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*Small Holdings
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 Great Britain size of farms*

CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS IN ENGLAND AND WALES DURING THE PAST 100 YEARS WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO SMALL HOLDINGS AND THE PROBLEMS OF SMALL HOLDINGS

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BROADLY speaking, the chief transition periods in the evolution of the farming industry of this country have had their counterparts in important changes in the size of the unit of agricultural management. Thus the great development of sheep farming in Tudor times was accompanied by a movement towards the formation of large holdings. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, centuries so often wrongly assumed to be uneventful, it is fairly certain that there was a reaction in favour of small farms, culminating in those conditions of which Gregory King has left us a statistical picture. The next big transition was the agrarian manifestation of the great changes ushered in by the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was this period that produced the modern so-called large-scale English farm. The beginning of the period with which this paper is supposed to deal (that is, the last 100 years) coincides with the time when this second movement towards large-scale farming was in full swing.

Fortunately for us a very full study of the greater part of the same field has already been made by a distinguished German student of our agrarian history. In his book on "Large and Small Holdings" Dr. Levy has traced the modern growth of the typical large-scale English farm. He has shown how that growth synchronized with a period in the history of our agriculture when corn-growing was supreme, that is, between 1750 and 1880. "From 1760 to 1813 there was a one-sided extension of arable at the expense of all other branches of farming. And this change had a direct counterpart in a great change in the customary unit of agricultural management. . . . Precisely at the time when the rise in corn prices began, mention begins to be made of the 'engrossing of farms'. . . . The passion for large farms, however, did not reach its height till early in the nineteenth century, when the small holdings disappeared in hundreds to be replaced by large ones. . . . The peace of 1815 did not put an end to the development of the new form of agricultural holding, (since) . . . the

Corn Laws caused an artificial development of that unit of holding which the economic conditions of the previous period had formed. . . . (Again) the extension of pasture farming after 1846 was in no way opposed to the further expansion of the large farm system (but) it fell in line with the predominant system of large arable farms. . . . (So that) the extension of the large farm system may be said to have continued well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century."

From 1880 onwards Dr. Levy finds that this movement towards large farms was checked, and thereafter a reaction in favour of small farms set in. The cause of this change he sees in the altered nature of the demand for agricultural products resulting in a re-orientation of English farming. "The period of almost 120 years of predominant corn production had witnessed a development of agricultural holdings which closely correspond to the peculiarities of that branch of agriculture. With the remarkable transformation of agricultural production since about 1880, the unit of holding has undergone changes no less revolutionary in character." It would appear, however, that the statistical evidence which is available for this later phase does not bear out entirely Dr. Levy's thesis that the size of the unit of management has responded quickly to the change in the nature of the production. It is the purpose of this paper to present this statistical evidence in such a way as to be easily comprehended by our overseas guests.

Since 1870 our knowledge of the changes in the numbers of the various sizes of holdings is based on a fair basis of fact. Since that date a statement of the number of separate returns made annually by the occupiers of land, has been incorporated from time to time in the official yearly reports of agricultural statistics. Before giving any of these figures, it will be as well to indicate very briefly how they are collected, and what are their more serious limitations.

These returns are collected every year, on June 4, from the "occupiers of all agricultural land exceeding one acre in extent." Up to 1918 the work of collecting these statistics was carried out by the local officials of the Customs and Excise. Since 1918 specially appointed persons acting directly on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture have been entrusted with the work. These persons are part-time officials only, and for most part they are land-valuers or such like—persons having private businesses of their own. Up

to 1926 the filling out of the returns by the farmers was entirely voluntary. The Agricultural Returns Act of 1925, however, makes it compulsory for all occupiers of agricultural land to give an annual return specifying (a) acreage of land in cultivation, (b) acreage of crops, (c) numbers of livestock, and (d) numbers of persons employed. The returns are given under a strict guarantee of secrecy, and can be used only for the purpose of compiling the annual official statistics. Incidentally this severely limits their value from the individual investigator's point of view, since he is barred access to the study of the returns other than on a county basis. It should be stated also that the accuracy of the individual returns depends on the farmers making them, since it is nearly impossible for the persons charged with their collection to spot any but the most glaring inaccuracies. But although they are subject to the usual limitations of the mailed questionnaire, there is no reason for doubting that the big majority are given in every good faith.

