

The Administration of the Poor Laws

in Dorset 1760-1834,

With Special Reference to Agrarian Distress.

by

George A. Body, M.A. (Bristol).



Preface.

The aim of this study has been to assess the character and degree of success of the administration of the old poor law in the county of Dorset in the last seventy-four years of its operation. It also seeks to investigate agrarian distress in the county and to consider whether the poor-law administration was a factor, major or contributory, in creating that distress. In particular, attention has been given to the period after the French wars in 1815, a period which culminated in the disturbances of 1830 and shortly afterwards in the Tolpuddle Martyrs episode. It has been thought wise to omit consideration of the latter since it has been exhaustively studied before. Since agrarian distress forms a part of the subject under consideration it has been thought appropriate to give a fairly extensive survey of social and economic conditions in the county in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the study of a social subject of this kind it is often difficult to determine the exact limits of relevant material and it has been found necessary to leave out of consideration the possible influence of the corn laws on Dorset agricultural economy and also the effects of national economic and financial trends such as inflation which clearly exaggerated the real increase in poor-law expenditure.

I must acknowledge the help so willingly given to me by Miss M. Holmes, the County Archivist, and by Mr. R. Piers, the Curator of the Dorset County Museum, in making available the records in their care. Likewise I must thank the many Dorset clergy who put themselves and the records of their churches at my disposal. I am only sorry that one or two felt unable to do so. My thanks are also due to Miss M. B. Weinstock, the Principal of Weymouth Training College, who was able to suggest sources of information and who kindly read and criticised the draft. Finally I must thank my wife who also read the draft and pointed out many stylistic errors which otherwise I might have missed.

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Abbreviations.

Brit. Mus.	British Museum.
D. C. M.	Dorset County Museum.
D. P.	Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society.
D. R. O.	Dorset Record Office.
E. H. R.	English Historical Review.
Econ. Hist. Rev.	Economic History Review.
H. of C.	House of Commons.
P. R. O.	Public Record Office.
Q. S.	Quarter Sessions.
S. D.	Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset.
V. C. H.	Victoria County History.

The titles of certain Parliamentary Reports have been abbreviated when cited in the footnotes viz:-

Poor Returns, 1777 - Report of the Select Committee Appointed to Inspect and Consider the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor in pursuance of the Act of the Last Session (16 George III c 40) together with Abstracts of the said Returns.

Poor Returns, 1787 - Report from the Select Committee to Inspect and Consider the Returns relative to the State of the Poor and Charitable Donations.

and A Further Appendix to the Preceding Report, being an Abstract of the Returns made by the Overseers.

Poor Returns, 180~~2~~³ - Abstract of Answers and Returns made pursuant to the Act 43 Geo. III 3 relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor.

Poor Returns, 1815 - Abridgement of Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to the Act 55 Geo. III c 42, for Procuring Returns Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor in England.

Poor Law Report, 1834- Report of His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiry into the Administration and Practical Application of the Poor Laws.

PART ONE.

An Introductory Study
of Aspects of the Social and Economic Life of
Dorset in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth
Centuries.

Chapter One.

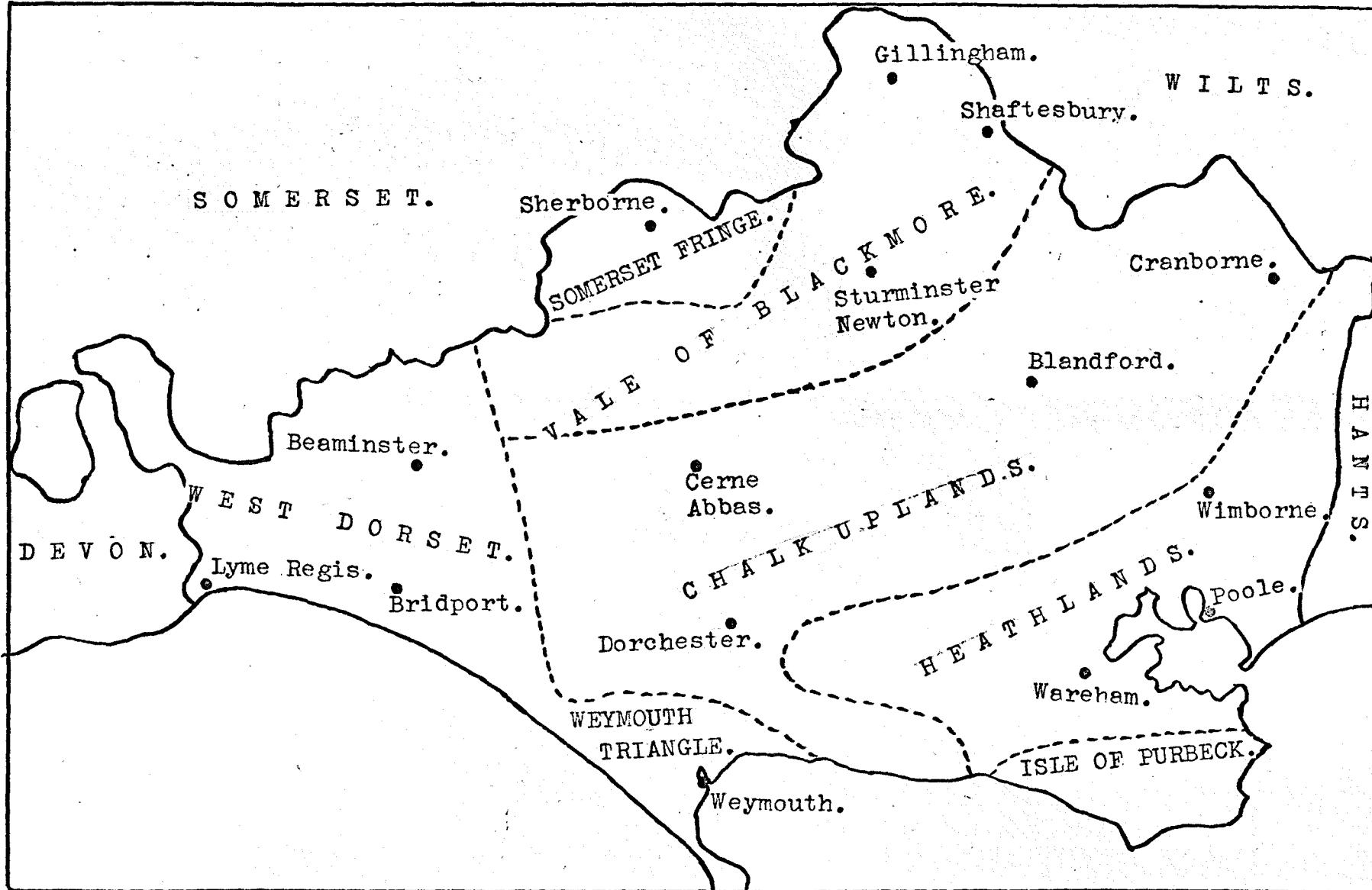
The Land and the People.

"Dorset is not a large county, but it shows a wide variety of physical features, and in many ways is typical of southern England. Its characteristic features are: a varied coastline, an interior of upland and valley, fertile clay vales, and barren heathland." Thus L.E.Tavener briefly described the county.(1) He continued by distinguishing several distinct "natural land types." These were West Dorset, the Somerset Fringe, the Vale of Blackmore, the Chalk Uplands the Heathlands and the Isle of Purbeck.(2) For the purposes of this study it will be useful to distinguish the Weymouth Triangle from West Dorset in which Tavener placed it on account of the similarity of the land. This distinction is justified by the almost complete lack of communications between the two areas in the period under review.(3)

About 93,000 of Dorset's 630,000 acres lie in West Dorset. It is an area of very varied relief and of mixed soils. Characteristic are the damp, clay-bottomed valleys which in the eighteenth century were already enclosed into small, irregular fields and were transversed by deep, winding lanes.(4) Many of the lanes were little different from the ancient horsepaths of the forest state - narrow, numerous and full of sloughs. (5) The villages according to William Marshall were comprised of scattered farmhouses and cottages; (6) but this seems to have been true only of the extreme west of the region where the parishes were often comprised of several scattered hamlets. Elsewhere in the region, as in the county generally, there was normally a nucleated village, although often with isolated settlements attached.

1. L.E.Tavener, Land Classification in Dorset, p.6.
2. Ibid., p.6-17. Tavener distinguished a further area in the north-east of the county, the Greensand Escarpment, which has been ignored here since it is very small and closely related to the Vale of Blackmore socially and economically.
3. See Map I on p.3 for these natural divisions.
4. W.Marshall, a prolific agricultural writer of the period, cf. The Rural Economy of the West of England (1796)p.134.
5. Ibid., p.131.
6. Ibid., p.137-8.

