  | 87.4 | 372 | -    | -    | -   |

\* buses every weekday 1947

N = number of parishes responding

which were to close were located in parishes defined as rural. Of all proposed school closures (over 200 in all), 82 per cent were in rural parishes. In contrast only 31 per cent of proposed new schools were planned for rural locations. Half the schools planned for closure had only one class and the mean number of pupils in schools proposed for closure was 51, and only 37 in junior/all standard schools which made up the bulk of the closures. None of these very small schools was located in an urban area. However in 6 named rural parishes (3 on Exmoor) one-class schools, all with very few pupils, were to be maintained. This policy document thus provides an important source of information for any investigation of postwar changes in educational provision in the study area.

From the 1980 survey, information on pre-school education suggests firstly that of 392 places for which information was available about half had no such facility. About 44 per cent had either a playgroup or a mother and toddler group and 4 per cent had both (Table 8.8). The questions asking whether there was a nursery school asked also whether it was run by the local authority or privately organised. Of the 245 parishes answering this, 91 per cent had no nursery school. Twenty one parishes did have one, and 19 of these were privately organised. No parish in West Somerset for which information is available had a nursery school in 1980, and pre-school playgroups and mother and toddler groups were also scarce there.

Just over half the parishes (52 percent) had a primary school in 1980. Fourteen (for example Wedmore, Wiveliscombe, Ansford, Chew Stoke and Batheaston) had a secondary school and 18 a preparatory or public school. Two (Bishops Hull Without and Bruton) reported a sixth form or tertiary college and 3 (Blagdon, Churchill, Ilminster Without) some other college. Adult education classes were available in 37 per cent of the parishes. The question on 'other educational facilities' generated a variety of responses, including, for example, 6 parishes with infant schools, 3 with special schools, one with a middle school and 7 with field centres.

Only 2 schools were reported to have opened in study area parishes between 1950 and 1980. However, 101 parishes reported the closure of one school while in 4 parishes more than one school closed over the 30 year period, so that in all over a quarter of the parishes lost at least one school. Most of the school closures reported here took place during the 1960s, although 5 parishes lost schools in the 5 years to 1980. In 20 parishes experiencing school closure the use of the school building in 1980 is recorded. Nine were in use as halls, 4 in educational use and 7, all closed since the mid 1960s, had been converted into private houses.

TABLE 8.8 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with at least one:                 | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|---------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                                             | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| Pre-school playgroup/<br>mothers & toddlers | -    | -    |     | 188  | 48.2 | 392 |
| Nursery school                              | -    | -    |     | 21   | 8.6  | 245 |
| Primary school*                             | 242  | 64.0 | 378 | 205  | 52.5 | 393 |
| All-standard school                         | 55   | 14.6 |     | -    | -    |     |
| Secondary school**                          | 14   | 3.7  |     | 14   | 5.8  | 245 |
| Grammar school                              | 2    | 0.5  |     | -    | -    |     |
| Preparatory or public school                | -    | -    |     | 18   | 7.3  | 246 |
| 6th form or tertiary college                | -    | -    |     | 2    | 0.8  | 246 |
| Further educational<br>establishment        | -    | -    |     | 3    | 1.2  | 244 |
| Adult education classes                     | 55   | 14.6 |     | 142  | 37.0 | 384 |
| Other educational facilities                | -    | -    |     | 27   | 11.1 | 245 |

N = number of parishes responding

\* junior in 1950

\*\* includes all secondary education in 1980,  
secondary modern in 1950



Direct comparison of the figures for schools of various types in the two survey years is of little value since the service has been substantially reorganised. However, it is possible to detect an increase in the number of parishes with adult education classes over the thirty year period.

#### **8.1.8 Public facilities**

Question 8 of the 1980 form asked about the number of public facilities of various kinds present in the parishes and for details of closures in the last 10 years.

Only 6 parishes had no church in 1980, but 84, over a fifth, had no public house. Both figures indicate losses since 1950 (Table 8.9). The number of guest houses and bed and breakfast establishments indicates the importance of tourism in the study area. Thirty five per cent of the places supplying information had as many as 6 such establishments. Only 18 per cent of parishes had a police station or resident police constable in 1980 compared with 28 per cent in 1950 and only 4 per cent had a fire station (missing values for these variables make these findings somewhat uncertain).

Seventy two parishes (nearly 30 per cent of those replying to Question 8.2) had experienced the closure of one or more of these public facilities over the last 10 years, nearly half of the facilities to close being churches, 22 per cent police stations and 16.5 per cent pubs or hotels. Information on the current use of the building in which a public facility had been closed was available for 43 parishes. Over half had been converted for private residential use, while 12 per cent had been left empty and 4 per cent demolished. Others were used as halls or had been converted for retail, office, industrial or storage uses.

Cinemas and libraries have been examined in some detail in Working Paper 1. Only one of the rural parishes (Butleigh in Mendip district) reported a cinema in 1980. Since no information was available for about 38 per cent of cases, it is possible that other cinemas might be found amongst these missing parishes. However, a glance at the telephone directories for the study area strongly suggests that what cinemas there are are located in the towns - Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Crewkerne, Wincanton and Minehead, for example.

TABLE 8.9 PUBLIC FACILITIES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:                        | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                                       | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| No church                             | 2    | 0.5  | 378 | 6    | 1.5  | 393 |
| 1 church                              | 132  | 34.9 |     | 187  | 47.6 |     |
| >1 church                             | 244  | 64.6 |     | 200  | 50.9 |     |
| No public house or hotel              | 75   | 19.8 |     | 84   | 21.3 | 394 |
| 1 public house or hotel               | 142  | 37.6 |     | 159  | 40.4 |     |
| >1 public house or hotel              | 161  | 42.6 |     | 151  | 38.3 |     |
| At least 1 guest house<br>or b & b    | -    | -    |     | 89   | 36.0 | 247 |
| Cinema                                | 5    | 1.3  |     | 1    | 0.4  | 246 |
| Mobile cinema                         | 56   | 14.8 |     | -    | -    |     |
| Police station/<br>resident policeman | 103  | 27.8 | 371 | 68   | 17.6 | 387 |
| Fire station                          | 49   | 13.1 | 373 | 10   | 4.0  | 247 |
| Branch library*                       | 294  | 78.0 | 377 | 23   | 5.9  | 389 |
| Mobile library                        | -    | -    | -   | 357  | 91.8 |     |

\* any library in 1950

N = number of parishes responding

Over the last thirty years there has been a considerable decline in the availability of cinema performances in the rural parishes of Somerset. This is most probably a reflection of the national trend towards increased television viewing and a decrease in cinema attendance. However, there is renewed interest, in rural Somerset and Avon, in the provision of some kind of mobile film service, aptly named 'Reels on Wheels', and both Avon and Somerset Community Councils promote such a facility.

Question 8.1 asked about branch libraries. Both Avon and Somerset County Council had already provided details of all the mobile library routes in operation during the survey period. However, most respondents added information about mobile libraries and stopping places. Data are available for 389 of the 395 study parishes. Nearly 92 per cent of these parishes had a mobile service in 1980, while just under 6 per cent reported a branch library. No branch libraries were reported in parishes with populations of less than 750. However, mobile services were more common in the less well populated parishes.

It appears that the last branch library to close was the one in Milborne Port parish, but according to the information on the closure of public facilities three other parishes - Pilton, Milverton and North Curry - experienced library closures in the 10 years to 1980.

Thus since 1950 there has been a complete turnaround in the library service from a situation in which nearly all the service was provided in branch libraries to one in which much the largest portion of the service is mobile. However, the number of parishes with no library service at all has decreased from 23 (22 per cent) in 1950 to only 9 (2.3 per cent) in 1980, and this would suggest a considerable improvement.

## **8.2 Halls, Social and Recreational Facilities and Social Life**

### **8.2.1 Halls, open space and other recreational facilities**

Like the 1947 and 1950 surveys the 1980 investigation sought detailed information about halls and other community facilities and about social organisations and clubs for both adults and young people. However, there is not space within the limits of this report to do justice to this material and this section can only give an indication of the wealth of data available.

Question 11.1 asked about community meeting places - their types, management and frequency of use - and about the activities held in them. If halls had closed respondents were asked to note the year of closure and the current use of the building. In all, 21 parishes reported the closure of at least one hall, and over three quarters of them had closed since the mid 1960s, including one third which closed in the 5 years to 1980. Although over a quarter of these closed halls stood empty in 1980 and 4 had been demolished the others were in use as private houses or for workshops or storage.

Just over 40 per cent of the parishes had one hall in 1980 while a further 51 per cent had two or more, including 17 parishes with more than 6. Table 8.10 suggests an increase in the number of halls per parish since 1950 and a reduction in the number of parishes with no hall at all.

As in 1950, the most frequently cited hall type was the village hall: 38 per cent of the 848 halls mentioned were of this type, and almost every parish had one (Table 8.11). Church halls, almost as widespread, made up 28 per cent of all the halls mentioned, while school halls accounted for a further 16 per cent; both types have seen an increase in terms of number per parish since 1950. Other types of hall commonly named included scout huts, Women's Institute (WI) halls and similar facilities, pub rooms and meeting rooms in other buildings.

About 20 per cent of halls were run by management committees in 1980 and a further 20 per cent by church organisations, or by parish councils, schools and user organisations. Only 5 per cent of halls were privately owned. Just less than half the halls were in use weekly or more frequently in 1980; 18 per cent were used daily. However, about 12 per cent were used monthly or less often or 'sporadically'. Extremely detailed information is available on the activities taking place in 469 of the halls recorded. Most common activities, in descending order, are shown in Table 8.12.

The results reveal that village halls remain important places of leisure and entertainment; indeed, the range of activities held in them has increased and with it, perhaps, the complexity of hall management. Additionally, the hall seems to be acquiring new roles, housing, for example, community markets and libraries and even, in one case, a post office, in 1980. As reported above, the question on clinics revealed that nearly half the infant clinics recorded were held in village halls. It is not surprising that many villages now see the village hall as their most important asset (Virgo 1984).

TABLE 8.10 HALLS AND OTHER MEETING PLACES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with: | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|----------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| No hall        | 48   | 12.7 | 378 | 35   | 8.9  | 392 |
| 1 hall         | 192  | 50.8 |     | 158  | 40.3 |     |
| >1 hall        | 138  | 36.5 |     | 199  | 50.8 |     |

TABLE 8.11 TYPES OF HALL IN 1950 AND 1980

|                        | 1950            |            |                  | 1980            |            |                  |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|
|                        | Number of Halls | % of halls | Halls per parish | Number of Halls | % of halls | Halls per parish |
| Village hall           | 206             | 37.1       | 0.63             | 321             | 37.9       | 0.90             |
| School hall            | 70              | 12.6       | 0.21             | 137             | 16.2       | 0.39             |
| Church hall            | 117             | 21.1       | 0.36             | 239             | 28.2       | 0.67             |
| Scout hut etc          | 10              | 1.8        | 0.03             | 32              | 3.8        | 0.09             |
| Other hall             | 82              | 14.8       | 0.25             | 56              | 6.6        | 0.16             |
| Pub room               | 28              | 5.0        | 0.09             | 30              | 3.5        | 0.08             |
| Room in other building | 23              | 4.1        | 0.07             | 29              | 3.4        | 0.08             |
| No details             | 19              | 3.4        | -                | 4               | 0.5        | -                |
|                        | 555             | 100.0      |                  | 848             | 100.0      |                  |

valid cases: 329

valid cases: 356

TABLE 8.12 HALL ACTIVITIES IN 1980

| Number of halls reporting:            |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Social activities                     | 269 |
| Adult groups                          | 210 |
| Young people's groups                 | 181 |
| Parish council and committee meetings | 151 |
| Church activities                     | 133 |
| Sport                                 | 129 |
| 'Welfare' use (eg playgroups)         | 118 |
| Educational use                       | 113 |
| Special interest groups               | 80  |
| Private functions (eg weddings)       | 80  |
| Health use (eg clinics)               | 52  |
| Polling station                       | 21  |
| Community markets                     | 5   |
| Sub post office                       | 1   |
| Library                               | 1   |
| Other activities                      | 116 |

The information on open space and recreational facilities is more detailed for 1980 than for the earlier survey, although some of the variables may be directly compared (Table 8.13). On the whole the number of rural parishes recording these facilities shows a substantial increase, although the proportion of places with allotments has fallen from just over half to just over a quarter. Special recreational facilities available in 1980, besides those listed in Table 8.13, mainly included sports pitches and childrens' playgrounds.

### **8.2.2 Social groups for adults and young people**

The most widespread adult social groups reported in 1980 were the WI and church organisations (Table 8.14), both of which have increased in popularity since 1950. The Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), Rotary or Round Table and political clubs were also widely reported in 1980, but the British Legion seemed to have suffered a decline: while nearly 61 per cent of rural parishes mentioned it in 1950, in 1980 only just over a quarter of places did so. Reporting of drama or music clubs (which included 'listening or discussion groups' in 1950) has also fallen off. Types of adult group not mentioned by Bracey's surveys include clubs for senior citizens and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), both found in about 45 per cent of places in 1980.

The village hall has become more popular as a venue for the British Legion and WI and in 1980 it was the usual meeting place of most other types of adult group. Church groups, 97 per cent of which met in church halls in 1950, have more recently shown some move towards private houses where 21 per cent of them met in 1980, although 60 per cent still used church halls. Amenity and conservation groups mentioned in 1980 met as often in private houses as they did in village halls, while PTAs, not unexpectedly, used school facilities.

Table 8.15 lists 'other adult groups' for the two survey years. This suggests a decline in the number of additional groups mentioned, and a fall, especially, in the number of clubs for indoor and outdoor sport. However, committee activity seems to have shown a considerable increase.

Something under half the parishes responding to Q 13.1 recorded the presence of youth clubs and of scouts, guides, brownies or cubs in 1980, (Table 8.16). Both types of activity have increased in popularity since 1950, while cadets, never very widespread, seem to have declined. Halls of all types were popular locations for

TABLE 8.13 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:                          | 1950 |      |     | 1980        |              |            |
|-----------------------------------------|------|------|-----|-------------|--------------|------------|
|                                         | No.  | %    | N   | No.         | %            | N          |
| School playing field                    | 51   | 13.5 | 377 | *28<br>**73 | 11.3<br>29.6 | 247<br>247 |
| Park or recreation ground               | 78   | 20.7 | 376 | 121         | 47.3         | 256        |
| Common land/<br>village green           | 71   | 18.9 | 375 | 125         | 32.0         | 391        |
| Allotments                              | 197  | 52.8 | 373 | 101         | 26.0         | 388        |
| Works playing field<br>(public use)     | -    | -    |     | 1           | 0.4          | 245        |
| Works playing field<br>(works use only) | -    | -    |     | 8           | 3.2          | 248        |
| Tennis court                            | -    | -    |     | 51          | 13.0         | 390        |
| Outdoor bowls green                     | -    | -    |     | 14          | 3.6          | 392        |
| Sports pavilion                         | -    | -    |     | 76          | 19.6         | 388        |
| Skittles alley                          | -    | -    |     | 218         | 55.7         | 391        |

\* for public use

\*\* for school use only

N = number of responding parishes



TABLE 8.14 ADULT SOCIAL GROUPS IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:              | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|-----------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                             | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| WI                          | 253  | 66.9 | 378 | 290  | 74.6 | 389 |
| WRVS                        | 25   | 6.6  |     | 93   | 30.6 | 304 |
| Royal British Legion        | 229  | 60.6 |     | 80   | 26.5 | 302 |
| Rotary/Round Table          | 7    | 1.9  |     | 12   | 4.1  | 296 |
| Church or Chapel groups     | 215  | 57.0 | 377 | 259  | 66.8 | 388 |
| Drama/music clubs           | 117  | 31.0 | 378 | 110  | 29.1 | 378 |
| OAPs clubs                  | -    | -    | -   | 175  | 45.9 | 381 |
| Political clubs             | 62   | 16.7 | 372 | 69   | 23.7 | 291 |
| Amenity/conservation groups | -    | -    | -   | 57   | 15.0 | 381 |
| PTA                         | -    | -    | -   | 168  | 44.0 | 382 |

N = number of responding parishes

TABLE 8.15 OTHER ADULT GROUPS IN 1950 AND 1980

|                                | 1950   |                   | 1980   |                   |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|
|                                | Number | % of other groups | Number | % of other groups |
| None                           | 53     | 4.5               | 74     | 12.4              |
| Mens club                      | 80     | 6.8               | 12     | 2.0               |
| Womens club                    | 35     | 3.0               | 57     | 9.6               |
| Social club                    | 15     | 1.3               | 52     | 8.7               |
| Outdoor sport                  | 448    | 37.9              | 102    | 17.1              |
| Indoor sport                   | 165    | 13.9              | 60     | 10.1              |
| Entertainment committees       | 6      | 0.5               | 93     | 15.6              |
| Other groups                   | 379    | 32.0              | 146    | 24.5              |
| No data                        | 2      | 0.2               | -      | -                 |
|                                | 1183   | 100.0             | 596    | 100.0             |
| Number of parishes responding: | 375    |                   | 283    |                   |

TABLE 8.16 YOUNG PEOPLES GROUPS IN 1950 AND 1980

| Parishes with:                  | 1950 |      |     | 1980 |      |     |
|---------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
|                                 | No.  | %    | N   | No.  | %    | N   |
| Scouts/cubs/<br>brownies/guides | 107  | 28.4 | 377 | 169  | 44.7 | 368 |
| Cadets/ATC etc                  | 26   | 6.9  | 376 | 11   | 4.6  | 231 |
| Youth clubs                     | 169  | 44.8 | 377 | 179  | 46.4 | 386 |
| Church groups                   | 320  | 84.9 |     | -    | -    | -   |
| Young farmers                   | -    | -    |     | 37   | 12.8 | 290 |
| Other                           | 48   | 12.8 | 376 | -    | -    | -   |

N = number of responding parishes

these activities in 1950 and this was still the case in 1980, although village halls were perhaps more often mentioned than others. Young farmers, in contrast, generally met in pubs. Other young peoples' clubs detailed for 1980, but not for 1950, most frequently referred to church groups (not separately examined in 1980), usually meeting in church halls, and to outdoor sport.

### **8.3 Additional Information in the 1980 Data Set**

The 1980 survey, like Bracey's, asked about local industry and employment, and two thirds of the parishes gave details of local firms. This information has been supplemented by material supplied by the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSIRA).

Comments on the local employment situation stressed the continuing significance of agriculture; of the 319 responses to Question 14.2, 14 per cent said that local employment was 'mainly farms' and a further 12.5 per cent said that local people either worked on farms or worked outside the parish. Commuting to work elsewhere was a widely reported activity, although problems of transport to work were mentioned in 13 cases. Other parishes named major local employers.

Fourteen per cent of the parishes apparently had 'no employment problems', but others were not so fortunate. Concern was expressed about unemployment, in particular among young people. The need for additional local employment - perhaps through the attraction of small firms or other industry - received a number of mentions, although elsewhere the parishioners objected to the possibility of locating industry in villages. These comments deserve more detailed investigation, especially in the light of the county councils' desire to 'regenerate the local economy'.

A certain amount of information on recent housing construction has also been collected, and this is referred to in Chapter 11. Ideally this should be used to illustrate more comprehensive data obtained from secondary sources if housing is to be analysed in more depth. While about 10 per cent of the parishes responding to Question 15.1 had had no new housing in the 10 years to 1980, almost one third had gained up to 10 new homes while a quarter had gained more than 20, mainly detached or semi detached private houses or bungalows, although 18 per cent of places reported some local authority housing provision.

There is scope for a future examination of the effects of the latest local policy changes on housing construction over the next few years, and the 1980 survey data may provide a base line for this.

The remaining questions in the 1980 survey on the threat of closures, the need for additional community facilities and the most serious problems in the village provide a wealth of more anecdotal information expressing the very real concern to maintain or improve the quality of rural life at a time of major change.

It is particularly interesting to compare the comments made by the 1980 respondents with those of their counterparts in 1950: in many cases the issues remain the same. Respondents in both years mentioned problems with public transport: in 1980 the cost of transport seemed to be as much a cause for complaint as the lack of it. In 1980, too, traffic, road maintenance and car parking problems were just as frequently mentioned as the lack of bus services. The lack of services of various kinds - particularly shops - and an awareness that certain facilities were under threat of closure, are features more characteristic of the 1980 survey than of the 1950 work. The lack of facilities for young people and the elderly seemed to provoke about the same degree of concern in both years. Respondents in 1980 clearly placed very great importance on community facilities, particularly the village hall (37 per cent of parishes suggested that an additional hall was needed) and seemed as anxious as their 1950 counterparts to maintain or improve 'community spirit', especially in parishes with a majority of elderly people or where there was friction between incomers and established residents.

On the whole, many of the problems mentioned in 1980 seem symptomatic of the broad socio economic changes which impinge on both rural and urban areas. In the continuing investigation of the consequences of counterurbanisation locally it will be worth picking out those parishes which suggest that recent population growth, and the associated pressures for growth, were problems and to contrast them with parishes where 'depopulation' or 'isolation' were a cause for concern. Chapter 11 includes a brief exploration of this theme.

#### **8.4 Services and Social Life in 1980 : Summary and Comment**

It is appropriate here to draw out some of the main findings to emerge so far from the descriptive treatment of the 1980 survey and from comparisons with 1950. On the whole the findings as so far summarised in this chapter do not describe a massive loss of services from the rural parishes since 1950. Many services which were scarce in 1980 were also scarce in 1950. The larger impression is of change in the organisation and usage of services.

The section on public utilities indicates improved quality of provision, although lack of mains sewerage is still a source of complaint and poses serious obstacles to new development in some places. Post offices are best discussed in conjunction with other retail businesses since these two are so often found under one roof and were also often together the only retail outlet left in a rural parish in 1980. The data on shops demonstrate contraction of retail businesses over the thirty year period under review 'up the hierarchy' into more populous places and the larger shopping centres and a change in the organisation of retailing, with a shift away from the specialist store (and especially from the specialist food shop) towards the supermarket or general store. The number and range of mobile retailing services has fallen, although most rural parishes are still served, particularly by food retailers (operating mobile shops rather than delivering orders), milkmen and newspaper deliveries. Despite the drop in both the number of shops per parish and the number of mobile services, most parishes still benefit from some kind of retail service and only 6 parishes (1.6 per cent) reported no shops and no mobile retailers in 1980, compared with only 1 parish with neither in 1950.

In both 1950 and 1980 professional services, never particularly widespread, are revealed as concentrated in the towns of the area and some of the more populous rural centres. In the case of accountants, solicitors and estate agents there has been an increase in provision over the thirty year period while the number of undertakers has fallen.

While the number of parishes without a doctors surgery has increased, the figures at least partly reflect the tendency for general practitioners to group their practices together, particularly in health centres. Numbers of dentists and dispensing chemists have fallen, but opticians are now more numerous. It is difficult to draw conclusions about clinics, since their organisation and the type of service they provided differ so much at the two survey dates. On the whole,

health services have shown some contraction into the towns and larger rural centres but retain an important mobile element.

Findings for education reflect national changes in provision, many of the observed parish changes being attributable directly to the effects of legislation. Nevertheless it is important to reflect that over a quarter of the parishes have lost at least one school since 1950. Adult education, in contrast, has become more widespread.

Data for public facilities suggest losses of churches and pubs from the rural parishes. While police and fire stations are less numerous than previously, the way in which these services are provided has changed. Other public facilities have also seen broad organisational changes. Cinemas were fairly widespread in Somerset in 1950 and about 15 per cent of the parishes had mobile shows, typically held in village halls. By 1980 the cinema service had contracted and cinemas were for the most part found only in the larger towns. The mobile element of the service has almost completely disappeared and it remains to be seen whether local initiatives will bring its return. In complete contrast is the library service which, as far as the rural parishes are concerned, is now almost completely mobile.

The emergence of alternative forms of service provision - for example the community shop and locally-run minibus - as services have contracted is notable. In this respect the village hall is playing an increasingly important role, although it has long been the venue for certain types of service, particularly clinics, as well as for social gatherings.

Social activities for both adults and young people seem as varied and as widespread as in the immediate postwar period. Changes in the popularity of the various types of activities must be set against the changing socio economic character of the study area's rural population: the shift out of agriculture, the influx of newcomers and the increased proportion of retired people among them, and against such national trends as growing affluence, rising car ownership, greater leisure time and the spread of television.

These socio economic changes must also underpin interpretation of the shifts in service provision. It is evident that developments in some services - retailing and the cinema for example - may reflect in particular changes in the characteristics of consumers, while in others, such as health and education, the influence of countywide or national changes in service distribution is crucial. Moseley's (1978)

identification of the need 'to lay bare the realities of decision-making by powerful agencies' such as the Post Office, county councils, health authorities and breweries in their determination of strategies of rural investment is clearly of relevance here.

To understand the changing pattern of service and social provision in the rural parishes it is important to examine the context within which changes occur. The following two chapters describe postwar population shifts and the evolution of local settlement planning policies in some detail as a preliminary to the analysis presented in Chapter 11 which examines analytically the links between counterurbanisation and rural services and the extent to which local planning policies may have impacted upon the hierarchy of rural settlements identified by Bracey.

#### **PART IV CHANGES IN THE RURAL SPATIAL ECONOMY**

In this part of the thesis, changes between 1950 and 1980 are reviewed and analysed in some detail. Chapter 9 considers population trends in the postwar period and assesses how far counterurbanisation is a feature of the study area's rural parishes. Chapter 10 examines the evolving system of planning for Somerset's rural parishes. It stresses the use of Bracey's work in the identification of settlement hierarchies and the continuing contribution which local research can make to the planning process. Together these two chapters provide the context for the analysis of changes in services and social activities reported in Chapter 11.



## 9. THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE I : POPULATION TRENDS 1951-1981

This chapter describes population trends in the area covered by this study, focussing on the postwar period. It is apparent that most of the area displays recent growth in population. Analysis presented towards the end of the chapter suggests that many of the rural parishes have experienced a turnaround from population loss to gain and invites a more detailed examination of the counterurbanisation process in the study area.

### 9.1 Overall Population Trends

#### 9.1.1 The regional context

The report of the South West Economic Planning Council, A Region with a Future : A Draft Strategy for the South West (SWEPC 1968), which covered the counties of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, described a period of persistent decline in the region's population relative to the rest of the country between 1821 and 1939, mainly the result of 'sustained net emigration to other parts of England where an industrial expansion was taking place which left the south west largely untouched'. The region's share of the total population of Great Britain fell from 12.5 per cent in 1921 to a little over 6 per cent in 1939'(SWEPC 1968 p.13).

After 1939, in contrast, the south west made substantial population gains, with a growth rate of 24 per cent, almost double the national rate, so that by 1961 the south west had captured a larger share of Great Britain's population - about 7.2 per cent (OPCS 1982a). The largest gains in the immediate post war period were made in the north and east of the region and along the south coast and were mainly the result of in-migration from other parts of Britain.

The SWEPC report described the south west as the least densely populated of the English regions after East Anglia, although there were wide differences within the south west, with large concentrations of population in the Bristol-Severnside region and very sparsely populated areas such as Bodmin and Exmoor elsewhere; and while the city of Bristol attracted an increasing share of the south west's population, many more rural parts of the south west suffered a relative decline and some, such as parts of Cornwall, an absolute decline. There are also long-

standing differences in age structure between the population of the south west region and that of Great Britain as a whole, with a relatively elderly population in the south west.

### **9.1.2 Population trends in Somerset 1951-1961**

Following a period of relatively slow population growth until 1939, during which time parts of the county experienced depopulation, Somerset made substantial gains in population to 1951, particularly in the north and east, although some parishes continued to show a slight loss. Before 1939 the largest population gains were made by the urban districts (Table 9.1) - the towns of Taunton, Yeovil, Minehead and Weston-super-Mare in particular - although the Rural Districts of Axbridge and Long Ashton also gained. Chard RD suffered a decline in population, and the small towns of Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster lost population through outmigration. Between 1939 and 1951 there was substantial in-migration, much of which was linked directly to movements of population during the war. In 1947 the population was estimated at nearly 456,000. Between 1939 and 1951 the population of the county increased by over 15 per cent, to more than 469,000. About 47 per cent of this growth occurred in the rural areas, Axbridge and Long Ashton RDs continuing to show the largest gains, although Wincanton, Shepton Mallet, Wells and Frome RD also began to show an increase towards the end of the period.

In 1961 the population of the county was estimated at about 514,000, an increase of over 9 per cent on the 1951 figure (Table 9.2). About 74 per cent of this increase was attributed to in-migration. About 59 per cent of the increase took place in urban areas (Keynsham UD, for example, almost doubled its population), and 41 per cent in the rural areas.

Somerset County Council's 1964 Development Plan Review (Somerset CC 1964a) identified 5 areas of marked population increase in the county: a belt between the A38 and the coast, including the areas around Bridgwater, the environs of Bath and Bristol, parts of Clutton RD, Taunton and Yeovil and their environs, and the area around Wells, Street and Glastonbury. Smaller gains were identified in and around Chard, Crewkerne, Shepton Mallet, Frome, Langport and Somerton and along the coast east of Minehead. However, there were also areas of population loss, largely on Exmoor and the Brendons and Mendips, in parts of the Levels and in the area between Bath and Chard in the east and south of the county. These changes are illustrated in Map 9.1.

TABLE 9.1 CHANGES IN THE POPULATION OF SOMERSET 1921-1951

|        | Area as constituted in 1931 |          |                  |          |          |                  | (1)      |          |                  | (2)      |          |                  |             |
|--------|-----------------------------|----------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------|-------------|
|        | Period                      |          |                  | Period   |          |                  | Mid 1931 | Mid 1939 | % change 1931-39 | Mid 1939 | Mid 1947 | % change 1939-51 | 1951 Census |
|        | Mid 1921                    | Mid 1931 | % change 1921-31 | Mid 1931 | Mid 1939 | % change 1931-39 |          |          |                  |          |          |                  |             |
| Urban  | 164,311                     | 175,660  | + 6.9            | 178,745  | 185,248  | + 3.6            | 191,370  | 219,009  | +17.6            | 225,036  |          |                  |             |
| Rural  | 222,776                     | 230,640  | + 3.5            | 222,595  | 224,452  | + 0.8            | 215,430  | 236,911  | +13.3            | 244,078  |          |                  |             |
| County | 387,087                     | 406,300  | + 5.0            | 401,340  | 409,700  | + 2.1            | 406,800  | 455,920  | +15.3            | 469,114  |          |                  |             |

Sources

- (1) Somerset County Council (1951) Appendix 9
- (2) Somerset County Council (1964a) Appendix 8

Note

Figures other than those for the 1951 census are based on the Registrar General's mid year estimates of the civilian population. Discrepancies in the figures for mid 1931 and mid 1939 are due to changes in the basis of the calculation of these estimates. The resulting difficulty in arriving at an accurate picture of trends to 1951 is compounded by the fact that the area as constituted in 1939 was not as it was in 1931.

