The University of Hull.

FAMILY AND LAND IN THE WEST OF IRELAND.

Being a thesis submitted for a degree of

Ph.D

in the University of Hull.

By

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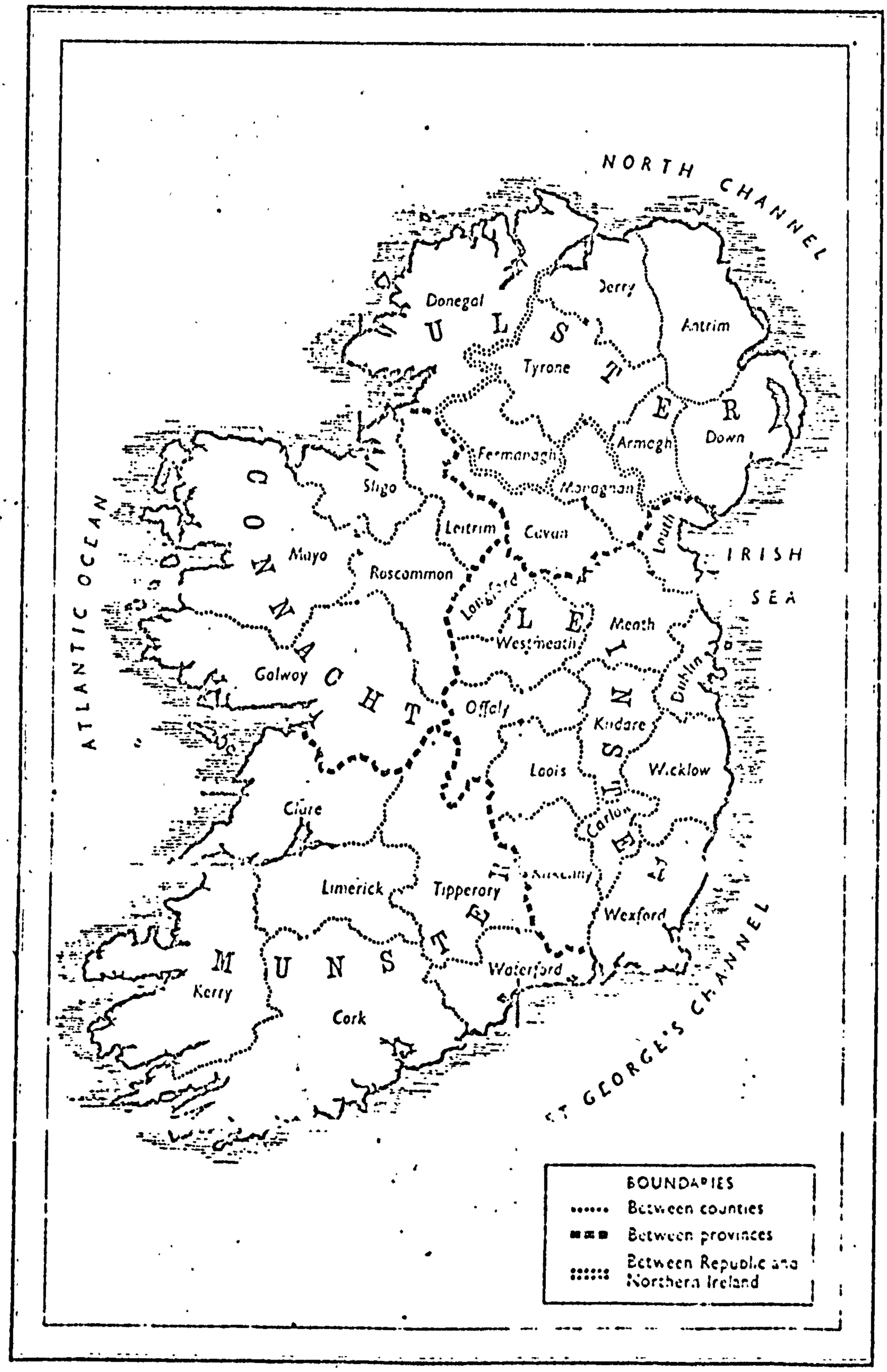
Political Map of Ireland.



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Introduction.

This thesis is about families and land in the West of Ireland. More precisely, treating land as a basic resource, it examines the social relationships which spring up around it; how land is acquired, utilized, valued, competed for, hoarded, bought and sold are central issues in the thesis. These issues are explored against the background of a small rural community in South Mayo. The thesis is an ethnographic statement, a picture of people in action at one point in time. It is not a'community study', but it uses a community as a setting or location for the exploration of problems of wider relevance. While the concepts used are drawn largely from sociology and social anthropology, the thesis straddles several academic fences into the domains of the economist, the social historian and the geographer.

While noting the comment by Bell and Newby that

> community sociologists often exhibit not only a high degree of subjectivity but also downright idiosyncracy and eccentricity, 1

I believe that the small-scale study remains an important and useful strategy in that it leads to insights into, and explanations of, problems not ascertainable by any other method. Further, the small-scale study very often suggests ideas for the explanation of general social relationships. The evidence supporting this position lies in existing community studies and the incorporation of their rich yield into sociological theory. However, many small scale studies would have benefited from a closer examination of historical processes and a keener awareness of the wider society in which the small community under study is situated. Thus an effort is made here to locate particular problems in their wider structural and historical setting.

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1 Bell, C., and Newby. H., Community Studies, London, Allen & Unwin, 1971, p.13.

The focus of this study is land and family in the West of Ireland; land because it has been the principal, indeed,the only resource in this region for centuries; family, because it is the unit of land ownership, production and inheritance. As the problem thus stated bears little resemblence to my original thesis proposal, I think it both useful and important to explain how the project evolved. What follows is a history of the thesis, from vague assumptions to written account, in the belief that:

> a real explanation of how the research was done necessarily involves a rather personal account of how the researcher lived during the period of study. 1,2.

The Study - Vague Beginnings.

In so far as it is ever possible to re-trace the beginnings of a research project, I would attribute this project to my first contact with the classic study of Irish rural communities, Family and Community in Ireland.[3]

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1 Whyte, W.F., "The Slum: On the Evolution of Street Corner Society", in Vidich, A.J., Bensman, J. and Stein, M.R. Reflections on Community Studies, London, John Wiley, 1964, p.3.

2 Fairbrother has recently written on this theme: "The research experience is embodied in the research report, in the organization of the material, the interpretation of the life history, and the quality of the relationship between the research worker and the people about whom the report is written...in what ever way the data is assembled, the research experience is a constituent element of the research report". Fairbrother, P., Review Article, 'Experience and Trust in Sociological Work', Sociology, Vol. II, 1977, pp.365-366.

3 Arensberg, C., and Kimball, S.I., Family and Community In Ireland, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, (first published, 1940).

My first contact with this work was through Frankenberg's interpretation in his Communities in Britain[1] and later I was to encounter the work itself. Arensberg and Kimball's[1] study had a special appeal in that I was born and had lived all my life just a few miles from the principal location of the study - Luogh in North Clare. My first impression was of a book extremely well written but giving a picture of community life unrecognizable in its monotonous regularity, its absence of tensions and conflict. Of course, the differences between my impressions of life in North Clare in the late sixties and Arensberg and Kimball's account could possibly be explained by changes that had occurred in the area since their study had been carried out. It was under this assumption that in my early post-graduate days, I attempted a formal re-study of Luogh, a venture which, for many reasons, was unsuccessful.

Later, when given an opportunity, through being awarded a Hull University Studentship, to undertake full-time research on a topic of my own choosing, I decided to embark on a study of a rural community in the West of Ireland focusing in particular on family structure and using mainly the techniques of participant observation. My attraction to the community study approach came in the main from my readings of Reflections on Community Studies and The Eclipse of Community.[2] While focusing on a theme - family structure - I hoped to show what many of the community studies had demonstrated - the interrelationships between the various segments of community life.

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1 Frankenberg, R., Communities in Britain, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1966.

2 Vidich, A.J., et al. op.cit.

Stein, M., The Eclipse of Community, London, Harper Row, 1960.

I began this research with the general intention of studying Irish rural family structure. My first year was spent in an attempt to focus this general intention. I began by reading most of the available literature on family structure in rural areas, studies of sex roles, power and authority. Much of the literature I found not to be suitable or sufficient for my purpose. I moved on to a consideration of rural community studies, the British studies by Rees, Williams, Frankenberg, Littlejohn, and Emmett,[1] and studies of "peasants" and "peasant society" in Europe;[2] and finally to an examination of the concept of "peasant" and "peasant societies" in general. This reading encouraged me to expand the scale of my inquiry and also focused my attention on some peculiarities of Irish rural social structure and attempts at its analysis.

On re-reading the anthropological and sociological material, the dominant influence of Arensberg and Kimball's study on all subsequent Irish work was evident. This essentially theoretical work had assumed the status of a paradigm in Irish sociology. Though some may have grumbled at the functionalist orientation of the authors, none had remotely challenged their ethnographic data. Thus later sociologists and anthropologists, accepting the account, had formulated their problems as follows: what happens to an isolated homogeneous community when it comes into contact with capitalist society? A worthwhile study of Irish rural community, it can convincingly be argued, would have to examine and perhaps challenge Arensberg and Kimball's work at both a theoretical and an empirical level.

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1. Rees, A., Life in a Welsh Countryside, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1950; Williams, W. M., The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956; Williams, W. M., A West Country Village: Ashworthy, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; Frankenberg, R., Village on the Border, London, Cohen and West, 1957; Littlejohn, J., Westrigg: The Sociology of a Cheviot Parish, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; Emmett, I., A North Wales Village, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

2. Lopreato, J., Peasants No More, San Francisco, Chandler, 1967; Banfield, E. C., The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, London, Collier-Macmillan, 1967; Pitt Rivers, J., The People of the Sierra, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954.

I understood my position to be similar to that of Lewis when re-studying Redfield's Mexican village. Lewis states that:

> it is not a matter of listing another's errors, in itself a distasteful and painful task, but rather of finding out what kinds of errors tend to be made by what kinds of people under what kinds of conditions. 1

If, I hypothesised, Arensberg and Kimball, like Redfield in Mexico, were guilty of serious errors and omissions, then many of the changes which are now taking place in rural Ireland may be part and parcel of a larger process of cultural, social and economic change which predates the Americans' visit. I would have, again like Lewis in his re-study of Tepoztlan, to go back in time and examine the historical development of Irish rural society.[2]

Thus I began another phase of research, the scrutiny of historical books, reports of commissions, documents and statistics.[3]

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1 Lewis, O., 'Tepoztlan Restudied: a critique of the folk-urban conceptualisation of social change', Rural Sociology, Vol.18, 1953, p.122.

2 See Lewis, O., Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlan Restudied. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1951.

3 I was particularly fortunate in that in recent years, a number of books and articles had been published on Irish economic and social history, an area much neglected in the past. i.e.

Cullen, L., An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660, B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1972.
Lyons, F.S.L., Ireland Since the Famine, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson,1971.
Lee, J., The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1974.
O'Tuathaigh, G., Ireland Before the Famine, 1798-1848. Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1972.

It was in the course of this analysis that I decided to concentrate on the issues of land. It appeared to be the focal point of rural society,[1] and a study of the social relationships that sprung up around it would allow one to consider power, conflict and tension as "normal" aspects of everyday life in rural communities.

Thus, at the end of my year of planning and reading, the issues had expanded. Historical material and a critique of existing sociological/ anthropological studies had become an integral part of the study. The focus had shifted from "community study" and a study of family structure to a study of the overall economic and social organization of the community with a focus on land and family.

The Period of Participant Observation.

While the scope of the thesis was now considerably expanded, my principal interest was still that of carrying out a participant observation study in a community in the West of Ireland today, and I yet had to select that community. This, the choice of a community, is an aspect of community studies over which there has been considerable heated discussion. Is the community representative? How far can one generalize from the community studied? Such questions are frequently raised. Since social and geographical conditions vary considerably in the West of Ireland, there seemed to be little point in searching for a community that was "really" representative of the region. Rather, I sought a community that was small enough to be studied intensely, was not remote, where farms were not unusually large or small and where the land was of reasonable quality.

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[1] The French traveller, De Beaumont wrote in 1839 that "the Catholic of Ireland finds only one profession within his reach, the culture of the soil; and when he has not the capital necessary to become a farmer, he digs the ground as a day labourer". De Beaumont, G., Ireland; Social, Political, Religious. London, W.C. Taylor, 1839, p.262. In 1870, Marx noted that "the land question has hitherto been the exclusive form of the social question in Ireland, because it is a question of existence, of life and death, for the immense majority of Irish people". Marx, K. and Engels, F., Ireland and the Irish Question, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965. Letter to Meyer and August Vogt. p.295.

I had listed ten areas that might fit these criteria on the basis of prior knowledge, examination of available statistics, and discussions with some local people. On my return to Ireland, I spent one month visiting these areas. Whilst at least four of the areas would have been suitable, a practical difficulty, that of finding suitable living accomodation, guided my final choice from a number of South Mayo villages.[1] I had learned from a farmer, to whom I had stopped to talk about the locality, of the existence of a number of houses "at the lake" which were let to tourists in the summer months, but remained vacant for most of the year.

In my efforts to locate the owners of these houses and eventually to secure one of the houses, I established my first contacts in the villages. That was in July, 1975. As the house was occupied by tourists until Spetember, I arranged to rent a caravan for the intervening weeks. The first days in the villages were spent in this caravan and later, when I moved to the house, I was joined by my wife and four-months old child. The initial period of field-work is perhaps the most important and many of the issues which I was later to single out for attention - tourists, the estate, the state and agricultural policy, household isolation - were impressed on my mind in those early weeks.

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[1] I feel that it is important to clarify at this point what the word village signifies in this thesis. In Ireland, the smallest areal division is the townland. The townland is peculiar to Ireland (though comparable in some ways with the English tithing) and has its origin in the Irish landholdings of pre-Anglo-Norman times. It is firstly a land unit but it can be and usually is a settlement unit. In parts of South Mayo and elsewhere in the West of Ireland, townlands which contain a number of households (i.e. 6-12) in fairly close proximity are called villages by their inhabitants. It is to such units that the word village refers to here and the material presented in chapters 4-9 is by and large drawn from a study of 13 such villages.
For a study of the origin and development of townlands see Jones-Hughes, J., 'Town and Baile in Irish Place Names', in Stephens, N. and Glasscock, R.E.(eds) Irish Geographical Studies in Honour of E. Estyn Evans, Belfast. Department of Geography, Queen's University, 1970, pp.244-258. and 'The Preface' to An Archaeological Survey of County Down, Belfast, H.M.S.O., 1966.

We remained in the house for nearly eleven months, before giving way to the tourists. When my wife and child departed, I stayed on in the area for a further two months, living at different times in a camp, a caravan and a local house. I have returned to the villages on several occasions while attempting to clarify and edit my field notes.

Stein has written of the complexities of establishing a fruitful relationship with the community:

> anyone who studies a community is as much changed by his work even while in the midst of it as the community he studies. During the research and his personal experience of it, the investigator is led into interests and problems that were initially outside the scope of his imagination, so that only with the passage of time does his own work inevitably become fairly sharply defined. 1

There are indeed common difficulties faced by people who engage in participant observation studies, but the solutions are largely personal.

Participant observation has been discussed from different perspectives. The general problem of participant observation,[2] the possible roles of the participant observer,[3] and the difficulties of interpreting the results of this method,[4] have been examined by various writers. In the field, all of these problems have to be faced by the individual researcher.

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1 Stein,M., Op.cit, p.VII.

2 Schwartz, M.S.; and Schwartz, C.C. 'Problems in Participant Observation', American Journal of Sociology, Vol.60, 1955, pp.343-353.

3 Junker, B., 'Some suggestions on the design of field-work learning experience', in Hughes, E.C. et al. Cases on Fieldwork, University of Chicago, 1952.
Gold, R.L., 'Roles in Sociological Field Observation', Social Forces, Vol. 36, 1957/58, pp.217-223.
Kluckhohn, F.R. 'The participant-observer technique in small communities'. American Journal of Sociology, Vol.46, 1940, pp.331-343.

4 Becker, H.S., 'Problems of inference and proof in participant observation'. American Sociological Review, Vol.23, 1958, pp.652-660.
Cicourel, A.V., Method and Measurement in Sociology, Ch. II Theory and Method in Field Research, The Free Press, New York, 1964.

The most immediate is that of establishing a position in the community. From the outset of the study, I was obsessed by the idea of observation, but there appeared to be little to observe and few communal activities. As I had not been introduced to the area by any of its residents, I had no ready-made contacts. I had to approach individuals and it seemed logical to begin by visiting the house of the people from whom I was renting the caravan. I explained my presence in the area in terms that I was writing a book on the locality. This explanation was deliberately vague and given in the hope that all types of information would be forthcoming and that afterwards I could sift this information. This is what happened. I was at times told about old towers, graveyards, and other such tales, but at least I was never excluded from conversations on the grounds that "he is not interested in that".

Most of my early contacts were with my new landlords and with a few other families in the village where we lived. Later I came to know people from other villages through meeting them on the roads, by giving them lifts to town, or simply by meeting them at the livestock mart, in pubs, and in houses where I was known. In my efforts to make contacts, I had to learn patience and I came to understand that I could make my position clearer through peoples' experience of me, and through their observing my activities, rather than through verbal explanation of what I was about. In this fashion, I developed a place for myself in the villages as a generally accepted resident.

After four months, I was known to most people in the villages and I, in turn, knew something about them. I had made a number of special contacts who were to become key informants.

These were: an old man living on his own, a middle-aged married man also living on his own, an elderly married couple and two middle-aged married couples. In one of the married cases, the principal informant was the husband, in another it was the wife. In addition, I later had two important informants who lived a few miles from the villages, one a primary school teacher, the other a farmer. These informants were important on a number of counts. They were a source of information about events that had taken place before my arrival and also about ongoing activities. They were also a fund of knowledge on other families, giving me information which made the asking of questions which could be construed as offensive, unnecessary. They were also a constant check on my observations, but above all else, they were friendly households whom I could visit when the field-work did not appear to be leading anywhere. This was particularly true of Padraic, the old reflective man with whom I spent countless hours.

During the fieldwork, my involvement with, and to an extent my reliance on, these informants was often a source of worry to me. This would appear to be a common problem in this type of research.[1] Some households are difficult to get into, some people are friendlier and more interesting than others, and so on. My solution to the problem of the "self selection of informants" was to survey each household on a checklist of items, shortly before I left the villages.

I attempted to overcome the problem of the absence of young people in the villages by having pupils in the parish primary and secondary schools write essays on living and farming in the West of Ireland.

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[1] See Janes, R.W., 'A Note on Phases of the Community Role of the Participant-Observer', in McCall J.L., and Simmons, J.L.(Eds.) Issues in Participant Observation, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, London, 1969, pp.52-60.

The results were so general and vague as to be unusable. Other problems such as the lack of young farmers or young married people could not be overcome.

A further limitation on the study stemmed from my own sex. From the early stages of fieldwork, most of my contacts were males. Later, while I developed a number of contacts with women, there were definite barriers to my inquiries which were only overcome with some timely advice from my wife. Governed by pseudo-scientific notions, I had cautioned her from becoming too involved locally, in the belief that she might "say something wrong" and disturb "my villagers". When I realised the error of my cautious ways, it was almost too late, but many of the insights on women's roles came from her. Had I given my wife a freer hand earlier in the study, the chapter on family structure would have had greater depth.

Unlike the majority of anthropologists and sociologists who undertake this type of study, I did not terminate my relationship with the community. While I no longer live there, I have continued to return - as much to visit friends as to collect new information or re-check old. It is, after all, a study of a society of which I am intimately a part.

The final report on the study, which was abandoned, in despair, more than once, but never for very long, has taken the following form:

Chapter One: Begins with an examination of the concept of 'peasant', explores the use of this concept in nineteenth century Ireland and examines the social, economic and political development of that society in the same period.

Chapter Two: consists of an examination of agricultural trends and policy since the foundation of the Irish Free State.

Chapter Three: is a critique at both theoretical and empirical levels of the major sociological/anthropological studies of farming communities in the West of Ireland.

The remaining chapters deal mainly with the evidence derived from the study of the villages in South Mayo.

Chapter Four: deals with land distribution and ownership.

Chapter Five: focuses on land usage; i.e. the sociology of production and distribution.

Chapter Six: deals with non-local agents who have influences and are influenced by local social structure.

Chapter Seven: is a study of general social relationships; the local status system and issues of conflict are explored.

Chapters Eight and Nine: focus on family and household structure. Chapter eight has a general and historical perspective, chapter nine a local perspective.

In the concluding chapter, an integration of the theoretical questions and the fieldwork data is attempted.

Chapter I

Irish Peasant Society: Its Formation and Structure.

Peasants and Peasant Societies.

In the introduction to his reader Peasants and Peasant Societies , Shanin states that:

> in view of the rapidly increasing number of peasant studies, there is something grotesque in the failure of scholars to reach even a general agreement on the very existence of the peasantry as a valid concept. 1

These sentiments had previously been expressed by Von Dietze who stated that:

> it is difficult to define the term (peasantry) while the construction of a comprehensive theory of the peasantry is well nigh impossible. 2

Yet the failure to reach agreement cannot be attributed to lack of academic effort. Sociological and anthropological literature abounds with attempted definitions.[3] Three broad approaches are discernible; the cultural, the political, and the economic.[4]

All three approaches stem to some degree from Kroeber's formulation of peasant society. In 1948, he stated that:

> peasants are definitely rural...yet live in relation to market towns; they form a class segment of a larger population which usually contains also urban centres, sometimes metropolitian capitals. They constitute part societies with part cultures. They lack the isolation, the political autonomy, and self sufficiency of tribal societies; but their local units retain much of their old identity, integration and attachment to soil and cults. 5

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1 Shanin, T,(ed.) Peasants and Peasant Societies, London, Penguin Books, 1971, p.12.

2 Von Dietze, C., 'Peasantry', Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.12, 1934, pp.48-53.

3 For a general review, see Halpern, J.M. and Brode, J., 'Peasant Society, Economic Changes and Revolutionary Transformation', in Biennial Review of Anthropology, 1967, Siegel, B.J. and Beals, A.R. (Eds.)

4 Powell, J.D., 'On Defining Peasants and Peasant Society'. Peasant Studies Newsletter, Vol. 1, part 3, 1972, pp.94-99.

5 Kroeber, A., Anthropology, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1948, p.284.

Redfield focused on the 'part-society with part-culture' aspect of this definition and came to view peasants as the rural dimension of old civilisations. He distinguished the great tradition of the reflective few from the little tradition of the unreflective many. Emphasising the role of the city, he stated that:

> there were no peasants before the first cities ... The peasant is a rural native whose long established order of life takes important account of the city.[1]

Much of Redfield's empirical work in Latin America had been concerned with identifying this peasant culture.[2]

Peasants as political, social and economic inferiors is the viewpoint associated with Wolf:

> it is only when the cultivator becomes subject to the demands and sanctions of power-holders outside his social stratum that we can properly speak of peasants.[3]

Shanin also emphasises the weak political position of the peasantry stating that:

> The political economy of peasant society has been, generally speaking, based on the expropriation of its surpluses by powerful outsiders, through corvee, tax, rent and terms of trade.[4]

Foster sees peasants as "settled rural peoples subject to the control of outsiders".[5]

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1. Redfield, R., Peasant Society and Culture, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 20.
2. Tepoztlan, A Mexican Village, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1930; The Folk Culture of the Yucatan, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1941.
3. Wolf, E., Peasants, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall, 1966.
4. Shanin, T., 'Peasantry: A delineation of a concept and a field of study', Eur. Journal of Sociology, Vol. 12, p. 296.
5. Potter, J. M., Diaz, M., and Foster, G., Peasant Society: a reader, Boston, Little, Brown, 1967. Foster adds that the critical common denominator is that peasants have little control over conditions that govern their life ... peasants are not only poor ... but they are relatively powerless. p. 8.

A third approach focuses on the economic and occupational aspects of peasants. Thus Firth states that by a peasant economy one means a:

> system of small scale producers with a simple technology and equipment often relying for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. The primary means of livelihood of the peasant is the cultivation of the soil. 1

Such a definition is wide enough to include most small scale producers such as fishermen and craftsmen. Others deal with peasants only as agricultural producers.[2] Galeski views the traditional peasant farm as operating on the basis of:

> a domestic economy, the principal part of the products serving direct family consumption and the surplus is sold in order to satisfy other family needs and to ensure the farm's functioning. 3

Writers like Galeski who emphasise the family character of the peasant labour force have been greatly influenced by Chayanov's[4] theory of the peasant economy and the central concept in this theory, namely the labour-consumer balance between the satisfaction of family needs and the drudgery or irksomeness of labour. Clearly there is considerable disparity in the understanding and use of the peasant concept. Shanin has attempted to bring order to these diverse approaches, seeking to delimit peasant societies by establishing a general type which includes:

1. The peasant farm as the basis of a multi-dimensional social organization..
2. Land husbandry as the main means of livelihood providing the major part of consumption needs.
3. Specific traditional culture related to the way of life of small communities.
4. The under-dog position - the domination of peasantry by powerful outsiders. 5

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1 Firth, R., Elements of Social Organization, London, Tavistock Publications, 1951, p.87.

2 Wolf, E., 'Types of Latin American Peasantry; A preliminary discussion'. American Anthropologist, Vol. 57, 1955, p.453.

3 Galeski, B., 'Social Organization and Rural Social Change', Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. 10, 1970, p.263.

4 Chayanov, A.N., The Theory of Peasant Economy, Ed. Thorner, D, et al. Homewood Illinois, 1966, see also Harrison, M. 'Chayanov and the Russian Peasantry' Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. III, 1974, pp.389-417, and Lunden, T., 'Some Causes of Change in a Peasant Economy', Scandinavian Economic History Review. Vol. XXII, 1974, pp.117-135.

5 Shanin, T., op.cit.pp.14-15.

From this basic typology, Shanin also distinguishes what he calls "analytically marginal groups" who share some but not all of the peasant's characteristics, i.e. agricultural labourers, rural craftsmen holding little or no land, and the frontier squatter.

Such a scheme, while drawing attention to many important aspects of peasants and peasant societies, nonetheless leaves important issues unresolved. Who are the powerful outsiders? What form does the domination take? How do the marginal groups relate to the peasants? In particular, Shanin's definition ignores two questions which are crucial if we are to understand what constitutes a peasant society and its formation. These are the particular character of the outside world and of the external forces to which the peasants are subordinated, and secondly the internal differentation of the peasantry.[1]

It is clear that peasantries nowhere form a homogeneous mass or aggregation but are 'always and everywhere typified themselves by internal differentation along many lines',[2] and as Mintz notes:

> unless the peasants can be understood in terms of their internal differentation along economic and other lines, it may appear that they consist entirely of prey; in fact, some are commonly among the predators.

Thus peasants may differ in terms of wealth, status or some other characteristic which will affect relations between peasants themselves and between peasants and the 'outside world'.

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1 This problem has largely been ignored by sociologists and social anthropologists but is well treated by Littlejohn, J., 'Peasant Economy and Society' in Hindess, B, (ed.) Sociological Theories of the Economy, London, MacMillan, forthcoming, and by Mintz, S.,' A Note on the Definition of Peasantries', Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 1, 1973, pp.91-106.

2 Mintz., S., Op.cit., p.93.

In the Irish context, attention to these issues is of fundamental importance. Arensberg and Kimball's classic study of rural Ireland in the ninteeen thirties depicted an isolated, homogeneous, and almost unchanging peasant community. Later scholars, accepting this account, have formulated their problem thus: what happens to such an homogeneous community when it comes into contact with urban capitalism? Yet such a formulation of the basic intellectual problem is weak since there is little evidence other than their own to support Arensberg's and Kimball's basic account. On the contrary, the evidence can be interpreted to suggest that 'an isolated' peasantry has not existed in Ireland since at least the latter decades of the eighteenth century.

One of the principal achievements of revisionism in Irish historical scholarship in recent times has been to correct the vulgar assumption that the Irish peasantry experienced great events (e.g. 'famine,' 'land consolidation', etc. in an undifferentiated manner.[1] Differences in structure can and have been established. External influences can be empirically shown to have affected these different strata in qualitatively different ways. An extreme example, perhaps, might be famine itself which made possible usury, later to be translated into formal retail activity and on the other hand, death in the most appallingly slow circumstances, from hunger. General assumptions of a common experience in the nineteenth century have been the cornerstone of simplistic models of Irish rural life in the twentieth century. What is necessary is an accurate teasing out of the differences and contradictions in the objective structure of nineteenth century rural Ireland and their effect on the base of contemporary social structure with which this study deals. The provision of this corrective setting is the subject of what follows in this chapter.

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[1] Cullen, L., An Economic History of Ireland since 1660, B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1972,
Lee, J., The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918, Gilland MacMillan, Dublin, 1974.
Lyons, F.S.L., Ireland Since the Famine, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971.
O'Tuathaigh, G., Ireland Before the Famine, 1798-1848 Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, 1972.

Irish Peasant Society.

The Great Famine has been a convenient watershed in Irish history. However, efforts to understand the formation of Irish rural social structure as we now know it, must look beyond the Great Famine. In the 19th century, Ireland underwent a rural crisis of which the Great Famine was the extreme expression.[1] The general background to this crisis lies in the expansion of Irish agricultural production, with an increasing emphasis on tillage products in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[2]

Indeed the most striking economic "event" of the 18th century was the swing from a pastoral to a tillage economy. In 1770, Ireland was an importer of grain; in 1807, she exported a surplus worth half a million pounds. The swing is remarkable since Ireland had been for centuries dominated by pasture. Numerous travellers and visitors to Ireland had commented on cattle numbers and the extent of grassland. Spenser[3] in 1630 lamented the large numbers of cattle and the absence of tillage. A century later the Duke of Devonshire,[4] addressing Parliament, commented on the shortage of foodstuffs in Ireland and on the absolute need to encourage tillage. The swing to tillage was remarkable, especially since the Irish climate conditions favoured pastoral farming rather than tillage.

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1 Lyons, F.S.L., Ireland Since the Famine, London, Fontana, 1973, p.34.

2 See Crotty, R.D, Irish Agriculture: Its volume and structure, Cork, Cork University Press, 1966, p.23.
Connell, K.H., The Population of Ireland 1750-1854, Oxford, 1950, p.23.

3 Spenser, E., View of the State of Ireland, 1663, Reprinted in Tracts and Treatise on Ireland, Dublin, 1860.

4 Quoted in O'Rourke, J., History of The Great Irish Famine of 1847, Dublin 1875, p.73.

Two factors are of crucial importance in accounting for the rise in tillage production; rising prices and a continuing demand, and the prospect of a high yield per acre. The former was produced by a British economy which could no longer supply a rising population with bread. Formerly, she had forbidden the export of grain from Ireland, now Britain subsidized its export. High yields per acre were provided by a liberal use of cheap fertilisers and by the employment of a root crop, in particular, the potato.

The potato however performed another function. It provided a cheap and adequate food supply (especially when supplemented with milk) and because large numbers could be grown on small areas of ground, it freed large areas for cereal production. When a family was willing to live on potatoes rather than grain or the traditional pastoral products and when it consequently turned pasture into tillage, it could easily survive on less than its entire holding. The increase in arable acreage and dependence on the potato brought widespread division of holdings. Subdivision was also encouraged by landlords because it offered the possibility of increased rents and in some cases political gain. The tillage economy was associated with subdivision of holdings, early marriage and a rising population. When price movements after Waterloo favoured livestock rather than tillage, population pressure made the change back from tillage to pasture not only difficult, but in many areas impossible until the Great Famine dramatically and drastically altered the population structure.

This general account underrates the complexity of pre-famine social structure and represents only a partly valid analysis of the crisis. Rural social structure in pre-famine Ireland was indeed complicated. The 1841 census placed rural dwellers in three categories.[1]

1. Property owners and farmers of more than 50 acres.
2. Artisans and farmers from 5-50 acres.
3. Labourers and small holders up to 5 acres.

Hooker[2] has gone further and suggested six classes in which the agricultural population might be divided; landed proprietors, middlemen, tenants, sub-tenants, cottiers, and other agricultural labourers.

1. The landed proprietors were the owners of estates.
2. "Men who rented land in order to make a profit by letting it out in smaller holdings were called middlemen. They hired land either from an absentee landlord or from a resident owner glad to be freed of rent collection, or from a leaseholder desirous of obtaining rent from part of his grass lands, or in some cases from some other middlemen": 3
3. Tenants from year to year - tenants who held land on an oral agreement - terminable at the end of any year at six months notice. 4
4. On the holdings of many tenants were sub-tenants: "sometimes a tenant lets an entire holding; more frequently, he sub-divides the holding, letting part and cultivating the rest himself". 5
5. Cottiers lived on the holdings of tenants: "some of them had also the use of a patch of ground on which to raise the potatoes that fed them and their families. The rest obtained land ready for planting in conacre (cornacre) at high rates, on which to raise the crops for a single season. Part of the cottiers could count on at least some employment on the holdings. Others had to piece out their living wherever they could find employment". 6

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[1] Cullen, L., An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660, London, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1972, p.3.

[2] Hooker, E. Re-adjustments of Agricultural Tenure in Ireland, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1938, p.23.

[3] Ibid., p.36.

[4] Ibid., p.27.

[5] Ibid., p.29.

[6] Ibid., p.30. See also Beames, M.'Cottiers and Conacre in Ireland,' Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.2, pp.352-354, 1975.

6. Agricultural labourers worked for part of the time on farms and were even less secure than the cottiers.

Seventy percent of the rural population consisted of labourers and smallholders with less than five acres. A higher proportion of these were in the Western part of the country.[1] In parts of the West, cottiers, labourers and smallholders also derived some income from the home spinning and weaving of flax and wool. There were also large numbers of knitters in Galway and Mayo and in

> Connemara long stockings, made with homespun wool from mountain sheep, were sold at one shilling a pair or less, and socks for six pence or even fourpence. The women knitted with great speed and the Halls reported that in some cases an itinerant knitter would "go on a visit" for two or three months in 'the bad times' or 'a hard summer' to a neighbour-farmer, and knit for her board and lodging. 2

But as Freeman observes domestic industry was facing considerable difficulty by 1841, particularly because the textile mills of England were producing large quantities of material at low prices.

> Many home workers still brought their lengths of linen or pieces of homespun tweed to the fairs and markets, or peddled their handknit stockings; but they had to face the competition of mass-produced goods. Even in the northeast, they had real problems. The cotton weavers were menaced by the successful competition of Lancashire, and home linen-weaving survived only because workers toiled for a few pence a day. 3

The population increase which was largely associated with the labouring class took place in certain counties where

> large regions of smallholders existed, (and) the population grew more rapidly than in the rest of the country. 4

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1 Cullen, L., Op.cit., p.117.

2 Freeman, T.W., Pre-Famine Ireland, Manchester. Manchester University Press, 1957, p.244.

3 Ibid., p.6.

4 Lee, J., The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918. Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1974, p.4.

These regions were also associated with early marriage and subdivision.[1] Outside of these classes, subdivision and early marriage were not common and when the Great Famine came, it was at the ranks of the labourers and smallholders that it struck. As Lee puts it:

> the small farmer and especially the labourer - the real proletariat - were decimated by the famine. 2

An examination of events in pre-famine Ireland clearly shows that a homogeneous peasantry did not exist. Such an examination also casts doubts on the existence of an isolated peasantry operating on a subsistence economy. Cullen's analysis of the 1831 census has shown that even:

> in a poor county like Mayo the number of hucksters, peelers, and shopkeepers was impressive. 3

Crotty has also challenged the existence of a subsistence economy. "Using subsistence economy" in the more general sense of an undynamic economy where the principal economic activity of the population is to produce for its own subsistence, it is clear that such an order was terminated in Ireland by the Elizabethan conquest and that, certainly since the Cromwellian clearances, the Irish economy was overwhelmingly market oriented. The provision of a subsistence for the producers from then on was a decidedly secondary economic objective, the primary one being the maximization, through the market, of landlords' rental income. The Great Famine itself was but one manifestation of the extent to which agriculture in every part of Ireland was organized to produce primarily for the market, the peasants' subsistence taking a secondary place.

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1 Lee, J., "Irish Agriculture", Agricultural History Review, Vol.XVII, 1969, p.69.

2 Op.cit., p.71.

3 Cullen, L., Op.cit., p.116.

Had their lives been less dominated by the market, its threat to their existence would have been correspondingly less dire.[1]

The estimated population loss over the Great Famine years is two million people. The population decline was in the main caused by deaths, and emigration. Emigration had begun long before the years of the Great Famine and in 1841 there was a substantial Irish community living in Britain, mainly in the expanding cities of Liverpool, London, Manchester and Glasgow.[2] Indeed many authorities and observers had favoured emigration as the remedy for Ireland's economic problems.[3]

Much of the population decrease can be attributed to a decline in labourers, cottiers, and smallholders. The cottier class all but disappeared. Bourke's[4] adjusted figures show the decline in holdings from 1841-51.

Table I

Agricultural Holdings in Ireland, 1845-51.

Size of Holding	1845	1847	1851
Above 1 ac., not exceeding 5 ac.	181,950	139,041	88,083
Above 5 ac., not exceeding 15 ac.	311,133	269,534	191,854
Above 15 ac.	276,618	321,434	290,401
TOTAL	769,701	730,009	570,338

1 Crotty, R., Op.cit., p.307.

2 Freeman, T.W., Op.cit., p.9.

3 Black,R.D. Collison, Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960, pp.203-238.

4 Bourke, P.M.A., 'The Agricultural Statistics of the 1841 Census of Ireland'. Economic History Review, Vol.XVIII, No.2, 1965, pp.375-391.

The number of farms above 15 acres rose between 1845-51 from 276,618 to 290,401.

> during the famine years, farmers enlarged their holdings and increased the stocking on their land. A continued decline in the number of smallholders ensured some continued enlargement of farm sizes in post famine Ireland. 1

Taking the sixty years 1851-1911, the number of holdings 1-5 ac. declined by 30,000 those from 5-15 ac. declined by 50,000 while holdings above 15 ac. increased by 30,000 (Table 2).

In post Famine Ireland, agricultural resources were increasingly shifted from tillage cultivation to animal husbandry as prices became steadily more favourable for animal commodities as compared with grain and other commercial crops. (Table 3 and 4).

Speaking of rural society as a whole, Cullen sees the years from the Great Famine to the First World War as dominated by the expansion of cash nexus.

> by the end of the century country families already long habituated to the postal order as a means of receiving remittances from their emigrant members were becoming frequent users of the parcel post and the mail order catalogue, while increasing ease of transport...brought more and more of them into contact with country towns where general stores offered a new and exciting range of goods to those who had cash to pay for them. 2

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1 Cullen, L., Op.cit., p.136.

2 Cullen, L., Op.,cit., p.136.

TABLE 2

Number of Agricultural Holdings by farm size 1850-1911 in thousands of holdings

Farm Size.

Year	Under 1ac.	1-5ac.	5-15ac.	15.30ac.	30-50ac.	50-100ac.	100-200ac.	200-5--ac.	500ac.+	TOTAL
1851	37.7	88.1	191.9	141.3	70.1	49.9	19.8	7.8	1.5	608
1871	48.8	74.8	171.4	138.6	72.8	55.1	21.7	8.2	1.6	610
1891	55.6	63.5	156.6	133.9	73.9	56.4	22.8	8.3	1.6	572
1911	86.9	62.4	154.3	136.8	76.4	59.0	22.8	7.7	1.6	608

SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics for Ireland, 1847-1926

TABLE 3

Livestock in Ireland 1851-1911 (000 omitted)

Year	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs
1851	143	102	52
1911	226	187	66

SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics, 1847-1926.

TABLE 4

Distribution of the Land of Ireland, in Acres
(000 omitted)

Period	Cereal Crops	Root Crops	Meadow and Clover	Grass
1851-60	2,180	1,503	1,349	9,375
1861-70	2,296	1,486	1,634	9,858
1871-80	1,903	1,366	1,890	10,285
1881-90	1,618	1,231	2,063	10,130
1891-00	1,433	1,140	2,158	10,395
1901-10	1,289	1,036	2,773	10,298

SOURCE: The Economic History of livestock in Ireland, O'Donovan, J., Cork, Cork University Press, 1940, p. 206.

Post Famine Adjustment.

The general trends associated with the post famine era were slower to emerge in parts of the West of Ireland where pre-famine conditions, subdivision of holdings, early marriage and a tillage economy persisted in some districts. Population did not greatly decline.[1] for some years. O'Grada[2] has argued the role that seasonal migration played in the continuing of pre-famine marginal living conditions in the West of Ireland. In the wider structural context, seasonal migration represented the integration of the remotest regions of the Irish countryside into the dominant English industrial society.[3] For a period, Irish migrants were in fact essential for harvest work in Scotland and England, where labour had been drawn into factories.

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1 Cousens, S.H. 'Emigration and Demographic Change in Ireland 1851-1861.' Economic History Review, Vol. 14, 1961, pp.275-88.

_____, 'The Regional Variation in Population Changes in Ireland, 1861-1881,' Economic History Review, Vol.17, 1964, pp.301-21.

Walsh, B.M., 'Marriage Rates and Population Pressure, Ireland, 1871 and 1911,' 'Economic History Review, Vol.23, 1970, 148-62.

2 O'Grada, C., 'Seasonal Migration and Post Famine Adjustment in Ireland,' Studia Hibernica, No. 13, 1973, pp.48-76.

3 The Registrar-General stated in his evidence before the Royal Commission on the Land Acts (Ireland 1886): "In 1841 this migration (seasonal) was common almost all over Ireland, but it is now confined almost to Connaught and Donegal: in 1841 the migratory labourers were 58,000; in 1884, 14,000; in 1885, 13,000; in 1886, 12,000 - of these 10,000 were from Connaught, 7,000 from Mayo alone; the dimunution is said to be owing to the increase in tillage in England, and the increased use of machinery." in Royal Commission on Labour, H.M.S.O., 1893, p.57.

Mason has an account of some of the migrants' journeys:

> from Dublin most went by boat to Liverpool, when they dispersed to look for seasonal farm work; some went Southwest into Cheshire and North Wales and worked in gangs contracting to hoe roots...Undoubtedly, the main route taken was into the Lancashire arable farms for root hoeing, cleaning fold years, and early hay time...From the early hay crop in Lancashire, the men moved on to the later hay crop in the Pennines, many attending special hiring fairs at such places as Bentham, Malham, Hawes and Skipton. 1

A detailed account is given in the Royal Commission on Labour.[2] It states that:

> a very great number of men go to Scotland and England from Mayo to work on the farms during the year. To say that they go harvesting by no means describes the length of time the people stay out of Ireland, for many of them, both men and women begin to go from the middle of March for the purpose of putting down potatoes, weeding and doing the ordinary work on the farms and do not return until after potato lifting is over towards the end of November or as late as Christmas. 3

Many sold their cattle before they departed to pay their fares.

The migration of women was often in the hands of a local man, known as the "Gaffer". Employers in England and Scotland communicated with him to bring over a certain number of women. "The Gaffer" takes over the women and accompanies them from farm to farm.[4]

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1 Mason, K., 'Irish Labour in the North of England'. Folklife, Vol. 10 1972, p.132.

2 Royal Commission on Labour, H.M.S.O., 1893.

3 Ibid. p.60.

4 Ibid., p.61.

Women's work included putting down potatoes, thinning turnips, weeding, harvesting and potato lifting.[1]

A serious agricultural depression which occurred during the later 1870's and which locally represented a repeat of the Great Famine itself, interrupted this form of adjustment and created an immense upheaval of a political and demographic kind. It initiated the displacement of seasonal by permanent migration.[2]

Social Conditions of the Peasantry.

In our efforts to establish the social conditions of the peasantry, we are fortunate to have such records as those of the Inspectors of the Congested Districts Board.[3] These reports contain a wealth of information on the social conditions of the peasantry in many parts of the West of Ireland. They give detailed accounts of families' income and expenditure and testify to the peasants' involvement in a cash economy.

The following is one example, that of Partry in Co. Mayo. The account is for a family in what is described as ordinary circumstances.

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1 See Kitteringham, J., 'Country work girls in nineteenth-century England' in Samuel, R., Village Life and Labour, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

2 Curtin, C and Gibbon, P., 'The Stem Family in Ireland,' forthcoming edition of Comparative Studies in History and Society.

3 Congested District Board. Baseline Reports, Dublin, 1892-8.

Table 5

Income and Expenditure of a family in Partry in Co. Mayo, 1892.