Secondly, it is very necessary to remember that the primary object of the collection of these annual statistics is to ascertain the acreage of the principal crops and the numbers of livestock on the farms of the country. The computation of the numbers of separate holdings is, therefore, only incidental to the major purpose involved. Since 1922, however, special efforts have been directed towards obtaining as accurate data as possible on this point also. Thus every precaution is taken to ensure that each separate return represents a separate unit of management. This is not always easy, and it is recognized that a certain amount of error results from the difficulty of "securing uniformity of returns from farmers occupying two or more holdings."

Thirdly, it is recognized "that the returns made annually to the Ministry cannot be regarded as absolutely complete as regards the quite small pieces of land. . . . The difficulty of tracing and identifying small areas is obvious, and in practice a number of such holdings are bound to escape the vigilance of the officers responsible for collecting the returns. This has always been recognized, but it has been considered that the task of obtaining absolutely complete returns would involve an expenditure in labour and money disproportionate to the value of the increased accuracy obtained." Thus the official statement. One is tempted to sug-

gest, however, that it might be well worth while attempting one exhaustive census of all the holdings in the country. It would then be comparatively easy to revise such a record annually.

Fourthly, the holdings in the official statistics refer only to what is technically known as "cultivated area" and this must always be borne in mind when interpreting the figures to be given later. It is of particular importance in appreciating the true significance of such statistical concepts as the "average size of farm." For example the average size of all holdings in England and Wales, obtained by dividing the total area of "cultivated land" by the number of undertakings, is only 63.6 acres, but if the area of rough grazing is also considered then the area of the average farm is increased to 76.5 acres.

Fifthly, the improvements in the arrangements for collecting the returns, and particularly their more comprehensive character in the later years has undoubtedly influenced the yearly trends to a certain degree. The official view is, that from 1895 onwards, the returns have been more uniform in character.

Lastly, it is unfortunate that the method of classification into size-groups adopted in presenting the statistics has not been uniform throughout. Prior to 1895 all holdings of over one-quarter acre were included in the returns. Since then only holdings of over one acre have been included. This has, of course, restricted the comparison of the size-groups under five acres. Again, the classification of holdings over 100 acres into three size-groups adopted up to 1895, is not the same as that used since 1913, while a different classification of all holdings into four groups only, was in use from 1895 to 1908. However, I have endeavored to present in one table all the more important series of figures, in such a way as to show the general movements and without over-burdening the table with too many statistics (table 1). The table is based on the fuller tables given in the official report on "The Agricultural Output of England and Wales, 1925," and has been brought up to date. Bearing in mind what has been said about the limitations of these statistics it is fair to assume that this table supplies a fairly complete picture of the trend of affairs for the last 58 years.

I will now attempt to review as briefly as possible the chief movements as revealed by these statistics, and, it will facilitate matters if I take the various size-groups one after the other.

1. As I have just said, the statistics for holdings under five

Table 1. Numbers of Agricultural Holdings of Various Sizes in England and Wales in Different Years From 1870 to 1928

Year	Under* 5 acres	Above 5 and not exceeding 20 acres	Above 20 and not exceeding 50 acres	Above 50 and not exceeding 100 acres	Above 100 and not exceeding 150 acres	Above 150 and not exceeding 300 acres	Above 300 acres	Grand total
1870	113,050	127,761	75,418	54,569			78,749(2)	449,547
1875			333,630(1)	54,498		65,766(3)	16,106	470,000
1885	136,425	126,674	73,472	54,937		67,024(3)	16,608	475,140
1895	97,818	126,714	74,846	56,791		68,277(3)	16,021	440,467
1914	91,570	121,698	78,454	59,514	31,860	37,615	14,413	435,124
1918	83,392	114,064	77,878	60,572	32,453	37,641	14,126	420,126
1920	80,737	114,517	79,542	60,697	32,298	36,708	13,492	417,991
1921	81,217	116,159	80,967	61,001	32,020	35,822	12,947	420,133
1924	76,859	111,934	79,537	60,781	31,930	35,481	12,861	409,383
1925	75,283	110,385	79,119	60,931	31,875	35,411	12,704	405,708
1926	74,185	108,814	78,827	61,063	31,797	35,373	12,580	402,639
1927	74,331	107,843	78,654	61,317	31,946	35,121	12,522	401,734
1928	74,456	107,126	78,546	61,398	31,865	35,121	12,383	400,895

* Previous to 1895 holdings of one-quarter acre and over are included while from 1895 onwards only holdings of one acre and over are included.