Map I. The Natural Regions.



Another characteristic feature of West Dorset is its hills, described by Marshall as mostly unenclosed and overgrown with dwarf furze, heath and coarse herbage.(7) The hills are often broad-topped, sweeping downs with harsh edges and deep combes. Sometimes they are flat-topped knolls rising from the valleys. In the south and in the east of the region, they are of no great elevation, but in the north-west they rise to a considerable height. (8)

The 28,000 acres of the Weymouth Triangle are of a similar character to the hilly clay lands of West Dorset, although the hills are very much lower, rarely rising over 200 feet. The area includes the island of Portland which is far bleaker and more barren than the rest of this region, and which, in the period under review, was approachable only by ferry from the mainland. The Weymouth Triangle is bounded by chalk hills from Osmington to Abbotsbury.(9)

The Somerset Fringe is the name given to the 28,000 or so acres around Sherborne. It is enclosed on the south by the broad curve of the Vale of Blackmore, but in the north and west only the county boundary divides it from similar country in Somerset. It is undulating country with rich, loamy soils(10), described by the early nineteenth-century traveller, James Dugdale, as providing fine arable land which yielded large crops of cereals. (11)

The Vale of Blackmore is a low-lying and often marshy area of about 112,000 acres, reaching from Gillingham and Shaftesbury in the north-east to the low hills lying just south of Yeovil in the west. References made by the older writers imply that the vale ended around Mappowder and Longburton, (12) but Tavener regards it as extending further west into the more hilly country. This extension is justified by the similarity of the soils and the nature of the agriculture.

7. Marshall, op.cit., p.137.

8. Tavener, op.cit., p.15.

9. Ibid., p.15.

10. Ibid., p.17.

11. James Dugdale, The New British Traveller, 1815, p.201.

12. G.A. Cooke, The Modern British Traveller, Vol.5, 1801-7, p.37.

The soils of the area are mostly heavy clays which are liable to flooding in wet weather.(13) The stickiness of the soil after rain has led to the region being designated "dirty Dorset"! Nineteenth-century writers suggested that the vale was enclosed early; Stevenson recorded that the open parts of the Vale were mostly common pasture.(14) This observation is supported by a modern study of Dorset Enclosures (15) which shows that only one-third of the parishes was affected by eighteenth and nineteenth-century enclosure. Most of these enclosures involved less than half the parish and were of common pasture only.

The Chalk Uplands form the centre of the county, extending thirty miles westwards from the Wiltshire border in a series of round-backed ridges, intersected by fertile valleys where many of the villages are found.(16) In this area were most of the unenclosed villages, although even here many were completely enclosed and of the rest few were wholly open.(17) The Chalk Uplands extend to about 200,000 acres which is roughly one-third of the county.

To the south of the Chalk Uplands lie the Heathlands, described by a contemporary writer as "a most dreary waste, serving only in the summer to support a few ordinary sheep and cattle and to supply the neighbouring villages with heath for firing."(18) William Stevenson considered that enclosure of the Dorset heaths would not pay, but suggested that they might profitably be wooded.(19) The surface of the heaths is a mixture of sands, gravels and clays and is mostly very infertile. There are, however, several alluvial valleys cutting across the heathlands and it is here that the main settlements are found.(20)

- 13. Tavener, op.cit., p.6.
- 14. William Stevenson, an agricultural writer of the early nineteenth century. Cf. General view of the agriculture of the County of Dorset (1812) p.171. This work is the Dorset volume in the series of county reports made to the Board of Agriculture, it is the report of John Claridge General view of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1793) revised and enlarged.
- 15. G.B. Endacott, The Progress of Enclosures in Dorset in the Eighteenth and part of the Nineteenth Centuries. (Unpublished Thesis.) cf. figures given in appendices.
- 16. Tavener, op.cit., pp.6-9.
- 17. Endacott, op.cit., appendices.
- 18. Britton and Brayley, Description of the County of Dorset. p.322.
- 19. Stevenson, op.cit., p.332.
- 20. Tavener, op.cit., pp.11-12.

The whole area amounts to some 105,000 acres.

The Isle of Purbeck is separated from the Heathlands by a narrow, steep-sided chalk ridge which shelters the Vale of Purbeck. The Valley has a comparatively flat bottom of very mixed and not very fertile soils and on its southern side lies a broad upland area of Portland and Purbeck limestones, breaking down along the south into ravines and some limited coastal lowlands.(21) These limestones gave rise to a quarrying industry which was employing some four hundred persons at the end of the eighteenth century.(22) The extent of the whole area is about 27,000 acres.

It is necessary now to turn to the consideration of the population of Dorset which seems to have grown steadily throughout the period of this study, although decisive evidence is available only from 1801 onwards. The following table shows the national and county figures from the first five ten-yearly censuses. To the last four sets of figures is added the percentage increase for the decade preceding each census. (23)

	National.		County.	
	Total.	Increase.	Total.	Increase.
1801.	8,872,980.	-	114,452.	-
1811.	10,150,615.	13%.	124,718.	9.7%.
1821.	11,978,875.	18%.	144,494.	15.2%.
1831.	13,897,187.	18%.	159,385.	10.4%.
1841.	15,906,741.	14%.	174,743.	11.0%.

From these figures it can be seen that the population of Dorset was increasing at a rather lower rate than that of the whole country. This fact suggests that the same may have been true of the late eighteenth century, but there is little substantiating evidence. It would be useful, however, to reach some estimate of the population of Dorset in 1760.

The population of England in 1760 is usually estimated by modern writers as being between six and a half and seven millions. J. Steven Watson estimates that it may have been between six and a half and six and three-quarter millions.(24).

20. Tavener, op.cit., pp11-12.
21. Ibid., pp.12-13.
22. J.Claridge, General Description of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset (1793), p.41.
23. Figures from Victoria County History of Dorset, Vol.2, pp266-273.
24. J.Steven Watson, The reign of George III, p.10.

A Redford, following E.C.K. Gonner, suggests that the population in 1750 may have been 6,320,000. (25) This figure together with an annual increase of about 50,000 would make the population of 1760 about 6,820,000. This estimate may well be too high; for Prof. T.S. Ashton has shown from the evidence of parish registers and bills of mortality that the increase in the population began about 1750 and speeded up in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. (26) If a figure of six and three-quarter millions be adopted for 1760 the population increase to 1801 would be about 47%. These figures apply to the whole country and may not be true of any particular county, but if the same percentage of increase be applied to the Dorset figures, a population of 77,500 may be estimated for 1760, growing to 114,452 in 1801. Another way of reaching an estimate is to consider the percentages of increase after 1801. If it is assumed that the same trend existed before 1801, the percentages of increase in the last four decades of the eighteenth century would be:

1760-1770, . . 1.9%;
1770-1780, . . 2.9%;
1780-1790, . . 4.4%;
1790-1800, . . 6.6%;

These figures do not take into account the acceleration after 1780 suggested by Prof. Ashton and will, therefore, give too large a figure for 1760. If, however, the population increased by 15.8% over the four decades, the 1760 figure would be about 98,000. It is worth noting that this agrees closely with the estimate made by Marshall relating to 1750 (i.e. 96,000). (27) These estimates vary considerably and unfortunately there is very little documentary evidence relating to the Dorset population at any date prior to 1801. All that appears to exist relates to Puddletown, a chalkland village, and to Marnhull in the Vale of Blackmore.

25. A. Redford, Labour Migration in England, 1800 to 1850, p.11.
26. T.S. Ashton, An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century, p.3.
27. J. Marshall (the early nineteenth-century statistical writer) An Account of the Population (1831), p.11.

Miss M.B. Weinstock has made a study of Puddletown and has given the following figures from a parish census carried out in 1724/5 and from another made in 1769: (28)

1724/5. . . 605 persons,

1769. . . 670 persons, (about 11% increase).

To these can be added the figure from the 1801 census; (29)

1801. . . 909 persons, (an increase of 36%).

If it be assumed that the population increase began about 1790, the percentage by which the population increased between 1760 and 1801 would be about 40%. At Marnhull the population in 1740 was 976, (30) and the 1801 census figure was 1,075, i.e. an increase of 11%. Again if the population increase began about 1750 and if the first decade after that date had the lowest rate of increase, then a 10% increase between 1760 and 1801 seems probable. If the average of these two figures (25%) be regarded as the county figure, the 1801 population of 114,452 must have grown from about 91,000 in 1760. This figure seems a reasonable one, as far as can be estimated from such limited evidence.