INCOME	L	S	D	EXPENDITURE	L	S	D
Sale of two cattle	10	-	-	Rent	5	-	-
Sale of 10 sheep	6	-	-	Countycess	-	10	-
Sale of 4 pigs	10	-	-	Meal	10	-	-
Sale of I Foal	5	-	-	Flour	9	16	-
Sale of Flannels or Frieze and Stockings				Groceries	9	10	-
120 yds. of Flannel	8	-	-	Tobacco	2	12	-
12 Doz. Socks	2	8	-	Guano	3	15	-
Eggs	4	-	-	Household	3	-	-
Migratory Labour	10	-	-	Church Dues	1	-	-
TOTAL	55	8	-		43	3	-
Surplus	12	55	-				

Income was forthcoming from both the sale of surplus time and surplus products. Migrants usually left in May and returned in November bringing back between £8 and £12.

Spade labour was usually employed in the cultivation of the land. Very few small farmers continued to use organic manure and gradually they became dependent on artificial manure. The reports testify to the crucial role of women in the economy, both in terms of domestic industry and work on the land especially when men were absent.

They generally assisted in the digging of the soil for the potato and oat crop and attended the after cultivation of the potatoes. They carried manure in baskets on their backs. They also worked hard cutting and saving turf and they carried it on their backs from the bog to the nearest road.

The small farmers had become closely involved with merchants and shopkeepers and the reports remark time and again on the number of people in debt to shopkeepers:

> it may be safely assumed that a large number of the people are never out of the shopkeepers' power. 1 (Belmullet District)
>
> most of the people are in debt to shopkeepers. 2 (Kiltimagh District)
>
> most of the people are more or less in debt to shopkeepers...They seldom clear off the debt. 3 (Swinford District)

The relationship of shopkeeper and client was indeed complicated. Details of accounts are given in the Royal Commission on Labour,[4] report on the Westport Poor Law Union. Below is the account of C D with B C grocer and general dealer.

C D is aged 50. He has five children living at home and three children living in America. He rents 10 ac. of land for eight pounds and also has rights to mountain grazing on which he has three head of cattle and ten sheep.

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1 Congested Districts Board, p.320.

2 Ibid., p.405.

3 Ibid., p.400.

4 Royal Commission on Labour - The Agricultural Labourer. Ireland H.M.S.O. 1893, report by the assistant commissioner on the Poor Law Union of Westport, p.70.

Part of the account is as follows:

1891		L	S	D
March 17th	Owed	17	18	10½
" 17th	Cash Paid	2	0	0
		15	18	10½
September 8th	Owed	23	14	3½
	Cash Paid	5	0	0
		18	14	3½
December 23rd	Owed	14	9	8
" 23rd	Sold a bullock L 3 S 10 D 0			
	Less (for luck) 1 0	3	9	0
		11	10	8

In the account[1] of E.F. with the same grocer, we see that money for the payment of debts came from a number of sources.

E.F. is aged 45 and is unmarried. He lives with his mother and a niece. His sister, who had been a servant in America, is now living in his house. His holding is let to him at £5 rent.

1891							
May 1					L	S	D
	Owed				14	7	10½
		L	S	D			
	By cash, per sister in America	4	11	0			
	By hay 24½ cwt, at 2s. a cwt.	2	9	0	7	0	0
					7	7	10½
1892							
January 14th	Owed				12	8	6½
	By Cock of Hay				2	17	6
					9	11	0½

1. Ibid., p.70.

		L	S	D
September 14th	Owed	18	10	6½
	By cash, brought by sister from America	3	10	0
		15	0	6½

		L	S	D	L	S	D
September 25th	Owed						
	By hay	2	17	6	15	0	6½
	By sale of bullock	2	1	6	4	19	0
					12	19	0

In a third account, efforts to clear off debts took the form of working for the dealer. The account reads:

> "credit for 31 days work from October 31st at 6d a day".
>
> "owed.....less cash for work".
>
> "part of account cleared by 36¾ days work".

Clearly the merchant had been established between the consumer and producer. Gibbon and Higgins[2] have examined the activities of the "Gombeenman", and write of:

> shopkeepers either practising usually as a sideline or integrating orthodox commercial and usurious relations of exploitation.

The Gombeenman exercised economic patronage:

> through credit retailing in combinations with money lending in order to secure a dependent clientele he made cash loans, and credit freely available, ostensibly without reference to security. In return he both charged interest and insisted that his debtors bought goods only from his store. Having established dependence, he could then charge inflated retail prices to his customer in order to secure as much profit as possible and to keep the customer falling into further debt.

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1 Ibid., p.p. 70-71.

2 Gibbon, P., and Higgins, M.D., 'Patronage, Tradition and Modernization : The Case of the Irish Gombeenman', The Economic and Social Review, Vol. 6, No. I, 1974, pp.27-44.

This technique:

> secured the clientele for both purchasing and retailing it enabled the Gombeenman to attain a monopoly in marketing the produce of clients, and further enabled him not only to pay for them below market price, but to make a second profit by insisting that the produce be bartered for shop goods.

A second usage of the Irish Gombeenman calls attention to their emergence from the ranks of the peasantry. Coulter[1] wrote of the Gombeenman as

> one of the peasant class who has contrived to accumulate some money which he turns to his account by lending to his poorer 'neighbours at usurious interest'.

Political Conditions.

The latter part of the 19th century was dominated by the political struggle for ownership of the land and resulted in the transference of land from English and Irish landlords to Irish farmers. This transformation took place in three stages.[2]

1. A stage of rent regulation.
2. Recognition of dual ownership of the land by landlord and tenant.
3. The conceding of tenant proprietary or a return to unitary ownership, this time the tenant and not the landlord the recognised owner.

These concessions were won by the activities of the Land League - a combination of farmers and townsmen with shopkeepers prominent.[3] Agrarian agitation took place primarily in the West and its basis was in the economic crisis brought on by the poor harvests of 1878 and 1879 which affected all classes of farmers.

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1 Coulter, J., The West of Ireland, Dublin, 1862, p.73.

2 O'Shiel, K., 'The work of the Land Commission', Public Admin. of Ireland, Vol. II, Parkside Press, Dublin, 1949.

3 Clark, S., 'The social composition of the Land League', Irish Historical Studies, Vol. XVII, No. 68, 1971, pp.447-469.

Also in these years, the virtual halting of emigration in many districts provided a fund of young activists. These conditions were built on by the Land League who not merely articulated, but largely motivated that aspiration, (peasant proprietorship), and legitimized it with an immaculate pedigree by which tenants acquired retrospective private shares in "a mythical gaelic garden of Eden." [1]

Tenants were not so overcome with the desire to own land that they reacted immediately to the purchase provisions. Most purchases were made after the passing of the 1903 Wyndham Act which contained repayment terms well below rent levels,[2] - a crucial factor in acceptability. In 1870, tenants constituted 97 percent of farm occupiers, in 1906 they represented 70.8 percent and in 1916, 36.I percent.[3]

Economic and social conditions in the most remote parts of the West had improved in the 1890's. Cash incomes rose and deposits in post office savings banks rose from a quarter of a million pounds in 1881 to two and a quarter million in 1912.[4] Diet, housing, and transport also improved. Yet in these areas, the underlying social and economic structure was precarious and in an effort to combat this, the Congested District Board was established in 1891.

In 1891, a congested district was defined as a region where more than 20 percent of the people lived in electoral divisions in which the per capita rateable Poor Law Valuation was less than 30 shillings .

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1 Lee, J., Op.cit., p.102.
2 Ibid., p.103.
3 Hooker, Op.cit., p.120.
4 Cullen, L., Op.cit., p.151.

In 1900, all of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Six rural districts in Co. Clare and four in West Cork were included in the Board's area.[1] The Board's purpose was to bring about lasting improvements in the poor districts of the West of Ireland and the relief of exceptional distress. To this end, it was involved in schemes to promote fisheries, development of forestry, and promotion of other industries. The improvement of agriculture and in particular the enlargement and consolidation of agricultural holdings[2] was a primary aim.

Land Purchased by the Congested District Board.

Period	No. of Estates.	Area (Acres)
1903	46	169,829
1903-1910	158	327,723
1910-1920	733	1,768,027

Though the Board's policy of encouraging migration or emigration had only limited success, its land activities greatly altered the settlement pattern in many areas. A clear example of this policy was the case of Clare Island which used to be held in Rundale, with people not knowing where their land begun or ended, but which was re-apportioned into seventy-four farms by the Congested Districts Board. The Board also improved holdings through the building of new houses and stone boundaries.

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1 For a history of the Congested Districts Board, see Micks. L., An Account of the Congested Districts Board, Dublin, 1925.

2 Agricultural Statistics, 1891. Brandenburg, S.J., 'The Progress of Land Transfer in the Irish Republic', Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics, Vol. 8, 1932, pp.275-286.

The most striking aspects of Irish agriculture in the latter part of the nineteenth century were the shift from the production of cereals to the production of animals and the consolidation of land holdings. These developments were largely a response to price movements. Commentators have testified to the 'rational' character of Irish agriculture. Barrington in 1926 remarked that:

> there is not a shred of evidence... to suggest that the Irish farmer has regulated his productive activities other than in accordance with the economic tendencies of the time. 1

Another commentator has remarked that it cannot be denied that the changes in Irish agriculture were essentially 'rational'.[2]

The West of Ireland had participated in these general trends and by the time of foundation of the Irish Free State had emerged as a region of small and medium size landholders, operating a mixed economy and providing on the one hand, young animals for sale to the Eastern half of the country and on the other, young people for export to England and America.

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1 Barrington, T., 'A Review of Irish agricultural prices,' Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Vol. XV, 1926-27, p.279.

2 Staehle, H., 'Statistical notes on the economic history of Irish agriculture'. Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, Vol. XXI, 1951-52, p.457. See also Table 30, Appendix I.

Chapter 2

Agricultural Trends and Policy since the Foundation of the Irish Free State.

In this chapter, we examine some of the principal developments in Irish agriculture since the foundation of the Irish state in 1922. These developments are examined under the headings of land ownership and settlement; numbers and size of holdings; agricultural labour force; and farm mechanization. The state agricultural policy, particularly as it relates to small farms, is then examined.

Land Ownership and Settlement.

The establishment of the Irish Free State did not effect the movement towards general farm ownership, which continued under the direction and supervision of the Irish Land Commission. This body had been established by the 1881 Land Act as a rent fixing agency. It later developed by law into a tenant-purchase agency for the elimination of landlordism and the conversion of tenants into proprietors.

Ultimately it was expanded into a purchaser and distributor of land in implementing a nationwide land structure reform programme.[1]

As it is now constituted, the Land Commission consists of a judicial commissioner, who is a judge of the high court, and not more than four lay commissioners.[2] These commissioners have the sole power to determine the following:

(i) the persons from whom land is to be acquired;
(ii) the actual land to be acquired;
(iii) the price to be paid for acquired land;
(iv) the persons to whom (and the price at which) the land shall be alloted . 3

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1 Following the dissolution of the Congested Districts Board in 1923, responsibility for land reform in the congested districts was transferred to the Land Commission.

2 Department of Lands leaflet, December, 1971. The Work of The Land Commission, p.1.

3 Ibid., p.2.

In addition to its work of distributing land among small holders and the establishment of new farms, it is also the function of the Land Commission to rearrange into compact units, land holdings which are held in scattered strips.

Between 1923 and 1968 the Land Commission transfered 2,836,268 acres to tenant purchasers.[1] Its activities from 1945 to 1971 can be summarized in the following figures:[2]

Area of land acquired through compulsory and voluntary purchase:	724,000 acres
Area of lands distributed in land settlement operations:	815,000 "
Number of new farms created:	2,250
Number of existing farms enlarged	22,500
Amount expended on estate improvement works	£15,600,000

Number and Size of Holdings.

Since the foundation of the state, the number of land holdings, particularly smaller holdings has declined.

Table 6

Number and Sizes of Holdings in Ireland. (26 Counties) 1910-1971.

Year	Above I acres& less than 5	Above 5 acres& less than 15	Above 15 acres & less than 30	Above 30 acres& less than 50	Above 5 acres & less than 100	Above 100 acres& less than 200	Above 200 acres	Total Holdings above I acre
1910	48,274	115,882	103,547	58,728	48,524	20,486	8,602	404,042
1931	30,687	73,362	90,364	62,267	49,873	21,081	7,949	335,583
1939	27,686	67,417	90,765	62,478	49,966	21,021	7,399	326,732
1949	26,360	62,423	86,983	64,453	51,287	21,772	7,270	318,548
1960	23,312	47,476	73,295	62,056	54,209	22,884	7,076	290,308
1971	23,095	44,014	65,773	60,235	56,238	23,351	6,744	279,450

Source: Agricultural Statistics 1927-33, Agricultural Statistics 1934-56, Statistical Abstract 1961, Statistical Abstract, 1972-73

1 Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

2 Land Commission Leaflet, Op.cit., p.3.

This trend was not new, but rather as we observed in the previous chapter, had begun before the Great Famine, but was given momentum by the events of the Famine years.

For the State as a whole and in the period 1910-1971, the number of holdings over I acre declined from 404,043 to 279,450. The number of holdings 1-5 acres declined from 48,274 to 23,095, holdings from 5-15 acres declined from 115,882 to 44,014 and holdings 15-30 acres declined from 103,547 to 65,773. The numbers of holdings 30-50 acres, 50-100 acres and 100-200 acres increased, the largest increase taking place in holdings 50-100 acres, from 48,524 to 56,238 holdings.

In the period 1931-65, the greatest percentage decline in holdings 1-15 acres was in the Western province of Connaught (44.8%). The greatest percentage increases in holdings 30-50 acres and 50-100 acres were also in this province.

Table 7

Percentage decline in holdings 1931-65, by size and province.

	1-15	15-20	30-50	50-100	100-200	200	Total
Leinster	31.9	23.3	4.1	+5.5	+13.8	10.1	14.0
Munster	24.6	23.7	10.0	+2.4	+7.2	12.2	11.3
Connacht	44.8	20.5	+12.1	+40.7	+9.7	30.7	17.7
Ulster	31.7	32.2	7.6	+16.5	+19.6	+8.3	21.4
State	34.7	23.9	1.7	+10.7	+10.6	12.3	15.5

Source: Fennell, R.,'Structural Change in Irish Agriculture,' Irish Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Vol.I, 1968, p.183.

Yet in 1971, nearly sixty percent of holdings in this Western province were less than 30 acres.[1]

[1] See map appendix 1. Map 6.

Land Utilization.[1]

The trend away from tillage, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter was discernable before the Great Famine, has continued, (Table 7) except for exceptional periods. These were the ploughing campaign years 1917-1918 when the tillage acreage rose by 648,000 acres, from 1,735,000 in 1916 to a peak of 2,383,000 in 1918.[2]

The economic war years in the early and mid 1930's when, because of a policy of price supports, the acreage of wheat rose from below 21,000 in 1931 to 255,000 in 1936,[3] and the years during, and immediately following, the second world war when a compulsory tillage order operated (Emergency Powers Act, 1939). In 1940, it was compulsory to till one-eighth of the arable land in each holding. In 1944, the proportion was increased to three-eighths.

In these years, the total acreage ploughed rose by 1,075,000 acres from 1,492,000 in 1939 to a peak of 2,567,000 in 1944 - the highest recorded acreage under crops since 1872.[4] After 1944 the acreage ploughed has continuously declined. In 1973 the total area ploughed was 1,196,000 acres which was fifty three percent below the 1944 peak. In 1973, slightly more than seven percent of land was utilized for the growing of crops and fruit.[5]

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1 See diagrams 12 to 17, appendix I.

2 Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-1973.

3 Lyons, F.S.L., op.cit., p.621.

4 Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

5 See diagram 11, appendix I.

TABLE 8

Area of Crop and Pasture

Year	Corn Crops	Root and Green Crops and Flax	Total Tillage	Hay	Pasture	Total Crops & Pasture	Other Land
1921	1,034,705	763,443	1,798,148	1,983,241	8,090,375	11,881,459	5,137,696
1931	763,284	654,376	1,417,660	2,313,189	7,988,824	11,727,034	5,297,447
1941	1,413,196	814,328	2,227,524	2,004,214	7,336,107	11,576,734	5,447,751
1951	1,073,614	631,733	1,705,347	1,936,263	7,934,698	11,588,244	5,435,848
1961	1,081,000	505,700	1,586,700	1,889,200	7,779,900	11,267,800	5,755,900
1971	964,900	347,700	1,322,000	2,425,700	8,175,600	11,923,300	5,100,400

TABLE 9

Number of Livestock, 1910-1971

Year	Horses	Mules & Jennetts	Asses	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs	Poultry
1921	490,183	26,877	215,874	4,419,347	3,020,231	890,886	17,092,988
1931	449,697	15,719	117,334	4,029,084	3,575,379	1,227,003	22,782,229
1941	459,176	8,438	148,436	4,150,460	2,909,410	763,692	17,392,788
1951	367,048	3,712	102,267	4,376,358	2,615,819	557,960	18,838,825
1961	207,100	82,060		4,713,300	4,527,600	1,056,400	12,843,300
1971	117,200			6,133,700	4,188,700	1,322,500	11,777,000

SOURCE: 1921-1961 Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1962.

1971 Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

Agricultural Labour Force.

Since the foundation of the State, the numbers employed in agriculture have continued to decline. This is again a continuation of a trend established in the nineteenth century. In the period 1921-1971, the numbers classified as farmers has declined from 269,000 to 182,000, those classified as 'relatives assisting' declined from 262,000 to 54,000 and those classified as agricultural employees declined from 113,000 to 30,000

Table 10

Farm Labour Force in Thousands

Year	Farmers	Relatives Assisting	Employees
1926	269	262	113
1936	257	244	103
1946	250	203	106
1951	235	171	85
1961	223	95	54
1971	182	54	30

Source: Facts about Irish agriculture: Government Publication - January, 1975.

This trend of a declining agricultural population was part of a general process of rural population decline which again was established before the Great Famine.

Table 11

Town and rural population (thousands), at various dates, 1841-1966.

	Total		Leinster		Munster		Connacht		Ulster (3 counties)	
	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R
1841	1.110	5,429	530	1,444	429	1,967	100	1,309	31	709
1891	888	2,581	518	670	296	876	53	671	21	363
1901	911	2,311	547	608	290	787	53	571	22	324
1911	942	2,197	574	588	295	740	52	559	21	310
1926	959	2,013	595	554	288	682	54	499	22	278
1936	1,055	1,914	672	549	298	644	62	464	23	257
1936	1,099	1,869	701	519	313	629	62	464	23	257
1946	1,161	1,794	756	525	317	600	64	429	25	239
1951	1,227	1,794	814	523	323	576	66	406	25	228
1951	1,272	1,688	814	495	332	567	72	400	28	225
1956	1,285	1,613	855	484	333	545	70	376	27	209
1956	1,287	1,611	858	481	332	545	71	375	26	210
1961	1,299	1,519	871	461	331	518	72	347	25	193
1961	1,307	1,512	876	457	333	516	72	347	26	191
1966	1,419	1,465	960	455	357	503	76	326	27	182

Source: Meenan, J., The Irish Economy Since 1922, p.185.

In Connaught, the Western province, a loss of population has been recorded in each census in the present century. The rural population declined from 1,309,000 in 1841 to 671,000 in 1891 to 400,000 in 1951, and to 326,000 in 1966.

Indeed as Table 12 shows the decline of the agricultural population was greatest on the smaller holdings. The decline in the number of male farmers working farms of less than 30 acres increased from eighteen percent between 1926 and 1946, to thirty-five percent between 1946 and 1966.

Table 12

Number of Male Farmers by Size of Holding in Ireland, 1926, 1946, 1961, and 1966.

	Size of Holding in Acres					
Year	1-30	30-50	50-100	100-200	200 over	Total
1926	120,563	43,146	34,506	13,917	4,937	217,069
1946	98,971	47,403	38,322	15,592	4,794	205,084
1961	70,365	46,863	41,551	17,011	4,682	180,472
1966	64,660	46,916	43,854	16,893	4,368	177,452
Percentage change						
1926-46	-18	+10	+12	+12	-3	-6
1946-66	-35	-1	+14	+ 8	-9	-13

Source: Kennedy, R.E., The Irish, p.101.

Depopulation was facilitated and indeed encouraged by emigration, a feature of Irish life since opening decades of the nineteenth century.

Table 13

Net Emigration, 1891-1966.

Year	Net Emigration	Rate per 1,000
1891-1901	39,642	11.9
1901-11	26,154	8.2
1911-26	27,002	8.8
1926-36	16,675	5.6
1936-46	18,712	6.3
1946-51	24,384	8.2
1951-56	39,353	13.4
1956-61	42,401	14.8
1961-66	16.121	5.7

Source: Meenan, J., The Irish Economy Since 1922, p.206.

Agricultural Mechanization.

In recent years, agricultural mechanization has involved the increasing substitution of tractors and tractor-drawn machines for horses and horse-drawn machines. The early period of mechanization which began in the eighteen fifties had involved the increased substitution of horses and horse-drawn machinery for manual agriculture.[1]

In 1926 there were less than one thousand tractors in the country. This figure had risen to over 10,000 in 1949 and to 44,000 in 1960.[2] The movement towards tractors was much more rapid on the large holdings.

Table 14

Tractors per 100 Holdings by Size of Holdings, Ireland, June 1960.

Item	Size of Holding in Acres. 1-30	30-50	50-100	100-200	200-Over	Total
Number of Holdings	144,083	62,056	54,209	22,884	7,076	290,308
Number of Tractors	4,699	6,364	13,181	12,266	6,809	43,319
Tractors per 100 holdings	3	10	24	53	96	15

Source: Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1964.

1 Kennedy, E., The Irish, Emigration, Marriage, and Fertility. Berkely, University of California Press, 1973, p.87.

2 Agricultural Statistics 1934-56. Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1964. It is difficult to come by figures after 1960, but the numbers of tractors have undoubtedly continued to rise.

Indeed tractorization helped to widen the gap between small and large holdings and thereby increase individual farmers'need and desire for additional land.[1]

Agricultural Policy and the Small Farms.

As we have seen in this and in the previous chapter, ever since the Great Famine there has been a trend away from mixed farming, viewed as wasteful of land and labour, towards specialization in livestock production. This transition and the continuous commercialization of agriculture have favoured larger farmers over smaller ones, and the numbers of these latter have continued to decline. In the light of these trends, it is interesting to examine agricultural policy reports, particularly as they pertain to smaller land holders.[2]

On first glance it would appear that from the foundation of the State, agricultural policy operated on the basis of support for small-scale family farming. The policy of owner-occupancy was continued and as we have seen the whole land reform programme and the work of the Land Commission was geared towards the redistribution of land amongst small holders. Lyons has summarized the position thus:

> Politically, the structure of Irish agriculture was sacrosanct. Owner-occupancy had been the ark of the covenant for so many years, that to tamper with it would have been suicide for any politician. No politician in fact showed the slightest sign of doing so. 3

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1 In chapter 5, we examine this process operating in the villages.

2 Agricultural Policy as it has affected small farmers is a much neglected topic. But see Meenan, J., The Irish Economy Since 1922. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1970 and Crotty, R., Irish Agricultural Production, Cork, University Press Cork, 1966.

3 Lyons, F.S.L., Ireland Since the Famine, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971, p.606.

Yet true though this may be, a closer examination of policy documents also demonstrates that support for small scale family farming was by no means universal. Such an examination reveals the existence of rival conceptions of agriculture. On the one hand, there was the viewpoint that agriculture was a way of life as well as an industry and that a country benefited from the presence of large numbers of small holders who helped maintain a vibrant rural population. The rival viewpoint was that agriculture was firstly a business and should therefore be subject to the same rules and laws as any other business. Both viewpoints are present in the majority and minority reports of the first Commission on Agriculture,[1] and in the first and second Interim Reports on Wheat Growing and the question of Tariff on Flour.[2]

Thus while the majority report of the first Commission on Agriculture was mainly concerned with the problem of increasing the efficiency of production and marketing so that farmers could sell profitably in the free and competitive British market, the minority report dissented from this view. The signatories of the minority report stated that:

> we dissent from the report of the majority in that it appears to view agriculture and all the operations connected therewith as a means of making money, and to test the prosperity of agriculture by the amount of the balance at the end of a period lying to the credit of the farmer....We believe to be fallacious the theory that the maximum benefit to the nation will be achieved by encouraging every individual in the nation to pursue his own personal advantage; we are emphatically of opinion that State policy respecting agriculture must be guided by a clear recognition of the principle that in the utilization of the national resources, including the land, individual self-interest must be subordinated to the national welfare. 3

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1 Agriculture, Report of the Commission on, S.O., 1923.

2 First and Second Interim Reports on Wheat Growing and the Question of Tariff on Flour. Economic Committee, S.O., 1928.

3 Agriculture, Report of the Commission on, 1923, p.77.

The national welfare could best be served if agriculture was directed to "firstly, to satisfy the needs of the people of this country".[1] The pursuit of this policy would involve the encouragement of tillage and especially of wheat growing. Again the Minority Report on Wheat Growing suggested that the primary purpose of agriculture was to provide human food and therefore wheat growing should be encouraged as it would employ more fully the people employed in agriculture and help retain them on the land. The majority report on Wheat Growing contested this claim and argued that wheat growing was not as profitable to the individual farmer as other crops.

These conflicting viewpoints roughly approximated to the political divisions in Irish society. The majority report emphasis was by in large supported by Cumann na Gaedhl, the party of the larger farmer.[2] The minority viewpoint was held by Fianna Fail, the party which drew its support from the smaller farmers. Indeed De Valera and Fianna Fail had placed wheat-growing and the development of the Irish market for agricultural produce in the vanguard of their programme.

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1 Ibid , p.77. In fact the Minority Report recommends that the acreage of land held by a single owner should be fixed. It suggested that "the limit should vary according to the proportion of land fit for tillage which is in fact tilled. If the normal limit were fixed at 100 acres of arable land, an extra 50 or 100 acres might be allowed, provided that, say, 16 percent (i.e. the 1912 average for 50-100 acre holdings) of the total holding were ploughed; or any additional acerage desired should be granted on condition that an increasing percentage of the whole were tilled". p.95.

2 Chubb, B. The Government and Politics of Ireland, London, Oxford University Press, 1974, pp.70-96.

In 1931 De Valera stated that:

> With regard to economic problems I hold more strongly than ever to our aim of making Ireland as far as possible self-sufficing. The countries which to-day are suffering most from the prevailing depression are those which are most dependent on foreign trade. Ireland, thanks to her soil and climate, is in the fortunate position of being able to produce all the necessaries of life for her own people. It is our intention to enable home producers to take advantage of that position by giving them security in the home market. In pursuit of this policy, we propose to protect every branch of agriculture. 1

When Fianna Fail came to power in 1932, its desire to pursue a policy of self sufficiency was strengthened by the Anglo-Irish dispute over land annuities. In July 1932, special duties were imposed on Irish livestock, dairy produce and meat. entering the United Kingdom.

The policy of self sufficiency entailed state intervention in order to provide adequate prices. The measures taken are summarized by Meenan.

> A minimum price was fixed for wheat; the difference between it and the average price was paid out of State funds. Legislation provided for the absorption of surplus oats and barley by mixing them with maize for feed. The growing of sugar beet and tobacco was encouraged by remissions of duty. The growers of fruit and vegetables were protected by tariffs and quotas. 2

This policy was pursued by Fianna Fail in order to alter the balance between large and small farmers and to:

> redress the balance between the different sectors of the economy - to free the countryside from the dominance of the cattleman, to extend the area of tillage, to develop home industries and thus provide employment for those who might otherwise be obliged to emigrate. 3

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1 Irish Press, October 28th, 1931.

2 Meenan; J., Op.cit., p.99.

3 Lyons, F.S.L., Op.cit., p.614.

But our analysis of agricultural trends clearly shows that it did not realize this aim. Indeed one commentator has suggested that in reality, the policy supports followed, may in general, have benefited the larger farmers at the expense of small ones and may therefore have contributed towards an acceleration in the decline in the number of persons working on small farms.[1]

The 1937 Constitution emphasised the desirability of having as many people as possible on the land. Article 45 (V) stated "That there may be established on the land in economic security as many families as in the circumstances shall be practicable".[2]

Yet in the first post-war report on agriculture the old tensions were again evident, if more muted. The majority report on post emergency agricultural policy[3], while conceding that "the social and economic advantages of a system of small-scale proprietorship was readily appreciated", nonetheless doubted the value of totally concentrating on small scale farming. The minority report adopted a more social and populist position, viewing agriculture as not only an industry but also a way of life, providing homes and many of the necessities of life. The advantages of a large rural population are stressed and the report stated that:

> bearing in mind the advantages to the nation of prosperous and populous rural population and in view of the continued degree of embarrassment caused by the continuous movement of the rural population into towns, it has become urgently necessary to make conditions on the land sufficiently attractive to induce labour to remain on the land. 4

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1 Crotty, R., Irish Agriculture, Cork. Cork University Press, 1966, pp.184-191.

2 Constitution of Ireland, Government Publications Sales Office, Dublin, p.150.

3 Post-Emergency Agricultural Policy, Report of the Commission on, 1945, p.13

4 Ibid., p.115.

Individual commentators also stressed the social value of the small family farm. For example Coyne states that:

> It is in the sphere of non-economic values that we must look for the national importance of these (small) holdings, their owners and their families.

and,

> The economic issues with regard to these smaller farms... have always seemed very much less urgent than the human and social ones. 1

While another commentator stated that,

> The small holding kept more people on the land,

and,

> keeping people on the land was to him more of a major consideration than was production. 2

Support for small-scale farming and agriculture as a way of life continued into the early sixties, when this perspective came increasingly under attack from economists.[3]

In fact the fifties had witnessed a major debate on the 'rural community' a debate characterized by the defence, on social policy grounds, of the small family farm by clerics, administrators and some agricultural economists. The tone of the debate is well represented in the journal Christus Rex whose Autumn 1958 issue was devoted to the problem of the future of the small farm.[4]

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1 Coyne, E.J., 'The Small Farm in Irish Agriculture', Studies, Vol. 47, 1958, pp. 9-10.

2 O'Hegarty, P.S. "Discussion on Johnson, J., paper, An economic base for an Irish Rural Civilization", Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, 1947-48, p.22.

3 In 1964 a government report had felt it necessary to remark that: "the emphasis placed on the concept of the standard family farm does not mean that the problems of smaller farms are being overlooked. The Government have, in fact, long recognised the special problems of the small farm areas and have introduced various measures designed primarily for their benefit. Their income position can be improved by taking advantage of opportunities for operating their holdings on more intensive lines and by taking up part-time off-farm work where this is available in their area". Agriculture in the Second Programme for Economic Expansion. Dublin Government Publications Sale Office, 1964, (PR7697), p.188.

4 "The Rural Parish", Christus Rex, October, 1958.

The majority economic opinion in the sixties was that farming was now to be viewed as an economic activity and should be approached in a scientific and business-like fashion. The small farm region, the West of Ireland, previously referred to as the backbone of the country now came to be classified as "having all the essential features of an under-developed economy, e.g. a relatively high density of population on the land, low labour and land productivities, importance of traditional social modes".[1]

The solution to the problem of this "underdeveloped" region was to be in terms of structural re-organization and elimination of large numbers of small farms and increasing the size of the remaining farms. The concept of viability was now in regular usage. Progress in the West of Ireland would now depend on "pursuing a policy of structural reform within agriculture together with a policy of higher productivity of the individual farms which are regarded as potentially viable".[2]

The seventies began with a further shift towards strict economic principles in thinking and planning in regard to land and agricultural policy.

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1 Attwood, E.A. 'Agriculture and Economic Growth in the West of Ireland.' Journal of The Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland. Vol.XX, 1961-62, p.175.

2 Scully, J., "The Development of The West of Ireland", Irish Geography, Vol. 6, No.I, 1969. p.63.

The culmination of this approach came with the implementation in Ireland of the E.E.C. Farm Modernization Schemes which amounts to a deliberate policy of reducing farm and rural population.[1] The problem is now defined as that of altering land and labour to the market and technological progress. The "structural" problem is how to enlarge single farms, and enterprises within farms, so that the existing labour-saving devices can be fully utilized. Agriculture is expected to make the maximum contribution to the national product, while also providing a fair level of income for a limited number of viable farms.[2]

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1 Directive 159, Farm Modernization Scheme envisages a three-fold classification of farms into commercial, development and transitional. Commercial farms are those where income per labour unit per annum is already £1,800 in 1974; development farms are those where this level of income, defined as the 'comparable' income, in terms of its equivalent at the time, can be yielded within six years. The remainder are transitional. All get aid but preferential terms are given to the development category. Directive 160 provides for retirement grants to farmers over 55 years of age, on condition that they lease or sell their land, to which development farmers have priority. Directive 161 provides a scheme of social guidance to farm families particularly on their future prospects in farming or outside it. See,

Commins, P., 'Human aspects of Change in the Rural Economy', paper read at the Conference, Current Adjustments in the Rural Economy, Dublin, November, 1974, p.7. See also Appendix 2.

2 For comment on those Directives in a wider context see Borgan, S., 'Agricultural Policy in Western Europe and some of its sociological aspects', Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. IX, 1969, pp.252-259.

Nooij, A.T.J., 'Values in European Agricultural Policies', Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. V. 1965, pp.77-95.

That there may be room for some disagreement in the interpretation of the influence we have traced (in this and the previous chapters), for example, in their ordering and interaction, cannot be denied.[1] It seems inconceivable, however, that given the magnitude of the changes involved of a social and an economic kind, they should be almost entirely ignored. Yet this is precisely the departure point for the study which has come to be regarded as the classic account of Irish rural social relations. It is to this study we must now turn if we are to encounter the prevailing assumptions of Irish rural community studies to the present day.

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1 Hannan, D., 'Kinship, Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish Rural Communities'. Economic and Social Review, Vol.3, 1972, pp.163-188.

Chapter 3

Sociological/Anthropological Studies of Farming Communities in the West of Ireland

There have been three major studies of farming communities in the West of Ireland. One in the 1930's[1], a second in the 1950's,[2] and a third[3] in the late sixties. The first in time and importance in so far as it has been used as a departure point for almost all subsequent research on rural Ireland is Family and Community in Ireland. It has been accepted as the classic study of rural Ireland[4] and except for Gibbon,[5] doubts about the work have at most resulted in suggestions for minor alterations[6] and further research.

The background to Arensberg and Kimball's study can be gleaned from Lloyd Warner's preface. Here we see that their work was to be a contribution to the development of a "full grown comparative science of man". In fact Harvard University had undertaken a fairly general study of Ireland using physical anthropologists, archaeologists and social anthropologists. The social anthropological aspects of the study were directed by Lloyd Warner who visited Ireland in 1931 and in fact chose the study's location. Co. Clare was chosen we are told because it was

> a county in which there was a blending of the older Gaelic and modern British influences and one that was neither entirely Gaelic nor entirely English in speech. 7

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1 Arensberg, C., and Kimball, D., Family and Community in Ireland, Harvard University Press, Mass. 1968, second edition, (first published 1940).

2 Cresswell, R., Une Communauté Rurale de l'Irlande, Paris, Institut d'Ethnologie, 1969.

3 Brody, H., Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland. Penguin Books, London, 1969.

4 Humphries, A., The New Dubliners, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966. Limerick Rural Survey - Social Structure, 1962. Mitchell, G.D., Sociology, University Tutorial Press, London, 1957.

5 Gibbon P., 'Arensberg and Kimball', Revisited. Economy and Society, Vol.2, 1973, pp.479-498.

6 Bell, C., and Newby, H., Community Studies, Allen & Unwin, London, 1971.

7 Op.cit., p.XIII.

Arensberg settled in Clare in 1932 and was later joined by Kimball. The fieldwork continued for two years and the book was first published in 1940. Here the book is examined in terms of its theoretical orientation and adequacy and its empirical validity.

Arensberg and Kimball's theoretical position is clearly stated in the introduction to the book,

> Experience in Yankee city in New England had led the authors to the point of view which is the central hypothesis of functional anthropology. The more they worked, the more it grew certain for them that to a certain approximation it is useful to regard society as an integrated system of mutually interrelated and functionally interdependent parts. A study in Ireland then should be to test this hypothesis. 1

Ireland was to be the testing ground for the emerging functionalism and we are told that "the theoretical problem is of greater importance than any description of things Irish".[2] Thus the book abounds with the language of functionalism "mutual dependence"; "functional interconnections"; "complex social organism"; "state of equilibrium", etc. The influences on the work are of course Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown, while the hidden hand of Durkheim is revealed from time to time.[3] Thus their emphasis on comparative sociology and on "objective" social science and the belief that society could be understood from a point in time examination. Thus they speak of the uselessness of the methods and theories of the older anthropologists - historical rather than analytical - for the investigation of modern life. Like all functionalists their work is based on assumptions about history, in this case, on the belief that Ireland "represented a relatively unbroken tradition dating back to pre-Christian and pre-Roman times".[4]

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1 Op.cit., p.XXX

2 Ibid., p.XX1

3 Arensberg and Kimball wrote that 'the work was begun in 1932 as an intensive field research in social anthropology as it had grown up in the Ethnological fieldwork of Malinowski and through the theoretical formulations of Radcliffe Brown., Op.cit., p.XXIX.

4 Ibid., p.XXXI.

The problem for the American authors then was to identify the structure of Irish rural communities and to establish how order and equilibrium was maintained. The structure was identified with a given series of observed relationships, which are listed in the final chapter. There are:

> The relationships of the familistic order.
> The relationships of the age grading or generation.
> The relationships of sex organization.
> The relationships of local division of labour.
> The relationships of exchange and distribution in fairs and markets.1

These relationships are governed by sets of norms and customs and the dynamic element is added by the concept of function. Institutions are seen as functioning parts of the social system which maintained its equilibrium over time through adjustment.

In the maintenance of the system, custom and kinship assume great importance. Thus "the traditional custom of life persists and continues to yield its power in essentially similar fashion decade after decade and generation after generation".[2] Custom operates on rural dwellers, they are followers of custom, and order is maintained by individuals acting out their roles in accordance with prescribed norms.

Empirical Validity.

The data gathered to support this theoretical position were assembled from three townlands in North Clare: Rinnamona, Inagh and Luogh with the latter featuring most often. The census of population is used in the opening chapter to isolate categories of farmers.

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1 Ibid., pp.302-303.
2 Ibid., p.30.

> The census has laid bare the existence of two widely different types of agriculture in the countryside. There are two widely different groups of persons whom we can isolate as large and small farmers. 1.

The authors state that this simple distinction was supported by their informants own belief - "The statistics give factual evidence to the divisions the Irish reckon in the countryside itself".

The distinction is based on factors other than the size of holding. Technology, land usage and labour are also used to distinguish the two types of farmers. Thus the large farmer, a grazier of over 200 acres, cultivating nothing but a "kitchen garden" for household use, utilizes his land to its full capacity for grazing cattle. He is also dependent on machinery and hired labour, while the small farmer is characterized by a mixed economy, producing oats, rye, potatoes, cabbage and caring for hens, geese, ducks, pigs, cows and stock. Labour is provided by the family and assisting relatives. The economy is subsistence oriented.

However, in the real world this dichotomy is essentially a false one and leads to false conclusions. It stems from the desire to isolate the small farmer and to establish a functioning community of equals. As it is, we are never really sure what a small farmer is. In the book large farmers would appear to be those over 200 acres, small farmers being less than 200 acres. However, those under 50 acres and sometimes those under 30 acres are in actuality the "small men". This presentation is all part of an effort to build a model of a static and homogeneous community ignoring changes in farm ownership and the consolidation of holdings that was going on all around them.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p.3.

[2] Gibbon's work on the agricultural statistics for Co. Clare, 1930-33 shows that during this period the number of holdings under 15 acres diminished by 17%, holdings between 15 and 50 ac. diminished by 4%, and those over 50 acres increased by 4%. Op.cit., p.486.

This large/small dichotomy is used to interpret the nature of the cattle trade which reveals itself as a movement from small farm to large, as an interchange between two kinds of farmers. This trade is structured geographically and socially in the sense that it flows between two parts of Ireland, east and west, and between the two great agricultural classes. Such an interpretation does a great injustice to the complexity of the cattle trade, ignoring as it does the presence of a multitude of middlemen often drawn from the ranks of the small farmers.

Having isolated a changeless and homogeneous community, its structure and functioning is the subject matter for the remainder of the work. The small farm is a family farm and is directed by the father who is assisted by a wife and children. The image presented is that of social actors submerged under norms. Subservient women, obedient children and dominant fathers emerge with monotonous regularity. In these families choice and tension are absent.

This contented and self sufficient farm family is supported by the "give and take" of aid between small farmers which was in fact the kinship system in operation. "In a country region such as Luogh, nearly all the families are united by complicated and reduplicated bonds of marriage and descent and in fact disloyalty to one's kinship group is felt as a deadly crime against that group".[1] Indeed in Arensberg and Kimball's hands, kinship assumes an all embracing character, taking precedence over differences between farms, differences which would have suggested a more selective and complex co-operative system.[2]

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1 Op.cit., p.90.

2 See chapter 5.

The most important outward extensions of the local community are centres of trade, fairs and shops. Even though at one point we are led to believe that the small farmer is little affected by the market, we are also informed that the buying and selling of cattle are the source of the ultimate success or failure of the farm family. Such an important event as the fair one might then expect to be surrounded by tension, but it is lost in the rigid observance of custom and tradition. Although the farmers complained that the fair gave undue advantage to the buyer rather than to themselves, they would change nothing of it and they bitterly criticize any departure from customary precedure. The equal/unequal nature of the buyer/seller relationship is lost. There is nothing heard of the cattle bought and sold several times at a fair by middle-men for profit. Neither is there any account of the cattle bought directly off the land, especially from farms owned by elderly people, nor of the rigid patron-client relationship where cattle were continuously sold to one buyer, even at prices which were perceived to be low in the belief that the buyer would, even in bad times, always purchase their cattle. All of this is lost in the concern with the procedures of bargaining and sale which are "as unchanging a ritual as any church can provide".[1] The structure of relationships is lost in elaborate discussions of its form.

The countryman is serviced by a series of shops; the cross-roads shops which have smaller items, country shops which sell most items and shops in town.

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[1] Ibid., pp.290-291.

The relations between shopkeeper and customer are habitual, customary and ceremonious and go further than economic acts of barter purchase and sale. It is essentially familistic, which gives the fabric of society "additional cohesiveness". The integration of dealer and customer is deepened by the giving and receiving of credit which functions as a stabilizing force between shopkeeper and customer. The credit relationship is governed by custom. The whole relationship depends on each party recognizing the customary arrangements and in the end, through the combination of family and credit patterns in the shopkeeping system, a permanent and stable relationship between the resident of town and country is maintained. Thus, while admitting that antagonism did exist between farmers and shopkeepers and was based on shopkeepers "sharp practices", yet such practices are regarded as minor deviations from approved behaviour.

Maintaining the System.

The rural community of farm families was maintained according to Arensberg and Kimball by a number of devices. Most important among these being the form of marriage known as "the match".[1] "The match" ensured continuity on the farm, but necessitated the dispersal of siblings since only one child inherited.

> The nearly universal form of marriage in the countryside unites transfer of economic control, land ownership, reformation of family ties, advance in family and community status and entrance into adult and procreative sex life. 2

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[1] An arranged marriage.

[2] Ibid., p.103.

We are told that "the match" was the only respectable form of marriage, giving control of succession to parents. However, details on "the match" are based on solicitors' accounts (see pp.105-117) and country stories recounting what would happen and what people would do in hypothetical situations. There is little direct observation, and in fact in Luogh there had been only four marriages, in the ten years previous to the authors' visit. Indeed one informant stated that "there aren't any matches nowadays as nobody has a fortune to give to his daughter and the young men must travel".

The purpose of marriage was to "keep the name on the land". Arensberg and Kimball see the Irish countryman as having an intimate and reverent attitude towards the land. Clearly land as in any agricultural society was valued, being the only source of support for those who remain in the local community. The belief that reverence for the land, for a particular small holding, was an end in itself, may well have been fostered by groups outside the ranks of the peasants, particularly by cultural revivalists and particular politicians for whom it was essential that sets of values and attitudes should be developed and stressed, which would ensure that the peasantry would resign themselves to the laboriousness of physical survival.