1. Includes all holdings not exceeding 50 acres in size.

2. Includes all holdings above 100 acres in size.

3. Includes all holdings above 100 acres in size but not exceeding 300 acres.

acres, that is, small allotment holdings, are not strictly comparable for the periods before and after 1895, since, previous to that date, the returns included holdings of one-quarter acre and over, but from 1895 onwards only holdings of one acre and above have been recorded. An examination of the earlier set of figures shows that the number of holdings in the two groups then distinguished, that is, holdings between one quarter and five acres in size, showed a marked increase in the period from 1870 to 1885, this increase continuing up to 1890. Since 1890, however, there has been, with only few exceptions, a decided downward movement in the number of holdings under five acres in size, a net reduction of 23,362, or 23.9 per cent having occurred since 1895.

2. The movement in the numbers of holdings in the "5-20" acre group has been very similar. In 1870 there were 127,761 holdings registered in this group; by 1895 the number had dropped to 126,714. With the exception of an increase of over 2,000 between 1918 and 1921, this decrease has continued right up to the present day, the number for 1928 showing a reduction of 19,588 or 15 per cent from the corresponding number for 1895.

It is clear, therefore, that there has been a considerable diminution in the numbers of these very small holdings, holdings between 1 and 20 acres, during the last three decades. In 1895, these two groups together accounted for 50.98 per cent of all holdings in the country, and for 6.23 per cent of the cultivated area; in 1928 they accounted for only 45.29 per cent of all holdings, and in 1924 (the latest year for which figures are available) for only 5.82 per cent of the cultivated area.

3. The first decade after 1870 also witnessed a reduction in the number of holdings in the "20-50" acre group. But from 1885 to 1914 there were successive increases in this group, which, with the exception of a drop in the war years, 1914-1918, continued up to 1921, when the highest number (80,967) was recorded. Since 1921, however, the opposite tendency appears to have set in once again, and a reduction in numbers has been shown each year, the number for 1928 being 78,546. In 1895 this group accounted for 16.99 per cent of all the holdings, and for 9.04 per cent of the cultivated area; in 1928 it accounted for 19.59 per cent of all holdings, and in 1924 for 10.40 per cent of the cultivated area.

4. With but little exception, the numbers of holdings of from 50 to 100 acres in size have tended to increase throughout the

period covered by the official statistics. In 1870 their number was 54,569, in 1895 it was 56,791, in 1918 it was 60,572, and in 1928 it was 61,398—the highest figure so far recorded. There has been, therefore, a total increase of 6,829 holdings in this class since 1870, or an increase of over 12.5 per cent in 58 years. The increase has been 8.1 per cent since 1895. In 1895 this group accounted for 12.89 per cent of all holdings, and for 15.0 per cent of the cultivated area. In 1928 it accounted for 15.32 per cent of all holdings, and in 1924 for 17.06 per cent of the cultivated area.

5. In 1875 there were 65,766 holdings in the "100-300" acre group. By 1895, this number had increased to 68,277, the increase continuing up to 1918, when the group included 70,094 holdings. Since 1918, however, a continuous decrease has been recorded, and in 1928 the number of holdings included was only 66,986. It is unfortunate that the division of this group into holdings over and under 150 acres in size has not been used throughout the whole period for which statistics have been collected. From 1913 onwards, however, during which period such sub-grouping has been in existence, the movements in the numbers of the two groups have been very similar, that is, the increase in numbers up to 1918, and the subsequent decrease is common to both, with the exception of a slight increase in 1926-27 in the case of the "100-150" acre group. In 1895 the two groups together accounted for 15.50 per cent of all holdings, and for 42.16 per cent of the cultivated area, in 1928 they accounted for 24.19 per cent of all holdings, and in 1924 for 43.84 per cent of the cultivated area.

6. For the largest size group, that is, holdings of over 300 acres, the earliest figure that can be used is for 1875, when the group included 16,106 holdings. Since then, this group has shown a very decided tendency to decrease in numbers, and in 1928 only 12,383 holdings of over 300 acres were recorded. In 1895 this group accounted for 3.64 per cent of all holdings, and for 27.57 per cent of the cultivated area; in 1928 it accounted for 3.09 per cent of all holdings, and in 1924 for 22.88 per cent of the cultivated area.

