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Spaces, Places, Custom and Protest in Rural Somerset and Dorset, c. 1780-1867

Leonard John Baker

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis examines how material space, meaningful place and custom shaped the forms and functions of protest in rural Somerset and Dorset between 1780 and 1867. Through their everyday lives and interactions with the local environment, countryfolk struggled against not only landscape change but also political exclusivity, poor working conditions and cultural transformations. Through analysis of both major protests and everyday acts of resistance, this study reveals how rural landscapes gave tangible substance and structure to otherwise intangible traditions, identities, customs and political beliefs. It argues that during their acts of resistance, rural protestors sought to materially remake the landscape to align with their moral beliefs and customary relationships. For these men and women, the physicality of a contested space had just as much meaning as any symbolic performance. This thesis also illustrates the importance of placing major acts of protest within the context of local everyday lives, social relationships and legacies of resistance. Answering calls to examine resistance ‘holistically’, this thesis examines the role that local socio-economic conditions, ritual, custom and physical spaces had in shaping the repertoires of protest movements whilst also influencing how rural communities perceived resistance. Due to their focus on local spaces, customs and identities, rural communities in Somerset and Dorset have been characterised as venal, deferent or sporting limited political horizons. Conversely, this thesis reveals how popular protests and rituals frequently incorporated national and international concerns. Contesting local spaces and utilising customary performances did not prevent rural men and women from connecting to wider networks and mentalities. Rather, by seizing and remaking key political sites protestors could contest national political issues from their locality. During their protests, rural people attempted to physically and symbolically construct, or reconstruct, an ‘ideal’ world, to be enforced in their locality and the nation beyond.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the footnotes:

NA – The National Archives, London.

SHC – Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton.

DHC – Dorset History Centre, Dorchester.

BSC – University of Bristol Special Collections, Bristol.

Introduction

In November 1849, a special correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle* sent in an alarming report on the ‘physical condition of the labourer’ in Dorset and Somerset. Yet, it was not their material state that most concerned the London reporter. Instead, he was:

astonished at the extent to which I have found Socialist doctrines prevailing among the rural poor... its principles have made their way amongst them to a considerable extent – their progress being promoted, if it was not originated, by the daily contemplation of their own wretched lot... [they demand that the] land is treated not as a property, but as a trust.¹

These claims, although probably sensationalist, encapsulate the major themes of this thesis. Exploring protest in the rural villages and towns of Somerset and Dorset between 1780 and 1867 this study reveals the centrality of material space, meaningful place and custom in shaping the forms and functions of rural resistance. Through their everyday lives and interactions with the local environment, countryfolk struggled against not only landscape change but also political exclusivity, poor working conditions and cultural transformations. This thesis subsequently challenges previous depictions of the agricultural labourer as inherently ‘inward-facing’ or lagging ‘almost a generation or more behind their urban counterparts.’² By analysing both major protests and everyday acts of resistance, this study reveals how rural spaces were not perceived as stoic economic resources. Rather, these landscapes gave tangible substance and structure to otherwise intangible traditions, identities and political beliefs.³ As one of the first applications of the ‘spatial turn’ to English rural protest history, this thesis demonstrates how national calls for socio-political reform and the defence of local rights and identities were understood and made actionable through rural spaces, places and customary performances.

Due to the ‘spatial turn’ studies of protest in modern Britain have begun investigating how the repertoires and mentalities of resistance were shaped by the semiotics of space and the

¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 November 1849.

² J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 270. See also: A.J. Peacock, ‘Village Radicalism in East Anglia, 1800-1850’, in J.P.D. Dunbabin (ed.), *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), pp. 27-60; D. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 33-46.

³ N. Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time: Landscape History from a British Perspective’, *Landscape Research*, 40 (2015), pp. 925-38; N. Whyte, ‘Spatial History’ in S. Handley, R. McWilliam and L. Noakes (eds.), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 233-52. Unfortunately, this thesis does not have space to discuss the issues of landscape and national or regional identity, for this debate see: D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, 2nd Edn. (London: Reaktion, 2016); P. Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

identities associated with place.⁴ Urban and rural landscapes are no longer perceived as passive backgrounds to protest but as active and vital participants. Political radicals and enclosure rioters alike are now depicted as contesting dispossession and exclusion through the reclamation of spaces, their uses and their meanings.⁵ Unfortunately, this new interest in space and place has focused primarily on the industrial regions or Celtic fringes of Britain. Rural areas, such as Somerset and Dorset, have been left on the physical and figurative periphery of many studies. Therefore, this thesis is not merely an attempt to uncover the protest history of two overlooked counties. It also reveals how local customs, ritual performances and material landscapes were integral to countryside resistance. Expanding upon the arguments of early-modern historians such as Andy Wood and the examinations of contested conservation by Karl Jacoby, this study proposes that a distinct set of vernacular environmental and societal ethics underpinned rural protest. Through customary performances and acts of resistance, communities expressed their visions for how ecologies, society and politics should be, nationally and locally.⁶ Addressing gaps within current historiography this thesis highlights how material objects, environments and bodies were fundamental to this process. Whilst many of their actions were performative or symbolic, rural protestors did not envision their local landscapes as abstract ‘texts’.⁷ Rather, protestors frequently reshaped physical spaces in order

⁴ An introduction to the spatial turn with regards to rural protest history is given in the following introduction. For more overarching summaries see: B. Kümin and C. Osborne, ‘At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the “Spatial Turn”’, *History and Theory*, 52:3 (2013), pp. 305-18; B. Warf and A. Santa (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009); R. Kingston, ‘Mind over Matter? History and the Spatial Turn’, *Cultural and Social History*, 7:1 (2010), pp. 111-21; T.F. Gieryn, ‘A Space for Place in Sociology’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000), pp. 463-96; G. Schwerhoff, ‘Spaces, Places and the Historians: A Comment from a German Perspective’, *History and Theory*, 52:3 (2013), pp. 420-32; S. Gunn and J. Morris (eds.), *Identities in Space: Contested Territories in the Western City Since 1850* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2001); D. Featherstone and P. Griffin, ‘Spatial Relations, Histories from Below and the Makings of Agency: Reflections on *The Making of the English Working Class at 50*’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 40:3 (2015), pp. 375-393.

⁵ For the most significant recent research conducted in these areas see: K. Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); I. Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest in the Scottish Highlands After 1914: The Later Highland Land Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013); N. Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2009).

⁶ A. Wood, ‘The Place of Custom in Plebeian Political Culture: England, 1550-1800’, *Social History*, 22:1 (1997), pp. 46-60; A. Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); K. Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. pp. 1-29, 48-80; C. Griffin and I. Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict in Rural England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 82:1 (2016), pp. 24-49.

⁷ For criticisms of the ‘immateriality’ of the spatial turn see below, also: L. Jerram, ‘Space: A Useless Category for Historical Analysis’, *History and Theory*, 52:3 (2013) pp. 400-419; K. Navickas, “‘Why I am Tired of Turning’: A Theoretical Interlude”, *History Working Papers Project*, <http://www.historyworkingpapers.org/?page_id=225> [Accessed, 03/03/2019]; B. McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects: Material Readings of Enclosure Protest in Sixteenth-Century England’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 45:2 (2019), pp. 254-75.

to enact their social, political or environmental demands. It was not enough to ‘semantically’ perform previous customary activities or symbolically condemn those in power, these protests were also inscribed onto material landscapes.

By focusing on Somerset and Dorset, this thesis also illustrates the importance of placing major acts of protest within the contexts of everyday life, social relationships and local legacies of resistance. Seminal events, such as the Captain Swing Riots, the Reform Riots and the Tolpuddle Martyrs, have become disconnected from distinctive regional protest patterns and modes of repression. Answering calls to examine resistance ‘holistically’, this study uncovers how local socio-economic conditions, rituals and cultures shaped the repertoires of major protest movements, whilst also influencing how rural communities perceived resistance.⁸ Such factors have often been neglected during attempts to fit these significant events into national ‘modernising’ narratives. Rather than portraying groups such as the Martyrs as lone luminaries in ‘a sea of rural apathy’, this thesis contextualises their actions as products of local social, cultural and material landscapes.⁹ The struggles of Swing, Tolpuddle and Reform did not emerge from the ‘national’ ether fully formed. Instead, countrywide social and political concerns were debated, understood and contested through local cultures, social relationships, spaces and discourses.

Far from being backwards or isolated places, rural communities found themselves ‘reeling in the wake of every move and maneuverer of the centre of things.’¹⁰ Yet, the relationship between the ‘national’ and the ‘local’ was not one-way.¹¹ Due to their focus on local spaces, customs and identities, rural communities in Somerset and Dorset have been characterised as venal, deferent or sporting limited political horizons.¹² Conversely, this thesis reveals how popular

⁸ For these calls see: C. Griffin, ‘The Culture of Combination: Solidarities and Collective Action Before Tolpuddle’, *Historical Journal* 58:2 (2015), pp. 443-80; S. Poole, ‘Forty Years of Rural History from Below: Captain Swing and the Historians’, *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 1-20. See also: T. Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath in Dorset, 1830-8’, *History Workshop Journal*, 82:1 (2016), pp. 1-23; K. Navickas, ‘What Happened to Class? New Histories of Labour and Collective Action in Britain’, *Social History*, 36:2 (2011), pp. 192-204.

⁹ A. Charlesworth, ‘An Agenda for Historical Studies of Rural Protest in Britain, 1750-1850’, *Rural History*, 2:2 (1991), pp. 231-40; Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 39-42.

¹⁰ This comment is from a study of North American rural poverty: K. Stewart, ‘An Occupied Place’, in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1996), p. 137.

¹¹ C. Williams, ‘“One Damn Election After Another”: Politics and the Local Dimension’, *Family and Community History*, 5:2 (2002), pp. 111-23; J. Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. pp. 15-8.

¹² For this debate in more detail see Chapter 3, also: D.C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976); K.T. Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence in 19th-Century England and Ireland’, *English Historical Review*, 109:432 (1994), pp. 597-620; A. Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 180-207; D. Harvey, ‘Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place,

protests and rituals frequently incorporated national and international concerns. Contesting local spaces and utilising ‘traditional’ customary performances did not prevent rural men and women from connecting to wider networks and mentalities. Applying the models of geographer David Featherstone, this thesis argues that the performances of the customary calendar, electoral violence and rural unionism utilised local spaces, places and rituals to debate, assess and contest national socio-political issues.¹³ During their protests, rural people attempted to physically and symbolically construct or reconstruct an ‘ideal’ world, to be enforced in their locality and the nation beyond.

Rural Protest History: Patricians, Plebeians, Custom and the Spatial Turn

In the 1990s complaints regarding rural history’s inability to reveal ‘the life and motivations of rural people’ were prevalent.¹⁴ According to Roger Wells, a ‘myopic devotion’ to ‘exceptional moments’ of protest, such as Tolpuddle and Swing, had distorted perceptions of rural life, presenting countryfolk as largely subservient and drawing attention away from everyday resistance.¹⁵ Indeed, classic works, such as Hobsbawm and Rudé’s *Captain Swing*, had presented these occasions as singular outbursts by a downtrodden, desperate and inherently ‘backwards facing’ body of labour.¹⁶ Simultaneously, inevitable comparisons to energetic and innovative nineteenth-century ‘urban’ protest movements, such as Chartism, led some historians to concur with contemporary political activists who bitterly argued that the ‘ignorant’

Space and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams’, *Social Text*, 42 (1992), pp. 65-98. For criticisms see: K.D.M Snell, ‘Deferential Bitterness: The Social Outlook of the Rural Proletariat in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England and Wales’, in M.L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes In Europe Since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 158-84; D. Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference: The Rural Electorate, 1820-1860’, in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 27-49; F. O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference in “Unreformed” England: 1760-1832’, *Journal of Modern History*, 56:3 (1984), 391-429.

¹³ For a more detailed overview of Featherstone’s model see below, also: D. Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: Or Why the Geographies of Past Struggles Matter for Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation’, *Antipode*, 37:2 (2005), pp. 250-71; D. Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2008), esp. pp. 15-35.

¹⁴ M. Reed, ‘Class and Conflict in Rural England: Some Reflections on a Debate’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1990), pp. 1-2; Charlesworth, ‘An Agenda for Historical Studies of Rural Protest in Britain’, pp. 231-40.

¹⁵ R. Wells, ‘Social Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside: A Rejoinder’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 8 (1981), pp. 514-30. See also: J. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 8.

¹⁶ E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing*, (London: Verso, 2019 [1969]), esp. pp. 23-96, 116-33. For the impact and reappraisal of this influential study see also: A. Randall, ‘Captain Swing: A Retrospect’, *International Review of Social History*, 54:3 (2009), pp. 419-27; I. Robertson, “‘Two Steps Forward; Six Steps Back’: The Dissipated Legacy of Captain Swing”, *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 85-100; Poole, ‘Forty Years of Rural History from Below’, pp. 1-20.

rural poor ‘suffered and starved in silence’.¹⁷ Crippled by illiteracy and isolation the failure of rural workers to organise any ‘meaningful’ resistance towards socio-economic injustices was seemingly inevitable.¹⁸ Although repeatedly challenged this metrocentric historiographical legacy has remained remarkably persistent, with Tolpuddle and Swing maintaining their positions as singular ‘turning points’ in nineteenth-century rural protest history.¹⁹ These moments, which form only a small part of a local legacy of rural protest, have become mythologized and repackaged into self-contained and easily retold narratives.²⁰ One in which lone ‘enlightened’ figures attempted, but inevitably failed, to rouse a violent but otherwise uncaring rural labouring population. Such studies misrepresent rural protest due to the imposition of ahistorical national frameworks constructed from urban examples and assumptions that nineteenth-century protest movements followed a ‘progression model’, becoming increasingly organised and bureaucratised.²¹ These major protests thus need to be locally recontextualized, especially in relation to the minor acts of everyday resistance that they have regularly overshadowed. This thesis will illustrate how the lukewarm reception of Chartism in Dorset, the use of rural rituals during electoral violence and the deployment of social crime in contested spaces were not indicative of a backward set of protest repertoires or mentalities. Rather, rural protestors were utilising the tactics, identities and places best suited to achieving their local and national goals.

For historians studying minor acts of resistance in rural England, the work on the ‘weapons of the weak’ by anthropologist J.C. Scott has been immensely influential. In his studies of modern

¹⁷ These words were from an ex-Chartist in Yeovil: H. Solly, *“These Eighty Years”: Or, the Story of an Unfinished Life*, 2 Vols (London, 1893), I, p. 396. The categorisation of Chartism as ‘urban’ is also contested, see: R. Brown, *Chartism: Localities, Spaces and Places, The Midlands and the South* (London: Authoring History, 2015).

¹⁸ R.B. Pugh, ‘Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire’, in A. Briggs (ed.), *Chartism Studies*, (London: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 174-219; Peacock, ‘Village Radicalism in East Anglia, 1800-1850’, pp. 27-60; Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, pp. 265-75. This is especially true in the history of enclosure, see: G.E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact, 1750-1850* (London: Longman, 1997); M. Turner, ‘Economic Protest in Rural Society: Opposition to Parliamentary Enclosure in Buckinghamshire’, *Southern History*, 10 (1988), pp. 99-105; G. Rogers, ‘Custom and Common Right: Waste Land Enclosure and Social Change in West Lancashire’, *Agricultural History Review*, 41:2 (1992), pp. 137-54. For a corrective see: R. Wells, ‘Southern Chartism’, *Rural History*, 2:1 (1991), pp. 37-59.

¹⁹ T. Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors: Taboo, Violence and Punishment in Labour Disputes in Britain, 1760-1871* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 79-80; Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers’ pp. 1-23.

²⁰ This is true of Tolpuddle especially, see Chapter 4 and also: C. Griffiths, ‘From “Dorchester Labourers” to “Tolpuddle Martyrs”’: Celebrating Radicalism in the English Countryside’, in Q. Outram and K. Laybourn (eds.), *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 59-84. For an example of the continuance of modern mythmaking see: A. Gallop, *Six for the Tolpuddle Martyrs: The Epic Struggle for Justice and Freedom* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2017); R. Ball, *Tolpuddle and Swing: The Flea and the Elephant* (Bristol: Bristol Radical History Group, 2010).

²¹ C. Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758-1834* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). See also: M. Empson, *“Kill All the Gentlemen”: Class Struggle and Change in the English Countryside* (London: Bookmarks, 2018). For further criticisms see: Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 251-76.

peasant communities Scott argued that whilst overt rebellions were uncommon, subordinated people instead regularly enacted forms of resistance such as ‘foot-dragging, evasion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage’. These tactics allowed the dominated to resist whilst providing ‘avenues for retreat’.²² As Jeanette Neeson found during her study of enclosure, ‘grumbling’, ‘mischief’ and ‘non-compliance’ allowed rural communities to resist without endangering individual members. Similarly, Briony McDonagh has demonstrated how minor acts of trespass or vandalism regularly stalled landscape change in early-modern England.²³ Communities could subsequently resist without needing major demonstrations or organisations. In this sense, Eric Hobsbawm’s theory of social crime provides a useful companion to Scott’s formulation. A social crime was an act deemed illegal by authorities, such as trespass, poaching or wood-theft, which was nevertheless accepted by local communities and formed a conscious challenge to the prevailing social order.²⁴ In adopting these complimentary models, historians have challenged depictions of the rural poor as inherently deferent. Indeed, Keith Snell has provocatively claimed that even outward displays of submission were performances that ‘cannot be taken at more than its face value’. Beneath the ‘mask of deference’ lay ‘social bitterness which had to be censored’ as a survival mechanism.²⁵ Subsequently, this thesis will emphasise the importance of everyday resistance, demonstrating how minor acts provided a foundation for major protests.²⁶ Subtle inversions and challenges consistently sought to undermine attempts by elites to assert dominance or redefine local environments and society.

²² J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p. 29. See also: J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); J.C. Scott, ‘The Moral Economy as an Argument and as a Fight’, in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 187-208.

²³ J. Neeson, ‘The Opponents of Enclosure in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire’, *Past and Present*, 105 (1984), pp. 114-39; J. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); B. McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property: Negotiating Enclosure and Common Rights in Sixteenth-Century England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 76:1 (2013), pp. 32-56; B. McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground: Private Property and Public Protest in the Sixteenth-Century Yorkshire Wolds’, *Agricultural History Review*, 57:2 (2009), pp. 191-206. See also: A. Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Social History*, 39:3 (2006), pp. 803-26.

²⁴ For the origins of the theory see: E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969); E. Hobsbawm, ‘Distinctions Between Socio-Political and Other Forms of Crime’, *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 25 (1972), pp. 5-6. For recent interpretations see: M. Freeman, ‘Plebs or Predators? Deer-Stealing in Whichwood [sic] Forest, Oxfordshire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Social History*, 21:1 (1996), pp. 1-21; J. Rule, ‘Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, in J. Rules and R. Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England, 1740-1850* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), pp. 153-68; T. Shakesheff, ‘Wood and Crop Theft in Rural Herefordshire, 1800-60’, *Rural History*, 13:1 (2002), pp. 1-18.

²⁵ Snell, ‘Deferential Bitterness’, pp. 158-84.

²⁶ See Chapters 2 and 4 for a discussion of the artificial separation of ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ protest.

However, focusing on everyday resistance is not unproblematic. Most notably, there has been an unfortunate tendency to present those at the ‘bottom’ and ‘top’ of society as two eternally opposed and monolithic entities. Studies of rural history ‘from below’, conducted by historians such as Bob Bushaway, have enhanced our understanding of rural culture, work and protest by rescuing agricultural labourers from their previously deferent position. Yet, these works have often constructed binary oppositions between nebulously defined ‘ruling classes’ and the ‘popular crowd’. In particular, it has been argued that during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries English rural elites separated themselves almost entirely from the ‘customary society’, a contractual framework whereby the socially superior accepted certain responsibilities and cultural roles in return for popular loyalty.²⁷ Explanations for this separation centre around the implementation of a new orderly and industrialised society by capitalist elites, against the wishes of ‘traditional’ rural communities. Storch, Howkins and Merricks, for instance, saw conflict arising between ‘old style plebs’ who continued to perpetuate ‘the older forms’ and the ‘symbols of the new order’.²⁸ Craig Calhoun also described the ‘contest’ between rural traditions and ‘industrialising England’ as a dualistic ‘zero-sum game’.²⁹ These older models of social interaction are noticeably simplistic. If elite and popular culture are constantly defined in opposition to one another, conflict becomes inevitable. Social crime, for example, obscures the commercial enterprise of acts such as poaching whilst neglecting the complicated contests between customary rights and private ownership.³⁰ Rural customs and landscapes become romanticised into ‘survivals’ from an Arcadian past, now threatened by a conspiring capitalist elite ‘depriving the poor of what had always been theirs’.³¹

²⁷ B. Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England, 1700-1850* (London: Junction Books, 1982); R. Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community in Southern England, 1700-1850: The Ideology of Custom’, in B. Stapleton (ed.), *Conflict and Community in Southern England: Essays for the Social History of Rural and Urban Labour from Medieval to Modern Times* (New York: St Martins Press, 1992), pp. 110-35; A. Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun: The Changing Face of a Nineteenth-Century Rural Holiday’, in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), pp. 187-209. See also: P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* 3rd Edn. (Farnham: Routledge, 2009).

²⁸ R. Storch, ‘Persistence and Change in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture’, in R. Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 1-19; R. Storch, ‘Popular Festivity and Consumer Protest: Food Price Disturbances in the Southwest and Oxfordshire in 1867’, *Albion*, 14 (1982), pp. 209-34; A. Howkins and Merrick, ‘“Wee Be Black as Hell”: Ritual, Disguise and Rebellion’, *Rural History*, 4 (1993), pp. 41-53.

²⁹ C. Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 84-98.

³⁰ S. Hindle, ‘Custom, Festival and Protest in Early Modern England: The Little Budworth Wakes, St Peter’s Day, 1596’, *Rural History*, 6:2 (1995), pp. 155-78; C. Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700-1850* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 50-4.

³¹ Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, p. 133; T.E. Young, ‘Popular Attitudes Towards Rural Customs and Rights in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2008), pp. 4-6.

Such portrayals misrepresent the complex loyalties and concerns present in rural areas whilst also ignoring the malleable, contested and increasingly commercialised nature of nineteenth-century customary rights.³² Subsequently, this thesis questions the totalising trends present in rural protest history. For example, recent studies that stress how agricultural and industrial workers in South West England were united by a shared ‘culture of combination’ need to be qualified. Otherwise, there is a risk of eliminating local diversity and imposing an artificial unity of ideas and practices upon rural protestors and authorities.³³ In challenging previous depictions of a universally deferent rural labouring class it is crucial that historians avoid similarly unrepresentative models of rural life as a constant binary struggle.

In this regard, the work of E.P. Thompson on custom and ‘patrician-plebeian’ social relations will be utilised in this thesis to clarify issues surrounding rural social conflict. In his landmark examinations of eighteenth-century protest, Thompson argued that custom and ritual underpinned ‘plebeian culture’. The ‘local customs of the manor’ were ‘lex loci’, an interface between national law and local agrarian practice. Crucially, these customs not only set patrician against plebeian but also mediated these conflicts.³⁴ In order to maintain some form of social harmony a ‘norm of reciprocity’ developed between social stratum. In a manner similar to the ‘customary society’, rulers and crowds needed each other and performed theatre and counter-theatre through the adoption of customary rituals and practices. Certainly, this was not an equal contest, with the rural elite controlling the tools of patronage and repression. Yet unlike other models, for Thompson the basis of eighteenth-century social relations was negotiation not subordination, conflict not consensus and structural reciprocity instead of a simplistic ‘pyramid of power.’³⁵ Thompson traced the patrician-plebeian relationship from its early-modern origins until its supposed demise during the brutal suppression of food rioting in the early-nineteenth

³² C.P. Rodgers, E. Straughton, A. Winchester and M. Pieraccini, *Contested Common Land: Environmental Governance Past and Present* (London: Earthscan, 2011), pp. 19-31; B. McDonagh and S. Daniels, ‘Enclosure Stories: Narratives from Northamptonshire’, *Cultural Geographies*, 19:1 (2012), pp. 107-21. For these arguments see Chapters 1 and 2.

³³ See: Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80; R. Wells, ‘Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850’, in J. Rule (ed.), *British Trade Unionism: The Formative Years* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 98-142. These arguments are considered in Chapter 4.

³⁴ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991), esp. pp. 16-96, 97-184; E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975). See also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 32; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 85-96.

³⁵ E.P. Thompson, ‘Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture’, *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1974), pp. 382-40; E.P. Thompson, ‘Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class’, *Social History*, 3:2 (1978), pp. 133-65; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 16-96. The ‘norm of reciprocity’ is an extension of Thompson’s theory by Scott, see: J.C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 186-7; J.C. Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, *Politics and Society*, 7:3 (1977), pp. 270-81.

century, whereupon both patrician and plebe acknowledged that the reciprocal customary society had been extinguished.³⁶

However, the collapse of patrician-plebeian relations, alongside the diminishing importance of custom as an interface and instigator of social conflict, was neither universal nor total.³⁷ This thesis will demonstrate how nineteenth-century rural protestors regularly referred back to, and relied upon, the discourses and repertoires of the reciprocal patrician-plebeian model. It thus follows the arguments of Randall and Newman, amongst others, who have challenged claims that the Captain Swing Riots in 1830 signified the death rattle of beliefs in paternalism amongst authorities and protestors.³⁸ In rural Somerset and Dorset communities did not believe that a return to previous ‘harmonious’ social relationships was categorically impossible.³⁹ Instead, between 1780 and 1867 the desire to enforce and protect ‘ideal’ ecological and social systems were often represented through reshaping material landscapes. Remoulding an enclosure to physically resemble a former common or gaining access to a politically exclusive public house helped performatively demonstrate demands that local elites re-assume their customary duties and obligations.⁴⁰ Crucially, this study does not present rural customary society and political ideologies as inherently static or backward. As Chapters 4 and 5 argue, the demands for ‘reciprocity’ during agricultural unionism and the utilisation of the customary calendar for national political statements indicate the malleability and adaptability of these beliefs. Throughout this period appeals to ‘fairness’, ‘reciprocity’ and ‘duty’ provided a foundation for

³⁶ E.P Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 259-351.

³⁷ For studies that support the notion of a collapse see: R. Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside, 1700-1880’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1990), pp. 121-98; R. Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 209-71; C. Griffin, ‘Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing? On the Death Throes of a Protest Movement, December 1830-December 1833’, *International Review of Social History*, 54 (2009), pp. 459-97.

³⁸ A. Randall and E. Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists: Social Conflict in Rural Wiltshire, 1830-1850’, *Rural History*, 6:2 (1995), pp. 205-27. For other works that have signalled a resurgence of Thompson’s ideas see: K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); B. Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 11-2.

³⁹ For these arguments see: A. Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory in Early Modern England’, in S. Hindle, A. Shepard and J. Walter (eds.), *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 233-54.

⁴⁰ For the importance of these ‘patrician-plebeian’ relationships and notions of reciprocity during conflicts over landscape change and political exclusivity see Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. See also: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 196-216; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 121-176; J.R. Fisher, ‘The Limits of Deference: Agricultural Communities in a Mid-Nineteenth Century Election Campaign’, *Journal of British Studies*, 21:1 (1981), pp. 99-104.

rural protests rather than a restrictive framework. These notions allowed communities in Somerset and Dorset to address both internal complaints and national concerns.

This thesis does not propose an unquestioning extension of Thompson's patrician-plebeian model into the nineteenth century. Even Thompson warned that beyond 1760 the model became theoretically unstable, with the classifications of 'gentry' and 'labouring poor' becoming increasingly unwieldy due to socio-economic change.⁴¹ Moreover, the patrician-plebeian relationship is bipolar and naturally combative. Whilst Thompson emphasised the role of negotiation, the model still overlooks the 'middling sort' of rural society. This is especially problematic for studying the nineteenth century as during this period the countryside was increasingly commercialised with rural craftsmen and artisans becoming influential local figures.⁴² Certain historians have therefore proposed an alternative 'triangular model' of social relations, incorporating the shifting loyalties of middling groups.⁴³ Addressing these debates, this thesis reveals how the rural middling sort often changed their allegiance between 'crowd' and 'authorities' based upon local socio-economic circumstances and relationships. Throughout this thesis it is argued that whilst custom and protest rituals often symbolically performed an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship, there was no simplistic binary between rich and poor, landowner and labourer or custom and enclosure. In the 'theatre' of paternalism and resistance there were no set 'scripts' or 'roles'. Instead, this study utilises the term 'performance' to highlight the importance of improvisation. During rural protests or rituals people from across social stratum could easily adopt different 'roles' and often remoulded their performances, and allegiances, to suit their current aims.⁴⁴ As Thompson acknowledged, 'custom was a place in which many interests contested for advantage'.⁴⁵ This ensured that

⁴¹ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 16-17. See also: P. Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History*, 72:234 (1987), pp. 38-61. For similar controversy surrounding the term 'plebeian' see: G. Eley, 'Edward Thompson, Social History and Political Culture, the Making of a Working-Class Public, 1780-1850', in H. Kaye and K. McClelland, *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 12-49.

⁴² P. King, 'Edward Thompson's Contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies. The Patrician-Plebeian Model Re-examined', *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), pp. 215-28; D. Wahrman, 'National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Social History*, 17:1 (1992), pp. 43-72. For the importance of rural craftsmen in nineteenth century protest see: R. Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the Rural South', in J. Rule and R. Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England, 1740-1850* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), pp. 91-125; R. Wells, 'Rural Rebels in Southern England in the 1830s', in C. Emsley and J. Walvin (eds.), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians, 1760-1860: Essays Presented to Gwyn A. Williams* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 124-65.

⁴³ For example: D. Hays and N. Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); N. Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); King, 'Edward Thompson's Contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies', pp. 226-7.

⁴⁴ See: P. Burke, 'Performing History: The Importance of Occasions', *Rethinking History*, 9:1 (2005), pp. 35-52.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 175-9; C. Griffin, 'Enclosures from Below? The Politics of Squatting and Encroachment in the Post-Restoration New Forest', *Historical Research*, 91:252 (2018), pp. 274-95.

crowd action was not solely directed towards ‘immoral’ social superiors, but also against ‘misbehaving’ members of the lower orders. As Chapters 2 and 5 demonstrate, rural communities frequently enacted rough justice upon those who had acted ‘unfairly’ or ‘incorrectly’ in relation to local societal or ecological values, no matter their social standing.

It is in an effort to understand these customs and values that the ‘spatial turn’ has been introduced to rural protest history. Once considered a neutral ‘stage’, space is now envisioned as being socially and culturally constructed.⁴⁶ In particular, historians have utilised the theories of philosophers Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau and postmodern geographer Edward Soja. Lefebvre and Soja both devised tripartite models that categorised space firstly as material or ‘concrete’, secondly as symbolic or representative and thirdly as a ‘lived experience’ combining the material and representative.⁴⁷ These categories transform spaces from static backgrounds into meaningful and contested sites that were ‘interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined.’⁴⁸ In their studies of nineteenth-century radical London, for instance, James Epstein and Christina Parolin both emphasised how specific spaces, such as coffee houses, ordered and regulated subjective identities, social relations and discourses; shaping what activities could take place or who could speak.⁴⁹ Yet it would be incorrect to assume that people passively accepted the meanings and restrictions associated with certain spaces. In his influential essay ‘Walking in the City’ de Certeau illustrated how everyday actions instilled spaces with meaning, history, identities and expectations. Often these new meanings ran counter to the designers’ original intentions, with simple acts such as walking transforming an individual’s perceptions of, and relationships with, a town square or park.⁵⁰ In essence, spaces are forged by performance whilst simultaneously disciplining and shaping the performances possible within them. Subsequently, protestors gained agency through the

⁴⁶ S. Gunn, ‘The Spatial Turn: Changing Histories of Space and Place’, in S. Gunn and J. Morris (eds.), *Identities in Space: Contested Territories in the Western City Since 1850* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2001) pp. 1-14.

⁴⁷ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (London: Wiley, 1992), E. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). For summaries see also: D. Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); C. Pooley, ‘Patterns on the Ground: Urban Form, Residential Structure and the Social Construction of Space’, in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: 1840-1950*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), III, pp. 429-66; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 233-52.

⁴⁸ Gieryn, ‘A Space for Place’, pp. 463-96. See also: M. Crang, ‘Spaces in Theory, Spaces in History and Spatial Historiographies’, in B. Kümin, *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2009), pp. 249-66.

⁴⁹ J. Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 106-25; C. Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c.1845* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2010), pp. 4-15.

⁵⁰ M. de Certeau, ‘Walking in the City’, in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 91-110.

inversion or transformation of spaces. For Soja resistance created ‘thirdspace’, or a ‘counter-space’ that challenges dominant practices and meanings. Similarly, William Sewell argued that ‘resource-poor insurgents’ exercise agency by ‘changing the meaning and strategic uses of their environments.’⁵¹ This thesis will expand upon these studies by revealing how rural protestors consistently sought to alter or subvert the meanings attached to significant spaces, such as an enclosed field or politically exclusive inn. Moreover, during their performances, protestors attempted to construct, or reconstruct, spaces where previous social barriers and inequalities were dissolved. By destroying or altering material objects, such as enclosure walls or fences, riotous crowds could challenge the ‘visual representations’ of private property and ‘immoral’ environmental practices.⁵² Spaces were not containers within which protest took place, they were objects of struggle in their own right.⁵³

Unfortunately, the ‘spatial turn’ has often confused the meanings of space and place. Influenced by Lefebvre and Soja’s emphasis on space as ‘representation’ historians have primarily focused on semiotics and symbolism, leading to a worrying immateriality. Spaces have been treated as an abstract ‘text’, in a manner similar to the linguistic and cultural turns.⁵⁴ In his critique of the ‘spatial turn’, Leif Jerram warned that ‘most scholarly writing does not attend at all to the environments in which humans exist’. Material spaces produce effects ‘beyond their symbolic functions’, shaping human actions by their physicality alongside semiotic attachments.⁵⁵ Nicholas Blomley, for example, demonstrated that the hedges that accompanied enclosure were not opposed because they were simply ‘visual representations’ of private ownership. Rioters materially obliterated these objects because they impeded their everyday lives, working

⁵¹ W. Sewell, ‘Space in Contentious Politics’ in R. Aminzade, J. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E. Perry, W. Sewell, S. Tarrow and C. Tilly, *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 51-88; N. Blomley, ‘Law, Property and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93 (2003), pp. 121-41. Soja’s ‘thirdspace’ is itself founded upon Foucault’s theory of heterotopia or a ‘world-turned-upside-down’, see: Soja, *Thirdspace*, pp. 57-61; M. Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), p. 24.

⁵² J. Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandy Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); T. Barnes and J. Duncan (eds.), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992). For the ‘reading’ of space see also: J. Wood, ‘Reading Spaces and Reading Violence in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 133-44.

⁵³ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, esp. 14-6, 130-53; F. Tonkiss, *Space, The City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 58-60.

⁵⁴ P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 2nd Edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 71. For summaries of the linguistic and cultural turns, which focused on the semiotics of ritual and language see: J. Vernon, ‘Who’s Afraid of the ‘Linguistic Turn’? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents’, *Social History*, 19:1 (1984), pp. 81-97; Epstein, *In Practice*, pp. 15-55; P. Burke, ‘Overture. The New History: Its Past and Its Future’, in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd Edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 1-24.

⁵⁵ Jerram, ‘Space’, pp. 400-419. See also: K. Navickas, ‘A Return to Materialism? Putting Social History Back into Place’, in S. Handley, R. McWilliam and L. Noakes (eds.), *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 87-108.

practices and freedom of movement.⁵⁶ This is not to deny that buildings or fields were, in part, culturally constructed and so symbolic resistance was important. Rather, these considerations highlight how spaces shaped resistance by their materiality, such as woodlands providing incendiaries with escape routes or the layout of a marketplace influencing the targets of electoral violence. This study will avoid these terminological entanglements by utilising the definitions of space and place developed by cultural geographers and ethnologists. These scholars propose that place, rather than space, was instilled with meaning, historical associations, performances and codes. Simply put, space is material whilst place is meaningful.⁵⁷ Place was forged through a combination of material space and personal, or communal, experiences and legacies.⁵⁸ Subsequently, the forms, functions and perceptions of a mass trespass or electoral riot were shaped by both the materiality of rural landscapes and the identities, memories and customary practices associated with place. To fully comprehend rural resistance space and place must be examined together.

Place was therefore fundamental in the operation of rural custom and the formation of communal identities. The impact of landscape change is now understood to have extended beyond rural household economies, also affecting local social relationships and culture. For Olwig and Massey acts such as enclosure directly assaulted people's 'senses of place' or belonging. Feelings of dispossession, dislocation and alienation thus followed environmental transformations, even when an individual had not been forcibly moved.⁵⁹ Rather than dismissing emotion as irrational, historians have begun to reincorporate these elements into protest history. Anger towards landscape change was empowered by emotive fears that those in authority had 'betrayed' rural communities and undermined their identities. As Nicola Whyte argues, otherwise unperceivable customs, traditions and ritual practices were made

⁵⁶ N. Blomley, 'Making Private Property: Enclosure, Common Right and the Work of Hedges', *Rural History*, 18 (2007), pp. 1-22. See also: McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects' pp. 254-75. For the semiotic and symbolic focus see: D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of the Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵⁷ E. Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena', in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1996), pp. 13-52; T. Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 12; M. Kahn, 'Your Place and Mine: Sharing Emotional Landscapes in Wamira, Papua New Guinea', in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1996), pp. 167-96; K. Olwig, 'Recovering the Substantive Meaning of the Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86:4 (1996), pp. 630-53.

⁵⁸ Jerram, 'Space', pp. 404-6; K. Basso, 'Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a West Apache Landscape', in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1996), pp. 53-90.

⁵⁹ K. Olwig, 'Representation and Alienation in the Political Land-scape', *Cultural Geographies*, 12:1 (2005), pp. 19-40; D. Massey, *Landscape/Space/Politics: An Essay* (2008), <<https://thefutureoflandscape.wordpress.com/landscapespacepolitics-an-essay/>>, [Accessed 13/03/2019]. For the local attachment experienced in the nineteenth century see: Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 2-24.

tangible and actionable through the ‘physical traces of the past’. The right to pasture cattle on a common or gather wood in a certain copse relied upon both legal statutes and the material landscape being preserved in a state that facilitated and enabled these customary practices. Through ritual performances and continued re-enactment, these rights and privileges were demonstrated and passed to the next generation, empowered by a sense of continuity.⁶⁰ To use the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, these places and customs helped forge the ‘habitus’ of a community. The habitus was a malleable framework of rules and cultural repertoires within which all strove to compete.⁶¹ Transformations, such as enclosure, subsequently threatened this framework, challenging people’s understandings of their community and social relationships.⁶² Consequently, this thesis contributes to the rehabilitation of custom and emotion into protest studies by illustrating how places across Somerset and Dorset were underpinned by emotive memories and performances. Conflict over the imposition of ‘private property’ centred around human and animal bodies performatively challenging, or enforcing, new material impositions and socio-economic changes.⁶³ Utilising customary gestures and practices protestors and landowners sought to materially and symbolically alter or protect spaces and places.⁶⁴ During both environmental and political struggles, rural communities expressed disapproval and defended local identities by materially altering the landscape. Both the destruction of enclosure fences and the burning of a ‘corrupt’ electoral agent’s home demonstrated local beliefs that the victim had acted against established moralities and values. Between 1780 and 1867, protestors and authorities continually shaped and reshaped spaces and places, seeking to secure influence and assert their ethics or beliefs.

⁶⁰ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, esp. pp. 58-89; Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 925-38; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 240-5. See also: I. Robertson and T. Hall, ‘Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict in the Scottish Highlands’, in N. Moore and Y. Whelan, *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 19-36.

⁶¹ P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 173; Pooley, ‘Patterns on the Ground’, pp. 435-5; Burke, ‘Overture’, p. 17; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 174-6. For the conflation of custom and habitus see Chapter 2, also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 13-14.

⁶² P. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. R. Nice (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 159; Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 179; G. Steinmetz, ‘Bourdieu, Historicity, and Historical Sociology’, *Cultural Sociology*, 5:45 (2011), p. 52; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 48-9.

⁶³ McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-56; C. Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property: Custom, Law and the Geographies of “Ownership” in 18th- and 19th-Century England’, *Environment and Planning A*, 42:3 (2010), pp. 747-62.

⁶⁴ Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, pp. 27-39; C. Griffin and A. Evans, ‘On Historical Geographies of Embodied Practice and Performance’, *Historical Geography*, 36 (2008), pp. 5-16; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-53; K. Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields and Popular Protest in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1800-1848’, *Northern History*, 46:1 (2009), pp. 93-111. For conflicts surrounding enclosure see Chapters 1 and 2, also: L. Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass as Protest: Space and Continuity in Rural Somerset and Dorset’, *History Workshop Journal*, 87:1 (2019), pp. 72-93; B. McDonagh and C. Griffin, ‘Occupy! Historical Geographies of Property, Protest and the Commons, 1500-1850’, *Historical Geography*, 56 (2016), pp. 1-10; McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’ pp. 254-75.

Customary laws and rituals have subsequently taken on greater importance in studies of rural protest. This thesis posits that place was defined, demarcated and contested through custom throughout the nineteenth century. It thus applies and extends Andy Wood's analysis of the interlocking relationships between memory, identity, custom and 'plebeian political culture' in early-modern England. Drawing upon Thompson's model of customary culture as 'lex loci', Wood contends that customary practices and laws defined the distinctiveness of places and established the particular culture and identity of communities. Seemingly minor differences, such as who could gather furze on the common, aided in the construction of communal belonging. Both 'plebeians' and 'patricians' sourced their identities from their status as 'the inheritors of tradition, rights and duties'.⁶⁵ Customs and places thus not only conveyed privileges but also responsibilities, reinforcing the 'norm of reciprocity'. Crucially, Wood rejects utopian depictions of common rights, stressing how customary laws were founded upon exclusion. The right and capacity to dwell were contingent and political, circumscribing and constraining activity through hierarchies of gender, status and lineage. Place and custom were thus inseparable, shaping both environmental practices and how individuals envisioned their society, cultural obligations and social relationships. Moreover, during protest custom provided people with a channel of agency, allowing subaltern groups to 'carve out a space beyond domination' generating 'counter-hegemonies' from their everyday lived experience. For Wood, custom made the past 'usable' to protestors, allowing rights to be retained and empowering the claims of poorer groups through references to communal memories and lauded origins in 'time immemorial'. Yet these customary practices were not neutral bearers of memory, instead they provided a distinct and adaptable 'way of remembering' that provided organizational focus and legal validation. Subsequently, customs did not simplistically oppose environmental or political modernisation, rather they mediated these changes through local structures and understandings.⁶⁶ As Griffin discovered, customs and places continued to shape rural resistance throughout the nineteenth century, providing communal memories and a 'language of rights' that were utilised during negotiations regarding landscape change.⁶⁷ Custom, subsequently, shaped the repertoires and mentalities of rural protest. This thesis argues

⁶⁵ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 2-24; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p. 97

⁶⁶ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20; Wood, 'The Place of Custom in Plebeian Political Culture', pp. 46-60; A. Wood, "'Some banglyng about the customes": Popular Memory and Experience of Defeat in a Sussex Village, 1549-1640', *Rural History*, 25:1 (2014), pp. 1-14; A. Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 101-9. See also: Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 240-5.

⁶⁷ Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 747-62; C. Griffin, 'Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict: Understanding the Spaces of "Tree Maiming" in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33:1 (2008), pp. 91-108; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 272-6

that contested places were often defined by competing claims to customary practices and rights, with the use of custom being far from inherently plebeian. It was this adaptability, alongside its intimate connection to place, that ensured custom's continued utilisation during nineteenth-century protests.

The influence of de Certeau and Lefebvre has also ensured that the 'spatial turn' has remained primarily focused on urban Britain, thus overlooking the important connections between rural working lives and the landscape. Examinations of nineteenth-century space have mostly concerned themselves with boulevards, metropolitan parks and the middle-class 'remaking' of industrial cities.⁶⁸ As Katrina Navickas warned, generalisations from London have risked eliminating regional differences in the relationships between communities, spaces and societal change.⁶⁹ This is especially true for rural England, where local landscapes were also sources of food, fuel and employment. The men and women of Somerset and Dorset did not 'ramble' through nearby fields and woodlands for pleasure like the gentry of London. This was an environment to be worked; spaces where communities and individuals had sought economic benefit for centuries. Anthropologist Tim Ingold has proposed the term 'taskscape' to highlight how landscapes were made 'pregnant with meaning' through generations of working lives.⁷⁰ Spaces, places and customs were not constructed from abstract vantage points, instead they were made through the everyday actions of both human and non-human actors. Iain Robertson has shown how crofters resisted landscape change during the Scottish Land War by recalling and re-enacting previous farming practices from a collective memory of work.⁷¹ These customary practices inscribed local claims onto the material landscape, with the illegally ploughed fields a visible indication that their previous working heritage had not been

⁶⁸ See for example: S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 36-83; A. Taylor, 'Commons-Stealers, Land-Grabbers and Jerry Builders: Space, Popular Radicalism and the Politics of Public Access in London, 1848-1880', *International Review of Social History*, 40 (1995), pp. 383-407; R. Allen 'The Battle for the Common: Politics and Populism in mid-Victorian Kentish London', *Social History*, 22 (1997), pp. 61-77; J. Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone Press, 2002); S. Poole, "'Till Our Liberties Be Secure": Popular Sovereignty and Public Space in Bristol, 1780-1850', *Urban History*, 26 (1999), pp. 40-54; M. Reed, 'The Transformation of Urban Space, 1700-1840', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: 1540-1840* 3 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), II, pp. 615-40.

⁶⁹ Navickas, "'Why I am Tired of Turning": A Theoretical Interlude'; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 154-76.

⁷⁰ T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 189-99. See also: K. Navickas, 'Luddism, Incendiarism, and the Defence of Rural "Task-scapes" in 1812', *Northern History*, pp. 59-73.

⁷¹ Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, esp. pp. 67-159, 196-216; I. Robertson and M. MacLeod Rivett, 'Of Necessary Work: The Longue Durée of the Moral Ecology of the Hebridean Gàidhealtachd' in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 159-87. See also: Whyte, 'Senses of Place, Senses of Time', pp. 925-38.

abandoned. As the following chapters illustrate, emotional, material and cultural attachments to these taskscape provided both repertoires and motivations to those resisting landscape change and degrading working conditions.

Subsequently, the theoretical framework adopted by this study combines Lefebvre and Soja's 'spatial triads' with an appreciation of the material and customary relationships that underpinned rural everyday life. In particular, this study utilises concepts such as 'taskscape', 'spatial practice' and 'thirdspace' to examine how protestors and authorities created, defended, subverted and remade local landscapes to achieve their socio-political goals.⁷² Drawing upon these models, this research presents both physical space and meaningful place as products of lived experience and daily practice. The cultural meanings, economic practices and emotional attachments that connected countryfolk to their surrounding environments were not forged through singular symbolic moments. Rather, everyday activities and physical encounters sustained 'senses of belonging' whilst also providing the foundation for acts of resistance.⁷³ Crucially, this thesis does not seek to use the 'spatial turn' to supersede or replace previous models of rural unrest. There exists a great deal of beneficial overlap between the work of historians such as Wood, Snell, Thompson or Hobsbawm and recently proposed models of space and place. In this thesis, for instance, spaces and places are presented as integral to the construction and renegotiation of 'harmonious' patrician-plebeian relationships, political ideologies and customary celebrations. A partial return to historical materialism, subsequently, allows this study to highlight how 'national' social conflicts were shaped by particular places, regional structural forces and local performances.⁷⁴ As such, humans, non-humans and material objects are envisioned not as mere 'semantic representations' of wider struggles, but as corporeal, active and transformative beings.⁷⁵ By uniting theories from anthropography, ethnology, cultural geography and history this thesis will avoid imposing a restrictive

⁷² Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, esp. p. 39; Soja, *Thirdspace*; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99. See also: D. Brady, 'Space, Place and Agency in the Roe 8 Highway Protest, Western Australia', *Contention*, 7:1 (2019), pp. 29-48; D. Endres and S. Senda-Cook, 'Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97:3 (2011), pp. 257-82; H. Leitner, E. Sheppard and K. Sziarto, 'The Spatialities of Contentious Politics', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33:2 (2008), pp. 157-72.

⁷³ For these theories deployed elsewhere see: W. Lines, *Patriots: Defending Australia's Natural Heritage* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006); T. Ingold, 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived through the Feet', *Journal of Material Culture*, 9:3 (2004), pp. 315-40.

⁷⁴ D. Massey, 'Entanglements of Power: Reflections', in J. Sharp, P. Routledge, C. Philo and R. Paddison (eds.), *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 279-86; Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 233-52; Navickas, 'A Return to Materialism?', pp. 87-97; Featherstone and Griffin, 'Spatial Relations', pp. 375-393.

⁷⁵ For the transformative power of material objects, humans and non-humans see Chapter 1. Also: McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects', pp. 265-6; C. Griffin, 'More-than-human Histories and the Failure of Grand State Schemes: Sylviculture in the New Forest, England', *Cultural Geographies*, 17:4 (2010), pp. 451-72.

conceptual framework onto the sources. Instead, the following case studies utilise the ‘spatial turn’ as a theoretical toolbox; supplementing, diversifying and complicating established models of eighteenth and nineteenth-century rural protest.

Seeking to rectify historiographical gaps and integrate new ecological theories, historians have begun to consider the role of ‘vernacular environmental ethics’ during rural resistance. In particular, Karl Jacoby’s model of ‘moral ecology’ has proven to be influential. Inspired by Thompson’s moral economy, which detailed how food rioters used customary rituals to reassert a communally determined ‘fair price’, Jacoby proposed that environmental resistance was founded upon a vision of nature ‘from the bottom up.’⁷⁶ In his study of American conservation, Jacoby argued that resistance revealed two competing sets of values. Opposing the state and its conservation efforts there existed a series of vernacular ‘beliefs, practices and traditions’ that governed how rural people interacted with the environment. Acts such as trespass and poaching were not the work of ignorant despoilers but attempts to maintain and protect customary practices. Moreover, minor acts of resistance, such as fence breaking or tree maiming, were forms of communal justice against landowners and officials who had redefined landscapes and reconceptualised previously accepted practices as illegal, thereby threatening local livelihoods.⁷⁷ Through their protests, rural communities sought to assert the ‘correct’ image of the landscape. A moral ecology, therefore, ties together shared understandings of how ecology, economy and society should be. It encapsulates a series of norms and values that detailed how communities were supposed to interact with the ‘natural world’ and what ‘rules’ surrounded resource utilisation.⁷⁸ As with taskcapes, the moral ecology was constructed over generations of lived experiences; becoming rooted in notions of sustainability, reciprocity and fairness. Drastic changes to the material environment, such as enclosure, naturally impinged upon these vernacular environmental ethics, challenging what was believed to be the correct relationship between masters, men and the landscape.

⁷⁶ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*; K. Jacoby, ‘Class and Environmental History: Lessons from “the War in the Adirondacks”’, *Environmental History*, 2:3 (1997), pp. 324-42; Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd’, pp. 259-351.

⁷⁷ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 48-80; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict’ pp. 24-49. See also: D. Featherstone, ‘Skills for Heterogeneous Associations: The Whiteboys, Collective Experimentation, and Subaltern Political Ecologies’, *Environment and Planning D*, 25 (2007), pp. 284-306.

⁷⁸ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 1-29; C. Griffin and I. Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon: Moral Ecologies and Conflict on the Nineteenth-Century Severn’ in D. Worthington (ed.), *The New Coastal History: Cultural and Environmental Perspectives from Scotland and Beyond* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 101-3; C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance’, in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 1-34.

The moral ecology allows for a nuanced understanding of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century environmental conflicts. It integrates factors such as emotion and socio-cultural expectations with traditional considerations of economic struggle. Activities such as wood-taking or trespass are reconceptualised to embody an element of social dissent, their continuation demonstrative of local resistance against the redefinition of landscapes and customary practices. In this sense, the moral ecology draws Hobsbawm's theory of social crime into dialogue with Thompson's moral economy.⁷⁹ Rather than artificially separate major and minor acts of resistance, the moral ecology model recognises that the protection and proliferation of vernacular environmental ethics took a number of forms. As with the moral economy, the moral ecology encapsulates both a mindset and a wide collection of protest repertoires, ranging from lone trespassers to mass riot. In this regard, Jacoby's work is theoretically indebted to subaltern studies, particularly Guha's examination of ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalaya. These 'peasant movements' were able to forge a well-articulated indigenous ideology independent of outside guidance, whilst also successful stalling ecological change.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, aside from Robertson and Griffin's recent work, historians have been reluctant to utilise Jacoby's model to assess environmental conflicts before 1860.⁸¹ This is a considerable oversight as discourses surrounding early-nineteenth century landscape change bear striking resemblance to those deployed in later conflicts. As Howkins noted, during the promotion of parliamentary enclosure customary practices were increasingly redefined as either woefully ignorant or maliciously 'despoiling'.⁸² Such language, alongside a similar struggle against 'crimes' such as trespass or poaching, suggest that this period may benefit from the moral ecology model.⁸³ In Chapters 1 and 2, Jacoby's theory will be tested respectively against short-term protests, such as enclosure riots, and long-term social conflicts, such as recurring acts of wood-theft. Through these examinations this

⁷⁹ To a certain extent, this 'dialogue' had tentatively commenced in research covering topics such as smuggling or anonymous threatening letters, see: D. Hay, P. Linebaugh, J. Rule, E.P. Thompson and C. Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1975).

⁸⁰ R. Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* 2nd Edn. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁸¹ C. Griffin, 'Squatting as Moral Ecology: Encroachment and "Abuse" in the New Forest, England', in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 235-63; Robertson, "'Two Steps Forward; Six Steps Back'", pp. 85-100. For the most recent scholarship see: C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁸² A. Howkins, 'The Use and Abuse of the English Commons, 1845-1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 78 (2014), pp. 107-32. See also: E. Staughton, *Common Grazing in Northern English Uplands: Land, Society, Governance c. 1800-1965* (Lampeter: Edwin Meller Press, 2003), p. 245.

⁸³ Baker, 'Human and Animal Trespass', pp. 72-93; J. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare: Arson, Animal Maiming and Poaching in East Anglia, 1815-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

study investigates how nineteenth-century rural communities expressed their visions for how their local economy, society and ecology should be.

However, Jacoby's model is not without its flaws, especially when applied to nineteenth-century England. As with Scott and Thompson's work, the moral ecology risks romanticising the actions of the rural poor whilst eliminating any diversity of opinion. Indeed, Jacoby's original study contains an inherent duality between the values of elite conservationists and America's 'frontier' population.⁸⁴ This binary opposition has been a trend in subaltern environmental studies, with Raymond Cames warning that the dominated have been regularly portrayed as an 'ecologically noble savage'.⁸⁵ The polarised nature of Jacoby's study obscures the role of the middling sort. The crucial impact of shopkeepers, artisans and the burgeoning tourist industry on American conservation being largely overshadowed by the clashes between state officials, poachers and squatters.⁸⁶ These naturally combative and binary elements of the moral ecology must be questioned with regard to nineteenth-century Somerset and Dorset. As Briony McDonagh demonstrated, within the complex web of claims that surrounded landscape change; allegiances, interests and moralities were fluid and flexible. Simple dichotomies between landlord and community or between private property and moral ecology are inherently misrepresentative. The poor did not hold a monopoly over morality, with the meanings and values attached to specific material objects and places being regularly contested and challenged.⁸⁷ This thesis contributes to these debates by revealing how the rural poor, middling sort and elite all sought to promote and protect their own moral ecologies. Agricultural labourers were not unchanging traditionalists, nor were landowners simply uncaring opportunists. The multiple moral ecologies of Somerset and Dorset were flexible and malleable, being adopted and reshaped by multiple social groups. Conflict arose from competing environmental ethics that divided communities and cut across social stratum.

By reclaiming spaces and struggling against exclusion rural groups also attempted to gain political recognition. In her study of urban popular politics, Navickas revealed how radical movements critiqued and challenged national political exclusivity by attempting to control key

⁸⁴ E. MacDonald, 'Review of *Crimes Against Nature*', *Landscape Journal*, 22:2 (2003), pp. 157-9; T. Catton, 'Review of *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* by Karl Jacoby', *Environmental History* 7:1 (2002), pp. 141-3.

⁸⁵ R. Cames, 'The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 36 (2007), pp. 177-90. See also: A. Shah, 'The Dark Side of Indigeneity?: Indigenous People, Rights and Development in India', *History Compass*, 5:6 (2007), pp. 1806-32.

⁸⁶ For a study that stresses the importance of the middle class see: B. Johnson, 'Conservation, Subsistence, and Class at the Birth of the Superior National Forest', *Environmental History*, 4:1 (1999), pp. 80-99.

⁸⁷ McDonagh, 'Subverting the Ground', pp. 200-6; McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects', pp. 254-75.

public spaces and subverting spatial codes. The nineteenth century witnessed attempts by both local and national governments to prevent unrest through the exercising of tight control over public spaces. Subsequently, by seizing and utilising these sites political groups materially and symbolically inserted themselves into ongoing political discourses.⁸⁸ The importance of political gestures, performances and rituals needs to be reassessed in relation to the demands of both space and place.⁸⁹ Such work has not been forthcoming for rural England, with historians of political culture side-lining conflicts as ‘the pressure upon public spaces was considerably less acute in these less urbanised constituencies.’⁹⁰ This thesis does not assert that struggles over political space in the villages and rural towns of Somerset and Dorset were identical to those of Manchester or London. Rather, it highlights unique rural political cultures, customs and senses of place, overlooked by political historians focused on urban political culture. Understanding the social and spatial conditions that surrounded political ideas is crucial to uncovering their significance. In particular, rural electoral contests have often been depicted as backward, violent and ‘inward-facing’. The popular crowd’s focus on local spaces, issues and identities causing some to consider them merely deferent or apolitical thugs.⁹¹ In challenging these views, this study will extend the work of O’Gorman and Fisher who have illustrated how the rural electorate challenged the ‘politics of deference.’⁹² The popular, largely unenfranchised, crowd also inverted and undermined rituals and spaces that were designed to enforce deference, such as treating or the hustings. Moreover, Chapter 3 will utilise Clifford Geertz’s models of political ritual and argue that electoral violence and concerns surrounding local spaces and places were not incompatible with national political mentalities. Through ritualistic performances and crowd action, electoral rioters in Somerset and Dorset transformed local spaces and places into ‘exemplary’ sites or a ‘material embodiment of the political order’ they desired.⁹³ Acts of violence, such as the burning of a political agent’s home, were not

⁸⁸ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of the Space and Place*, pp. 8-9, 23-105, 154-76. See also: Poole, “‘Till our Liberties be Secure’”, pp. 40-54; M. Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); L. Forster, ‘The Paris Commune in London and the Spatial History of Ideas’, *Historical Journal*, Advanced Access (2019), pp. 1-24.

⁸⁹ For the importance of symbols and rituals in political contests see: P. Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 2nd Edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), pp. 78-80; F. O’Gorman, ‘Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics in England (c. 1700-1830)’, *Memoria y Civilización*, 3 (2000), pp. 171-86.

⁹⁰ J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 213-4

⁹¹ Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, 597-620; J. Wasserman and E. Jaggard, ‘Electoral Violence in Mid Nineteenth-Century England and Wales’, *Historical Research*, 80 (2007), 124-55. For the West Country see: K. Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Dorset’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Reading, 1984), pp. 52-75, 208-25; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 180-207.

⁹² O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference’, pp. 391-429; Fisher, ‘The Limits of Deference’ pp. 90-105.

⁹³ C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) pp. 122-32; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 86. For the intersection of local and national during

merely displays of incoherent rage. Instead, through ‘local’ rituals and violence unenfranchised crowds symbolically and materially demonstrated how national political institutions should be.

During union activity, political demonstrations and customary celebrations, rural communities intertwined local, national and international influences. Arguments that protestors were ‘fragmented by their considerable attachment to place’ have been increasingly challenged.⁹⁴ In his study of port strikes and Wilkesite agitation in 1768, David Featherstone argued that, whilst the strikes were ‘place-located events’, the identities and ideologies generated during resistance were not bounded. Subaltern groups utilised their economic, social and cultural networks to communicate and agitate across the nation.⁹⁵ Although port workers had greater access to cross-national networks than agricultural labourers, these examples suggest that shared identities and national outlooks were not antithetical to attachments to place. The Tolpuddle Martyrs, for example, benefitted from pan-regional ‘webs of work and organization’.⁹⁶ Whilst acknowledging local differences, historians have stressed the importance of examining the ‘interrelationships’ between the national and the local. Jon Lawrence has warned that ‘unhelpful dichotomies’ exist in studies of both the ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ and that examinations of political culture need to be aware of how national and local identities ‘feed into and help shape’ one another. Similarly, Massey understood places as being necessarily ‘constructed out of articulations of social locations... which are not only internal to the locale but which link them to elsewhere.’⁹⁷ This thesis argues that the Tolpuddle Martyrs and political protestors utilised spaces and places to connect with national issues and identities. Calls for parliamentary or workplace reform were made understandable and actionable through inherently local rituals and performances. It is thus crucial to recognise the multiple levels of influence operating during resistance.

Whether it was through the moral ecology, an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship or the seizing of political spaces, protestors in Somerset and Dorset sought to both perform and

electoral unrest see also: T.G. Otte and P. Readman, ‘Introduction’ in T.G. Otte and P. Readman (eds.), *By-Elections in British Politics, 1832-1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 7-10.

⁹⁴ Snell, ‘Deferential Bitterness’, pp. 158-84; Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers’, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁵ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 73-4, 91-7. See also: Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 18-19.

⁹⁶ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

⁹⁷ J. Lawrence, ‘Political History’, in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London: Hodder Education, 2003), pp. 195-9; J. Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 61-3; D. Massey, ‘Places and their Pasts’, *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (1995), p. 183. For concerns regarding the ‘pan-regional’ analysis of Tolpuddle see Chapter 4.

impose an 'ideal' vision of society. Through rituals, customary activities and altering material landscapes acts of resistance provided a 'model for reality' which clarified this 'ideal state'.⁹⁸ Assaults on electoral agents and the smashing of enclosure fences utilised similar discourses of corruption, immorality, betrayal and foreign influence.⁹⁹ Throughout this thesis, it will be shown how rural protests were not simplistic rejections of socio-economic change. Instead, these rural communities were seeking to protect previously accepted norms, values and ethics from being irreparably damaged. New models such as the moral ecology will be adopted and tested in this thesis to demonstrate how rural protestors envisioned and championed an opposing set of environmental and societal ethics that challenged landscape change and political exclusion. Moreover, this study will address current issues regarding the 'immateriality' of the 'spatial turn', stressing the importance of material objects, landscapes and bodies to these acts of resistance. Place will also be rehabilitated, with the role of custom and a sense of belonging positioned at the centre of rural communal identities and resistance towards landscape change. It was through their daily interactions with the environment that rural people came to understand and conceptualise their social relationships. As such, there is room to incorporate theories such as taskscape with Thompson's patrician-plebeian model. However, this thesis will challenge the binary oppositions that have often plagued rural protest history. Environmental ethics and political beliefs were not subject to a polarised duality. This thesis consequently contributes to wider considerations of the role of spaces, places, customs and culture during protest. Through these conduits an 'ideal' world was not only imagined but materially constructed, addressing both local and national concerns.

Sources, Scope and Structure

This thesis examines the contiguous pastoral counties of Somerset and Dorset during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period of renowned economic, political, cultural and environmental transformation.¹⁰⁰ As such, the years 1780 and 1867 bookend this study

⁹⁸ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 112. See also: R. Darnton, 'The Symbolic Element in History', *Journal of Modern History*, 58 (1986), pp. 218-34.

⁹⁹ For the use of ritual during political demonstrations see Chapter 3, also: F. O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780-1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), pp. 79-115; N. Rogers, 'Crowds and Political Festival in Georgian England', in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 233-64; R. Poole, 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England', *Past and Present*, 192 (2006), pp. 109-53.

¹⁰⁰ For economic and environmental changes, political changes and cultural changes between 1780 and 1867 see the overviews in Chapters 1, 3 and 5 respectively. For general summaries of the changing conditions in rural England during this period see: G.E. Mingay, *The Transformation of Britain, 1830-1939* (London: Paladin, 1987);

chronologically and thematically. In both of these counties, the 1780s marked the resurgence of widespread landscape change. During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, a shift in mentalities amongst many local and national elites led to formerly accepted ecological practices being declared economically wasteful and morally corruptive. In turn, the proliferation of acts such as enclosure increasingly challenged the material arrangement and environmental ethics of rural communities.¹⁰¹ Simultaneously, during this period a series of political struggles threatened to fundamentally alter the structures and customary relationships that underpinned everyday life. In particular, demands for parliamentary reform or improved working conditions became intertwined with fears that local elites had abandoned their customary obligations. The passing of the Second Reform Bill in 1867, therefore, heralded the arrival of a new era for these conflicts. With the electoral franchise being substantially widened in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; the relationships between rural communities, political representatives and national institutions were slowly but substantially changed.¹⁰² Consequently, whilst this thesis rejects narratives of singular or spectacular ‘turning points’ in rural history, this timeframe encompasses the study’s major environmental, political and social themes. Between 1780 and 1867 demands for a ‘harmonious’ and ‘reciprocal’ patrician-plebeian relationship were fervently championed during ecological, electoral and cultural conflicts. Throughout this investigation, assumptions that the early-nineteenth century witnessed a nationwide ‘shattering’ of customary social relationships and mentalities will be repeatedly challenged.¹⁰³ By examining a formative period for rural protest, these investigations thus reveal how continuity, rather than change, defined political, social and environmental resistance in Somerset and Dorset.

A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (London: Harper Collins, 1992); Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 65-81.

¹⁰¹ Howkins, ‘The Use and Abuse of the English Commons’, pp. 107-32; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict’ pp. 24-49; P. Warde, *The Invention of Sustainability: Nature and Destiny, c. 1500-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), esp. pp. 129-41, 255-63.

¹⁰² M. Chase, ‘The Movement for Parliamentary Reform in Provincial Britain During the 1860s’, *Parliamentary History*, 36:1 (2017), pp. 14-30; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 41-70; E. Biagini and A. Reid, ‘Currents of Radicalism, 1850-1914’, in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1-20; M. Taylor, ‘The Old Radicalism and the New: David Urquhart and the Politics of Opposition, 1832-1867’, in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 23-43; M. Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), esp. pp. 242-66, 287-310.

¹⁰³ These points are made in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. For studies favouring the ‘collapse’ narrative see, for example: Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 209-71; Wells, ‘Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History’, pp. 98-142; Griffin, ‘Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?’, pp. 459-97; Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers’ pp. 1-23.

Focusing on two conjoined counties allows this thesis to consult a wide array of sources whilst remaining attentive to wider socio-economic patterns and changes through comparisons with other regions.¹⁰⁴ In particular, Griffin and Wells' focus on the 'agrarian capitalism' of the South East and Navickas' studies of industrial Manchester provide fertile grounds for comparison.¹⁰⁵ Crucially, this study has elected to omit the cities of Bath and Bristol, as protest in these urban areas has already been fruitfully explored by other historians.¹⁰⁶ A glance through the following chapters and sub-headings will also reveal that this thesis is primarily comprised of focused case-studies of communities and resistance. Whilst remaining empathetic to wider changes it is crucial that examinations of protest do not rely upon the master narratives of a catch-all 'rural England'. Instead, this study will build upon Reay's conception of multiple and divergent 'rural Englands' and examine protest as it occurred within local contexts, thereby uncovering the experiences and mentalities rural people drew from their social relationships or everyday interactions with material landscapes.¹⁰⁷ As David Sabean noted, 'the local is interesting precisely because it offers a locus for observing relations'.¹⁰⁸ It was within their local communities that rural people forged their identities, performed social relationships and asserted political agency. Without focused studies we risk losing nuance, falling back onto misrepresentative and generalising models of binary opposition and unquestioning deference. Conversely, utilising a microhistorical approach does not inherently result in a rejection of national concerns, rather this methodology is adopted to unveil how rural communities reacted to both local upheaval and national change.¹⁰⁹ By reconstructing these protests in their local

¹⁰⁴ For the benefits of using 'the county' for historical analysis see: Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness', pp. 121-6.

¹⁰⁵ C. Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012); Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', pp. 209-71; R. Wells, 'Historical Trajectories: English Social Welfare Systems, Rural Riots, Popular Politics, Agrarian Trade Unions, and Allotment Provisions, 1793-1896', *Southern History*, 25 (2003), pp. 85-245; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*; Navickas, 'Moors, Fields and Popular Protest', pp. 93-111; Navickas, 'Luddism, Incendiarism, and the Defence of Rural "Task-scapes"', pp. 59-73.

¹⁰⁶ For example, see: S. Poole and N. Rogers, *Bristol from Below: Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017); S. Poole, 'Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1791-1805' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Bristol, 1993); Poole, "'Till our Liberties be Secure'", pp. 40-54; J. Caple, *The Bristol Riots of 1831 and Social Reform in Britain* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1990); R.S. Neale, *Bath, A Social History, 1680-1850, or A Valley of Pleasure, yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London: Routledge, 1981); D. McNulty, 'Class and Politics in Bath, 1832-1848', *Southern History*, 8 (1986), pp. 112-29.

¹⁰⁷ B. Reay, *Rural Englands: Labouring Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ D. Sabean, *Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁹ For further analysis of the microhistorical approach see: Reay, *Microhistories*; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, pp. 41-60; M. Gray, 'Microhistory as Universal History', *Central European History*, 34:3 (2001), pp. 419-31; G. Levi, 'On Microhistory', in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd Edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 97-119.

context, this study explores how internal customary mechanisms, social relationships and environmental ethics shaped resistance.

The study of Somerset and Dorset provides an important counterpoint to the geographical imbalance present in rural protest history, which has been criticised for a ‘little southeast England’ mentality.¹¹⁰ Although rural Somerset and Dorset has not been overlooked completely, studies of protest in these counties have focused on unique communities or singular instances.¹¹¹ Historians tracing the long-term development of rural protest have generally remained focused upon the South East. Yet pastoral Somerset and Dorset was not identical to agrarian East Anglia or Kent. For example, farms in these counties rarely exceeded 100 acres, compared to the 200 to 500 acres common in the South East. In the Vales of Dorset this disparity was even more pronounced, with farms averaging five acres.¹¹² Such differences compromise ‘national’ narratives of nineteenth-century rural social, cultural and political change. Proclamations regarding the collapse of paternalism, the ‘proletarianization’ of agricultural labourers or the ‘assault’ on rural popular culture often generalise from counties that were wildly different from Somerset and Dorset. None of Shaw-Taylor’s twenty-nine villages that demonstrated the ‘overestimation’ of enclosure’s impact, for instance, were based in the South West where common land remained prevalent.¹¹³ The following chapters each illustrate the importance of local economic and cultural contexts. Rather than portray these

¹¹⁰ L. Bellamy, K.D.M. Snell and T. Williamson, ‘Rural History: The Prospect Before Us’, *Rural History*, 1 (1990), p. 2.

¹¹¹ For unique communities see: R. Thompson, ‘A Breed Apart? Class and Community in a Somerset Coal-Mining Parish, c. 1750-1850’, *Rural History*, 16 (2005), pp. 137-59; R. Thompson, ‘Economic and Social Change in a Somerset Village, 1700-1851: A Microhistory’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2004); S. Shave, ‘The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing the Lives of Individuals “On the Parish” in Rural Dorset, 1800-1832’, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), pp. 67-97. For singular instances of protest see: S. Poole, “‘A Lasting and Salutory Warning’: Incendiarism, Rural Order and England’s Last Scene of Crime Execution’, *Rural History*, 19 (2008), pp. 163-77; T. Scriven, ‘Activism and the Everyday: The Practices of Radical Working-Class Politics, 1830-1842 (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2013) esp. pp. 31-134. For a more general examination of socio-economic conditions see also: C. Beardmore, ‘Landowner, Tenant and Agent on the Marquis of Anglesey’s Dorset and Somerset Estate, 1814-1844’, *Rural History*, 26:2 (2015), pp. 181-99.

¹¹² See Chapter 2, also: Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 18-22; J.F. Lawrence, ‘Somerset 1800-1830: An Inquiry into Social and Economic Conditions’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 1941), pp. 45-56; J. Beckett, ‘The Pattern of Landownership in England and Wales, 1660-1880’, *Economic History Review*, 37:1 (1984), pp. 1-22; J. Beckett, ‘The Debate over Farm Sizes in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England’, *Agricultural History*, 57:3 (1983), pp. 308-25.

¹¹³ L. Shaw-Taylor, ‘Parliamentary Enclosure and the Emergence of an English Agricultural Proletariat’, *Journal of Economic History*, 61:3 (2001), pp. 640-62. See also: R. Wells, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1990), pp. 29-53; J. Humphries, ‘Enclosures, Common Rights and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal of Economic History*, 50:1 (1990), pp. 17-42. For criticisms of rural history’s trend towards generalisation see: A. Randall and E. Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 157-67; P. Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations: The “Moral Economy” of the English Crowd in the Nineteenth Century’, *Social History*, 32 (2007), pp. 272-91.

towns and villages as utterly unique, this study qualifies many of the general pronouncements regarding late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century rural life and resistance. It was through local environments, customs and relationships that national social changes, protest movements and political debates were understood and made actionable.

Even a focused study cannot provide an encyclopaedic account of rural resistance in Somerset and Dorset. Certain protests, such as food rioting and animal maiming, have therefore been omitted from this study.¹¹⁴ Instead, the following chapters utilise the county archives to uncover how rural communities envisioned their moral ecologies, social relationships and political beliefs. In particular, both Somerset and Dorset were well-served by an energetic regional press with the Tory *Dorset County Chronicle*, Whig *Sherborne Mercury* and radically inclined *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal* providing extensive coverage during the nineteenth century. The availability of conflicting reports is especially useful in the study of electoral violence, where political allegiances critically influenced how popular protest was recorded and represented. Unfortunately, due to reader interest and the positioning of reporters, the contents of these newspapers often gravitated towards major towns.¹¹⁵ Despite this bias, their regional coverage provides a useful avenue to study the patterns and shared repertoires of major countywide outbreaks of protest, such as Swing and the Reform Riots. As such, by utilising these newspapers in Chapters 3 and 4, this thesis will reveal how locally focused protests connected to regional, or national, networks. Similarly, this thesis also makes repeated use of Somerset and Dorset's court papers, most notably the county Quarter Sessions. These criminal courts only dealt with a select number of cases, with many 'smaller' acts being pre-emptively handled by the Petty Sessions or summary judgements. However, whilst these lower courts remained largely undocumented, occasional judgements were recorded in regional

¹¹⁴ For valuable studies of these protests see: R. Wells, 'The Revolt of the South West, 1800-1801: A Study in English Popular Protest', *Social History*, 2:6 (1977), pp. 713-44; J. Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy and Market Transition in England, c. 1550-1850* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); R. Sheldon, A. Randall, A. Charlesworth and D. Walsh, 'Popular Protest and the Persistence of Customary Corn Measures: Resistance to the Winchester Bushel in the English West', in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp. 25-45; C. Griffin, "'Some Inhuman Wretch': Animal Maiming and the Ambivalent Relationship between Rural Workers and Animals", *Rural History*, 25:2 (2014), pp. 133-60; T. Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest: Herefordshire, 1800 to 1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003); Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*.

¹¹⁵ C. Griffin, 'Knowable Geographies? The Reporting of Incendiarism in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Provincial Press', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32:1 (2006), pp. 38-56; R. Matthews, 'The Provincial Press in England: An Overview', in M. Conboy and J. Steel (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to British Media History* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 239-49; A. Jones, 'Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture', in L. Brake, A. Jones and L. Madden (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 63-70.

newspapers or the correspondence of local elites.¹¹⁶ Moreover, by 1820 the Quarter Sessions in both Somerset and Dorset had become remarkably efficient and sophisticated with the extensive use of well-documented eyewitness statements, interrogations and examinations.¹¹⁷ For studying the forms and repertoires of protest these records are therefore invaluable. The use of these sources together, alongside others such as personal correspondence and parish records, is particularly suited to the microhistorical approach adopted throughout this thesis. By combining a wide array of sources, this study demonstrates how custom, ritual and the material environment shaped not only acts of protest but also local identities and mentalities.

In choosing Somerset and Dorset, this study also benefits from archival sources that provide unique insights into the development of environmental and political resistance. Of note, the estate papers of this region have been critically underutilised by historians of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century protest. Due to their focus on economic matters, such as tithes, rents and leases, there has been a tendency to consign these documents to the traditionalist ‘ploughs and cows’ approach to agricultural history.¹¹⁸ Yet, if scholars are to examine protest ‘holistically’ these estate papers provide an unmatched opportunity to situate acts of resistance within wider patterns of rural life. In particular, the papers of the Marquis of Anglesey, Lord Rivers and the Earl of Ilchester, whose lands covered large swathes of South Somerset and North Dorset, provide the foundations for many of the following case studies.¹¹⁹ Although correspondence was not uniform, noble landowners expected regular reports from their principal land agents. For instance, the Marquis of Anglesey, who resided in London, received fortnightly correspondence detailing local events ranging from charity galas and election dinners to attempted arson and legal disputes. Usually reaching four to five pages each, these letters provide a running commentary of landscape change, political debates and local unrest.

¹¹⁶ For the role and organisation of the various courts in Somerset and Dorset see: J.H. Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex: 1500-1900* (Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1977), pp. 107-22.

¹¹⁷ For the development of courts in England see: C. Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900*, 4th Ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), esp. pp. 188-226.

¹¹⁸ C. Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent of the Marquis of Anglesey’s Dorset and Somerset Estate: William Castleman and his Sons, c. 1812-1854’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2015), pp. 12-4; F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1963), esp. pp. 151-83; G.E. Mingay, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward’ in E.L. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution: Essays Presented to J.D. Chambers* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), pp. 3-27; C. Dakers, ‘Land Agents: Fact and Fiction in the Long Nineteenth Century’, in C. Beardmore, S. King and G. Monks (eds.), *The Land Agent in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 59-87.

¹¹⁹ Particularly Chapters 1, 2 and 5. For the operation of these estates see also: C. Beardmore, ‘William Castleman and Sons: Agents to the Marquis of Anglesey, 1814-1854’, in C. Beardmore, S. King and G. Monks (eds.), *The Land Agent in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 87-106; J. Waymark, ‘Landed Estates in Dorset Since 1870: Their Survival and Influence’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1995), pp. 38-63; Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 24-37, 40-60.

In times of crisis these reports could even become daily occurrences, such as during the Swing Riots of November and December 1830 when over thirty letters were sent in three weeks. Additionally, the attached expense vouchers reveal the hidden costs of rural social conflict, with notes relating to the hiring of watchmen for timber plantations or replacing vandalised fencing highlighting otherwise unmentioned conflicts. In total, between 1812 and 1854 over 3000 letters and 10,000 vouchers relating to Anglesey's estates were sent from Dorset to London.¹²⁰ Utilising these regular reports allows this thesis to engage in a detailed study of rural protest. In these letters, minor protests, such as wood-theft or trespass, were commonly mentioned as stewards attempted to justify rising expenditure or falling productivity. As such, this correspondence provides an opportunity to investigate how everyday resistance inspired and shaped major disturbances. Concomitantly, these reports often detail the opinions of the estate's inhabitants on pressing local and national issues. Comments from tenants and labourers on topics such as poor relief, environmental change and political reform provide candid insights into some of the most important issues facing rural life. Indeed, noble landowners directly responded to these local disputes by writing in the margins of reports that were then returned to the steward.¹²¹ By combing through these documents and recording incidental mentions of discontent or debate, this thesis unveils the conflicts and negotiations that punctuated rural life and provided the material or cultural foundations for 'seminal' moments of resistance.

However, whilst these sources provide valuable insights into rural everyday resistance, an overreliance upon estate papers can potentially misrepresent regional and local patterns of protest. Crucially, the following studies have been geographically shaped by the availability of estate records. The decision to centre the microhistorical examinations of Chapter 2 around a particular area of North Dorset, for example, stems from the existence of multiple well-documented estates in the region.¹²² In comparison, much of North East Somerset remains undocumented, with only fragmentary sources existing in the papers of the Meade and Acland-Hood families. The reasons for this dearth are varied and unclear, potentially including; smaller

¹²⁰ As of writing these records are deposited under: D-ANG, *DHC*. For the estate papers relating to Lord Rivers and the Earl of Ilchester see, respectively: D-PIT, *DHC*; D/FSI, *DHC*. For the efforts made to catalogue these records see: Beardmore, 'The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent', pp. 16-20, 25-35; I. Jones, *The Stalbridge Inheritance, 1780-1854* (Dorchester: Friary Press, 1993) pp. 1-11.

¹²¹ Beardmore, 'Landowner, Tenant and Agent', pp. 181-99; G. Monks, 'The Path to Professionalisation: Mechanisation and Legislation on the Welbeck Estate', in C. Beardmore, S. King and G. Monks (eds.), *The Land Agent in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 39-58. See also: R. Jones, 'William Scott Owen, 1853-1920: An English Born Land Agent in Mid Wales', *Family and Community History*, 21 (2018), pp. 82-95; S. Webster, 'Estate Improvement and the Professionalization of Land Agents on the Egremont Estates in Sussex and Yorkshire, 1770-1835', *Rural History*, 18 (2007), pp. 47-69.

¹²² Beardmore, 'William Castleman and Sons', pp. 87-106; Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 24-37.

estates, inattentive land agents, poor record keeping or correspondence simply being lost.¹²³ Subsequently, when analysing these areas, surviving estate papers must be deployed alongside other sources, such as newspapers or parish records. Yet, even intact estate archives should not be treated as infallible sources. On landed estates, records were almost invariably compiled by the principal land agent. Unsurprisingly, these men had their own environmental and political beliefs, with their reports being tailored to ultimately benefit their careers. As Wells noted, during this period local authorities often refused to report instances of unrest so as not to tarnish their reputations. Moreover, when disturbances were recorded magistrates sought to present themselves as lone heroic figures standing against an unthinking, violent and dangerous ‘mob’.¹²⁴ Similar patterns are encountered within estate records, reports and correspondence. Unwilling to endanger their employment, stewards repeatedly misrepresented or minimised ongoing resistance whilst portraying themselves as model administrators. Simultaneously, when resistance was noted the participants were generally depicted as acting ‘irrationally’ or using customary claims to mask illegal activities.¹²⁵ With the exception of letters that bypassed the steward, complaints or protests regarding the operation of the estate were, therefore, often categorised as mere criminality or relayed to the landowner as distorted caricatures of rural backwardness. Consequently, this thesis will foreground the statements and physical performances of protestors in order to counteract this inherently biased language. The targets and repertoires of an enclosure protest or electoral riot were not selected at random but help reveal the mentalities that drove resistance.¹²⁶ By applying the ‘spatial turn’ and examining the materiality of protest, this study will attempt to address the partisan nature of estate papers.

Furthermore, the fractious political geographies of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Somerset and Dorset help counteract the issues present in using estate papers. In these counties,

¹²³ The surviving estate papers are catalogued under: DD/MK, *SHC*; DD/AH, *SHC*. For comparisons of landownership in Somerset and Dorset see Chapter 1, also: M. Williams, ‘The Enclosure of Waste Land in Somerset, 1700-1900’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 57 (1972), pp. 99-123; B.J. Buchanan, ‘The Financing of Parliamentary Enclosure: Some Evidence from North Somerset, 1770-1830’, *Agricultural History Review*, 30 (1982), pp. 112-26. For the land agent’s importance in the record keeping of larger estates see: S. King, ‘The Role of the Land Agent: Continuity and Continuity’, in C. Beardmore, S. King and G. Monks (eds.), *The Land Agent in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 129-50.

¹²⁴ R. Wells, ‘Counting Riots in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Bulletin for the Study of Labour History*, 37 (1978), pp. 68-72. See also: R. Wallis, ‘The Relationship Between Magistrates and their Communities in the Age of Crisis: Social Protest, c. 1790-1834’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of the West of England, 2016), pp. 7-20.

¹²⁵ Freeman, ‘Plebs or Predators?’, pp. 1-21; Rule, ‘Social Crime in the Rural South’, pp. 153-68; Shakesheff, ‘Wood and Crop Theft’, pp. 1-18; Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 152-3.

¹²⁶ McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 200-6; McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 254-75; M. Harrison, ‘Symbolism, Ritualism and the Location of Crowds in Early-Nineteenth Century English Towns’, in D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of the Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 194-214; Harrison, *Crowds and History*, esp. pp. 202-33; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-53.

neighbouring landowners and authorities were often in conflict.¹²⁷ As such, within their reports land agents delighted in commenting upon unrest within ‘opposing’ estates. Notably, the papers of Lord Rivers detailed ongoing conflicts upon the Marquis of Anglesey’s estates in the hope of gaining an advantage ‘should the Marquis seek to divest himself of any troublesome land.’ In response, Anglesey was provided with accounts of growing discontent amongst Lord Rivers’ tenants.¹²⁸ These conflicting reports help reframe the self-aggrandising narratives present within estate records. Equally, wherever possible estate papers will be used alongside other records, such as newspapers or court cases, to provide a degree of balance. As the following investigations reveal, the internal politics of the landed estate were anything but harmonious. In these rural villages, disputes flourished not only between authorities and the working poor but also between tenant farmers and land agents.¹²⁹ In Chapter 1, for instance, the records and minutes compiled by enclosure commissioners reveal an assertive and energetic rural population. Similarly, in Chapter 3 the detailed accounts of electoral violence are the result of local authorities attempting to repress independent and politically knowledgeable individuals through the court system. Unlike the censored estate papers, in these records protestors from across the social spectrum are allowed to momentarily express their environmental ethics and political beliefs through recorded pleas or public meetings.¹³⁰ Thus, by combining and contrasting sources the archival approach of this thesis will attempt to rectify the biased language and observations contained within estate papers. By drawing together a range of accounts, it will investigate how countryfolk envisioned and defended their ‘ideal’ world.