The match prepared the way for dispersal of the other family members. The principal use of the dowry was to allow the 'old couple' to assist these children as they pleased, ideally in training for one of the Irish professions, but more commonly for emigration.[1] Dispersal did not coincide exactly with the wedding of the nominated successor - it generally preceeded it, when the nomination was made.

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[1] Ibid., pp.142-3.

It is also clear that the nomination was often delayed, leaving sons in suspense for years.

Once dispersal took place the way was clear for succession, which involved the establishing of the 'new couple', producing a new generation, and the retirement of the 'old couple', which was signified by their movement into the houses 'west room'. Arensberg and Kimball also allude to an alternative to this latter pattern - the postponement of inheritance until the death of the 'old couple'. The popularity of this arrangement is said, however, to have declined after the introduction of the old age pension.[1]

This set of arrangements raises the question of the status of the aged in the rural community. Arensberg and Kimball state that:

> the old live long because they have so much to live for. In their own sphere of life, they are honoured. They have power. [2]

In their families they are objects of respect and a mild sort of veneration on the part of all the younger members and they are accorded first place by the fire, the better cup of tea, the bigger slice of bread, etc. They represent the community "before priest, school-master, merchant, cattleman and government official".[3]

Yet we later note their unwillingness to give up the land. This can be partly attributed to their uncertainty about future treatment. A number of safe-guarding actions by the elders are recorded by Arensberg and Kimball. There is the case of the old farmer who demands payment for the land from the heir.

> Jimmy B. had only 10-15 acres of land but he said he would give it to his son, if the son paid ten pounds a year for it. They (the old people) often do that, make the son pay ten to fifteen pounds a year for the land. 4

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1 Ibid., p.121. Arensberg, C. The Irish Country Man, N.Y., Macmillan, 1937, pp.87-89.
2 Ibid., p.162.
3 Ibid., p.171.
4 Ibid., p.110.

We can also see that support for the old on the small holdings was a source of tension and that those who were found to be too great a burden "may go to the County Home". The old people were often the subject of the young peoples' hatred who, in the authors'own words,

> recognise themselves as forming a distinctive group with interests and sentiments of its own, opposed in the scheme of rural life to the elders. 1

This was not surprising as they were set off from the old people's gatherings and were condemned by the old land holders to a life of celibacy.

The first anthropological study of a West of Ireland community was a test of structural functionalist theory as it was emerging in the 1930's. The weaknesses of this perspective have since been well documented. Our immediate concern is that the testing ground for this theoretical approach was in the West of Ireland and that the empirical account used to sustain it has largely gone unchallenged. We have seen that the work contains errors and inconsistencies and that the homogeneous, smoothly functioning community depicted by Arensberg and Kimball reflects the demand of a limited theory rather than the activities of the real world.

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1 Ibid., p.168.

The Rural Community in "Transition" and "Decline".

In Cresswell's, Une Communauté Rurale De L'Irlande,[1] the traditional rural community is depicted as being in a state of "transition", one of the chief causes being depopulation. Cresswell states that any group whose economic and social functioning is as closely limited to kinship as was Irish traditional society is bound to reach, at a certain point of population loss, a state of anomie and the region studied could be said to have been in a condition approaching anomie at the time the fieldwork was carried out. This anomie is mainly indicative of transition. Rural communities at such a stage in Cresswell's view, contain within themselves the seeds of future development.

If Cresswell noted that the rural community was in a state of transition, Hugh Brody in Inishkillane, after spending five years in the Irish countryside, speaks of its total decline. His account is of

> the transformation of rural Ireland's traditional farm communities from an integrated working system to their present demoralized and contracted vestiges. In the rural communities, the people are demoralized, they feel outside their social system and have no faith in it continuing. They are lonely and withdrawn and have lost their belief in the social advantages or moral worth of their own small community. 2

But what is the traditional community that has broken down? It is that community which emerged from the pages of Family and Community in Ireland.

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1 Cresswell, R., Une Communauté Rurale De L'Irlande, Paris, Institute d'ethnologie, 1969.

2 Brody, H., Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1973, p.7.

Thus, although Brody is critical of Arensberg and Kimball's theoretical position, it is their ethnographic account, supplemented by selected native writers,[1] O Crohan,[2] O'Sullivan,[3] and Sayers[4], which forms the base line for the change and decline recorded. The contrast is between the community that is strong and enduring in the 1930's and the present day community where people are demoralized and weak.

To clarify Brody's position, we will examine some examples of the contrast he offers. In the traditional society the year was characterized by a seasonal round. This began in Spring with the preparation of the year's crop. May and June were for turf cutting and hay-making which in August "was closely followed by the harvest of whatever winter feed was down".[5] The work eased off in Winter giving way to festivities. Yet the activities of all seasons were part of a single social and economic whole. Preoccupation with the farm persisted through fireside chats and all the activities took place against the background of a vibrant community. Today, Summer and Winter are in opposition, summer being characterized by elation, winter by despondency. This elation has little to do with farming, but is brought on by the "tourists" whose presence in the area brings reassurance for the traditional way. Their arrival is an occasion for singing and drinking in the pub. Their departure and the coming of winter is also an occasion for drinking, but now it takes place in an atmosphere of despair.

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1 O'Donnell's work is selectively used with these authors although his work is of a different order.

2 O'Crohan, T., The Islandman, London, Oxford University Press, 1951.

3 O'Sullivan, Twenty Year Agrowing, London, Oxford University Press, 1953.

4 Sayers, P., An Old Woman's Reflections, London, Oxford University Press, 1962.

5 Brody, H., op.cit., p.19.

Again, the "traditional Irish home was to all appearances uncompromisingly patriarchal".[1] The farmer-father was in charge of all important matters, being the final arbiter and judge, from the sale of cattle to negotiating children's dowries. Today, children show a total disregard for their parents who have become dependent on their children. Now remittances rival, and in many cases supplant, income provided by the family farm. This money has now assumed great significance and in "purely economic terms, the sons of farm families in the remoter and poorer regions of the West have a central position".[2]

Elsewhere the traditional "cooring community" is contrasted with the community where "cooring" has all but disappeared from the life of the people. The traditional supportive and caring community is contrasted with the community where loneliness and breakdown are normal. The united and common interest community is contrasted with the community divided into shop and pub crowd.

This line of argument depends on the accuracy of Arensberg and Kimball's account. We have seen in Chapters one and two and in our examination of Family and Community that many facets of breakdown were present in the traditional community - Gibbon has forcibly challenged the novelty of Brody's themes, "the eclipse of community", "isolation and demoralization", "the rise of the Gombeenman", writing that none of "the novel changes in Irish rural communities which Brody identifies is novel at all. All that they are novel in relation to is rural Irish society as it was romantically depicted by Arensberg and Kimball".[3]

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1 Arensberg and Kimball, op.cit. p.109.

2 Ibid., p.121.

3 Gibbon, P., op.cit., p.491.

Gibbon also casts doubts on Brody's explanation of this change:

> Brody would have us believe that more radio, television, and cinema brings in alternative ways of life and makes the rural population aware of their deprived situation. This feeling of deprivation, Brody suggests, results in a demoralized local community and emigration by those not tied to the land. This emigration Brody argues,
>
> > has its repercussions principally in the increase in cash from emigrant remittances. These sources of cash together with general demoralization in consequence of the devaluation of peasant life, induces the farmers to contract their operations. This, in turn, leads to a decline in their solidarity and allows the rise to pre-eminence of the shop-keeper over the atomized rural society. 1
>
> This line of argument is indeed extremely speculative as there is little evidence to support increased cultural contact, no evidence at all to show the increasing importance of remittances,[2] nor is there any supportive evidence to substantiate the claim for the contraction of farming operations.

All of this is not to claim that Inishkillane is not helpful to our efforts at understanding rural communities in the West of Ireland.

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1 Gibbon, P., op.cit., p.492.

2 Brody's claim for the increased importance of remittances is indeed remarkable. For example, in 1907 witnesses to Royal Commission on Congestion stated that "usually they (tenants) are unable to pay their rent and rates till they get money from America, in addition to the money they earn in the harvest fields or in England and Scotland". Or again "from my own experience as a business man, I find that the majority of farmers around here would not be able to pay rent, taxes, shopkeepers and other debts if it were not for the numerous cheques and money orders that are sent to them from time to time by friends in America. There is scarcely any farmer around here who has not some friend - in the land of the Great Republic. About the Christmas season, I cash around £700 to £800 from my customers".
Royal Commission on Congestion, Ninth Report of the Commission. Appendix to the report, minutes of evidence taken in Mayo, 21st August, to 3rd September, Dublin, H.M.S.O. (c.d.3845) 1907, p.6,p.12.

Certainly, it draws attention to some of the strains and tensions operating in communities today, raising the issues of individual loneliness, isolation, and something of the communitys response, the inability and unwillingness to co-operate, the inroads being made by the tourists and its consequences, the activities of Michael Ryan, shopkeeper extraordinary, landholder, hotelier, minibus and boat owner and the muted local opposition to his rise to prominence. Perhaps Brody's failure lies in not linking the various sources of tension. Thus Joseph's crisis (his second breakdown) could then be seen as having been brought on by opposition to the sale of some of his land to strangers[1] (tourists). The opposition was led by a shopkeeper, who viewed the "strangers" as possible competition.

Again while much of the book treats the decline of farming, which is attributed to outside forces, in the final chapter we see that the Ryan's have, over time, added three large pieces of land to the family farm.

> The rent and rate records are dotted in recent years with changes in ownership following his deals with other Inishkillane farmers. 2

We also learn of the bachelor who in "one sale alienated both his land and his labour". Yet this and other sales remain as isolated incidents.

In Family and Community in Ireland, Irish rural communities were made to hang on the frame of emerging structural functionalism. We are left with an account of an isolated, homogeneous and vibrant society. A quarter of a century later this theoretical construct is in a state transition. Fifteen years later on, it is in total decline, as Brody asks what happens to this working community when it comes into contact with capitalist society? In this, and similar approaches, the peculiar external contacts and the internal dynamics of rural society are ignored.

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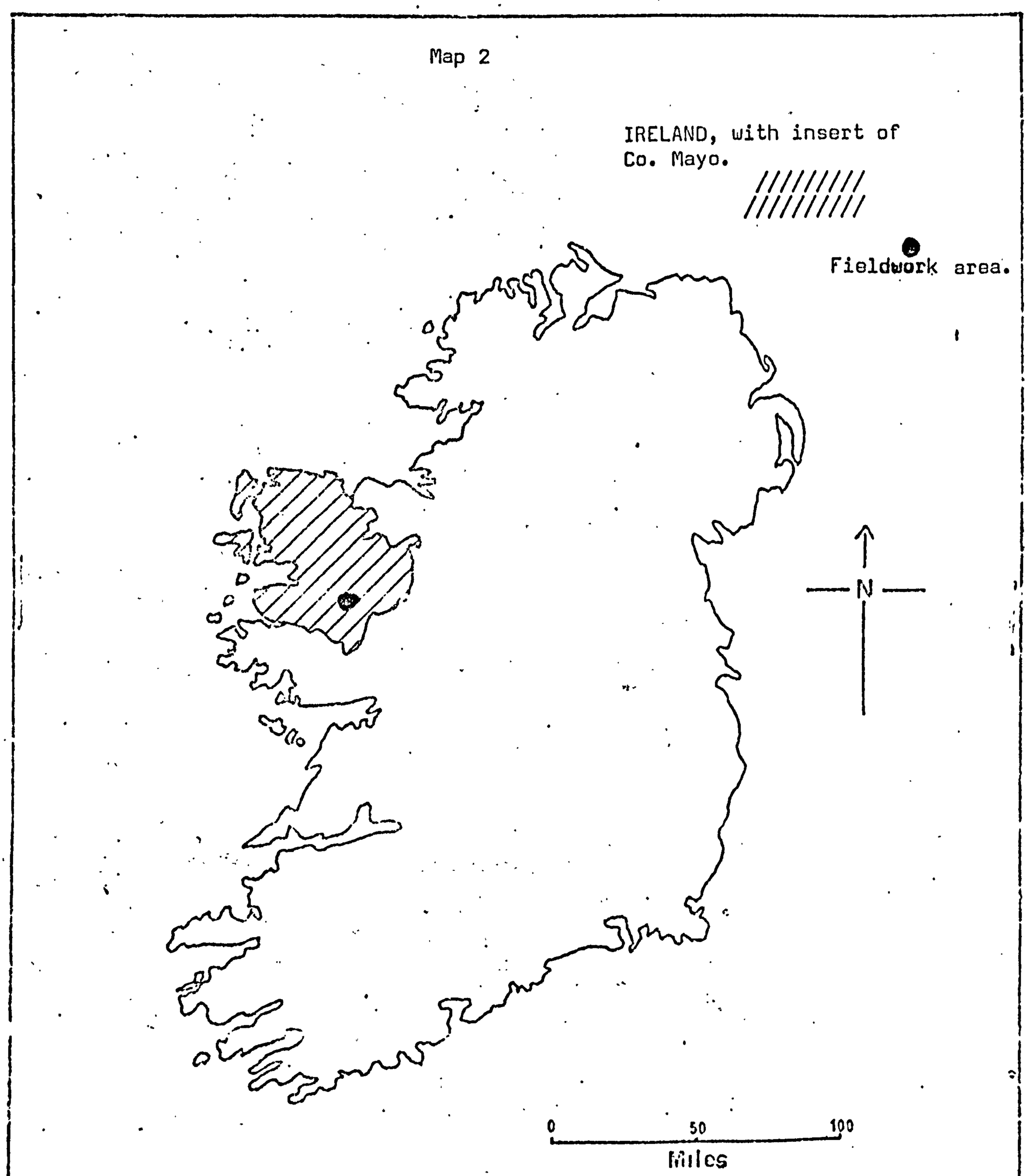
1 Brody, H., Op.cit., pp.100-107.

2 Ibid., p.194.

We perceived this as a major defect. Our own study deals with the historical location of a community. Even if limited in scope, its focus is on the integration of community process with historical change, something missed, at great cost, we feel, in the studies to which we have referred.

Case Study of Some Mayo Villages.

Map 2


IRELAND, with insert of Co. Mayo.
Fieldwork area.
N
0
50
100
Miles

Map 3

Co. Mayo.

Fieldwork area.

N

0 10

Mile

Chapter 4

Land: Its ownership and distribution.

Agriculture in Co. Mayo.

Mayo is largely a county of small landholders. In 1973, fifty-five percent of its farms were between five and thirty acres with a further twenty seven percent between thirty one and fifty acres. Only two percent of farms were greater than 100 acres. Farms are fragmented, with twenty percent in three parcels or more. Sixty three percent of farms are less than £10 valuation. Only twenty five percent of farms have tractors, less than fifty percent have electricity in farm buildings and less than thirty percent have piped water on the farmyards.[1]

However, it must be stated that Mayo is quite a large county by Irish standards and that this general picture tends to hide important variations that exist in farm productivity, farm size, and soil fertility, from area to area.[2] Thus, much of West and North Mayo is characterised by poor soils, wet climate and general remoteness from markets. Farms are often less than 20 acres and are:

> supplemented by the use of rough grazing on mountain and bog, most of which is held in common. 3

There is little scope for tillage and farm income is mainly derived from the sale of young cattle.

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1 All above figures from Farm Resource Survey, Dept. of Agriculture, Athenry Western Regional Office, 1976.

2 Freeman, T.W. In 'The Changing Distribution of Population in Co. Mayo'. A paper read to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, January, 1943, divides the county into six regions: North-West Mayo; Achill-Newport; Louisburgh Area; South-West Mayo; Ballina Lowland; Mayo Lowland. Lee, J., in 'An Analysis of Land Potential for Grazing in Ireland with Particular Reference to Farm Size Relationships'. A paper read to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, May, 1974, refers to the variety of soil types to be found within the county.

3 Freeman, T.W., Op.cit., p.94.

Much of East Mayo tends to be wet and boggy,[1] while the Southern part has mainly dry and rich soil. Thus, while on the whole, Mayo is an area of small farms (less than 30 acres), the viability of the average farm varies considerably from area to area. The agricultural economy of the county is based on livestock, particularly cattle which are important in all parts.

Table 15
Numbers of Cattle in Mayo, 1964-73.

Total No. of Cattle	1964	1973
	252,400	360,200

As one moves further South, sheep are of increasing importance. This is also true for tillage, while the proportion of land given to tillage has continued to decline in recent years.

Table 16
Numbers of Sheep in Mayo, 1964-73.

Total No. of Sheep	1964	1973
	362,400	376,800

Table 17
Acreage of Crop, Hay and Silage in Co. Mayo, 1964-73.

Crop, Hay and Silage (acres)	1964	1973
Wheat	500	100
Oats	20,800	10,400
Malting Barley	100	Nil
Feeding Barley	5,000	2,900
Potatoes	15,900	8,600
Turnips	1,600	1,000
Mangels	700	200
Fodder Beet	800	200
Sugar Beet	400	200
Hay and Silage	95,800	118,400

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1 29% of the land acreage in the county is classified as mountain and hill, with a further 29% classified as low level peat. Lee, J., Op.cit., p.153.

2 All figures from Mayo-Sligo farmers' Annual Chief Agricultural Officers' Report, 1975.

Cow densities in the region are low and additional calves are purchased from the Munster dairying region via middlemen, and sold as stores one and a half to two and a half years later. In terms of more intensive farming, dairying is becoming more important but there has been little interest in pig keeping on a commercial basis, and over the past nine years the number of pigs in the county has remained static.

Table 18
Numbers of Milch Cows and Pigs in Co. Mayo, 1964-73.

	1964	1973
Total No. of Milch Cows	65,400	102,700
Total No. of Pigs	35,300	35,500

Numbers of household fowl have also greatly declined.

Table 19
Numbers of Fowl in Co. Mayo, 1964-73.

Total No. of Fowl	1964	1973
Turkeys	35,800	16,400
Geese	26,900	10,800
Ordinary Fowl	748,900	421,800

The Setting of The Study

The villages examined in this and later chapters are quite close to the town and are part of the civil parish of Ballinrobe in South Mayo (see map 3) the nearest village being less than one mile and the furthest four miles. They form a geographical unit being bounded by a river, a lake and a road. The most remote village is linked by a narrow, but tarred road to the town, and the villages are criss-crossed by a series of smaller roads.

Today, the town is essentially a service centre for the surrounding countryside. Like many towns in the West of Ireland, it has dwindled in size over the years. In 1851, its population was 2,161. Today it is 1,262. Once it was a thriving market town - as evidenced by its market square - and was, in fact, a stage on a railway line. As tillage declined in the countryside, so the market aspect of the town declined. Unlike, however, some towns of its size, the market has not been replaced by small industries. Rather, the town remains a service centre for the countryside, providing schools, banks, shops, post office, pubs, church, social welfare office, and courthouse. The major sources of employment are two bakeries (employing less than 80 in all) and outside the town the research station of the Agricultural Institute.

The "traditional" form of employment for men in town is that of shop assistant in hardware and general merchant businesses;for women in grocery shops and draperies. Business in the town is dominated by a number of families who combine a number of enterprises. A typical combination being Bar and Grocery and/or Hardware. Some businesses have declined over the years, but changes in the business elite have been minimal.

There is little non - agricultural employment available in the area, and those who do not have a claim on land go elsewhere. The villages, like the town have also been losing population.

Table 20
Population of Villages, 1841-1976.

Year	Population
1841	1,484
1851	941
1911	531
1976	230

The number of households has dropped from 260 in 1841, to 115 in 1911, to a present day total of 85.

It is easy to see why land has dominated the way of life of the villages. It is the resource around which peoples' day to day life revolves. Without access to land, the alternatives are migration or emigration. As is typical of South Mayo, apart from some low-lying ground which is liable to flooding, land is of good quality and is mostly under grass. Farms are owned and farmed by individual families.

One can best understand the land structure today by looking at its historical development in the pre-peasant proprietor days. The villages were owned by two landlords, one who owned tracts of land stretching for miles beyond the villages, and another who had his demesne and estate[1] with about thirty tenants in the villages. The tenanted parts of the estates were taken over by Congested Districts Boards and later by the Land Commission who transferred the land to the tenants. Since the area was one of considerable congestion, the Land Commission made every effort to move tenants out and to enlarge and make more compact the remaining holdings. This task was made easier by the availability of a large grazing estate on the other side of the town.

The effect of the resettlement policy was to alter the land holding and population structure in the villages. The effects and the course of these changes can be explored by examining three villages in detail.

Village A.[2]

	1911	1976
Households	22	10

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[1] Hereafter referred to as the estate or small estate.

[2] Account based on Land Commission and land valuation records and local information.

In 1911, all but one of the households owned land, the exception being an old woman who lived on her own and died in 1920. Families moved to new farms carved out of the estate by the Land Commission. In all cases, they were families with growing children and had moved from the village by 1925. Their land was divided among the remaining households. There were two cases where land was sold; one where a family sold all its land and possessions to another in the village, and emigrated to America in 1934 and another where a man on his own fell into debt and sold his farm. This land was first purchased by a Guard stationed in the town who later sold it to a farmer in a nearby village. Finally, there are two cases of men living on their own where the land was inherited by relatives living outside the village.

Village B.

Land Commission officials who surveyed this village in 1915 referred to it "as being minutely sub-divided".[1] The separate lot of each tenant being made up on average, of six portions of land.

	1911	1976
Households	16	9

Here again we have four households moving to new Land Commission holdings. There is the case of a widow living on her own whose brother living next door took over the land. In another case, land was inherited by an only daughter who married into a village in a nearby parish and this land is now farmed by outsiders. One childless couple moved to town and now rent their land. In addition, one farm owned by people living outside the village was sold to a man who built a new house on the land.

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1 Land Commission records for the village.

Village C 1862 1

Households	Rented Land in acres	Landlord
Philbin	12	G. Martyn.
Bradley	12	
Cusack	11	
Burke (a)	12	
Burke (b)	7	
Shaughnessy	7	
Cahalan	11	
Sweeney	10	
Moran	8	
Dolan	14	
Keady	6	
Joyce	5	
Healy	9	
Total Households	14	

Source: Griffiths Valuation 1862. Letters are used to distinguish households with similar names.

In village C in 1862, there were thirteen tenants renting land directly from G. Martyn. The amount rented varied from five to fourteen acres. In addition they held a small amount of land in common (three acres). By 1911 one of the families, Joyce,had died out, another three had left the village, Shaughnessy, Keady and Sweeney and in one household, the name on the land had changed by marriage, Dolan to Moran. A new household had been established in the village, Burke (c) and its owner did not own land but was classified in the 1911 census as a carpenter.

Village C 1911 2

Households	Rented land in acres	Landlord
Philbin	12	G. Martyn
Bradley	12	"
Cusack	11	"
Burke (a)	12	"
Burke (b)	14	"
Burke (c)	—	"
Cahalan	11	"
Moran (a)	18	"
Moran (b)	20	"
Healy	14	"

Source: 1911 Census; Land valuation office records and local evidence.

The twenty eight acres that became available were distributed as far as I could discern from land valuation records as follows: seven acres to Burke (b), ten acres to Moran (a), five acres to Healy and six acres to Dolan (changed in the period to Moran (b)).

In the period 1911-1976, the land structure was again altered. The main source of change was the Land Commission. In the nineteen twenties the land was vested in this body and later transferred to the tenants. Major restructuring at this point depended on the movement from the village of a number of families, but only one (Healy) proved willing to move. It was only in the nineteen forties, when land became available in a nearby village, that holding structure was notably altered. Villagers also improved their positions through purchase and marriage.

Village C 1976

Households	Size of holdings (including land held in other villages)
Bradley	29
Cusack	—
Moran (a)	33
Moran (b)	—
Bourke (c)	13
Murphy (a)	42
Murphy (b)	—
Tierney	28
Kelly	24

Source: Village Survey and Land Valuation office records.

The present structure can be accounted for as follows:

Murphy (a) from a nearby village purchased Burke's (a) holding when the latter emigrated to America. He subsequently inherited a small portion of land and purchased another portion in two other villages. His son, who will inherit the farm, has a job in town and lives in a house next door to his father.

Moran (b) emigrated for a time to America and in his absence the Land Commission took over the holding. He has since returned to the village, but now owns less than half an acre of land. Burke (b) gave his land over to the Land Commission in return for a farm in another village. Burke (c) who did not own land in 1911, has since purchased thirteen acres in another village.

It was difficult to establish the exact position in the case of Cusack. It would appear that the present occupant of the house, a middle aged man, actually inherited the land. However, when it became clear that he did not intend to marry, his brother 'prevailed' on him to sign the land over to his son.

Cahalan's and Philbin's land was transfered through marriage to Kelly and Tierney. In the period examined 1862-1976, only two families have succeeded in keeping their names on the land and in one of these, the present owner does not have a son and intends to sign the land over to his married daughter.

Farms over one hundred acres pre-date the activities of the Land Commission. These are the demesne of the small estate, bought and sold intact on six occasions to outsiders, despite local opposition, and now being sold off in large and small portions by the present owner. The other farms in this group, one of one hundred and forty five acres and the other of one hundred and ninety. Both appear in their present form in Griffiths valuation of 1862.[1] They have remained intact[2] and within the same families until the sale of the larger farm during the field-work period.

Acquiring Land.

There are a number of ways of acquiring land in the villages. The usual method is through inheritance, land being passed on from father to son or daughter or to some relative in the villages. There were only four households where some part of the farm has not been inherited.

The second method of acquiring land is by purchase either on the open market or privately. Land is sold privately when relatives make an agreement to sell land to each other, usually at something below market price. Through purchase, four former landless men acquired land. The capital in two cases was earned in England and in the other two instances was accumulated through cattle dealing. Land is also purchased to enlarge an existing holding, usually in small portions, but part of the small estate (50 ac.) had been purchased shortly before the fieldwork period.

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1 Griffiths Primary Valuation drawn up between 1848 and 1864 - the document on which present day rates are based - lists each occupier of each house or piece of land, with the name of the immediate lessor, a description of the tenement, area of land rented, rateable annual valuation of land and buildings and the total valuation of rateable property.

2 One has recently been sold.

From this detailed examination we can see that a number of forces have combined in the formation of the present land holding structure. The original position of tenants, the activities of the Congested Districts Board and Land Commission, tenants' willingness to move, emigration, indebtedness.

Table 21

Farm Size in the Villages in Acres, 1976.

5 - 15	16 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 100	100 - 200	Total
2	41	27	2	3	75

Like the county as a whole, the most common category of holding is from sixteen to thirty acres, most of which are slightly less than thirty acres. These are, in fact, Land Commission holdings, created in the second decade of this century, with, in certain villages, further adjustments in the late forties and early fifites.

Holdings in the thirty one to fifty acre group are the result of the amalgamation of two Land Commission holdings through inheritance or purchase.

There are two farms in the fifty one to hundred group. Records show that one was leased from the landlord in the 19th century and has been inherited intact. The other is a combination of Land Commission holding and land purchase.

Capital for such land purchases was forthcoming from a number of sources, accumulated elsewhere, usually England; inherited in either money or land form, some or all of the latter being sold to facilitate the purchase of land in a more convenient setting; capital earned in the locality, usually from dealing in cattle, and capital borrowed from a bank or credit society. Land can be purchased by the combination of some or all of the above alternatives.

During the fieldwork period, two farms, one in the villages and the other bounding them, were sold on the open market. One (35 ac.) was to a returned emigrant and the other (190 ac.) was purchased by a group of businessmen from the town. Thus, the trend in land purchase is by returned emigrants and business people. With land at approximately £1,000 an acre, it is outside the range of most farmers. Unless it is taken over by the Land Commission it is likely to go to outsiders, particularly of wealthy people with surplus cash who view it as a safe haven for their cash.

The size of the farm can be increased by renting land in conacre. One commentator has referred to conacre as a:

> system by which leases are auctioned or otherwise changed annually, the change normally taking place in November. Tenancy is held for less than one year, sometimes a year less a day. More frequently for eleven months only, hence the common phrase which refers to the system as the eleven months let. 1

During the second world war, much of the small estate in the villages was let on conacre for tillage purposes, the fields being "striped out" and auctioned. Today, land is only rented for grazing.

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1 Proudfoot, B., 'Studies of Conacre', Irish Geography, Vol. 3, 1958-1964, pp.162-164.

See also, Wallace, M.W., The Land Utilization of County Armagh, 1929-1949, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, Belfast. 1958.

In the villages, land renting takes a number of forms. In some instances, land is rented from the immediate family or a relative. As such, the land is not auctioned and may be paid for by services as well as money. Where the leasor is an old couple, or an old person living alone, land renting is usually part of a general agreement to "look after" the old people i.e. bring them to mass on Sunday as well as taking care of any land they retain, buying and selling animals, etc. Such an arrangement is often the forerunner to full ownership, through inheritance, but it is also loaded with considerable tension.

Land is also rented by public auction and is eagerly sought after. There is a long history of competition for rented land in the villages, and it is a source of much bad feeling between families. Today, where small amounts of land are involved, the competitors are almost always local, while larger farms i.e. the small estate, are rented to outsiders. The largest farm in the villages, the small estate was, until recently, rented by cattle dealers from another parish. However, during the fieldwork it was "taken over" by a local expanding farmer who had previously purchased part of the estate.

Land which is rented, in the first instance by auction, sometimes shades into a private arrangement between the parties which continues on a "permanent" year to year basis and the tenant:

> treats the rented fields as part of his own farm, working them in conjunction with his own and often making plans concerning their place in his agricultural programme for the coming year. 1

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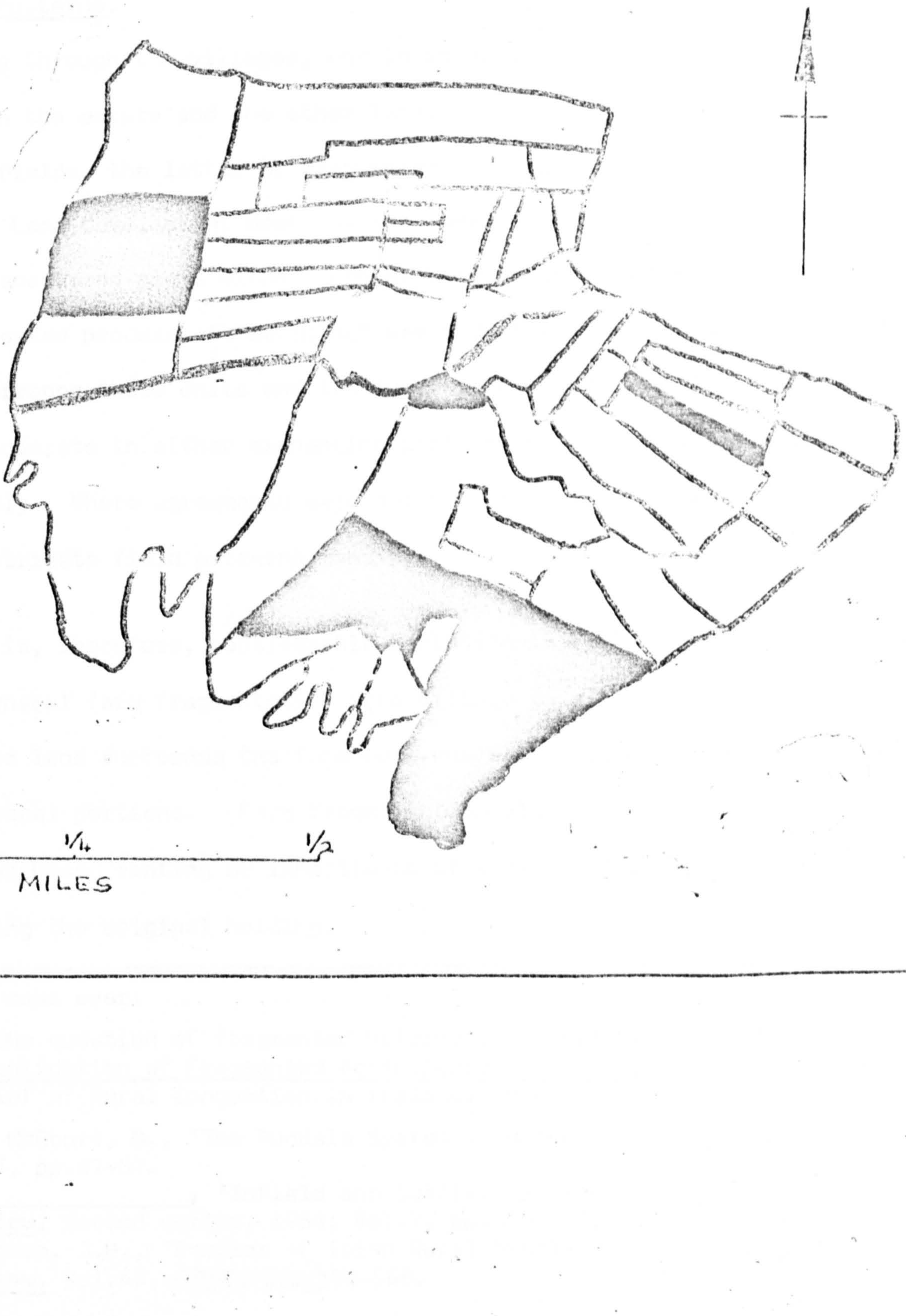
1 Proudfoot, B., Op.cit., p.166.

Map 4

Sketch map of village, with the land of one farm marked.



Finally, in addition to land owned and rented, farms are usually supplemented with land held in common. Former tenants in most villages have grazing rights on commons. In the villages, commons are small and the land poor, either liable to flooding or scrub. There did not appear to be any definite rules governing the number of animals a household is entitled to have grazing, and common land is often the source of public conflict and private utterance or neighbours' abuse.

Field Patterns.[1]

Passing through the villages, one is immediately struck by the differences between the estate and the other land. The former is made up of large level fields, the latter of fragmented holdings.[2] Prior to the activities of the Land Commission, most holdings were held in a form of Rundale[3], small scattered plots without proper communication between them. A complicated process of "striping" was undertaken by the Land Commission to rearrange these units and its success depended on villagers' willingness to co-operate in either exchanging portions of land or leaving the area entirely. Where agreements were not forthcoming, the complicated and intricate field patterns remain.

There is, therefore, considerable variation in field size, field access, and general farm fragmentation from village to village. In some cases, all the land surrounds the farmhouse, while in others it is spread out in several portions. Farm fragmentation also almost always results from the purchase, renting or inheritance of additional land which is seldom bounding the original holding.

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1 See maps over.

2 On the question of fragmented holdings, see F.A.O. Publications, The Consolidation of Fragmented Agricultural Holdings, Section 3, Relief of Rural Congestion in Ireland, 1950.

3 See McCourt, D., 'The Rundale System in Donegal'. Donegal Annual, Vol.3 1955, pp.47-57.
_____, 'Infield and Outfield in Ireland,' Economic History Review, Second series, 1954, Vol.7, pp.369-376.
Johnson, J.H., 'Studies of Irish Rural Settlement'. The Geographical Review, Vol.48, 1958, pp. 554-568.

Case Studies of Farm Structure.

Underneath is a selection of holdings and their owners' circumstances.

Landholder I.

Biggins, P. aged 70, unmarried and living on his own. Holding size twenty six acres. His grandfathers' name appears on Griffiths valuation for the area (1862) as a tenant with slightly less than ten acres. The Land Commission created the present holding in 1918 with a further small addition of land in 1948. His farm is in two separate portions. The present owner inherited the land in this form in 1963 and it has remained unaltered. He has never rented land.

Landholder 2.

Joseph Kennedy, aged 40, married with one son (11). Holding size forty five acres. Again, the Kennedys were small tenants (seven acres) on Griffiths valuation. As a result of re-settlement in his village, the farm was increased to over twenty acres and that size increased again through inheritance. The farm is now in three separate portions.

Landholder 3.

William Higgins aged 66, married. All his children have left the farm. Farm size thirty nine acres, inherited a small holding (twelve acres) and rented additional in the 1950's. He purchased a further twenty seven acres in the early sixties with money earned from cattle dealing, borrowed money and remittances from a brother in America.

Landholder 4.

Cameron, J, aged 48, married, two children. Farm size twenty eight acres. He also rents an additional thirty acres from an elderly couple who have retired to town. Farm purchased in 1971 with money accumulated in England as a lorry driver and later as sub-contractor. He is anxious to acquire more land.

Landholder 5.

Sheridan, J, aged 40, married, four children. Farm size, seventy three acres. Inherited house and farm of twenty eight acres from an uncle who had been in America, returned in 1926, purchased the land and built the house. John Sheridan's wife inherited a farm in another parish, which was sold and the money used to purchase part of the small estate. The sale was a private arrangement. The Sheridan s also have the use of an ageingcousin's farm (twenty six acres) and have lately begun renting the remainder of the estate. Anxious to acquire more land.

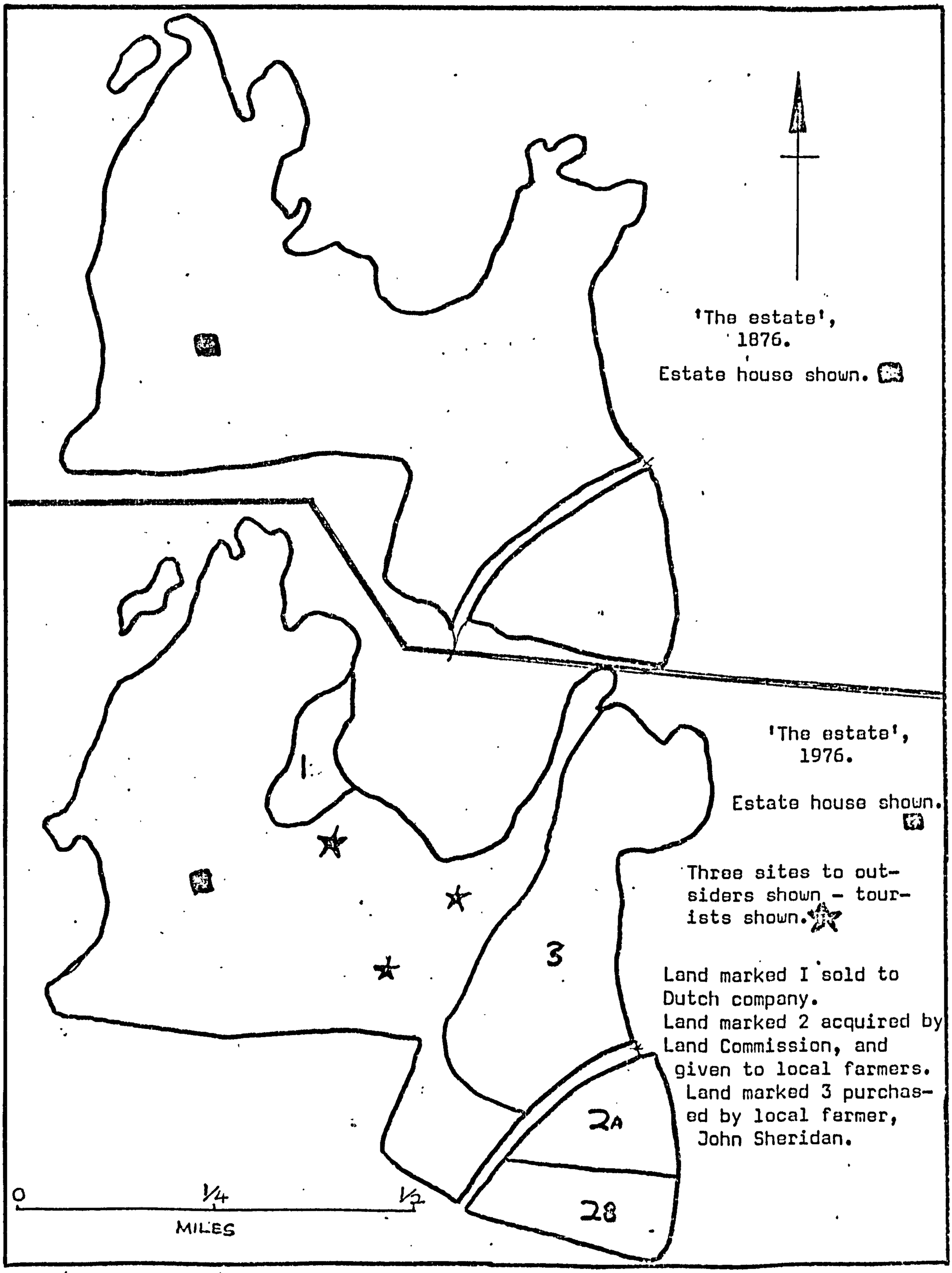
Landholder 6.

Mellet, T. and Mellet, J. father (aged 70) and son (aged 30). Now a three generational household. Farm size, one hundred and thirty acres in one portion. The farm appears in its present form in Griffiths valuation (1862). The farm is distinguished by its size and compactness, but also by a large farm house. The fortunes of the farm house have fluctuated. At one stage, a number of local men were employed on the farm. The older of the present owners allowed it to run down, but his son is building it up again, on a foundation of cattle dealing, an occupation in which his grandfather specialized.

Map 5

Sketch Map

'The estate', 1876-1976.



Landholder 7.

This "estate" is run by a father and son combination and the McGonigales are a three generational household. Originally a landlord's demense of two hundred acres, the estate has been sold privately despite local protests on six occasions. The present owner has begun to renovate the estate house as a guesthouse, while selling off the land - forty five acres to the Sheridans, twenty acres to a Dutch company and small amounts as sites to tourists.[1]

In the villages, land is organized in a number of privately owned farms of various sizes, but the majority are less than thirty acres. Farm size has changed over time and has been influenced by a number of factors such as internal family affairs, inheritance and factors outside the local system, i.e. Land Commission. In the next chapter, we examine the way land is used for agricultural purposes.

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1 See map over.

Chapter 5.

Land Use: The Social Organization of Agricultural Production and Distribution

In this chapter, we examine the nature of the production, distribution and exchange systems in the villages, looking at such questions as what is being produced and by whom; what form of technology is employed; what is the purpose of production; how are products exchanged and to whom are they directed?[1] We are interested in these activities themselves, but also in analyzing the nature and types of social relationships which these activities entail and in the ways in which the use of resources is manifested in a range of social situations.

On almost all farms, the most important activities are associated with the rearing of animals, mainly cattle. The actual numbers reared depend on a variety of factors, the size of holding and the stage of the family cycle being of greatest importance. The cattle are reared, usually until they are not more than three years and sold in the cattle mart in the nearby town. There is little interest, more correctly there is a deep reluctance, to indulge in the more labour intensive forms of agriculture-tillage.[2] This latter is associated locally with poverty and backwardness. Dairying is also unpopular, though one farmer has recently purchased a milking machine and intends to concentrate on dairying in the future. As an exception to present farming patterns, the situation of this farmer is examined at the end of this chapter.

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1 Like Firth, we examine "the what, how and to whom of economic effort". Firth, R, in Firth, R, and Yamey, B.S., Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1964, p.16.

2 This is, of course, true for the county as a whole, See Ch. 4.

General farming has not been abandoned entirely, even by the most "progressive farmers". Most farmers sow potatoes and vegetables which are consumed on the farm. In many cases enough potatoes are sown to last for nine months of the year. A cow, perhaps two, are kept to provide milk for household consumption. However, most consumption items are purchased in shops and supermarkets. The land is used to feed animals whose sale will pay for these and other purchases.

Cattle rearing dominates the farm economy in a variety of ways. The day to day activities of the farm are oriented to the animals. A careful farmer will examine his stock every day. This is particularly so in winter when animals have to be fed twice a day. Animals have also to be treated for a variety of diseases. Hay is cut, saved and stored. Root crops may also be grown and other feed-stuffs may be bought from merchants and traders for winter feed. Land is reclaimed and manured to increase stock numbers. At the market, animals are bought and sold, examined and looked over and their present and possible future prices closely watched.

This type of farming, as it is now practised, is essentially familistic, individualistic and is becoming increasingly mechanized. Each household, nowadays almost always a nuclear family or single person, occupies a farm, owned in almost all cases by a man. The labour force of this farm is familial. While all family members are active in the enterprise, most of the farm work is "men's work". The activities of the family can be best explored by examining first crucial events in the agricultural year and later some of the day to day activities of the farm.

The first major event of the year is the spring sowing. Today, spring work, ploughing, harrowing and drilling are completed with the aid of a tractor. On three farms, I observed horses being used for part of the spring work, but these were exceptions and were seen to be so by the farmers who used them. Tractors are either owned by individual farms or hired. If a tractor is to be hired, who is to be hired, and when, is determined by the male owner of the farm. Tillage for the home or for animal feed is gradually being abandoned on farms where the husband has a full-time occupation other than farming.