Summarizing these figures, it is seen that for the period covered by our official statistics, namely, the last 58 years, there has been a tendency for the extreme size-groups (those under 20 acres, and those over 300 acres) to decrease numerically throughout. On the other hand, the medium sized farms have become actually and proportionately more numerous. Thus, the "50-100" acre group

has shown a continuous increase in numbers throughout the period. Again, the next lower size-group (from 20 to 50 acres) has also increased in numbers over the greater part of the period, but since 1921 this group has tended to decrease. Similarly with farms from 100 to 300 acres, the tendency has been to increase in numbers during the whole period up to 1918, when the opposite tendency sets in.

The greatest reduction in numbers has occurred in the smaller size groups. But in interpreting this reduction it is necessary to remember what has already been said regarding the admitted shortcomings of the official returns so far as these very small holdings are concerned. Improvements in the methods of collecting the returns must also be considered, particularly the attempt that has been made since 1922 to ensure that separate pieces of land controlled by one management should be returned as a single unit. In this connection, also, the continually changing area accounted for at different dates as "cultivated" may easily result in shifting many holdings from one size group to another. Again the relentless absorption of cultivated land by expanding industrial areas, has taken a heavier toll of the smaller holdings "partly by reason of the fact that small holdings tend to cluster around towns, and are, therefore, more immediately within the sphere of urban encroachment, and partly because the absorption of an equal area may involve numerous small holdings, or only one large holding." Evidence of this is provided by the fact that the decrease in the number of smaller holdings has been comparatively more pronounced in industrial counties. Again, a process of consolidation in one district may counterbalance an attempt to provide small holdings in other districts. In this respect the official statement of what occurred during the war period is relevant. "It is held that the conversion during the war, into allotments, of fields in the outskirts of towns, previously in separate ownership, resulted in the disappearance of numerous small farms—a movement with which the provision elsewhere of similar sized holdings did not keep pace." Lastly, to quote the official report once more, "It is doubtful whether the reduction in the number of holdings from 1 to 20 acres is really representative of actual fact, in view of the extensive changes in the occupation of agricultural land and the very considerable number of small holdings created in recent years. Moreover, seeing that a considerable proportion of the holdings

of 1 to 20 acres returned to the Ministry (45,000, according to crop reporters' estimate in 1925) are only partially or incidentally used for agriculture, it is quite impossible to estimate how far, if at all, the decline in the total numbers of holdings in the two smallest groups is due to a decrease in real small holdings."

This official statement is only one of many made in the reports during recent years, and all prompted towards proving that the decrease in the numbers of these small holdings does not necessarily indicate that the attempt to provide small holdings by the government has been a failure. This attempt started back in 1893, but for all practical purposes, the existing land settlement schemes in the country commenced with the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1908, when local authorities were authorized to make provision for small holdings. The scheme was developed in many respects by the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act of 1919, and the Small Holdings Colonies Act, both of which aimed at settling ex-service men on the land. All these earlier acts are now replaced by the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1926. As a result of the workings of these various acts, from 1908 to 1926 inclusive, approximately 38,700 new holdings were created in England and Wales, more than half of which have been created since the war.

Although it is possible to point to the above tendencies, yet one would certainly not be justified in stating, from a perusal of the available statistics, that any fundamental changes have occurred during the period under review. It may be possible to give instances of consolidation of holdings having occurred within recent years; it may be possible also to indicate instances of the opposite process, but neither of these two processes have been on a sufficiently extensive scale to be reflected in the figures for the whole country. It is also true that since 1895 there has been a reduction of over 39,000, or nearly 9 per cent, in the number of returns for the whole of England and Wales, but, in order to put this in its correct perspective, it is necessary to remember that over 50 per cent of this reduction is accounted for by so-called holdings of under five acres in extent. As far as the more purely agricultural interests are concerned, the available statistics would appear to show that the sizes of farm holdings in this country have been fairly static for over half a century.