TABLE 9.2 POPLUATION CHANGE 1951-1981 ENGLAND AND WALES, SOUTH WEST REGION, SOMERSET, AVON, STUDY AREA

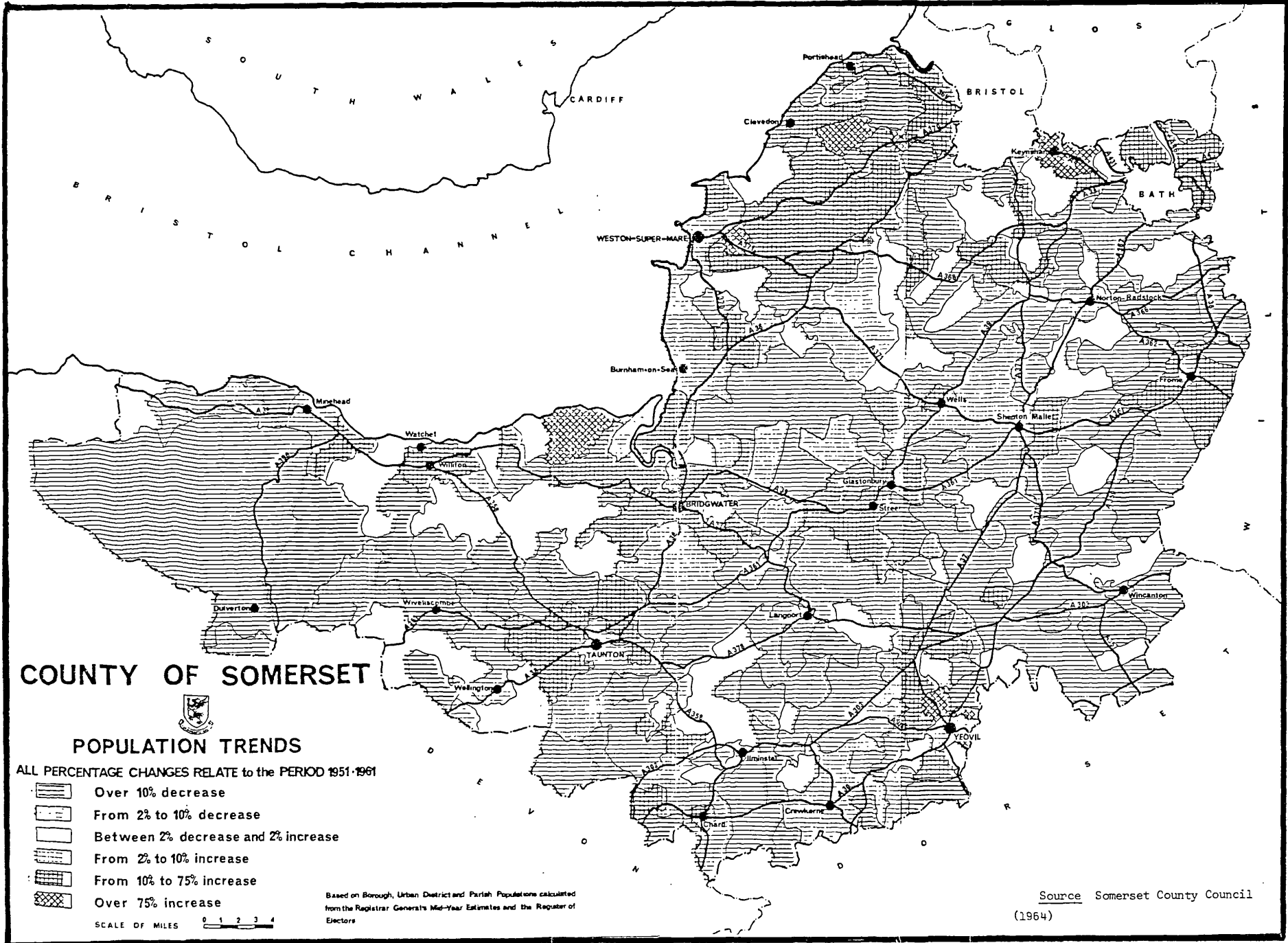
| Census & % change <sup>(1)</sup> | England & Wales   | South West Region <sup>(2)</sup> | Somerset <sup>(3)</sup> | All Avon <sup>(3)</sup> | Study Area <sup>(4)</sup> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1951 census pop                  | (a)<br>43,757,900 | ((a)<br>3,229,100                | (a)<br>323,230          | (e)<br>774,567          | (f)<br>469,114            |
| % change 1951-61                 | + 5.4             | N/A                              | + 6.1                   | + 7.0                   | + 9.7                     |
| 1961 census pop                  | (b)<br>46,104,548 | (b)<br>3,689,317                 | (a)<br>342,860          | (e)<br>828,953          | (f)<br>514,731            |
| % change 1961-71                 | + 5.7             | +10.6                            | +12.6                   | + 9.3                   | +16.2                     |
| 1971 census pop                  | (b)<br>48,749,575 | (b)<br>4,080,589                 | (a)<br>386,070          | (e)<br>905,890          | (f)<br>597,994            |
| % change 1971-81                 | + 0.8             | + 6.6                            | + 9.4                   | + 0.4                   | +10.6                     |
| 1981 census pop                  | (b)<br>49,154,687 | (b)<br>4,348,908                 | (c)<br>422,534          | (d)<br>909,408          | (c,d)<br>661,151          |

Sources

- (a) Somerset County Council (1977a) Table 1 p.9
- (b) OPCS (1982a) Table A
- (c) Somerset County Council (1982a)
- (d) Avon County Council (1982)
- (e) OPCS (1982b) Table A
- (f) HMSO (1973) Table 2 p.2

Notes

- (1) Population 'present on census night'.
- (2) Includes Avon, Somerset, Glos,Wilts, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, but 1951 figure is for pre 1974 boundary and excludes Bourne-mouth/Christchurch area.
- (3) 1974 boundaries
- (4) Somerset (1974 boundaries) plus districts of Wansdyke and Woodspring in Avon. Excludes Bath and Bristol.



### **9.1.3 Population trends in the study area 1961-1981**

Trends in the various parts of the study area since 1961 are best described by reference to the separate counties of Somerset and Avon. In each county the figures for 1961 and 1971 have been revised to apply to the areas within the boundaries designated in 1974 and comparisons with 1981 are on this basis.

#### **(i) Changes in total population**

Table 9.2 describes the changes in the total population of the study area, the south west region and England and Wales between 1961 and 1981. The counties of Somerset and Avon are also included. Since 1951, and in particular since 1961, the rate of population growth in the study area, in the separate counties of Avon and Somerset, and in the south west region, has exceeded that for England and Wales. The south west region's share of the total population of Great Britain has continued to rise, from 7.2 per cent in 1961 to 7.6 per cent in 1971 and just over 8 per cent in 1981 (OPCS 1982a).

Between 1961 and 1981 the growth rate for both present day Somerset and for the study area was greater than for the south west region. While the percentage population change for England and Wales between 1971 and 1981 was less than 1 per cent, the equivalent figure for the south west has remained above 6 per cent and the study area has shown a particularly large percentage change, 10.6 per cent. (Avon's relatively low rate of change reflects the decline of population observed in the cities of Bath and Bristol).

A more detailed picture of population changes by district is shown in Table 9.3. Figures for 1951 are not readily available for the districts of Wansdyke and Woodspring separately, although an estimate can be made for all of south Avon. In the districts in Somerset and in the study area as a whole, it is apparent that substantial growth occurred between 1951 and 1961, followed by even faster growth between 1961 and 1971, though this growth was not evenly distributed over the study area. Somerset County Council commented in the 1977 Report of Survey :

TABLE 9.3 DISTRICT POPULATIONS 1951-1981

|                      | Mendip | Sedgemoor | Taunton Deane | West Somerset | (1) Yeovil | Wansdyke | Woodspring  | All study area |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------------|----------|-------------|----------------|
| 1951 census pop      | 66,300 | 61,800    | 69,350        | 26,570        | 99,210     | 145,884  |             | 469,114        |
| % change 1951-61     | + 5.6  | +11.4     | + 5.6         | + 5.0         | + 3.7      | -        | -           | + 9.7          |
| 1961 census pop      | 70,030 | 68,820    | 73,200        | 27,890        | 102,920    | 60,524   | (3) 108,745 | 514,731        |
| % change (2) 1961-71 | +12.8  | +17.7     | +12.1         | + 6.9         | +11.1      | + 7.3    | +13.1       | +16.2          |
| 1971 census pop      | 79,057 | 80,980    | 82,057        | 29,824        | 114,403    | 70,875   | 140,763     | 597,994        |
| % change 1971-81     | +10.1  | +10.0     | + 4.8         | + 0.1         | +14.1      | + 7.7    | (4) +15.3   | +10.6          |
| 1981 census pop      | 87,030 | 89,051    | 86,025        | 29,845        | 130,583    | 76,322   | 162,295     | 661,151        |

Sources

- (1) Somerset County Council (1977) Table 2 p.10
- (2) " (1982)
- (3) Avon County Council (1980) Table 2.3 p.10
- (4) " (1982)

Notes

The establishment of accurate figures for each district at each date is by no means easy since the figures vary between sources. This variation is partly the result of attempts to accommodate the boundary changes which have taken place since 1951, but in some cases the figures have been rounded. Comparisons 1971/81 are difficult because of errors in coding. See text.

Although it is not apparent at district level, certain areas of the country, notably Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, together with certain areas in South-east Somerset, experienced a decline in population during the period 1961-71. This probably reflects the decline in employment in agriculture, the major industry in these rural areas. (Somerset CC 1977a para 3.9, p 11).

As the Structure Plan Issues Report for Somerset pointed out, while net migration has continued to account for the greatest proportion of population growth, in Somerset at least :

The flows involved are considerably larger than the balance suggests. For example in 1970-1 over 17000 people moved to Somerset but the population increase directly attributable to immigration over the same period amounted to only 1960.

And :

It is not only the number of people gained through immigration that is important, there are also significant differences between the age structures of those coming in and those leaving. A significant proportion of those coming in are over retirement age, thus adding to an already aging population structure (Somerset CC 1977b para 2.1.2, p.3).

#### **(ii) Changing age structures 1971-81**

While the 1971 census showed that the population of Somerset (1974 boundaries) and the south west region had similar age structures, both continuing to have an older age structure than England and Wales, there was also some district variation (Table 9.4), with West Somerset having an older age structure than the rest of the county. In Somerset as a whole, 41 per cent of the population was aged 45 or more in 1971 (compared with 37 per cent of the population of England and Wales) and 22 per cent was aged 65 or over (13 per cent in England and Wales). In the county of Avon, in contrast, just over 38 per cent of the population was aged 45 or over in 1971 and 14 per cent was 65 or more, so that in general the age structure of the population of Avon was much more similar to the national pattern than was Somerset's, although still slightly older than average. In those parts of Avon falling within the study area, Wansdyke's age structure was very similar to the national pattern but Woodspring had a greater proportion of residents aged 65 or over, 17.3 per cent. This reflects the attraction of certain parts of Woodspring, notably the towns of Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon, for retired people.



TABLE 9.4 POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE: DISTRICTS, COUNTIES OF AVON AND SOMERSET, STUDY AREA, ENGLAND AND WALES 1971

| Age group | Mendip |     | Sedgemoor |     | Taunton Deane |     | West Somerset |     | Yeovil |     | All (1) Somerset |     | Wansdyke |     | Woodspring |     | All (2) Avon |     | Study Area |     | England & Wales |     |         |    |
|-----------|--------|-----|-----------|-----|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------|-----|------------------|-----|----------|-----|------------|-----|--------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------|-----|---------|----|
|           | No.    | %   | No.       | %   | No.           | %   | No.           | %   | No.    | %   | No.              | %   | No.      | %   | No.        | %   | No.          | %   | No.        | %   | No.             | %   |         |    |
| 0-4       | 6400   | 8   | 6410      | 8   | 5870          | 7   | 1920          | 6   | 8990   | 8   | 29590            | 8   | 17130    | 24  | 32085      | 23  | 210150       | 23  | 138115     | 23  | 3901100         | 8   |         |    |
| 5-14      | 12640  | 16  | 12880     | 16  | 12770         | 16  | 4000          | 14  | 17020  | 15  | 59310            | 15  |          |     |            |     |              |     |            |     |                 |     | 7634500 | 16 |
| 15-44     | 29410  | 37  | 29540     | 36  | 29990         | 36  | 9610          | 32  | 41870  | 36  | 140420           | 36  | 27060    | 38  | 50890      | 36  | 350060       | 39  | 218370     | 37  | 18833300        | 39  |         |    |
| 45-64     | 18540  | 24  | 19680     | 24  | 20580         | 25  | 7820          | 26  | 28330  | 25  | 94950            | 25  | 17430    | 25  | 33400      | 24  | 219030       | 24  | 145780     | 24  | 11785800        | 24  |         |    |
| 65-74     | 7320   | 9   | 7950      | 10  | 7960          | 10  | 3980          | 13  | 11580  | 10  | 38790            | 10  | 9260     | 13  | 24390      | 17  | 126655       | 14  | 95450      | 16  | 4136900         | 8   |         |    |
| 75+       | 4470   | 6   | 4550      | 6   | 4890          | 6   | 2490          | 9   | 6610   | 6   | 23010            | 6   |          |     |            |     |              |     |            |     |                 |     | 2301200 | 5  |
| TOTAL     | 78780  | 100 | 81010     | 100 | 82060         | 100 | 29820         | 100 | 114400 | 100 | 386070           | 100 | 70875    | 100 | 140765     | 100 | 905890       | 100 | 597715     | 100 | 48592800        | 100 |         |    |

Source

(1) Somerset County Council (1977) Table 4 p.11

(2) Avon County Council (1980) Table 2.4 p.13

Note

All figures rounded

Early results of the 1981 census suggested a substantial increase in the proportion of elderly people in both Somerset and Avon since 1971, although there are difficulties in making comparisons since the 1981 figures refer to men over 65 and women over 60 rather than to all persons of 65 or over (OPCS 1982b and 1982c). In 1981 :

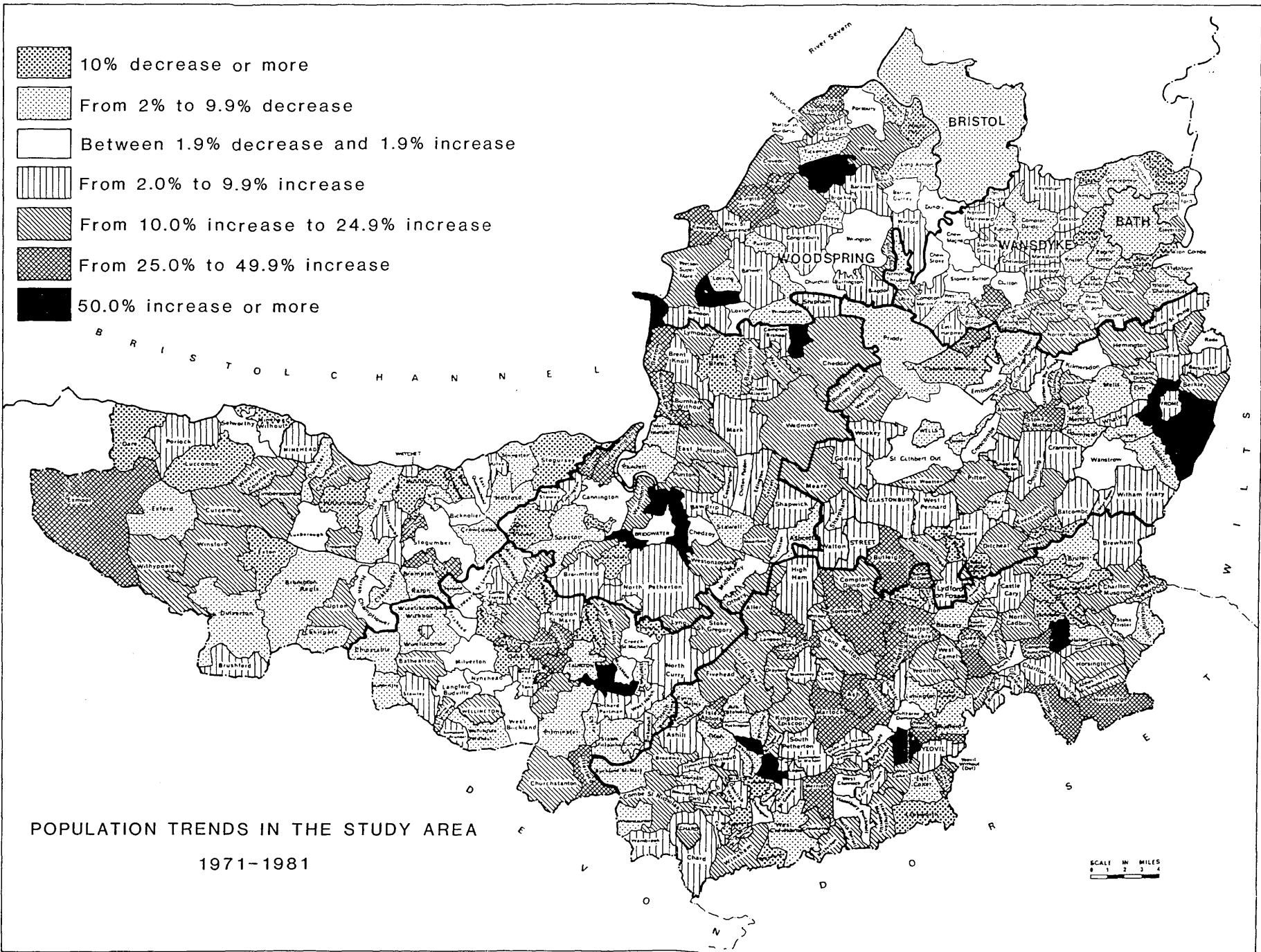
In Somerset 20.5 per cent of the population were of pensionable age...while 7.0 per cent were aged 75 years or more. The proportion of persons of pensionable age was highest in West Somerset (30.2 per cent) and lowest in Mendip (18.6 per cent). In Somerset as a whole there were 13,061 (17.4 per cent) more persons of pensionable age present on Census night in 1981 than in 1971. (OPCS 1982c p.1)

Figures for the whole of the county of Avon show that in 1981 18.4 per cent of the population was of pensionable age and 6.2 per cent were 75 or older, an overall increase of just over 10 per cent in the number of pensioners since 1971. Of the two districts of Avon within the study area, Woodspring continued to have a more elderly population, with 20.3 per cent of its residents of pensionable age, compared with 17.5 per cent of residents in Wansdyke.

### **(iii) Problems with inter census comparisons 1971-81**

There are several difficulties in making comparisons between the results of the 1971 and 1981 censuses. For example, owing to a miscoding problem caused by classifying some absent residents as being present residents (described in detail in OPCS 1982d) the Small Area Statistics tables detailing the number of persons present on census night are in error and local authorities have been advised to use the preliminary counts as the best available estimates. Further, the County Monitors published by OPCS for the most part include tables describing the characteristics of the 'usually resident' population (residents who were absent on census night being included and visitors excluded), and these are also slightly in error.

The use of counts of the population present on census night presents another problem. The population present consists of persons both in private households and in communal establishments such as hospitals, hotels and boarding schools, and at parish level, in particular, these communal establishments can have a very marked effect. As a note produced by the Information Section of Somerset County Planning Department points out :



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1971-1981

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Change in the institutional population of an area may also be partly responsible for the apparent change in population during 1971-81. For example, the fact that 2454 people happened to be at Butlins, Minehead, would make the population growth for this area seem much more rapid than it actually was. (The figures presented for Minehead have in fact been amended to allow for this fact.) (Somerset CC 1982)

The population 'present' can fluctuate considerably according to, for example, school terms. The 1971 census took place during term time for most educational establishments but at the time of the 1981 census most of these places were on holiday. The non-recording of the majority of the school or student population in places with large educational establishments has affected the total population recorded for 1981 and apparent changes since 1971, suggesting that growth since 1971 was less than it actually was.

Certain parishes in Somerset pose particular problems in the interpretation of the total population data. Norton Fitzwarren, Williton and Yeovilton, for example, contain forces camps. In the parish of Stogursey, 182 persons, probably workers associated with the construction of Hinkley Point power station, were recorded as resident 'in non-permanent buildings', and have since left the parish. The interpretation of population change in the survey parishes requires considerable attention to local details of this kind.

#### **(iv) The detailed pattern of change**

The County Planning Departments of Avon and Somerset have provided figures detailing parish populations present in 1971 and 1981 and the percentage changes over the 10 year period (included in Mills 1982d). These changes are illustrated in Map 9.2, which includes urban districts.

There has been a substantial loss of population from the cities of Bristol and Bath in keeping with national trends towards metropolitan population decline. Bristol's population fell by 9.1 per cent between 1971 and 1981, from 426,657 to 387,977, while Bath's fell by 5.6 per cent to just under 80,000. Parishes adjacent to these two cities, many of which lie in the green belt, also showed a population loss. Examples are Abbots Leigh, Batheaston, Newton St Loe, South Stoke and Monkton Combe. In each of these cases the loss was greater than 10 per cent.

Of the towns in the study area, only Taunton, Wells and Bridgwater showed a population loss. Taunton's population fell by 2118 to just over 35,000, a fall of 5.7 per cent. Somerset County Planning Department suggests that this is mainly

due to declining household size, but it is a reflection also of the fact that boarding schools happened to be closed on census night 1981. Wells showed a smaller population decline, 2.7 per cent, while Bridgwater's population decreased by 1.9 per cent. However, with the exception of Cheddon Fitzpaine (a parish with a high proportion of visitors and a large number of people in institutions, making interpretation of the findings difficult) all parishes which border on Taunton gained population between 1971 and 1981, the largest increase being reported in Stoke St Mary where the population rose by 1914, 354.4 per cent, mainly as the result of new housing development. This was the largest percentage increase recorded in any study area parish. Similarly, the parishes adjacent to Bridgwater showed a substantial increase in population. Durlleigh's rose by nearly 72 per cent, Chilton Trinity's by 92.5 per cent and Bridgwater Without's by nearly 170 per cent. (But note that in 1981 about 46 per cent of Chilton Trinity's population was recorded as being in non-permanent buildings so that the result for this parish is somewhat suspect.)

The smaller towns of Keynsham, Street, Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury, Frome, Yeovil, Minehead and Watchet experienced gains of up to 10 per cent between the two censuses, and Ilminster and Crewkerne gained just over 10 per cent. Wellington, Weston-super-Mare, Chard and Norton Radstock showed slightly larger increases, 12.9, 13.9, 18.7 and 20.4 per cent respectively. Still larger gains were made by Portishead, Clevedon and Burnham on Sea, each of which increased its population by a quarter or more, as did the large villages of Martock, Milbourne Port, Somerton and Wincanton.

In the study area as a whole parishes which gained population outnumber those with population declines, although only 13 parishes increased their population by 50 per cent or more. None of these was an urban district. The largest gains occurred in parishes bordering the medium sized and small towns, for example Selwood, around Frome, in addition to those already mentioned above. Selwood's population increased by 3329, 111.6 per cent, the largest absolute increase in any Somerset parish. There was also a substantial gain in Axbridge (over 56 per cent) and in the parishes to the south and west such as Cheddar and Wedmore. Of all the study area parishes, Nailsea, more than the other small towns, perhaps, an area of planned growth, recorded the largest absolute increase, 5555, or 64.4 per cent.

In general, population increase is most apparent in the central parts of the study area, in the north west part of Yeovil district and in the south westerly parts of

Mendip, as well as around Bridgwater and along the coast northwards towards Weston-super-Mare and other popular retirement towns. Several parishes on Exmoor also show increases of between 10 and 25 per cent, though absolute gains were small, and the increase experienced by Exmoor parish itself, 40.3 per cent, may be due to institutional changes.

Apart from the areas adjacent to Bath and Bristol noted above, areas of decline are most apparent in West Somerset, although parts of Taunton Deane also stand out, as does a group of parishes on the Mendip Hills (Priddy, Chewton Mendip and Ston Easton) and another to the south of Bruton (Pitcombe, Shepton Montague, Bratton Seymour and Yarlington). The apparent decline in Bruton itself is probably a reflection of the large number of boarding school pupils absent during the holidays.

Where population declines were experienced by the rural parishes these were generally small. The largest percentage decline was recorded in Kingsweston in Yeovil district, with a fall of 52.5 per cent, but this fall may be largely explained by a decrease in the institutional population from 88 in 1971 to 55 in 1981. West Quantoxhead in West Somerset experienced a fall of 35.6 per cent, but this parish showed a decline in 1981 because St Audries school happened to be closed on census night. In West Somerset more than half the parishes showed a decline rather than an increase in population. Like West Quantoxhead, Luccombe and Minehead Without also lost one fifth or more of the 1971 population. The largest absolute loss (-485) was recorded at Williton, the result of the closure of a forces camp at Donniford.

The overall impression is one of change rather than stability. Comparatively few parishes experienced only slight changes (between a 2 per cent decrease and a 2 per cent increase). Most of those in which the population remained stable are located in the central part of south Avon, around Wells and to the north and west of Wellington.

## **9.2 Population Characteristics of the Survey Parishes in 1951 and 1981**

In the 378 parishes for which Bracey's survey information is available the total population recorded in 1951 was 236,589, so that the survey information covers parishes accommodating about 97 per cent of the total population of Somerset's Rural Districts and about 50 per cent of the county population recorded at the

1951 census, as Table 9.5 shows. (Note that in relating services and social activities to population size Bracey himself used 1931 census data since he regarded the estimates provided in 1939, 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1949 as insufficiently accurate). Table 9.5 also details the population in the survey parishes by 1974 district. While Bracey's survey covered about half the population in what is now Sedgemoor and in south Avon, in Mendip about 43 per cent and in Taunton Deane only about 39 per cent of the population was accommodated in the survey parishes, presumably a reflection of a fairly large urban population in these two districts. Yeovil and West Somerset appear as more 'rural' in character. Over two thirds of West Somerset's 1951 population was located in the parishes surveyed by Bracey.

The mean population size of a survey parish was 626 in 1951, but there was wide variation by district, from an average of 448 persons per parish in West Somerset to 1072 in Woodspring. Overall, parishes which are now in south Avon had a larger population, on average, than did those which are now in Somerset (934 people compared with 818 in Somerset parishes). In 1951 almost 70 per cent of the population covered by the survey was located in parishes which are now in Somerset, while about 30 per cent was to be found in areas now part of Avon.

Further detail is provided by Table 9.6, parish population (by size categories) by district. While only 9 parishes fell into the smallest size category, just over a third had populations of 270 or less. The district with the highest proportion of these least populous places was West Somerset (45 per cent), followed by Yeovil (41.4 per cent), while in Sedgemoor less than a quarter of the survey parishes had fewer than 270 people in 1951.

Of the parishes surveyed by Bracey the least populous was Treborough in West Somerset with only 63 people. Eight others had 90 people or less. Just over a quarter of the parishes had 1951 populations greater than 750, including 20 places (such as Cheddar, Somerton and Wedmore) with more than 2050. The survey parish with the largest 1951 population was North Petherton with 3,426 people. While the existence of a large parish population usually indicates the presence of one large settlement, a number of these parishes contain more than one village.

In 1981 the total population recorded for the 395 parishes for which 1980 survey information is available was 346,242, an increase of 46 per cent on the 1951 figure, although it should be noted that the 1980 survey covers a slightly larger number of parishes and that this analysis has been carried out before the

TABLE 9.5 POPULATION IN 378 RURAL SURVEY PARISHES 1951, BY DISTRICT

|                       | Survey parishes |           | Districts,<br>total pop | Pop in survey parishes<br>as % of total district pop |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | Total           | % Mean    |                         |                                                      |
| Mendip                | 28,683          | 12.1 531  | 66,300                  | 43.3                                                 |
| Sedgemoor             | 31,229          | 13.2 625  | 61,800                  | 50.5                                                 |
| Taunton Deane         | 26,892          | 11.4 585  | 69,350                  | 38.8                                                 |
| West Somerset         | 17,920          | 7.6 448   | 26,570                  | 67.4                                                 |
| Yeovil<br>(1)         | 59,985          | 25.4 540  | 99,210                  | 60.5                                                 |
| All Somerset          | 164,709         | 69.6 547  | 323,230                 | 51.0                                                 |
| Wansdyke              | 34,347          | 14.5 818  | -                       | -                                                    |
| Woospring             | 37,533          | 15.9 1072 | -                       | -                                                    |
| All south<br>Avon (1) | 71,880          | 30.4 934  | 145,884                 | 49.3                                                 |
| ALL STUDY<br>AREA     | 236,589         | 100.0 626 | 469,114                 | 50.4                                                 |

Note

(1) 1974 boundaries



TABLE 9.6 PARISH POPULATION 1951, BY DISTRICT (1974 BOUNDARIES)

|           | Mendip |      | Sedgemoor |      | Taunton Deane |      | West Somerset |      | Yeovil |      | Wansdyke |      | Woodspring |      | All Parishes |       |
|-----------|--------|------|-----------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|--------|------|----------|------|------------|------|--------------|-------|
|           | No.    | %    | No.       | %    | No.           | %    | No.           | %    | No.    | %    | No.      | %    | No.        | %    | No.          | %     |
| 1-9C      | -      | -    | 2         | 4.0  | 2             | 4.3  | 1             | 2.5  | 4      | 3.6  | -        | -    | -          | -    | 9            | 2.4   |
| 91-270    | 16     | 29.6 | 10        | 20.0 | 16            | 34.8 | 17            | 42.5 | 42     | 37.8 | 11       | 26.2 | 10         | 28.6 | 122          | 32.6  |
| 271-750   | 28     | 51.9 | 23        | 46.0 | 16            | 34.8 | 16            | 40.0 | 44     | 39.6 | 16       | 38.1 | 8          | 22.9 | 151          | 39.9  |
| 751-2050  | 10     | 18.5 | 12        | 24.0 | 10            | 21.7 | 6             | 15.0 | 16     | 14.4 | 11       | 26.2 | 11         | 31.4 | 76           | 20.1  |
| 2051-5550 | -      | -    | 3         | 6.0  | 2             | 4.3  | -             | -    | 5      | 4.5  | 4        | 9.5  | 6          | 17.1 | 20           | 5.3   |
| Total     | 54     | 14.3 | 50        | 13.2 | 46            | 12.2 | 40            | 10.6 | 111    | 29.4 | 42       | 11.1 | 35         | 9.3  | 378          | 100.0 |

amalgamation or deletion of parishes where boundary changes have occurred (see Chapter 11 and Appendix 3). The survey information for 1980 covers 52.4 per cent of the total population of Somerset and south Avon (including Urban Districts), a slightly higher percentage than that covered by Bracey's surveys, and the survey covers a higher proportion of Somerset's population than it does of south Avon's (55 per cent compared with 47 per cent), as Table 9.7 shows.

It is significant that in most districts the proportion of the population accommodated in the survey parishes is higher for the 1980 survey than for Bracey's, the increase being particularly marked in Taunton Deane and Yeovil. However, in West Somerset the 1980 survey coverage is less comprehensive than was Bracey's survey work, although almost 61 per cent of the district population was located in the 1980 survey parishes.

The mean population size of the survey parishes increased from 626 in 1951 to 877 in 1981, particularly, it seems, because of a substantial increase in population in some of the parishes of south Avon, and in Nailsea especially. In south Avon the mean parish population in 1981 was 1373 (in Woodspring, 2085), compared with an average of 746 in Somerset parishes. West Somerset and Wansdyke were the only districts in which there has been a slight fall in the mean population size of a survey parish. In Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and Yeovil the mean population of a survey parish increased by between a third and one half, but in Woodspring the mean has increased by as much as 94 per cent of the 1951 figure.

The percentages of the 1981 survey population located in each of the districts of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and Yeovil remain about the same as the percentages of the 1951 survey population located there, but West Somerset and Wansdyke contained a smaller share of the 1981 population than of the 1951 population, and there has been a very substantial rise in the percentage of the total survey population which is located in Woodspring, from 16 to 22 per cent.

Table 9.8 shows the district pattern of 1981 population by size classes. Some loss of population from the least populous places is suggested by these figures and examples are provided by Charlinch (98 in 1951, 49 in 1981) in Sedgemoor and Chillington in Yeovil, where the population has declined from 126 in 1951 to 88 in 1981. On the other hand, the number of parishes in the largest size groups has increased, and in 1981 there were 4 parishes with populations greater than 5500. There are serious doubts as to whether Nailsea, with a 1981 population of over

TABLE 9.7 POPULATION IN 395 RURAL SURVEY PARISHES 1981, BY DISTRICT

|                | Survey parishes |           | Districts,<br>total pop | Pop in survey parishes<br>as % of total district pop |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|                | Total           | %<br>Mean |                         |                                                      |
| Mendip         | 42,247          | 12.2      | 728                     | 48.5                                                 |
| Sedgemoor      | 47,999          | 13.9      | 923                     | 53.9                                                 |
| Taunton Deane  | 40,133          | 11.6      | 854                     | 46.7                                                 |
| West Somerset  | 18,073          | 5.2       | 441                     | 60.6                                                 |
| Yeovil         | 85,178          | 24.6      | 741                     | 65.2                                                 |
| All Somerset   | 233,630         | 67.5      | 746                     | 55.3                                                 |
| Wansdyke       | 37,541          | 10.8      | 816                     | 49.2                                                 |
| Woodspring     | 75,071          | 21.7      | 2085                    | 46.2                                                 |
| All Avon       | 112,612         | 32.5      | 1373                    | 47.2                                                 |
| All study area | 346,242         | 100.0     | 877                     | 52.4                                                 |

TABLE 9.8 PARISH POPULATION 1981, BY 1974 DISTRICT

|            | Mendip |       | Sedgemoor |       | Taunton Deane |       | West Somerset |       | Yeovil |       | Wansdyke |       | Woodspring |       | All Parishes |       |
|------------|--------|-------|-----------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|-------|------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|            | No.    | %     | No.       | %     | No.           | %     | No.           | %     | No.    | %     | No.      | %     | No.        | %     | No.          | %     |
| 1-90       | 2      | 3.4   | 2         | 3.8   | 3             | 6.4   | 5             | 12.2  | 8      | 7.0   | 2        | 4.3   | -          | -     | 22           | 5.6   |
| 91-270     | 13     | 22.4  | 8         | 15.4  | 15            | 31.9  | 16            | 39.0  | 33     | 28.7  | 9        | 19.6  | 6          | 16.7  | 100          | 25.3  |
| 271-750    | 24     | 41.4  | 21        | 40.4  | 12            | 25.5  | 13            | 31.7  | 43     | 37.4  | 20       | 43.5  | 7          | 19.4  | 140          | 35.4  |
| 751-2050   | 17     | 29.3  | 17        | 32.7  | 10            | 21.3  | 6             | 14.6  | 23     | 20.0  | 11       | 23.9  | 10         | 27.8  | 94           | 23.8  |
| 2051-5550  | 1      | 1.7   | 4         | 7.7   | 7             | 14.9  | 1             | 2.4   | 7      | 6.1   | 4        | 8.7   | 11         | 30.6  | 35           | 8.9   |
| 5551-15000 | 1      | 1.7   | -         | -     | -             | -     | -             | -     | 1      | 0.9   | -        | -     | 2          | 5.6   | 4            | 1.0   |
| Total      | 58     | 100.0 | 52        | 100.0 | 47            | 100.0 | 41            | 100.0 | 115    | 100.0 | 46       | 100.0 | 36         | 100.0 | 395          | 100.0 |

14000, should continue to be classified as a rural parish. As a respondent to the 1980 survey commented :

Although it is a parish, it has grown into a sizeable town over the last 20 years...It was as a result of this rapid growth that in 1975...the then Nailsea Parish Council unanimously voted to change its title to Nailsea Town Council. If your department can ever use its influence with the various producers of maps to cease the misleading practice of printing Nailsea's name in the same size letters as for 25 years ago, I am sure the Town Council would be very appreciative.