Hay-saving in July-August is perhaps the most crucial time of the year for the farm family. Most of this work is now mechanised, though there may be considerable variation from farm to farm in its extent. On one farm, all the stages of hay-saving may be completed by tractor and machinery, on others only the cutting of the hay involves a tractor, the remainder of the work being completed by manual labour, sometimes aided by horse-drawn machinery. This latter now applies only in the case of a few older farmers who save relatively little hay.

Machinery now makes it possible for farmers to save their hay on their own. This is particularly so if the hay is baled rather than stacked in cocks. It is now also possible to hire machinery to complete all stages of hay-saving. This is an approach which appeals to those who have occupations other than farming. The usual method of hay-saving involves a combination of machinery and manual labour, this latter largely supplied by family members. Women and children of both sexes become involved.

It is in the day to day activities of the farm that the close association between family and farm is most clearly articulated. This association is manifested in two ways. Firstly, while most of day to day activities which are concerned with the care of animals are the domain of the farmer, all family members may from time to time be involved. Children drive cows and other animals from land to housing, or to the lake or stream for water. Women may be involved in these activities also, as well as in feeding animals that are housed, or milking cows. However, except in cases where the "farmer" has another job, it is he who will do this work.

The amount and range of farm activities largely depends on the size of holding owned or rented by the farmer and the degree of his involvement in farming. However, most farmers will milk a cow or two morning and evening and in winter will have to concern themselves with the tasks of housing and feeding animals and cleaning sheds and cabins. In winter too, a daily activity is the drawing of feed stuffs, particularly hay to animals that are not housed. Animals are often long distances from the hay barn and the hay may be transported manually, being tied with ropes and carried on the back. Tractors, cars, and vans are now used as modes of transport. Even when animals are not in need of fodder, it is considered important to examine them daily. In an area of fragmented holdings, this is time consuming.

The association of family and farm is also shown in the difficulty one has in separating out tasks which might belong uniquely to either of the two conceptualized activities. Thus tasks which are not directly concerned with the land are as much a part of farm work as those that are. Thus in the case of the few remaining thatched houses, time spent in their repair is not seen as time wasted nor indeed is the cutting and storing of firewood and tasks of this nature. They are an integral part of on-going farm activities. The organization of this work at least is at one with the account of Arensberg and Kimball.

Mechanization.

In an area of small and fragmented holdings, the large numbers of tractors is striking. The possible reasons which explain this and indeed the variety of uses made of tractors merits examination. Most farmers give as a reason for owning a tractor, the necessity for being independent and invoke the situation of those who are without tractors.[1] As was previously noted, tractors are principally hired for seasonal work, i.e. important and urgent work. Simply stated, the farmer who does not own a tractor at these times is at the mercy of those who go on hire. At peak periods, there is great demand for those who go on hire. These latter are also farmers and are firstly interested in securing their own crops. Always, subject to the uncertain climate, farmers desperate to secure the hay harvest are, without tractors, subject to the whims of those who own or hire tractors.

Tractors are also hired for spring work, i.e. ploughing and harrowing, spreading manure and transporting animals to and from marts. Demand is not as great for these operations and the hirer can afford to be more selective in whom he hires from. Usually, one tractor is hired for all the spring work. If a second tractor is hired, it is because the owner has additional machinery. Payment is made in cash, when all the work is completed.

Those who go on hire with a tractor are usually younger farmers with a knowledge of machinery. Income earned in this manner is used to pay for machinery and generally to improve the farm of the tractor owner.

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[1] Morin, E., remarks that "it is easier to adapt to the economy of the machine than to the machinery of economics".
Plodemet, London, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1971, p.88.

It can also be used to stock existing land or to purchase additional land. Those who hire tractors fall into two broad categories. Firstly, there are old people on very small holdings who know little about machinery and who in any case, are too poor to purchase it. These are a group to whom Franklin's label "elderly peasants on full-time holdings might be applied".[1] Secondly, tractors are also hired by those with a full-time occupation other than farming and within this category, by those who are not using their occupation as a springboard towards future full-time farming, but are rather using land as an additional and secondary source of income.

Tractors have become an important labour-saving device on all farms. They ensure that essential work is completed. However, it is only the larger farmers who have use for them all year round. For the smaller and the less active medium-sized farmers, they simply occupy space in a shed for most of the year. Even at crucial periods, their owners may lack the additional machinery and the technical knowledge to get full value from them. Time and again, farmers mentioned the importance of having a tractor for the hay harvest. This latter is a period of great importance and uncertainty is made less by the feeling that one will be able to take advantage of the "fine spell". The common belief is that at a crucial moment, each farmer will, and indeed should, look after his own farm. It is at crucial times, i.e. hay harvest, when the year's economic activity is at stake that one wants as many factors as possible in one's favour. In the past, one sought this security in a large labour force, now in a tractor. It is important therefore, not to view tractorization as simply an aspect of general cultural modernization, the transcendence of traditional agriculture. Very often, it is the 'rational' response of a basically individualistic family farm.

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[1] Franklin, S. The European Peasantry - The Final Phase, London, Methuen & Co., Limited. 1969, p.219.

Agricultural Co-operation.

Given the over-capitalization of the small farms referred to, co-operation is frequently posed as an obvious alternative strategy. Yet co-operation in a labour-intensive agriculture might at least have been expected to have obtruded itself on the attention of Arensberg and Kimball. Today, the terms of reciprocity have radically altered. In a recent article[1] on co-operative labour, Moore describes the material conditions of production and the local pattern of socio-economic relations as:

> the factors having primarily causal influence on the prevalence and nature of labour co-operation.

He defines co-operative labour as:

> the joint performance of a task by a group of persons practising a minimal division of labour, whose relationships to the beneficiary is other than employer or employee.

Within this definition, Moore distinguishes two categories, festive labour and exchange labour and two sub-categories of each. Thus festive labour can:

I) be a form of labour service to political and ritual superiors and can

2) apply in cases where sanctions are less stringent for non-attendance at gatherings.

All categories have been noted in the West of Ireland, though not so clearly distinguished as in the Moore article. Arensberg and Kimball, for example, write of a group labour exchange which appeared to have a festive character - The Meitheal. They state that:

> in former days, the daughters of the community might gather in meitheal or co-operative work groups under the supervision of the older women for carding and spinning flax and wool. 2

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1 Moore, M, 'Co-operative Labour in Peasant Societies.' Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol.2, 1974, pp.270-312.

2 Arensberg, C, and Kimball, S., Family and Community in Ireland, Harvard University Press, 1968, p.65.

Incidentally, we are not given the ultimate destiny of the produce. Elsewhere, the word meitheal refers to a band of men or teams acting together to perform a task. These tasks were beyond the capacity of individual or 'cooring' families. It thus resembles Sahlin's[1] generalized reciprocity in that the group who performed the task did not expect payment.

As outlined by Arensberg and Kimball, the meitheal has social welfare functions as well as being a service to local elites.

1. Mowing and harvesting for priest and school teacher.
2. Mowing and harvesting for an old couple without children who could not do it themselves.'
3. Hauling and mowing where many horses were needed as a meitheal of horses for bringing sand or seaweed manure from the coast, or moving and resettling a family.
4. Rebuilding a house and resettling an evicted family.
5. Collecting a meitheal of girls with their spinning wheels from all the community's houses to spin after shearing.
6. Collecting a meitheal of men and girls for various processes connected with the conversion of flax to linen. 2

Thus some of the services were for the peasants' superiors and others were for peasants who could not help themselves. In other cases, we are given the nature of the exchange, the purpose remains unclear. To whom was the seaweed brought? Who benefitted from the spinning? Why was the flax converted into linen? These questions are neither posed nor answered.

The forms of the meitheal just given had more or less disappeared when Arensberg and Kimball were in North Clare. This is attributed by the authors to the decreasing need for the services and the increasing dominance of monetary hire.

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1 In Banton, M. Ed., The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology, London, Tavistock, 1965, pp.139-236.

2 Arensberg and Kimball, Op.cit.,p.255.

The old age pension, the overall increase in prosperity and the increase in machinery are also given as factors. Nonetheless:

> the foundations of mutual relations between members of the local community upon which the meitheal was based still exists and it can be called into play in emergency or under special circumstances. 1

The decline of co-operative activity and thus the contradiction of their position is given by Arensberg and Kimball as:

> the extension inward into the community of the lines of relationship with persons and institutions external to the farm community. 2

Here it should be noted that Arensberg and Kimball make no reference to landlord-tenant relations where the peasants were used by the landlords to beat bushes and woods for the hunt and shoot and were rewarded in food and drink.

Arensberg and Kimball are most concerned with a form of exchange labour called 'cooring'. It approximates to Sahlin's "balanced reciprocity" in that a return was made that was recognized to be the equivalent of what was given:

> for a day given, you would give a day of work in return. 3

No monetary payment was involved (here, note quotation from previous page - monetary hiring was spreading to the countryside). 'Cooring' took the following forms:

1. "Lending tools or doing work with one's own for friends and neighbours who have not the requisite tools, especially in mowing, spring sowing, harrowing and ploughing".

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1 Op.cit., p.256.
2 Ibid., p.256.
3 Ibid., p.254.

2. Lending a boy at turf-making, spring sowing, harvest, oats harvest, or driving cattle to a fair; that is at any time a farm needed an extra hand to get the work done quickly.

3. Of women; making up a tub of butter, or a firkin of salted butter, thus pooling resources, the proceedings to be divided proportionally.

4. Of women; lending a girl on any occasion that an extra hand is needed in the household.

5. Helping at times of distress or when one household was short, or a crop delayed, with gifts of cattle, food, or labour.

6. Working together communally to get a harvest done, particularly in oats reaping and thrashing. Here the actual work is done by the boys who are lent by their fathers, though, of course, the latter may also take a hand, if necessary.

7. Obligations surrounding rites of passage and ceremonies.[1]

Thus, 'cooring', involved a variety of activities from landowners directly exchanging labour to there exchanging their son's and daughter's labour. It also involved the lending of tools and communal activity. However, the most common form of exchange occurred in the hayfield.

During the hay-harvest, farmers could be divided into two groups, those who owned mowing machines and those who did not. The first group "mowed their own meadows as quickly as possible",[2] assisted by their own family and sons from nearby families. His mowing done, this farmer then took his machine to the farmer who helped him and mowed his meadows. How is this co-operation to be explained? Arensberg and Kimball are driven to:

> a social rather than an economic explanation and were to ascertain that in each case of this co-operation, an extended family relationship was involved. 3

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1 Ibid., p.72.

2 Ibid., pp.68-69.

3 Ibid., p.70.

Co-operation was explained by reference to a general ideology of friendliness. Thus, people "had a right to help their friends". People were under obligation to co-operate as part of an overall extended family relationship. As one informant told Arensberg:

> country people do be friendly, they always help one another. 1

This picture of rural co-operation is idealistic in the extreme. Despite contradictory information, it assumed equal starting points for each farmer and unchanging positions. Undoubtedly, there were cases when those who had mowing machines complied with the friendship norm and moved on to their neighbour's field when they had their own fields mowed. However, it was equally true that they possessed the most important resource and could thus determine the balance of the relationship. Co-operation has both an economic explanation as well as an economic function. Shortage of machinery, horses and labour, at peak periods had to be remedied, thus those who possessed the greater resources dictated in the long run the way in which there needs were remedied. Exchanges were by no means always equal.

In my fieldwork area, a form of exchange not mentioned by Arensberg and Kimball appears to have been the most prominent. Here farms could be divided into those that had a horse, those that had two horses and farms without any. Those who did not have a horse, hired those from those who had two, to do all the "heavy farm work".

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1 Arensberg, C. The Irish Country Man, Macmillan, London, 1937, p.67.

Those who had one horse went "in co"[1] with a farmer in a similiar position. This exchange of horses was usually for specific work, particularly spring work. The saving of hay and turf was a matter for individual families, though the co-system could be extended to these areas also. The aim of every farmer was to own his own horse since it was the basis for equal exchange. It allowed one a qualified independence. A horse and trap were also a source of transport. Emigrant remittances[2] and profit from the land, particularly from the good prices resulting from the first world war,were often used to purchase a horse.

A number of factors decided who would go "in co" with whom. A person was likely to go "in co" with a relative if there was one living nearby. Distance was an important variable also and there was a reluctance to go "in co" with someone who lived more than three miles away. One would go "in co" with a neighbour if one was free and of course, the quality of the others' horse and equipment was also important.[3] Over a time, a family might have hired a man with two horses, later bought a horse and gone "in co" and perhaps, later still, bought a second horse and gone on hire.

In the light of the above, it is important to examine the influence of the tractor on co-operation. Hannan[4] has an interesting discussion on this topic.

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1 Estyn Evans, E, Mourne Country, Dundalk, Dundalgan Press, 1967. "In general, only the large farme...could keep two horses so that the "one horse farms" combined in pairs to get through the heavy work of ploughing, harrowing and drilling". pp.127-128.

2 'The Letter ' in The Short Stories of Liam O'Flaherty, New English Library, London, 1971. The letter contains a cheque for twenty pounds from an emigrant daughter. "The father coughed and said in a low voice 'there is a horse for that money to be had. A horse'. p.103.

3 Kavanagh, P. The Green Fool, Penguin Books, 1971, also adds "that nobody would wish to join up with a fellow who had no farm implements".

4 Hannan, D., 'Kinship Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish rural Communities'. Economic & Social Review, Vol. 3, 1972, pp.163-188.

He states that the introduction of the agricultural tractor and its associated machines into the traditional mutual aid system of the neighbour and kingroup had a far more direct influence on these reciprocal exchanges than the gradual cumulation of horse-drawn machines ever had. The high cost of such mechanization and the break with tradition required for its introduction, meant that it was very selectively introduced. It was only the more commercially orientated farmers who could afford the costs involved. These differential acquisitions created new status barriers amongst neighbours that were far more obvious than the number of draught horses kept.[1] Again he states that it was very "difficult to integrate it (the tractor) into the mutually understood and reciprocally balanced systems of equivalent exchanges of labour and horse power".[2] Thus "the initial difficulties in working out the new terms of trade were compounded by new cultural differences then arising when interests in personal gain and individual family advancement were replacing the more communal orientation of earlier times".[3]

These statements depend to a great extent on the prior assumption of equality, balance and equilibrium in many areas. These may have been the case at certain points in time. My own fieldwork would appear to indicate that differentials based on the size of holding and the ownership of horses, tools and machinery and the pattern of paying for hired horses and machinery were long established and that the tractor was fitted into this pattern.

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1 Hannan, Op.cit., pp.180-188.

2 Ibid., p.180.

3 Ibid., p.180.

Today agricultural co-operation of any form appears to be extremely limited though not entirely absent. I have observed the lending of machinery and of a tractor. Machinery is sometimes shared yet as soon as it can be bought individually, it is. Problems arise over when one can have the use of machinery, but perhaps the most common issue is who should pay when it is broken. Farmers are prepared to help each other out of difficulties. Hence instances of tractor lending or an instance which I observed of a group of men who gathered to fill a lorry of beet for a neighbour.

Perhaps the most organized form of co-operation takes place in the Autumn, when the threshing machine[1] comes to a village. In order to operate the thrashing machine four to six men are needed and all those who grow corn co-operate with each other until the work of the village is completed. Of course, the more corn one has, the greater benefit one gets from this system since nobody will leave because their work took a few hours and another's the greater part of the day. When the threshing machine is in the village, every hand is needed and on these occasions, the distinction between the "good" and "bad" neighbour is generally abandoned.

Most farmers realize that at certain times of the year they neither have enough labour or machinery. Most have thought about "organized" co-operation as a solution to this problem but are adamant that it would not work. Their solution becomes investment in tractors and machinery which we noted earlier will lie idle for considerable periods. Co-operation is undermined by a suspicion of the motives of others and by the widely held belief that it simply would not work.

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[1] This latter is now however being replaced by the combine harvester.

This belief is grounded in local economic circumstances and long term external policies which have undermined local confidence.

If we are to understand co-operation in areas of small holdings, then we must see it in economic terms rather than in terms of the bonds of community and kinship or the friendship of the area. Labour exchange based on balanced reciprocity ideally exists between farmers or peasants who have equal resources. Changes in the range and distribution of resources upsets the balance and nature of the exchange. Within the limits of their environment, Irish peasants have striven for increased economic resources, i.e. more land, machinery, and produce. In the long run, and in the absence of external planning, this has meant looking after one's own farm first and involved exploitation of a conscious/unconscious nature within rural communities.[1]

Sale and Exchange of Agricultural Produce.

Here we are largely concerned with the sale of livestock since, as we noted in the opening section of this chapter, tillage is relatively unimportant and is largely consumed in the home or fed to animals. Animals are sold by auction at the livestock market in the nearby town. Except for those who live very close to the market, animals will be transported by tractor or by car and trailer. At the market, animals are "checked in", given a number and placed in a pen from where they will later be driven to the ring where they will be weighed, displayed and auctioned.

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1 This discussion is expanded in chapter seven.

For the purpose of analysis one can categorize people at the mart into "buyers" and "sellers". These break down into a variety of sub-categories and some people are "buyers" and "sellers". As a loose grouping, the "buyers" can be distinguished by their appearance, actions, gestures, and signals and their position in the auction arena. Buyers are usually better dressed, wearing suits, not always clean, and wear hats rather than caps. They will usually stand around the ring into which the cattle enter. On first appearances, they will appear to be on very good terms with each other and will sometimes be seen huddled together in conversation. Such gestures and activities obscure the basic hostilities and tensions that exist between buyers. Here it is important to distinguish kinds or types of buyers.

There is firstly the cattle-dealer proper who buys on a constant basis usually for a meat factory. Most of the animals sold are bought by these buyers. Secondly, there is a larger group of buyers who either act as middlemen for other dealers or who rent large amounts of land and buy stock for this land. Thirdly, farmers who buy and sell on a fairly regular basis. Fourthly, farmers who buy and sell infrequently. The last three groups are always merging with each other and buyers and sellers are not easily distinguished.

It is, of course, in the buyers' interest (as a buyer) to depress prices and in order to do do so, buyers make arrangements to take turns in the purchase of animals rather than compete against each other. It is thus of great advantage to be a recognized buyer.

In order to be recognized as such, one has to "prove" that one has the resources - capital - that could be used to compete for animals. Thus a new buyer is put to the test, over time by the other buyers who continue to bid on any animal he is interested in, thus greatly increasing the cost of the animal and testing his resources. If he can hold out under this pressure, he will gradually be admitted to the buyers' circle.

The buyers' clique or ring thus depresses prices by restricting competition between buyers. However, when there is a big demand for cattle this system of agreement may not hold. Such demand often comes from meat factories asking their buyers to provide a definite number of cattle on a particular day. Under these circumstances, agreement may not hold as buyers are prepared to pay extra in order to fulfil orders. Now the buyers' circle takes on a more aggressive appearance and as animals enter the ring, buyers gesture and signal to each other and claim the animals as their own. Buyers of the second order take a back stage position on these occasions.

The audience for this performance are sellers and owners of the animals, the farmers. As we have stated, these may also be buyers on occasions. Those farmers who attend the mart on a regular basis usually have a good knowledge of prices at marts. Price is the principal topic for discussion among farmers. All day is spent watching prices and the types and quality of animal that gets such and such a price. A "good price" is crucial for the farmer, representing the payoff on two to three years work, providing cash for the family and the means for acquiring new stock to continue the enterprise. Yet prices and their fluctuations are poorly understood by the majority of farmers.

In the absence of fixed prices, the sale and purchase of livestock is very often the test of the business mentality required to run a successful enterprise. When to buy and when to sell are skills which the farmer must possess. These are skills which were often not cultivated in the past as parents gave their sons little opportunity to practice the techniques of buying and selling. As a result, many farmers had to rely on other farmers to buy and sell for them. At fairs, it was a common occurence for a farmer to wait until a deal was almost completed and then offer a slightly higher price, securing the animal without having to go through the haggling process.

For many of the older farmers, even for those who were confident operators at fairs, the present market system is one of confusion. Very often they will have to wait all day for their animal to be auctioned. When the animal enters the ring, the farmer enters a box close to the auctioneer from where he can watch the bidding. When the bidding halts the auctioneer asks the seller if he wants to put the animal "on the market". This is the crucial moment, since an answer in the affirmative means that the animal will be sold even if there are no higher bids. It is at this point that knowledge of prices is crucial. Of course, farmers are often forced to sell when they know the price is inadequate. Distance from the market and the lack of transport are important factors with the real need of the family for cash being most influential.

Farmers acting as individual sellers are at a considerable disadvantage. When faced with buyers who are prepared to compromise and organize to further their aims, organization is made difficult by farmers being buyers also. Nonetheless, farmers often group together at marts, bidding on each other's cattle to increase the price.

This is a tactic which the second order buyers use when they are selling animals bought at one market and sold at another often within a few days.

The marts have not divorced themselves from the haggling approach to buying and selling. Animals which are not sold in the ring may be sold outside it later in the day.[1] The extent of this practice would appear to vary from mart to mart. The price at which the animal is withdrawn from the mart becomes the point at which haggling begins. The prospective buyer uses it as a statement of the animal's real value with the owner pleading that the animal is worth far more and if this is all he can offer then he will take the animal home. This latter is the ultimate threat which is seldom actually invoked, as a final price, something above the closing mart price, is agreed upon.

A similiar form of dealing takes place outside the marts, in calves where the buyer and seller confront each other without the presence of an official middleman. The calves are bought in the southern dairy region and the sellers are often buyers of the second order who transport cattle bought in the West and return with the calves which are sold from covered vans and lorries outside the mart building. Calf dealers are known to the farmers and the method of sale is similiar to the haggling at fairs.

The farmer will approach the calves, examining them carefully. If there is one that suits him, argument over the price begins. The dealer often separates the calf from the others allowing him to walk about and display his good features which are stressed by the seller. If a price cannot be agreed upon, another farmer may enter as a mediator.

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[1] This arrangement is not, of course, looked on with approval by the mart authority.

Farmers often leave and return later hoping that the price will be reduced. When a deal is completed, the animal is marked, to be collected or delivered later. Money is not always paid at the moment of sale. Rather than press for payment, dealers are likely to add that there is no need to hurry payment. They know that the farmer can be trusted. Past deals have proven this and emphasis on this trustworthiness may enhance the prospect of future sales. The dealers' code is profit and a satisfied customer.

The mart, in addition to being a centre for the sale of animals, - the weighing of cattle for sale in the ring and sheep auctioning from pens - has a variety of other functions. It is a centre for dealers in tools which are of use to the farmers as well as for dealers in clothes, new and second-hand, and footwear. At certain times of the year, plants, shrubs and young trees are also sold. Haggling is characteristic of all these sales. Rather than a fixed price, there exists the sellers' "asking price", the buyers' opening price, and the sale price between these. As a result, there is considerable variation in the price at which certain goods are sold.

Shanin makes the distinction between market places:

> where people meet on and off at predefined times to exchange goods by bargaining and the market as an institutionalized system of organizing the economy by more or less free interplay of supply, demand and price of goods. 1

Applying this distinction to the mart, we find that it is a local centre of a capitalist economy which should operate according to the characteristics of that economy, anonymity, universality, abstract profit aims and eventual bureaucratization.

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1 Shanin, T., 'The Nature and Logic of The Peasant Economy,' Journal of of Peasant Studies, Vol. 1, 1973, p.74.

In practice, the mart retains many of the characteristics of the market place, often controlled by middlemen dealers. Neither are all sales in the "free" and "open" auction system, since the personal deal still continues. The mart is also a centre for the sale of a variety of goods and it retains the non-economic functions of contact, information and gossip.

The small farmers have for long depended on the sale of animals to pay for the produce which they could not or did not produce, and for the services of non-farmers. As such, they have been subjected to the whims of uncertain markets and fluctuating prices and confronted with middlemen often coming from within their own ranks. They have been hindered by ignorance of prices and the price system. The mart system has not changed this and some farmers would maintain that it has made the "work" of the middlemen easier. In the market situation, a variety of conflicts are possible.[1] There can be competition between individual buyers and individual sellers or between buyers and sellers. As we have seen, these tensions are present in livestock marts complicated by the interchanging roles of buyers and sellers. Buyers form alliances to lower prices. The sellers, largely farmers, seldom form such alliances, being at once buyers and sellers. They are divided by allegiance to both categories, and in the market, they lose out.

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[1] Benvenuti, B., Newby, H., and Galgart, B, 'The Current Status of Rural Sociology', Sociologia Ruralis, Vol.15, 1975, p.14.

Fragmentation.

The small farm economy is essentially familistic. Each family owns a piece of land, perhaps supplemented by rented land, on which it rears livestock, usually cattle for sale. The labour force is essentially familial. Following Galeski[1] the small farm is characterized by the "identification of the enterprise (i.e. the commodity-producing establishment) with the domestic economy of the family household". As such, farms are faced with common problems. There is the problem of land shortage becoming more acute with increased emphasis on animal husbandry. There is the problem of fragmentation of farms which limits the adoption of new approaches to farming. There is the common demand of modernization which demands in the words of Edgar Morin:

> a new attitude to money which regards credit as a condition of progress, not as family dishonour...an aptitude for book-keeping... thinking not in terms of financial viability - income - but of economic viability - overhead, current prices and amortization. 2

Thus there is the overall problem of uncertainty, what the future contains, anxiety as to whether prices will remain at present levels.

How these problems are tackled depends on a variety of factors. Resources, skills, information are not equally distributed nor are similiar resources similarly deployed. The nature and the extent of the variability can best be explored by examining actual cases encountered during the fieldwork.

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1 Galeski, B, Basic Concepts of Rural Sociology, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1972, pp.10-11.

2 Morin, E, Plodemet, London, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1971, p.88.

The Single Person Farm.

Paul aged 69 is perhaps an extreme example of the type of small farmer who lives on his own. Living in one of the few remaining thatched cottages, he owns less than thirty acres, a holding created by the Land Commission and inherited from his father. He owns neither horse, tractor or farm machinery and has no farm buildings except for two old cabins. Though a farmer "all his life", he has worked elsewhere as a labourer.

He sows potatoes and vegetables which he consumes. He hires a tractor and machinery for the spring work. He keeps four cows, the milk from one he uses himself, the others rear calves. He seldom purchases stock, rearing his own calves and retaining them until they are perhaps four years old. He sells them at the mart, hiring a neighbour's tractor to transport them. He also hires a tractor to cut his hay, but does all the other tasks associated with the hay harvest without the assistance of machinery. His land is poorly fenced, but since he has so few animals, they are well fed and seldom stray. His land is generally in poor condition contrasting with the well manured land that bounds his.

He has little to do with his neighbours whom he regards with suspicion. He believes that they are only interested in his land. He pays for the services he requires and lives an isolated existence, withdrawing more and more into himself. He knows or cares little about what goes on in the "outside" world.

Having few demands to meet and being prepared to live a frugal existence, he has no need for modernization. Perhaps his principal asset is his willingness to work hard. He has little interest in long term planning or continuous risktaking and prefers to remain as he is. His situation is similar to many farmers who live on their own, having farmed their land to the best of their knowledge. They now find their farms classified as unviable and they themselves as unproductive. Like all smallholders, they are not unaccustomed to risks, since the small holders have long been at the mercy of fluctuating prices, uncertain weather and diseases in crops and animals. Their farms have remained small as they have grown old. Now without a future, they are encouraged by agricultural policy to give up their land. They are being asked to break the habit of a lifetime, to turn away from a way of life and a belief that in the end the land is the only real form of security.

Farm Families. The Murphys.

Here the husband and wife are in their sixties. All five children have left home and the village except the eldest son who works full-time in the Inland Fisheries and has built a house close to his parents. The Murphys acquired their first portion of land from a family who simply left the village for America. William was just a caretaker of their land when the village was resettled by the Land Commission, he received the smallest and poorest-adjusted holding. To survive, he worked elsewhere whenever the opportunity arose, as a labourer, on boats, and on drainage schemes, as a boatman, bought and sold cattle, rented additional land and took part of 'the estate' on conacre.

In the early sixties, he bought a second farm two miles from his first holding on his very fragmented forty three acres. The Murphys operate a mixed economy, concentrating more than most other families in the villages on sheep. They sow potatoes and vegetables for home consumption, root crops and oats for winter feed and keep cows for their milk as well as to rear calves. Hens are also kept to provide for the house. Their main emphasis is on cattle and they stock their land to capacity; many of their neighbours would say beyond its capacity.

For the Murphys every day is a busy day and running the farm a seven day week affair. The normal tasks of feeding and caring for animals are made more difficult by the distance between his portions of land. The major part of the land is quite a distance from the farm house. His life is also made more difficult by the rearing of sheep who have to be carefully watched during the lambing season. I lived in Murphy's village,and for most of the winter, I passed Willie Murphy as he reclaimed land close to the farmhouse, land which had largely been waste land up to then and which he planned to use as pasture for the sheep in springtime. Many of his winters had been spent in reclaiming land. He did not have the assistance of heavy machinery.

The Murphys are an independent family. They own a tractor and farm machinery which are operated by the son who lives nearby. The Murphy's have struggled with the land all their lives and continued to live in a thatched cottage until the summer. I left the village when they commenced building a new house. Their resources have largely gone to their children's education. They have borrowed to buy additional land and more stock, a venture which was unsuccessful due to the cattle crisis of 1973.

The Murphys realize that their life has been spent in hard labour and Willie is quick to point out the hazards of small scale farming. Yet though he may protest against the excess of work, he is quick to admit that he would not like to have it any other way. During our many conversations over the winter, he would state "why am I bothering with this reclaimation for" ! Yet he would curse the fishing season which took him away from the land.

Farm Family (2) The Burkes .

John Burke, just a few years younger than Willie Murphy, has been married for less than ten years. For years he lived on his own, farming a small holding and acting as caretaker in 'the estate' house. He payed little attention to his land and in his own estimation, spent all he had on drink. When he married, his way of life changed. His wife had been to America and there had accumulated a considerable amount of money. This was used to build a new house and purchase land which bounded his own land. This additional land lifted him above the average village farm, leaving him in the exceptional position of having thirty five acres of relatively good land, in one place. He also rents land some two miles from his own.

The Burkes concentrate on cattle rearing while also growing the usual produce for the house and three to four acres of root crops, principally turnips for winter feed. The cattle can be divided into three categories; stronger animals approaching the stage when they can be sold; younger animals, one year to one year and a half; and calves. All three categories require different care, particularly in winter when all the younger animals have to be housed and feedstuffs have to be purchased. John Burke believes in feeding his stock well.

His land is well manured and he has a new hay barn with adjoining feedstore and houses for winter shelter for cows and younger animals. He also has an old tractor and machinery about whose working he understands little, thus he is dependent on garages and handy neighbours.

John is recognized as being one of the foremost dealers in cattle in the villages. Many farmers closely observe the type of cattle he buys and follow his example. He attends the mart nearly every week and has learned to operate its rules. He will watch and wait all day for the animal or two which will suit him and slips the nets of the buyers. Some days he will not buy, but will remain standing among the farmers until the sales end. He tries to attend the few surviving fairs and will buy from other farmers in the parish when the opportunity arises and the animal and the price is favourable.

On the Burke's farm, one sees something of the separation of family and farm.[1] Mrs. Burke confines herself to the housework and has little to do with the land, though her capital minimised the potential conflict between the demands of farm and house. House and land are physically separated by timber fences and stone walls. The ground about the house is out of bounds to animals and mowed regularly. Conversely, the connection between the house, farm, and family is shown by John who does not regard mowing the land or keeping the house tidy to be in any sense in a different category to his other work.

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[1] This theme is explored in more detail in chapter nine.

The Burkes are by village standards in a very secure position. Yet John is uncertain of the future. Having had a son late in life, he has been given new hopes and doubts. Hope, now that he has something to work for, doubts as to whether he can continue to farm successfully and to improve, and yet greater doubts that his son will want to continue his work.

Farm Family (3) The Kennedys

The Kennedys have a number of factors in common with the Burkes. Here the farm is the husband's domain, the house the wife's. Here also there is one son and the farm is similar in size and quality of the soil, though more fragmented. Yet the Kennedys are a generation apart from the Burkes, being still in their thirties. Joe Kennedy has had experience outside farming, working as a labourer in an Agricultural Research Institute and running the farm on a part-time basis.

On becoming redundant, he was faced with the problem of how best to utilize his resources. He had become used to a regular wage and this strongly influenced his decision to concentrate on milk production. In order to make this venture a secure proposition, he would have to modernize. He contacted the agricultural advisor and had his farm classified under the E.E.C. Farm Modernization Scheme, thus ensuring that he would qualify for grants. Modernization essentially involves the purchase of a milking machine and the long term improvement of animal housing and the quality of the cow herd.

The Kennedys have committed themselves to a future of milk production which they expect will bring a regular and secure income. They have broken from the pattern of stock rearing, yet the commitment to the new enterprise is not "total". Joe still believes in the principle of mixed farming, of not "placing all your eggs in one basket" and will continue to rear some calves rather than send all his milk to the creamery, although he will receive a grant towards the purchase of the milking machine and building improvements. He is quick to point out that he is committed to nothing except his family.

Milk production has brought him into contact with the agents of modernization, agricultural advisors and farm policies. For many in his position, it would have placed them in debt to banks or credit corporations, but the Kennedys had the necessary money - redundancy pay. Buying the milking machine has brought him into contact with firms who sell these machines. He wrote to a number of firms seeking price details and was visited by a number of salesmen. His decision on what type of machine he would purchase was greatly influenced by the farmer whom most of the people regard as the most technically knowledgable and most successful farmer in the villages, rather than by the salesmen or the agricultural advisor.

The Kennedys do not own a tractor or machinery and Joe sees this as an obstacle to the successful operation of the farm enterprise, but this can be bought either with borrowed money or profits. The main obstacle to progress is land fragmentation, now more acute because of the concentration on dairying. This problem is not so "easily" overcome. It depends on the co-operation and goodwill of their neighbours and to date efforts to re-arrange land have ended in failure.

The Entrepreneurial Family.

John Sheridan is regarded by the other farmers as the most successful and progressive farmer in the villages. One farmer's son, now an agricultural advisor,noted that while for most farmers farming was a way of life, John Sheridan was really in it for profit alone and that he is a profit-making entrepreneur who operates and thinks in terms of reinvesting income productively.

He is always the first to introduce new farming techniques, being prepared to change techniques and approaches which he feels are no longer profitable, and has consistently expanded his enterprise. Now what is important in understanding this exception is to relate his development to that of the other families which form the local social structure in which he operates.[1] This will be taken up again in the next chapter. Here let us examine the background to his progress.

John Sheridan inherited less than thirty acres, the "typical" local holding,from his uncle. Through marriage, he acquired a farm in another parish. This land was quickly sold and the income used to purchase part of the local 'estate'. The villagers had long sought to have this 'estate' divided, but their efforts had been unsuccessful. It had been sold intact,to and by outsiders, on six occasions since the landlord first departed. The present owner is the first to sell off a portion, having no interest in land. The present owners were interested in developing the 'estate' house as a hotel and needed additional capital.

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1 What Barth terms his "niche". Barth, F., ed. The Role of the Entrepreneur in Social Change in Northern Norway. Norwegian University Press, 1963, p.9.

Thus the Sheridans were fortunate in having this capital. They were prepared to invest it in land which would demand further investment in terms of reclamation and fertilizer. The fields are now open pasture and are easily distinguishable from all others by their unbroken and well manured appearance. This land and indeed all Sheridans' land is well stocked with cattle and sheep.

The Sheridans' farm has the most modern machinery and buildings. John was one of the first farmers to purchase a tractor and went on hire until the tractor had "paid for itself". Aware of the specialisms demanded by "modern" farming, he tries to be an expert at all of them. He has become something of an expert on machinery, and now acts as a middleman in used tractors. These he purchases in the Eastern large farming regions where tractors are quickly disposed of to make way for the latest models. He sells at a considerable profit to local farmers.

The farmhouse is an essential part of the enterprise, though not in the traditional way. It is in fact a farmhouse-guesthouse in the area and as such, it is very successful. It is run by Mrs. Sheridan who also employs a local man as a general helper.

What factors facilitated the rise of John Sheridan? His own family background is important. His father encouraged him to take risks. When I spoke to his father, he told me of the time when his sons where young and he gave them two lambs to sell at a fair. They did poorly in the deal, but learned a quick lesson. He encouraged his sons to be successful at school without discouraging them from working the land. He was fortunate to inherit land from his uncle and more land as a result of his marriage.

Local circumstances also aided him. His knowledge and possession of tractors and machines,make him almost indispensable to many local people. There were few people who had not used or did not expect to use his services. Thus he had been able to "buy" off the other families who had sought to have the estate divided and he had begun to reclaim the land before they became aware that he had bought a portion of the estate.

If local social conditions facilitated "his rise", his outside connections were equally important. His brother, an agricultural advisor and farmer in the mid lands,has been a constant source of advice to him on where to buy agricultural machinery at cheap rates, and has also given advice on cattle prices.

Before marriage, John Sheridan had thought about leaving the village, giving up his holding to the Land Commission in return for a better one in the Eastern farm region. Such a farm would have offered him greater opportunities for expansion. His father asked him to remain in the village where he has succeeded in acquiring some of the land so long sought by the villagers. He will in time inherit his father's farm and possibly the land of a distant cousin. People believe that he will buy more of 'the estate', that there is no limits to what he will own.

Barth[1] distinguishes the entrepreneur by his

1) More single-minded concentration on the maximization of one type of value: "profit".
2) Acts on the basis of the deductive prognosis of results instead of expectations based on accumulated institutionalized experience.
3) Greater willingness to take risks, shown by his committing a greater fraction of his total assets to a single venture.

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[1] Barth, F., Op.cit., pp.7-8.

The point at which the entrepreneur seeks to exploit the environment Barth calls his niche: the position he occupies in relation to resources, competitors, and clients. Niche and assets determine the restrictions to which any particular enterprise is subjected.

We have seen that once John Sheridan had "chosen" his niche, he used his assets, in this case personal skills and knowledge, to expand. He has shown himself more willing to innovate, to take risks and make changes in his efforts to maximize profit.

Paine has taken the entrepreneurial model further and distinguished two types of entrepreneurial activity - free enterprise and freeholder:

> Entrepreneurs of the freeholder type are prepared to accept responsibility in associations in order to help raise the productivity of the community... Those of the free-enterprise type may not work in either of the principal livelihoods of the community. Their characteristic interests are of a speculative type and they pursue them in disregard of local values. 1

It is easy to identify the owners of the estate house and lands as entrepreneurs of the free enterprise type. They have come from outside the community, have little interest in farming and have little to do with the farmers of the village. But what of the Sheridans? They have little interest in raising the productivity of the community. Nonetheless, they follow the common occupation and engage in relationships with neighbouring farmers. They took care to pacify the locals before purchasing part of the estate. That they were from the locality helped to minimize protests since a common belief was that if the land was to be sold, then a local should have it.

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[1] Paine, R., 'Entrepreneurial Activity without its Profits' in Barth, F., Op.cit., pp.35-55.

We are now in a better position to assess the 'state' of agriculture in the villages. In chapter four, we observed that there were considerable differences in size between farms. These differences are reflected in varying levels of farm productivity and profitability. Some of the larger farms, such as the Sheridans, are efficiently organized and managed with the aid of modern machinery. Land is used to its full capacity and output is high. Other farms are so small and fragmented as to prevent their owners from making a reasonable living from farming alone. It is of course difficult to assess farm income, but it is clear that some farms of less than thirty acres earned somewhat less than one thousand pounds from agriculture in 1976, while on farms such as the Sheridans, income from agriculture would have been five or six times this amount. Differences in income are reflected in living standards such as the style or quality of house owned or in car ownership.

Farmers anxious to improve their position in the villages need to acquire additional land. But there are more farmers anxious to expand than there is land available to satisfy their needs. Thus competition between farms is severe, relationships are often strained, and tensions and conflicts common. This is a theme which we return to in chapter seven.

Many village farmers are unable to obtain a satisfactory income from agriculture and thus become dependent on other forces, such as the state, for additional income. Of particular importance is the small farmers' assistance or 'Dole'. Also important in the village studied here is tourism. These components of the village's economy and their effects on village life are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Land: Non local agents, The State and Tourists.

In previous chapters we have examined the villages in terms of the distribution and organization of farms and the social organization of agricultural production. Our analysis has been, to some extent, locally orientated and as such, incomplete, in so far as outside factors impinge on this local system altering its structure and the balance of relationships within it. Of particular importance here is the State's role in terms of its land and agricultural policy, and especially the part played by tourism in the life of the villages.

In chapter two we observed that Irish agricultural policy was, up until the nineteen fifties, largely based on support for small family farmers and was governed by a belief in the value of having as many people as possible on the land. We also saw that this policy was not without its disputants and that despite the stated aims of agricultural policy, the numbers of small holders continued to decline from census to census.

In the nineteen sixties this policy was increasingly attacked by agricultural economists who now spoke more and more of 'viable units' and urged the state to concentrate its support on those farms which had shown the potential for expansion. Parts of the West of Ireland with large numbers of smallholders were now officially classified as backward and underdeveloped regions. This line of thinking became increasingly dominant in the late sixties and early seventies and was highlighted in the implementation in Ireland of the European Economic Community's Farm Retirement and Farm Modernization Schemes.[1]

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[1] See appendix II.

The Farm Modernization Scheme divides farms into three categories: commercial farms, which are large and well developed; developmental farms, which have the potential for development and transitional farms, which are small, usually fragmented and with little hope of development. The scheme discriminates against these transitional farms, in terms of grants, aid, and advice. Under this scheme, farmers classified as developmental must submit a detailed six year development plan in order to benefit from grants and agree to keep farm accounts of a detailed nature, i.e. a balance sheet and a profit and loss account.

Already in the villages, this policy is widening the existing gap between landholders, as a few farmers expand their enterprises and acquire more land and technology, while the majority remain static and come to depend on the expanding few for machinery and technical knowledge. The agricultural adviser for the villages concentrates on what he regards as progressive and enterprising farmers, and has little time for, or interest in, other farmers. The division between farmers is also encouraged by the selective support for the more commercially orientated farms by the advisory credit and commercial institutions. These institutions have come more and more to deal with a more select clientele, principally those who have the potential to remain in business under these E.E.C. farm policies. In time, it is expected that these smaller non-viable farms will disappear and their land will be taken over by the progressive farmers.

We have seen that even before the implementation of this scheme the numbers of small holders in the villages had been declining. That this decline has not taken place at a greater pace and that the E.E.C. scheme, for the present at least, is unlikely to greatly increase the speed with which small holders give up their land, can be attributed to a number of factors.

National land policy, where it can be discerned, has continued to operate along the "old lines", making land available to numerous eligible[1] applicants. Were an estate to be divided in the villages, where all but a few of the farms are in the non-viable class, their owners would still expect their "rightful" share from any land division. Many villagers have not given up hope of having part of a local 'estate' divided and receiving an addition.

Again, many villagers who would now be classified as the owners of 'non-viable' farms are supported by a number of State measures, the most important being the small holders' assistance or Dole,[2] and the annual livestock headage payment scheme. In addition, although off-farm employment is not easily come by, a number of small holders have other occupations and work their farms on a part-time basis. Income from this source is often invested in machinery, labour-saving devices and is sometimes used to launch an entry into farming on a full-time basis. Of course off-farm employment is not new in the villages, with many farmers having experience of a variety of manual jobs from road repairs to drainage schemes. Such employment was then viewed as being supportive of the farm. To-day, income from the land is seen on some farms as a bonus to the weekly wage.

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1 Those who reside within a one mile radius of the estate.

2 Unemployment assistance was first introduced in Ireland in 1933, qualification for assistance being based on a means test. This later was changed in 1966 when farmers eligibility was determined by a notional income system. The assistance rates vary according to land valuation, marital status and number of dependent children. See:
Curry, J., "Farmers Dole - a lifeline or bounty". Part I, Irish Times, 11th March, 1976 and Part II, Irish Times, 18th March, 1976.

Tourism

Tourism has insured the survival of many small holders and this is particularly true in those villages where it has become important, largely because of their proximity to a lake. In all of the villages, the "tourist industry" consists of providing services for anglers who arrive in mid-April and continue to come and go until the end of September. They are provided with houses to rent and accommodation in guest houses, information, boats, engines and services of boatmen. In later years, they have established themselves in the villages through their purchase of sites and houses.