There was considerable variation in the degree of poverty between the several regions of Dorset and in the methods adopted in relieving it. It will, therefore, be useful to show how the population was distributed within the county and this is set forth in the table below.

The Population of the Regions of Dorset Related to

Extent and Value of the Land. (31)

	Population.			Acres.	Annual Value per acre in £s.
	1801.	1831.	Percentage Increase		
West Dorset.	20,531	29,046.	43%	92,568.	1.5
Weymouth Triangle.	4,941	8,476.	70%	24,941.	1.4
Chalklands.	26,646	36,734.	38%	197,576.	.9
Heathlands.	13,444	18,578.	37%	104,592.	.5
Purbeck.	4,291	5,524.	29%	27,323.	.6
Blackmore.	22,554	28,678.	27%	112,096.	1.4
Som. Fringe.	6,723	8,821.	31%	28,097.	1.7

28. M.B. Weinstock, Studies in Dorset History, pp.63ff.

29. V.C.H., Dorset Vol.2, pp.266-273.

30. E.H. Roscoe, (Ed.), The Marn'11 Book, p.82.

31. V.C.H., Dorset Vol.2, pp.266-273.

From the table above certain other useful figures can be calculated and these are set out below.

A Table Showing the Number of Persons to the Acreage and in Relation to the Value of the Land.

	Persons to the Acre.		Persons to £1 Annual Value.	
	1801.	1831.	1801.	1831.
West Dorset.	.23	.31	.15	.21
Weymouth Triangle.	.2	.35	.14	.25
Chalklands.	.14	.19	.16	.21
Heathland.	.13	.18	.24	.33
Purbeck.	.15	.2	.25	.33
Blackmere.	.2	.26	.14	.19
Som. Fringe.	.24	.31	.14	.19

This table shows that the population of the county was fairly evenly distributed in relation to the value of the land as estimated in 1815. The figures for the Weymouth Triangle in 1831 are higher than the average and probably reflect the growth of Weymouth as a watering place and its spread into the villages around. The figures for the Heathland and the Isle of Purbeck both show a higher population in relation to the annual value of the land. The explanation here is probably the quarrying industry and the growing clay-mining industry around Poole harbour, together with the overflow of the urban area of Poole into the neighbouring villages. (It should be noted that in these statistics, Poole itself and certain other purely urban districts have been omitted.) Other factors which may well have influenced the population of these areas with considerable coastline were the fishing and other maritime industries.

It would be wrong to conclude from these figures alone, that it is possible to deduce evidence relative to agrarian distress, for the rural population seems to have included a sizeable proportion of those who did not derive their living directly from the land. Thus in 1821 Dorset contained 14,821 families engaged in agriculture, 10,811 engaged in trade and craft, and 4,680 other families. From the evidence of a limited number of parishes, some idea may be gained of the way in which these were distributed through the county. These are larger places where the non-agricultural population was likely to be highest, although the purely urban areas have been excluded.

The figures will perhaps under-estimate the agricultural population in the rural areas as a whole but their average is quite similar to that of the county. (32)

No. of places.	Families.		
	Agricultural.	Trade & Craft.	Other.
West Dorset.	16.	57%.	35%
Weymouth			8%.
Triangle	4.	33%.	54%.
Chalklands.	24.	65%.	25%.
Heathlands.	11.	71%.	19%.
Purbeck,	3.	47%.	37%.
Blackmore.	16.	61%.	26%.
Som. Fringe.	3.	51%.	43%.
Average		59%.	26%.
Whole County.		49%.	36%.
			15%.

It must not be supposed that the term "trade and craft" given in the returns represented an industrial population, although where the figure was high it probably included that. It usually referred, however, to the retail tradesmen and the craftsmen ancillary to agriculture. This can be illustrated from the records of Winterborne Whitechurch, a large chalkland village. The occupations followed there are set out in detail as follows: (33)

Agricultural families:

5 yeomen.

45 agricultural labourers.

Trade and Craft families:

3 tailors, 9 woodmen, 2 gamekeepers, 4 carpenters, 1 groom, 1 carrier, 1 baker, 1 innkeeper, 4 masons, 3 thatchers, 2 blacksmiths, 1 plasterer, 3 shoemakers, 1 miller, 1 gardener.

Other Families:

3 independent, 1 clergyman, 6 paupers. Thus, in a village of 495 persons, 52% of the families were engaged in agriculture, 38% in trade and craft, and 10% were otherwise occupied.

32. J. Marshall, op.cit., pp.10-11, 26, 29, 56-7.

33. D.R.O., P58/0VI

It is also clear that most of these occupations were to be found in any agricultural community of that time. The figures on page 10, therefore, cannot be held to relate to many purely industrial families, although there was rural industry throughout the county and especially in the western and northern parts. Industry was, however, a supplement to agriculture, rather than an alternative to it. In rural areas it depended ~~far~~ on the labour of the women and children, and perhaps the part-time or spare-time work of the men.

The county can fairly be described as a predominantly agricultural one, but, as will be seen below, one in which there was plenty of industrial work to supplement the family income. The figures cited above suggest that the problem of over-population was most likely to occur in the Heathland and in the Isle of Purbeck. The Somerset Fringe and the Vale of Blackmore had the lowest population in relation to the value of the land and the West Dorset figure was only marginally higher. It will be shown later that the Vale of Blackmore was a black spot of agrarian distress whereas the Somerset Fringe and West Dorset were among the least troubled areas. This suggests that population, in itself, was not a major factor in causing distress in Dorset.

Chapter Two.

Owners and Occupiers.

In his "General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset", Stevenson wrote that estates in Dorset were large and the owners were few in number. He added that there were more of the yeomanry in the western part of the county, especially in the detached part.(1) Arthur Young, who visited Dorset in 1771, found a similar situation but noted that Lord Milton owned 3,461 acres in West Dorset.(2) There is no readily accessible information to confirm and illuminate these generalisations except the 1873 Return of Landowners, and some of the poll books of the period. The former is obviously too late to be relied upon in any detail, although the general pattern it presents was probably similar to that of fifty years before. The latter source can throw light on the numbers of forty-shilling freeholders in any particular parish.

In 1873 there were 10,903 landowners, owning 573,389 acres in estates of various sizes as the following table shows: (3)

Less than one acre.....	7,494	owning 1,631 acres.
1 - 999 acres.....	3,303	owning 192,163 acres.
1,000 - 5,000 acres.....	86	owning 153,541 acres.
Over 5,000 acres.....	20	owning 226,054 acres.

More than one-third of the county was owned by a small group of families in estates of over 5,000 acres and almost two-thirds were owned in estates of over 1,000 acres. This certainly seems to justify Stevenson's statement. It is extremely difficult to determine whether this was equally true of each part of the county, for the return gives no indication of the whereabouts of the estates. If the twenty largest landowners are considered further, it will be found that those who had Dorset seats, lived in central, east and north Dorset and especially around Blandford, Cranborne, Wareham and Wimborne. This suggests that the eastern half of the county was an area of large

1. Stevenson, op.cit., pp.73-75.
2. A. Young, A Farmer's Tour through the East of England (1771) III, p.382.
3. Return of Landowners (1873), Dorset Section.

estates, and the relatively small number of freeholders there, as is shown by the contemporary poll books, supports this. The same source shows that in a far higher proportion of West Dorset parishes the ownership of the land was widely shared. An analysis of an 1831 poll book shows that the numbers of freeholders, excluding the parson and the squire, were as follows: (4)

Freeholders.	No. of Parishes.
0.	71.
1-5.	95.
6-10.	46.
11-15.	19.
16-20.	21.
Over 20.	46.

The distribution of these freeholders can be shown thus:

	Parishes with:		Total of parishes in the area
	5-20 freeholders	Over 20 freeholders	
West Dorset;	11	18	39
Weymouth			
Triangle;	5	2	11
Chalkland;	24	5	96
Heathland;	6	5	29
Purbeck;	3	1	8
Blackmore;	11	14	56
Som. Fringe;	5	0	20

These figures demonstrate the truth of Stevenson's observation that there were more of the yeomanry in West Dorset. Indeed it appears that this area was predominantly one of small owners. In the Weymouth area, the Isle of Purbeck and the Vale of Blackmore there appears to have been a considerable number of parishes where the small freeholder predominated but elsewhere the proportion was far less. These conclusions agree extremely well with those deduced from the 1873 return.