In view of the important changes that have occurred in the nature of agricultural production within the same period, it is probably

difficult for those not fully acquainted with the development of our rural economy to understand why the size of farms has not responded to apparent economic forces. The explanation, to my mind, is to be found in the intimate connection which has existed in this country between the size of holdings and the system of land tenure. The modern English landlord-and-tenant system is largely a product of the agrarian changes of the 18th century. The wholesale enclosures, with the accompanying engrossing of farms which characterised these changes, had as one of their principal aims the building up of large estates. The size and the layout of the farms forming these estates was a secondary consideration, and in the majority of cases it was largely haphazard. This being so, the evolution of English farm holdings was not dictated by purely economic forces, and certainly there was no conscious effort to secure an optimum distribution. In the earlier phases of this development the large farm was in the ascendant and was favoured by the landlord class for very obvious reasons. Moreover, it was also helped by the comparative prosperity of arable farming, and was in harmony with the economic philosophy of the time. But when the transformation of agricultural production which set in about 1880 challenged the preeminence of the large farm, there was no attempt, and no desire on the part of those responsible for the management of these large estates, to respond to the new conditions. It is clear, therefore, that except in its earlier stages when it favoured the extension of large farms, the system of big estates in England has been essentially inelastic. (The exceptions have been so few that they have monopolised attention, as, for example, the efforts of the Duke of Bedford on his estates). In other words, it would appear that in a country like England, traditional institutions, once established, slow down considerably the rate of change which purely economic forces would otherwise in all probability have set in motion. We shall return later to a consideration of the possible effect of the present disintegrating forces at work within this system of tenure on the future trend of the size of holdings in the country.

In the meantime it is necessary to give a brief description of the present day distribution of holdings. In view of what has just been said of the comparatively static nature of conditions, you will realise that such a description applies, with but little variation, to the state of affairs prevalent in the country for many generations.

At the outset it is necessary to correct the very prevalent idea that England is essentially a country of large farms. This idea owes its origin to the fact that, as we have just said, the development of modern English farming was very partial to the large scale farming system up to about 1880. It is also partly due to the fact that most of the qualities for which English farming is deservedly famous, have been closely associated with the big farming class. Colour is also lent to this impression by the much greater part which the proletarian labourer plays in English rural life than is the case in most other farming communities. Nevertheless, the most cursory examination of the statistics of this question must dispell the idea that England is farmed by large farmers. In England, over 45 per cent of the so-called "farmers" are occupiers of holdings under 20 acres in size, while farms of over 300 acres form only 3.6 per cent of the total number. The importance of these small and medium sized holdings is also emphasised by the fact that they cover the greater part of the cultivated surface of the country. The figures for England for 1924 are given in table 2.

Table 2. Total Acreage in Holdings of Various Sizes in England, 1924

Size of holding (acres)	Total acreage	Per cent total
1-50.....	3,457,443	15.0
50-300.....	13,816,988	59.9
Over 300.....	5,796,951	25.1

It is hardly necessary to comment on these figures. Generally speaking, the smaller farms are more prevalent in those counties having a high industrial population. Major Craigie pointed out in a paper to the Royal Statistical Society in 1897, that "if we except Middlesex and Cornwall, the counties which have the smallest sized holdings lie together in a group. They are Lancashire, Derby, Worcester, Chester, York (W.R.), and Stafford." Today we would add a few other favoured areas, particularly the Holland Division of Lincolnshire, and Isle of Ely in Cambridge. At the other extreme, the large farms preponderate in mountainous counties such as Northumberland, in downland counties such as Wilts, Berks, and Dorset, and in the eastern counties where arable farming still predominates. The connection between the prevalent size of holdings and the importance of arable farming which was

mentioned by agricultural writers at the end of the 18th century, and which was so fully traced in Levy's study of 1908 still holds good. "Hand in hand with the increased percentage of arable in the East goes an increase of large holdings. Hand in hand with the increase in percentage of pasture in the West goes an increase of medium and small holdings."

I have purposely omitted the Welsh figures from this last statement, for I wish to emphasise an essential difference which exists between the agricultural communities of the two countries in this particular. At the danger of appearing to contradict what I have just said, I wish to show that, as compared with England, Wales is still more essentially a country of small farmers. Thus, while the average size of holding for the whole of England is approximately 67 acres, the corresponding average for Wales is only 45 acres, and in Wales, over 87 per cent of the holdings are under 100 acres in extent. But the difference between the two countries is more profound than even these bare statistics indicate. It is true that there are still in England a high proportion of small and medium sized farms. In England, however, the importance of the big farmer in the rural economy is out of all proportion to his numbers, and this lends a considerable amount of truth to the prevailing ideas of English farming. In Wales, on the other hand, not only are the large farmers in a small minority, but the whole structure of the Welsh rural community rests on the basis of the small family farm. In other words, while England, particularly the England of the South, the Midlands, and the East, has, for over a century, departed from the peasant tradition, rural Wales is still essentially peasant in structure and outlook. What is true of Wales, is, I believe, also true of the greater part of Scotland.