The general impression is one of increased 'polarisation' of rural parish populations, with fewer in the middle size groups and increased numbers of more or less populous places.

### 9.3 Evidence for counterurbanisation ?

The study area has moved from a situation of relatively slow population growth up to the second world war to rapid post war growth, fastest between 1961 and 1971. Growth slowed somewhat during the 1970s. Throughout the period reviewed population growth has overwhelmingly been due to net in-migration rather than to natural increase. It is interesting to note that Somerset's slow growth before the war was said to be due to 'net emigration as a result of industrial expansion elsewhere' (SWEPC 1968 p.13) while, as Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis demonstrated, in Britain as a whole, and in other advanced industrial nations, more recent growth tends to be attributed to healthy economic conditions in the non-metropolitan parts of the country - 'the areas most suited to economic growth in recent years (OPCS 1981a p.8). While the urban areas, especially Bristol, were the major population gainers until about 1951, since 1971 they have become areas of absolute population loss, and the small towns and rural parishes surrounding them, previously areas of slow increase, have taken over as the main centres of growth. While Avon and Somerset, both non-metropolitan counties, gained population between 1971 and 1981, Avon's increase was much less than Somerset's, largely because of the decline experienced in and around the cities of Bath and Bristol.

The OPCS Report entitled The First Results of the 1981 Census of England and Wales (OPCS 1981b p.2) describes, more generally, 'a decline in population in the metropolitan areas and other cities...together with a decline or relative stability...in the adjoining outer urban areas, and growth in the more rural districts'. In Avon

this pattern is repeated at the local scale. With the exception of the more 'coastal' parishes of west Woodspring, the parishes of Avon with the highest growth rates are those furthest from Bristol and Bath. This is an illustration of a general reduction in population growth in the most accessible rural regions identified by OPCS (1981b p.4). OPCS's examination of national shift in population change by districts in 1971-81 compared with 1961-71 showed that Somerset had three districts with 'upward shift' - areas which experienced a greater increase or smaller decrease in population between 1971 and 1981 than they did in 1961-71 : West Somerset, Yeovil and, to a lesser extent, Mendip. (But note that the West Somerset figure is almost certainly affected by the inclusion of the Butlins visitors in the OPCS provisional figures). In Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor, in contrast, there has been a slight downward shift. Avon is largely an area of downward shift. As the OPCS report remarks, 'districts with marked downward shifts ...appear on the fringes of ...major centres such as Portsmouth, Bristol, Nottingham and Hull'(1981b p.6).

Locally, as nationally, there are more areas with gains than with losses. At district level there has been little rural depopulation but 'district level changes mask a more mixed local picture', with 'housing developments in small towns and large villages' (cf. Stoke St Mary) but 'continuing contraction of smaller settlements' (OPCS 1981b p.2), (cf. Treborough). The effects of continued planned growth are also clear, Nailsea providing the most obvious local example.

As Chapter 2 of this thesis has indicated, OPCS made a number of further comments on trends which it is valuable to investigate in more detail in the study area :

In some ways the upward shift in remoter districts during the decade when transport costs were increasing is surprising : the growth points may in fact be a very few places in each district. The settlement of retired people may be an influential factor...In some cases, upward shifts may be a further expression of looser urban structures identified during the two decades before 1971 : smaller centres on the fringes of metropolitan areas gained jobs & population in the 1960s while the metropolitan cores declined. During the 1970s places more distant from the cores enjoyed the growth - a characteristic now labelled 'counter-urbanisation'. (OPCS 1981b p6).

Furthermore :

There are indications that, when the more local and detailed results of the census are analysed, population growth in the main will be strongly associated with smaller towns and accessible settlements in the countryside (OPCS 1981b p.8-9).

Findings for the study area do indeed suggest that these patterns are a feature of the parishes of Somerset and south Avon, with growth around the smaller towns of, for example, Axbridge and Frome, in addition to the more easily explained planned growth in parishes such as Brympton or Stoke St Mary adjacent to, respectively, Yeovil and Taunton. However, a more detailed estimation of whether or not aspects of the counterurbanisation process are visible in the study area is required.

### **9.3.1 The relationship between parish population size and rate of growth**

Johansen and Fuguitt (1984) have described an empirical analysis which compares population growth levels and factors associated with growth across three decades, 1950-60, 1960-70 and 1970-80, in a sample of between 500 and 600 US villages. They noted (p. 24) that 'previous research, consistent with the older trend of metropolitan concentration' had 'generally shown that villages have higher levels of growth if they are near cities and also that larger villages have higher levels of growth than smaller ones', and they were anxious to discover whether these relationships still held, for in a situation of counterurbanisation they expected to observe a weakening in these associations over time. They aimed to establish whether there had been an upturn in village growth over the period and, as a first step, to discover how far growth rates were linked to the population size of a village at the start of each time period and to distance from the nearest metropolitan centre.

Their results suggest recent general increase in the growth levels of villages, but with considerable variation from place to place, as has been the case in rural Somerset and south Avon. Their analysis of growth rates by initial size of the village suggested that larger villages continued to show the highest rates of growth until the most recent decade, when a possible reversal of the size-growth association was detected, although they were surprised to find that smaller places were still likely to show rapid decline : 'smaller places were more likely than larger ones to either be growing rapidly or to be declining rapidly' (Johansen & Fuguitt 1984 p.37). So far as distance from metropolitan centres was concerned, Johansen and Fuguitt detected a fall in the importance of urban proximity as a factor in village growth over the thirty year period.

In the present study a start has been made in investigating population changes at parish level in more detail for the decades 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81. Figures

are available for 397 rural parishes, although boundary changes between 1951 and 1981 have necessitated the omission of several parishes from the detailed analysis of patterns from one decade to the next, so that the number of cases is slightly different for each 10 year period.

An initial examination of trends in each period reveals steadily accelerating growth overall; the mean parish population change was 3.5 per cent in the period 1951-61, 8.9 per cent in 1961-71 and 9.8 per cent in 1971-81, with increasing variation in growth rates over the thirty year period. However, these figures conceal a complex pattern of growth and decline amongst the parishes.

Examination of the relationship between initial parish population size and the rate of change for each decade using a simple (Pearson product moment) correlation coefficient suggests that by 1971-81 the relationship was much less strong, in statistical terms, than in the 1950s and '60s (Table 9.9). Graphical methods (described by Cleveland 1979), used to check for non-linearities and 'outliers' in the relationship between population size and rate of change which may affect the results shown in Table 9.9, serve also to reinforce the conclusion that until 1971 there was a positive relationship between parish population size at the start of the decade and the rate of subsequent growth but that after 1971 this relationship was less clear (Figures 9.1 to 9.3). (Three parishes on the outskirts of Taunton and Bridgwater which showed unusually high rates of growth as a result of urban expansion, and the parishes of Brympton and Ilminster Without in Yeovil district which showed growth in excess of 320 per cent between 1971 and 1981 have been removed from the scatterplots.) Figures 9.1 to 9.3 also suggest that by the most recent decade the degree of dispersion in growth rates was greater among the very smallest and very largest places than in medium sized parishes, so that patterns of change were indeed becoming more 'polarised'. In the 1970s the very smallest and largest places, in population terms, were likely to be experiencing rapid growth or rapid decline, while medium sized places showed a certain stability. In parishes with small populations it is likely that declining household size may have had an important effect on the observed patterns, but this awaits further analysis.

No attempt has yet been made to examine possible changes in the statistical relationship between rates of population change and distance from large urban centres in the study region. In later analysis it is intended to make use of the 1981 'centres of population' - grid references representing approximately the centre of population of a given area - available for enumeration districts and wards from OPCS (see OPCS 1984), to calculate distances from the rural parishes to urban



TABLE 9.9 CORRELATION OF POPULATION CHANGE BY INITIAL PARISH POPULATION IN THREE DECADES

| Percent change | Population | Correlation Coefficient | Significant* at: |
|----------------|------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1951-61        | 1951       | 0.21                    | >99%             |
| 1961-71        | 1961       | 0.26                    | >99%             |
| 1971-81        | 1971       | 0.08                    | >80 but <90%     |

| Percent change | Log Population | Correlation Coefficient | Significant at: |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1951-61        | 1951           | 0.26                    | >99%            |
| 1961-71        | 1961           | 0.27                    | >99%            |
| 1971-81        | 1971           | 0.10                    | >90 but <95%    |

\* using a standard significance test (2 tailed) for Pearson's product moment coefficient

TABLE 9.10 DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL PARISHES IN SOMERSET AND SOUTH AVON, BY PATTERNS OF POPULATION GROWTH AND DECLINE 1951-61, 1961-71 AND 1971-81

|         | Number     | Percent      |
|---------|------------|--------------|
| GGG     | 80         | 20.2         |
| DGG     | 72         | 18.2         |
| GDG     | 41         | 10.4         |
| GGD     | 44         | 11.1         |
| DDG     | 60         | 15.2         |
| DGD     | 29         | 7.3          |
| GDD     | 27         | 6.8          |
| DDD     | 40         | 10.1         |
| No data | 3          | 0.8          |
| Total   | <u>396</u> | <u>100.0</u> |

G = Growth D = Decline

Eg. GGG = growth in 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81

GDD = growth in 1951-61, decline in 1961-71 and 1971-81

FIGURE 9.1 SCATTERPLOT OF PER CENT POPULATION CHANGE 1951-61 (y) AGAINST THE LOGARITHM OF POPULATION IN 1951 (x). THE SOLID LINE IS A ROBUST SMOOTH OF THE DEPENDENCE OF y ON x.

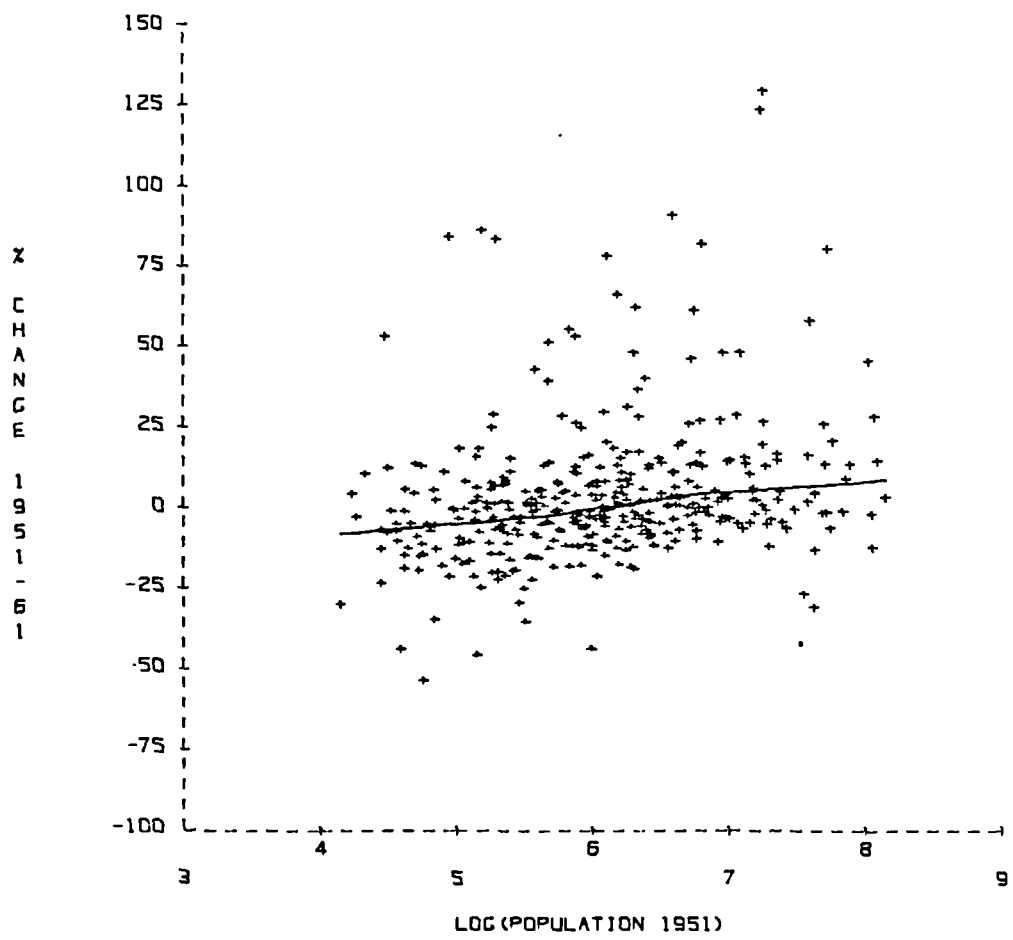


FIGURE 9.2 SCATTERPLOT OF PERCENT POPULATION CHANGE 1961-71 ( $y$ ) AGAINST THE LOGARITHM OF POPULATION IN 1961 ( $x$ ). THE SOLID LINE IS A ROBUST SMOOTH OF THE DEPENDENCE OF  $y$  ON  $x$ .

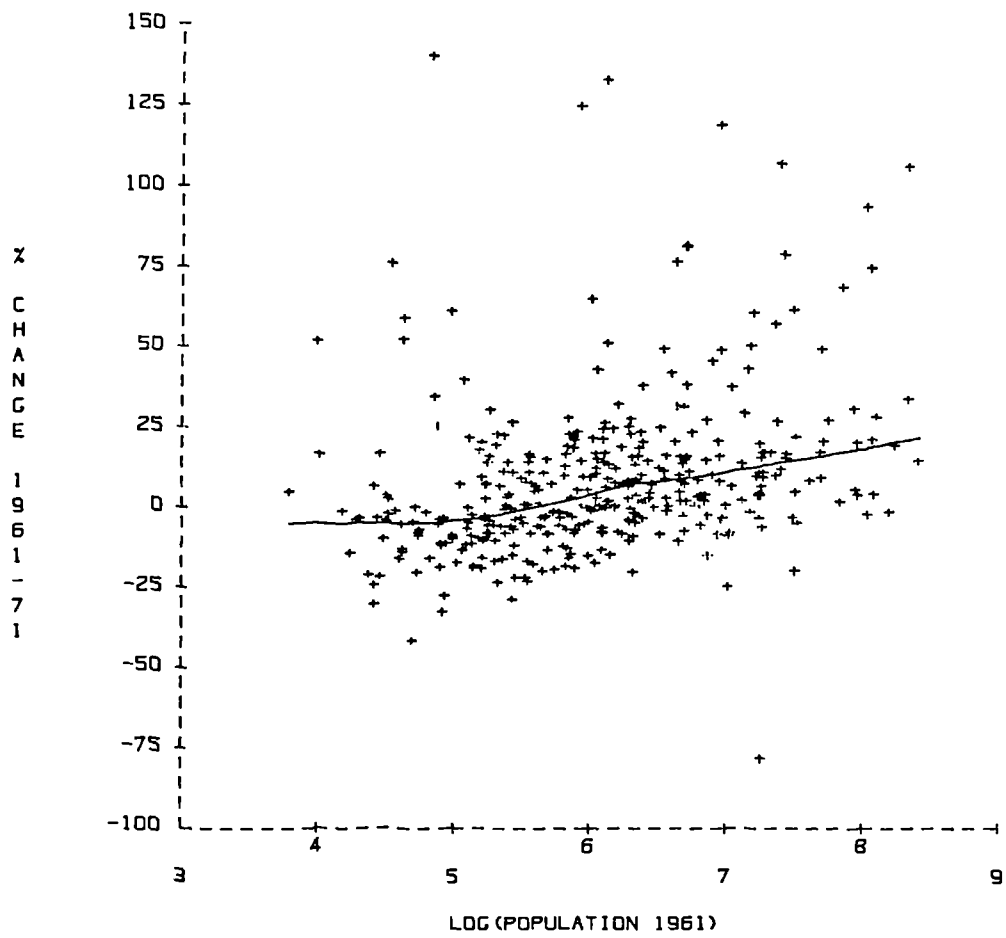
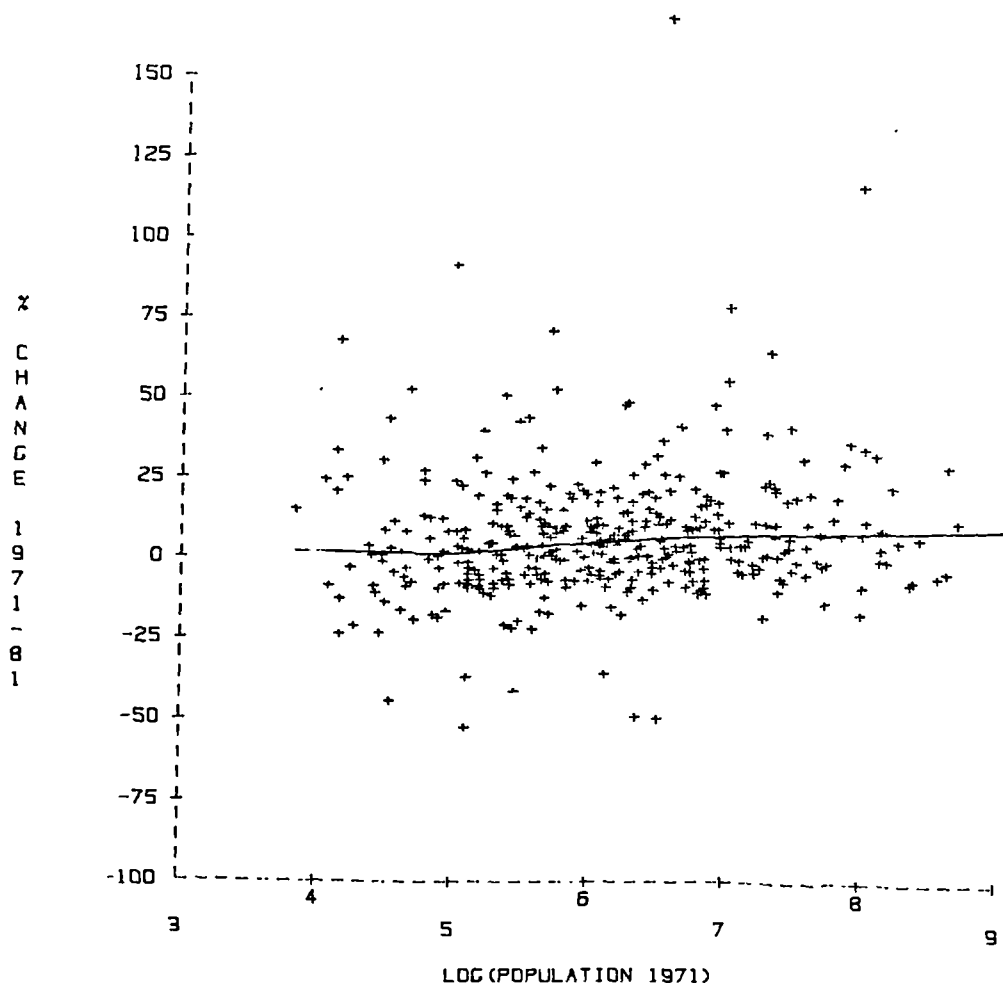


FIGURE 9.3 SCATTERPLOT OF PER CENT POPULATION CHANGE 1971-81 ( $y$ ) AGAINST THE LOGARITHM OF POPULATION IN 1971 ( $x$ ). THE SOLID LINE IS A ROBUST SMOOTH OF THE DEPENDENCE OF  $y$  ON  $x$ .






centres over a certain population size. Approximate grid references for the parishes, extracted locally, have already been used in a preliminary mapping exercise (Haggett, Mills & Morgan 1982).

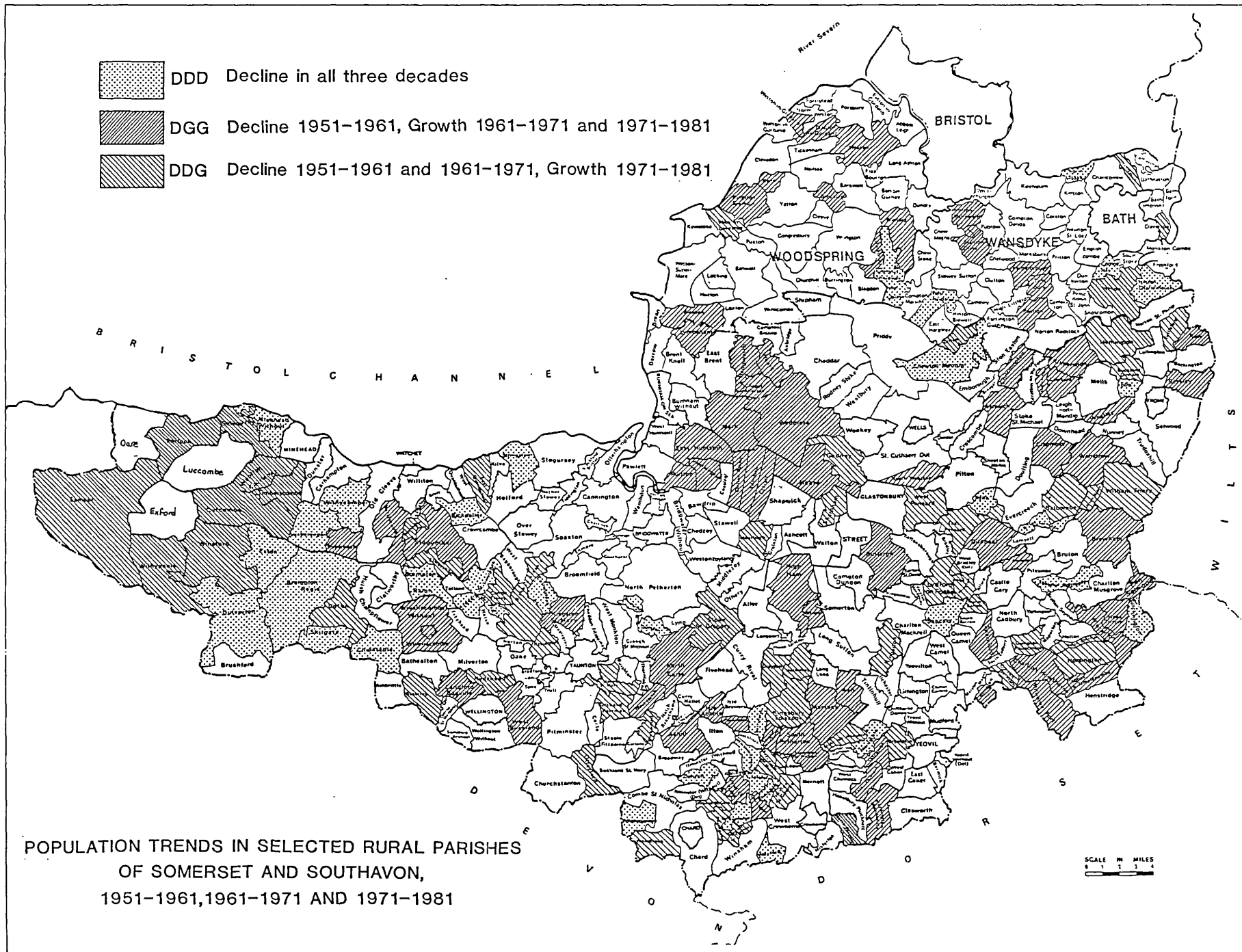
### **9.3.2 Population turnaround**

However, one further piece of analysis has been carried out on the population data. This analysis of population change at parish level is similar to Woodruffe's (1976) national investigation of trends in the decades 1951-61 and 1961-71 in rural districts and counties in which he describes 6 categories of population change, including 'reversed depopulation' - turnaround from population decrease in 1951-61 to growth in the following decade. Over a quarter of the counties and rural districts, mainly those remote from cities, experienced this.

In Table 9.10 the study area parishes have been categorised according to whether their populations were growing or declining in each of the three decades 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81. While about a fifth of the parishes show a consistent pattern of growth and about 10 per cent consistent decline, others have experienced change in the direction of population trends.

Of most interest in the present analysis are firstly, the 72 parishes which experienced a switch from depopulation to population growth during the 1960s and which have since maintained this growth, and, secondly, the 60 places which experienced a similar turnaround during the 1970s. Map 9.3 shows the location of these parishes. While those which experienced turnaround during the 1960s are distributed throughout the study area, with some clustering quite close to the coastal resort towns of Woodspring and on the Somerset Levels, only 3 parishes in West Somerset experienced this early shift. In the 1970s turnaround parishes are most conspicuous in the remote parts of West Somerset (admittedly this visual impression is affected by the large area of some of these parishes), although it is noticeable that several adjacent parishes in central West Somerset, on Exmoor, have suffered sustained depopulation in the postwar period. Other parishes with recent turnaround from loss to gain tend to be located adjacent to the country towns of, for example, Taunton, Wellington and Glastonbury. And while 3 parishes close to Bath display this trend, this is generally not a feature of south Avon, nor of the Sedgemoor area.

-  DDD Decline in all three decades
-  DGG Decline 1951-1961, Growth 1961-1971 and 1971-1981
-  DDG Decline 1951-1961 and 1961-1971, Growth 1971-1981



POPULATION TRENDS IN SELECTED RURAL PARISHES  
 OF SOMERSET AND SOUTHAVON,  
 1951-1961, 1961-1971 AND 1971-1981

#### **9.4 Concluding points**

So far, then, the data provide evidence of a turnaround from population loss to gain in numerous rural parishes, about one third of those considered here, especially those furthest away from the largest city of the region. More than this, however, there is statistical evidence to suggest that the 'traditional' relationship between the size of place and subsequent population growth is breaking down. In the 1950s and '60s the most populous places tended to grow more quickly than smaller parishes, but by the 1970s the pattern was showing signs of reversal, with faster growth 1971-81 in places with small 1971 populations. Thus there is evidence that a process of counterurbanisation is observable in the study area.

In Chapters 2 and 3 a number of possible explanations for counterurbanisation were discussed. Since Somerset and south Avon seem to be sharing in the rural population turnaround it is important to determine how far these explanations hold true and how far more formal hypotheses may be generated and tested here. For example, it will be useful to determine to what degree the observed changes may be due to spillover from urban areas; initial impressions suggest that this is unlikely to be an important factor. Further work on the age structure and employment characteristics of the parish populations would also be revealing.

Two themes are of particular interest in the present project, however. Firstly, since there is evidence to suggest that counterurbanisation processes may have been underpinned by government policies of various types it is appropriate, at the local level, to try to gauge the influence of rural settlement policies on patterns of population growth and decline. Chapter 10, which follows, considers the postwar development of these policies in some detail. Secondly, it is the principal aim of this thesis to examine relationships between population shifts and the distribution of services traditionally located in central places, and in particular to investigate the detailed characteristics of parishes displaying population turnaround using the data provided by Bracey's early studies and by the follow-up survey undertaken in 1980. This analysis is described in Chapter 11.

## 10. THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE II : POSTWAR PLANNING FOR RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOMERSET AND AVON

### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter considers postwar planning for rural settlements in Somerset and Avon . Where appropriate it highlights the influence of Bracey's survey work on settlement policies and the subsequent links between the 1980 follow-up study and the planning process.

Before proceeding to a description of settlement policies it is first useful briefly to review the legislative background against which local developments must be set.

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 required every County Council to prepare a Development Plan showing the proposed pattern of development within the area under its jurisdiction. Plans were to be submitted to the Minister for Town and Country Planning by 1951 and reviewed at 5 yearly intervals. The detailed form of the Development Plans was controlled through subsidiary legislation in the form of regulations and Circulars issued by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (MTCP), later the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG). The most important of these, initially, were Circular 40 (MTCP 1948a), Circular 59 (MTCP 1948b), and an Advice Note issued in 1950 on the Siting of New Houses in Country Districts (MTCP 1950).

The first of these, as well as advising planning authorities to catalogue services and facilities in their larger settlements (mentioned in Chapter 4, above), described agriculture as 'the basis for the whole rural economy' (Cloke 1983 p.79), while the second described how the locations of centres for social, economic and health services should be depicted cartographically. However, the third had a particularly important bearing on the treatment of rural settlements in the Development Plans since it contained strongly-worded advice to the effect that 'the economic provision of services in rural areas could only be achieved by the selection of certain settlements for expansion' (Cloke 1983 p.80).

The planning system as established in the early postwar years had a number of shortcomings, especially important being the failure to take an overall view of the rural economy : the Development Plan was 'not a blueprint for the rural economy'(Whitby et al 1974 p. 72). Secondly the administrative machinery was



cumbersome and little consideration was given to the resources and agencies which would have to be mobilised in order to provide services in the desired locations. There was little provision, within the Plans, for adaptation to changing circumstances. They were 'limited in scope, detailed in character and liable to date rapidly when faced with significant social and economic changes' (Somerset CC 1977a p 1).

By the mid 1960s general dissatisfaction with the system as established since 1947 led the government to set up a review under the Planning Advisory Group (PAG). Their report, Settlement in the Countryside (MHLG 1967), which stressed the need in each county for 'an overall county policy framework for village development and for a coordinated programme for public investment' (Cloke 1983 p.80-81), provided the basis for a new planning system, introduced in the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act and brought into being by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1971 and the Local Government Act, 1972, and elaborated, as before, by subsequent Circulars.

The post-1968 planning system gives the Minister (now the Secretary of State for the Environment) the final say in strategic issues as set out in a Structure Plan for each county. However, local planning authorities are given considerable powers to deal with specific local issues through Local Plans designed to elaborate in detail the policies of the Structure Plans but not to depart from them. An important feature of the current system is the provision for public participation in the planning process, as recommended by the Skeffington Committee's report, People and Planning (MHLG 1969). The new framework is also intended to provide for more positive action on the part of planners, replacing the former negative controls of the old system of development planning, and for a more flexible approach to changing circumstances. Both Structure Plans and Local Plans are intended to be continuously reviewed. However, the main feature of the post-1968 system as compared with that established by the 1947 Act is intended to be a new way of looking at the relationships between rural and urban areas. Under the new system of local government implemented by the 1972 Local Government Act, rural and urban areas are to be treated as functionally linked, 'abandoning the exclusiveness of the definition of urban and rural authorities which is an inheritance of a Victorian view' (Whitby *et al* 1974 p.82). It is against this background that local events must be assessed.

This chapter is based on an examination of planning reports and studies published by the local authorities, principally the County Councils, although a certain

amount of participant observation in the policy process was possible during the later stages of Structure Plan preparation in the study area. While the plans for Somerset issued before 1974 cover the whole of the study area, the investigation of policy documents produced after this date must include publications for both Somerset and Avon. By 1980 the Structure Planning process was further advanced in Somerset than in Avon, and several Local Plans were in preparation, including those for the Dulverton Area and for Watchet and Williton in West Somerset.

This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive review of local government policies in the two counties. Neither does it set out to measure policy effectiveness. Rather the aim is to provide background information against which to set the discussion of the changing pattern of service provision in the rural parishes. In particular, the examination of the various reports suggests several changes of emphasis in settlement planning and related policies during the postwar period, responses both to central government influences and to broader changes in the space economy, all of which bear upon the parishes under study.

## **10.2 Planning Under the 1947 System**

### **10.2.1 The County Development Plan 1953**

The first Development Plan for Somerset was published in 1953 and approved by the Minister in 1958. The Plan was reviewed in 1964 and the revised edition approved in 1972.

The overriding concern of the planning authorities during the 1950s was the protection and encouragement of agriculture in the county, to the extent that virtually all the policies in the early reports are described in the light of their likely effects on farming. This is in many ways a reflection of national opinions about the importance of food production expressed in the Scott Report, published in 1942, which:

emphasised the essential place held by agriculture in the country's economic structure,....dealt with the drift of population from the country to the town, gave reasons for this drift and proposed methods for counteracting it and the consequent decline in agriculture (Somerset CC 1951 p.2)

In 1951 the planning department stated firmly that 'the essence of rural planning is to maintain and increase all branches of agricultural industry' (Somerset CC

1951 p 15). Settlement policy in the early 1950s was subsumed under the heading 'Maintenance of an Adequate Agricultural Labour Force' and when consideration was given to housing, services and the social life of rural workers it was in order 'to sustain agricultural production' or even 'to conserve good agricultural land' (Somerset CC 1952 p 6 & 15).