In a similar fashion, the survival of many archaic legal structures in Somerset and Dorset further enables a detailed study of everyday life and resistance. In a number of towns, local authorities and ‘ancient’ guilds maintained their own courts and by-laws into the nineteenth century. In Axbridge and Poole, for example, borough Quarter Sessions were empowered by medieval

¹²⁷ Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 79-85; Lawrence, ‘Somerset 1800-1830’, pp. 45-120; Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 226-271; Poole, ‘Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire’, pp. 427-476.

¹²⁸ ‘Reports Concerning Sixpenny Handley’, Pitt-Rivers Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/E/43; ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 May 1821’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/29. See also Chapter 2.:

¹²⁹ Beardmore, ‘William Castleman and Sons’, pp. 87-106; Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 37-75; J. Martin, ‘Land Agents, Game Shooting and Diversification of Estate Income, c. 1850 to the Present’, in C. Beardmore, S. King and G. Monks (eds.), *The Land Agent in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp. 107-28.

¹³⁰ R. Wallis, ‘“We Do Not Come Here... To Inquire into Grievances; We Come Here to Decide Law”’: Prosecuting Swing in Norfolk and Somerset, 1829-1832’, *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 159-75; K. Navickas, ‘Political Trials and the Suppression of Popular Radicalism in England, 1799-1820’, in M. Davis, E. Macleod and G. Pentland (eds.), *Political Trials in an Age of Revolutions: Britain and the North Atlantic, 1793-1848* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 187-88; M. Turner, ‘Enclosure Commissioners and Buckinghamshire Parliamentary Enclosure’, *Agricultural History Review*, 25:2 (1977), pp. 120-9.

charters. However, by the nineteenth century both towns had suffered economically and demographically, with observers noting that Axbridge was now ‘a mere village... entirely occupied by smallholders.’¹³¹ Similarly, in Taunton a centuries-old guild, known as the Conservators of the River Tone, stringently enforced their by-laws and jurisdiction over the surrounding waterways.¹³² By the late-eighteenth century, these outdated legal structures were thus increasingly dealing with issues that elsewhere would have been handled by Petty Sessions or summary judgements.¹³³ In Chapters 1 and 5, consequently, these sources provide an insight into how minor protests, such as trespass, or customary celebrations, such as Bonfire Night, were utilised during times of social conflict. Despite dealing with relatively minor issues these organisations produced a significant amount of detailed paperwork. As such, these sources allow historians to examine how resistance was physically enacted and performed. Alongside the Somerset and Dorset Quarter Sessions, which have remained underutilised due to their largely uncatalogued status, these materials provide a counterpoint to nationally focused studies that portray rural life as a binary conflict between poor and elite.¹³⁴ Instead, these inherently local documents frequently record negotiation and co-operation between social stratum. In conjunction with estate papers, these sources allow for a nuanced understanding of the interactions between protestors and local material, emotional and social geographies.

This study demonstrates how spaces, places and rural customs were central to the forms and functions of protests in late-eighteenth and nineteenth century Somerset and Dorset. Chapter 1 focuses on the role of material space and performance during conflicts over enclosure and new infrastructure projects. It argues that notions of ‘ownership’ and ‘private property’ were influenced by local social relationships and illustrates how environmental transformations were constantly regulated, reinforced and challenged by the physical performances of human and animal bodies. Resistance against acts such as enclosure was not solely a product of economic concerns, but also demonstrative of divergent ecological and societal visions.¹³⁵ Thus, Jacoby’s model of moral ecology is both utilised and questioned through examinations of how protestors

¹³¹ J. Darby, ‘The Farming of Somerset’, *Journal of the Bath and West of England Society and Southern Counties Association for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, 5 (1873), pp. 132-4. See also: J.W. Gough, *The Mines of Mendip* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1967), pp. 63-7; S. Toulson, *The Mendip Hills: A Threatened Landscape* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1984), pp. 110-5; D. Beamish, J. Dockerill and J. Hillier, *The Pride of Poole: 1688-1851* (Poole: Poole Historical Trust, 1974), pp. 20-43.

¹³² See Chapter 1, also: G. Body and R. Gallop, *Any Muddy Bottom: A History of Somerset’s Waterborne Trade* (Stroud: The History Press, 2015), pp. 68-70.

¹³³ Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 107-22; Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 62-84.

¹³⁴ For these views see: Jacoby, ‘Class and Environmental History’, pp. 324-42; Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80; Wells, ‘Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History’, pp. 98-142.

¹³⁵ See also: Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62.

and landowners utilised material spaces and objects to legitimise their claims and societal outlooks.¹³⁶ Crucially, Chapter 1 reincorporates the performances and viewpoints of local elites in order to prevent a binary and romanticised model of moral ecology. Chapter 2 expands these investigations by considering the role of custom, communal identity and place in the riotous Vale of Blackmore. Through a focused case study of three communities over approximately fifty years the chapter reveals how feelings of dispossession, dislocation and betrayal lingered following landscape change. In these villages, it was believed that local elites had reneged on the reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship by altering the environment. Through reoccurring acts of protest and everyday resistance, such as trespass and wood-theft, rural people kept alive communal identities and protected local places from being rendered materially unrecognisable.¹³⁷ Answering calls to place Swing in its local and environmental contexts, Chapter 2 notes how the Swing Riots of 1830 were fundamentally shaped by the legacies of resistance that existed within these communities.¹³⁸ The repertoires and mentalities of Swing were altered and adapted by the people of Blackmore to serve their ongoing struggles against unethical societal and ecological practices. These two chapters illustrate how rural people envisioned their local environment as taskscapes, made meaningful through daily lives, customary performances and communal identities.

The thesis then examines how these spaces, places, customs and mentalities were utilised during conflicts over national politics, labour conditions and the customary calendar. Chapter 3 examines electoral violence and ritual in Somerset and Dorset between 1820 and 1867. It contends that the control of material spaces and adoption of local customary performances were essential to electoral culture in these provincial towns and villages. This chapter questions the arguments of Vernon, who characterised popular politics in this period as increasingly exclusionary and ‘tamed’. In effect, it will argue that many of the criticisms levelled against the generalising nature of Vernon’s all-encompassing ‘closure’ model from historians of later periods are equally applicable to the mid-nineteenth century.¹³⁹ Moreover, this section rejects the portrayal of rural popular crowds as inherently deferent or backwards. Political rituals, such as ‘treating’, were founded upon reciprocal plebeian-patrician relationships. If a candidate

¹³⁶ See also: Griffin, ‘Squatting as Moral Ecology’, pp. 235-63.

¹³⁷ For conflicts over keeping the landscape ‘recognisable’ see: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 162-216; McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-56.

¹³⁸ P. Jones, ‘Finding Captain Swing: Protest, Parish Relations and the State of the Public Mind in 1830’, *International Review of Social History*, 54:3 (2009), pp. 429-58; Robertson, “‘Two Steps Forward; Six Steps Back’”, pp. 85-100.

¹³⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. For these criticisms see: Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 58-61.

failed to meet the crowd's exacting standards, they were often punished by acts of violence or mockery. Subsequently, electoral violence and riots were not merely 'carnavalesque' exuberance or unthinking displays of anger. Instead, through the capture and 'remaking' of important local political spaces, the popular crowd also challenged national political exclusivity. Through these actions, the crowd were symbolically and materially vocalising a vision of their 'ideal' national and local government.¹⁴⁰ During political conflicts the state of these towns and villages represented, in microcosm, wider demands for national reform.

Chapter 4 explores Dorset's most famous act of resistance, the Tolpuddle Martyrs. It criticises and contributes to recent attempts to 'reground' the events of 1834, and the subsequent Chartist revival of 1838, demonstrating how the decision to form an agricultural union was predicated on a regional legacy of rural organisation and well established oppositional mentalities.¹⁴¹ These discourses, sourced from social relationships and customary culture, intertwined with everyday experiences to both encourage worker combination and prepare agricultural labourers to adopt these protest forms. Many of the mentalities and repertoires utilised by the Tolpuddle Martyrs would not have been radical innovations for the rural poor in Dorset, nor did agricultural unionism indicate a 'break' with 'older' protest methods.¹⁴² Instead, the inability for activists to capitalise on the legacies of Tolpuddle, alongside a return to 'older' protest forms in the following decades, indicates how local mentalities, customary expectations and protest repertoires critically influenced the adoption and perception of national social movements.¹⁴³ Chapter 4, subsequently, studies both the foundations upon which Tolpuddle was constructed and its 'injurious' legacy over the following decades.

Chapter 5 concludes this study by considering the role of the customary calendar during local and national protests. It reveals how the desire to enforce an 'ideal' world, defined by reciprocity and fairness, remained integral to celebrations such as 5 November and Shrove Tuesday. Moreover, as the century progressed the desire to protect a 'morally correct' society on these festive days increasingly focused upon national issues, politics and institutions. Adopting the models of David Featherstone, this chapter argues that inherently 'local' rituals

¹⁴⁰ For the importance of the physical space and the reconsideration of the role of violence see: Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, esp. 130-153, 277-305; C. Griffin, 'Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early-Nineteenth Century Popular Protest', *Historical Geography*, 36 (2008), pp. 139-62.

¹⁴¹ Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 443-80; Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers', pp. 1-23; Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History', pp. 98-142.

¹⁴² Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers', pp. 1-23; Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 31-84.

¹⁴³ This is contrasted with recent emphasis on Chartism's adaptability: T. Scriven, *Popular Virtue: Continuity and Change in Radical Moral Politics, 1820-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), esp. pp. 44-66.

and celebrations were explicitly connected with national debates through their use of ritual and space.¹⁴⁴ It also assesses attempts to curtail and control popular festivities, arguing that struggles surrounding the rural customary calendar were not binary conflicts between modernising elites and ‘traditional’ poor.¹⁴⁵ Instead, many local elites encouraged these festivities and championed a version of the ‘patrician-plebeian’ relationship; whilst changing tastes and commercialisation transformed the relationship between rural labourers and customary culture. All strove to compete within the bounds of rural popular culture, not only against superiors or inferiors but also against each other.

Taken together these chapters reveal how rural protest was shaped by customs, social relationships and everyday lives. Through spaces and places, resistance was encouraged, enacted and facilitated. These studies subsequently provide insight into how rural communities envisioned their society and local environments. Yet, their demands for reciprocity and fairness did not halt at the parish border. Instead, the same social and ecological demands that drove the smashing of enclosure fences also encouraged involvement in national political disputes and union activity. Major events, such as Swing and Tolpuddle, were founded upon these local legacies of resistance. Alongside economic concerns, participants in rural resistance possessed their own vernacular environmental ethics and conceptions of the correct patrician-plebeian relationship. However, we should not dismiss the rural elite as merely capitalist exploiters. They too championed their own moral ecologies and cultural expectations, expressed through the utilisation of material space and meaningful place. Consequently, rural collective action may have been forged through local spaces and places, but it was also connected to national concerns. Through their customary performances and rituals, protestors sought to demonstrate that an ‘ideal’ world was possible.

¹⁴⁴ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

¹⁴⁵ Calhoun, *Roots of Radicalism*, pp. 84-98; J. Walton and R. Poole, ‘The Lancashire Wakes in the Nineteenth Century’ in R. Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 100-24. For criticisms see: Hindle, ‘Custom, Festival and Protest’, pp. 155-78; E. Griffin, *England’s Revelry: A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Chapter 1: The Moral Ecology of the English Crowd? Space, Performance and Landscape Change in Somerset and Dorset, c. 1780-1867

In May 1811 farmers in Whitchurch Canonycorum awoke to the sound of a ‘skimmington ride’. This punishment, usually reserved for adulterers or cuckolds, was a form of public remonstrance for breaking a community’s ‘moral codes’. Condemned individuals were paraded through the village amidst mocking yells and ‘rough music’, but the targets of Whitchurch’s moral outrage were not human. Instead, the crowd had uprooted and enacted a ‘riding’ upon four fence poles and a hedge. These material objects had been recently installed by a new landowner to expand his tenants’ holdings, at the expense of the local poor’s customary right of turf-cutting for fuel. However, rather than prevent the ongoing destruction, the Parish Constable played ‘rough music’ on his violin whilst the tenant farmers gifted the crowd ‘a cask of cyder’. Festivities lasted until sunset when the offending objects were ‘cast into the river’. This evocative ritual performance allowed the poor of Whitchurch to momentarily renegotiate and condemn the physical remaking of their community. Crucially, their moral reprimands crossed social boundaries, encouraging participation from farmers who economically benefited from enclosure. Of the fourteen men indicted, only three were labourers.¹ This chapter, therefore, investigates how material objects and bodily performances enacted and resisted landscape change in Somerset and Dorset between 1780 and 1867. The imposition of ‘private property’ in rural communities was not solely conducted through symbols or discourse. Instead, these new spatial practices were enforced through altering material landscapes and violently policing animal and human bodies.² Enclosure may have been enacted by legal changes, but it also had to be performed by hedges, fences, livestock and people. Subsequently, collective action allowed communities to test the limits of private property and dispossession. Through protests such as hedge-breaking or illegal grazing ‘cracks in property’s grid’ emerged, offering fleeting yet tangible reconstructions of threatened lives, practices and customs.³ By modifying,

¹ ‘Information of Joseph Miller the Elder, Joseph Miller the Younger and Joseph Sheppard’, Dorset Quarter Session Rolls, Midsummer 1811, *DHC*. The extinguishing of rights is referenced in: *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 October 1809. For the history of ‘skimmington rides’ see: M.J. Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England’, in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 166-97; E.P. Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, *Folklore*, 103:1 (1992), pp. 3-26; A. Walker, ‘Rough Music, Community Protest and the Local Press in Nineteenth-Century England’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 13:1 (2018), pp. 86-104.

² Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 1-22; McDonagh and Daniels, ‘Enclosure Stories’, pp. 107-21.

³ Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’, pp. 121-41. See also: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 191-200; N. Blomley, ‘Enclosure, Common Right and the Property of the Poor’, *Social and Legal Studies*, 17 (2008), pp. 311-331; McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 1-10.

or protecting, material environments, rural people physically enacted their ‘ideal’ social relationships and moral ecologies.

Recent studies of historical landscape change have tended to prioritise semantics and ‘representation’. For Wood, boundaries ‘symbolically... demarcated individual and collective resources, rights, affinities and obligations.’⁴ Enclosure is similarly interpreted as a product of shifting mentalities; whereby ‘property’ was reconceptualised as a bounded and territorialised phenomenon, rather than a series of interlocking social obligations.⁵ Such depictions risk imposing an immateriality upon both landscape change and resistance. Whilst changing discourses regarding ‘property’ underpinned transformative legislation, at the local level landscape change was enforced and challenged through material alterations. New hedges and fences did not simply ‘represent’ private property or a growing hostility towards customary rights, they also placed physical restrictions upon people’s movements and activities.⁶ By preventing commoners from performing their customary entitlements these barriers established the landowner’s control over rural landscapes and resources. Concomitantly, these objects enforced a ‘reconfiguration of social relations’, with ‘customary reciprocity’ replaced by exclusive ownership.⁷ Subsequently, protestors did not struggle symbolically against landscape change. Instead, they physically removed these objects, reverting environments and communities to their previous state. During resistance spaces were ‘remade’; concretizing or resisting particular claims to access, custom, possession and ownership.⁸ This chapter demonstrates how struggles against landscape change attempted to revert environments to their ‘correct’ material arrangement. Protests enrolled physical objects and nonhuman bodies to symbolically perform an ‘ideal’ customary society whilst simultaneously reconfiguring the landscape to facilitate these rights and relationships.

Resistance towards landscape change centred around performances of customary entitlements. Acts such as trespass or fence-breaking rejected environmental alterations through the continuation of established local practices. In his study of Scottish Crofters, Robertson

⁴ Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 223.

⁵ Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community’, pp. 110-35; McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 4-7; Cosgrove and Daniels (eds.), *Iconography of the Landscape*.

⁶ McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-56; Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 3-5; Navickas, ‘Luddism, Incendiarism and the Defence of Rural “Task-Scapes”’, pp. 59-73. See also: Kingston, ‘Mind over Matter?’, pp. 114-6. For the changing definitions of ‘property’ and ‘trespass’ see: McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 1-10; Baker, ‘Human and Animal’, pp. 72-93.

⁷ This had been a fear since the early-modern period: Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 929-30; Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 3-9, 91-124. For reciprocity see: J.G.A. Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, *American Historical Review*, 81:3 (1976), pp. 516-23.

⁸ McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 254-75; Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 196-200.

illustrated that, as long as a space had not been ‘obliterated’ by change, memories of previous taskscapes remain embedded in the land. Thus, through bodily performances of previously everyday activities these practices, relationships and environments could be materially ‘revived’.⁹ Conversely, for property to become truly private, human and animal bodies needed to be disciplined and previous landscapes eliminated.¹⁰ Protests built upon memories of threatened working lives, performatively asserting customary rights and visibly challenging new exclusivities. Through repetitive bodily actions, animal and human protestors physically re-inscribed the landscape to reflect and empower their claims. Trampling down newly planted crops or demolishing an enclosure wall demonstrated that the enclosers’ control over these spaces was illegitimate and unsupported.¹¹ However, ‘private property’ was also imposed and protected through similar displays. By punishing transgressive bodies and conducting their own public performances, landowners communicated their claims and established control over contested spaces. Due to English Common Law, which was supposedly a ‘reflection of the general practices of the people’, possession, use and daily practice were integral to demonstrating ownership.¹² The centrality of continuity to Common Law encouraged landowners and protestors to utilise bodily performances to enforce their ‘correct’ landscapes. Consequently, these protest repertoires provided a ‘universal language’ of resistance and control, being employed by commoners, farmers and labourers alike to protect their interests. Spaces were never static, being instead made and remade as ‘actively and continually practised social relations’.¹³ Nor was ‘private property’ an absolute social fact. Property was performative with landowners and protestors materially and symbolically refashioning spaces to align with their local social relationships and customary expectations.

Yet humans were not the only beings who could perform ownership and contest claims. The field of animal studies has illuminated the role of nonhumans in facilitating and inspiring

⁹ Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 212-4. See also: Robertson and MacLeod Rivett, ‘Of Necessary Work’, pp. 159-87; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99.

¹⁰ Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; Rogers, ‘Custom and Common Right’, pp. 137-54.

¹¹ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, esp. pp. 58-89; McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 254-75. For the importance of experience and memory in defining spaces and places see: Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, pp. 18-31; Wood, “‘Some banglyng about the customes’”, pp. 1-14.

¹² McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 191-206; G.E. Aylmer, ‘The Meaning and Definition of “Property” in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Past and Present*, 86 (1980), pp. 87-97; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 749-51; Olwig, ‘Representation and Alienation’, p. 22; M. Lobban, ‘Custom, Common Law Reasoning and the Law of Nations in the Nineteenth Century’, in A. Perreau-Saussine and J.B. Murphy (eds.), *The Nature of Customary Law: Legal, Historical and Philosophical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 257-64; Wood, ‘Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60.

¹³ Massey, ‘Entanglements of Power’, pp. 279-86; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 233-52. For the constant ‘remaking’ of the landscape see also: Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99.

resistance. Although studies of animal maiming have been a staple part of rural protest history, historians have generally depicted livestock as passive representations of ‘capital’ or hated employers.¹⁴ Conversely, recent investigations have stressed the corporeality of these creatures and their ability to act as living beings.¹⁵ In his examination of English sylviculture, Griffin highlighted how the destructive power of nonhumans could stall landscape change and provide opportunities for human protestors to assert their own visions.¹⁶ Similarly, this chapter will illustrate how transgressive animal bodies challenged the privatization of land. The presence of animal trespassers on supposedly enclosed fields modified the physical terrain whilst allowing onlookers to symbolically revive previous everyday practices. Their trampling, grazing and roaming reverted the materiality of these contested spaces to their unenclosed states. Subsequently, the sheep, cows, horses and pigs that had previously resided upon common land held economic and symbolic value to protestors and landowners. By moving outside the neat definitions, demarcations and ‘animal spaces’ constructed by enclosure, these creatures threatened the imposition of private property into rural life.¹⁷ Despret has argued that we can view agency in animals by how they incite, inspire or ask others to do things.¹⁸ Following this approach, this chapter reveals how human protestors and landowners exploited animal agency to enforce their claims. Both opponents and proponents of landscape change utilised the corporeality and unique abilities of nonhumans to transmit ideas, forms and possibilities. Through the interpretation of animal activities, claims to contested spaces were demonstrated and reinforced.¹⁹ Animals were more than mere economic resources or static cultural reminders of a lost past. These were transformative beings whose actions undermined, or enacted, the redefinition of the landscape.

¹⁴ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 123-9; Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*. For criticisms see: E. Fudge, ‘Milking Other Men’s Beasts’, *History and Theory*, 52:4 (2013), pp. 13-28; C. Griffin, ‘Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life: The Bestial and the Bestly in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37:2 (2012), pp. 301-16.

¹⁵ J. Saha, ‘Colonizing Elephants: Animal Agency, Undead Capital and Imperial Science in British Burma’, *BJHS Themes*, 2 (2017), pp. 170-5; D. Gary Shaw, ‘A Way with Animals’, *History and Theory*, 52:4 (2013), pp. 1-12; J. Specht, ‘Animal History After its Triumph: Unexpected Animals, Evolutionary Approaches and the Animal Lens’, *History Compass*, 14 (2016), pp. 326-36.

¹⁶ Griffin, ‘More-than-human Histories’, pp. 451-72. For animal agency and political activity see also: J. Saha, ‘Among the Beasts of Burma: Animals and the Politics of Colonial Sensibilities c. 1840-1940’, *Journal of Social History*, 48:4 (2015), pp. 910-32.

¹⁷ C. Philo and C. Wilbert, ‘Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: An Introduction’, in C. Philo and C. Wilbert (eds.), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-36; S. Pearson and M. Weismantel, ‘Does “The Animal” Exist? Toward a Theory of Social Life with Animals’, in D. Brantz (ed.), *Beastly Natures: Animals, Humans and the Study of History*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), pp. 17-37.

¹⁸ V. Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’, *History and Theory*, 52:4 (2013), pp. 29-44.

¹⁹ D. Gary Shaw, ‘The Torturer’s Horse: Agency and Animals in History’, *History and Theory*, 52:4 (2013), pp. 146-67; C. Pearson, ‘Dogs, History and Agency’, *History and Theory*, 52:4 (2013), pp. 128-45.

Underpinning the performances of landowners and protestors were conflicting sets of societal outlooks and environmental ethics. Thus, the moral ecology model will be deployed in this chapter to examine how rural people envisioned their communities and landscapes. According to Jacoby's theory, commons were 'the materialization of a set of beliefs' or a morally driven 'way of doing.' Rejecting the primacy of economic imperatives, recent studies have contended that against conservation or enclosure, communities attempted to reassert their own societal and ecological forms.²⁰ By continuing to perform their everyday activities, in defiance of new laws and material boundaries, protestors demonstrated how relationships between masters, men and environment should be. Conversely, the criminalisation of 'traditional' practices by supporters of enclosure was founded upon discourses that presented these 'ignorant' customs as threats to environmental sustainability and communal morality.²¹ Subsequently, struggles surrounding enclosure in this period pre-empted the conflicts over conservation commonly studied through the moral ecology model.²² However, despite these similarities extracting the moral ecology from its original context is a complicated procedure. Unlike Jacoby's late-nineteenth and twentieth-century American examples, there was no binary struggle between elite ideologies and a 'moral ecology of the poor' in Somerset and Dorset. Instead, landowners and protestors alike possessed multiple competing moral ecologies that enrolled individuals from across social stratum. Central to these conflicting environmental ethics were local customs, manorial laws and idealised patrician-plebeian relationships. These elements acted as an 'interface', connecting the material landscape to wider concerns regarding crumbling paternalistic duties or societal obligations.²³ This chapter reveals how customary performances championing harmonious patrician-plebeian relationships were utilised by both elites and subalterns during environmental conflicts. These moral ecologies thus provided an adaptable series of repertoires and mentalities, rather than a restrictive bipolar framework.

²⁰ Griffin and Robertson, 'Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict', pp. 24-38; Griffin and Robertson, 'Elvers and Salmon', pp. 101-3; Griffin, Jones and Robertson, 'Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance', pp. 1-34.

²¹ Howkins, 'The Use and Abuse of the English Commons', pp. 107-32. See also: Staughton, *Common Grazing*, p. 245; B. Short, 'Environmental Politics, Custom and Personal Testimony: Memory and Lifespace on the late Victorian Ashdown Forest, Sussex', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30:4 (2004), pp. 470-95.

²² Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, esp. pp. 11-47, 81-98; S. Jana Thing, 'Politics of Conservation, Moral Ecology and Resistance by the Sonaha Indigenous Minorities of Nepal', in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 37-58; R. Jones, J. Christensen and T. Jones, 'Global Ecologies and Local Moralities: Conservation and Contention on Western Australia's Gascoyne Coast', in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 59-82.

²³ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, esp. pp. 16-96, 97-184; Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 32.

Between 1780 and 1867, landscape change in Somerset and Dorset was imposed, regulated and challenged through material transformations and bodily performances. During these struggles, both opponents and proponents of change used customary rituals and public demonstrations to enforce 'ethical' taskscapes and ecologies. The following section examines how rural landscapes were physically and culturally transformed. It contends that material transformations necessitated the redefinition of customary practices as illegal or immoral. Concomitantly, 'private property' and common rights were enforced through physical compulsion and violence. Landowners utilised hedges, fences and livestock to disrupt the everyday practices of rural communities and perform their exclusive control over contested spaces. The chapter then investigates how enclosure protests resisted landscape change through the continuation of customary practices. By materially and symbolically reverting these fields to their previous state, human and animal bodies 'out of place' momentarily prevented the redefinition of local environments. Moreover, these acts of resistance were empowered by moral ecologies that condemned 'immoral' material impositions and accused local elites of abandoning their paternal duties.²⁴ The chapter concludes by revealing how rural elites also deployed moral ecologies, paternalistic performances and an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship to support their ecological control. Studying conflict on the River Tone between 1824 and 1832 this section argues that landowners, merchants and civic authorities enthusiastically adopted these 'old fashioned' repertoires and discourses to support their claims. Altogether these studies reveal how resistance towards landscape change was founded upon a shared desire to reinstate a habitus of reciprocal and harmonious social relationships.²⁵ Property was performative and so transgressive bodies allowed rural people to defend threatened rights, customs and relations.

²⁴ For a further examination of resistance towards the 'incorrect' arrangement of the environment see: Featherstone, 'Skills for Heterogeneous Associations', pp. 284-306.

²⁵ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*, pp. 77-80; N. Whyte, 'Landscape, Memory and Custom: Parish Identities, c. 1550-1700', *Social History*, 32:2 (2007), pp. 166-86; Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 173.



Figure 1: Post-1794 Enclosures in Somerset.²⁶

Despite agriculturalists in Somerset and Dorset declaring that these counties were ‘entirely enclosed’, the pace of landscape change increased dramatically in the early-nineteenth century.²⁷ Although some historians have questioned the impact of enclosure nationally, in Somerset the enclosures of this period have been described as ‘the most extensive investments’ in county history. Between 1790 and 1820, approximately 1347 hectares were enclosed per

²⁶ T.J. Hunt and R.R. Sellman, *Aspects of Somerset History* (Bridgwater: Somerset County Council, 1973), p. 34.

²⁷ J. Claridge, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset* (London, 1793), pp. 16-7, 43-5; J. Billingsley, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Somerset* (London, 1794), pp. 48-73; W. Stevenson, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset* (London, 1812), pp. 171-3, 333-7.

year through parliamentary acts. In total, the county averaged three parliamentary enclosures per year, whilst England as a whole witnessed seventy-five.²⁸ This surge was inspired by the rising price of wheat during the Napoleonic Wars and a concomitant boom within Somerset's woollen industry. Alongside the county's coal mines and limestone quarries, these industries enticed migrants from across the country. This spike in agricultural and industrial populations allowed landholders to diversify the county's traditional produce, dairy and wool, through cereal farming and commercialised fruit orchards. Rather than convert existing pastures, landowners sought to acquire new land wherever possible.²⁹ As Figure 1 illustrates, enclosure during this period was primarily focused on Somerset's central districts, which were dominated by wasteland, moors and the majority of remaining commons. For example, 24,000 acres were enclosed on the Mendip Hills and 22,000 acres were disafforested on Exmoor.³⁰ It has been estimated that, by 1830, 13.8 per cent of the county had been enclosed by act of parliament with another 12 per cent enclosed by local agreements.³¹ However, peace with France in 1815 triggered a national agricultural depression. Plummeting wheat prices ensured that the pace of enclosure slackened between 1820 and 1840. In Somerset, this downturn was compounded by the collapse of the local woollen industry. Increasing competition from Northern England led to formerly promising industrial towns, such as Frome and Taunton, haemorrhaging population and crumbling economically.³² In response to these local and national crises, landowners reverted to their previous pastoral focus with dairy and wool once again dominating. A further

²⁸ Buchanan, 'The Financing of Parliamentary Enclosure', pp. 112-26; Williams, 'The Enclosure of Waste Land in Somerset', pp. 99-123; J.A. Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England* (London, Macmillan, 1977), pp. 11-45. For the questioning of enclosures impact see: Shaw-Taylor, 'Parliamentary Enclosure', pp. 640-62; L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, Cows, Common Rights and Parliamentary Enclosure: The Evidence of Contemporary Comment, c. 1760-1810', *Past and Present*, 171 (2001), pp. 95-126.

²⁹ Darby, 'The Farming of Somerset', pp. 96-172; Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 24-37, 40-60; J.H. Bettey, *Wessex from 1000 AD* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1986), pp. 200-280; J. Hamilton and J.F. Lawrence, *Men and Mining of the Quantocks* (Bracknell: Town and County, 1970); J.A. Bulley, 'To Mendip for Coal', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 98 (1953), pp. 46-78; S. Jackson, 'Population Change in the Somerset-Wiltshire Border Area, 1701-1800: A Regional Demographic Study', *Southern History*, 7 (1985), pp. 119-44; R. Dunning, *A History of Somerset* (Bridgwater: Somerset County Library, 1987), pp. 45-63.

³⁰ M. Williams, 'The Enclosure and Reclamation of the Mendip Hills, 1770-1870', *Agricultural History Review*, 19:1 (1974), pp. 65-81; C.S. Orwin and R.J. Sellick, *The Reclamation of Exmoor Forest* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970); Lawrence, 'Somerset, 1800-1830', pp. 48-52.

³¹ Williams, 'The Enclosure of Waste Land in Somerset', pp. 101-21; W.E. Tate, *Somerset Enclosure Acts and Awards* (Frome: Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1948), esp. pp. 1-20; G. Slater, 'Enclosure of Common Fields in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics, 1905), p. 330.

³² K. Rogers, *Wiltshire and Somerset Woollen Mills* (Eddington: Pasold, 1976), pp. 70-257; K. Rogers, *Warp and Weft: The Somerset and Wiltshire Woollen Industry* (Buckingham: Barracuda, 1986), pp. 74-100; A. Randall, *Before the Luddites: Custom, Community and Machinery in the English Woollen Industry, 1776-1809* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41-68; T. Scrase, *Somerset Towns: Changing Fortunes, 800-1800* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), pp. 110-30; J. Barry, 'South-West' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: 1540-1840* 3 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), II, pp. 67-92. For a contemporary assessment see: W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, ed. I. Dyck, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001), pp. 313-6.

twenty-six parliamentary enclosure acts were passed after 1840 to facilitate this change by draining the Somerset Levels and converting the Western Hills. By 1867 only 4 per cent of Somerset's total acreage remained unenclosed.³³ Consequently, enclosure in Somerset was intense and geographically focused. The economy and material landscapes of this county were in constant flux, with the rapid growth and decline of the woollen industry causing many landowners to radically alter land usage. For Somerset's rural communities, therefore, landscape change threatened both customary entitlements and everyday working lives.

In contrast, historians have characterised the agriculture and economy of nineteenth-century Dorset as stagnant, with the land monopolised by noble landowners. The county's industrial growth was stymied by a lack of mineral resources and navigable riverways. Thus, aside from a few scattered hemp, rope and silk manufactories, no major industries developed in Dorsetshire during this period.³⁴ This directly impacted the agricultural population, with a lack of diverse employment opportunities leading to a severe depreciation of wages. By 1850, the agricultural labourers of Dorset earned on average 2s less per day than their Somerset counterparts.³⁵ Although some farmers attempted to diversify their produce during the Napoleonic Wars, the majority remained steadfast in their adherence to dairy and wool. In 1801, with wheat prices soaring, West Dorset only had 303 acres ploughed out of a possible 5420.³⁶ Those who attempted to switch were often heavily criticised by their landed neighbours. In 1846, farmers in Whitchurch Canonorum condemned a fellow tenant for 'profiteering' when he began 'meddling in corn growing'.³⁷ Yet these conservative mentalities did not prevent enclosure. As Chapman and Seeliger demonstrated, the overwhelming control of the land by a small number of landowners encouraged Dorsetshire's enclosures by eliminating the negotiations and debates that often preceded an agreement.³⁸ In Stoke Wake,

³³ This was, approximately, 40,000 acres out of 1,052,800. See: Lawrence, 'Somerset, 1800-1830', pp. 58-60; Williams, 'The Enclosure of Waste Land in Somerset', pp. 102-3. For a similar overview of another region see: R. O'Donnell, *Assembling Enclosure: Transformations in the Rural Landscape of Post-Medieval North-East England* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2015) pp. 11-18.

³⁴ Bawn, 'Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order', pp. 148-54; Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 40-60; B. Kerr, *Bound to the Soil: A Social History of Dorset, 1750-1918* (Tiverton: John Baker Publishing, 1968), esp. pp. 1-68; J. Richards, 'Rethinking the Makeshift Economy: A Case Study of Three Market Towns in Dorset in the Later Decades of the Old Poor Law' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2017), pp. 84-103.

³⁵ See Chapter 2, also: J. Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-1* (London, 1852), pp. 72, 512-7. See also: B. Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer, 1750-1850', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 84 (1962) pp. 166-76; Shave, 'The Dependent Poor?', pp. 67-97.

³⁶ W.E. Minchinton, 'Agriculture in Dorset During the Napoleonic Wars', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 77 (1955), pp. 162-73; Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 50-68.

³⁷ G. Broom, *History of St Candida and Holy Cross* (Dorchester, 1855) quoted in Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, p. 56.

³⁸ J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment & Landscape in Southern England* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), pp. 49-66; J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, 'Formal Agreements and the Enclosure Process: The Evidence from Hampshire', *Agricultural History Review*, 43:1 (1993), pp. 35-46. For informal and formal agreements see

for instance, the entire village was held by Henry Seymer and divided between three tenant farmers.³⁹ Similarly, in Burleston William Wellesley owned all but 1.4 acres of the parish, being denied total control by the presence of glebe land. The village was thus let to a single tenant, who conducted alterations as he pleased.⁴⁰ Within these communities, landscape change was enacted at will, without the need for parliamentary interference or informal agreements. In Stoke Wake, enclosure was enacted suddenly and left no detailed records, with only a passing note in the Churchwarden Accounts of 1812 indicating the surrendering of the glebe.⁴¹ Subsequently, whilst 16.5 per cent of Dorset's total acreage was enclosed by parliamentary acts, another 14 per cent was transformed by 'minor' enclosure agreements.⁴² In relative terms, the extent of enclosure in 'stagnant' Dorset equalled 'dynamic' Somerset and across both counties landscape change was unrelenting and geographically intensive.

Enclosure necessitated the construction of new hedges and fences and the 'stopping-up' of roads. These material alterations transformed the daily lives of countryfolk, rendering previously everyday activities impossible and enacting private property through physical compulsion. The hedges planted during the enclosure of Shepton Mallet in 1806, for example, were ten feet high and so thick 'that a bird can scarcely creep between them'. It was estimated that these hedges stretched for 'one hundred miles' across the Mendip Hills giving the landscape 'a very cold and naked appearance'.⁴³ These material boundaries not only prevented

also: R. O'Donnell, 'Conflict, Agreement and Landscape Change: Methods of Enclosure of the Northern English Countryside', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 44:109 (2014), pp. 109-21.

³⁹ 'Transcript of Poor Rate Assessment, 1840', Stoke Wake Parish, *DHC*, Ph.753; 'Stoke Wake Tithe Map, Apportionment and Summary, 1841', Dorset and Sherborne Archdeaconries Tithe Maps and Apportionments, *DHC*, T/STW/1-3.

⁴⁰ 'Tithe Apportionment of Burleston, Dorset', Records of the Tithe Commissioners and Successors, *NA*, IR 29/10/34; 'Tithe Map of Burleston, Dorset', Records of the Tithe Commissioners and Successors, *NA*, IR 30/10/34. For further examples see: Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment & Landscape*, pp. 49-66. Glebe was an area of land used to support the parish priest. By the nineteenth century these customary entitlements had become severely disliked by landowners, see: E.J. Evans, 'Tithing Customs and Disputes: Evidence of Glebe Terriers, 1698-1850', *Agricultural History Review*, 18 (1970), pp. 17-35; E.J. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe: The Tithe Problem and English Agriculture, 1750-1850* (London: Routledge, 1976).

⁴¹ 'Account Book and Inventory of Church Goods', Stoke Wake Parish, *DHC*, PE-STW/CW/1/1. See also: 'Stoke Wake', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Dorset, Central*, 5 Vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), III, pp. 257-9; B. House, *The Machine Breakers: James and Abraham House and the Blackmoor Vale Riots, 1830* (St. Albans: Barbara Billings, 2000), pp. 85-98.

⁴² This amounted to 103,000 acres and 87,000 acres respectively: M. Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosures: Its Historical Geography and Economic History* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1980), pp. 178-92; G.B. Endacott 'The Progress of Enclosures in the County of Dorset in the Eighteenth and Part of the Nineteenth Centuries', (Unpublished B.Litt, University of Oxford, 1938), pp. 19-20; Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment & Landscape*, pp. 53-66.

⁴³ J. Billingsley, 'An Essay on the Best Method of Inclosing, Dividing and Cultivating Waste Lands', *Letters and Papers on Agriculture, Planting &c. Addressed to the Society Instituted at Bath for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce within the Counties of Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester and Dorset, and the City and County of Bristol*, 11 (1807), p. 10; J. Billingsley, 'Remarks on the Utility of the Bath and West Society with an Account of the Progress of Improvement in the County of Somerset', *Letters and Papers on*

customary agricultural practices, such as depasturing animals on common land, but also basic activities such as walking. The hedges planted in 1806 gave these fields a ‘naked appearance’ by physically preventing animal and human bodies from performing their previous taskscape and daily rituals.⁴⁴ By stripping these spaces of their previous inhabitants, these barriers both represented and enforced exclusive spatial practices. Furthermore, nineteenth-century enclosure commissioners were permitted to make whatever changes they deemed necessary local infrastructure. For many enclosures this meant that traditional pathways were extinguished in favour of private roads. Following the Drayton enclosure of 1818 only one public lane remained, with the remaining twenty-seven becoming private routes. Hostility towards traditional footpaths and country lanes was most evident in North Somerset. Here the majority of enclosures resulted in every public road being ‘stopped-up’ and incorporated into the enclosed fieldscape. As enclosures in this area were primarily financed by auction, a system whereby enclosed land was sold off to recoup costs, destroying these roads allowed commissioners to keep their prices low whilst increasing the land available for sale.⁴⁵ Consequently, as the fields and pathways of Somerset and Dorset were warped to accommodate enclosure, communities found their customary entitlements and everyday movements increasingly restricted. These new hedges, fences and roads remade local spaces, privatizing the land by compelling animal and human bodies to change their habits and lifestyles.

These material transformations were founded upon a series of discourses and mentalities that depicted commonly held land as both economically inefficient and morally corruptive. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the landowning classes of Somerset and Dorset transitioned from reluctant supporters of enclosure to complete converts. Previous customary relationships were criticised and a new social order, defined by wage labour, private property and elite detachment, was instead championed.⁴⁶ John Billingsley, the region’s foremost agriculturalist, launched scathing attacks on customary rights, claiming that commonly held land created a culture of ‘sloth and poverty’. According to Billingsley, the commoner’s home

Agriculture, Planting &c. Addressed to the Society Instituted at Bath for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce within the Counties of Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester and Dorset, and the City and County of Bristol, 10 (1805), p. 246.

⁴⁴ Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 8-10; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-52.

⁴⁵ Lawrence, ‘Somerset 1800-1830’, p. 63; Buchanan, ‘The Financing of Parliamentary Enclosure’, pp. 112-26. For surveys of the anger caused by these transformations see also: Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93; Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields and Popular Protest’, pp. 100-5.

⁴⁶ Howkins, ‘The Use and Abuse of the English Commons’, pp. 107-32; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon’, pp. 101-3; Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 8-12; Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community’, pp. 110-35. For earlier transitions, such as the hardening definitions of ‘property’ and ‘trespass’ in the sixteenth century see: McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 1-10.

was a ‘miserable hovel of disease, wickedness, and want’ with their wives and children ‘addicted to stealing and pilfering’. Moreover, the commoner himself acquired ‘a habit of indolence’ by ‘sauntering after’ his emaciated cattle.⁴⁷ In these condemnations, it was the physical presence of human bodies on common land that corrupted communities. By ‘sauntering’ through these spaces, commoners were transformed from ‘industrious’ men to vile and dangerous beings. Enclosure thus became more than merely an economic investment, adopting characteristics of a civilizing project. These discourses also reveal a sharp distrust of the rural poor, with landscape change enabling landholders to dismantle their supposedly harmful economic and social autonomy.⁴⁸ In Somerset, Billingsley boasted that enclosures had allowed ‘the cottager’ to ‘gradually rise... [to] active labour and comfortable subsistence’.⁴⁹ The ‘stopping-up’ of traditional footpaths was legitimised through similar language. Landowners in villages such as Bradford Abbas and Lilworth justified their actions by claiming that these lanes had become ‘infested’ with ‘persons of ill repute’, namely ‘smugglers, robbers and rapists’.⁵⁰ Through these discourses, customary practices and spaces were criminalised and condemned. Conversely, the new walls and hedges now served a moral purpose, their physical presence ensuring that local people were ‘saved’ from their uncontrolled and degenerate lifestyles. The landowning elites of Somerset and Dorset thus possessed their own moral ecologies that depicted commonly held land as inherently immoral and private property as a cure for rural social ills.

In these discourses, the commoners’ animals fared little better with animals ‘out of place’ presented as a fundamental challenge to orderly society. For proponents of enclosure, livestock on the common were invariably ‘half-starved’ and ‘deprived of any profit or advantage.’⁵¹ In Langford, farmers claimed that the ‘seven bullocks’ who grazed upon the common ‘abuse the land’ and were ‘productive of nothing but misery’.⁵² Through such language, landowners

⁴⁷ Billingsley, ‘An Essay on the Best Method of Inclosing’, pp. 6-7; J. Billingsley, ‘Uselessness of Commons to the Poor’, in A. Young (ed.), *The Annals of Agriculture* (London, 1798), pp. 29-30. For similar views on enclosure nationally see also: J. Howlett, *An Enquiry into the Influence which Enclosures Have Had Upon the Population of England* (London, 1786).

⁴⁸ Jacoby, ‘Class and Environmental History’, pp. 326-7. See also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 343; J.L. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer, 1760-1832: A Study in the Government of England Before the Reform Bill* (London: Longmans, 1911), p. 37; Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 241-65.

⁴⁹ Billingsley, ‘An Essay on the Best Method of Inclosing’, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰ The word ‘infested’ is taken directly from a letter of complaint from Bradford Abbas, see: ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 24 October 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51. For Lilworth see: ‘Opinions on Trespass on Cliffs at Lilstock, 1832’, Acland Hood of Fairfield Estate Papers, *SHC*, DD/AH/19/5/4; Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 87-8.

⁵¹ Billingsley, ‘Uselessness of Commons to the Poor’, pp. 30-1.

⁵² ‘Notebook Containing an Account of Langford Common and List of Cattle Impounded, 1857-1868’, Sanford Family of Nynhead Papers, *SHC*, DD/SF/3/3/68.

presented animal bodies on common land as inherently immoral. In a similar manner to their human counterparts, these creatures became ignorant despoilers. Conversely, the large herds of the dairy farmer, situated on enclosed land, became the only ‘correct’ space for these creatures to inhabit. This ensured that these new spaces for animals were inherently connected to notions of landownership and class.⁵³ As Philo and Wilbert argued, acts such as enclosure create strict demarcations and cultural boundaries by constructing new ‘animal spaces’ whilst delegitimising previous spaces, such as common land.⁵⁴ Animals who were discovered outside of these new ‘animal spaces’ were described in a similar manner to human malcontents. One magistrate recalled a trespassing herd of cattle acting ‘maliciously’ and making farmers ‘suffer severely’ whilst another condemned a ‘mischievous’ horse, declaring that he was in no doubt of the ‘illegality of his [the horses] conduct.’⁵⁵ Evidently, rural authorities feared the disruptive potential of animals ‘out of place’. In Huish Champflower, William Collins complained bitterly about cattle roaming onto his enclosed fields. Writing to a former commoner, Collins declared that ‘your cattle frequently break into this field and do great damage... they must be in their correct place.’⁵⁶ Such language conferred upon these creatures a significant degree of agency, with their ability to ‘break into’ these fields mimicking a human burglar or trespasser. Animal bodies who moved beyond their ‘correct place’ thus became inherently criminal or immoral. In Somerset and Dorset, these discourses worked alongside the new material landscapes to control and curtail the movements of animals and humans. In so doing, proponents of landscape change sought to prevent physical or symbolic disruptions that could potentially threaten the expansion of private property.

Eventually, these new discourses flowered into legislation that protected private property by criminalising hitherto customary behaviours, rights and beliefs.⁵⁷ In 1820 the Malicious Trespass Act was introduced and, after being revised in 1827, allowed for the summary conviction of those caught causing ‘malicious injury’ to any ‘building, hedge, fence, tree, wood, or underwood.’ For first-time offenders, ‘malicious trespass’ was penalised through a

⁵³ Pearson and Weismantel, ‘Does “The Animal” Exist?’, pp. 23-6; R. Yarwood and N. Evans, ‘Taking Stock of Farm Animals and Rurality’ in C. Philo and C. Wilbert (eds.), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 98-114.

⁵⁴ Philo and Wilbert, ‘Animal Spaces, Beastly Places’, pp. 6-13. See also: Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93.

⁵⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, 28 October 1819; *Taunton Courier*, 3 April 1822. For similar descriptions of trespassing animals see: *Taunton Courier*, 14 April 1824; *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 December 1856, 21 January 1862.

⁵⁶ ‘William Collins to Robert Sellick, 4 June 1858’; ‘William Collins to John Bickey, 4 June 1858’, Wyndham Estate Papers, SHC, DD/WY/7/7/30.

⁵⁷ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 49-53; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62.

£5 fine or three-month gaol sentence.⁵⁸ The act was widely deployed and by 1853 sixteen per cent of all summary imprisonments were due to ‘malicious trespass’.⁵⁹ Trespassing animals were punished in a similar manner to their human counterparts. Through common law and manorial by-laws ‘stray’ livestock could be impounded, with new fines introduced in 1842 to punish individuals who attempted to free their animals.⁶⁰ Equally, the Stopping Up of Unnecessary Roads Act was passed in 1815 and allowed for the closure of any route deemed irrelevant. Although nominally requiring two justices of the peace to agree to road closures the act quickly became a mere formality for landowners.⁶¹ Through these laws formerly uncontroversial landscapes and practices were redefined as criminal. In 1833, for example, Thomas Mitchell was imprisoned for one month when he ‘wilfully trespassed in the corner of a field’. According to Mitchell, this illegal act was merely part of his ‘usual journey home’. William Barnes was similarly punished in 1822 for drunkenly taking a shortcut through an orchard whilst travelling home from the inn.⁶² Authorities subsequently recast everyday movements as wilful acts of insubordination. Through newspapers and printed handbills, repeated warnings were issued, stating that those discovered traversing through new enclosures would be ‘prosecuted as wilful trespassers.’⁶³ There was a concerted effort to recast customary taskscapes as not only conducive to immoral behaviour but inherently criminal in and of themselves. Imprisoning men such as Mitchell or Barnes publicly demonstrated the new ‘sanctity’ or exclusivity of these spaces, dissuading others from disrupting private property.

With customary activities now perceived as criminal by those in power, these privatized spaces legitimised and encouraged violent reprisals against ‘transgressive’ bodies. As Blomley noted, private property is maintained by, and consequently justifies, acts of bodily harm.⁶⁴ In nineteenth-century Somerset and Dorset, attempted performances of previous taskscapes were thus harshly punished. At Langton Wallis, families were attacked by cudgel-wielding bailiffs

⁵⁸ Malicious Trespass Act. 1 Geo. 4, c. 56 (1820); Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest*, pp. 117-9.

⁵⁹ These figures were referenced by contemporary newspapers: *Bath Chronicle*, 7 August 1856.

⁶⁰ McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 4-5; McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 40-1; *Taunton Courier*, 20 September 1843.

⁶¹ C. Aitchison, N. Macleod and S. Shaw, *Leisure and Tourism Landscapes: Social and Cultural Geographies* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 52-3; Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields and Popular Protest’, pp. 100-1; A. Wallace, *Walking, Literature and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 115

⁶² ‘Conviction of Thomas Mitchell for Trespassing on George Kemp’s Property’, Poole Court Papers, *DHC*, DC-PL/C/C/17/1; ‘Conviction of William Barnes for Trespassing on John Foot’s Orchard’, Poole Court Papers, *DHC*, DC-PL/C/C/16/3.

⁶³ *Bath Chronicle* 21 August 1800; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 1 September 1836, 8 September 1836, 13 May 1847; ‘Notice Regarding Any Future Trespass, 1812’, *SHC*, DD/RC/26/18.

⁶⁴ Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’, pp. 121-41; Blomley, ‘Enclosure, Common Right and the Property of the Poor’, pp. 312-16.

as they attempted ‘to cut furze, heath, turf, peat or otherwise trespass’ on land recently enclosed by Henry Bankes. These beatings were supposedly permitted as a defence against ‘wilful and malicious trespassers.’⁶⁵ In these rural communities, claims to customary rights sourced their authority from continuous usage. For the Langton trespassers, turf-cutting was a ‘usual and accustomed practice’ that had occurred since ‘before common recollection’.⁶⁶ Assaulting these people thus enforced Bankes’ exclusive ownership whilst also breaking the chain of continuity that provided these customs with legitimacy. By forcibly regulating the movements and practices of local residences, Bankes ensured that his private property was protected materially and symbolically. The unblemished fields stood as a physical testament to, and reflection of, his exclusive control. These violent actions were justified and encouraged by English Common Law due to its reliance on ‘actual practice’.⁶⁷ Moreover, violent public performances discouraged future disruption, ensuring that environmental transformations could proceed unchallenged. In 1823, Isaac Short was ‘publicly whipt’ in the marketplace of Tellisford after trespassing in a newly created orchard.⁶⁸ These visceral and emotive demonstrations helped construct and solidify private property, revealing what befell those who challenged the new rural order. The wounds inflicted upon the Langton families or Short were public warnings for those who considered disrupting private property in future. Alongside hedges or fences, these assaults curtailed the movement of rural people through physical, legal and social compulsion.⁶⁹ The discourses that depicted enclosure as a moral crusade justified these actions, presenting violence as the only route to protect rural morality from ignorant despoilers. Through physical force, enclosers enforced their own moral ecologies and material alterations whilst simultaneously preventing rural people from performing their customary practices.

Yet it would be misleading to present conflict over contested spaces as a binary clash between enclosers and the rural poor. In establishing ‘actual practice’ rural elites frequently exploited the performances of animal and human bodies to contest the claims of fellow landowners. Since the sixteenth century, farmers had used livestock to performatively demarcate and expand their

⁶⁵ ‘Notice and Record of Trespass on Langton Wallis Heath’, Papers of Ryder of Rempstone and Wareham, *DHC*, D-RWR/T/71 f. 1.

⁶⁶ ‘Notice and Record of Trespass on Langton Wallis Heath’, Papers of Ryder of Rempstone and Wareham, *DHC*, D-RWR/T/71 f. 2. McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 204-6; Lobban, ‘Custom, Common Law Reasoning and the Law of Nations’, pp. 257-64; D. Bogart and G. Richardson, ‘Property Rights and Parliament in Industrializing Britain’, *Journal of Law and Economics*, 54:2 (2011), pp. 241-74.

⁶⁷ Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’, p. 123; T. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-28, 97-146. For law as struggle see: Navickas, ‘A Return to Materialism?’, p. 99.

⁶⁸ *Bath Chronicle*, 2 October 1823; *Sussex Advertiser*, 6 October 1823.

⁶⁹ R. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. pp. 26-7 52-91; Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 8-10.

property.⁷⁰ In 1833, two Somerset landowners engaged in an impounding war over a disputed wood. Both men would depasture various livestock on the site whilst also impounding their rival's animals. The physical occupation of contested landscapes by livestock was widely understood as a key determinant of ownership. Lawyers for both parties agreed that if either man allowed the other's animals to remain in the woods unmolested, he would 'surrender his claims'.⁷¹ These creatures thus performed private property, acting as living symbols that visibly demonstrated control. However, these animals were not merely cultural markers but transformative beings. Their presence reshaped the terrain to align with the claims of one party whilst damaging the other's property. In 1860, a herd of horses were released into an oat field belonging to a Mr White in Ashill. These animals belonged to White's neighbour, Dr Palmer, and before they were captured these horses 'destroyed the crops' and 'levelled the fences'. According to an 'old villager' who had known 'the land many years since', the fieldscape created by the trespassing horses resembled 'when part of the field was an orchard, part of an old enclosure... which was all purchased by Dr Palmer.'⁷² These animals did not simply seize the land symbolically but also remade it to physically advertise and enact Palmer's claims. Simultaneously, White's encroachments were materially obliterated, ensuring that Palmer's visions of the land's 'correct' state could be easily read from the landscape. Contrary to the arguments of Sewell, it was not only the 'resource-poor' who inverted spatial practices to enforce their claims.⁷³ For landowners, placing livestock in contested spaces created physical 'landmarks of memory', that tapped into the recollections of local people. With the authority of customary law resting upon 'ancient practice', these animals revived or reinforced claims whilst remaking landscapes to facilitate specific memories.⁷⁴ Conflicts over contested spaces were not simply struggles between rich and poor over private property or moral ecologies.

⁷⁰ McDonagh, 'Making and Breaking Property', p. 51; McDonagh and Griffin, 'Occupy!', pp. 1-6.

⁷¹ 'Case of Bond vs Downton for Trespass, 1833-4', Butleigh Court Papers, *SHC*, DD/S/BT/26/11/78; 'Assorted Documents and Reports Regarding Bond vs Downton, 1833-4', Butleigh Court Papers, *SHC*, DD/S/BT/26/12/16-7. Similar cases include: 'A Case of Trespass and Damage with Cattle', *SHC*, DD/DP/60/5; 'Correspondence Concerning Trespass at Barnsley Farm, Bankes Family Correspondence, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/H/1/3/24.

⁷² *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 November 1860.

⁷³ Sewell, 'Space in Contentious Politics', pp. 55-65. See also: D. Eastwood, 'Communities, Protest and Police in Nineteenth-Century Oxfordshire: The Enclosure of Otmoor Reconsidered', *Agricultural History Review*, 44:1 (1996), pp. 35-46.

⁷⁴ M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. L. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 175; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 36-7; Brady, 'Space, Place and Agency', pp. 29-48; Griffin and Evans, 'On Historical Geographies', p. 10. For the importance of memory to disputes over custom and enclosure see: B. Short, 'Conservation, Class and Custom: Lifespace and Conflict in a Nineteenth-Century Forest Environment', *Rural History*, 10:2 (1999), pp. 127-54; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20, 222-3; Whyte, 'Senses of Place, Senses of Time', pp. 925-38.

Instead, these performances underpinned everyday negotiations between landowners and the subsequent operation of exclusive ownership.

Similarly, the rights and privileges of commoners were founded upon the ‘violence of exclusion.’ Historians of enclosure sometimes risk romanticising common land as an egalitarian space.⁷⁵ However, due to increasing commercialization throughout the eighteenth century, commons came to occupy an ambiguous middle ground between private and communal property. Within many communities, access to common land was restricted through hierarchies of gender, status and lineage.⁷⁶ These cultural and social boundaries were thus frequently policed through violent actions. In 1834, John Diment allowed his horse to graze on common land in Buckland Newton. He was soon approached by James Young who asserted that Diment did not hold ‘common of pasture’ as he was ‘a farmhand.’ Young attempted to seize the animal but:

[Diment] did not let go of the horse; and Young struck him ten or twelve blows about the head. A Jew was passing by, whom Young several times asked for a knife, but he did not give him one. Young then took a stick out of the hedge, and beat the horse’s behind, so that it ran off.⁷⁷

Young’s willingness to conduct serious bodily harm over a horse indicates how animals ‘out of place’ were perceived as serious threats to notions of exclusive ownership. For Young this trespassing horse was an unacceptable imposition and so violence was authorized to impound it.⁷⁸ Allowing this horse to remain within this space would have visibly undermined supposedly exclusive privileges, the animal’s corporeality remaking previous demarcations and social distinctions.⁷⁹ At court Young argued that allowing the horse to graze would have resulted in Diment becoming ‘wrongfully in possession’ of common rights and that it was his duty to ‘defend the common land’.⁸⁰ This language depicts Diment as a thief stealing a material object, suggesting that rural people envisioned common rights as having a physical presence in the

⁷⁵ Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure*, p. 133; Turner, ‘Economic Protest in Rural Society’, pp. 99-105. For the ‘violence of exclusion’ see Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 150-3.

⁷⁶ Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, pp. 260-4; Rodgers, Straughton, Winchester and Pieraccini, *Contested Common Land*, pp. 19-31; McDonagh and Daniels, ‘Enclosure Stories’, pp. 108-11. For the importance of the hierarchies of exclusion in other areas of customary rights and laws see: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20; Wood, ‘Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60; Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, pp. 101-9.

⁷⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 10 July 1834.

⁷⁸ Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 8-9; Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’, p. 123

⁷⁹ For the value placed upon the corporeality of animals by protestors and authorities see: Pearson, ‘Dogs, History and Agency’, p. 132-34; Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’, pp. 37-40.

⁸⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 10 July 1834.

world. Indeed, the maintenance of common rights necessitated that these spaces were preserved, often at the expense of the local poor. In 1807, for example, commoners in Sherborne destroyed the walls surrounding a series of allotments meant to support 'poor widows'. It was claimed that these women were not 'permitted these privileges' and that the commoners had suffered a 'conspiracy against their rights.'⁸¹ With the authority of common rights reliant on continuous unaltering practice, allowing any other group to physically perform these privileges or modify the land risked disrupting the claims of commoners. Consequently, there was no singular moral ecology that encompassed the entirety of the rural poor. Commons were hotbeds of internal conflict with those deemed 'unfit' being forcibly excluded. As with landowners, commoners fought to ensure that their rights and moral ecologies could be 'read' from the land.⁸²

This period witnessed a transformation in how landowners envisioned the landscapes of Somerset and Dorset. Previous customary relationships and notions of reciprocity were replaced with discourses that presented common land as a corruptive force. To align with these cultural perceptions, and facilitate the fluctuating demands of local economies, material landscapes were altered to prevent performances of customary rights and 'disruptive' everyday activities. Through physical barriers, new legislation and violence enclosers extinguished previous practices and compelled communities to accept their exclusive ownership. Simultaneously, landowners conducted their own performances by using animal bodies to visibly demonstrate their claims. As Lefebvre emphasised, bodily experiences and the practices of everyday life drove the making and remaking of spaces.⁸³ Both private property and common land were thus forged, policed and challenged through daily activities or experiences. These struggles were not purely symbolic as animal and human bodies physically reshaped the land to support certain claims.⁸⁴ Neither enclosure nor the violent protests that followed them were sudden disruptions of previously stable spaces. Instead, the landscapes of Somerset and Dorset were sites of constant conflict. Protests such as fence-breaking or mass trespass were impactful because landowners, tenant farmers and commoners had all regularly adopted these repertoires to protect their own interests. These actions were empowered by common and customary law, which both emphasised continuity and 'actual practice'. Thus, there was no simplistic divide

⁸¹ 'Indictment Against John Baker and Five Others for the Destruction of a Wall', Papers of Ffooks and Darlington, DHC, D-FFO/12/5.

⁸² See further: McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects', pp. 265-6.

⁸³ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 405; Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 241-2.

⁸⁴ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 58-89.

between ‘plebeian’ environmental ethics and private property.⁸⁵ Controlling and reshaping physical spaces allowed landowners and protestors to enforce their visions of the ‘correct’ relationships between masters, men and the environment.

Performing Continuity: Enclosure Protests and Defending Landscapes

It would be disingenuous to suggest that every instance of enclosure in Somerset and Dorset was met with overt resistance. Some local historians estimate that only eleven enclosure riots occurred in Somerset and Dorset between 1780 and 1850.⁸⁶ As Neeson highlighted, landscape change was primarily opposed through non-violent means, such as legal challenges.⁸⁷ In rural communities, ‘grumbling’ and negotiation commonly preceded physical transformations. In Worle and Portbury, for example, locals expressed their discontent through village meetings and the crafting of parliamentary petitions. Both documents declared enclosure to be ‘injurious’ to the ‘lives and customs’ of local people.⁸⁸ In Sturminster Marshall, a secret ballot was employed in 1806 with the entire male population invited to vote on enclosure. This ‘election’ soundly rejected the act, although the commissioners rejected the result arguing that most of those voting had no ‘interest in the land.’⁸⁹ These protests allowed people to voice their discontent without risking their personal safety. Indeed, petitions and complaints regularly gained concessions from landowners seeking to avoid prolonged negotiations.⁹⁰ In Lydlinch, a sizeable portion of the common was left untouched to appease a petition against the stopping-up of a ‘certain ancient public highway’.⁹¹ Petitioning and ‘grumbling’ were thus far from token protests against landscape change. Similarly, the rural poor often employed ‘mischief’ and

⁸⁵ For these debates see: Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict’, pp. 24-38; Griffin, Jones and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance’ pp. 1-34.

⁸⁶ Although ‘counting’ riots is fraught with difficulties: Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order’, pp. 24-6; Lawrence, ‘Somerset 1800-1830’, pp. 56-60, 101-110; Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 63-76. For this debate in a wider context see: M. Brown, ‘Aspects of Parliamentary Enclosure in Nottinghamshire’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 1995), pp. 194-239.

⁸⁷ Neeson, ‘Opponents of Enclosure’, 114-39; Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 259-94.

⁸⁸ Both of the petitions were ultimately unsuccessful: ‘Petition of the People of Worle Against the Proposed Enclosure’, Worle Parish Papers, *SHC*, DD\TRANS/3/38; ‘Petition Against the Portbury Inclosure Act’, Portbury Parish Papers, *SHC*, DD\OB/101. For enclosure petitions and parliament see: J. Hoppit, ‘Petitions, Economic Legislation and Interest Groups in Britain, 1660-1800’, *Parliamentary History*, 37:1 (2018), pp. 52-71.

⁸⁹ ‘Proceedings and Results of a Ballot on the Inclosure of Common Lands’, Sturminster Marshall Parish Records, *DHC*, D1/11700.

⁹⁰ D. Stead, ‘An Arduous and Unprofitable Undertaking: The Enclosure of Stanton Hardcourt, Oxfordshire’, *University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, 26 (1998), pp. 1-35; B. Frazer, ‘Common Recollections: Resisting Enclosure “by Agreement” in Seventeenth-Century England’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 3:2 (1999), pp. 75-99.

⁹¹ ‘Complaint and Case of William Caines and Others’, Buckland Newton Parish Papers, *DHC*, PE-BCN/SU/2/1.

‘non-compliance’ to resist enclosure.⁹² In 1797 the enclosure of North Curry was delayed for several months by acts of vandalism and theft. The land surveyors were ‘unable to hire any labourers’ within the village to assist them and their tools were ‘stolen on numerous occasions’. Local magistrates even requested a detachment of dragoons be sent to patrol the common after a number of exploratory fencepoles were broken during the night.⁹³ Consequently, whilst the following case studies focus on riotous protest, we should not conclude that the lack of overt resistance indicates an unquestioning acceptance of enclosure. Communities that did not riot still understood the threat posed to their everyday lives, moral ecologies and customary practices by landscape change. Breaking down fences and petitioning parliament both sought to prevent material transformations.⁹⁴ Enclosure was not a universal process and each community responded differently to the alteration of their local taskscapes.

All enclosure protests were linked by a principal goal: the defence and reconstruction of customary landscapes. Protesting crowds altered the spaces they occupied, remaking these contested physical spaces to visibly assert and facilitate customary practices, privileges and social relationships. By breaking fences or conducting mass trespass, human and animal bodies thus re-established and reinforced threatened environments.⁹⁵ In 1810, the Gillingham enclosure ‘excited much discontent’ following announcements that the common would be auctioned off and the ‘common road’ stopped-up. The resulting disruption of everyday life was deemed ‘intolerable’ at a meeting of villagers.⁹⁶ In response, three hundred men ‘from Gillingham and parts adjacent’ assembled on Mapperton Hill and Piercewood, overlooking the common, and then ‘destroyed long lines of the fences’. The crowd focused their anger on the fences that surrounded the common and ‘stopped-up’ the ‘common road’.⁹⁷ By destroying these fences in particular the crowd reverted the environment to its pre-enclosure state, momentarily reviving their endangered taskscape. It was recorded that removing these material objects allowed locals to ‘use the common road freely’ and that they had been ‘injured or aggrieved’ by the disruption of their ‘accustomed foot way’.⁹⁸ Through their now unconstrained bodily

⁹² Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. 28-47; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 136-82. See also: McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-56.

⁹³ ‘Report on the North Curry Inclosure, 1797’, Serel Collection, *SHC*, DD/SAS/C795/SE/127, f. 103. The Home Office politely declined this request: ‘John White, Home Office, to Mr Andrews, n.d. 1797’, Serel Collection, *SHC*, DD/SAS/C795/SE/127, f. 104.

⁹⁴ For further explorations of ‘everyday’ resistance see the following chapter, also: McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 191-206; Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest*, pp. 78-200.

⁹⁵ Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 195-216; McDonagh and Daniels, ‘Enclosure Stories’, pp. 107-21; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, 130-1.

⁹⁶ *Bath Chronicle*, 4 January 1810; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 12 February 1810, 19 February 1810.

⁹⁷ *Morning Post*, 20 March 1810; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 March 1810.

⁹⁸ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 23 April 1810.

movements protestors in Gillingham demonstrated that their customary access rights were still being practised and enforced. Moreover, notions of being ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ were defined in relation to material boundaries.⁹⁹ By altering these spaces physically, the crowd thus eliminated the material impediments to their everyday lives whilst concomitantly challenging the cultural redefinition of local space. Removing the controversial fencing directly countered proclamations from officials that these routes had been ‘stopped-up’ and privatized. Enclosure protests, therefore, did not simply demonstrate local anger but also called previous non-exclusive spaces ‘into being’.¹⁰⁰ By breaking these fences the Gillingham crowd symbolically and physically reasserted their visions of a morally correct environmental state.

However, anger in Gillingham was not solely reserved for the fences that enforced enclosure. Through their protest repertoires the crowd also condemned the local elites who threatened customary landscapes and thus betrayed their paternal duties. After assembling on Mapperton Hill and Piercewood the crowd assembled themselves into an ‘orderly procession’ with a number of yeomen and tenant farmers positioned at the front. As a singular group the protestors then marched to the fences deemed obstructive and these ‘landed men’ would ‘direct the mob’ to ‘commence with their destruction’. When the crowd finally dispersed these farmers were heralded by ‘a series of cheers and huzzahs’.¹⁰¹ If enclosure denoted a ‘reconfiguring of social relations’ from customary reciprocity to impersonal wage labour, then this protest performatively rejected these new arrangements.¹⁰² Gathering as one body on the hills overlooking Gillingham common demonstrated both the protestors strength and unity. Disciplined marching similarly emphasised the crowd’s strength, with its militaristic connotations implicitly threatening violence against local supporters of enclosure.¹⁰³ Moreover, the placing of local farmers at the head of this procession was not accidental, nor was it an example of impressment ‘from below’. Instead, these men willingly performed their customary role as paternalistic protectors of the poor. At a meeting of the enclosure commissioners, one of the few opportunities locals had for legally voicing their opposition, a

⁹⁹ McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 261-2. See also: Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 5-6; M. Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 70-5.

¹⁰⁰ Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-9; Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 930-1; Robertson and Hall, ‘Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict’, pp. 19-36.

¹⁰¹ *Taunton Chronicle*, 5 April 1810; *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 March 1810; ‘Examinations of James Read, Samuel Cox, Elias Greed, Albinus Snook, John Matthews, William Honeyfield, Thomas Lush, Thomas Stone and John Yetman’, Dorset Quarter Session Rolls, Easter 1810, *DHC*.

¹⁰² Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 929-30; Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 91-124. See also: Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 56-7, 71-81; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 204-5, 293-5; Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 65; Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 292, 330.

¹⁰³ For the importance of the landscape and marches to protest movements see: Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields and Popular Protest’, pp. 91-111; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 223-50.

supporter of the protesting farmers claimed that defending common rights was ‘their duty’.¹⁰⁴ Of the nine Gillingham men imprisoned; two were yeomen, five were labourers, one was a mason and one was a horse-dealer.¹⁰⁵ This suggests that a broad cross-section of the community participated, aligning with the national demographic patterns for enclosure rioters.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently, to prevent the material transformation of Gillingham’s common land, the local population not only recreated a landscape that facilitated their customary rights but also performatively revived ‘reciprocal’ patrician-plebeian social relationships.¹⁰⁷ Certainly, some of these farmers benefitted from common rights, but they would have likely profited from enclosure as many were poised to increase their holdings. Indeed, William Honeyfield, one of the gaoled yeomen, was entitled to a portion of the enclosed land or its profits following auction.¹⁰⁸ His leading role in this protest indicates that moral ecologies were not monopolised by a single class. For these communities, enclosure threatened their daily working lives and conceptions of a ‘moral’ society.

In order to revert the land to its ‘correct’ state, protestors frequently attempted to eradicate all evidence of an enclosure’s existence. Some historians have restrictively envisioned ‘enclosure riots’ as immediate responses to boundary changes.¹⁰⁹ However, it was not legal redefinitions that inspired resistance but later material transformations. In Stockland Dalwood, enclosure was enacted in 1790, removing the grazing rights of village freeholders. Aside from an ambiguous incident in 1802, when some freeholders ‘prostrated’ the fences, this enclosure was not met with any overt resistance.¹¹⁰ In March 1829 the land was thus purchased by Robert Hawker who began to construct a new farmhouse on the site. This material alteration immediately led to protests by freeholders who ‘proceeded to the place, and, in order as they thought to defend their rights... commenced destroying the walls and fences with pickaxes.’¹¹¹ The ‘rights’ these freeholders were defending had not been legally enforceable for almost forty

¹⁰⁴ ‘Minutes of the Gillingham and Motcombe Inclosure Committee’, *DHC*, D-FAN, p. 34. For impressment, see: Wallis, “‘We Do Not Come Here... To Inquire into Grievances; We Come Here to Decide Law’”, pp. 159-75.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Criminal Process Register, 1809-1820’, Dorchester Prison Papers, *DHC*, NG-PR/1/D/1/2.

¹⁰⁶ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 72-5; Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order’, pp. 25-6.

¹⁰⁷ For these two-way relationships see also: Thompson, ‘Eighteenth-Century English Society’, pp. 133-65; Snell, ‘Deferential Bitterness’, pp. 158-84; Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Minutes of the Gillingham and Motcombe Inclosure Committee’, *DHC*, D-FAN, p. 33; *Taunton Chronicle*, 5 April 1810.

¹⁰⁹ Archer, *Social Unrest*, pp. 10-13; Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order’, pp. 24-31; P. Carter, ‘Enclosure, Waged Labour and the Formation of Class Consciousness: Rural Middlesex, c. 1700-1835’, *Labour History Review*, 66:3 (2001), pp. 269-93.

¹¹⁰ The only reference to the 1802 incident is in regard to the later unrest and it is unclear whether this act was intentional or an accident: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 23 July 1829.

¹¹¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 23 July 1829.

years. Yet because the land had not been materially transformed since 1790 the memory of these practices remained. Enclosures did not spring into existence through legal acts, they needed to be performed and constructed within each locality to take effect. In Stockland Dalwood, the previous grazing rights and taskscapes remained physically embedded in the land, making this new cottage an intolerable imposition. As Robertson noted, ‘recalled-but-absent’ landscapes helped empower dispossessed people. In Stockland, the remains of a previous way of life littered the landscape as material legacies and landmarks of memory.¹¹² Until 1829 these fields had remained unchanged and so the rights associated with them went unchallenged. Claims to common land had to be maintained materially as well as mentally and so permitting this house to be built risked surrendering the freeholders’ customary rights. For these communities, the physicality of the space had just as much intrinsic meaning as its symbolic elements.

The moral ecologies of Stockland Dalwood necessitated that this cottage be removed, and its occupant punished. Through such actions these locally focused protests became connected with wider concerns regarding the changing nature of communal relations.¹¹³ Following the 1829 protests, a number of freeholders were fined and construction was completed without further incident.¹¹⁴ However, unrest resurfaced in 1832 due to ‘local disagreements’ and a belief that the cottage was an ‘insult’. A crowd of villagers ‘surrounded the cottage’ before breaking down the doors and forcibly evicting Hawker. Ropes were then attached to the ‘eaves of the cottage’ and ‘fifteen men... attempted to pull down the house’. Directing these proceedings was James Lane, a yeoman who had participated in the 1829 protests. He ‘regaled’ the labourers with ‘music, drink and victuals’ until ‘mounted constabulary’ arrived from neighbouring parishes to disperse the crowd.¹¹⁵ As in Gillingham, Lane’s performances directly referenced idealised notions of a harmonious patrician-plebeian relationship. Furthermore, conducting a treating ritual within this contested space allowed Lane’s paternal generosity to be directly contrasted to Hawker’s ‘immoral’ actions.¹¹⁶ Destroying the cottage materially thus returned this space to its ‘correct’ state whilst also championing paternalistic social relationships. Crucially, gifting

¹¹² Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 213; Robertson and MacLeod Rivett, ‘Of Necessary Work’, pp. 159-87. See also: R. Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 198.

¹¹³ For these concerns see also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 159-60; Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class’, pp. 803-26.

¹¹⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 23 July 1829.

¹¹⁵ ‘Indictment of Robert Bouchier, James Lane and Thirteen Others’, Assizes Western Circuit: Indictment Files, NA, Assi 25/22/21 ff. 43-5; *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 26 August 1832.

¹¹⁶ For other examples of these popular judgements see: G. Seal, ‘Tradition and Agrarian Protest in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales’, *Folklore*, 99:2 (1988), pp. 146-69; S. Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales, 1760-1914: The Courts of Popular Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 72-81.

the crowd ‘drink and victuals’ should not be interpreted as a purely cynical manoeuvre by Lane. The crowd, largely comprised of landless labourers, seemed to comprehend and condemn Hawker’s physical alterations. Cries of ‘Down with the house!’ and ‘D[amn] trespasser!’ punctuated the demolition and the crowd ‘roughly handled’ Hawker to enact ‘their own justice’.¹¹⁷ In Dorset, the ‘pulling down’ of a home was commonly associated with the persecution of Methodists. These ritualistic acts of destruction had been a ‘regular occurrence’ in the eighteenth century and remained a part of local customary culture. During celebrations on Oak Apple Day, non-conformists were visited by gangs of labourers, who demanded ‘charity’ payments or else their home would be ‘in peril’.¹¹⁸ Consequently, protestors at Stockland Dalwood had adopted a set of repertoires that directly likened Hawker to these social pariahs. By emphasising ‘local disagreements’ and lionising Lane’s paternalism, these acts of resistance sought to not only revert this space physically but also protect customary social relationships. As Whyte argued, material landscapes were ‘narrated’ as an unfolding story to empower protests. In Stockland, the previous fieldscape was presented as an embodiment of a ‘moral’ societal state whilst Hawker’s home became a corruptive imposition.¹¹⁹ By destroying this cottage, protestors were enforcing the ‘rules’ that supposedly governed the relationships between patricians, plebeians and the environment.

Trespassing animals could, therefore, provide the keenest challenge to private property. Through their bodily performances, these creatures reverted the landscape to its former state whilst also publicly demonstrating common rights and customary practices. Animals ‘out of place’ inspired communities to resist enclosure, providing opportunities for locals to express alternate ecological visions.¹²⁰ Following the enclosure of Milverton, Edward Dyer took possession of a series of fields known as ‘Church Lands’. In 1805, Dyer erected new fences and planted crops on the former pasture. Placards were also placed around the village warning that any animals found on ‘Church Lands’ would be impounded. What had once been a communally accepted ‘animal space’ had thus been delegitimised by these physical and legal

¹¹⁷ *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 26 August 1832.

¹¹⁸ J. Smith Simon, *Methodism in Dorset: A Sketch* (Weymouth, 1870), pp. 12-15; G. Roberts, *The History and Antiquities of Lyme Regis and Charmouth* (London, 1834), pp. 257-8; *Taunton Courier*, 5 June 1867. Oak Apple Day was celebrated on 29 May, for more on customary festivals and protest see Chapter 5. Similar rituals were witnessed in Wales, see: R. Jones, ‘Symbol, Ritual and Popular Protest in Early Nineteenth-Century Wales: The Scotch Cattle Rebranded’, *Welsh History Review*, 21:6 (2012), pp. 34-57.

¹¹⁹ For the continued use of the environment and custom in making activities meaningful and understandable see: Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 930-1; Wood, *Memory of the People*, 11-2; Kahn, ‘Your Place and Mine’, pp. 167-96. For the use of rituals to ‘cleanse’ communities see Chapter 3 also: Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 136-40; Howkins and Merrick, “‘Wee Be Black as Hell’”, pp. 41-53.

¹²⁰ Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 81-5; McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 267-71.

alterations.¹²¹ The fences and plants also visibly asserted Dyer's exclusive ownership, erasing all traces of the space's former animal occupants. However, in May 1805 a 'number of cattle' were discovered in these fields:

wrongfully feeding and depasturing upon the grain growing in and upon the said field and doing damage to the said Edward Dyer by trampling and destroying the crops... this placed much distress upon the said Edward Dyer and the said fields.¹²²

These trespassing animals challenged Dyer's attempts to eradicate customary access rights in Milverton. By having these animals occupy this space the former commoners not only mocked Dyer's claims to exclusive control but also reinforced their customary claims to the land by symbolically resurrecting the everyday lives of the former common.¹²³ Underpinned by Common Law's emphasis on daily practice, the visible and active presence of these cattle revived Milverton's former taskscape. The 'feeding' of cattle within this contested area reinforced and transmitted beliefs that these fields were a legitimate 'animal space', directly contradicting Dyer's attempts to constrain these creatures. Yet these animals were more than mere cultural reminders of threatened lifestyles. As the indictment makes clear, these cows were 'trampling and destroying' the crops. The destructive power of trespassing animals and their ability to reshape the land was central to their value. As Collard and Dempsey noted, the political power of animals derived from their status as animate actors. Protestors exploited the corporeality of these creatures, ensuring that their former customary rights could be 'read' from the land.¹²⁴ This protest attempted to provide a tangible reconstruction of endangered lives and rights. Placing animals within 'Church Lands' punished Dyer by causing him 'distress' whilst also providing a direct line of continuity back to the landscapes previous state. By returning the spaces 'legitimate' inhabitants these fields were remade, physically and legally.

It was through their ability to transmit ideas and inspire protest that animals became the focal point for resistance. Protecting 'trespassing' animals legitimised popular violence and allowed

¹²¹ 'Indictment Against John Mansfield of Milverton et al.', Dorset Correspondence Collection, *DHC*, D1-OX/2. For the construction and contestation of animal spaces see also: Philo and Wilbert, 'Animal Spaces', p. 6-10; M. DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 11-14, 32-43.

¹²² 'Indictment Against John Mansfield of Milverton et al.', Dorset Correspondence Collection, *DHC*, D1-OX/2.

¹²³ Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 749-50; McDonagh, 'Making and Breaking Property', pp. 39-43.

¹²⁴ R.C. Collard and J. Dempsey, 'Life for Sale? The Politics of Lively Commodities', *Environment and Planning A*, 45:11 (2013), pp. 2682-2699. See also: McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects', pp. 265-6; D. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 45-68.

protestors to publicly defend customary rights. In Milverton, a group of villagers intercepted Dyer when he attempted to impound the cattle discovered on ‘Church Lands’:

John Mansfield approached and took hold of me. He said ‘you shall not take them, I will make sure of it’... Betty Trickett and several others stood in the road preventing the cattle from entering the pound... John Mansfield then struck me about the head and in the struggle tore my coat.¹²⁵

Rescuing these animals gave these protests an enticing narrative for local participation. It allowed Mansfield, a labourer, and Trickett, a yeoman’s wife, to portray their actions as the recapturing of stolen goods.¹²⁶ In this instance, the cattle’s collective agency, their ‘feeding’ and ‘trampling’, tapped into communal memories of a formerly ‘taken-for-granted’ practice, inspiring the crowd to ‘free the cattle with force and arms’.¹²⁷ Once again, the defence of customary rights encouraged violence, yet it would be misleading to suggest that these actions were spurred by some omnipresent class enmity. Instead, this conflict emerged from fears that by exiling these creatures Dyer was constructing an unacceptable image of the landscape. The grazing of cattle on ‘Church Lands’ was believed to have been a right practised since ‘time immemorial’.¹²⁸ Not only was this a legal term, empowering resistance through claims to antiquity, it also emphasised how these practices were fundamental to the daily lives of local people. Depasturing animals on these fields was a part of Milverton’s culture and customs, helping to define the unique nature of this community.¹²⁹ In seizing these animals, Dyer threatened the customary foundations of local society. Conversely, rescuing livestock provided an opportunity for these protestors to assert their own ecological visions.¹³⁰ These animals thus performed previous taskscapes whilst restoring the ‘correct’ daily lives and social relationships of Milverton.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concept of ‘private property’ was not as absolute as many perceive it in modern times. Instead, these boundaries were subjective and

¹²⁵ ‘Information of Edward Dyer’, Somerset Quarter Session Rolls Midsummer 1805, Q/SR/373/3 f. 54.

¹²⁶ For custom and legitimisation of violence see: Wood, ‘Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60; Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, pp. 101-9.

¹²⁷ ‘Indictment Against John Mansfield of Milverton et al.’, Dorset Correspondence Collection, *DHC*, D1-OX/2. See also: Despret, ‘From Secret Agents’, pp. 29-44; Short, ‘Environmental Politics’, pp. 470-95.

¹²⁸ ‘Indictment Against John Mansfield of Milverton et al.’, Dorset Correspondence Collection, *DHC*, D1-OX/2. For the punishing of these unacceptable images see also: Featherstone, ‘Skills for Heterogeneous Associations’, pp. 284-306.

¹²⁹ For further exploration of these themes see Chapter 2, also: Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*, pp. 80-2; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 240-5; Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, pp. 12-52.

¹³⁰ Griffin, ‘More-than-human Histories’, pp. 451-72. See also: Griffin, ‘Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life’, pp. 301-16; Despret, ‘From Secret Agents’, pp. 29-44.

heavily influenced by social relationships and rivalries. In these conflicts, animal bodies and spaces thus provided outlets for local disagreements. In *Isle Brewers*, ‘a farmer of respectability’ named Mr Couzins was in dispute with his lower-class neighbours over a strip of land near his home. The local poor claimed the land had been granted to them ‘by one of the previous rectors’ and were using this plot to house a small number of pigs. Couzin disagreed, believing that the land was part of his fields.¹³¹ In these rural communities, ambiguous claims to certain spaces were commonplace and were often productive of long-running disputes.¹³² Indeed, in *Isle Brewers* this disagreement had been ‘productive of disorder’ with Couzins and his neighbours regularly ‘exchanging insults’ in the village streets. In 1824 Couzins attempted to seize a pig ‘for trespassing’, but was stopped by Mrs Blake, the animal’s owner. Blake proceeded to ‘pull the poor creature’s tail’ and ‘shout loudly for help’. This ‘tumult’ soon gathered a crowd and when Couzins persisted:

[Blake] opposed him and resolutely prevented his unlocking the gate. In the scuffle which ensued, Mrs Blake was driven back into a ditch... having first severely scratched Mr Couzins’s face and given him other visible marks of her displeasure.¹³³

Unlike *Milverton*, this protest did not seek to transform the local environment into a material reflection of threatened customary rights. Instead, these animals were used to protect existing ownership and enact social vengeance. The specificity of the bodies involved in protest was central to how these acts were performed and punished.¹³⁴ A single pig could not have trampled crops or dismantled fences in the same manner as a herd of cattle, so Blake utilised its other abilities. Its pained squeals gathered a crowd thereby publicly communicating her claims. Blake was also able to use this brief opportunity to enact revenge upon Couzins, the ‘visible marks of her displeasure’ the result of a long-running feud. This personal enmity influenced how both Couzins and Blake responded to accusations of trespass. By exploiting this creature’s corporeality, Blake was able to defend this space and castigate Couzins in front of a large

¹³¹ ‘Information of James Couzins and Others’, Somerset Quarter Session Rolls Easter 1824, *SHC*, Q/SR/432 f. 71-3.

¹³² Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 753-4. For the subjectivity and performance of private property see also: N. Blomley, ‘The Territory of Property’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 40:5 (2016), pp. 593-609; D. Harvey, ‘Ambiguities of the Hedge: An Exercise in Creative Pleaching – Of Moments, Memories and Meanings’, *Landscape History*, 38:2 (2017), pp. 109-27.

¹³³ *Taunton Courier*, 14 April 1824; ‘Information of James Couzins and Others’, Somerset Quarter Session Rolls Easter 1824, *SHC*, Q/SR/432 f. 71-3.

¹³⁴ See further: Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93

crowd. Private property was not an objective social fact but was subsumed into the interpersonal relationships of rural communities.