Some Dorset landowners farmed a considerable part of their estates themselves. Arthur Young, in 1771, mentioned Mr. Sturt of Crichel, Mr. Drax of Charborough

4. Poll book of 1831 for the county; D.C.M., Box File 14.

Park near Wareham, Mr. Pleydell of Milborne St. Andrew, Lord Milton of Milton Abbas and Mr. Hardy of Kingston Russell. He described Mr. Hardy's farm of 11,000 acres as the largest in Dorset. (5) Stevenson, in 1815, mentioned also Mr. Portman of Bryanston, Mr. Wood of Osmington, Mr. Farquharson of Tarrant Gunville and Mr. Damer of Winterborne Came. (6) Most of the land in the great estates, however, was let to tenant farmers, and in the period under review the system of land-letting was undergoing transformation. Stevenson found that copyhold tenure had almost disappeared except for cottages and gardens, and that the leasing of land on lives or for ninety-nine years was far more common. (7) The tenant paid a fine on entering into the lease which, according to Claridge, was equal to two years' purchase on one life, seven years' purchase on two lives, and fourteen years' purchase on three lives. (8) Each year the tenant paid a small rent amounting to about one-twentieth of the annual value. (9) The lease terminated with the death of the last of the named lives, or at the end of ninety-nine years according to whichever was earlier. Stevenson gave an example of three named lives: a man and his two sons. The fine was £280 and the yearly rent was £2. 13. 4., plus a capon or 1/-, a harvest journey or 6d, cleaning the mill seat of 4d, a ploughing journey or 2/6d, and a herriot of £5. (10) Miss Weinstock, in her study of Puddletown, gives another example. Charles Buse, a yeoman, leased a cottage and an acre of arable on the payment of a £15 fine and a yearly rent of 4/-. The lease, which included rights of common for twenty sheep and two cattle, plus rights of wood, was to run for three lives or ninety-nine years. (11) On many of the larger estates, this system of lease on lives was not practised. Stevenson wrote of the decline of the long lease pointing out that in the eighteenth century the twenty-one year lease had been common whereas by 1812 most of the leases were for seven years and in some cases for

5. Young, op.cit., pp.252,273,358,369,373.

6. Stevenson, op.cit., pp.91-92.

7. Ibid., p.74.

8. Claridge, op. cit., p.22.

9. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 74.

10. Ibid., p. 74.

11. Weinstock, op. cit., p. 68.

only three years. Stevenson regarded this shortening of leases as unfortunate since it discouraged the farmer from improving the land. He reported that the landlords supported the practice by pointing to the steady fall in the value of money which soon made the rent on a long lease unrealistic. He found that Henry Bankes of Kingston Lacy, whose estate extended to about 10,000 acres, gave leases of twenty-one years determinable at the end of each seven year period. Bankes said that this made it possible to get rid of the unsatisfactory tenant quickly, but that it was his policy to keep the good tenant not merely until the end of the lease but for life. Lord Digby gave leases for eight years, but Lord Shaftesbury gave no leases at all. Shaftesbury's policy, however, was never to turn the tenant out, so that they all had a sense of security. (12)

The rents at which the land was let are difficult to compare, since Young in 1771 gave the rents for some places whereas Stevenson in 1815 gave those for others. Stevenson, however, commented that there had been a considerable rise in rents during the French war and added that on the clay lands they had trebled in fifteen to twenty years. (13) From the figures of Young (14) and Stevenson it is possible to suggest that the average rents were as follows; -

	1771.	1815.
West Dorset.	12/- to 20/-	30/- per acre.
Chalkland.	8/6 to 11/-	18/- to 24/- per acre.
Heathland.	5/-	10/- to 12/- per acre.
Vale of Blackmore.	(10/- to 20/-*)	30/- to 60/- per acre.

* estimated from Stevenson's remark above.

The size of holdings varied tremendously. In West Dorset and in the Vale of Blackmore they were usually quite small (15). Young gave an account of the farms belonging to Lord Milton between Bridport and Axminster. The numbers were as follows:

18 farms below 20 acres,
26 between 21 and 50 acres,
10 between 51 and 100 acres,
and 11 over 100 acres. (16)

12. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 104-109.

13. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 93-95.

14. Young, op. cit., pp. 245, 248, 273ff, 326ff, 358ff, 366ff, 382.

15. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 388.

16. Young, op. cit., p. 382.

Marshall, who visited West Dorset in c. 1796, recorded that the farms were small but added that one man sometimes had several of them. (17) This engrossing of farms will be considered below. In other parts of the county it seems that the farms were much larger. Claridge, (18) writing in 1793, observed that one man sometimes occupied the whole hamlet, parish or lordship, perhaps from 1,000 or 1,500 to 2,000 acres. The vast farm of Mr. Hardy of 11,000 acres around Kingston Russell has been noted already. Lord Milton farmed 3000 acres (19) and Mr. Pleydell 902 acres. Young quoted instances of a 900 acre farm in the Crichel area, a 1000 acre farm in the Moreton area and an 1800 acre farm near Milton Abbas. (20) The advertisements in "The Sherborne Mercury" refer to more, of which the following may serve as examples: Old Gunville Farm of 800 acres, Duddle Farm at Puddletown of 394 acres, Hooke Farm of 876 acres. (21) The agricultural returns of 1796, covering eighty-six parishes in the coastal area, showed that:-

11	parishes	were	occupied	by	a	single	farmer,		
33	"	"	"	"	"	two	to	five,	
22	"	"	"	"	"	six	to	ten,	
14	"	"	"	"	"	eleven	to	twenty,	
6	"	"	"	"	"	more	than	twenty	farmers.

Netherbury, in West Dorset, had the largest number: this parish of 6,274 acres had fifty-one farmers. (22) The process of consolidating the small farms into one big one seems to have been going on all over Dorset. William Barnes, the Dorset poet, referred to it in one of his eclogues; " Robert.....' In thease there used to be

Eight farms avore they were a-drew'd together,
An' eight farm housen, Now how many be there?
Why after this, you know, there'll be but dree.'

" Thomas. ' An' now they don't employ so many men
Upon the land as work'd upon it then,
For all they midden crop it worse nor stock it.'

The verses go on to point out that the consolidation had been to the advantage of the landlord since he had fewer

17. Marshall, op.cit., p.142.

18. Claridge, op.cit., p.24.

19. Young, op. cit., pp. 251, 283, 369.

20. Young, op. cit., pp.369 & 358.

21. The Sherborne Mercury, 15.1.1778, 19.3.1778, 7.5.1810.

22. Agricultural Returns (1796), Printed in D.P., pp 162-73.

farmhouses to maintain. The displaced small farmers had gone to swell the ranks of the labourers. (23) The Rev. Harry Place of Marnhull related that the number of people in his parish was increasing but that the number of houses was decreasing. This he said was due to the practice of letting large farms and allowing the surplus farmhouses to decay. He considered this to be harmful to the community for three hundred acres let to three tenants would be more productive than the same land let to one man. (24) The Rector of Hawkchurch in 1808 related how within his memory ten farmers had lived independently on the lands then occupied by Mr. Barns of Wild Court. (25)

These contemporary accounts can be supplemented by an examination of the rate lists given in the poor books. In most parishes there was a reduction in the number of ratepayers, which is good evidence of the situation since usually only the occupiers of land were rated. In many cases the reduction is not significant but in some it is most striking as at Winterborne Monkton near Dorchester. In 1730 there were eighteen payers, all of approximately equal assessment; but by 1800 the number had fallen to two, of which one was the parson. The stages in this process are set out below. (In brackets after the number of the payers are added the individual assessments.)

1730. 18 payers, (3/-, 1/-, 1/-, 9d, 1/-, 1/-, 1/-, 1ld, 1/-, 1/-, 1/6, 1/-, 6d, 1/-, 1/-, 4d, 8d, 4d.)

1760. 11 payers, (3/-, 2/-*, 3/-, 9d, 1/-, 1/3, 2/4, 2/2, 1/-, 1/-, 6d.)

1780. 8 payers, (3/-, 6/-*, 4/-, 8d, 2/4, 1ld, 9d, 4d.)

1790. 5 payers, (3/-, 9/3*, 4/9, 8d, 4d.)

1800. 2 payers, (3/-, 15/-*)

The 3/- assessment is that of the parson and the assessment marked * is that of William Taunton. (26) It is interesting to note that the enclosure of Winterborne Monkton took place in 1808, (27) which suggests that it was only the remodelling of a parish already in the hands of one man.