The 1952 Analysis of the County Survey argued that 'people are more likely to be retained in agricultural work and prevented from drifting into town industries if our villages are places where they can have good facilities' (para 383). This was in keeping with two of the main findings of the Scott Report, summarised in the introduction to the 1951 Report on the County Survey, that 'people in the countryside lacked adequate standards of public services compared with people in the towns' and that 'a satisfactory social structure in the country could not develop without these essential services or if the opportunities for reasonable social activities were inadequate' (Somerset CC 1951 p 2).

It was further argued by the Somerset planners that 'services on such a scale cannot be provided except in places having sufficient population' and it was decided to concentrate future development of housing and services in a few 'main villages' which would serve as centres for the surrounding agricultural areas, for as the Scott Report had also concluded it would not be economically or practically possible to provide these services and activities,

if building development were scattered over the countryside in sporadic outbreaks. Planning Authorities must encourage the building up of suitable villages which could act as centres of population economically capable of supporting better services and large enough to develop a satisfactory corporate life (Somerset CC 1951 p 2).

Thus in Somerset:

It is most evident ...that in the rural areas, where one gets sufficiently far from the territorial influence of principal towns, main villages (or key villages) exist which act as centres for a group of smaller villages and provide the commercial and social activities for the area; ...it is vitally important to the wellbeing of the agricultural areas that these main villages at least should be provided with a concentration of good public services and given every encouragement for reasonable development to keep them active. They are the miniature capitals of their small territories. In rural areas, where there seems to be an absence of obvious main villages, those showing most promise should be given every facility and encouragement to help them develop (Somerset CC 1951 para 383).

The 1951 Report on the County Survey described the historic pattern of settlement in the county - a pattern which had 'withstood the test of time and should not be subjected to significant changes without good reason' (Somerset CC 1951 p 173). It detailed the growth of inland market towns such as Yeovil, Taunton and Glastonbury and of port towns like Watchet and Bridgwater, and the more recent growth of additional functions in most of the towns - administration (for example in Taunton), industry (Street, Bridgwater, Wellington), tourism (Weston-super-Mare, Minehead, Wells) and 'commerce' (Taunton, Yeovil). Settlements in the county were classified according to 'their provision of facilities for surrounding areas', and the Towns were divided into two groups - those of 'primary' and those of 'secondary' importance in their 'territorial influence' (Figure 10.1).

Villages were regarded almost wholly in terms of their links with agriculture - 'the home and community centre of the rural workers' families' (Somerset CC 1951 p 15), although it was recognised that the growth of tourism and leisure in the countryside, the tendency for people to retire to rural areas, and the relatively cheap land available there, together with the postwar demand for housing which encouraged 'townspeople' to live in villages, were bringing changes in rural life.

#### **(1) The identification of Main Villages**

To the planning authorities, the Main Villages were those which were, 'before the emergence of modern transport, small market towns' of 'agricultural significance' (Somerset CC 1952 p 6), serving the various farming areas. The 1951 Report on the County Survey divides the county into a number of farming districts - Crop and Market Garden Areas, Dairy Farming and Livestock Grazing Areas - in order to identify the villages 'affected' by each farming type. However, within each farming area the identification of Main Villages - not all of which were immediately apparent - reportedly relied heavily on Bracey's work:

At this stage of the survey, this part of the report is limited to a broad assessment of existing village life obtained from preliminary field surveys and from some research work of the Bristol University Reconstruction Research Group (Somerset CC 1951 p 15).

This was in spite of the fact that the agricultural market function of settlements was not of primary importance in Bracey's research. Rather, 'the basis upon which the University Research Group has noted these villages is their existing shopping capacity to serve a surrounding rural area' (Somerset CC 1951 para 206).

Further, it is interesting to note that although the classification of towns and villages was said to bear 'no relationship to population' (see Figure 10.1), it is clear from paragraph 383 of the 1952 Analysis that Main Villages, and places likely to become Main Villages, were those with sufficient population to give the concentration of revenue to finance the various services to be provided within them.

From these several directions a number of Main Villages were identified, as listed in Figure 10.1. Also listed were places which showed signs of developing into Main Villages, and, quite differently, several which could, given a concentration of effort by all the authorities providing public and social services, become local centres for areas which did not yet enjoy good facilities.

The designation of these places was not intended to infer any policy aimed at the suppression of smaller villages and hamlets. The needs of agriculture again provided the criteria for development in these smaller settlements, for 'any established small community would be allowed whatever housing is needed for agriculture...in the adjoining countryside' (Somerset CC 1952 p 19).

#### **(ii) Main Villages and the 'agricultural population'**

The selection of Main Villages and local centres was seen as especially important in areas of the county suffering from depopulation, particularly the uplands such as Exmoor and the Quantock Hills, although depopulation was not a serious problem in Somerset generally (see section 9.1.2, above) and it was the view that the relatively high birth rate might 'fill deficiencies in agriculture labour' (Somerset CC 1952 p 13). At this time the main cause of depopulation was seen to be the lure of town social life and jobs in industry, while the main problem in rural areas was the resulting shortage of agricultural manpower. Changes in agricultural methods were not linked to the movement of labour out of farming, although the 1952 Analysis did point to changes in farming practice as a major cause of soil erosion in the upland areas and went on to warn (p.4) that 'no provisions which the Planning Authority may make to facilitate development in these areas can be effective if the main source of livelihood is impaired', thereby implying some connection between the two.

It seems that the plans of the 1950s were characterised by a lack of foresight concerning the changes that the increasing mechanisation of agriculture would bring. Increased food production, brought about by greater efficiency in farming,

FIGURE 10.1 SOMERSET DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CLASSIFICATION OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES ACCORDING TO THEIR PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR SURROUNDING AREAS

| CLASSIFICATION OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES ACCORDING TO THEIR PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR SURROUNDING AREAS                                                                                                                                                             |                      |                                                                           |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| NOTE: The classification bears no relationship to population. Some villages of considerable size are omitted because the proximity of large towns has eclipsed their function as rural centres; e.g., North Curry, which is close to Taunton.                     |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| 1. Towns of primary importance in their territorial influence:                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| Bridgwater, Taunton, Minehead, Weston-super-Mare, Yeovil.<br>Although not within the administrative County, Bristol and Bath have an influence reaching far into North Somerset.                                                                                  |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| 2. Towns of secondary importance in their territorial influence:                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| Burnham and Highbridge, Chard, Clevedon, Frome, Glastonbury, Wellington, Wells.                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| 3. Other towns and main villages which act as local centres:                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| (a) WEST SOMERSET                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | (b) CENTRAL SOMERSET | (c) NORTH SOMERSET                                                        | (d) SOUTH SOMERSET |
| Watchet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Shepton Mallet       | Portishead                                                                | Crewkerne          |
| Porlock                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Street               | Keynsham                                                                  | Ilminster          |
| Williton                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Axbridge             | Midsomer Norton                                                           | Langport           |
| Nether Stowey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Cheddar              | and Raastock                                                              | Somerton           |
| Dulverton                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Wedmore              | Yatton                                                                    | Martock            |
| Wivellicombe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                      | Nailsea                                                                   | Wincanton          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      | Monkton Combe                                                             | Castle Cary        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      | (including Combe Down)                                                    | Bruton             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      | Peasedown St. John                                                        |                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      | Paulton                                                                   |                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      | Whitchurch                                                                |                    |
| 4. Places showing evidence of developing and which from their position and circumstances might become main villages:                                                                                                                                              |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| (a) NORTH SOMERSET                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                      | (b) SOUTH SOMERSET                                                        |                    |
| Churchill, Evercreech, Winscombe.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                      | Ilchester, Milborne Port, Temple Combe, South Petherton, Stoke-under-Ham. |                    |
| 5. Places which, although not showing evidence of developing, could serve as local centres for areas not now enjoying good facilities. Their development would depend upon a concentration of effort by all the authorities providing public and social services. |                      |                                                                           |                    |
| (a) WEST SOMERSET                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | (b) NORTH SOMERSET   | (c) CENTRAL SOMERSET                                                      | (d) SOUTH SOMERSET |
| Exford                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Norton St. Philip    | Woolavington                                                              | Churchingford      |
| Brompton Regis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Coleford             | Othry                                                                     |                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Wanstrow             |                                                                           |                    |

SOURCE: Somerset CC (1947)

was seen as dependent upon an enlarged, or at least constant, supply of labour and it was the main task of the planners to try and prevent the movement of labour to the towns.

Meanwhile the existence of a number of areas of population growth in the countryside adjacent to larger settlements was a matter of some confusion but was explained as resulting from shortages of housing in the towns which forced those who wished to work in the towns to move to the country and commute. This was seen as a temporary phenomenon, contrary to the natural order of things:

The housing shortage has forced newcomers to disperse far and wide into the countryside to find accommodation. Presumably, in the course of years as the housing deficit is gradually overcome, there will be a corresponding population adjustment as these people find houses nearer their work. If so, it follows that at present the apparent rate of population growth in these rural districts is false and unrelated to agriculture and also there is a corresponding false impression of housing demand in those districts where the newcomers have become the official responsibility of the rural districts as housing authorities (Somerset CC 1952 p.12).

The 'pressure upon agricultural land by urban needs' posed considerable problems, especially to the south east of Bristol where there was concern to prevent the further overspill of the city (described (in Somerset CC 1953b) as 'these suburban outbursts') into the farming parish of Whitchurch.

#### **10.2.2 The First Review of the County Development Plan 1964**

Although the later reports show an increase in sophistication, many of the early concepts remain fairly intact. Indeed the First Review of the Development Plan in 1964 held that the principles contained in the planning documents of the early 1950s had been proved to be correct since 'Somerset remains one of the most pleasant counties in which to live and work', although the control of development under 'modern conditions' had proved to be 'an arduous task' (Somerset CC 1964a Forward).

The early 1960s were times of high population forecasts, especially for the urban areas, rising car ownership and increasing concern about the imminent closure of most of the minor railway routes in the county. In general, the planners seemed to be adopting a wider outlook in their consideration of the factors which might influence the increasingly complex problems they faced; factors such as motorway construction and membership of the EEC. While the 1953 Development Plan had concentrated largely on the interests of agriculture, the 1964 Review seemed

broader in outlook, stressing, for example, the need to make the towns of Somerset 'safer and more agreeable places to live', and there was greater emphasis on roads and on landscape than had previously been the case.

**(1) Continuing support for agriculture**

Agriculture was still said to be of primary importance in maintaining the 'economic stability' of the county, although it by now employed only 7 per cent of the workforce and its grip on land resources was perhaps no longer quite as strong as it had been. The 1964 Review noted that the continuing decline in the number of permanent farmworkers was part of a national trend and commented that 'to a great extent farmers have been able to offset this decline in the labour force by improvements in mechanical efficiency'. However, it was also noted that changing agricultural practices could be a cause rather than a result of labour losses. The report A Region with a Future published three years later specifically attributed the loss of agricultural manpower to increasing mechanisation on the farms. In Somerset, agricultural labour loss continued to be mainly attributed to 'remoteness and housing difficulties' (South West Economic Planning Council (SWEPC) 1967).

While the planners recognised that their ability directly to influence the prosperity of agriculture was limited - 'insofar that the future economy of the agricultural industry is concerned with mechanisation and wage rates it is not a matter for direct action by the Local Planning Authority' - they still professed themselves able to 'influence the size of the labour force by encouraging adequate housing ....in appropriate places, and the provision of good public services and social facilities' (Somerset CC 1964a p 77), facilities which it was not seen as 'practicable' to provide in very small villages and hamlets.

Thus the planners continued their policy of increasing the supply of housing, services and social facilities in the larger villages and small towns, a policy which was seen as particularly important in those areas of the county which were still experiencing depopulation. For example, on Exmoor and the Brendons it was considered that 'moderate growth of the established communities would appear to offer the best scope for satisfying the agricultural employment needs of the area' although 'past trends show that it will be difficult to achieve', especially since 'motorised transport facilities' were beginning to provide the agricultural workers with a much greater degree of mobility (Somerset CC 1964a p 76).



Paragraph 519 of the 1964 Review is noteworthy in that here the planners extend the idea of supporting agriculture through the provision of village facilities to the support of agriculturally-based manufacturing industries by the same methods:

The dependence of some of the main manufacturing industries within the towns of the county on agriculture...needs recognition...The Plan aims at strengthening this link by encouraging the provision of adequate services and social facilities for the rural worker.

**(ii) Continuing control on new housing development and the designation of Green Belts**

Between 1951 and 1961 over 32,000 new houses were built in the county, 'the number erected in the Rural Districts being only slightly lower than the total for the Boroughs and Urban Districts' (Somerset CC 1964a para 272 p 57), but in most parts of the county the settlement pattern remained largely unchanged since most new construction took place in existing built up areas, including those villages picked out for development in the earlier plans. As an illustration, the 1964 Report for the Bath Environs commented in its preface that 'except in those villages indicated for expansion the Local Authority has permitted only development essential to agriculture and necessary for the continued vitality of village life' (Somerset CC 1953c).

However, the expansion of some of the existing towns, which was 'to be encouraged and accomodated' (Somerset CC 1964a p 98), had already brought suburban encroachment upon the adjacent rural areas. In addition, the influx of town workers into the countryside was even more apparent than it had been in the early 1950s, especially in parishes surrounding the major towns where there were considerable population gains between 1951 and 1961. Far from being the temporary feature that the 1952 Analysis of the County Survey suggested, there was 'a growing tendency for people to move away from their place of employment and accept the consequent journey to work'.

Policies to prevent the further overspill of the cities of Bristol and Bath into the surrounding rural Environs were strengthened during the 1960s by the proposals to designate Green Belts in which 'sound agricultural development' would be encouraged and 'high recreational values ...maintained and enhanced' (Somerset CC 1964b para 233 p 34). New development was to be located in existing settlements beyond the Green Belt, and Nailsea was selected as a suitable growth point.

### **(iii) The classification of settlements in the 1964 Review**

The classification of towns in the 1964 Review remained much as it had been in 1952, although in a reference to Bracey's study of the rural service importance of settlements Frome was added to the list of 'towns of primary importance in their territorial influence'. Smaller towns and large villages designated as Main Villages in the first Development Plan were in 1964 divided into rather different groups (Figure 10.2).

A number of towns which in the 1952 analysis were referred to as 'other towns and main villages which act as local centres for agricultural areas' - Williton, Portishead, Keynsham, Norton Radstock, Nailsea, Shepton Mallet, Street and Crewkerne - were in 1964 referred to as 'towns of secondary importance in their territorial influence', increasing the number of such towns from 7 in 1952 to 14 in 1964. The 'other towns and main villages which act as local centres' (no longer termed 'local centres for agricultural areas') in 1964 included Yatton, Ilchester, Milborne Port, South Petherton, Templecombe and Wincanton. Thus a notional movement of settlements 'up the hierarchy' is apparent between the two dates.

In general the rural settlements were no longer described in terms of the farming areas in which they were located. Rather the Report spoke of 'geographical' areas - Exmoor and the Brendons, the Quantocks, the Levels, the Somerset Coalfield - although the names of two 'geographical' areas - the Midford Sands Arable Area and the Lias Clay Hills and Pastures - retained an agricultural flavour. It was acknowledged that the pattern of settlements in the county was a reflection not only of agricultural needs but of such factors as rising car ownership, which provided 'a much greater degree of mobility between town and country' (Somerset CC 1964a p 34).

Although the policy of encouraging the development of Main Villages was viewed as 'equally relevant' in 1964 as in 1952, the definition of a Main Village, in the 1951 Report on the County Survey conceived of as a settlement of vital importance to particular agricultural areas, had by 1964 become more specific and yet more broadly based.

This, together with the fact that certain places besides those designated as Main Villages had gained services, facilities and population since 1952 made it necessary to revise the classification of, and policy for, the smaller rural centres.

FIGURE 10.2 SOMERSET DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CLASSIFICATION OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

|                                                                  |                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Towns of primary importance in their territorial influence:   |                          |
| Bridgwater                                                       | Taunton                  |
| Frome                                                            | Weston-super-Mare        |
| Minehead                                                         | Yeovil                   |
| 2. Towns of secondary importance in their territorial influence: |                          |
| Burnham-on-Sea                                                   | Norton-Radstock          |
| Chard                                                            | Portishead               |
| Clevedon                                                         | Shepton Mallet           |
| Crewkerne                                                        | Street                   |
| Glastonbury                                                      | Wellington               |
| Keynsham                                                         | Wells                    |
| Nailsea                                                          | Williton                 |
| 3. Other towns and main villages which act as local centres:     |                          |
| (a) North Area                                                   | (d) West Central Area    |
| Axbridge                                                         | Nether Stowey            |
| Cheddar                                                          | Watchet                  |
| Wedmore                                                          | Wiveliscombe             |
| Yatton                                                           |                          |
| (b) North East Area                                              | (e) Exmoor National Park |
| Paulton                                                          | Dulverton                |
| Peasedown St. John                                               | Porlock                  |
| (c) South East Area                                              |                          |
| Bruton                                                           | Milborne Port            |
| Castle Cary                                                      | Somerton                 |
| Ilchester                                                        | South Petherton          |
| Ilminster                                                        | Templecombe              |
| Langport                                                         | Wincanton                |
| Martock                                                          |                          |

SOURCE: Somerset CC (1964)

On the basis of past trends and future growth prospects two schedules of rural settlements were prepared (Figure 10.3 ).First Schedule villages were those which by 1964 had adequate services and social facilities to accord with the following description:

The essential services will include electricity, a good water supply and main drainage. A minimum range of facilities would comprise a primary school, shops capable of supplying daily requirements, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities capable of providing the means for an active social life. Services and facilities on this scale only become practicable within communities large enough to justify their provision and subsequent maintenance. Within rural areas such communities will normally be the larger villages (Somerset CC 1964a p 105).

Some of the places listed under the First Schedule had in 1952 been classified as Main Villages (Monkton Combe, Whitchurch), or as those which might become Main Villages (Churchill, Evercreech, Winscombe, Stoke Sub Hamdon), or those which might serve as Local Centres (Norton St Philip, Coleford, Wanstrow, Exford, Brompton Regis), but there were numerous others which in 1964 were thought to merit similar treatment.

Policy for these First Schedule villages was set out as follows:

The Local Planning Authority will give favourable consideration to satisfactory proposals for development ...within these villages, and to this end will, where necessary, encourage the provision of main services and facilities within them. (Somerset CC 1964a p 106).

The scope for this policy was to vary according to population trends, and there were special provisions to restrict the development of First Schedule villages within, for example, the Green Belt and high amenity areas.

The Second Schedule included a large number of 'smaller villages with limited facilities and of such a size as to render their provision on an adequate scale difficult in the near future'. These were places not named in the 1952 classification. In these Second Schedule villages the Local Authority proposed to 'encourage the provision of essential main services' and to 'give favourable consideration to small scale residential development ...in the form of infilling,...consistent with the established character of the village,...and in scale with the range of facilities likely to be available' (Somerset CC 1964a p 105-6).

As in 1952, the Local Authority was at pains to point out that this policy did not infer an attempt to suppress the many other smaller villages and hamlets not

FIGURE 10.3 SOMERSET DEVELOPMENT PLAN: FIRST AND SECOND SCHEDULE VILLAGES

|                            |                       |                    |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>NORTH AREA</b>          |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Axbridge R.D.</b>       |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Banwell                    | Brent Knoll           | Hutton             | Sandford              |
| Berrow                     | Churchill             | Kewstoke †         | Shipham               |
| Blagdon                    | Congresbury           | Locking            | Winscombe             |
| Bleadon                    | East Brent            | Mark               | Wrington              |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Badgworth                  | Butcombe *            | Langford           | Rooks Bridge          |
| Blackford                  | Cross                 | Lympham            | Ston Allerton         |
| Brean                      | Hewish                | Mark Causeway      | Weare                 |
| Burrington                 |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Long Ashton R.D.</b>    |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Abbots Leigh * †           | Dundry * †            | Long Ashton * †    | Winford *             |
| Backwell                   | Easton-in-Gordano and | Tickenham *        | Wraxall *             |
| (West Town) †              | Pill *                |                    |                       |
| Cleeve *                   |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Barrow Gurney * †          | Claverham             | Kenn               | Portbury *            |
| Clapton-in-Gordano *       | Felton *              | Kingston Seymour   | Walton-in-Gordano †   |
| Backwell (Church           | Flax Bourton * †      | North Weston †     | Weston-in-Gordano †   |
| Town & Farleigh) †         |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>NORTH EAST AREA</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Bathavon R.D.</b>       |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Bathampton * †             | Bathford * †          | Monkton Combe * †  | Whitchurch * †        |
| Batheaston * †             |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Camerton                   | Freshford *           | Newton St. Loe * † | South Stoke * †       |
| Compton Dando *            | Hinton Charterhouse * | Priston * *        | Tunley *              |
| Corston * †                | Lower Swainswick * †  | Shoscombe          | Wellow *              |
| Dunkerton *                | Marksbury *           |                    |                       |
| <b>Clutton R.D.</b>        |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Bishop Sutton              | Clutton               | Farrington Gurney  | Temple Cloud          |
| Chew Magna *               | East Harptree         | High Littleton     | Timsbury              |
| Chew Stoke *               | Farnborough           | Pensford *         | West Harptree         |
| Chilcompton                |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Compton Martin             | Stanton Drew *        | Ston Easton        | Ubley                 |
| Hallatrow                  |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Frome R.D.</b>          |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Beckington                 | Mells                 | Nunney             | Wanstrow              |
| Coleford                   | Norton St. Philip     | Rode               |                       |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Buckland Dinham            | Kilmerdon             | Trudozhill         | Witham Friary         |
| Faulkland                  | Leigh-upon-Mendip     |                    |                       |
| <b>CENTRAL AREA</b>        |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>Shepton Mallet R.D.</b> |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Croscombe                  | Holcombe              | Pilton             | Stoke St. Michael     |
| Evercreach                 | Oakhill               |                    |                       |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Batcombe                   | Ditcheat              | East Pennard       | Lydford               |
| Cranmore                   | Doultling             | Gurney Slade       | Stratton-on-the-Fosse |
| <b>Wells R.D.</b>          |                       |                    |                       |
| <b>First Schedule</b>      |                       |                    |                       |
| Baltonsborough             | Draycott              | Walton             | West Pennard          |
| Chewton Mendip             | Meare                 | Westbury           | Wookey                |
| <b>Second Schedule</b>     |                       |                    |                       |
| Butleigh                   | Easton                | Priddy             | West Hay              |
| Coxley                     | North Wootton         | Rodney Stoke       | Wookey Hole           |
| Dinder                     |                       |                    |                       |

**SOUTH EAST AREA**

**Chard R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|                        |                            |             |         |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Broadway/Broadway Hill | Combe St. Nicholas Merritt | South Chard | Winsham |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------|

**Second Schedule**

|                             |                                             |                             |                                                          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Ashill<br>Buckland St. Mary | Donyatt<br>Dowlsh Wake<br>Hinton St. George | Iiton<br>Lopen<br>Misterton | Seavington St. Mary/<br>St. Michael<br>Shepton Beauchamp |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|

**Langport R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|             |                    |                    |             |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Curry Rivel | Keinton Mandeville | Kingsbury Episcopi | Long Sutton |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|

**Second Schedule**

|                                                    |                                                               |                                                |                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aller<br>Babcary<br>Barrington<br>Barton St. David | Charlton Adam<br>Charlton Mackrell<br>Compton<br>Curry Mallet | Drayton<br>Dundon<br>East Lambrook<br>Fivehead | Hambridge<br>High Ham<br>Isle Brewers<br>Kingsdon<br>Pitney |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

**Wincanton R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|                    |            |               |             |
|--------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| Charlton Horethome | Henstridge | North Cadbury | Queen Camel |
|--------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|

**Second Schedule**

|                                         |                                            |                      |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anxford<br>Drewham<br>Charlton Musgrove | Corton Denham<br>Cucklington<br>Galhampton | Horsington<br>Horton | Penselwood<br>Pitcombe<br>Sparkford |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|

**Yeovil R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|                     |                      |                  |            |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------|
| Haselbury Plucknett | Montacute<br>Odcombe | Stoke-sub-Hamdon | West Coker |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------|

**Second Schedule**

|                                                                              |                                                                   |                                                         |                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Ash<br>Marwick Stoford<br>Chilthorne Domer<br>Chiselborough<br>East Chinnock | East Coker<br>Hardington Mandeville<br>Limington<br>Marston Magna | Mudford<br>North Perrot<br>Norton-sub-Hamdon<br>Rimpton | Tintinhull<br>West Camel<br>West Chinnock<br>Yeovilton |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|

**WEST CENTRAL AREA**

**Bridgewater R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|                                         |                                      |                                      |                                |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ashcott<br>Cannington<br>East Huntspill | North Petherton<br>Othery<br>Puriton | Spaxton<br>Wemdon †<br>Westonzoyland | West Huntspill<br>Woolavington |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|

**Second Schedule**

|                                                                      |                                              |                                              |                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Bay Drip<br>Catecott<br>Chedzoy<br>Chilton Polden<br>Chilton Trinity | Combwich<br>Cossington<br>Edington<br>Enmore | Goathurst<br>Lyng<br>Middlezoy<br>Moorlynych | North Newton<br>Pawlett<br>Shapwick<br>Stawell |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|

**Bulverton R.D. (part of)**

**First Schedule**

Brushford

**Taunton R.D.**

**First Schedule**

|                                                     |                                                               |                                  |                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bishop's Hull †<br>Bishop's Lydeard<br>Churchinford | Creech St. Michael<br>Kingston St. Mary<br>Monkton Heathfield | North Curry<br>Norton Fitzwarren | Stoke St. Gregory<br>Trull † |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|

**Second Schedule**

|                                                 |                                   |                                                      |                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Blagdon<br>Cheddon<br>Fitzpaine<br>Combe Florey | Corfe<br>Halse<br>Hatch Beauchamp | Lydeard St.<br>Lawrence<br>Ruishton<br>Staplegrave † | Stoke St. Mary<br>West Bagborough |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

**Wellington R.D.**

**First Schedule**

Milverton

**Second Schedule**

|                                               |                                    |                  |                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bradford-on-Tone<br>Fitzhead<br>Holywell Lake | Langford Budville<br>Langley Marsh | Nynehead<br>Oske | Sampford Arundel<br>West Buckland |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|

**Williton R.D. (part of)**

**First Schedule**

|            |           |           |          |
|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Carhampton | Stogumber | Stogursey | Washford |
|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|

**Second Schedule**

|                         |                  |                              |                                |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bicknoller<br>Crowcombe | Holford<br>Kilve | Old Cleeve<br>Sampford Brett | West Quantoxhead<br>Withycombe |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|

| EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK     |              |                   |           |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Dulverton R.D. (part of) |              |                   |           |
| First Schedule           |              |                   |           |
| Brompton Regis           | Exford       | Winsford          | Withypool |
| Second Schedule          |              |                   |           |
| Exton                    |              |                   |           |
| Williton R.D. (part of)  |              |                   |           |
| First Schedule           |              |                   |           |
| Dunster                  | Roadwater    | Wheddon Cross     |           |
| Second Schedule          |              |                   |           |
| Allerford                | Timberscombe | Wootton Courtenay |           |

- \* denotes villages within the proposed Bristol and Bath Green Belt
- denotes villages within Town Map Areas

SOURCE: Somerset CC (1964)

designated under the First or Second Schedules. However, while the 1953 Development Plan restricted development in these smallest places to housing needed for agricultural workers, the 1964 Review stated much less specifically that sympathetic consideration would be given to 'development needed for the livelihood of any established community'.

### **10.2.3 A comment on the early plans**

The Plans prepared under the 1947 system, then, reveal, above all, the planners' preoccupation with agriculture : their strong desire both to stem depopulation from sparsely populated areas so as to maintain the agricultural workforce and to prevent urban sprawl over farmland close to the towns. Even the settlement hierarchy was established with agricultural criteria in mind, though the actual designation of Main Villages drew on Bracey's survey work, based not on agricultural services but mostly on more general retailing. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, the Somerset planners had taken on board many of the academic ideas about central places (described in Chapter 4), and they designated Main Villages and Local Centres as foci for growth, intended to serve surrounding rural populations and to act as alternatives to the larger towns.

The 1960s saw the gradual development of a broader approach. Greater attention was paid to housing and to social facilities, which planners still sought to concentrate in the larger settlements. In particular, by 1964 it was recognised that the movement of people into the countryside was no longer a temporary phenomenon. There was growing pressure for the basic postwar strategies to be revised.

### **10.3 Progress in the 1970s**

The 1964 Review, which effectively underpins the county's existing settlement policy, did not receive formal approval until 1972, by which time it had become apparent that the pressures on rural areas were now such that more detailed policy guidelines were needed.

In response to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government's Bulletin Settlement in the Countryside (MHLG 1967), Area Studies were prepared for Weston-Super-Mare, Burnham and North Somerset (now part of Avon), and from these arose a number of Area Settlement Policy Statements amplifying the policies



expressed in the 1964 Review. These and other, less comprehensive, studies suggested that:

While the Settlement Policy contained in the County Development Plan was relatively successful on a broad scale in preventing the excesses of unrestrained development, it did have certain inherent weaknesses which became apparent over the years while used as the basis for control of development (Somerset CC 1977a p 174).

For while the Development Plan and First Review gave general encouragement to development under the assumption that growth should continue, this development was much more strictly controlled in the urban areas for which detailed Town Maps had been prepared than in smaller settlements and rural areas where a range of individual committees had only the basic classification of settlements on which to base their decisions on development control.

Although the 1964 Review had named particular settlements where expansion would be encouraged, there had been no attempt to define the spatial limits of these settlements, and particular problems arose in parishes containing more than one village, not all of which were listed as settlements in the Schedules. More generally, attempts to apply 'the same statements of intention to the circumstances of a small village on Exmoor at the one extreme and a large straggling village near the edge of one of the main towns at the other' (Somerset CC 1977a p 175) brought confusion.

Additionally, the pressure for development in the rural areas continued to increase at a rate beyond that envisaged by the earlier reports, and since there was so much flexibility in development control decisions there were difficulties in coordinating public expenditure and private building, so that the provision of schools and other services often lagged behind private housing development, leading to complaints of the lack of amenities in 'suburban' or 'dormitory' areas.

In 1974, under the reorganisation of local government, the county of Somerset was reduced in size, the area to the north of the Mendip Hills becoming the southern part of the new county of Avon, centred on Bristol. The two counties have since proceeded along somewhat different lines in their planning for rural settlements. Section 10.4, which follows, considers developments in Somerset, while in section 10.5 aspects of the structure planning process in Avon are discussed.

## 10.4 The Somerset Structure Plan

### 10.4.1. Preliminary work

Somerset's 1977 Report of Survey, the preliminary to the Somerset Structure Plan, was particularly critical of the way in which the categorisation of settlements in 1964 had been based on the situation in those settlements at the time of the Review, with little account of 'the capability of a settlement to accommodate further development' (Somerset CC 1977 para 8.11 p 174).

In both the County Development Plan and the First Review the basic feature of settlement policy was a classification of settlements according to their role and function, together with a general statement indicating the nature of development appropriate to each category. These earlier classifications tended to emphasise the current role of a settlement rather than its future role and the treatment appropriate to it (Somerset CC 1979 p 20).

Details of the settlement classification were also criticised. For example, the designation of the third category 'local centres' was held to be especially inappropriate:

too many local centres have been identified. For example, in the former Williton RD five settlements within a radius of five miles were classified and as a result various services and facilities have been dispersed between them (Somerset CC 1977a p.174).

On the whole, although it had been the county's policy to concentrate facilities in the larger communities, it seemed that the policy had not gone far enough; the planners considered that it fell short of a more 'directive' key settlement approach adopted in other parts of the country at the time. In those parts of Somerset which had experienced 'limited growth or even a decline in population' it was 'possible that the identification of one centre as a "key settlement", that is a focus for that area, would have given direction to public investment in services and facilities which in turn might have given more direct encouragement to further private investment' (Somerset CC 1977a p 174).

As it was, the planners had to acknowledge the continued existence of a dispersed settlement pattern, and with it the need to retain educational, health and social services facilities in the villages; blame for the continued trends towards increased concentration which made this so difficult was placed squarely on 'major economic forces' outside the local authority's control.

While the planners apparently sought to alter the settlement policy they had inherited they made much of the constraints which might impede or prevent this : their limited control over the modest population increase expected during the Structure Plan period; the difficulty of reversing previous policy decisions which had resulted in a build up of housing land allocations in less than ideal locations; the high costs likely to be involved in attempts to increase job opportunities in the rural areas when current trends (they still believed) were towards their concentration in the towns; patterns of investment in public utility services which continued to reinforce the concentration of development in the towns and larger villages; and above all the limited funds available to overcome these constraints.

At least, according to the 1977 Report of Survey, the pressures for development had eased somewhat in Somerset since the reorganisation of local government in 1974, (greatest pressure had been felt in the north of the county which now became part of Avon) and reorganisation, rather than increasing the problems, had 'facilitated the implementation of settlement policy by bringing together town and surrounding rural area under one administration'. However, it is doubtful that many would now agree with the additional view expressed in 1977 that liaison between the County and District Planning Authorities had helped 'to create better understanding of the basic strategy behind the settlement policy'(Somerset CC 1977a p 174, and see Leach & Moore 1979 for a discussion of this particular issue).