Tourists or anglers have been coming to the villages for many years. Some of the older people remember the English "gentry" coming to stay in town and their being driven to the lake by horse and side-car. Then as now, locals acted as boatmen rowing them out onto the lake, taking them to the good fishing grounds and fishing for them. The custom, then as now, was that the boatmen handed his catch over to the client.

It would appear that after the Second World War, the number of English "gentry" coming to the area greatly declined and that the fifties were in general characterized by the absence of tourists. In the sixties, the numbers coming to the lakes increased. However, the type of tourist now changed. Some English tourists continued to come, but were of a "lower order".[1] Today local people classify tourists as follows:

Continentals (usually German or French)
English
Northern (from Northern Ireland)
Irish.

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1 On a nearby lake, seeking a client is still referred to as "getting your gent".

In the villages, there are three farmhouse guesthouses which cater for the tourists. Two are run by the wives of part-time farmers, a third by the wife of the villages "most progressive" farmer, John Sheridan.[1] This latter is easily the most successful, being advertised in the Tourist Board's brochures. Mrs. Sheridan had previously worked in the estate house and now employs one of the landless villagers for cooking and for general housework. This guesthouse has built up a regular clientele for whom it provides a full array of services as well as a place to live. Back-up services are provided, from lunches packed for the day's boating, to boats and the hiring of boatmen. This latter provides the Sheridans with an important source of patronage which we noted in a previous chapter was successfully used to curtail objections to their purchase of part of the estate.

Mrs. Sheridan's assistant is a middle-aged man who works for her for the season, i.e. April/September. He collects Unemployment Assistance for the remainder of the year, a common practice in areas where tourism provides seasonal employment.[2] In the guesthouse, he has a variety of tasks, i.e. cooking, waiter, housework and has long-standing contacts with some tourists. He feels he knows how to please the tourists, remembering their peculiarities from year to year and being remunerated accordingly. Locally, he is regarded as being rather odd, largely because he does work usually regarded as women's work.

Tourists also rent houses in the village in closest proximity to the lake. There are six houses available for renting each summer, as well as a few houses owned by outsiders, who use them during the fishing season. Outsiders also own houses in other villages close to the lake.

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1 See chapter 5 for Case Study.

2 Referred to as "putting up the stamps".

Much of the land on the lake shore is owned by one family, of which the husband is the oldest and most experienced boatman in the villages. It was his contacts with the tourists that began the site-selling trend.

In the early sixties this boatman was hired in the usual fashion for a day's boating. While they were on the lake, his client offered to purchase a site on the lake-shore for one hundred pounds. He agreed without hesitation, but was unsure that his client was really serious. However, on the following day, the client returned with a cheque for the agreed amount. A few years later, he purchased a second site and this family sold four more sites within a few years.

Local people had expected that when the first house was built, the owners would use them as summer houses. However, they were rented to tourists and the family who had sold the site were appointed caretakers, their task being to ensure the houses' upkeep in Winter. They looked after the visiting anglers in summer. In this manner, they became identified at a local level with the tourists. Gradually they took charge of bookings, and tourists who arrived in the village were sent to their house, there they were given the key and accompanied to the tourist house by the wife of the caretaker who explained the workings of the house to them. In the village tourists came to this house with their problems. This family - the Morans - mastered the art of handling the tourists and were able to give what they appeared to want i.e. friendliness. More fundamentally, they were prepared to serve.

Mrs. Moran looked after one aspect of the tourist "business". She attended to their house comforts. As tourists came and left, she cleaned the house and ensured that a supply of fresh linen was available. Her husband was also involved with the tourists, for many of whom he acted as boatman, and the tourist houses provided him with a regular supply of clients.

As caretakers of valuable property, the Morans' status began to increase in the villages. They were in a position to employ locals to do repair work and they sometimes had surplus clients to dispose of to local boatmen. As such, they were able to set themselves above some of the villagers who came to depend on them for favours.[1]

In conversations with the Morans, it became clear that they were now aware that they had sold their sites cheap. However, they felt that their action had payed off in terms of money earned, and prestige gained as caretakers. More important, one of their daughters has used the tourist experience to her advantage. She has built two houses also overlooking the lake and they are now the most modern houses available to tourists. At one stage, she used the surplus bookings from the other houses to fill her own. However, this situation has now been reversed and it is her surplus bookings which are passed on.

A neighbour of the Morans was next to sell sites, two being bought by emigrants from the town, then resident in England. When the houses were built they were also rented to tourists, bookings and collection of fees being handled by an auctioneer and the original site owners having the caretaker/cleaner role. Now the locals were aware that there was a market for sites and houses, old and not so old. One man stated to me that it "was a pity his old family house was so close to the one he was building as he could get sale for it".

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[1] For tourist influence on an alpine village, see:
Friedl, J., "Changing Economic Emphasis in An Alpine Village", Anthropological Quarterly, Vol.45, No.1, 1972, pp.145-157.

Perhaps the biggest tourist development has begun on the 'Estate'. As we have seen in chapter four, despite local opposition part of the estate has been sold to the Sheridans and its breakup has been hastened by the sale of a smaller portion, twenty acres, to a Dutch company.[1] When this sale was discovered locally, the belief was that it would be used for tourist houses. Already on a small island adjacent to the estate, three chalets had been built and protected with the "Private Property" sign. The locals' belief was confirmed when the planning permission notices appeared in the papers, and the first house had been built when I returned to the village in the early part of this year[2] (1977).

Boats, Boating, Boatmen.

For most villagers, contact with tourists is made through boating. The "traditional" relationship of villager and tourist is that of boatman and client. The boatman is hired by the client (the angler) for a day or perhaps a week. In return for his fee, the boatman provides a boat and engine, his expertise and knowledge of the lake and his services as a fisherman, handing over his catch to the client. The boatman is expected to take the client to an area where fish will be caught. In addition to the fee, the client is expected to provide a lunch for the boatman. This is usually taken on one of the islands on the lake, where the boatman lights the fire and looks after the cooking arrangements.

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1 See map 5 chapter four.

2 Writing about the circum-alpine area, Berthoud states that "in the case of an effective or prospective touristic development, the villagers are legally deprived of their landed property by national or international capital, whose only objective is speculation and profit. This very capital will then be able to buy the labor force of landless villagers to perform menial jobs in the newly created resort". Berthoud, G. 'The Dynamics of Ownership in the Circum-Alpine Area.' Anthropological Quarterly, Vol.45, 1972, pp.122.

Locally, there is a distinction made between full-time and part-time boatmen. Since boating is in any case a part-time affair, this distinction needs clarification. Full-time boatmen are largely farmers who are willing to be hired on almost every day of the fishing season, while part-timers are weekend boatmen who hold an occupation other than farming. Some tension exists between part-time and full-time boatmen which centres on the fee which the client should be charged. Fees are "set" by a boatman's club where the part-timers continuously press for higher fees and the full-time men stress moderation. This plea for moderation is based on the belief that high fees would drive the anglers away, particularly as today's anglers are not the real monied people and that there is a limit to the fee they would be prepared to pay. If they began to leave the area, full-time boatmen would suffer most. When I first visited the villages, the boatmen's fee was £7. per day. At the boatmen's annual meeting, part-timers moved that it be raised to £10, but they were overruled and the fee was set at £8.00.

For the boatmen the season usually begins at the Easter holiday weekend. In the weeks before, the lakeshore is busy with people cleaning and painting boats and talking of the coming tourists. Curious sightseers wander into the villages before they are expected, inspect the area, and they in turn, are inspected. For the peak fishing periods, most, if not all, the boatmen are booked out. At other times boatmen's fortunes vary. A few, mainly those with access to tourists houses, are busy for most of the season. Others are only on the lake for a few weeks. Income earned from boating ranged from £250.00 to £600.00 in 1976.

The boatman's day begins at ten at the lakeshore where he is met by his client(s). Here he will greet them, perhaps pass some remarks on the weather and carry their fishing gear to the boat. During the day, apart from the duties previously described, the boatman is expected to entertain the client, to be at all times willing to serve the client, who is very often addressed as 'sir'. Boatmen who have learned to serve well are in greater demand. Boatmen also seek to manipulate the client and the situation to their advantage as evidenced by their efforts to discourage fishing techniques that are wasteful of petrol or their subtle encouragement of anglers to venture on the lake on a calm and sunny summer day when the probability of catching fish is low.

Tourisms effects on the Villages.

Tourism has had a varied effect on the villages. Financially some families have benefited more than others. The 'farmhouse guesthouse' market has been cornered by the Sheridans. Income from the sale of land in the form of house sites has largely, though not entirely, been confined to those families owning land on, or close to, the lake shore. These are now referred to as the "tourist families". Boating has had the widest effect bringing a great number of villagers into contact with the tourists.

Tourism has opened up the villages to the sale of plots of land to outsiders. Outsiders have bought and rented land in the villages in the past but the land was used for farming purposes. Very often, the owners or renters simply grazed the land and were seldom seen in the area. Such is not the case with the tourists who built their houses in the villages and use its roads and common land, put up 'private' and 'no trespass' signs and associate selectively, if at all, with villagers.

Because villagers have benefited selectively from tourism, it has upset existing balances between families.[1] To those families committed to farming and success through toil and hard but 'honest work', it has raised doubts about the correctness of their vision. Some families have privately objected to the selling of sites and the tension between the "tourist" and "farm" families became evident when some of the latter objected to the development of some common land as a tourist car park by the Tourism Development Board. Tourism has thus become the source of new tension, conflicts, and alliances.

Similar divisive effects of tourism have been recorded by Peader O' Donnell in his most recent book Proud Island.[2] In that book we see how Minnie McBride's land is sold via the local Dail Deputy and auctioneer to the tourists who are quick to erect the 'no trespass' sign. At first there appears to be unanimous objection to the idea of 'no trespass' but gradually people begin to wonder at the value of their land and object to any action against the 'no trespass' sign as the people with money might cast their eyes elsewhere. Divisions appear between the pro and anti-tourist people which are really part of the struggle about the island's future. This becomes clear when the tourists attempt to purchase and close off the island's most important inlet.

In the villages, tourism does not present such a threat to the farm economy. In the case of the Sheridans, income from the guesthouse finances household expenditure and allows the profit from the farm to be invested in land and technology. For the majority, tourism supplements income from the sale of animals and social welfare, allowing them to continue their present pattern of farming rather than altering it.

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1 See The Dispute in next chapter.

2 O'Donnell, P., Proud Island, Dublin, The O'Brien Press, 1975.

Indeed, tourism and the pattern of farming in the villages complement each other. In the past when tillage was more common, it fitted in with the tourist season. Most of the sowing was completed in March or early April before the busy fishing month of May. Hay was cut and saved in July, usually a slack period on the lake, and the harvest was gathered in September/October. Today, tillage has declined and machinery has cut the time and labour content of summer work leaving more time for the lake. On the other hand, the quick returns from a days boating contrasts with the slow rate of returns from small scale farming and it is income earned without great risk. For most of the villagers, the tourists bring a certain gaiety to the area after the long and generally monotonous Winter. Villagers are glad to see the strange cars and they also welcome the letters with foreign post-marks which confirm previous boating arrangements or which seek to establish new ones.

Hugh Brody also refers to the effects of tourism on the parish of Innishkillane.[1] In Inishkillane, the economic benefits of tourism have gone mainly to one person, Michael Ryan, the owner of the shop, "Michael's". We learn that Michael's shop is also a guesthouse and

> Michael's accommodates about fourteen visitors, and its first storey has been designed with the tourist trade in mind. For those weeks when tourists are spreading into the Irish villages of the West, the Michael family squeezes into as few bedrooms as possible, leaving a maximum of space for guests, which is well filled for the six-week tourist season. 2

Some local people are employed in the guesthouse and Michael's house has been altered to meet the demands of the tourists.

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1 Brody, H., Inishkillane, London, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1973.

2 Ibid., p.190.

> The number of visitors at Michael's creates a prodigious amount of work, more than they can accomplish unaided. So they pay for help during the tourist time, which makes them again unique among local guesthouses. Also, the kitchen in the Michaels' house was not able to meet the demands of so many visitors - unlike most other families which take guests, the Michaels' like to provide full board - so they have built a larger kitchen as part of an extension to their house. Thus the house has been reshaped by the demands of the tourist trade. 1

Michael Ryan apart, Brody writes that most people in Inishkillane benefit little economically from the tourists. But for most people in the parish the tourists have an uplifting effect; they bring reassurance for and approval of their rural way of life.

> Even where the tourists are not bringing much money with them, they still seem to inject zest and enthusiasm into the community. And the people who exhibit the most zest are the ones who benefit financially the least and are also the ones who behave with the greatest and surest generosity towards visitors, buying drinks and inviting them home for tea and more drinks....
>
> What the tourists do, however, is to affirm their esteem for the rural milieu and its ways. By travelling to a remote parish the tourists indicate approval for it. And when they are staying, it is singing and conviviality in the bar, the fishing and the scenery itself, which they are both explicitly and implicitly complimenting. The presence of these outsiders, these representatives of the social and cultural forms which the country people so frequently unquestiongly assume to be superior to their own, thus gives a renewed confidence in their own society and culture. 2

However, in the villages studied here, and in other areas of the West of Ireland with which I am familiar, tourists are welcomed and their presence approved principally because they bring money to areas that are economically depressed.

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1 Ibid., p.191.

2 Ibid., pp.41-42.

People have become dependent on them, not so much for cultural reassurance, as for much needed income.

We have looked at past and present economic and social constraints which form the setting for action in the fieldwork area. In the next chapter we will examine the manner in which these effects are filtered through social relationships and the web of social intercourse.

Chapter 7

Land: General Social Relationships; Issues of Conflict and Co-operation.

In previous chapters, we noted that land is owned and farmed by individual families, with little economic co-operation between families. We now examine the nature and types of social relations in the villages which are not directly concerned with the production or distribution of goods. The geographical and sexual constraints on relations are first examined and this is followed by some emergent generalizations on the nature of relations. These generalizations are illustrated by "incidents" or "events".[1] Explanations are then put forward.

The village or townland is the primary unit of an individual's identity,[2] people being referred to as 'so and so from a certain village'. Farmers, certainly, will have spent most of their life in their own village. To an extent, geographical boundaries set limitations to social relations. A farmer is likely to meet his fellow villagers a few times a day. He is likely to know well those families who live along his route to town, simply because he meets them more often. He usually has in addition a wide circle of acquaintances and has accumulated a store of knowledge on numerous farmers whom he has met over the years at fairs, marts and in town.

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1 See Van Velsen for discussion on the procedures and utility of such analysis; in Epstein, A.L., The Craft of Social Anthropology. London, Tavistock Publications, 1967, pp.129-149.

2 Munch makes the useful distinction between the neighbourhood as a unit of identity and as an interaction unit. Munch, P., 'Interaction and Collective Identification in a Rural Locality.' Rural Sociology, Vol.28, No I, 1963, pp.18-34.

If he is married, his wife will also have spent most of her life in one village. However, she will have been much more confined to this locality and to her husband's house. For married women and, indeed, for older women in general, opportunities to meet people outside their village are limited - in many cases they consist merely of shopping trips to town and Sunday Mass. Women who have married into a village never cease to be known as strangers and often remain unfamiliar with villages and people just a few miles distant.[1]

If the village is the primary unit of identity, it is also the geographical location of those people about whom one has most knowledge. In the more clustered villages, the activities of many families are within the observation range of each household. Over time, people have built up a vast store of knowledge on their fellow villagers. Within limits (discussed here) each household "knows all about" the other households, the general history of the village, and the particular history of each individual household, its accomplishments and failures. From this knowledge, typifications of individuals and families are constructed and used to explain ongoing activities.

Knowledge about others is largely acquired through direct observation. People in the villages seldom if ever discuss their "problems" or affairs with their neighbours. People keep themselves to themselves or attempt to do so. The respectable person minds his or her own business. Yet people are intensely curious about each others' business and are always keen to acquire information about others.

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1 For a similiar observation from France, see Reiter, R.R.'Men and Women in the South of France'in Towards an Anthropology of Women, ed. Reiter, R.R. London, Monthly Review Press, 1975.

Relations between families I found to be often characterized by jealousy and envy. People had very little that is good to say about each other, and gossip about individual families was often harsh if not malicious. Nobody escaped criticism. If a person drinks, then he spends all his money in town. If he does not drink, he will be regarded as mean and cute. If he has a small number of animals on his land, then he is regarded as lazy and wasteful. If he has many animals, then he is overstocking and abusing the land. Taking care of an old neighbour is often interpreted as having an eye on the land. Not doing so, merits the label of a poor neighbour.

A number of distinctions based largely on property ownership are recognized between neighbours. Those who own land are distinguished from those who do not. Bigger holdings from the not so big. In the villages, largely through the activities of the Land Commission, the exact amounts of land owned by each household and additions through purchase or inheritance are well known. Again distinctions are also made on the basis of ownership of machinery, related of course to the size of the holding distinction. People are also greatly concerned about the type and quality of houses in the villages. The modern bungalow is much admired and is contrasted with the older cottages. There are now only four thatched cottages in the villages; one is owned by an old couple, two by bachelors and one by a widow. These people as well as their houses are referred to as old-fashioned. In the early days of fieldwork, I was not invited in to some houses on the basis that as they were not modern, I would not "approve". Later, when relations were established, on visits to these houses the type of house was referred to in apologetic terms, "as only an old-fashioned cottage" or "I hope you do not mind sitting in a house like this". Houses built by tourists and returned migrants set high standards for villagers.

Distinctions are also arrived at on the basis of personal achievements. Hard work, drive and thrift are generally highly valued. They must however be allied to the support of a family. The unmarried man is expected to be careless and lazy, having nothing to work for. He will be expected to waste his time in town. Living on his own, his house will become run-down. In any attempt to understand village distinctions, an important category is that of "the respectable family". These families combine the virtues mentioned above i.e. hard work, etc. and are generally achievement orientated. This should have resulted in their "having money in the bank". In the normal run of events, the children of these families should have all 'good' jobs, such as teaching or the civil service. Husbands really should not drink, or if they do so, in extreme moderation. Wives are expected to be hard working and supportive.

In contrast to these are the families who are somewhat tainted. They somehow manage to get themselves into trouble, are unable to manage competition and tension, and are careless in the management of the farm. Families who fail to make the respectable category have usually very little say in the matter. Some past trouble casts doubts on their honour and it comes as no surprise when they also get into trouble. It (trouble) is 'in the family'.

The Dole,[1] or small holders' assistance is also grounds for distinction. Some families, though legally entitled to Dole, do not accept it as a matter of principle, and look with scorn on those who do.

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1 See chapter 6.

All of these divisions do not result,however, in people being in continuous conflict. Distinctions unite groups as well as setting them off from others, and although relationships carry overtones of envy and suspicion and are laden with tension, they are usually not outwardly hostile. Indeed a quick survey of the villages would give the impression of villagers claiming that "we are all friendly here", or that "the neighbours are very good". On closer examination one sees that this really means that they are regarded as potentially good neighbours, if one had to call on them for assistance, it is expected that they would oblige. My evidence, is, however, that villagers seldom seek such assistance.

What people are really concerned with is avoiding open dissension. To this end they try to keep themselves to themselves. In maintaining distance people believe that they have less chance of creating enemies. Thus, houses in the villages are intensely private and neighbours seldom visit. On a journey through the villages on a winter's night, one sees each house distinguished by the flashing television screen. On entering a house, one finds individuals or families alone. Indeed people are unsure how to handle the unsuspected visitor. Social calls have little meaning and one is expected to state one's business at the door. People do not like to be caught unaware by a caller and indeed such callers seldom catch occupiers unaware in most houses. The front door is seldom used, which means that one has to go round the house. Barking dogs also give advance warning and delay the visitor on reaching the back door. The impression is of a private order being invaded.

To these generalizations of household privacy some additional notes must be added. Many of those outside the family system, mainly elderly bachelors, band together in what are extensions of more economic equally directed co-operative arrangements. They are likely to go to the mart or to town or get drunk together. Again, not all houses are privatized. In many of the older houses, the door is left open; even in Winter, as a friendly gesture to the outside world.

People are concerned with minimizing conflict and organise their activities accordingly. But conflicts, disputes, and disagreements do occur and the common source of conflict is land. Conflicts vary from mild, to more prolonged and violent disputes over rights of way and the use of common land. Conflict is often flamed by competition for "rented land", for small portions that are sometimes offered for sale, and for the few non-farm jobs that arise in the villages. Conflict is almost always over property.

As we demonstrated in Chapter IV, farms are in general fragmented and bound each other in several places. In such a situation disputes can be triggered off by cattle traspassing. This latter often leads to allegations that fences are not being properly maintained. Such accusations or outbursts are usually quickly settled. But they may also turn into a long running feud. Conflict also arises where it is suspected that a neighbouring farmer is trespassing on purpose. That is, where cattle or sheep are "let into" a field at night, and allowed to graze and taken out early next morning.

This is likely to occur where a farmer has land in a village some miles from the farm house, or where an outsider has land in a village, or sometimes where an older farmer is not grazing his land fully or is renting it to an outsider. Unheeded warnings about this activity often result in the threat of violence or in the sending of a solicitor's letter which is viewed as the ultimate sanction.

People use privacy, secrecy, and the approach of keeping themselves to themselves to minimize tension and conflict. When disagreements occur, they are seldom allowed to develop into open conflict. Yet from time to time, hidden animosities erupt into open conflict, and are taken to court. Such an instance is now examined. It is a case of a dispute over the use of land which was contested in court. Here we see how the dispute began, developed and was "resolved".

The Dispute.[1]

As it appeared in court - a man (A) claims that he has a right of way through another's (B) land. B denies this, claiming that the right of way does not exist and erects a temporary gate to cut off A's access. The rival claims are contested in the District Court, which assesses that A has, in fact, a right of way.

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[1] Gulliver, P.H., in Law, Culture and Society, ed. Nader, L. Chicago, Adline Press, 1969, writes that "a dispute arises out of disagreements between persons (individuals or groups) in which the alleged right of one party is claimed to be infringed, interfered with, or denied by the other party", and he also suggests that "no dispute exists unless and until the right claimant or someone on his behalf actively raises the disagreement from the level of dyadic argument into the public arena with the expressed intention of doing something about the denied claim".

The following were the principal modes of settlement open to the disputing villagers.[1]

1. Face to face negotiations - bargaining.
2. Mediation.[2]
3. Conciliation.
4. Arbitration.
5. Litigation.

The dispute in question does not appear to have ever been seriously at stage 1, as both parties continuously claimed that they were in the right. A neighbour and a priest however, attempted to act as mediators. The strategy used was to appeal to the disputants' good sense and the foolishness of being in conflict over such a 'small' matter.

A successful outcome here should have led to conciliation, but these appeals had no effect. Arbitration, the fourth mode, was not invoked. Rather when the conflict had violently erupted on a number of occasions, solicitors were engaged, and the dispute was submitted to litigation.

To understand why the conflict should have taken this course, we will examine the issues involved and the disputants in some detail.

The Disputants and articulation of the Dispute.

The disputants were two married men, both owners of small farms (less than 30 acres). The conflict in its verbal, physical, and legal forms was largely between these men. From time to time, the wife of one and the wife and children of the other were involved, mainly in verbal exchanges supporting rival claims.

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1 I am grateful to Paul Robertshaw, Dept. of Law, University of Cardiff for bringing this scheme to my attention.

2 Gulliver writes that 'in negotiations, there may be, but invariably is, a third party who, though he has no ability to give a judgment, acts in some way as a facilitator in the process of trying to reach agreement. This is a mediator'. Gulliver, P.H., On Mediators, in Hamnett, I. ed. Social Anthropology and Law, A.S.A. Monograph 14, London Academic Press, 1977, pp.15-53.

The disputants lived in the same village and in fact occupied houses within a few yards of each other, until one family moved to another part of the village fifteen years previous to my fieldwork. In the year of the dispute, the second family had also moved to a new house. Their lands, like all farms in the village, bound each other in a number of places.

The dispute did not develop overnight. Enquiries in the village made it clear that the families had long been on poor terms and had disagreed before over many issues. Before the dispute was submitted to litigation, claim and counter claim had resulted in many heated arguments, accusations of physical assault by one man on the other, and further accusations that fences had been knocked and animals attacked. Each party expressed in public their fear of the other and, on at least one occasion, the police were called upon to restore order.

The Dispute and Other Villagers.

Apart from the priest, who lives in the town, and one of the villagers who set themselves up as "formal" mediators, a number of villagers had, from time to time, suggested to the disputants that they had little to gain from continuing the conflict. None of the villagers allied themselves with either side. All were unwilling to become involved. This is not to say that they were disinterested. The dispute was a much discussed topic and people sought the most up-to-date views and the latest developments. Information was sought on questions such as, were they really going to court? Had solicitors been engaged? Which solicitors? When it did become clear that the dispute was to be settled in court, people quickly stated that they had no longer had any sympathy for the disputants. They would both lose as the "law would cost a fortune".

The common belief was that the legal people would see how foolish the whole affair was and would charge them accordingly.

The legal mode of settlement was viewed as being, in monetary terms, wasteful. It was also seen by those who knew the disputants as not providing a lasting solution, since the losing side would get no satisfaction and would probably seek revenge at a future date.

Villagers also worried about the effects of the dispute on the village's image. It was made clear to outsiders, such as this writer, that nothing like this had ever happened here before and that the village was really a friendly place. Concern was also expressed that the tourists would hear about the dispute. Thus, when one of the men involved in the dispute verbally attacked the wife of the other man in town (on Sunday, after Mass), the concern of one of the villagers present when this incident took place was with "what the tourists would think if they hear what was said" - and as to whether he, being from the same village, would be associated with this type of conduct.

The dispute had the further effect of making villagers even more fearful of each other and encouraging the policy of keeping oneself to oneself. It had reminded them of the issues which could also draw them into conflict.

Explaining the Dispute.

A series of events and a number of factors have to be taken into account in any effort to explain the conflict, the form it took, and its mode of resolution. Here we have to distinguish the general explanation for the existence of conflict from the particular explanation as to why the dispute should surface when it did.

The general explanation lies in what may be termed the dispute's pre-history. Included here are the bad feelings that existed between the families, extending back to previous generations and it appears, resulted in many verbal disagreements. As locals assessed it, "they were never on good terms anyway". Put this way, the present dispute was a continuation, and an outcome, of past conflicts. The conflict was also about each family's status in the village, and the dispute was, in part, a public gesture to establish superior-inferior ranking in the village. In this way, the process of going to court was used by both families to prove that they had the resources to engage legal aid.

That this ongoing conflict should have again flared up when it did can, I think, be attributed to the in-roads being made into the villages by the tourist economy. The dispute was, on the surface, about a right of way claimed by one family, denied by the other. Only a small portion of ground was involved and in these circumstances, "reasonable" people might have compromised on the issue. This indeed was the course suggested by other villagers. However, the actual location of the right of way becomes important. As we noted, both families had left their original houses, which were quite close to each other and moved to other parts of the village. In "normal" circumstances, the old houses would have been allowed to disintegrate. However, in the villages, there now existed a tourist market for houses. Both families wished to benefit from this market. But there existed the problem of the closeness of the old houses and also the problem of clear access.

A lane separated the two houses and was used by family A to bring cattle to and from outhouses. To continue this practice would greatly reduce the tourist potential of the old house of family A. Using the disputed right of way would have overcome this difficulty for family A. Family B found this movement of cattle unsatisfactory because the right of way ran by the back door and would thus reduce the value of their old house for tourist purposes. There did exist a real conflict of interest over who should benefit from this new potential source of income. The development and the sale or renting of either house reduced the value of the other given the tourist's desire for privacy. Thus, there was room for only one house to be developed for this new income purpose.

The dispute gives us dramatic insight into social relationships in the villages. Here we have families in conflict, with long felt animosity being fanned by the new forces of tourism. In the ensuing clash of interest, villagers proved unwilling to become involved and, indeed on this issue at least, a local community did not exist. The second event now examined - the station - is equally dramatic in that it is the only occasion when one finds all the village together under one roof.

The Station.

The station is primarily a religious event in that Mass is said in one of the village houses and all the people of the village have a right and are expected to attend without invitation. Each station area - a village or group of villages - has two stations in the year, one in Autumn, the other in Spring.

The location of the station follows a definite order within villages and a household will know years in advance when its turn is due. A house has an option to decline the station and it is sometimes expected that older bachelors will do so. However, in practice it is rare for a house not to comply when its turn arrives.

There appears to be considerable variation in what takes place at stations, given that in all Mass is said. Really the differences are in the extent to which it is seen simply as a religious event or is given greater social connotations. In the villages; this distinction was evident, in that the station in one village was seen to be essentially a religious event as "everybody left when mass was over". While the station in another village that I describe in some detail here was, as well as being a religious event, a prolonged social gathering.

In general the station can be seen to be composed of three stages: Stage One. preparation for the event; Stage Two. the actual day of the station; Stage Three. the aftermath. For most families preparations will begin two to three months in advance of the station. These preparations range from alterations to the house, painting and cleaning to a general overhaul of the house. Major structural alterations i.e. building of porches and kitchens are hastened by the approaching station. At the very least, the house will be re-painted or the cottage white-washed and the grounds and approaches cleaned and ordered.

Preparations close to the day of the station are largely concerned with the preparation of food. Up to a few years ago what was referred to as a full or sit-down breakfast was made available. This practice has now almost disappeared and where food is served, it consists of tea and sandwiches supplemented with a variety of cakes. It should be added here that it was not uncommon in the past for people to go into debt to provide a plentiful supply of food since one's good name and standing in the community was to an extent determined by one's generosity at the station.

Stage Two. The day of the Station. The day begins early for the host household as final adjustments are made. If Mass is at 9.00 a.m. people will begin arriving up to a half hour before hand. After Mass, people will either quickly depart, having given their offering to the priest, or remain on for food and conversation, depending on the interpretation of the station as a social or religious event.

Stage Three. The Aftermath. Even where the station is confined to its religious aspects it provides a basis for later conversations and gossip. The state of the house and the contents are discussed and changes if any assessed. Who attended and why; what the priest said, and who he spoke to after Mass, become conversation topics. All of these three stages can be distinguished in the station I am now about to describe.

One Station Described.

At the outset it must be made clear that this station was somewhat exceptional in that it took place in the house of a returned emigrant. This family had been in America and on their return had purchased a business in town. On the sale of this business, they had built a house and retired in the husband's native village. This was the first station to be held in this house and thus gave an opportunity to the villagers to enter a house in to which most would never have been before and were unlikely to be into again for some time.

The family had made efforts to have the station in the evening, but these were unsuccessful. Mass was then timed for 9.00 a.m. and on the day of the station, people began arriving from 8.30 onwards, dressed for the occasion in their 'good' or 'Sunday' clothes. They were met at the door by the householder and welcomed to the house. In the short period before Mass, people huddled together in groups and engaged in general conversation. The arrival of the priest temporarily ended the talk as people felt uneasy in his presence and they searched for safe and suitable topics of conversation.

The formalities of the occasion were got under way with confessions which were held in a separate room for those who wished to attend. Mass followed and the extent to which the station was a village event was underlined in the sermon which was on the theme of 'neighbourliness' and the need to be on good terms with one's neighbours. Those who were not on good terms should try to improve their relations.[1] After Mass, prayers were said for the deceased members of the village, people of whom it was said "may not have had any other form of Mass, but this one", a veiled reference to Penal days and secret Masses said to confound the laws.

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[1] Reference to disputants who were living in the station area.

After Mass, the priest moved to a private room for drinks and food while the people were given tea and sandwiches and a variety of cakes and pastries. After a short period, the priest returned and his imminent departure was announced. Before this took place, however, the oldest inhabitant of the village sang about the great beauties and virtues of the village.

On the priest's leaving drinks, beer and whiskey were served to all and the affair began to take on more of the appearance of a party. People were called on for songs, poems, and generally to perform. Here it is interesting to examine who did what. The householders were the leading actors in all activities. They played the part of the good host with sophistication, enquiring if everyone had enough. Serving the food was largely women's work and a friend of the host's family who was present assisted as did also many of the other village women. In the end, most people sang, though some only after long admonition. The songs seemed to be of a nostalgic nature, praising times past and life in the country. They were recorded by the householder's daughter in the belief that many of the older people might well have passed on when this family's turn to hold the station had come again.

As the station progressed, one could see that the gathering was breaking down into loose groupings: women; a few separate groups of men; and a man and woman who were generally regarded in the village as being somewhat forward, lacking in respect for common rules and prone to gossip. Both were regarded as 'characters' in a half mocking, half affectionate tone.

The conversation of these latter clearly articulated the thoughts and the doubts of many of those present. They added "yes, certainly the day had been a great success....People were impressed, but there had been equally successful stations in ordinary houses".

During the station, villagers had begun to wonder about stations held in their own houses and indeed how past stations had compared to this one. After mid-day, people gradually began to move off. It was generally expected that friends of the family from town would visit later in the evening and that they should be given an opportunity to prepare for them. In less than an hour, villagers had changed into their everyday clothes and were in the middle of an ordinary day.

This particular station was discussed in the villages for weeks afterwards. It was generally seen as a most successful day. It had of course set new standards. Later stations would be compared with it. Two factors above all had impressed; first, the style in which the event had been handled. All the family were seen to have been efficient hosts and performers. Secondly, they had also proved to be on very good standing with the priest. People and women in particular, spoke of the fine house and how well it was ordered, with reaction varying from praise to envy. Women looking ahead to their stations and assessing their houses found the comparison unfavourable.

The Station's effect on the Villages.

The station is outwardly a religious event, mass being said in a house and neighbours attending. However, the station must be seen in a wider context. Attitudes towards having the station in one's home vary. Most people feel that it is "nice" to have Mass said in the house, but many see it as a source of unwelcome trouble. This is so because the station is a status event, being the day when the host's family exposes itself to its neighbours for critical assessment. Thus,as we have seen, the station usually triggers off a period of house improvement, cleaning, etc. It is a period more than anything else when people's housing conditions are fully assessed.

For those who live on their own, often in older houses, it is a reminder of the poor state of their dwellings. Yet pride will not allow them to refuse the station, an act which would be viewed as publicly admitting to the existence of these conditions. Yet the hopelessness of their position, the impossibility of making improvements, makes them more and more nervous as the day of the station approaches. A man who was in any case somewhat unstable found that he was unable to work when he thought of his position and in conversation with the fieldworker, sought reassurance, stating that "I will clean and sweep the house and what more can I do?" Others in this position, less sensitive to neighbours' opinions, adopt an attitude of disregard and operate on the basis that this is the way things are anyway.

The station provides information for local comparisons. This largely focuses on the quality and state of the house, but also extends to the food offered. The station also brings together, on two occasions each year, the people of a village and as such, it is unique, allowing for the ritual recognition and outward praise of the "locality". It captures in a confined geographical area local significant people and gives them an opportunity to assess their local world. It succeeds in overcoming the barriers of household privacy. The station is the occasion for display and comparison, for criticism and pity, as the modern and clean house is taken as an indicator, not only of prosperity, but of ability to successfully keep in touch with the "modern" world. It is also of course a reminder to others of their "backward" conditions.

The account of relationships in the village given here is in many ways similar to reports on peasant societies from very different parts of the world. The classic statement is of course to be found in Lewis's restudy of Tepoztlan[1], which emphasises the "underlying individualism" of Tepoztlan's institutions and character, the lack of co-operation, the tensions between villages in the Municipio, the schisms within the villages, and the pervading quality of fear, envy and distrust in interpersonal relations. Foster, after examining the literature of interpersonal relations in peasant society, concludes that:

> the list of examples could be extended but the point should be clear; peasant society can hardly be said to have a Rousseauian quality.... an objective appraisal of a peasant village, however fond the anthropologist may be of his people, will in all likelihood reveal strains and tensions in interpersonal relations that make it difficult to understand how the community continues to function. 2

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1 Lewis, O., Life in a Mexican Village, Tepoztlan Restudied, University of Illinois Press, Illinois, 1951.

2 Foster, G.,'Interpersonal Relations in Peasant Society,'Human Organization, Vol. 19, pp.174-178, 1961. See also comment by Lewis, O., Some of my best friends are peasants, and Pitt, R.'Interpersonal Relations in Peasant Society,'.A Commentin that volume.

Foster explains the poor quality of interpersonal relations in terms of the cognitive orientation of peasants developing the notion of 'limited'. By the image of limited good, Foster means that broad areas of peasant behaviour "are patterned in such fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes - their total environment - as one in which all of the desired things of life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honour, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply, as far as the peasant is concerned".[1]

"Not only do these and all other good things exist in finite and limited quantities, but, in addition, there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities. It is as if the obvious fact of land shortage in a densely populated area applied to all other desired things: not enough to go around. "Good, like land, is seen as inherent in nature, there to be divided and re-divided, if necessary, but not to be augmented". This cognitive orientation comes to have an existence of its own and may produce behaviour which is not appropriate to the changing conditions of life which the peasant has not yet grasped.

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[1] Foster, G. 'Peasant Society and The Image of the Limited Good', American Anthropologist, Vol. 67, 1965, pp.293-315. See for comment; Bennett, J.W., 'Further remarks on Foster's image of limited good.' American Anthropologist, Vol. 68, 1966, pp.206-210. Honigmann, J.J., 'Interpersonal relations in atomistic communities'. Human Organization, Vol. 27, 1968, pp.220-229. Kaplan, D., and Saler, B.,'Foster's image of limited good; an example of anthropological explanation.' American Anthropologist, Vol. 68, 1966, pp.202-206.

Banfield has also put forward a dominant norm or principle to explain the self interest of families in Southern Italy - a moral familism - which can be summarized as the tendency to maximise the short run advantages of the nuclear family: assuming that others will do the same..[1] The behaviour observed in the villages might well be fitted to an explanation such as that offered by Banfield or Foster. However, the cognitive orientation or familism, to which these writers refer, seems less proximate an explanation than the historical and contemporary conditions in which those observed attempted to live their lives.

The nature and types of social relations in the villages is firstly the product of economic organization. Individual or family ownership and efforts to expand generates in the village setting, an atmosphere of suspicion and fear. The relations examined here are the outcome of strategies adopted to come to terms with real and ongoing conflict of interests.

In the villages, in many ways, the pie is limited. While this is particularly true as regards land, it also holds for other "goods" such as off-farm employment or income from tourists. In the absence of any national or regional policy to foster and encourage the co-operative use of resources, it is not surprising that these resources are competed for, and that suspicion, envy and jealousy should be a major component of village social relationships.

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[1] Banfield, E.C. The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, Glencoe, Free Press, 1958.

In the course of our analysis, we have seen there has not been enough land in the villages to satisfy demands. Thus, in the nineteenth century, tenants had to compete with other tenants for rented land. While the move to owner-occupancy may have conferred some security on a limited number of families, farms remained small. Families had still to compete with each other for the limited amount of land available for renting. Families who were eager to purchase additional land could only do so when another family was willing to sell or, more usually, when their circumstances forced them to do so.

In some of the villages, the existence of 'the estate' had been the source of hope for additional land. For long, the villagers were united in their ambition to have this estate divided, but their agitation and their approaches to the Land Commission went unheeded, as the land was sold intact on six occasions to outsiders. Eventually, as we noted in a previous chapter, a local family, the Sheridans, secretly purchased a large portion of 'the estate' from its present owner.

While most villages were aware that this move was underhand and against their interests, unified protest or action did not follow. We observed that this could be explained by the fact that the purchaser always had the latest and most sophisticated machinery and that there were few people who had not used, or would not need, his services.

As we noted previously, ways of making a living other than from the land are limited in the villages. There are few non-farm jobs in the town or immediate locality and it is not to be wondered at that villagers should fear and envy each other as they compete for the few positions that become available, or for the patronage of those who are influential in deciding who should get these jobs. Again, tourism and boating are an important source of income, but for a few short periods there are more boatmen than visiting anglers anxious to hire their services.

Two further questions can be raised at this point. Firstly, are the types of relations described peculiar to the villages? Evidence from the few recent studies of similar areas in the West of Ireland suggest that they are not. Thus Hannan's[1] work in Roscommon, and Brody's material on a number of parishes in the West of Ireland, tends to concur with this account. For example, Brody writes that "social and economic separation between households with its emphasis on privacy has created a great deal of suspicion".[2]

Secondly, to what extent are the types and character of relationship described 'new' to the villages? Or, put another way, to what extent is isolation and competition 'worse' now than in the past? This is indeed a difficult question to answer satisfactorily because of the difficulty of establishing a reliable baseline from which to assess change. Certainly while this researcher was surprised at the extent of tension and jealousy between families and particularly the degree of conflict over land, most villagers were adamant that such conflicts and tensions had decreased rather than increased in recent years.

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1 Hannan, D., 'Kinship, Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish Rural Communities,' Economic and Social Review, Vol.2, 1972, pp.163-188.

2 Brody, H., Inishkillane, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1973, p.151.

Arensberg and Kimball's account tends to emphasise consensus and ignore conflicts and tensions and as such, is not a useful baseline. Literary sources would further seem to suggest that the tensions, conflicts and competition described were also present in the early decades of this century, but the degree of household isolation and privacy may not have been so marked.[1]

In the next two chapters, we are concerned with family structure and relationships. In chapter eight, we break the continuity of the case study in order to place these issues in their historical context. Chapter nine deals with issues of family structure and relationships in the villages today.

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1. Kavanagh, P., The Green Fool, London, Penguin Books, 1971.
O'Donnell, P., Adrigoole, London, Cape, 1929.
_____, The Big Windows, London, Cape, 1955.
O'Flaherty, L., The House of Gold, London, Jonathan Cape, 1929.
_____, Land, London, Gollancz, 1946.
_____, Spring Sowing, London, Jonathan Cape, 1924.

Chapter 8.

Family, Household and Land: An Historical Treatment.

> And since, on the family farm which has no no recourse to hired labour, the labour force pool, its composition and degree of labour activity are entirely determined by family composition and size, we must accept family make-up as one of the chief factors in peasant farm organization. 1

This quotation from Chayanov draws attention to the special feature of the rural family, its role in agricultural activities and its ties with the farm. Before going on to consider family and household structure in the villages, I feel that it would be useful to consider firstly some of the existing writing on Irish rural family structure and to explore in particular issues that can be examined in some detail in a later chapter.

Two series of writings on Irish rural family structure have received most attention, those from the pen of the social historian, K.H. Connell, and those of the American anthropological team, Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball. The anthropological account describes the working of the stem family in rural Ireland in the nineteen thirties; Connell traces the emergence of this system.

Connell's writings can be divided into two sections: pre-famine marriage and family structure, and post-famine marriage and family structure. Connell has contended that a trend toward early marriage began in Ireland in the late eighteenth century, a trend which reached its peak during the three decades 1790 to 1820.

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1 Chayanov, A.V. The Theory of Peasant Economy, ed. and introd. by Thorner, D., et al., Homewood. Illinois, 1966 p.53.

This contention is the key part of his attempt to measure the extent and to explain the rapid growth of population from the mid-eighteenth century. Connell attributed the population growth to a rise in the birth rate which he linked to a trend towards earlier marriage.

In Connell's analysis, early marriage was facilitated by a transition from pasture to tillage, by a potato diet, and by subdivision and sub-letting of holdings.[1]

If the major obstacle to marriage in pastoral societies is the difficulty of acquiring capital with which one can buy a settlement and support a family, then such a difficulty was not present in early nineteenth century Ireland. In the tillage economy, as it then operated, Connell argues that:

> the capital-less man of twenty, able to grow potatoes and subsist on them, could survive almost as well as his father who commanded the family store of capital. 2

Connell also suggested that early marriage was encouraged by the poor, indeed hopeless, condition of the peasantry and by the breakdown of the old gaelic society. This response discouraged planning and saving and encouraged improvidence and the urge to marry at will.

There is no accurate statistical information available to support this thesis of early marriage and Connell's case rests largely on the literary evidence of contemporary observers. The literature of the period contains many statements which would appear to give unqualified support.

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1 See chapter I for description of the tillage economy.