Acts such as hedge-breaking or riot were not merely reactionary. Instead, these repertoires allowed communities to negotiate and were often deployed alongside legal challenges. On these occasions, rural people appealed to custom as a series of social obligations that maintained and regulated ethically ‘correct’ material landscapes.¹³⁵ For example, in Axbridge enclosure riots were preceded by litigation that united the town’s corporators with local agricultural labourers. As mentioned previously, rather than deferring to the Somerset Quarter Sessions this small town maintained its own courts, providing a unique insight into local environmental conflicts. In 1800 the Mayor sold a plot of land, known as Moor Green, to one John Tucker. The land had been commonly used ‘since time immemorial for holding several fairs in the year’ and ‘erecting sheep pens thereon’.¹³⁶ Shortly afterwards Tucker removed the sheep pens and transformed Moor Green into a series of walled ‘orchards and gardens’. He also ‘stopped up’ the customary route used to travel from this town to its local fairgrounds. A legal challenge to this sale of land was subsequently launched by a number of townfolk, including ‘the Aldermen and a Burgess’. Their case rested upon the argument that Tucker’s material alterations impeded their ability ‘to have, hold and keep several fairs each and every year... in the usual and accustomed manner.’¹³⁷ These demands were not nebulous references to half-remembered practices, the authority of custom rested in its status as a corpus of local law. Demonstrating that a right had been in continuous usage satisfied most courts, providing there were no written records to the contrary.¹³⁸ In Axbridge, opponents of enclosure produced a letter from 1690 written by the Bishop of Bath and Wells. It confirmed their ‘peaceable possessions’ of the ‘common of our beasts’ since ‘before recollection’.¹³⁹ These documents and claims not only granted these customary rights legal authority but also recast Tucker’s

¹³⁵ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 131-2. For custom as an interface see also: Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 97-184; Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 32; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 85-96.

¹³⁶ ‘Explanation of the Case, 1801 Chapman Indictment’, Axbridge Quarter Sessions Legal Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 2. For Axbridge’s unique legal situation see the Introduction, also: Toulson, *The Mendip Hills*, pp. 110-5; Gough, *The Mines of Mendip*, pp. 63-7.

¹³⁷ ‘Case Presented Against John Tucker, 30 June 1800’, Axbridge Quarter Session Legal Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/2/7.

¹³⁸ Wood, ‘Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60; Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community’, pp. 115-20; S. Sandall, *Custom and Popular Memory in the Forest of Dean, c. 1550-1832* (London: Scholar’s Press, 2013); Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, p. 7. For custom as a smokescreen see: Freeman, ‘Plebs or Predators?’, pp. 1-21.

¹³⁹ ‘Petition to the Bishop of Bath and Wells for the Use of the Common Law with Reply’, Records Relating to Commons in Axbridge, *SHC*, D/B/AX/38/7.

transformations as a fundamental challenge to how Axbridge operated as a society.¹⁴⁰ What had once been a legitimate space for both the community's entertainment and their livestock had become privatised almost overnight. One Alderman even claimed that 'the authority of the Corporation' would be lost if they failed to 'protect Moor Green and its associated rights'.¹⁴¹ Access to Moor Green thus formed an integral part of Axbridge's patrician-plebeian relationships, with physical change undermining previous power structures. Resistance in Axbridge, therefore, was not simply a case of poor labourers objecting to the removal of their 'petty' economic entitlements.¹⁴² Instead, enclosure and the 'stopping up' of this road fundamentally altered the local habitus, threatening a space that helped structure local practices, relationships and customs.

Ultimately, this legal challenge was unsuccessful. When the verdict was announced a group of townsfolk, led by the linen-draper Mary Chapman, stormed out of the hall promising that Tucker 'will make satisfaction for this insult'.¹⁴³ In January 1801, Chapman subsequently led a crowd from Axbridge to Moor Green. This riot sought to remove Tucker's material presence, perform the crowd's desired customary relationships and physically inscribe their moral ecologies onto the landscape. After breaking down the fences, the protestors 'allowed various livestock... to be depastured and consume' the various crops now growing on Moor Green.¹⁴⁴ By having their animals occupy this space, the people of Axbridge challenged Tucker's claims to exclusive ownership whilst simultaneously resurrecting their customary practices and publicly demonstrating their rights. The reintroduction of animals disrupted the 'geographies' of private property by performing extinguished taskscapes.¹⁴⁵ It was also reported that groups 'old men and boys remained' on Moor Green for 'many hours' watching over the animals.¹⁴⁶ Whilst this vigil was primarily conducted to protect the livestock from being impounded it also served important cultural and legal purposes. As noted previously, customary rights depended

¹⁴⁰ J. H. Bettey, "'According to Ancient Custom Time Out of Mind: A Problem of Manorial Custom', *Local Historian*, 14:2 (1980), pp. 93-7; Young, 'Popular Attitudes Towards Rural Customs', pp. 64-8.

¹⁴¹ 'Case Presented Against John Tucker, 30 June 1800', Axbridge Quarter Sessions Legal Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/2/7.

¹⁴² Shaw-Taylor, 'Parliamentary Enclosure', pp. 640-62; Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, Cows, Common Rights and Parliamentary Enclosure', pp. 95-126.

¹⁴³ 'Evidence of Thomas Nicholls, 1801 Chapman Indictment', Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/2/7 f. 6.

¹⁴⁴ 'Brief Against Mary Chapman, Henry Carpenter and Joseph Carpenter', Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Blomley, 'Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence', pp. 124-6; McDonagh, 'Subverting the Ground', pp. 204-6.

¹⁴⁶ 'Brief Against Mary Chapman, Henry Carpenter and Joseph Carpenter', Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 3.

on continued practice and gained legitimacy from communal memories. By making young boys bear witness to this protest, opponents of enclosure not only reasserted their ‘ancient’ common rights but also pre-emptively defended their claims against future legal challenges.¹⁴⁷ If access rights to Moor Green were challenged again these the lived experiences of these youths would serve as evidence for the unbroken use of the common. The presence of these human and animal bodies ‘out of place’ reasserted customary landscapes and taskscapes, not only resisting Tucker’s material alterations but also ensuring that local moral ecologies were strengthened and propagated.

These protests were not merely designed to challenge Tucker’s private ownership but completely obliterate the material objects than performed his property. After watching their animals ‘trample’ and ‘crush’ the crops, rioters removed the walls, fences and fruit trees via a series of ‘carts, waggons and other carriages’. Over the course of three days, the rioters removed 1050 cartloads of material from Moor Green with the total damages estimated to have cost Tucker £240.¹⁴⁸ According to one witness, after seizing all of the carts near Axbridge labourers travelled twelve miles to commandeer ‘every waggon’ in the village of Churchill to support their cause. The sheer scale and time-consuming nature of these acts of reversion demonstrate the local support for these protests, especially as there were no attempts from authorities to prevent further destruction. Indeed, it was believed that a number of corporators and ‘respectable gentlemen’ assisted Chapman by providing tools and equipment. William Goodman, a burgess, was accused of retrieving the sheep pens that Tucker had removed, thereby completing the reconstruction of Moor Green’s customary landscape.¹⁴⁹ The moral ecology demonstrated during these protests was not founded upon simplistic class enmity, rather it attempted to encourage participation from across social stratum. As in Stockland or Gillingham, these physical performances and material alterations championed notions of customary reciprocity and ‘harmonious’ patrician-plebeian relations.¹⁵⁰ Mary Chapman had specifically declared that she desired to ‘make satisfaction’ with Tucker and punish him for

¹⁴⁷ McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 269-70; Whyte, ‘Landscape, Memory and Custom’, pp. 166-86; N. Whyte, ‘Custodians of Memory: Women and Custom in Rural England, c. 1550-1700’, *Cultural and Social History*, 2:8 (2011), pp. 153-73.

¹⁴⁸ This was £30 for grasses and corns uprooted and consumed, £30 for damages to fences, hedges and walls, £80 for the damage caused to the fruit trees and £100 for the industrial goods such as stones or bricks, see: ‘Brief Against Mary Chapman, Henry Carpenter and Joseph Carpenter’, Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 3.

¹⁴⁹ William Goodman was not indicted for this act, although a surviving Corporation Minute Book lists a ‘W. Goodman’ one of the primary and most vocal opponents of the sale when a similar case arose in 1828: ‘Case Against William Goodman, 1801 Chapman Indictment’, Axbridge Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 5-6; ‘Axbridge Corporation Minute Book, 1823-1882’, Axbridge Borough Records, *SHC*, D/B/AX/2/1/4.1 p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ For similar occurrences in other protests see: Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 67-93; Reay, *Microhistories*, pp. 133-55.

insulting established ecologies and local custom.¹⁵¹ When conducted at this scale, enclosure protests could thus cause serious financial harm to landowners whilst also damaging their symbolic authority. The remade common publicly advertised Tucker's inability to perform his exclusive claims and the widespread rejection of his ownership. Concomitantly, even if Tucker could afford to repair or replace the walls, fences and trees it would take months before the enclosure was fully restored. In reverting the local environment to its previous state, these protestors thus recreated a landscape that facilitated their customary practices and would continue to do so for the immediate future.

The moral ecologies of Axbridge centred around a desire to reinstate a 'norm of reciprocity' and 'harmonious' social relationships.¹⁵² Following the destruction of Tucker's enclosure, the debris was not simply discarded. Instead, Mary Chapman directed groups of labourers to take the material and conduct road maintenance. According to one eyewitness, a group of men arrived at 'a number of ditches along the Cheddar road and filled them up... it must have taken at least 14 loads.' This continued as Moor Green was being transformed, resulting in nearly every ditch and pothole in Axbridge being repaired by the protesting crowd.¹⁵³ Far from acts of pure-hearted civic duty, these performances were a direct criticism of the Corporation's supposed negligence. In 1792 the local ratepayers had taken the Corporation to court for 'allowing the roads to fall into serious disrepair'. In response, the Mayor and Aldermen had promised to construct 'a new brickyard' on land 'neighbouring Moor Green' to assist the 'maintenance of the highways'.¹⁵⁴ This new brickyard never materialised, and the roads continued to degrade. As Griffin and Robertson noted in their analyses of moral ecologies, in rural communities resource utilisation was commonly governed by notions of 'fairness'.¹⁵⁵ For Chapman, the corporation had failed in its duty to protect local wellbeing and maintain reciprocal relations. When called upon to explain her actions, she:

¹⁵¹ 'Evidence of Thomas Nicholls, 1801 Chapman Indictment', Axbridge Quarter Session Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/2/7 f. 6.

¹⁵² For the 'norm of reciprocity' see: Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, 'Hegemony and the Peasantry', pp. 270-81; Pocock, 'The Classical Theory of Deference', pp. 516-23.

¹⁵³ 'Evidence of William Squire, 1801 Chapman Indictment', Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 6.

¹⁵⁴ 'Summons and Case: Mayor and Aldermen for Not Repairing Roads', Axbridge Court Papers: Miscellaneous Bundles, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/5/41.1.

¹⁵⁵ Griffin and Robertson, 'Moral Ecologies', pp. 24-49; Griffin and Robertson, 'Elvers and Salmon', pp. 101-3.

acknowledged she had directed the other defendants to take it to fill up a ditch... she said she would pay half a guinea and if the plaintiffs would not take that they should get nothing and she would not give a farthing more.¹⁵⁶

By offering to pay for these materials Chapman was invoking the ‘harmonious’ relationship that had been promised by the Corporation in 1792. This was not theft but a revival of how society was supposed to operate. Similar tactics were regularly deployed during food rioting, with protestors forcing bakers and merchants to sell their goods at a ‘fair price’ whilst punishing those who attempted to profit from local misery.¹⁵⁷ The moral ecology in Axbridge worked in an identical manner, with the Corporation forced to allow people to use these materials in return for a ‘fair’ amount of compensation. The occupation and destruction of Moor Green, therefore, was conducted not simply to punish Tucker for ‘immorally’ altering the land. Through their performances, these protestors restored the reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships that this space had previously fostered.

A combination of legal pressure and violent protest allowed the people of Axbridge to resist the transformation of their customary landscape. Unwilling to contend with local hostility Tucker returned Moor Green to the Corporation, accepting an unspecified amount of money in compensation. The common remained open until 1828 when, despite vociferous opposition, the land was turned over to tillage. Although two men were subsequently arrested for fence breaking and tree-maiming, there is no evidence for any larger protest movement.¹⁵⁸ The size of Axbridge’s enclosure riot may have been abnormal, but similar repertoires and mentalities were deployed throughout Somerset and Dorset during this period. The imposition of private property into rural everyday life did not immediately follow legal alterations, it had to be performed. Protests utilised ‘out of place’ human and animal bodies to disrupt the geographies and performances of exclusive ownership.¹⁵⁹ Whilst legitimacy was sourced from symbolic references to customary practices, resistance was more than an arrangement of ‘signs’.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Evidence of Thomas Nicholls, 1801 Chapman Indictment’, Axbridge Quarter Sessions Court Papers, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/3/7, f. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd’, pp. 76-136; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 259-351; A. Charlesworth, ‘From the Moral Economy of Devon to the Political Economy of Manchester, 1790-1812’, *Social History*, 18:2 (1993), pp. 205-17; A. Charlesworth and A. Randall, ‘Comment: Morals, Markets and the English Crowd in 1766’, *Past and Present*, 114 (1987), pp. 200-13; Boshtedt, *The Politics of Provisions*, pp. 165-244.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Axbridge Corporation Minute Book, 1823-1882’, Axbridge Borough Records, *SHC*, D/B/AX/2/1/4.1 p. 27; ‘Conviction of James Dovey and Edmund Rawlins, December 1829’, Axbridge Quarter Session Court Papers: Miscellaneous Bundles, *SHC*, D/B/AX/36/5/41.1.

¹⁵⁹ Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’ pp. 121-41. N. Blomley, ‘Enclosure, Common Right and the Property of the Poor’, pp. 311-331; McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 1-10.

Trespass or hedge-breaking reshaped the landscape by removing the material objects that enforced private property and encouraging local people to perform their moral ecologies. It remade ‘placid spaces’ into ‘fluid arenas of conflict’ by inverting the exclusionary spatial practices of enclosure.¹⁶⁰ However, the specific nature of transgressive bodies critically influenced how resistance was performed and punished. A lone pig did not materially or semantically ‘remake’ a landscape in the same manner as a band of trespassing labourers. Both opponents and proponents of enclosure exploited the unique abilities of human and animal bodies to achieve their goals. Furthermore, moral ecologies in Somerset and Dorset were not simplistic ideologies that unified the poor against a cabal of capitalist landowners. Nor were these protests solely concerned with economic entitlements. Instead, these acts of resistance enrolled individuals from across the social spectrum due to their emphasis on customary relationships, hierarchies and obligations. With enclosure transforming both physical environments and rural social structures, these protests became enrolled in attempts to preserve, and champion, ‘norms of reciprocity’ and idealized, but inherently unequal, patrician-plebeian relationships.

Performing Control: Conflict on the River Tone, 1824-1832

Assertions of an ‘ethical’ environmental state were not limited to struggles over enclosure, nor were they solely deployed by agricultural landowners or commoners. Historians have sometimes presented moral ecologies and everyday resistance as the sole preserve of subaltern groups.¹⁶¹ Yet condemnations of immorality, corruption and harmful ‘foreign’ influence were also utilised by elite organisations during periods of contested transformation. The conflict between the Conservators of the River Tone and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal Company highlights how physical violence, customary performances and patrician-plebeian relationships remained integral to the operation of nineteenth-century property rights. Founded in 1699 by an act of parliament, the Conservators of the River Tone were vital to Somerset’s growing economy.¹⁶² The River Tone connected Bridgwater, the county’s largest port, and Taunton, a

¹⁶⁰ Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, p. 196; Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’, pp. 142-3; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-1.

¹⁶¹ Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies’, pp. 24-49; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon’, pp. 99-116; Griffin, Jones and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance’ pp. 19-25. For a critical assessment of ‘everyday resistance’ see: D. Gupta, ‘Everyday Resistance or Routine Repression? Exaggeration as Stratagem in Agrarian Conflict’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 29 (2001), pp. 89-108.

¹⁶² J. Priestley, *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals and Railways of Great Britain* (London, 1831), pp. 637-8.

centre for local silk and cloth manufacturing. By 1802 it was estimated that 11,500 tons of coal were being transported upstream every year to supply this growing town. In order to ‘maintain the river’s navigability’ through infrastructure projects, the Conservators were permitted to collect tolls and fine anyone who broke their by-laws.¹⁶³ However, this monopoly was disrupted by the construction of the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal between 1824 and 1827. This shorter route was meant to revive flagging local industries by directly connecting the River Tone to the River Parrett, bypassing the Conservators tolls. Unsurprisingly, historians have tended to focus on economic concerns, portraying the resulting conflict as one of traditionalism against progress.¹⁶⁴ Conversely, this section contends that local identities and customary relationships underpinned resistance towards the alteration of this riverscape.

Since their founding, the Conservators had utilised their control over the River Tone to embed themselves within Taunton’s civic identity and customary calendar. As Cusack noted, riverscapes helped define identities as dominant groups exploited these environmental features to embody their ideal society.¹⁶⁵ In Taunton, the ritual performances of the Conservators ensured that an ‘old fashioned’ patrician-plebeian relationship remained central to the operation of the river. According to their charter, the paramount duty of the Conservators was to ‘aid the poor of Taunton’.¹⁶⁶ This involved funding various poor houses and charities, including the construction of the Taunton and Somerset Hospital in 1809. The Conservators advertised these donations, amounting to around £1500 per annum, through elaborate ceremonies that publicly demonstrated their generosity in a ‘theatre of paternalism’.¹⁶⁷ Although these celebrations had begun in the early-eighteenth century, due to the restricted size of provincial newspapers it was not until the nineteenth century that a full description becomes available. Nevertheless, on these occasions it was ‘customary’ for the Conservators to take their ‘annual aquatic excursion’ and ‘patrol the extreme boundary of their right of supervision’ on a ‘decorated barge’ accompanied by ‘banners and a full band’. Eventually, they would sail into Taunton and parade through the

¹⁶³ C. Hadfield, *The Canals of South West England* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1967), pp. 27-32; Scrase, *Somerset Towns*, pp. 115-6; Bulley, ‘To Mendip for Coal’, pp. 55-60. For an example of the by-laws enforced by the Conservators see Appendix I.

¹⁶⁴ Body and Gallop, *Any Muddy Bottom*, pp. 68-70; Hadfield, *The Canals of South West England*, pp. 28-30.

¹⁶⁵ T. Cusack, *Riverscapes and National Identities* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 57-96. See also: W. Taylor, ‘Misplaced Identities: Cultural and Environmental Sources for the ‘Settler Society’ along the Swan River, Perth, Australia’, *National Identities*, 9:2 (2007), pp. 143-61.

¹⁶⁶ ‘William III, 1698: An Act for making and keeping the River Tone navigable from Bridgwater to Taunton in the County of Somerset. [Chapter VIII. Rot. Parl. 10 Gul.III.p.I. n.8.]’, in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (London, 1820), pp. 464-469 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol7/pp464-469>> [Accessed 03/02/2019].

¹⁶⁷ Body and Gallop, *Any Muddy Bottom*, pp. 68-9. For the ‘theatre of paternalism’ see: Thompson, ‘Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture’, pp. 382-405; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 10-5.

town whilst providing the onlooking poor with ‘ample amounts of roast beef and cider’.¹⁶⁸ Every element of this ritual was designed to publicly perform an ‘ideal’ patrician-plebeian relationship whilst simultaneously demonstrating the Conservator’s local power. The ‘aquatic excursion’ took the form of a perambulation ceremony, a ritual usually conducted to confirm and protect parish boundaries. Yet parading around a village or riverway also served a social function by confirming the commonality of what lay within and the ‘otherness’ of what lay without.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, these rivers were not picturesque backdrops but spaces of constant work and toil that needed to be maintained. By patrolling the ‘extreme’ boundaries of their demesne, the Conservators ensured that the river had not been physically altered in a manner that would undermine their claims to exclusive control. As with enclosure boundaries, these spaces needed to be regularly performed and repaired.¹⁷⁰ Equally, their presence within these taskscapes demonstrated their commitment to protecting local wellbeing, as did providing the local poor with food and drink. These actions momentarily encapsulated and advertised the Conservators reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship with Taunton’s community.¹⁷¹ Thus, these rituals materially and culturally maintained the Conservators control over the Tone whilst ensuring the loyalty of the local population.

Whilst popular participation in political rituals should not be mistaken for an unthinking acceptance of elite dominance, the response towards the new canal suggests that these customary riverscapes were closely associated with local identities.¹⁷² In 1824 a public meeting held to discuss altering the River Tone was productive of ‘anger and riotous proceedings’ with the representative of the Canal Company unable to speak due to ‘numerous interruptions from the less respectable inhabitants’. Charles Bunter, a ‘representative of local trades’, summarised local concerns:

I hold it to be the duty of a Taunton Man to support with his best energies, however humble they may be, the town’s true interests should he find any about

¹⁶⁸ *Taunton Courier*, 29 October 1810; *Taunton Courier*, 31 October 1838, 30 October 1839, 3 February 1841, 10 July 1844, 23 July 1845; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 24 July 1845.

¹⁶⁹ D. Fletcher, ‘The Parish Boundary: A Social Phenomenon in Hanoverian England’, *Rural History*, 14 (2003), pp. 177-96; Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 58-89; Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, pp. 285-6; Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 82-4; K.D.M. Snell, ‘The Culture of Local Xenophobia’, *Social History*, 28:1 (2003), pp. 6-8.

¹⁷⁰ Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99; Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 933-6.

¹⁷¹ Such tactics were particularly common during political contests and popular festivities, see Chapters 3 and 5, also: O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies’, pp. 108-9; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 70-9.

¹⁷² See Chapter 3 for discussions on political ritual and deference, also: Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 177-214; N. Rogers, ‘Burning Tom Paine: Loyalism and Counter-Revolution in Britain, 1792-3’, *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 32:64 (1994), 139-71; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 80-102; F. O’Gorman, ‘Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics’, pp. 161-86.

him disposed to sacrifice those interests upon an unrighteous altar... Not a single trade [is] likely to be benefitted by the proceeding... the whole difference is to go into the pockets of the Bristol speculators!¹⁷³

Fears of an increase in coal prices due to new canal tolls were widespread, with many locals believing that the canal's construction costs, approximately £4000, would be paid for through higher tolls on coal barges. However, Bunter's speech also presents the canal as a threat to local morality and identities.¹⁷⁴ These were 'unrighteous' changes being forced upon Taunton by exploitative foreigners. Claims to represent a community were highly political, necessitating the drawing of boundaries and the silencing of dissident voices. In this instance, a true 'Taunton Man' could not support the canal, which was portrayed as the work of 'Bristol speculators'.¹⁷⁵ The Canal Company thus became a looming threat to the harmonious patrician-plebeian relationships fostered by the Conservators and physically embedded in the River Tone. A letter signed by 'An Honest Tradesman' asked:

Can the Taunton public have any conceivable interest in exchanging the protection afforded them by the Conservators of the River Tone, for the commercial extractions of the Canal Company?¹⁷⁶

Conflict over the River Tone was not merely a matter of company profits or coal prices. It also reflected local fears regarding wider changes to rural society. Whether by accident or design, the Conservators had come to represent customary rights and social relationships. Conversely, the 'commercial extractions' of the Canal Company embodied a new 'impersonal' rural order.¹⁷⁷ As with new enclosure walls, the canal physically demonstrated a disregard for customary reciprocity. Preserving the river's material state thus became entangled in the defence of local identities and practices.

The moral ecologies of the River Tone were initially expressed through the protection of the material landscape. For the Conservators and their supporters, this river was a space of

¹⁷³ *Taunton Courier*, 17 March 1824.

¹⁷⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 24 March 1824, 6 January 1830, 3 November 1831; Priestley, *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers*, p. 638; Body and Gallop, *Any Muddy Bottom*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷⁵ For the politics surrounding assertions of 'community', see: Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, pp. 107-9; Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 18-25; Thompson, 'A Breed Apart?', pp. 137-59.

¹⁷⁶ *Taunton Courier*, 29 February 1832.

¹⁷⁷ For these fears in other protests see also: Griffin, 'Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict', pp. 94-7; Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 748-9.

subsistence that should not be ‘despoiled’ or reshaped wholesale by external powers.¹⁷⁸ In December 1826 the Canal reached Firepool Weir ‘so closely to that river as to be separated only from it by an embankment which a couple of hours labour might subvert’.¹⁷⁹ However, the final connection was prevented by ‘fellows of suspicious appearance’ who were ‘observed throwing up a mound for the purpose of preventing a supply of water from the Tone.’ The *Taunton Courier* reported that these actions were ‘hailed with satisfaction... in the ancient town of Taunton’.¹⁸⁰ By defending the Tone’s riverbanks, opponents of the canal were publicly demonstrating their claims. As Whyte observed, despite their malleable natures both customary rights and material landscapes were portrayed as eternally unchanging during land disputes.¹⁸¹ The Conservators’ power rested upon the belief that their customs had been consistently practised since 1699. Referring to Taunton as an ‘ancient town’ reinforced these notions, with the river’s material state positioned as central to local heritage.¹⁸² Allowing these banks to be breached risked undermining the cultural foundations of not only the Conservators but Taunton as a whole. Moreover, these acts of sabotage were not conducted in opposition to legal rulings but because of them. The Conservators justified their resistance by claiming that the Canal Company had lied to Parliament by stating ‘in evidence that they had no intention of entering the River Tone at the Firepool Weir’.¹⁸³ These moral ecologies were thus founded upon customary beliefs and legal indignation. In maintaining the Tone’s ‘ethically correct’ material state, the Conservators ensured that their control could be ‘read’ through the riverscape.

In sabotaging the canal, the Conservators also protected their taskscape whilst preventing the Canal Company from performing theirs. For the canal to be operational it needed a constant supply of water. The ‘dams’ built by the Conservators thus rendered navigation of the canal impossible. One Canal Company agent complained that through these ‘nuisances... the Conservators have done serious mischief and prevented any trade on the canal.’¹⁸⁴ If the

¹⁷⁸ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 48-80; Jacoby, ‘Class and Environmental History’, pp. 329-36; Johnson, ‘Conservation, Subsistence and Class’, pp. 80-99.

¹⁷⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 28 December 1826.

¹⁸⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 3 January 1827, 10 January 1827. These actions were further detailed during a subsequent case at the Court of Chancery and King’s Bench: *London Courier*, 14 August 1830.

¹⁸¹ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, 7-9. See also: Wood, ‘Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60; P. Karsten, *Between Law and Custom: “High” and “Low” Legal Cultures in the Lands of the British Diaspora – The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 23-31.

¹⁸² For these discussions in a modern setting see: T. Jones and A. Perkasa, ‘Crimes Against Cultures: How Local Practices of Regulation Shape Archaeological Landscapes in Trowulan, East Java’, in C. Griffin, R. Jones and I. Robertson (eds.), *Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 129-58.

¹⁸³ *Taunton Courier*, 4 July 1827. For this promise in parliament see: *Taunton Courier*, 17 March 1824.

¹⁸⁴ *Bath Chronicle*, 20 May 1830, 3 November 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 3 November 1831; *Taunton Courier*, 22 February 1832.

Conservators' annual perambulation demonstrated their control over the riverscape, then the lack of water traffic through the canal revealed the Company's claims to be hollow.¹⁸⁵ The thingness of the canal – as an assembly of stone and water – was dismantled and delegitimised by these physical interventions. Conversely, permitting water to freely flow into the canal would remake property's 'grid', allowing the Canal Company to present their route as equal to the previous taskscape.¹⁸⁶ The Canal Company understood this and promptly destroyed the Conservator's dams whilst using a 'number of steam engines' to pump water from the Tone into the canal. Permanent connections were also established in January 1827 at Firepool and Obridge after the Canal Company purchased riverside properties and constructed new locks.¹⁸⁷ Upon gaining access, the Canal Company announced that they had a right to oversee navigation on the surrounding stretch of water.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, these dams and locks underpinned and enforced contentious claims to exclusive property. Although the Conservators rejected their declarations, the physical presence of the Firepool and Obridge locks allowed the Canal Company to perform new taskscapes.¹⁸⁹ Controlling the materiality of the River Tone was thus vital to the operation of local customary rights and social relationships.

These acts of destruction were further supported by a legal campaign against the Canal Company. Crucially, the status of custom as a corpus of local law allowed the Conservators to demonstrate their control over the river through both local and national courts.¹⁹⁰ In the months following the canal's opening the Conservators took a number of the Canal Company's agents to court for breaching the Tone's by-laws, including failing to have their boat 'registered at Ham' and sailing a coal barge of 'more than seven tons burden' down the river in July.¹⁹¹ These public prosecutions served a wider purpose than merely punishing individual crimes. As Navickas noted, trials contained 'elements of theatre and performance' allowing social and political messages to be communicated.¹⁹² These cases generated a 'great deal of excitement'

¹⁸⁵ Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 747-62; McDonagh and Daniels, 'Enclosure Stories', pp. 108-9.

¹⁸⁶ McDonagh, 'Disobedient Objects', pp. 262-3; Blomley, 'Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence' pp. 121-41.

¹⁸⁷ *London Courier*, 14 August 1830; *Taunton Courier*, 3 January 1827, 10 January 1827; Hadfield, *The Canals of South West England*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁸ Body and Gallop, *Any Muddy Bottom*, pp. 68-70. For a map of the Firepool and Obridge locks see Fig. X.

¹⁸⁹ 'Facts Relative to Obridge and Firepool', Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/54, f. 1. For the importance of material and structural forces in shaping social relations and culture see also: Navickas, 'A Return to Materialism', pp. 95-99.

¹⁹⁰ For customs legal basis see: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 15-17; Bushaway, 'Rite, Legitimation and Community', pp. 112-15.

¹⁹¹ *Taunton Courier*, 17 January 1827, 4 July 1827. According to these regulations larger boats were not allowed to traverse the Tone between 24 June and 20 September to prevent damage being done to the river. For the full regulations see Appendix I.

¹⁹² Navickas, 'Political Trials and the Suppression of Popular Radicalism', pp. 187-88.

in the local area, providing an opportunity for the Canal Company and the Conservators to publicly enforce or demonstrate their control over the Tone. In a 'passionate speech' the Canal Company's representative described the Conservators' regulations as 'spurious and wasteful', claiming that these boats caused 'no real harm'. Moreover, the Conservators had 'lost all sight of the objects for which they formed into a body corporate' with these trials 'a waste of public money' and trade being stifled. In response, the Conservators declared that it was their 'fixed determination' to prosecute anyone who dared 'upend the accustomed rights and laws of this river.'¹⁹³ As such, both organisations utilised these opportunities to make statements regarding local customary relationships. To legitimise their presence, the Canal Company portrayed the Conservators as betraying their paternalist traditions and negatively impacting local wellbeing. Conversely, the Conservators emphasised their status as an established local presence with the Canal Company being disruptive foreigners. Rather than reject 'old fashioned' discourses, both organisations thus embraced the patrician-plebeian relationship. Eventually, these men were pronounced guilty and fined with 'hushed cheering' coming from the audience.¹⁹⁴ Naturally, the Canal Company appealed these decisions and these cases eventually reached the Court of the Exchequer and the King's Bench.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, for the moment these decisions bolstered the Conservators' claims to the Tone. As with private property, in order for their exclusive control to continue those who 'trespassed' needed to be publicly punished. These spaces were not static, instead requiring constant remaking and reinforcing.

The animosity between the Canal Company and the Conservators steadily rose as control over the river was scrutinised in London's courts. Meanwhile, at the local level both sides deployed violence and customary punishments to enforce their exclusive ownership. In April 1827, the Canal Company forcibly evicted the Conservators' 'Superintendent of the River' from his cottage at Firepool. In this parish custom dictated that any heir 'must be proclaimed three times at the Manor Court and then answer to be able to take the land when it is passed'. The Conservators had supposedly neglected this ritual, allowing the Canal Company to purchase the property.¹⁹⁶ Although seemingly arcane and ancient, these customary performances became vitally important during struggles over property rights. The eviction was conducted 'by force'

¹⁹³ *Taunton Courier*, 17 January 1827, 4 July 1827. See also: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 3 November 1831.

¹⁹⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 17 January 1827, 4 July 1827.

¹⁹⁵ The cases were bundled together with a number of other complaints, querying the Conservators control over the River Tone: 'Plea to the Kings Bench from the Conservators of the River Tone', Papers of the Meade Family, SHC, DD/MK/54, f. 6-7; *Bath Chronicle*, 31 December 1829; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 April 1830.

¹⁹⁶ 'Facts Relative to Obridge and Firepool', Papers of the Meade Family of Taunton, SHC, DD/MK/54, f. 1; *Taunton Courier*, 18 April 1827; *Bath Chronicle*, 31 December 1829.

and the Superintendent suffered ‘blows to his arms, chest and back’.¹⁹⁷ Once again, these customs, rituals and spaces both legitimised and encouraged acts of violence.¹⁹⁸ As Figure 2 illustrates, the cottage was in a strategically important location. Situated at the meeting point between the River Tone and the canal, ownership of the cottage granted the ability to control the everyday movement of goods and people through the Firepool and Obridge locks. The Conservators acknowledged that ‘control of the River Tone could not be continued’ following this eviction and that the Canal Company had ‘control over the water’.¹⁹⁹ In a similar manner to depasturing cattle on common land, the opening and closing of locks were part of the daily routines of the river’s taskscapes. In seizing this cottage, the Canal Company supplanted the Conservators in the daily lives of local people, with previous claims to an unbroken century of ‘traditional’ navigation subsequently undermined.²⁰⁰ Spaces are defined by everyday performances and so the Canal Company’s control over Firepool cottage allowed them to alter the river’s taskscapes to reflect their control.

¹⁹⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 April 1830.

¹⁹⁸ Blomley, ‘Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence’, pp. 130-1; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62

¹⁹⁹ ‘Interviews with Men Accused of Destroying Canal Company Property’, Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/54, ff. 1-2.

²⁰⁰ For the importance of these daily routines see: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 198-9.

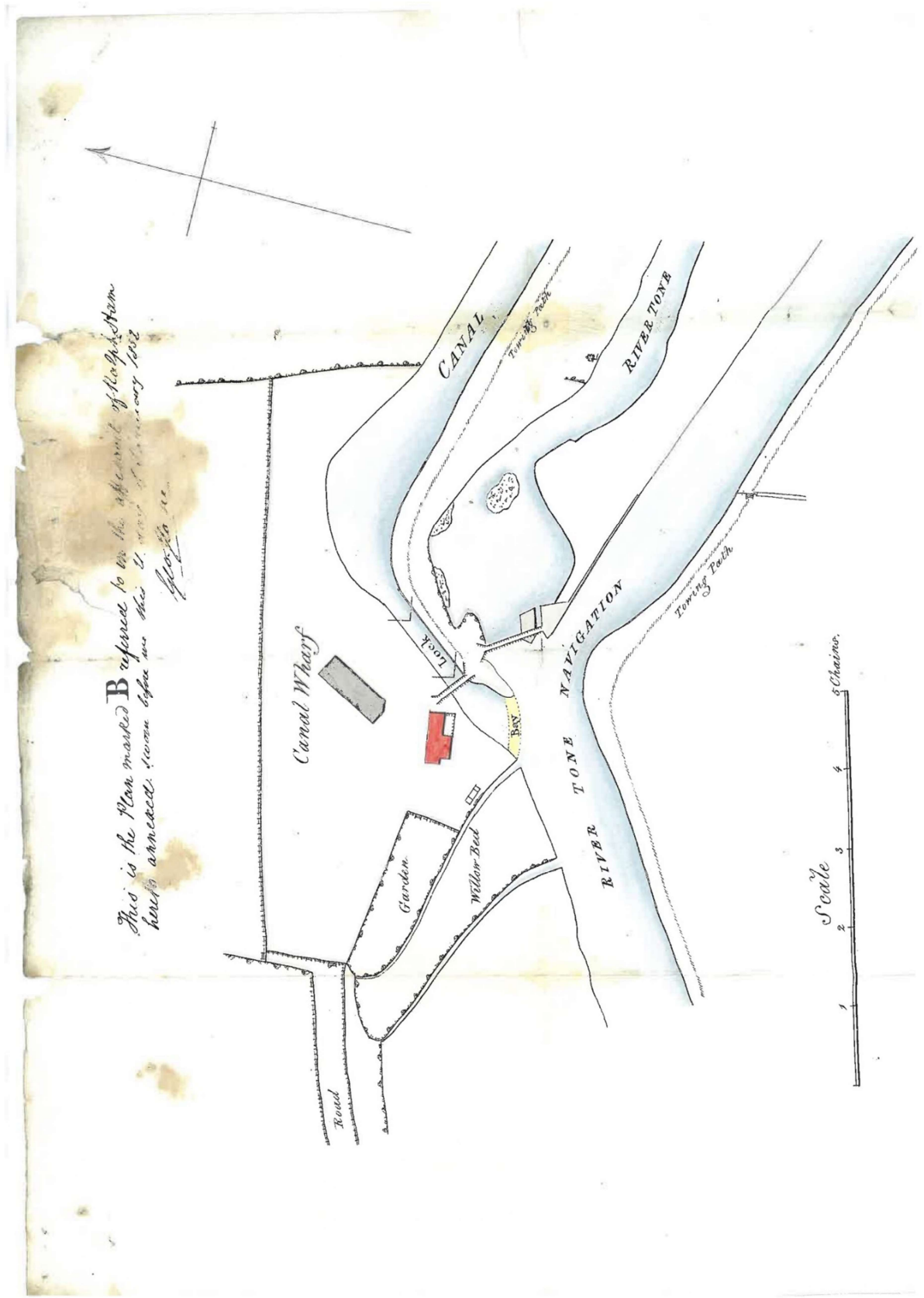


Figure 2: Map of Firepool and Obridge Locks, 1824.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Source: Map of the Firepool and Obridge Locks', Papers of the Meade Family of Taunton, DD\MK/54, f. 9

In retaliation, the Conservators deployed shaming rituals to publicly advertise the Canal Company's immoral takeover. On 20 February 1830, Thomas Raddick, the new occupant of Firepool cottage, awoke to discover a large crowd of Conservators and townsfolk gathered outside his home. Under the direction of Mr Shillibeer, a Conservator, ropes were attached to the Firepool and Obridge lock gates and the crowd proceeded to pull until 'they were completely torn from their hinges and the water escaped rapidly.'²⁰² As in 1826, this public demolition restored the customary taskscapes of the Tone, reshaping the material environment to facilitate the Conservators practices and everyday activities. However, on this occasion the Conservators did more than revert the physicality of this space. Raddick was seized by the crowd and made to watch as 'after breaking open the lock gates they used them to make a fire'. With this bonfire lit, the Conservators produced:

an effigy that I was told was meant for me. Shillibeer and Goodland paraded it around the fire and the locks... Some people struck the effigy with wood taken from the lock gates. There was a placard tied around its neck, it read 'Invaders of the River'... The effigy was thrown into the fire to cheers.²⁰³

The burning of effigies was an established tool of communal justice in rural Somerset. Through depictions of physical assault on embodied representations, these protests were designed to foster a response of fear through the enactment of 'disembodied pain'.²⁰⁴ Beating and burning the effigy of Raddick suggested what could occur if he continued his 'unethical' environmental activities. Yet this shaming ritual was more than an attack on one man, it also condemned the entire Canal Company as 'Invaders of the River'. Shillibeer and Goodland made sure to parade the effigy around the Firepool and Obridge locks, incorporating the entire space into their condemnations. In this manner, the 'crimes' of Raddick were expanded to include the transformation of this site. Similarly, by burning Raddick upon the broken locks this ritual castigated the invasive alterations made by the Canal Company. As O'Gorman stressed, effigy burnings helped consolidate a common view of an individual or subject. By appealing to

²⁰² *Sherborne Mercury*, 1 March 1830; *Bristol Mirror*, 24 July 1830.

²⁰³ 'Interview with Thomas Raddick', Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/54, f. 2-3; *Sherborne Mercury*, 1 March 1830.

²⁰⁴ For disembodied pain see: Griffin, 'Affecting Violence', pp. 144-53. See also: Griffin, 'Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict', pp. 91-108; Griffin, 'Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life', pp. 301-16 Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 262-4. For further studies of effigy burning in political, communal and labour contexts see: F. Götcke, 'Burning Effigies with Bakhtinian Laughter', *European Journal of Humour Research*, 3 (2015), pp. 129-44; Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 132-77; Howkins and Merrick, "'Wee Be Black as Hell'", pp. 41-53; R. Storch, "'Please to Remember the Fifth of November": Conflict, Solidarity and Public Order in Southern England, 1815-1900', in R. Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 71-99.

people's emotions and adopting participatory elements, mock executions encouraged people to become involved thus transforming them from passive onlookers to active supporters.²⁰⁵ On this occasion, locals were encouraged to beat Raddick's effigy and cheer for his execution, thereby condemning the actions of the Canal Company. Equally, the Conservators presented themselves as paternalistic protectors as it was Shillibeer and Goodland who made sure justice was enacted by committing this 'criminal' to the fire. Rural elites, therefore, did not avoid these traditional repertoires and rituals. Due to the importance placed upon morality, environmental ethics and harmonious social relationships, these 'outdated' performances became central to struggles over property rights.²⁰⁶

Although the burning of Raddick's effigy was a spectacular moment, daily performances were also needed to truly demonstrate the Conservators' control over these spaces. By April 1830, the Conservators were 'opening and shutting the lock gates at will'.²⁰⁷ With the strength of customary law based in its reflection of 'actual practice', the Conservators thus sought to return everyday life on the River Tone to a 'pre-Canal Company' state.²⁰⁸ On 14 April, Raddick:

saw Shillibeer, Goodland and others come down the river to Obridge on a decorated boat... About 30 persons were in the boat. A great number were on the shore... They were the Conservators I had seen breaking open the lock gates.²⁰⁹

This 'decorated boat' was a restaging of the Conservators' customary perambulation ceremony. As noted previously, these rituals were typically conducted to repair or prevent any physical encroachments that could damage the navigation of the Tone.²¹⁰ On this occasion, the procession publicly demonstrated that the Conservators were in control of this space, having materially and symbolically removed any impediments to their rule. At the King's Bench, this event was even used to support the Conservators claims to 'continued usage' as it was a vital

²⁰⁵ F. O'Gorman, 'The Paine Burnings of 1792-3', *Past and Present*, 193 (2006), pp. 111-55; F. O'Gorman, 'Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in J. Neuheiser and M. Schaich (eds.), *Political Rituals in Great Britain, 1700-2000* (Augsberg: Wißner-Verlag, 2006), pp. 20-3; Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 275-7; Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales*, pp. 72-81. For a further discussion of effigy burnings in the context of 5 November, see Chapter 5.

²⁰⁶ For the argument that effigy burnings were had become outdated by the nineteenth century see: Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain*, pp. 55-105.

²⁰⁷ 'Interview with Thomas Raddick', Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/54, f. 2-3.

²⁰⁸ Navickas, 'A Return to Materialism', pp. 98-100; McDonagh, 'Subverting the Ground', pp. 191-206; Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 749-51

²⁰⁹ 'Interview with Thomas Raddick', Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/54, f. 2.

²¹⁰ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 58-89; Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*, pp. 285-6; J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 20-4.

part of ‘making and keeping the river Tone navigable’.²¹¹ In nineteenth-century Somerset, violence and ritual performances were not simply reactionary outbursts but were often deployed to support more ‘sophisticated’ legal challenges.²¹² However, these acts of legal, cultural and physical reversion were not complete until all evidence of the Canal Company’s presence had been removed from Firepool. A few days after their perambulation:

Shillbeer, Goodland and about 50 others came to the mill cottage – they broke the door and removed all the persons in the house... The 50 people who entered were very resolute – did not make much noise but came armed with chunks of wood and some with swords.²¹³

The Conservators had thus regained everything the Canal Company had taken from them in 1827. Unlike the riotous eviction witnessed in Stockland Dalwood, this was a carefully planned act of intimidation and reclamation. The moral ecologies of the Conservators required that this cottage remain standing so that the ‘correct’ landscape could be recreated and performed. All of these protest repertoires, from effigy burning and perambulation to an armed eviction, related directly to the Conservators’ claims that they were defending reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships from an uncaring foreign entity.

Although the Conservators enjoyed widespread support, it would be misleading to suggest that locals slavishly supported their claims. One criticism of Jacoby’s moral ecology model is its tendency to present environmental conflicts as binary struggles between homogenous groups.²¹⁴ For the Conservators and their supporters, resistance against the Canal Company drew from concerns regarding the disintegration of paternalism.²¹⁵ It was declared that the Canal Company’s ‘proceedings... had been designed by jealousy, as opposed to the fairness of the Conservators’. Protecting these material spaces, therefore, prevented local society from being overrun by ‘iniquitous and monopolising measures’ and ‘avaricious and unjustifiable speculation’.²¹⁶ However, not every community on the River Tone viewed the Conservators as

²¹¹ *The Law Journal for the Year 1830: Comprising Reports of Cases in the Courts of Chancery, King’s Bench and Common Pleas, From Michaelmas Term 1829 to Trinity Term 1830, Both Inclusive*, (London, 1830), VIII p. 236, for the full trial see: pp. 226-43.

²¹² See also: Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-2.

²¹³ ‘Interview with Thomas Raddick’, Papers of the Meade Family of Taunton, *SHC*, DD\MK/54, f. 3.

²¹⁴ For example: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 48-80, 121-48; Jacoby, ‘Class and Environmental History’, pp. 324-42.

²¹⁵ For these changes see also: D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Traditions and Transformations in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 9-22; Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 233-54; Randall and Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27.

²¹⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 28 December 1826; *Bath Chronicle*, 31 December 1829; *Taunton Courier*, 29 February 1832.

the defenders of reciprocity. Instead, they were regularly criticised for conducting ‘immoral’ assaults on local moral ecologies. In August 1831, for example, the villagers of Creech St Michael ‘pulled up certain gates whereby water was drawn from the river, to the great injury of the navigation.’²¹⁷ It was claimed that the Conservators’ decision to build these floodgates had ‘threatened to destroy the livelihoods of those who relied upon this river’ by harming the water-powered mills in Creech. Thus, this destruction was justified as the millers had ‘felt it necessary to protect their interests’. Moreover, by constructing these barriers the Conservators had reneged on an agreement made in 1778 that their improvements ‘would not harm them.’²¹⁸ In this instance, it was the Conservators who had broken their promises and disrupted the everyday lives of local people. For all their criticisms of the Canal Company’s ‘avaricious’ and ‘monopolising’ nature, it is evident that for many of those living on the River Tone the Conservators were not caring paternal masters. The Conservators were a corporate entity founded to profit from the River Tone as a navigable waterway. This meant that their moral ecologies clashed with those of communities such as Creech, whose taskscapes necessitated a different set of ecological ethics. Subsequently, there was no singular moral ecology that united every individual who dwelt on the River Tone. Rather, there were multiple competing moral ecologies, each seeking to protect differing economic interests and environmental beliefs.

Yet claiming that the Conservators cynically exploited customary rituals and moral ecologies to achieve their economic goals ignores the crucial role of custom in rural society. These ‘traditional’ practices and performances were vital in establishing legal and social control over contested spaces. In 1830 the justices of the King’s Bench decided ‘all the points submitted to them in favour of the Conservators’.²¹⁹ The power of custom as a set of local laws, therefore, should not be underestimated. This ruling forced the Canal Company to negotiate with the Conservators. In 1832 an agreement was reached whereby the Canal Company would pay off the Conservators outstanding debts and provide an annual donation so ‘that the River Tone be then vested in the Canal Company.’²²⁰ This allowed the Conservators to continue their local rituals and paternalistic performances, whilst the Canal Company gained access to the river. Consequently, it was not only the poor whose mentalities and protests drew from a series of environmental ethics. For the Conservators, the River Tone was imbued with paternal duties

²¹⁷ *Bath Chronicle*, 18 August 1831.

²¹⁸ ‘Briefs for Plaintiffs: Conservators v. Thomas Dyer, Samuel Dyer and John Fry for Trespass’, Papers of the Meade Family, *SHC*, DD/MK/81 f. 3; ‘Case for the Plaintiffs: Conservators v Thomas Dyer, Samuel Dyer and John Fry’, Records of Tone Conservators, *SHC*, DD/TC/14, f. 2-3.

²¹⁹ *Bath Chronicle*, 29 December 1829, 26 August 1830.

²²⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 2 November 1831, 12 September 1832; *Bristol Mercury*, 22 September 1832.

and customary practices. The arrival of the Canal Company materially threatened social relationships that had been cultivated by ‘traditional’ rituals and daily practice.²²¹ Effigy burnings, perambulations and property damage were not antithetical to the elite discourses and protest repertoires of nineteenth-century Somerset. Smashing locks in Firepool served the same purpose as fence-breaking in Gillingham, namely the revival of an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship. The Conservators portrayed themselves as paragons of paternalism being assaulted by avaricious and uncaring foreigners. Whilst not universally convincing, these arguments resonated with local concerns regarding the changing nature of rural society.²²² However, for the Conservators and the Canal Company, controlling the physicality of these spaces was paramount. By building dams and seizing cottages the Conservators attempted to erase all evidence of the Canal Company’s ‘immoral’ intrusion. Equally, these organisations legitimised their rule by controlling sites vital to everyday life. Operating the Firepool and Obridge locks allowed both groups to demonstrate how local society and ecologies should be.

Conclusions

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, landscape change transformed Somerset and Dorset materially and culturally. The new fences, hedges, walls and canals did not simply reflect a new rural social order, they enforced it. By constraining the everyday activities of countryfolk, these material impositions allowed private property to be performed. With claims to exclusive ownership founded in acts of physical compulsion, those deemed ‘out of place’ were publicly and violently punished. English Common Law underpinned these actions due to its emphasis on everyday use and established practice.²²³ Subsequently, the performative nature of private property, and its reliance on material objects, empowered acts of trespass or hedge-breaking. These protests were perfectly understood by those who opposed lower-class protestors because they employed similar repertoires to protect their own interests. Placing a human or animal body in a contested field physically and symbolically reshaped the landscape. Their presence a vivid reminder of the way the world once was whilst their bodies dismantled the walls, hedges and fences that reshaped everyday rural life. Protestors used bodily performances to ensure that

²²¹ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England*, pp. 77-80; Whyte, ‘Landscape, Memory and Custom’, pp. 166-86.

²²² Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 929-30.

²²³ To a certain degree, this relationship continues to the present day: N. Duxbury, ‘Custom as Law in English Law’, *Cambridge Law Journal*, 76:2 (2017), pp. 337-59; A. Loux, ‘Persistence of the Ancient Regime: Custom Utility and the Common Law in the Nineteenth Century’, *Cornell Law Review*, 79:1 (1993), pp. 183-218.

their customary rights and relationships could still be ‘read’ from the landscape.²²⁴ Equally, the ability for nonhumans to communicate ideas and possibilities was crucial to resistance. More than mere cultural symbols, the corporeality of animals was exploited to inspire onlookers to resist landscape change. These creatures signalled a continuation of customary practices whilst materially reviving previous taskscapes. The physicality of these contested spaces was just as important to protestors as any symbolic performance. By destroying invasive material objects, previous spaces and lives were called ‘into being’.²²⁵ Landscapes were thus constantly being made and remade in order to facilitate, protect and demonstrate the customary rights threatened by environmental change.

Examinations of nineteenth-century landscape change benefit greatly from the moral ecology model. As in Jacoby’s study, resistance towards enclosure was not driven solely by economic imperatives. Instead, these fields and riverways were imbued with notions of a morally correct ‘way of doing’, founded upon reciprocity, fairness and sustainability.²²⁶ For these communities, enclosures were immoral impositions that threatened their livelihoods and accepted everyday practices. In Axbridge and Gillingham, these endangered resources and spaces were central to the daily operation of customary relationships. Depasturing cattle on the common was not merely an economic advantage, but a performance that confirmed and demonstrated a ‘norm of reciprocity’ between masters and men. Landscape change eradicated these relationships, supposedly signalling a transition from paternalism to uncaring exploitation of the land. Destroying these fences and hedges subsequently allowed protestors to momentarily enforce the ‘morally correct’ arrangement of physical landscapes and local society. Enclosure was also justified in a similar manner to later acts of conservation. Agriculturalists were deeply distrustful of the rural poor, presenting common land as not only economically inefficient but also morally corruptive. The curtailing of ‘ancient’ rights was predicated on the labourer’s innate ability to ‘despoil’ the landscape.²²⁷ However, transporting Jacoby’s model to eighteenth and nineteenth-century Somerset and Dorset raises some issues. The ‘moral ecology of the poor’ often presents environmental conflict as a binary struggle. Yet, as the Conservators demonstrate, the poor did not hold a monopoly over discourses of fairness,

²²⁴ McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 265-6.

²²⁵ Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-9; Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 930-1.

²²⁶ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, esp. pp. 11-80; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict’, pp. 24-38; Griffin, Jones and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance’, pp. 1-34.

²²⁷ Howkins, ‘The Use and Abuse of the English Commons’, pp. 107-32; Staughton, *Common Grazing in Northern English Uplands*, p. 245.

betrayal and ‘foreign’ corruption. Equally, in Stockland Dalwood and Gillingham tenant farmers, who would have benefitted from enclosure, willingly participated in enclosure protests. These moralities were frequently shared across social stratum and it is crucial that historians avoid romanticising the environmental practices of the rural poor. Commons were not egalitarian spaces but sites where jealously guarded rights were protected through exclusionary hierarchies and violence. Within these rural communities, therefore, there existed multiple competing moral ecologies, each seeking to establish their own ‘ideal’ society.

All acts of landscape change were linked by a shared sense of losing what had helped define a community. Not only with regard to the land itself but also the social and cultural ties that were supported by these spaces.²²⁸ Rather than collapsing, harmonious and reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships continued to be lionised through these moral ecologies.²²⁹ It is evident, however, that the number of people who supported these customary relationships was decreasing. As material landscapes were transformed, both patricians and plebes became increasingly unable, or unwilling, to perform the rituals and everyday practices that underpinned a ‘norm of reciprocity’. The following chapter, therefore, examines how these moral ecologies developed and operated over an extended period of time. It reveals the importance of custom, senses of place and local legacies of resistance in shaping the relationship between masters, men and the environment.

²²⁸ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 80-1; I Waites, ‘The Common Field Landscape, Cultural Commemoration and the Impact of Enclosure’, in M. Cragoe and P. Readman (eds.), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 19-36.

²²⁹ For the collapse narrative see: Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 209-71; Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 250-54.

Chapter 2: ‘The Most Riotous Unprincipled Men’¹: Custom, Place and Protest in the Vale of Blackmore, c. 1800-1845

By December 1830 reports from Dorset suggested that the arson, robbery and strikes of the Swing riots had ceased, with one notable exception: ‘The spirit of the people around this county is excellent, I wish I could say the same for the Vale.’² The ‘Vale’, roughly estimating, was a wide valley in North Dorset extending north to south nineteen miles from Gillingham and Silton to Dantish and Mappowder and east to west fourteen miles from Compton and Sutton to North Wooton and Long Burton.³ Since the late-eighteenth century this pastoral area, famously described by Thomas Hardy as the ‘Vale of Little Dairies’, had garnered a reputation as a riotous region.⁴ The Vale was condemned as a ‘singular place with a wild and dissolute population’ and its labourers ‘a cast of deer stealers, poachers, smugglers and every variety of lawless character.’⁵ Despite being considered the epicentre for Swing in Dorset, the ‘intense’ and ‘prolonged’ riots that struck Blackmore have often been examined in a vacuum, devoid of any connection to local legacies of protest and resistance.⁶ As Peter Jones argued, many historians have simply attributed Swing to the ‘grinding poverty’ of rural England; leading to models of popular protest that overlook local conditions, beliefs and attitudes.⁷ Conversely, this chapter will contextualise Swing through an extended study of resistance in Blackmore. It demonstrates that Swing’s protest repertoires and mentalities were deeply indebted to previous resistance against ‘immoral’ transformations of both the material environment and customary society. The landscapes of Blackmore were not picturesque backdrops to protest; nor were they solely envisioned as economic resources. These were sites where notions of belonging, communal identity and ‘ancient custom’ rested. A sense of place was integral to shaping both the forms and functions of rural protest throughout the early-nineteenth century, with feelings

¹ ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 30 August 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

² ‘Smith to D.O.P Okeden, 30 November 1830’, Letters to D.O.P. Okeden Regarding Swing, *DHC*, D1-OP/1.

³ Claridge, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset*, 13-5; J.H. Bettey, *Dorset* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), pp. 41-62. See Appendix III: Map of the The Blackmore Vale, 1903.

⁴ T. Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), pp. xlv, 102.

⁵ ‘D.O.P. Okeden to Lord Uxbridge, 10 December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42; ‘D.O.P Okeden to Lord Uxbridge, 26 December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

⁶ Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 90-122; J. Draper, ‘The 1830 “Captain Swing” Riots in Dorset – An Eye-Witness Account’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 124 (2002), pp. 21-34; Bawn, *Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order*, pp. 76-101.

⁷ Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Jones, ‘Finding Captain Swing’, pp. 429-58.

of loss and dislocation underpinned by desires to re-establish 'morally correct' ecologies, customs and social relationships.

The loss of access to communal fields or woodlands has often been studied through a primarily economic lens. Roger Wells concluded that physical landscapes were 'not convincingly embraced by a rural moral economy' and, whilst momentarily gaining importance during conflicts over customary rights, 'once these defences failed there were few subsequent opportunities for their re-enaction'.⁸ These arguments risk diminishing both the continuing importance of access rights to the rural poor's 'economy of makeshifts' and the role physical environments held in constructing customary culture.⁹ In these villages, communal identities were forged from everyday experiences and working lives. The physical environment gave tangible substance and structure to otherwise intangible customs, rituals and traditions.¹⁰ Pasturing cattle on the commons or gathering wood in nearby coppices helped performatively demonstrate communal membership. These customary practices established the distinctiveness of individual places and established the particular culture of each locality. Although differences were often subtle, rural people nevertheless jealously guarded the places and rituals that made their community unique.¹¹ As public performances of customary law, these sites and customs visibly confirmed what rights the local people had, how those rights could be exercised and who could exercise them.¹² As such, these so-called 'ancient practices' were neither neutral nor static but were contested and politically charged. Landscape change not only impinged upon rural household economies but also senses of belonging and identity. In response, acts of resistance, such as hedge-breaking or trespass, were forms of communal justice. These protests attempted to materially remake local places into a state that facilitated and conformed to previous customary practices, memories and identities.¹³ This chapter demonstrates that protests against landscape change in Blackmore were fuelled by a belief that, in order to protect

⁸ Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', pp. 223-7.

⁹ For the economy of makeshifts see: S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England and Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Whyte, 'Senses of Place, Senses of Time', pp. 925-38; Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 233-52; Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, esp. pp. 1-29, 48-80; Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place', pp. 13-52.

¹¹ These assertions of difference were not limited to rural communities: Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 479; A. Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 131; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, pp. 57-60.

¹² For the 'politics of custom' see: Wood, 'Place of Custom', pp. 46-60; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-12, 32; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 15-19. For the importance of exclusivity to vernacular environmental ethics see: Griffin, 'Enclosures from Below?', pp. 274-95.

¹³ Griffin and Robertson, 'Elvers and Salmon', pp. 99-116; Griffin and Robertson, 'Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict', pp. 24-49; Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 235-7; Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 175.

both natural resources and local identities, the ‘morally correct’ material and cultural environments needed to be maintained, protected and, if needed, re-enacted.

By studying three communities over the course of approximately forty-five years, the following investigation expands upon the previous chapter by revealing how place and custom were crucial to the consistent reoccurrence of protest. Historians have generally focused on the resistance that preceded enclosure or the riots that immediately followed an act’s finalisation.¹⁴ However, feelings of dislocation and dispossession, or psychological and social alienation, could remain for generations.¹⁵ Equally, the transformation of formerly open land into private property was a slow process, often taking decades to render the land materially ‘unrecognisable’. These places were thus imbued with traumatic memories of previous resistance and ‘immoral’ dispossession, eventually becoming touchstones for later protest.¹⁶ As such, examinations of major rural protests need to be supplemented by considerations of long-term and ‘everyday’ resistance. These smaller protests not only kept popular claims to commonable fields or woodlands alive but also subtly reverted local landscapes to their previous, morally correct, state. The rural environment was a taskscape, made ‘pregnant with meaning’ through repetitious, intergenerational performances of work and movement.¹⁷ Those conducting landscape change, consequently, attempted to redefine landscapes as exclusive and customary practices as criminal. Yet, through repeated performances, protest kept these taskscapes alive.¹⁸ Minor acts of protest provided these places with a sense of continuity, opposing attempts to alter landscapes and communal relationships. Shakesheff has argued that, in Herefordshire, it is uncertain whether ‘criminal’ acts such as wood-theft constituted protest or a defence of customary privileges.¹⁹ In Dorset, conversely, minor acts of resistance became a vital part of negotiations regarding new environmental impositions.²⁰ These everyday actions symbolically demonstrated that customary claims had not been abandoned whilst their physical elements momentarily prevented the landscapes material transformation.

¹⁴ Such as those riots and protests examined in the previous chapter, see also: McDonagh, ‘Making and Breaking Property’, pp. 32-56; Eastwood, ‘Communities, Protest and Police’, pp. 35-46.

¹⁵ Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 259-94; Olwig, ‘Representation and Alienation’, pp. 19-40; Gieryn, ‘A Space for Place’, pp. 463-94; Massey, *Landscape/Space/Politics*.

¹⁶ For the complicated implementation of enclosure see: O’Donnell, *Assembling Enclosure*. For the experiences of loss and the use of certain sites as a touchstone of protest see: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 162-216; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 106-21.

¹⁷ Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99.

¹⁸ For the transformation of accepted practices into criminal acts see: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 29-78.

¹⁹ Shakesheff, ‘Wood and Crop Theft’, pp. 1-18. For the importance of continuity see Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 95-100; Robertson and Hall, ‘Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict’, pp. 19-36.

²⁰ See also: Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 254-75; Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93.

Swing should be understood as part of this legacy of local resistance, rather than as a singular or conclusive occurrence. The riots, machine breaking and strikes that swept across Southern England in the autumn and winter of 1830 have been envisioned as a turning point in rural history. Nominally united under the mythical ‘Captain Swing’, these protests were the result of three decades of poor wages, agricultural mechanisation and fracturing customary relationships. As a result, this ‘mass rising’ shattered previous conceptions of rural paternalism and the ‘norm of reciprocity’. By the early-1830s, beliefs in a ‘harmonious’ patrician-plebeian relationship had supposedly been replaced by pragmatic demands for increased wages, a reliance on ‘covert’ tactics such as arson and an increasingly polarised rural society. However, there is a risk that historians have overemphasised Swing’s position as a ‘dramatic shift’ in rural protest repertoires and mentalities or as a ‘culmination’ of previous concerns.²¹ Whilst many now classify Swing as a ‘meta-movement’, or a series of inherently localised protests loosely connected by similar goals, few studies have interrogated its reliance on local legacies of resistance.²² This chapter, therefore, argues that Swing’s repertoires and mentalities were fundamentally shaped by previous acts of resistance and landscape change. Crucially, in stressing the continuity of its forms and functions this study does not seek to diminish Swing’s position as an unprecedented national rural rising. Rather, following the suggestions of Iain Robertson, it applies the moral ecology model to the study of Swing. In the Blackmore Vale, the protests of 1830 sought to restore both the ‘traditional’ reciprocal relationships between masters and men and the ‘ethical’ treatment of the landscape and ‘natural’ resources.²³ Swing thus focused on reclaiming key local places and mobilising communities by adopting recognisable protest repertoires. In contesting the ‘revolutionary’ nature of Swing this chapter also extends Thompson’s models of patrician-plebeian relations into the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Swing was not the ‘death throes’ of a moral economy nor were rural protests in the early-1830s merely extensions of Swing’s ‘shifted mentalities’.²⁵ Contrary to

²¹ See, for example: Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 281-302; Griffin, *The Rural War*, esp. pp. 66-81; R. Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, pp. 155-68; Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath’, pp. 1-23; A. Randall, “‘The Luddism of the Poor’: Captain Swing, Machine Breaking and Popular Protest”, *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 41-61.

²² See: Jones, ‘Finding Captain Swing’, pp. 429-58; Griffin, ‘Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?’, pp. 459-97.

²³ Robertson, “‘Two Steps Forward; Six Steps Back’”, pp. 85-100. For concerns regarding the reciprocal relationship, see: Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community’, pp. 110-35.

²⁴ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, esp. pp. 16-96, 259-351; Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*.

²⁵ For these views see, respectively: Wells, ‘Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History’, pp. 98-142; Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 235-43; Griffin, ‘Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?’, pp. 459-97.

the arguments of historians such as Wood, this chapter reveals how appeals to paternalism and a belief that local society could be restored to its previous ‘harmonious’ state underpinned protest in Blackmore, before and after Swing.²⁶ As with previous resistance, Swing expressed a desire to restore both material environments and local society to an acceptable ‘moral’ state.

This chapter argues that physical landscapes operated in a manner similar to Geertz’s description of personality – how people ‘represent themselves to themselves and to one another’ – but at a communal level.²⁷ In defending local places materially, protestors were not only protecting customary entitlements but also their identities, heritage and ideal social relationships. The following section examines the Vale’s geography and economy during the early-nineteenth century. It reveals how worsening conditions forced Blackmore’s rural poor to increasingly rely on customary rights. This economic reliance combined with emotional and cultural elements to reinforce popular beliefs that, to ensure a harmonious local society, the environment and its resources needed to be treated ethically.²⁸ The chapter will then explore how place and custom sustained protest in three communities: Sixpenny Handley, Stalbridge and Pimperne. In Handley and Stalbridge environmental protests reflected fears that local identities, customs and reciprocal patrician-plebeian relations were being eroded. Meanwhile, in Pimperne violence arose from conflicting opinions over what constituted the ‘moral’ treatment of the landscape. In all three locales, physical performances and everyday resistance maintained vernacular environmental ethics and customary practices. Resistance was never a simple binary of poor labourer against rich landowner, or moral ecology versus private property. Rather, senses of place and belonging, or alternatively dislocation and dispossession, underpinned protest in the Blackmore Vale.

Physical and Moral Geographies in the Blackmore Vale

Labouring lives in Blackmore centred around dairying, with only a tenth of the land assigned to arable farming.²⁹ This imbalance fostered a rural working poor whose underemployment and low wages were increasingly supplemented by customary entitlements. Whilst dairying offered

²⁶ Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 233-54. See also: Randall and Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27; Poole, ‘Forty Years of Rural History from Below’, pp. 15-18.

²⁷ C. Geertz, ‘On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding’, *American Scientist*, 63:1 (1975), pp. 47-53. For this theory in an historical perspective see: P. Pickering, ‘Class Without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement’, *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), pp. 144-62.

²⁸ Rodgers, Straughton, Winchester and Pieraccini, *Contested Common Land*, pp. 19-31.

²⁹ J. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, 2 Vols. (London, 1774), I, pp. lxx; Bettey, *Dorset*, pp. 41-62.

year-round work it needed far fewer labourers than agrarian farming. Most of Blackmore's fields were 'mere paddocks' with pastures rarely exceeding five acres and farms employing, on average, a couple of herdsman and dairymaids.³⁰ Snell and Shave have therefore placed Dorset, and Blackmore in particular, alongside Norfolk as a region that suffered acutely from high poor law dependency, low wages and surplus labour.³¹ In 1800 the average wage for labourers was 6s per week. By 1850 it had barely risen to 7s 6d, remaining far below the national average of 9s.³² In terms of real wages, Dorset plummeted in the fifty years after 1770 and it was as late as 1880 before earnings returned to 1767 levels.³³ Averages, however, mask the extreme poverty and desperation felt in Blackmore. At a meeting of magistrates in December 1830, Reverend Yeatman estimated that around twenty-five to thirty per cent of labourers in the Vale earned 2s 6d per week with 'one man [being employed] for every seventy acres of land'.³⁴ Contrary to the geographically selective arguments of Shaw-Taylor customary gathering rights for fuel and food were thus increasingly relied upon, not only as additions to the rural household economy but as its foundations.³⁵ In 1831 an 'old fallower' begged upon the 'tenderness' of Lord Anglesey, one of Blackmore's major landowners, to protect the local woodlands upon which 'the remainder of my family entirely depend' for both fuel and 'ward[ing] off starvation'.³⁶ The low wages of the Vale, consequently, not only created discontent in and of themselves but also ensured that the rural poor became dependent upon increasingly threatened customary entitlements and access rights.

Subsequently, whilst previous scholars have rightfully stressed the importance of grinding poverty in spurring acts of rural resistance, it was not the sole cause of unrest in Blackmore.³⁷ Acts such as gathering wood or furze were immersed in a web of material and customary

³⁰ The description is from: Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, p. 12. For historical corroboration see: J. Perry, 'Working-Class Isolation and Mobility in Rural Dorset, 1837-1936: A Study of Marriage Distances', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 46 (1969), pp. 126-7; Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 7-25, 50-66.

³¹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 191; Shave, 'The Dependent Poor?', pp. 73-5.

³² Claridge, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset*, pp. 20-6; Caird, *English Agriculture*, pp. 72-3, 512. For an overview of wages see: Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer', pp. 166-76.

³³ K.D.M Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 375-6.

³⁴ 'Reverend Yeatman to William Castleman, 2 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42; Revered H.F. Yeatman, *A Letter to D.O.P Okeden, Esq., Together with an Inquiry into the Merits of his Poor Law Report as Assistant Commissioner*, 2nd Ed. (Sherborne, 1839), pp. 47-50.

³⁵ Shaw-Taylor, 'Parliamentary Enclosure', pp. 640-62. See also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 157-67.

³⁶ 'Peter Kelly to Lord Anglesey, n.d. 1831', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/43. For the continuing reliance on customary entitlements see: D. Woodward, 'Straw, Bracken and the Wicklow Whale: The Exploitation of Natural Resources in England Since 1500', *Past and Present*, 159 (1998), pp. 43-76; Rogers, 'Custom and Common Right', pp. 137-54.

³⁷ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 38-55, 127-32; Beardmore, 'The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent', pp. 99-103; Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations', pp. 273-5.

relationships. In the Vale, as with many rural regions, a lack of infrastructure and plummeting real wages ensured that coal was prohibitively expensive and the older fuels, furze and wood, continued to be utilised by the majority of households.³⁸ This reliance inevitably created tension between customary claims, social relationships and private property. In Stalbridge it was reported that ‘fuel is extremely dear, which compels the poor women and children to pick wood from the hedges... for which they are often severely reprimanded and fined’. Similarly, one magistrate at the Sturminster Newton Petty Sessions concluded: ‘the offence of taking wood from hedges was one of daily and hourly occurrence’.³⁹ However, these acts were not solely legitimised by poverty. At Sturminster, Yeatman contended that wood theft had a ‘moral character’ with the local poor regularly demanding that magistrates ‘do their duty’ and uphold ‘the ancient gathering rights’.⁴⁰ Notions of paternalistic duty were central to the operation of these customs. In defending their rights, the local poor knowingly emphasised these ideals and even otherwise reluctant authorities could be swayed by such demands. At Hazelbury Bryan, for example, authorities decided against arresting wood thieves in 1827 even though they were ‘by no means satisfied that the rights claimed can be supported’. This leniency was caused by a number of appeals to their ‘noble demeanour’ by the villagers.⁴¹ Recent research has shown that, across Dorset, many communities adopted a fairly generous attitude towards the landless, allowing them to exercise rights that they did not legally possess. Consequently, these gathering rights were not absolutes but were subject to local personalities, moralities and communal relationships.⁴² In these inherently unequal communities, access was often negotiated through appeals to paternalistic duty and a ‘norm of reciprocity’ that characterised an ‘ideal’ society.⁴³

The landscapes of Blackmore, however, were not solely coveted as economic resources. Local cultures, memories and heritage were deeply connected to certain physical sites, assisting in

³⁸ J. Langton, ‘Forests in Early-Modern England and Wales: History and Historiography’ in J. Langton and G. Jones (ed.), *Forests and Chases of England and Wales, c. 1500-1850: Towards a Survey and Analysis* (Oxford: St. John’s College Research Centre, 2008), pp. 1-9; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; Griffin, ‘Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict’, pp. 91-108. For the deficiencies in Blackmore’s infrastructure see the complaints in: ‘Diary of Henry Kaines of Manston’, *DHC*, D-391/1; Perry, ‘Working-Class Isolation’, pp. 121-41.

³⁹ *The Times*, 31 August 1826; *Morning Chronicle*, 3 August 1826.

⁴⁰ Yeatman, *A Letter to D.O.P Okeden*, pp. 55-60. For conflicts over gathering wood from hedges, see also: Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 10-12; S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 43-8; Shakesheff, ‘Wood and Crop Theft’, pp. 1-18.

⁴¹ ‘William Castleman to Sir Henry James, 29 November 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

⁴² Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment & Landscape*, pp. 15, 49-66; Shave, ‘The Dependent Poor?’ pp. 67-97.

⁴³ For this ‘norm of reciprocity’ see also: Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81. See also: Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class’, pp. 809-12; Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23.

the circulation of knowledge, practices and identities.⁴⁴ Since medieval times the Vale had been regarded by its inhabitants as unique, with many commentators stressing its heritage as the ‘Royal Forest of Blakemore.’⁴⁵ Popular nineteenth-century ballads even boasted of a descent ‘from those Foresters bold.’⁴⁶ This sense of belonging and, perhaps, pride was also expressed by the labouring population. Following a series of interviews, Reverend Osborne of Blandford reported that ‘the labourer’:

loves the locality in which he was born, he has strong feelings of affection towards many amongst whom he has been reared — there is something within his breast, which binds him strongly to the spot, where his fore-fathers lived, died, and are buried, he would live and die, and there be buried.⁴⁷

Osborne’s comments should not be taken as proof for a lack of mobility amongst Blackmore’s poor. Researchers have found Blackmore labourers as far afield as East Anglia in search of seasonal work.⁴⁸ Yet the emotional element, the ‘strong feelings of affection’, is evident. In his memoirs, the ploughman Robert Young claimed he ‘shed tears’ upon hearing that a field he had ‘fondly remembered from his youth’ had been built over. Young also recorded feeling ‘intense dread’ when walking through ‘Gough’s Close’, a field where ‘many blood fights were seen’.⁴⁹ These personal and communal memories had embedded themselves within the landscape and were recalled through physical interaction and movement. As ethnologists have argued, places gather communal history and experiences and facilitate their transmittance to future generations.⁵⁰ In Blackmore this inheritance was facilitated by folklore; such as the Mappowder commons that were haunted by vengeful ‘hedge-pigs’, or gipsy ghosts, seeking revenge after townspeople drove them away. Equally, at Winterborne Houghton, the spirits of executed smugglers manifested as the murderous ‘Houghton Owls’ who lured drunken

⁴⁴ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 58-89; B. Bushaway, ‘“Things Said or Sung a Thousand Times”: Customary Society and Oral Culture in Rural England, 1700-1900’, in A. Fox and D. Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 256-77.

⁴⁵ ‘Roe-Deer Hunting in Dorset’, *The Sporting Magazine*, 5 (1845), pp. 100-107; Stevenson, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset*, 453-4.

⁴⁶ ‘A New Song to An Old Tune, Respectfully Addressed to the Loyal Inhabitants of Ringwood’, Paget Estate Papers, DHC, D-ANG/B/5/42.

⁴⁷ Rev. S.G. Osborne, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Ashley M.P. on the Condition of the Agricultural Labourer* (Blandford, 1844), p. 36.

⁴⁸ N. Goose, ‘Cottage Industry, Migration and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England’, *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 798-819. For the ‘myth’ of rural immobility see: Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, pp. 127-8.

⁴⁹ R. Young, *Early Years: Recollections of Life in Sturminster Newton in the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. A. Chedzoy, (Dorchester: Dorset Record Society: 2008), pp. 6-12.

⁵⁰ Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, pp. 12-52; Basso, ‘Wisdom Sits in Places’, pp. 53-90

travellers into the forest with promises of wealth.⁵¹ Through myths and legends the meanings attached to the landscape were unfolded, helping to define the people of each individual community.⁵² Major landscape change, therefore, not only threatened economic stability but also these identities and senses of belonging.

Plebeian environmental ethics, or moral ecologies, were subsequently forged through the convergence of precarious material circumstances and this ‘affection’ towards the landscape. Due to inevitable socio-ecological differences, no two communities held identical environmental standards, nor did these ethics remain static throughout time. However, within Blackmore there were some unifying trends during the early-nineteenth century. Osborne’s interviews with labourers, for example, placed gathering wood from coppices, cutting furze, and pasturing animals on the commons alongside gleaning, the practice of gathering leftover grain after the harvest, as ‘the oldest found privileges that exist’ that were protected ‘by no less authority than God himself’. Although Blackmore was primarily pastoral, such acts held both economic and cultural importance, with one Blandford labourer pleading: ‘do not... sweep up for yourselves, that which we were bred to believe, belonged to us.’⁵³ These privileges were part of their identity, having been ingrained into local culture over generations. During an enclosure protest in Sixpenny Handley, the crowd supposedly assaulted fences ‘which they say oppressed them and their customs’.⁵⁴ These material impositions constructed an unacceptable image of both the landscape and social relations. The destruction of fences, or crimes such as wood theft, were legitimised through claims to custom, identity and the belief that locals were opposing unethical changes to boundaries and laws. Moral ecologies, subsequently, were rooted in a local taskscape and tied together understandings of how ecology, economy and society should be.⁵⁵ The ‘oppression’ of fencepoles not only meant that the poor were unable to support themselves economically, but also that their supposedly paternalistic masters had betrayed them. Almost invariably, enclosure threatened the social, cultural and material ties

⁵¹ J.S. Udal, *Legends and Customs of Dorset: Including Legends and Superstitions, Witchcraft and Charms, Birth, Death and Marriage Customs, Local Customs* (London: Read Books, 1922; 2010), pp. 10-15; E.A. Rawlence, ‘Some Old Village Jokes and Games which Obtained in the Blackmore Vale in the Last Century’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 36 (1915), pp. 6-15.

⁵² Kahn, ‘Your Place and Mine’, pp. 167-96.

⁵³ Osborne, *A Letter*, pp. 30-3. For ‘gleaning’ rights elsewhere see: Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 26-30; E.P. Thompson, ‘The Grid of Inheritance: A Comment’ in J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 340-1.

⁵⁴ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 24 November 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

⁵⁵ Featherstone, ‘Skills for Heterogeneous Associations’, pp. 284-306; Navickas, ‘Luddism, Incendiarism, and the Defence of Rural “Task-Scapes”’, pp. 59-73; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon’, pp. 99-105. For similar feelings held towards machinery in the factories see: Randall, *Before the Luddites*, pp. 41-102.

that had previously defined rural communities.⁵⁶ Thus, environmental resistance sought to regain customary privileges whilst concomitantly restoring ‘traditional’ or ‘harmonious’ relationships between masters, men and the ‘natural’ world.

At the centre of these environmental ethics stood the customary concept of ‘good neighbourhood’. Since the early-modern period, the ‘good neighbourhood’ encapsulated the maintenance of peaceable relations between community members who relied upon finite, and exhaustible, resources. A ‘good neighbourhood’ was not unchanging but generally strove to ensure the preservation of resources through just and ‘equitable’ access, determined by property rights, custom and tradition.⁵⁷ Inevitably, these customs and traditions were neither infallible nor unchallenged, often becoming embroiled in attempts to gain power and influence.⁵⁸ The moral ecologies of Blackmore, subsequently, were defined by exclusivity just as much as inclusivity. In 1835, for example, the villages of Langton Wallis and Fordington came into conflict over the ‘malicious’ moving of ‘boundstones’ on a shared piece of common land. For two months violent clashes occurred with both communities attempting to ‘return’ the stones to their ‘traditional positions’.⁵⁹ The preservation of ‘good neighbourhood’ in both Langton and Fordington, consequently, depended on the exclusion of the opposing village thereby ensuring that one specific ‘tradition’ defeated the other. Unlike Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, in which ‘all individuals internalise as a guide to their actions and attitudes, the partial structural explanations of their situations which impinge upon them partially as a consequence of those situations’, custom and ‘good neighbourhood’ were not unconsciously learnt but deliberately rehearsed, materially inscribed into the landscape and written into law.⁶⁰ The boundstones, as physical objects, were central to the performance of ‘good neighbourhood’. In Langton and Fordington attempts were made to ensure that the material world matched the landscapes described from memory or during previous rituals.⁶¹ Consequently, the moral ecologies of

⁵⁶ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 80-2; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 240-5; Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 196-216.

⁵⁷ Rodgers, Straughton, Winchester and Pieraccini, *Contested Common Land*, pp. 20-1, 34-6. See also: K. Wrightson, ‘The “Decline of Neighbourliness” Revisited’, in N.L. Jones and D.R. Woolf (eds.), *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 19-49.

⁵⁸ Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 240-2; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon’, pp. 99-105.

⁵⁹ ‘Robert Taylor to William Castleman, 28 April 1835’, ‘Robert Taylor to Henry Castleman, 8 June 1835’, Papers of the Bankes Family, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/M/1/44.

⁶⁰ D. Robbins, *Bourdieu and Culture* (London: Thousand Oaks, 2000), p. 16; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 13-14; Burke, *What is Cultural History*, p. 81. For a more positive opinion on the use of habitus in this situation see: Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p. 102.

⁶¹ A 1779 report confirmed the Langton claims generally but not in their entirety: ‘Presentment of a Perambulation of Part of the Boundary of the Manor of Langton Wallis, presented at the Special Court Leet of William John Bankes, 26 May 1835’, Papers of the Bankes Family, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/M/1/44. See also: McDonagh, ‘Disobedient Objects’, pp. 254-75; Navickas, ‘A Return to Materialism?’, pp. 87-108.

these communities were centred on protecting local environments from both internal and external threats. The preservation of ‘good neighbourhood’ focused on physical markers to assist in the maintenance of social harmony and environmental sustainability.

The importance of local material and cultural conditions in shaping relationships between communities and their landscapes should not be overlooked. As the following case studies demonstrate; communal memories, customs and identities were foundational to both the forms and functions of environmental protest during this period. Contested commons or woodland were not perceived as stoic economic resources. Rather, these places fostered and strengthened a sense of belonging. The material state of the environment thus played a central role in the operation and preservation of a harmonious ‘good neighbourhood’ and moral ecologies. Acts such as fence breaking, trespass or wood theft were forms of communal justice against those who threatened local livelihoods by transforming the environment and, in so doing, were betraying their community. Protests, even national occurrences such as Swing, were therefore shaped by local physical and cultural relationships with the landscape.

Sixpenny Handley: Custom, Coppices and Captain Swing

Sixpenny Handley lay on the eastern edges of the Vale. This village was a forest community, positioned beside an expansive area of common land and coppices known as Handley Common.⁶² The Manor of Handley also held a unique legal status; it was a ‘Liberty’ of the Cranborne Chase, an area of woodland with a measure of autonomy whose ‘laws and customs in many instances nearly resemble those of the Royal Forests’.⁶³ Both the geographic and cultural positioning of Sixpenny Handley thus served to inculcate a strong independent spirit. As with other forest communities, Handley was situated on the physical borderlands of rural society, leaving them relatively unconstrained by the immediate presence of any institutional authority.⁶⁴ Indeed, according to local commentators; deer-stealing was common, smugglers

⁶² For the demographics and economy of Handley see: Beardmore, ‘Landowner, Tenant and Agent’, pp. 181-99; Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, esp. pp. 37-75. For a map of the village and common land see Appendix IV.

⁶³ ‘Rivers v Hardyman: Handley Hunt and Deer Rights’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/44. For details of this autonomy see also: F. Adye, ‘Cranborne Chase’, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 19:112 (1892), pp. 373-86.

⁶⁴ Griffin, ‘Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict’, pp. 91-108; R.W. Malcolmson, ‘A Set of Ungovernable People: The Kingswood Colliers in the Eighteenth Century’, in J. Brewer and J. Styles (eds.), *An Ungovernable People, The English and their Laws in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 85-127. For the issues associated with these ‘ungoverned’ rural spaces see also: Poole, “‘A Lasting and Salutary Warning’”, pp. 163-77.

sought refuge in the Chase and the inhabitants were given to ‘all kinds of vice’.⁶⁵ Similarly, these ‘laws and customs’ fostered a culture of local independence. It was commonly believed in Handley that their status as a ‘Liberty’ exempted them from the legal restrictions placed upon hunting and wood gathering, including the Game Laws.⁶⁶ Soon after his arrival the new steward, William Castleman, declared that the village was populated by ‘lawless fellows’.⁶⁷ Yet Handley was also severely impoverished, with the farms in a ‘shocking state’ and nearly every building needing ‘alterations & improvements’.⁶⁸ From the outset, Handley was caught between Castleman’s economic ‘rejuvenation’ and pre-existing communal memories and customary relationships. Handley’s status as a ‘Liberty’ of the Chase ensured that an independent communal identity had been established, alongside a close cultural connection with the landscape.

Conflict in Handley began with the Court Day Riots of 1818 and 1819. These protests over the right to hunt deer during the Manor Court demonstrate Handley’s communal identity and the centrality of custom to social relationships. In Handley it was customary to hold a ‘general hunt on the day on which the court is opened’. Supposedly, this had ‘been practiced and deemed a right in the memory of persons near a hundred years of age’.⁶⁹ Such claims were not nebulous appeals to a half-remembered past. A legal investigation in 1818 discovered that the ‘Handley Hunt’ had been present since ‘before official recollection’. It also confirmed that ‘every resident claims and exercises that right’, suggesting that the landless poor regularly participated.⁷⁰ Appeals to custom and tradition, consequently, were not merely justifications for illegal activities but founded in an understanding of local law.⁷¹ However, custom was neither unchanging nor unchallengeable. Between 1817 and 1818 the Hunt was contested repeatedly in court. In particular, Lord Rivers, a neighbouring landowner and ‘Warden of Cranborne Chase’, claimed that the practice injured his rights of ‘Chace and Deer Feed’. Eventually, judges at the Dorset Assize and King’s Bench redefined this previously accepted act as criminal, claiming that the Hunt ‘could not be supported on any ground of law or

⁶⁵ W. West, *A History of the Forest of Chase Known by the Name of Cranborne Chase*, 6 Vols. (Gillingham, 1816), VI, pp. 121, 131; Hutchins, *History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, III, pp. 411-2; Adye, ‘Cranborne Chase’, pp. 380-5.