Although it was clear that the planning authorities regarded the settlement policy as less than satisfactory they were obliged to make the best of things, stressing that lessons had been learned from attempts to put it into practice. They concluded that this experience :

...together with the recognition of the new relation between County and District Planning Authorities... clearly indicates a need to re-examine the basic approach to the definition of settlement policy... Whatever direction the overall strategy may take, it is vitally important that the settlement policy be expressed in such a way that both the overall strategy and the implications for the individual settlement or community can be readily understood (Somerset CC 1977a p 175).

The 1977 Report of Survey stressed that Somerset remained 'an essentially rural county', but the outlook for rural services seemed particularly gloomy :

The problem of serving and providing facilities for a scattered rural settlement pattern involves cost penalties...Bus services, essential deliveries, meter readings, police, fire protection etc have always cost more in the country than in the towns but such costs are not always readily apparent or directly accountable. In almost all aspects of life there has been an understandable demand for improved services and facilities in rural areas...yet inevitably, due to the limitation upon resources, standards tend to be lower.

It would need a very dramatic increase in resources, clearly far beyond the levels likely to be forthcoming from rates or government funds to bring all rural services up to urban standards. Certainly the present emphasis in the allocation of government resources towards the needs of the major conurbations and the inner city areas and the scale of the problems there does not suggest that the problems of the rural communities are likely to receive any greater attention in the foreseeable future (Somerset CC 1977a p 176).

#### **10.4.2 Strategy for rural development**

The Somerset Structure Plan came into effect in February 1982 after a five year period of analysis and discussion. More than the earlier plans, the Structure plan sets the county within the context of regional and national socio-economic change and of national policies, stressing the limitations both of finance and of the opportunities to influence change through local government action, and stressing also the need for flexibility in meeting future developments. The overriding concern is now the promotion of economic prosperity in its widest sense.

The Structure Plan strategy for the rural areas is a broad one, recognising the problems of these areas: declining employment opportunities (especially for young people and those aged over 55) 'the limited availability of housing for young people, young people leaving, the decline in services and facilities, and the impact of elderly people retiring to the countryside' (Clark 1983 p 12).

##### **(i) Rural settlements as 'focal points'**

As the 1979 Draft Written Statement recognised, the simple allocation of land for various purposes will not, of itself, counter problems like these :

Positive investment and action is required, along with the necessary political will, and, even then, the prospects for success are considered to be limited. Obviously the restriction upon resources will limit the scope for action but it is considered that strategy must strive to achieve most benefit from available resources by selecting a range of rural settlements to function as focal points (Somerset CC 1979a).

The County Council argues that it is upon the continuing prosperity of these 'focal points', mainly the county's towns, that 'effectively combating the trends in the rural areas and assisting the maintenance and vitality of rural communities' largely depends (Somerset CC 1977a p 18). Areas with special problems, mainly those most remote from the towns, are picked out for special attention.

The Structure Plan divides Somerset into a number of policy sub areas reflecting 'population growth prospects, the character and distribution of settlements, the overall intentions of strategy and the concern for rural areas' (Somerset CC 1977a p.20). The sub areas have been defined on the basis of catchment areas for schools, medical services, shopping and community facilities, and take account of accessibility factors such as journey to work, bus services and the hierarchy of routes although 'for administrative convenience' the boundaries where possible conform to those of the District Councils.

While each sub area is in general centred on a town, several more remote parts remain, and in these 'a few small towns and large villages have been identified as Main Rural Centres to function as the focal points for surrounding sub areas'. Several villages with more limited spheres of influence have been selected as Local Rural Centres 'in such a way as to complement the pattern of towns and Main Rural Centres, thus ensuring that all parts of the county have reasonable access to a centre'(Somerset 1977a p 21). The designation of Local Rural Centres frequently involved a choice between neighbouring villages with similar functions and facilities 'where it would be uneconomic to promote both centres'.

#### **(ii) Identifying the settlement hierarchy**

Identification of the service centres at various levels relied largely on work preliminary to the Structure Plan which established a hierarchy of shopping centres for the area : regional centres such as Bristol, located outside the county, the sub-regional centres of Taunton and Yeovil, 12 towns and eight 'key rural shopping centres which fulfil shopping functions performed elsewhere by towns' (Somerset CC 1977b para 2.2.69 p 18). Studies of accessibility to shopping centres suggested that 'only a small proportion of the county's population are deprived of ready access to a reasonable range of shops, but these people are too dispersed to support shopping centres of the standard available elsewhere'. This work also pointed to 'an upward redistribution of trade' at the lowest levels of the shopping hierarchy outside the towns. 'The main rural shopping centres (those with more than 15 shops) have lost trade ...to the towns'. The increasing concentration of

shopping facilities has led to the need for more shopping to be done at a greater distance from home - with particular disadvantages for the remote rural residents. Yet '78 per cent of the county's...population' in 1977 lived 'within 10 minutes driving time of a town centre' (Somerset 1977b p 18).

In the event, thirteen towns are identified (Figure 10.4) : 'centres of economic and social activity' offering 'the best locations for extending employment and services' (Somerset CC 1979 p 21). Their service levels vary, but they are generally described as having a secondary school, possibly a further educational establishment, hospitals and specialist social services; a wide range of professional and commercial services such as banks, insurance companies, building societies and solicitors; entertainment and recreational facilities such as cinemas, theatres and sports facilities; shopping turnovers of about £2m or more and shopping floorspace exceeding 48,000 sq ft in 1971; and good accessibility to national routes and regular transport services. All were previously classed as 'towns of primary or secondary importance' in the 1964 Review. Other settlements previously classed at this level are now mainly located in Avon, but Williton has been paired with Watchet as a Main Rural Centre. Policies for the towns are not considered in detail here, although it may be noted that the towns are expected to accommodate as much as 70 per cent of future growth and that Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil are designated as the major growth areas.

Figure 10.5 lists the settlements designated as Main and Local Rural Centres. There are fewer Main Rural Centres than there were 'other towns and main villages which act as local centres' in the Development Plan Review, since several are now located in Avon while others, such as Axbridge and Wedmore, are classed as Local Rural Centres.

#### **Main Rural Centres:**

have a less extensive range of facilities than the towns but each one selected has a middle school and/or a secondary school; a health centre or group medical practice and a social service facility; a selection of professional and commercial services; over 25 shops; good accessibility to county routes and a regular 'bus service to a town (Somerset 1977b p 23).

FIGURE 10.4 SOMERSET STRUCTURE PLAN: SETTLEMENTS IDENTIFIED AS TOWNS

|                                                                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| BRIDGWATER                                                                        | MINEHEAD       |
| BURNHAM-ON-SEA                                                                    | SHEPTON MALLET |
| CHARD                                                                             | TAUNTON        |
| CREWKERNE                                                                         | WELLINGTON     |
| FROME                                                                             | WELLS          |
| GLASTONBURY/STREET (paired because of their close proximity & inter-relationship) | YEOVIL         |

SOURCE: Somerset CC (1979)

FIGURE 10.5 SOMERSET STRUCTURE PLAN: MAIN AND LOCAL RURAL CENTRES

|                    |                                                                                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MAIN RURAL CENTRES |                                                                                      |
| CHEDDAR            | WATCHET/WILLITON (paired on account of their close proximity and inter-relationship) |
| DULVERTON          | WINCANTON                                                                            |
| ILMINSTER          | WIVELISCOMBE                                                                         |

|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| LOCAL RURAL CENTRES |                 |
| AXBRIDGE            | MILBORNE PORT   |
| BISHOPS LYDEARD     | MILVERTON       |
| BRUTON/PITCOMBE     | NETHER STOWEY   |
| CASTLE CARY/ANSFORD | NORTH CURRY     |
| COLEFORD            | PORLOCK         |
| EVERCREECH          | SOMERTON        |
| LANGPORT            | SOUTH PETHERTON |
| MARTOCK             | WEDMORE         |

SOURCE: Somerset CC (1979)

Local Rural Centres have 'a more limited range of facilities', but all have:

a primary school and occasionally a middle or secondary school; health centre or group medical practice; a few professional and commercial services; over ten shops; good accessibility to county routes and a basic journey-to-work and shopping 'bus service to a town (Somerset 1977b p.24).

Thus the selection of centres at various levels in the hierarchy has continued to rely on the identification of a range of facilities present at the time of the plan, with all the practical difficulties this involves. However, their policy role is spelt out much more explicitly than in the earlier plans.

### **(iii) The policy role of the rural settlements**

Main Rural Centres have been selected in areas which are experiencing difficulties because of 'a lack of employment opportunities; an aging population...; relatively poor accessibility and lack of personal mobility; and a general decline in the level of provision of social and community facilities' (Somerset CC 1977b para 5.15 p 23). For these centres, 'special efforts' have to be made to maintain and extend their function, mainly by improving local employment opportunities and providing facilities and services. The development of small scale industrial estates and individual small firms, for example, is encouraged. Initial efforts along these lines have been concentrated in Watchet/Williton and Wiveliscombe within the Rural Development Area designated early in 1985 (Somerset CC 1985a). Occasionally, in recognition of the need to ensure the continued functioning of the Main Rural Centres as foci for their rural hinterlands, new housing development is to be allowed in the smaller communities surrounding the Main Rural Centre rather than in the Centres themselves.

Local Rural Centres are intended 'as focal points for their surrounding areas in order to maintain and, where necessary, extend the range of facilities available to people not having reasonable access to a town or Main Rural Centre' (Somerset CC 1979 p 24). In Local Rural Centres, development 'appropriate' to 'maintain their function and to satisfy the needs of the sub area' is to be encouraged, including some small scale industrial development likely to provide local employment, but housing development is restricted to small groups of dwellings or 'infilling' 'within the recognised limits of the settlement'. As in the case of the Main Rural Centres, designation as a Local Rural Centre is not seen as 'an automatic presumption for significant further development' which might be better accommodated in smaller communities associated with that centre.



There are...some sub areas where it may be better to disperse the limited growth more widely among the villages to help maintain the viability of services and facilities at present available in preference to concentrating further development in the Local Rural Centres (Somerset CC 1977b para 5.22).

Development in open countryside is not generally allowed. All other settlements considered to be 'appropriate locations for development' - over 200 of them - are referred to in the Structure Plan as 'villages' - those places which have 'a minimum of facilities such as a primary school, post office, food shop or village hall' (it is worth noting here the inclusion of the village hall - a community service - in the list of key facilities) but which 'already look to the towns and Main and Local Rural Centres for many of their needs and services'. Designation of a settlement as a village does not guarantee that the place will not experience further losses of facilities and the degree of development that could take place there is expected to be very modest. Housing development, for example, is mainly restricted to infilling, and industrial development is not considered appropriate, although 'individual proposals which are likely to provide local employment may be acceptable'.

A list of villages, distinguishing them from 'hamlets and other groups of houses which will come under policies for the countryside', intended to form the basis for development control purpose until the Local Plans have been completed, was published in conjunction with the Structure Plan.

Hart (1983) has sought to elaborate the distinction between Rural Centres and 'villages' in policy terms. He explains that while policy in the villages is 'reactive' - providing a framework within which proposals 'are evaluated as they come forward', policy in Main and Local Rural Centres is intended to be 'more innovative', seeking 'to identify (through Local Plans) sites for development', although he acknowledges that in part this policy distinction simply reflects the difficulties of predicting future demand for land in very large numbers of villages spread widely across the county.

#### **10.4.3 Reactions to the strategy for rural settlements**

Detailed reaction to the Plan from local communities was mixed. While some classed as 'villages' expressed concern that they might be swamped by inappropriate development and lobbied for re- classification as 'hamlets', others sought 'upgrading' in the settlement hierarchy. For example, the parishioners of

Castle Cary, classed as a Local Rural Centre, complained that Wincanton, a Main Rural Centre, might benefit at their expense.

Coordination of aspects of public participation in the structure planning process in rural areas has in most counties been a major task of the Rural Community Councils, 'county-based voluntary organisations whose objective is to improve the quality of life in rural areas' (Rogers *et al* 1985), and whose funding comes largely from the Development Commission (from the Welsh Office in Wales) and from local authorities and voluntary subscriptions.

The Community Council for Somerset and Somerset's Association of Local Councils (SALC) expressed themselves opposed to policies that 'encourage the centralisation of new development and of service provision into towns, to the detriment of villages' (SALC 1980) and of places still lower down the hierarchy. In making representations on the Structure Plan they queried the method by which the centres had been designated and argued that there should be no difference, in policy terms, between Local Rural Centres and the more numerous 'villages'.

The long standing policies which encourage the provision of services in certain central places are increasingly being called into question. Somerset Community Council criticised the assumptions which underlie these policies from both practical and more theoretical view points. They argued (Community Council for Somerset 1980 p 10) that the County Council's aim to 'ensure that all parts of the county have access to services' by concentrating facilities at a number of 'focal points' was a vain one, since access to private cars is limited and since public transport 'is focussed on the main towns, not on links between villages and Rural Centres'.

In a broadening of the argument, they drew on recent academic research evidence to argue firstly (after Cloke 1979) that key settlement policies implemented without a corresponding increase in accessibility in the parishes surrounding key settlements may encourage shifts in both services and population towards larger villages and towns and secondly, quoting evidence from North Norfolk, that assumptions about the economies of scale to be achieved by concentrating services in a few locations may be in error. They concluded their discussion of key settlement policy with a quote attributed to Moseley:

On grounds of equity, a key village policy must be accompanied (and in examining Structure Plan submissions the Department of the Environment should satisfy itself on this) by appropriate complementary policies relating to the areas not selected for preferential treatment'.

Despite a well-argued airing of the issues, however, Somerset Community Council proved relatively unsuccessful in achieving change to the Structure Plan.

The rural communities in Avon, represented by Avon Community Council and Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA), in contrast, achieved a substantial impact on rural settlement policies for the county by seeking to undermine the policies using a different tack. The structure planning process in the County of Avon is considered in the following section.

## **10.5 Rural Settlement in an Urban Context: The Case of Avon**

### **10.5.1 The first draft Structure Plan for Avon**

There have been two versions of the Avon Structure Plan Written Statement. The first was published in May 1980. This proposed an overall strategy of 'guided growth' within which the major aims would be to promote economic growth and job opportunities and to maximise the use of new and existing services and facilities in the county. Strategy for the rural areas focussed on an improvement in the 'balance' between housing and local job opportunities 'to sustain the vitality of the rural communities' and to decrease the need for long distance commuting.

Avon's Plan, like Somerset's, asserted that a policy of concentration of housing and service investment 'offers the most economically effective means of providing new facilities' (Avon CC 1980 para 12.6). And, like Somerset, Avon proposed the focussing of new development in a number of key settlements, termed Primary and Secondary settlements (Figure 10.6). Primary settlements were those with a primary school, a bus service suitable for work and shopping journeys; main drainage; a post office; and more than one shop, including a food shop. Secondary settlements were those having a primary school; a bus service suitable for work journeys; main drainage; a post office and a food shop. Residential growth in rural areas would be restricted to a list of places in which these conditions were judged to be met.

FIGURE 10.6 AVON STRUCTURE PLAN 1980: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RURAL SETTLEMENTS

PRIMARY RURAL SETTLEMENTS

H.5 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT NORMALLY WILL BE APPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING RURAL SETTLEMENTS, PROVIDED THAT THE CHARACTER OF THE SETTLEMENT IS MAINTAINED AND EXISTING PUBLIC SERVICES ARE ADEQUATE FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

| DISTRICT   | SETTLEMENT         |
|------------|--------------------|
| NORTHAVON  | ALMONDSBURY        |
|            | HAWKESBURY UPTON   |
|            | MARSHFIELD         |
|            | RANGEWORTHY        |
|            | SEVERN BEACH       |
| WANSDYKE   | PAULTON            |
|            | PEASEDOWN ST. JOHN |
|            | TEMPLE CLOUD       |
|            | TIMSBURY           |
| WOODSPRING | BACKWELL           |
|            | BANWELL            |
|            | CHURCHILL          |
|            | CONGRESBURY        |
|            | YATTON             |

SECONDARY RURAL SETTLEMENTS

H.6 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WITHN THE EXISTING LIMITS OF THE SETTLEMENT NORMALLY WILL BE APPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING RURAL SETTLEMENTS PROVIDED THAT THE CHARACTER OF THE SETTLEMENT IS MAINTAINED AND EXISTING PUBLIC SERVICES ARE ADEQUATE FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

| DISTRICT          | SETTLEMENT         |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| NORTHAVON         | ALMONDSBURY        |
|                   | ALVESTON           |
|                   | CHARFIELD          |
|                   | EASTER COMPTON     |
|                   | FRAMPTON COTTERELL |
|                   | IRON ACTON         |
|                   | OLVESTON           |
|                   | PUCKLECHURCH       |
|                   | WICK               |
|                   | WICKWAR            |
|                   | WANSDYKE           |
| BATHEASTON        |                    |
| CLUTTON           |                    |
| FARMBOROUGH       |                    |
| FARRINGTON GURNEY |                    |
| HALLATROW         |                    |
| HIGH LITTLETON    |                    |
| MARKSBURY         |                    |
| WHITCHURCH        |                    |
| WOODSPRING        | EASTON-IN-GORDANO  |
|                   | FAILAND            |
|                   | FELTON             |
|                   | LONG ASHTON        |
|                   | PORTBURY           |
| SANDFORD          |                    |

Policy for the rural settlements drew heavily on an appraisal, in 1976, of the service function of the settlements in the county outside the main urban centres of Bath, Bristol, Kingswood and Weston-Super-Mare. Urban settlements such as Yate and Clevedon were included in the appraisal 'because of their service function in relation to adjacent rural centres' (Avon CC 1976 p 5). In an exercise reminiscent of the derivation of Bracey's first index of social provision, points were awarded to each settlement to reflect the presence of county council services, such as schools and police stations, public transport, and other services, mainly shops of various types. The settlements were ranked on the basis of their service scores, allowing the identification of a second two tier hierarchy of Major and Minor settlements (Figure 10.7). The list of Major and Minor settlements, to be the locations for future investment in health, social and educational investment was also published in the Plan, but as Avon Community Council pointed out, the Plan contained 'no explanation of how these major and minor service centres relate to the principal and secondary rural settlements identified for housing development' (O'Flynn 1980a p.6).

Although doubts were expressed within the planning department as well as outside it about the accuracy of the settlement appraisal (and by 1980 it was acknowledged that up to date information was badly needed), the strategies which rested on it were judged as valid.

This first version of Avon's Plan attracted criticism from representatives of the rural communities for a number of reasons. At a general level, they drew attention to the County Council's failure to achieve coordination between its main areas of activity. The development of a corporate strategy for the rural areas of the county was seen as a priority in a county with extensive rural areas (about 85 per cent of the land area of Avon is in some form of rural use) but in which the majority of the population - and the major policy focus - is urban based.

Criticisms of the County Council's compartmentalised treatment of rural problems were shown to be well justified at a meeting in August 1980 (attended by the author) when the planning officers described the way in which public comments on the Structure Plan were being handled. Letters commenting on a number of issues such as housing, employment and education were photocopied and the copies cut up according to topic for distribution to the panels of officers allocated to each subject area, although the planning officers did suggest that the letters would be available in their original form for circulation to the elected members of the council at some stage.

FIGURE 10.7 AVON STRUCTURE PLAN 1980: MAJOR AND MINOR RURAL SETTLEMENTS

NEW FACILITIES TO MEET THE HEALTH, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES WILL BE LOCATED IN EACH CASE IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SETTLEMENTS:

| DISTRICT              | SETTLEMENT                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) MAJOR SETTLEMENTS |                                                                                                                             |
| NORTHAVON             | FRAMPTON COTTERELL<br>THORNBURY<br>YATE/CHIPPING SODBURY                                                                    |
| WANSDYKE              | KEYNSHAM/SALTFORD<br>MIDSOMER NORTON/RADSTOCK,                                                                              |
| WOODSPRING            | CLEVEDON<br>NAILSEA<br>PORTISHEAD                                                                                           |
| (b) MINOR SETTLEMENTS |                                                                                                                             |
| NORTHAVON             | ALMONDSBURY<br>HAWKESBURY UPTON<br>MARSHFIELD<br>OLVESTON<br>PUCKLECHURCH<br>SEVERN BEACH<br>WICK<br>WICKWAR                |
| WANSDYKE              | BATHEASTON<br>CHEW MAGNA<br>PAULTON<br>PEASEDOWN ST. JOHN<br>TEMPLE CLOUD<br>TIMSBURY                                       |
| WOODSPRING            | BACKWELL<br>BANWELL<br>BLAGDON<br>CHURCHILL<br>CONGRESBURY<br>EASTON/PILL<br>LONG ASHTON<br>WINSCOMBE<br>WRINGTON<br>YATTON |

SOURCE: Avon CC (1980 p 112)

More specific criticisms of the Plan centred on the adoption of a list of named villages as the only rural settlements in which growth would be permitted. These villages were, as previously, selected on the basis of their existing service provision and only services provided in the conventional manner counted. For settlements not selected within the hierarchy no opportunity was provided for the community to support alternative ways of meeting local need. (For example, in deriving the service hierarchy no account was taken of village halls, community shops or car-sharing schemes). Avon Community Council (1981) commented especially on the fragile basis of the settlement hierarchy proposed by the County Council : the continued presence of the 'key' facilities and services in the villages selected for growth could not be guaranteed. Public transport was particularly vulnerable.

Although the rural settlement policy was fragile it was to be rigidly applied. Further, the designation of 'an exclusive list' of settlements for public service investment would be likely to deprive the remaining communities of investment opportunities. All in all the County Council seemed not to have recognised the need for a flexible approach so as to meet the varied and changing needs of rural communities.

In a report on Housing in Rural Avon, O'Flynn (1980c) drew attention to an alternative approach pursued by a number of other counties (among them, lately, Gloucestershire) : the planned grouping or clustering of villages where policies for housing, transport, community services and employment could be integrated. Such a solution, which could 'overcome the perennial problem of erosion of services from smaller villages which do not have a sufficient level of services to serve the needs of the existing and future population, although a group of villages in close proximity may do so' might be applicable in the villages of the most rural parts of Avon, though 'obviously not ...closer to Bristol and Bath, where villages look to the urban areas for many of their services'. The report recommended the 'identification of appropriate groups of settlements between which investment may be shared'. It went on to conclude :

that solutions to the problems of supporting investment in the rural areas of Avon should be sought not from the conventional wisdom of economic theory, but from detailed survey and investigation of the rural areas of the county. (O'Flynn 1980c p.4)

### **10.5.2 A new version of the Plan: pressure for a more coordinated approach**

In May 1981 the newly elected Labour Council withdrew the first version of the Avon Structure Plan, mainly because it did not reflect their declared priorities for the county, but also because it had attracted so much adverse criticism for its failure fully to take into account the views of the District Councils, local people and organisations. This made it necessary for the Plan to be re-submitted for further public consultation early in 1982.

The rural settlement policies of the second Draft Structure Plan were broadly similar to those of the first, though the list of settlements selected for growth had been slightly altered. The policies again attracted criticism on the grounds that the continued availability of the services identified by the County could not be guaranteed in the villages selected for growth. As things stood, the absence of just one of these services could block development. Little account seemed to have been taken of the fact that housing development might in turn influence the distribution of services, nor of broader factors such as changes in the structure of retailing.

Further,

The rigid definition of the wide range of services required within rural settlements is...misconceived. The policies identify a range of particular named services which must be present together before residential development will be permitted. Each of these services is unlike the others and demands a different size of catchment area to support it. For example, the hinterland required to support a school would be very much greater than that necessary to maintain the viability of a village shop and sub post office. Yet the absence of a school would ...preclude new development which would support the remaining services (Avon Community Council 1982a p. 1).

It was proposed that a criterion of 'reasonable access to services', which would allow housing in places which lacked certain facilities, should be added to the settlement policies, a suggestion that was later endorsed by the Secretary of State in his decision on the Avon Structure Plan.

The Structure Plan submitted to the DOE in October 1982 proposed the concentration of residential development 'within and on the fringes of the urban areas of Bath, Greater Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare' and in eight named towns. In all other settlements, residential development would be allowed in places with at least 'a primary school, a bus service suitable for both work and shopping



journeys, main drainage, a doctor's surgery, a post office and more than one shop, including one food shop', provided that 'the development is not precluded by Green Belt policies ...the character of the settlement is maintained; and ...public services at the time of the proposals are adequate for the proposed development' (Policy H4). In settlements with at least 'a primary school, a bus service suitable for work journeys, main drainage, a post office and food shop' small groups of houses would normally be allowed, provided that 'the character of the settlement is maintained; and ...public services at the time of the proposals are adequate for the proposed development' (Policy H5). Significantly, this time the settlements with these various facilities were not named.

Development in other rural settlements would only be allowed if it enabled 'the provision of a local service' or provided 'support for local employment' - and then only within strict limits (Policy H6) (Avon CC 1982). As in Somerset, residential developments in open countryside would be discouraged, but in Avon these were normally to be permitted 'only when they are essential for the efficient operation of the rural economy' (Policy H7); clearly the rural economy was now seen to encompass activities wider than agriculture alone. In all, of the total of 48,500 dwellings proposed for Avon for the period 1979-1991, the Plan provided, outside the towns, for a total of 1500 homes in Wansdyke District and 1600 in Woodspring.

To these policies the County Council added a list of places where 'development to meet the health, social and educational needs of rural communities normally will be located' substantially the same as that proposed in 1980 (shown previously in Figure 10.7) and this is reproduced in Figure 10.8.

Shortcomings in the rural settlement policies were exposed at the Examination in Public (EIP), held in June 1983, when representatives of the rural communities pointed out the dangers of basing development control decisions on a checklist of services which may change rapidly and over which the local authority may have no control. Additionally, information from the study of Avon parishes which was part of the updating survey described in Chapter 7 of this thesis had revealed a number of anomalies in the County Council's lists of what facilities were located where. This caused the County Planning Department some embarrassment, not least because only weeks after the EIP drew to a close the Education Committee, apparently unaware of the implications of its action for the Structure Plan, voted to close primary schools in three of the villages designated for growth.

FIGURE 10.8 AVON STRUCTURE PLAN 1982: RURAL SETTLEMENTS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION

DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE HEALTH, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES NORMALLY WILL BE LOCATED IN THE FOLLOWING SETTLEMENTS:

| DISTRICT                 | SETTLEMENT                                    |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| NORTHAVON                | ALMONDSBURY                                   |
|                          | FRAMPTON COTTERELL/WINTERBOURNE/COALPIT HEATH |
|                          | HAWKESBURY UPTON                              |
|                          | MARSHFIELD                                    |
|                          | OLVESTON                                      |
|                          | PUCKLECHURCH                                  |
|                          | RANGEWORTHY                                   |
|                          | SEVERN BEACH/PILNING                          |
|                          | THORNBURY                                     |
|                          | WICK                                          |
|                          | WICKWAR                                       |
|                          | YATE/CHIPPING SODBURY                         |
|                          | WANSDYKE                                      |
| CHEW MAGNA               |                                               |
| KEYNSHAM/SALTFORD        |                                               |
| MIDSOMER NORTON/RADSTOCK |                                               |
| PAULTON                  |                                               |
| PEASEDOWN ST. JOHN       |                                               |
| TEMPLE CLOUD             |                                               |
| TIMSBURY                 |                                               |
| WOODSPRING               | BACKWELL                                      |
|                          | BANWELL                                       |
|                          | BLAGDON                                       |
|                          | CHURCHILL                                     |
|                          | CLEVEDON                                      |
|                          | CONGRESBURY                                   |
|                          | EASTON-IN-GORDANO/PILL                        |
|                          | LONG ASHTON                                   |
|                          | NAILSEA                                       |
|                          | PORTISHEAD                                    |
|                          | WINSCOMBE                                     |
|                          | WRINGTON                                      |
|                          | YATTON                                        |

SOURCE: Avon CC (1982 p32)

Following this the County Council established an inter-departmental officers working group, the function of which would be to improve communication between policy-making sections of the local authority and thus to work towards a more integrated approach to the county's rural areas.

### **10.5.3 The Secretary of State's decision on the Avon Structure Plan**

The Secretary of State's Decision Letter on the Avon Structure Plan, dated 25th July 1985 (Avon CC 1985), brought substantial changes to the strategy for rural areas. He deleted the policies which explicitly focussed residential development in the major urban areas and rendered the policies for housing construction in rural areas considerably more flexible. While accepting that the Structure Plan should contain development control policies for rural housing, and that 'the concept of defining the level of facilities which should normally be available to support a certain scale of development' had a certain logic, the EIP Panel:

found the differences between the criteria in Policies H4 and H5 ...to be small and felt their application could result in decisions which were over-sensitive to changed circumstances. Instead the Panel advocated a more general approach and recommended that a policy replacing H4 and, at least partially, H5, should indicate that in, or immediately adjoining, rural settlements not in the Green Belt, residential development will normally be permitted where there is reasonable access to a primary level of community facilities and services and provided the character of the settlement is not adversely affected. They were also inclined to the view that "reasonable access" and "primary level of community services facilities and services" should not be defined, as the more open policy recommended would better serve the needs of the rural communities (Avon CC 1985 para 3.6). (Emphasis added)

The Secretary of State endorsed their recommendation.

Policy H6, a special measure for the smaller rural settlements, was deleted from the Structure Plan, since the Panel recommended (para 3.8) that:

housing in settlements outside the Green Belt which did not have reasonable access to a primary level of community facilities and services should be dealt with as exceptional cases under the other policies of the plan.

These modifications in effect eased the restrictions on house building in the smallest villages where residential development is no longer tied to a 'local economy' condition. More broadly, the deletion of policy H6 has cast doubt on Avon's attempt to adopt a broader definition of the 'rural economy' as part of its overall strategy to foster employment in the county.

The policies as modified apply to settlements outside the Green Belt. Within the Green Belt, which now covers about sixty per cent of the land area of rural Avon:

residential development, restricted to infilling, will normally be permitted within the existing limits of settlements only where development will not prejudice the character of the settlement and the purpose of the Green Belt (Avon CC 1985 para 3.9).

Thus the Panel and the Secretary of State's views appeared to be in some accord with those expressed by representatives of the rural communities when they called upon the County Council to abandon the rigid use of a service-related settlement hierarchy to decide future housing development. Nevertheless for public service provision the list of key settlements as set out in Figure 10.8 remains unchanged. Public service provision and private residential development are no longer tied, as they once were, to the same major settlements.

The local communities might have been reasonably happy with this decision had it not been for the fact that the Secretary of State went on to increase the County's total housing allocation for 1979-1991 by 3000 dwellings. The figure for the area of Wansdyke outside the towns was increased to 2700 and in Woodspring the provision for new housing in and fringing Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead was increased by an additional 1300 homes, and that for rural Woodspring by a further 500.

Until Local Plans are prepared and approved for different areas officers of the County and District planning departments in Avon see themselves as particularly vulnerable to the actions of housing developers who, on appeal when planning permission is refused, can make use of the large numbers of homes specified as the target for each district to argue the existence of local housing deficits. There is enormous concern that public service provision will be unable to respond to the new demands made by 'unpredictable growth' led by developers' preferences. Commenting on the Secretary of State's decision on the Structure Plan at the Annual General Meeting of Avon Community Council in September 1985 the Leader of Avon County Council admitted that Avon's rural planning strategy was 'in tatters'.

## 10.6 Conclusions

In 1974 the new counties of Somerset and Avon inherited a set of policies for service provision in rural areas which advocated a strategy of focussing investment in a number of major or 'key settlements'. In the derivation of these policies the local planning authority had acted in close accordance with central government advice, and had drawn, in matters of detail, on Bracey's survey work in the rural parishes. Gloucestershire's policies, which Avon also inherited, were broadly similar.

The key settlement concept provided that certain settlements in rural areas should become focal points for the servicing of other settlements in the surrounding rural areas. This concept was based on concentration of resources in one locality instead of dispersal over scattered communities where there could be difficulties in maintaining reasonable standards and which could prove to be wasteful. In order to support and reinforce this concept, land was to be released in key settlements to stimulate growth of population and economic activity (Avon CC 1980 p.108).

In both counties, these policies have been heavily criticised, not least because of the difficulty in identifying the distinguishing features of key settlements, yet, under the planning system established after 1968, both have gone on to advocate very similar strategies for the period covered by the Structure Plans. Change to the basic strategy is seen as an expensive option, in any case difficult to achieve because of the number of outstanding planning permissions in settlements earlier designated for growth.

In both counties, but especially in Avon, information gathered during the updating of Bracey's work in the rural parishes provided an important input to the structure planning process, in particular by strengthening the role of Avon Community Council as a representative of the views of the rural communities. This is a significant aspect of the research exercise described in Chapter 7.