2 Connell, K.H., The Population of Ireland 1750-1845, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950, p.72.

For example, Wakefield, author of a reliable survey published in 1812 stated that:

> potatoes form the principal food of the people, which in consequence of their being raised at a small nominal expense, encourage marriage as the people consider a family secure of subsistence. 1

Rawson wrote in 1807 that an:

> unmarried man of twenty five or a woman at twenty, is rarely to be met in the country parts. 2

Townsend writing of Ireland in 1815 added that:

> here marriage is delayed by no want, except sometimes the want of money to purchase a licence. 3

Witnesses who came before the poor inquiry of 1836, on the whole would appear to support Connell. Thus a Kerry priest told of how he had married girls of twelve to thirteen and at this moment, there is a married woman in Templomore who has just had a child at the age of fourteen![4]

Drake has questioned the reliability of these non-statistical sources and doubts that there was a trend towards earlier marriage and has attempted to account for the population explosion by arguing that:

> a highly nutritious and regular diet of potatoes so improved the health of Irish women that their fecundity increased markedly and that the universal acceptance of the potato as a stable food would lead to a once and for all drop in the general level of mortality. 5

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1 Wakefield, E., An Account of Ireland: Statistical and Political, Vol. II, London, 1812, p.690.

2 Rawson, T.J., Statistical Survey of the County Kildare, Dublin, 1807, p.23.

3 Townsend, H., A General and Statistical Survey of the County of Cork. Vol. I, Cork, 1815, p.95.

4 Report of the Poor Inquiry Commission, 1836, Quoted in Connell, K.H. Op.cit,.p.52.

5 Drake, M., 'Marriage and Population Growth in Ireland' 1750-1845. Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol.XVI, 1963, pp.301-313.

While the debate over the causes of the population increase is complicated and as yet unresolved, one of the issues, that of the early marrying peasantry, may well have been clouded by the lack of attention paid to class differences in marriage patterns. There is evidence that suggests that labourers married earlier than other categories of rural dwellers. In fact, most Poor Inquiry witnesses emphasized that labourers married earlier than others:

In Kilkenny:

> those who are a grade above the cottier are more cautious as to marrying at an early age. 1

or

> small occupiers are generally not so reckless in marrying as labourers. 2

Or in Portnehinch:

> the labourers marry under the feeling that they cannot be in a worse situation, but this is seldom the case with the small farmers' sons, whose situation is generally not so desperate. 3

As Lee perceptively notes:

> by lumping labourers and farmers together under the obfuscatory term "peasant", Connell obscures important differences in the attitudes of the two classes to marriage. 4

This error, as we shall see later has further consequences for Connell in his efforts to explain the mercenary character of marriage in post-Famine Ireland.

Apart from the issue of marriage patterns, we remain in the dark about most issues of pre-famine family structure.

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1 Report Poor Inquiry Commission. Quoted in Lee, J., Marriage and Population in Pre-Famine Ireland. Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol.XXI, 1968, p.284.

2 Poor Inquiry, in Lee, J., Ibid, p.284.

3 Poor Inquiry quoted in Lee, J., Ibid, p.284.

4 Lee, J., Ibid., p.284.

Carney has recently presented some material on the size and composition of households in five counties in 1821, based on data drawn from a one-in-six random systematic sample of all the surviving manuscripts of the 1821 census. Irish households in 1821 were significantly larger than English households with a mean houseful size (total number of inhabitants in each house) of 5.7 The sample for Galway, a Western county exhibited the greatest mean houseful size (all members of a household related directly or indirectly, plus their servants), and family size (all members of a household related by blood or by marriage).

Table 22
Mean Houseful , Household and Family Size in 1821.

Measure	Cavan	Meath	Fermanagh	King's	Galway	Weighted Mean	Mean of Means
Mean houseful size	5.69	5.45	5.82	5.68	5.86	5.68	5.70
Mean Household size	5.54	5.26	5.49	5.34	5.60	5.45	5.45
Mean family size	5.13	4.86	4.97	4.94	5.25	5.05	5.03
Mean number of servants	0.40	0.40	0.52	0.40	0.35	0.40	0.41
Mean number of inmates	0.15	0.19	0.33	0.34	0.26	0.23	0.25
N	857	528	271	501	506	2663	-

1 Carney, F.J., 'Aspects of Pre-Famine Irish Household Size: Composition and Differentials'. Unpublished Paper, p.6.

Carney has also examined household, houseful, and family size by the age of the household head. The largest households were headed by persons aged 45 to 54 years, the smallest where the head of the household was less than 24 years of age.

Table 23[1]

Mean Houseful., Household and Family Size by Household Head in Ireland in 1821.

Measure	.24	25.34	35.44	45.54	55.64	65+
Mean houseful size	3.60	4.80	6.20	6.31	5.74	5.38
Mean household size	3.35	4.65	5.97	6.02	5.49	5.16
Mean family size	3.09	4.25	5.46	5.70	5.13	4.66
Mean number of servants	0.27	0.40	0.51	0.32	0.36	0.49
Mean number of inmates	0.25	0.15	0.24	0.29	0.25	0.22
N	93	565	672	627	469	237

A picture emerges of a high growth rate of households headed by persons 20 to 30 years, the peak being reached by the time the household has reached 50. Carney also notes that:

> households seem to take on servants fairly rapidly over the family.formation period, say from ages around 25 to 40...when the children were young, the family took on servants but as more children reached adulthood....servants are quickly sloughed off for about a ten year interval. Then there is a build-up in the number of servants residing...

[1] Ibid., p.11.

> as the household head reaches 60. Servants seem then to be a substitute for young children earlier in the family cycle; later...children seem again to be substitutes but this time for departing children who have now reached adulthood. 1

Carney's analysis in this fine paper does not relate household size to the various sub-groups in the agricultural population. Evidence of a more impressionistic order would seem to suggest that, for the labouring and cottier classes at least, the household unit was the nuclear family of husband, wife and children. A visitor to one of these cabins recalled that at night:

> The floor is thickly strewn with fresh rushes and stripping themselves entirely, the whole family lie down at once and together, covering themselves with blankets if they have them, if not, with their day clothing, but they lie down decently and in order, the eldest daughter next the wall, farthest from the door, then all the sisters according to their ages, next the mother, father and sons in succession, and then the strangers, whether the travelling pedlar or tailor or beggar; thus the strangers are kept aloof from the female part of the family and if there is apparent community, there is great propriety of conduct. 2

The same visitor recalled that at meal time, the whole family ate together, the father and mother sitting on turf creels, the children sitting on the floor.[3]

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1 Carney, F.J., Op.cit., p.41-42.
Berkner commenting on peasant households in Austria in the 18th century writes that the "servants' main function in the peasant household was as a labour substitute for children". Berkner, L.K., 'The Stem Family and the Developmental Cycle of the Peasant Household: An eighteenth century Austrian example.' American Historical Review. VolLXXVII, 1972, p.413.

2 Maxwell, C., Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges. Dundalk, Dundalgan Press, 1949, p.124.

3 Maxwell, C., Op.cit., p.125.

A rigid division of labour between the sexes does not appear to have existed. Husband and wife worked together in the fields, and there were few if any activities closed to women. In many cases, women were the bread winners. One report notes that:

> very often the male part of the family lies frequently in bed during the day, the wife or daughter perhaps goes around and begs about the neighbourhood for some potatoes, which she brings home...The male lies down on a little straw on the floor and remaining there, nearly motionless all day, gets up in the evening, eats a few potatoes and then throws himself upon the earth where he remains till morning. 1

Indeed, besides sharing the farm work, the wives and daughters of small farmers and cottiers were also heavily involved in domestic industry, particularly in the making of cloth. In the Western part of Ireland, the knitting of coarse stocking was important, while in the North East women were involved in the linen industry. Domestic industry was in the first instance a response to domestic needs but:

> increasingly as the eighteenth century wore on, the manufacture of cloth or embroidery was for sale and its returns were necessary to meet inflated rent demands. 2

Post-Famine Family and Marriage Structure.

Accounts of post-Famine family and marriage structure have focussed on the related issues of the decreasing number of marriages, the increasing age of the people who did marry and the calculating manner in which marriage was entered and family life conducted in rural Ireland.

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1 Select Committee on the State of Ireland, 1825, pp.205-208.

2 O'Tuathaig, G.,'The Role of Women in Ireland under the New English Order'. Unpublished Thomas Davis Lecture, pp.3-4.

Most of the historiographical writing on these topics has come from K.H. Connell, while the main anthropological account is Arensberg and Kimball's Family and Community in Ireland. Connell has contended that before the famine:

> When a peasant's children had normally settled near their home, they had married whom they pleased, when they pleased.... But by the end of the century, this uninhibited, indiscriminate marriage proved no longer lived than the improvidence that underlay it.. by the end of the century, the marriage which united peasant son with peasant daughter was by intent as much an economic as a biological institution. 1

In these terms, if in pre-Famine Ireland land had been subordinated to people, in post-Famine Ireland people were subordinated to land. Marriage now existed to ensure the continuity of the farm and to provide the labour to work the farm. One son inherited the farm intact and one daughter married into a neighbouring farm. Connell is in fact writing of the emergence of a stem family system.[2]

Marriage was thus:

> part of the mechanism that perpetuated the rural economy...it established on a particular farm the nucleus of the labour that would run it, accidents apart for a generation. Marriage was likely to be contemplated, not when a man needed a wife, but when the land needed a woman. 3

Marriage then depended on the ownership of property or, more accurately, on being in favour with the property owner. As such, it was arranged by parents, using the devices of the matchmaker and the dowry.

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1 Connell, K.H.,'The land legislation and Irish social life', Economic History Review, Second series, Vol.XI, 1958, p.5.

2 "A three generational structure which functioned to retain its original location by means of dispersing younger members, while preserving the main family stem by a principle of single inheritance". Curtin, C. and Gibbon, P. "The Stem Family in Ireland", Forthcoming edition of Comparative Studies in Society and History, p.1.

3 Connell, K.H. 'Peasant marriage in Ireland: Its structure and development since the famine', Economic History Review, Vol.XIV, 1962, p.503.

The dowry was sometimes used to discharge debts in the boy's family, but its commonest use:

> was to provide for one or more of the groom's brothers or sisters. 1

The success of "the match" was judged in its production of children, ensuring a future labour force and the continuity of the name on the land. Thus a daughter-in-law was wanted as a mother no less than a worker.[2]

Connell associates the emergence of the 'stem family' in Ireland to those processes which have become known in Irish economic history as the 'post-Famine adjustment'.[3] This latter involved a shift from subsistence to commercial agriculture, from tillage to livestock, from subdivision of holdings to a single successor system and from tenants to farm owners. Connell emphasises the role of the land legislation, which instilled in the peasant a pride in his property, and encouraging him to establish his name on his land. He attributes a major role in adjusting the Irish rural population to later marriages to the Church.[4]

As the match, dowry, family succession and dispersal are all present in Arensberg and Kimball's study of County Clare in the 1930's,[5] the question needs then to be asked: was the stem family system as universal as these writers imply? In the first instance Connell, by not distinguishing subcategories within the peasantry, may well have over-emphasized the post-Famine swing to late marriage.

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1 Ibid., p.507-508.

2 Ibid., p.522.

3 See chapter I for a detailed discussion.

4 Connell K.H.'Catholicism and Marriage in the Century following the Famine'in Irish Peasant Society, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968.

5 This issue are dealt with in more detail in chapter 3 as part of Arensberg and Kimball's overall orientation to Irish Rural Society.

Since early marriage in pre-Famine Ireland was, by and large, the prerogative of the labourers and cottiers, the destruction of these groups by the Great Famine may well have tended to exaggerate the swing to later marriage in the Great Famine survivors.

Arensberg and Kimball's loose use of the term "small farmer" is also a source of difficulty. A reading of Family and Community suggests that the stem family system and its "devices" was a universally valid outcome of 'small farm' culture. Yet the only quantitative evidence presented in their work, dealing with the townland of Lough, shows that none of the households were three generational and that seven were only one generational.[1]

Recent work by Curtin and Gibbon on the 1911 census returns concludes that while:

> the stem family did exist as a norm in Ireland amongst a very substantial proportion of the rural population,

it was more likely to be associated with medium rather than small farms.[2] More recent fieldwork evidence casts further doubts on the universality of the stem family as described by Arensberg and Kimball.

Symes[3] describes the parish of Ballyferriter in 1911 as having a mean household size of 8.14 persons, with twenty two percent of the households containing married sons. In Mogey's[4] survey of five districts in Ulster in 1944, the proportion of three generational households varied from five percent in Catholic areas to a maximum of eleven percent in the Protestant districts.

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1 Arensberg and Kimball, S., Op.cit., p.121.

2 Curtin and Gibbon, Op.cit., p.18.

3 Symes, D.G., 'Farm Household and Farm Performance: A study of twentieth-century change in Ballyferriter, South West Ireland'. Ethnology, Vol.11, 1972.

4 Mogey, J.M., Rural Life in Northern Ireland, London, Oxford University Press, 1947.

McNabb's fieldwork in Limerick in the 1950's found no significant number of three generational households. Rather he writes that the:

> ideal is the conjugal family. 1.

Hugh Brody's Inishkillane also gives the impression that few of the households in the area studies were three generational.[2]

Arensberg and Kimball's account of inheritance survives comparison better than their account of generational structure, yet exceptions and modifications have been reported. Mogey's[3] work refers to subdivision still being the norm in parts of Tyrone, while Fox has described a bilateral inheritance system on Tory Island.[4] The impression gleaned is of no fixed pattern of inheritance in rural Ireland.

On succession and dispersal, fieldwork accounts indicate multiple rather than common patterns. Symes' study of Kerry in 1911 indicates that the marriage of children and the co-residence of their spouses regularly took place before the "old couple" died or reached the age grade of death. Succession did not always follow marriage.[5] In Mogey's account of Ulster, while three generational households did exist, the norm and the ideal was for the retiring parents to move out of the house traditionally attached to the family land.[6]

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1 McNabb, P. The Limerick Rural Survey, ed. by Newman, J, Muintir na Tire, Limerick, p.188

2 Brody, H. Inishkillane, London, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, pp.86-87.

3 Mogey, J.M. Op.cit., p.15.

4 Fox, J.R. 'Tory Island' in Benedict, B. Problems of Small Territories. London, 1967.

5 Symes, D.G., Op.cit., pp. 25-38.

6 Mogey, J.M. Op.cit., pp.108-109.

In rural Limerick in the 1950's, it would appear that generational succession did not take place until after the death of the old couple. On the father's death, the farm management passed to his wife and it was only when she died that a son took over.[1]

On the issues of generational structure, farm inheritance and succession, the fieldwork evidence is of such a nature as to cast some doubts about the universality of the norms of family arrangements described, both by Connell and Arensberg and Kimball.

So much then for the nature of the arrangements which established the farm family and secured its continued existence. What of the internal workings of the family? Here again the principal accounts are those of Connell and Arensberg and Kimball, the latter providing the most detailed description of Irish rural family interaction. Later field studies that have paid attention to this topic tend to concur with the Americans' account. This is true for example of McNabb's discussion of family life in the Limerick Rural Survey,[2] or of Humphreys' discussion on the rural family in New Dubliners. Indeed Humphreys writing in 1966 stated:

> to that moment transformations in the rural community had been relatively slow and small and the countryman's family retained the essential features that Arensberg and Kimball so ably described and analysed. 3

More recent works, also accepting without question Arensberg and Kimball's description and analysis have attempted to register changes in family interaction.

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1 McNabb, P. Op.cit., p.227.

2 McNabb, P., Op.cit., pp.222-247.

3 Humphreys, A.J. New Dubliners, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, pp.11-39.

Thus Streib examines changes in the nature of intergenerational relations[1,2] and filial bonds.[3] Brody[4] in Inishkillane writes of the decline of patriarchialism in West of Ireland families. Hannan on the basis of a sophisticated survey of 408 families, on farms varying from size 10 to over 100 acres concludes that:

> only a small proportion of present day farm families, certainly less than one third, conform in their structure to the traditional model first proposed by Arensberg and Kimball. In fact, no dominant model now appears to exist. 5

What, therefore is the core of Arensberg and Kimball's account of family life and how accurate and representative is it? This is how George Homans adopted the account for his book, The Human Group.

> The room is low and rectangular. The left wall is filled by a door, closed, and a big stone fireplace, fitted for cooking. Against the back wall a table stands, and to the right of the table a coloured picture hangs over a cabinet containing a small figure. The right wall is taken up by a dresser, full of kitchen gear and crockery, on one side of which is a door, and on the other, a staircase leading upstairs. Through a window over the table a yard, with a cart in it is seen in a dim light. A woman opens the door, right, and comes into the room. She goes to the fireplace, rakes together the ashes on the hearth, some of them still alive, puts on new fuel, and re-kindles the blaze. Then she fills a kettle with water and hangs it on a hook over the fire. When it boils, she makes tea; meanwhile she lays out dishes, cutlery, bread, and milk on the table, and gets ready to cook eggs.

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1 Streib, G.F. 'Old age in Ireland: Demographic and Sociological Aspects'. The Gerontologist, vol. 8, Winter 1968, pp. 227-237.

2 _____, 'Farmers and Urbanites: Attitudes Towards Intergenerational Relations in Ireland.' Rural Sociology, Vol.35, No. I, 1970, pp.26-39.

3 _____, 'Migration and Filial Bonds: Attitudes of Cork farmers and Dublin men.' Irish Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Vol. 3, No.I, 1970, pp.61-73.

4 Brody, H., Op.cit., pp.109-130.

5 Hannan, D.F., and Katsiaouni, L. A., Traditional Families?, Dublin, The Economic and Social Research Institute, 1977, p. 9.

> A middle-aged man and two younger ones enter, exchange a few words with the woman, pulls up a chair sits down at the table, and begins to eat. The woman herself does not sit, but stands by, ready to bring up more food, and drink if the men ask for them. When the men have eaten, the older one says to the younger ones, "Well, we'd better to off". They go out.
>
> By this time a girl has joined the woman in the room, but not until the men have left do the two sit down for their meal. Before they have finished, crying is heard outside, right. The woman leaves and later returns carrying a young child in her arms. She fondles and comforts it, then feeds it in its turn. She turns to the girl, who is already washing the dishes, with a remark about making butter. 1

As Higgins has commented on this passage:

> the imagery is clear: the family, a microcosm of the larger society, is an institution which neatly allocates roles and tasks on the basis of age and sex. 2

Hannan writing on what he calls Arensberg and Kimball's model of family life states:

> the model that emerges from their study was one of a rigidly defined division of labour within the farm family and a dominant patriarchal and rather severe authority system. The internal emotional life was one where feelings were not usually openly articulated and were frequently repressed. The position of the father was presented as that of a severe, "distant", authority figure. The position of the mother was presented as a role which was both warmly supportive and one which played a central role in handling and working out tensions within the family. 3

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1 Homans, G., The Human Group, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1950, p.39.

2 Higgins, M.D., 'Liam O'Flaherty and Peader O'Donnell : Images of rural community'. The location of some issues in the sociology of literature,' paper read at a University of Hull Symposium on Sociology on Sociology and Literature. January, 26th, 1977, p.12.

3 Hannan, D., Op.cit., p.1.

Thus, true to its theroetical guidelines, Arensberg and Kimball's account is of men and women submerged by norms, of actors having defined statuses. There is no question of individuals being faced with a choice between norms. Tension has been removed from everyday life.

It is of course difficult to test the accuracy of this account, but another source of evidence does exist: the accounts of family life in the contemporary literature, and particularly the works of Peadar O'Donnell and Liam O'Flaherty. A rather different and more complex picture emerges from their pens. Here we select a number of issues also written on by Arensberg and Kimball.

In O'Flaherty's story The Painted Woman,[1] we are introduced to two brothers, Martin and Patrick Bruty. Both are in their late thirties and unmarried. Their parents have died without making a will and they are waiting for someone to "make the first move", i.e. get married. When Patrick, the younger brother decides to make the move, the tension between the brothers emerges in the dialogue. Patrick states that:

> these three years since mother died, are worse than all the hardship ever in my life. A house without a woman is worse than hell. 2

Later he adds:

> I have wasted the best years of my life, each of us watching the other. You always had a sour mouth whenever I thought of a woman, but I'll wait no longer. 3

To which Martin replies:

> Marry her then; marry her, but I'll stay here. This is my father's house. You cannot put me out of it. 4

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1 O'Flaherty, L., Spring Sowing, London, Jonathan Cape, 1924, pp.9-49.

2 Ibid., p.16.

3 Ibid., p.20.

4 Ibid., p.20.

Before the marriage takes place, a reluctant settlement is made by the brothers, Patrick taking possession of the house and land, Martin the household savings and retaining a room in the house.

After the marriage takes place, the tension between the brothers continues and eventually the woman takes over the running of house and land.

> It was she who treated with neighbours
> about cases of trespass and she who paid
> the rent and rates that came due in Summer. 1

Eventually neither of the brothers pay any attention to her. Consumed with jealousy and hatred:

> they watched each other ceaselessly.
> Their eyes became fixed. 2

In a dramatic ending they seek to murder each other on a boat and are both drowned in the attempt.

This is not an account of men following traditional norms but of a fierce struggle to assert one's individual power. Gibbon has written on the theme of patriarchialism:

> Almost every serious novel on Irish rural life during the last fifty years has dealt with a father/son or father/daughter conflict. Even before this date, the theme was immortalized in J.M. Synge's Playboy of the Western World (1906), which depicts both an attempted patricide and, more significantly, the feting of the attempted murderer by a West of Ireland community...Synge was able to defend its realism by referring to two contemporary actual cases of patricide (in Aran and Lynchehaun) where the murderers escaped through the collusion of neighbours. 3

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1 O'Flaherty, L., Ibid., p.42.

2 _____, Ibid., p.42.

3 Gibbon, P. 'Arensberg and Kimball Revisited', Economy and Society, Vol.2, No.4, 1973, p.490.

Peader O'Donnell in The Big Windows, constructs the first mornings conversation with the mother-in-law of a young island woman who has married into the glen.

> Up by the Loch, there was one house alone, away from the others, its soot-marked gable towards them. She sauntered along the side of the house, and a woman driving a cow raised her head. She was big with child, her face strangely small and in-drawn, so that her eyes seemed too large for it. For a moment, they stared, and then the woman raised her elbows and prodding the air with them, walked away and a young woman by a haggard, noticing her rid her throat angrily and her elbows went up too and she walked quickly. Mary came up breathless. 'Did I not say to you, Bridget, to take a rest in the morning?" "I had to go over to our Peggy. Peggy is nailed to the bed with pains in her back. I had to milk for her". "Looks like the daylight makes no difference to them, Mary. Look at them, with their elbows out, putting you in mind of nothing so much as hatching sea-gulls, trailing their wings in anger. 1

The imagery is clear. It is of a woman moving into a community where she finds herself in fear, under suspicion and jealousy.

Indeed in the contemporary literature peasant women appear as strong and assertive rather than weak and submissive. In The Knife,[2] set in the Lagan Valley, Nuala emerges as a forceful character in the local community, while in The Big Windows, O'Donnell focuses on the successful attempt by the island woman to bring something of her own - The Big Windows - to the glen and the consequences of this act. In Islanders,[3] the dying Mrs. Duggan mutters:

> what was I saying? She said, strugging to concentrate. Sure I saw the hens finish their feed myself. Don't let the black cow get a shower of rain. She continued after a pause 'an it is her first day out'. An' it must be time to give the calf her drink....

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1 O'Donnell, P., The Big Windows, London, Jonathan Cape, 1955, The setting for the book is rural Ireland in the 1930's.

2 O'Donnell, P., The Knife, London, Jonathan Cape, 1930.

3 O'Donnell, P., Islanders, London, Cape, 1928.

There is little of Arensberg and Kimball's rigid division of labour in these accounts. This can also be said of The Island Man, Thomas O Crohan's account of his life on the Blaskets, an island off the Kerry coast, in the first three decades of the twentieth century. This book testifies to the hard physical work undertaken by the island's women:

> There were no asses on the island in those days, only a creel on the back of every man and every women too. 1

and later he recalls that:

> His mother took home six creels of turf before he woke up. 2

Within his family, while "his father tailored his breaches", his sisters "were up to their bellies unloading boats".[3]

Women were not only active in the home, but outside it. They were involved in the buying and selling of fish.

> In those days, there were always women called huxters on the quay. Their business was to buy and sell fish and they made their living out of it. 4

In summary then, while there is considerable evidence to suggest that a trend towards earlier marriage emerged in Ireland in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the trend was undoubtedly associated with particular socio-economic groups - labourers, cottiers and small-holders - rather than with the rural population as a whole. As labourers, cottiers, and smallholders were more prominent in the West of Ireland, early marriages were more numerous there than in other parts of the country.

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1 O Crohan, T., The Island Man, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951, p.3.
2 Ibid., p.3.
3 Ibid., p.67.
4 Ibid., p.89.

The available evidence also suggests that for these lower ordors at least, the common household arrangement was the nuclear family and that in such households, a rigid division of labour between the sexes did not exist.

In post-Famine Ireland, there was a movement both towards fewer marriages and a rise in the age of those who actually married. However, this trend did not represent an entirely new mentality in the rural population, but rather can be accounted for by the shift in the rural class structure and particularly the destruction during the years of The Great Famine of the socio-economic groups most associated with early marriage. In parts of the West of Ireland, where the pre-Famine economy was not entirely shattered, pre-Famine marriage patterns continued for a short period.

Again, while post-Famine Ireland undoubtedly possessed a stem family system, it was not, as Connell suggests, 'common to the peasantry as a whole' or, as Arensberg and Kimball maintain, 'associated with a small economy and culture'. Rather, it appears to have been associated within a particular economic strata, medium size land holders involved in a form of petty commodity production

It was never the norm for example, in areas such as Co. Mayo, an area with large numbers of smallholders. While there was a definite set of practices within the stem family, i.e. generational structure, inheritance, succession and dispersal, the nature and the extent of these practices varied considerably from region to region. Again, the rigid division of labour between the sexes in the rural family may well have been more common on the medium and larger holdings.

While it is true that events in post-Famine Ireland, particularly the movement to owner-occupancy,favoured the emergence of a patriarchal family structure, the evidence suggests that the father's powers were not only questioned, but often resisted. Indeed ownership of land did give the father a large degee of power, but this held true for medium and larger farms rather than for small ones, on which sons could see very little future for themselves.

In Family and Community in Ireland, we are told only of ideal or typical aspects of family life, role structure, and interaction. The extent of variation around these typifications is not suggested. Clearly, the account is accurate in some respects and for some households. But to accept it in its entirety and thereby uncritically use it as a baseline for assessing present day farm family structure and interaction is in the circumstances unwarranted.

In the following chapter, we examine issues, ignored by Arensberg and Kimball, but adverted to in this chapter. Such issues in the villages are examined against a wider historical and economic range of processes rather than against a partial and indeed, selective view chosen for theoretical purpose by the functionalist authors to which we have referred so often.

Chapter 9.

Family, Household and Land Today.

In this chapter, we examine family structure and interaction in the villages. We begin with a statistical sketch and comparison based on the completed household census schedule returns for 1911[1] and the fieldwork census, 1976. Aspects of family structure and interaction are then described, using a life cycle approach. Finally, a number of case studies of particular households are presented. These latter help to keep the reader in touch with real people as they live and work and with the content and variety of actual family life. They also may make it possible to elicit the deeper meaning of events described in this and previous chapters.

As we noted in chapter four, the village's population has been declining since the famine years. In 1841, the population was 1,484, in 1851, it was 941, in 1911, it was 302 and in 1976, it was 234. The number of inhabited households has declined from 260 in 1851 to 120 in 1911 and 85 in 1976.

The actual population loss can also be gauged by the decrease in the numbers attending the village's primary school. In 1886, not long after the school had opened, there were 159 pupils enrolled. By 1910, this figure had decreased to 101, by 1930 to 84, by 1950 to 62, and in 1976 there were thirty four pupils enrolled.

As well as the actual number of households in the villages declining, household size has also declined. In 1911, mean household size was 4.18, in 1976, it was 2.75. The number of single person households has increased, the numbers of very large households decreased.

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[1] The 1911 census is the most recent census in which the actual manuscript return are open to public inspection. It is held in the Public Records Office, Four Courts, Dublin.

Table 24

Household Size 1911-1976.

Year	Number of Persons per household.							
	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	3-4 (40%)	5-6 (15%)	7-8 (8%)	9-10 (13%)	11.12	13 and over (I%)
1911	10 (23%)	18 (29%)	48 (35%)	18 (II%)	9 (2%)	14 (I%)	___	1
1976	20	24	29	9	2	1	___	_____

Households containing 9-10 people constituted thirteen percent of all households in 1911, in 1976, there was only one such household.

In 1911, fifteen percent of households were three generational, sixty six percent two generational and nineteen percent one generational. In 1976, the corresponding figures were four percent, forty seven percent and forty nine percent. Thus while there has been a considerable drop in the number of three generational households, this can to some extent be explained by the tendency for married children to set up new households close to their parents.

Table 25

Households by Generational Depth

Year	One Generational	Two Generational	Three Generational
1911	23 (19%)	79 (66%)	18 (15%)
1976	42 (49%)	40 (47%)	3 (4%)

In 1911, twenty seven percent of household heads in the villages were females. In 1976, this figure was reduced to eleven percent.

Table 26

Sex of Household Head 1911-1976.

Year	Male	Female
1911	87 (73%)	33 (27%)
1976	76 (89%)	9 (II%)

Many of the female household heads in 1911 were widows.

Table 27

Marital Status of Household Head

Year	Married	Single	Widower	Widow
1911	65 (54%)	13 (10%)	15 (13%)	27 (23%)
1976	44 (52%)	30 (35%)	3 (4%)	8 (9%)

The age of household head has not changed dramatically since 1911.

Table 28

Age of Household Head

	Under 26	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76-85	86 -
1911	I (I%)	2 (2%)	20(17%)	26(21%)	24(20%)	33(27%)	11(9%)	3(3%)
1976	_____	7 (8%)	22(26%)	15(18%)	23(27%)	13(15%)	5(6%)	_____

Today, the most common domestic group in the villages is the nuclear family. It is both a production and consumption unit and the core of economic and social life. All work is said to be done for the family and all work is done by the family, since no labour is hired. The family is the base on which an individuals' reputation and standing is originally established. Beyond the nuclear family there is no grouping of significant importance. The extended family comes together for ceremonial occasions,births,marriagesand deathsand perhaps from time to time for limited agricultural activities.

There are three households that have a three generational structure in the villages; the estate a farm of more than 130 acres and a farm with over 70 acres. These are clearly much larger than the typical village farm which is hardly capable of supporting two families. Indeed, with the system of farming now practised, on most farms the labour of husband and wife is adequate for most purposes. Parents have little need for their children to stay on and help them run the farm until they grow old and infirm. However, had the possibility of working in the locality in an occupation other than farming presented itself, more children would certainly have remained in the villages and perhaps continued farming on a part-time basis. Those families who have succeeded in settling a son or daughter in the villages on this principle are much envied.[1]

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[1] In this context, Rosemary Harris writes that in Ballybeg "a woman who... had all her daughters not just safely, but well married locally had achieved a great deal". Harris, R. Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster. Manchester Manchester University Press, 1972, p.65.

We now move on to examine aspects of family interaction, paying attention to the role of the family in the rural economy and using the 'lifecycle' concept as an ordering device. The life cycle begins when an individual marries and continues through the stages of producing and rearing children through infancy, childhood and adolescence. As children leave, parents move into middle age, old age and the cycle ends with death.

Ideally, every individual in the villages is expected to marry and establish a family. The Church also encourages marriage and sanctifies the family as the primary unit of society. Those who do not marry are the subject of ridicule and pity and there are many unmarried people, particularly men, in the villages. Their presence can be attributed to a number of related factors. Many, awaiting economic independence, have grown old caring for elderly parents. In some cases, a few brothers have remained at home, all expecting to inherit. In the end, no will is made and all are deprived of full ownership. In addition, women have, over the years, proved unwilling to marry into smaller fragmented and poorer farms.

Many of the unmarried men in their fifties and early sixties have not given up hope of marriage and some attend dances and 'singing lounges' in what is usually a futile search for a younger partner. A few others would probably accept an arranged marriage. These latter are encouraged from time to time and particularly on the day of the station when the village bachelor(s) are ritualistically ridiculed and asked as to "when he is giving the day out".

When marriage takes place it is always in a church, usually in the bride's parish. It is attended by the family and kin of the man and woman and by selected neighbours and friends. After the religious ceremony, there is a procession of cars to a hotel for a reception and formal festivity. This latter usually consists of a dinner, followed by speeches from important family members extolling 'their side' of the new unit. Later, there is usually music and dancing, interspersed with drinking. The couple depart during the festivities, to begin the honeymoon which lasts from a week to two weeks.

The couple will return to a house which they will have built or renovated or purchased themselves. Occasionally, they may move in for a time with a widowed mother. Marriage establishes a permanent bond between husband and wife, and establishes the existence of an independent unit. The couple must begin the business of making a living. Ideally, the first domain of the man is land, the woman's domain is the household. Previous chapters testify that reality approximates to the ideal. Women work almost every day within the house, caring for home and family. Men work on the land caring for animals, sowing and reaping, buying and selling. Yet the paths of husband and wife cross on numerous instances. Moreover, a rigid division of labour on the basis of sex does not exist, or, more accurately, a fixed pattern of segregation of household and farm tasks along sexual lines does not exist. Women, though sometimes professing ignorance on agricultural matters are involved in farm activities and:

> within the agricultural labour force they form a critical reserve pool of labour. [1]

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[1] Reiter, R.R., 'Men and Women in the South of France: Public And Private Domain' in Reiter, R.R. Ed. Toward an Anthropology of Women, London, Monthly Review Press, 1975, p.270.

Though deprived of an important source of income with the decline of poultry rearing, women are coming to play an important role in the keeping of records on the farms that have begun to introduce more accurate accounting procedures. Men who act shy of household chores can also be found from time to time at most household activities.

Except for a few younger women, who have the use of cars, married women spend most of their lives in the villages. Apart from shopping trips to town and occasionally further afield and Sunday trips to Mass, most married women seldom venture far from their farmhouse and land. Man's principal domain often takes him beyond the confines of the villages but he remains aloof and independent. The division of labour is greatly influenced by presence of children, their numbers and ages.

Among the village families, the arrival of children is eagerly awaited. Children, it is often said, provide the meaning for life. Childbirth now almost always takes place in hospital. The birth of a child is often preceded by the arrival of a mother or mother-in-law who will look after the household in the absence of the 'housekeeper'. While the mother and child return home from three days to a week after the birth, the visiting relative usually stays on for a week or two while the mother is recovering.

The early care of the young child is largely in the hands of the mother who feeds and nurses it. This is ideally considered to be her sphere of responsibility but in three out of four households, where children were born while I was living in the villages, fathers were also actively involved in the child's care. The upbringing of the child, after the first weeks, is regarded as the parents' responsibility.

Kin are usually invited to the child's baptism which takes place from four to six weeks after the child's birth. Thereafter, the child will come into contact with his kin only on special occasions.

The first few years of the child's life are spent largely in his or her parents' company. In the villages, because of the proximity of households, children are in and out of neighbour's houses at an early age, particularly houses where there are other children. As such, they have access to pieces of information which they bring back to their parents. Children are trained from an early age to "be cute", and to reveal as little as possible of their parent's activities. In some of the more remote rural areas children have little contact with people other than their parents until they begin school.

In the villages this takes place between four and six years. The village school is run by two teachers and is, in recent years, in danger of closing because of the small numbers attending. Having begun school, children are regarded as having embarked on the most important aspect of their lives; in the villages, school is viewed as the key which opens the door to a wider world of opportunity. It is not expected that children will remain on the smaller farms but will rather move away to jobs in the larger urban centers. Such jobs can only be acquired through a 'good' education, the basis of which, it is believed, is built in the primary school. It is for this reason, that the activities of the primary school teachers are closely scrutinised.

Indeed the various teachers in the village school are ranked on the basis of their ability to maintain discipline and obtain results.

In the past, the yardstick of the latter was the number of pupils who were awarded County Council scholarships to prestigious secondary schools. These scholarships were eagerly sought after and were a source of envy and jealousy among neighbours. Since such scholarships no longer exist, judgment on teachers is based on the more subjective indicators of the parent's (principally the mother's) impression of how a child is progressing. There is a general belief that good results and strong discipline go hand and hand and that, for this reason, the school should always have a strict male teacher, for whom the children will "do their lessons".

While attending primary school, children also begin to play a part in the farm economy. On returning from school in the afternoon, they will join their father if he is working close by the farmhouse. As they grow older, they take on certain tasks of their own; bringing cows and calves in from the fields, or to and from water; clearing sheds and outhouses, feeding cattle, calves, cows and sheep, and milking cows. They are present for seasonal activities such as saving the hay and on school holidays they may attend the mart with their father. Girls as well as boys partake in these activities.

Between twelve and fourteen years children move to second level education. There are three second level schools in the town. A boy's school, a girl's school and a co-educational vocational school. Most parents prefer their children to attend the more academic secondary school rather than the technical school on the basis that attendance at the former is the safer road to the sought-after jobs in offices, the Civil Service and, perhaps, teaching.

Today, secondary education is free and almost all students from the village attend one of the town schools. Students more than three miles distance from a school, are taken to town by school bus, others cycle or are taken to school in care by their parents. Villagers have little control over, or knowledge of, events in the second level schools. The village primary school is staffed by local people while many of the secondary teachers commute long distances each day. In addition, the primary school is more locally and environmentally orientated. Parents share with their children the anxiety of waiting for examination results which will determine their, the children's, future careers. Good results are a source of pride to parents, particularly mothers, who pay close attention to children's schooling. Failure by a child brings stigma to all the family. Success brings prestige.

While children are attending second level educational institutions they continue to be active on the farm, perhaps taking on some heavier tasks and beginning to use machinery. Yet, in most cases, every effort is made by parents, particularly by the mothers, to ensure that farm work does not interfere with schoolwork. The exceptions here are the few large farms, particularly the 'enterprising' Sheridans, where greater emphasis appears to be placed on farm work. From schools, children usually move away to jobs or, in exceptional cases, to University. This pattern has been noticeably affected in recent years by the national unemployment crises and some students have, after completing their education, to remain at home for long periods, while applying for the few jobs that become available.

Nevertheless, there are few people between the ages of 18 and 30 in the villages.

Land is utilized by the family to provide for itself. As children leave and parents move into middle age, the family does not lose its land. All the usual tasks have to be performed and this is made possible with the aid of machinery. Children may return for weekends or holidays to assist on the farm. As they establish families of their own, return visits become less and less frequent. As parents become older, the problem of their care arises, particularly if one parent dies, leaving the other on his/her own. In these circumstances parents may urge children to return to the villages. In fact four sons have so returned in the past ten years and in three cases they moved out of their parent's house after numerous disagreements.[1] Some old people let their land and live on this source of income and state pensions.

Death is another occasion for the gathering of relatives. If an old person dies at home, the corpse is laid out in the 'good room' and neighbours and relatives visit 'to pay their respects'. Food and drink are usually provided for such visitors. In a day or two the corpse is brought to the church and later buried in the parish cemetery. Most villagers consider it their duty to visit the 'corpse house' and walk in the funeral. If death is expected, sons and daughters and perhaps brothers and sisters may return, in an effort to improve conditions in and about the house and later to discuss and dispute arrangements for 'the place' and surviving old people, if any.

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[1] See case study the Camerons in the following pages.

We can now illustrate the structures and relationships just described by examining a number of households in detail. Each household in the villages is, of course, to some extent unique as it is moulded and in turn seeks to manipulate and come to terms with events described in this and previous chapters. Households have been selected for closer study here on the basis that between them they cover a range of household types found in the villages.

The first household studied, the Camerons, consists of a returned migrant family, with children attending the village school. The second household, the Kellys, contains a middle-aged couple and one child at second level education. Five other children have either migrated or emigrated. The third household, the Morans, contains an elderly couple now living on their own. The final case study is on Padraic Jennings, an old man, living on his own.

<u>The Camerons</u>.

The household contains Joe Cameron, aged 44 years, his wife aged 40 years and their two daughters aged 9 and 11 years. The farmhouse is a new bungalow and is surrounded by modern outhouses. They own a farm of 28 acres and rent, in two separate portions, land totalling together slightly less than 50 acres.

Joe is originally from the villages and met his wife when she came to work in a hotel in the locality. Joe had twelve brothers and sisters, all of whom, except for one sister, who married into a farm in a nearby parish, emigrated at intervals to England, North America and Australia. Joe emigrated to England and, like countless Irish emigrants, he became involved in the construction industry.

From a small base of one lorry, he expanded, to employ labour and own more machinery and lorries. In conversation it becomes clear that he had made considerable profit in these operations but that neither he or his wife were happy living in England.

The call from an ageing father to come home to "look after" land and parents coincided with a slump in the English construction industry and was answered. The Camerons returned to Joe's old home but stayed there less than one year after much argument, over the running of the farm and other issues, with the 'old couple'. They went back to England but had decided to return to the villages if the opportunity presented itself. Their return was facilitated by the death of an elderly farmer and his house and land was purchased by the Camerons.

The Camerons sold most of their property in England, except for a lorry and some machinery, which they brought back with them on the basis that they could be hired out while the farm was being built up. When I arrived in the villages, the Camerons just a few years in full-time farming, had one of the best stocked and most efficiently managed farms. A new house had been constructed and much of the land reclaimed and manured.

The Camerons' farm economy is strictly a family enterprise with Joe and his wife interchanging farm tasks. Indeed with Joe absent, on hire with lorry and/or machinery, much of the farm work is undertaken by Mrs. Cameron. She is also one of the few women who rear considerable numbers of poultry. Both daughters also work on the farm and at certain times of the year, such as haymaking or potato-picking, the whole family work together in the fields.

Both husband and wife are both knowledgeable on farming matters and work is undertaken on a partnership basis. Both partners are equal in the resources they possess for interaction with the outside forces that affect their farming operation.

Like most families in the villages, the Camerons keep themselves to themselves. Their village contains a number of active farmers including the Sheridans[1] and there is considerable rivalry between them. Indeed, this rivalry is likely to increase in the future as they contend for whatever land becomes available. Relations with Joe's parents are strained and the Camerons are more involved with Mrs. Cameron's parents and brother. Living in the Munster dairying region, these latter have encouraged and helped Joe to purchase calves directly from that area, rather than purchasing them at a far greater cost outside of the cattle market.

The Cameron household is characterised by the continuous involvement of all family members in the running of the farm. It is a household 'that chose' farming as a way of making a living and that had had the advantage of non-local profitable experience. Farm expansion or improvement involves all the family and indeed the Camerons continue a mixed economy of rearing calves, cattle, sheep and cultivating some tillage to some extent because such a system involves all the family on a regular basis. This situation can be contrasted with the Kennedy household where Mrs. Kennedy plays little part in the farm economy and where specialization has been encouraged, particularly by Mrs. Kennedy, because it would allow her to cultivate the role she most values, that of full-time housewife.

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[1] See chapter 5.

The Kellys.

The household contains Patrick Kelly aged 54, his wife aged 48 and one daughter aged 15 years, attending a second level school in town. The five older children have moved away, four to England and one to Dublin. The Kellys live in a renovated cottage and own 37 acres of land. They own this amount of land because of a restructuring of land holdings in their village in the 1950's by the Land Commission. Prior to this, Patrick has worked on the farm of a small tubercular sanatorium, since closed.

The farm was inherited by his wife and is now in joint ownership. Outhouses are few and in poor condition and the Kellys possess neither tractor nor machinery nor have they any plans in that direction. Far from being a necessary consequence, no significant economic or technical innovation has followed joint ownership in this case. The farm economy is mixed, cattle, sheep and a little tillage. Much of the farmwork is undertaken by Patrick, who buys and sells for and off the farm. On these matters his authority is clear and usually accepted but Mrs. Kelly is also involved on the farm combining house-work and farmwork in her daily activities.

A typical day in winter takes the following form. She gets up before eight to prepare breakfast for her husband and daughter, who will later be collected for school. Later she feeds a few hens and ducks, lets the cows and calves out to the fields, inspects some newly born lambs and returns to the house, to remove the previous day's ashes and generally tidy the house. Work may be interspersed with a conversation with the postman or a passing neighbour. She then has to prepare a midday meal for her husband and herself and in the afternoon boils potatoes for feed for the cows and prepares a meal for her daughter who returns home about five o'clock. Night-time is spent watching television, except for one night - spent at Bingo.

Patrick Kelly spends his day working on and about the land and attends the cattle market regularly. He has a vast store of knowledge on agricultural matters. There is no evidence of an attempt to apply this knowledge. Indeed he is not really interested in the practice of farming. Neither he nor his wife have encouraged their children to stay on the land; while the older ones migrated, the younger ones have been encouraged to continue their schooling. The Kelly's' belief in education was somewhat challenged by the difficulties one daughter had in securing employment. She had attended University, qualified as a secondary teacher but had been unemployed for over a year. After she acquired a teaching post, the Kelly's' faith in schooling was restored and their youngest daughter is now being given every opportunity to succeed at school.