⁶⁶ ‘Rivers v Hardyman: Handley Hunt and Deer Rights’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/44; *Bath Chronicle*, 28 October 1819; ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 27 February 1818’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/23.

⁶⁷ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 9 November 1819’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25.

⁶⁸ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 22 May 1815’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/16; ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 7 March 1818’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/23.

⁶⁹ ‘Anonymous Letter to Lord Anglesey, 21 October 1819’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25.

⁷⁰ ‘Rivers v Hardyman: Handley Hunt and Deer Rights’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/44.

⁷¹ Wood, ‘The Place of Custom’, pp. 46-60; Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community’, pp. 115-20.

justice'.⁷² Castleman supported this decision, writing to his employer, the Marquis of Anglesey, that by removing this obstruction to the 'efficient operation' of the Manor Court he could begin to tame these 'lawless fellows'.⁷³ Eliminating this customary right was an opportunity for Castleman to gain influence over Handley, reshaping local society to an orderly, less independent, state. It also placated Lord Rivers, momentarily pausing his conflict with Anglesey over unclear borders and territorial claims.⁷⁴ Yet the local poor were reluctant to surrender this custom, rejecting Rivers offer of a yearly gift of a 'hogshead of beer' and 'brace of bucks' as compensation. Each deer caught during the Hunt could be sold for approximately 30s, making Rivers' offer a substantial financial downgrade.⁷⁵ Handley's distinctive identity and status as a politically independent 'Liberty' was founded on rituals such as the Hunt. Its removal threatened both household economies and senses of belonging.

These fears were realised when, in 1818, Castleman sought to prevent the Hunt by refusing to open the Court. An anonymous letter sent to Lord Anglesey described Castleman as a 'great little man' whose attempt to curtail the hunt was an act of 'insolent tyranny'. Most damningly, the letter concluded:

If your Lordship has authorized these proceedings, you have given up the most valuable rights of your Estate, your court will become not legal, but if it be the work of your Steward... [then] the punishment of being discharged from your service is very inadequate to his status.⁷⁶

Not only is Castleman depicted as morally corrupt, but he is also accused of endangering Handley's social contract. Without the Hunt the 'court will become not legal' and tyranny will replace local independence. Customs legitimised and codified the structures and institutions of village communities. Rituals such as the Court Day Hunt made the intangible, in this instance Anglesey's authority, tangible and acceptable to local people. Put simply, these rituals formed

⁷² *Bath Chronicle*, 28 October 1819; 'Rivers v Hardyman: Handley Hunt and Deer Rights', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/44. For the particularities and peculiarities of Lord Rivers' medieval rights, see the Pimperne section below.

⁷³ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 9 November 1819', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25. For more on the desire of local elites to eliminate customary practices to discipline the populace see: Bushaway, 'Rite, Legitimation and Community', pp. 110-35.

⁷⁴ For further information on these claims see the final section of this chapter. Also: Beardmore, 'The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent', pp. 44-5; D.R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lord and People: The Estate Steward and His World in Later Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 109.

⁷⁵ 'Rivers v Hardyman: Handley Hunt and Deer Rights', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/44; T.W.W. Smart, *A Chronicle of Cranborne* (London, 1841), pp. 143-5.

⁷⁶ 'Anonymous Letter to Lord Anglesey, 21 October 1819', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25.

the ‘theatre of paternalism’ that underpinned rural rulership.⁷⁷ Handley, as a place, was also defined and made distinctive by customs such as the Hunt; its removal threatening local social identity.⁷⁸ When Castleman finally attempted to open the court he was ‘insulted in the grossest manner by a mob of 4 or 500’ and ‘in defiance of my remonstrances, the jury, as soon as they were sworn, left the court, with the rest of the mob, to pursue their diversion of deer hunting.’⁷⁹ The desertion of the Manor Court jury, most of whom were propertied men, further demonstrates that this was an issue of communal identity, rather than a battle between rich and poor.⁸⁰ Custom provided all of Handley’s population with a communally sanctioned image of both their local environment and society. This was seen in 1819 when Castleman’s agents again attempted to prevent the Hunt. According to the records of Lord Rivers, they were pelted with stones amidst cries ‘betrayal’ and one tenant asserting ‘he would never bow in submission’ to ‘the steward’s laws’.⁸¹ Castleman had upended the ‘correct’ ordering of local society and was traitorously creating illegitimate laws. His ‘betrayal’ stemmed from both his failure to uphold his paternal duty and his disruption of communal identities. To prevent further unrest, Castleman extinguished Handley’s Manor Court. The resident’s fears had been justified and a cornerstone of manorial life and local identity had been lost.

The spectre of the Court Day Hunt would continue to haunt Handley, with the woodlands becoming a reminder of Castleman’s ‘unethical’ rule and failure to uphold social obligations. In January 1827 Castleman sold a ‘considerable quantity of Ash Timber’ located on the ‘waste of Handley’ to a local carpenter. When this was reported the ‘whole of this riotous place announced that it was theirs’ with ‘the general cry of the mob’ being that ‘the Marquis and Mr Castleman had taken away the hunt from them and now they wanted to take away the rest of their rights.’⁸² Almost a decade later, the Court Day Hunt was still remembered and served to rekindle conflicts over customary rights. Resistance began with minor acts, such as a group of

⁷⁷ Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 929-31. For the ‘theatre of paternalism’ see: Thompson, ‘Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture’, pp. 382-405; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 10-5.

⁷⁸ Bushaway, “‘Things Said or Sung a Thousand Times’”, pp. 260-1; Wood, “‘Some banglyng about the customes’”, pp. 1-14. For the theory behind social identity and difference see: Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 479; Blok, *Honour and Violence*, p. 131.

⁷⁹ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 9 November 1819’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25.

⁸⁰ For an overview of the social makeup and operation of Manorial Courts in this region see: Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 105-15.

⁸¹ ‘Papers Concerning the Handley Hunt and Minutes of Evidence from Lord Rivers’ Servants’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/30; ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 9 November 1819’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/25.

⁸² ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 February 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39; ‘John Joyce to William Castleman, 12 February 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

labourers who ‘cut down and carried away two very small trees... and shrouded two others.’⁸³ This was not merely an attempt to salvage resources from the woodlands but a symbolic performance. By enacting these gathering rights, despite Castleman’s sale of the woods, these villagers were publicly demonstrating that their claims were still valid and actionable, whilst Castleman’s exclusivity was visibly unsupported. Such acts were underpinned by English Common Law, which was supposedly a reflection of the ‘general practices of the people’.⁸⁴ Moreover, this resistance materially disrupted Castleman’s control, with the shrouding of the trees returning the landscape to its pre-sale appearance. These performances momentarily halted Castleman’s attempts to privatize this environmental resource.

A labourer named Adams was subsequently arrested and his trial provides an insight into Handley’s environmental ethics. Adams claimed that, due to his previous betrayal, the Marquess of Anglesey ‘was not Lord of the Manor’ and so the timber did not belong to him.⁸⁵ Crucially, these arguments were not baseless as there existed considerable legal confusion surrounding Anglesey’s timber rights and control over the Manor of Handley.⁸⁶ It is worth restating that customary claims to the land and natural resources did not exist in opposition to legal statute but because of them. Simultaneously, this defence was an extension of the view, first expressed during the Court Day Riots, that the customary gathering and access rights of the woodland legitimised Anglesey’s rule. For labourers such as Adams, the gathering of wood in these commons was envisioned as a physical performance that reinforced Handley’s harmonious ‘good neighbourhood’ and reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships. Selling the woods, conversely, threatened to reshape accepted taskcapes and social relationships. As a result, both Castleman and Anglesey had been disavowed by the community, with their nebulous rule now used against them. It was also claimed that ‘years ago... the Marquis cut a tree in the common, like those trees, and the people took it and carried it away and why did not the Marquis of Anglesey prosecute them.’⁸⁷ Castleman’s actions were thus portrayed as being inconsistent with accepted custom and good practice. These memories were recalled for distinctly political purposes, legitimating present claims to the land. Recounting Handley’s former ‘good neighbourhood’, where timber was distributed equitably, explicitly condemned

⁸³ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 February 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39. For the power of places to remind communities of social obligations see: Kahn, ‘Your Place and Mine’, pp. 167-96.

⁸⁴ Lobban, ‘Custom, Common Law Reasoning and the Law of Nations’, pp. 256-78; Young, ‘Popular Attitudes Towards Rural Customs’, pp. 22-6.

⁸⁵ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 February 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

⁸⁶ Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 754-5; Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 37-75.

⁸⁷ ‘John Joyce to William Castleman, 12 February 1827’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

Castleman's current behaviour. The privatization and sale of these woods had created an unacceptable image of the landscape.⁸⁸ The moral ecology of Handley was an interlocking set of values that connected men and their masters through the local environment. Even minor acts of wood theft could reassert and re-enact the correct operation of local ecology and society.

When Castleman's agents arrived to remove the trees in February 1827, they were met by the entire male population of Handley. Leading the crowd were a number of significant farmers, Captain Peyton, a retired naval officer, and Streatfield, the village curate. They repeated that Anglesey was not their Lord and threatened to arrest the woodcutters. Once again, concerns for the landscape cut across social boundaries with Streatfield providing a succinct summary of local environmental ethics, arguing:

that the Marquis was not the Lord of the Manor of Handley and that every man was Lord of his own, the Marquis was but one and he had no more right than they, he should not cut or carry away any timber.⁸⁹

As Griffin has argued, private property was not an absolute concept in the nineteenth century. Rather, it was negotiated and understood through customs and communal relationships.⁹⁰ Streatfield's claim may have borrowed its language from groups such as the Levellers, but it was forged from local memories and experiences.⁹¹ It was a restatement of 'good neighbourhood', the belief that to protect Handley's 'harmonious' community an individual, even Lord Anglesey, could not monopolise local resources. The Handley protestors did not reject private property altogether but believed it should be tempered by customary reciprocity. Subsequently, the villagers began to occupy the woodland:

Thomas Hill came and sat on the cut and said to Himer [woodcutter] 'if you cut me I'll break your damned neck.' Stephen Pouch snatched the chain around the timber and a great many people came and sat down on the sticks and swore it should not be hoisted away.⁹²

It is noteworthy that Hill likened himself to the coppices when he challenged the woodcutters to 'cut me'. This language, alongside the physical occupation, suggests a close connection

⁸⁸ Featherstone, 'Skills for Heterogeneous Associations', pp. 284-306; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 222-40.

⁸⁹ 'John Joyce to William Castleman, 12 February 1827', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

⁹⁰ Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 754-6.

⁹¹ R.B. Seaberg, 'The Norman Conquest and the Common Law: The Levellers and the Argument from Continuity', *Historical Journal*, 24:4 (1981), pp. 791-806.

⁹² 'John Joyce to William Castleman, 12 February 1827', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

between villager and landscape. Indeed, this occupation provided an opportunity for senses of place and belonging to be reconfirmed. The protest adopted a festive atmosphere; whilst the men set up camp, Handley's children brought them food, cider and torches. Meanwhile, the woodcutters were pelted with stones and insults.⁹³ This protest not only sought to protect economic resources but also place the woodlands back at the heart of Handley's community. These actions harkened back to customary celebrations, such as Bonfire Night, and made this place inseparable from a sense of communal belonging. Castleman's actions, conversely, were presented as an immoral disruption of local taskscapes. These protests thus sought to both prevent physical transformations, assuring that the woods remained in a recognisable state, whilst reinforcing communal ecological attachments and identities.

Despite these protests, Castleman managed to remove approximately half of the trees by March 1827. However, minor acts of resistance continued; serving to keep claims to the woodland alive whilst preventing these places from being materially obliterated. Tellingly, Castleman only recorded a few of these incidents in his reports. Attempting to portray himself as a capable administrator, he stated that his initial victory had permanently settled 'this vexatious question'.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, in 1828 a man named Duffet was committed 'to gaol to hard labour' for deliberately damaging the coppices and fences.⁹⁵ Similarly, in March 1829 local newspapers reported that 'a number' of trees were damaged in the coppices and a 'great quantity of barley had been stolen' from the estate. The culprits were soon discovered burning the barley on 'large bonfires' in the coppices. Their motive, supposedly, 'originated in revenge'.⁹⁶ In a similar manner to the dumping of grain during food protests, burning this wood and barley served no economic purpose but delivered a strong moral message.⁹⁷ As Griffin noted, tree-maiming expressed local grievances by publicly and viscerally destroying 'living capital'. These trees served as embodied proxies for Castleman, the violence conducted upon them enacting 'revenge' through 'disembodied pain'. These acts thus offered psychological catharsis for the perpetrators whilst threatening Castleman with demonstrations of violence. Maiming these plants suggested what might happen to Castleman himself if he continued to

⁹³ 'John Joyce to William Castleman, 12 February 1827', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

⁹⁴ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 February 1827', 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 16 February 1827', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/39.

⁹⁵ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 29 July 1828', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/40; 'Depositions and Charge Against George Duffet', Dorset Quarter Session Rolls: Midsummer 1828', *DHC*.

⁹⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 16 February 1826; *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 20 February 1826.

⁹⁷ Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', pp. 76-136; Boshtedt, *The Politics of Provisions*, esp. pp. 165-244.

transform this space and endanger local identities.⁹⁸ Such actions also reduced the likelihood of physical changes; damaging the trees lessened their market value, whilst breaking fences directly challenged material impediments to everyday life. For Castleman's transformations to be successful, he had to not only materially reshape the landscape but also fundamentally alter Handley's existing environmental behaviours, working lives and taskscapes. Despite his reluctance to explicitly record these conflicts, rewards of £5 were offered for any information on wood thieves and tree-maimers. However, in Castleman's tenure as steward only four people took this money, with the majority of claims occurring before the conflict over Handley Coppices had intensified.⁹⁹ In 1837 Castleman was still complaining about 'constant' trespasses and wood theft in the remaining woodland, despairing at the 'set of vagabonds' who resided in Handley.¹⁰⁰ These repeated trespasses reinforced the claim that access to the woods was an accepted and continuously practised right whilst simultaneously undermining Castleman's authority.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, breaking branches, trampling fences and shrouding trees physically performed local claims, demonstrating to locals and outside onlookers that Castleman's redefinition of the landscape had been neither successfully enacted nor passively accepted. Both culturally and materially, these minor acts of resistances attempted to preserve the coppices, ensuring that the community retained this meaningful place.

The forms and functions of the Swing risings in Handley were predicated on these environmental attachments and local legacies of resistance. Swing in Handley began on 21 November 1830, the first documented rising in Dorset. Reports indicate that these riots were backed by the majority of Handley's population with support for Swing being 'the general feeling.'¹⁰² This widespread discontent, however, was not solely caused by poor economic conditions, as an anonymous threatening letter indicates:

⁹⁸ Griffin, 'Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict', pp. 91-108; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 262-3.

⁹⁹ 'Voucher to Thomas Woodman, 1824-5', 'Vouchers to Mr Welch and Holly Hick, 1824', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/4/49; 'Voucher to Robert Brooksby, 1831', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/4/54.

¹⁰⁰ 'William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 12 August 1837', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

¹⁰¹ Short, 'Conservation, Class and Custom', pp. 127-54. These thefts are similar to the acts of 'pilfering' studied in Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 118-24.

¹⁰² *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 December 1830; 'Henry Castleman to John Sanderson, 25 November 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42. *The Times*, 13 January 1831; 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 24 November 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

Mr Castleman. Sir – Sunday night your House shall come down to the Ground for you are an inhuman monster and we will dash out your brains... your sett ought to be sent to Hell. The Handley Torches have not forgot.¹⁰³

Unlike other areas of England, in Handley there was no need for a mythical leader figure such as Captain Swing.¹⁰⁴ These risings were predicated on communal memory, with previous conflicts over the woodland or the hunt feeding and legitimising current animosity. Describing Castleman as a ‘monster’ referenced prior condemnations of his supposedly immoral behaviour. Indeed, in September and October 1830 concerns had resurfaced as Castleman had begun the process of enclosing Handley Common. This move was heavily contested, with many locals claiming ‘unlimited rights of Common’ leading to ‘tedious and expensive litigation’.¹⁰⁵ The response from those without common rights was equally frustrating. Castleman’s private surveyors had their equipment stolen, exploratory fence poles were broken and by late October Castleman concluded that the enclosure was ‘in a most unsatisfactory state and will I fear be productive of trouble and expense’.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Swing in Handley was not solely concerned with low wages or unemployment. Rather, Swing coincided with rising fears that Castleman was endangering village customs and communal identities. The ‘Handley Torches’ thus saw it as their duty to prevent further assaults on important local places.

These concerns subsequently inspired and shaped the repertoires of Handley’s Swing protests. Between 21 and 25 November, wandering crowds burnt approximately fifteen threshing machines in Handley, Tollard and Cranborne.¹⁰⁷ Such burnings have been interpreted as the trademark protest of Swing, an assault on ‘immoral’ capital through the destruction of employment endangering machinery.¹⁰⁸ Yet studies of machine breaking have overlooked crucial local differences in how these protests were performed. In Handley protests took on a

¹⁰³ ‘Anonymous to Castleman, 21 November 1830’ in W.H. Parry Okeden (ed.) ‘The Agricultural Riots in Dorset in 1830’, *Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Proceedings*, 52 (1930), pp. 88-9.

¹⁰⁴ P. Jones, ‘The True Life and History of Captain Swing: Rhetorical Construction and Metonym in a Time of Reform’, *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 101-116; K. Navickas, ‘The Search for “General Ludd”: The Mythology of Luddism’, *Social History*, 30:3 (2005), pp. 281-95.

¹⁰⁵ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 September 1830’, ‘John Sanderson to William Castleman, 2 October 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁰⁶ *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 23 September 1830; *Sherborne Mercury*, 22 November 1830; ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 22 October 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁰⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 2 December 1830; *Sherborne Mercury*, 29 November 1830, 6 December 1830; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 December 1830; ‘Earl Digby to Lord Melbourne, 2 December 1830’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/7, fo. 326-8; ‘James Harnham to Lord Anglesey, 25 November 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁰⁸ Randall, ‘Luddism of the Poor’, pp. 41-61; Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 137-53.

sombre tone, its forms emphasising a communal sense of unity and loss. A crowd ‘armed with sledges and branches’ paraded in ‘relative silence’ around the commons and coppices, led by a labourer who ‘held aloft a lighted candle in a lantern’. When they arrived at the farm of James Dixon, they demand access to his barn ‘in a very civil manner’ and then destroyed the machine.¹⁰⁹ For the Handley crowd, Dixon’s threshing machine was not an absolute priority as other material objects commanded more of their attention. Castleman reported:

I am witnessing great devastation... They have destroyed 4 or 5 miles of the fences. We are experiencing untold resistance against the fences with they say oppressed them and their customs’.¹¹⁰

By Swing’s end the Handley crowd had ‘levelled the fences in the whole of the parish’.¹¹¹ This was not the boisterous and carnivalesque disturbance usually associated with Swing’s machine breaking.¹¹² In Handley communal anger focused on the material signifiers of the new enclosures whilst their performances served to reinforce the connection between these actions and memories of dispossession. The procession around the commons and coppices attempted to reinforce a sense of community and belonging. Marching as a unified group beneath the light of a single lantern physically encapsulated desires to reunite a society that had been in turmoil since 1818. As Jones argued, Swing’s crowd actions repeatedly sought to recruit the entire local population, willingly or otherwise, in an attempt to revive the traditional bonds of village life.¹¹³ In Handley, such repertoires were inescapably bound with the physical landscape and feelings of dislocation. The silent procession was akin to a funeral rite, tracing the outline of meaningful places that were at risk or had already been materially assaulted. The arming of the crowd compounded this, threatening what might occur if these environmental outrages continued.¹¹⁴ If Swing was concerned with restoring the ‘morally correct’ structures of society then in Handley the defence of the landscape was foundational to these mindsets. The ‘resistance against the fences’, was an attempt to restore what had been lost by reshaping the physical landscape and removing morally offensive material objects.

Swing’s targets were also determined by Handley’s ongoing environmental conflicts. In the neighbouring parish of Cranborne a group of sixty Handley men targeted the home of Henry

¹⁰⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 13 January 1831.

¹¹⁰ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 24 November 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹¹¹ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 25 November 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹¹² For these instances see: Griffin, *Rural War*, esp. pp. 87-117.

¹¹³ Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91.

¹¹⁴ For the importance of feelings of loss and symbolic violence see: Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 196-216; C. Griffin, ‘The Violent Captain Swing?’, *Past and Present*, 209:1 (2010), pp. 149-80.

Moyle, a land-surveyor. According to newspaper reports, Moyle had previously been involved in the Handley enclosure process.¹¹⁵ Swing, therefore, provided an opportunity for the crowd to seek revenge and demonstrates that rural labourers understood the enclosure process. Moyle offered to give the crowd 5s to spare his home, but the ringleaders refused stating that, due to Moyle's crimes, 'I'll be damned if I don't have more'. He was then threatened with a bludgeon until he handed over 8s 6d, 'about three or four gallons of beer' and 'some bread and cheese, the remnants of which they threw down in the road'.¹¹⁶ Unlike other victims, where money was demanded under the pretence of payment for the destruction of machinery, the assault on Moyle was legitimised by the crowd as a punishment.¹¹⁷ Equally, casting the bread and cheese into the road was a public chastisement. Requesting beer or bread was a common tactic of Swing, supposedly representing charity and thus a return to harmonious paternalist relationships.¹¹⁸ Destroying this food suggests that Moyle was both irredeemable and unwelcome in the protestors' 'ideal' society. Local conditions and relationships were thus crucial in shaping Swing's forms and functions. The assault on Moyle and procession around Handley were designed to condemn those who threatened local customs, identities and places. These protests sought to restore the material environment and society in general to their 'correct' states.

A new scale of wages and promises of relief saw the conclusion of disturbances in Sixpenny Handley by the end of November.¹¹⁹ However, access to the land and its resources remained a contentious issue. The new curate, Reverend Mason, offered to grant the poor 'ten acres' if Castleman put aside twenty-five 'to be tilled on the parish account'. Castleman curtly denied this proposal claiming that there was 'not an acre of land in Handley that is not under lease'. When Mason complained directly to Lord Anglesey, Castleman intercepted the letter and instructed the priest to 'desist all further correspondence' as 'I am not accountable to you'.¹²⁰ This exchange again highlights the land agent's central role in relaying information to the landowner and their repeated attempts to control the discourse surrounding local unrest. For Castleman, allotments would be 'inefficient' and would inculcate 'bad habits' amongst the poor. Agricultural 'improvement' was the only cure for Handley's poor moral state as

¹¹⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 8 September 1825; *Sherborne Mercury*, 22 November 1830; 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 September 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹¹⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 13 January 1831.

¹¹⁷ For other accounts of robbery during Swing in Dorset see the proceedings of the Special Commissions: *The Times*, 13 January 1831, 14 January 1831.

¹¹⁸ Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations', pp. 275-80.

¹¹⁹ 'Henry Castleman to John Sanderson, 25 November 1830', 'D.O.P Okeden to Lord Uxbridge, 10 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹²⁰ 'William Castleman to Rev. Mason, 3 December 1830', 'Rev. Mason to Lord Anglesey, 7 December 1830', 'William Castleman to Rev. Mason, 18 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

enclosure would 'set straight' Handley's 'set of vagabonds'. It was not only the poor who held moral visions of the landscape. Through enclosure Castleman hoped to quash the rebellious and independent spirit that came from Handley's identity as a free 'Liberty'.¹²¹ Yet resistance in Handley was becoming increasingly organised. By the early-1830s, regular meetings were being held in the village and there was 'scarcely a person in the place that is not openly or covertly forwarding the views of Peyton and his gang in opposition to Lord Anglesey's interests.'¹²² Peyton had reprised his role as a 'leader' from the protests of 1827. Moreover, the adoption of organised meetings seems to suggest that experiences of previous defeats had influenced the protest repertoires of Handley. Indeed, resistance against the Handley enclosure, such as fence breaking or trespass, served to support a concomitant legal challenge, which was considered in the Court of the Exchequer between 1833 and 1834.¹²³ The plaintiff was Harry Dibben, a small farmer who lived on the edge of the common. An unsuccessful auction in 1817 reveals that Dibben held 22 acres in Handley, which include 9 'beast leazes' on the common. He had also regularly appeared on Handley's jury lists and, in a private notebook, Castleman had described Dibben as having been 'commendable all these years'.¹²⁴ This suggests that Dibben was a respected member of the community, making him an ideal leader for the local campaign to restore a 'harmonious' society and ecology. Consequently, protests against enclosure between 1831 and 1834 need to be understood as the result of almost two decades of environmental struggle, with this resistance serving as a final attempt to restore local society to its 'correct' form, materially and culturally.

Meaningful places, such as Handley Common, were not conceived as isolated entities but were viewed in the context of other places and times. Resistance in 1832 thus explicitly referenced past actions and focused on sites of prolonged protest.¹²⁵ Castleman reported in February that:

the place is the most disorderly and riotous I have ever had to deal with. I wish to go on peaceably with them and have without remonstrance responded, but it

¹²¹ 'William Castleman to Rev. Mason, 3 December 1830', 'John Sanderson to William Castleman, 9 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42; 'William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 12 August 1837', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51. For opposition to allotments see: J. Burchardt, 'Rural Social Relations, 1830-1850: Opposition to Allotments for Labourers', *Agricultural History Review*, 45:2 (1997), pp. 165-75. The desire to 'control' the commons and those who lived around them continued throughout the nineteenth century, see: Howkins, 'The Use and Abuse of the English Commons', pp. 107-32.

¹²² 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 January 1834', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/46.

¹²³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 7 November 1833, 15 May 1834.

¹²⁴ 'Jury List for Sixpenny Handley, 1827', Dorset Quarter Sessions, *DHC*, Q/S/J/5/1827/211; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 January 1817; 'William Castleman's Estate Notebook', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/6/2.

¹²⁵ Whyte, 'Spatial History', pp. 235-40. See also: Brady, 'Space, Place and Agency', pp. 29-48.

is impossible to keep this course any longer. Dibben... has now turned his cows into one of **those coppices** insisting on their being commonable all the year.¹²⁶

According to Castleman this was a regular performance, with Dibben repeatedly parading his cattle around the common. Such an act was a highly visible, and physical, recreation of past practices. Moreover, it was conducted not only on the common and but also in the coppices, connecting these actions with previous resistance. Despret has argued that the importance of animals can be seen in how they incited or inspired others to act. Trespassing cattle performed the previous state of the commons whilst simultaneously reshaping the material landscape into an acceptable state. The cows ‘trampled’ the grass and ‘broke’ the fences, eradicating the physical objects that disrupted custom and asserted Castleman’s control. In essence, these animal bodies conveyed possibilities whilst also preventing material change.¹²⁷ Castleman understood this threat and quickly impounded the cattle.¹²⁸ This response, however, provided a rallying call for Handley’s protestors. Over the next four months, the enclosures were repeatedly attacked. Castleman claimed that, in one night, protestors could destroy ‘500 lugs’ of fencing and they did so ‘almost weekly’.¹²⁹ Though locals referred to the destruction as ‘Dibben’s Cause’, possibly taking advantage of his local reputation, this conflict was not focused on one man’s claims.¹³⁰ Rather, it was an attempt to impress an acceptable moral ecology upon Castleman. Standing before the magistrate D.O.P. Okeden, the fence breakers explained that Castleman’s enclosure would eliminate the last remnants of the ‘existence of the Chase’.¹³¹ Such claims demonstrate local fears regarding the loss of identity and heritage. First expressed during the Court Day Hunt, this concern was sourced from the belief that these customary practices ensured a ‘good neighbourhood’. Handley’s commons and coppices were not merely a series of economic entitlements but places that underpinned local distinctiveness and social relations. To Castleman’s horror, Okeden accepted these arguments and acquitted the fence breakers. He also condemned the fences, believing them to be ‘injurious’. Subsequently, later rioters would claim that acted ‘by Squire Okeden’s advice.’¹³² The physical

¹²⁶ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 February 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁷ Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’, pp. 29-44; Pearson, ‘Dogs, History and Agency’, pp. 132-34.

¹²⁸ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 February 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44.

¹²⁹ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 12 June 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44. A ‘lug’ was the local name for a rod, a unit of length equal to 5½ yards. This destruction thus totals at slightly above 1.5 miles of fencing per night.

¹³⁰ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 22 February 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44.

¹³¹ ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 12 June 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44.

¹³² ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 12 June 1832’, ‘William Castleman to John Sanderson, 27 September 1832’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44.

performances of Dibben, the cattle and the fence breakers challenged Castleman's redefinition by presenting a tangible image of what local ecology and society should be. These material performances of an 'ideal' community were even enough to convince elite onlookers.

Okeden's decision, however, was not founded on emotion or misplaced sympathy. Rather, his actions were guided by legal precedent. Historians of rural protests sometimes risk presenting customary culture as the inevitable opponent of 'modernising' law and private property.¹³³ Yet the enclosure protests in Handley did not occur in opposition to statutes and legal advice but because of them. Dibben had been advised by his legal counsel to take down all the fences in Handley, albeit without using a 'riotous mob'.¹³⁴ Patrolling the commons with cattle or destroying fences were clear legal statements, demonstrating that threatened customary rights and privileges had not been overlooked or extinguished. Due to the operation of English Common Law, these minor actions were vital to keeping claims alive. The law was not immutable but a 'terrain of struggle' over 'actual practice', with both the labouring poor and rural elite acknowledging the importance of custom in underpinning legal precedent.¹³⁵ Nor was customary law envisioned as utopian or the commons as universally accessible. At court, Dibben's lawyers made it clear that the privileges claimed were for those with common rights to have access between 12 May and 22 November with the coppices also being made commonable once every four years. For those without land, their rights were 'to have and take reasonable amounts of the furze'.¹³⁶ Certainly, this fuel source would have benefitted local household economies, but it was hardly equal access. Nevertheless, popular action against the enclosure fences served to support Dibben's legal proceedings, with his lawyers commenting on Handley's customary rights being 'universally' understood and supported. The court agreed, declaring that Anglesey had 'no course of action', that Dibben and other landed men 'ought to have common of pasture', and, most surprisingly, that the people of Handley could 'from time to time cut down the trees there growing'.¹³⁷ This final ruling did not simply pertain to Handley Common, it was also a retroactive condemnation of the coppice sale in 1827. Continued

¹³³ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England*, pp. 262-70; Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, pp. 84-98.

¹³⁴ This was relayed during the subsequent trial: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 7 November 1833. For established connections between enclosure protest and litigation in early-modern England see: McDonagh, 'Making and Breaking Property', pp. 36-9.

¹³⁵ E.P. Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity', in D. Hay, P. Linebaugh, J. Rule, E.P. Thompson and C. Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: A. Lane, 1975), pp. 260-265; Navickas, 'A Return to Materialism?', pp. 99-101. See also: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20; Wood, 'Place of Custom', pp. 46-60; Bushaway, 'Rite, Legitimation and Community', pp. 115.

¹³⁶ 'Copy Award of Serjeant Charles Bompas Regarding Sixpenny Handley Common Rights', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/60; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 May 1834.

¹³⁷ 'Copy Award of Serjeant Charles Bompas Regarding Sixpenny Handley Common Rights', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/60.

resistance in Handley had thus ensured that customary access rights to both coppices and common had not faded away. Materially reverting Castleman's changes ensured that their claims could be 'read' from the landscape. By ensuring the physicality of these places remained intact, past practices and custom remained part of communal identities and memory.

Following their court victory, Dibben and Peyton hosted a 'variety of rural diversions' on the common 'in celebration'.¹³⁸ Such actions not only strengthened local bonds but also situated this place at the heart of village culture. Aside from an incident in 1837, where two bailiffs were assaulted after attempting to remove an outhouse, Castleman would never again interfere with Handley Common.¹³⁹ The bonds between Handley, as a community, and its commonable fields and woodlands were unique. These landscapes provided not only resources but also senses of belonging, communal identities and ways of remembering the past.¹⁴⁰ Landscape change threatened the customs and rituals that made Handley distinct, as an independent 'Liberty', and its local spaces meaningful. Contrary to the arguments of Wells, in Handley we witness demands for customary access rights constantly being revived and refurbished.¹⁴¹ The legacy of the Court Day Hunt, Castleman's first 'betrayal', was still being referenced in the late-1830s. Even Swing's repertoires and targets were crucially influenced by Handley's local history of resistance. As such, resistance towards enclosure in 1832 should not be interpreted as merely a continuation of Swing. These later protests were founded on communal memories of loss and sourced both their ideologies and legitimacy from far older acts of resistance. It was a final attempt to reinstate local moral ecologies and subsequently return both the material landscape and local society to a 'correct' arrangement. There is no evidence to suggest that Handley's labourers believed returning to a previous 'harmonious' society was utterly impossible.¹⁴² Castleman's 'improvements' not only threatened local household economies but also fostered a belief that he had failed in his paternalistic duty to protect Handley's 'good neighbourhood'. These duties and obligations revolved around performances and the material landscape, which provided 'landmarks of memory' and allowed locals to understand and challenge otherwise intangible social relationships.¹⁴³ Even minor acts, such as wood theft, helped maintain customary claims and helped prevent landscapes from becoming

¹³⁸ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 May 1834.

¹³⁹ 'Christopher Grant to William Castleman, 17 September 1837', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

¹⁴⁰ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 240-45.

¹⁴¹ Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', pp. 223-7. See also: Robertson and Hall, 'Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict', pp. 19-36.

¹⁴² See: Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory in Early Modern England', pp. 233-54.

¹⁴³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 175; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 36-7.

‘unrecognisable’. Place was thus defended by both symbolic public performances and material preservation.

Stalbridge: Place and Paternalism

Handley could easily be dismissed as a unique convergence of geographic location and cultural heritage. Studying Stalbridge, therefore, demonstrates how widespread these beliefs in a moral ecology were. It also emphasises how vernacular environmental ethics underpinned and legitimised authority in rural society. Located in the central Vale, Stalbridge was a poor but otherwise unremarkable market town. A letter to *The Times* in 1826 estimated that the parish contained 4,600 acres of farmland ‘being generally of excellent quality’. Yet the 1,600 people who resided here were ‘extremely poor and wretched’. The working poor were ‘principally labourers in agriculture’ with around two hundred ‘engaged, at extremely low wages, for the silk-throwsters’. The local silk trade had collapsed during the Napoleonic Wars and those who were engaged in agriculture, principally dairying, chafed under low wages and ‘the enormous rent charged to him for potato-land’. With potatoes remaining the labourers’ ‘principal sustenance’ in winter, these exorbitant rents were doubly devastating. Unsurprisingly, fuel was also ‘extremely dear’ leading ‘poor women and children’ to ‘pick wood from hedges... for which they often severely reprimanded.’¹⁴⁴ Subsequently, Stalbridge was similar to many rural communities in the early-nineteenth century, especially those examined by Wells during the post-1815 agricultural depression.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, during Yeatman’s investigation into the state of Blackmore’s labourers, Stalbridge was classified as a ‘typical’ Vale town ‘where there are fifty and even seventy able-bodied men out of employ’.¹⁴⁶ These customary environments, therefore, played a crucial role in local household economies and everyday life.

Aside from the local hedgerows, the main source of fuel for the local poor were the woodlands on Stalbridge Park and Clifton Wood. A survey in 1814 by Lord Anglesey’s new steward, William Castleman, confirmed that the ‘destruction committed by felling timber’ was ‘very great’ in these areas.¹⁴⁷ These sites, therefore, occupied a central position in local people’s

¹⁴⁴ *The Times*, 31 August 1826. A later letter confirmed that these issues were worsening, see: *The Times*, 1 May 1829. For a detailed overview of Stalbridge’s demographics see: Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 15-32. For a map of nineteenth-century Stalbridge see Appendix V.

¹⁴⁵ Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, pp. 129-146.

¹⁴⁶ Yeatman, *A Letter to D.O.P Okeden*, pp. 65-6.

¹⁴⁷ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 13 August 1814’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/16. This section will primarily focus on Stalbridge Park as Clifton Wood was located in a neighbouring parish, see: Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 95-6.

everyday lives and household economies. This was partially due to the long-standing, and accepted, exclusivity of Stalbridge's common. Unlike Handley, the poor of Stalbridge had no special connection towards or reliance upon their common. Stalbridge had been enclosed in 1811, yet there are no reports of any protest, nor is there any evidence of the poor illegally turf-cutting for fuel on the common during the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. According to the Manor Court Book, only fifteen residents, those who operated 'Common of Pasture', were granted turf-cutting rights. This was, apparently, a 'well established and accepted' arrangement.¹⁴⁸ This acceptance is tentatively confirmed by a survey of the Poor Rate, which barely rose from £983 in 1811 to £986 following the finalisation of enclosure in 1815. The total number of recipients also fell from 33 in 1811 to 25 in 1815.¹⁴⁹ A lack of any noticeable change in poor relief, combined with pre-existing restrictions, suggest that labourers in Stalbridge had long since accepted the exclusive nature of their common land.¹⁵⁰ In this instance, local moral ecologies were not binarily opposed to notions of exclusivity, with the Stalbridge poor using the nearby woodlands to satisfy their household needs. It would be overly simplistic to argue that the people of Stalbridge had 'passively accepted' enclosure.¹⁵¹ Rather, their understanding of customary law had accommodated restricted and exclusive access rights before the enclosure process had even begun. Instead, it was the woodlands, particularly on Stalbridge Park, that had become a centrepiece of Stalbridge's vernacular environmental ethics.

As at Handley, Castleman's attempts to 'improve' Stalbridge's economic and moral character were not well received. Soon after his arrival, the woodlands on Stalbridge Park and Clifton Wood were partially transformed into timber plantations. These privatised sites were to 'supply for the necessary repairs' across Anglesey's estates. Consequently, new fences were installed and existing hedgerows were expanded and widened.¹⁵² These material alterations were significant. What had once been open and accessible woodland was now strictly controlled and privatized with previously accepted customary practices made criminal. Almost immediately, minor acts of resistance and theft struck the new timber nurseries. In 1814 a report noted that an unknown group had badly 'pruned' the trees 'many of which are [now] dead'. Similarly, in

¹⁴⁸ Those with furze-cutting rights could take thirty faggots for every bullock's leaze or sixty for every horse leaze. They also had to pay the hayward 6d per hundred faggots. 'Manor of Stalbridge Court Book, 1781-1841', Burrige, Kent and Arkell Solicitors Papers, *DHC*, D-484.

¹⁴⁹ 'Stalbridge Overseers' Accounts, 1811-1820', Stalbridge Parish Records, *DHC*, PC-STG/6/5.

¹⁵⁰ Enclosure's lack of impact in Stalbridge is also commented upon in: Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 49-55.

¹⁵¹ Bawn, *Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order*, pp. 12-36; J.P.D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), pp. 19-26.

¹⁵² 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 17 March 1818', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/23; 'Printed Notice to the Tenantry Regarding New Fences and Hedges, 21 October 1818', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/23.

1818 a storm knocked down '11 elm trees' and before Castleman could react the local population had stolen the trees that had been blown over whilst destroying saplings and doing 'considerable damage' to the fences.¹⁵³ It is noteworthy that the crowd only 'stole' the timber that had been blown down and damaged the rest. This was because, according to local custom, the crowd was only 'entitled' to gather storm-damaged timber.¹⁵⁴ The moral ecologies of the Stalbridge poor subsequently shaped their resistance, governing which trees were 'stolen' and which were destroyed. It was not only Castleman whose actions were judged and circumscribed by environmental ethics; 'illegal' acts, such as wood theft, were also governed by detailed local expectations, traditions and customary rules. As Scott noted, these 'rules' protected protestors by allowing them to avoid accusations of outright criminality.¹⁵⁵ Such selective theft also reveals the underlying moral concerns that both inspired and guided these protests.

The new nurseries in Stalbridge were seen as both economic inconveniences and serious threats to local social harmony. Griffin has noted how timber plantations were monocultures, extinguishing both fuel supplies and a host of other gathering rights, such as nutting.¹⁵⁶ Castleman's transformations thus worried neighbouring authorities due to fears that desperation or anger would turn the population to crime, immorality, or revolt. In 1815, Reverend Yeatman wrote to Castleman to report that he had convicted 'two farmers' sons of great notoriety' for 'sporting on the manor of Stalbridge' and damaging the woodland. In the letter, he expressed concerns regarding recent changes made to the Park and impressed upon Castleman the need 'to restore a little of the good order so necessary to the morals of the public, as well as the preservation of the rights of the individual'.¹⁵⁷ These final words from Yeatman hint at a moral ecology underpinning local concerns. In 1829 an anonymous letter to *The Times* stated that 'new industries', customary privileges and access rights had been 'systematically discouraged, lest they should render the labourers too independent.'¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, acts of

¹⁵³ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 13 August 1814', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/16; 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 17 March 1818', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/23; *Bath Chronicle*, 12 March 1818.

¹⁵⁴ 'William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 1 January 1837', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51; 'Manor of Stalbridge Court Book, 1781-1841', Burrige, Kent and Arkell Solicitors Papers, *DHC*, D-484. This belief was common amongst the nineteenth century rural poor, see: Griffin, 'Becoming Private Property', pp. 756-60.

¹⁵⁵ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. 28-47. See also: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 48-80; Griffin, 'Squatting as Moral Ecology', pp. 235-63.

¹⁵⁶ Griffin, 'Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict', pp. 91-108; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 77-80; Woodward, 'Straw, Bracken and the Wicklow Whale', *Past and Present*, 159 (1998), pp. 43-76.

¹⁵⁷ 'Reverend Yeatman to William Castleman, 3 June 1815', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/50. In his letters, Yeatman frequently criticised Castleman's management of the estate: 'William Castleman to Samuel Lewis, 20 November 1821', 'Samuel Lewis to William Castleman, 24 November 1821', 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 29 November 1821', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/29.

¹⁵⁸ *The Times*, 1 May 1829.

wood theft, trespass and fence breaking served to reject the Castleman's perceived suppression of local rights and independence. These material transformations were socially alienating, dislocating the people of Stalbridge from their accepted understandings of social relationships and authority.¹⁵⁹ The new fences and hedges physically represented an unacceptable social order, where previous freedoms had been lost and individual liberty was materially threatened. Such beliefs were compounded by Castleman's apparent disregard for local heritage and a growing opinion that he was a tyrannical 'foreigner'. In order to modernise the management of the Stalbridge estate, in 1815 Castleman relocated the customary dinner held to celebrate the yearly audit from Stalbridge Manor, a mansion situated on the Park, to Stalbridge's Red Lion Inn. The silver cutlery and antique glassware, which were reserved for this occasion, were also sold off.¹⁶⁰ These changes deeply concerned the local tenantry. One anonymous letter to Lord Anglesey asserted that 'few respectable people will concern themselves with your present Steward who is if possible worse than Bo__te [Bonaparte]'. Another letter, from 1817, suggested cutting the Stewards 'exorbitant' wages to help relive local distress.¹⁶¹ As in Handley, Castleman is presented as an exploitative tyrant, assaulting accepted practices for personal gain. Stalbridge Manor had been the focal point of estate life, it was from this place that the steward usually conducted his official business, such as holding Court.¹⁶² Subsequently, the Manor had become central to local identities, rituals and communal belonging. Even a minor change, such as moving the dinner, risked delegitimising Castleman. Due to generations of communal memories, the Manor had become a place that embodied the 'correct' and 'moral' patrician-plebeian social relationship. Yet Castleman's rejection of established local custom and governance was not merely symbolic. To raise funds for the estate Stalbridge Manor was demolished in 1823. As the anonymous letter to *The Times* reported:

The land... is under the management of an **attorney**, who lives 20 miles distant, and his subagents, the Marquis not having been here for many years, and the fine old family mansion having been pulled down and sold for the produce of the lead, stone and timber.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Olwig, 'Representation and Alienation', pp. 28-35. For the dislocation caused by the transformation of land into a commodity see: E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (London: Abacus, 1962), pp. 185-90.

¹⁶⁰ The Red Lion Inn was situated in central Stalbridge: 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 6 November 1815', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/17. See also: Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 58-9.

¹⁶¹ 'Anonymous to Lord Anglesey, n.d. November 1815', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/17; 'Anonymous to Lord Anglesey, 5 April 1817', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/22.

¹⁶² Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 58-60.

¹⁶³ *The Times*, 31 August 1826. Emphasis in original.

Most of the ‘lead, stone and timber’ was used to support building projects in Anglesey’s rotten borough, Milborne Port. The work was conducted by labourers from Blandford and Shaftesbury, with many locals ‘refusing’ these jobs in a show of non-compliance.¹⁶⁴ The language used by the anonymous writer conveys a sense of loss and anger, depicting Anglesey as an absentee landlord whilst Castleman was merely an ‘attorney’ living ‘20 miles distant’. Fitting with Snell’s concept of ‘local xenophobia’, both men are presented as ignorant foreigners with no connection to Stalbridge nor any ability to understand local struggles.¹⁶⁵ Describing the Manor as a ‘fine old family mansion’ indicates a sense of communal heritage, longevity and belonging that Castleman had now immorally obliterated. Even Castleman’s superior, John Sanderson, expressed affection by requesting that the ‘ponderous stone Stair Case’ be saved ‘before its fate’.¹⁶⁶ Through his actions, Castleman had broken the social bonds that tied Stalbridge together. Bushaway has argued that the nineteenth century witnessed a ‘retreat’ of rural elites from rural social life, yet such a withdrawal was not solely conducted symbolically.¹⁶⁷ The destruction of the Manor had materially removed Castleman from this community. Consequently, the restoration of a ‘correct’ patrician-plebeian relationship came to form a key part of the local poor’s moral ecology and their attitudes towards the landscape.

Throughout the following decades, the people of Stalbridge thus sought to perform their visions of how local ecology and society were supposed to operate. Through minor acts of resistance, their environmental ethics were continually inscribed onto the material world. Such actions were crucial as, unlike Handley’s coppices, these spaces had not been totally altered by change, allowing memories of previous landscape use and conflicts to remain embedded in the land.¹⁶⁸ In 1819 a group of labourers were discovered deforesting the Park, with Castleman estimating that twenty trees had been taken. These men had been employed by two leaseholders, who claimed that they had a right to take the trees as doing so was a ‘common practice’ when repairs were needed in the town. Despite an appeal to customary rights, they were each fined £20 by the magistrates.¹⁶⁹ This was an attempt to not only keep the practice of woodcutting alive in the Park but also re-enact a paternalist bond by utilising Lord Anglesey’s resources to improve

¹⁶⁴ ‘Vouchers for the Work Conducted on Stalbridge Manor House, 1823’, Paget Estate Papers, DHC, D-ANG/4/4/48; Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 43-6. For building work at Milborne, which began in the early-1820s, see: Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 116-46.

¹⁶⁵ Snell, ‘Culture of Local Xenophobia’, pp. 1-30.

¹⁶⁶ Sanderson was the Principal Agent of Lord Anglesey, who oversaw the operation of numerous estates from London: ‘John Sanderson to William Castleman, 7 June 1823’, Paget Estate Papers, DHC, D-ANG/B/5/32.

¹⁶⁷ Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community in Southern England’, pp. 110-35.

¹⁶⁸ Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 212-4; Robertson and Hall, ‘Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict’, pp. 19-36.

¹⁶⁹ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 18 January 1819’, Paget Estate Papers, DHC, D-ANG/B/5/25.

life in Stalbridge. Both the leaseholders and labourers were trying to maintain traditional social structures by continuing to use the material landscape in a manner that supported reciprocal patrician-plebeian relations. Eventually, tree-maiming and wood theft became so widespread in Stalbridge that Castleman began employing two informers solely to assist in capturing these protestors. By 1835 continued ‘depredations’ caused Castleman to also hire watchmen, armed with rifles, to patrol the plantations.¹⁷⁰ By continually performing their claimed rights protestors were able to preserve the material environment in a state that allowed communal memories of past practices and social relationships to be easily recalled and re-enacted. Equally, attempts to transform local spaces were ferociously resisted. In 1822, a threshing machine in the nearby village of Charlton Horethorne became the centre of a series of threats. Throughout the parish, placards had been posted stating ‘Woe to the Farmers that use Threshing Machines’. When this warning proved ineffective, a barley rick was burnt in the farmyard adjoining the barn that housed the machine. According to the newspapers, when the fire was at its height, members of the crowd began chanting the placard’s warning.¹⁷¹ Although this incident did not convince Stalbridge farmers to abandon mechanisation, the *Taunton Courier* reported that across the estate machines had become ‘elusive’.¹⁷² Indeed, in 1825 Castleman decided that it was not advisable to replace a damaged threshing machine due to local ‘hostility’.¹⁷³ Certainly, anger towards threshing machines was not solely due to an attachment to place. Yet the consequences of this incendiary attack, namely machines being hidden away, suggests a convergence between a popular distrust of machinery and local moral ecologies. The erection of a threshing machine risked transforming the Park beyond all recognition, severing connections with past practices and harming traditional relationships. Theorists have often portrayed place as infinitely malleable and reflexive but, in cases such as Charlton or Stalbridge, communities also went to great lengths to prevent places from being altered.¹⁷⁴ In so doing they defended their vernacular environmental ethics and senses of belonging.

Due to these ongoing concerns, Swing in Stalbridge focused on reclaiming the Park, even at the expense of the movement’s ‘traditional’ repertoires. Historians have uncharitably classified

¹⁷⁰ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 8 February 1823’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/31; ‘Estate Vouchers: Stalbridge Plantation, 1835’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/4/4/58.

¹⁷¹ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 30 October 1822’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/31; *Evening Mail*, 30 October 1822.

¹⁷² *Taunton Courier*, 30 October 1822, 6 November 1822. See also: Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 56-60.

¹⁷³ This was supported by the abundance of low-cost labour: ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 15 December 1825’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/35.

¹⁷⁴ Kahn, ‘Your Place and Mine’, pp. 167-96; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 233-52; Jerram, ‘Space’, pp. 416-9; Massey, *Landscape/Space/Politics*.

Stalbridge's Swing rising as a failure. No machines were burnt and the solitary wage strike was chased off by a group of Special Constables led by Castleman.¹⁷⁵ These interpretations not only assume that there is one 'true' form of Swing, focused entirely on machine breaking, but they are also founded upon Castleman's self-aggrandising reports.¹⁷⁶ An uncritical examination of these sources, therefore, can potentially misrepresent the forms and functions of Swing. In Stalbridge, protests in 1830 were a continuation of the conflicts that surrounded the Park, with Swing's repertoires crucially shaped by this local legacy of resistance. On 1 December, around four hundred labourers gathered in the Park. Despite a party of men from neighbouring Henstridge attempting to convince them to begin destroying local machinery, the Stalbridge crowd refused to move and proceeded to construct a number of bonfires. According to Mr Luke, the town curate, the crowd conducted themselves 'jovially' around the fires. He also noted that the crowd wore their best clothes with 'laurel in their hats'.¹⁷⁷ These actions were not toothless attempts at resistance but a clear statement of communal identity. By occupying the Park and constructing bonfires as visible markers of their presence, the Swing protestors were reinforcing local bonds whilst simultaneously demonstrating the centrality of this place to their social outlooks. Additionally, the 'laurel in their hats' was a deeply political statement. By the late-eighteenth century, laurel had become a clothing accessory directly connected with political radicalism, most notably republicanism. Yet it was also used to denote political independence.¹⁷⁸ In Stalbridge it was likely the latter ideology that was being championed, although we cannot ignore Swing's reformist undertones. Certainly, local magistrates were acutely concerned about the presence of radical orators, with rumours circulating that Henry Hunt was riding through Dorset 'conversing with every labourer he meets'.¹⁷⁹ In this instance, however, the laurel was a direct reference to previous complaints, namely that Castleman's 'tyrannical' rule threatened to eliminate local rights, freedoms and independence. The widespread refusal to burn machinery in Stalbridge, therefore, does not mean that these

¹⁷⁵ Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, pp. 73-6; Beardmore, 'The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent', pp. 98-112; Bawn, *Social Protest, Popular Disturbance and Public Order*, pp. 76-100.

¹⁷⁶ For machine breaking and Swing see: Poole, 'Forty Years of Rural History from Below', pp. 1-20; Randall, 'Captain Swing', pp. 419-27; Randall, 'Luddism of the Poor', pp. 41-61.

¹⁷⁷ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 December 1830; *The Times*, 14 January 1831; 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 4 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁷⁸ K. Navickas, "'That Sash Will Hang You': Political Clothing and Adornment in England, 1780-1840', *Journal of British Studies*, 49:3 (2010), pp. 551-3; J. Epstein, 'Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth Century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity', *Albion*, 20:1 (1988), pp. 275-80.

¹⁷⁹ 'P.M. Chitty Esq., Shaftesbury, to Lord Melbourne, 27 November 1830', Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/7, ff. 293-293a. This is explored further in Chapter 4, see also: Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 465-74; Griffin, *Rural War*, pp. 190-206.

protestors were poorly organised or afraid of reprisals.¹⁸⁰ After the arson scare in 1822, the local population had made their opposition to threshing machines known and Castleman had been reluctant to embrace mechanisation.¹⁸¹ Subsequently, in Stalbridge machinery was not perceived as an immediate danger to society or ecologies. Instead, the crowd protected their independence and reinforced local identities by reclaiming a meaningful place, Stalbridge Park. This defence of place and identity cut across occupational and class divides. The destruction of Stalbridge Manor and the subsequent tension between Castleman and local tenant farmers and craftsmen led to a general refusal to be sworn in as Special Constables. One agent reported that there was a ‘lukewarm feeling amongst them... and we could not prevail a singular individual to... enrol’.¹⁸² Upon his arrival in Stalbridge, Castleman discovered that the two local magistrates had been surrounded ‘by a great many persons’ and forcefully presented with a petition so they ‘felt a difficulty in resisting’.¹⁸³ The document focused on the reduction of rents to allow ‘wages sufficient for the proper maintenance’ of the labouring poor. Yet it also contained clauses focused on reviving traditional access rights. It called on Anglesey to ‘find for a large body of workmen any means of living beyond parish relief’, many of which had been ‘previously enjoyed on your Lordships properties’.¹⁸⁴ The demands of Swing in Stalbridge, namely access to the Park and its resources, were understood across social stratum.¹⁸⁵ If, as Jones has argued, Swing protestors sought to restore ‘traditional rural social relations’, then similar desires can also be extended to many members of the rural middling sort. Tenant farmers, craftsmen and labourers in Stalbridge were united in their dislike of Castleman and his assault on their supposedly harmonious and sustainable ‘good neighbourhood’. Consequently, although Castleman reported that he had inspired the tenantry by ‘taking the Testament in my hand’ and promising to lead them against the rioters; the mass swearing-in of Special Constables only occurred after he had promised to deliver their petition to the Marquis. Additionally, the estate vouchers record that Castleman gifted 16s 8d worth of brandy to the petitioners.¹⁸⁶ This was far from the overwhelming triumph of law and order that

¹⁸⁰ A Stalbridge machine was later attacked but the crowd was almost entirely comprised of individuals from Henstridge: *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 December 1830; *The Times*, 14 January 1831.

¹⁸¹ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 15 December 1825’, Paget Estate papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/35.

¹⁸² ‘George Thomson Jacob to William Castleman, 28 November 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁸³ ‘William Castleman to the Earl of Uxbridge, 2 December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Petition of the Stalbridge Tenants to be Allowed a Reduction in Rents to Support Labourers’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁸⁵ For more on Swing’s cross-class allegiances see: Wells, ‘Rural Rebels in Southern England’, pp. 124-65.

¹⁸⁶ ‘William Castleman to the Earl of Uxbridge, 2 December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42; ‘Voucher for the Purchase of Brandy, December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, D-ANG/B/4/54. Although ‘three

Castleman's letters seek to portray. Instead, Swing in Stalbridge was remarkably successful. Certainly, the protests here gained more concessions than the violent outbursts in Handley. The occupation of Stalbridge Park gained widespread local support because it was a physical performance that connected concerns surrounding access to the landscape with ongoing debates regarding Castleman's 'tyrannical' rule. These acts of resistance materially restored the environment to an 'ethical' state whilst also communicating how local society should operate. To his credit, Castleman spent the next two years attempting to present himself as a generous paternal master. Stalbridge thus gives a useful insight into the local afterlife of Swing and elite responses to a widespread movement. In December 1830, two Justices of the Peace were commissioned to conduct a survey of Stalbridge's agricultural population. They discovered that 'upwards of 60 persons' were unemployed or being paid inadequate wages.¹⁸⁷ In response, Castleman established the 'Stalbridge Plan', whereby Anglesey would employ 33 labourers personally whilst subsidising tenant farmers to employ the rest in tasks such as hedge maintenance or road resurfacing. Castleman also committed to a reduction of rents, the establishment of a basket weaving industry for winter employment and ten new cottages to be given to 'the best of the labourers'.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, although he continued to prevent local workers from accessing the woodlands, Castleman revived a coal subsidy scheme, which had been rescinded due to the 'behaviour of the poor' following a spate of wood theft during a storm in 1825. For Castleman, these endeavours promised 'to improve the morals and conduct of the rising population in that turbulent place'.¹⁸⁹ Digby has argued that rural public philanthropy of this type was indiscriminate and, unlike targeted private benevolence, was therefore unable to exercise or enforce 'moral discipline'.¹⁹⁰ Yet, in his response to Swing, Castleman's attempt to condition and control Stalbridge's population is clearly evident. Through the provision of half-price coal or higher wages and by rewarding well-behaved labourers, Castleman sought to reduce the local poor's dependency on Stalbridge Park, and thus sever their sense of place or cultural connections. As a neighbouring steward confessed in a letter regarding the 'Stalbridge Plan', the fuel subsidy 'is the only means of preventing them

shoemakers and one courier' steadfastly refused to join, highlighting the radical political culture of these occupations: Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 40-3; Wells, 'Southern Chartism', pp. 51-3.

¹⁸⁷ See Appendix II. Source: 'Table of Inhabitants of Stalbridge Paying More than £20 Poor Rate, the Value of their Land and the Number of Labourers they Employ, 7 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC* D-ANG-B/5/42; 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 16 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁸⁸ 'Minutes of Meeting and Proposal, 7 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁸⁹ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 3 February 1826', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/37; 'Minutes of Meeting and Proposal, 7 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

¹⁹⁰ A. Digby, 'The Rural Poor', in G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside* 2 Vols. (London: Routledge, 1981), II, p. 594.

from breaking the fences'.¹⁹¹ With ongoing conflicts in Stalbridge focused on preventing material transformations of the Park, Castleman sought to use charity to pre-emptively stymie acts of tree-maiming and fence breaking, thereby allowing his psychological and cultural changes to continue uncontested.

Yet the poor did not accept this charity unquestioningly, nor did the 'Stalbridge Plan' succeed in eliminating their cultural connections with Stalbridge Park. As Mauss theorised, gifts supposedly confirmed and reinforced social bonds and structures. Those who received charity not only had their societal position enforced and defined, they were also obligated to repay in services or loyalty.¹⁹² The rejection of charity in Stalbridge, despite depreciating economic conditions, thus indicates that the local poor were opposed to both Castleman personally and the social structure he was attempting to reinforce. The ten cottages constructed following Swing were universally shunned, with Castleman unable to convince labourers to inhabit them. In 1832 the 'new cottages' were attacked, with a crowd of townsfolk smashing every window and stealing the front doors.¹⁹³ The people of Stalbridge had seemingly no desire to publicly align themselves with the foreign 'tyrant' Castleman, or those who did had been sufficiently intimidated. Castleman's attempts at portraying himself as a caring paternalist had been undermined by his previous actions. Similarly, Castleman believed that, due to the coal subsidy and higher wages, the locals would 'stay quiet' regarding his plans to expand the plantations in October 1832. In consequence, a number of 'farms' were provided with new saplings, with 104 being planted in two days. However, depredations continued with a number of local wood thieves being convicted in the autumn of 1832. Indeed, Castleman subtly recorded that within a month he had been forced to replant 'a few elm saplings'.¹⁹⁴ The charitable subscriptions and increased employment had failed to entirely separate Stalbridge's poor from the Park. Their connections with this place were forged by more than simple economic necessity, suggesting a continued deep cultural connection despite Castleman's attempted reforms. In response, Castleman suspended the 'Stalbridge Plan' of employment, not to recoup financial losses but as a 'punishment'.¹⁹⁵ It was not only the poor who could use everyday relationships, rituals and

¹⁹¹ 'Lord Portman to William Castleman, 11 December 1838', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/54.

¹⁹² M. Mauss, *The Gift: Expanded Edition*, trans. J. Guyer, (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016 [1925]), esp. pp. 85-144. See also: V. Heins, C. Unrau and K. Avram, 'Gift Giving and Reciprocity in Global Society', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 14:2 (2018), pp. 126-44; N. Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁹³ 'Estate Vouchers for Construction and Repair of the New Cottages, 1832', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/4/4/55; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 9 July 1832. See also: Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, p. 80.

¹⁹⁴ 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 20 October 1832', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 22 October 1832, 19 November 1832; Jones, *Stalbridge Inheritance*, p. 89.

¹⁹⁵ 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 20 October 1832', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/44.

customs to enforce their moralities; withholding charity or privileges were integral parts of the dominant classes own 'hidden transcripts'.¹⁹⁶ In Stalbridge elite responses to Swing did little to solve the ongoing issues regarding access to the Park. Communal memories of conflict and loss ensured that the populace rejected attempts to reshape local society through philanthropy.

Griffin has recently argued that in an 'attempt to reinforce Swing's gains' during the 1830s, rural workers altered their repertoires of resistance, which underwent a 'dramatic shift' in their mentalities and tone.¹⁹⁷ In Stalbridge, however, the interpretation of Swing as a 'turning point' is not convincingly supported. Despite arson becoming increasingly popular post-Swing, protests remained focused on the older conflicts surrounding the Park. Notably, during the operation of the 'Stalbridge Plan' only a single arson attack occurred in Stalbridge, but this changed following the plan's cancellation.¹⁹⁸ Fires struck Stalbridge in January 1834, March 1835 and April 1836.¹⁹⁹ Certainly, incendiarism was not overwhelmingly popular, but it was clearly established within local repertoires. It may even be the case that many attacks went unreported, with both regional newspapers and estate correspondence only recording the most spectacular or damaging incidences.²⁰⁰ Crucially, reports from autumn 1831 acknowledged that the property most in danger from Stalbridge's 'gang of roughs' were those that 'adjoined' the Park. Commenting upon the 1835 fire, a prominent Dorsetshire magistrate, James Frampton, similarly noted that the town's inhabitant's 'have a motive to conduct such an act' due to the 'lands surrounding the farm'.²⁰¹ The scale of incendiarism may have been unprecedented, but the mentalities that underpinned these protests had not been drastically altered by Swing. In Stalbridge, arson was not deployed to 'keep alive' the demands of Swing, the tactic was instead used to punish those who had 'injured' the park.²⁰² John Benjafield, whose farm was destroyed in 1836, had recently built a 'milk house, steam house and a stall' on a patch of former woodland. Although Castleman tentatively concluded that this fire was accidental, this did not

¹⁹⁶ Young, 'Popular Attitudes Towards Rural Customs', pp. 10-12; Shave, 'The Dependent Poor?' pp. 67-97.

¹⁹⁷ Griffin, 'Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?', pp. 459-97. For other interpretations of Swing as a 'turning point' see: Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath in Dorset', pp. 1-23.

¹⁹⁸ The fire was started a few days after the announcement of the new plan of employment: 'William Castleman to John Sanderson, 16 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42

¹⁹⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 1 January 1834, 19 March 1835; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 4 April 1836; 'William Taylor to William Castleman, 27 March 1836', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/50.

²⁰⁰ See: Griffin, 'Knowable Geographies?', pp. 38-56.

²⁰¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October, 17 November, 24 November 1831; 'James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 3 May 1835', Ilchester Correspondence '1818-1841 File', *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242b

²⁰² Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 33-61; C. Griffin, "'The Mystery of the Fires': 'Captain Swing' as Incendiarist", *Southern History*, 32 (2010), pp. 21-40.

prevent the spread of ‘vicious rumours, accusations and plots’ throughout Stalbridge.²⁰³ Even Castleman suggested that the Marquis take out fire insurance for similarly located properties across the estate until ‘their evil dispositions shall appear to have subsided’.²⁰⁴ In effect, arson was a highly public enforcement of the ‘good neighbourhood’, a terrifying condemnation of those who threatened the communities ‘harmonious’ existence, no matter their social standing.²⁰⁵ Such examples demonstrate the flaws in portraying arson as a natural continuation of the ‘core demands’ of Swing.²⁰⁶ As Poole noted, acts of incendiarism were the result of a complex web of communal politics and social relationships.²⁰⁷ In Stalbridge incendiarism, and even Swing itself, were protests that attempted to enforce a moral ecology. These fires were not the work of Captain Swing but, as all of Stalbridge understood, another defence of the Park.

Incendiary threats and minor protests would continue until the late 1830s. The last major mobilisation occurred on New Year’s Day 1837 when locals attempted to physically reclaim the Park and perform their customary gathering rights. Following a major storm, almost the entire population of Stalbridge gathered in the Park armed with hooks, axes and saws. As in 1818 or 1825, they were attempting to enforce their customary right to gather ‘storm-damaged’ timber, and so the crowd:

in defiance of all remonstrances cut and carried away a considerable part of the tops and persisted until they were overpowered... Notwithstanding this punishment the same attempt was made by a large concourse of the same class of persons who were with great difficulty resisted and turned out of the Park... They contended that were entitled to the tops of the trees.²⁰⁸

The ‘punishment’ of these wood thieves led to many of Castleman’s agents being ‘severely wounded’. Evidently, the crowd sincerely believed they were ‘entitled’ to this wood and were willing to commit murder in defence of their customs.²⁰⁹ These acts held historical precedent,

²⁰³ ‘William Taylor to William Castleman, 27 March 1836’, ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 18 April 1836’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/50; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 2 April 1836; *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 4 April 1836.

²⁰⁴ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 22 July 1835’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/48.

²⁰⁵ Benjafield was the richest farmer in Stalbridge, see the survey of Stalbridge in Appendix II. Source: ‘Table of Inhabitants of Stalbridge Paying More than £20 Poor Rate, the Value of their Land and the Number of Labourers they Employ, 7 December 1830’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC* D-ANG-B/5/42

²⁰⁶ Griffin, ‘Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?’, esp. pp. 468-85; Wells, ‘Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History’, pp. 119-22.

²⁰⁷ Poole, “‘A Lasting and Salutary Warning’”, pp. 163-77.

²⁰⁸ ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 1 January 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

²⁰⁹ Castleman complained bitterly about paying for his agent’s extensive medical treatment: ‘Thomas Beer to William Castleman, 21 January 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51; ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 9 April 1838’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/54.

such as in 1825 when, according to Castleman, the crowd had ‘overrun’ the woodland ‘stealing the timber’. Indeed, in 1837 Castleman similarly recorded that trespassers had ‘defiled several of the trees’.²¹⁰ Words such as ‘defiled’, ‘stealing’ and ‘overrun’ grant insights into Castleman’s own moral ecology. As in Handley, Castleman viewed these customary practices as abuses of the land, barbaric and morally degrading. For the crowd, however, this mass ‘timber theft’ was legitimised because the trees had been blown down. Their customary actions were not free-for-all but governed by a distinct set of local expectations, traditions and rules.²¹¹ By performing these gathering rights after every major storm the crowd ensured that their claims remained embedded in communal memories and physical landscapes. Subsequently, this aggressive enforcement of their customary rights not only secured resources immediately, it also protected their ability to gather wood in future. This was compounded by local fears that Castleman had mismanaged the woodland. As Castleman admitted in 1838: ‘I have never cut any timber in Stalbridge Park since my agency’ and ‘a vast number of trees in the Park are in a state of decay.’²¹² The Stalbridge Park Riot was not driven solely by economic need. It was an attempt to reclaim the Park as a place and enforce a morally sanctioned ‘good neighbourhood’. To fully achieve this, the Park had to be secured for future generations. The crowd did not envisage themselves as thieves but as protectors, especially now that Castleman had failed in his paternalistic duty to protect their environment and its resources.

To punish the ‘timber stealers of Stalbridge’ Castleman, once again, rescinded the coal subsidy.²¹³ The lasting effects of this decision are unclear as, due to Castleman’s poor health, reports from Stalbridge become increasingly sporadic after 1838.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, protest in Stalbridge between 1814 and 1838 indicates how the material landscape helped underpin rural society and culture. From understanding and legitimising local social relationships to expressing notions of political independence, these environments enabled otherwise intangible concerns to be physically embodied. Unlike Handley, Stalbridge did not possess any ancient cultural or legal connections with its surrounding woodland. Rather, Stalbridge Park was beloved because it was the epicentre of a taskscape, instilled with meaning from generations of lived experience. The protection of this taskscape relied upon paternalist guardians such as

²¹⁰ ‘William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 3 February 1826’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/37; ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 1 January 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

²¹¹ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 48-80. For notions of abuse see: Howkins, ‘The Use and Abuse of the English Commons’, pp. 107-32; Staughton, *Common Grazing*, p. 245.

²¹² ‘William Castleman to Thomas Beer, 9 April 1838’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/54.

²¹³ ‘Thomas Beer to William Castleman, 21 January 1837’, Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/51.

²¹⁴ For a biography of Castleman and his sons, who increasingly took on his duties during the 1840s, see: Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 37-75.

Castleman. His failure to uphold the ‘correct’ patrician-plebeian relationship was not demonstrated symbolically, it was inscribed onto the material landscape during conflicts over the plantations or Stalbridge Manor. Over time memories of previous conflicts came to define these places, providing future movements with legitimacy and meaning.²¹⁵ Examining Swing in Stalbridge further demonstrates how protest movements were crucially shaped by, and understood through, local places, relationships and legacies of resistance. Despite eschewing many ‘staple’ Swing repertoires, the Stalbridge risings succeeded by appealing to communal memories and occupying meaningful places. Equally, incendiary attacks in the 1830s were not simplistic continuations of Swing but sourced their targets and mentalities from a number of ongoing conflicts and disputes. In performing their moral ecologies, protestors in Stalbridge were not merely defending customary entitlements in the immediacy. They were also expressing a vision of how society should be.

Pimperne: Divergent Ecological Visions

Yet the moral ecologies of the poor were not always united, nor were they inert or fixed.²¹⁶ The ability for places to hold different, contested and often contradictory interpretations is evident during the Pimperne Enclosure of 1809 to 1819. Unlike Stalbridge or Handley, this community did not present a united front against a supposedly ‘foreign’ invader. Instead, conflict stemmed from growing divides between different occupational groups, environmental ethics and lived experiences. As such, protests regarding the Pimperne Enclosure indicate the importance of material objects, non-human actors and the physical terrain in shaping local identities, memories and practices. Arguments centred on the ‘morally’ correct’ treatment of the landscape and no-one was exempt from the rough justice of moral ecologies. Pimperne demonstrates that customs and vernacular environment ethics were not solely used to oppose elites but attempted to govern and police the actions of the entire community. The social and cultural dislocation of enclosure, consequently, risked undermining not only household economies but also the communal bonds of rural society.

Pimperne provides a rare example of agricultural labourers conducting violent acts to support, rather than oppose, enclosure. Located on the edge of the Cranborne Chase, Pimperne was

²¹⁵ Brady, ‘Space, Place and Agency’, pp. 29-48; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 223-50.

²¹⁶ For the shifting of moral ecologies and vernacular environmental ethics in a Scottish context see: Robertson and MacLeod Rivett, ‘Of Necessary Work’, pp. 159-87.

supposedly governed by the same unique ‘laws and customs’ as Sixpenny Handley.²¹⁷ Yet, whether the village was part of the Chase was a subject of intense legal debate. Lord Rivers, the ‘Warden of the Chase’, claimed the ‘Right of Chace and Deer Feed’ across the local area. Essentially, Rivers argued that anywhere the deer may feed or where a hunt might take place should not be obstructed or ‘materially damaged’.²¹⁸ Conversely, regional agricultural interests, led by local landowner and parliamentarian Edward Portman, contended that Rivers had exaggerated the size of the Chase by approximately 86,000 acres.²¹⁹ Such a major recalculation was spurred by a general belief that the customary restrictions of the Chase were stifling agriculture. Commentators described the Chase as ‘pernicious’ with the prohibition of fences, hedges and ploughing meaning that ‘it is an occasion’ when a ‘few turnips are sown’.²²⁰ These issues were acutely felt in Pimperne where the largest area of open field, Pimperne Down, was left unused due to an inability to ‘raise fences’ and the ‘trampling of crops’ by deer hunts.²²¹ However, whilst the Chase stymied employment for agricultural labourers, a sizeable minority of the population relied upon the Chase for work. A ‘good number’ of individuals in Pimperne were reportedly engaged as gamekeepers, woodsmen or similar occupations. The central position of the Chase to their daily lives led to a belief amongst these occupational groups that ‘they cannot think it right to offer any part of the Pimperne Down to be fenced in’.²²² Consequently, the legal battles between Portman and Rivers were reflected in tensions between Pimpernes labouring classes. This was a village divided between two opposing taskscapes, two different relationships between local people and their environment. Pimperne Down thus became a contested place and local material divisions spurred conflicting claims to custom, tradition and moral ecology.

Pimperne was enclosed by an Act of Parliament in 1809, but unrest did not begin until the first fences were erected in autumn 1811.²²³ As in Stalbridge or Handley, opposition to enclosure focused on these material impositions, which were supposedly threats to local customs, traditions and identities. Gamekeepers began committing ‘wanton injury’ to the fences and

²¹⁷ The Chase itself covered a great deal of land and spread into Hampshire and Wiltshire, for a history of the Chase see: E. Crittall, ‘Cranborne Chase’ in E. Crittall (ed.) *A History of the County of Wiltshire*, 18 Vols. (London: Victoria County History, 1957-2011) IV, pp. 458-60.

²¹⁸ ‘Justice Dampiers Opinion on the Pimperne Enclosure, 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²¹⁹ The Chase covered around 14,000 acres whereas Lord Rivers claimed rights roughly 100,000 acres: *Oxford University and City Herald*, 20 June 1818.

²²⁰ Stevenson, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset*, pp. 334-5.

²²¹ ‘Statement that the Downs are Within the Bounds of Cranborne Chase’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 18 February 1811.

²²² ‘Mr Webb to Mr Bowles, 13 May 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²²³ W.E. Tate and M.E. Turner, *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards* (Reading: Whiteknights, 1978), p. 103.

hedges. When confronted these men claimed they were destroying anything that ‘would very much materially injure and abridge, if not totally annihilate’ their ‘ancient rights’.²²⁴ The material world was thus explicitly linked to the preservation of culture, custom and communal heritage. By citing their ‘ancient rights’ the gamekeepers were attempting to make this landscape meaningful, positioning landscape change as a threat to the distinct identity of Pimperne.²²⁵ The gamekeepers even began referring to themselves as the ‘Guardians of the Chase’ in an attempt to project themselves as Pimperne’s historic and legitimate protectors. Rather than an act of protest, these men envisioned the destruction of enclosure fences and hedges as a solemn duty. One keeper was brought before a magistrate who:

asked me if I had thrown open the fences the second time, I replied yes, I did not neglect my duty in defending the Chace and restoring it to its accustomed and ancient manner, upon which he desired me not to do it again.²²⁶

Such language not only legitimised their resistance but sought to garner support, or at least sympathy, from the local community. One gamekeeper claimed that they only removed what was ‘obstructive to their work’, content with making gaps in fences ‘sufficient for the keeper’s horses to pass’.²²⁷ The gamekeepers’ acts of destruction were thus an attempt to ‘negotiate’ with these new material impositions, their aim being to maintain or re-enact their usual taskscapes.²²⁸ To ‘restore’ the Chase, the keepers ‘ancient rights’ needed to be publicly and unquestionably performed. Furthermore, these performances were aided and enabled by the physical landscape. The gamekeepers’ knowledge of the hidden pathways of the woodland allowed them to easily avoid Portman’s agents. One bailiff reported that the keepers could seemingly appear ‘out of nothing’, destroy the fences and then disappear back into the woods.²²⁹ For the gamekeepers this was not a landscape to be appreciated from afar, it was instead forged from their everyday experiences and working lives. Material transformations thus threatened both future employment and their understanding of local society.

The local agricultural population, however, were not sympathetic to this plight. Their lived experiences and moral ecologies led them to steadfastly oppose the gamekeepers. From the

²²⁴ ‘Mr Harvey to Mr Farrer, 14 November 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35; ‘Statement on the Pimperne Enclosure, 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²²⁵ Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 925-38.

²²⁶ ‘Mr Webb to Lord Rivers, 20 June 1818’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35.

²²⁷ ‘Mr Harvey to Mr Farrer, 14 November 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35.

²²⁸ For negotiation with physical transformations see: Blomley, ‘Making Private Property’, pp. 13-5.

²²⁹ ‘Report from Pimperne’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35. For similar occurrences in Northern England see: Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest’, pp. 96-7.

initial assaults on the enclosure fences, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers alike expressed their distrust of the keepers' 'ancient rights'. As one letter stated, they:

could hardly have conceived any objection would have been made to our ploughing up a part of the Down, particularly when no deer has in any remembrance ever been seen on the Down.²³⁰

Such claims immediately undermined Rivers, and his gamekeepers, customary claims to Pimperne Down. It weakened appeals to English Common Law by challenging the practices 'ancient' status whilst simultaneously delegitimising the 'restoration' of this supposedly misremembered, or long extinct, taskscape.²³¹ Despite their authoritative appearance, customary practices or laws were not monolithic entities with a singular interpretation. These claims and counterclaims regarding Pimperne's 'traditional landscape' were attempts to seize influence and power. Indeed, Lord Rivers attempted to enforce his claims via cartography with his enclosure map explicitly recording that 'deer are always to be found' in Pimperne Wood.²³² His lawyers also logically deduced that, although it had not been witnessed, 'the deer in passing must cross Pimperne Down'.²³³ Maps and legal quibbles, however, meant little to Pimperne's agricultural population. If Dibben's cattle in Handley 'performed' the rights of common through their physical presence, then the non-existence of the deer did the opposite in Pimperne. Their lack of corporeal presence demonstrated that Rivers' claims were without substance. Subsequently, Pimperne's agricultural population committed themselves to defending the new enclosures. Patrols and watchmen were organised, paid in 'food and victuals' by the local farmers, and any gamekeeper discovered interfering with the enclosures was punished severely. In 1814 one keeper, Mr Knight, was found attempting to 'throw down' a gate. Unable to make his escape he was beaten with a 'horse-whip' until he was 'insensible'. Similarly, Thomas Little was caught cutting a holly border in 1815, whereupon he was taken to the riverbank and 'nearly drowned' by a group of labourers whilst Portman's tenantry looked on and cheered.²³⁴ Investigations by Rivers revealed almost universal animosity towards his 'ancient rights'. In Pimperne the local tenantry declared that they would not 'suffer Lord Rivers' interests in the Chase any longer', with the 'customary' restrictions supposedly causing

²³⁰ 'Mr Bowles to Mr Webb, 17 February 1811', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²³¹ McDonagh, 'Making and Breaking Property', pp. 39-41.

²³² For the Enclosure Map of Pimperne see Figure 3.

²³³ 'Statement from Justice Dampier on Pimperne Enclosure, 1811', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²³⁴ 'Edward Portman to Mr Bingham, 8 November 1811', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36; 'Legal Opinions Regarding Poachers and Assaults on the Gamekeepers', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/15.

‘formerly honest men with impeccable characters’ to become ‘united with the deer stealers’.²³⁵ Such language suggests that these men were not supporting enclosure simply for free beer or economic advantages. Enclosure was depicted as both an economic and moral boon for Pimperne, providing employment and thereby reducing criminal activities. Conversely, it was Rivers, and his keepers, who were perceived as immoral, protecting unused land for imaginary deer. Rather than a simplistic battle between enclosing landowner and poor villagers, the Pimperne enclosure demonstrates the tangled web of interests and claims that cut across socio-economic stratum.²³⁶ There was no singular ‘moral ecology’ in Pimperne. Instead, differing working lives and everyday experiences led to opposing visions of the ‘correct’ organisation of both the landscape and local society.

Although both were aware of the ongoing disagreements in Pimperne, there is little evidence to suggest that either Portman or Rivers were willing to exploit or direct the conflict. Instead, both of these landowners attempted to reign in their supporters during a concomitant legal battle. Rivers was keen to enforce his customary rights, which had supposedly ‘existed since a very early period’ and admitted to ordering his keepers to take down fences in 1811.²³⁷ Yet, following news of the gamekeepers’ violent conduct, Rivers distanced himself and publicly condemned their actions. Between 1812 and 1816, Rivers signed approximately six printed notices warning fence breakers to desist ‘or face the law’ and in 1818 commanded his head gamekeeper to control his men as Rivers was committed to finding an ‘agreement that would satisfy all parties’.²³⁸ Portman also disapproved of his tenants supporting the ongoing acts of violence, writing to one member of the Vestry that ‘further proceedings must be stopped’.²³⁹ Upon the capture of one labourer accused of assault, Portman publicly apologised to Lord Rivers noting: ‘I much regret that a servant... has so far abused his masters confidence’.²⁴⁰ Consequently, whilst Rivers’ ‘ancient rights’ and Portman’s agricultural expansion may have sparked conflict in Pimperne, these protests quickly took on a life of their own and neither landowner seemed able to quell the ongoing conflict.

²³⁵ ‘Edward Portman to Lord Rivers, 12 November 1814’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35; ‘Depositions and Information Against John Cole’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/59.

²³⁶ For similar case studies see: McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 191-206; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, esp. pp. 143-160.

²³⁷ ‘Brief and Trial Transcript on a Case of Deer Hunting, 1816’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/46; ‘Lord Rivers to Mr Farrer, 10 November 1811’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35.

²³⁸ The original letter does not exist, but the reply directly references Lord Rivers’ commands: ‘Mr Webb to Lord Rivers, 20 June 1818’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/35.

²³⁹ ‘Edward Portman to Mr Bingham, 28 December 1813’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/36.

²⁴⁰ ‘Depositions and Information Against John Cole’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/59.

By 1817, both Rivers and Portman acknowledged that Pimperne had become ‘ungovernable’. Rivers admitted that he had ‘lost control’ of the keepers whilst assaults were occurring regularly on the Downs.²⁴¹ This was accompanied by a wider collapse in local authority, poaching was rampant and the village constables were unable to stop gamekeeper and labourer alike illegally ‘grabbing the furze’ from the former common.²⁴² The most serious incident occurred in September 1817 when labourers ambushed a group of keepers and ‘impounded’ their horses, demanding that Rivers reimburse the community for damage to the fencing. The ransom was never paid as a few days later armed gamekeepers reclaimed their animals.²⁴³ As witnessed in Handley, the impounding of stray animals had long been a method for landowners to enforce their claims to private and exclusive property. The popular deployment of these punishments served to articulate the agricultural labourers’ belief that these new fences were legitimate. Impounding also prevented the gamekeepers from using these animal bodies to perform their claims.²⁴⁴ Subsequently, the conflicts in Pimperne went beyond the usual animosity between gamekeepers and the rural poor.²⁴⁵ Pimperne was a battleground for two opposing visions of the local landscape and how it should be ‘ethically’ treated. Whereas micro-studies of other Somerset and Dorset villages have found a strong cross-occupational camaraderie, in Pimperne such feelings had evaporated.²⁴⁶ Different working lives and lived experiences had fostered two incompatible sets of environmental ethics. Moral ecologies, therefore, were not simply a tool to be used against imposing landowners but a series of customs and communally sanctioned laws that, supposedly, governed all of society.²⁴⁷ In Pimperne these ethical rules fractured and became contested. Claims to ‘ancient right’ and ‘moral’ landscapes were subsequently used to secure local power and influence.

It was not until the early-1820s that Pimperne had quietened enough that Rivers was no longer ‘perpetually in conflict’ with his neighbours. By this time, Rivers was prepared to surrender

²⁴¹ ‘Mr Webb to Lord Rivers, 9 September 1816’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/15; ‘Case for Opinion on the Assault of a Keeper’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/15; ‘Copy Depositions of the Gamekeepers’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/58.

²⁴² ‘Cases for Opinion Regarding Poachers Using Wire to Kill Game, 30 April 1815’; ‘Mr Webb to Lord Rivers, 17 June 1816’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/15.

²⁴³ ‘Letter Concerning the Retrieval of Chase Keepers’ Horses Impounded by Mr Farquharson’s Servants’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/50; ‘Legal Opinion Regarding the Impounding of the Keepers Horses’, Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, *DHC*, D-PIT/L/51.

²⁴⁴ Baker, ‘Human and Animal Trespass’, pp. 72-93; McDonagh and Griffin, ‘Occupy!’, pp. 1-10.

²⁴⁵ For the conflicts between gamekeepers, poachers and rural communities see: Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare*.

²⁴⁶ For a summary of these studies see: Thompson, ‘A Breed Apart?’, pp. 137-59.

²⁴⁷ For instances of this ‘rough justice’ see: Griffin, ‘Enclosures from Below?’, pp. 274-95.

his claims; offering to disenfranchise the Chase in return for an annual payment.²⁴⁸ This was completed in 1829, rendering the questions surrounding Pimperne's legal status moot.²⁴⁹ Due to proactive concessions, Pimperne was not visited by Captain Swing. Before the risings had even reached Dorset, Portman offered his labourers '2s more per day' and was 'determined to reduce his rents to the standard of 1795'. Not only were economic worries alleviated, but Portman was also lauded as a caring paternal master.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, between 1809 and 1819 the societal changes and material impositions introduced by landscape change fundamentally altered previously accepted communal relationships in Pimperne. The fact that the local poor were not united in their moral ecologies indicates the importance of moving beyond simple dichotomies between landowner and labourer or enclosure and custom.²⁵¹ In Pimperne 'ancient rights' and traditions were not neutral arbitrators of past practice but contested battlefields. Within these conflicts both the gamekeepers and agricultural population jostled for power and influence, seeking to enact their 'moral' environment. Underpinning this conflict was the material landscape itself, controlling Pimperne Down allowed protestors to perform their 'ideal' ecology or society, whilst simultaneously silencing their opponents. It was not enough to simply drive off gamekeepers or assault labourers, both groups had to publicly demonstrate that their moral ecology was being enforced by reshaping the land itself. The landscapes of Blackmore fostered and empowered these protests, both physically and culturally.