In Somerset a key settlement policy of the traditional type remains intact, for the moment at least. In contrast, developments in Avon suggest that, there, strategies in which development decisions rest on the presence or absence of a number of key services no longer find favour with local communities (if they ever did), nor with central government. However, this is not necessarily to suggest that central government is now reaching some greater understanding of the problems of rural areas. Rather, it seems that the desire to foster growth 'wherever it wants to go' (discussed earlier, in Chapters 2 and 3) was behind the Secretary of State's decision on the Avon Structure Plan.

Progress in the two counties provides illustration of two particular criticisms of the post-1968 planning system voiced by Cloke. The first concerns the planners' continuing failure to adopt an integrated approach to the rural areas - rural settlements have been 'studied piecemeal under...various subject headings rather than as a topic in their own right' (Cloke 1983 p.82). The second, applicable especially to Avon, criticised for its urban outlook, turns upon the treatment of urban-rural relationships under the new framework of local government. The newly constituted districts, which 'combined many areas previously labelled "rural" or "urban" into more hierarchical settlement systems' were intended to be 'units within which the structural processes underlying both rural and urban problems could be attacked on a united front' (Cloke 1983 p.85). Progress so far has been limited, however:

In fact it appears that the envisaged change of approach has been less evident than expected...[and there is evidence to suggest] that the potential improvements in tackling rural problems have not been realised during the structure plan era (Cloke 1983 p.85).

Although widespread changes have taken place in the rural economy since 1947, the approach to rural settlement planning in the study area, it may be argued, remains essentially the same as it was nearly 40 years ago. In particular, despite the shifting view of population change - from an early postwar focus on depopulation to an awareness that population growth in rural areas is likely to continue - rural strategies are still of a type originally intended to stem population decline. In the study area there has been little attempt to link continued service loss from the smaller settlements not designated for growth to the application of these policies in the past. Nor is it known how far these policies have contributed to changing population patterns in the two counties. These questions are among those considered in the following chapter.

## 11. SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN THE RURAL SPATIAL ECONOMY

### 11.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to examine aspects of the process of counterurbanisation in the study area, where the parishes that make up the 'lower limb' of the settlement hierarchy have shared to various extents in this major urban system shift. In Section 11.2 the patterns of population change in the three decades 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81, identified in Chapter 9, above, are examined in greater detail, and an attempt is made to link these patterns to the application of local planning policies for the rural settlements, described in Chapter 10. It should be stressed at the outset, however, that the aim is to search for patterns in the data and not to examine in detail the implementation or impact of particular policy decisions in local situations. The findings are supplemented by information on recent house building provided by the 1980 questionnaires.

The major focus of this thesis, however, is the examination of changing patterns of service provision and of how far these may be linked to counterurbanisation trends. This task requires that a way be found to describe the service 'profiles' of the parishes, essentially Bracey's aim when he designed his indices of social provision and centrality in the 1950s. Sections 11.3 and 11.4 describes two contrasting but complementary approaches to the derivation of service 'profiles' using multivariate analysis.

In Section 11.4 the results of the analyses of service patterns using hierarchical cluster analysis are presented. Comparison of the results for 1950 with the settlement hierarchy identified by Bracey is illuminating. Attention is also drawn to relationships between service patterns and planning policies for the rural settlements as set out in the 1964 Development Plan Review (Somerset CC 1964a), in which the identification of a hierarchy of key settlements was reportedly based largely on Bracey's work. Links between the service patterns revealed by the cluster analyses and population shifts are examined.

In the final sections an attempt is made to draw together some of the threads of the analysis and to make some assessment about the way in which the counterurbanisation process has impinged upon the study area. Some possible ways of extending the analysis are suggested.

## 11.2 Population Shifts

Of the 371 parishes for which complete and matched data are available for both time periods (see section 11.4.1, below) approaching 20 per cent display growth in all three decades, but the largest group, 127 parishes (34 per cent), display a key characteristic of counterurbanisation - turnaround from population decline in the 1950s to growth in either the '60s or '70s. In contrast, about 18 per cent show a downturn from growth in the '50s to decline in the '60s or '70s, and just over 10 per cent steady population loss in all three decades.

The counterurbanisation literature suggests that it is the smallest, 'least urban', places which have tended to share in this phenomenon. In Somerset the settlement hierarchy set out in the 1964 Development Plan Review (Somerset CC 1964a) provides a measure of how 'urban' the study area parishes were judged to be close to the start of the period under review, and examination of the population shifts in relation to parishes' designation in this document is revealing (Table 11.1).

Generally, the more 'urban' the designation the greater the proportion of parishes thus designated which experienced steady postwar growth. However, an examination of the parishes experiencing population turnaround from loss to gain seems less predictable. A relatively high percentage of Main and Local Rural Centres and fairly high percentages of 1st and 2nd Schedule Villages displayed a shift from loss to gain during the 1960s and went on to maintain this growth during the '70s. However, only 11 per cent of the 'most rural' undesignated places showed population turnaround in the 1960s. In contrast, turnaround during the 1970s applied to about 16 per cent of all parishes but to a much higher proportion of undesignated places - approaching 27 per cent - and to rather few parishes with 'higher' designations which had clearly already experienced this shift during the previous decade. Thus the turn from loss to gain shows some signs of shifting down the settlement hierarchy through time, from designated rural centres to smaller, undesignated, places.

It is important to note, however, that while about 38 per cent of all non designated parishes experienced population turnaround during this 30 year period, almost the same proportion experienced population loss or a downturn. Clearly it is worth asking how far declining parishes at the base of the settlement hierarchy



TABLE 11.1 POPULATION SHIFTS IN THE THREE DECADES TO 1981 IN SOMERSET PARISHES DESIGNATED AS CENTRES IN THE 1964 DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

|                            | Town     |              | Main or local Rural centre |              | Village 1st schedule |              | Village 2nd schedule |              | No designation |              | All parishes |              |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                            | No.      | %            | No.                        | %            | No.                  | %            | No.                  | %            | No.            | %            | No.          | %            |
| Steady growth              | 1        | 50.0         | 7                          | 36.8         | 36                   | 34.0         | 27                   | 19.0         | 2              | 2.0          | 73           | 19.7         |
| Steady decline or downturn | 1        | 50.0         | 2                          | 10.6         | 27                   | 25.5         | 37                   | 26.1         | 37             | 36.6         | 104          | 28.0         |
| Turnaround 1960s           | -        | -            | 8                          | 42.1         | 19                   | 17.9         | 31                   | 21.8         | 11             | 10.9         | 69           | 18.6         |
| Turnaround 1970s           | -        | -            | 1                          | 5.3          | 9                    | 8.5          | 21                   | 14.8         | 27             | 26.7         | 58           | 15.7         |
| Other                      | -        | -            | 1                          | 5.3          | 15                   | 14.2         | 26                   | 18.3         | 24             | 23.8         | 67           | 18.1         |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>2</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>19</b>                  | <b>100.0</b> | <b>106</b>           | <b>100.0</b> | <b>142</b>           | <b>100.0</b> | <b>101</b>     | <b>100.0</b> | <b>371</b>   | <b>100.0</b> |

differ in, for example, the services they support, from those enjoying a population upturn.

### **11.2.1 Population shifts, settlement policies and house building**

In rural parishes with only small populations large percentage increases are likely to have been associated with the construction of new houses, be it only on a modest scale. Further, it may be argued that it is the construction of new housing that settlement planning policies have been primarily designed to regulate. In the study area, some impressionistic information on the location of new house building between 1970 and 1980 is provided by the 1980 questionnaire. Q 15 asked 'Have any new houses been built over the past 10 years ?' and Q 15.2 sought brief details of the types of houses built. Information is available for 311 parishes, nearly 90 per cent of which had had at least some new building, although the respondent was not always able to indicate how many houses had been built. In 253 parishes the respondent also provided some details of the types of houses constructed.

This information reveals the continuing effects of 1964 planning policies in the 1970s. Parishes with no recent housebuilding between 1970 and 1980 were mainly those not designated for growth in the 1964 Plan. However, a large group of undesignated places (62 per cent) reported small scale building, generally through infilling (and sometimes conversions), with up to about 10 houses in each. Building of between 10 and 20 new homes was more characteristically reported in 2nd Schedule Villages and large developments of more than 20 houses in 1st Schedule Villages.

There is a suggestion that parishes which experienced population turnaround in the 1960s, principally the Main and Local Rural Centres, continued to support relatively large developments in the 1970s (40 per cent of these parishes reported the construction of more than 20 homes), while those that experienced turnaround in the 1970s, largely not designated for growth, did so while supporting relatively modest developments of fewer than 10 houses (44 per cent of them reported fewer than 10 houses built).

Evidence on the types of houses built in the parishes experiencing counterurbanisation suggests that the growing population has largely been accommodated in privately built detached or semi-detached houses, and frequently

in bungalows. This is especially true of parishes within Exmoor National park and on the coast.

The evidence presented so far suggests that counterurbanisation was a feature of many rural centres in the 1960s but that in the 1970s it spread to include some of the 'most rural' parishes of the study area. While population turnaround in the 1960s and subsequent growth may have been encouraged in some places by housing development associated with their designation as key settlements, in the 1970s it was the undesigned parishes which were more likely to display this trend. Not unexpectedly, continuing growth in the largest centres seems to have been associated with the construction of housing estates while 1970s population turnaround in undesigned places, where 'volume' house builders are less likely to seek and obtain planning permission, has been accomplished mainly through small scale housing development.

#### **11.2.2 Population shifts and countryside policies**

A further dimension to the discussion of links between local policies and counterurbanisation is added by considering shifts in the population of parishes in relation to their location within or outside of areas of planning restraint, designated because of their special landscape or countryside value, for, according to the counterurbanisation literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, population turnaround from loss to gain has been particularly likely to occur in scenically attractive areas of countryside, especially those remote from major cities and close to the coast.

It is harder, in the case of countryside policies, to suggest causal links between the policies themselves and counterurbanisation. Rather, the policy designations are used to identify scenically attractive and remote areas of countryside. Also, these different designations describe the 'value' placed on the countryside in the late 1970s. Although the National Park came into being in the late 1950s, and the Green Belts in the 1960s, Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AsONB) have been established or extended much more recently.

Of 58 parishes with population turnaround in the 1970s all but 11 were located in areas designated for the quality of their landscape. Several, such as Bishops Lydeard in Taunton Deane, Porlock on Exmoor and Wellow close to Bath enjoyed

more than one type of designation (for example, Porlock is both a Coastal Protection parish and in the National Park).

Table 11.2 confirms observations about the geographical location of turnaround parishes made in Chapter 9. It reveals that population turnaround from loss to gain was especially likely in parishes located in Exmoor National Park (in West Somerset), the most remote part of the study area. Of the 28 parishes located in the National Park, the largest group (39 per cent) display turnaround from population loss to gain during the 1970s (only 3 parishes - 11 per cent - showed turnaround in the '60s). This is in contrast to parishes outside the National Park which, if they did display population turnaround, were more likely to have experienced this in the '60s than '70s. However, a quarter of the National Park parishes displayed a continuous pattern of population loss, and a total of 39 per cent either continuous loss or a shift from gain to loss in recent decades, indicating that by no means all these remote rural places were sharing in the process of counterurbanisation.

The population shifts displayed by the National Park parishes are in marked contrast to those found in parishes located in AsONB, AGLV or in the Green Belts, areas which between them cover a very high proportion of the survey parishes. It was more usual for parishes in these areas to display either steady population growth over the three decades or a downturn from growth in early decades to loss later on. Coastal parishes, perhaps surprisingly, have shown a greater tendency towards population loss than to growth or upturn.

Parishes located in the Green Belts were significantly less likely to display population turnaround than were those elsewhere. One quarter of the Green Belt parishes grew in the 1950s and 1960s and then began to show population loss in the 1970s, a pattern which is likely to reflect the proximity of the parishes to the major cities of Bristol and Bath, both of them losing population during the period under study, as well as restrictions on housing development in these areas. There is little general evidence to suggest that restrictions on building in Green Belts have been more strictly applied in recent decades, but rather mounting public concern that the Green Belts are 'under threat'. Survey information on house building was available for 51 parishes in the green belts. All but 6 reported some new house building between 1970 and 1980. Approaching one quarter of them reported the development of more than 20 new homes.

TABLE 11.2 POPULATION SHIFTS 1951-1981 IN PARISHES LOCATED IN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AND COUNTRYSIDE AREAS AND IN THE GREEN BELTS

|                  | Exmoor National Park |       | AsONB |       | AGLV |       | Coast protection |       | Green belts |       | All parishes |       |
|------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                  | No.                  | %     | No.   | %     | No.  | %     | No.              | %     | No.         | %     | No.          | %     |
| Steady growth    | 1                    | 3.6   | 11    | 28.2  | 54   | 19.6  | 6                | 24.0  | 10          | 19.2  | 73           | 19.7  |
| Decline/downturn | 11                   | 39.6  | 14    | 35.9  | 83   | 30.1  | 9                | 36.0  | 21          | 40.4  | 104          | 28.0  |
| Upturn 1960s     | 3                    | 10.7  | 4     | 10.3  | 50   | 18.1  | -                | -     | 7           | 13.5  | 69           | 18.6  |
| Upturn 1970s     | 11                   | 39.3  | 4     | 10.3  | 37   | 13.4  | 5                | 20.0  | 3           | 5.8   | 58           | 15.6  |
| Other            | 2                    | 7.1   | 6     | 15.4  | 52   | 18.8  | 5                | 20.0  | 11          | 21.2  | 67           | 18.1  |
| Total            | 28                   | 100.0 | 39    | 100.0 | 276  | 100.0 | 25               | 100.0 | 52          | 100.0 | 371          | 100.0 |

Notes

AsONB Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AGLV Area of Great Landscape Value

Sources

Avon County Council (1982)

Somerset County Council (1979)

Having established that links exist between local policies for the rural settlements and population shifts, what changes in service and social provision have occurred in these places in the period under review, and how might these shifts in turn be related to local planning policies ? These questions are among those addressed in the following sections which describe the multivariate analysis of the data generated by Bracey's surveys and by the 1980 follow-up study described earlier in this thesis.

### **11.3 Service Shifts : a Parish Deficit Indicator**

A preliminary analytical examination of the data referring to 378 parishes was reported in Haggett, Mills & Morgan (1982), of which Peter Haggett was the principal author. This analysis was primarily directed towards questions of service loss and it focussed, therefore, on facilities missing from the survey parishes at the two survey dates.

Twenty services were selected so as firstly to sample the wide spectrum of provision, from private enterprises to public services; secondly to range over the main categories of service provision most relevant for people of different ages; and thirdly to include those services widely used in academic studies of rural services. The 20 chosen are listed in Table 11.3. From these a shorter list of 5 'basic' services (picked out in capital letters) was selected: those services which had been the subject of special public concern over the period of the study.

The detailed information on the selected services was simplified to a binary form, with emphasis on the absence of services (a score of 1 indicated that the service was missing). Despite a considerable loss of information, this measure allowed strict comparability between the 1950 and 1980 data sets and discriminated well between the poorly served places.

This analysis first examined the number of parishes from which individual services were absent in 1950 and 1980 (Table 11.3). Table 11.4 ranks the number of parishes losing services between the two surveys, with the first four services listed accounting for half the total losses. While the losses of schools and shops bear out the findings of the descriptive account presented in Chapter 8, the apparent loss of professional services is somewhat at odds with the impression gained earlier. In contrast to Table 11.4, Table 11.5 demonstrates the high degree of continuity in service provision in the study area. More than three times as

TABLE 11.3 NUMBER OF PARISHES WITHOUT SERVICES IN 1950 AND 1980

| Service                 | Number of parishes with service absent |      |            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|------|------------|
|                         | 1950                                   | 1980 | Difference |
| Adult Organisations     | 15                                     | 22   | + 7        |
| Banks                   | 335                                    | 331  | - 4        |
| BUS CONNECTIONS         | 6                                      | 58   | + 52       |
| Chemists                | 343                                    | 284  | - 59       |
| Clinics                 | 313                                    | 166  | - 147      |
| DOCTORS SURGERY         | 257                                    | 264  | + 7        |
| Fire Stations           | 324                                    | 221  | - 103      |
| Garages                 | 262                                    | 164  | - 98       |
| Library Services        | 83                                     | 7    | - 75       |
| Police Stations         | 268                                    | 306  | + 38       |
| POST OFFICES            | 60                                     | 95   | + 35       |
| Professional Services   | 238                                    | 295  | + 57       |
| Public Houses           | 75                                     | 82   | + 7        |
| Public Telephones       | 67                                     | 14   | - 53       |
| Range of Shops          | 215                                    | 302  | + 87       |
| Recreational Facilities | 267                                    | 113  | - 154      |
| Village Hall            | 48                                     | 33   | + 15       |
| VILLAGE SCHOOL          | 86                                     | 178  | + 92       |
| VILLAGE STORES          | 34                                     | 38   | + 4        |
| Youth Organisations     | 37                                     | 0    | - 37       |

TABLE 11.4 SERVICE INSTABILITY: PARISHES LOSING SERVICES BETWEEN THE 1950 AND 1980 SURVEYS

| Rank | Service                 | Parishes losing Services |      |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------|
|      |                         | Number                   | %    |
| 1    | VILLAGE SCHOOL          | 99                       | 26.2 |
| 2    | Range of Shops          | 90                       | 23.8 |
| 3    | Professional Services   | 87                       | 23.0 |
| 4    | Police Stations         | 54                       | 14.3 |
| 5    | BUS CONNECTIONS         | 53                       | 14.0 |
| 6    | Garages                 | 52                       | 13.8 |
| 7    | POST OFFICES            | 40                       | 10.6 |
| 8    | DOCTORS SURGERY         | 34                       | 9.0  |
| 9    | Fire Stations           | 32                       | 8.5  |
| 10   | VILLAGE STORES          | 30                       | 7.9  |
| 11   | Clinics                 | 21                       | 5.6  |
| 12   | Public Houses           | 20                       | 5.3  |
| 13   | Adult Organisations     | 16                       | 4.2  |
| 14   | Village Hall            | 14                       | 3.7  |
| 15   | Recreational Facilities | 14                       | 3.7  |
| 16   | Banks                   | 6                        | 1.6  |
| 17   | Chemists                | 5                        | 1.3  |
| 18   | Public Telephones       | 2                        | 0.5  |
| 19   | Library Services        | 0                        | 0.0  |
| 20   | Youth Organisations     | 0                        | 0.0  |



TABLE 11.5 SERVICE STABILITY: PARISHES REMAINING WITHOUT SERVICES  
BETWEEN THE 1950 AND 1980 SURVEYS

| Rank | Service                 | Parishes remaining without services |      |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|
|      |                         | Number                              | %    |
| 1    | Banks                   | 325                                 | 86.0 |
| 2    | Chemists                | 279                                 | 73.8 |
| 3    | Police Stations         | 252                                 | 66.7 |
| 4    | DOCTORS SURGERY         | 230                                 | 60.8 |
| 5    | Range of Shops          | 212                                 | 56.1 |
| 6    | Professional Services   | 208                                 | 55.0 |
| 7    | Fire Stations           | 189                                 | 50.0 |
| 8    | Clinics                 | 145                                 | 39.4 |
| 9    | Garages                 | 112                                 | 29.6 |
| 10   | Recreational Facilities | 99                                  | 26.2 |
| 11   | VILLAGE SCHOOL          | 79                                  | 20.9 |
| 12   | Public Houses           | 62                                  | 16.4 |
| 13   | POST OFFICES            | 55                                  | 14.6 |
| 14   | Village Hall            | 19                                  | 5.0  |
| 15   | Public Telephones       | 12                                  | 3.2  |
| 16   | VILLAGE STORES          | 8                                   | 2.1  |
| 17   | Library Services        | 7                                   | 1.9  |
| 18   | Adult Organisations     | 6                                   | 1.6  |
| 19   | BUS CONNECTIONS         | 5                                   | 1.3  |
| 20   | Youth Organisations     | 0                                   | -    |

many parishes show a continuing absence of a service than show a loss, and the list is less dominated by a few services. Banks continued to be absent in one parish in 6, chemists in one place in 4 and police stations and doctors surgeries in one place in 3.

To measure changes in aggregate service provision, a Parish Deficit Indicator (PDI) was devised. First a simple count of services missing from each parish was made, up to a maximum of 20. Weights were then calculated for the 20 services and later for the 5 basic facilities using first the proportion of parishes in which the service occurred and secondly the proportion of the study area population represented by the parishes from which the service was missing. This produced 8 different measures, and from these principal components were extracted for 1950 and 1980, standardised so that a value of zero indicated a parish with no deficit and 100 a parish from which all the indicator services were missing.

In 1950 the average unweighted PDI for the survey parishes was 27.2 (Table 11.6). By 1980 the average had risen by about a quarter to 33.5, with West Somerset showing the largest rise. However, weighting the PDI by population conveyed a much more stable picture overall, although district variations stood out.

In a discussion seeking factors likely to be related to service change Haggett, Mills & Morgan (1982) examined planning policies impinging on the parishes and changes in average total population. Table 11.7 shows the pattern of service change in relation to the designation of settlements in the 1964 County Development Plan Review. Undesignated parishes were unfortunately not included in this analysis, but for settlements designated as Towns and Main or Local Centres the PDI levels suggested some service gains while the smaller villages of the 1st and 2nd Schedules tended to experience a service loss, though the magnitude of change was not particularly high.

Total population change 1951-81 (rather than shifts in each decade which were not considered in the PDI analysis) is also shown in Table 11.7. In general the analysis suggests that loss of services was typical in the small parishes which had stable or declining populations, but that a small number of more populous places increased their service provision over the same period.

The PDI analysis also examined the situation for parishes which were in the National Park, AsONB, AGLV, Green Belts and Coast Protection areas, and also those which contained Conservation Areas or Sites of Special Scientific Interest,

TABLE 11.6 CHANGE IN INDEX OF SERVICE PROVISION PER PARISH

| Parish Average          | Average PDI (unweighted) |      | Average PDI (weighted) |      | % Change |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------|------------------------|------|----------|
|                         | 1950                     | 1980 | 1950                   | 1980 |          |
| Mendip                  | 24.6                     | 31.5 | 16.8                   | 21.2 | 26       |
| Sedgemoor               | 23.8                     | 28.1 | 14.1                   | 15.7 | 11       |
| Taunton Deane           | 30.3                     | 33.0 | 19.9                   | 19.3 | - 3      |
| West Somerset           | 28.0                     | 40.2 | 15.1                   | 20.2 | 34       |
| Yeovil                  | 30.7                     | 37.3 | 20.4                   | 20.6 | 1        |
| Somerset                | 28.0                     | 34.5 | 17.9                   | 19.4 | 8        |
| Wansdyke                | 25.7                     | 33.1 | 14.6                   | 17.1 | 17       |
| Woodspring              | 22.0                     | 25.5 | 12.2                   | 10.6 | - 13     |
| South Avon              | 24.0                     | 29.6 | 13.4                   | 12.5 | - 7      |
| Somerset and South Avon | 27.2                     | 33.5 | 16.5                   | 17.1 | 4        |

TABLE 11.7 RELATION OF 1964 PLANNING CATEGORIES TO CHANGE

| Settlement Category            | Number of Parishes | Average parish population |            | % Change    | Unweighted  |             | Average PDI  |             | Weighted    |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
|                                |                    | 1950                      | 1980       |             | 1950        | 1980        | 1950         | 1980        | 1950        | 1980         |
| Town (of secondary importance) | 1                  | 1972                      | 2463       | + 25        | 1.5         | 0.0         | - 1.5        | 1.5         | 0.0         | + 1.5        |
| Main/Local centre              | 19                 | 1805                      | 2616       | + 45        | 3.5         | 2.0         | + 1.5        | 3.4         | 1.7         | - 1.7        |
| Village (1st schedule)         | 107                | 1011                      | 1376       | + 36        | 12.5        | 15.1        | + 2.6        | 11.5        | 11.8        | + 0.3        |
| Village (2nd schedule)         | 145                | 444                       | 512        | + 15        | 26.6        | 33.6        | + 7.0        | 23.7        | 30.9        | + 7.2        |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>378</b>         | <b>626</b>                | <b>827</b> | <b>+ 32</b> | <b>27.2</b> | <b>33.5</b> | <b>+ 6.3</b> | <b>16.6</b> | <b>17.0</b> | <b>+ 0.4</b> |

No information available for 106 parishes

not discussed in section 11.2, above, since the results of exploratory tabulations were so inconclusive. The findings suggest, for example, that the 28 parishes located in Exmoor National Park, when taken as a group, showed, over the 30 year period, a substantial loss of population and an increase in the PDI, while parishes with Conservation Areas had extremely low PDI levels. Green belt parishes, too, showed increased service provision despite low population growth.

#### **11.4 Service Shifts : An Alternative Approach using Hierarchical Cluster Analysis**

The Parish Deficit Indicator, while of value in identifying service losses, could not take account of service gain, nor of more detailed changes in provision. Priority was therefore given to the derivation of some measure of service provision which would preserve more of the available information and which would adequately discriminate between parishes at all population size levels, essentially Bracey's original task. It was thought appropriate to attempt a hierarchical clustering exercise using subsets of the variables, although it was recognised that the use of cluster analysis requires a number of subjective decisions on the part of the researcher and that there is a need to experiment in the selection of variables and in the type of clustering performed.

It was also envisaged that cluster analysis would provide a means for undertaking a direct comparison between the classification of parishes produced by Bracey (in the days before computers were available to social researchers) and that produced with the aid of a mathematical algorithm. Note, however, that Bracey's early analyses focussed on the identification of a hierarchy of higher level settlements - the market towns of the area 'commonly visited' by rural residents - rather than on the rural parishes themselves. Although the index of social provision calculated on the basis of the 36 variables in the 1947 survey was regarded by Bracey as useful in identifying groupings among parishes in the 'lower limb' of the settlement system, his results were published as maps rather than lists (see for example Map 4.5 in Chapter 4, above, and Map 6 in Appendix 6 (unpublished) which provides a little more detail). Their scale does not allow the allocation of particular parishes to particular groups. Only the results of his re-analysis of the data (reported in Bracey 1962), in which he used principally a count of shops to group the more rural places, are available in list form, providing data which allow a comparison to be made.

In the analysis which follows there is also an opportunity to compare Bracey's hierarchy of centres with that identified by the county planning department which reportedly relied on Bracey's work. However, it is only possible to do this for Bracey's (1962) Central Villages and the list of centres published in the 1964 Development Plan Review, since although the 1951 Report on the County Survey reportedly used Bracey's earlier analysis in identifying Main Villages (Somerset CC 1951 p.15) it has not been possible to locate Bracey's version of the hierarchy.

#### **11.4.1 Data preparation**

Before carrying out the cluster analyses it was necessary to prepare two sets of data - one for 1950 and one for 1980 - containing variables measured in the same ways referring to geographically coterminous units. This involved firstly the amalgamation of data for certain parishes and the deletion of other places (as described in Appendix 3) so as to take account of boundary changes occurring between the two surveys, and secondly the recoding of certain variables so that the categories used to measure each were the same in both years. Both tasks were detailed and time-consuming but the preparation of matched data sets greatly enhances the interpretation of the cluster analysis results, especially in pinpointing changes between 1950 and 1980.

#### **11.4.2 Selection of variables**

While wishing to do justice to the detailed information collected, it was necessary to be selective in the use of variables for the cluster analysis. The choice of variables of course influences the character of the clusters identified; the aim was to derive a set of clusters which would describe the service and social characteristics of the parishes while allowing variation between them to emerge. The presence or absence of a church, for example, would be unlikely to discriminate between parishes since virtually all have one. Extremely rare services, such as hospitals, were also not considered to be useful discriminators for the purposes intended here.

Further, since it was the aim to identify changes between 1950 and 1980 it was not valuable to include in the analysis information collected in one year but not the other (although it might be rewarding in the future to carry out more detailed work on either data set making use of these additional variables). Thus the information on, for example, sewerage and whist drives available for 1950 but not

1980 was omitted, as was the information on nursery schools, playgroups and chiropodists collected only in 1980.

Initially it was the intention to base the cluster analysis on the 20 variables selected for the computation of the PDI, reported above. However, in the light of the examination of the data described in Chapters 5,6 and 8, and bearing in mind the rather different aims of the cluster analysis, it was decided to omit or modify certain of the variables and to make fuller use of the data by including others. Thus, for example, it was decided not to include a variable describing the library service because this changed so radically between the two survey dates (the code for mobile libraries was not used at all in 1950). Similarly, the information on presence or absence of 'other professional services' was not used since it referred mainly to undertakers in 1950 but to a range of quite different services (such as architects) in 1980. On the other hand, rather than collapsing certain sets of variables into single groups, as was the case in the derivation of the PDI, it was decided to include the members of each set separately in the hopes of 'calibrating' the classification as finely as possible. Thus, for example, instead of collapsing the information on professional services into one variable, accountants, solicitors, estate agents and vets were entered separately. Adult organisations, youth organisations and recreational facilities were similarly disaggregated.

The 22 service variables and 12 social and recreational variables selected are listed in Table 11.8, which also draws attention to the ways in which the variables have been specified. Note that while for most variables complete data were available, in the case of public telephones and fire stations in 1980 there were, respectively, 143 and 148 missing values, a result of shortcomings in the data collected via the Thatch questionnaire (see Chapter 7).

#### **11.4.3 Choice of clustering method**

Several computer packages for cluster analysis are available. Perhaps the best known to social scientists are CLUSTER (within SPSSX) and CLUSTAN which is relatively easy to use and produces very high quality graphical output. Unfortunately, however, CLUSTER is not suitable for use with categorical data and CLUSTAN does not allow the combination of continuous, binary and categorical variables in the same analysis. About 8 per cent of all the variables in each of the 1950 and 1980 data sets are continuous in nature and about 19 per cent of those in Bracey's surveys and 36 per cent of those in the 1980 set are of a straightforward binary type. The majority of variables in both sets, however, take

TABLE 11.8 VARIABLES USED IN HIERARCHICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS

| SERVICE (22)                                                               | SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL (12)                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Presence/absence of:</u>                                                | <u>Presence/absence of:</u>                             |
| Public telephone                                                           | Youth club                                              |
| Post office (all types)                                                    | Scouts (or cubs/brownies/<br>guides)                    |
| Grocer/general store<br>(excludes POs)                                     | Royal British Legion                                    |
| Hairdresser                                                                | Women's Institute                                       |
| Clothing or shoe shop<br>(includes shoe repairs)                           | Sports club (indoor/<br>outdoor)                        |
| Garage                                                                     | Church group (not Sunday<br>School)                     |
| Police station (or police<br>cottage 1950)                                 | Political association                                   |
| Fire station                                                               | Village hall                                            |
| Bus service (bus stop<br>within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile + 'regular'<br>service) | Church hall                                             |
| Primary school (Junior/<br>all-age 1950)                                   | School hall                                             |
| Adult education classes                                                    | Sportsfield (includes<br>recreation ground)             |
| Doctor's surgery (includes<br>health centre 1980)                          | <u>Number of:</u>                                       |
| Dentist                                                                    | Public houses/hotels<br>(1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, >6,<br>none) |
| Dispensing chemist                                                         |                                                         |
| Child welfare clinic<br>(excludes other types 1980)                        |                                                         |
| <u>None, one, &gt;one:</u>                                                 |                                                         |
| Bank                                                                       |                                                         |
| Accountant                                                                 |                                                         |
| Solicitor                                                                  |                                                         |
| Estate agent (or auctioneer<br>1950)                                       |                                                         |
| Veterinary surgeon                                                         |                                                         |
| <u>Number of:</u>                                                          |                                                         |
| Shops                                                                      |                                                         |
| Travelling shops/deliveries                                                |                                                         |



on descriptive categories. All but two of the variables selected for the cluster analysis were either binary or categorical in nature.

An alternative to CLUSTER and CLUSTAN is the statistical programming language GENSTAT which has a facility for combining continuous and binary or categorical variables in the same analysis in the manner described by Gower (1971) who devised a general similarity coefficient for use in the construction of a similarity matrix on which a clustering is based (Mather 1976). The use of GENSTAT, while by no means straightforward, enhances the researcher's ability to perform a wide range of data manipulations and analyses not possible in packages like SPSS.

The hierarchical clustering algorithms available in GENSTAT begin with all the units (in this case parishes) in separate groups. The two groups with the highest similarity are merged and similarities between the new cluster and all other clusters redefined. This process is repeated until all the units belong to a single cluster. The similarity of two merging clusters decreases as the algorithm proceeds. The clustering procedure may be halted at a particular stage and results generated which allocate units to clusters and indicate which variables are important in defining the clusters derived. In addition the procedure produces up to 5 nearest neighbours for each unit and provides an indication of the 'most typical' units within each cluster.