In order to touch on the whole subject set me in the title, I must, for the rest of the paper, mention very briefly the special nature of the small-holding problem in this country. I will content myself with suggesting certain points more as an introduction to the discussion to follow than as being in any way a complete survey of a subject which still continues to be a field for contention in spite of all that has been said and written about it in the past.

The two chief points which I have attempted to bring out in the first part of my paper may be taken as sufficient reason for concluding in this way. In the first place the preponderance of small farms in England and Wales still makes the problems of the small

farmer of primary importance. Secondly, the fact that there are unmistakable signs that at the present day the English system of land tenure is undergoing a process of disintegration, may have important repercussions on the size of farms, since the present distribution forms an integral part of that system of tenure. In other words, British farming is passing through another important transition period, and, just as in the transition periods of the past, it is highly probable that this transition period, also, will be reflected in important changes in the size of farm holdings.

Any discussion of the small-holding problem must distinguish clearly between the various forms of small holdings. In particular it is necessary to differentiate between the problems of the small farmer who depends on his small farm for his living, and the problems of the man whose tenure of a small holding is coupled with some other employment. It is very unfortunate that we have no detailed statistical evidence on which to classify the small farms of the country on this basis. The only available data for the whole country are based on an estimate made by the crop reporters for 1925. According to the estimate then made, it appeared that holdings which could be described only as miscellaneous and not purely agricultural made up approximately 35 per cent of the "1-5" acre group, 17 per cent of the "5-20" acre group, and 2.5 per cent of the "20-50" acre group. This estimate may be compared with the more detailed figures obtained during a survey conducted in 1924 of small holdings in the county of Carmarthen, when it was ascertained that nearly 46 per cent of the occupiers of the 4,000 small holdings under 50 acres in size found in that county, had some other employment than farming. An analysis of the occupations of these people, which was also made, brought out the very wide appeal which small holdings exert. The results are summarised in table 3.

To make this analysis complete, these persons should have been divided into two groups, according to whether the occupation of the holdings was or was not their primary source of employment and income. It is of special interest to draw attention to the very large number of coal miners included in the table, since they form an example of a very important class of occupiers of small holdings in this country, that is, a class of industrial workers. In the case of these men the occupation of a small holding is a very doubtful asset, since there are reasons for believing that in the majority

Table 3. Employment of 1905 Carmarthenshire Small Holders Engaged in Non-Agricultural Occupations, 1924*

<i>Other occupation pursued</i>	<i>Number</i>
General labourers.....	360
Road labourers.....	110
Hauliers.....	78
Woodmen.....	19
Gardeners.....	8
Blacksmiths.....	58
Carpenters, wheelwrights, etc.....	124
Masons.....	55
Shoemakers and cobblers.....	15
Clogmakers.....	7
Coopers and hoopers.....	3
Tailors.....	15
Weavers.....	29
Dyers.....	1
Rabbit catchers.....	12
Gamekeepers.....	2
Jockeys and horse trainers.....	5
Coachmen and chauffeurs.....	6
Butchers.....	72
Bakers.....	2
Millers.....	51
Publicans.....	92
Grocers and provision dealers.....	77
Cattle dealers and hucksters.....	67
Milk vendors.....	23
Woollen manufacturers.....	33
Tanyard proprietors.....	4
Coal merchants.....	6
Timber merchants.....	24
Ministers of religion.....	46
Medical practitioners.....	2
Schoolmasters.....	5
Veterinary surgeons.....	3
Auctioneers, surveyors, etc.....	21
Postal employees.....	18
Parochial officers.....	12
Clerks.....	13
Clock makers.....	1
Piano tuners.....	1
Hairdressers.....	1
Cockledealers and fishermen.....	4
Coal miners.....	363
Tinplate workers.....	8
Lime workers.....	2
Railwaymen.....	33
Quarrymen.....	14
Total.....	1905

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of cases it means that they purchase the advantages of living at a distance from their work and in the country, only at the price of considerable extra manual toil, and at the price of making their wives and families work hard. These adjunctive holdings, have, of course, much in common with the allotment. They differ from the latter, however, in the important fact that generally the home is a part of the small holding, while the allotment is not connected in any way with the home.