Conclusions

The communities of the Blackmore Vale were certainly 'riotous', but to claim they were 'unprincipled' would be a gross misrepresentation. In Sixpenny Handley, Pimperne and Stalbridge there existed a set of vernacular environmental ethics that oversaw access to the landscape and the use of its resources. Landscape change, therefore, not only threatened rural household economies but also these beliefs in a 'morally correct' relationship between locals and their surrounding environment. These moral ecologies were neither utopian nor constructed from half-imagined 'ancient customs'. They were instead founded on established

²⁴⁸ 'William Castleman to Lord Anglesey, 14 May 1821', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/29; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 April 1826.

²⁴⁹ Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 74-6; Crittall, 'Cranborne Chase', pp. 458-60. The Pitt-Rivers family continued to own large estates in the Chase, famously facilitating the pioneering work of Augustus Pitt-Rivers: M. Bowden, *Pitt Rivers: The Life and Archaeological Work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers*, *DCL*, *FRS*, *FSA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 103-140.

²⁵⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 25 November 1830.

²⁵¹ McDonagh, 'Subverting the Ground', pp. 191-206.

legal precedent and everyday experience.²⁵² As such, the moral ecologies of Blackmore did not simply reject notions of private property. Rather, exclusive control of a certain space or resource was often ‘legitimised’ through reciprocity, such as allowing townspeople to claim fallen trees in Stalbridge or permitting cattle to occasionally graze in Handley’s coppices.²⁵³ Major acts of protest were predicated on a belief that the local elite had failed to uphold their environmental obligations. In particular, mistreatment of the material landscape was often perceived as an assault on the customary concept of ‘good neighbourhood’, threatening communal harmony by disrupting ‘equitable’ access to the land. Consequently, protests over enclosure or the destruction of coppices not only attempted to protect sorely needed resources, but also sought to defend, or restore, customary and reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships. Adherence to paternalism did not collapse in the early-nineteenth century, nor did Blackmore’s agricultural labourers believe that a return to previous ‘harmonious’ social relations was impossible.²⁵⁴ Material alterations to the landscape were consistently perceived as threats to local social relationships and communal identities. These places gave material substance and structure to otherwise immaterial customs, practices and traditions.²⁵⁵ The moral ecologies of Blackmore subsequently governed not only how environmental resources should be used but also how people perceived and interacted with authorities.

Within these contested places, communal identities and senses of belonging were constantly made and remade. The customs and rituals associated with these woodlands or commons gave communities such as Handley or Stalbridge their distinctiveness, and thus their identities. These sites were taskscapes, made meaningful by generations of working lives and everyday experiences. Subsequently, feelings of dislocation, dispossession and betrayal were a natural consequence of landscape change and remained embedded within the material environment. Later protests in both Stalbridge and Handley were understood as the continuation of conflicts that had begun decades previously. These memories empowered resistance whilst also legitimising them as a method to reinstate local communal bonds and a sense of belonging. Claims that protests over access right had ‘few subsequent opportunities for their re-enaction’ underestimate the adaptability, and long memories, of rural communities.²⁵⁶ The Handley

²⁵² Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 4-9.

²⁵³ See also: Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 747-62; Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81.

²⁵⁴ Randall and Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27; Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 233-54.

²⁵⁵ Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape*, pp. 58-89; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 188-245.

²⁵⁶ Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 223-7.

Coppices, Pimperne Down and Stalbridge Park all became touchstones of protest, material reminders of past resistance and previous dispossession. Physical performances, such as trespass or wood theft, were thus critical to the challenging of landscape change and the reassertion of place. Rural protestors used their bodies, and those of their animals, to revive past practices and demonstrate that the claims of their opponents were unsupported in the 'real' world. Moreover, during these protests the material landscape was repeatedly positioned as a centrepiece for communal bonds, identities and social relationships. These minor acts of resistance kept alive the connections between communities and their local landscapes, reshaping rural society and environments both symbolically and physically.

Yet it would be misleading to suggest that a singular moral ecology united the Blackmore poor. In communities such as Pimperne, differing interpretations of spaces and places, sourced from opposing taskscapes, inspired years of conflict. Equally, opposition to landscape change was not a binary battle between landowners and labourers. Due to the centrality of the material landscape to local identities and relationships, acts of resistance easily cut across social boundaries. Similarly, studying Swing in Blackmore demonstrates the importance of previous protest and resistance in shaping the events of winter 1830. In Handley and Stalbridge, Swing was a continuation of pre-existing struggles rather than a momentous 'turning point' for mentalities or repertoires. Swing was not solely concerned with wages or employment, it also sought to restore a 'traditional' and 'ideal' rural society. For those in the Blackmore Vale, the landscape was a fundamental part of this restoration, and so Swing regularly focused on reclaiming the local environment. This examination has demonstrated the importance of place, identity and custom in shaping rural responses to both landscape change and national protests. The following chapter will, therefore, seek to apply similar considerations of rural cultures, spaces and identities to a study of nineteenth-century electoral ritual and political violence.

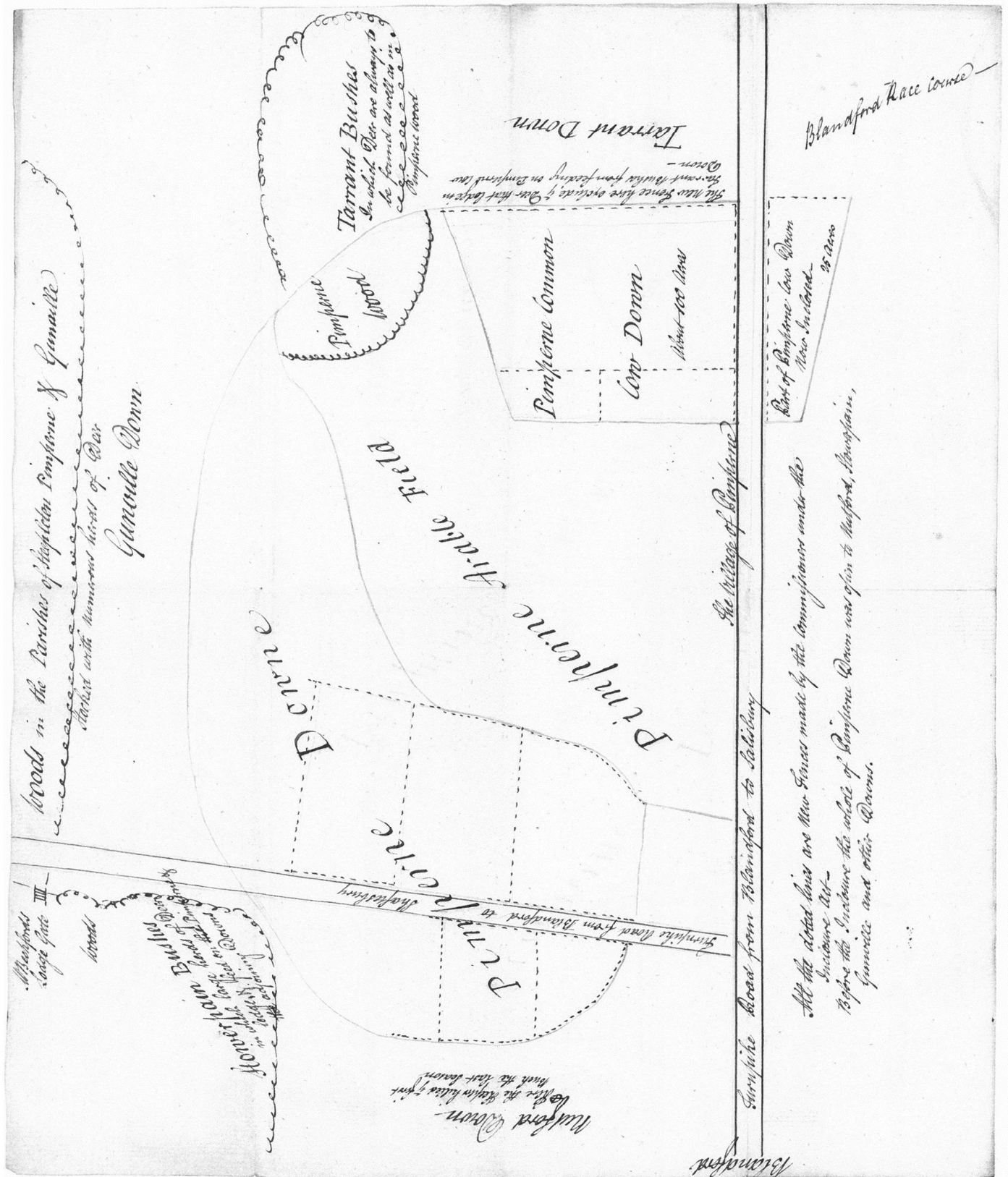


Figure 3: Pimperne Enclosure Map, 1811²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Source: 'Enclosure Map for Pimperne', Pitt-Rivers Legal Papers, DHC, D-PIT/L/15.

Chapter 3: ‘Let Us Storm Yonder Castle of Corruption’¹: Elections, National Politics and Local Spaces, c. 1820-1867

If the reception and repertoires of national protest movements such as Swing were critically influenced by local spaces and legacies of resistance, then the same should follow for political unrest. By the nineteenth century, election campaigns in Somerset and Dorset had become renowned for their violence.² In January 1832, the victory of anti-Reform candidate William Astell led to a series of riots in Bridgwater. As a director of the East India Company, Astell had been opposed by local merchants who resented his political stance and the company’s monopoly over the cloth trade. It was also reported that Astell had evicted the local poor from an ‘old turnpike house’ and had ‘converted it into ‘a “seminary” for young ladies.’ Further investigations would supposedly ‘furnish some curious information, relative to the Eastern customs exhibited at this establishment.’³ Through these accusations, this space had been transformed into an embodiment of Astell’s corruption and immorality. Anger towards the seizing of the house intermixed with ongoing criticisms of East India Company lobbyists.⁴ When this supposed ‘harem’ was burnt, protestors were addressing both local concerns and national debates.⁵ Unfortunately, whilst it is uncontroversial to suggest that electoral politics remained inherently local throughout the nineteenth century, the connections between electoral violence and national issues have remained underexplored.⁶ The importance placed upon local spaces, places, customs and identities by rural people has been regarded as an obstruction to wider ‘national’ mentalities or repertoires. Countryside constituencies have thus been dismissed as inherently ‘inward-facing’, deferent and ‘pre-political’.⁷ Conversely, this chapter

¹ *History of the Shaftesbury Election 1830, Containing a Complete and Correct Account of the Extraordinary Contest for the Liberty and Independence of that Borough* (Shaftesbury, 1831), p. 36.

² Otte and Readman, ‘Introduction’, p. 6; Beardmore, ‘The Rural Community Through the Eyes of the Land Agent’, pp. 116-46; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 179-208; J. Fripp, ‘The Sherborne Riots of 1831: Causes, Characters and Consequences’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, p. 127 (2005), pp. 21-30.

³ ‘The “Honourable” East India Company, 9 January 1832’, Admiral Blake Museum, *SHC*, DD\BLM/9.

⁴ For distrust towards the East India Company’s parliamentary influence: M. Taylor, ‘Interests, Parties and the State: The Urban Electorate in England, c. 1820-72’ in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State, and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 65-6; Y. Kumagai, ‘The Lobbying Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests Against the Renewal of the East India Company’s Charter, 1812-1813 and 1829-1833’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), esp. pp. 104-208.

⁵ *Bath Chronicle*, 8 December 1833.

⁶ F. O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 285-98; J.A. Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818-1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 1-10; Williams, “‘One Damn Election After Another’”, pp. 111-23.

⁷ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 52-75, 208-25; D. Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), pp. 95-106; Harvey,

argues that between 1820 and 1867 rural electoral riots were not merely the products of ‘carnavalesque’ excess but attempts to use local spaces and rituals to challenge national political institutions. By remaking political sites, crowds were able to materially enforce their visions of an ‘ideal’ government and momentarily express their views on how society should be.

Crucially, this chapter does not seek to present rural communities as continuously nationally minded. Rather, during the multiple political crises of this period, even the most settled patterns in local politics could be disrupted. Debates surrounding parliamentary reform between 1829 and 1832, religion in 1847 or free trade in 1852 were not beyond the intellectual capacity of the rural unenfranchised.⁸ As research by Jaggard, Scriven and Poole has indicated, previous assumptions of a politically ‘isolated’ rural South West fail to acknowledge the capacity for rural people to engage in radical politics through their everyday lives.⁹ By examining electoral rituals and violence, this chapter contends that even during outwardly venal political customs the unenfranchised were able to challenge existing structures and institutions. The depiction of election campaigns as periods of ‘carnavalesque’ festivity mischaracterises the use of ritual by these subaltern groups.¹⁰ Invading the hustings or performing ‘skimmington rides’ on disliked voters were not simply opportunities for catharsis, nor were these disruptions spurred solely by elite bribery. In a similar manner to the smashing of an enclosure fence, these subversive activities were founded upon discourses of immorality, betrayal and corruptive foreign influence. Between 1820 and 1867 these violent customary performances thus allowed authorities and protestors to physically enforce their own political visions upon society.

Moreover, the political culture and structure of Britain was altered dramatically during this period. Commencing with the Reform Act of 1832, the rituals and performances of elections were gradually transformed. For some historians, the new restrictions placed upon electoral campaigns, such as the introduction of multiple polling booths or the reduction of voting to two

‘Militant Particularism and Global Ambition’, pp. 65-98; Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; K.T. Hoppen, ‘Roads to Democracy: Electioneering and Corruption in Nineteenth-Century England and Ireland’, *History*, 81:264 (1996), pp. 553-71.

⁸ Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference’, pp. 33-4; S. Poole, ‘“Some Examples Should Be Made”’: Prosecuting Reform Bill Rioters in 1831-32’, in M. Davis, E. Macleod and G. Pentland (eds.), *Political Trials in an Age of Revolutions: Britain and the North Atlantic, 1793-1848* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) pp. 237-63; J.R. Fisher, ‘Issues and Influence: Two By-Elections in South Nottinghamshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Historical Journal*, 24:1 (1981), pp. 155-65. See also: Chase, ‘The Movement for Parliamentary Reform in Provincial Britain’, pp. 14-30.

⁹ E. Jaggard, *Cornwall Politics in the Age of Reform, 1790-1885* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999) pp. 24-48; Scriven, *Popular Virtue*, pp. 44-66; Poole, ‘Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire’, pp. 75-81.

¹⁰ Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; Wasserman and Jaggard, ‘Electoral Violence’, pp. 124-55; D.C. Richter, ‘The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections, 1865-86’, *Victorian Studies*, 15 (1971), pp. 19-28.

days, served to ‘formalise and close down the public political sphere’. In his foundational work, Vernon argued that the introduction of structured party politics and the candidate’s gradual retreat from open meetings ‘disciplined, regulated and disabled popular politics.’¹¹ Certainly, this period was one of increasing exclusion and many ‘progressive’ reforms were used to limit the scope of popular participation. However, Vernon’s new orthodoxy risks constructing a narrow and totalising narrative that eliminates the ambiguity present in relationships between politicians and the ‘people’. As Lawrence noted, in Vernon’s analysis the ‘triumph of party’ is assumed to be absolute by the 1860s with popular politics nearly completely tamed.¹² This chapter, conversely, argues that in these rural and semi-industrial communities there was a large amount of continuity between unreformed and reformed electoral culture. Despite Vernon’s analysis including the county seat of Devon, the majority of his work has focused on the cities and urban boroughs. Indeed, this is a common issue throughout the study of nineteenth-century political culture, where proclamations regarding the state of popular involvement largely rest on these larger towns.¹³ These counties thus provide a corrective to claims that the 1830s and 1840s were major disjunctures in political history, with local rural rituals and customs adapting to suit the needs of both politicians and the popular crowd.

In rural England, political culture has also been commonly associated with paternalism and deference. Due to the dependence of tenant farmers on elite landowners, the political independence of rural electors has been constantly questioned. Political rituals, such as treating, supposedly served to both reinforce the social hierarchy and enforce deferent behaviour.¹⁴ As O’Gorman warned, this mechanistic vision of rural social relationships oversimplifies the nature of political control in the countryside. The deference of electors should not be dismissed as mindless acceptance of economic inequality and utter subservience to their landlords’

¹¹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, esp. pp. 80-104; E.J. Evans, *Parliamentary Reform, c. 1770-1918* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 26-30. See also: F. O’Gorman, ‘The Culture of Elections in England: From the Glorious Revolution to the First World War, 1688-1914’ in E. Posada-Carbó (ed.), *Elections Before Democracy: The History of Elections in Europe and Latin America* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 17-32.

¹² Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 58-61. See also: M. Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism, 1847-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 62-4.

¹³ For example: D. Beales, ‘The Electorate Before and After 1832: The Right to Vote, and the Opportunity’, *Parliamentary History*, 11:1 (1992), pp. 139-50; J.A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters and Straights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); C. Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: The Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832-85* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

¹⁴ Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 180-207; Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; M. Manai, ‘Influence, Corruption and Electoral Behaviour in the Mid Nineteenth Century: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1847-1865’, *Northern History*, 29:1 (1993), pp. 154-64.

political whims.¹⁵ Instead, this chapter demonstrates that during electoral rituals deference was offered under the expectation that the candidates would commit to a series of obligations. In this manner, overt displays of deference were moulded around a complex form of participatory politics, where a ‘norm of reciprocity’ was continuously championed and reinforced.¹⁶ Elections provided voters and non-voters opportunities to publicly assess the ability of their rulers to fulfil societal and moral responsibilities. Rather than mere showcases of elite power, these rituals signified the persuasion of equals and the refreshing of local commitments. The relationship between politicians and these communities was one ‘representation’ and thus it needed to be constantly renegotiated and remade.¹⁷ Furthermore, the majority of studies that have challenged the ‘politics of deference’ model have primarily focused on the rural electorate. Whilst this allows deference to be quantified through analysis of the poll books, it often leads to the unenfranchised being depicted as a ‘mob’ selling their political agency for bribes of beer or mutton.¹⁸ The following study extends notions of ‘reciprocal deference’ to the rural unenfranchised as crowds in Somerset and Dorset frequently demanded that candidates publicly demonstrate their supposed paternalism. In this manner, the influence of an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship continued to hold power in rural politics throughout this period.

Whether it was the politics of deference, popular rituals or crowd violence, the control of physical space was vital to election campaigns. Through processions, banners and bodily occupations candidates demonstrated their power and presented themselves as the popular local choice. The marketplaces or public houses of Somerset and Dorset were not merely backdrops, instead these sites shaped and encouraged electoral violence.¹⁹ Although Vernon argued that contests over space were less significant in rural regions, historians should not discount the cultural, symbolic and tactical value placed upon certain spaces by both politicians and protestors.²⁰ In a similar manner to enclosure, where material barriers enforced private

¹⁵ O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference’, pp. 391-429; Fisher, ‘The Limits of Deference’, pp. 90-105; Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference’, pp. 27-49.

¹⁶ Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23; Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81. See also: Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class’, pp. 809-12.

¹⁷ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 61-3; J. Lawrence, ‘The Culture of Elections in Modern Britain’, *History*, 96:324 (2011), pp. 459-76.

¹⁸ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 52-75, 208-25; Richter, ‘The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections’, pp. 19-28.

¹⁹ Harrison, ‘Symbolism, Ritualism and the Location of Crowds’, 1988), pp. 194-214; Harrison, *Crowds and History*, esp. pp. 202-33; E. Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 77-132. Taylor, ‘Interests, Parties and the State’, p. 71; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-53.

²⁰ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 213-4. For a demonstration of the importance placed upon certain sites see: Navickas, ‘Luddism, Incendiarism, and the Defence of Rural “Task-Scapes”’, pp. 59-73.

property, the political exclusivity of nineteenth-century England was physically constructed through these locations. Preventing the rural unenfranchised from standing upon the hustings or accessing a ‘respectable’ election dinner performatively demonstrated who was, and was not, worthy of the franchise. Building upon the arguments of Navickas and Parolin, this chapter contends that by gaining access to townhalls, marketplaces or polling booths, unenfranchised rioters challenged their exclusion from national political systems.²¹ By seizing material spaces and objects that ‘performed’ an election, such as the hustings or poll books, these protestors could forcibly insert themselves into the official mechanisms of politics. Equally, burning a ‘corrupt’ electoral agent’s home was not simply an act of incoherent rage. These emotive performances sought to cleanse a community physically, momentarily constructing an ‘ideal’ social order by driving out malicious influences.²² By remaking spaces, both politicians and popular crowds imbued these sites with specific political meanings.

Through local spaces and rituals, the rural unenfranchised challenged national political institutions. In his study of nineteenth-century Bali, Clifford Geertz argued that political rituals created a ‘theatre state’. During ceremonies monarchs not only demonstrated their power but also created an ‘ideal model’ for politics. For Geertz, the capital became an ‘exemplary centre’ that the state replicated across the nation.²³ This chapter reverses Geertz’s model, revealing that during electoral unrest the unenfranchised of Somerset and Dorset constructed an ‘exemplary periphery’. By taking control and remodelling political spaces the crowd physically performed their own ‘ideal model’. In effect, a public house in rural Dorset could momentarily become an ‘effigy’ or embodied representation of the Houses of Parliament.²⁴ Although invariably repressed, through these violent performances alternate political systems were imagined, advertised and enforced. Consequently, whilst their protest repertoires were inherently local, the political imaginations of rural communities did not stop at the parish border. Neither ‘national’ nor ‘local factors existed in isolation, instead ‘movements, mediation

²¹ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 8-9, 51-4, 236-40; Parolin, *Radical Spaces*, pp. 4-15. See also: Epstein, *In Practice*, pp. 106-25; Forster, ‘The Paris Commune in London’, pp. 1-24.

²² In this manner it was similar to many communal festivities, see Chapter 5. Also: Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 132-77; Howkins and Merrick, “‘Wee Be Black as Hell’”, pp. 41-53. For further discussion see: L. Baker, “‘West Country Scum’: National Politics, Local Ritual and Space in the English South West, c. 1820-1832”, *Romance, Revolution and Reform*, 1 (2019), pp. 23-30.

²³ Geertz, *Negara*, esp. pp. 122-32; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 86; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 23-4.

²⁴ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 73-4. For the importance of local performances to national power, see also: M. White, “‘For the Safety of the City’: The Geography and Social Politics of Public Execution After the Gordon Riots”, in I. Haywood and J. Seed, *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 204-25.

and influence' proceeded 'along a two-way street'.²⁵ These local electoral contests were not unconnected with wider political issues, with concerns regarding local patrician-plebeian relations frequently compared to wider debates.²⁶ Notably, this was not a constant or unwavering concern but a series of networks that rural people could easily exploit.

Between 1820 and 1867 electoral campaigns in Somerset and Dorset were defined by the 'interconnectedness of politics.' There were no strict dichotomies between centre and periphery, high and low, or elite and popular politics.²⁷ The following section provides an overview of the official structure of electoral politics in this region. It argues that the rural labourers who lived in 'peripheral' rural communities were not isolated from ongoing national political debates. Instead, the mechanics of nineteenth-century politics enabled these labourers to involve themselves in electoral ritual. The chapter then examines three mid-nineteenth century election rituals to challenge claims that rural political culture was defined by the 'politics of defence'. Instead, these customs allowed voters and non-voters to subvert dominant narratives or challenge existing structures. Many electoral rituals, before and after reform, relied upon overt demonstrations of an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship. Thus, when candidates failed to meet local expectations violent performances were communally legitimised. The chapter concludes with an examination of electoral violence. These riots were not merely products of a 'carnavalesque' atmosphere, nor were they evidence for reactionary local mentalities. Rather, by deploying rituals and co-opting spaces rural communities could challenge ongoing political and social exclusivities. National and local concerns were thus intertwined, inseparable and interdependent.

Electoral Politics and Rural Involvement

With the exceptions of Bath and Bristol, Somerset and Dorset have been classified as 'politically moribund'. Despite these two counties holding thirty-eight parliamentary seats, the lack of electoral contests prior to 1832 is considered to have curtailed local political culture and mentalities.²⁸ In both counties, the two 'county seats' were distributed through a power-

²⁵ Williams, "One Damn Election After Another", pp. 111-23; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 165-70.

²⁶ Featherstone, 'Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms', pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35; J. Innes and N. Rogers, 'Politics and Government: 1700-1840', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: 1540-1840*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), II, p. 565.

²⁷ Lawrence, 'Political History', pp. 195-9.

²⁸ Somerset held eighteen seats and Dorset twenty. The South West as a whole provided twenty-five per cent of all MPs: Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 180-90; S. Farrell, 'Dorset' in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of*

sharing agreement due to the exorbitant costs of elections. The Tories and Whigs both nominated a single candidate, leading to only a handful of contests prior to 1832.²⁹ Aside from its two major cities, Somerset also boasted seven electoral boroughs. The majority of these constituencies, however, were tightly controlled by landed interests. Between 1762 and 1826, Wells did not witness a single contest, with the uncontested re-election of 1820 being so uneventful that the proceedings were not even recorded by the local press.³⁰ Similarly, in Milborne Port, Minehead and Ilchester wealthy landlords evicted people who did not vote ‘correctly’.³¹ In Ilchester, this practice was so intense that between 1790 and 1806 the electorate dropped from two hundred to sixty. When George Phillips, a Whig, bought an Ilchester seat in 1812 for £5000 he ‘wrote a letter to the electors commanding them to return me’ demanding ‘no processions, or cockades, or any such nonsense’.³² In 1817, therefore, reformers estimated that twelve of Somerset’s parliamentarians were ‘nominees of the boroughmongers’.³³ Similar patterns were witnessed in Dorset, where boroughs such as Weymouth were commonly bought by aspiring naval officers to help their careers.³⁴ Prior to 1830 the town of Shaftesbury was

Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832 (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/dorset>> [Accessed 01/02/2019]; T. Jenkins, ‘Somerset’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/somerset>> [Accessed 01/02/2019]; Bettey, *Rural Life in Wessex*, pp. 70-83.

²⁹ Most notably these were the Somerset election of 1826 where a contest was caused after the nomination of the radical Henry Hunt and the vicious reform elections witnessed in Dorset in 1831. See also: C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *A History of British Elections Since 1689* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 22-44.

³⁰ R. Thorne, ‘Wells’ in R. Thorne (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/wells>> [Accessed 01/02/2019]; T. Jenkins, ‘Wells’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/wells>> [Accessed, 04/02/19].

³¹ T. Jenkins, ‘Milborne Port’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/milborne-port>> [Accessed, 04/02/19]; T. Jenkins, ‘Minehead’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/minehead>> [Accessed, 04/02/19]; T. Jenkins, ‘Ilchester’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/ilchester>> [Accessed, 04/02/19].

³² J. Stevens-Cox, *A History of Ilchester: The Ancient County Town of Somerset* (Ilchester, 1958), pp. 221-2; S. Farrell, ‘PHILLIPS, George (1766-1847), in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/philips-george-1766-1847>> [Accessed, 05/02/19].

³³ *Reformist Register and Weekly Commentary*, 24 May 1817.

³⁴ S. Farrell, ‘Weymouth’, in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/weymouth-and-melcombe-regis>> [Accessed, 06/02/19]. The use of parliamentary seats to aid naval careers was common throughout England, see: T. Jenks, ‘Language and Politics at the Westminster Election of 1796’, *Historical Journal*, 44:2 (2001), pp. 419-39.

also ‘praised’ for allowing politicians to buy their seat ‘in a very quiet independent manner’.³⁵ Across Somerset and Dorset, the culture of official electoral politics prior to 1832 was thus deeply corrupt. Landowners used their material control over the electorate to ensure that their preferred candidates were elected without a contest. Through physical compulsion, threats and bribery they protected their political resources.

Yet despite the venality of official politics, electoral culture in these communities flourished throughout the early-nineteenth century. The lack of elections did not prevent a vibrant repertoire of rituals from being deployed whenever a contest occurred. John Billingsley blamed Taunton’s poor economic fortunes on a popular preoccupation with politics that led to ‘idleness and debauchery’.³⁶ Similarly, in Weymouth the announcement of a contest in 1826 led to the streets ‘being almost immediately filled with marching bands’ and ‘one tradesman alone sold blue ribbons to the value of £200.’³⁷ Even the most corrupt constituencies could erupt with political fervour, in Ilchester elections were:

boisterous, riotous events, accompanied with banners, uniforms, bands of music, dancing in the streets and drunkenness of everyone; and it was understood that everyman who gave his vote would be in the processions, but also that everyman was even... One innkeeper proclaimed “damn me if Ilchester is worth living in, there are hang-fairs and good elections”³⁸

The overwhelming control of local landlords did not degrade electoral culture. It may even be argued that the rare nature of contests increased popular participation, providing a rare opportunity for voters and non-voters to voice their displeasure. The belief that ‘everyman was even’ indicates that this was a moment where any person could voice their opinions. In Ilchester an expansive legacy of rituals and counter-rituals thus persisted, creating a political scene that was deeply critical of established authorities. In 1826, the town welcomed the radical reformer Henry Hunt ‘in defiance of the landed interest’ with ‘music and a massed multitude bearing flags’. Hunt was carried through the streets ‘draped in a Union Jack’ and ‘nearly the whole

³⁵ J. Cannon, ‘Study in Corruption: Shaftesbury Politics’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 84 (1962), pp. 154-7; S. Farrell, ‘Shaftesbury’, in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009): <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/shaftesbury>> [Accessed, 05/02/19].

³⁶ Billingsley, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Somerset*, p. 295.

³⁷ In this election, blue was the colour of the popular opposition candidate. See below for the riot that accompanied this contest, also: ‘Case for Counsels Opinion on Weymouth Parliamentary Election Regarding the Use of Intimidation and Mob Violence’, *DHC*, D-FAR/B/L/1, f. 9.

³⁸ ‘Memories of Ilchester, written by W.H. Greene, c. 1886’, *SHC*, A\CTP/1/12/18.

town cried “Hunt and Liberty””.³⁹ Almost instantaneously, this town had visually and materially transformed itself from a den of venality into a radical heartland. Even the local press, who were universally opposed to Hunt’s candidacy, acknowledged the support, asking: ‘Where are the friends of the other candidates in Ilchester’s election farce?’⁴⁰ Subsequently, the corruption of Somerset and Dorset’s political elite did not stifle electoral culture. Communities continued to use elections to challenge local and national authorities.

Furthermore, the physical geographies of Somerset and Dorset encouraged the enrolment of agricultural workers in electoral rituals. In 1831, the *Bath Chronicle* embedded a reporter into a radical delegation that was travelling from Bath to the county hustings at Wells. During this procession, the journalist was ‘shocked to discover’ that ‘the reformers’ colours’ were being worn ‘by every farmhand and ploughman’ and that:

the villages and hamlets through which the procession passed... sent out their inhabitants en masse to cheer the glittering cavalcade... Labour seemed to have been relinquished in all quarters for the day and [the villagers] uplifted their voices in shouts of “Reform for ever! Goodbye to the Boroughmongers!”⁴¹

Unlike other counties, Somerset and Dorset lacked a singular urban centre that monopolised population or political influence. This meant that urban and rural populations frequently mixed with election processions snaking across the countryside from every direction.⁴² It would have been difficult, therefore, for agricultural labourers to escape the pageantry of county contests. Indeed, for some rural communities these marches allowed them to express their political viewpoints and, momentarily, influence proceedings. In Wiveliscombe, the arrival of parties of voters with ‘bands playing and colours flying’ during the 1837 elections enabled unenfranchised labourers to publicly demonstrate their support. According to a Tory agent, the villagers ‘soon made their feelings known’ with some attempting to ‘prevent our passage through this little place’ whilst the ‘supporters of Mr Sanford were cheered as they passed

³⁹ *Taunton Courier*, 21 June 1826. Henry Hunt was experienced in these tactics, see: J. Belchem, ‘Henry Hunt and the Evolution of the Mass Platform’, *English Historical Review*, 93:369 (1978), pp. 739-731; J. Belchem, *‘Orator’ Hunt: Henry Hunt and English Working Class Radicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 28 June 1826; *Bath Chronicle*, 6 July 1826.

⁴¹ *Bath Chronicle*, 12 May 1831. For the importance of visual devices to political contests see also: Navickas, “‘That Sash Will Hang You’”, pp. 540-65; Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo’, pp. 109-53; Pickering, ‘Class Without Words’, pp. 144-62.

⁴² Barry, ‘South West’, pp. 67-92; S. Poole, ‘To Be a Bristolian: Civic Identity and the Social Order’, in M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 76-95; Belchem, *‘Orator’ Hunt*, pp. 131-5.

unopposed'.⁴³ Sanford was the Whig candidate, making this action a deeply partisan manoeuvre. Blockading the road thus granted these rural labourers a modicum of political agency, disrupting their opponents plans whilst publicly demonstrating local hostility to their cause.⁴⁴ The physical landscapes of Somerset and Dorset granted these rural communities unique abilities, empowering their protests and facilitating the spread of political knowledge. Although the majority of electoral rituals occurred within urban areas, countryfolk could use local spaces to forcibly insert themselves into proceedings.

Nineteenth-century electoral contests needed to enrol agricultural labourers to grant candidates legitimacy. As O'Gorman has repeatedly stressed, prospective parliamentarians relied upon the popular crowd as a visible symbol of their political mandate. By involving the unenfranchised poor in rituals, political elites could claim that they truly represented the 'people' of their constituencies.⁴⁵ This was achieved through rituals such as the 'showing of hands', whereby an informal vote was conducted at the hustings during the nomination of candidates.⁴⁶ With the rural electorate remaining comparatively small between 1820 and 1867, this ceremony granted the unenfranchised a modicum of power. As one biographer recounted:

the hand of a labourer standing before the hustings, held up for a candidate, told as much in his favour as that of a freeholder... those farmers who were in favour of Parliamentary Reform, sent their waggons filled with villagers to Dorchester, to cheer and hold up their hands.⁴⁷

Keen to validate their 'popular' mandate, candidates willingly enrolled the rural population during county elections. However, such rituals were not 'charades' that led the unenfranchised to unwittingly endorse 'a hierarchic, unequal society'.⁴⁸ In certain cases, these rituals could decide political contests. In both the Dorsetshire election of 1831 and the Frome election of 1852, witnessing a popular demonstration of disapproval led unpopular candidates to 'retire from the field in the face of political aggression'.⁴⁹ Although such displays were admittedly

⁴³ 'F.J. Edwards to Francis Henry Dickinson, 19 July 1837', Dickinson Family Correspondence 1830-1854, *SHC*, DD/DN/4/4/5.

⁴⁴ Similar occurrences were seen in Devon: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 207-37. For the importance of controlling access during elections see also: Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 14-23.

⁴⁵ O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies', pp. 79-115; O'Gorman 'Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics', pp. 171-86; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 130-41

⁴⁶ Lawrence, *Electing our Masters*, pp. 5-6; O'Gorman, 'Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain', pp. 30-4.

⁴⁷ W. Mate, *Then and Now: Or Fifty Years Ago. Facts, Ancient and Modern, Connected with the County of Dorset and the South-West of England* (Poole, 1883), pp. 83-4.

⁴⁸ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 140-1; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 185-6

⁴⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 12 May 1831; *Wells Journal*, 18 December 1852.

uncommon, it would be incorrect to dismiss rural labourers as political props. The very nature of ritual transformed these people from passive onlookers into active political beings, encouraging participation through emotive displays.⁵⁰ Despite elections being primarily conducted within the market towns or industrial districts of Somerset and Dorset, newspapers frequently noted the overwhelming attendance of agricultural labourers from the surrounding villages.⁵¹ As the following section demonstrates, electoral rituals were designed to provide successful candidates with a local mandate by physically enrolling every available body.

The electoral reforms of 1832 left the political culture and structure of Somerset and Dorset relatively unscathed. Somerset was divided into two districts, East and West, and gained a new borough in Frome. Three venal constituencies, Ilchester, Milborne Port and Minehead, were also extinguished. In total, the number of representatives for this county was thus reduced from eighteen to thirteen. Concomitantly, Dorset was not divided but given another county seat and lost only one borough, Corfe Castle. Three of the smallest boroughs in England, Weymouth, Wareham and Bridport, were not disenfranchised but had their seats cut in half resulting in Dorset losing only five representatives.⁵² The push to defend 'landed interest' in Westminster during debates over the Reform Bill allowed these counties to escape with only minor alterations, compared to the sweeping changes witnessed elsewhere.⁵³ However, whilst the reshaping of political boundaries did not revolutionise political culture, these changes did intensify and encourage future electoral contests. As Beales argued, changes made to electoral law ensured that divisive political contests would become increasingly common. The division of large counties into electoral districts and the shortening of the polling window from fifteen days to two diminished the costs of contesting a rural county election. With failure at the polls less financially devastating, formerly 'safe' seats in Somerset and Dorset were now at risk.⁵⁴ Consequently, whilst continuity defined the political culture in these counties, moments of change still occurred. Although certainly not uniform, reform slowly allowed an increasing number of rural people to become involved with electoral politics in this region.

⁵⁰ Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 23-8; O'Gorman, 'The Paine Burnings', pp. 111-25.

⁵¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 Oct. 1831; *Sherborne Mercury*, 1 July 1843; *Taunton Courier*, 11 May 1859.

⁵² Jenkins, 'Somerset'; Farrell, 'Dorset'.

⁵³ E.J. Evans, *The Great Reform Act of 1832*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), esp. pp. 45-54; Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill*, esp. pp. 95-100; J.A. Phillips and C. Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England', *American History Review*, 100:2 (1995), pp. 411-36.

⁵⁴ Beales, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832', pp. 139-50; J Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 76-85; P. Salmon, *Electoral Reform At Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832-1841* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 119-45.

Whilst some have claimed that Somerset and Dorset existed in a state of splendid political isolation, the realities of electoral contests meant that this was an impossibility.⁵⁵ Certainly, these counties were notoriously corrupt, before and after the Reform Bill, but this was not an insurmountable barrier to popular political participation.⁵⁶ As the following case studies reveal, even a candidate who bought his seat could not guarantee the loyalty of the unenfranchised if he did not present himself as a ‘worthy’ representative. These were not mechanistic social relationships but required constant reinforcing through public performances. Even the geographic ‘isolation’ that is commonly used to dismiss rural electoral behaviour could be turned into a political weapon. By physically controlling the countryside, rural voters and non-voters could disrupt or reshape the rituals that underpinned electoral processes.

Election Rituals, Deference and Controlling Spaces

Between 1820 and 1867, electoral campaigns did not simply revolve around the enfranchised. The poll was no more than a singular moment in a protracted, interactive and contested series of performances that constituted an election. As O’Gorman and Eastwood have argued, these occasions were active political processes that formed a ‘participatory theatre’.⁵⁷ This section will thus examine three rituals that were commonly deployed during elections in Somerset and Dorset: treating, canvassing and the hustings. Although these ceremonies did not comprise the entirety of electoral culture, they have often been presented as emblematic of the ‘inward-facing’ nature of rural politics.⁵⁸ Thus, whilst the rural electorate’s ‘politics of deference’ has been largely discredited, the unenfranchised are still envisioned as passive and easily exploitable props for the local elite.⁵⁹ Conversely, this section contends that ‘representation’ needed to be renegotiated and remade at every election. The rural unenfranchised used these

⁵⁵ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 95-106; Kerr, *Bound to the Soil*, pp. 90-123.

⁵⁶ For the continuation of electoral corruption see: K. Rix, ‘The Second Reform Act and the Problem of Electoral Corruption’, *Parliamentary History*, 36:1 (2017), pp. 64-81; K. Rix, “‘The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections’? Reassessing the Impact of the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act’, *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), pp. 65-97.

⁵⁷ Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference’, pp. 30-2; O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies’, pp. 79-85. For the notion of social relations as theatre see also: Thompson, ‘Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture’, pp. 382-40.

⁵⁸ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 52-75, 208-25; Richter, ‘The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections’, pp. 19-28; Hoppen, ‘Roads to Democracy’, pp. 553-71. The most significant electoral ritual not covered in this chapter is the charring of successful candidates. For further discussions see: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 95-98; Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 6-7; O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies’, pp. 90-1.

⁵⁹ Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 185-6; Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; K.T. Hoppen, ‘The Franchise and Electoral Politics in England and Ireland, 1832-1885’, *History*, 70:229 (1985), pp. 202-17.

occasions to demand overt displays of a patrician-plebeian relationship where an ‘ideal’ government was publicly and materially performed. Those candidates who failed to demonstrate a ‘norm of reciprocity’ were punished through threatened or actual violence.⁶⁰ Consequently, through the use of local spaces and rituals, rural non-voters were able to voice their opinions on national political issues throughout this period. The ‘public political sphere’ did not uniformly close in Somerset and Dorset following parliamentary reform.⁶¹ Instead, the crowd utilised a malleable set of repertoires to suit their current struggles at different elections.

For some historians, treating has come to epitomise the venality and deference of early-nineteenth century electoral politics. By providing the local populace with free food and drink, the candidate reinforced the hierarchic structures of rural society by rewarding unquestioning loyalty.⁶² Yet, these depictions overlook the ‘bottom-up’ demand for treating as a public demonstration of patrician-plebeian relationships. In 1826, Colonel Tynte was invited to stand as an independent candidate for Bridgwater due to his support for parliamentary reform. The incumbent Tory was deeply unpopular with the popular crowd and Tynte’s entrance into the town was greeted with ‘deafening cheers’.⁶³ However, these attitudes changed after it was discovered that Tynte had refused to treat the local population. In an open letter, Tynte declared that it:

would be altogether inconsistent with those principles of independence, which you and I both profess and feel, and have hitherto acted upon; inconsistent with the practice of the past, the honour of the present, and the future welfare and purity of the cause.⁶⁴

This stance was relatively common amongst early-nineteenth century radicals, being rooted in a belief that parliamentarians needed to remain ‘nationally minded’. The ‘purity of the cause’ was endangered by the petty ‘local interests’ promoted during treating.⁶⁵ Conversely, for locals

⁶⁰ Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81; Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23.

⁶¹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 14-15; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 58-61.

⁶² Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp. 77-78; Wasserman and Jaggard, ‘Electoral Violence in Mid Nineteenth-Century England’, pp. 154; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 83-90; O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies’, pp. 85-6.

⁶³ *Taunton Courier*, 15 February 1826; T. Jenkins, ‘Bridgwater’ in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009); <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/bridgwater>> [Accessed 06/02/19]

⁶⁴ ‘Colonel Tynte’s Answer to a Requisition Presented to Him by a Numerous and Respectable Body of the Electors of Bridgwater, 13 February 1826’, Election Material of the Tynte Family, SHC, DD\S\WH/351.

⁶⁵ Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, p. 19-21; O’Gorman, *Voters, Patron and Parties*, pp. 108-41, 285-98; Taylor, ‘Interests, Parties and the State’, pp. 65-6.

this was an intolerable decision. Tynte's agents were met with 'various depredations and insults' as they canvassed for votes, with one man declaring that Tynte 'is no true gentleman, but a foreigner'. Banners supporting Tynte were also 'torn down by the mob' and 'trampled underfoot' throughout the town.⁶⁶ By assaulting Tynte's supporters and tearing down his colours, which served as embodied representations, the Bridgwater crowd were attempting to recast him as an unwanted or intrusive presence.⁶⁷ Despite his popular policies, Tynte had failed to demonstrate his ability to uphold a 'norm of reciprocity'. Thus, national politics were filtered and understood through these local social relationships. Eventually, Tynte was obliged to hold an 'enthusiastic meeting' at a local inn 'to preserve the peace of the borough.' There Tynte reaffirmed his paternalist commitments, providing 'copious amount of food and victuals'. This was enough to win the crowd, who subsequently voiced their support for Tynte at the hustings.⁶⁸ Crucially, the demand for treating was not cynically minded, as Tynte only treated two hundred people. Rather, these were public performances that affirmed the candidate's willingness to defend customary relationships.⁶⁹ Through treating, national politics, local customs and the candidate's moral character were all intertwined.

The interconnected nature of politics enabled demands for treating and reciprocity to influence the campaign for parliamentary reform in 1831. During riots in Sherborne, fears that the local gentry had neglected their paternalistic duty combined with a distrust of anti-Reformers to legitimise violent performances.⁷⁰ Following the victory of the Tory candidate Lord Ashley, the streets were 'paraded by the mob' led by 'a drum, fife, and a small flag' that read 'Liberty For Ever!'⁷¹ When the crowd reached the vicarage they 'enquired into the political allegiance of Reverend Parsons' who declared that he was a 'true Ashleyite'. Upon learning this, the ringleaders demanded that Parsons 'make amends to the town and provide them with some victuals' and when rebuffed 'they destroyed the windows, broke into the house [and] took beer and spirits with which they regaled themselves.'⁷² Further assaults were then conducted against

⁶⁶ *Taunton Courier*, 15 February, 22 February 1826.

⁶⁷ Griffin, 'Affecting Violence', pp. 144-53; O'Gorman, 'The Paine Burnings', pp. 111-55.

⁶⁸ *Taunton Courier*, 22 February, 1 March 1826.

⁶⁹ Thompson, 'Eighteenth-Century English Society', pp. 133-65; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 16-96.

⁷⁰ For similar repertoires see: J. Beckett, 'The Nottingham Reform Bill Riots of 1831', *Parliamentary History*, 24 (2005), pp. 114-38; P. Searby, 'Paternalism, Disturbance and Parliamentary Reform: Society and Politics in Coventry, 1819-1832', *International Review of Social History*, 22:2 (1977), pp. 198-225.

⁷¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831.

⁷² *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831; 'Papers in Dispute: Parsons v. Inhabitants of the Hundred of Sherborne for Riot and Trespass, 1831', *DHC*, D-FFO/25/23; 'Rev. J Parsons to Lord Melbourne, 22 October 1831', Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/12, ff. 21-4. For a further discussion on the opposition of the clergy to the Reform Bill see: R. Saunders, 'God and the Great Reform Act: Preaching Against Reform, 1831-32', *Journal of British Studies*, 53:2 (2014), pp. 378-99.

‘confirmed Ashleyites’ throughout the town, including the Black Horse Inn where Ashley had provided ‘wine and roast beef’ to his voters earlier in the week.⁷³ The windows were smashed after the landlord refused to gift some beer to a crowd who ‘desired justice’.⁷⁴ By assaulting Parsons and the Black Horse Inn these people were attempting to re-establish threatened customary bonds and relationships. As Mauss theorised, the act of gift-giving reinforced social structures, with both parties locked into an unequal but reciprocal relationship.⁷⁵ In a similar manner to the Swing protests, forced treating allowed protestors to reunite a fractured community through public performances.⁷⁶ For the rioters, supporting Ashley was a moral outrage and a betrayal of paternalistic duty. When Parsons was asked to ‘make amends’, the crowd were depicting his political opinions as a threat to the local social contract. Opposing reform was, supposedly, antithetical to a reciprocal patrician-plebeian social relationship. Consequently, demands for treating were not inevitably rooted in unthinking deference. Through these rituals, voters and non-voters could contest local and national political issues.

Throughout this period, exclusive public houses remained vital to treating rituals. Unlike urban areas, where ‘popular politics originated in the pub’, in Somerset and Dorset the vast majority of inns remained tightly controlled by local authorities.⁷⁷ With a drastically smaller clientele, many establishments were forced to expel political radicals or risk losing their license.⁷⁸ By controlling the spaces of treating, landlords could handicap their political opponents by preventing them from performing these crucial rituals. In 1826, Henry Hunt was barred from the ‘respectable’ public houses of Yeovil, Ilchester and Wells.⁷⁹ This was an attempt to present Hunt, and his radical politics, as alien to the people of Somerset. The incumbent members called Hunt a ‘foreigner’ who was ‘hurling the poisoned missiles of calumny and falsehood against the honourable men who are opposed to his strange and unpalatable politics.’⁸⁰ Similarly, local newspapers described him as a man ‘endeavouring to produce discord by sowing Paine’s bones in the fields of Somerset.’⁸¹ In this instance, ‘Paine’s bones’ referred to

⁷³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 October 1831.

⁷⁴ *The Times*, 29 October 1831; ‘James Frampton to Earl Digby 20 Oct 1831’; ‘Earl Digby to James Frampton, 20 Oct 1831’; ‘Earl Digby to James Frampton, 22 Oct 1831’, Correspondence Between Colonel Frampton and the Secretary of State, DHC, D-DOY/A/3/1/3; *Sherborne Mercury*, 19 March 1832.

⁷⁵ Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. pp. 85-144; Heins, Unrau and Avram, ‘Gift Giving and Reciprocity’, pp. 126-44.

⁷⁶ Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Jones, ‘Finding Captain Swing’, pp. 429-58.

⁷⁷ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 32-4; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 214-6; Parolin, *Radical Spaces*, pp. 105-46.

⁷⁸ For the fickle nature of licensing laws see: Parolin, *Radical Spaces*, pp. 179-243.

⁷⁹ *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826, 7 June 1826.

⁸⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 12 February 1823.

⁸¹ *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826.

the republican writer Tom Paine, who had been burnt in effigy throughout Somerset during anti-Jacobin demonstrations in the 1790s.⁸² By denying Hunt access to the spaces of treating, therefore, local authorities portrayed him as a foreign and corruptive force.⁸³ This physical exile also prevented Hunt from conducting the rituals himself, potentially weakening his connection with local people. However, Hunt was able to take advantage of this banishment by constructing alternative political spaces. After being ejected from the Mermaid Inn in Yeovil, Hunt travelled to the Three Cloughs, a poorer establishment on the outskirts of town, whereupon:

He dined at the market-table; and when the cloth was removed, amused the farmers and labourers, for three quarters of an hour, with a statement on their grievances, the crimes of the Magistrates, and the total incompetency of the present members.⁸⁴

Rather than the silk banners, fine dining and eloquent speeches that usually accompanied electoral dinners and treating, Hunt had inverted the usual performances and spatial practices.⁸⁵ The ‘market-table’ was one of the cheaper tables, and a tablecloth replaced the usual banner. By taking advantage of his ‘exile’ from polite political society, Hunt symbolically embraced the local community and presented himself as a leader willing to endure personal sacrifices and hardships.⁸⁶ As such, the sites where treating occurred were just as important as the ritual performance, by constructing new political spaces Hunt became a popular alternative.

Additionally, Hunt utilised patrician-plebeian relationships to construct an ‘exemplary model’ of politics that intertwined his radicalism with local custom. Although his opponents portrayed him as merely a ‘dealer in black coffee’ from London, Hunt was actually ‘Lord of the Manor of Glastonbury Twelve Hides’.⁸⁷ Following his release from Ilchester gaol in 1823, Hunt had regularly returned to his manor and presided over the Court Leet. During this ceremony, Hunt listened to local grievances and appointed officers to police the ‘correct and fair’ weights and

⁸² *Taunton Courier*, 29 January 1823. For the extensive burning of Tom Paine in effigy across the nation see: O’Gorman, ‘The Paine Burnings’, pp. 111-25; Rogers, ‘Burning Tom Paine’, pp. 139-71.

⁸³ Such notions fit within ‘local xenophobia’, see: Snell, ‘Culture of Local Xenophobia’, pp. 1-30.

⁸⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826.

⁸⁵ Epstein, ‘Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression’, pp. 271-91; P. Brett, ‘Political Dinners in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain: Platform, Meeting Place and Battleground’, *History*, 81:264 (1996), pp. 527-552. For the inversion of spatial practices see: Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 405; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 241-2.

⁸⁶ Within nineteenth-century political culture, these traits were central to the archetypical ‘gentleman leader’: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 259-60; J. Belchem and J. Epstein, ‘The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited’, *Social History*, 22:2 (1997), pp. 174-93.

⁸⁷ *Bath Chronicle*, 16 December 1824; Belchem, ‘Orator’ Hunt, pp. 11-13.

measures of the marketplace.⁸⁸ Through these performances Hunt was transformed from a ‘foreign’ demagogue into a paragon of paternalism, legitimizing his radical political views. During the elections of 1826, a meeting of Glastonbury’s farmers proclaimed that while ‘the Corporation laugh at us, and say they don’t care a fig for us’ Hunt was worthy of ‘the great authority of Alfred’ and was a ‘man of true county stock’.⁸⁹ In the villages surrounding Glastonbury, it was reported that Hunt’s radicalism had led the labours into a ‘universal state of insubordination’ and that discussions between farmhands had been ‘dragged into that labyrinth of political warfare by Mr Hunt’.⁹⁰ Consequently, by embracing reciprocal patrician-plebeian relations Hunt had constructed an exemplary model of how society should be in Glastonbury. These rituals had allowed him to overcome the label of ‘foreigner’ and begin politicizing local people through paternalist ceremonies such as the Court Leet.⁹¹ By embodying the ‘norm of reciprocity’ Hunt directly connected his radicalism to Somerset’s customary social relationships.

Similarly, by reclaiming the spaces of treating the unenfranchised of Somerset and Dorset could enforce alternate political ideals. Through the physical occupation of these exclusive sites, non-voters attempted to symbolically and materially insert themselves into the electoral process.⁹² In Poole, the crowd were enraged following a decision by reformist candidates to privately treat voters in the Antelope Inn. After the crowd heard ‘the boisterous hilarity of those upstairs’ they demanded entrance claiming that ‘we are your true supporters’. When no answer came, ‘retaliation was the word’ and stones pelted the Antelope until ‘every window in the inn was demolished’. The crowd then:

found means of climbing up and getting into the room by the large bow window over the front door. Those inside at first repelled the intruders by pushing them back, but some one suggested a change of tactics, and the rioters, who were bold enough to get in at the window were allowed to do so without further hindrance, but as soon as they were in the room, half-a-dozen stalwart fellows seized the

⁸⁸ ‘Henry Hunt to the Radical Reformers’, *SHC*, SERIAL 6/21; ‘Town Clerk of Glastonbury to the Home Office’, Home Office Disturbance Correspondence, *NA*, HO 40/17, f. 369.

⁸⁹ *Morning Post*, 30 October 1826.

⁹⁰ ‘William Ryall, Butleigh Court, to George Neville Grenville, Lord Glastonbury, n.d. 1826’, *SHC*, A/CTP/3/2/3; ‘Extract of a Report Concerning Henry Hunt’, *SHC*, A/CTP/1/12/16.

⁹¹ For further discussion of Henry Hunt’s use of a West Country identity, see: Baker, “‘West Country Scum’”, pp. 18-21.

⁹² Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, esp. 14-6, 130-53.

intruders, and dragging them across the floor pitched them head foremost down the stairs.⁹³

This riot highlights the flaws present in ascribing electoral unrest solely to overarching national issues, such as Reform. Prior to this incident, these reformist candidates had been popular favourites. When their victory was initially announced ‘triumphant arches were erected in various parts of the town’.⁹⁴ However, by refusing to treat or even acknowledge the local unenfranchised these candidates had forgone Poole’s existing social bonds. As Lawrence argued, the relationship between candidate and constituent was one of ‘representation’, thus it needed to be constantly renegotiated.⁹⁵ In essence, by failing to acknowledge the crowd these politicians had recast them as unworthy of political attention. Subsequently, by disrupting these rituals and physically placing themselves in these spaces, the unenfranchised were challenging local and national political exclusivity. In these actions, there was a demand to be taken seriously as political actors. Before being ‘pitched’ downstairs one ‘invader’ complained that the candidates ‘had not even spoken from the window’.⁹⁶ The rural popular crowd did not approach treating as merely an opportunity for carnivalesque excess.⁹⁷ Instead, through treating the unenfranchised became included in the electoral process. These rituals were not unthinkingly deferential but centred around a desire to negotiate as equals.

Although there were attempts to curb ‘electoral corruption’ through new legislation, as the nineteenth century progressed treating remained a constant in the political culture of Somerset and Dorset.⁹⁸ Despite Vernon’s claims that these rituals were reimagined as ‘degrading and corrupt’, political candidates continued to perform elaborate treating ceremonies.⁹⁹ In 1866, the Conservative candidate for Bridgwater was unseated ‘on the grounds of bribery, treating, and undue influence’. During this election every public house was ‘thrown open to the mob’ whilst Conservative voters were ‘paraded to a polling booth, preceded by a band’.¹⁰⁰ Rather than decline, between 1820 and 1867 treating rituals became intricately planned and increasingly bureaucratized. In Bridport, election agents kept detailed notes on key members

⁹³ Mate, *Then and Now*, p. 42.

⁹⁴ Mate, *Then and Now*, p. 85.

⁹⁵ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 61-3; Lawrence, ‘Culture of Elections in Modern Britain’, pp. 459-76.

⁹⁶ Mate, *Then and Now*, p. 43.

⁹⁷ Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; Wasserman and Jaggard, ‘Electoral Violence’, pp. 124-55; Richter, ‘The Role of Mob Riot’, pp. 19-28.

⁹⁸ Rix, ‘The Second Reform Act and the Problem of Electoral Corruption’, pp. 64-81; Rix, ‘“The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections”’, pp. 65-97; Evans, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 26-30. See also: K. Rix, *Parties, Agents and Electoral Culture in England, 1880-1910* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 1-15.

⁹⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 25 April 1866

of the community who could assist in treating rituals. Ambrose Bishop, for example, is listed as a ‘master mason’ who is ‘consistently Conservative’ and could be ‘trusted to convince his fellows to join.’ Conversely, Joseph Batson’s ‘wife manages and controls him’ making him ‘unreliable.’¹⁰¹ Treating was thus streamlined in order to influence as many people as possible. Moreover, following the introduction of the workhouse candidates moved their treating within its walls. At Taunton in 1847, Bridgwater in 1857 and Shepton Mallet in 1859 a ‘good substantial dinner’ was provided by the candidates to the poor in these establishments.¹⁰² By placing these rituals in a tightly controlled space, public participation could be precisely stage-managed. These new sites allowed candidates to perform a patrician-plebeian relationship without risking popular disruption or subversion. Consequently, whilst attitudes towards treating remained constant, the spaces in which they took place were altered to undermine popular political participation. A ‘norm of reciprocity’ was still regularly performed but it became increasingly harder for the unenfranchised to engage in negotiation.

Intimately linked with treating was the canvass. Canvassing involved the candidate walking amongst the people, physically placing himself in their community and listening to their grievances. Even in county constituencies, this personal touch was in great demand, providing an opportunity for voters and non-voters to see the candidate as ‘as a man’ and judge his character personally.¹⁰³ However, contrary to claims that these counties were filled with a ‘usually submissive peasantry’, the canvass frequently became an avenue for contentious debates.¹⁰⁴ In 1857 the ongoing implosion of the Liberal Party reached Taunton where ‘gangs of farm labourers’ quizzed candidates on ‘the government of Lord Palmerstone’, ‘the Church as a National Establishment’ and ‘Church Rates – the Ballot – and Universal Suffrage.’¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in 1831 the *Dorset County Chronicle* despaired at the aggressive nature of the county canvass claiming that ‘the once sober, loyal, and honourable labourers of this county’ had been corrupted by reformers and were now ‘appealing to violence and brute force once so alien to

¹⁰¹ ‘Election Agent’s Record of the Canvas’, Papers Concerning the Bridport Parliamentary Election of 1841, DHC, D-COL/X/7. For the development of electoral agents over this period see also: E.A. Smith, ‘The Election Agent in English Politics, 1734-1832’, *English Historical Review*, 84:330 (1969), pp. 12-35.

¹⁰² *Taunton Courier*, 18 August 1847; *Bath Chronicle*, 9 April 1857; *Wells Journal*, 23 April 1859

¹⁰³ Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies’, pp. 84-5; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 85-7; Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference’, pp. 31-3.

¹⁰⁴ E.A. Smith, *Reform or Revolution?: A Diary of Reform in England, 1830-32* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1992), p. 38; J. Innes, ‘People and Power in British Politics to 1850’, in J. Innes and M. Philp (eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 132-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Taunton Courier*, 25 March 1857. For the ongoing crises within the Liberal Party during this period see: Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism*, pp. 82-98.

their nature.’¹⁰⁶ Thus, whilst it is certainly true that the canvass allowed local people to judge the candidates’ moral character this did not prevent serious political discussions from emerging. Naturally, the balance between local and national discussions depended on the character of an individual election and constituency. In 1852, for example, canvassing during the Wells elections centred around the character of the candidate’s wives. According to the local press, there was ‘a great deal of discussion regarding Mrs Tudway, who is known locally as a kind and generous woman’.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, whilst the canvass allowed the unenfranchised to engage with national politics it would be misleading to suggest that this was a constant feature. Although local labourers had access to wider social and political networks, they were always not always used or needed.¹⁰⁸ Every election was different, with local and national issues becoming relevant at different times.

Nevertheless, these bodily performances allowed local people to disrupt electoral processes. By physically assaulting canvassing electoral agents and candidates the unenfranchised could momentarily enforce an ‘ideal’ political vision. In 1855, the canvass at Wells was ‘pursued with the utmost zeal and determination’ and so ‘from both parties complaints have reached us of coercion and intimidation’. Popular anger centred around ‘Mr Davies, the Bishop’s Secretary, whose office they think should keep him from dabbling in election matters.’ Subsequently, during the canvass Davies was ‘harangued and jostled’ by a group of men who ‘seized him by his arms... and dragged him to the Bishop’s Palace’ where he was commanded to ‘stay until the proceedings were finished’.¹⁰⁹ This performance presented Davies as a corruptive influence on the community that needed to be momentarily removed. By evicting him from the streets these men were physically demonstrating where Davies’ ‘correct’ place was. In preventing Davies from undertaking the canvass the crowd were denying him a position within the political process, materially enforcing their visions for local government. In 1818 a similar occurrence at Ilchester led to the candidate, Sir William Manners, being chased out of the town by a group who had ‘riotously assembled and proceeded to demolish the windows of a house and committed other violence.’¹¹⁰ The crowd justified their actions by arguing that Manners was a ‘candidate of the boroughmongers’. Historians have commonly portrayed

¹⁰⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

¹⁰⁷ *Bath Chronicle*, 15 July 1852. Similarly, the West Somerset canvass in 1834 revolved around the candidate’s mother: ‘Mary Sandford to E.A. Sanford, n.d. 1834’, Correspondence of Edward Ayshford Sanford, *SHC*, DD/SF/7/5/15.

¹⁰⁸ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35; Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 478-9.

¹⁰⁹ *Wells Journal*, 17 November 1855.

¹¹⁰ *Bath Chronicle*, 23 April 1818.

electoral violence as reactionary or the work of drunken ‘mobs’.¹¹¹ Yet, elections provided an opportunity for the unenfranchised of these counties to voice their political opinions free from repression. Even the judge at Ilchester admitted that ‘latitude for the expression of opinion might be allowed during an election contest.’¹¹² In a political system that denied them the vote, these physical performances were the only avenues for non-voters to express their viewpoints and construct their ideal political world. The canvass aided in this process by providing easy access to the bodies of disliked candidates.

Nowhere was the control of material space more important than the hustings. From the nomination of candidates through to the polling of voters and final announcements these raised wooden platforms were the heart of the official theatre of elections. In the boroughs of Somerset and Dorset hustings were usually constructed in the marketplace, the physical and symbolic heart of a community.¹¹³ For the county elections, however, giant edifices were built on the hills overlooking Dorchester and Wells. According to the *Dorset County Chronicle*, the stage built in 1831 was ‘far grander than any have known’ and could ‘be seen from many miles away on ancient Poundbury Hill’.¹¹⁴ These sites were physical manifestations of local and national political power. Poundbury Hill, for instance, was an Iron Age hillfort, ensuring that these constructions were not only physically spectacular but also directly connected to local heritage.¹¹⁵ By controlling the hustings materially, both candidates and crowds could reshape electoral proceedings the enforce their vision of an ‘ideal’ political state. Although Randall has dismissed the hustings as only maintaining ‘the illusion of popular participation’, both political elites and the unenfranchised crowd understood the symbolic and material power that control over these sites granted.¹¹⁶ In 1831, fourteen thousand people ‘descended upon the hustings’ in Dorchester ‘eager for the fray.’ The crowd were not attending solely for fun. Instead, their physical presence allowed them to influence proceedings. During the nominations, the anti-Reformer Henry Bankes attempted to address the crowd but was ‘instantly assailed by the most appalling and discordant noises... the mob were determined that he should not be heard.’¹¹⁷ In

¹¹¹ Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; Hoppen, ‘The Franchise and Electoral Politics’, pp. 202-17. For further criticisms see: Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-1.

¹¹² *Bath Chronicle*, 23 April 1818.

¹¹³ Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 3-23. See also Z. Dyndor, ‘The Political Culture of Elections in Northampton, 1768-1868’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Northampton, 2010), pp. 187-194.

¹¹⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

¹¹⁵ J. Hyams, *Dorset* (London: Batsford, 1970), pp. 145-6.

¹¹⁶ Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 185-6.

¹¹⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 12 May 1831.

effect, the largely unenfranchised crowd were able to filter the political messages offered at the hustings. Naturally, these depredations did not go unanswered by Bankes' supporters and so:

About one hundred ruffians, who had entered the field armed with missiles and staves, attacked the freeholders, who were unarmed, and beat them in a most inhuman manner; at length the freeholders made a most determined rush, wrested the bludgeons from them, tore Mr Bankes's standard into shreds, and, with a cheer, drove these miscreants over the great extent of the field.¹¹⁸

Amongst those who resisted Bankes' 'bludgeonmen' were mounted soldiers of the Yeomanry Cavalry 'commanded by the Whig patron J.S.W. Sawbridge Erle Drax Esq., who was himself on the hustings encouraging them and urging them forward by language and by signals.'¹¹⁹ Consequently, electoral violence was not a binary conflict between the unenfranchised poor and the political elite. These battles over political spaces were an integral aspect of nineteenth-century electioneering. In attempting to construct his ideal political world through physical force, Drax's actions were similar to the election rioters in Sherborne or Wells. There was great symbolic value in controlling the hustings, tearing Bankes' banners down from Poundbury Hill communicated his lack of support. Yet these violent actions were also practical. Unable to speak without being harassed and with his supporters chased from the field, Bankes withdrew from the contest and allowed Dorset to elect two Whig candidates for the first time in its political history.¹²⁰ In a later letter, his Whig opponents confided that he 'should not be ashamed of standing down after losing the field'.¹²¹ Indeed, this had not been a new occurrence for Bankes, as he had lost the 1823 elections in a similar manner. Although on this previous occasion he had merely stormed off the stage following his defeat during the 'showing of hands'.¹²² Controlling the hustings allowed the popular crowd to physically demonstrate their support for a candidate whilst dictating the electoral process. Such violence was not abhorred by authorities but woven into their political strategies.

The hustings were a malleable space, with both unenfranchised crowds and parliamentary candidates using visual devices and performances to 'remake' these areas. The deployment of banners, clothing and colours transformed spaces whilst simultaneously allowing rural

¹¹⁸ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 May 1831.

¹¹⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 12 May 1831.

¹²⁰ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 May 1831; Farrell, 'Dorset'.

¹²¹ 'Mr. Ponsonby to Mr. Bankes, 17 May 1831', *DHC*, D-BKL/D/B/2/40.

¹²² '26 February 1823', Diary of Henry Kaines of Manston, *DHC*, D-391/1.

communities to express their political concerns.¹²³ In 1831, Lord Ashley complained that ‘his colours were broken and trampled underfoot’ by the crowd ‘in every village across the county’.¹²⁴ These colours acted as embodied proxies for unpopular candidates. In a similar manner to burning an effigy, tearing down the colours of Ashley inflicted a form of ‘disembodied pain’.¹²⁵ This was not only an opportunity for catharsis but also emotively demonstrated local opposition. In Poole, the ‘banners and flags’ of Ashley changed ‘the complete character of the town’, making it seem as if ‘there were no supporters of reform living here’.¹²⁶ By ‘trampling’ these colours crowds prevented local spaces from being remade by ‘the Ashleyites’. Indeed, battles over banners were commonplace at the hustings as rival political groups attempted to ensure that their control was performatively enforced. During the Somerset election of 1831, one particular noteworthy banner was:

a representation of the funeral of one of the deceased boroughs – on one side of the picture was shown a large bridge inscribed – Boroughbridge, over which the mourners in sable array, with an inscription above them of “Twiss and Co.” were following the coffin containing the remains of “60 Rotten Boroughs” to the tomb: on the other side of the painting was shown “The Tomb of Oblivion,” which had also the affecting epitaph “Rest in Peace.” This jeu d’esprit excited much amusement... and at one period some annoyance to the anti-reformers, as an attempt was made to obtain possession of it.¹²⁷

This banner summarised the campaign for reform in a single emotive image. At an event where the vast majority of the crowd could not hear the speakers, such devices were vital in transmitting political messages. In 1831, for instance, newspaper reporters were unable to hear candidates standing five feet from them due to the noise of the hustings.¹²⁸ Moreover, these visual devices transformed the hustings as a material space by dominating the crowd and physically demonstrating local support for reform. As Epstein noted, these symbolic practices ‘intensified meanings’ by overturning the previous state of the space and saturating it with new

¹²³ Navickas, “That Sash Will Hang You”, pp. 540-65; Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo’, pp. 109-53; Pickering, ‘Class Without Words’, pp. 144-62.

¹²⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

¹²⁵ Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’, pp. 144-53. See also: Griffin, ‘Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict’, pp. 91-108; Griffin, ‘Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life’, pp. 301-16; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 262-4.

¹²⁶ Mate, *Then and Now*, p. 85.

¹²⁷ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 May 1831.

¹²⁸ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 May 1831.

meanings.¹²⁹ Consequently, the hustings as a physical space were never fixed. Instead, they were constantly being negotiated with, altered and transformed through physical performances and visual devices. By tearing down, or protecting, these elements non-voters remained vitally important to the electoral process.

Due to the interconnectedness of local and national issues, conflict could transform hustings into embodied representations of exclusive political structures.¹³⁰ By disrupting or controlling polling, the unenfranchised crowd challenged their status as non-political entities.¹³¹ In 1826 sustained rioting occurred during the Weymouth elections following the nomination of a populist candidate, Colonel Gordon, to oppose 'the Union', an alliance between conservative and liberal corporators to each send two members to parliament.¹³² After promising to 'free Weymouth from the chains of tyranny and corruption forged by the Union', Gordon gained the support of the unenfranchised population who began to overwhelm the small town hall where the hustings were situated:

the Blues totally filled the hall and overpowered the few friends of the Union that made their way into it. The Blues acted upon a regular system of obstructing the voters for the union from entering the hall... The voters for the Union were pointed out to the Gordonites or Blues, 3 or 4 of these would surround a voter for the union and carry him by force away from the door of the hall.¹³³

The crowd, primarily comprised of non-voters, had thus seized this political space and were dictating who could vote. This was not some drunken brawl but a calculated and planned strategy.¹³⁴ Each day when the poll was closed 'the Blues became perfectly civil and assisted in protecting the candidates from the horrors of the crowded town hall.'¹³⁵ Nor was it a 'hired mob' as some historians of Dorset have claimed.¹³⁶ According to the Captain of the Dragoon Guards, who were called upon to prevent further rioting, one of the captured rioters claimed

¹²⁹ J. Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 122 (1989), pp. 75-118.

¹³⁰ Lawrence, 'Political History', pp. 195-9; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-53.

¹³¹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 87-90.

¹³² Weymouth held four parliamentary seats: 'Case for Opinion Concerning Election Disturbances at Weymouth', *DHC*, Ph.555; *The Times*, 22 June 1826. See also: Farrell, 'Weymouth'.

¹³³ 'Case for Counsels Opinion on Weymouth Parliamentary Election Regarding the Use of Intimidation and Mob Violence', *DHC*, D-FAR/B/L/1, f. 3.

¹³⁴ Hoppen, 'Grammars of Electoral Violence', pp. 597-620; Richter, 'The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections', pp. 19-28.

¹³⁵ 'Case for Counsels Opinion on Weymouth Parliamentary Election Regarding the Use of Intimidation and Mob Violence', *DHC*, D-FAR/B/L/1, f. 6; 'J. Martin, 22 June 1826', Home Office Domestic Correspondence, *NA*, HO 40/20 ff. 84-5.

¹³⁶ Bawn, 'Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order', pp. 53-4.

that they were trying to ‘drive out the Union’ and that ‘the Mayor was not performing his duty’.¹³⁷ In these protests, subsequently, there was a demand for the reinstatement of a correct patrician-plebeian relationship. The corporation had become corrupted by the Union and the Mayor had failed in his paternal duties, by physically occupying these spaces the crowd believed that the Union could be expelled from Weymouth and the community cleansed. Equally, the crowd’s violent performances were a direct critique of national political inequalities and the exclusivity of the franchise. According to one rioter, although they ‘were weak in votes and were denied their say by the masters, they had a plan to bring their candidate in by force.’¹³⁸ By occupying this site, the crowd were symbolically and physically inserting themselves into electoral politics. These acts challenged both the local ‘Union’ and the national unreformed parliament. Controlling the townhall and forcibly evicting any voter who disagreed with them inverted the spatial practices usually associated with the hustings.¹³⁹ In Weymouth, the hustings were transformed from sites enshrining national political authority to radical spaces that facilitated alternate political worldviews.

It was the hustings’ rough nature that, according to Vernon, was used to justify the increasing closure of the political sphere.¹⁴⁰ However, in Somerset and Dorset the hustings continued to be the centre of electoral proceedings. Unlike urban constituencies, where ticketed events slowly supplanted mass outdoor meetings, in this region the hustings remained a celebrated local institution. The *West Somerset Free Press* concluded an election report by commenting:

An election occurs only once every four or five years, and a little noisiness and disorder may be forgiven... If it be a custom sanctioned by long continuance that at election time an unpopular candidate should not be permitted to be heard, we may be content with it as one of our established institutions.¹⁴¹

As with many rituals in rural society, the ‘rough’ nature of the hustings was legitimised through its status as a continually practised ‘ancient’ tradition. As Scott noted, these ‘carnavalesque’

¹³⁷ J. Martin to the Commanding Officer of the Dragoon Guards, 22 June 1826’, Home Office Domestic Correspondence, NA, HO 40/20, f. 87; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 June 1826. The use of the Dragoon Guards caused a minor national controversy: *The Times*, 22 June 1826; ‘J. Martin to the Commanding Officer of the Dragoon Guards, 19 June 1826’, Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 40/20 f. 86

¹³⁸ ‘Case for Counsels Opinion on Weymouth Parliamentary Election Regarding the Use of Intimidation and Mob Violence’, DHC, D-FAR/B/L/1, f. 2.

¹³⁹ For the hustings as symbols of established authority see: Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, pp. 185-6. For inversion and protest see also: Brady, ‘Space, Place and Agency’, pp. 29-48; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 223-50.

¹⁴⁰ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ *West Somerset Free Press*, 29 July 1865.

customs allowed communities to resist safely as they ‘can be taken to have no political significance whatever.’¹⁴² Indeed, the absence of banners, flags and other paraphernalia at the Frome election of 1854 was deemed to be more conducive of disruption. There was nothing left but ‘hard words and threatening menaces and uplifted sticks.’¹⁴³ Unsurprisingly, some political candidates attempted to remove themselves into private spaces that enabled them to control political meetings and prevent disruptions. Yet these were commonly combined with ‘open’ events, such as in Bridgwater where Conservative electors convened in a private meeting hall to hear speeches before parading the streets and attending a rally.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Congresbury was ‘illuminated with banners and signs’ celebrating the local Conservative party and whilst the electors privately dined with the candidate the poor ‘were treated to plentiful food and drink’.¹⁴⁵ As Lawrence warns, there was no simplistic transition from open meetings to private spaces following the Reform Bill.¹⁴⁶ The mass platform continued to be important for both candidates and the popular crowd throughout this period. By controlling the physical state of these rural towns and villages, political allegiance was publicly demonstrated and materially enforced.

Although electoral rituals were founded upon unequal relationships, rural communities did not unquestioningly accept the ‘politics of deference’. Instead, these customs allowed voters and non-voters to negotiate with their social superiors. Elections provided a periodic opportunity for a public assessment of the conduct of the ruling classes, locally and nationally. If it was believed that they had neglected their paternalistic duty, elections also provided an occasion to forcibly remind the elite about their obligations and the ‘norm of reciprocity’.¹⁴⁷ Between 1820 and 1867 there was no universal closing down of the ‘popular political sphere’.¹⁴⁸ Rather, electoral agents and candidates became increasingly aware of the power that rituals such as treating or the canvass held. Thus, patrician-plebeian relationships remained vitally important to the political culture of these rural communities throughout the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁴² Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 167-8. For contemporary debates surrounding the ‘harmlessness’ of festive trappings see: Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo’, pp. 109-53

¹⁴³ *Bath Chronicle*, 26 October 1854.

¹⁴⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 26 July 1865.

¹⁴⁵ *Wells Journal*, 3 September 1864.

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 163-94; Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 51-7. See also: M.J. Wickham, ‘Electoral Politics in Berwick-Upon-Tweed, 1832-1885’, (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 2002), pp. 157-9.

¹⁴⁷ O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference’, pp. 396-9; Fisher, ‘The Limits of Deference’, pp. 99-104; Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference’, pp. 27-49.

¹⁴⁸ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, esp. pp. 80-104; Evans, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 26-30. See also: O’Gorman, ‘Culture of Elections in England’, pp. 17-32. For further criticisms see: Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 58-61; Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism*, pp. 62-4.

However, this desire for reciprocal social relations did not limit the political imaginations of rural people. Although their repertoires were inherently local these ritualistic disruptions were still connected to wider social, political and cultural networks.¹⁴⁹ By physically occupying certain spaces, the rural unenfranchised challenged their exclusion from national politics and were, momentarily, able to control the electoral process. Equally, radicals such as Henry Hunt built upon the ‘ancient’ customs of rural communities to popularise their political views.¹⁵⁰ Crucially, it would be misleading to suggest that the struggles over space or treating were a binary conflict between the unenfranchised poor and political elite. The use of violent performances was a well-accepted element of nineteenth-century electioneering.¹⁵¹ Through these actions, crowds and candidates alike symbolically performed and materially enforced their ‘ideal’ national and local governments.

Barricades in Blandford: Electoral Violence and the Exemplary Periphery

There has been a tendency in studies of electoral violence to separate the ‘bloody electioneering’ of unreformed England from the ‘rough and tumble’ of post-reform politics. For historians such as Hoppen, electoral violence peaked in 1831 and 1832 but then rapidly declined.¹⁵² This model has led the analysis of electoral violence to become disjointed and incomplete. As with political rituals, there was a greater level of continuity in the deployment and repertoires of electoral violence than previously suggested.¹⁵³ Moreover, popular disorder should not be artificially separated from the rituals and customs detailed above as candidates and political elites used violence at nearly every stage of the electoral process. This section, therefore, investigates instances of electoral riot and mass violence through the lens of Geertz’s ‘theatre state’. By physically occupying and remaking local spaces and enacting violent performances against ‘immoral’ politicians the popular crowd in Somerset and Dorset were attempting to create an ‘exemplary periphery’.¹⁵⁴ This was a theatricalised model of what the

¹⁴⁹ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35; Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 478-9.

¹⁵⁰ Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo’, pp. 151-2.

¹⁵¹ Dyndor, ‘The Political Culture of Elections in Northampton’, pp. 206-7; C. Emsley, *Hard Men: The English and Violence since 1750* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 118.

¹⁵² Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620; Hoppen, ‘The Franchise and Electoral Politics’, pp. 202-17; Emsley, *Hard Men*, pp. 118-20.

¹⁵³ Dyndor, ‘The Political Culture of Elections in Northampton’, pp. 206-7.

¹⁵⁴ Geertz, *Negara*, esp. pp. 122-32; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 86; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 23-4.

‘correct’ social and political state, locally and nationally. Although riots were not universally deployed, rural crowds frequently used violence and local spaces to contest national issues.

The Reform Crisis of 1829 to 1832 was the peak of electoral violence in Somerset and Dorset with twenty-three separate disturbances.¹⁵⁵ This violence was usually justified through the cry of Reform. In Yeovil, for example, magistrates found a large crowd attempting to set fire to a Tory agent’s house and when questioned the participants kept ‘bawling out “Reform!”’.¹⁵⁶ As historians have noted, the language of ‘Reform’ was incredibly broad during the early-nineteenth century with individuals and communities envisioning the cause in wildly different ways.¹⁵⁷ In Somerset and Dorset reform appealed to the restoration of ‘ancient rights’ and British constitutionalism, referencing documents such as the Magna Carta that had been supposedly discarded by the political classes.¹⁵⁸ It was believed that the political system had been degraded from an originally pure state by corruption locally and in Westminster. In Bridgwater, it was declared that ‘Parliament and our own irresponsible Corporation... wish to keep you always as slaves’ but ‘Englishmen had not forgotten the spirit which animated their forefathers’.¹⁵⁹ In recasting the unreformed parliament as a corrupted entity, supporters of reform could depict their actions as a restoration of a previous ‘moral’ order. Such language complimented rural notions of an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship. In Taunton, a reform meeting called on the corporation to ‘remember their duties as noble men’ and ‘cast out those who had sullied our ancient and beloved institutions’.¹⁶⁰ The undemocratic nature of the unreformed electoral system was thus a direct result of local paternalists failing to protect the community. Furthermore, calls to ‘cast out’ corrupt individuals would directly influence the electoral violence seen during this febrile period. In the following case studies, the ‘exemplary

¹⁵⁵ Fripp, ‘The Sherborne Riots of 1831’, pp. 21-30; Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 52-75; Poole, “Some Examples Should Be Made” pp. 237-63.

¹⁵⁶ *Western Flying Post*, 9 April 1832.

¹⁵⁷ J. Innes, “Reform” in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word’, in A. Burns and J. Innes (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 71-97; P. Harling, ‘Parliament, the State and “Old Corruption”: Conceptualising Reform, c. 1790-1832’ in A. Burns and J. Innes (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 98-113; M. Philp, ‘Talking about Democracy: Britain in the 1790s’, in J. Innes and M. Philp (eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland, 1750-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 101-113.

¹⁵⁸ J. Dinwiddy, ‘Conceptions of Revolution in the English Radicalism of the 1790s’, in E. Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and German in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 535-61; J. Fulcher, ‘The English People and their Constitution after Waterloo: Parliamentary Reform, 1815-7’, in J. Vernon (ed.), *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England’s Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 52-82; Navickas, ‘Political Trials and the Suppression of Popular Radicalism’, p. 194.

¹⁵⁹ ‘A Report on the Bridgwater Reform Meeting and Disturbance’, *SHC*, A/DQO/54/5/12.

¹⁶⁰ *Western Times*, 1 October 1831.

peripheries' constructed by rioting crowds were founded on beliefs that local society needed to be physically cleansed and patricians reminded of their 'ancient' duties.

In October 1831, a by-election for Dorset was called following the suicide of one of its Whig parliamentarians. This placed the region in a unique position, with Dorset's electorate able to voice their opinion on parliamentary reform as the matter was being debated in Westminster. Thus, as the House of Lords considered, and ultimately rejected, the Reform Bill, in towns such as Dorchester and Blandford local communities were able to physically and symbolically performed their ideal political state.¹⁶¹ The contest was mired in corruption, with claims that the poll clerks were favouring the Tory candidate, Lord Ashley, by raising unwarranted challenges against the voters for the reformer Ponsonby.¹⁶² Following Ashley's victory the county revolted. In Dorchester, the assessor was 'burnt in effigy' at the hustings whilst the man himself had to be escorted by armed cavalymen out of the county at night.¹⁶³ Lord Chancellor Eldon reported riding through these towns and seeing 'Ashley, in chalk, exhibited on a gallows in many different places.'¹⁶⁴ As Navickas noted, this graffiti changed public spaces into an arena of potential or imagined danger. Combined with the effigy, the opponents of Ashley used 'disembodied pain' to amplify their threats against those who had 'corrupted' local and national politics.¹⁶⁵ The proponents of reform were thus literally transforming their local environments to demonstrate their opposition. In Blandford it was reported that:

the mob believe that Mr Ponsonby lost the election through the trickery of the lawyers and the partiality of the assessor, the houses of the attorneys of Lord Ashley, that of the vicar, and others of the Tory party, were marked out as objects of violence.¹⁶⁶

Interpreting the invectives of parliamentary reformers, the crowd sought to 'cast out' these corruptive influences, with the physical property of these Tory men being specifically targeted.

¹⁶¹ The MP, John Calcraft, supposedly committed suicide due to the pressure of these debates: Farrell, 'Dorset'. For the events of 1831 see: Evans, *The Great Reform Act of 1832*, pp. 45-57; J. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform: 1640-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 204-41.

¹⁶² For a full account of the proceedings see: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831, 20 October 1831, 27 October 1831. See also: Farrell, 'Dorset'.

¹⁶³ *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 10 November 1831.

¹⁶⁴ 'Lord Eldon to Lord Stowell, 18 October 1831', in H. Twiss (ed.), *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon: With Selections from His Correspondence*, 3 Vols. (London, 1844), III, pp. 154-5.

¹⁶⁵ K. Navickas, 'Thirdspace? Historians and the Spatial Turn, with a Case Study of Political Graffiti in Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England', in S. Griffiths and A. von Lünen (eds.), *Spatial Cultures: Towards a New Social Morphology of Cities Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2016) pp. 73-4. For disembodied pain see: Griffin, 'Affecting Violence', pp. 144-53.

¹⁶⁶ *The Times*, 20 October 1831.

In Blandford a ‘mob numbering in the thousands’ broke into these homes and destroyed ‘every document, paper and book on which they could lay their hands.’ The ransacking was so complete that ‘the streets for some distance in the vicinity of these gentlemen’s offices, could not be seen for parchments and paper.’¹⁶⁷ This was not a drunken brawl but a conscious and informed political demonstration.¹⁶⁸ By destroying these men’s papers, the crowd removed the material objects that had corrupted local politics. The perverted mechanics of state were seized by the unenfranchised and cast out of their town. These violent performances condemned both local ‘Ashleyites’ and the unreformed electoral system. The notebooks and journals of political agents, as physical objects, were widely perceived as the administrative foundations of an electoral campaign. In trampling these items, the crowd thus rejected electoral ‘trickery’ whilst concomitantly challenging their exclusion from national politics.