23. William Barnes, Collected Works, Vol. I, pp 160-62.
24. Hutchins, History and Antiquities of Dorset, 2nd Ed., Vol II, p. 396.
25. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 332.
26. Poor Book of Winterborne Monkton.
27. Endacott, Thesis, appendices.

At Poxwell, near Weymouth, the process was well advanced when the Poor Book starts. Thus in 1708 the rate list was:

The Farm.	£1	5	0.
Parsonage.	5	0.	
Bridle's living.	1	8.	
Vies' Tenement.	1	3.	

Vies' Tenement was absorbed into the farm until in 1711, and Bridle's living in 1751. From then onwards the only assessments were the farm and the parsonage. (28) At Newlands, a tithing in Wootten Glanville parish, Madame Wellman had "the farm" and three livings in 1760. In 1770 Isaac Wellman Esq. had the farm and five livings, and by 1784 the number of his livings had risen to seven. In this latter year the other ratepayers were three men with two livings each, and nine with one each. (29) Twenty-five years later, in 1809, the list suggests that the process of consolidation was almost complete.

James Dark had "the farm" and one living,

John Warren - six livings,

George Young - five livings,

William Warren - two livings,

Thos. Wellman Esq. - one living. (30)

It seems that the squire had steadily accumulated the livings in his own hands until he was able to let the land in much larger holdings. In the Wytherstone hamlet of Powerstock all the livings were held by Henry Dunning in 1824 while in the Nettlecombe hamlet, in the same year, Alfred Roper had "the Farm" and four livings, and Richard Palmer had five livings. At Toller Porcorum a Mr. Whittle occupied six properties. (31)

More evidence of this kind could be given, but the implication is clear - that all over the county holdings were being consolidated: a process which probably had far wider social implications than had the better known enclosure movement. Indeed the evidence of Winterborne

28. Poxwell Poor Book.

29. Wootten Glanville Poor Books, D.R.O., P7/OV.3.

30. Ditto P.7/OV.5.

31. Powerstock Poor Books, D.R.O., MC/4832. Toller Porcorum Poor Book 1800-19; cf. also Eden, The State of the Poor Vol. 2, p.150-1, on Darwenston where forty farms had been consolidated into two.

Monkton suggests that in some cases enclosure was simply the final step in consolidation. William Mathews, secretary of 'The Bath and West of England Society', pointed out when addressing the society in 1796 that whereas enclosure was generally to the good of all classes, the consolidation of the land into "immoderately large farms" was the cause of the evils "so much complained of" (32) Stevenson was of the same opinion. He thought that if the holding occupied by a large farmer (which might be a whole village - the result of the laying together of five or six farms) were divided into smaller holdings it would support more people. On these large farms, he argued, the farmer had to keep sheep to make them pay, and because of the size could not engage in the many sidelines which were characteristic of the mixed farm. In particular he thought that most of these large sheep farms could support a large dairy of cows and so provide for many more families. (33)

Enclosures in Dorset have been studied by G.B. Endacott in his thesis "The Progress of Enclosures in Dorset in the Eighteenth Century and part of the Nineteenth"; a work which gives a very thorough treatment of the acreages involved, the districts most affected and the dates of the enclosures. Most parts of Dorset were enclosed by 1760. There had been much enclosure in the seventeenth century, most of which is unrecorded, although some examples have been uncovered by Endacott and others. (34) This early enclosure affected the north and west of the county especially and in these areas the only common land remaining in 1760 was common pasture and waste, often land of slight agricultural value. The area which had a considerable number of later enclosures was the chalkland, and about 1812 Stevenson estimated that there were eighty parishes in the region with some open land, often both arable and pasture. (35) During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries

- 32. Letters and Papers of the Bath and West of England Society, Vol.2, (1802 Edition) pp.283-295, & 299.
- 33. Stevenson, op.cit., p. 90.
- 34. Endacott, op.cit., pp64 &71. Cf. also, Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the 16th Century, p32; and G.E.Fussell, Four Centuries of Farming Systems in Dorset pp.116-7; for Iwerne Minster. Also C.D.Drew, The Division of the Commons of West Parley and West Moors (D.P.I) p.109-116)
- 35. Stevenson, op. cit., p.171.

(up to 1874) 93,892 acres were enclosed by parliamentary sanction, 27,820 acres by non-parliamentary means, and 46,316 remained unenclosed in 1874; thus Endacott summarises his findings.(36) There is reason to regard these estimates as too high. In the first figure Endacott has taken the whole area as given in the award, but this often included old enclosures which were being redistributed. Examples of this can be found at Chilfrone and at Bincombe.(37) Again a distinction should be made between the enclosure of agricultural land and the reclamation of waste lands. Endacott, however, makes no such distinction. In his list of non-parliamentary enclosure (38) he includes 2,688 acres at Affpuddle. Yet a visit to Affpuddle will reveal that this acreage must have resulted chiefly from reclamation of Winfrith Heath. The process of reclaiming marginal land continued throughout the period: for example, in 1771 Young mentioned that Mr. Frampton of Moreton, a neighbouring parish to Affpuddle, encouraged his tenants to cultivate and enclose the waste. (39) Moreover, Endacott sometimes confuses references to the engrossing of farms, such as that at Hawkchurch cited above, with enclosure. Finally, in the non-parliamentary enclosures where he has no figures of what was actually enclosed, he assumes that the whole parish was involved. This seems extremely improbable and yet he has assumed this in the case of eight parishes, amounting to 17,722 acres. At Longburton, for instance, the total acreage is given as 1,041 acres. The parish lies on the southern edge of the Somerset Fringe, an area where almost all the parishes were completely enclosed before 1760. In the Vale of Blackmore to the south, the parishes were nearly all enclosed, except for pasture commons. Holnest which adjoins Longburton is also included by Endacott among his non-parliamentary enclosures. This is a parish of 2,062 acres, and the observations concerning Longburton apply here too. It would be reasonable to assume that the enclosures in both these places would probably be similar in scale to those well-documented parliamentary enclosures in the area, such as Beer Hackett

36. Endacott, op.cit., p.171.

37. D.R.O., Enclosure Awards.

38. Endacott, op.cit., p.70.

39. Young, op. cit., IIIP.278.

where one-seventh of the parish was enclosed; or Caundle Marsh where it was one-tenth. (40)

It seems then that Endacott's calculations of the proportions of Dorset subjected to enclosure in the eighteenth century and the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century are misleading. This is so because enclosure of agricultural land might well have harmful social results, whereas enclosure from the waste would almost certainly be beneficial. The poor might lose the "turf" and furze that could be cut for fuel, but they would gain immensely from the additional work created both by the reclamation and by the working of the reclaimed land. It is interesting to note that Prof. J.D. Chambers mentions Dorset as a county where the enclosure of the wastes stimulated the growth of population. (41) It is easy to criticise Endacott's calculations but to suggest more accurate ones is difficult without repeating his research. It could be suggested, however, that his figure of 93,892 acres of parliamentary enclosure, which certainly included some old enclosures and some non-agricultural land, might be a reasonable estimate of the total enclosures of all cultivated land and good grassland which had previously been systematically stocked. Even so it might still be too high, for as he points out 70% of all parliamentary enclosure was of common pasture or of waste. (42) This total of 93,892 acres would suggest that 14.7% of the total acreage of the county was subjected to enclosure between 1700 and 1874.

The years between 1760 and 1834 will now be examined in order to discover when enclosure occurred. From Endacott's lists the following table has been compiled, showing the numbers of enclosures at different dates in the period.

1760-1789.....	11 enclosures.
1790-99.....	10 enclosures.
1800-09.....	22 enclosures.
1810-19.....	14 enclosures.
1820-29.....	5 enclosures.
1830-39.....	7 enclosures.

40. Endacott, *op. cit.*, pp.64-68, & appendices.

41. Chambers, *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Vol.5 (2nd Series) No.3, p.323.

42. Endacott, *op. cit.*, p.90.

This indicates clearly enough that the period of maximum enclosure was during the French wars, a time during which agriculture was exceptionally prosperous. It shows that after the war, when agriculture was depressed, the rate of enclosures slowed significantly. This fact suggests that enclosure was only worthwhile in a period of unusual prosperity and that the most profitable lands had probably been enclosed long before, (43).