Small holders depending entirely on their holdings for a living may, again, be subdivided into two classes. One class consists of those who pursue some special type of cultivation such as market gardening, poultry rearing, or fruit growing. According to the 1925 estimate already alluded to, 17,000 of the holdings under 50 acres in size might be described as fruit or vegetable holdings, and a further 4,500 holdings might be specifically classified as poultry holdings. The former class is concentrated in certain specially favoured districts particularly in Worcester (Vale of Evesham), Kent, Bedford, Isle of Ely, Middlesex, Norfolk, Lincoln (Isle of Axholm and the Holland Division), Hampshire (Botley District), Gloucester and Somerset. Generally speaking, the poultry holdings are concentrated in the industrial areas, being most numerous in Lancashire, York (W. Riding), and Cheshire. Then come Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and Hants.

Assuming that these estimated figures are approximately correct, it follows that the great majority of the whole-time small holders in this country are not specialists in any way, and the general statement can be made that it is only in the matter of size that most of the small farms in England and Wales differ from the big farms in their immediate neighbourhood. We must therefore conclude that it is the problem of this type of small farmer which is our real small-holding problem.

The question of the economic position of these holdings is therefore of first class importance for the understanding of the agricultural situation in this country. Much of the work done in the field of agricultural economic research in this country has attempted to throw some light on this question. In most of the economic surveys of farming, for example, the attempt has been made to show the influence of the size of holdings on efficiency and on profits. Data have been collected to rebut or to support, as the case may be, the old familiar arguments for and against the small

farm. A few studies have been concerned entirely with the position of the small farmer, and figures have been obtained concerning the cropping, stocking, general equipment and employment on small farms, as well as evidence concerning their financial outgoings and income, this being used to estimate the net income of the small farmer. This kind of investigation is perfectly familiar to all, since I believe similar investigations have been very numerous in North America, and also in Europe. Such information is without a doubt exceedingly useful for the study of the economic position of the small farmer, but, it is not so certain that the entire process of assessing the small farmer's position by comparing the so-called "profits" thus estimated with the "profits" of the larger farm is altogether justified. The dangers of the method may be illustrated by further reference to the survey of small holdings in Carmarthenshire, where, by charging family labour at the current rate of wages, and by putting a price on the produce of the holding consumed by the household, the attempt is made to arrive at the "net return" of the smaller holder, and the conclusion is drawn that, for Carmarthenshire, only the more favourably situated small holdings of the valleys can show a return which compares favourably with that which the occupier could have obtained by finding himself employment as a hired farm hand.