The Blandford rioters were committed to concomitantly removing the physical presence of ‘corrupt’ officials whilst physical remaking their town into an exemplar of ‘moral’ politics. The crowd paraded the streets with ‘horns and drums’ and ‘approached the magistrates and notables’ to ‘gauge their political allegiance’. If they were discovered to be a reformer the crowd ‘gave them three cheers and moved on’ but Tories were ‘seized and taken across the bridge out of town’. A party of rioters then remained on the bridge and those who attempted to cross were ‘assailed on their approach with a storm of stones’.¹⁶⁹ Addressing the crowd a labourer named Bleathman pointed to one magistrate and declared ‘the bald headed ____ shall not pass over Blandford Bridge alive!’¹⁷⁰ As in Weymouth, the Blandford rioters were physically remaking the town into an exemplary model of politics, with those elites who had failed in their reformist ‘duty’ physically exiled. Underpinning these performances was a reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship. When the crowd arrived at the home of Mr Moores, a supporter of Ashley, he ‘prostrated himself before them and passionately apologised’, the crowd were then ‘offered some beer, cheese and bread’ whereupon Moores was ‘spared their wrath for the moment.’¹⁷¹ During communal protests such as food rioting, similar emotive

¹⁶⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831; ‘John James Smiths Account of the Blandford Riots’, Pinney Papers, *BSC*, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box B4, Bundle 5, f. 1.

¹⁶⁸ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Dorset’, p. 53; Richter, ‘The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections’, pp. 19-28.

¹⁶⁹ ‘John James Smiths Account of the Blandford Riots’, Pinney Papers, *BSC*, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box B4, Bundle 5, f. 3.

¹⁷⁰ For these actions, Bleathman was sentenced to death: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 March 1832.

¹⁷¹ ‘John James Smiths Account of the Blandford Riots’, Pinney Papers, *BSC*, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box B4, Bundle 5, f. 5.

performances were used by gentlemen who approached crowds ‘with tears in their eyes’.¹⁷² In effect, Moores admitted that he was at fault for breaking the Blandford’s supposed social contract and by treating the crowd he renewed his paternalist promises. Consequently, the riot remade Blandford into an example of the ideal political state, complete with caring patricians. Those who threatened this vision were removed from the town through physical violence.

The repertoires of electoral rioting and enclosure protests thus coalesced with crowds seeking to materially remake the landscape to support their claims. For local authorities, however, these actions were an intolerable threat and military support was requested to deconstruct Blandford’s ‘exemplary’ model. To defend themselves the crowd took advantage of their knowledge of local spaces through an uncommon tactic in British protest, the barricade:

Stones were thrown from the crowd as well as from behind walls, drawn carriages and broken furniture... it was then necessary to clear it, but when the cavalry rode in they found their retreat obstructed by a cart loaded with bricks which had been dragged across it behind them which the mob continued to pelt them the soldiers. Orders were then given to fire and a skirmish ensued with the determined rioters, the street was eventually cleared and some soldiers dismounted and took down the numerous obstructions.¹⁷³

This was a rare sight in British protest, although throughout Europe barricades had become a symbol of revolution and freedom. Deploying barricades was a complicated undertaking that required organisation, commitment and bravery.¹⁷⁴ In Blandford local spatial knowledge allowed protestors to ambush the military. As Sewell noted, by remaking spaces ‘resource-poor’ protestors could effectively challenge established authorities.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, these barricades reinforce the argument that electoral violence was not merely an act of ‘carnavalesque’ excess. This was a disciplined act of resistance that drew upon international protest repertoires to protect an ideal political world.

¹⁷² Wells, ‘The Revolt of the South West’, pp. 713-44; S. Poole, ‘Scarcity and the Civic Tradition: Market Management in Bristol, 1709-1815’, in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds), *Markets, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp. 91-115; S. Poole, ‘Documents in Focus: The Stogursey Rising of 1801’, *Regional Historian*, 9 (2002), pp. 2-6.

¹⁷³ ‘John James Smiths Account of the Blandford Riots’, Pinney Papers, *BSC*, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box B4, Bundle 5, f. 3; ‘G.W.J. Chard, Bailiff of Blandford, to Lord Melbourne, 29 October 1831’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/12, ff. 35-8.

¹⁷⁴ In Britain the most famous examples of the barricade are Glasgow in 1848 and Cable Street in 1936: M. Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); E. Hazan, *A History of the Barricade*, trans. D. Fernbach, (London: Verso, 2015).

¹⁷⁵ Sewell, ‘Space in Contentious Politics’, pp. 51-88

During these acts of violence, locals expressed fears that political corruption had been amplified by disruptive foreigners. As such, there exists a useful overlap between studies of rural electoral violence and Snell's concept of 'local xenophobia'.¹⁷⁶ In these counties, arson and assault were underpinned by rural mentalities and folklore. In Yeovil, the elections of 1831 led to rioting following the arrival of 'multitudes of the inhabitants of the adjacent villages'.¹⁷⁷ As in Blandford violence focused on Ashley's 'corrupt' agents, yet the crowd were not content merely recapturing documents. One agent arrived to find his 'papers piled and burning... in the middle of the kitchen', whilst another was forced to flee after 'several hundred persons commenced burning my home.'¹⁷⁸ Whilst these acts physically exiled these men, the use of arson carried specific cultural connotations in rural society. In Somerset and Dorset, fire was commonly used to physically and spiritually cleanse objects and spaces. On the outskirts of Yeovil, farmers were shocked to discover that labourers drove out vermin and warded off crop disease by 'setting fire to the corn'.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, in Langton Budville villagers processed around the village during winter with torches to 'drive out the Devil', whilst on Exmoor the homes of suspected witches were burnt down after their death to prevent 'contagion'.¹⁸⁰ By the eighteenth century, 'agrarian magic' stated that purifications by smoke and fire were needed to protect crops and human bodies from toxic elements.¹⁸¹ When John Goodforde, a magistrate, asked the Yeovil crowd 'What business have you here?' the crowd responded that these agents had spread 'foul oaths and curses' and 'that the house would be burned.'¹⁸² Consequently, for these rural communities the 'political culture of fire' held unique cultural associations.¹⁸³ In these moments, ancient customs were interspersed with modern political debate. As with crop disease, the 'corruption' of the unreformed parliament had a physical presence. The demands from reformist politicians for 'Old Corruption' to be removed from society were thus taken literally by these rural crowds.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁶ Snell, 'Culture of Local Xenophobia', pp. 1-30.

¹⁷⁷ 'J. Goodforde, Yeovil, to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/15, ff. 606-7.

¹⁷⁸ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 October 1831; *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 April 1832.

¹⁷⁹ 'Farm Account and Memorandum Book of Hugh Boone, Cossington', SHC, DD\S/DA/1.

¹⁸⁰ 'Notes of W.W. Wheatley on the Customs of Somerset', SHC, A/DAS/1/333/2; F.J. Snell, *A Book of Exmoor* (London, 1903), pp. 213-16. For the festive uses of fire see Chapter 5.

¹⁸¹ P. Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. T. Croft-Murray and H. Elsom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 259-64. See also: Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 258-60

¹⁸² *Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal*, 11 April 1832; *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 April 1832.

¹⁸³ For the urban 'political culture of fire' see: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 233-7; Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 132-77.

¹⁸⁴ See reports of reform meetings in Somerset: *Western Times*, 1 October 1831. For more on this desire to rid themselves of Old Corruption see: Harling, 'Parliament, the State, and "Old Corruption"', pp. 98-113.

Due to its language and repertoires, it is tempting to romanticize electoral violence as a struggle between the unenfranchised poor and an entrenched political elite. Yet many artisans, merchants and farmers in Somerset and Dorset actively supported electoral rioters. In Blandford the seizing of key spaces was aided by local reformers, including a ‘company of magistrates who are outwardly upon friendly terms with them’. The wife of an assaulted political agent condemned ‘the townspeople (respectable as they call themselves) who could see John half-murdered without coming out of their own doors to assist him.’ Almost universally, the middle classes of Blandford refused to enrol as Special Constables with magistrates ‘not being able to get any one except the two regular constables and a deviant tailor.’¹⁸⁵ This meant that the ability for local authorities to control Blandford as a physical space had been crippled, allowing the protesting crowd to easily remake it in their ideal image. Equally, these actions, or inactions, should not be dismissed as purely the result of intimidation.¹⁸⁶ The patrician-plebeian relationship and parliamentary reform had supporters from across the social spectrum. Indeed, local newspapers blamed reformist members of the middle classes for promoting violence, claiming that they ‘have by their conduct and observations encouraged the lower orders to a disobedience of the laws’.¹⁸⁷ James Frampton specifically named the noble landholder J.S.W. Sawbridge Erle Drax, who had directed the Yeomanry Cavalry during the previous election’s hustings riot, for encouraging the rioters in 1831 and discouraging ‘any persons we called on from being sworn in’.¹⁸⁸ For those who supported parliamentary reform, these riots were invaluable demonstrations of their support from the local populace. After two of the Blandford ringleaders were sentenced to death, over nine hundred people from the town sent memorials and petitions requesting a commutation to the Home Secretary.¹⁸⁹ On many occasions, the support of middle- and upper-class reformers facilitated electoral riots, with performances of an ideal political state by the lower orders being both implicitly and explicitly supported by large swathes of the population.

Those who opposed the crowd, however, were publicly punished to demonstrate the immorality of their actions. At Bridgwater in 1832, a ‘skimmington riding’ was deployed to condemn both the Tories locally and anti-reformers nationally. The disturbance began when John Bower, a

¹⁸⁵ ‘Lady Smith to Frances Pinney, n.d. 1831’, Pinney Papers, *BSC*, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box R5, f. 2-3.

¹⁸⁶ Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 208-25.

¹⁸⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 October 1831.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Account of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry from 1830 to 1845 by James Frampton’, *DHC*, D-FRA/X/4, f. 2. James Frampton would later become famous for prosecuting the Tolpuddle Martyrs, see Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 March 1832. See also: Poole, “‘Some Examples Should Be Made’” pp. 254-6.

magistrate and editor of *The Bridgwater Alfred*, an anti-reform newspaper, arrested a man for drunkenness during the post-election revelry. Subsequently:

The crowd commenced by uttering cries of vengeance against Mr Bowen and ‘all the Blue party’ ... his premises being surrounded by a mob consisting of not less than two hundred persons, most of whom were armed with large sticks, and many of them in disguise. Soon after Mr Bowen had entered, cries were uttered by the mob “We will have him out or pull down the premises.”¹⁹⁰

It was revealed in court that ‘one of the mob had his face blackened’ whilst another was ‘wearing fake curls and a dress.’ Their leader was playing a bugle whilst wearing a ‘large great coat, with a cape that came all around his body.’¹⁹¹ The presence of blackface, discordant music and cross-dressing embed this act within the ritual structures of ‘skimmington riding.’ In its traditional setting, those accused of moral or sexual crimes were visited by a procession of villagers beating pans, blowing horns and screaming the supposed crimes of the victim. The blackened faces were not simply a disguise. Rather, the masks and costumes enabled the perpetrators to overcome their individuality within the crowd, becoming a representation of the community. Crossdressing, similarly, not only allowed the crowd to ‘act out’ sexual crimes in lurid detail but also represented a damning moral judgement. Women were often seen in rural society as the judges of moral character and so by crossdressing during protest men attempted to adopt this power. In short, ‘skimmington riding’ was a highly public form of remonstrance against those who endangered the moral codes of rural society.¹⁹² By performing this ritual outside Bowen’s home, the protestors were directly likening his political activities to gross sexual misdemeanours. Bowen, and the entire Tory party, were thus degraded to the level of a henpecked husband or adulterous woman. Furthermore, ‘skimmington riding’ was traditionally coupled with the removal of an offender from society. Bowen’s political actions had thus exiled him from the community, much like the sexual crimes of the cuckold. The enforcement of this

¹⁹⁰ *London Evening Standard*, 20 December 1832. Bowen would later become famous for revealing the appalling conditions of Bridgwater’s workhouse: S. Shave, “‘Immediate Death or a Life of Torture are the Consequence of the System’: The Bridgwater Union Scandal and Policy Change”, in J. Reinartz and L. Schwarz (eds.), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 161-91.

¹⁹¹ ‘Notes of Trials Arising Out of Election Riot at Bowen’s House in Bridgwater, 1832’, *SHC*, DD/CLE/6/1.

¹⁹² Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes’, pp. 166-97; M. Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and the “Reform of Popular Culture” in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 105 (1984), pp. 79-113; M. Ingram, ‘Juridical Folklore in England Illustrated by Rough Music’, in C.W. Brooks and M. Lobban (eds.), *Communities and Courts in Britain, 1150-1900* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), pp. 61-82; Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, pp. 3-26. For similar deployment in other protests see: K. Chadbourne, ‘Rough Music and Folkloric Elements in the Whiteboy Movements’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 16/17 (1996/1997), pp. 176-94; R. Jones, *Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015).

exile was attempted both symbolically and physically. Cries of ‘Down with premises!’ and ‘Away with the Blues!’ permeated the crowd and many of those gathered around Bowen’s home, including an increasing number dressed as women, attempted to pull down his house.¹⁹³ Bowen’s home became a bridge between local ritual and national politics. The corruption of the Tories had to be cleansed, and by destroying this house Bridgwater could be freed from their influences.

These rural rituals were not impediments to national political protests but aids, providing protestors with a shared set of cultural repertoires to express their distaste for the current state of British politics. A similar assault occurred in Poole where the crowd specifically targeted a beer shop ‘kept by a man named Hoare, who had voted for Lord Ashley’ in 1831. According to Hoare’s lawyer, he had ‘made himself obnoxious in consequence of his political conduct, and a mob had gone to his house to shew their disapprobation’.¹⁹⁴ Accordingly, he was:

knocked down; and whilst down, was struck a violent blow on his arm. They then hauled him up and tumbled him about. He was led by the mob away from the house [with] a particular kind of whistle from one of the mob which was followed by a cheer and a huzza.¹⁹⁵

Hoare was carried through the streets as the crowd played ‘rough music’, publicly announcing his crimes. To ensure that the townspeople identified Hoare the crowd stole his pub sign and paraded it in front of him.¹⁹⁶ Deploying these ritual forms invested political protests with cultural legitimacy through precedence and association.¹⁹⁷ These performances encouraged participation, allowing the supposedly unacceptable nature of these actions to be communicated across the entire community.¹⁹⁸ ‘Skimmington Riding’, at its core, was a shaming ritual used to castigate a member of the community who had failed in their societal obligations and expectations. Both Bowen and Hoare had been assaulted for their support of national corruption, thereby betraying the compact between patrician and plebeian.¹⁹⁹ These rituals performed and communicated political concerns through the shared language of

¹⁹³ ‘Notes of Trials Arising Out of Election Riot at Bowen’s House in Bridgwater, 1832’, *SHC*, DD/CLE/6/1.

¹⁹⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 October 1831.

¹⁹⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 March 1832.

¹⁹⁶ Mate, *Then and Now*, p. 102.

¹⁹⁷ Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’, pp. 139-62.

¹⁹⁸ O’Gorman, ‘The Paine Burnings’, pp. 111-25; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 17-36.

¹⁹⁹ Thompson, ‘Rough Music Reconsidered’, pp. 3-26; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 467-538.

custom.²⁰⁰ The crowds at Bridgwater and Poole were cleansing corruption locally whilst also demonstrating their opposition to contemporary political structures by likening their supporters to the dregs of society.

In rural areas, local spaces often became the bridge between parochial issues and national politics. Violence over a contested public house was not ‘inward-facing’ or reactionary but could be used to proactively strike against national political structures.²⁰¹ During the Shaftesbury election contest of 1830, for instance, local concerns regarding access to local space combined with national debates surrounding political representation. The election was contested by F.C. Knowles, a popular independent candidate, and P.M. Chitty, the candidate of local landlord and ‘boroughmonger’ Lord Grosvenor.²⁰² Immediately, Knowles’ campaign focused on parliamentary reform. To the ten thousand who had gathered, Knowles announced that this was a battle for ‘bursting asunder the chains of political slavery.’²⁰³ However, as the campaign continued a local issue arose regarding access to a public house named the Grosvenor Arms. The inn overlooked the hustings and was, unsurprisingly, owned by Lord Grosvenor. Subsequently, Chitty’s supporters made frequent use of a specially constructed balcony that overlooked the town square. Meanwhile, the supporters of Knowles and Reform were denied access as the publican admitted he dared not ‘risk giving offence to the Earl Grosvenor’s agents, which might lead to a notice to quit.’²⁰⁴ The Grosvenor Arms, therefore, quickly became a local symbol for corruption and exclusive political practices. As the election campaign progressed, the issues of national reform and access to the inn coalesced. During the canvass, one of Knowles’ supporters began railing against the ‘great corrupt edifice’ that was the current House of Commons. He concluded his speech by standing directly outside the pub bellowing:

Let us storm yonder castle of corruption, and I will assist you to place the banner of freedom and independence on its summit. Now we have put on the armour of liberty let us not cast it off, till we have trodden under our feet, that double headed monster, tyranny and corruption.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales*, p. 84; Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 11-2. For further discussions of identity and rituals see: Baker, “‘West Country Scum’”, pp. 9-31.

²⁰¹ Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain*, pp. 15-7; Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620.

²⁰² *History of the Shaftesbury Election*, pp. xii-xv, 1-11. For the full history of Shaftesbury’s electoral corruption see: Bawn, ‘Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order’, pp. 54-75

²⁰³ *History of the Shaftesbury Election*, p. 3.

²⁰⁴ *History of the Shaftesbury Election*, p. 37.

²⁰⁵ *History of the Shaftesbury Election*, p. 36.

In this speech the House of Commons, Old Corruption and Shaftesbury's corrupt oligarchy were all connected through this local space of exclusivity.²⁰⁶ The people of Shaftesbury could easily replicate the national exclusivity of the unreformed parliament through the restrictions placed upon their everyday lives. The Grosvenor Arms provided a tangible and understandable reconstruction of abstract political structures, acting as an effigy for national political corruption. The shame of being denied access to the local inn amplified the calls for parliamentary reform. After Knowles' defeat, the crowd followed the demands of his supporters literally and stormed the public house.²⁰⁷ In assaulting this inn, the people of Shaftesbury were contesting their exclusion from both local and national politics.²⁰⁸ Consequently, whilst rural areas did not want for open spaces, the symbolic power of certain sites continually encouraged acts of political violence. As such, Vernon's claims that contests over electoral spaces in these regions were noticeably less significant than in urban areas needs be reconsidered.²⁰⁹ Instead, by acting out their concerns in specific and significant spaces these crowds were able to powerfully align themselves with the national movement for Reform.

Historians of electoral violence have largely concurred with the theory that after 1832 popular political participation was stymied.²¹⁰ In particular, the shortening of the poll to two days and the addition of multiple polling booths have been credited with curtailing popular violence. These alterations supposedly dispersed crowds and provided a smaller window for people to organise.²¹¹ However, these arguments have overstated the political disjuncture of the 1830s. In these rural communities, protestors continued to use local spaces and violence to influence the electoral process. In the unreformed system, for example, it was common for rural communities to blockade the roads and prevent supporters of a disliked candidate from travelling to the hustings.²¹² During the Dorset elections of 1831, groups blockaded roads outside Blandford and Lyme 'preventing voters from passing'.²¹³ Despite the introduction of multiple polling booths, these tactics continued with rural protestors taking full advantage of their local landscapes. In fact, the reduction of polling to two days aided crowds in pinpointing

²⁰⁶ For old corruption see: Harling, 'Parliament, the State, and "Old Corruption"', pp. 98-113

²⁰⁷ 'Captain R.J. Fawcett, Shaftesbury, to Peel, 6 August 1830', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/7, f. 269.

²⁰⁸ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 213-4.

²¹⁰ Hoppen, 'Grammars of Electoral Violence', pp. 597-620; Wasserman and Jaggard, 'Electoral Violence', pp. 124-55; Richter, 'The Role of Mob Riot in Victorian Elections', pp. 19-28.

²¹¹ Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, pp. 72-88.

²¹² Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 207-37; Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, pp. 14-23.

²¹³ 'G.W.J. Chard, Bailiff of Blandford, to Lord Melbourne, 29 October 1831', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/12, ff. 35-8; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

their ambushes. At Yeovil in 1847, a Conservative procession had ‘no other route but the northern turnpike gate.’²¹⁴ Knowing this a group of protestors prepared themselves:

Joseph Seymour. Henry Task and John Edwards were standing at the opposite side of the road... They called to us to come to them. One of them said, ‘have you got a handkerchief?’ We said ‘No, what for?’ They said ‘to collect some eggs to scare off the foreign Tories’ We declined... They said ‘They cannot arrest you if you hit them as it is Election Time.’²¹⁵

This conversation reveals the continuing fear of corruptive foreign influence on local spaces and moralities. Opposing voters were still envisioned as an invasive force that needed to be ‘scared off’. Subsequently, when the procession reached Yeovil they ‘found that a great crowd of persons were collected there’ pelting them with mud, eggs and rocks.²¹⁶ Reforming the electoral process did not instantaneously eliminate electoral violence or popular participation.²¹⁷ Rather, the inherent malleability of these repertoires, tactics and rituals encouraged their continued deployment.

The enduring nature of electoral violence is best demonstrated by the Clutton riots of 1852. Here the crowd utilised their control over physical spaces to once again protest national issues and control the electoral process. During the elections for West Somerset the village’s only public house, the Warwick Arms, had been chosen as the site for a polling booth. This caused ‘a large number of idle persons, estimated at several thousands altogether’ to assemble in the village. Using this numerical advantage, the largely unenfranchised crowd began deploying tactics similar to the riots previously witnessed in Blandford or Weymouth:

They mobbed the voters, demanded of some who they voted for, and, in several instances, took off the hats of Conservatives and flung them in their faces... they blocked up the avenues to the polling-booths, opened the doors of the carriages as they drew up, and demanded of those within how they intended to vote.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ *Bath Chronicle*, 9 September 1847.

²¹⁵ ‘Evidence of Joseph Watts and Joseph Seymour Concerning the Throwing of Eggs at an Election Procession’, Somerset Quarter Session Rolls: Michaelmas 1847, *SHC*, Q/SR/559/63-65.

²¹⁶ ‘Evidence Given Concerning the Throwing of Mud, Stones and Eggs at an Election Procession in Yeovil, 16 August 1847, Somerset Quarter Session Rolls: Michaelmas 1847, *SHC*, Q/SR/559/66-7.

²¹⁷ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 207-37.

²¹⁸ *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette*, 26 July 1852.

The ‘extra controls’ on polling introduced by the Reform Act of 1832 does not seem to have ‘limited’ popular participation in Clutton.²¹⁹ Crucially, in these violent performances the importance of physical space is once again highlighted. By controlling the ‘avenues’ to the polling booths the unenfranchised could decide who was allowed to participate in the political process. It was a direct inversion of their unenfranchised status and allowed these men and women to voice their opinions on key national issues. Equally, the choice to place the polls within the Warwick Arms inflamed local sensibilities due to its exclusionary nature. The inn had ‘long been used by the Conservative Committee’ and during the subsequent trial the Judge lamented that ‘this was a house which had been chosen by the Blues, and had denied local people access during the previous election’.²²⁰ The exclusivity of this public house disrupted the everyday lives of villagers whilst raising fears of unfair or immoral political activity. As the riot continued, one poll clerk attempted to escape but: ‘When the people saw me they cried “Save the books from the Blues!”. They then pelted me.’²²¹ Unlike Blandford, where the agent’s notebooks were seen as politically degrading, in Clutton these objects became symbols of purity that needed to be defended. Through these spaces and items, the crowd attempted to protect their political system from corruption, ensuring it remained in an ‘ideal’ state.

Moreover, this riot reveals the lingering importance of patrician-plebeian relationships and their connection with national issues in these rural communities. As the crowd blockaded the poll booths ‘radical’ farmers and landlords also gathered. They personally served the crowd from ‘some barrels of beer’ they had placed on the village green and were praised by the assembled agricultural labourers as ‘kind gentlemen and worthy masters’.²²² Even in 1852, during an election centred around free trade and protectionism, the power of a ‘norm of reciprocity’ remained.²²³ This is not to suggest, however, that national debates were ignored by the rural crowd. Instead, customary protest repertoires were utilised to educate, involve and convince the local population:

two loaves of bread were lifted aloft on pikes, a smaller loaf draped in a blue cloth and a larger loaf draped in yellow... It was announced to the crowd that this election was a determined struggle to see whether Free Trade or Protection

²¹⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 81-3.

²²⁰ *Wells Journal*, 12 August, 14 August 1852.

²²¹ *Wells Journal*, 12 August 1852.

²²² *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette*, 26 July 1852.

²²³ Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23; Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81. See also: Wood, ‘Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class’, pp. 809-12.

should prevail... every time the yellow loaf was raised the mob cheered... they pelted the blue loaf with stones.²²⁴

The symbolism was direct but effective and when violence broke out it was believed to be because of the ‘contrast of the big loaf and little loaf.’²²⁵ On the surface, these loaves were a direct reference to the effects of Conservative and Liberal policies on everyday life. As O’Gorman noted, rituals were effective because they turned onlookers into participants.²²⁶ Throwing stones at the ‘protection’ loaf remade these agricultural labourers into fierce opponents of Tory policy. Yet, these devices and symbols existed within a regional legacy of rural resistance. In 1816 the ‘Bread or Blood’ riots swept across the rural south.²²⁷ As Figure 4 illustrates, the image of a bleeding heart or loaf of bread on a pike was commonly used to threaten local farmers. Although intended to induce them into lowering the price of wheat, it soon gained revolutionary connotations. These loaves thus inflicted a form of ‘disembodied pain’, threatening the assembled protectionists with what might occur if they continue to oppose local demands.²²⁸ Consequently, the adaptability of rural rituals, repertoires and mentalities allowed electoral disturbances to continue long after the Reform Bill. By seizing the Warwick Arms non-voters rejected local spatial practices and national economic policies.

Electoral violence in nineteenth-century Somerset and Dorset should not be dismissed as the work of drunken or ‘inward-facing’ rustics. Between 1820 and 1867 rural people used their ability to physically control local spaces as a weapon in their political endeavours. There was no ‘closing’ of the public political sphere but a continuity that empowered protestors through shared repertoires and a legacy of resistance.²²⁹ By remaking exclusive sites, the crowd were able to control the electoral process. Furthermore, these rural public houses and marketplaces connected ‘peripheral’ communities with the metropolitan ‘centre’. By incorporating national issues into local spaces, protestors were able to assert their political agency and contest governmental policy. During these acts of violence, the patrician-plebeian relationship

²²⁴ *Wells Journal*, 14 August 1852.

²²⁵ *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette*, 26 July 1852.

²²⁶ O’Gorman, ‘The Paine Burnings’, pp. 111-25; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 17-36.

²²⁷ A.J. Peacock, *Bread or Blood: A Study of the Agrarian Riots of East Anglia in 1816* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965); C. Griffin, ‘East Anglian Wheat Country Riots, 1816’ in I. Ness (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Revolution and Protest*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 1040-2.

²²⁸ Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’, pp. 144-53. See also: Griffin, ‘Protest Practice and (Tree) Cultures of Conflict’, pp. 91-108; Griffin, ‘Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life’, pp. 301-16; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 262-4.

²²⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, esp. pp. 80-104; Evans, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 26-30. See also: Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, pp. 58-61; Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism*, pp. 62-4.

remained crucial in influencing how protestors envisioned ‘moral’ political activity. Images of ‘foreign’ corruption seeping into the constitution proved to be a driving force behind these performances.²³⁰ Calls from radicals to cast out malicious influences were taken literally by the unenfranchised crowd in this region who physically exiled those members of the political elite deemed insufficiently paternalistic. In eliminating these threats, the crowd constructed an ideal political world, communicating their visions of an alternate way.

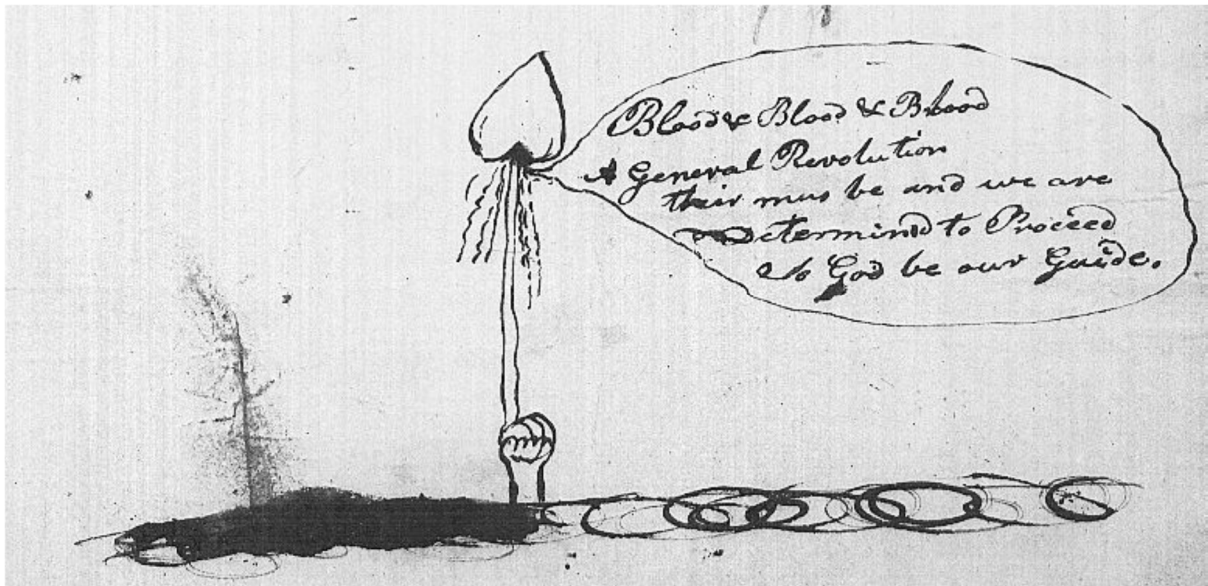


Figure 4: Threatening Letter: ‘Blood and Blood and Blood’.²³¹

Conclusions

In confusing the repertoires of rural protestors with their overall aims, historians have risked parroting the arguments of the nineteenth-century political elite. Although rural protestors were greatly concerned with local issues this did not deter them from engaging with national politics.²³² During rituals such as treating or the canvass, the unenfranchised of Somerset and Dorset debated national issues whilst simultaneously assessing the potential candidates’ adherence to the patrician-plebeian relationship. Crucially, being a ‘true paternalist’ involved

²³⁰ Dinwiddy, ‘Conceptions of Revolution’, pp. 535-61; Fulcher, ‘The English People and their Constitution’, pp. 52-82.

²³¹ This drawing of a heart impaled upon a sword was attached to an anonymous threatening letter in 1816. Text reads: ‘Blood and Blood and Blood, A General Revolution their mus [sic] be and we are determined to proceed as God be our Guide’. Source: ‘Anonymous to J. Bryant, 12 Mary 1816’, Home Office Letters and Papers, NA, HO 42/62, ff. 321-2.

²³² Harvey, ‘Militant Particularism and Global Ambition’, pp. 65-98; Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; Hoppen, ‘Roads to Democracy’, pp. 553-71.

not only acts of local generosity but adherence to certain national political policies, such as reform. The ‘politics of deference’ were thus conditional and during electoral contests voters and non-voters in these counties wished to be treated as equals. Central to this desire was access to key political spaces, such as public houses or the hustings. When any political party attempted to ‘close off’ these sites, violence was utilised by the crowd to regain access. By physically occupying these spaces the crowd publicly confirmed themselves as worthy political subjects whose needs and desires needed to be addressed. Subsequently, for radicals such as Henry Hunt, the spaces and rituals of elections provided a unique opportunity to inculcate their politics amongst the rural population. By inverting spatial practices or presenting himself as the epitome of paternalism, Hunt radicalized agricultural labourers and remade himself a ‘true’ local gentleman.²³³ For any politician in Somerset and Dorset, being seen as a disruptive or corruptive foreigner could irreparably damage an electoral campaign. During rituals such as the hustings, the crowd did not simply grant legitimacy to successful candidates. Rather, through violent performances the unenfranchised influenced the electoral process and could even decide the outcome of a contest. As Featherstone and Griffin have rightly noted, although protests in the nineteenth century were founded upon local repertoires and performances, they were regularly connected to wider material and intellectual networks.²³⁴ Controlling these local spaces and rituals allowed the crowd to continually influence and contest national political policies. Within the locally focused patrician-plebeian relationships of this region were a set of codes that detailed how politicians should behave.

Navickas has argued that for urban radicals ‘the civic body politic represented in microcosm what the national should be’.²³⁵ This chapter has demonstrated that such notions are equally applicable to rural regions and can be extended to many different political spaces. During electoral violence public houses, the hustings and even significant fields were all contested. For rural protestors gaining access to certain political sites was just as important as any speech, banner or song. Their exclusion from these spaces represented the repression of prevailing political institutions and structures. By placing themselves in these spaces, protestors physically and symbolically contested the status quo whilst simultaneously reshaping local political sites to their preferred form. Through the deployment of violent rituals such as

²³³ For further discussion on the concept of ‘gentlemen leaders’ across Britain see: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 251-91; Belchem and Epstein, ‘The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited’, pp. 174-93; Belchem, ‘Henry Hunt and the Evolution of the Mass Platform’, pp. 739-731; Belchem, ‘*Orator*’ Hunt.

²³⁴ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35; Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 478-9.

²³⁵ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, p. 8.

‘skimmington rides’ or the banishing of ‘corrupt’ local figures, the rural crowd demonstrated that the existing state of national politics was no longer morally acceptable.²³⁶ Contrary to the arguments of Hoppen and Vernon popular participation and violence did not rapidly decline following the reform bill.²³⁷ Instead, these rural practices of protest were remarkably malleable and continued to be deployed throughout this period. Consequently, it is crucial that historians avoid forcing diverse rural communities into singular explanatory frameworks. In the following chapter, the infamous case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs will further demonstrate the importance of these local cultures and legacies of resistance. As with rural political protest, the events of 1834 have been subjected to some totalising proclamations.

²³⁶ See further: Baker, ““West Country Scum””, pp. 9-31.

²³⁷ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, esp. pp. 80-104; Hoppen, ‘Roads to Democracy’, pp. 553-71; Hoppen, ‘Grammars of Electoral Violence’, pp. 597-620. See also: Wasserman and Jaggard, ‘Electoral Violence’, pp. 124-55

Chapter 4: Tolpuddle c. 1780-1840: Regrounding the Martyrs

In February 1834, six agricultural labourers from the village of Tolpuddle were arrested on the charge of issuing illegal oaths. Since September 1833 these men had been the leaders of a trade union, the ‘Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers’ (hereafter FSAL). The FSAL had been created in response to falling wages and the failure of local employers to honour concessions promised during the Swing Riots. As George Loveless, the FSAL’s leader, recorded, they had ‘resolved to form a friendly society among the labourers, having sufficiently learnt that it would be vain to seek redress of either employers, magistrates or parsons.’¹ The trial and transportation of the ‘Dorchester Labourers’ under the 1797 Mutiny Act led to national protests that eventually resulted in a pardon being issued in 1837.² For labour historians Tolpuddle has occupied a totemic place in narratives of nineteenth-century trade unionism, becoming mythologized as a unique and self-contained event.³ In turn, this has resulted in rural trade unionism and collective action being considered ‘exceptional’ in 1834. Roger Wells, for example, argued that in the early-nineteenth century rural collective action had collapsed, with labourers switching over to ‘covert’ repertoires such as arson.⁴ Equally, studies of the FSAL have often concluded with the triumphant return of the Martyrs in 1837. Beyond cursory examinations of the 1838 Chartist movement in Dorset, little attention has been paid to the development of agricultural collective action in this region.⁵ The case for Tolpuddle as a ‘unique’ event, consequently, rests upon the assumption that by 1834 rural workers both lacked the repertoires of collective action and had remained isolated from the practices of urban unionism. Conversely, this chapter argues that the Martyrs ‘unique’ nature has been overstated and that the FSAL was founded upon an extensive local legacy of resistance. Through their working, political and religious lives these men were not only predisposed to collective action

¹ G. Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery: A Statement of the Persecutions Experienced by the Dorchester Labourers: With a Report of their Trial, Also a Description of Van Dieman’s Land, And Reflections Upon the System of Transportation*, ed. D. Davie (London, 1838;1846), pp. 12-3.

² The labourers were George and James Loveless, John and Thomas Stanfield, James Hammett and James Brine. For a full summary of these events see: J. Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* (London: Granada, 1971); Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 156-61; A. Norman, *The Story of George Loveless and the Tolpuddle Martyrs* (London: Haligrove, 2008); Ball, *Tolpuddle and Swing*.

³ For these criticisms see: C. Griffiths, ‘Remembering Tolpuddle: Rural History and Commemoration in the Inter-War Labour Movement’, *History Workshop Journal*, 44 (1997), pp. 145-69; Griffiths, ‘From “Dorchester Labourers” to “Tolpuddle Martyrs”’, pp. 59-84.

⁴ Wells, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat’, pp. 29-53; Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside’, pp. 121-214.

⁵ For the exceptions to this see: Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath in Dorset’, pp. 1-23; Scriven, ‘Activism and the Everyday’, pp. 31-84.

but had also accumulated numerous repertoires and discourses to aid their struggle. The events of 1834 were not a ‘rupture’ of existing mentalities and protest practices, nor did resistance suddenly cease following the Martyrs arrest. In the decades that followed, Tolpuddle’s legacy shaped the reception of national political movements in Dorset.

Crucially, this chapter does not contend that the formation of the FSAL was an insignificant event, nor was the formation of a trade union a commonplace occurrence in rural Dorset. Instead, this chapter demonstrates how the everyday lives of rural workers facilitated and encouraged the decision to unionise. Subsequently, this chapter challenges the separation of ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ practices of protest. According to an influential paper by Roger Wells, the increasing proletarianization of the agricultural labourer and the administration of the poor law created conditions whereby ‘overt’ protest was nearly impossible. Deprived of these defensive measures, the rural working poor thus relied on ‘covert’ protest, such as arson or crime. In a response, Charlesworth criticised this model by noting that the rural society Wells described would have rendered protests on the scale of Swing or the 1816 food riots inconceivable. Despite initial interest, the so-called Wells-Charlesworth debate was never productively concluded and rural protest historians have continued to conceptualise ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ protest as two mutually exclusive phenomena.⁶ Moreover, restricting studies of ‘collective action’ to riot or unionism neglects the complexities of everyday resistance.⁷ In times of stress, industrial and agricultural workers could turn to many forms of protests or customary rituals.⁸ This chapter demonstrates how ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ protests were mutually supportive, with many ‘traditional’ rural repertoires providing a foundation for ‘modern’ protests such as unionism. The FSAL did not emerge in 1833 fully formed from the individual brilliance of George Loveless, nor were these agricultural labourers simply being directed by foreign unionist emissaries. Indeed, the FSAL was founded five months before the ‘Grand National Consolidated Trades Union’, an organisation that has been positioned by many older histories

⁶ Wells, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850’, pp. 29-53; A. Charlesworth, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850: A Comment’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1990), pp. 54-64; Wells, ‘Social Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside’, pp. 65-81; Reed, ‘Class and Conflict’, pp. 1-28; J. Archer, ‘The Wells-Charlesworth Debate: A Personal Comment on Arson in Norfolk and Suffolk’, in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1990), pp. 82-9.

⁷ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 29; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; Scott, ‘The Moral Economy as an Argument and as a Fight’, pp. 187-208.

⁸ M. Chase, *Early Trade Unionism: Fraternity Skill and the Politics of Labour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); J. Rule, ‘Industrial Disputes, Wage Bargaining and the Moral Economy’, in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 166-86.

as the true masterminds behind Tolpuddle.⁹ Instead, unionism resulted from local legacies of resistance that continued influencing protests long after the Martyrs had been transported.

More recent examinations have attempted to situate the events of 1834 within wider narratives by detailing the evolution of rural protest repertoires and mentalities. Unfortunately, whilst these studies have placed the Martyrs into national contexts, there has been a tendency to minimise the influence of local customary moralities and beliefs. In Wells' study, the FSAL is depicted as the culmination of a steadily increasing demand for unionism in the countryside, with 'unionist mentalities' being central to rural protests between 1830 and 1834.¹⁰ Similarly, in his study of Swing, Tolpuddle and Dorset Chartism, Scriven contended that although the FSAL was 'a continuation' from Swing, the demand for wages 'as a consequence of his own labour' marked a 'major departure from the tenets of the moral economy' and a 'critical attitude towards landlord paternalism'.¹¹ Both Scriven and Wells, therefore, have located Tolpuddle within a 'modernising' trend, with the decision to form a union and focus solely upon wages signalling a disjuncture with previous resistance. However, whilst George Loveless and his compatriots were certainly sceptical of local paternalism, these arguments risk imposing a singular and totalising framework upon the development of rural collective action. As seen previously, idealised patrician-plebeian relationships and discourses of entitlement were still being utilised by protestors in Somerset and Dorset throughout the mid-nineteenth century, with Swing being far from the 'death throes' of the moral economy.¹² Consequently, this chapter highlights the continuing influence of paternalism and the 'norm of reciprocity' during rural workplace protests. The 'moral economy of the countryside' encompassed notions of a 'fair' wage and this was reflected in the discourses and repertoires of the FSAL.¹³ A widespread belief in the moral right to subsistence, amongst both labourers and authorities, ensured that the union's formation was not a complete break with previous protest practices.¹⁴ Following the arrest and transportation of the Martyrs, these 'older' protest forms continued to be

⁹ W.H. Oliver, 'Tolpuddle Martyrs and Trade Union Oaths', *Labour History*, 10 (1966), pp. 5-12; W. Maitland Walker, 'An Impartial Appreciation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 55 (1933), pp. 47-77.

¹⁰ Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850', pp. 98-142.

¹¹ Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', pp. 1-23; Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 31-84.

¹² Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850', pp. 98-142; Griffin, 'Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?', pp. 459-97.

¹³ Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', pp. 209-71.

¹⁴ For the right to subsistence see: Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations', pp. 272-97; A. Howkins and I. Dyck, "'The Times Alteration': Popular Ballads, Rural Radicalism and William Cobbett', *History Workshop Journal*, 23:1 (1987), pp. 20-38.

deployed to protect the FSAL's gains. These malleable customs, mentalities, and relationships allowed rural workers to repeatedly resist degrading working conditions.

Carl Griffin has offered the most sustained challenge to this 'exceptional' view of Tolpuddle, proposing that a 'pan-industrial culture of combination' existed in the South West that united agricultural labourers and industrial workers long before the events of 1834. These 'deeply entrenched cultures' were founded upon a shared set of repertoires that enabled communication between rural labourers and the various industrial trades present in counties such as Somerset.¹⁵ The 'culture of combination' thus applies Featherstone's model of protest, whereby inherently localised repertoires were connected to wider cultural, social and material networks, to criticise Tolpuddle's 'exceptionalism' and demonstrate the numerous linkages that existed between rural workers and industrial combinations prior to 1834.¹⁶ However, in stressing 'pan-industrial' and 'pan-regional' mentalities Griffin subsumes the rural and industrial working classes into a singular 'culture of combination'. In so doing, the labourers of Somerset and Dorset become almost universally militant and singularly minded.¹⁷ Subsequently, whilst this chapter demonstrates the connections between rural and industrial workers it stresses the importance of local diversity. A mechanistic or totalising interpretation of the 'culture of combination' is rejected in favour of an adaptable set of social relationships, customs and repertoires. Equally, presenting the industrial and working classes of these counties as united against a similarly monolithic elite romanticises these struggles. Beliefs in a reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship and a fair wage were not limited to the working classes, finding proponents from across society.

Furthermore, most studies conclude with the sentencing of the Martyrs in 1834. Only Scriven's examination details later protests in Dorset, leaping ahead four years to the 'Chartist Unionism' of 1838.¹⁸ By overlooking four years of rural development, this analytical jump reinforces Scriven's argument for Tolpuddle as a 'break' in rural protest forms and mentalities. This periodisation also raises questions regarding the 'culture of combination'. If there existed a

¹⁵ Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 443-80.

¹⁶ Featherstone, 'Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms', pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

¹⁷ For work that stresses rural diversity during the nineteenth century see: Reay, *Rural Englands*; Reay, *Microhistories*; Thompson, 'A Breed Apart?', pp. 137-59; Bellamy, Snell and Williamson, 'Rural History', pp. 1-4; Charlesworth, 'An Agenda for Historical Studies of Rural Protest', pp. 231-40; Randall and Newman, 'Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists', pp. 205-27.

¹⁸ Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850', pp. 98-142; Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 443-80; Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', pp. 1-23. Scriven's study is complimented by his unpublished PhD thesis, see: Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 31-84.

pan-industrial set of beliefs and repertoires in Dorset, then the lack of any long-lasting agricultural combination between 1834 and 1872 requires explanation.¹⁹ In the immediate aftermath of the Martyrs arrest, labourers in Dorset continued to organise and agitate. Through strikes, arson and riots, crowds in this county continued to express their discontent and demand a resumption of reciprocal working relationships.²⁰ By studying Tolpuddle's legacy in Dorset this chapter reveals how national protest movements were shaped by local legacies of resistance. The lingering memories of Tolpuddle, and its repression, meant that agricultural labourers persisted in campaigning for 'fair' wages during the 'Chartist Unionism' of 1838. This left little room for the Charter's political reforms and led to a fundamental disconnect between two distinct 'cultures of combination'.²¹ Moreover, in the later-nineteenth century, rural workplace disputes and collective action continued to rely upon a 'norm of reciprocity' rather than the mentalities of unionism. The 'rupture' between the customary attitudes of Swing and the unionism of Tolpuddle was, therefore, neither clean nor universal.

The FSAL was forged from the lived experiences of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and a local legacy of resistance. The following section thus explores how the everyday lives of rural workers provided the repertoires and mentalities that facilitated collective action in 1834. Throughout Dorset, agricultural labourers had become accustomed to negotiating with their employers and establishing temporary combinations, which were regularly underpinned by idealised patrician-plebeian relationships. When Swing came to Tolpuddle in 1830, therefore, it was imbued with both radical politics and the 'norm of reciprocity'.²² The experiences of these protests would shape the FSAL, where demands for 'fair' wages continued to source legitimacy from these customary beliefs. The chapter then examines how industrial and political unions in this region actively inculcated rural labourers into a series of wider networks prior to 1834. Both the trade and political unions of the South West sought to involve agricultural workers in their organisations. Aided by local institutions, rural labourers created a series of connections that allowed them to lay the organisational and intellectual frameworks for their own forms of

¹⁹ For studies of unionism in the 1870s see: J.P.D., Dunbabin, 'The Revolt of the Field: The Agricultural Labourers' Movement in the 1870s', *Past and Present*, 26 (1963), pp. 68-97; J.P.D. Dunbabin, 'The Incidence of Organisation of Agricultural Trades Unionism in the 1870s', *Agricultural History Review*, 5 (1968), pp. 114-41.

²⁰ For a similar analysis of the aftermath of Swing see: Griffin, 'Swing, Swing Redivivus, or Something After Swing?', pp. 459-97.

²¹ For more on the Chartist activity in the region see: Wells, 'Southern Chartism', pp. 37-59; Brown, *Chartism: Localities, Spaces and Places*; M. Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 31-7.

²² Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, 'Hegemony and the Peasantry', pp. 270-81; Pocock, 'The Classical Theory of Deference', pp. 516-23.

unionism.²³ The chapter then concludes with an assessment of the ‘afterlife’ of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Following the trial and transportation of these men, the continued use of repertoires such as arson or mass riot reveals the interconnected nature of ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ resistance. Equally, the response to an attempted Chartist revival of the FSAL in 1838 highlights how local legacies of resistance influenced the reception of national movements. For these communities, the arrest, trial and transportation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs was part of a long chain of resistance that stretched back centuries.

Established Repertoires: Rural Collective Action and Everyday Life

It bears repeating that the case for rural isolation is largely mythological. Due to the necessity of seasonal work, farm labourers frequently travelled across the country.²⁴ Shared experiences of collective action thus transcended the boundaries of the parish. Tolpuddle, in particular, was perfectly placed to take advantage of this interchange of people and ideas. The village was located near the Dorchester-Salisbury highway, a major road that provided a direct route from Cornwall to London. Stagecoaches and mail coaches operated daily, allowing national news to be rapidly conveyed.²⁵ However, for agricultural labourers these roads also facilitated the spread of rumour, gossip and information. Every village in this area was connected through the jobbers and carters who plied their trades on these roads. Their importance was confirmed in 1830 when Dorsetshire magistrates demanded that Home Office work to subdue the ‘exaggerated accounts and rumours spread by coachmen, postboys and carriers.’²⁶ As Featherstone acknowledged, resistance was communicated through individuals whose occupations granted them mobility.²⁷ Consequently, in 1833 these men allowed the FSAL to spread rapidly. In December, a carter name Elsworth from Hazelbury Bryan was caught carrying a letter that informed local labours that there was ‘a possibility of getting a just remuneration for your labour without any violation of the law’.²⁸ By January 1834 nightly

²³ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

²⁴ Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, pp. 127-8; Goose, ‘Cottage Industry, Migration and Marriage’, pp. 798-819. For these arguments see: Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England*, p. 75.

²⁵ Leigh’s *New Pocket Road-Book of England and Wales, Containing an Account of all Direct and Cross-Roads: Together with a Description of Every Remarkable Place* (London, 1837), pp. 456-61; A. Bates, *Directory of Stage Coach Services, 1836* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1969).

²⁶ ‘George Ledgard, Poole, to Lord Melbourne, 28 November 1830’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/7 ff. 304-5.

²⁷ Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

²⁸ ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 2 March 1834’, Ilchester Correspondence 1834 Letters File, *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242a.

meetings were being held in Tolpuddle, Bere Regis, Mappowder and Hazelbury Bryan, with the latter two villages located ten miles away from the former.²⁹ Through their working lives, rural labourers thus had access to an efficient, and largely confidential, communication network. This allowed for the rapid dispersion of news and facilitated rural-led combinations. In this instance, rural life was not an impediment to organised resistance.

In their studies of rural unionism, historians have generally overlooked the specific customary culture and geographies of Tolpuddle. In this village an established culture of communal negotiation had been established by the late-eighteenth century, allowing workers to gain experience negotiating for a 'fair' wage.³⁰ During harvests, farmworkers across the country typically drew up a series of special contracts with employers that outlined a number of conditions, such as a higher rate of wages or acceptable working hours. The labourers' demands were handled by a handful of delegates, known as 'Captains'.³¹ However, for agricultural labourers in Tolpuddle, the physicality of local landscapes ensured that this commonplace arrangement became an opportunity to negotiate for the entire community. According to the local vicar, Dr Bernard Hodges, by 1780 Tolpuddle consisted of 'numerous smaller farms' each employing 'a small number of labourers'. In 1781 it was decided that each year there would be a 'village meeting' where a delegation of labourers and the local farmers would agree to the entire parishes' wages. Hodges mediated these harvest meetings between 1784 and 1806, commenting that the labourers often demanded a 'fair wage, equal to their fellows in the neighbouring villages'.³² The physical nature of Tolpuddle thus enabled local labourers to gain experience negotiating as a collective entity, with the community having to come together to decide the harvest wages. In 1795 there had been an emergency meeting, following the same rules, regarding the 'low wages' of the labourers during a period of high wheat prices. At this meeting, it was agreed that their employers were 'obliged to support them' and 'protect the

²⁹ 'James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 30 January 1834' in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), p. 172; 'James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 2 March 1834', Ilchester Correspondence 1834 Letters File, *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242a.

³⁰ Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 454-6; P. Horn, *Life and Labour in Rural England, 1760-1850* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987) pp. 74-5. For the effects of rural working lives on identity see also: Bushaway, "'Things Said or Sung a Thousand Times'", pp. 256-77.

³¹ E.J.T. Collins, 'Migrant Labour in British Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 29 (1976), pp. 38-59.

³² 'Notes of Dr Bernard Hodges, Vicar of Tolpuddle 1775-1805, Concerning Running the Living', Tolpuddle Parish Ephemera, *DHC*, PE-TOL/IN/3/1, ff. 18-25; 'Notes of Bernard Hodges Concerning the Vicarage of Tolpuddle with a Survey, 1784-1806', Tolpuddle Parish Ephemera, *DHC*, PE-TOL/IN/3/2, ff. 5-7.

poor.’³³ In these meetings, the labourer’s wages were directly connected to notions of fairness and paternal duty. In 1832, George Loveless was similarly selected as the ‘one nominated to appear’ when local labourers ‘made application to a neighbouring magistrate’ for assistance when their wages began decreasing.³⁴ Applying to a magistrate for aid was founded upon an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship and was a common practice during both agricultural and industrial strike action throughout this period.³⁵ Contrary to Scriven’s arguments, the genesis of the FSAL was not a rupture with previous mentalities.³⁶ Although Loveless declared that ‘the labouring classes must do it themselves, or it will for ever be left undone’, the fact that their initial response was an appeal to the magistrates reveals an existing foundation of repertoires and mentalities.³⁷ The local paternalists had failed to uphold their duty and thus popular collective action was legitimised.

Furthermore, outside of harvest negotiations farm labourers could still protest the terms of their employment. Arguably, the most popular way to challenge employers in rural Dorset was through renegeing on contracts and leaving service during periods of peak labour demands. As with industrial strikes, the timing of this aggressive and proactive individual action was designed to pressure employers into negotiating new terms.³⁸ In 1825, for example, Elizabeth Courage and Elizabeth Rose walked out on their employer after he refused their request for a pay rise. Unsurprisingly, this left him ‘in a considerable amount of distress’ with ‘a great deal of work to be done.’³⁹ These seemingly minor actions thus reveal that rural combination and workplace protest were not merely defensive actions. By ‘leaving service’ agricultural labourers could make demands of their employer. These protests, consequently, were punished quite harshly by magistrates with months of hard labour not being uncommon.⁴⁰ In Dorset, no

³³ ‘Letter of 14 July 1795’, in ‘The Letters of George Boswell, 1787-1805’, in J.F. James and J.H. Bettey (eds.), *Farming in Dorset: The Diary of James Warne, 1758, and the Letters of George Boswell, 1787-1805* (Dorchester: Dorset Record Society, 1993), pp. 156-7.

³⁴ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, pp. 12-3.

³⁵ D. Hay, ‘Patronage, Paternalism and Welfare: Masters, Workers and Magistrates in Eighteenth-Century England’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 53 (1998), pp. 27-47; M. Milne, ‘Strikes and Strike-Breaking in North-East England, 1815-1844: The Attitude of the Local Press’, *International Review of Social History*, 22:2 (1977), pp. 226-40.

³⁶ Scriven, ‘The Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath’, pp. 1-23; Scriven, ‘Activism and the Everyday’, pp. 31-84.

³⁷ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 50.

³⁸ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 454-5; J.R. Clynes, ‘Melbourne Fears the Unions’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), p. 164.

³⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 30 June 1825.

⁴⁰ See, for example: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 30 June 1825; 24 August 1826; 1 September 1831. For ‘offensive’ and ‘defensive’ strikes see: Rule, ‘Industrial Disputes, Wage Bargaining and the Moral Economy’, pp. 166-86.

magistrate was more active in securing prosecutions for ‘leaving service’ than James Frampton. His first case, in March 1803, involved committing six labourers of Milton Abbas to between one and two months imprisonment for ‘leaving off work before an agreement had expired and combining with others to increase wages.’⁴¹ Prior to arresting the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Frampton was involved in more cases for ‘leaving service’ than any other Dorset magistrate.⁴² It is clearly evident, therefore, that an assertive protest culture was already present in Dorset prior to 1834. The formation of the FSAL was an attempt to solidify these disparate workplace protests and communal negotiations into a centralised organisation.⁴³ Throughout the early-nineteenth century strikes and temporary combinations had co-existed with customary beliefs in reciprocity and paternalism. In early 1833, for example, farm labourers in Sturminster Newton engaged in strike action demanding an increase of around ‘2s 6d per week’. The men initially attempted to send a delegation to negotiate with their employers, but this was refused. The local magistrate and priest, Henry Farr Yeatman was then called on to mediate, although he:

made them no promise... taking at the same time the precaution of driving into the town, and telling the whole number of fifty men, who had all struck work from various places and were assembled at the Crown Inn, that by taking the law into their own hands, and by combining as they had done for an unlawful purpose... which all of them had done on that day, they endangered our protection on those accounts.⁴⁴

This strike highlights how Tolpuddle was only one part of a wider pattern of rural combination. As Rule noted, unionist ideology did not require the presence of an organised institution.⁴⁵ The scale of the strike at Sturminster similarly demonstrates how collective action could occur in rural communities without official institutions. In a single day, fifty men from various farms had struck work and assembled at the inn. Either arrangements had already been made or a disagreement on one farm had been rapidly communicated to the others, leading to a collective demonstration of solidarity. However, despite the sophistication of this combination the crowd still committed themselves to upholding idealised patrician-plebeian relationships. Calling on

⁴¹ ‘Dorset Criminal Process Register, 1782-1808’, *DHC*, NG-PR1/D1/1/1, p. 147.

⁴² ‘Dorset Criminal Process Register, 1809-1820’, *DHC*, NG-PR1/D1/1/2; ‘Dorset Criminal Process Register, 1820-1825’, *DHC*, NG-PR1/D1/1/3; ‘Dorset Criminal Process Register, 1826-1828’, *DHC*, NG-PR1/D1/1/4.

⁴³ This was also the case for industrial unionism across the period see: R. Sykes, ‘Early Chartism and Trade Unionism in South-East Lancashire’, in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London, Macmillan, 1982), pp. 152-94.

⁴⁴ Yeatman, *A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden*, pp. 51-2.

⁴⁵ J. Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 256-8.

the magistrate for ‘protection’, once again, reinforced their supposed role as the arbiters of a ‘fair’ wage.⁴⁶ Yet, this was not a role that local authorities despised. Earlier in 1833, a fellow Dorsetshire magistrate had argued in a public letter regarding the Poor Law that:

I ought to act as the guardian of my own poor; and that if I should neglect any opportunity which the Lord may place within my reach... I shall be guilty of deserting a plain duty.⁴⁷

Across Dorset, a ‘norm of reciprocity’ centred around ‘fair’ wages was promoted by both the striking labourers and mediating magistrates.⁴⁸ Despite the arguments of Wells, the repertoires of combination and unionism were not inherently opposed to these customary mentalities. Although communities such as Tolpuddle and Sturminster witnessed hostility between labourers and employers in the early-1830s, neither side abandoned the patrician-plebeian relationship entirely. In these villages, collective action remained associated with these traditional forms of negotiation.

Additionally, by the early-nineteenth century ‘traditional’ forms of collective action, such as food rioting, had also incorporated demands for ‘fair’ wages and political equality. Whilst some have supposed that food rioting subsided after 1801, in rural Somerset and Dorset these protests continued sporadically throughout the nineteenth century, becoming increasingly sophisticated.⁴⁹ By 1816 these protests were often associated with complaints about the stagnation of trade, lack of employment and low wages. In Bridport, for example, ‘upwards of 2000’ were involved in a bread riot which argued that the high price of bread ‘added to their want of employ.’⁵⁰ Similarly, in Frome a crowd attempted to burn down a woollen mill ‘on account of an advance in the price of potatoes.’ It was believed that ‘the present distress could be relieved if Master Sheppard raises his wages.’ The *Bath Chronicle* noted that the ‘mob’ was comprised of factory workers ‘and labourers from the nearby villages’, indicating cross-occupational allegiance.⁵¹ Consequently, by the early-nineteenth century the demands presented by food rioters across Somerset and Dorset were not limited to calls for lower grain

⁴⁶ Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Hay, ‘Patronage, Paternalism and Welfare’, pp. 27-47.

⁴⁷ H. Walter, *Letter to Rev. H.F. Yeatman, Acting Magistrate for Somerset and Dorset* (London, 1833), pp. 44-5. For Yeatman’s own paternalist stance see Chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 229-31.

⁴⁹ Wells, ‘The Revolt of the South West’, pp. 713-44; Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions*, pp. 245-61. For the involvement of agricultural labourers in food riots see: R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1802* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1988), pp. 161-8; Wells, ‘Counting Riots’, pp. 68-72.

⁵⁰ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 18 May 1816; *Taunton Courier*, 30 May 1816.

⁵¹ *Bath Chronicle*, 4 July 1816.

prices and complimentary beer. These protest repertoires were malleable and could incorporate many different concerns. Across South Somerset, food rioting took on a distinctly revolutionary tone. Farmers across the region received anonymous demands for increased wages accompanied by proclamations that ‘a General Revolution there must be’.⁵² Meanwhile in Chard riots occurred ‘to prevent the transport of grain’ to neighbouring villages:

They were armed with long, heavy sticks, the ends of which, to the extent of several inches, were studded with short iron spikes... Their flag was inscribed ‘Bread or Blood!’ and they threatened to march to London and Parliament.⁵³

Subsequently, nineteenth-century food riots were not solely focused on bread prices. Instead, these occasions allowed rural workers to voice their concerns regarding any number of labour and political ‘injustices’. In Chard, Bridport and Frome, food riots reinforced a habit of collective action in response to external threats to existing notions of independence and fairness.⁵⁴ Crucially, there was no singular culture of combination, as witnessed when rioters attempted to prevent other communities from taking their grain.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in many communities across Somerset and Dorset customary protests had already laid the foundations for the adoption of unionism in 1834. It is evident that the language of political radicals and trade unions had already influenced rural discourses of entitlement.

Moreover, the spread of unionism throughout Somerset and Dorset was aided by local experiences with ‘illegal’ forms of organisation. Through ‘covert’ groupings, such as criminal gangs, agricultural labourers gained invaluable experience in organisation, communication and secrecy.⁵⁶ In Dinder, for example, Lady Jane Somerville was the target of a ‘poaching, thieving gang’ in 1815 after she refused to sign a local petition ‘against the Corn Bill and the Game Laws’.⁵⁷ The ‘wretched gang’ formed the core of a combination that encompassed the entire village and ensured Somerville could not ‘trust my own labourers to watch by night as they are all in a gang’. In March 1815 a crowd of labourers ‘led by the poachers’ pulled down a stable

⁵² ‘Anonymous Letter to J. Bryant, 12 May 1816’, Letters and Papers, Supplementary, NA, HO 42/150, f. 321-2. See Figure 4 in the previous chapter for an image.

⁵³ *Taunton Courier*, 23 May 1816.

⁵⁴ Randall, *Before the Luddites*, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Snell, ‘Culture of Local Xenophobia’, pp. 1-30; A. Booth, ‘Food Riots in the North-West of England, 1790-1801’, *Past and Present*, 77 (1977), pp. 84-107.

⁵⁶ Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 131-2; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, pp. 44-62; R. Wells, ‘Popular Protest and Social Crime: The Evidence of Criminal Gangs in Rural Southern England, 1790-1860’, *Southern History*, 13 (1991), pp. 32-81; J. Rule, ‘Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Southern History*, 1 (1979), pp. 135-53.

⁵⁷ ‘Jane Somerville to James Somerville Fownes, 9 March 1815’, Correspondence of James Somerville Fownes, SHC, DD\SVL/3/3/21.

and a cattle house belonging to Somerville, before demanding that she sign the petition.⁵⁸ Lady Somerville again refused and by August 1815 the gang had expanded its operations to neighbouring villages. Supposedly, ‘emissaries of the poachers’ had been spotted conversing with labourers in Croscombe, Chilcote and Woodbury. Alongside support for their petition, the ‘large gangs’ who patrolled the area demanded ‘beer, victuals and money’ from local farmers as well as ‘promises to lower the price of wheat’.⁵⁹ Eventually, a group of farmers agreed to subsidise wheat prices and the ‘labourer gangs’ finally dispersed, despite poaching continuing on the estate.⁶⁰ The repertoires and mentalities expressed through this criminal organisation thus pre-empt those deployed in Tolpuddle. In Dinder, a combination of rural labourers banded together to ameliorate economic issues, represented by the Corn Bill. Although there was no formal organisation initially, one slowly coalesced in a manner similar to early industrial unions.⁶¹ The emissaries convincing neighbouring parishes to join were similar to those who spread the message of the FSAL.⁶² Indeed, the two men who informed on the Martyrs, Legg and Locke, confirmed that they had initially learnt of the FSAL through local gossip.⁶³ Equally, reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships were again reinforced when the crowd demanded ‘beer and victuals’, with the surrendering of these items becoming a public performance of ‘ethical’ paternalism.⁶⁴ Consequently, even ‘covert’ criminal activity could provide the skills and mentalities needed to adopt ‘overt’ protest forms.⁶⁵ Through these organised poaching gangs, communities in this region were already gaining vital organisational experience. The FSAL would not have been an innovation for most labourers in Somerset and Dorset.

Swing is remarkable not solely because of abstract ‘unionist mentalities’ but because the riots encapsulated local demands for reciprocity and fairness.⁶⁶ Across Somerset and Dorset, agricultural labourers engaged in wage strikes, rick burnings and other collective actions,

⁵⁸ ‘Jane Somerville to James Somerville Fownes, 22 March 1815’, Correspondence of James Somerville Fownes, *SHC*, DD\SVL/3/3/21.

⁵⁹ ‘Jane Somerville to James Somerville Fownes, 17 August 1815’, Correspondence of James Somerville Fownes, *SHC*, DD\SVL/3/3/21.

⁶⁰ ‘Jane Somerville to James Somerville Fownes, 24 November 1815’, Correspondence of James Somerville Fownes, *SHC*, DD\SVL/3/3/21.

⁶¹ Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, p. 198; C.R. Dobson, *Masters and Journeymen: A Prehistory of Industrial Relations, 1717-1800* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 29-37; K. Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism, c. 1770-1990* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), pp. 12-32.

⁶² James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 2 March 1834’, Ilchester Correspondence 1834 Letters File, *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242a.

⁶³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 March 1834.

⁶⁴ Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91; Randall and Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27.

⁶⁵ Poole, ‘Forty Years of Rural History from Below’, pp. 1-20; Poole, ‘“A Lasting and Salutory Warning”’, pp. 163-77.

⁶⁶ Wells, ‘Tolpuddle’, p. 118; Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 463-4.

informed by a local legacy of resistance. This unrest united industrial and rural populations through a common language of paternal duty and betrayal. In Shepton Mallet, for example, a woollen manufacturer received an anonymous letter warning him that '[a]s Swing is travelling on his [way] through England, he must necessarily [sic] soon be here, look to your duties'.⁶⁷ The emphasis on 'duties' needing to be performed before Swing arrives reinforces Jones' argument that Swing was an attempt to force local elites to publicly perform their customary relationships, thus 'reuniting' the community.⁶⁸ Even in Somerset, where the Swing risings were relatively minor, magistrates and farmers understood the power of these public performances. In Cossington, the farmers and constables 'paraded the town with short clubs' before arriving in the centre of the village and providing the poor 'with a good meal and promises of higher wages'.⁶⁹ In one ceremony, local authorities had demonstrated the two sides of rural authority. Promises of reciprocity were buttressed by threats of repression and physical violence. In this region, Swing was a key part of the legacy of collective action and encompassed a number of local demands for an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship.

The formation of the FSAL in 1833 was not a sudden innovation but a clear continuation of the repertoires and mentalities performed during Swing. Whilst Scriven has argued that unionism broke from previous traditions due to its disregard for the moral economy and a focus on wages alone; the adaptive nature of Swing meant that, in many Dorset villages, wages were of primary importance.⁷⁰ In the region surrounding Tolpuddle, Swing's mobilisation began on 25 November 1830 with a pan-parish strike. Labourers in Bere Regis, Winterbourne Kingston and Tolpuddle struck work almost simultaneously and 'refused to work' until they were granted a pay rise.⁷¹ Similarly, at Abbotsbury '20 or 30 men and boys' put down their tools until their wages were increased.⁷² In the nearby village of Winfrith strikes turned violent following the intervention of James Frampton. Here the crowd, wearing their church clothes, 'advanced

⁶⁷ 'Magistrates of Shepton Mallet to Lord Melbourne, 24 November 1830', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/9 f. 630; Jones, 'Finding Captain Swing', pp. 429-58. See also: K. Navickas, 'Captain Swing in the North: The Carlisle Riots of 1830', *History Workshop Journal*, 71:1 (2011), pp. 5-28.

⁶⁸ Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations', pp. 272-91. For Swing in Somerset see: Wallis, "'We do not come here... to inquire into grievances; we come here to decide law'", pp. 159-75.

⁶⁹ 'Farm Account and Memorandum Book of Hugh Boone, Cossington', SHC, DD\S\DA/1.

⁷⁰ Scriven, 'Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', pp. 7-8. For the importance of Swings local forms see: Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations', pp. 272-91; Griffin, *Rural War*, pp. 171-81.

⁷¹ 'W. Castleman to J. Sanderson, 25 November 1830', Paget Estate Correspondence, D-ANG/B/5/42; 'J. Harken, Wimborne, to Lord Melbourne, 25 November 1830', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/7, ff. 278-9; 'James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 25 November 1830', Ilchester Correspondence Rural Disorders File, DHC, D/FSI/Box 242a.

⁷² 'Unknown to the Earl of Ilchester, 29 November 1830' Ilchester Correspondence Rural Disorders File, DHC, D/FSI/Box 242a.

rather respectfully, and with their hats in their hands, to demand an increase in wages'. Frampton ordered them to leave and seized one of the ringleaders, leading to a fistfight and the crowd being forcibly dispersed.⁷³ In these Swing protests there is clear evidence for complex organisation and a belief in the primacy of wages. The simultaneous striking in Bere Regis, Winterbourne Kingston and Tolpuddle indicates the presence of established communication networks and organisational abilities. Swing was not merely a violent or 'carnavalesque' series of protests that focused on threatening farmers for bread and beer. Instead, rural labourers addressed a multitude of issues, shaped by the unique necessities of each community. In Tolpuddle, Swing focused on wages and the immoral behaviour of local farmers. An anonymous letter, sent to 'the labouring inhabitants of Tolpuddle', read:

Whereas the Deputy for National Civil Liberty have learnt that letters of an inflammatory and destructive nature have been picked up in your streets in consequence of extortion, oppression and depreciating men's labour. Do here advise that no hasty attempts be made. First, let one and all apply to their masters or employers to advance their wages and in consequence of a refusal help shall be obtained from the loyal and obedient subjects of W.B.R. on this rock.⁷⁴

This address demonstrates Swing's capacity to adopt qualities similar to radical or unionist repertoires. Although the hints at a larger organisation were likely sensationalist, the focus on 'extortion' and 'oppression' place this letter alongside contemporary trade union discourse. The seeds for careful combination are also present, with the warnings against 'hasty attempts' ruling out violent protest. Nevertheless, calling on workers to 'apply to their masters' maintains some level of paternalist thought. For the men and women of Tolpuddle, therefore, the repertoires and mentalities of the FSAL and trade unionism did not suddenly replace 'backwards' demands for bread and beer. Throughout the early-nineteenth century, these mentalities had been a key part of rural protest and working lives.

Indeed, similar demands for reciprocity and fairness can be seen in the decision to form the FSAL. Despite their later denials, both George and James Loveless were believed to have been a part of Tolpuddle's Swing protests.⁷⁵ George, supposedly, threatened strike breakers

⁷³ M. Frampton, *The Journal of Mary Frampton, from the Year 1779 until the Year 1846: Including Various Interesting and Curious Letters, Anecdotes Relating to Events Which Occurred During that Period*, ed. H.G. Mundy (London, 1885), pp. 361-2; 'Account of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry from 1830 to 1845 by James Frampton', *DHC*, D-FRA/X/4, ff. 4-5.

⁷⁴ James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 25 November 1830', Ilchester Correspondence Rural Disorders File, *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242a.

⁷⁵ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 20

declaring that any man who returned to work before wages were increased would ‘have his head cracked’, whilst James attempted ‘to persuade the men to go and join the mob which had assembled at Piddletown.’⁷⁶ Whilst these accusations are potentially fabrications by hostile authorities, their involvement in these strikes would have laid the foundations for later unionisation. Additionally, demands for wage increases during Swing were sourced from a desire to reunite the community, rather than a binary conflict between rich and poor. At Swing meetings, such as the one in Winfrith, local labourers attempted to bargain with their masters, claiming that they would campaign for some ‘arrangement about a reduction in rents’ if they were given a wage increase.⁷⁷ This encapsulated the ‘norm of reciprocity’ where the loyalty of the plebeians was offered if local patricians agreed to uphold their paternalist duties.⁷⁸ Such mentalities fed directly into the FSAL, as George Loveless explained following his arrest:

our object was not to ruin the master, but that, for a long time, we had been looking for the head to begin, and relieve the various members down to the feet: but finding it was of no avail, we were thinking of making application to our masters, and for them to make application to their masters, and so up to the head.⁷⁹

The FSAL’s goals would have been immediately recognisable to those involved with the Swing protests or earlier subsistence protest. Such objectives reflected common demands for a return to ‘harmonious’ patrician-plebeian relationships and the reinforcement of ‘vertical’ solidarities within rural communities. Both Swing and the FSAL represented calculated demands for the restoration of economic and social equilibrium.⁸⁰ Thus, the argument that the formation of the FSAL constituted a definitive ‘departure’ from previous mentalities is not entirely accurate.

For George Loveless, the FSAL was created in response to the collapse of the concessions negotiated during Swing. As Loveless recalled:

⁷⁶ ‘James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 5 March 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), p. 183.

⁷⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 2 December 1830.

⁷⁸ Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81; Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23.

⁷⁹ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 15.

⁸⁰ Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, 235-7. For the argument that these relationships had collapsed by this period see: Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 233-54.

in vain we remonstrated that an agreement was made, and the minister of the parish (Mr Warren) was witness between the masters and the men; for this hirling parson... so as soon as reference was made to him, denied having a knowledge of any such thing.⁸¹

Certainly, the patrician-plebeian relationships of this community had failed, but to claim that unionisation was a rejection of customary repertoires and mentalities would be an overstatement.⁸² Through their daily working lives and customary practices of protest, the agricultural labourers of Dorset were able to protest and reshape labour conditions. Tolpuddle, in particular, had nurtured an active culture of organisation that was able to effectively and aggressively negotiate for higher pay. During these debates and struggles, wages were envisioned as an integral part of 'fair' and equitable social relationships. The rapid spread of the FSAL in 1834, therefore, can be attributed to these local repertoires and legacies of resistance. Through their everyday experiences and acts of resistance, the agricultural labourers of Dorset had gained a powerful series of assertive protest repertoires.

Established Networks: Trade Unions, Political Unions and the Rural Worker

West Country manufacturing trades had shown signs of unionism since at least the 1720s. During the first half of the eighteenth century, excepting London, the counties of Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire were the most unionised in England.⁸³ Thus, the organised trades in this region were well placed to combine and could draw upon extensive networks of local and national contacts. This section examines the influence of urban trade unions and combinations on the development of rural mentalities and repertoires. In addition, it expands the examination of unionism to also include the political unions of Somerset and Dorset, which were formed during the Reform Crisis. In this manner, it utilises Featherstone's model of protest networks to demonstrate how locally focused organisations, such as the FSAL, were empowered by wider social, political and economic connections.⁸⁴ In these counties, the interconnected nature of rural and urban workers was facilitated by local geographies and economies. Somerset's

⁸¹ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 13

⁸² Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850', pp. 98-142. Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', pp. 1-23; Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 31-84.

⁸³ Rule, *The Labouring Classes*, pp. 257-8; Dobson, *Masters and Journeymen*, pp. 154-70. See also: Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*, p. 58.

⁸⁴ Featherstone, 'Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms', pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

woollen mills, for instance, were almost always located in rural or semi-rural areas. There was no singular urban region that incorporated the majority of the counties' industry and towns such as Chard, which was located forty miles outside the main clothing area, were not uncommon.⁸⁵ Consequently, agricultural labourers regularly lived alongside unionised factory workers. This is neatly demonstrated in Tolpuddle through the pivotal role of John Loveless, 'a Flax Dresser' who 'supplied George Loveless with the Rules and with every information relating to the Society' that he was a member of in the village of Burton Bradstock.⁸⁶ There was no neat divide between urban and rural populations in this region and different occupations co-operated during industrial disputes.

Whilst Somerset's woollen industry was the largest unionised force in this region, before the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824 numerous trades engaged in strike action and combination.⁸⁷ Many of these were located in the rural areas of Somerset and Dorset, such as the paper industry. In 1816, for example, papermakers in Cheddar struck work as part of a national 'combination club of journeymen of the trade.' Due to a sophisticated support network, including 'donations from local farmhands', the strikers managed to hold out for four months 'living in a state of insubordination and idleness.' By April the courts were forced to intervene after three men threw the paper manufacturer's foreman into 'a vat of heated water, used in the process of the manufactory.'⁸⁸ Despite the men being sentenced to six months solitary confinement, some members remained away from work and publicly vowed revenge.⁸⁹ Similarly, in Dorset three journeymen millwrights from Beaminster were convicted in 1821 for 'entering into a combination to alter the hours of working.' Through maintaining and repairing mills these men had become integral to rural everyday life and the efficient operation of local household economies. Subsequently, when constables attempted to make the arrest, the millwrights were momentarily freed 'by the concerted efforts of the local poor.'⁹⁰ Even when combinations were being actively suppressed rural labourers had opportunities to both witness and engage with workplace disputes, with occupational groups such as miners constantly

⁸⁵ Rogers, *Wiltshire and Somerset Woollen Mills*, pp. 70-257; Rogers, *Warp and Weft*, p. 74.

⁸⁶ 'James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 29 March 1834', in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), pp. 181-2.

⁸⁷ For examinations of combination within the Somerset woollen trade during this period see: Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 455-7; Rogers, *Warp and Weft*, pp. 100-20.

⁸⁸ *Bath Chronicle*, 2 May 1816.

⁸⁹ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 13 April 1816.

⁹⁰ 'Examinations and Depositions, Certificate Signed by Evan Nepean, J.P., Regarding Conviction of Jacob Apsey, Thomas Saxey and George Burbridge', Quarter Session Rolls: Midsummer 1821, *DHC*.

protesting in rural spaces and communities. In 1817 the colliers of Paulton refused to work ‘in consequence of an arrangement made by their masters amounting to a reduction of one-tenth of their wages.’ Joined by miners from neighbouring towns, these strikers marched across the countryside to gather at Clandown, where they were finally dispersed by a military force.⁹¹ Consequently, the miners, papermakers and millwrights of Somerset and Dorset consistently used rural spaces and enjoyed local support during their protests. Their presence was both instructive and inspiring to the local agricultural population.

However, it was the repeal of the Combination Acts that not only remade unionism in this region but also facilitated the transition of rural labourers from observers to participants. Unlike elsewhere, the West Country did not witness an immediate upswing in union activity following repeal. It was not until 1825 that combinations began forming in earnest.⁹² In Chard, the ‘lace operatives’ formed a union and struck for wages in 1828.⁹³ Despite the strike being broken within a few months, the organisation continued and began to recruit agricultural labourers from the surrounding villages. In December 1833, whilst the FSAL was active in Tolpuddle, magistrates seized ‘Mr Cross, landlord of the Ball Inn’ after ‘information had been given to them that an unlawful assembly of persons, called the Trades’ Union, was nightly held at his house.’ Reportedly, the union meetings were attended by ‘lace operatives’ and a ‘number of labourers engaged in farm work’. This was serious enough for local farmers to announce that they had ‘resolved to discharge every man who may join this Union.’⁹⁴ As noted previously, Chard was a rural parish and so involving agricultural labourers helped the lace operatives grow their organisation. The power of a union resided in its ability to mobilise a large number of people to support industrial action, financially or socially. For communities such as Chard, where the agricultural population far outstripped industrial workers, trade unions needed to appeal to farm labourers.⁹⁵ In these combinations, a series of networks were thus forged between rural and industrial populations in Somerset and Dorset.

In the formative years following repeal, trade unions were not merely vessels for a militant working class. The demographic makeup of these combinations was flexible and designed to encourage participation from across social stratum. Equally, the trade unions of the 1820s and

⁹¹ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 10 March 1817; *Taunton Courier*, 6 March 1817.

⁹² For a comprehensive list of strike action immediately following the repeal see: Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 457-8; Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*, p. 88; Wells, ‘Tolpuddle’, p. 118.

⁹³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 26 June 1828.

⁹⁴ *Sherborne Mercury*, 23 December 1833.

⁹⁵ Rogers, *Warp and Weft*, p. 74.

1830s were not confined by administrative boundaries, especially in regions such as the South West where the majority of manufacturing occurred in the borderlands between counties.⁹⁶ In 1829, for example, a union of ‘weavers and associated trades’ had begun in Wiltshire but had managed to establish a presence in Frome and Taunton. Although the union acted in ‘total secrecy’, magistrates believed that ‘all the artisans, labourers and the different classes [are] falling as fast as possible into the same association.’⁹⁷ A later report confirmed that in lodges stretching from Bradford-upon-Avon in Wiltshire to Frome in Somerset, ‘lawyers, surgeons and apothecaries belong to them and agricultural servants.’⁹⁸ Although local magistrates and factory owners may have been prone to panic, their letters to the Home Office suggest that the lure of unionism was not limited to the manufacturing trades. In these lodges, agricultural labourers were able to participate in the rituals of unionism alongside industrial workers and middle-class professionals. It was believed that ‘their designs and proceedings are concealed by an oath, or engagement of secrecy, in administering which I believe the Holy Scripture are used.’⁹⁹ Throughout this period the agricultural population were inculcated into the ceremonies and practices of unionism via these cross-occupational organisations. Secret oaths and scripture were key elements of the FSAL, eventually leading to the Martyrs’ prosecution.¹⁰⁰ Yet it would be misleading to suggest that this culture of combination was inherently ‘working class’, the union in Wiltshire and Somerset contained a range of occupations due to a desire to involve as many people as possible. Thus, Tolpuddle was not an exceptional individual moment but a continuation of a general push for permanent organisations that had begun following the repeal of the Combination Acts.

By 1833 there was a clear and concerted effort to spread unionism across the South West. In this febrile atmosphere, unions in Dorsetshire utilised rituals and communal connections to directly involve agricultural labourers. The formation of the FSAL was thus influenced by a developing series of networks between local trades in the immediate area surrounding Tolpuddle. After George Loveless’ arrest in 1834, a copy of a leaflet promoting trade unions was found in his possession entitled ‘To the Flax and Hemp Trade of Great Britain’. This

⁹⁶ Jackson, ‘Population Change in the Somerset-Wiltshire Border Area’, pp. 119-44; Dunning, *A History of Somerset*, pp. 45-63.

⁹⁷ ‘E. Sheppard, Gloucestershire, to Robert Peel, 9 February 1829’, Home Office Distressed Areas Correspondence, *NA*, HO 42/23, ff. 52-5.

⁹⁸ ‘H. Burgh to Robert Peel, 17 February 1829’, Home Office Distressed Areas Correspondence, *NA*, HO 42/23, ff. 74-5.

⁹⁹ ‘W. Pelly to H. Burgh, 20 February 1829, Home Office Distressed Areas Correspondence, *NA*, HO 40/23 ff. 77-80

¹⁰⁰ See the newspapers reports for more information on their trial: *Dorset County Chronicle*, 17 March 1834; *The Times* 17 March 1834.

document was believed to have been provided by George's brother, John Loveless, a flax dresser at Burton Bradstock near Bridport.¹⁰¹ However, whilst historians have acknowledged John's role, the scale of trade unionism in Bridport has not been studied.¹⁰² The flax combers of Bridport formed a combination in the late-1820s, attempting to advance their wages in January and November of 1826. This was attempted through a series of strikes and walkouts, with the workers supposedly receiving financial support 'from fellow workmen across the country'.¹⁰³ The provision of funds to striking flax combers in Bridport reveals the existence of a series of national networks that connected these men to wider organisations. Subsequently, workers in Bridport would protest again in February 1833 after a decrease in wages. During these strikes the shop of prominent flax merchant was burnt to the ground whilst the dressers refused to help.¹⁰⁴ A sixteen-year-old boy, Silvester Wilkins, was arrested for the attack, with the only evidence being a witness overhearing him laughing near the scene. Despite multiple petitions for clemency, he was sentenced to death in March 1833.¹⁰⁵ The execution shocked the town and the flax dressers union began organising a public funeral for the 'Bridport Martyr'. The following month:

the funeral procession was headed by the choristers of the Church in their surplices, and about 50 men decently dressed in black – then came the body in a coffin handsomely ornamented and covered with a pall, which was supported by six young women. The parents, and about 100 females in black followed the corpse. The street was thronged with at least 2000 spectators who had followed the procession across the county.¹⁰⁶

In this ceremony, the flax dressers not only mourned Wilkins' death but also attempted to unite the community in support of their cause. By the mid-nineteenth century, funeral processions had become a method for expressing political or social criticism.¹⁰⁷ As the cortege passed

¹⁰¹ 'James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 29 March 1834', in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, p. 181-2.

¹⁰² Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 49-50; Norman, *Story of George Loveless*, p. 33.

¹⁰³ *Southampton Herald*, 30 January 1826; 4 December 1826.

¹⁰⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 28 February 1833.

¹⁰⁵ *Morning Post*, 15 March 1833.

¹⁰⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 11 April 1833.

¹⁰⁷ M. Nouvian, 'Defiant Mourning: Public Funerals as Funeral Demonstrations in the Chartist Movement', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 24:2 (2019), pp. 208-26. See also: R. Poole "'To the Last Drop of My Blood": Melodrama and Politics in Late Georgian England', in P. Yeandle, K. Newey and Jeffrey Richards (eds.), *Politics, Performance and Popular Culture: Theatre and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 21-43 R.G. Halls, 'Hearts and Minds. The Politics of Everyday Life and Chartism, 1832-1840', *Labour History Review*, 74 (2009), pp. 27-43; T. Laqueur, 'Bodies, Death and Pauper Funerals', *Representations*, 1 (1983), pp. 109-31.

through the towns and villages of Dorset it gathered spectators, advertising the union's cause. As O'Gorman notes, such actions transformed onlookers into participants. With funerals being emotive events, each mourner could be used by the flax dressers to demonstrate their local support. Equally, whilst ritual provides a mirror to society it also communicates a vision of how things should be.¹⁰⁸ In this instance, agricultural labourers and industrial workers presented themselves as a respectable, unified and disciplined force. Marching slowly behind the coffin in a neat procession, dressed in their Sunday best, these men and women performed an 'ideal' local community.¹⁰⁹ In the months immediately preceding Tolpuddle, therefore, urban trades and agricultural labourers were united through rituals that remade local struggles into a countywide cause.