Between 1760 and 1834 thirty-six parishes which or hamlets which had arable fields were enclosed. Of these, thirty-four were either in the chalkland or in the Weymouth Triangle, or immediately adjoining those areas. In only eight cases did the area involved in the enclosure exceed half of the parish, and often the acreage stated in the award included old enclosures being redistributed or exchanged. (44) Of the places which remained unenclosed after 1834, twelve of the fourteen which possessed open arable fields were in, or partly in, either the chalkland or the Weymouth Triangle. Of these only four involved more than half the parish. The common arable land of Dorset in 1760 was not extensive, and most of it was in the chalk areas or in the Weymouth area, a region of heavy clay. Neither of these areas can be considered a good arable district and it was only in a period of great prosperity that enclosure there was likely to be considered profitable.

The distribution of enclosures of common pasture was as follows: (45)

1760 - 1834.

Heathland.....	7 enclosures.
Vale of Blackmore.....	6 enclosures.
West Dorset.....	2 enclosures.
Chalkland.....	1 enclosure.

After 1834,

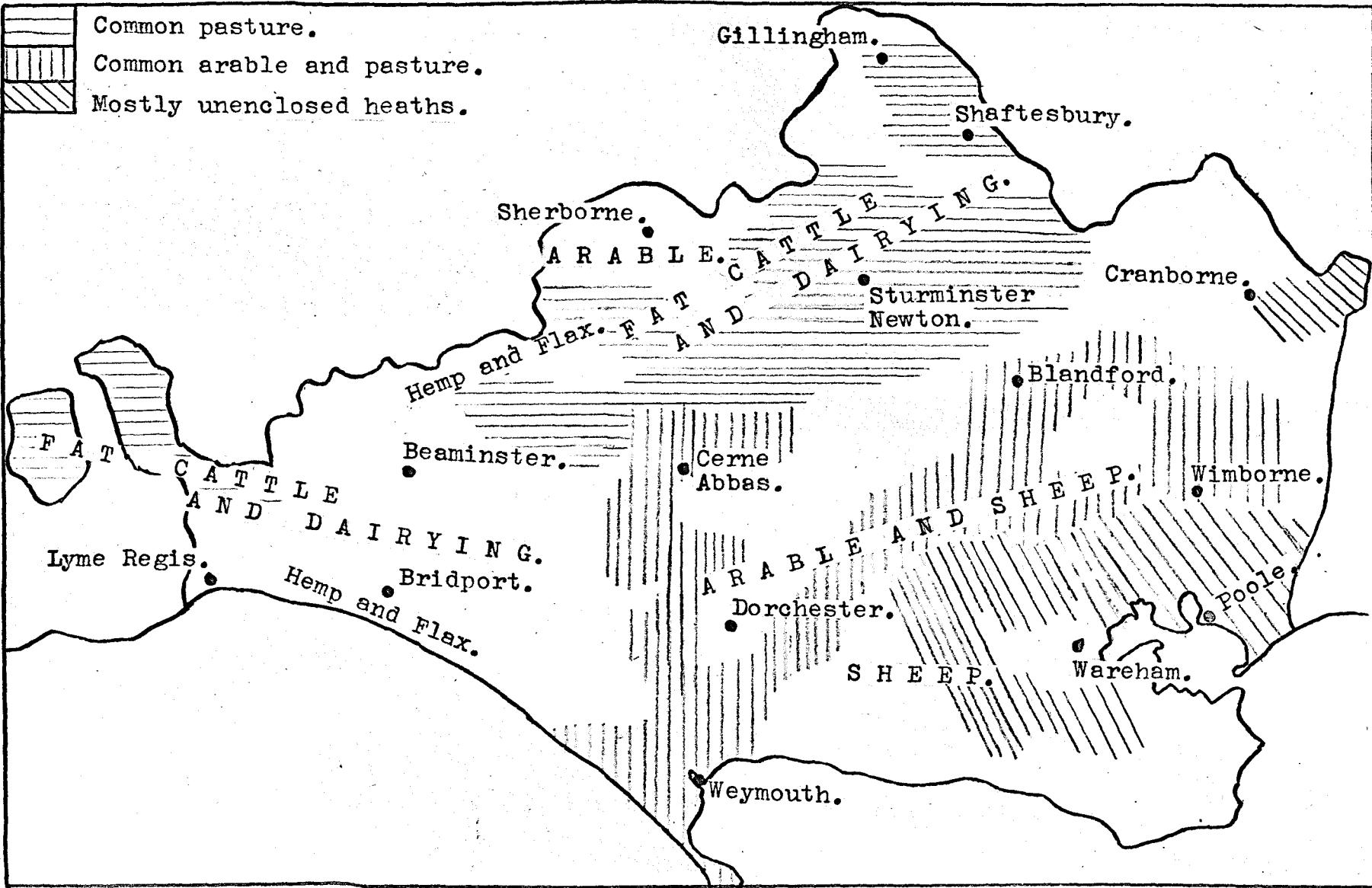
Vale of Blackmore.....	20 enclosures.
Heathland.....	6 enclosures.
West Dorset.....	4 enclosures.
Chalkland.....	2 enclosures.

43. The figures are from Endacott; op. cit., appendices.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

Thus the only two areas where there were a significant number of enclosures were the Vale of Blackmore and the Heathland. In the latter area the probability is that most of the enclosure was of waste rather than of good pasture land. It was, moreover, in this area that the population was highest in relation to the value of the land (vide supra). Undoubtedly the bringing of more land into profitable use would help to relieve the potential distress of the area. In the Vale of Blackmore, the proportion of enclosures carried out before 1834 was far lower and it seems likely that one of the reasons for the distress of this area in the early nineteenth century was that a far larger proportion of the land remained in an unimproved and unprofitable state.



The predominant type of agriculture in each area is shown, as are the main unenclosed areas in 1760.

Map II.

Enclosures and Agriculture.

Chapter Three

Farmers and Farming.

When Arthur Young visited Dorset in 1771, he was not favourably impressed by the farming then practised in the county and in the account of his journey he criticised it severely. He attacked first the preoccupation of the farmers with sheep husbandry and the uneconomic way in which it was managed. Secondly, Young commented on the lack of good tillage in the county and particularly on the limited crops of turnips. He considered that many of the upland pastures, at that time only used for grazing sheep and in very poor condition, could profitably be broken up and cropped. Thirdly, he condemned the common practice of letting dairies with the right to keep pigs. It took from the farm one of the most profitable lines and its yearly tenure meant that the dairyman had no interest in the upkeep of the holding, let alone its improvement. Fourthly, he thought that the level of rents was so low that the farmer had no need to put the land to full use or to improve it in order to make a satisfactory profit. (1) These criticisms will serve as a guide for the consideration of Dorset agriculture during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth.

In this period Dorset was primarily a sheep-rearing area although in the west and the north of the county cattle were fattened and dairy herds were kept. In the central and southern parts, where the farms were very large, sheep predominated. As Stevenson pointed out, these farms could only be worked profitably if sheep were grazed on them. (2) One such farm was that of Mr. Damer of Winterborne Came who devoted 660 acres to a flock of 1590 sheep. Young considered that Damer's methods were more progressive than most Dorset farmers but thought his returns were low, for after calculating all the outgoings he estimated that Damer made a real profit of £129 per year. Damer was a landowner and reckoned the rent of the land he devoted to sheep at a very low figure. If the land were ploughed and devoted to arable crops, it would

1. A. Young, op. cit. III, pp. 402 - 11.
2. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 90.

fetch a very much higher rent and Young thought it would pay Damer to do this. (3) Other large farmers were Mr. Hardy of Kingston Russell who kept 13,000 sheep on his farm of 11,000 acres and Mr. Pleydell of Milborne St. Andrew who kept 1,340 sheep on his 902 acres. (4) These were the farms of the gentry but Young seems to have regarded them as typical, although perhaps more progressive than those of the ordinary farmers.