In the Kelly household, property is jointly owned by husband and wife. While both are involved in farmwork, the work is directed by Patrick, who also would appear has the final say on most agricultural affairs. Neither husband nor wife expressed a strong interest in expanding the scale of operations on the farm, though they are not adverse to acquiring additional land from the Land Commission. To this effect, they have been most vocal in the past in local efforts to have the estate divided within the village. Mrs. Kelly was most involved and each time brought this matter into the conversation. She chided her husband for not being more active. The Kellys have not encouraged their children to continue in farming, but as they grow older, their opinion on this matter may well change.

The Morans.

The household contains John Moran, aged 72 years and his wife aged 64. They own a farm of less than 30 acres in the village closest to the lake. The Morans have, in the terminology of Arensberg and Kimball, succeeded in 'keeping their name on the land'. The present owner's grandfather, also John Moran, is listed in Griffith Valuations Lists, in the last century as renting some of the land now owned by the Morans.

Agriculture has always been central to Moran's way of life but in the past few years, John has gradually reduced the scale of the enterprise and now at 72, has just two cows, seven store cattle and a few calves. The cows supply the house with milk and also feed a calf. Potatoes and other vegetables are also consumed by the family.

John Moran's father died when John was nine years old, leaving him as 'the man of the house', his own words. His father and mother had married late in life; aged 54 years and 38 years respectively, and John had one sister who went to America in 1925, but returned to the village in 1935. John Moran remembers paying rent and recalls that the people of his village did not become freeholders until 1926. John Moran married in 1937 aged 35; his wife was 24.

He would have described himself then, not merely as a farmer, but also as a cattle-dealer or more correctly a 'tangler'. The latter term, perhaps being the more accurate in that it was used to describe those who bought and sold on a "small scale" and who come from the small farming category. He travelled to fairs in Mayo and Galway buying cattle and sometimes actually selling them at the same fair for a profit, but more often he would hold the cattle on grass for a period and sell them at another fair.

Like most of those who carried on a trade in cattle, he favoured the fairs that were held in Connemara. There he was able to play on the inhabitants' ignorance of prices. Over time he built up a series of contacts with farmers in these remote areas. Through such contacts he would acquire first preference on their cattle.

The land which he owned was never adequate to feed the number of animals he owned, a fact which forced him to rent land. Because the area is one where there is little land for rent, what land came on the market was competed for by local landholders. Renting land for these purposes was very much a risk-taking activity since the price of cattle was continuously subject to fluctuations. Yet John Moran was successful and to put it in his own words "managed to make the land pay". Cattle dealing on this small scale had gradually declined since the advent of the livestock mart. John Moran, like many of the older farmers, finds the mart "system" confusing and impersonal.

John Moran's wife comes from a similar farming area as the villages, less than ten miles away. Her brother inherited her parent land and his son now owns it. Her life has been totally bound to her own family and farm. She played, and continues to play, a part in agricultural activities. All the work of the farm she has at one time or another undertaken, except for the sale of animals. She now plays an important role in the activity, which has become of increasing importance for the Morans - tourism.[1]

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[1] See chapter 6.

The Morans' house is a converted cottage, slate has taken the place of thatch, a bathroom and toilet have been added, and floors have been tiled and carpeted. The house has a small lawn and yard to the front, outhouses, old but well-kept, for cows and calves stretch to the side and a small "household" garden extends by the rear of the house. There are other houses on either side of the Morans.

To return to the Moran family itself - there were four children, all daughters, in the family. All went to secondary school and two were at boarding school.[1] Afterwards two left for jobs in Dublin and one for a job in England. The remaining daughter was employed as a cook in a hotel, less than twenty miles from the village. She spent whatever time she had off from work at home. After marriage she continued to visit her parents almost every weekend. Four years ago, John Moran "signed" the land over to this daughter. She and her husband (I will refer to this couple from now as "the O'Malleys") immediately commenced work on the building of a house in the village for rent to tourists. During my fieldwork they built a second house and also bought an old house near Ballina - an area undergoing industrial expansion. All of these houses are intended for rent. While the second house was being built, the O'Malleys were in Moran's village every weekend. Every Friday evening the gate of the 'old couple's' house was left open in expectation. Immediately on arrival the O'Malleys would leave their children with the Morans and begin work on the house. Relations between the two families were not ones of predictable simplicity. A complexity emerged and is reflected, as we shall see, in their relationships.

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[1] On County Council Scholarships.

John Moran in particular was disappointed that his son-in-law showed no interest in farming, although he was well aware of the "quick" money in tourism. He still regarded farming as something you can always fall back on, as security. Yet while he would never be the legal owner of any of the "tourist houses" within the village, the houses were referred to as "Moran's houses", adding to the Morans' status. Thus he liked to be asked how the house-building was progressing. He took part as much as he could in the building activities. In such activities he tried to assert his authority. It was clear to me that the O'Malleys regarded him as a nuisance, old-fashioned and that it would be better for all if he stayed away. Whatever authority he had, disappeared when he signed over his property. Whatever he did, no matter how helpful, he was now "just tolerated". Once, in an effort to assert himself, he refused a request from the O'Malleys to reclaim some of the land on the grounds that he would be without firewood and anyway, he queriously asked, how would he benefit from this? John Moran sees himself as going on and on; his daughter and son-in-law have no such illusions.

At an early stage of the fieldwork it became clear that the Morans had regrets over signing over all their property to one daughter. Thus Mrs. Moran spent much of the winter in Dublin helping one daughter who was pregnant. Often John Moran accompanied his wife and would bring farm produce - usually potatoes. After the birth of her baby, this daughter paid frequent visits to the village. Not being interested in house-building, they took the Morans to whereever they wanted to go in their car. This contrasted strongly with the seeming ingratitude of the O'Malleys.

The decision to give all to one daughter was influenced by the belief, common in the villages, that once one gets a job in the city, one has it made. Frequent trips to Dublin casts doubts on this notion. The Morans also made one trip to England to visit their daughter. There, they found the working-class housing estates more confusing than Dublin suburbia. This year their son-in-law was threatened with redundancy and letters arrived at the Moran's house, inquiring about the possibility of employment at home. The Morans now have nothing to offer. Last Christmas it was John Moran who sent the English five pound notes to his daughter.

Relations within the Moran household are complex. John Morans' urge to pass on his property intact is complicated by doubts about his son-in-law. Increased contact with his other daughters does not ease his misgivings. Recent efforts to assert his authority only serves to show how little authority he really has.

Pádraic Jennings.

Aged 74 years, he now lives on his own, in a house referred to locally as an old fashioned cottage. The house has a thatched roof with a central living room, dominated by an open fireplace. There are two bedrooms, one on either side of the living area. The house is old and has had little structural alterations made to it. Padraic owns 30 acres of land which he inherited from his father. It is one of the most compact holdings in the villages, as his father had purchased a holding which bounded his land.

The household was actively involved in the 'Troubles', 1918-1923, in the early part of the century, during which time the household incurred considerable debts. The sons, the farm labour force, were "on the run" and the house was a resting place for rebels who were fed and looked after. In the late twenties and early thirties, his brothers, one after another, left for America and he remained in the village to care for his parents. As well as farming, in which local people say he was never very interested, he also went on hire as a thatcher, and with horse and plough, activities which have in recent years, become outmoded. Today, Padraic might more accurately be called a landholder rather than a farmer. Ageing and living on his own, he is unable to utilize the land for productive purposes. His answer to this predicament is to let most of his land to a neighbouring farmer, below its market value. Padraic sees the arrangement in social as well as in economic terms. The rent is paid in money and in kind, i.e. assistance by his neighbour in caring for the animals Padraic rears on the land he retains for himself. He also has a meal each day in his neighbour's house.

Land is no longer his principal source of income, its place having been taken by State pensions. Padraic collects two pensions, Old Age and what is called an I.R.A. pension. Money from these sources are used to pay for everyday household items. He is on good terms with all his neighbours and his is the one house in the village where people visit for the sake of conversation.

Like many of the elderly men living on their own, he is a frequent visitor to town and to the pubs. Such visits always begin at the Grocers or Supermarket where provisions, however small, are acquired. He will then continue on to a number of pubs and will spend most of the day there. As he cycles to town, he prefers to get home before darkness falls.

Like many people in similar circumstances, ageing and living alone, Padraic is in a situation that while he seeks to maintain independence, he has been forced to make essential compromises. This operates at the village level where he as had made 'an arrangement' about his land. In the wider context, he has been attempting to come to terms with the outside forces that seek 'to help' him. His pension he feels he has earned, but schemes such as free electricity, which he is entitled to, he refuses on the grounds that he would be a burden on the State. He has resisted efforts by members of voluntary organizations from the town to improve his house. Yet a recent illness has forced him to avail himself of a State service - free medical attention - and indeed to reassess his situation.

Shortly before my arrival in the villages, a growth appeared on one of Padraic's hands. Though it quickly became painful, he gave it little attention. Perhaps a year later and with some encouragement from neighbours and myself, he visited a doctor in town. He was sent by the doctor for an X-ray to the County Hospital in Castlebar and on the results of the X-ray, received a letter asking him to attend a hospital in Dublin within two weeks to have the growth removed.

He had never been away from his village before and his first reaction was to postpone the journey. He said he simply was not prepared for such a venture. He had not completed the thatching. Who would look after his house and land? He ignored his letter and a second letter confirming the appointment. Three months later after more encouragement, and now believing himself to be ready, he agreed to answer a third appointment.

The journey to Dublin was completed with the aid of private and State enterprise. A neighbour's car provided transport to the bus station in town. He availed himself of free bus and train service to Dublin and hired a taxi to take him to the hospital. Later, reconstructing his hospital stay, he emphasised the comforts provided by the hospital, even heat, hot whiskey at night and open conversation with the man in the next bed. He had also been visited by a few neighbour's relatives now living in Dublin.

Within a few weeks of his return to the villages, Padraic was back to his own routine. Little appeared to have changed but, in fact, in the conversations I had with him in the months that followed, it became clear that his fear of permanent institutionalization had diminished. He began to speak of the possibility of selling his land and going to live in a home, but as yet has not taken any action.

In the villages and in many parts of the West of Ireland one finds men like Padraic, living on their own. Such men tend to own the smaller farms, concentrate on cattle production, make little investment in the land and become dependent on younger, more "progressive" farmers for machinery and transport. Their houses are usually in poor condition, yet they are the most open for a neighbourly visit.

Yet those such as Padraic Jennings are in possession of a valuable resource - land. Many seek to hold on to their land, despite State, land speculators, and sometimes local farmers' demands that they do otherwise. Land is used as a bargaining resource played off against favours from neighbours and relations. Owning land confers status and makes possible the exercise of a particular, if limited, type of freedom.

In this chapter, we have compared aspects of household structure in the villages in 1911 and 1976, examined aspects of family structure and interaction in the villages today and then illustrated our general account with a detailed study of particular households. We observed that the numbers of 'large' and three generational households have declined. Today village households are headed by married couples and single people. This feature of the villages'social structure can be set within the context of the economic situation of the villages.

Firstly, most farms are too small to provide an acceptable standard of living for two families and thus parents are reluctant to encourage their children to remain on the land on a full-time basis. Secondly, the system of farming now practised and the availability of machinery has lessened the demand for additional labour. In these circumstances, children are encouraged to take full advantage and make full use of education. In the absence of suitable employment opportunities, people leave the village at an early age, usually when they have completed their secondary education. Children do return of course to help on the farm from time to time, but are no longer involved on a full-time basis in the agricultural economy.

It is thus only the wealthier and larger farmers who can provide incentives for their children to stay on the land on a full-time basis.

But all this, I feel, does not mean that children do not highly value land or that they do not want to inherit. As we have seen, some have returned to take over farms from ageing parents. Others have acquired non-farm jobs in the locality and are prepared to continue farming on a part-time basis. There are few farms where the children are not anxious to inherit the land or few parents considering selling their land. In the future, of course, some of the inheriting children, more removed from the land than their parents, may prove more willing to part with it or at the very least they may be inclined to let it to other farmers.

What will happen to the land of the village bachelors is more uncertain. Many have no immediate relatives living in the villages and have made neither will or settlement for their land. In the future, their land may well be sold to pay off disputing relatives and these sales would provide opportunities for the larger and more ambitious farmers to acquire extra land and expand further. A few 'may promise' their farms to relatives or neighbours in return for their assistance in the running of the farm. What is certain is that these farms will be a source of controversy and tension in the villages in the future.

Conclusion

This thesis began with a discussion of the conceptual categories peasant and peasant society and with an examination of the utility of these categories in the interpretation of modern Irish rural experience. The general weaknesses of the non-historical peasant model, and the scant attention paid to external ties and internal differentation were particularized in the Irish case, for example in the structure of migration and the existence of a complex rather than a simple class structure against which the Great Famine's effects or the growth of credit retailing had to be examined.

The more recent social anthropological studies were criticised on theoretical, methodological and factual grounds. While defects at these different levels are undoubtedly related, it was nonetheless found useful to specify the level at which criticism was directed. The major implications of the overall functionalist orientation were seen as the omission of conflicts and their sources to such a degree as to render the classic account presented in the nineteen thirties close to fiction.

Therefore, as part of an effort to offer an alternative historically located type of research, my own study of some Mayo villages commenced with a specification of what was felt to be the major features of recent history which were seen as providing the setting of the study reported and executed during 1975-76.

The structure of land ownership in the villages was examined and attention was drawn to the variety of farm size and enterprises and the different ways in which land can be acquired, i.e. purchase, inheritance, Land Commission. We then examined the way in which land is used for agricultural purposes, observing that on almost all farms, the most important activities are associated with the rearing of animals, mainly cattle. While mixed farming and production for the household has not entirely disappeared, cattle rearing has come to dominate the village economy. Both day-to-day activities and seasonal work is related to the care of animals.

Farming is carried out in individual households and there is considerable variation in output and income from farm to farm. There is little economic co-operation between farms and almost all farm work is now mechanized. Tractors are owned by individual farmers. Farmers who do not possess machines hire it from other farmers or from agricultural contractors. Rather than viewing tractors as creating new divisions between farmers, it was seen to be more accurate to view them as being fitted into an already unbalanced structure.

As Irish peasant studies were criticised for ignoring the ingress of external movements and events and Arensberg and Kimball were criticised for a similar type of omission, importance was attached to the spelling out of the links the community studied had,of an economic and administrative kind, with the wider society.

The most important outside contact takes place in the sale and exchange of agricultural produce. Animals were sold in the livestock market which was located in the nearby town. The operation of the mart is indeed complex, with an array of buyers and sellers sometimes in conflict and sometimes in alliance with each other. For many of the older farmers, the present market system creates confusion. Perhaps because of this a considerable amount of dealing takes place outside the formal market structure.

Over the years, conditions have more and more favoured farmers who have been able to specialize in the breeding and fattening of livestock. Consequently the number of smallholders in the villages has continuously declined. That this is not taking place at a greater pace was attributed to a number of factors. National land policy appears to operate along the 'old lines' of making land from the division of estates available to all farmers in the proximity of the estate. Thus we saw that in the villages, 'non-viable' smallholders still expect their share of 'the small estate'. Also important in this context is the small farmers assistance or Dole, off-farm employment, and, particularly in the villages, tourism.

In the villages, the 'tourist industry' consists of providing services for anglers who arrive in mid April and continue to come and go until the end of September. Villagers supply tourists with houses to rent; accomedation in Guesthouses; boats, engines and their services as boatmen. Tourists have lately come to establish themselves in the villages through their purchase of sites and houses.

The farmhouse-guesthouse market has largely been cornered by one family. A few families have benefited from the sale of sites and houses. Boating has had the widest effect, bringing many villagers into contact with the tourists.

'In general, relations between families were characterized by feelings of envy and jealousy. People had very little that was good to say about each other and gossip about individuals and families was often harsh if not malicious.' The general character of social relations now existing in the villages was illustrated by the examination of two 'incidents' or events, 'the station' and 'the dispute'.

The last two chapters were devoted to an examination of family structure and relations. The number of single-person households has increased while the number of three generational households has decreased. There appears to be a pattern emerging of the inheriting son or daughter establishing themselves in a separate house in the village. The extended family is not of great importance and functions mainly on ceremonial occasions and sometimes during seasonal agricultural activities. Family structure was examined on a life cycle basis, and the role of men and women examined in detail. Men are largely concerned with the land. As regards the position of women, two patterns appear to be emerging; in one, the wife makes an important contribution to the farmwork; in the other, she concentrates on the home. Finally, the general description of family structures and relationships was illustrated by the examination of a number of households in detail.

In this thesis an attempt was made to take account of recent historical dynamics, while also tracing systematically the working out of particular destinies and events. While it may be seen that some of the actors or indeed whole households are the more historical fodder of powerful historical process, over which they have very little control , yet we have traced individual initiatives which may survive and the restructuring of relationships which may grow in importance. We have also reported comments which may indicate the acceptance of defeat.

As for the points of divergence with existing studies, generally the research strategy employed - historically located research - leads to an interpretation of modern Irish history, which would emphasise conflict. The consensus, central to the functionalist construction of events, at its best emerged from the fieldwork as a shaky system of reciprocities. Interpretations of a modernization kind which elevate innovative practices to the status of causal explanations were seen not to hold up,as such innovations could be shown to feed into an existing system of social relationships and an established social structure. Cognitive boundaries to conflicts, as suggested by Foster and others, were rejected in favour of an analysis based on the assumption of the existence of realistic conflicts of interest of an economic kind.

This thesis, an account of social relations in rural Mayo in modern times, challenges many of the received notions and assumptions concerning Irish rural communities.

At times, in fact, it challenges nearly all the assumptions of Arensberg and Kimball and those community studies based on their account. But is it simply that 'times have changed'? The conclusion must be in the negative. As we stressed that theoretical orientation leads to methodological structure, which in turn specifies points of exclusion and inclusion and this explains most of the defects of this classic study.

Arensberg and Kimball's main interest in rural Ireland was as a testing ground for structural-functional theory as it was then emerging in the nineteen thirties. Being little interested in, and paying little attention to, historical developments, they assumed that they had found in rural Ireland a homogeneous, working and almost changeless community. They then went on to establish the structure and functioning of this society, ignoring or being blind to economic, social, and political divisions, conflicts and tensions.

Later studies of rural Ireland, though grumbling at Arensberg and Kimball's theoretical orientation, accepted without reservation their empirical account. Then faced with the existence of tensions and conflicts, they were forced to put forward some very distorted arguments to explain these 'new events'. This thesis is part of an effort to redirect sociological and anthropological inquiry in Ireland and represents a modest attempt to locate a study historically and against the full round of facts as they have trapped or been manipulated by human actors.

Thus in many ways it can be taken as an appeal for a new beginning in Irish community studies. It is not so much that the villages studied between 1975-76 had changed from the time of Arensberg and Kimball - the nineteen thirties - but rather that these scholars were limited by a theoretical model which excluded the treatment of conflicts, which plausibly were as real in the County Clare of the nineteen thirties, as we have found them today in Co. Mayo.

Insofar as the entire apparatus of modern Irish rural community studies has been challenged, the issues raised in this study need further research and elaboration. Any study which breaks a continuous thread of assumptions, is itself tentative. Yet the magnitude of the gap between the experience of living actors and the account which has become central in almost all sociological references to Ireland, justifies a reorientation.

In terms of the people studied, the clear image in the mind of the researcher from the conclusion of the fieldwork to the compilation of this report, is of a group of farmers in a clear perception of and yet in great bewilderment, as to what a new series of external forces in the form of European Community Directives, affecting land structures, succession, retirement and advice, have in store for them.

The villages have long been divided along social and economic lines and these divisions continue and are being accentuated today. Some farmers continue to expand, acquire more land and machinery and organize efficiently to meet market demands. Other farmers have been unable to keep up with new developments and have fallen, economically and socially behind those expanding farmers. Yet these 'backward' farmers are still the owners of land. Many expanding farmers, claim that they are unwilling and unable to develop their land and are growing increasingly vocal in their demands for the redistribution of the land held by 'backward' farmers.

These demands will undoubtedly be faciliated by the implementation of the E.E.C. Directives on farm modernization, farm retirement and land structure reform. These schemes recognize and make distinctions between farmers and state that these distinctions will continue to grow. They favour farms that are capable of adjusting to economic developments and farmers who adopt 'rational methods of production'.

These E.E.C. schemes are perhaps the most significant set of directives to be applied to rural Ireland since the Land Acts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is therefore interesting to note that while the aim of the Land Acts was to transfer land from a few landlords to many tenants, the E.E.C. schemes in the long run will undoubtedly add great momentum to the trend of land ownership being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

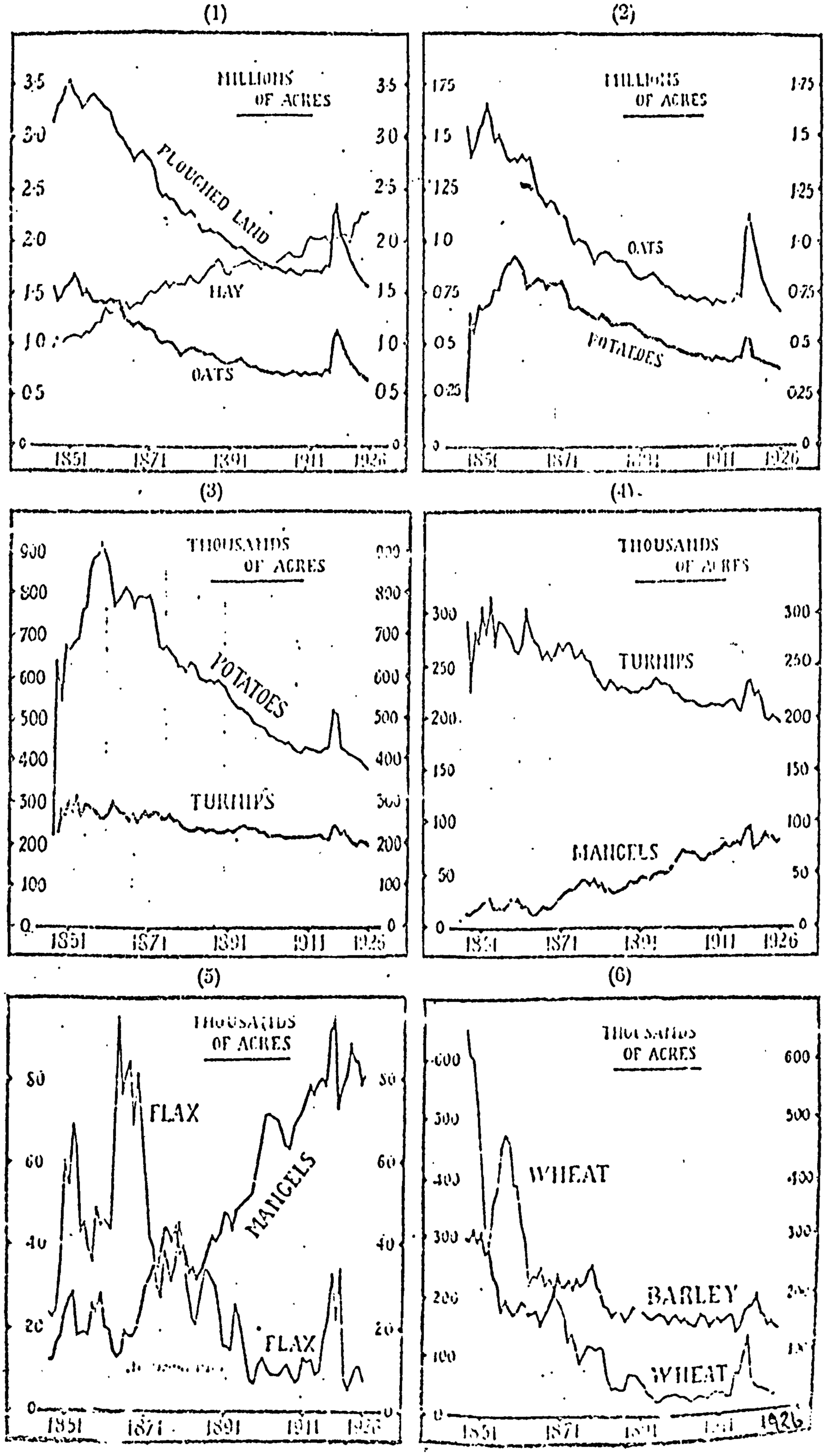
Theoretically, it is clear that Irish community studies will benefit from the presence of full historical factors and processes. Methodologically, they will be more complete. In relation to this particular study, it is hoped that because of this thesis, the gap between the lives, fears, hopes, greed and calculated co-operation of real people and formal accounts of their behaviour - opened in the thirties - will have begun to be closed.

Appendix I

Figures, Diagrams, Maps and Tables, illustrating the trends and the changing pattern of the Irish rural economy.

Diagrams 1-6.

Area of Crops. 1847-1926.

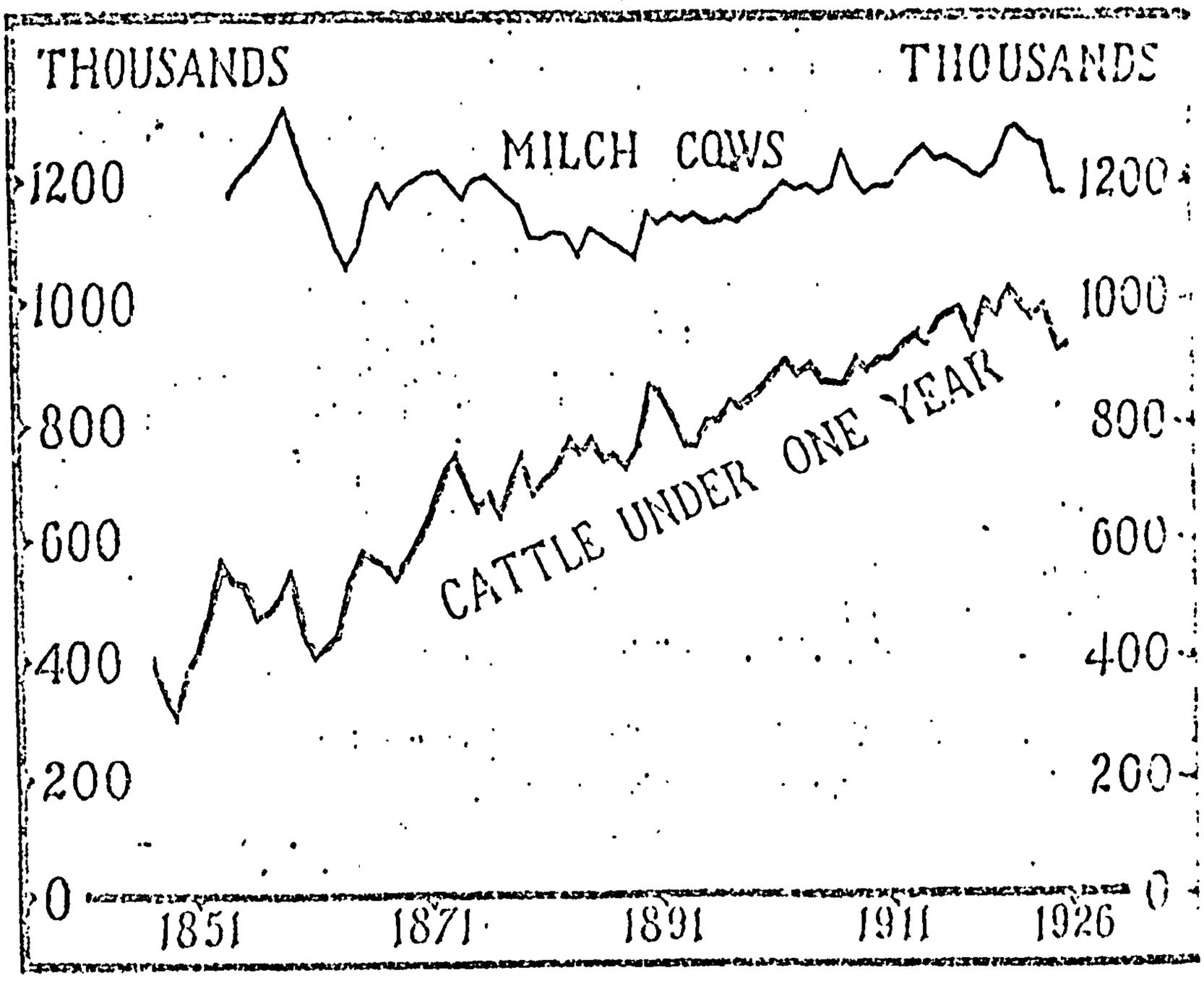


SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics 1847-1926.

Diagrams 7-8.

Numbers of Cattle and Sheep, 1847-1926.

(7)



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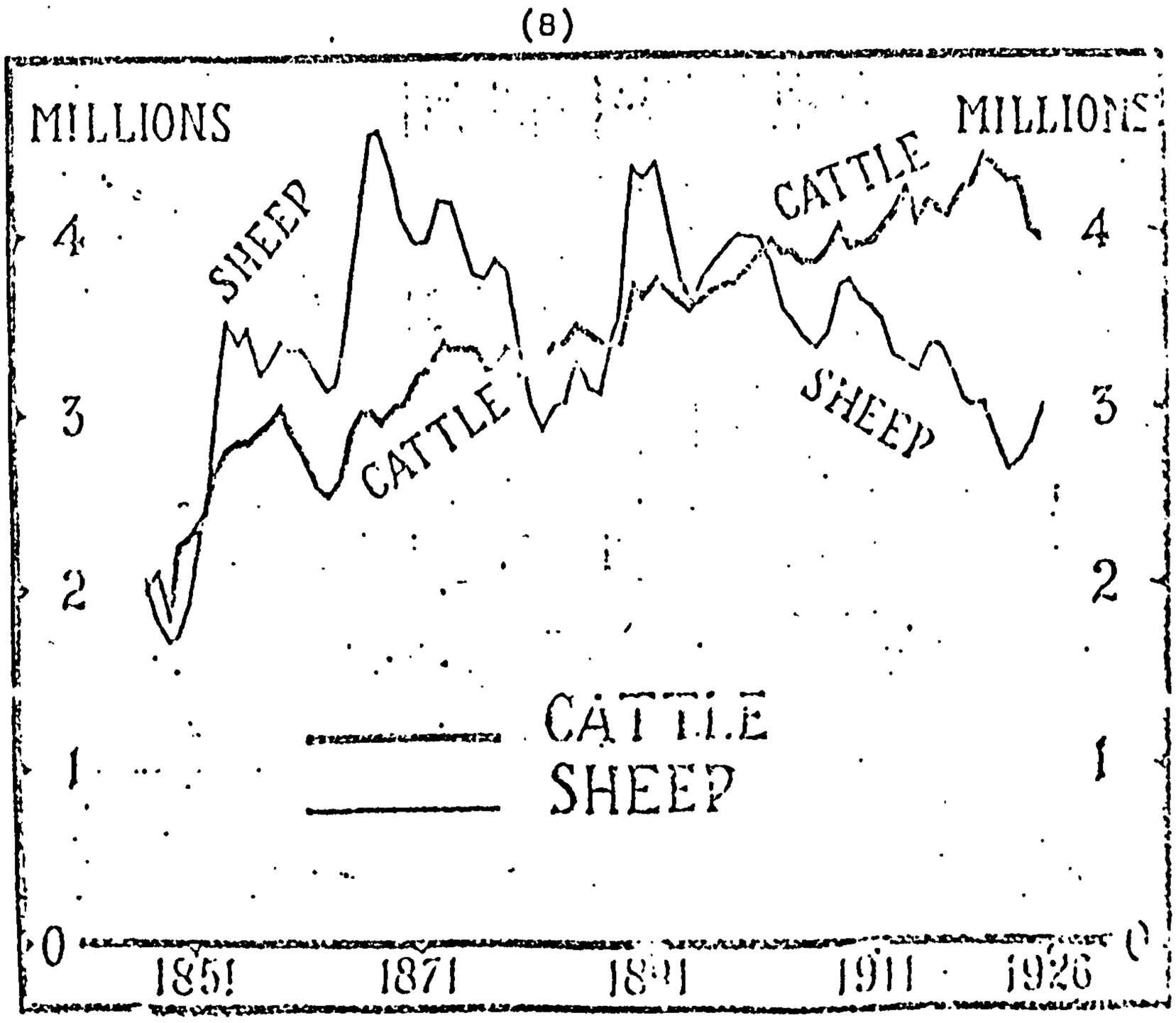
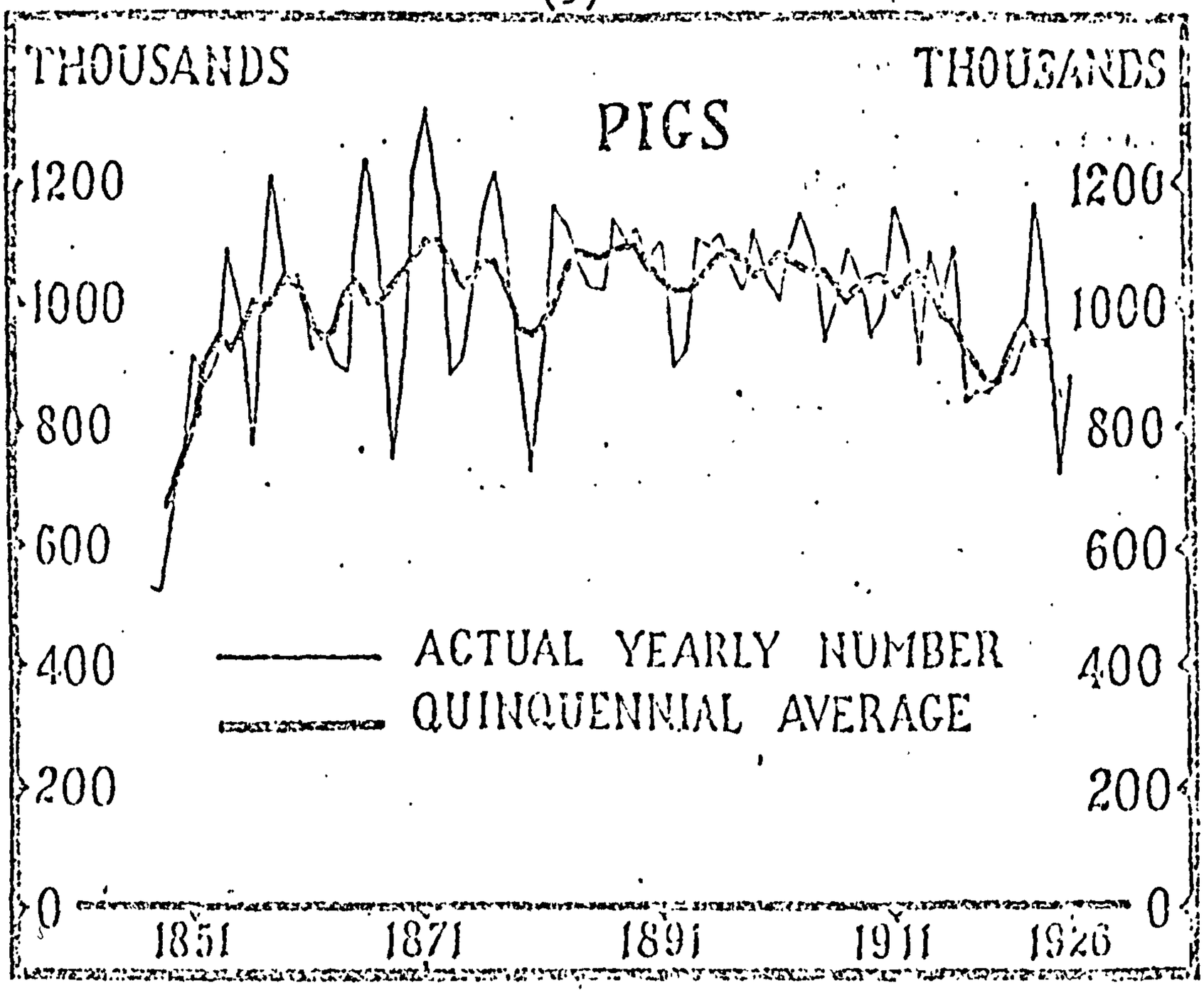


SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics 1847-1926.

Diagrams 9-10.

Numbers of Pigs and Poultry, 1847-1926.

(9)



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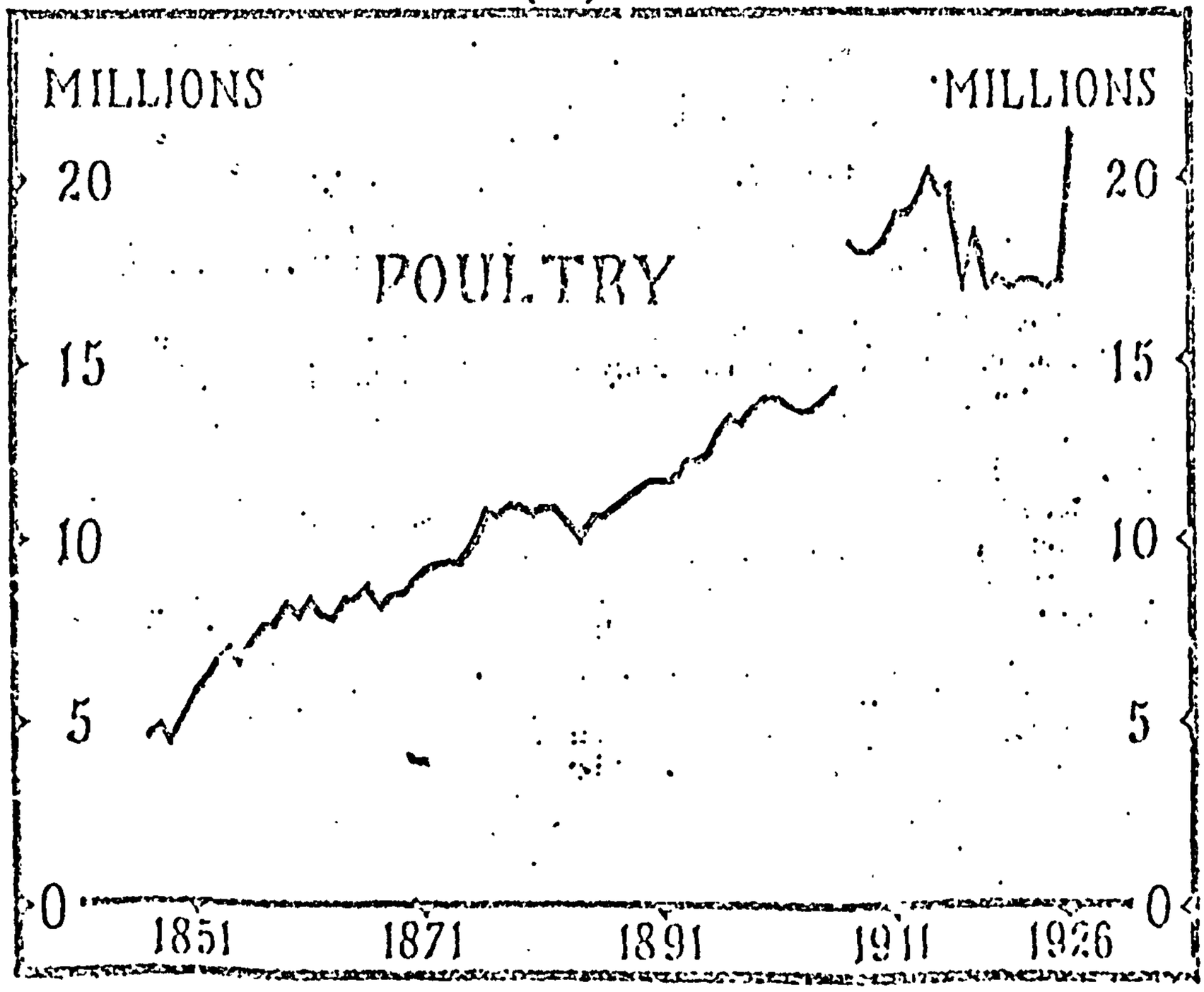


SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics 1847-1926.

Table 29

Largest and Smallest Area, and Area in 1926 of each Crop. Saorstat Eireann

	Year	Acres		Year	Acres		Year	Acres
Wheat	1847	671,448	Potatoes	1859	923,054	Flax	1864	94,622
	1925	22,252		1647	219,555		1922	4,876
	1926	29,386		1926	374,771		1926	6,802
Oats	1852	1,661,596	Turnips	1853	316,659			
	1926	647,407		1926	194,600	Fruit	1920	10,274
							1906	5,945
Barley	1849	313,947	Mangels	1918	94,851		1926	7,515
	1915	139,687		1848	12,058			
	1926	141,009		1926	80,839	Ploughed	1851	3,599,229
						Land	1926	1,551,447
Rye	1848	18,636	Cabbage	1890	42,623			
	1919	4,648		1917	18,779	Hay	1924	2,288,097
	1926	6,645		1926	34,428		1847	959,342
							1926	2,287,849
Beans and Peas	1850	46,899	Other root	1851	51,496			
	1916	411	and green	1925	17,035			
	1926	641	Crops	1926	27,404			
Total Corn	1847	2,534,989	Total Root	1859	1,285,236	All Crops	1860	4,603,198
Crops	1926	825,088	and Green	1847	569,634	including	1902	3,484,269
			Crops	1926	712,042	Hay	1926	3,839,296

SOURCE: Agricultural Statistics, 1947-1926.

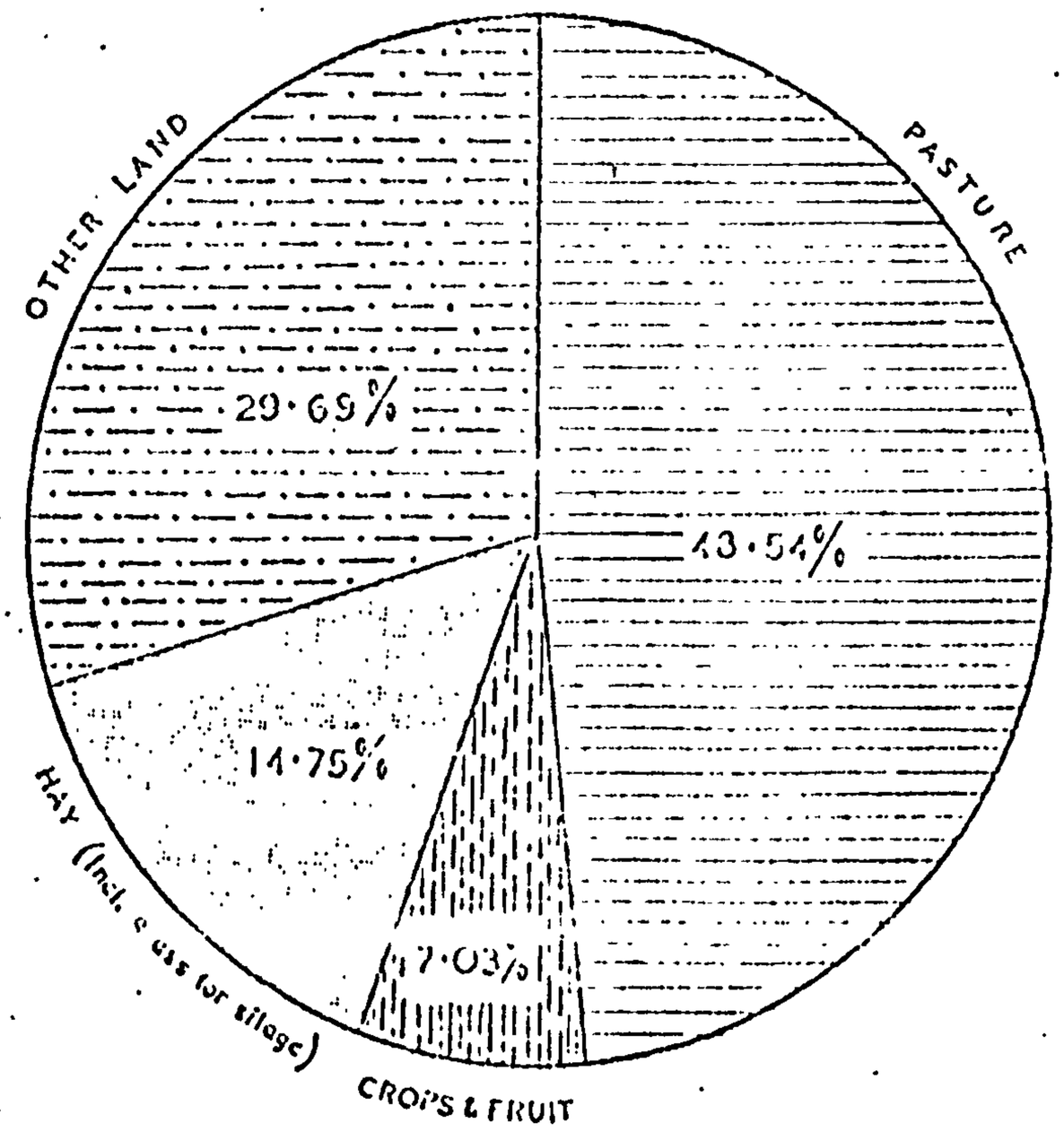
Table 30

COMPARATIVE PRICES OF CEREALS WITH LIVE STOCK PRODUCTS.