The method by which similarities between the units are defined depends on the choice of clustering algorithm. In situations where the clusters are to be based on categorical data little guidance on making this choice has been available in the literature until recently. However, Hands & Everitt (1987) have suggested the use of the centroid method (in which the recalculated similarity is the mean of similarities between each of the two merged clusters and any third cluster (Alvey *et al* 1983)), especially when, as in the case of the Somerset data, the proportion of observations in each cluster is likely to be very different. The single linkage method, regarded as theoretically likely to yield the most perfect cluster solutions since it emphasises the separateness of clusters and is unlikely to assign two similar units to different major clusters (a risk when the other methods are used) rarely produces meaningful results in situations where the units occur in a linked system (as is the case with settlements). If there are no isolated clusters the single linkage method will produce one large cluster with a few outliers. Attempts to cluster the parish data by this means produced just this result.

In fact five clustering methods are available within GENSTAT and trial runs were undertaken using three of them, a centroid analysis (termed 'average linkage' cluster analysis) and single linkage analysis, referred to above, and a median cluster analysis, also potentially useful when using categorical data. In the event the average linkage method produced small numbers of reasonably stable clusters with only rare outliers (according to Hands & Everitt (1987) indicators of clustering accuracy) while the other two methods tended to produce either a single large cluster with many outliers or numerous very small clusters, also with many unclassified places.

### **11.5 Cluster Analysis Results**

Average linkage cluster analysis was carried out on six sets of data. Firstly clusters were produced using only the 22 service variables for 1950. These clusters were then compared with the hierarchy of rural settlements proposed by Bracey (1962) and with that published in Somerset County Council's 1964 Development Plan Review (Somerset CC 1964a, and see Fig 10.3 above). Secondly, a set of clusters based on 12 social and recreational variables was derived and compared with that generated using the service data. Thirdly all 34 variables were entered in the analysis.

Three equivalent sets of clusters were then produced using the 1980 data set. The 1980 service clusters were then compared with the hierarchy of rural service centres identified in the Somerset and Avon structure plans (Figs 10.5 and 10.6).

Comparison of the 1950 and 1980 cluster solutions allows the identification of shifts in the parish groupings and the pinpointing of parishes moving 'up' or 'down' the hierarchy between the two survey dates. These changes are examined in the light of settlement planning policies and in relation to population shifts.

The results are presented in the following sections.

#### **11.5.1 The 1950 service clusters**

Cluster analysis of the 371 parishes on 22 service variables from the 1950 data set produces 3 groups of parishes. These are shown in Table 11.9 which reports the percentage of parishes in each cluster having each of the services measured. The 'interaction statistics' are chi square values produced by the GENSTAT program to

TABLE 11.9 CLUSTERING OF 371 PARISHES IN 1950 USING 22 SERVICE VARIABLES

| Parishes with:       | Cluster 1<br>(259) |          | Cluster 2<br>(84) |         | Cluster 3<br>(28) |          | All<br>parishes<br>(371)<br>% |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
|                      | %                  | IS       | %                 | IS      | %                 | IS       |                               |
| Phone                | 74.1               | 10.67    | 100.0             | 18.51   | 100.0             | 6.17     | 79.7                          |
| Post office          | 77.2               | 9.16     | 100.0             | 15.88   | 100.0             | 5.29     | 84.3                          |
| 0-7 shops            | * 86.5             | -5.84(t) | 35.7              | 2.78(t) | *                 | 12.95(t) | 68.4                          |
| 7-15 shops           | 2.3                | 0.73(t)  | 29.8              | 0.52(t) | 96.4              | -3.14(t) | 15.4                          |
| 1-9 travelling shops | 25.5               | 10.03    | 100.0             | 19.19   | 50.0              | 4.18     | 29.6                          |
| Grocer/general store | 73.8               | 15.45    | 52.4              | 65.01   | 96.4              | 4.07     | 81.4                          |
| Hairdresser          | 8.9                | 7.36     | 54.8              | 39.43   | 3.6               | 6.89     | 18.3                          |
| Clothing shoes       | 17.8               | 18.08    | 58.3              | 72.12   | 3.6               | 3.15     | 25.1                          |
| Garage               | 10.0               | 31.77    | 21.4              | 8.39    | 7.1               | 153.35   | 20.8                          |
| Bank                 | 0.4                | 4.10     | 3.6               | 1.68    | * 85.7            | 26.61    | 11.7                          |
| Accountant           | 1.2                | 11.76    | 3.6               | 1.34    | 25.0              | 139.06   | 3.0                           |
| Solicitor            | 0.8                | 8.67     | 1.2               | 2.27    | 57.1              | 133.66   | 5.7                           |
| Estate agent         | 0.8                | 5.68     | 6.0               | 1.23    | 50.0              | 36.88    | 4.1                           |
| Veterinary surgeon   | 1.5                | 33.58    | 52.4              | 26.83   | 28.6              | 74.85    | 4.7                           |
| Police station       | 11.2               | 19.33    | 27.4              | 16.36   | 100.0             | 41.15    | 28.0                          |
| Fire station         | 3.9                | 0.82     | 92.9              | 1.68    | 53.6              | 0.71     | 16.6                          |
| Bus service          | 92.3               | 11.82    | 97.6              | 19.33   | 96.4              | 8.07     | 98.3                          |
| Primary school       | 68.7               | 14.00    | 75.0              | 6.89    | 100.0             | 46.70    | 77.8                          |
| Adult education      | 6.6                | 78.43    | * 89.3            | 127.95  | 60.7              | 53.91    | 15.0                          |
| Doctor               | * 6.2              | 22.31    | 11.9              | 1.15    | 96.4              | 156.52   | 31.8                          |
| Dentist              | 0.4                | 26.13    | 14.3              | 2.65    | * 75.0            | 162.03   | 8.9                           |
| Chemist              | 0.0                | 15.25    | 32.1              | 15.26   | * 78.6            | 27.38    | 10.3                          |
| Child clinic         | 7.7                |          |                   |         | 53.6              |          | 16.8                          |

Note:

IS = Interaction statistic chi square (or t value where indicated)

\* = variable highly significant in determining cluster

indicate the degree of association between each variable and each cluster; the larger the value of chi square the greater the association (although the statistic does not have 'significance' attached to it in the usual sense but merely 'draws attention to groups for which the distribution is markedly different from the overall distribution' (Alvey *et al* 1983 Ch 8 p 2). In the case of the two continuous variables (number of shops and number of travelling shops or deliveries) the programme rounds the data values to the nearest point on a scale of 0 to 10 (unfortunately in the process compressing the data to such an extent that it is difficult to pick out, for example, places with no shops at all from places with 10) and an interaction statistic analogous to Student's t is calculated.

The 'efficiency' of each variable in discriminating between clusters is indicated by the size of the interaction statistics reproduced in Table 11.9 . An inspection of these values suggests that while the number of shops is clearly important the number of travelling shops is less so, and the presence or absence of certain other services - in particular the doctor, dentist, chemist, bank, solicitor and estate agent - is more critical. In his own classification of parishes Bracey (1962) picked out the solicitor as a key discriminator and the results presented here support his choice.

As Table 11.9 shows, the clustering produces one large group (of 259 places) containing parishes lacking many of the services listed, although most had a grocer or general store, post office, public telephone, bus service and primary school. A second group (84 parishes) is similar to the first but in this one over half the parishes had in addition a police station and garage, three quarters adult education classes of some kind and 89 per cent a doctor's surgery. Cluster 2 parishes also had more shops than those in Cluster 1 and were likely to have specialist outlets such as clothing or shoe shops as well as personal services such as hairdressers. Professional services such as accountants and solicitors, however, were rarely found amongst parishes in this cluster. The 28 parishes in Cluster 3 were still better served. All had a primary school and 96 per cent a doctor. Most reported a range of professional and public services, along with the less common health services - dentists and dispensing chemists, though the more specialised shops were not especially frequent.

### **11.5.2 Comparison between the 1950 service clusters and the hierarchy of Central Villages identified by Bracey (1962)**

Output from the GENSTAT program includes a grouping factor which indicates, for each parish, its location in a particular cluster. This may be treated as a new categorical variable and crosstabulated with others. Table 11.10, derived in this way, shows the relationships between the 1950 service clusters and Bracey's First-Order, Second-Order and Third-Order Central Villages.

Clearly there are some major anomalies. Although 80 per cent of Bracey's First-Order Central Villages appear in the Cluster 3 (the best served), so do 4 places which the cluster analysis suggests were only moderately well served - Easton in Gordano, Backwell and Peasedown St John (all now in Avon) and Porlock in West Somerset. Also, 8 (31 per cent) of Bracey's Second-Order places, one Third-Order place (Timsbury, in Wansdyke District) and 3 which Bracey did not identify as Central Villages at all (Winford, Whitchurch and Wincanton) all appear among the best served as identified by the cluster analysis. As the account in Chapter 4 indicated, Wincanton was in fact omitted from Bracey's 1962 analysis since he thought it more appropriate to treat it as a town. The reason for the omission of the other two relatively well-served parishes is less clear, however.

In the case of places not designated as Central Villages by Bracey there is a reasonably close correspondence with parishes which had only basic services, located in Cluster 1.

### **11.5.3 Comparison between 1950 service clusters and the rural settlement hierarchy described in the 1964 Development Plan Review**

In contrast, Table 11.11 shows the relationships between 1950 service clusters and the designation of parishes in the 1964 Development Plan Review. It is apparent that there is a close association between the two classifications, although the planning hierarchy distinguishes four rather than three levels (plus two 'Towns'). Ninety five per cent of the undesignated places (those seen as having little potential for growth) and 88 per cent of the 2nd Schedule Villages occur in Cluster 1, 89 per cent of the 1st Schedule Villages in Cluster 1 or 2, and 79 per cent of the Local Centres in Cluster 3. In addition, Cluster 3 contains the two parishes designated in the Plan as 'Towns'.

TABLE 11.10 COMPARISON OF 1950 SERVICE CLUSTERS WITH BRACEY'S FIRST-, SECOND- AND THIRD-ORDER VILLAGES

|                              | First Order Village |       | Second Order Village |       | Third Order Village |       | No designation |       | All |       |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-----|-------|
|                              | No.                 | %     | No.                  | %     | No.                 | %     | No.            | %     | No. | %     |
| Cluster 1<br>(basic)         | -                   | -     | 1                    | 3.9   | 15                  | 46.9  | 243            | 82.9  | 259 | 69.8  |
| Cluster 2<br>(moderate)      | 4                   | 20.0  | 17                   | 65.4  | 16                  | 50.0  | 47             | 16.0  | 84  | 22.6  |
| Cluster 3<br>(well serviced) | 16                  | 80.0  | 8                    | 30.8  | 1                   | 3.1   | 3              | 1.0   | 28  | 7.6   |
| Total                        | 20                  | 100.0 | 26                   | 100.0 | 32                  | 100.0 | 293            | 100.0 | 371 | 100.0 |

TABLE 11.11 COMPARISON OF 1950 SERVICE CLUSTERS WITH THE DESIGNATION OF PARISHES AS SERVICE CENTRES IN THE 1964 DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

|                           | Town |       | Main or local Rural centre |       | Village 1st schedule |       | Village 2nd schedule |       | No designation |       | All parishes |       |
|---------------------------|------|-------|----------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                           | No.  | %     | No.                        | %     | No.                  | %     | No.                  | %     | No.            | %     | No.          | %     |
| Cluster 1 (basic)         | -    | -     | -                          | -     | 37                   | 34.9  | 126                  | 88.1  | 96             | 95.1  | 259          | 69.8  |
| Cluster 2 (moderate)      | -    | -     | 4                          | 21.1  | 58                   | 57.7  | 17                   | 11.9  | 5              | 4.9   | 84           | 22.6  |
| Cluster 3 (well serviced) | 2    | 100.0 | 15                         | 78.9  | 11                   | 10.4  | -                    | -     | -              | -     | 28           | 7.6   |
| Total                     | 2    | 100.0 | 19                         | 100.0 | 106                  | 100.0 | 143                  | 100.0 | 101            | 100.0 | 371          | 100.0 |

However, 4 parishes (Axbridge, Nether Stowey, Porlock and Abbas & Templecombe) were designated as Local Centres, despite their occurrence in Cluster 2 which suggests that they were not as well-served as others picked out at this level, while other places had a wide range of services yet were not selected to act as Local Centres. These include, for example, Ashbrittle and Pitminster (now in Sedgemoor district), Exmoor in West Somerset and Combe Hay and Englishcombe now in Wansdyke. While the spacing of settlements must have been taken into account by the planners in deciding which settlements to designate as likely growth points (in fact in a note about the earlier more restricted classification of local centres in the County Development Plan Written Statement (Somerset CC 1947) they stated that 'some villages of considerable size are omitted because the proximity of large towns has eclipsed their function as rural centres') we may speculate that some places may have been overlooked as a result of the way they were classified by the planners who seem to have taken a lead from Bracey in using principally the number of retail outlets as a guide. It is of interest to follow the fortunes of these anomalous parishes by reference to the 1980 analysis and examination of later planning designations and population shifts, described below.

When the settlement hierarchy set out in the 1964 development Plan Review and that proposed by Bracey (1962) are directly compared (Table 11.12) it is evident that the planners did not, after all, rely on Bracey's published work. We may speculate that either he supplied them with a revised unpublished list, or that he allowed them access to his original data which they then re-analysed, or that the field work which they reportedly carried out led them to modify Bracey's findings. In the event, the hierarchy that formed the basis for rural settlement planning during most of the 30 year period under study seems closer to that which might have been identified had Bracey had access to the multivariate techniques now available than to the scheme he himself published.

#### **11.5.4 The addition of social and recreational variables to the analysis**

Since Bracey made use of only service variables in examining the rural settlement hierarchy it is of interest to ask whether his results might have been enhanced through the inclusion of some of the data on social life. Aspects of the clustering produced using simply the 12 social and recreational variables are shown in Table 11.13. The 4 clusters describe firstly a group of 72 relatively 'sociable' parishes, epitomised, for example, by Yatton, now in Woodspring district, having most of the facilities and groups listed. The presence of a sports field seems particularly



TABLE 11.12 COMPARISON OF THE DESIGNATION OF PARISHES AS SERVICE CENTRES IN THE 1964 DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW WITH BRACEY'S FIRST-, SECOND- AND THIRD ORDER VILLAGES

|                      | Town |       | Main or local Rural centre |       | Village 1st schedule |       | Village 2nd schedule |       | No designation |       | All parishes |       |
|----------------------|------|-------|----------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                      | No.  | %     | No.                        | %     | No.                  | %     | No.                  | %     | No.            | %     | No.          | %     |
| First-Order Village  | 2    | 100.0 | 13                         | 68.4  | 4                    | 3.8   | 1                    | 0.7   | -              | -     | 20           | 5.4   |
| Second-Order Village | -    | -     | 5                          | 26.3  | 20                   | 18.9  | 1                    | 0.7   | -              | -     | 26           | 7.0   |
| Third-Order Village  | -    | -     | -                          | -     | 26                   | 24.5  | 6                    | 4.2   | -              | -     | 32           | 8.6   |
| No designation       | -    | -     | 1                          | 5.3   | 56                   | 52.8  | 135                  | 94.4  | 101            | 27.2  | 293          | 79.0  |
|                      | 2    | 100.0 | 19                         | 100.0 | 106                  | 100.0 | 143                  | 100.0 | 101            | 100.0 | 371          | 100.0 |

TABLE 11.13 CLUSTERING OF 371 PARISHES IN 1950 USING 12 SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL VARIABLES

| Parishes with:        | Cluster 1<br>(72) |       | Cluster 2<br>(155) |       | Cluster 3<br>(120) |       | Cluster 4<br>(24) |       | All<br>parishes<br>(371) |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------------|
|                       | %                 | IS    | %                  | IS    | %                  | IS    | %                 | IS    |                          |
| Youth club            | 72.2              | 22.04 | 47.7               | 1.44  | 30.0               | 11.07 | 16.7              | 7.80  | 45.2                     |
| Scouts                | * 69.4            | 63.02 | 19.4               | 6.84  | 20.0               | 3.96  | -                 | 9.60  | 28.0                     |
| Royal British Legion  | 94.4              | 33.53 | 65.8               | 1.39  | * 29.2             | 51.80 | 91.7              | 9.36  | 63.0                     |
| Sports club           | 97.2              | 24.19 | 85.2               | 15.30 | 50.8               | 23.39 | * -               | 58.44 | 70.9                     |
| Women's Institute     | 94.4              | 23.61 | 74.2               | 3.03  | 44.2               | 30.25 | 62.5              | 0.29  | 67.9                     |
| Church group          | 90.3              | 33.73 | 56.1               | 0.43  | 37.5               | 18.20 | 50.0              | 0.48  | 57.3                     |
| Political association | 44.4              | 42.40 | 13.5               | 1.01  | 1.7                | 19.93 | 25.0              | 1.60  | 17.0                     |
| At least 1 pub        | 94.4              | 53.51 | 91.0               | 18.67 | * 55.8             | 44.52 | 83.3              | 8.48  | 80.1                     |
| Village hall          | 55.6              | 0.76  | * 83.9             | 69.45 | * 10.0             | 78.37 | 20.8              | 8.40  | 50.4                     |
| School hall           | 18.1              | 0.00  | * 3.9              | 21.09 | 34.2               | 21.04 | 29.2              | 2.00  | 18.1                     |
| Church hall           | 58.3              | 35.17 | 21.9               | 2.19  | 18.3               | 4.79  | 12.5              | 2.63  | 27.2                     |
| Sportsfield           | * 80.6            | 95.34 | 14.8               | 14.32 | 15.0               | 10.83 | 29.2              | 0.00  | 28.6                     |

Notes:

IS = Interaction statistic chi square

\* = variable highly significant in determining cluster

significant in identifying places in this group. A second much larger group (of 155 parishes) is similarly well supplied but many of these parishes lacked a school hall. Clusters 3 and 4 describe parishes which generally less often reported the social groups and facilities selected here. The 120 Cluster 3 places, of which Kingston Seymour in Woodspring provides a typical example, were likely to lack a village hall and to have relatively few pubs and were relatively unlikely to have a branch of the WI or British Legion. Cluster 4 contains 24 parishes which may be characterised as not very sporty. Examples include North Wootton in Mendip district, Whitestaunton and Compton Pauncefoot in Yeovil and Newton St Loe, the only Avon parish to fall into this category.

Comparison of the service and social/recreational clusters (Table 11.14) suggests that the 28 main service centres were also likely to support most of the social groups and to have recreational facilities in 1950 while those places lacking in services also tended to lack social activities. However, 26 (10 per cent) of the parishes in service cluster 1 (the most basic) were also among the most 'sociable'.

Comparison of the clusters produced for 1950 using all 34 variables with those derived only from the 22 service variables (not tabulated here) reveals some minor shifting of the parishes between clusters. Of the 214 places grouped in Cluster 1 (using all variables), 97 per cent were previously in service Cluster 3 - the most basic - while 8 were previously in service Cluster 2 which contains the major service centres. These are places that could perhaps be described as 'less sociable' than the 'average' higher order settlement. Conversely, two places (Blagdon and Banwell, both now in Avon) move, with the addition of the social and recreational variables, into the highest order cluster.

Additionally, 8 parishes which were classed as moderately well serviced enter the most basic cluster when the social and recreational variables are added to the analysis. Half of these are on Exmoor (Carhampton, Selworthy, Cutcombe and Exmoor parish itself), 3 in Avon (Combe Hay, Compton Dando and Englishcombe), and one in Mendip (Wanstrow). It is noteworthy that three of these are among those 'passed over' by the planners in designating Local Rural Centres (see section 11.5.3 above); this analysis may provide some evidence to suggest that the planners were right in their estimation of the potential of these places to act as focal points for the rural community.

Correspondence between the 1950 clusters generated using the mix of service and social and recreational data and the settlement hierarchy identified in the 1964

TABLE 11.14 COMPARISON OF 1950 SERVICE CLUSTERS WITH 1950 SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL CLUSTERS

| Social/<br>recreational:       | Service:             |                         |                              |              | Cluster 3<br>(well serviced) | All parishes |     |       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----|-------|
|                                | Cluster 1<br>(basic) | Cluster 2<br>(moderate) | Cluster 3<br>(well serviced) | All parishes |                              |              |     |       |
|                                | No.                  | %                       | No.                          | %            | No.                          | %            |     |       |
| Cluster 1<br>(sociable)        | 26                   | 10.0                    | 30                           | 35.7         | 16                           | 57.2         | 72  | 19.4  |
| Cluster 2<br>(moderate)        | 107                  | 41.3                    | 39                           | 46.4         | 9                            | 32.1         | 155 | 41.8  |
| Cluster 3<br>(lack most)       | 103                  | 39.8                    | 14                           | 16.7         | 3                            | 10.7         | 120 | 32.4  |
| Cluster 4<br>(no sports clubs) | 23                   | 8.9                     | 1                            | 1.2          | -                            | -            | 24  | 6.5   |
|                                | 259                  | 100.0                   | 84                           | 100.0        | 28                           | 100.0        | 371 | 100.0 |

Development Plan Review is not as close as that achieved using only the service variables in the clustering. In particular, Ilchester and Milbourne Port now enter the group of places (which previously included Axbridge, Nether Stowey, Porlock and Abbas & Templecombe) designated as Local Centres despite relatively modest levels of service provision, while Timsbury, south west of Bath, could now be added to the list of parishes which could have been designated as Local Centres but were instead classed as 1st Schedule Villages. In Timsbury's case this designation presumably reflects the closeness of the parish to the larger centre of Peasedown St John.

#### **11.5.5 The 1980 service clusters**

Analysis of the 22 service variables in the 1980 data set produces 3 clusters, as indicated in Table 11.15. It is apparent that a large number of parishes (338) now form one cluster, mostly containing places having only basic services, while 29 much better served places, distinguished especially by the presence of a bank, chemist and numerous shops including at least one selling clothing or shoes, occur in Cluster 2. Three places, Chew Magna, Nailsea and Winscombe, all in Avon, unusual in that all reported solicitors, dentists and fire stations and two thirds a vet in 1980, form a small third group.

While in 1980 the number of shops continues to be important in determining the classification of parishes by this method, the presence or absence of certain types of shop and other services, particularly chemists and banks, are more useful discriminators. Further, the significance of these more specialised variables appears much greater in the 1980 analysis than it was in 1950. We may speculate that the decline in the power of a simple count of retail outlets to distinguish between rural service centres is a reflection of trends in retailing itself, in particular the decreased tendency for specialist items, particularly foods, to be provided in numerous small outlets and the growth of the multi-purpose store. The majority of the parishes in 1980 in fact had only one shop - a grocer/general store (often combined with the post office) so that a count of shops would not display variations between these parishes.

#### **11.5.6 Comparison of the 1950 and 1980 service clusters**

Comparison of the clusters produced in 1950 and 1980 using these matched variables (Table 11.16) demonstrates that parishes with only basic services have become more numerous - in effect, Clusters 1 and 2 identified in 1950 by 1980

TABLE 11.15 CLUSTERING OF 371 PARISHES IN 1980 USING 22 SERVICE VARIABLES

| Parishes with:       | Cluster 1<br>(338) |          | Cluster 2<br>(29) |         | Cluster 3<br>(3) |          | All<br>parishes<br>(371)<br>% |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|---------|------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
|                      | %                  | IS       | %                 | IS      | %                | IS       |                               |
| Phone                | 56.5               | 0.26     | 65.5              | 1.53    | 100.0            | 2.20     | 93.8                          |
| Post office          | 73.1               | 1.05     | 100.0             | 9.42    | 100.0            | 0.98     | 75.4                          |
| 0-18 shops           | * 99.4             | -3.18(t) | 20.7              | 7.45(t) | *                | 11.10(t) | 92.8                          |
| >18 shops            | 0.3                |          | 75.9              |         | 100.0            |          | 7.2                           |
| 1-8 travelling shops | 91.7               | -0.77(t) | 75.9              | 2.05(t) | 33.3             | 2.43(t)  | 94.3                          |
| Grocer/general store | 31.4               | 3.69     | 100.0             | 50.70   | -                | 1.72     | 36.4                          |
| Hairdresser          | 15.4               | 6.47     | 89.7              | 82.27   | -                | 0.80     | 21.0                          |
| Clothing/shoes       | 3.0                | 19.51    | * 96.6            | 234.98  | -                | 2.40     | 10.2                          |
| Garage               | 51.8               | 2.78     | 43.1              | 26.51   | 100.0            | 2.40     | 56.3                          |
| Bank                 | * 2.7              | 24.59    | * 100.0           | 233.42  | 100.0            | 43.38    | 11.2                          |
| Accountant           | 0.3                | 14.78    | 48.3              | 127.85  | 66.7             | 29.21    | 4.7                           |
| Solicitor            | 0.6                | 18.68    | 62.1              | 155.80  | * 100.0          | 82.62    | 6.3                           |
| Estate agent         | 1.5                | 19.09    | 69.0              | 160.82  | 66.7             | 62.58    | 7.7                           |
| Veterinary surgeon   | 1.8                | 6.92     | 24.1              | 45.32   | * 66.7           | 82.09    | 4.1                           |
| Police station       | 10.4               | 10.53    | 89.7              | 108.65  | 33.3             | 5.26     | 17.6                          |
| Fire station         | 0.6                | 8.59     | 37.9              | 50.07   | * 100.0          | 82.62    | 5.8                           |
| Bus service          | 82.8               | 0.40     | 100.0             | 5.48    | 100.0            | 0.57     | 83.4                          |
| Primary school       | 47.6               | 2.61     | 100.0             | 26.75   | 100.0            | 2.77     | 52.3                          |
| Adult education      | 32.0               | 2.94     | 79.3              | 23.82   | 100.0            | 5.24     | 37.4                          |
| Doctor               | 22.2               | 7.85     | 100.0             | 70.62   | 100.0            | 7.31     | 29.1                          |
| Dentist              | 0.9                | 18.46    | 65.5              | 159.99  | 100.0            | 4.52     | 6.9                           |
| Chemist              | * 0.6              | 24.50    | * 86.2            | 247.73  | 66.6             | 14.50    | 9.4                           |
| Child clinic         | 10.4               | 3.76     | 51.7              | 34.22   | 66.6             | 6.90     | 14.1                          |

Note:

1 parish not clustered (Withypool in West Somerset)

\* = variable highly significant in determining cluster

IS = Interaction statistic chi square (or t value where indicated)

TABLE 11.16 COMPARISON OF 1950 SERVICE CLUSTERS WITH 1980 SERVICE CLUSTERS

| 1980 services:                 | 1950 services:       |                         |                              |              |     |       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----|-------|
|                                | Cluster 1<br>(basic) | Cluster 2<br>(moderate) | Cluster 3<br>(well serviced) | All parishes | No. | %     |
| Cluster 1<br>(basic)           | 259                  | 73                      | 7                            | 339          | 339 | 91.4  |
| Cluster 2<br>(well serviced)   | -                    | 10                      | 19                           | 29           | 29  | 7.8   |
| Cluster 3<br>(well serviced +) | -                    | 1                       | 2                            | 3            | 3   | 0.8   |
|                                | 259                  | 84                      | 28                           | 371          | 371 | 100.0 |

merge together into a single large group. A group of about 30 relatively well-served places (those in 1980 Cluster 3 may be included in this group) continues to stand out, somewhat enlarged in comparison with its 1950 counterpart.

For parishes located in the basic cluster in 1980 the percentage with a particular service was often lower than it had been for parishes identified as basic in 1950. For example, only 31.4 per cent of parishes in Cluster 1 in 1980 had a grocer or general store, compared with nearly 74 per cent of parishes in the 1950 cluster 1 and all 84 of those in 1950 cluster 2 (Tables 11.9 and 11.15). Thus a loss of certain services from these parishes is indicated. This is not true for all 22 services, however. Hairdressers, garages, banks, estate agents, doctors, clinics and adult education classes seem to be more numerous in these less well served parishes than previously. Comparison of Tables 11.9 and 11.15 also suggests that the best served places have enjoyed an increase in many services but that the percentage reporting certain public sector services including, for example, police stations, has fallen. (But note that falls in the number of parishes with public telephones and fire stations are partly due to the large number of missing values on these variables in the 1980 data set.)

Three major points may be made here. Firstly, the findings demonstrate the continued existence of a relatively stable hierarchy of rural settlements, although, using only service variables, it may no longer be possible to distinguish breaks in the hierarchy at the very lowest level. Secondly they reflect the broad changes reported in Chapter 8, including, for example the decline in the total number of shops and some growth in the number of professional services located in the rural parishes. Thirdly, as suggested in Chapter 8 and in the PDI analysis reported above, the parishes have indeed become more polarised as the 'middle level' places (those in Cluster 2 in 1950) have shed services while a few well served centres have kept some and gained others. Centralisation of services 'up the hierarchy' is evident.

While the hierarchy, then, remains in place, certain parishes have moved 'up' or 'down' it over the thirty year period considered here. Table 11.17 lists those better served places occurring in the 'top' cluster in both 1950 and 1980, those which were reported in this group in 1950 but not 1980 (ie those that have lost services) and those which joined the group in the 1980 analysis (service gainers).



TABLE 11.17 PARISHES IN THE 'BEST SERVED' CLUSTER (BASED ON 22 SERVICE VARIABLES) IN 1950 AND 1980

| District<br>(1974 boundaries) | Best served<br>1950                                                                                                                                                            | Best served<br>1980                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mendip                        | ---                                                                                                                                                                            | ---                                                                                                                          |
| Sedgemoor                     | Cheddar<br>Wedmore                                                                                                                                                             | + Axbridge<br>Cheddar<br>+ Nether Stowey<br>+ North Petherton<br>Wedmore                                                     |
| Taunton Deane                 | * Milverton<br>* North Curry<br>Wiveliscombe                                                                                                                                   | Wiveliscombe                                                                                                                 |
| West Somerset                 | Dulverton<br>Williton                                                                                                                                                          | Dulverton<br>+ Dunster<br>+ Porlock<br>Williton                                                                              |
| Yeovil                        | Bruton<br>Castle Cary<br>* Curry Rival<br>* Henstridge<br>Ilchester<br>Langport<br>Martock<br>Milbourne Port<br>Somerton<br>South Petherton<br>* Stoke sub Hamdon<br>Wincanton | Bruton<br>Castle Cary<br>Ilchester<br>Langport<br>Martock<br>Milbourne Port<br>Somerton<br>South Petherton<br>Wincanton      |
| Wansdyke                      | Paulton<br>Timsbury<br>* Whitchurch                                                                                                                                            | + Chew Magna<br>Paulton<br>+ Peasedown St. John<br>Timsbury                                                                  |
| Woodspring                    | Long Ashton<br>Nailsea<br>* Winford<br>Winscombe<br>Wrington<br>Yatton                                                                                                         | + Backwell<br>+ Blagdon<br>+ Congresbury<br>+ Easton in Gordano<br>Long Ashton<br>Nailsea<br>Winscombe<br>Wrington<br>Yatton |

Notes:

- \* Service losers/downward movers
- + Service gainers/upward movers

### **11.5.7 Links between movement in the hierarchy and settlement plans ?**

An examination of the designation of parishes in the 1964 Development Plan Review reveals that all the downward movers identified in Table 11.17 were designated as 1st Schedule Villages in 1964. It is of interest to note that all of these occurred in Cluster 2 (moderately well served) in the 1950 service cluster analysis and might therefore have been candidates for designation as Local Centres. Possibly the planners' failure to select them as Local Centres has contributed towards their subsequent service loss, although of course this finding could equally well be interpreted as reinforcing the planners' original decision that growth would be more likely to occur elsewhere. However, only one of these parishes (Milverton) displays a population downturn from gain during the 1950s, before the implementation of policies based on the 1964 planning document, to subsequent decline.

Those parishes moving up the hierarchy, in contrast, were variously designated as 1st Schedule Villages or Local Centres in 1964 and most show also either continuous population growth or a turnaround from decline to growth over the period, although Easton in Gordano and Chew Magna, close to Bristol, and Dunster in West Somerset display slight population downturn. As noted earlier, Axbridge, Nether Stowey and Porlock were all designated as Local Centres despite relatively low levels of service provision, so it is possible that their selection as key settlements may have influenced subsequent service gain. (Abbas & Templecombe, also in this group, shows a loss of services between 1950 and 1980, moving from 1950 service Cluster 2 to 1980 Cluster 1, suggesting that its selection as a key settlement did little for its growth prospects, despite an upturn in population during the 1960s.)

The designation of rural parishes as service centres in the Structure Plans for Avon and Somerset arguably came too late to influence the patterns of change identified using the data for 1950 and 1980 generated during the course of this research. Accordingly, detailed results of comparisons between the 1970 settlement planning designations and the service clusters produced using the 1950 and 1980 data are not presented here. However, it may be noted that, in Somerset, at least, the planners continued to place most emphasis on counts of shops in identifying service centres, which may account for some lack of correspondence between the 1980 cluster analysis results and the planning settlement hierarchy. Again, some parishes identified in the cluster analysis as relatively well served were not picked out as key settlements, but there seem fairly obvious reasons for this. For

example, Dunster is located adjacent to the town of Minehead, North Petherton close to Bridgwater, and Ilchester only 7 miles from Yeovil and easily accessible to Ilminster to the south west and Wincanton to the north east via the A303. Two parishes in Avon - Banwell and Churchill - were designated as Primary Rural Settlements for housing purposes, despite an apparent lack of services suggested by the 1980 data. Either the data are at fault or the designation of these places rested not on a review of services alone.