The management of sheep-farming was considered by Young to be uneconomic. Lambing in the late Autumn was usual so that the young animals would be ready for sale early in the next year. The ewes were kept for four and a half years and then sent to market as ewes in lamb, flocks of them often being driven to Weyhill fair. (5) Mr. Legg of Mapperton told Stevenson that land worth 20/- per acre would keep four sheep in summer and two in winter without hay. He kept a flock of 450 ewes which he calculated brought in a gross return of £706. 15. 0 per year. Each year he sold 150 ewes at 35/- each, 180 lambs at 23/- each and 25 poorer lambs at 15/-. This suggests that the sheep were kept chiefly on grassland and grazed in the open throughout the year. As might be expected from this method the production of lambs was low. (6) Yet Claridge, in 1793, reported that sheep-farming in Dorset was progressive. (7) There is no doubt that some progress had taken place by this time and twenty years later Stevenson commented on the introduction of turnips in the southern districts and on the improvement of the breed of sheep. (8)

Claridge considered that arable farming was the most backward of all branches of Dorset agriculture and he attributed this to the importance attached to sheep. The ploughing was usually done badly and the rotation of crops was unscientific. (9) The succession of crops usual in Dorset before the French wars was wheat, barley and oats, followed by a grass ley for three years. (10) The three cereal crops exhausted the soil and necessitated the three

3. Young, op.cit., pp. 333-338.
4. Young, op.cit., pp. 361 & 375.
5. Young, op.cit., III, p.331.
6. Stevenson, op.cit., p 406.
7. Claridge, op.cit., p.16.
8. Stevenson, op.cit., p.13
9. Claridge, op.cit., p. 16.
10. Young, op.cit., III p. 366.

years under grass to enable it to recover. The system provided for no root crop such as turnip to clean the land of weeds. In 1771 Mr. Drax of Charborough Park was growing turnips and hoeing them but the ordinary farmers did not follow his example. Most of them only grew turnips when the land was foul but illogically neglected to hoe them, so that the land was made yet more foul. Lord Milton, another landlord who was also a practising farmer and anxious to improve his methods, ordered his bailiff to have half his turnip field hoed and to leave the other half. The result converted the bailiff, who previously had been of the opinion that hoeing was a waste of time. (11) The prosperity of the twenty years after 1790 led to a marked improvement in arable husbandry, as Stevenson's report shows. In 1815 turnips were grown much more generally and the old Dorset cropping course had been replaced by a more scientific one : viz. Wheat, turnips, barley and then grasses. Moreover, the new mechanical methods were being increasingly employed in the county; the drilling of seed was used at Wimborne St. Giles, Milton Abbas and Beaminster and threshing-machines were in use in twenty-two different parishes. (12)

Cattle-breeding and dairying were second in importance to sheep-farming according to Claridge who considered that the Vale of Blackmore was a centre of this kind of farming. (13) Marshall showed that West Dorset was another such centre. (14) Oxen were grazed through the summer and then driven to Smithfield market where they were much sought after as providing some of the finest meat in the kingdom. (15) Dairy-farming was as important as fatstock and all the contemporary authorities commented on the local custom of letting dairies. On large farms the occupier retained in his own hands the sheep, the fat cattle and the arable land; but he frequently let the dairying side of the business to a dairyman. The farmer agreed to provide a certain number of cows at so much per head and to feed them, usually in fields specified in the contract; he provided what fodder was required and

11. Young, op.cit., III, pp. 274, and 369-72.
12. Stevenson, op.cit., p.73.
13. Claridge, op.cit., p.16.
14. Marshall, op.cit., p.141.
15. Claridge, op.cit., p. 13; and Anon., Reminiscences of Sturminster Newton, p.11, D.R.O., M.R.44.

undertook to maintain the herd at a specified number. The dairyman was entitled to a house for himself and his family, with dairy rooms attached. He could keep as many pigs and poultry as wished and also a mare to carry the butter to market. This was also a source of profit to him since the mare could be expected to produce a foal worth £8 - £9. The contract normally ran from Candlemas and could be terminated at the end of a year by notice given before All Saints' Day. (16) An example of such a contract is one made with Angel James in 1782 by James Wood of Poxwell. Wood agreed to provide twenty heifers and to replace any that died. He was to provide a bull to put with the heifers from May 3rd to July 25th, and if any of the heifers proved not to be in calf, James was to have a replacement. Besides the house and farm-buildings he was to have the right to keep pigs, poultry and a mare with her foal. For this, together with the necessary pasture and fodder, James was to pay £75 in four instalments. (17) The price which the dairyman paid per cow varied according to the quality of the land, and rose throughout the period. In 1771 in West Dorset the price varied from three pounds to five pounds per head. In 1812 the average was around eleven pounds per head, but by the 1830's the price was dropping. Mr. Taylor of Little Bredy, in his evidence to a Select Committee on Agriculture in 1836, said that whereas in 1833 cows had fetched nine pounds per head, the price had since dropped to eight pounds ten shillings with the proviso that if the butter price did not improve there would be a rebate. (18) This custom of letting dairies was generally condemned by the agricultural writers of the times. Young remarked, "Was ever such a ridiculous system known?" (19) Stevenson thought that the practice indicated that the farms were too large. (20) Marshall said that it was injurious to the estate as a succession of short-term tenants would have no interest in keeping up the buildings and fences. (21)

In the Vale of Blackmore and in West Dorset many small farmers managed their own dairies (22) and produced butter

16. Marshall, op. cit., p. 150.
17. Dairying Agreement, D.R.O., D69/T5.
18. Young, op. cit., III, pp. 248 and 382. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 381, Fussell, op. cit., p. 133.
19. Young, op. cit., III, p. 248.
20. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 389.
21. Marshall, op. cit., p. 150.
22. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 388.

and cheese for the market, as did the dairymen. The best butter from the Vale of Blackmore was salted, packed in tubs and sent by waggon to Poole where it was shipped to Portsmouth and London. (23) No doubt butter from the western parts of the county was shipped from Bridport. In the towns it fetched from eightpence to tenpence per pound, although this price was not of prime importance to the producers for they sold to factors on six months' contracts at a fixed price. In 1799 "Crito", writing to "The Times", described how the factors were holding up the supplies of butter to cause the price to rise and to increase their own profit. (24) Cheese-making was declining during the period since there was a greater demand for butter. In the western parts "Bridgwater cheese" was made before the French wars, and Marshall, who in 1796 found some still being made, considered it to be of good quality. (25) In the north of the county cheese was made from skimmed milk but was of inferior quality. In 1815 it sold at between 25/- and 30/- per hundredweight. (26) In 1802 this cheese was considered to be worth 5/- or 6/- less per hundredweight than the full-cream cheese of Somerset but this slight loss was more than compensated for by the sale of butter made from cream. (27)

Arthur Young's final criticism was that the rents were too low, and he thought that this was responsible for the small efforts made to improve the land and the methods of agriculture. It is true that he mentioned a number of large landowners who were actively farming a part of their estates in order to show to their tenants something of the more scientific agriculture. It seems, however, that the good example thus set had little following among the farmers of lesser size and status. This reluctance to change was also seen in the small number of enclosures which took place in the thirty years before 1790. In 1771 the average rent in Dorset was estimated at 10/9 per acre and varied between 5/- for the barren heathland of south-east Dorset and 20/-

23. Fussell, op.cit., p.126; and Anon., Reminiscences of Sturminster Newton, pp. 10-11.
24. The Times. 11.10.1799.
25. Marshall, op.cit., p. 148.
26. Stevenson, op.cit., p. 381.
27. Mr. Davis of Longleat in Letters and Papers of the Bath and West Of England Society, Vol. I, 1802 Ed., p. 204.

for some of the better parts of the west of the county, although in a few exceptional cases enclosed and improved farms fetched a higher price. By 1815 the rents had doubled and in some cases trebled, the range being between 10/- and 60/- per acre. (28) This was due in part to the inflationary trend of the war-time period, in part to real prosperity and in part to improvement of the land. The rent, for example, of land in the Vale of Blackmore which had been dressed with chalk was in 1815 three times what it had been in 1790. (29)

The French war brought a period of high rents and profits, of rapid changes in agricultural crops and methods, and of accelerated enclosures. A start was made on the enclosing of the grassland commons of the Vale of Blackmore and West Dorset. Claridge in 1793 had described them as overgrown with furze and covered with anthills and thought that, although in their present state they were not worth more than seven or eight shillings an acre, they would be worth more than double when they had been enclosed and limed. He mentioned that the right to use these commons rarely belonged to the inhabitants in general but to the occupiers of certain holdings. (30) An example of the working of these "stinted" commons is given in the peer-book of Caundle Marsh, a small parish in the Vale of Blackmore. (31) In 1816 the common right holders agreed how the common should be stocked for the next year, viz:-

	Young Cattle.	Horses.	Sheep.
R.Brake, (5/7½).	11.	5.	56.
J.Gollop, (4/9¼).	9.	4.	47.
H.Lane, (4/2½).	8.	4.	42.
E.Nettleton, (4/7).	9.	4.	45.
E.Coombes, (3/4).	6.	3.	33.
W.Cook, (2/2¾).	5.	2.	25.
G.Pope, (?).	4.	2.	23.
J.Jeffery, (2/1¼).	4.	2.	22.
W.Trowbridge, (10d).	1.	-	8.
C.Parsons, (9d).	1.	-	7.
J.Trowbridge, (1¼d).	-	-	1.