London agitators were also active in neighbouring Devon during the final months of 1833, where the universality of ritual demonstrates the desire to create a unified union movement. In Devon agitators assisted in the formation of oath-bound trade unions amongst the different building trades in Exeter, Tiverton and Horsebridge. Eventually, police in Exeter infiltrated a meeting and the subsequent evidence was sufficient for constables to arrest fifteen men, including the two London bricklaying delegates. The paraphernalia seized indicates how a general push for national unionism was spread across the West Country. In an identical manner to the FSAL this initiation ceremony included 'two white garments or robes, a large figure of death with the dart and hour-glass, a Bible and Testament, and the book in which the proceedings of the meeting and the oath administered to the initiated are entered.'¹¹⁰ The painting of death, white smocks and biblical verses were key factors in the decision to find the Martyrs guilty of issuing illegal oaths in 1834.¹¹¹ These ritual objects were not merely the mystic ravings of isolated rustics that the 'civilized' trade union movement had left behind.¹¹² These repertoires, ceremonies and codes were designed to be universal and create a bond between workers no matter their geographic location or occupation.¹¹³ Following the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824 not only had agricultural workers been inculcated to strikes and unionism by their proximity to industrial agitation but they had also taken an active participatory role. Tolpuddle, consequently, was not an exceptional moment for the history of

¹⁰⁸ O'Gorman, 'Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain', pp. 23-4; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁹ Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ *Sherborne Mercury*, 20 January 1824.

¹¹¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 March 1834.

¹¹² Norman, *Story of George Loveless*, pp. 33-5; Oliver, 'Tolpuddle Martyrs and Trade Union Oaths', pp. 5-12

¹¹³ For the desire to create a unified 'community' through ritual see: A. Pionke, "'I Do Swear": Oath-Taking Among the Elite Public in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, 49:4 (2007), pp. 611-33.

this region but part of a larger movement in the early-1830s which sought to unite all occupations into powerful unions.

Throughout Somerset and Dorset, worker organisations were becoming increasingly reliant upon national movements and networks during the early-1830s. In July 1833, factory owners in Yeovil intercepted correspondence between glovers and a northern coalition of trade unions. According to the reports, the striking workers had obtained leaflets entitled 'To the Flax and Hemp Trade of Great Britain' from 'The Grand Lodge at Leeds' and had been ordered to distribute them throughout the town. This was the same leaflet given to George Loveless, indicating that the Tolpuddle Union was part of a general desire to spread combinations throughout the country.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the 'Grand Lodge' promised that it would pay '8s per week for men and women 2s 6d per week' to any Yeovil glover who struck work.¹¹⁵ As George Loveless was receiving the 'delegates from London' into his home to aid him in forming the FSAL, magistrates in south Somerset reported that 'persons from Worcester and Derby have been on a visit to Yeovil, and instigated about 400 of their men to form a Trades Union and that they have had as many of their men enrolled through an oath of loyalty to a Committee.'¹¹⁶ Yet, these new unions did not go uncontested, and in many communities authorities relentlessly hounded workers who attempted to strike. By February 1834, the Yeovil combination had collapsed due to a lack of funds and the hiring of scabs.¹¹⁷ Despite the union propaganda, national organisation was still in its infancy and these 'networks' were not fully formed. Nevertheless, the formation of the FSAL in rural Dorset was not an isolated incident but part of a series of organisations that sought to assist one another.

However, for agricultural labourers in this region the push for general unionism did not solely emerge from their working lives. In particular, the role of political unions and the Reform Crisis in influencing rural workers during this period has been largely overlooked. In her foundational study of political organisation, Lopatin claimed that there 'is no indication that Political Unions included agricultural labourers' and that 'urban and commercial interests' were dominant amongst political union membership.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Belchem argued that these 'meeting groups'

¹¹⁴ Griffin, 'Culture of Combination', pp. 462-3.

¹¹⁵ 'Thomas Scott, Yorkshire, to Mr Chick, Somerset, n.d.', Home Office Distressed Areas Correspondence, NA, HO 40/31, ff. 167-8.

¹¹⁶ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 13; J. Phillips, Yeovil, to Under-Secretary Phillips, 22 January 1834', Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/25 ff. 132-3.

¹¹⁷ *Sherborne Mercury*, 10 February 1834.

¹¹⁸ N. Lopatin, *Political Unions, Popular Politics, and the Great Reform Act of 1832* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 168; N. Lopatin, 'Political Unions and the Great Reform Act', *Parliamentary History*, 10: 1 (May 1991), pp. 105-23.

were dominated by middle-class leadership.¹¹⁹ However, in Somerset and Dorset these unions were far more geographically extensive and socially inclusive than Belchem or Lopatin suggest. The Yeovil Political Union stated that the primary goal of their organisation was to ‘circulate political knowledge’ amongst both the regions ‘manufacturing and agricultural population.’¹²⁰ The Taunton Political Union was equally active, reportedly ‘haranguing’ those who attended the Somerton Cattle Fair in July 1832 and convincing the attending agricultural labourers to join their union.¹²¹ Such a clamour for agricultural participation and membership was the natural result of local demographics and legacies of resistance. In these counties, rural workers formed the bulk of the population meaning that any movement campaigning for ‘popular’ parliamentary reform needed to appeal to these men and women. As the previous chapter has shown, these rural towns and villages were also where the most active protests had occurred during the electoral campaigns of 1830 and 1831. The ‘battles’ of the Reform Crisis were thus fought in these rural communities and tensions remained high.¹²² To gain support the political unions in Somerset and Dorset aped trade union discourse. The Taunton Political Union printed a leaflet in 1833 that read:

Combine! Combine! Combine! For the safety of ourselves and country – The reign of the boroughmongers has created a woeful change in the aspect of our villages and their inhabitants. There is nothing left for the honest and rightminded but to unite in one common cause for their defence and preservation.¹²³

The language used here is directly comparable to the discourses used to justify worker combination.¹²⁴ For instance, the FSAL was promoted through letters promising a ‘just remuneration for labour’ and that all they needed to do was ‘be united and the victory is gained.’¹²⁵ By the 1830s rural workers were being introduced to organisations in both their working and political lives that called on them to combine. In both trade and political unions,

¹¹⁹ J. Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 59-61

¹²⁰ ‘Thomas Haywood, Secretary of the Yeovil Political Union to J. Phillips, with Enclosures’, Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/19, ff. 399-405.

¹²¹ *The Bridgwater Alfred*, 23 July 1832.

¹²² Wells, ‘Rural Rebels in Southern England’, pp. 124-65; G. Rudé, ‘English Rural and Urban Disturbances on the Eve of the First Reform Bill, 1830-1831’, *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), pp. 87-102.

¹²³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 24 January 1833.

¹²⁴ Chase, *Early Trade Unions*, pp. 110-39.

¹²⁵ James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 2 March 1834’, Ilchester Correspondence 1834 Letters File, DHC, D/FSI/Box 242a.

discourses were developed that presented collective action as the only solution to an ongoing decline in the quality of rural life.

Political unions allowed rural workers to both participate in collective action and gain experience in organising sustained resistance. Although the majority of political unions restricted leadership roles to their ‘respectable members’, there were still a variety of positions open to agricultural workers.¹²⁶ In Chard, for example, the society was controlled by a popularly elected ‘Committee of Management’ that appointed administrative roles such as the ‘Corresponding Secretary’ to agricultural, industrial and genteel workers alike. The only requirement was that any nominated person had to be ‘faithful, upright and efficient.’¹²⁷ This was not dissimilar to the FSAL, which was run by a popularly elected council and appointed similar roles such as a ‘General Secretary’.¹²⁸ In Chard, the union proved to be successful in gaining the support of the local agricultural population. Following a series of riots, which included the burning of a local reporter in effigy and an attempt to burn down the guildhall, local magistrates reported that ‘since the establishment of a Political Union, the place has been repeatedly the scene... of constant agitation and repeated outrages against public and private peace.’¹²⁹ Whilst each political union differed in its political tone and membership, in these rural communities the evidence suggests that the demands and desires of rural labourers were incorporated into the organisation. In August 1832 the Chard Political Union burnt a number of ‘Tory Lords’ in the marketplace during a demonstration but made sure to also include a local farmer who had ‘been in dispute with his labourers for some time’.¹³⁰ Certainly, this could be a cynically minded attempt to gain the support of the local crowd by assaulting a figure of hate. Nevertheless, such considerations demonstrate how political unions in Somerset and Dorset engaged in active dialogue with local agricultural labourers. These groups granted industrial and agricultural labourers with further opportunities to gain experience and challenge authority.

As the writings of George Loveless attest, Tolpuddle was not isolated from these discourses or organisations. Although some historians have downplayed the political motivations of Tolpuddle, Loveless’ writings reveal a politically knowledgeable man who was actively

¹²⁶ Lopatin, *Political Unions*, pp. 87-130.

¹²⁷ ‘Rules and Regulations of the Chard Political Union, 31 October 1831’, Chard Printed Material, *SHC*, D/B/ch/9/3/12.

¹²⁸ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 March 1834.

¹²⁹ ‘John Green, Chard, to Lord Melbourne, 4 August 1832’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/19, ff. 362-3

¹³⁰ ‘Chard Magistrates to Lord Melbourne, 26 August 1832’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/19, ff. 343.

seeking political equality.¹³¹ Although primarily a work criticising the Church of England, Loveless' second book, *The Church Shown Up*, regularly uses religious discourse to condemn contemporary political authorities. Whilst historians such as Thompson or Rule depicted Methodism as inherently conservative, for Loveless his faith taught him to proclaim 'liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that were bound' and refuse 'to pin my faith to sleeves of presidents, bishops or popes.'¹³² In such language, Loveless displays a vein of anti-authoritarianism and a political foundation for his decision to found a combination. This mindset was not merely the product of Loveless' experiences of transportation, it was forged from the political crises of 1831, as 'out of 200 clergymen, 12 only voted for the reform candidate!'¹³³ Even though Tolpuddle did not witness any electoral rioting in 1831, the news would have still influenced the mentalities of local labourers. Radicalism and unionism were united when Loveless proclaimed that:

all men are born naturally free, and that all have an unalienable right to receive a sufficient maintenance from the land that gave them birth; that they are kept in poverty and degradation by those who, living in luxury and idleness upon the fruits of their labour, tell the working man his portion is labour, to suffer, and to die.¹³⁴

Studies of the Martyrs commonly portray the FSAL as a purely defensive or materialist organisation, founded solely to protect the wages of local labourers. In the minds of its most influential members, however, it encompassed a great deal more. The organisation was the direct result of new political discourses and mentalities being inculcated into the countryside, aided by pre-existing Methodist beliefs.¹³⁵ The political upheavals of this period thus critically influenced the decision to form a combination in Tolpuddle.

¹³¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 368; J. Rule, 'The Chartist Mission to Cornwall', in J. Rule and R. Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England* (London: Rio Grande, 1997), pp. 67-81. For further examinations of Methodism and organisation see: J.A. Jaffe, *The Struggle for Market Power: Industrial Relations in the British Coal Industry, 1800-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 120-48; J. Epstein, 'Some Organisational and Cultural Aspects of the Chartist Movement in Nottingham', in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London, Macmillan, 1982), pp. 221-68.

¹³² G. Loveless, *The Church Shown Up, In a Letter to the Rev. Henry Walter, Vicar of Haselbury Bryan, Dorsetshire* (London, 1838), p. 4, 10.

¹³³ Loveless, *The Church Shown Up*, p. 13. See also: Saunders, 'God and the Great Reform Act', pp. 378-99.

¹³⁴ Loveless, *The Church Shown Up*, p. 14.

¹³⁵ For the most complete study of the influence of Methodism to the Martyrs see: Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday', pp. 31-84. For more general overviews on the relationship between the faith and labour activism see also: R. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800-1850* (London: Epworth Press, 1937), pp. 72-111; I. Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830-1870*, (Cambridge:

Upon being sentenced to transportation in 1834, George Loveless stood and threw a poem into the crowd, it read:

God is our guide, from field, from wave
From plough, from anvil, and from loom;
We come, our country's rights to save,
And speak a tyrant factions doom:
We raise the watch-word liberty:
We will, we will, we will be free!

God is our guide! No swords we draw.
We kindle not war's battle fires:
By reason, union, justice, law,
We claim the birth-right of our sires:
We raise the watch-word, liberty,
We will, we will, we will be free!¹³⁶

These lines formed part of the hymn sung to commemorate the first meeting of the Birmingham Political Union.¹³⁷ This action was an embodiment of the networks and mentalities that had been developing in counties such as Somerset and Dorset throughout the early-nineteenth century. The formation of the FSAL was not merely the work of a few foreign delegates but part of a concerted effort amongst industrial and agricultural workers to unionise.¹³⁸ Although some historians have envisioned Tolpuddle as a unique occurrence, in these rural counties trade unions actively courted rural workers through rituals and public performances.¹³⁹ Whilst these disparate occupations never united into a singularly militant working class, there was still a considerable amount of communication and co-operation between different organisations. As the largely middle-class political unions demonstrate; the discourses, networks and repertoires of unionism could be used for a variety of different endeavours. In Tolpuddle, the fallout of the Reform Bill and the push for political unionism critically shaped the mindset of its founding

Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 251; D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1984), pp. 215-6.

¹³⁶ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, pp 17-8.

¹³⁷ *Preston Chronicle*, 5 April 1834.

¹³⁸ Oliver, 'Tolpuddle Martyrs and Trade Union Oaths', pp. 5-12; Maitland Walker, 'An Impartial Appreciation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs', pp. 47-77.

¹³⁹ H. Evatt Vere, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs: Injustice Within the Law*, ed. G. Robertson, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), pp. 4-22; Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, pp. 27-32.

members. Consequently, whilst a singular ‘culture of combination’ risks oversimplifying the complexity present in these communities, using the models of Griffin and Featherstone reveals the importance of national networks in aiding local resistance.¹⁴⁰ The FSAL was only possible due to a series of social, political and cultural networks that spread across this region.

Tolpuddle’s Injurious Legacy? Collective Action Post-1834

The local response to the arrest and trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs has generally been overlooked by historians more interested in placing these events into a ‘national’ narrative.¹⁴¹ This has inadvertently led scholars to agree with the self-aggrandising boasts of James Frampton, who believed that his actions had ‘put a stop to those societies in this county’.¹⁴² The FSAL, however, continued to be active throughout 1834, resisting attempts by magistrates to eliminate the organisation. This section thus explores the afterlife of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, arguing that in order to continue their struggle rural workers in Dorset deployed a number of protest repertoires ranging from petitions and processions to suspected arson. In these years there were no strict demarcations between ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ protests, with both forms being mutually supportive. Between 1834 and 1838, these local legacies of resistance aided the survival of organised activity. Moreover, memories of Tolpuddle shaped how the agricultural labourers of Dorset responded to Chartism, resulting in a fundamental disconnect between the two movements. Rather than a singular ‘culture of combination’, the failure of Chartism reveals multiple cultures of collective action.¹⁴³ In Dorset the demand for ‘fair’ wages allowed a multitude of protest repertoires to remain active.

Knowledge of the local landscape allowed the FSAL to continue its operations and even expand in the immediate aftermath of the Martyrs’ arrest. On 25 February 1834, as the Martyrs were being committed for examination, ‘an extraordinary meeting was called together on Bere Heath by the sound of a horn’.¹⁴⁴ As Navickas noted, hilltop meetings were designed to demonstrate

¹⁴⁰ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80; Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

¹⁴¹ Marlow, *Tolpuddle Martyrs*, pp. 98-240; W. Citrine, ‘The Martyrs of Tolpuddle’ in Trades Union Congress (eds.) *The Books of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), pp. 31-74.

¹⁴² ‘Account of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry from 1830 to 1845 by James Frampton’, *DHC*, D-FRA/X/4, f. 18.

¹⁴³ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80

¹⁴⁴ James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 5 March 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, p. 175-6.

the strength and discipline of a protest movement.¹⁴⁵ By placing their meeting in this space, the continued presence of the FSAL was visibly demonstrated to the surrounding communities. Indeed, in the following months membership continued to increase, with Frampton admitting that the lodge in Winfrith was ‘numerously attended’ and that ‘many persons of the adjoining parish of Wool have entered into the Society’. Attempts were made to disrupt these gatherings but it was ‘impossible for us to send anybody to procure evidence of what is going on’ due to a native system of lookouts and informers.¹⁴⁶ On multiple occasions, magistrates arrived at the site of a suspected meeting only to find it completely deserted.¹⁴⁷ George Loveless and his compatriots may have been vital to the formation of the FSAL but once the organisation was established local labourers were able to continue its day-to-day operation. There remained a remarkable amount of loyalty with no labourers showing ‘the least sign of wishing to withdraw from the society.’¹⁴⁸ The survival of the FSAL in these months of targeted prosecution is a testament to the strength of the protest repertoires that had been inculcated into the local population. From ‘traditional’ overt forms, such as the horn and hilltop meeting, to the ‘covert’ actions of a secret society these rural labourers used local environments and customary tactics to support their continued combination.

Eight petitions were also drawn up within the villages of rural Dorset, with many locals hoping to continue their struggle through legal channels.¹⁴⁹ In addition, violence was threatened against those believed to have ‘betrayed’ the community during the Martyrs’ prosecution. Reverend Warren of Tolpuddle was specifically targeted due to his failure to uphold the patrician-plebeian relationship. Warren was the ‘hireling parson’ condemned by Loveless for refusing to honour the wage concessions negotiated during Swing.¹⁵⁰ Despite writing a private testimonial to the judge at Dorchester to request leniency, Warren remained steadfast in his belief that ‘the Unions must be put a stop to’.¹⁵¹ For the local population this was unacceptable and Warren was repeatedly ‘insulted in the streets’ and ‘pelted by a number of stones’. Warren thus concluded: ‘I have suffered the consequences of not going the whole length they wish.’

¹⁴⁵ Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest’, pp. 93-111.

¹⁴⁶ James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 5 March 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, p. 175-6.

¹⁴⁷ ‘J.M. Phillipps to James Frampton, 10 March 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), p. 177.

¹⁴⁸ ‘James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 22 March 1834’, Home Office County Correspondence, NA, HO 52/24, f. 51-2.

¹⁴⁹ Marlow, *Tolpuddle Martyrs*, pp. 169.

¹⁵⁰ Loveless, *The Victims of Whiggery*, p. 13.

¹⁵¹ ‘Rev. J. Warren to E. Warren, 1 April 1834’, The Letters of Thomas Warren, Vicar of Tolpuddle, DHC, D-2826/1/3.

The most serious incident occurred in March 1834 when Warren refused to sign a petition requesting that the government relieve the Martyrs and confirm the legality of trade unions. As a result, a crowd gathered in Tolpuddle during the night and by torchlight ‘they broke every pane in the lower window of my drawing room!’¹⁵² Acts of violence and legal challenges were thus mutually supportive in the local struggle to achieve a pardon for the Tolpuddle Martyrs. There were no strict demarcations between covert acts of terror and constitutional protests, such as petitioning.¹⁵³ Warren had neglected to uphold a ‘norm of reciprocity’ in 1832 and by refusing to sign these petitions he had also failed to make amends with the community. Subsequently, acts of violence were permitted as a remonstrance for his actions. As with enclosure rioters or political protestors, these violent performances were designed to publicly demonstrate Warren’s ‘immoral’ behaviour.

Using the repertoires and discourses established over the preceding decades, agricultural combinations continued in Dorset following the Martyrs’ transportation. In particular, the language of reform continued to hold sway, although its deployment did not always align with a united ‘culture of combination’. In Dorchester, four labourers were sentenced to hard labour for ‘an illegal combination’ in December 1836 after they had organised to ‘protect their wages and livelihoods’.¹⁵⁴ Sustained activity also occurred in the village of Cerne Abbas in February 1836 following the employment of Irish migrants. The local labourers struck work ‘for a number of days’ and one farmer received a threatening letter that read:

Gentlemen if you do not turn all those people out from the town that do not belong here and employ those that do belong here there must be a reform in Cerne and all that do not belong here must be turned out and their property thus seized. They will be shurely [sic] set fire to. A reform we must have in Cerne and will before long.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Rev. J. Warren to E. Warren, 1 April 1834’, *The Letters of Thomas Warren, Vicar of Tolpuddle*, DHC, D-2826/1/3. The attack is also mentioned briefly in ‘James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 2 April 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934: The Story of the Dorsetshire Labourers Who Were Convicted and Sentenced to Seven Years Transportation for Forming a Trade Union* (London: Trades Union Congress, 1934; 1999), p. 183

¹⁵³ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-1; Archer, ‘The Wells-Charlesworth Debate’, pp. 82-9.

¹⁵⁴ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 December 1836.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Cerne Abbas Anonymous Letter’, Home Office Distressed Areas Correspondence, NA, HO 40/34, f. 59.

In villages across England, the Irish were deeply resented due to fears that they would drive down pay in times of need.¹⁵⁶ Thus, these protests were part of the discourses of entitlement that formed a cornerstone of the rural moral economy.¹⁵⁷ The threatening letter specifically notes that ‘a reform we must have’ indicating that political or radical discourses remained influential in this region after the Reform Crisis of 1832.¹⁵⁸ However, in this instance the language of reform was specifically linked to the violence of exclusion, specifically the fear of foreigners corrupting or degrading rural life. Such practices and performances were a common part of the geographies of organised labour.¹⁵⁹ For these labourers, their ‘culture of combination’ was intimately bound up with notions of belonging and place. Despite possessing pan-regional networks and repertoires, rural mentalities often remained inherently local.

A common method for protesting wages or working conditions in the years following 1834 was arson. Although historians need to be careful in connecting potentially random acts of incendiarism with outwardly ‘peaceful’ combinations, such repertoires were not entirely dissimilar.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, in the minds of magistrates the two forms were commonly linked. Thus, although Loveless disavowed acts of violence, the terror created by these attacks could benefit formal organisations.¹⁶¹ When the farmhouse of one Joseph Weld was burnt in 1835, for example, James Frampton responded that Weld had ‘foolishly lowered all his labourers’ wages’.¹⁶² Similarly, in Shapwick the FSAL was specifically blamed for an arson attack in 1834. The village was situated around a mile away from Tolpuddle and there was probably some union activity here in late 1833.¹⁶³ Subsequently, after a hayrick was set on fire in April 1834 it was reported that ‘the place seems much disturbed’ and that ‘our county [is] full of that disaffected and uneasy sort as of late.’ In order to quieten the local labourers the village was treated to £10 worth of ‘beer, cheese and bread as a celebration of their loyal service.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁶ Peacock, ‘Village Radicalism in East Anglia’, pp. 29-30; A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), pp. 150-64.

¹⁵⁷ Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 222-35.

¹⁵⁸ Innes, ‘“Reform” in English Public Life’, pp. 71-97; Philp, ‘Talking about Democracy: Britain in the 1790s’, pp. 101-113.

¹⁵⁹ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, p. 150; Snell, ‘Culture of Local Xenophobia’, pp. 1-30

¹⁶⁰ Wells, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Countryside’, pp. 230-1; Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 33-61; Griffin, ‘“The Mystery of the Fires”’, pp. 21-40; Griffin, ‘Knowable Geographies?’, pp. 38-56.

¹⁶¹ For Loveless and violence see: Marlow, *Tolpuddle Martyrs*, pp. 31-5.

¹⁶² ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 3 May 1835’, Ilchester Correspondence ‘1818-1841 File’, *DHC*, D/FSI/Box 242b.

¹⁶³ James Frampton explicitly mentioned that most of the ‘other villages’ surrounding Tolpuddle were involved in the FSAL: ‘James Frampton to Lord Melbourne, 5 March 1834’, in Trades Union Congress (eds.), *Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, p. 175-6.

¹⁶⁴ William Castleman to Henry Bankes, 25 April 1834’, Bankes Family Correspondence, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/H/1/5/80; William Castleman to Henry Bankes, 18 April 1834’, Bankes Family Correspondence, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/H/1/5/79.

Evidently, there was a very real fear amongst the local ruling classes that the FSAL had fundamentally altered the nature of rural labourers. Through open displays of treating and paternalism it was hoped that the crowd could be satiated. The only suspect for this crime was a man named Cross, who had been spotted in one of the country lanes on the night of the attack and whose family gave conflicting reports regarding his whereabouts. More specifically, Cross was targeted because he had ‘participated in the late activity in the region’.¹⁶⁵ This was a clear reference to the FSAL and although Cross’ name does not appear on the list of members discovered in Loveless’ home there were reports of men who paid their dues but refused to have their name added.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, these actions highlight the mutually beneficial nature of overt and covert resistance. Cross may have been working alone and without the blessing of the FSAL, but his actions were enough to terrorise local employers. Their attempt to publicly perform a reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship reveals a very real fear of rural collective action. The division between ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ resistance is often arbitrary and obscures how these agricultural labourers could draw on a number of different protest forms.

It is with this understanding of a sporadic, but continued, period of unrest following the Martyrs’ arrest that the revival of the FSAL in 1838 can be fully appreciated. For Wells and Chase, this resurgence was a failed bid by London and Bath Chartists to incorporate Dorset’s ‘native trade unionism’. In his more extensive study, Scriven has presented this moment as a re-emergence of the FSAL, supported heavily by the London Working Men’s Association.¹⁶⁷ Although Scriven is accurate in his assessment, evidence suggests that organisation in 1838 was not a ‘re-emergence’ but an intensification of established repertoires. In June 1838 the Home Office intercepted communication revealing that a ‘Working Men’s Association’ was active in Dorset with ‘weekly meetings held at or near Bere Regis’. Furthermore, a London printer received orders for ‘2 or 3 hundred’ handbills advertising the new society.¹⁶⁸ The revival of unionism in 1838 was thus a native movement, rather than being reliant on outside Chartist assistance. Bere Regis had been a centre for FSAL activity and Gillian, the man who had ordered the handbills, was described as having been ‘very active during the former unions.’¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ ‘William Castleman to Henry Bankes, 25 April 1834’, Bankes Family Correspondence, *DHC*, D-BKL/E/H/1/5/80.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Copy of the List of Names found in the Box in George Loveless’ Home’, *NA*, PRO 30/69/1382; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 March 1834.

¹⁶⁷ Wells, ‘Southern Chartism’, 37-59; Scriven, ‘Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath’, pp. 1-23; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 31-7.

¹⁶⁸ ‘To the Workmen of Dorsetshire’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/36, f. 174; ‘Letter of T. Gillian, Bere Regis, 23 June 1838’, Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/36, f. 175.

¹⁶⁹ ‘James Frampton to Lord John Russell and Reply Concerning Renewed Trade Union Activity in Dorset’, Frampton Papers, *DHC*, D-FRA/X/32.

By early August 1838, when Scriven begins his analysis, this new FSAL had already been active for several months. Frampton reported that ‘the union is going on in great force in Bere Regis, Abbey Milton and the surrounding villages’ and that ‘the labourers intend to have a general meeting of the Unions on one of the overlooking open downs in the neighbourhood of those villages.’¹⁷⁰ The ‘Chartist Union’ of 1838 was not only founded in the same spaces as the FSAL but it was also adopting the same tactics. Nightly meetings and hilltop rallies were a direct continuation of the repertoires developed following the arrest of the Martyrs. Whilst the revival was aided by the presence of the Loveless and his compatriots, who returned home in 1837, they were not directly involved.¹⁷¹ The 1838 reformation was the result of concerted efforts by the broader membership of the FSAL indicating that between 1834 and 1838 the legacy of the Martyrs had remained a powerful force in rural Dorset.

The expected mass meeting, however, did not occur in August. According to Frampton, the FSAL lacked the manpower and funds to support any such action, choosing instead to agitate until it had raised sufficient capital for a new campaign in the winter.¹⁷² In October 1838 agitation began in earnest, but the ‘culture of combination’ exhibited was markedly different from previous occurrences. On this occasion, the FSAL had adopted an intensely secretive model of organisation, with Frampton recording that:

at night he had seen several small knots of people standing together in different parts of the downs between 11 & 12 o’clock at night... They are so very cautious that the least appearance of our suspecting any thing would prevent our getting any intelligence and therefore can only evaluate what is going on by the most safe and trusty persons.¹⁷³

A lingering fear of prosecution ensured that the new union remained uncompromisingly exclusive. Repertoires such as ‘hilltop’ rallies had been excised, with organisers focusing entirely on midnight meetings. Moreover, by this time the Unions had become explicitly Chartist with delegates from the London Working Men’s Association travelling ‘from village to village... to induce persons to join them.’ In larger towns, such as Blandford and Sherborne, a large number of labourers joined and even in smaller villages, such as Owermoigne,

¹⁷⁰ ‘James Frampton to Lord John Russell and Reply Concerning Renewed Trade Union Activity in Dorset’, Frampton Papers, *DHC*, D-FRA/X/32.

¹⁷¹ ‘Account of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry from 1830 to 1845 by James Frampton’, *DHC*, D-FRA/X/4, f. 31.

¹⁷² ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 24 August 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁷³ ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 14 October 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

informants witnessed '20 or 30' signing up together.¹⁷⁴ Crucially, this recruitment demonstrates that the FSAL in 1838 was reaching communities that the original incarnation had failed to involve. Chartism had fully enveloped the FSAL, using the success of previous organisations and pre-existing cultures of combination to spread its political message.

The Chartists did not revive the FSAL in 1838 but co-opted the spaces and culture of a movement that had been active for a while. Indeed, the national leadership considered this to be an unmissable opportunity and sent Henry Vincent to secure local loyalty. Vincent was a 'rising star' of London Chartism who had recently moved to Bath to oversee agitation in South West England and Southern Wales.¹⁷⁵ On the 13 November 1838, Vincent arrived in Tolpuddle where he spoke to crowds from home of Martyr Thomas Stanfield. According to Frampton, 'inflammatory speeches were made which were not confined to wages; but where Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot were advocated.'¹⁷⁶ This was a clear attempt to use the spaces and memories associated with the Martyrs to aid the ongoing Chartist agitation. By speaking at and interacting with this landmark of memory, Vincent created a direct link between past organisation and current efforts.¹⁷⁷ It was a poetic and emotive display that publicly portrayed this new FSAL as a direct successor to the previous cause. Crucially, Chartists such as Vincent were attempting to turn local labourers away from a focus solely on 'fair' wages and towards a complete programme of political reform. The cult of celebrity around George Loveless was also exploited, with placards bearing his signature allowing the Chartist FSAL to penetrate 'into almost every parish'. In Blandford, thirty-six men enrolled in a single meeting after reading Loveless' handbill.¹⁷⁸ The handbill itself, encouraged labourers to 'obtain by peaceable means, a fair return of wages for your labour, and a share in the making of the laws by having a vote for Members of Parliament'. Moreover, labourers were told to 'laugh at' the threats made by magistrates such as Frampton as the unions were completely legal.¹⁷⁹ Consequently, the arguments of Loveless and Vincent melded the existing demands of local agricultural

¹⁷⁴ James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 25 October 1838', Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁷⁵ W. Dorling, *Henry Vincent: A Biographical Sketch with a Preface by Mrs Vincent* (London, 1879) esp. pp. 13-31; T. Scriven, 'Humour, Satire and Sexuality in the Culture of Early Chartism', *The Historical Journal*, 57:1 (2014), pp. 157-78.

¹⁷⁶ 'Account of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry from 1830 to 1845 by James Frampton', *DHC*, D-FRA/X/4, f. 31; Scriven, 'Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', 14-5. For more on Henry Vincent see:

¹⁷⁷ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 175; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 36-7.

¹⁷⁸ 'James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 10 November 1838', Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁷⁹ 'Edwin Chadwick, Poor Law Commission, to S.M. Phillips, Home Office, 21 November 1838', Correspondence Between the Home Office and the Poor Law Commission, *NA*, HO 73/54/66, ff. 258-63.

labourers with the national aims of Chartism. As Chase and Thompson have noted, this was a common strategy within a movement that displayed a capacity to ‘adopt and adapt local political issues.’¹⁸⁰ By November 1838, therefore, the newly legitimised FSAL was demanding fair wages alongside the People’s Charter whilst attempting to organise mass demonstrations and meetings. At this moment national and local politics were welded together through the spaces and discourses of Dorset combination.

The ‘culture of combination’, according to Griffin, was a pan-industrial and pan-regional set of mentalities and repertoires that allowed rural workers to challenge the terms of their employment.¹⁸¹ The failure of the Chartist FSAL in 1838, however, indicates that the working classes of Dorset were not always united. In the months of November and December, the Chartists’ inability to entice agricultural participation in their mass meetings led to the movement retreating into the artisan communities of Dorset’s larger towns. By early November placards had been ‘stuck up’ calling for a mass rally.¹⁸² Eventually, on 14 November 1838, the Chartists gathered on Charlton Down, overlooking the town of Blandford. Attendance ‘could barely have exceeded 1500’, leading to claims of labourers being intimidated by local farmers and magistrates. The speakers were Henry Vincent; Robert Hartwell, the delegate from the LWMA; and two other Chartists from Bath. They addressed Dorset’s poverty, low wages and the implementation of the New Poor Law. Thomas Stanfield stood on a wagon to receive applause from the crowd and George Loveless, who was not present, was made Dorset’s representative to the upcoming Chartist National Convention.¹⁸³ Crucially, not a single native of Dorset spoke in a meeting that was largely focused on urban issues. As Scriven rightly notes, the operation of the New Poor Law in Dorset was fundamentally different to practices witnessed by the Chartist delegation in cities such as Bath.¹⁸⁴ Whilst this is not meant to imply that Dorsetshire labourers were unsympathetic to wider struggles, it highlights the disconnect between these rural labourers and a Chartist leadership whose experiences of Dorset began and ended with the carriage ride from Bath to Blandford. In the wake of the ‘mass meeting’ farmers promised their men wage increases but only if they agreed to never associate themselves with the unions.¹⁸⁵ By December, Frampton was reporting that ‘the Emissaries from London are all

¹⁸⁰ D. Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 22; Chase, *Chartism*, p. 37.

¹⁸¹ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80

¹⁸² ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 11 November 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁸³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 November 1838.

¹⁸⁴ Scriven, ‘Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath’, pp. 13-7.

¹⁸⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 10 January 1839.

gone.’¹⁸⁶ The attempt to remake the FSAL into a Chartist vehicle had failed to gain the support of the local agricultural working class, leading to a swift demise.

For the Chartists in 1838 Tolpuddle’s legacy was injurious and, when combined with an ignorance of rural affairs, stymied their Dorset campaign. Contrary to the arguments of Scriven, the mentalities and repertoires inculcated amongst rural labourers during the early-1830s were not invariably beneficial or compatible with later activism.¹⁸⁷ As seen in the pamphlet penned by Loveless the desire to obtain ‘a fair return of wages for your labour’ remained paramount to communities in rural Dorset.¹⁸⁸ In turn, this made many labourers reluctant to campaign for the political demands of the Charter. In December 1838, James Frampton noted that ‘the introduction of universal suffrage etc. has also put in check acceptance amongst the labourers, as they say they know nothing about it.’¹⁸⁹ Certainly, Frampton’s hostile and self-aggrandising account was heavily biased, being designed to further his local magisterial career, but the failure of the mass meeting seems to indicate a lack of interest in the People’s Charter as a political document.¹⁹⁰ These workers were focused on a more immediate struggle, namely the right to subsistence and ‘fair’ wage. Similarly, the Chartists’ desire for mass meetings and ostentatious demonstrations of support clashed with the current ‘culture of combination’ in Dorset. Following the collapse of the initial FSAL, unionists in Dorset had slowly shifted their repertoires towards midnight meetings. This allowed them to avoid unwanted attention from enthusiastic magistrates such as James Frampton. In 1838, therefore, a native movement based on secrecy was compelled to radically alter its tactics to suit the demands of the national Chartist leadership.¹⁹¹ The two opposing ‘cultures of combination’ subsequently clashed, ensuring the eventual demise of the Chartist FSAL in Dorset.

The presence of multiple ‘cultures of combination’ in Somerset and Dorset can be further illustrated by comparing the revived FSAL with Chartist activity in neighbouring Chard. As demonstrated earlier, during the early nineteenth-century both political and trade unions in

¹⁸⁶ ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 8 December 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁸⁷ Scriven, ‘Dorchester Labourers and Swing’s Aftermath’, pp. 1-23; Scriven, ‘Activism and the Everyday’, pp. 74-84.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Edwin Chadwick, Poor Law Commission, to S.M. Phillips, Home Office, 21 November 1838’, Correspondence Between the Home Office and the Poor Law Commission, *NA*, HO 73/54/66, ff. 258-63.

¹⁸⁹ ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 8 December 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

¹⁹⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 November 1838. For further details on the life and career of Frampton see: Maitland Walker, ‘An Impartial Appreciation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs’, pp. 47-77

¹⁹¹ ‘James Frampton to the Earl of Ilchester, 14 October 1838’, Ilchester Correspondence, *DHC*, D/FSI/Acc99 Box 355b.

Chard favoured boisterous public performances, with repertoires such as burning effigies and mass marches being repeatedly deployed.¹⁹² Consequently, in order to recruit new members, Chartists in Chard adapted to its cultures and legacies of resistance. Between 1839 and 1842 the Chartists fully embraced Chard's raucous political atmosphere. Apparently, their weekly meetings were punctuated by 'a mob armed with fire-arms and bludgeons parading the town and bidding defiance to all authority'.¹⁹³ On one occasion a group of Chartists:

maliciously exhibited a certain effigy and figure intended to represent one James Hill; that they set fire to such effigy, and whilst burning did throw it against the door of Mr Hill's house, with intent to burn down the house.¹⁹⁴

Hill was a factory owner currently in dispute with his lace operatives, allowing the Chartist movement to take advantage of local industrial discontent. As historians of Chartism have argued, although national in scope and mindset Chartism was shaped by local cultures.¹⁹⁵ It would be foolish, therefore, to not extend the same considerations to the 'culture of combination'. In Chard, the active and violent legacies left by the native political union and lace operative combinations fostered a bawdy and violent protest repertoire that was similarly adopted by Chartism. Conversely, for the agricultural labourers of Dorset their 'culture of combination' centred around the resumption of a reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationship and the right to subsistence.¹⁹⁶ Alongside the obvious practical considerations, such as the lack of employment opportunities, memories of repression shaped Chartism in Dorset and prevented the adoption of the vital mass platform.¹⁹⁷

Critically, these differences cannot be attributed to a simplistic divide between the mentalities of urban and rural populations. As previously demonstrated, such dichotomies were not strictly enforced in the towns and villages of Somerset and Dorset.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, the Chartists in Chard

¹⁹² See previously, also: 'W. Palmer, Chard, to Lord Melbourne, 15 September 1832', Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/19, ff. 370-6; 'Magistrates of Chard to Lord Melbourne, 12 November 1832', Home Office County Correspondence, *NA*, HO 52/19, ff. 327-8.

¹⁹³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 1 September 1842. For other Chartist disturbances in Chard see: *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 9 October 1842; *Taunton Courier*, 31 August 1842; *Northern Star*, 27 August 1842, 10 September 1842; *Western Times*, 27 July 1839.

¹⁹⁴ *Sherborne Mercury*, 1 July 1843.

¹⁹⁵ O. Ashton, 'Chartism and Popular Culture: An Introduction to the Radical Culture in Cheltenham Spa, 1830-1847', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 20:4 (Spring, 1987), pp. 61-81; Scriven, *Popular Virtue*, pp. 44-73.

¹⁹⁶ Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, 'Hegemony and the Peasantry', pp. 270-81; Pocock, 'The Classical Theory of Deference', pp. 516-23.

¹⁹⁷ For the importance of the 'mass platform' to Chartism see: J. Belchem, '1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform', in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (ed.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 269-310.

¹⁹⁸ Rogers, *Warp and Weft*, p. 74.

understood that the local agricultural labourers were vitally important to popular participation. In 1842 the lace operatives of Chard began industrial action with the Chartists providing social and political support. Both groups understood the importance of the local rural population and so:

the “turn-outs” were visiting the farm houses in the neighbourhood of Mr Cuff’s Factory, and demanding and obtaining large quantities of liquor... from this they returned into the town with increased number, and in an intoxicated state.¹⁹⁹

Demanding food and liquor from local elites was a traditional rural protest form that had been used throughout the early-nineteenth century.²⁰⁰ It was a public performance of idealised patrician-plebeian relationships and a favoured tactic of rebellious countryfolk. The industrial workers and Chartist of Chard, therefore, were well aware of their local surroundings and rural culture of combination. The adoption of this repertoire is demonstrative of the close links between rural and industrial workers in this region that continued well after Tolpuddle. By appealing to agricultural labourers the number of strikers seemingly swelled and on their return to Chard the ‘Chartists thronged the streets in groups.’ A deputation was formed and sent to the magistrates but before any agreement was reached ‘they [the crowd] proved uncontrollable’ and were forcibly dispersed by a combination of Yeomanry Cavalry and dragoons.²⁰¹ Not every rioter in Chard was a supporter of the People’s Charter, but these actions could still be presented as a popular mandate. Due to varying local legacies of resistance, the adoption of combination was different in every community. These protests illustrate that there was no stadial evolution of protest and unionism in these rural counties, nor was there a singular or monolithic culture of combination.

The legacy of the FSAL in Dorset is complicated and contradictory, serving to both empower and cripple subsequent collective action. In the immediate aftermath of the Martyrs’ arrest, local landscapes and customary protest repertoires allowed members of the FSAL to avoid prosecution. During this period of intense persecution, there were no sharp distinctions between overt and covert resistance, with violent actions closely accompanying polite legal

¹⁹⁹ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 9 October 1842.

²⁰⁰ See above also: Randall, “Luddism of the Poor”, pp. 41-61; Jones, ‘Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations’, pp. 272-91

²⁰¹ *Taunton Courier*, 31 August 1842.

challenges.²⁰² Combinations and wage disputes continued throughout the 1830s, remaining inextricably tied to the discourses and practices developed earlier in the century. The FSAL's legacy thus provided protestors with the mentalities and tactics needed to continue their struggles. Conversely, for movements such as Chartism these local cultures of combination proved to be deeply injurious. The failure of Chartist leadership to align their movement with the established mentalities and repertoires of rural Dorset crippled their expansion. These communities were not 'reactionary' or 'backwards', they were simply fighting their own battles with their own tactics.

Conclusions

If the Tolpuddle Martyrs were exceptional then it was only due to the remarkable account of their experiences left to us by George Loveless. The adoption of trade unionism by rural labourers in 1834 was not without precedent. Indeed, the decision to form the FSAL was reached due to a local legacy of resistance and an established culture of negotiation between agricultural labourers and employers. Admittedly, due to his faith, political views, family connections and physical locality, George Loveless may have been uniquely well-equipped to engage with this shared culture. Nevertheless, across Somerset and Dorset agricultural and industrial labourers engaged with institutions and organisations that inculcated the repertoires of combination into their everyday lives. Through criminal gangs and food riots, labourers were able to forge a series of tactics and worldviews that empowered their struggle for a 'fair' wage. The belief in the primacy of wages did not distinguish the FSAL from its forebears. Throughout the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the demand for reciprocity, moral economy and harmonious patrician-plebeian relationships had incorporated these demands, alongside new political discourses.²⁰³ Equally, the rural customs that protected agricultural labourers were not extinct by the early-nineteenth century, instead these rituals and beliefs proved to be incredibly malleable as the period progressed. It is difficult, therefore, to fully endorse the arguments of Wells and Scriven that there was a disjuncture in mentalities between Swing and Tolpuddle or that a 'new' unionist mentality developed in the early-1830s.²⁰⁴ The FSAL may have adopted unionism as an institution, rather than a repertoire, but its intellectual and

²⁰² Poole, 'Forty Years of Rural History from Below', pp. 1-20; Poole, "A Lasting and Salutary Warning", pp. 163-77.

²⁰³ Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', 209-71.

²⁰⁴ Scriven, 'Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath', pp. 1-23; Wells, 'Tolpuddle in the Context of Agrarian Labour History, 1780-1850', pp. 98-142.

organisational foundations remained firmly rooted in a long local history of resistance. Certainly, the failure of the elite in Tolpuddle led Loveless to become critical of landlord paternalism but this was commonplace in rural Somerset and Dorset. When authorities failed to do their ‘duty’ collective action was legitimised and, in this instance, unionism was adopted.

Building upon the work of Featherstone and Griffin, this chapter has demonstrated how an increasingly complex series of networks between rural workers and industrial labourers developed during the early-nineteenth century.²⁰⁵ In these counties, occupational groups frequently interacted and co-operated to achieve their goals. For agricultural labourers, the organisational skills and collective identities of industrial workers granted them a core to form themselves around, whilst the manufacturing trades valued the numerical strength gained by appealing to farmworkers. In this region, cross-occupational bonds remained a key element of combination throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. However, whilst it is important to acknowledge these networks and shared customs, imposing a singular ‘culture of combination’ upon the entirety of Somerset and Dorset risks romanticising these struggles. In every town and village, unique working conditions or legacies of resistance constructed different cultures of collective action. Attempting to impose a singular protest culture on these disparate communities eliminates the diversity inherent in rural life.²⁰⁶ Moreover, these totalising narratives diminish the important role played by middle-class groups such as the political unions. The mentalities and repertoires that underpinned the FSAL were not solely sourced from rural working lives. The political activity of the Reform Crisis allowed agricultural labourers access to a series of discourses and tactics that empowered their everyday struggles. As Loveless’ radical Methodism attests, rural workers were not hermetically sealed off from the ongoing developments of political and urban organisation.

This chapter has not sought to portray the rural working classes of Somerset and Dorset as a cast of radical unionists simply waiting for the opportunity to strike. Rather, it has challenged the notion that these men and women were unable to contribute to national labour movements.²⁰⁷ The demand for fairness and reciprocity was not incompatible with the ‘new’ campaigns for just working relationships in industrial England. These agricultural labourers

²⁰⁵ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80; Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

²⁰⁶ Reay, *Rural England*s; Reay, *Microhistories*; Thompson, ‘A Breed Apart?’, pp. 137-59; Bellamy, Snell and Williamson, ‘Rural History’, pp. 1-4; Charlesworth, ‘An Agenda for Historical Studies of Rural Protest’, pp. 231-40; Randall and Newman, ‘Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists’, pp. 205-27.

²⁰⁷ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England*, p. 75.

were empowered by their 'old fashioned' methods of protest and continued to deploy them throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, the following chapter explores how the rural customary calendar was utilised to protest local, national and even international issues. In this period, struggles over Bonfire Night or Shrove Tuesday began to spread far beyond the bounds of the parish.

Chapter 5: ‘The Town Appeared to Have Been Given Up to Bacchanalian Riot’¹: The Customary Calendar, Local Spaces and National Protest

This thesis has shown how rural rituals, cultures and customs provided popular protest with both its forms and functions. In this final chapter, therefore, the connections between the customary calendars of this region and the repertoires of resistance are specifically examined. It will be shown how these festivals and celebrations allowed the rural communities of Somerset and Dorset to voice their opinion on both local and national issues throughout the nineteenth century. Between 1780 and 1867, important dates, such as Shrove Tuesday or 5 November, allowed for ideal patrician-plebeian relationships to be performed and endorsed. As Thompson noted, ‘rulers and crowd needed each other, watched each other, performed theatre and countertheatre in each other’s auditorium’.² Although there were attempts by some local elites to curtail these festivals these attempts were neither uniform nor universally supported. The forms and functions of the customary calendar in these communities were thus typified by continuity, rather than change.³ As such, this chapter counters the argument that this period witnessed a general hostility towards popular festivity by the ruling classes.⁴ Additionally, whilst performances of a locally focused ‘norm of reciprocity’ remained vitally important to these festivities, rural mentalities were not geographically circumscribed. During the mid-nineteenth century, customary celebrations increasingly incorporated national and international symbols. Demands for fairness, reciprocity and harmonious patrician-plebeian relationships were not inexorably bound to a single parish. Through the emotive and engaging rituals of popular festivity, rural communities in Somerset and Dorset attempted to impose an ‘ideal’ moral world upon the entire nation, or even empire. Consequently, these festivals allowed countryfolk to not only voice their anger but also provided opportunities to performatively demonstrate how things should be.⁵ To this end, they were aided by notions of

¹ ‘Brief for the Prosecution on the Battle of Glastonbury Crown Inn’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, SHC, A/CMA/10/4/10, f. 4.

² Thompson, ‘Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture’, p. 402. For other considerations of popular culture and protest see: Storch, ‘Persistence and Change in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture’, pp. 1-19; R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

³ J.M. Golby and A.W. Purdue, *The Civilization of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England, 1750-1900* (London: Batsford, 1984), pp. 63-87.

⁴ Storch, ‘Persistence and Change in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture’, pp. 1-19; Storch, ‘Popular Festivity and Consumer Protest’, pp. 209-34; Howkins and Merrick, “‘Wee Be Black as Hell’”, pp. 41-53; Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 187-209.

⁵ O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 23-4; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 112.

‘carnavalesque’ misrule, a socio-cultural state where excessive behaviour and open resistance was momentarily legitimised.⁶ Furthermore, this chapter challenges the tendency of historians to romanticise or simplify the relationships between popular resistance and customary festivals. Rather than a binary conflict between agricultural labourers and local elites, these rituals united differing occupational and social groups in protest. All strove to compete within the bounds constructed by ritual and custom, not only against their ‘superiors’ but also against each other.⁷ Through raucous celebrations, rural people frequently adopted assertive social, cultural and political positions.

In older studies of nineteenth-century rural popular culture, narratives of a heroic struggle between traditional labourers and the ‘new order’ of capitalist elites dominated. The hostility shown to celebrations such as Shrove Tuesday or Oak Apple Day by magistrates, priests and landlords was, supposedly, part of an attempt to ‘condition the working classes into proper labour discipline’.⁸ Storch, for example, saw conflict existing between modernising elites and ‘an old style plebs... continuing to perpetuate many of the older forms’, whilst Howkins and Merricks argued that through the customary calendar rural rioters’ ‘anger was largely limited to the destruction of the symbols of the new order.’⁹ Most recently, Calhoun described the contest between rural tradition and industrialising England as a ‘zero-sum game’ whereby any victory for one side inevitably diminished the other.¹⁰ In such interpretations, the customary calendar becomes simplified into a pre-modern ‘survival’, under threat from the forces of modernity.¹¹ Additionally, with elite and popular culture constantly defined in opposition to one another, conflict between the two becomes inevitable.¹² The construction of a binary struggle between ‘working-class’ culture and ‘ruling-class’ reforming ignores both the continuity inherent in nineteenth-century popular culture and the adaptability of ritual.¹³ Moreover, as Griffin and Hutton have demonstrated, assumptions of a period of ‘classless’

⁶ Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 187-209; J. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 160-82.

⁷ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, esp. pp. 97-179.

⁸ Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 187-209; Walton and Poole, ‘The Lancashire Wakes in the Nineteenth Century’, pp. 100-24.

⁹ Storch, ‘Persistence and Change in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture’, pp. 1-19; Storch, ‘Popular Festivity and Consumer Protest’, pp. 209-34; Howkins and Merrick, “‘Wee Be Black as Hell’”, pp. 41-53.

¹⁰ Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, pp. 84-98.

¹¹ This is especially true in studies of folklore, see: W. Pooley, ‘Native to the Past: History, Anthropology and Folklore in *Past and Present*’, *Past and Present*, (Virtual Edition, 2015), pp. 1-15; P. Burke, ‘History and Folklore: A Historiographical Survey’, *Folklore*, 114 (2005), pp. 133-9; A.W. Smith, ‘Some Folklore Elements in the Movements of Social Protest’, *Folklore*, 77:4 (1966), pp. 241-52.

¹² For criticisms of this view in the context of Early Modern England see: Hindle, ‘Custom, Festival and Protest in Early Modern England’, pp. 155-78.

¹³ Golby and Purdue, *The Civilization of the Crowd*, pp. 41-62.

sociability in early-modern England misrepresents the social changes of later periods. The festivals and rituals of the customary calendar had always been prone to deep divisions and social conflict.¹⁴ Consequently, between 1780 and 1867 the construction of identity and the defence of popular custom did not adhere to simplistic or economically deterministic social categories. This chapter argues that through symbolic communication and the use of local space wider solidarities were established, often centring around notions of place and belonging.¹⁵ Whilst Griffin and Hutton have illustrated the divisions present in eighteenth-century popular culture, this chapter highlights the solidarities that remained in the nineteenth century. Attempts to control rural popular culture in this period were not uniform, with local elites frequently resisting changes alongside their plebeian neighbours. Despite being undoubtedly idealised, a desire to protect ‘reciprocal’ or ‘harmonious’ patrician-plebeian relationships continued to fuel both elite and popular resistance in these communities.¹⁶

The customary calendar provided an adaptive set of rituals that empowered a multitude of local and national protests throughout the nineteenth century. Through a shared ‘language of custom’ protestors and authorities could communicate their desires to one another and the community at large.¹⁷ Subsequently, the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin have remained influential in examinations of festival and protest. In his study of early-modern carnivals, Bakhtin argued that hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions were all temporarily suspended and replaced by new forms of communication unburdened by etiquette and empowered by playful forms, laughter and parody. Furthermore, ‘carnival’ was not simply a deconstruction of the dominant culture but also promoted alternative ways of living, it turned the world ‘upside down’ and eliminated the barriers constructed by prevailing social hierarchies, replacing them with ‘a vision of mutual cooperation and equality.’¹⁸ Through the ‘symbols of inversion’ crowds challenged existing authorities during the brief windows in which protest was legitimised by the customary calendar. These acts of resistance thus simultaneously rejected

¹⁴ Griffin, *England's Revelry*, pp. 80-5; R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 121-86.

¹⁵ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 1-20;

¹⁶ For the counter argument see: Wood, ‘Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory’, pp. 233-54.

¹⁷ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-2; Walton and R. Poole, ‘Lancashire Wakes’, pp. 100-24.

¹⁸ M. Bakhtin, ‘Carnival and the Carnavalesque’ in J. Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 2nd Ed. (London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 250-9; R. Lachmann, E. Eshelman and M. Davis, ‘Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture’, *Cultural Critique*, 11 (1989), pp. 115-52; D. Georgiou, ‘Redefining the Carnavalesque: The Construction of Ritual, Revelry and Spectacle in British Leisure Practices through the Idea and Model of “Carnival”, 1870-1939’, *Sport in History*, 35 (2010), pp. 335-63.

the state's laws whilst also accepting them by remaining fixed by the calendar.¹⁹ However, whilst these theories help clarify the relationship between the customary calendar and protest it is crucial that historians avoid a utopian interpretation of 'carnavalesque' resistance. In these communities, festivity did not instantaneously eliminate all social, communal or geographic distinctions. During the festivals of the customary calendar local identities were often formed, remade or strengthened, generally through the exclusion of certain people.²⁰ The dual forces of inclusion and exclusion cut across social and occupational boundaries, in direct contrast to Bakhtin's vision of a battle between poor and elite. Equally, these ceremonies were not simply opportunities for 'transgression' or turning the world 'upside-down'.²¹ In many cases, rural people sought to re-establish traditional rights and customs that they believed were being immorally and unfairly curtailed. Thus, these 'carnavalesque' celebrations were not reversing social structures but restoring them to their correct position. Custom formed a discourse within which oppositional ideas could be legitimately developed and expressed. When couched in a language of festivity popular outrage was empowered and avoided the negative reactions of the state.²² This allowed rituals during the customary calendar to have enormous flexibility with certain performances being deployed to criticise both local and national institutions.

It would be misleading to suggest that the nineteenth century was the moment when politics was finally introduced to the customary calendar. As Cressy has repeatedly illustrated, the vitality of celebrations such as 5 November came from their utility as a vehicle for dramatizing current political concerns. The 'street theatre' of processions, placards and effigies naturally lent itself to the derisive depiction of political figures who were altogether unconnected with the event's origins.²³ Such actions were not merely idle outbursts of rage; by burning or defiling embodied representations of political authorities, perpetrators aimed to tarnish the figures reputation and demonstrate local opposition to their policies. Seeing a Prime Minister or Archbishop being committed to a 'mock execution' enacted a form of communal judgement

¹⁹ Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, pp. 20-4; Chadbourne, 'Rough Music and Folkloric Elements', pp. 176-94; D. Reid, 'Interpreting the Festive Calendar: Wakes and Fairs as Carnivals', in R. Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 125-53.

²⁰ For the power of local allegiances in rural England see: Snell, 'Culture of Local Xenophobia', pp. 1-30. For the importance of exclusion to custom see: Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20; Wood, 'The Place of Custom in Plebeian Political Culture', pp. 46-60

²¹ J. Santino, 'The Carnavalesque and the Ritualesque', *Journal of American Folklore*, 124:491 (2011), pp. 61-73.

²² Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 13-42. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 29; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; Wood, 'Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class', pp. 809-12.

²³ D. Cressy, 'The Fifth of November Remembered', in R. Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 68-90; D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stewart England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), pp. 141-55.

and defiled their image in front of the entire local community.²⁴ Furthermore, the political demonstrations conducted during these festivities were not meant to merely reflect local opposition but also enhance and empower resistance. O’Gorman’s work on effigy burning and political ritual has illustrated how these ceremonies were engaging and participatory events.²⁵ By kicking effigies and throwing stones, the crowds at these celebrations became active members of the political community. Through ‘carnavalesque’ actions the men of women at these celebrations could pass judgement on political individuals and voice disapproval towards their national conduct. During acts of festive violence, both simulated and real, the crowd could communicate their opposition towards any institutions ranging from the East India Company to enclosure. Although rural protests were ‘rooted in locality, belonging and exclusion’ this did not prevent the adoption of national mentalities.²⁶

Integral to these performances was the control of material space. The rituals of the customary calendar were far from unthinking products of ‘emotional contagion’ but a conscious effort to appropriate key local sites for the crowd.²⁷ Situated at the heart of the community, a bonfire in the marketplace or an oak bough tied to the church steeple physically demonstrated the unity of the local population and the continuation of reciprocal social relationships. For crowds and authorities, it was not simply a matter of what was being celebrated and how, but also of where. When members of the local elite attempted to curtail or control these events, it was their physical placement that was targeted first. By removing these celebrations from the centres of rural settlements, reformist elites sought to break the customary connections between these holidays and the local community.²⁸ Similarly, rural authorities feared the collapse of social and moral boundaries whenever celebrations were conducted ‘out of place’.²⁹ In these festive moments, the rural poor were able to momentarily dictate spatial practices and become masters of the street. The specific importance of certain sites, such as the marketplace, was based upon their cultural legacies within each community. This chapter, therefore, will demonstrate how the control of space was fundamental to the operation of these ceremonies and their eventual

²⁴ D. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 161-2.

²⁵ O’Gorman, ‘The Paine Burnings of 1792-3’, pp. 111-55; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 20-3; Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 275-7; Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales*, pp. 72-81.

²⁶ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, p. 275; Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

²⁷ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-50; Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 275-7.

²⁸ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 82-5; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 399-403.

²⁹ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 62-5.

repression. For a few hours every year, those who generally stood outside the formal mechanisms of power temporarily took control of their local environment.

The customary calendar was a lived experience, never static but instead constantly reshaping itself to fit the needs of the community. The following section, therefore, will examine how these festivals and rituals were used during communal protests between 1780 and 1867.³⁰ On these holidays rural people could forcefully demand charity and public performances of a 'norm of reciprocity'. In so doing, these ceremonies forged an 'ideal' moral world. Those who threatened this state were also denigrated and extricated through ritual punishments. A demand for fair and just social relationships, subsequently, continued to empower these festivities throughout this period. The chapter then examines how the rituals and celebrations of Bonfire Night were utilised to protest national and international political events. Through acts of 'disembodied pain' rural crowds communicated their views towards policies ranging from the Second Reform Bill to the Indian Mutiny.³¹ The final section thus explores the patchwork and uneven attempts to curtail the customary calendar in Somerset and Dorset. By altering the spaces of festivity and introducing 'organised' celebrations certain elites sought to assert their control over popular ceremonies.³² However, these changes were not universally supported amongst the rural elite, nor were the popular crowds merely passive traditionalists. By the end of this period, new tastes and demands amongst the rural working classes meant that many celebrations were altered from within, rather than without. The customary calendar was not a static survival from a pre-modern past but an adaptive series of repertoires and customs always willing to adopt new political, social and commercial elements.

Communal Protests and the Customary Calendar

The precise shape and nature of the 'English Customary Calendar' is not something that can be easily summarised. By the nineteenth century, each region had a subtly different customary calendar of important festivals shaped by social, economic and cultural developments. For the communities under consideration in this chapter the major celebrations were Christmas, Shrove

³⁰ See also: Jones, 'Symbol, Ritual and Popular Protest', pp. 34-57.

³¹ This was most prevalent at the Bridgwater 5 November Carnival: R. Evans, *Somerset Carnivals: A Celebration of Four Hundred Years* (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 2005).

³² See also: G. Moses, 'Passive and Impoverished? A Discussion of Rural Popular Culture in the Mid-Victorian Years', *Rural History*, 22:2 (2011), pp. 183-206; G. Moses, 'Reshaping Rural Culture? The Church of England and Hiring Fairs in the East Riding of Yorkshire, c. 1850-1880', *Rural History*, 13:1 (2002), pp. 61-84.

Tuesday, Oak Apple Day, Whitsun and Bonfire Night.³³ Crucially, during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the celebration of these holidays in Somerset and Dorset was influenced by new legislation. Between 1790 and 1840 both the government and employers carried out a campaign to restrict traditional holidays. The Factory Act of 1833 declared that Christmas and Good Friday were the only two days of the year, excepting Sundays, where workers had a right to be absent.³⁴ In the industrial areas of Somerset and Dorset these rulings were evidently followed. At William Stephen's flax and hemp factory at Pymore the workforce was allowed four holidays and four half-holidays per year. This included Good Friday and Christmas Day, whilst the other holidays were for local fairs.³⁵ As these events became rarer in rural communities, their importance increased for individual workers who now enjoyed less free time than before. Even before the Factory Act authorities in this region had noticed this change. In 1821 Reverend Jenkins of Axbridge recorded that disorder at the annual fair increased when employers stopped 'allowing them to partake in their other yearly diversions'. As a result, the crowd now 'behave riotously in the streets, some of them are said to expose themselves to modest women.'³⁶ Critically, for agricultural labourers working seven days a week was common, with work and recreation so closely related that they were almost indistinguishable. In many villages, the customary calendar was structured to allow ritual performances during or immediately following the farm's working day.³⁷ These important festive dates were in flux during this period but there was no simplistic extinction as celebrations remained flexible and adaptable.

For rural labourers, the customary calendar remained a source of financial support during some of the most difficult months of the year. Almost every holiday legitimised and encouraged gift-giving, treating or begging. Moreover, through public performances an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship and 'norm of reciprocity' was demanded and enforced.³⁸ At Christmas, 'wassailing' parties would parade the major farmhouses, requesting cider and money in return

³³ Reay, *Rural Englands*, pp. 115-42. For a comprehensive overview of the customary year, including many minor regional holidays, see: Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun*.

³⁴ Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p. 112; H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp 57-75.

³⁵ 'Mill Register and Schedule', Records of the Pymore Mill Company, *DHC*, D-293/A67a. See also: Bawn, 'Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Popular Order', pp. 176-7.

³⁶ 'Reverend Jenkins, Axbridge, 17 October 1821', Home Office Criminal Correspondence, *NA*, HO 64/1, ff. 151-3.

³⁷ Kerr, 'The Dorset Agricultural Labourer', pp. 158-77; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society*, pp. 15-31.

³⁸ Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, pp. 186-7; Scott, 'Hegemony and the Peasantry', pp. 270-81; Pocock, 'The Classical Theory of Deference', pp. 516-23.

for songs praising the occupant.³⁹ Similarly, Oak Apple Day saw groups travel through the village decorating the principal houses with oak boughs in celebration of the Restoration, later requesting payment for services rendered.⁴⁰ These customs were not merely opportunities for ‘formalized begging’, but were designed to be public demonstrations of a fair and just relationship between masters and men.⁴¹ As Mauss theorized, the act of gift-giving confirmed the societal positions and obligations of all the parties involved.⁴² On both Christmas and Oak Apple Day, the rural poor accepted and praised their social superiors, whilst simultaneously demanding a reward for their loyalty. When this ‘reciprocal deference’ was neglected, these customary celebrations also facilitated the punishment of those deemed to have acted ‘immorally’. On Shrove Tuesday, groups of villagers would travel to the homes of notable local residents singing rhymes and requesting pancakes in return. Those who refused were pelted with bags of soot and shards of pottery in a practice known as ‘Lent Crocking’.⁴³ These were not harmless pranks but serious attempts to inflict either ‘disembodied’ or actual pain.⁴⁴ In Compton Pauncefoot, Joseph Whitlock had his scalp ‘torn to shreds’ by a barrage of pottery after he refused to donate. Even after he had collapsed the crowd continued their assault ‘until they believed him to be almost dead’.⁴⁵ Often the threat of violence was enough to make uncharitable community members submit. Across Somerset ‘a stone is affixed to the handle of the door’ of anyone who refused to give food to beggars on Shrove Tuesday. Supposedly, this was enough to make them ‘give more than was requested’.⁴⁶ As with effigies, the presence of this stone threatened what might occur if the occupant did not change their ways. Thus, the begging rituals of the customary calendar were not simply focused on preventing deprivation.⁴⁷ These acts forcibly enrolled the entire community into public performances of paternalism, thereby constructing a ‘harmonious’ patrician-plebeian relationship.

Despite the arguments of some historians, during the nineteenth century ‘reciprocal deference’ continued to underpin the attitudes of both the rural poor and elite, with rural communities

³⁹ W.G. Willis Watson, *Calendar of Customs, Superstitions, Weather-Lore, Popular Sayings and Important Events Connected with the County of Somerset* (Taunton: Somerset County Herald, 1920), pp. 24-9.

⁴⁰ Oak Apple Day was celebrated on 29 May: Roberts, *The History and Antiquities of Lyme Regis*, p. 257.

⁴¹ For the economic exploitation argument see: Smith, ‘Some Folklore Elements in the Movements of Social Protest’, pp. 241-52.

⁴² Mauss, *The Gift*, esp. pp. 85-144; Heins, Unrau and Avram, ‘Gift Giving and Reciprocity’, pp. 126-44; Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*.

⁴³ *West Somerset Free Press*, 21 February 1863; *Western Times*, 24 February 1879.

⁴⁴ Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’, pp. 144-53.

⁴⁵ *Western Gazette*, 4 April 1863.

⁴⁶ C.H. Poole, *The Customs, Superstitions and Legends of the County of Somerset* (London, 1877), p. 10-11.

⁴⁷ Bushaway, *By Rite*, pp. 168-70.

remaining fiercely protective of their customs.⁴⁸ Thus, instead of being universal symbols, the rituals of the customary calendar were founded upon exclusion.⁴⁹ In Minehead, for example, locals were fiercely protective of their annual celebration known as the Hobby Horse. In early May each year a large wooden horse, operated internally by two men, would appear and lead the townspeople on a series of processions. Any travellers they passed on the road were asked to give money 'to the horse'. Those who refused were held upside-down and 'struck with an old boot ten times, the hobby-horse bowing solemnly at each stroke.'⁵⁰ As with the previous ceremonies, the Hobby Horse used physical violence to enforce a 'norm of reciprocity'. Furthermore, the local gentry seems to have actively supported these celebrations, ensuring its continuation during the early-nineteenth century. Each year the parade visited Dunster Castle, home of the Luttrell family, where they were 'given food and ale by the local squire' who also 'praised and stroked the hobby-horse'.⁵¹ According to the account books of John Fownes Luttrell, the family were also directly responsible for the proliferation of the festival. Each year they would pay 5s for the construction of the horse, eventually rising up to 10s 6d due to 'the high price of provisions.'⁵² This was not merely a member of the elite performing a role under duress, without Luttrell the Hobby Horse would not have existed. Both elite and poor were thus united through these ritual performances of a patrician-plebeian relationship. However, this camaraderie was not extended to those from outside the parish. Any 'foreigner' who approached the horse was assaulted. Similarly:

It was once taken to Porlock, and the Porlock men set upon the Minehead party and beat them and took their 'horse' and hung in up on the top of the church steeple, to the derision of Minehead folk.⁵³

Consequently, the Hobby Horse was not a universal receptacle for the patrician-plebeian relationship. In demanding charity from their social superiors these townspeople were reinforcing an ideal moral world, but only for a select group. Although the Horse united patrician and plebeian locally this customary celebration was used to distinguish Minehead

⁴⁸ See also: Randall and Newman, 'Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists', pp. 205-27

⁴⁹ Snell, 'Culture of Local Xenophobia', pp. 1-30; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-20

⁵⁰ Watson, *Calendar of Customs*, p. 160-1. For an examination of the folkloric origins of the hobby horse see Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 81-94.

⁵¹ Watson, *Calendar of Customs*, p. 166.

⁵² 'Extracts from the Accounts Books of John Fownes Luttrell Relating to the Minehead Hobby Horse, 1787-1812', SHC, DD\TRANS/4/6.

⁵³ Watson, *Calendar of Customs*, pp. 160, 166.

from neighbouring communities.⁵⁴ This was not a binary matter of poor against elite, such rituals cut across social stratum and were fundamentally shaped by local allegiances.

Claims to represent ‘the community’ necessitated the drawing of boundaries and the silencing of dissident voices.⁵⁵ In rural Somerset and Dorset, the physical borders of a parish were key to constructing a sense of place and belonging, with those who transgressed during festive periods often being severely punished.⁵⁶ In Fordington, Christmas celebrations revolved around a performance by a local troupe of mummers. Apparently, this entertainment had occurred for so many years that it was considered to be ‘prescriptive right’ by the villagers. In 1827, however, this was threatened by a travelling group from a neighbouring parish, known as the ‘Bockhampton Band’.⁵⁷ Subsequently, on Christmas Eve the Bockhampton Band ‘attempting to cross a small bridge into the parish of Fordington’ but they were prevented by the mummers and others ‘amounting then to about one hundred.’ Dressed in their traditional costumes and wielding wooden swords the mummers assaulted the members of the Bockhampton Band, forcing them to retreat over the bridge.⁵⁸ For the mummers and people of Fordington, protecting their customary celebrations was intimately linked to local spaces. The physical presence of the Bockhampton Band threatened the social, cultural and economic structures that had developed in Fordington.⁵⁹ The operation of the customary calendar relied on symbolic and material exclusion, with the community being defined by the exclusion of ‘unwanted’ individuals. Through these actions the mummers of Fordington ensured that their central position in local society remained unthreatened.

Similarly, in the towns and villages of this region the customary calendar allowed locals to police their community and punish ‘immoral’ behaviour. Custom not only ‘permitted excesses’ but also provided an avenue for rural people to publicly chastise individuals, and systems, believed to have crossed local moral boundaries.⁶⁰ In Milborne St Andrews, a local landlord named William Read was subject to a number of assaults on Shrove Tuesday 1815 after evicting several families. A crowd gathered outside his home and began to pelt it with rocks until ‘around a wheelbarrow load of stones was thrown into the informant’s house.’ When Read

⁵⁴ Bushaway, “‘Things Said or Sung a Thousand Times’”, pp. 260-1; Wood, “‘Some banglyng about the customes’”, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁵ Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*, pp. 107-9.

⁵⁶ Fletcher, ‘The Parish Boundary’, pp. 177-96; Whyte, ‘Landscape, Memory and Custom’, pp. 166-86.

⁵⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 24 January 1828.

⁵⁸ ‘Information of James Charles, William Keates and John Hardy’ Dorset Quarter Session Rolls, Epiphany 1828, *DHC*.

⁵⁹ Howkins and Merrick, “‘Wee Be Black as Hell’”, pp. 41-53.

⁶⁰ See also: Bushaway, *By Rite*, p. 182.

attempted to capture one of the rioters, he was told: 'if you don't go into your own house I will kick you in, for you have no business here in the street.'⁶¹ Due to his previous actions, Read had been exiled from the local community. Customs and rituals served to culturally and socially unite those who participated in them, by demanding that Read leave 'the street' he was thus physically 'othered' by the crowd.⁶² According to Read, the men pelting his house were working in shifts, returning to a nearby public house named the 'Cardinals Cap' every hour to be replaced with another party of men.⁶³ Such a system suggests that this assault on Read was a planned and well-organised operation. The riots and rituals of the customary calendar, therefore, were not sudden outbursts of emotion but part of a comprehensive plan to cleanse the community of those who had acted immorally. The 'carnavalesque' pretensions of holidays such as Shrove Tuesday allowed oppositional ideas to be forwarded without fear of repression by local authorities.⁶⁴ It is likely that the people of Milborne St Andrews waited for this moment to take their revenge after Read had evicted their neighbours, knowing that an official response would be unlikely. Moreover, when Read attempted to capture a few of the men returning to the 'Cardinals Cap' the 'stable gates were slammed in his face' by the owner of the establishment George Drake.⁶⁵ Evidently, this was not a binary conflict between rich and poor as Drake was also a tythingman who was supposed to keep the peace. As Linehan had argued, ritual punishments were conducted not only to condemn certain actions but to also to ritually cleanse a community of corruption.⁶⁶ In this regard, the assault on Read was deemed necessary by local authorities in order to protect the community. By evicting these families, Read had separated himself from the community and so, in turn, the crowd attempted to materially remove him.

It was Bonfire Night, however, that facilitated the most emotive demonstrations of local anger. By the late-eighteenth century, the burning of Guy Fawkes had been replaced in many communities by effigies that represented local hate figures.⁶⁷ Fundamentally, the effigy burnings and mock executions of Bonfire Night were designed to foster a response of fear in its intended victim. Through depictions of physical assault and depredations on embodied representations, targets were made to experience what Carl Griffin has described as

⁶¹ 'Informations of William Read', Dorset Quarter Session Rolls: Easter 1815, *DHC*, f. 1, 4.

⁶² See also: Göttke, 'Burning Effigies with Bakhtinian Laughter', pp. 129-44; Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 132-77

⁶³ 'Informations of William Read', Dorset Quarter Session Rolls: Easter 1815, *DHC*, f. 5

⁶⁴ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 167-8; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-2.

⁶⁵ 'Informations of William Read', Dorset Quarter Session Rolls: Easter 1815, *DHC*, f. 6

⁶⁶ Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 136-40.

⁶⁷ Cressy, 'The Fifth of November Remembered', pp. 68-90; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 141-55.

‘disembodied pain’.⁶⁸ Generally, during these burnings, the victims were people who had broken the community’s moral code, such as informants or adulterers. At Langport:

The effigies of two persons who had made themselves unpopular in the town were arraigned before one of the guys, and formally sentenced to be hung. A high gallows was then erected a little lower down Bow-street, where the two dummies were hung in chains, and afterwards burnt, amidst a shower of shots from pistols, cannons, &c., the noise of which was augmented by the explosion of sundry squibs and crackers, which had been fixed to the nether garments of one of the figures which was intended to represent a female.⁶⁹

The fireworks being attached to the ‘nether garments’ of the female effigy suggest that in this instance the victims had conducted a sexual ‘crime’. On these occasions, effigy burnings were designed to produce shame by making the private public through performance.⁷⁰ These effigies were burnt in public spaces, ensuring that the entire village could witness the mock execution. Equally, by conducting these rituals in the style of a trial the practices, costumes and language of England’s legal tradition provided these demonstrations of anger with key cultural foundations and a widely understood repertoire of rituals. These symbols and practices were a form of cultural shorthand, a public mode of communication that quickly established the criminality of the victims.⁷¹ This was not simply a visual process, rituals encouraged participation through a range of sights, sounds and opportunities. In Langport, this was achieved by allowing the crowd to rain a ‘shower of shots’ at the effigies. The purpose of an effigy burning, therefore, was not simply to demean and shame the victim but also unite the community.⁷² By assaulting these effigies, these celebrations demonstrated the unacceptability of the accused’s ‘moral crimes’ whilst also pre-emptively policing the rest of society.

Custom formed a discourse within which oppositional ideas could be legitimately developed. Whilst authorities often sought to suppress demonstrations or riots; by couching their protests in a language of punishment and festivity, local people could assault hated figures with relative impunity.⁷³ The strength of this belief in physically cleansing the community of moral dangers even led authorities to participate in mock executions. In Weymouth, 1809, Christopher Prior

⁶⁸ Griffin, ‘Affecting Violence’. pp. 139-62.

⁶⁹ *Western Gazette*, 8 November 1867.

⁷⁰ T. Scheff, ‘Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory’, *Sociological Theory*, 18 (2000), pp. 84-99.

⁷¹ Pickering, ‘Class Without Words’, pp. 155-6; Ingram, ‘Juridical Folklore’, pp. 61-82.

⁷² Götcke, ‘Burning Effigies with Bakhtinian Laughter’, pp. 129-44; O’Gorman, ‘Paine Burnings’, p. 126-7; Storch, “Please to Remember the Fifth of November” pp. 71-99.

⁷³ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-2.

was set to be burnt after informing on a group of mariners for smuggling. Prior attempted to prevent his mock execution and, with a local constable, gathered ‘several soldiers of the Second Somerset Regiment of Militia’ who were garrisoning the town. However, upon seeing the gallows erected in the marketplace, the constable and militia turned on Prior and:

threw dirt against him and smeared him with tan and flour and feathers and with many others ... drew him by force through several of the streets and tied a rope round his neck with which they dragged him along ... and when the informant was drawn by fierce men to the side of the harbour he [constable] cried out: “Take and throw the old bugger overboard!”⁷⁴

These commands were followed and Prior soon found himself swimming to the opposite shore. The participation of non-locals, the militia, in what was ostensibly a communal affair demonstrates the universality of a belief that effigies served to cleanse the community. Moreover, situating these celebrations at the heart of the community, the marketplace, demonstrated to observers that the entire town had turned against Prior. Through their grand constructions, the bonfire or scaffold, effigies seized public space and enacted the ‘towns’ judgement.⁷⁵ These sites also granted burnings legitimacy as the marketplace was the customary place for official punishments, such as the stocks. This seizure of physical spaces and meaningful places may have been the factor that swayed the constable, who was unwilling to oppose the townspeople’s decision. Crucially, Prior was both symbolically and physically removed from the community, with his expulsion into the harbour mimicking his effigies’ punishment. By gathering a crowd at a meaningful site these folkloric rituals placed a communal sanction on Prior’s punishment and consolidated a common view of the victim.

The ability for effigy burning to use cultural legacies and local spaces to enrol widespread support thus requires us to reconsider Storch’s argument that, after 1815, the vilification of local figures caused the elite to disavow Bonfire Night.⁷⁶ Such accounts construct an unnecessarily binary relationship between the poor and elite of rural areas and ignore how rural people could utilise ritual to overcome occupational boundaries.⁷⁷ In 1860, for example, Bonfire Night celebrations in Bridgwater were overtaken by demonstrations of disapproval towards a local carriage maker:

⁷⁴ ‘Information of Christopher Prior’, *DHC*, Dorset Quarter Session Rolls: Midsummer 1809.

⁷⁵ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Navickas, *Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 133-5.

⁷⁶ Storch, ‘Please to Remember’, pp. 72-3.

⁷⁷ Linehan, *Scabs and Traitors*, pp. 132-77

in a slow procession through the principal thoroughfares, preceded by the fife and drum band, came, borne along on the shoulders of four hardy sons of toil, a gibbet, a real gallows, on the beam of which ... was the strangled corpse of (apparently) a fellow creature. The effigy wore an apron, and under the right arm was fixed a paint pot, and in the right hand a brush – symbols of his occupation. A lighted candle was stuck between the lifeless lips of the criminal, enabling the spectators to read over the head of the guy the inscriptions “A traitor to his shopmates;” “The anonymous writer;” “Boss-eyed Joe” and the obscure wish “Do see me home safe.”⁷⁸

This was a purely internal disagreement between the carriage makers of Bridgwater, centring around an anonymous letter and a number of firings. However, through the use of this detailed and grotesque effigy, the carriage makers were able to transform their trade dispute into a popular local cause. Crucially, the description of this man being ‘(apparently) a fellow creature’ demonstrates the importance of the effigy itself. Rather than portray an accurate image of the hated workman, effigies of humans were designed to be as debasing as possible to demonize, ridicule and insult the victim.⁷⁹ For onlookers, the effigy ‘unmasked’ the carriage maker, exposing the evil traits once hidden behind his human body. Similarly, symbols relating to juridical ritual, in this instance hanging, are deployed. This not only inflicted disembodied pain on the victim but also placed him in his appropriate position in human regard, deserving nothing but death.⁸⁰ The use of space and sound were also meant to portray this event as a popular cause; the fifes and drums drew attention whilst the life-sized gallows being dragged down the street took over the town’s celebrations. Importantly, the effigy was dragged through ‘the principal thoroughfares’ ensuring that every person could witness it. As Griffin notes, the positioning of these rituals granted them legitimacy by placing them at the centre of the community. When a crowd gathered, therefore, it was reported that even ‘a number of respectable gentlemen took it upon themselves to beat the criminal with their canes’.⁸¹ Space, sight and sound combined to enrol the entire community, ensuring that an internal dispute gained support from across social stratum.

⁷⁸ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 7 November 1860.

⁷⁹ Göttke, ‘Burning Effigies with Bakhtinian Laughter’, pp. 129-44; O’Gorman, ‘Paine Burnings’, p. 126-7; Storch, “Please to Remember the Fifth of November” pp. 71-99.

⁸⁰ Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales*, pp. 79-81.

⁸¹ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 7 November 1860.

Equally, the customary calendar could also be used to condemn entire social systems. In particular, the rituals of Oak Apple Day allowed communities to resist attempts from local landowners to ‘unjustly’ control or curtail access to the landscape. As mentioned previously, Oak Apple day provided an opportunity for communal begging through the decoration of houses with oak boughs.⁸² However, the procurement of these branches frequently led to conflict between local people and landowners, with these ritual performances often reasserting rights of access within contested woodlands during struggles over the taking of wood for fuel.⁸³ In the morning, large bands of rural labourers would ‘go out in search of oak boughs which were cut down and placed against the houses of the villages.’⁸⁴ Their very presence in newly privatised woodlands served to contest any attempts by local elites to control these spaces. By acting out their customary rights of wood gathering on this festive day, the local poor also preserved their rights in future contestations over access.⁸⁵ In the town of Norton Fitzwarren, for example, entire branches of oak trees were seized and lifted in chains atop Norton Church.⁸⁶ Similarly in Lyme Regis local landowners fought a running battle ‘to prevent depredations from being committed on their trees by the apprentices.’⁸⁷ The presence of an oak bough or branch placed at the front of a house physically and publicly demonstrated that the inhabitants had successfully challenged the privatisation of local property, it undermined attempts by landowners to redefine bodies within these contested areas as ‘out of place’. As Scott noted, ritual provides an opportunity for retreat, if caught these labourers could simply use the customary calendar as an excuse for their transgressive presence.⁸⁸ Gaining access to a plantation challenged the accepted bounds of private property and, potentially, provided precedent for further legitimising access at a later period. Oak Apple Day thus facilitated performances wherein immoral uses of the land could be challenged, with the ‘ideal’ world championed and propagated through physical movement.

The customary calendar, therefore, provided more than mere ‘economic opportunities’, for these communities it was a source of both local identity and repertoires of resistance. It allowed communities to challenge unjust people and practices in their localities and construct an

⁸² Roberts, *The History and Antiquities of Lyme Regis*, p. 257.

⁸³ Bushaway, *By Rite*, p. 80.

⁸⁴ Watson, *Calendar of Customs*, p. 200-1

⁸⁵ For the connections between custom, law and repetition see: Lobban, ‘Custom, Common Law Reasoning and the Law of Nations’, pp. 256-78; McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 191-206; Aylmer, ‘The Meaning and Definition of “Property”’, pp. 87-97; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 749-51.

⁸⁶ *Taunton Courier*, 5 June 1867.

⁸⁷ Roberts, *History and Antiquities of Lyme Regis*, p. 257.

⁸⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. 167-8; Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-2.

alternative ‘ideal’ world. Through the deployment of rituals such as effigy burning, not only was the victim punished but the entire community was united against them. By both physically and culturally exiling disliked individuals from local spaces and places the town or village could be cleansed of their supposedly corrupt influences. The ‘universal language’ of the customary calendar, subsequently, saw local elites not only treating these raucous proceedings with a form of benign neglect but also actively supporting them. For rural people, custom thus formed a discourse within which oppositional ideas could be legitimately developed.⁸⁹ Moreover, the continuing presence of the patrician-plebeian relationship is revealed through these celebrations, with many elites eager to publicly demonstrate their paternalist nature. However, this ‘ideal’ vision was not one in which all aspects of differentiation and hierarchy were eliminated.⁹⁰ Instead, strict demarcations were constructed during these rituals regarding who was and was not allowed to participate and benefit.⁹¹ Through acts of violence the crowd ensured that reciprocal paternalism continued to be both publicly performed and regulated.

Bonfire Night, Effigies and National Political Protest

The strength of the customary calendar came from its adaptability and malleability. Since its establishment in the early-modern period Bonfire Night had provided opportunities for communities to dramatize political concerns.⁹² Subsequently, as an increasing proportion of the population of Somerset and Dorset became politically active so too did these customary celebrations slowly change. During the Reform Crisis, for example, political effigies became increasingly noticeable in Bonfire Night celebrations across this region. At Dorchester, a ‘body of partizans, who addressed the assembled in the great question then agitating the nation’ ended their speeches by burning Lord Wellington and ‘other Tory rogues’ in a great bonfire overlooking the town.⁹³ Wellington was also burnt outside of the Duke of Wellington Inn in Wellington following a ‘Reform Meeting’. Locals claimed the burning to be the ‘sport of a few idle boys’ but the timing of the burning, so soon after a local ‘Reform Meeting’ casts doubt

⁸⁹ Wood, *Memory of the People*, pp. 11-2.

⁹⁰ Georgiou, ‘Redefining the Carnavalesque’, pp. 335-63.