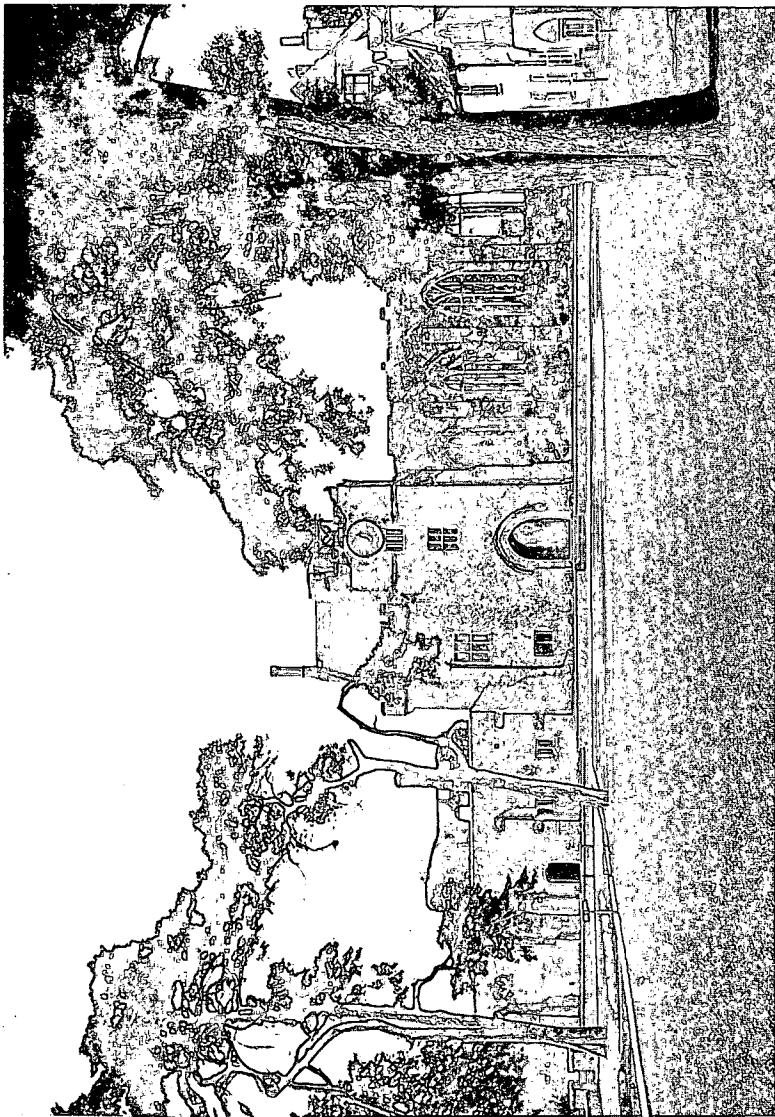
The method has its use, but it also has its serious limitations. In particular the process of valuing family labour at the rate of wages current in the neighbourhood rests on an entirely artificial basis. As Professor Black has recently shown, such a procedure entirely ignores the doctrine of opportunity cost, since, as Professor Ashby puts it, a big proportion of the hours of labour put in by the small farmer and his family has no "surrender value." Similarly, with the valuation of home consumed products—the potential advantage accruing to the intelligent housewife on the small farm from the use of the foodstuffs at her disposal is out of all proportion to the money value of the products used. All these limitations really point to the need that the approach to the economics of the small family farm, or the peasant holding, should not be cramped by analogy with the economics of the more highly capitalized larger farm. I cannot illustrate the danger better than by making a very candid confession. I was responsible for the Carmarthenshire survey, and the only conclusion I could come to by the use of this method was that the majority of the small farmers

in that county must be living on the margin of existence. But I knew from many years' intimate contact with them that they were living a happy and contented life, and, that they enjoyed a fairly high standard of living. What then was the justification for my study as presented? It was this. I also knew, that, with a little greater realisation of the possibilities within their reach, they could attain to a still higher standard of living. If the presentation of the results of the investigation in the extreme form in which it was done will help to hasten such a realization it will have served a useful purpose.

It seems to me to be very important to approach the problems of the large farmer and the small farmer from different points of view. It is only too true that, not only in the field of economic study, but also in the whole field of technical improvement of agriculture, most of the big developments have been conceived in the interests of the big-scale undertaking. There has been comparatively little attempt to solve the problems of the small farmer. To take a single example, but a very significant one, it is generally stated that the large farm possesses an unchallenged advantage in the use it can make of machinery. But how much has been done to produce machinery suitable for use on a small scale? Surely the comparison should not be between large farms and small farms using large-scale machinery, but between large farms using large-scale machinery and small farms using small-scale machinery. It seems to me that there is a very wide field for the study of small scale farming technique. Such a study, by improving the efficiency of the small producer, will make it possible for him to attain to a higher standard of living. So long as small farmers continue to form the largest group of producers not only in this but also in most other countries, there can be no justification for refusing to recognize that their problems are in many ways fundamentally different from the problems of the large farmer.

There remains the wider question of how far it is desirable to encourage the existence of the small farm. I do not propose to deal with this very important question further than to state that I feel convinced that the final answer will not rest on purely economic grounds, and certainly it is not only a question of comparative efficiency. The land problem in this country, as in all other countries, is also a social and a political problem, and, in attempting to find the economic solution, these other aspects will

always have to be considered. If we accept Dr. Black's threefold objects of a national agricultural policy as outlined in his latest book, it may be that the small family farm may still find a place in the general scheme. These three objects are (1) to hasten the improvement of the rural scale of living, (2) to check the present rapid rate of migration to cities, and (3) to maintain a somewhat larger proportion of population on the land than otherwise would be the case.



DARTINGTON HALL