Year	Wheat	Oats	Barley	Butter	Pork	Beef	Mutton	Wool	Store Cattle, 1-2 years	Store Cattle, 2-3 years	Statist Index No.
1840 ...	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1850 ...	73	101	87	74	92	81	100	92	89	130	74
1860 ...	99	139	135	104	138	112	135	153	157	200	96
1870 ...	84	127	118	141	144	148	162	110	157	200	93
1880 ...	76	120	114	129	146	135	160	122	239	245	85
1890 ...	59	123	99	91	107	119	152	84	255	249	70
1900 ...	56	109	105	101	121	119	142	62	243	235	72
1910 ...	62	111	106	108	161	125	146	98	284	266	76

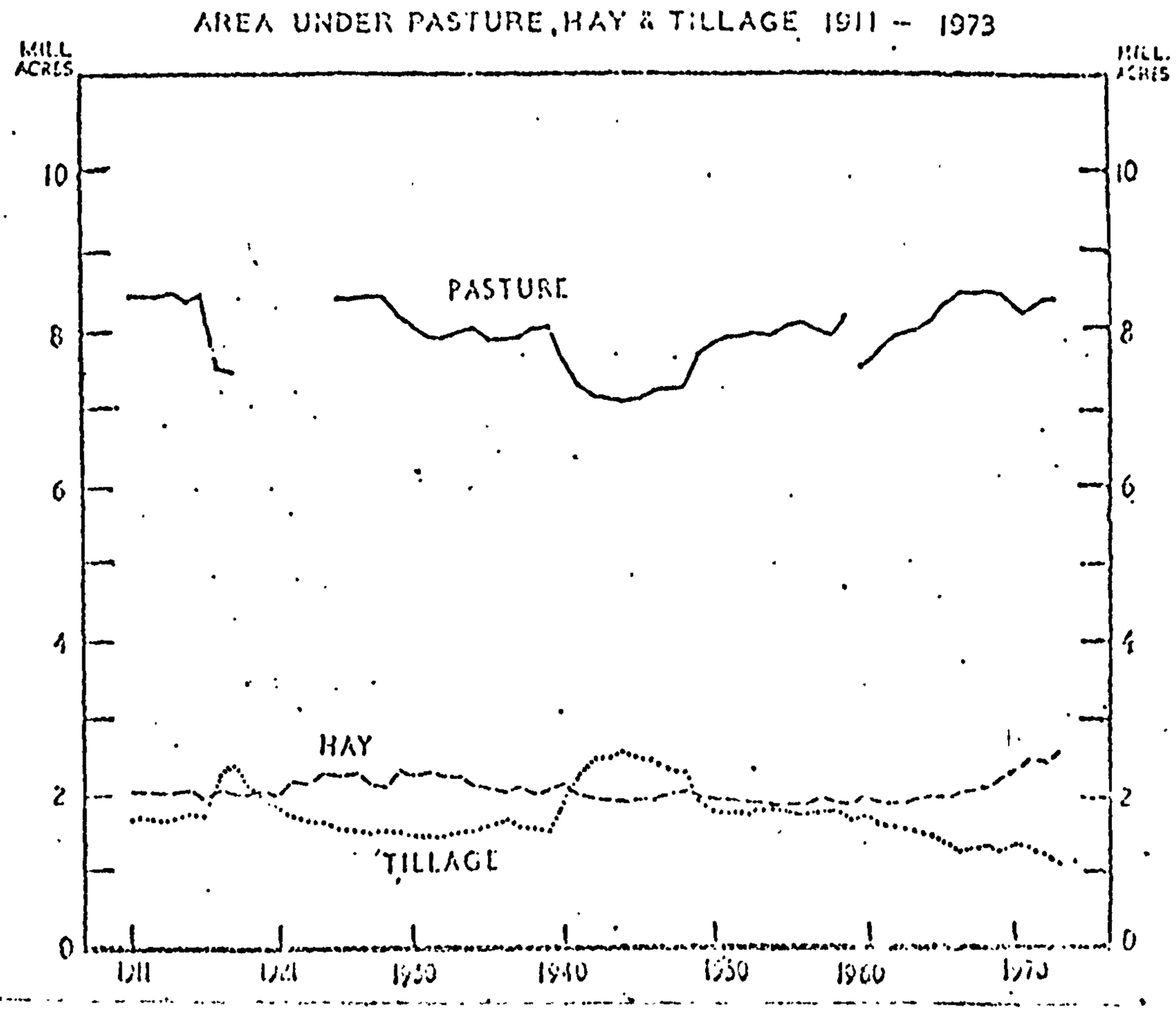
SOURCE: O'Donovan, J., The Economic History of Livestock in Ireland.

Diagram 11

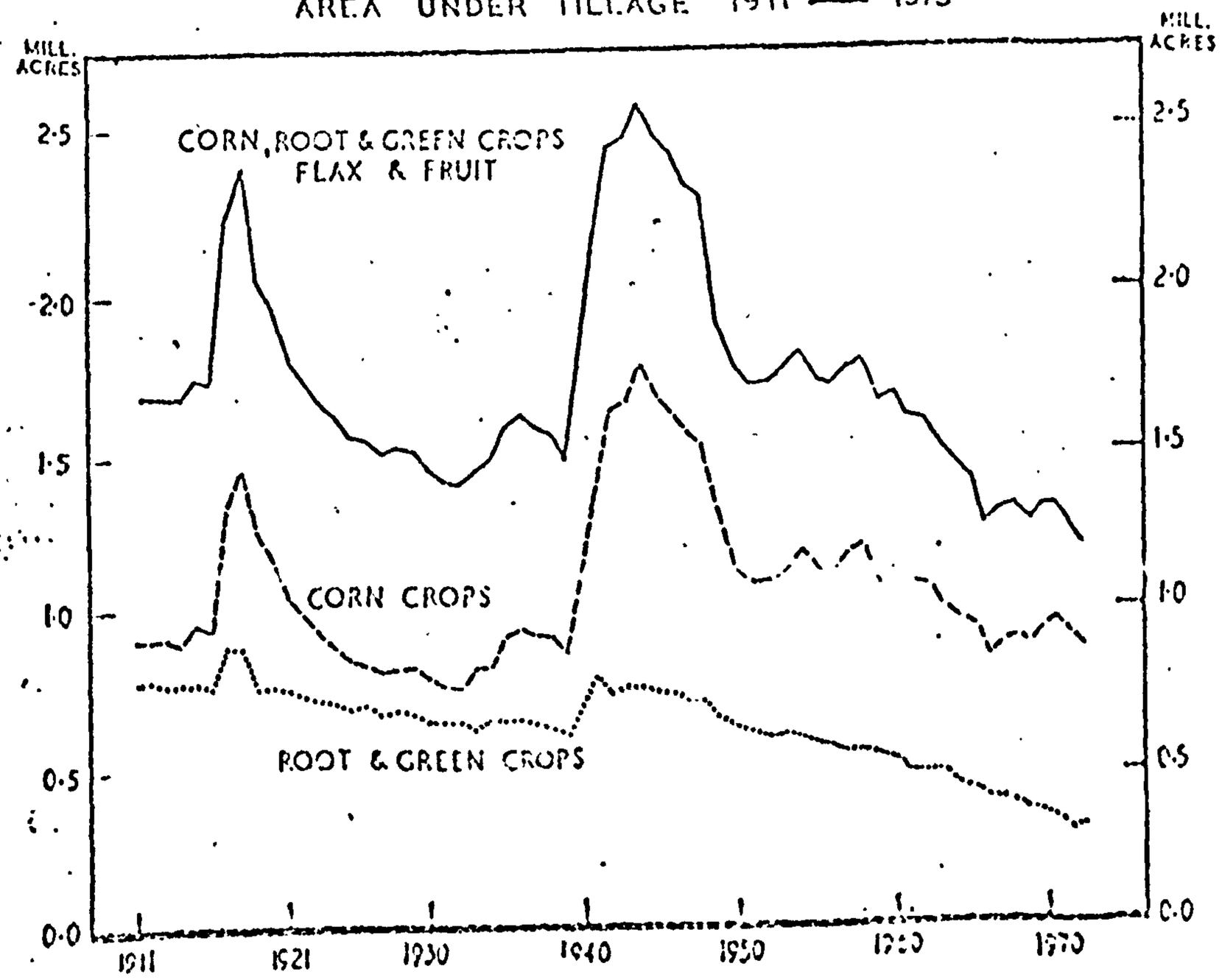


SOURCE: Statistical Abstract, 1972-73.

Diagram(12)



Diagram(13)



SOURCE: Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

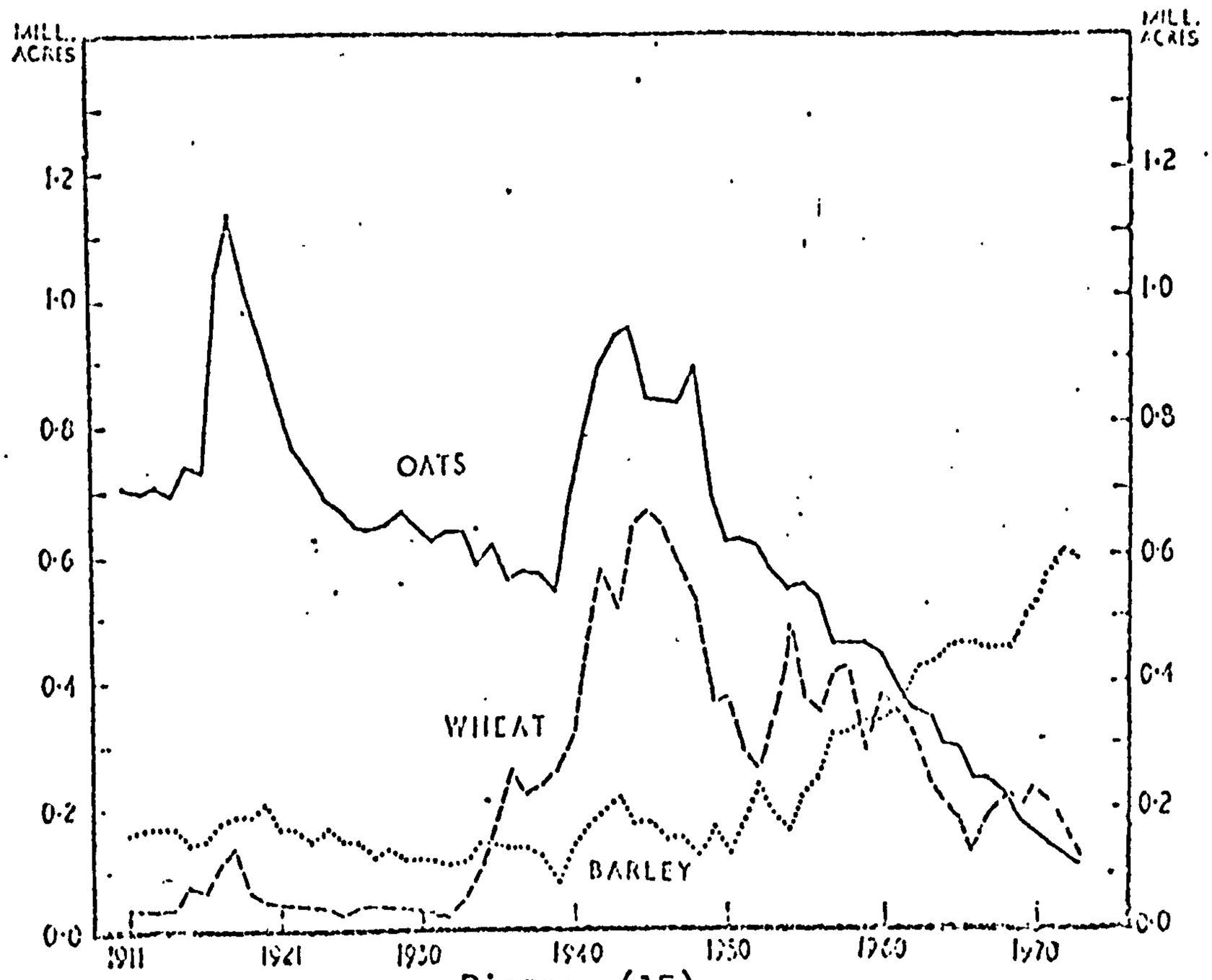
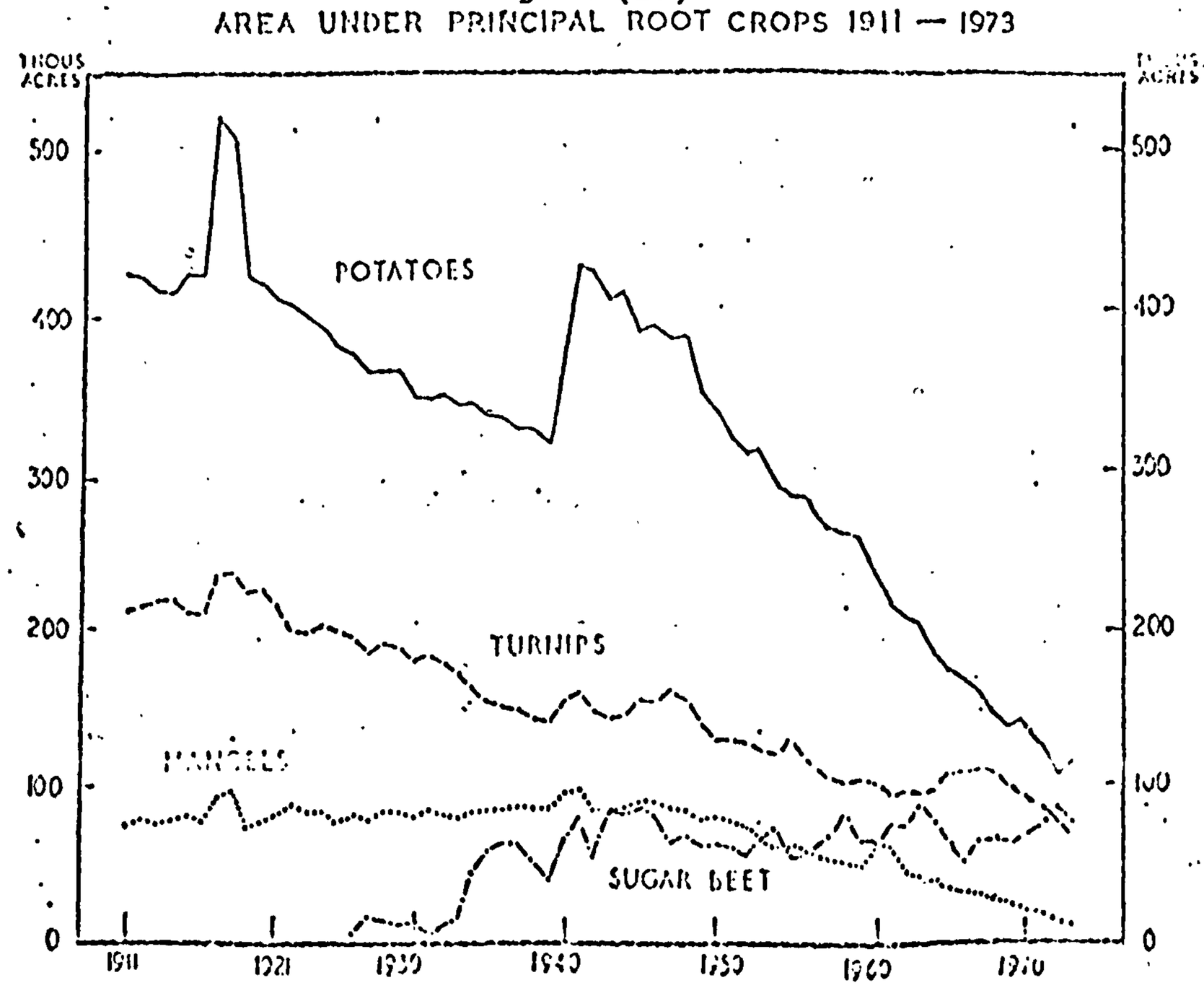


Diagram (15)

AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL ROOT CROPS 1911 — 1973



SOURCE: Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

Diagram (16)

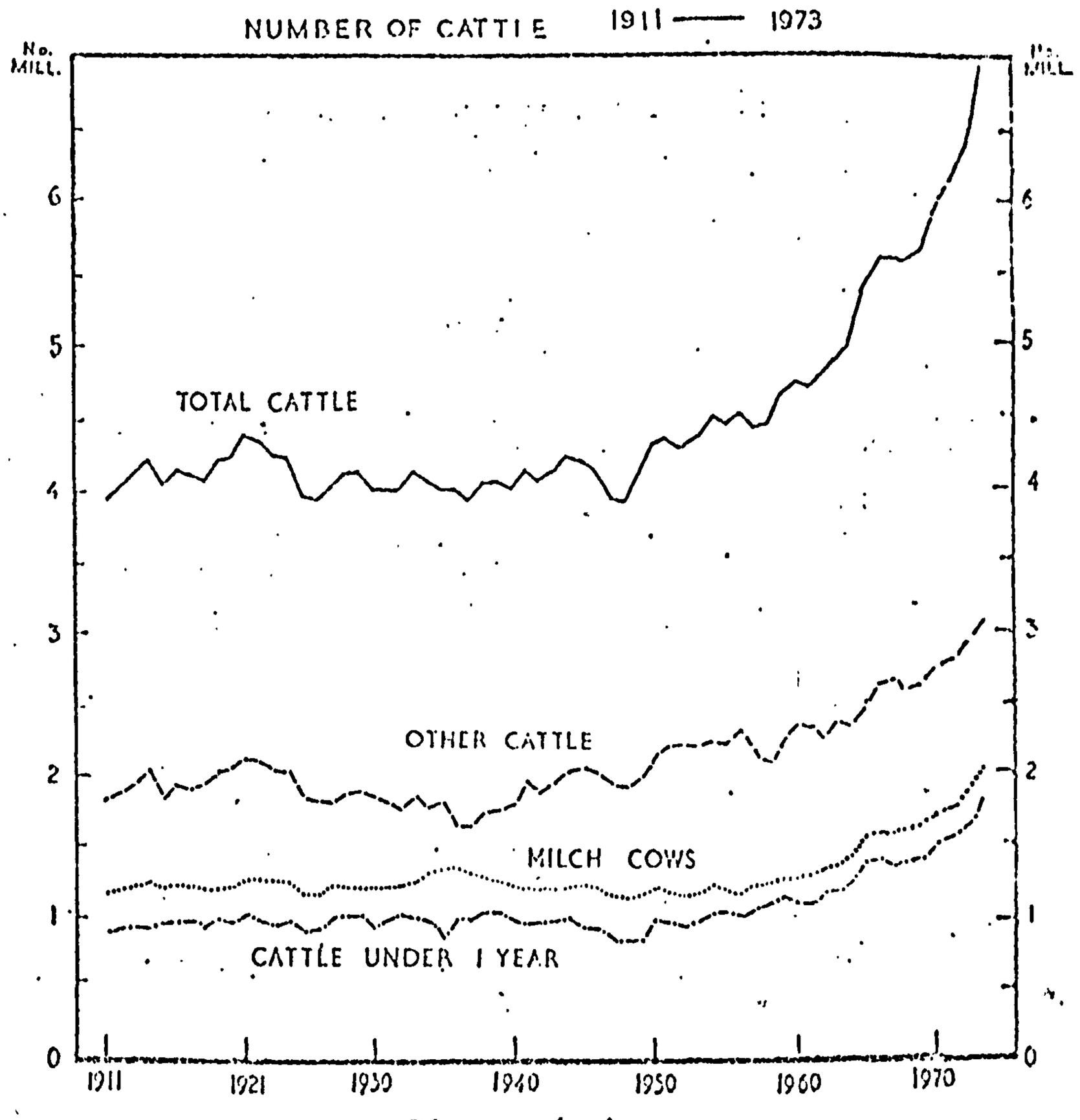
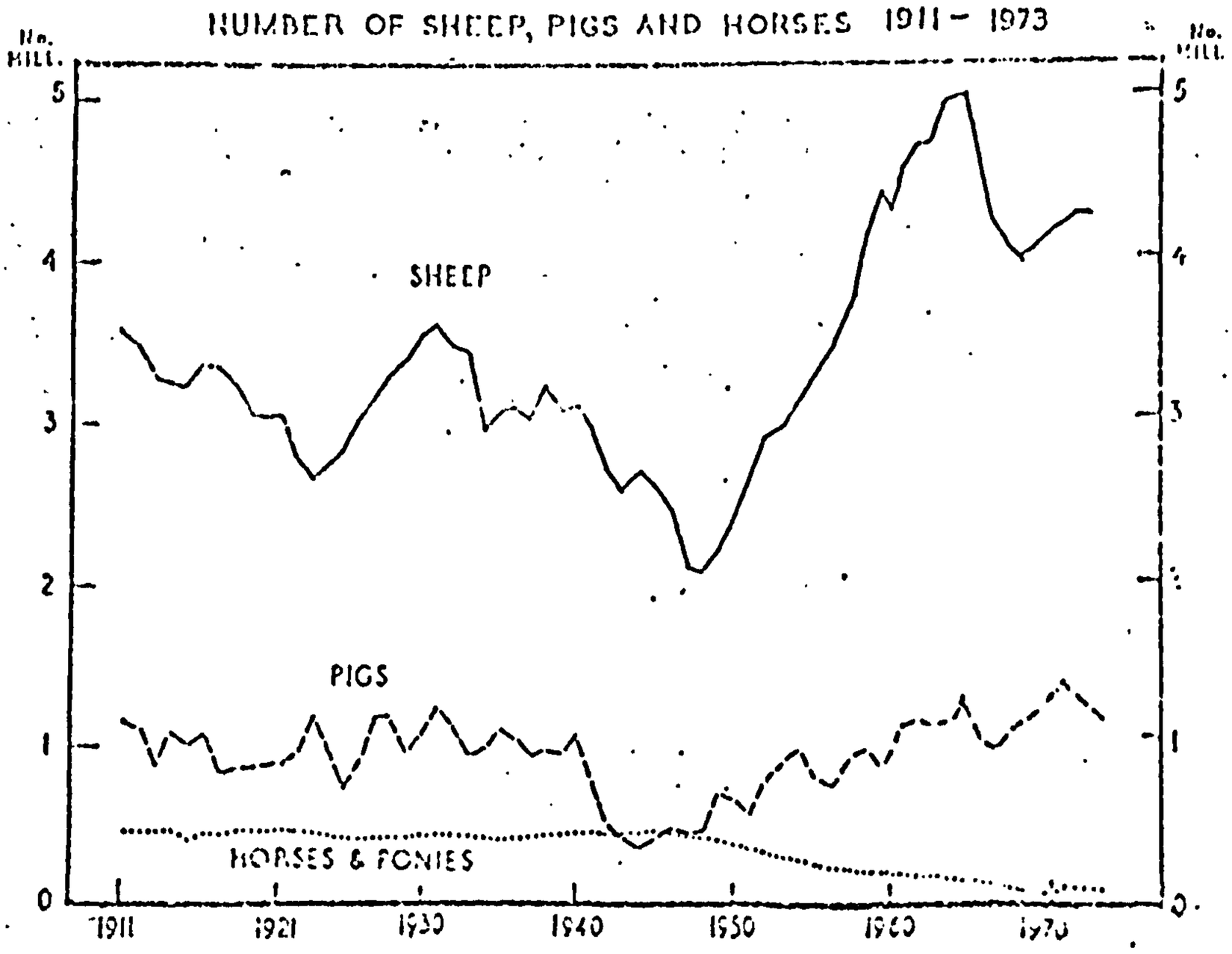


Diagram (17.)



SOURCE: Statistical Abstract of Ireland, 1972-73.

Map 6

Farm Size in Ireland, 1971.

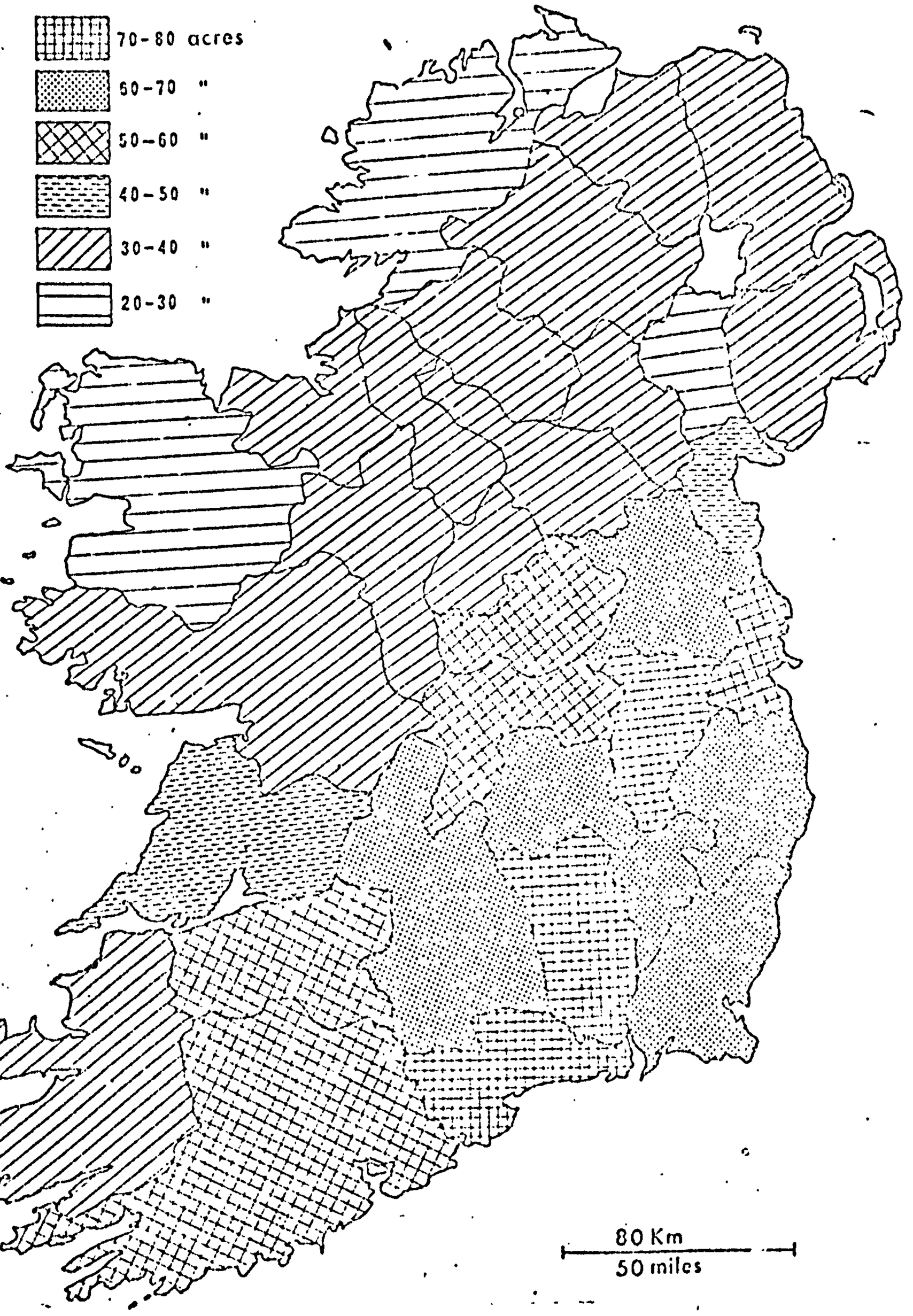


Table 31

Area under crops (thousand acres) at various dates, 1851-1968

	1851	1931	1939	1945	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Wheat	429	21	255	662	214	182	131	189	224
Oats	1,585	623	537	834	289	284	243	238	218
Barley	312	116	74	170	454	464	462	451	454
All corn crops	2,377	763	868	1,680	965	939	841	884	904
Potatoes	666	346	317	388	182	174	168	160	146
Turnips and Mangels	331	266	227	240	139	147	142	139	137
Sugar beet	—	5	42	85	80	66	54	64	64
All root and green crops	1,072	656	612	750	460	443	411	408	392
Total tillage	3,509	1,425	1,492	2,474	1,438	1,395	1,262	1,302	1,306
Hay - First-year	____	331	286	425	302	295	283	273	257
Other	1,060	1,982	1,776	1,526	1,610	1,659	1,723	1,775	1,827
Pasture	7,435	7,989	8,052	7,130	8,147	8,270	8,465	8,458	8,467
Total crops and pasture	12,004	11,727	11,606	11,555	11,233	11,413	11,656	11,747	11,868

Source: Meenan, J., The Irish Economy Since 1922, p.117.

Table 32

Numbers of livestock (thousands) at various dates, 1851-1968

	1851	1931	1939	1945	1965	1966	1967	1968
Horses	400	450	445	465	119	104	89	80
Milch cows	n.a.	1,222	1,260	1,222	1,547	1,582	1,568	1,607
Heifers in calf	n.a.	78	84	96	193	166	178	183
Cattle under 1 year	418	995	1,026	945	1,359	1,382	1,337	1,364
Cattle 1-2 years	461	856	927	921	1,216	1,325	1,349	1,295
Cattle 2-3 years over 3 years	1,448	619	565	709	808	896	992	897
Total cattle	2,327	4,029	4,057	4,211	5,539	5,590	5,586	5,572
Ewes	n.a.	1,507	1,298	1,058	2,197	2,083	1,936	1,882
Total sheep	1,971	3,575	3,048	2,581	5,014	4,661	4,239	4,077
Sows	n.a.	125	95	44	139	95	98	105
Total pigs	902	1,227	931	426	1,266	1,014	985	1,063
Total poultry	5,882	22,782	19,551	18,314	11,405	10,793	10,593	10,492

Source: Meenan, J., The Irish Economy Since 1922, p.123.

Table 33

Population Size and Intercensal Change in Ireland, 1841-1966; Births and Deaths Registered, Natural Increase, and Estimated Net Emigration, 1871-66. Numbers in Thousands.

Year or Period	Population Size	Births	Deaths	Natural	Population Change	Estimated Net Emigration
1841-51	5,112	NA	NA	NA	-1,417	NA
1851-61	4,402	NA	NA	NA	- 710	NA
1861-71	4,053	NA	NA	NA	- 349	NA
1871-81	3,870	1,037	718	319	- 183	502
1881-91	3,469	835	639	196	- 401	597
1891-1901	3,222	738	588	150	- 247	397
1901-11	3,140	714	534	180	-82	262
1911-26	2,972	968	731	237	- 168	405
1926-36	2,968	583	420	163	-4	167
1936-46	2,955	602	428	174	-13	187
1946-51	2,961	322	197	125	+5	120
1951-56	2,898	313	178	135	-62	197
1956-61	2,181	303	171	132	-80	212
1961-66	2,884	313	166	147	+66	81

Source: Census of Ireland, 1946, 1951, 1971.

NA: Not available.

Appendix II

Section of E.E.C. directive on Farm Modernization.

Official Journal of the European Communities.

Council Directive of 17 April 1972 on the modernization of farms.

The Council of The European Communities, having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Articles 42 and 43 thereof; Having regard to the proposals from the Commission; Having regard to the Opinion of the European Parliament; Whereas the objectives of the common agricultural policy set out in Article 39 (I) and (b) of the Treaty can only be achieved through a reform of agricultural structures; Whereas such structural reform is a basic factor in the development of the common agricultural policy; whereas it should therefore be based on a Community concept and on Community criteria; Whereas, because of the diversity of their causes, nature and gravity, structural problems in agricultural may require solutions which vary according to region and are capable of adjustment over a period of time; whereas such solutions must contribute to the overall economic and social development of each region concerned; whereas the best results can be achieved if, acting on the basis of Community concepts and criteria, Member States implement the common measures individually through their own legislative and administrative procedures, and if, in addition, they themselves determine, on the basis of conditions laid down by the Community, the extent to which such measures should be intensified in or concentrated on certain regions; Whereas agricultural structure within the Community is typified by the existence of a large number of farms which lack the structural conditions necessary to provide a fair income and living conditions comparable with those of other occupations; whereas, moreover, the gap between incomes of farms

with a structure enabling them to adjust to economic developments and incomes on other farms is constantly widening; Whereas, in the future, the only farms capable of adjusting to economic developments will be those on which the farmer has adequate occuational skill and competence, on which profitability is verified by accounts and which are capable, through the adoption of rational methods of production, of assuring a fair income and satisfactory working conditions for persons working thereon; whereas, therefore, reform of the structure of agricultural production should be directed towards the formation and development of such farms; Whereas in most cases the development of such farms cannot be achieved by short term measures; whereas, moreover, it can be achieved at a more reasonable and balanced pace under a development plan covering several years and setting out the measures to be taken from the start of operations until completion of the plan; Whereas, with a view to providing a guideline for the development of such farms, the objective which a development plan must attain both as regards the farm's profitability and as regards the working hours of those employed thereon should be specified; Whereas, where the development of the farm includes a proposal for extending the utilized agricultural area, it is not necessary that the farm should be in occupation of the land earmarked for its extension from the time the development plan is first put into operation whereas, it must, however, be certain that the land in question will become available to the farm within the proposed development period; Whereas, in order to ensure that public money allocated for the development of farms is indeed used for the benefits of farms which satisfy the required conditions, development plans should be subject to approval by the competent authorities;

Whereas the efforts of farmers towards achieving the objective of the development plan may be encouraged by allocation to them by way of priority land released under the Council Directive of 17 April 1972 and by granting aids for investment; Whereas aids for investment should be granted mainly in the form of interest rate subsides, in order to leave economic and financial responsibility for the farm in the hands of the farmer; whereas for the same rasons he should pay part of the interest; whereas provision should be made for aids to be granted also in the form of capital grants or deferred repayments; Whereas, in view of the size of the investment required to ensure the profitability of farm businesses concentrating on cattle and sheep enterprises, the granting of aids for the purchase of such stock should be made subject to certain conditions; Whereas, bearing in mind Community production objectives, incentives in respect of pig farming should be granted only under certain special conditions, and incentives in respect of poultry and eggs should be encouraged to concentrate on the production of beef, veal, mutton and lamb; Whereas the keeping of accounts is essential to a correct assessment of the financial and economic situation of farms and in particular of those undergoing modernization; whereas a financial incentive may encourage the keeping of accounts; Whereas, in the interests of rational production and of improvement in living conditions, encouragement should be given to the formation of groups having as their purpose mutual aid between farms a more rational common use of agricultural investments, or group farming operations; Whereas the possibilities of developing farms by means of land reparcelling or irrigation schemes must be used as fully as possible in order to help achieve the objectives of this Directive; whereas it is therefore desirable that special systems of additional aids be introduced in connection with such schemes or that existing systems be adapted;

Whereas the modernization of farms will only be realised successfully if the financial assistance given by Member States is concentrated on achieving the aforesaid objectives; whereas farms whose long-term profitability is doubtful should not be encouraged to embark upon a growth process which is often long and costly; whereas, however, Member States should be allowed to alleviate by means of temporary investment aids, the situation of heads of farm businesses which, for various reasons, are not eligible to benefit from the measures for agricultural reform.

Whereas Member States must be able to adopt special measures of aid for certain regions where the maintenance of a minimum level of population is not assured and where a certain amount of farming is essential in view of the need to conserve the countryside; Whereas the proposed measures are in the Community's interest and are intended to achieve the objectives set out in Article 39 (I) (a) of the Treaty, including the structural changes necessary for the proper functioning of the common market: whereas they therefore constitute common measures within the meaning of Article 6 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 729/70 of 21 April 1970 on the financing of the common agricultural policy; Whereas, inasmuch as the Community contributes to the financing of the common measures, it must be in a position to ascertain that the provisions adopted by Member States for the implementation of those measures will contribute towards achievements of the objectives thereof; whereas, to this end, provision should be made for a procedure establishing close cooperation between Member States and the Commission within the Standing Committee on Agricultural Structure set up by Article I of the Council Decision of 4 December 1962 on the coordination of policies on agricultural structure, and involving, as regards financial aspects, consultation with the EAGGF Committee referred to in Articles II to 15 of Regulation (EEC no 729/70).

Whereas it is desirable that the European Parliament and the Council be able, on the basis of a report submitted by the Commission, to examine annually the effects of the national and Community measures taken, so that they may assess the need to supplement or adapt the system introduced hereunder;

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

TITLE I

Incentives to farms suitable for development

Article 1

1. With a view to bringing about structural conditions conducive to a significant improvement in agricultural incomes and working and production conditions, Member States shall introduce a system of selective incentives to farms suitable for development, designed to encourage their operation and development under rational conditions.

2. Member States may, acting in accordance with the general provisions to be adopted hereafter by the Council under the procedure laid down in Article 43 of the Treaty:

——vary according to region the amount of the financial incentives provided for in the first sub-paragraph of Article 8 (2), and, within the limits set out therein, those provided for in Articles 10, 11, and 12 and also those provided for in Article 13;

——refrain from applying in certain regions all or some of the measures provided for in Articles 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Article 2.

For the purposes of this Directive a farm shall be considered suitable for development where:

1. the farmer:

(a) practises farming as his main occupation;

(b) possesses adequate occupational skill and competence;

(c) undertakes that from the start of the development plan he will keep accounts as defined in Article II;

(d) draws up a plan for the development of the farm business which satisfies the conditions laid down in Article 4;

2. its level of earned income is below that fixed in Article 4(I) as the modernization objective, or where its present structure is such as to jeoparadize the maintenance of that income at a comparable level; in the latter case, the interest rate subsidy provided for in Article 8 (I) shall apply only to 80% of the loan referred to in paragraph 2 of that Article.

Article 3

1. Member States shall for the purposes of this Directive defino what is meant by the expression of farmer practising farming as his main occupation. Definitions shall, in the case of a natural person, at least include the condition that the proportion of income from farming be not less than 50% of the farmer's total income and that the working time devoted to non-farming activities be less than half of the farmer's total working time.

Having regard, in particular, to the criteria indicated in the preceeding subparagraph, Member States shall define the aforesaid expression:

--------in relation to a person other than a natural person;

--------in respect of a farm owned by a person other than the farmer;

--------in respect of a farm worked under a share-cropping agreement.

2. In addition, Member States shall lay down the criteria for assessing the occupational skill and competence of the farmer. Such criteria shall refer to the standard of agricultural training received or to a minimum period of farming experience or to both.

Article 4.

1. The development plan provided for in Article 2 (I) (d) must show that, upon its completion, the farm undergoing modernization will be capable of attaining as a minimum, in principle for either one or two man-work units, a level of earned income comparable to that received for non-agricultural work in the region in question.

2. A comparable earned income as referred to in paragraph I means the average gross wage for a non-agricultural worker. Member States may, where necessary, take account of disparities between the social security arrangements for farmers and those for non-agricultural workers.

3. For the purpose of showing that the farm undergoing modernization will be capable of attaining the objective referred to in paragraph I, the earned income to be attained upon completion of the development plan shall be compared either:

———with the comparable earned income as defined in paragraph 2, or

———with that of reference farms which at the time when application is made have an earned income equivalent to the comparable income as defined in paragraph 2.

4. Member States

(a) shall:

———specify the minimum member of man-work units, having regard to the various types of production and to the working conditions associated therewith;

———determine what constitutes an adequate return on the capital invested in the farm business.

———fix, having regard to the duration of the development plan, the modernization objective referred to in paragraph I;

(b) may provide that up to a specified percentage of the earned income to be attained upon completion of the development plan may consist of income arising from non-agricultural activities, so long as the earned income derived from the farm business is at least equal to the comparable earned income for one man-work unit. The percentage specified may not exceed 20%

5. Upon completion of the plan, the level of income referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 must be attainable by means of an annual working period not exceeding 2300 hours.

6. The achievement of the objectives of the development plan may be spread over a maximum of six years. However, Member States laid down in Article 18, to specify a longer period for certain regions.

Article 5

1. Persons coming within Articles 2 and 3 who wish to benefit from the incentives herein provided for shall submit applications to the authorities appointed under Article 7.

2. An application may be made by a single farmer or by several farmers who are in association or who have agreed to form an association. Member States shall not discriminate between single and associated.farmers.

Article 6

1. The application shall be accompanied by development plan provided for in Article 2 (I) (d). This shall contain all the necessary particulars for assessing whether the farm satisfies the conditions laid down in Articles 2 and 4, and in particular;

———————a description of the situation at the start of the plan;

———————a description, in the form of a forward estimate, of the situation on completion of the plan;

———————an indication of the measures to be taken, and in particular of the investments to be made, in order to achieve the desired results.

2. If the development plan contains a proposal for extending the area of the farm, the enlarged area shall consist of:

———————the land already in the possession of the farmer;

———————land in respect of which he has been given a legally enforceable promise entitling him to possession.

Article 7.

Member States shall:

———————appoint the authorities responsible for examining application and approving development plans;

———————lay down an examination and approval procedure.

Article 8.

1. Incentives to farmers whose applications have been accepted and whose development plans have been approved shall include the following measures:

(a) the allocation, by way of priority, of land released under the Council Directive of 17 April, 1972;

(b) the granting of aids in the form of interest rate subsidies in respect of the investments necessary for carrying out the development plan, but excluding expenditure incurred in buying:

———————land;

———————pigs, poultry, or calves intended for slaughter.

With regard to the purchase of livestock, only the initial purchase provided for by the development plan may be taken into account.

(c) the provision of guarantees for loans contracted and the interest thereon, where the security or personal guarantee provided is insufficient.

2. The interest rate subsidy provided for in paragraph I (b) shall apply to the whole of the loan, except for any part of the loan exceeding 40,000 units of account per man-work unit. It shall not exceed 5% and, in principle, shall cover a period of fifteen years, which Member States may, however, extend to twenty years for investments in immovable property and reduce to ten years for other investments. The rate of interest remaining payable by the beneficiary may not be lower than 3%. Member States may grant this aid, in whole or in part, in the form of a capital subsidy or of deferred repayment; or they may combine the two forms.

However, the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission and voting as provided in Article 43 (2) of the Treaty, may authorize a Member State, for a specified period:

——to grant interest rate subsidies exceeding 5%, if such action is warranted by the situation of the the capital market in that Member State;

——to lower the minimum rate payable by the beneficiary to 2% in certain regions.

Article 9

1. Where the development plan provides for the purchase of cattle or sheep, the granting for the purchase of such livestock of the aids provided for in Article 8 (b) and (c) shall be subject to the condition that the proportion of sales from the cattle and sheep enterprises on completion of the development plan will be greater than 60% of the total sales of the business.

2. Where the development plan provides for an investment in pig farming, the granting under Article 8 (I) (b) or (c) of the incentives to that investment shall be subject to the condition that the investment is of at least 10000 units of account but does not exceed 40000 units of account and that the farm will be capable on completion of the plan of producing at least 35% of the feedingstuffs.

3. In respect of poultry and eggs the granting of the incentives provided for in Article 8 (I) (b) and (c) shall be subject to a subsequent decision by the Council, acting on a proposal from the Commission and voting as provided in Article 43 (2) of the Treaty.

Article 10

Where it is provided in the development plan that the farm will concentrate on the production of beef, veal, mutton or lamb, the incentives provided for in Article 8 shall be supplemented by the granting of a guidance premium. The amount of this premium shall be fixed before 15 September 1972 by the Council, acting upon a proposal from the Commission and voting as provided in Article 43 (2) of the Treaty.

Appendix III

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