⁹¹ See Thompson’s comments of the selective and factional nature of ‘folk’: Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 508-15. For these debates in terms of political boundaries, inclusion and ritual see also: O’Gorman, ‘Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics’, pp. 161-86; O’Gorman, ‘The Paine Burnings of 1792-1793’, pp. 111-55; Rogers, ‘Burning Tom Paine’, pp. 139-71.

⁹² Cressy, ‘The Fifth of November Remembered’, pp. 68-90; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 141-55; Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 251-3.

⁹³ Mate, *Then and Now*, pp. 100-101; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 Oct. 1831.

upon this defence.⁹⁴ Consequently, this section demonstrates how the rituals of Bonfire Night allowed political protestors to spread their messages throughout these counties. Utilising their local customary repertoires, rural communities were able to connect their protests to national political networks and concerns.⁹⁵ Moreover, the introduction of new national, and international, symbols invigorated local celebrations by providing new cultural associations and protest forms. Rather than national rites ‘extinguishing’ local rituals, Bonfire Night in these counties consistently adapted and incorporated both elements.

Situated at the heart of the community, a burning effigy on Bonfire Night demonstrated the supposed unity of the local population against a political policy, actor or group. Furthermore, the parading effigies on 5 November was not simply a show of force but was also a knowing inversion of the civic and patriotic parades conducted by local authorities.⁹⁶ Conversely, the physical distance between the perpetrators of a political mock execution and its intended victim often meant that the ‘shaming’ that accompanied local burnings was not possible. In 1842, for instance, Sir Robert Peel’s effigy was burnt in the village of Bradford-on-Tone by Anti-Corn Law protestors.⁹⁷ Thomas Assheton Smith, a local gentleman, wrote directly to Peel expressing his sorrow at the ‘hideous’ and ‘grotesque’ effigies that had been burnt by the crowd. Peel’s response, however, was simple: the backlash in national newspapers against the burnings meant ‘I cannot regret having been burned in effigy, when the flames caused so gratifying a demonstration in my favour.’⁹⁸ We can see in this reply that a disconnection between Peel and the value sets of Bradford had undermined any ‘disembodied pain’ that the burning sought to inflict. Yet, unlike local moral burnings, this was not the goal of political effigies. Rather, the construction of ‘grotesque’ effigies of Peel served to expose his, supposedly, criminal political activities to the villagers of Bradford. In a similar manner to the strangled carriage maker, by transforming Peel into a malignant caricature his physical appearance was made to simplistically and immediately communicate the ‘evil’ nature of his policies whilst simultaneously degrading the man himself. Additionally, the theatrical nature of such an occasion attracted attention and encouraged participation. Peel was rowed down the River Tone whilst his ‘crimes’ were read to the crowd; he was sentenced to death by drowning but, when

⁹⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 30 November 1831.

⁹⁵ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

⁹⁶ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 133-5.

⁹⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 23 February 1842.

⁹⁸ ‘Sir Robert Peel to Thomas Assheton Smith, 19 March 1842’, Coker Court Family and Estate Papers, *SHC*, DD\WHb/A/86.

it was discovered that he ‘would not die’, the villagers were called upon to cast his body into the flames.⁹⁹ Melodrama and crowd participation enraptured the audience.¹⁰⁰ Whilst Peel may not have worried about his depiction in this small rural village, these rituals served to clearly associate his stance on the Corn Laws with criminality and, through spectacle, enrol support for the movement locally.

Moreover, the ‘politics of space and place’ were crucial to the operation of effigy burning. Both the procession that preceded a burning and the bonfire itself served to seize control of local space, allowing the crowd to depict themselves as the true representatives of the community. For instance, at Taunton in 1859 the burning of a politician led to a battle between authorities and the crowd for control over the town. The victim was a parliamentary candidate named Doble, who had gained the crowd's ire by being ‘both a voter and candidate’ and ‘loudly voicing his opposition to further reform’. Subsequently, a ten-foot-tall effigy of Doble was carried through ‘every major street’ whilst the following crowd swelled from three hundred people to over one thousand. Through their procession the crowd not only gained new participants but also demonstrated their power and control over the locality. After failing to disperse the protestors through force, the police superintendent attempted to negotiate with the ringleaders stating:

“If you mean to have your lark, have it out, and go away out of the town.” Coates then turned towards me and said, “Shall us drown 'un? ... Let us go down as far as the bridge at Blackbrook, and we'll throw 'un over there.”¹⁰¹

Evidently, it was not so much the burning of an effigy that the Taunton police resented but rather its placement. By demanding they took their ‘lark’ out of the town the police were attempting to distance the crowd from their source of legitimacy, the people.¹⁰² Equally, as with the mock execution of moral criminals, the intended outcome for this effigy was exile. By throwing the effigy off ‘the bridge at Blackbrook’ the desire for the town to be rid of Doble was made clear. Ultimately, the police were ignored, and the effigy taken back to Taunton’s marketplace. Here the crowd took it in turns to swing from the arms of the figure until they were ‘swung off.’¹⁰³ Such behaviour threatened Doble through ‘disembodied pain’ whilst also mocking the police and undermining their authority. Effigy burnings were far from unthinking

⁹⁹ *Bath Chronicle*, 24 February 1842.

¹⁰⁰ Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, pp. 77-132; Poole “‘To the Last Drop of My Blood’”, pp. 21-43.

¹⁰¹ *Sherborne Mercury* 11 May 1859.

¹⁰² Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Navickas, *Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 133-5.

¹⁰³ *Taunton Courier*, 11 May 1859

products of ‘emotional contagion’ or moral panics, but a conscious effort to appropriate physical spaces for the crowd.¹⁰⁴ By utilising and adapting the customary culture of effigy burning, crowds both denigrated their victim and, through their processions and occupations, presented themselves as the ‘voice’ of their communities.

Throughout this period, the popular crowd continuously adapted customary repertoires to suit contemporary political concerns and fashions. Additionally, radical groups took advantage of Bonfire Night to challenge their exclusion from ‘official’ sites of political activity by either creating their own spaces or inverting spatial practices.¹⁰⁵ In Dorchester, for example, the popularity of Italian Revolutionaries in 1860 allowed one group to transform the traditional celebrations into a criticism of ‘tyranny’. Whilst the Pope was burnt as usual, on this occasion he was joined by a procession funded by ‘a local association of liberals’. Preceding the pontiff was a young boy crossdressing as ‘Young Italy’ flanked by men ‘dressed as Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel’. This was a coming together of traditional celebrations with a fashionable cause célèbre:

An immense concourse followed, several rounds of cheers being given for the liberator of Italy; and, after parading High, West Street and South Street, the effigy was taken to Mambury Rings and there burnt, the sides of that ancient earthwork presenting a strange spectacle, studded as they were with human faces, reflected by the lights of the torches and the squibs which were profusely thrown about. The police did not interfere, and the crowds returned after the "downfall" of the Pope, bearing "Young Italy" in triumph back again into the town.¹⁰⁶

Crucially, this celebration combined local historic sites with modern political demonstrations. Mambury Rings was an Iron Age Hillfort and so its prominence in the landscape and culture of Dorset lent the protests against the Pope local significance.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, by utilising the repertoires of Bonfire Night, the radicals of Dorchester had transformed a formerly ‘inert’ space into a site imbued with political meaning.¹⁰⁸ Whilst the ‘tyranny of the Bishop of Rome’ may have been condemned in particular, his mock execution also sent a direct and terrifying

¹⁰⁴ Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 275-7.

¹⁰⁵ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 405; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 241-2; Brady, ‘Space, Place and Agency’, pp. 29-48; Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 223-50.

¹⁰⁶ *Wells Journal*, 10 November 1860.

¹⁰⁷ For the local significance of Mambury Rings see: Hyams, *Dorset*, pp. 146-7.

¹⁰⁸ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 130-50.

message to any politician who sought to emulate the Pope's 'despotic actions' in England.¹⁰⁹ Contrary to the arguments of Storch, Bonfire Night's power was not sourced from its status as a 'survival' from a utopian past.¹¹⁰ Instead, its strength was sourced from an ability to take on new meaning and symbols that, in turn, empowered protest throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, local and national burnings mutually supported one another. In Yeovil 'Ex-Governor Eyre, of Jamaica notoriety' was burnt by the crowd alongside depictions of the town's Corporation. Eyre had become notorious for his brutal suppression of a Jamaican insurrection in 1865 and, despite the efforts of liberals such as John Bright and John Stuart Mill, had escaped criminal prosecution.¹¹¹ By burning Eyre and the Corporation together not only was the crowd demanding justice, but the Yeovil Corporation's rule was also likened to Eyre's inhumane governorship. These actions clearly worried the authorities as the Mayor condemned the celebrations, concluding:

there are some ugly features about this modern effigy-burning. If a man renders himself, justly or unjustly, obnoxious to the mob, he runs the risk of being held to contempt and ridicule on the next 5th of November, and this is a risk which most people would shrink from incurring.¹¹²

The increasing deployment of political effigies was beginning to worry local authorities and so the 'modern' effigy burning of a national or international political figure was directly contrasted with the 'traditional' burnings of Guy Fawkes or a moral criminal. Although this neat separation is a fantasy, local authorities evidently feared both the immediate disruption of these rituals and their ability to intimidate the ruling classes.¹¹³ The burning of Eyre alongside the Corporation thus served both national aims, informing people of Eyre's crimes and demanding his prosecution, and local goals, condemning Yeovil's Corporation and forcing them to change their policies. By mixing 'traditional' and 'modern' burnings the organisers of these rituals granted the crowd a local frame of reference to apply to national debates. In Somerset and Dorset, national political figures did not suddenly replace or overwhelm local effigies. Rather, these two strands of protest complemented one another. On these occasions,

¹⁰⁹ Poole, 'Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire', pp. 142-7.

¹¹⁰ Storch, 'Popular Festivity and Consumer Protest', pp. 209-34.

¹¹¹ G. Dutton, *The Hero as Murderer: The Life of Edward John Eyre, Australian Explorer and Governor of Jamaica, 1815-1901* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1977).

¹¹² *Western Gazette*, 9 November 1866.

¹¹³ Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 251-3; Cressy, 'The Fifth of November Remembered', pp. 68-90; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 141-55.

national political burnings utilised the rituals of local mock executions whilst local burnings benefitted from the comparison of local and national hate figures.

This shared symbolism extended not only to individuals but entire national systems and governmental policies. In 1867, at the height of a food crisis which swept across the South West, Bonfire Night celebrations in Shepton Mallet took on a deeply antagonistic tone:

The effigy represented injustice partly blinded, holding a scale in the left hand with a loaf of bread in it short weight, and a sword in the right hand, standing on a labourer lying with a spade by his side, and curled round the waist of injustice was a serpent. On arriving at the residence of the bakers a halt was made, and groans of short weight and such like given. Afterwards the procession returned to the top of the town, where the effigy was burnt.¹¹⁴

This was not simple revelry or license provided by the festive night but meaningful protest in and of itself. The extreme hardship of the times had caused the usual disapproval of Guy Fawkes or a moral criminal to be shifted onto both local bakers and a whole system of ‘injustice’ that oppressed and injured the labourer. This was a powerful rebuke of what the participants saw as the corrupt and immoral structures of society. Their choice of a symbolic representation of ‘injustice’ demonstrates that an effigy did not have to be human.¹¹⁵ Instead, by using this symbolic abstraction the criticisms of these labourers expanded beyond their locality, with a demand for reciprocal and just social relationships encompassing the entire nation. In a similar manner to a political banner, this giant effigy was meant to remake the spaces it travelled through whilst instantaneously informing any onlookers about the protestors’ cause. The customary calendar, therefore, legitimised and empowered these protests by providing them with a shared language that could be used to assault not only individuals who had wronged the community but also wider national systems. It was not a static holdover from a pre-modern age but a reflexive avenue of contemporary protest.

However, the desire to deploy national or international symbols during Bonfire Night was not limited to the popular crowd or political radicals. For those in power, introducing their own national images provided an opportunity to curtail the ‘disorder’ of Bonfire Night whilst also

¹¹⁴ *Shepton Mallet Journal*, 8 November 1867. For further explorations of the rioting which took place during this year see: P. Horn, ‘Food Riots in Devon, Somerset and Dorset in November 1867’, *Bulletin for the Study of Labour History*, 42 (1981), pp. 22-26; Storch, ‘Popular Festivity and Consumer Protest’, pp. 209-34; Sheldon, Randall, Charlesworth and Walsh, ‘Popular Protest and the Persistence of Customary Corn Measures’, pp. 25-45.

¹¹⁵ N. Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), pp. 215-31.

ensuring that the local poor remained loyal to both local and national authorities.¹¹⁶ In 1857, ‘a well-organized committee had been formed’ in the town of Bridgwater with the express purpose of arranging the first centrally managed Bonfire Night. Immediately, effigies of traitorous workmen or sexual deviants were banned in favour of an ‘instructive tableau for the townsfolk’. The ‘Committee’ was headed by three merchants employed by the East India Company, whose popularity in Bridgwater had sunk following the Indian Mutiny.¹¹⁷ The committee hoped to change this through a massive effigy depicting a mutinous Sepoy and the ‘leader’ of the Indian Mutiny, Nena Sahib:

Accordingly, life-sized effigies of the fiendish Indian governor and soldier were got up, together with an image of a recumbent English lady and her infant, whom the rascally sepoy was represented as in the act of bayonetting... The infamous hero of Cawnpore was placed in a sitting posture, beneath a canopy, and before a neatly-painted screen: he was described as quietly smoking his pipe, while in the foreground one of his minions was butchering the lady and her infant, whose dress was saturated with blood... four inveterate smokers were supplied with as much tobacco as necessary in order to cause fumes of tobacco-smoke to issue from the “monster’s” mouth.¹¹⁸

This was an incredibly unsubtle piece of propaganda, designed to inculcate a sense of fear and hatred of the Indian Mutineers on the streets of Bridgwater. Naturally, it was hoped that this would also lead to a rise in popular support for both the imperial project and the East India Company. The early-modern rituals of Bonfire Night were thus modified to support Imperial imagery and mentalities, with the crowd encouraged to assault the devilish foreigner and protect a white woman and her child. Simultaneously, this effigy sought to ensure local remained loyal to Bridgwater’s Corporation. The ‘tableau’ was paraded through the streets led by a procession of gentlemen and yeomen. When they passed the residence of the Mayor ‘three hearty cheers were given for his Worship’ who came out of the house and led the procession to the marketplace. Upon arriving the members of the Corporation ‘drew their swords... [and]

¹¹⁶ See also: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 70-9; Poole, ‘Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire’, pp. 142-57; K. Navickas, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 79-130.

¹¹⁷ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 11 November 1857; *Southern Times and Dorset County Herald*, 14 November 1857.

¹¹⁸ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 11 November 1857. For a summary of the Mutiny see: E.I. Brodtkin, ‘The Struggle for Succession: Rebels and Loyalists in the Indian Mutiny of 1857’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 6:3 (1972), pp. 277-90; S. Malik, *1857: War of Independence or Clash of Civilizations? British Public Reactions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-44.

the sanguinary Nena was then dragged down from his comfortable divan with the Sepoy scoundrel, who was hurled into an immense fire.’¹¹⁹ By using an Imperial ‘other’ the Corporation of Bridgwater thus presented themselves as true paternalists, defeating the foreign monster and protecting the town. As with the rituals of Bonfire Night itself, the patrician-plebeian relationship remained flexible and malleable throughout this period. In this instance, local elites and national policy were welded together.¹²⁰ Moreover, rather than committing local figures to the flames, which could disrupt local authority, the focus was shifted towards a ‘safe’ foreign opponent.

Yet in the years following this demonstration, Bridgwater’s seasonal revellers were not quietened. Instead, they became increasingly raucous and anti-authoritarian. As historians of political ritual have warned, participation in civic rituals should not be mistaken for an unthinking acceptance of its intended ‘lessons’.¹²¹ Indeed, in Bridgwater the message of this ritual was reversed, with Indian costumes become symbols of resistance against the local corporation. In the following years the streets of the town were supposedly filled with ‘a column of Indian soldiers’, ‘darkies with banjos, one or two Garibaldian volunteers, some fierce looking banditti’ and ‘a Fenian Brigade, all armed with shillelaghs.’¹²² According to Howkins and Merrick, the traditional disguises of carnival were meant to eliminate individuality and make their wearer one with the ‘communitas’.¹²³ In Bridgwater, however, these disguises did the exact opposite. By putting on these costumes and becoming the rebellious ‘other’, actions were permitted that would have been unthinkable for a ‘respectable’ representative of the community. In 1860 local newspapers complained that:

the carnivalists were all armed with sticks – great imaginary Indian clubs some, and of various sizes dwindling to the simple switch. And so these variously clothed and funny looking personages, who had evidently determined to enjoy themselves for once, paraded the different streets, their chief amusement being to annoy innocent and fearful people.¹²⁴

Carrying these weapons through the streets and threatening disliked employers or members of the local corporation was legitimised by becoming a violent caricature of an Indian Mutineer.

¹¹⁹ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 11 November 1857. See also: Vernon, *Politics and the People*, 70-9

¹²⁰ See further: Rogers, ‘Crowds and Political Festival in Georgian England’, pp. 233-64.

¹²¹ Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, pp. 177-214; Rogers, ‘Burning Tom Paine’, 139-71; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 80-102; F. O’Gorman, ‘Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics’, pp. 161-86.

¹²² *Bridgwater Mercury*, 9 November 1867.

¹²³ Howkins and Merrick, ‘“Wee Be Black as Hell”’, pp. 41-53.

¹²⁴ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 7 November 1860.

By assuming the guise of Indian Sepoys, these protestors also adopted their association with violence and rebellion. Consequently, local protests seized the images constructed by the East India Company and reversed them. Rather than becoming loyal British citizens committed to defending the mission in India, the people of Bridgwater became the Sepoy rebelling against tyrannical rule.

Through these costumes and parades, therefore, it is evident that Bridgwater was not merely an isolated rural town but part of cultural, political and social networks that spread across the globe.¹²⁵ In a similar manner to the championing of Garibaldi, these international symbols were used as a direct challenge to ‘tyranny’ at home. In 1867, for example, a ‘column’ of ‘Indian Sepoys’ marched down the ‘principal streets’ of Bridgwater carrying with them a number of effigies. At the head of the procession ‘were a number of grotesque depictions of those men who, by virtue of voting against Reform, had angered the mob’. In this instance, an international symbol of ‘freedom’, the Sepoy, was directly contrasted to the ‘tyranny’ shown by Parliamentarians who had voted against the Second Reform Bill. This was further complemented by a local example:

this time they had the effigy of a man hoisted on poles, and kept shouting, "This is the wicked King of Dunwear," this being nickname given to a certain farmer who appears to have rendered himself obnoxious to some of his neighbours in reference to magisterial proceedings in which he played a prominent part. This effigy, amid shouts of execration, was put upon the bonfire on the Cornhill and quickly consumed.¹²⁶

Bridgwater Bonfire Night, therefore, witnessed the melding of the local and the national. Mock Indian soldiers burnt local farmers who were disliked because they were magistrates and parliamentarians who had opposed parliamentary reform. Immoral authorities were criticised both generally, through the rebellious Sepoy or Garibaldian revolutionary, and specifically, through the burning of the “King.” Consequently, rural customs were flexible, adaptive and receptive to outside change and influence. Wood has argued that through rituals popular memory could generate a ‘usable past’ that legitimised claims in the present.¹²⁷ In a sense, the Bridgwater Bonfire Night provided a ‘usable Empire’ for local people, thus permitting their

¹²⁵ Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

¹²⁶ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 9 November 1867.

¹²⁷ Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. ix.

acts of resistance. These rituals and demonstrations were infinitely versatile, effortlessly combining local, national and international concerns into a single protest. For both authorities and protestors these symbols, costumes and images provided new opportunities to ensure that their 'ideal' world was imposed on the rest of the society.

As the century progressed, an increasing number of 'dangerous' or 'rebellious' ethnic groups, such as 'Red Indians' or 'cannibals' from the 'Dark Continent', would come to 'participate' in the festivities at Bridgwater.¹²⁸ In these communities, the increasing popularity of nationally focused effigy burnings on Bonfire Night was only possible due to the existing cultural foundations provided by the customary calendar. The sheer spectacle of a burning effigy made it a key repertoire for political protestors. These bonfires and grotesque effigies dominated the urban and rural environments in which they were placed. Consequently, maintaining the ability to conduct these mock executions within these rural towns and villages enabled protestors to not only enrol support through spectacle but also present themselves as the will of the community at large. In this sense, both local and national burnings were mutually supportive. Whilst the national political figures being burnt did not suffer 'disembodied pain', this was not the sole aim of these executions.¹²⁹ Instead, the spectacle of Bonfire Night rituals and their spatial dominance enrolled supporters and created a shared political viewpoint. The 'cleansing' of communities through effigies was not limited only to adulterers or informers but also political actors and concepts. Both local and national burnings were sourced from the same desire to banish malignant influences and reinforce the 'correct' moral order.

¹²⁸ *Frome Times*, 7 November 1866, *Taunton Courier* 18 November 1868. See Figure 5.

¹²⁹ Griffin, 'Affecting Violence', pp. 144-53.



Figure 5: Masqueraders Carnival Club 1892, ‘Savages from Africa!’¹³⁰

Taming Festivity from Without and Within

The campaign to curtail popular culture in the nineteenth-century countryside has been envisioned by some historians as a binary conflict between the rural poor and a series of grasping capitalist elites. Supposedly, the middle-classes sought to inculcate their values into the lower orders and enforce labour discipline by ‘taming’ socially disruptive or politically subversive festivals.¹³¹ As Golby and Purdue noted, these models of a ‘traditional society’ under assault overestimate the amount of change that occurred within popular culture during this period. Although transformation undoubtedly occurred, changes were neither uniform nor universally endorsed by the ‘middle classes’ of rural society.¹³² Equally, the romanticised

¹³⁰ Photograph sourced from: J. Millar, ‘When Carnival Clubs had Latin Mottos and they Carried Rapiers on the Streets’, *Bridgwater Mercury*, 16 October 2015.

¹³¹ Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 160-82; R. Storch, ‘The Problem of Working Class Leisure. Some Roots of Middle Class Moral Reform in the Industrial North: 1825-1850’, in A. Donajgrodzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 138-62; G. Tresidder, ‘Coronation Day Celebrations in English Towns, 1625-1821: Elite Hegemony and Local Relations on the Ceremonial Occasion’, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 15:1 (1992), pp. 1-16.

¹³² Golby and Purdue, *The Civilization of the Crowd*, pp. 63-87.

image of the rural poor as an essentially pre-modern class underestimates their changing tastes and desires. Such views also downplay the commercialised nature of rural society. Consequently, this section explores the attempts to curtail or alter the customary festivals of Somerset and Dorset during the mid-nineteenth century. It contends that in these communities many local elites still supported 'traditional' patrician-plebeian relationships. Alterations to the customary calendar, therefore, were slow and frequently contested. Moreover, during attempts to extinguish festive acts the control of space was of paramount importance.¹³³ Within many communities, conflicts thus centred around establishing the 'legitimate' use of public space.

The most common response to unwanted rituals by local authorities was to ban them or attempt to remove them from key local spaces by force. This can be seen in the numerous edicts published reminding local people about bans on fireworks and bonfires or gathering for 'riotous purposes.'¹³⁴ In the language of these proclamations, the rituals and ceremonies of the customary calendar are reconceptualised as 'backwards' or 'old fashioned'. By declaring that these customs were no longer a legitimate avenue for social expression, authorities undercut the ability for ritual to unite and 'speak' for the community. In 1864 townspeople in Bridport endeavoured to burn an effigy of a maligned Unitarian minister who had drawn the ire of the crowd by describing the town as a 'National Ulcer' and saying, 'something derogatory to a portion of the Town Council, as well as to the inhabitants in general.' It was thus determined that an effigy of the gentleman was to be burnt 'but this having come to the knowledge of the magistrates, the police were put on the alert, and every precaution taken to preserve the peace of the town.' It was declared by the local corporation that the streets were no place for an 'outdated' and 'backward' practice. The effigy was thus 'burnt before eight people in a field on the harbour road.'¹³⁵ In this instance, even civic pride was not enough to convince local authorities to permit the practice of effigy burning to continue within their community. Similarly, at Christchurch, magistrates swore in fifty new special constables on Shrove Tuesday to prevent 'Lent Crocking'. Consequently, when these men were approached by a group of labourers singing their customary rhymes it was declared that the magistrates 'had no patience for nonsense or riotous games.' A brawl ensued and a number of the 'Lent Crockers' were taken into custody.¹³⁶ These acts of repression worked by both removing the customary

¹³³ Griffin, *England's Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Navickas, *Politics of Space and Place*, pp. 133-5.

¹³⁴ For example, see: 'Poster on Illegality of Fireworks', Wells Various Notices and Official Affairs, 1834-1868, SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CE/20/34; 'Bridport Notices Against Fireworks 1852-1857', DHC, DC-BTB/PQ/4.

¹³⁵ *Sherborne Mercury*, 15 November 1864.

¹³⁶ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 9 November 1818.

celebration physically and undercutting its ability to ‘represent’ the community. No longer seen as a legitimate avenue through which grievances could be voiced the festivities of the customary calendar were increasingly dismissed as either superstitious nonsense or a degrading distraction. Furthermore, by banishing effigies burnings to the periphery authorities delegitimised the practice, removing it from the symbolic heart of their communities.

Yet revellers in Somerset and Dorset did not simply accept the physical dislocation of these ceremonies, nor their delegitimization. The bonfires and fireworks of 5 November allowed the poor to gain control over local streets and this was not a privilege they surrendered lightly.¹³⁷ Thus, conflicts surrounding the customary calendar did not seek to turn the world ‘upside down’ in a ‘carnavalesque’ fashion, instead they attempted to prevent local spaces from becoming privatized.¹³⁸ Following a series of riotous Bonfire Nights, the ‘principal inhabitants’ of Glastonbury endeavoured to enforce their control over local spaces and extinguish the festival. In 1841 they ‘paraded the town until midnight’ preventing any bonfires from being lit whilst simultaneously demonstrating their power. By marching through these spaces on 5 November, the local elite of Glastonbury were undermining claims from local people that this holiday granted them control over the streets. Controlling the principal thoroughfares not only prevented immediate disorder but quashed attempts by the local poor to redefine these spaces. However, in the following year:

In consequence of this decision great license again prevailed in 1842, and the more riotously disposed part of the people... considered that they had achieved a triumph over the sober-minded and orderly of the place and the most unbridled license and wanton injury to persons and property prevailed.¹³⁹

Crucially, the response to the patrolling and suppression of 1841 was not immediate violence, instead the crowd bided their time and waited until 1842 to reassert control. As Bakhtin noted, the customary calendar legitimised protest but it also circumscribed it, controlling when disruptive activities were acceptable.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, in 1842 the celebrating crowd completely transformed not only the physical spaces of Glastonbury but also its emotional and symbolic contexts. According to one witness, the town ‘appeared to have been given up to the

¹³⁷ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 399-403.

¹³⁸ Storch, “‘Please to Remember the Fifth of November’”, pp. 71-99; Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales*, pp. 184-91.

¹³⁹ ‘Brief for the Prosecution on the Battle of Glastonbury Crown Inn’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, SHC, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Bakhtin, ‘Carnival and the Carnavalesque’, pp. 250-9; Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, ‘Bakhtin and Carnival’, pp. 115-52

Bacchanalian Riot and Confusion of a Lawless Mob.’ The special constables who had assembled were driven off the streets and two houses were burnt down due to their curtains being set on fire by fireworks. The crowd specifically targeted the men who had paraded the year before, with lighted fireworks thrown into their faces and their doors used as fuel for the bonfire. Moreover, those who had not participated in the previous suppression were treated respectfully, with one elderly gentleman claiming that when he attempting to cross a street packed with rioters ‘a group of young men assisted me and made sure I was protected’.¹⁴¹ Consequently, the attempts by local authorities to remake spaces through suppression were not definitive.¹⁴² Spaces were constantly being made and remade and thus all the changes made in 1841 were reverted in 1842. By controlling the marketplace and bonfires, both authorities and popular crowds sought to control the identity of their community.

By 1843 both the civic power and popular crowd in Glastonbury were prepared for a struggle over the marketplace. Critically, this not a binary conflict between poor labourers and the ‘modernising’ middle classes.¹⁴³ Instead, the court documents reveal that whilst the crowd was primarily comprised of ‘labourers and assorted trades’ the leaders included John and Edwin Burgess, two local doctors, and Henry Kenslake a baker who had just been sworn in as a special constable.¹⁴⁴ The customary calendar cut across social boundaries, although their status corresponds with similar descriptions of ‘Bonfire Gangs’ in the South East.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, these middle-class men had embraced their role as local paternalists. Kenslake, for example, wore a ‘set of ridiculous whiskers’ whilst providing ‘roast oxen’ to the assembled crowds.¹⁴⁶ Not only was Kenslake confirming his caring nature by donating to the crowd, but his costume was also a source of ridicule and thus confirmed that this was a night of inversion. Despite previous struggles, in 1843 only one special constable arrived at the marketplace to keep order. The crowd, therefore, continued their usual celebrations until the appearance of two local farmers, James Chiswick and Thomas Cook, approached the bonfire. Both of these men were seized by the crowd and had lighted fireworks pushed against them. Cook was set on fire but Chiswick broke free and ran down the street.¹⁴⁷ These events should not be romanticised as

¹⁴¹ ‘Brief for the Prosecution on the Battle of Glastonbury Crown Inn’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 4; ‘Evidence of Joseph Smart’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 1.

¹⁴² Massey, ‘Entanglements of Power’, pp. 279-86; Whyte, ‘Spatial History’, pp. 233-52. For the constant ‘remaking’ of the landscape see also: Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99.

¹⁴³ Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community in Southern England’, pp. 382-405.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Brief for the Prosecution, 1843’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Storch, “Please to Remember the Fifth of November”, pp. 71-99

¹⁴⁶ ‘Brief for the Prosecution, 1843’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 2.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Evidence of Joseph Smart’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 4-7.

mere frivolity, instead such actions demonstrate how attempts to control the streets on Bonfire Night could become incredibly violent. By burning these men, the crowd were delivering a potent and emotive message that confirmed their ‘ownership’ of this space during festivities. For this one night, they were the ones who decided who could access Glastonbury’s marketplace.¹⁴⁸ Chiswick was thus hunted through the streets whilst ‘the mob sounded a hunting horn’ and ‘treated him like a deer or rabbit’. As a result, both Chiswick and Cook needed serious medical treatment.¹⁴⁹ In defence of their customary spaces and rituals, the crowd had inverted the power relationships of their everyday lives. These two farmers were reduced to a ‘less-than-human’ status, permitting wanton acts of violence to be conducted against them. Consequently, whilst the poor lacked legal sanction for their views, they were not without resources to enforce their own definitions upon public spaces.¹⁵⁰ By controlling these contested sites both the crowd and authorities sought to physically and symbolically enforce their vision of a ‘moral’ society.

In lieu of brute force, reformist local authorities commonly sought to replace raucous festivities with controlled or genteel affairs. Through new celebrations or events, the local poor were provided with ‘safer’ diversions. In Langport, for example, ‘Lent Crocking’ was replaced by ‘shroving’, aided by the introduction of the national school system:

The youngsters of the various schools were abroad earlier than they are wont to be... as soon as the lots had been drawn and the various victors proclaimed and crowned, processions were formed, calico flags unfurled, and visits paid to several mansions near the town, in order to collect money towards the distribution of confectionary and fruit, which took place in the afternoon on the following day. There could hardly have been a better time for “shroving.”¹⁵¹

This was a major change from the forcible extortion and demands of ‘Lent Crocking’. Processions, respectful begging and the civilized distribution of treats all inculcated the existing social hierarchy into the youth of the village. Crucially, patrician-plebeian relationships and the ‘norm of reciprocity’ were still being performed, albeit in a highly controlled state. Yet, rather than an assertive local poor demanding that local elites ‘treat’ them, local notables were now being respectfully asked.¹⁵² Concomitantly, changes to Oak Apple Day were designed to

¹⁴⁸ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5

¹⁴⁹ ‘Evidence of Moses Underwood’, Case of Riot and Assault at Glastonbury, *SHC*, A\CMA/10/4/10, f. 12-5.

¹⁵⁰ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, p. 108-9.

¹⁵¹ *Western Gazette*, 13 February 1864, 16 February 1866.

¹⁵² Scott, ‘Hegemony and the Peasantry’, pp. 270-81; Pocock, ‘The Classical Theory of Deference’, pp. 516-23.

undercut demonstrations of local moral ecologies. In Norton Fitzwarren, the owner of the local timber plantation began ‘providing the village’ with ‘oak leaves to decorate their homes and a few hogsheads of beer for their pleasure’.¹⁵³ Although the ritual decoration of the village remained identical on the surface, the poor were no longer ‘legitimately’ allowed to wander through the enclosed woodland. These changes defanged the previous ritual whilst instilling a sense of subservience on local communities. Oak boughs and oak leaves were no longer taken as a right but ‘generously’ given as a voluntary gift. In these instances, subtle transformations succeeded where physical repression failed, and the trappings of patrician-plebeian relationships were effectively utilised to undermine the independence of the local poor.

Emma Griffin has argued that across urban England ‘attempts to restrict bonfires and fireworks in public streets were rarely respected’.¹⁵⁴ In this region, such patterns are exemplified by the battles over Bonfire Night in Axbridge. Due to economic collapse in the late-eighteenth century, this town maintained many of the legal and governmental structures commonly associated with larger settlements, whilst it was in actuality ‘a mere village... entirely occupied by smallholders.’¹⁵⁵ As such, the well-documented conflicts over customary celebrations contained within Axbridge’s court and borough records provide a unique insight into rural social conflict. Contrary to the binary conflicts envisioned by national studies, in this local example both the agricultural poor and elite remained steadfast in their support for the customary calendar.¹⁵⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century, celebrations in Axbridge had garnered a reputation for debauchery and criminality. In 1836 fifty people were arrested for crimes including theft, pickpocketing, prostitution and indecency during one night of celebration.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, a regional scandal occurred in 1852 when a woman was murdered by her husband during the festivities, causing the *Bath Chronicle* to opine that Axbridge’s Bonfire Night celebrations had ‘long been notorious for the gross license which reigns among the lower classes... it is supposed then, that the deceased woman must have been guilty of some loose conduct.’¹⁵⁸ For these commentators, Bonfire Night Celebrations had either corrupted Axbridge or at the very least ‘degenerated into a positive nuisance.’¹⁵⁹ To resolve this issue,

¹⁵³ *Taunton Courier*, 5 June 1867.

¹⁵⁴ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 110-11

¹⁵⁵ Darby, ‘The Farming of Somerset’, pp. 132-4. See also: Gough, *The Mines of Mendip*, pp. 63-7; Toulson, *The Mendip Hills*, pp. 110-5.

¹⁵⁶ For these studies see: Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 187-209; Walton and Poole, ‘The Lancashire Wakes in the Nineteenth Century’, pp. 100-24; Moses, ‘Reshaping Rural Culture?’, pp. 61-84.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Examination of Charlotte Bridgewood, 1836’; ‘Recognisances of 5 November 1836’, Records Relating to Festivals and Fairs in Axbridge, SHC, D\B\AX/38/30.

¹⁵⁸ *Bath Chronicle*, 1 April 1852.

¹⁵⁹ *Wells Journal*, 16 October 1852.

the new vicar, Reverend Beadon, began a campaign amongst the clergy to curtail these festivities arguing that the day should be used to promote the ‘industry of the town’ with a fair that would sell ‘items of lawful merchandise.’¹⁶⁰ Although some have seen festivals and pleasure fairs as ‘open to assault’ during the nineteenth century, for the Axbridge Corporation such changes were unthinkable.¹⁶¹ In response to the 1840 petition, the Mayor replied that:

the Corporation having given the subject their best consideration desire me to inform you they are at a loss to understand the meaning and intention of the petitioners who signed the document: if however the intention be to do away with the festivities holden on this day the Corporation consider they have no authority to do so. The Corporation is of the opinion that if the respectable inhabitants of the town would exert themselves a great deal of that so many have complained about might be easily prosecuted and imprisoned if requested.¹⁶²

Crucially, this reply was not merely an attempt by the Mayor to shirk responsibility for policing Bonfire Night. By claiming that the Corporation had ‘no authority’ to interfere with the celebrations, the Mayor confirmed this day as one where ‘traditional’ authority was relinquished or inverted. Since the eighteenth century, Bonfire Night had been commonly perceived as a primarily plebeian festival and this was confirmed in the reply from the local corporation.¹⁶³ The legitimacy gained from being a time-honoured practice outweighed the supposed corruptive moral implications of festivities. Consequently, whilst the ‘moral reform’ of the nineteenth century was strong in some circles it was not a universal change.¹⁶⁴ In Axbridge, the Corporation was inclined to side with the ‘mob’ over the clergy.

Throughout the 1840s, Beadon committed himself to a letter-writing campaign with the occasional petition from the local clergy also included. In these writings, Beadon presents the extinguishing of these celebrations as a moral crusade where he would be ‘glad to find that the evil to which I have declared my duty to desist and the activity which needs to be suppressed.’¹⁶⁵ To some degree, there was a hint of paternalistic duty in Beadon’s campaign against the fair. In a similar manner to enclosure and common land, by preventing ‘corruptive’

¹⁶⁰ ‘Petition Against Festivals and Fair’, Records Relating to Festivals and Fairs in Axbridge, *SHC*, D\B\AX/38/30.

¹⁶¹ For these views regarding pleasure fairs see: Moses, ‘Passive and Impoverished?’, pp. 183-206.

¹⁶² ‘Mayor to Reverend Beadon, 29 February 1840’, Records Relating to Festivals and Fairs in Axbridge, *SHC*, D\B\AX/38/30.

¹⁶³ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 77-80.

¹⁶⁴ Moses, ‘Passive and Impoverished?’, pp. 183-206; Moses, ‘Reshaping Rural Culture?’, pp. 61-84.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Reverend Beadon to the Mayor of Axbridge, 12 March 1841’, Records Relating to Festivals, Fairs and Markets in Axbridge, *SHC*, D\B\AX/38/30.

practices the poor were to be saved from themselves. Moreover, in one letter Beadon declared that ‘the festival is to be regretted, when servants are removed from the control of a master or mistress’.¹⁶⁶ Although such theories have been condemned as simplistic, it would be wrong to completely discount the argument that extinguishing festivities provided the elite with a method of social control. Bonfire Night was an opportunity for the rural poor to momentarily invert the hierarchical structures of everyday rural life and for some local authorities this was unacceptable.¹⁶⁷ Unsurprisingly, Beadon’s public opposition to these festivities did not endear him to his parishioners. During the celebrations of 1848, Beadon discovered a group of men letting off fireworks and lighting a bonfire on the outskirts of the fairground. One man had also ‘unlawfully lighted a fire ball at the fire in the market place and ran through the principal streets.’ Upon seeing Beadon the men assaulted him and, whilst dragging Beadon with them, ‘paraded the market place with a lighted stick.’¹⁶⁸ By parading Beadon around the marketplace, these men who forcibly involving him in the rituals that he was attempting to extinguish. This was not merely an act of public humiliation, by ‘participating’ in these supposedly debauched and corrupt festivities Beadon’s ‘sacred’ stature as the local priest was tarnished, robbing him of the moral high ground. At the Quarter Sessions all of these men were given very small fines, with one man gaoled for a week.¹⁶⁹ The leniency of these sentences suggests that local authorities did not see Beadon’s assault and humiliation on Bonfire Night as a serious event. Consequently, the local poor and elite were not inevitably locked in an eternal struggle over the customary calendar. When examined at the local level the importance of customary relationships between patricians and plebes becomes readily apparent.

The spaces of Bonfire Night were critically important to both its practices and cultural legitimacy. In their studies of urban festivals, Griffin and Hutton both argued that by moving bonfires away from the principal streets and squares the potency of these performances was lessened by reforming authorities, allowing for their eventual elimination.¹⁷⁰ Conversely, in Axbridge it was after the bonfire had moved toward the town that festivities began to collapse. Originally, the bonfire had been constructed on the town’s fairgrounds near Moor Green. As

¹⁶⁶ ‘Reverend Beadon to the Mayor of Axbridge, 21 February 1841’, Records Relating to Festivals, Fairs and Markets in Axbridge, *SHC*, D\B\AX/38/30.

¹⁶⁷ Bakhtin, ‘Carnival and the Carnavalesque’, pp. 250-9; Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, ‘Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture’, pp. 115-52

¹⁶⁸ ‘Information of Thomas Williams and Richard Lewis, 10 November 1848’, Axbridge Quarter Sessions 1848-9, *SHC*, D\B\AX/36/5/61.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Sentencing of William Templer, Charles Hooper, Henry Greedy, James Jennifer and James Jeffery’, Axbridge Quarter Sessions 1848-9, *SHC*, D\B\AX/36/5/61.

¹⁷⁰ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 399-403.

seen in Chapter 1, the Green was a large piece of common land that had become economically and culturally significant for the people of Axbridge. Subsequently, when both the fairgrounds and the common were ‘converted into arable or tillage’ the celebrations could not be held ‘in the usual and accustomed manner.’¹⁷¹ In response, the bonfire was moved to a site closer to town in the hopes of encouraging popular participation, but by simply moving the festival the damage had already been done. The power of custom resided in continued practice. Thus, moving the bonfire critically undermined claims that this festival had remained unchanged since its inception.¹⁷² Equally, by moving the bonfire closer to the town previously supportive members of the local elite were alienated by the threat of disorder on their doorstep. In 1852 a meeting of the ratepayers resolved to ask the corporation to ‘take measures as may be necessary to discontinue the festival’. The meeting also used the recent murder to justify their complaints, as ‘one of our fellows is now under sentence of transportation, occasioned by the evils arising therefrom.’¹⁷³ In a rather heartless manoeuvre, this statement portrays the murderer as merely a victim of the ‘evils’ of Bonfire Night, reinforcing the narrative of Bonfire Night as a corruptive force. Critically, when the bonfire had been positioned in a distant field, local elites were happy to play the role of caring paternalist. Yet when the same festival was transported less than a mile closer to the town, fears of disorder led to a moral panic amongst the same men and women. It was the distance, therefore, that made these festivals safe for elite participation. In 1856, the Corporation agreed to the demands, stating that they were ‘not only protecting the moral character of the town but its interests also, as well as that of the vicinity.’ In the following years, celebrations were allowed to continue but became heavily policed with only a small bonfire, sponsored by the Corporation, being permitted.¹⁷⁴ Consequently, whilst the reformers had succeeded it had still been a hard-fought battle. In Axbridge, the downfall of Bonfire Night had been caused not by the demands of moral reformers but because of the spaces it occupied. A distant bonfire allowed the authorities of Axbridge to pay lip-service to the patrician-plebeian relationship whilst not actually risking their own safety or property. When the bonfire began to move closer, their attitudes rapidly changed.

Furthermore, many of the changes made to popular festivity came not from external pressure but from within the rural working classes. The tastes of agricultural labourers did not remain

¹⁷¹ ‘Axbridge Corporation Minute Book, 1823-1882’, *SHC*, DVB\AX/2/1/4.1, p. 27

¹⁷² Lobban, ‘Custom, Common Law Reasoning and the Law of Nations’, pp. 256-78; McDonagh, ‘Subverting the Ground’, pp. 191-206; Aylmer, ‘The Meaning and Definition of “Property”’, pp. 87-97; Griffin, ‘Becoming Private Property’, pp. 749-51.

¹⁷³ *Wells Journal*, 8 May 1852.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Axbridge Corporation Minute Book, 1823-1882’, *SHC*, DVB\AX/2/1/4.1, p. 220.

frozen in a pre-modern state throughout this period. As Golby and Purdue noted, commercialisation was not some malignant external force but a result of the desires of working people across England to take advantage of the nation's new wealth and institutions.¹⁷⁵ At Nettlebridge, for example, a teetotal festival successfully replaced previous celebrations on Oak Apple Day due to the demands of the local population. Sir Walter Trevelyan was convinced to fund the event after his steward reported that 'the weekly meetings of the [teetotal] society have been a remarkable success' and that many villagers were uneasy with the 'licentious conduct' of traditional celebrations.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, in 1856 a new celebration was planned, with many of the new events similar to those of an election feast or civic dinner.¹⁷⁷ For instance, as the villagers sat down to their 'comfortable tea, with plenty of bread and butter and rich plum cake' they were 'waited by the farmers and their wives and sons and daughters.'¹⁷⁸ As with election rituals, where the candidate served the local townspeople, this was designed to promote loyalty.¹⁷⁹ Through these public performances, an 'ideal' patrician-plebeian relationship was reinforced. However, the local rural labourers were never allowed to forget where political power in the village lay as 'a seat decorated with beautiful flowers in great form was placed at the head of the great room for Miss Trevelyan in which we had the pleasure of seeing her seated, previous to her partaking of tea.'¹⁸⁰ Serving as a proxy for her father, Trevelyan was the embodiment of caring and gentle paternalism. Historians have sometimes viewed the teetotallers as a movement that, by accident or design, sought to prevent disruptive behaviour and support the ruling classes.¹⁸¹ However, these performances and rituals were interactive experiences and the rural poor were not inanimate objects. After the dinner the community hosted a series of games on the village green comprising of 'donkey racing, skittle playing, and men and boys, women and girls, running for prizes.' The blood-sports, such as cudgels or cut-leg, that were usually practised on Oak Apple Day were nowhere to be found. Yet, as Trevelyan's steward admits, 'the society only managed the luncheon.' In Nettlebridge

¹⁷⁵ Rule, 'Methodism, Popular Beliefs and Village Culture in Cornwall, 1800-1850', pp. 48-70; Golby and Purdue, *The Civilization of the Crowd*, pp. 63-87.

¹⁷⁶ 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 15 June 1856', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 1.

¹⁷⁷ Epstein, 'Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression', pp. 271-91; Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty', pp. 75-118.

¹⁷⁸ 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 15 June 1856', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 1.

¹⁷⁹ O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies', pp. 79-115.

¹⁸⁰ 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 15 June 1856', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 2.

¹⁸¹ C. Reid, 'Temperance, Teetotalism and Local Culture: The Early Temperance Movement in Sheffield', *Northern History* 13 (1977), pp. 248-64.

tastes had changed and the raucous celebrations of this holiday were no longer accepted. According to Babbage's report, the substitution of the traditional fair for a teetotal festival seemed to have been a success with one labourer commenting that 'He did not now wonder at men turning teetotallers if they had such tea as he was then drinking.'¹⁸² On this occasion, the customary calendar had been altered by a combination of pressure from within and without.

In the following years, the Nettlebridge festival would continue to grow and gain attendees from across the local area. Attendance rose from 200 people in 1856 to 1200 in 1857 and finally 2000 in 1860.¹⁸³ By the latter date, the transformation had been completed with the main entertainment being a cricket tournament.¹⁸⁴ Admittedly, unlike the rapid change and commercialisation of the regions pleasure fairs, the alteration of customary festivals was not as widespread or as uniform.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, in Somerset and Dorset changing tastes slowly remade these rituals. In Bridgwater, for example, whilst the costumes of Indian Mutineers allowed new meaning to be attached to Bonfire Night it also led to amusements such as cut-leg and cudgel playing disappearing as popular focus was shifted towards pantomime performances around the bonfire.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, in Crimchard the freeform celebrations of bonfires and fireworks were replaced in 1842 with a more subdued or orderly arrangement. Rather than celebrating the Gunpowder Plot the recent donation of land for allotments by a local landlord caused labourers to change this day into a village fete. Whilst the 'village was bedecked in flower arrangements' the 'labourers, merchants and farmers gathered together on the new land' to share food and drink. A bonfire was eventually lit but it was a muted affair and accompanied by a local band playing 'stirring and patriotic music'.¹⁸⁷ In Crimchard, the festivities of 5 November were not suddenly assaulted by a grasping capitalist elite but altered to fit the needs and desires of the community. In this instance, the day provided an opportunity to celebrate a local paternalist gesture and reinforce communal identities. In his study of the early-modern period, Wood argued that customs and rituals helped define each community.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 15 June 1856', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 3.

¹⁸³ 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 17 June 1857', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 5; 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 9 August 1860', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 9.

¹⁸⁴ 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 17 June 1857', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 6-8; 'James Babbage to Sir Walter Trevelyan, 9 August 1860', Correspondence to Sir Trevelyan on Teetotal Festivals, *SHC*, DD\WO/54/11/60, f. 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ Moses, 'Passive and Impoverished?', pp. 183-206; Moses, 'Reshaping Rural Culture?', pp. 61-84.

¹⁸⁶ *Bridgwater Mercury*, 23 July 1857, 20 October 1859.

¹⁸⁷ *Sherborne Mercury*, 12 November 1842.

¹⁸⁸ Bushaway, "'Things Said or Sung a Thousand Times'", pp. 260-1; Wood, "'Some banglyng about the customes'", pp. 1-14.

This continued throughout the nineteenth century, but rural towns and villages did not remain static. As the period progressed the festivals of the customary calendar needed to remain malleable and adapt to local expectations, tastes and desires.

The ability for agricultural labourers to use the customary calendar to voice alternative political opinions and challenge authorities persuaded a growing number of the local elite to oppose these rituals. Yet, the extent of this desire to ‘reform’ the rural customary calendar has been overstated by many historians.¹⁸⁹ Whenever alterations did occur it was inevitably the spaces of festivity and ritual that were targeted first. Thus, battles over the customary calendar centred around negotiating the ‘legitimate’ use of rural and urban spaces.¹⁹⁰ In towns such as Glastonbury, the bonfire in the marketplace was not simply an excuse for ‘carnavalesque’ excess but reflected the ability of the local poor to enforce their customary rights and identities. Furthermore, this section has shown how it was often a small subsection of the rural elite that sought to extinguish the customary calendar. Often these reformers were met with indifference or hostility from other authorities. Amongst many rural elites, the patrician-plebeian relationship still held power and overt displays of paternalism were encouraged. The desire to enforce ‘labour discipline’ and order upon the rural population was thus not a binary divide between modernising elite and rustic poor.¹⁹¹ The changing attitudes of those who attended customary festivals were just as influential. The replacement of traditional games with sports such as cricket only occurred due to a combination of internal and external pressures. Movements such as teetotalism succeeded because the popular crowd were willing to change. These festivals were not static or vulnerable cultural icons but constantly evolving participatory events where the ability to perform the ‘correct’ society was paramount.

Conclusions

Between 1780 and 1867 rural communities across Somerset and Dorset used the customary calendar to enforce their ‘moral’ world. By remaking local spaces through rituals or conducting public performances, rural people constructed and reinforced reciprocal customary relationships. It is unfortunate that historians have commonly viewed nineteenth-century

¹⁸⁹ Storch, ‘The Problem of Working Class Leisure.’, pp. 138-62; Bushaway, ‘Rite, Legitimation and Community in Southern England’, pp. 110-35; Walton and Poole, ‘The Lancashire Wakes in the Nineteenth Century’, pp. 100-24; Howkins, ‘The Taming of Whitsun’, pp. 187-209.

¹⁹⁰ Griffin, *England’s Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 399-403.

¹⁹¹ Calhoun, *Roots of Radicalism*, pp. 97-8.

popular culture as a ‘zero-sum game’ where two monolithic classes clashed.¹⁹² Such perspectives ignore the various local solidarities and ‘vertical’ allegiances present in these towns and villages. The idealised patrician-plebeian relationship was popular because it supposedly benefitted both the local elites and the popular crowd, providing both groups with a system of negotiation rather than conflict. This chapter has demonstrated, however, that neither patricians nor plebeians were united in thought. The customary calendar was punctuated by heavily policed borders that defined who was able to participate and benefit. Those who were deemed ‘foreign’ or ‘immoral’ were publicly and violently excommunicated. In so doing, protestors demonstrated their moral codes to the rest of the population. The ‘ideal world’ thus constructed during Bonfire Night or Shrove Tuesday were not places where all forms of differentiation and hierarchy had been eliminated.¹⁹³ Indeed, concepts such as ‘reciprocal deference’ depended upon the inherently unequal nature of rural society for its legitimacy. Customary festivities were not merely pre-modern survivals kept alive by ‘backwards’ rustics but adaptive and effective repertoires that helped people communicate their frustrations to the wider world. During key rituals, such as effigy burning, individuals and communities were able to transform onlookers into the participants, not only empowering their specific worldviews but also propagating them. Bonfire Night, Shrove Tuesday and Oak Apple Day granted opportunities for protestors to utilise local spaces and places to challenge authority, whilst simultaneously providing an avenue for retreat under the cloak of festivity. The customary calendars of Somerset and Dorset survived not due to rural society’s inherent ‘backwardness’, but because these tactics were continuously effective.

These ceremonies kept alive the customs of the past, but they were not inevitably restricted by them. Although holidays such as Bonfire Night had been political from the outset, it was during this period of lively popular politics that national political figures were increasingly committed to the flames.¹⁹⁴ The rituals and performances of Bonfire Night provided groups from across the political spectrum an opportunity to inculcate their beliefs amongst the general population. By seizing local spaces and conducting emotive displays of disapprobation these rituals helped to consolidate a common view of a political figure, event or institution. However, the rural crowd did not accept these political acts unthinkingly but instead constantly tested, expanded

¹⁹² Storch, ‘Persistence and Change in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture’, pp. 1-19; Calhoun, *Roots of Radicalism*, pp. 84-98

¹⁹³ Bakhtin, ‘Carnival and the Carnavalesque’, pp. 250-9; Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, ‘Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture’, pp. 115-52

¹⁹⁴ Cressy, ‘The Fifth of November Remembered’, pp. 68-90; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 141-55.

or challenged their messages. At its most extreme, such as in Bridgwater, communities could seize the imagery of popular loyalism for themselves, turning them into anti-authoritarian symbols. The burning of an effigy was an inherently local phenomenon, its power sourced from transforming previously ‘tranquil’ sites into spaces where ‘disembodied pain’ occurred and authority was lax. Yet, throughout the nineteenth century, the customary calendar was supported by national and international networks of political imagery, social ideas and cultural forms. Even in remote villages these celebrations were not sealed off from the rest of the world. Festivities transformed physical spaces, but they were also deeply reliant upon them. Whilst there was no concerted or unified effort from ruling classes of Somerset and Dorset to extinguish the customary calendar, battles over the ‘legitimate’ use of local space continuously occurred.¹⁹⁵ By exiling ‘Lent Crockers’ or effigies to the outskirts of town reformers robbed these customs of their key repertoires and local support. Yet, previous perceptions of a ‘hostile’ ruling class and a ‘traditional’ working class are unsupportable. Many within the rural elite wished to continue supporting reciprocal patrician-plebeian relationships, whilst agricultural labourers were regularly discovering new forms of celebration that appealed to their individual tastes and desires. In these two counties, rural popular culture was neither static nor merely an excuse for ‘carnavalesque’ excess. Deploying these rituals and repertoires formed a key part of the ongoing struggle for respect and fairness.

¹⁹⁵ Griffin, *England's Revelry*, pp. 80-5; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 399-403.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined how material spaces, meaningful places and custom shaped the forms and functions of protest in rural Somerset and Dorset between 1780 and 1867. In so doing, it has provided one of the first applications of the ‘spatial turn’ to the study of rural resistance. The fields, marketplaces, rivers and woods of this region were not passive backdrops to the struggles of rural communities, but active and vital participants. Although historians have tended to focus upon ‘semantics’ and ‘representations’, the physical properties of these contested spaces were just as important to protestors as any symbolic performance. During enclosure, the new fences, hedges and walls did not merely represent a new rural social order but materially enforced it. These barriers directly impacted everyday lives within rural communities, disrupting people’s ‘taskscape’ and impeding customary performances.¹ Equally, the political exclusivity of the nineteenth century was enforced in rural towns by physically removing the unenfranchised from political spaces, such as public houses or the hustings. This thesis has demonstrated that by remaking these spaces rural protestors challenged existing exclusivities whilst simultaneously presenting themselves as valid political or environmental actors. Through bodily performances and violence, these sites were remade at a physical level, thus ensuring that onlookers could ‘read’ resistance from the land. Crucially, the rural landscapes of Somerset and Dorset were never static or complete, instead they were constantly being remade and renegotiated through rural everyday life. Focusing on the landmark moments of overt protest has obscured the daily struggles occurring in rural areas. For these protestors, everyday acts such as wood theft or trespass were used to keep customary claims alive and legally enforceable. Similarly, the repertoires of Tolpuddle and Swing were crafted through the working lives of agricultural labourers across these counties. Consequently, whilst historians should never neglect these major occurrences, there is an urgent need to delve into the day-to-day struggles of rural communities if we are to truly appreciate the mentalities and practices of rural resistance.

Moreover, the study of physical space needs to be complemented by examinations of meaningful place. Throughout this study, it has been shown how senses of place, identity and belonging were vital to rural resistance. These rural landscapes were made meaningful by generations of working lives, creating powerful emotional attachments between the rural poor and their local environments. Although older scholars dismissed these connections as

¹ Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, pp. 189-99; Whyte, ‘Senses of Place, Senses of Time’, pp. 933-6.

‘irrational’, historians of contested landscapes are beginning to investigate the emotive power of the landscape during rural resistance.² Feelings of dislocation, dispossession and betrayal inevitably followed acts of landscape change, ensuring that protests did not simply occur as a reaction to the initial changes but continued to flare up over longer periods of time. The tendency for historians to focus on the economic value of customary entitlements has led to overly mechanistic assessments of what these rights meant to rural communities. Being able to graze a cow on the common or collect fallen pieces of wood provided economic benefits whilst simultaneously defining local and communal identities. As physical embodiments of local history and heritage, these coppices, rivers and fields provided rural communities with a sense of being. This thesis has contributed to current scholarship by revealing how these meaningful places structured and shaped rural mentalities and repertoires of resistance. By destroying material impositions, rural protestors reverted the land to its correct and ethical state, ensuring that the customs that supported their local identities could continue. Furthermore, the demand for local environments to be treated ethically was shared by rich and poor alike. The foregoing case studies indicate that struggles over landscape change should not be presented as a simplistic conflict between capitalist enclosers and traditional labourers. The desire to protect physical spaces and meaningful places united disparate social groups and occupations. In this regard, Jacoby’s ‘moral ecology’ has proven to be beneficial to the study of nineteenth-century landscape change.³ Whilst scholars have remained reluctant to transfer the model away from conservation studies, its ability to unite ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ resistance had aided this examination. In these counties, each rural community possessed its own morally correct ‘way of doing’ that encompassed local spaces and natural resources. Through notions of reciprocity, fairness and sustainability, these vernacular environmental ethics legitimised reprisals against anyone who threatened their ‘good neighbourhood’ or local livelihoods.

However, whilst endorsing the ‘moral ecology’ this thesis has repeatedly warned against the creation of models that impose too rigid a framework upon rural resistance. Studying Somerset and Dorset reveals that many of the arguments made by nationally focused historians have obscured unique local practices and experiences of resistance. Models such as the ‘moral ecology’ and the ‘culture of combination’ risk romanticising eighteenth and nineteenth-century

² Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest*, pp. 152-3.

³ Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Conservation in Conflict’, pp. 24-38; Griffin and Robertson, ‘Elvers and Salmon’, pp. 101-3; Griffin, Jones and Robertson, ‘Moral Ecologies: Histories of Conservation, Dispossession and Resistance’, pp. 1-34.

protest, resulting in a binary conflict between labourers and landowners.⁴ By conducting a geographically focused study, this thesis has illustrated how these class allegiances and enmities were never concretely demarcated, nor were they uniform across the region. Within rural areas, complex webs of influence and interests ensured that no two communities protested in the exact same manner. Crucially, this thesis has not sought to argue that all national models are inherently misrepresentative. Instead, modern historians must pay closer attention to the ambiguities of rural life. In these counties, there were multiple ‘moral ecologies’ and ‘cultures of combination’, sometimes peacefully co-existing but also frequently competing with one another. In the field of urban protest history, historians of cities such as Manchester have powerfully argued against the generalisation of national experiences from examinations of the metropole. This thesis has illustrated that similar issues persist in rural history, where the South East retains a dominant status.⁵ In particular, the local elite of Somerset and Dorset have been neglected by historians of rural protest, their motivations and moral beliefs largely dismissed by studies ‘from below’.⁶ In this thesis, case studies such as the Conservators of the River Tone, the Reform Riots and Bonfire Night demonstrate that the middle and upper classes possessed their own protest repertoires, environmental ethics, and social moralities. There was no eternal struggle between rich and poor in this region. Rather, through customary performances, rituals and spaces, negotiation and compromise commonly occurred.

Proclamations regarding the death of the patrician-plebeian relationship have punctuated the historiography of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century England. An examination of Somerset and Dorset, however, reveals these claims to be partially exaggerated. Certainly, the ‘harmonious’ and ‘reciprocal’ social relationships repeatedly praised during rural protests were largely fantastical, but this did not lessen their influence on the mentalities and repertoires of resistance. Demands for public performances of paternalism and notions of ‘duty’, or ‘obligation’, were utilised throughout this period during political, social and environmental protests. The ‘norm of reciprocity’ and a desire to resurrect ‘harmonious’ customary relationships remained a key element of resistance between 1780 and 1867. In a noble effort to challenge claims that rural resistance was ‘backwards’ or ‘inward-facing’, rural protest historians have tended to disregard or diminish the importance of these ‘traditional’

⁴ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80.

⁵ Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*. For the ‘little South East England’ mentality see: Bellamy, Snell and Williamson, ‘Rural History’, p. 2.

⁶ See also: Poole, ‘Forty Years of Rural History from Below’, pp. 1-20; Poole, “‘A Lasting and Salutory Warning’”, pp. 163-77.

relationships. Yet demands for a resumption of patrician-plebeian relationships were not incompatible with ‘modern’ or ‘nationally minded’ struggles. As this thesis has illustrated, the ‘norm of reciprocity’ and ‘patrician-plebeian’ relationships remained central to rural protest because of their flexibility and malleability. In these counties, ‘moral ecologies’ and meaningful places were physically and symbolically inseparable from notions of reciprocity. Similarly, potential parliamentarians were expected to conduct paternalist displays of treating, not as acts of cynical bribery but as public confirmations that the unenfranchised were an integral part of the political process. Indeed, many rural elites publicly and powerfully confirmed their adherence to the patrician-plebeian relationship. Such support is evident during conflicts over ‘fair’ wages and the celebrations of the customary calendar. Although the popularity of such beliefs was declining, nationally and regionally, in numerous towns and villages pockets of paternalism remained. Through physical spaces, meaningful places and customary performances the patrician-plebeian relationship continued to hold sway.

The importance placed upon local spaces, places and customary identities by rural protestors has led some theorists to conclude that national mentalities and allegiances were inevitably stymied in Somerset and Dorset.⁷ However, the belief that these counties existed in a state of splendid political or social isolation is largely mythological. Building upon the research of Featherstone and Griffin, this thesis has argued that rural communities could access a series of social, political and cultural networks that stretched across the nation.⁸ During times of national tension, such as the Reform Crisis or Tolpuddle, calls for national change were understood through inherently local rituals and performances. In towns such as Blandford or Shaftesbury protestors used their control over physical spaces to perform their visions of how national government should be. Historians have often confused the repertoires of rural political protestors with their overall mentalities, with the continuation of physical violence supposedly demonstrative of limited worldviews and a reactionary nature. Yet, in these counties assaults and rioting were deployed as one part of a wider range of performances. When electoral rioters burnt the home a political agent, they were not criticising an individual but condemning an entire political system. In a similar manner, burning effigies on Bonfire Night helped consolidate a common view of a political person, issue or institution. Through violent performance, local physical spaces and customary rituals intangible concepts, such as Old Corruption, were made tangible and actionable. Consequently, the ‘local’ and the ‘national’ are

⁷ Most famously: Harvey, ‘Militant Particularism’, pp. 65-98.

⁸ Griffin, ‘Culture of Combination’, pp. 443-80; Featherstone, ‘Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms’, pp. 250-71; Featherstone, *Resistance, Space and Political Identities*, pp. 15-35.

not mutually exclusive; instead they are intertwined, inseparable and interdependent. The local provides spaces to perform as well as identities, customs and rituals that lent political protests their culture and political legitimacy. It is only by acting through local spaces that national change can be both imagined and implemented.

In Somerset and Dorset, the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods of intense political, social and environmental change. As this thesis has shown, rural communities understood the transformations that were sweeping across society and attempted to use their customs and rituals to protect established ways of life. Although constructed upon a series of exclusionary practices, the power of custom as a corpus of local law granted protests legitimacy dating back to ‘time immemorial’. Referencing customary law allowed even the poorest in society to adopt assertive positions against their social superiors. Through the examination of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, this thesis has demonstrated how rural workers in Somerset and Dorset were not utterly reliant upon outside help or acts of violence to ensure their ‘fair’ treatment. Instead, they could effectively use their customary rights, relationships and local institutions to challenge degrading working conditions. Appeals to custom gave individuals and communities the ability to mediate or negotiate change through local structures and understandings. Crucially, these protests should not be taken as evidence that the rural poor of these counties were inherently reactionary or opposed to progress. Whether it was the smashing of an enclosure fence, the storming of a hustings or the stoning of a disliked landlord on Shrove Tuesday, protestors sought to perform and impose an ‘ideal’ vision of society. By deploying ritual performances and customary discourses, acts of resistance provided a model for how society and politics should be. Through custom, ritual and violence protestors in these counties constructed an ‘exemplary periphery’ for the nation to follow.⁹

Further research may profitably expand the conclusions of this study into other regions of England. Indeed, although Somerset and Dorset occupied the centre of the South West, there are credible cases to be made for numerous other configurations with neighbouring counties such as Devon or Wiltshire. As a whole, England still lacks a detailed study of regional protest cultures and identity, despite the work already conducted on certain regions.¹⁰ Similarly, whilst

⁹ Geertz, *Negara*, esp. pp. 122-32; Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 86; O’Gorman, ‘Political Rituals in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, pp. 23-4.

¹⁰ Wells, ‘Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness’, pp. 121-6; E. Royle (ed.), *Issues of Regional Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); B. Deacon, ‘Regional Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century England: Discursive Terrain and Rhetorical Strategies’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 28:1 (2003), pp. 59-74.

this thesis has begun the process, more work is needed to fully incorporate the ‘moral ecology’ into nineteenth-century studies. In particular, the relationship between these vernacular environmental ethics and faith suggests some productive avenues for research. As examples such as George Loveless illustrate, faith in these rural communities was critically shaped by everyday experiences and landscapes. Moreover, whilst this work has traced a continuing belief in an idealised patrician-plebeian relationship until the 1860s, its continuation into the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries remains uncharted. More work is needed before the death of patricians, plebes and the ‘norm of reciprocity’ can finally be announced.

Overall, by introducing the ‘spatial turn’ into the protest history of Somerset and Dorset this thesis has revealed the complex and interdependent relationships between masters, men, animals and the rural landscape. Across these disparate rural communities, there was a common struggle for justice, fairness and reciprocity. Yet, despite these ongoing local conflicts the men and women of Somerset and Dorset did not turn away from national concerns and debates. Instead, they sought to physically and symbolically create an ‘ideal’ and ‘moral’ world, not only in their local community but also across the entire nation.

Appendix I: Regulations of the River Tone, 1825

Source: *Taunton Courier*, 23 November 1825

We, the undersigned, being the major part of the Conservators of the River Tone, in the County of Somerset, do, by virtue, and in pursuance of the power and authority given unto us, in and by an Act of Parliament, made and passed in the Forty-fourth Year of the Reign of King George the Third, entitled, ‘An Act for Explaining and Amending Two Acts, Passed in the Tenth and Eleventh Years of King William the Third, and in the Sixth Year of Queen Anne, for Making, and Keeping Navigable, the River Tone, from Bridgwater to Taunton, in the County of Somerset’, make the following Orders or Regulations, for the Government of the Boatmen, Bargemen, or others, in navigating Boats or Barges, or Floating Timber on the said River, viz:

That after the passing of each boat through either, and every, of the pounds or locks, and before the boat shall proceed on its voyage down the river, all the shuts and lashers belonging to the said pound, shall be closed by one of the boatmen belonging to, or having in charge the said boat.

That no shut or lasher, in either of the pound gates, shall be drawn, whilst either gate, in the said pound, remains unclosed.

That boats, on their way up the river, do enter the half-locks, in succession, as they arrive thereat, but no boat that does not reach such half-lock, within half an hour after the last preceding boat has entered (if such last preceding boat be waiting for an increase of water), shall be allowed to have such half-lock drawn or opened, until the said preceding boats shall have all passed through the pound next above.

That no half-lock shall be opened or drawn for a boat going down the river, whilst any boat is detained above the said half-lock, for want of sufficient water, to carry it up into the pound next above.

That from the Twenty Fourth Day of June, to the Twenty Sixth Day of September in each year, no boat shall traverse any part of the river between Curry Moor half-lock, and the town of Taunton, having on board a cargo of heavier weight than Seven Tons and half.

That no boat shall traverse any part of the said river, without having first been registered with the Toll Collector at Ham, and the name of the owner, as well as the registered number of the said boat, painted in black letters and figures on a white ground (such letters and figures to be at least two inches in length, on the bulk-head of the stern of the said boat).

That no boat shall be allowed to pass down through Ham Lock on Sundays, after nine o'clock in the morning, nor to pass up through the said lock on any part of the same days.

M. Blake

John W. Warren

Clitsome Musgrave

Samuel Norman

John Bluett

J.G. Musgrave

W.M. Beadon

D. Blake

John Clitsome

Richard Meade

James Bunter

The above Orders, or Regulations, were laid before the Justices of the Peace, assembled at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, held at Bridgwater, in and for the said County of Somerset, on Monday, the Eleventh Day of July 1825, for Examination and Correction.

Such Orders, or Regulations, are to be duly observed and kept by all persons, using the said river, for navigating Boats, Barges, and other Vessels, or floating Timber; and every person who shall offend against any such Orders, or Regulations, being thereof convicted before one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County, shall, for every offence, forfeit a sum, not exceeding Five Pounds, nor less than Forty Shillings, according to the directions of the said Act.

Appendix II: Table of the Inhabitants of Stalbridge and their Employees, December 1830

Source: 'Table of Inhabitants of Stalbridge Paying More than £20 Poor Rate, the Value of their Land and the Number of Labourers they Employ, 7 December 1830', Paget Estate Papers, *DHC*, D-ANG-B/5/42.

Names of Persons Occupying Lands in the Parish of Stalbridge Assessed at £20 per annum and Upwards on the Poor Rate with the Number of Labourers Employed by Each, 7th December 1830.

Tenants Names	Landlord(s)	Amount Valued. (Fixed by a Commissioner at About 4/5 ^{ths} of the actual value about 4 years ago [1826])			No. of Labourers at Present Employed		Additional No. Intended to be employed by Tenant		No. by Landlord		Observations
		£	s.	d.	Men	Boys	Men	Boys	Men	Boys	
A'Barrow Henry	Lord Anglesey	308	10	-	4	1	-	-	2	-	
Akerman James	Deferred under R. Burge	100	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	
Alfsey Sarah	Deferred under Lord Anglesey	56	10	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Burge Robert	Lord Anglesey	366	10	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	2 Men sometimes employed in draining Lord A. land
Benjafield John	Lord Anglesey	477	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	-	
Biss Daniel	Lord Anglesey	117	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	Occasionally
Brown William	Lord Anglesey and W. Taylor	137	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	Occasionally
Bawsey Peter	W. Bouches	275	4	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	
Bugg Robert	Lord Anglesey	79	4	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	Occasionally

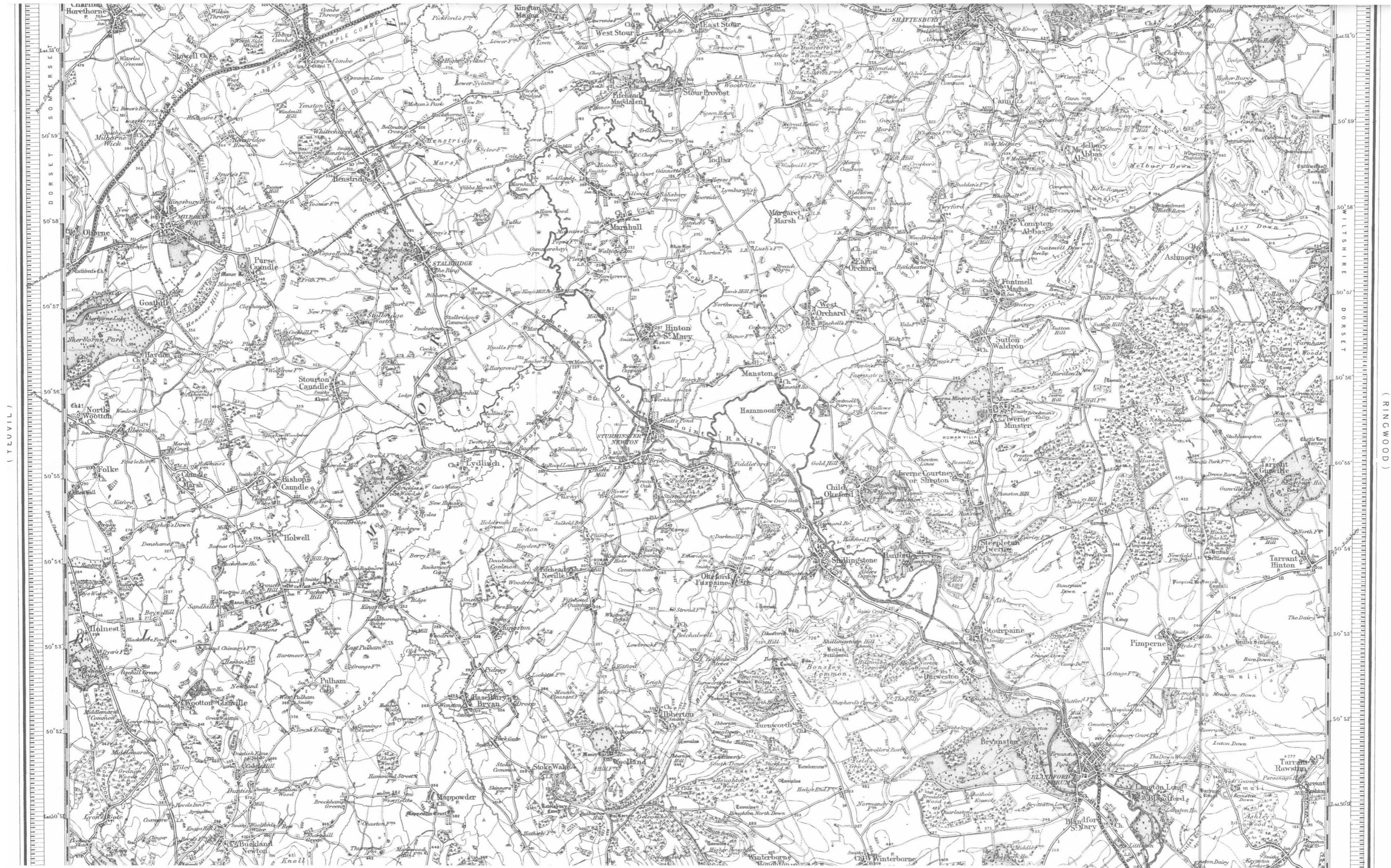
Bugg John	W. Galpine	59	10	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	
Bugg Anthony	Lord Anglesey	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bugg William	Lord Anglesey	21	15	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Caw James	R. Burge and W. Tite	91	10	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	
Chant John	Lord Anglesey	31	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Dyke Benjamin Jr.	Runs the farm of his father	50	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	Has 2 sons working on his farm
Buffett Elias	Lord Anglesey	112	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	
Drew John	Lord Anglesey	185	15	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	Children of his men who work
Dawe George	W. Fryer	243	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	
Eavis James	Lord Anglesey	75	12	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3 sons able to work. Willing to give up his land if needed to provide for parish poor.
Galfine James & Richard	W. Bouches	188	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Green Elias	Lord Anglesey	121	12	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	Wants a man
Green Edith	Lord Anglesey	91	12	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2 sons and occasionally employs a man.
Guster George	Mr. Wills and W. Bouches	87	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	Occasionally
Game Thomas	Mr. Stedman	319	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	Will employ men for making new roads.
Galfine James	Lord Anglesey	55	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	

How Thomas	Lord Anglesey, Mr Eavis and his own lifehold.	837	-	-	13	6 (3 Women)	-	-	4	-	
Harris Samuel	Own lifehold, Lord Anglesey	102	5	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	
Haines William	Lord Anglesey	50	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	Not present at the meeting.
Harris Daniel	Lord Anglesey	150	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3 Sons
Hughes Joseph	W. Bouches	164	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	
Kavil Charles	Lord Anglesey	175	5	-	4	2	-	-	1	-	
Lovell Robert	Lord Anglesey	261	15	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	
Lewis John	Lord Anglesey and Own Lifehold	67	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	
Moore Thomas	Lord Anglesey and Own Lifehold	128	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	All pastures
Moore William	Lord Anglesey & W. Bouches	327	10	-	4	2	-	-	2	-	26 acres W. Bouches
Minchington Robert	Mr. Brown	50	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	Occasionally
Ridouch William	Lord Anglesey	224	15	-	5	4	-	-	1	-	
Read John	W. Bouches	122	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Ryall Joseph	Mr. Thorne & Lord Anglesey	50	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Segram Thomas	W. Bouches	99	15	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	Not present at the meeting

Shepherd George	Lord Anglesey and Lifehold under his Mother	68	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	
Sulk John	Lord Anglesey	183	15	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	All pastures
Taylor Henry	Mr Cotton, Mr Dove and Lord Anglesey	255	-	-	6	2	-	-	-	-	
Taylor [Illegible]	Mr. Kelly	269	10	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	
Tulk Gen. Lewis Samuel	Lifehold under Lord Anglesey	105	15	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	
West James	Lifehold under Lord Anglesey	31	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	
Williams John	Lord Anglesey	21	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total:		7486	1	-	79	54 (3 women)	7	-	26	-	
Out of Employ:					44	31					
Engaged by Lord Anglesey and the Tenants:					33						
Revised Out of Employ:					8	31					

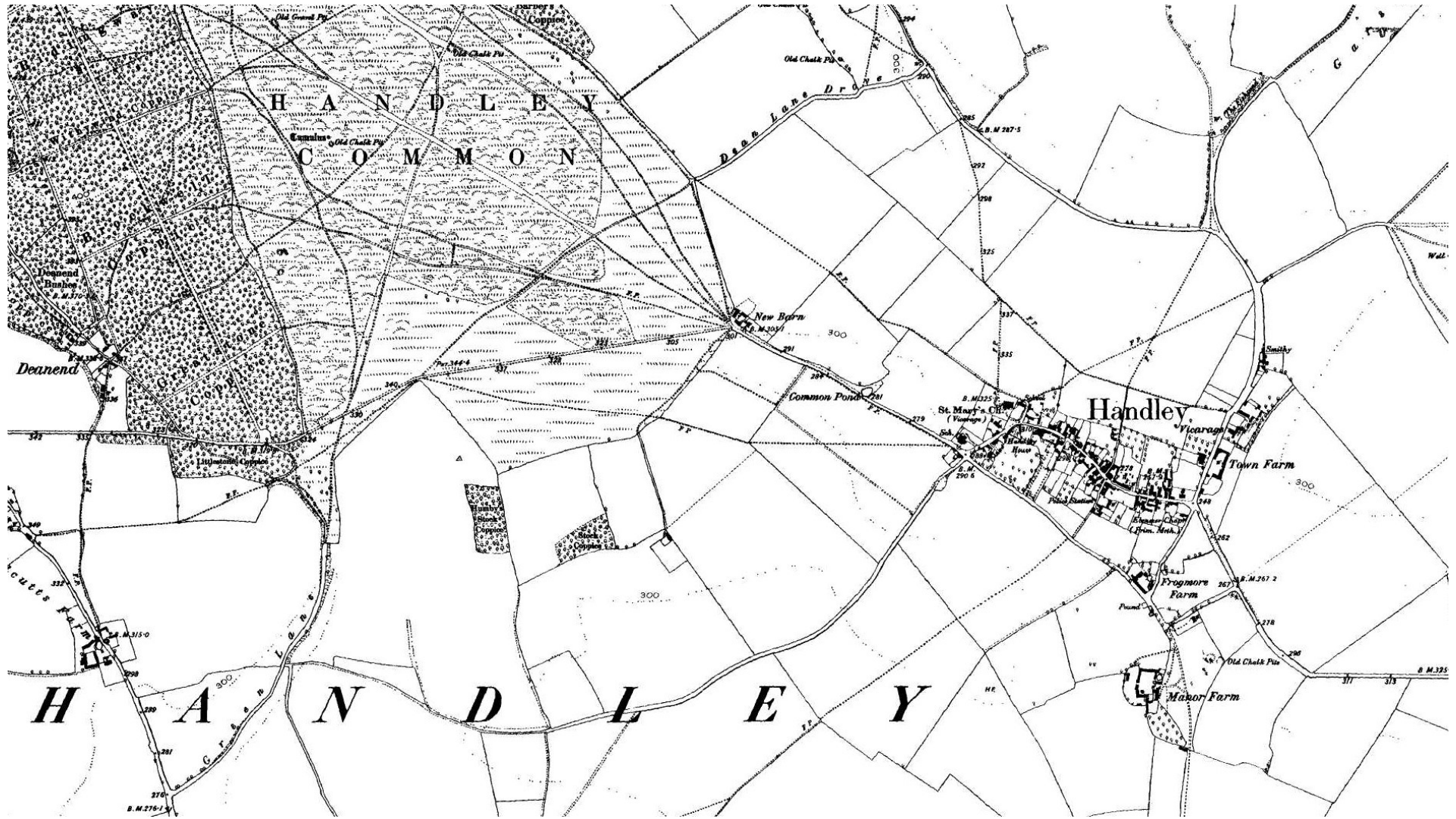
Appendix III: Vale of Blackmore Ordnance Survey Map, 1903

Source: Old Ordnance Survey Maps, *The Blackmore Vale, 1903* (Consett: Alan Godfrey Maps, 2006)



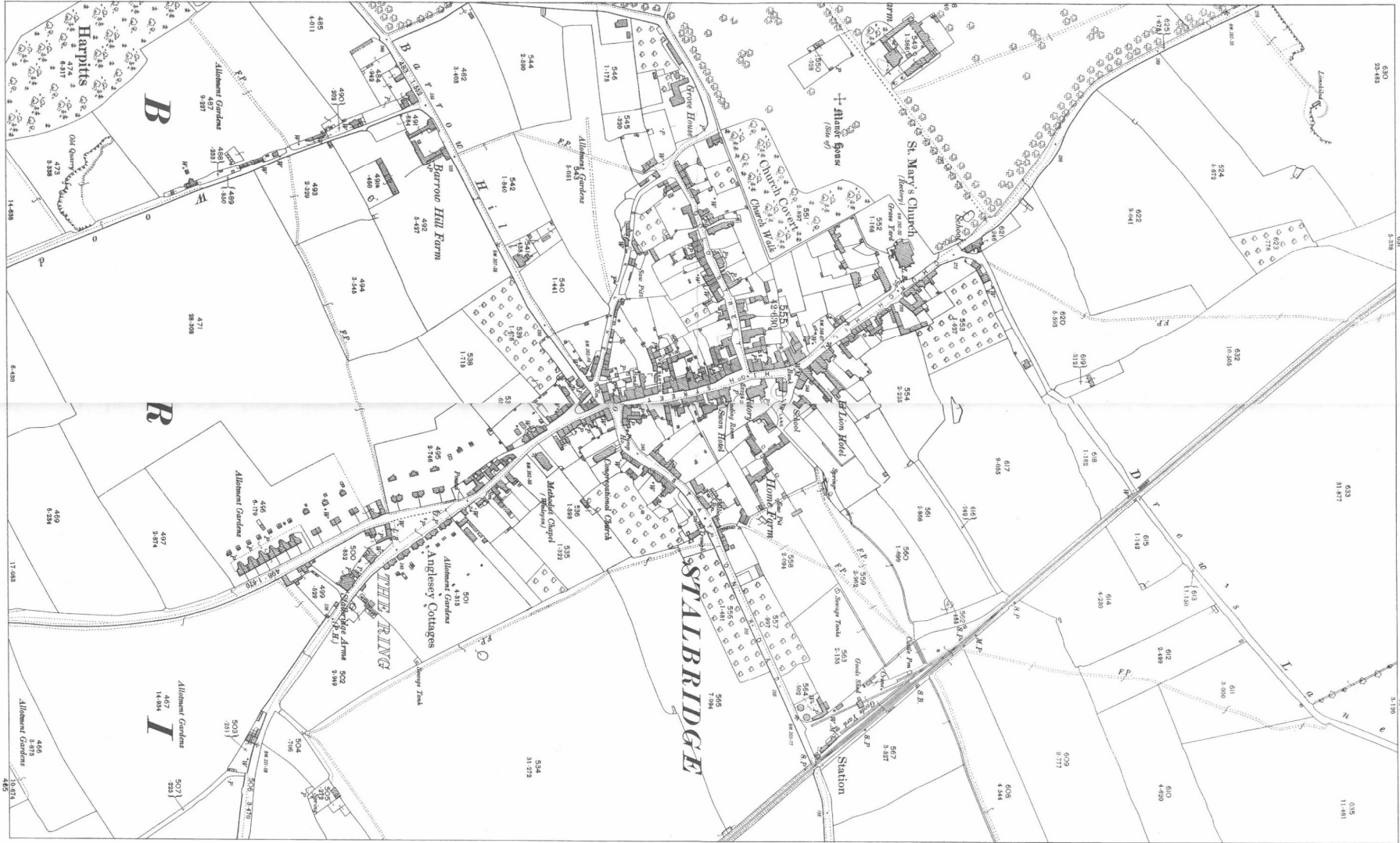
Appendix IV: Sixpenny Handley Ordnance Survey Map, 1900

Source: Ordnance Survey, County Edition Series, Ref. HOSM59420.



Appendix V: Stalbridge Ordnance Survey Map, 1903

Source: Old Ordnance Survey Maps, *The Blackmore Vale*, 1903 (Consett: Alan Godfrey Maps, 2006)



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