### 11.6 Service Characteristics of Turnaround Parishes

It remains, in this section, to try to describe the service characteristics of those parishes which have experienced population turnaround over the thirty year period considered here.

Table 11.18 summarises the characteristics of the 127 places displaying population turnaround, as described by the 1950 and 1980 service clusters. The results suggest that counterurbanisation in Somerset and south Avon has overwhelmingly occurred in places which at best could be described as 'basic' in terms of the range of services they offer. In addition, a particularly high proportion of parishes which experienced population turnaround in the 1970s is located in the most basic group, while only 1 such place (Porlock) was in the best served cluster in 1950, compared with 14.5 per cent of places displaying turnaround in the previous decade, suggesting that the more 'rural' the place (as measured by the limited set of variables available here) the later the shift. A note of caution should again be introduced here, however, since those parishes which have experienced steady population loss are also drawn mainly from the most basic clusters.

While some parishes in the study area seem to have lost services despite population turnaround, others enjoying counterurbanisation have experienced service growth rather than stagnation or decline, occasionally (as in the case of, for example, Stawley and Otterford in Sedgemoor District and Lovington and Stoke Trister in Yeovil) despite a complete lack of attention from the planning authorities.

The suggestion that in counterurbanisation parishes one might expect to find a lively social life despite lack of services is worth investigating. The comparison of the 1980 service clusters with a set produced using only the 12 social and recreational variables (not tabulated here) indicates that almost a quarter of the parishes with the most basic services in 1980 were also among the 'most sociable'.

TABLE 11.18 SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS OF PARISHES DISPLAYING POPULATION TURNAROUND

|      |           | Turnaround<br>1960s<br>(69) |      | Turnaround<br>1970s<br>(58) |      | All with<br>turnaround<br>(127) |      |
|------|-----------|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------------|------|
|      |           | No.                         | %    | No.                         | %    | No.                             | %    |
| 1950 | Cluster 1 | 42                          | 60.9 | 47                          | 81.0 | 89                              | 70.1 |
|      | Cluster 2 | 17                          | 24.6 | 10                          | 17.2 | 27                              | 21.3 |
|      | Cluster 3 | 10                          | 14.5 | 1                           | 1.7  | 11                              | 8.7  |
| 1980 | Cluster 1 | 61                          | 88.4 | 57                          | 98.3 | 118                             | 92.9 |
|      | Cluster 2 | 8                           | 11.6 | 1                           | 1.7  | 9                               | 7.1  |
|      | Cluster 3 | -                           | -    | -                           | -    | -                               | -    |

This is in contrast to the situation in 1950, described in section 11.5.4, above. Then only 10 per cent of parishes with the most basic service profiles were also located in the 'most sociable' group.

The use of all 34 variables for 1980 adds little to the picture already produced, except that greater variety among the parishes is suggested. Five clusters result (Table 11.19). The 179 parishes in Cluster 1 are mainly distinguished on the basis of the presence of basic facilities such as a post office and primary school but the absence of 'higher order' public, health and professional services. These parishes also tend to be well supplied with public houses and to support most types of social group. The parishes in Cluster 2 could well be classed with those in the first group. They are distinguished primarily by the presence of an estate agent. The 160 parishes in cluster 3, in contrast, lack most services and social organisations. Though most had a village hall, 46 per cent had no pub. Clusters 4 and 5 contain the 29 parishes which were best supplied with both services and social/recreational facilities and groups. The presence of certain services, rather than social groups, was crucial in determining membership of these last two clusters, but the 3 parishes in Cluster 5 were distinguished by having all the social groups listed.

Parishes experiencing population turnaround in the 1960s tended to be found in Clusters 1 or 3 and only 7 could be said to be among the most sociable and best served places. Parishes experiencing turnaround in the '70s were mainly of the type found in Cluster 3 - the most basic. There is little evidence here to suggest that counterurbanisation is associated with an upsurge in rural social life of the type measured by these variables. It is highly likely, of course, that social life in counterurbanisation parishes which, the literature suggests, experience an influx of relatively wealthy people from among the higher socio-economic groups, may be better measured in other ways. The acquisition of data on, for example, the number and size of dinner parties, would, however, be a daunting research task.

The question of whether turnaround parishes have special characteristics which distinguish them from other very rural places showing population loss is difficult to answer using only quantitative analysis of the type reported here. The use of more of the data provided by the 1980 survey, the preparation of descriptive accounts of the type used in Chapters 6 and 8, or even a return to the original questionnaires, might be useful starting points.

TABLE 11.19 CLUSTERING OF 371 PARISHES IN 1980 USING 34 SERVICE AND SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL VARIABLES

| Parishes with:        | Cluster 1<br>(179) |          |        | Cluster 2<br>(3) |          |        | Cluster 3<br>(160) |         |         | Cluster 4<br>(26) |       |       | Cluster 5<br>(3) |       |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------|--------|------------------|----------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|--|
|                       | %                  | IS       | %      | %                | IS       | %      | %                  | IS      | %       | IS                | %     | IS    | %                | IS    |  |
| Phone                 | 56.4               | 7.98     | 100.0  | 56.3             | 11.08    | 65.4   | 65.4               | 1.35    | 100.0   | 1.35              | 100.0 | 2.20  | 100.0            | 2.20  |  |
| Post office           | 97.2               | 45.68    | 100.0  | 46.3             | 73.80    | 100.0  | 100.0              | 8.45    | 100.0   | 8.45              | 100.0 | 0.98  | 100.0            | 0.98  |  |
| 0-18 shops            | 97.8               | -1.55(t) | -      | 99.4             | -2.48(t) | * 23.1 | 23.1               | 6.68(t) | * 73.1  | 6.68(t)           | *     | 11.10 | *                | 11.10 |  |
| 718 shops             | 2.2                | 95.0(t)  | 100.0  | -                | -0.32    | 73.1   | 73.1               | 2.43    | 33.3    | 2.43              | 33.3  | 2.43  | 33.3             | 2.43  |  |
| 1-8 travelling shops  | 95.0(t)            | 27.68    | 100.0  | 4.4              | 70.84    | 100.0  | 100.0              | 45.45   | -       | 45.45             | -     | 1.72  | -                | 1.72  |  |
| General store         | 55.3               | 4.35     | 100.0  | 3.1              | 30.87    | 92.3   | 92.3               | 79.57   | -       | 79.57             | -     | 0.80  | -                | 0.80  |  |
| Hairdresser           | 27.4               | 6.7      | -      | -                | 0.34     | -      | -                  | 227.84  | *       | 227.84            | *     | 0.34  | -                | 0.34  |  |
| Clothing/shoe shop    | 6.7                | 2.44     | -      | -                | 18.26    | 100.0  | 100.0              | 20.86   | 100.0   | 20.86             | 100.0 | 2.40  | 100.0            | 2.40  |  |
| Garage                | 79.9               | 43.79    | 100.0  | * 20.0           | 84.50    | 100.0  | 100.0              | 213.81  | * 100.0 | 213.81            | 100.0 | 43.38 | 100.0            | 43.38 |  |
| Bank                  | 6.1                | 6.73     | -      | 0.7              | 19.08    | -      | -                  | 145.87  | * 100.0 | 145.87            | 66.7  | 29.21 | 66.7             | 29.21 |  |
| Accountant            | 0.6                | 8.12     | -      | -                | 8.34     | -      | 53.8               | 177.75  | 53.8    | 177.75            | 66.7  | 82.62 | 66.7             | 82.62 |  |
| Solicitor             | 0.6                | 10.93    | -      | 0.7              | 10.07    | 0.7    | 69.2               | 166.91  | 69.2    | 166.91            | 66.7  | 62.58 | 66.7             | 62.58 |  |
| Estate agent          | 0.6                | 9.50     | * 66.7 | 0.6              | 26.47    | 0.6    | 73.1               | 54.83   | 73.1    | 54.83             | 66.7  | 83.80 | 66.7             | 83.80 |  |
| Veterinary surgeon    | 2.8                | 3.61     | -      | 0.7              | 0.21     | 0.7    | 26.9               | 104.65  | 26.9    | 104.65            | 66.7  | 5.26  | 66.7             | 5.26  |  |
| Police station        | 1.7                | 2.08     | 100.0  | 2.5              | 14.67    | 2.5    | 92.3               | 57.25   | 92.3    | 57.25             | 66.7  | 5.26  | 66.7             | 5.26  |  |
| Fire station          | 1.7                | 5.74     | -      | 0.6              | 2.23     | 0.6    | 30.8               | 104.65  | 30.8    | 104.65            | 66.7  | 5.26  | 66.7             | 5.26  |  |
| Bus station           | 0.6                | 5.74     | -      | 70.0             | 23.86    | 70.0   | 100.0              | 4.92    | 100.0   | 4.92              | 100.0 | 0.57  | 100.0            | 0.57  |  |
| School                | 93.9               | 12.82    | 100.0  | 0.57             | 0.57     | 0.57   | 100.0              | 23.98   | 100.0   | 23.98             | 100.0 | 2.77  | 100.0            | 2.77  |  |
| Adult education       | * 82.1             | 65.12    | 100.0  | 2.77             | 120.18   | 100.0  | 100.0              | 19.28   | 100.0   | 19.28             | 100.0 | 5.24  | 100.0            | 5.24  |  |
| Doctor                | 48.0               | 10.75    | 100.0  | 5.24             | 34.28    | 14.4   | 76.9               | 63.31   | 76.9    | 63.31             | 100.0 | 7.31  | 100.0            | 7.31  |  |
| Dentist               | 37.4               | 6.00     | 33.3   | 0.03             | 38.33    | 6.9    | 100.0              | 162.31  | 100.0   | 162.31            | 100.0 | 41.52 | 100.0            | 41.52 |  |
| Chemist               | 2.2                | 7.06     | -      | -                | 0.32     | -      | 69.2               | 235.28  | 69.2    | 235.28            | 66.7  | 14.50 | 66.7             | 14.50 |  |
| Child clinic          | 2.2                | 8.33     | -      | 18.40            | 14.52    | -      | 88.5               | 34.23   | 88.5    | 34.23             | 66.7  | 6.90  | 66.7             | 6.90  |  |
| Youth club            | 17.3               | 1.62     | 100.0  | 2.80             | 21.64    | 1.3    | 53.9               | 24.29   | 53.9    | 24.29             | 66.7  | 3.63  | 66.7             | 3.63  |  |
| Scouts                | 56.4               | 9.27     | -      | 2.80             | 26.62    | 25.0   | 92.3               | 24.10   | 92.3    | 24.10             | 100.0 | 4.23  | 100.0            | 4.23  |  |
| Royal British Legion  | 55.9               | 15.49    | 33.3   | 0.30             | 40.48    | 16.9   | 88.5               | 23.31   | 88.5    | 23.31             | 100.0 | 11.84 | 100.0            | 11.84 |  |
| Sports club           | 27.4               | 9.28     | 66.7   | 4.20             | 32.08    | 3.8    | 57.7               | 11.76   | 57.7    | 11.76             | 100.0 | 9.10  | 100.0            | 9.10  |  |
| Women's Institute     | 31.8               | 4.76     | 100.0  | 9.10             | 20.41    | 9.4    | 53.9               | 9.20    | 53.9    | 9.20              | 100.0 | 1.06  | 100.0            | 1.06  |  |
| Church group          | 93.9               | 37.12    | 100.0  | 1.06             | 63.18    | 46.3   | 100.0              | 13.86   | 100.0   | 13.86             | 100.0 | 13.86 | 100.0            | 13.86 |  |
| Political association | 84.9               | 30.66    | 33.3   | 1.57             | 54.36    | 37.5   | 53.8               | 23.35   | 53.8    | 23.35             | 100.0 | 30.20 | 100.0            | 30.20 |  |
| At least 1 pub        | 20.1               | 2.69     | 33.3   | 1.29             | 14.09    | 7.5    | 100.0              | 146.72  | 7.5     | 146.72            | 100.0 | 1.71  | 100.0            | 1.71  |  |
| Village hall          | * 0.6              | 48.78    | 100.0  | 5.18             | 83.25    | * 53.8 | 84.6               | 1.91    | 100.0   | 1.91              | 100.0 | 1.71  | 100.0            | 1.71  |  |
| School hall           | 82.7               | 9.30     | -      | 7.91             | 12.55    | 60.0   | 76.9               | 24.81   | 60.0    | 24.81             | 66.7  | 4.27  | 66.7             | 4.27  |  |
| Church hall           | 44.1               | 13.16    | 100.0  | 6.51             | 40.62    | 8.1    | 40.62              | 27.98   | 8.1     | 27.98             | 100.0 | 4.27  | 100.0            | 4.27  |  |
| Sportsfield           | 51.4               | 7.62     | 100.0  | 4.27             | 31.57    | 19.4   | 92.3               | 15.56   | 19.4    | 15.56             | 100.0 | 6.12  | 100.0            | 6.12  |  |
|                       | 42.5               | 7.43     | 100.0  | 6.12             | 26.54    | 13.8   | 69.2               |         | 13.8    |                   | 100.0 | 6.12  | 100.0            | 6.12  |  |

Notes:

\* = variable highly significant in determining cluster

IS = Interaction statistic chi square (or t value where indicated)

## 11.7 Some Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Work

The analysis reported in this chapter has demonstrated that links exist between the service profiles of the rural parishes, shifts in population in the three decades to 1981, and planning policies aimed at concentrating service provision and new housing in particular places designated for growth at various levels.

In so far as counterurbanisation may be identified in Somerset and south Avon, it seems to be associated with the 'most rural' parishes located in scenically attractive areas remote from the major cities of the region, in keeping with international trends.

While planning designation for growth may have encouraged population turnaround from loss to gain in the 1960s, more recently the turnaround has occurred in settlements at the very bottom of the hierarchy, perhaps in spite of rather than because of policies for rural settlement planning and the countryside operating locally. It is appropriate here to remember, however, that a major objective of Somerset's first Development Plan was to stem rural depopulation through the designation of key settlements (see Chapter 10). How far the observed changes may be attributed to the rather late success of this policy and how far to a fortuitous sharing in widespread rural revival is a matter for reflection. Since population growth in the study area seems to have been realised through increased immigration rather than reduced depopulation it is likely that the second of these two explanations is more appropriate. Whatever the explanation, the more detailed examination of population shifts reported in this chapter reinforces the finding, in section 9.3.1, below, that while there was a positive relationship between the population size of a place and subsequent growth at the start of the period under review, by the end of the period it was a case of the smaller the place the greater the growth.

It might be useful, in trying to establish 'explanations' for population turnaround, to build the variables which have been used individually here into a general linear model examining the combined effects of these and perhaps other features of the space economy on population trends.

Where services are concerned, there does seem to be evidence from both the PDI analysis and the clustering exercise linking continued service loss from small settlements not designated for growth to the application of settlement planning policies. In fact, though, settlements at all levels display both losses and gains,

particular services (often public sector) declining and others (largely private) increasing, presumably in response to much broader changes than those measured by the limited number of variables available for this analysis.

During the course of this analysis it has also been possible to compare the hierarchy of parishes produced by means of a statistical clustering algorithm with those produced in the 1960s by Bracey and by Somerset County Planning Department. Of course it cannot be claimed that the clustered hierarchy is somehow an improvement on the hierarchy identified using hand computations and common sense, except that it is based on a greater number of variables than used by either Bracey or the planners. Furthermore, the variables used and the purpose of the classification were not precisely the same in each case. Nevertheless, the pinpointing of some interesting anomalies when the different hierarchies are compared suggests that further investigation of characteristics of the anomalous parishes might be fruitful. Such an investigation might draw, in the first instance, on more of the information stored in the 1950 and 1980 data sets.

The settlement hierarchy itself has remained fairly stable over time. However, the changes reported between 1950 and 1980 in the configuration of the service clusters may suggest a 'loss' of hierarchy amongst the settlements with only basic services.

It would be possible to extend the quantitative analysis of the service and social/recreational data in a number of directions. For example, in the cluster analysis reported here all the variables have been given equal weight. This has kept the interpretation of the interaction statistics relatively straightforward, allowing the efficiency of the different variables as discriminators to be assessed. GENSTAT is flexible enough to allow weights to be assigned to the variables (for example, the presence of a grocer/general store may be more important to parish residents than the presence of an estate agent). How might this distort the matrix of similarities and hence the clusters produced ?

Secondly, although the use of matched data and the apparent stability of the settlement hierarchy have allowed comparisons to be drawn between the 1950 and 1980 clusters, it might be possible directly to assign the parishes as described by the 1980 data to the clusters generated by the 1950 data to measure more precisely how far the 1950 clusters still apply and which parishes have 'moved' from one to another over time. The design of such an analysis is extremely complex, however,



and the statistical validity of the results produced using categorical data would be difficult to determine.

Thirdly, it would be valuable to discover the geographical spread of parishes in particular clusters by mapping them. It might also be possible to go on to model the changes in the configuration of clusters to test certain hypotheses. For example, it may be that the opening of the M5 motorway has changed patterns of accessibility to retailing facilities and had adverse effects on village shops. Building in a new variable, distance from the M5, would allow this to be tested. Examination of the links between parishes' cluster memberships and distance from the major cities of the region might also be useful.

While further quantitative analysis may be valuable in examining changes in services and social life as measured by the variables prepared for the cluster analysis, the different task of exposing the detailed nature of counterurbanisation probably demands a more qualitative approach.

## 12. CONCLUSIONS

### 12.1 The Research Task in the Context of the Changing Urban System

This thesis has examined the nature of change in the rural spatial economy of an English county. In Chapter 2 it was argued that in the highly integrated advanced industrial economies, of which Britain is one, trends in rural settlement are best understood in relation to changes in the urban system as a whole, changes which reflect the operation of 'society's economic and political structure' (Moseley 1980 p.97). Chapter 2 went on to review the recent literature on urban systems change in a number of countries, focussing on the reversal of flows of population and employment observed during the 1970s when large cities began to show absolute losses of people and jobs while smaller towns, and, most recently, remote villages, began to experience growth, sometimes after decades of depopulation and decline. It was argued that the literature on counterurbanisation, as this shift has been called, which is drawn from a wide range of academic disciplines, has until recently been urban-biased, seeking explanations for the trends, and examining their consequences, in the cities of these highly urbanised nations. It was further argued that in Britain, especially, government policies, particularly those directed towards urban areas, have reinforced these trends.

Chapter 3 demonstrated the need for a shift in focus towards rural areas, in order to advance explanation of these patterns and to examine their consequences in the new areas of non metropolitan growth. Although a review of the literature reveals a widespread appreciation of the sociological effects of population change in areas of inward migration, particularly those relatively close to large cities, together with a well recognised concern for the effects of changes in rural services, there have been few attempts empirically to examine in detail the links between counterurbanisation and service provision. Such an examination ideally requires time series data on both population characteristics and services, so as to monitor changes over a lengthy period, data which are in practice not available. However, for the county of Somerset, as it was before the reorganisation of local government in 1974, a set of cross-sectional data is available, relating to the year 1950. It was the aim of this research to establish the 1950 data in a form suitable for contemporary computer analysis and to generate a later cross-section (for 1980), and thus to proceed to a longitudinal analysis of change.

## **12.2 Historical Precedents**

The second part of this thesis examined the starting point for this exercise: the work conducted by Dr H E Bracey in the rural parishes of Somerset between 1947 and 1950, the basis of his pioneering contribution to early empirical studies of central places.

As Chapter 4 demonstrated, Bracey was able to analyse only a relatively small proportion of the data he collected, presenting the findings in a summarised way. Chapter 5 described the transfer of Bracey's data to computer, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the material, while Chapter 6 (supplemented by Appendix 6 and Appendix 7) provided a detailed picture of services and social life in the rural parishes of Somerset in the immediate postwar years which fleshes out the skeleton of the settlement hierarchy identified by Bracey.

Chapter 4 also set Bracey's research activities in their academic and policy context. While his contribution to the discipline of geography as it evolved in the 1950s and '60s is well covered in the literature, his links with the policy makers are less well recognised; this part of the thesis establishes him as an early advocate of applied rural geography. The influence of Bracey and his academic contemporaries on rural planning policies set out in the Development Plans drawn up under the post-1947 planning system is emphasised. Bracey himself remained sceptical about the ability of planners to influence village life, stressing instead the much greater influence of society-wide changes.

## **12.3 The Follow-up Survey : Applied Rural Geography**

The third part of this thesis described the 1980 follow-up survey and the preliminary analysis of the data collected. Chapter 7 discussed the constraints on research design stemming from the need to replicate Bracey's work sufficiently closely to generate a consistent set of data for the thirty year period. The main theme of this chapter, however, was the development of an interactive approach to the empirical work. This stemmed from an acknowledgement that the nature of the project precluded any kind of sample survey along 'detached' statistical lines, but also, more positively, from a recognition that greater involvement in the processes under study, and particularly in the policy process, is a legitimate and desirable aim for rural geographers.

Bracey appreciated that his work was likely to have an important impact on local planning, but the appraisal of his work gives the impression that he did not involve himself closely with the planners, nor with the representatives of the communities he studied. Perhaps this stance contributed to the planners' selective and partial adoption of aspects of his work and of the work of his contemporaries in academic geography. It was hoped that the research reported in this thesis would demonstrate the value of a more interactive style of academic research in which the process of research might itself help to advance policy.

A major advantage of the establishment of personal links with the parish respondents which this approach entailed was a high response rate and the completion of the questionnaires in a great deal of detail. In addition, close working with both the county planning departments and the Community Councils resulted in the extension of the survey coverage to the remainder of rural Avon and helped to cement links which can only be of benefit to future researchers in this area. In fact the interactive approach proved mutually beneficial. Both the Community Councils and the planners gained comprehensive information about facilities in the rural parishes at a crucial stage in the structure planning process. Recognising the practical value of such information both counties have since gone on to resurvey the parishes, Avon using what is effectively the method designed by the present author. Moreover, it is apparent that political approval to resurvey the parishes has been in large measure based upon an appreciation of what could be achieved once the University's results had been made available. In both counties the data collected in 1980 and subsequently are being used to monitor change in service provision within the rural parishes, with the particular aim of linking such changes to policy implementation.

County planning departments in general still tend to suffer from the lack of detailed information about rural areas noted by Bracey almost 40 years ago. As Moss has commented, for example,

their information base is dominated largely by urban catchments, about which local authorities have considerably more information. What happens in rural areas as far as strategy planning is concerned, is frequently of secondary importance (1978 p.64).

It seems that in Avon and Somerset, at least, the research work reported here has gone some way towards rectifying this situation.

Chapter 8 presented an overview of services and social activities in the parishes in 1980, drawing contrasts and comparisons with the situation in 1950. It is interesting to note that comments made by the respondents in 1980 often referred to issues raised earlier by respondents to Bracey's investigations. For example, the lack of facilities for young people and for the elderly were of particular concern both in 1950 and thirty years on. The main finding to emerge from this 'before and after' study, however, was that although certain services have been lost from the rural parishes (and in particular primary schools, certain public facilities and food shops), in Somerset and Avon it is more accurate to speak of service change than of service 'loss' or 'decline'. In the case of certain services - health services, for example - a high percentage of the parishes had none to lose in any case. However, as in other rural areas, it is the case that some less populous places have indeed lost services while larger centres have retained them or made gains, so that some concentration of services 'up the hierarchy' is apparent.

#### **12.4 The Changing Local Context**

Having prepared and explored comparative sets of data on services and social life in the rural parishes for 1950 and 1980 it was important to establish more precisely the context within which service changes could be examined.

The detailed examination of postwar population changes in the study area (Chapter 9) demonstrated that many of the rural parishes under study have experienced a turnaround from population loss to gain, a key characteristic of counterurbanisation. While parishes close to the major urban areas experienced this swing during the 1960s, in the 1970s more remote places, such as parishes on Exmoor, experienced renewed growth. In addition, the statistical evidence presented showed that by the 1970s the *population growth of settlements* was no longer as positively associated with settlement size as it was in the 1950s. Instead, fast growth was occurring in parishes with small populations. The phenomenon of counterurbanisation, noted in several other advanced industrial nations, is evident in this part of the South West.

Chapter 10 described the establishment and development of the postwar planning system and its interpretation and impact in the study area, emphasising the process by which certain rural settlements were selected for expansion while 'the excesses of unrestrained development' (Somerset CC 1977a p.174) were discouraged elsewhere in order to safeguard agriculture, and later to protect the

countryside landscape. In identification of key settlements the planners drew on Bracey's work and on the ideas of his academic contemporaries, although, as Chapter 11 went on to explain, the extent to which they made direct use of Bracey's data is unclear. Whatever the case, it seems that Bracey's work has had a lasting impact upon rural settlement planning in the study area, and thus, it may be suggested, on the settlements themselves.

As Chapter 10 further demonstrated, in both Somerset and Avon the structure planning process provided opportunities for the local authorities and local communities to assess the extent of change in the postwar years. It brought home the fact of the growing importance of broad socio economic change, as rural communities come increasingly to be integrated into the national urban system, and of central government policy. These 'external' influences both provide the framework for and constrain local action.

Two particular conclusions which bear upon the counterurbanisation theme stand out. Firstly, the Secretary of State for the Environment's decision on Avon's rural settlement strategy as set out in the structure plan demonstrates the county's status as an area in which non metropolitan growth is to be allowed 'in the national interest'. Secondly, although the local planning authorities are aware that the rural areas of the two counties are now characterised more by population growth than by decline, the rural policies they continue to advocate are of a type originally devised to stem population losses.

A number of writers have now underlined 'the curious fact that key settlement policies have been considered appropriate for both expanding and declining rural areas ' (McNab 1984 p.7), though the stated aims of these continuing policies have changed from promoting growth in areas of population decline to channelling it to suitable locations in pressured rural areas.

## **12.5 The Dynamics of Change**

While Chapter 5 described the distribution of services and social organisations in 378 parishes in 1950 and Chapter 7 the corresponding pattern in 395 parishes in 1980, drawing attention to losses and gains in between and to some broad changes in the organisation of service provision, the development of a more analytical approach to the data, especially in attempting to measure and interpret changes over the 30 year period under review, required more selective use of the

information and the preparation of matched data sets for 1950 and 1980 which were of the same length (that is, the number of parishes was the same in each), referred to the same data units (each parish defined in 1980 referred to the same geographical area as it did in 1950) and contained variables specified in exactly similar ways. Chapter 11 described the use of these matched data sets in a systematic analysis of changes in the rural spatial economy, linking population and service shifts with local planning policies.

The analysis confirmed, for example, that the incidence of counterurbanisation in the study area appears to fit well with trends observed elsewhere. It was possible to establish that a statistical relationship exists between planning designation of a rural parish and population shifts there. Much more definite was the relationship between planning designation and later service changes, the lack of services being observed principally in places not designated for growth, although in view of the way in which the presence of services in settlements has been used to identify these places as suitable for future growth this is not entirely unexpected.

In fact services losses from smaller places do not seem to have been as dramatic in Somerset and south Avon as those experienced in, for example, Devon and Norfolk. It is worth asking what local factors may be operating to prevent further losses. The explanation may lie partly in the nature of counterurbanisation as experienced in the study area. For example, the influx of certain types of newcomers and their assumption of local leadership positions may be providing an internal force for change (see Ploch 1980). Confirmation of this emerging hypothesis will require detailed behavioural information (for example on patterns of service usage) of a kind not provided in any systematic way by the type of survey conducted in the present study.

It is possible, also, that local factors are operating on the supply side. In particular, the local authorities in both counties have recently displayed a greater awareness of rural problems and have begun to adopt a more proactive stance to rural development, as demonstrated, for example, in their growing acceptance of the need to support innovative methods of service provision and in their efforts to obtain Rural Development Area status for certain parts of each county. The research has also highlighted the importance of the Community Councils, particularly active in Somerset and Avon, which have helped to coordinate local opposition to service loss (for example to primary school closure) and to promote alternative service provision.

On the question of whether the settlement hierarchy is 'breaking down' as small settlements begin to function collectively (in the manner described by Hodge (1983) and Martin (1976) and described in Chapter 3) the analysis in Chapter 11 is inconclusive, not being designed to pinpoint changes of this type. However, a further look at some of the 1980 material - for example on other places visited for shopping - might throw some light on this. There is already evidence that settlements often function collectively where social organisations are concerned. It may be that clustering of parishes to provide basic services has been prevented by the continuing application of key settlement policies, and that in Avon, at least, latest developments surrounding the structure plan policies for rural settlement may allow clusters of parishes, if the potential for them indeed exists, to emerge.

The results of the multivariate analysis do, however, suggest that there may be parallels between trends in this part of south west England and observations made by Buursink (1975), working in the Netherlands, who suggested that 'geographical hierarchy...is only recognised at the scale of regional service centres' and 'below that, hierarchy is not apparent'.

It is important to recognise that while patterns have been identified here the processes associated with counterurbanisation are difficult to disentangle and the achievement of a better understanding of them demands research of a broader scope than has been possible within the confines of this thesis.

In taking the work reported in this thesis forward it will be important to refer to the recent work of Paul Cloke and Jo Little (1987a,b,c) who have attempted to go beyond the establishment of 'inferential links' between policies and other changes observed in particular rural localities and to enhance understanding of 'the impacts of decision-making on the lives of rural residents' (Cloke & Little 1987a p.55). For the moment their general approach seems to provide considerable support for the contention in this thesis that understanding of events in rural communities is enhanced through a consideration of policy issues. Further, their empirical results on population and service changes in 10 parishes in Gloucestershire bear out those reported for Somerset and south Avon. For example they also identify a decrease in public services and their replacement by private sector and voluntary schemes (Cloke & Little 1987a,c).



## 12.6 Implications for Urban Systems Concepts and for Policy

It remains, then, to comment on some of the implications of the changes currently underway in rural areas for urban system concepts and for policy. In Britain, as in the other advanced industrial nations, counterurbanisation continues amid growing uncertainties about the capacity of governments to control an ever more complex urban system. 'The limited capacity for institutional adaptation...was part of the population problem in non metropolitan America in the 1970s' (Brown & Wardwell 1980 p.3). Will it be part of the problem in areas of Britain experiencing counterurbanisation in the 1980s ?

The concern of most governments is not to reverse these major trends but to manage the consequences. West European governments seem more committed than most to the maintenance of cities. Certainly they are now more interventionist than the present regimes in either the USA or Britain, both of which have aimed to 'roll back the frontiers of the state' and to decrease public control of systems change to its barest minimum in the hope of promoting more general economic recovery. Meanwhile it frequently falls on local government and local agencies, with their diminishing financial resources and lack of financial support from the centre, to deal with the worst of both urban and rural problems.

In the period since the war local planning authorities have not been seen as particularly sensitive to the attributes and needs of rural communities. For example, despite the Scott Committee's emphasis on the need to support rural social life, planners have been criticised for their failure to take into account the social needs of rural residents (see for example Shaw and Stockford 1979). Some local authorities have tried to remedy this in structure plan policies for their rural areas but these moves have been blocked by Department of the Environment intervention. Bracey himself was concerned, in the late 1940s, that the maintenance of 'quality of life' in rural areas should be an important aim of policy. In the light of Clark's suggestion that it is time for 'a new Scott Report' to review 'the function and scope of rural planning' (1984 p.325), it is pertinent to ask to whom responsibilities like these fall in the 1980s.

Blunden & Curry conclude that in the future the health of Britain's rural areas will depend to a large extent on three factors:

the state of the national and urban economies; the policies of central government; and the amount of initiative shown by the rural communities themselves (Blunden & Curry 1985 p.200)

Rural areas have long received 'less than their share of public expenditure' (Blunden & Curry 1985 p.192) and current government policies which seek to reduce support for local authority activities, including service provision, can be expected to do little to assist rural areas in coping with the pressures of growth and with the continuing problems experienced by disadvantaged rural residents. In this situation the degree of initiative shown by voluntary organisations and community groups is assuming greater importance.

Turning again to links between counterurbanisation and policy, highlighted in Part I of this thesis, it is useful to compare policy interventions in urban areas with those in the 'lower limb' of the settlement hierarchy. It is evident that while the support of places with the best chances for growth seems a recent development at the national and urban scales, in the rural areas this has long been a feature of the planning scene. Secondly, it may be argued that national and urban policies have often had unintended consequences for rural areas in terms of support for counterurbanising forces. Local policies for rural settlements seem to have been more directive, though they too may have had unintended consequences for the places at the very base of the settlement hierarchy. While socio-economic change, encouraged by central government policies, is continuing to underwrite non-metropolitan growth, on the ground the local authorities fight to contain it and to deal with the consequences, endeavouring to protect the countryside and to support those rural residents not sharing in the new rural affluence.

One of Bracey's contemporaries, A.E. Smailes, wrote of 'the curse of the gnawing struggle between the urban and rural authorities' (Smailes 1967 p.147). We may speculate that in the 1980s this has been replaced by a no less acrimonious struggle between central and local government as counterurbanisation continues.

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