28. Young, op.cit., III, p. 275-326; and Stevenson, op.cit., pp.93-95.

29. Stevenson, op.cit., p.95.

30. Claridge, op.cit., p.43.

31. Caundle Marsh Peer Book (back fly-leaf).

The figures in brackets are the assessments for the poor rate. Thus it can be seen that eight of the eleven commoners were fairly substantial farmers and only one could be regarded as a cottager.

The war led to new crops becoming important, including hemp and flax, which had been grown in West Dorset before Young's visit in 1771. (32) The war, however, made it very difficult for the rope and net industries of the Bridport district to obtain raw materials from the Baltic countries, and the local growers prospered. Marshall remarked, "What marks the environments of Bridport most evidently, is the culture of hemp and flax to supply the consumption of a manufactory of sail clothe and cordage". (33) It appears from the 1796 agricultural returns that 548 acres in the coastal area were devoted to these two crops in that year. (34) There seems also to have been some hemp and flax grown in the Sherborne area (35) and some flax was grown in the north-west of the county, along the Somerset border. (36) The flax, and possibly the hemp too, was grown not by the farmer but by the "Jobber" who paid the farmer £4-£5 per acre for the land. The farmer did the ploughing and paid the rates but the rest of the cultivation and the harvesting was the responsibility of the jobber. As both crops were pulled by hand they provided the women with seasonal work in the districts where they were grown. (37)

Potatoes were another crop which increased in importance during the French wars. Before the war, some had been grown in Dorset but they had never been a popular crop. In 1771 a few improving landlord-farmers, such as Mr. Sturt of Kingston Lacy and Mr. Maude of Tincleton Clift, (38) were experimenting with potatoes but they do not appear to have become popular at this period for in the acreage returns of 1796, covering 86 parishes, only $82\frac{1}{4}$ acres were reported. (39) and Stevenson thought that there had been any improvement in the condition of the labourers on this account. (40)

- 32. Young, op.cit., III, p.380.
- 33. Marshall, op.cit., p.145.
- 34. Agricultural Returns from D.P.77, pp.162-173.
- 35. J.Pahl in D.P. 82, p.147.
- 36. Stevenson, op.cit., p.295.
- 37. Cooke, op.cit., pp. 45-46
- 38. Young, op.cit., IV, p.117; cf. Stevenson, op.cit., p.267.
- 39. Acreage Returns, from D.P.77, pp.162-173.
- 40. Stevenson, op.cit., p.452.

The bad times of 1799 - 1801 seem to have been responsible for the increase in the use of the potato and it was at this period that it began to feature considerably in the poor-books. (41) It would probably not be an exaggeration to claim that the potato was established in Dorset as an expedient to feed the poor and in Stevenson's time it was grown mostly by the labourers to support themselves and to feed their pigs.

At this point it is proposed to turn to a consideration of the farmers themselves. In 1771 Young found that they complained of their poverty and this, he considered, was due to their bad husbandry rather than to their high rents. (42) There is little evidence on which to base an accurate assessment of the prosperity of the farmer before the French wars. The impression gained from Young in 1771 and Claridge in 1793 is that although the farmers were not prosperous, largely through their own mismanagement, at least there was no great hardship. They were content with a simple life, not much above that of their labourers, and they could maintain this without undue labour and certainly without changing their old-fashioned methods. It was indeed a time when the industrious labourer could make his way into the farmers' ranks. Young cites the case of William White, one of Mr. Frampton's tenants at Moreton. White began as a day labourer and by thrift saved £200. Then he took two acres on lease and soon after two more. Later on he received two small legacies which together with his own savings helped him to increase his holding. When Young visited Moreton, he had 87 acres on life leases and another 266 acres of near heathland at an annual rent of £50. He was reputed to be worth £1,150. (43)

The French wars brought sudden prosperity to the land as the prices of corn and other products rose rapidly. Increases in rents followed more slowly as much of the land was let on lifehold or long leases. While the farmers put some of this new wealth into improving their land, much of it went into apeing the gentry. "Their entertainments are as expensive as they are elegant.....; for it is not an

41. For detail of this, vide infra. Chapter XVI

42. Young, op.cit., III p.280.

43. Ibid., p. 306.

uncommon thing for these newly created farmers to spend £10 or £12 at one entertainment, and to wash off delicate food they must have the most expensive wines, and those the best of their kind....As to dress, no one that is not personally acquainted with the opulent farmer's daughter can distinguish her from the daughter of a duke by her dress." (44) This is probably exaggerated and does not specifically refer to Dorset but no doubt there were comparable cases in this county. It is quite clear that the Dorset farmer was becoming more money and profit-conscious, and that he no longer felt with the labouring class in their hardships. In the difficult times of 1799 - 1800, some of the farmers seem to have held back their corn to keep the price up and those who were willing to sell corn even to their own labourers at a price below that in the open market were deemed worthy of mention in the local papers. An account in "The Sherborne Mercury" stated: "If half the reports in circulation respecting the conduct of the farmers during the late artificial scarcity are founded in truth, we can no longer boast that the yeomanry of this kingdom are the most respectable body of men it contains. We expect better things of them. At least it is evident to us, that the manoeuvres of the growers of corn have not been the only cause of the evils we lament". (45) Moreover, the farmer had discovered that the bad season could be as profitable as the good one. The wartime period saw a number of bad harvests and sometimes they occurred in successive years, as for example in 1799 and 1800, and again 1808 - 1811. (46) In these years the farmer grew and harvested less wheat but, protected by the corn laws and the wartime disruption of trade, he was more than compensated by the extremely high prices which he received. The landlord benefited more slowly but in the end he was able to put his rents up. The labourer, however, bore the hardship

44. Gayer, Restow and Schwartz, British Economy, Vol. I, p. 37; Cf. also Cobbett, Political Register, 17. 3. 1821.
45. Sherborne Mercury, 4. 8. 1800.
46. T.S. Ashton, Economic Fluctuations in England, 1700 to 1800, p.25; and Gayer Restow and Schwartz, op.cit., Vol. I, pp.83-85.

while his master prospered for his wages did not rise as rapidly as did the cost of living. If the harvest was good and the price fell, it never fell too far; for the continental system made import difficult. If, however, the farmer was hit by falling prices, or if in time of shortage he wished to hold back his supplies until the price was higher, the banks came to his aid. The first Dorset bank had been founded at Sherborne in 1750, apparently as an adjunct to a grocery business. (47) It was not until 1786 that the next one was established, but between that date and 1815 no less than eighteen banks in various parts of the county made their appearance. (48) From the end of 1808 onwards the banks throughout the country made money available to borrowers to a far greater extent than their reserves justified. In this lending spree many new county banks appeared, issuing an abundance of their bank notes. (49) Although this observation applies to the country in general it was undoubtedly true of Dorset; for nine banks were established in the four years after 1808. (49) (50)

After the end of the war the situation soon changed. The farmers had gained by the slowness in the rise in rents in the first part of the war, but now their leases committed them to high rents for several years ahead. Both landlord and farmer, moreover, had become used to higher incomes and more lavish living, and both were reluctant to accept the lower levels which the changed circumstances indicated. The decline of an agricultural prosperity had started in 1813 with the ending of the continental system and the abundant harvest of that year. (50) The wheat prices fell from 152/- before the harvest to 75/- by the end of the year. The years from 1813 - 1823 were mostly years of fair or good harvests and when they were not, there were usually sufficient stocks in hand to keep the price down. Only in 1816 and 1817 was there anything approaching a shortage of wheat and in the

47. M.B. Weinstock, More Studies in Dorset History, pp.85-6
48. H.Symonds, West Country Banks, D.P.48 p. 19.
49. Gayer etc., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 105.
50. Symonds, op.cit., p.19.
51. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, op. cit., Vol I, p.110.

latter year the price rose to nearly 100/-. (52) Fussell describes how in the hard times after 1815 Dorset farmers were hit by these adverse conditions. In one district of the county alone, fifty-two farmers occupying 24,000 acres failed between 1815 and 1820. (53) "The Times", in 1822, reported on farm sales in the west of England including Dorset. It stated that sales under execution remained numerous and that at such a sale recently held near Stalbridge purchasers could not be found. A cow of superior quality put up for sale at £5 did not attract a bidder. Finally after offering sheep at an equally low price, the auctioneer abandoned the sale. (54)

After 1823 agricultural prosperity revived to some extent. The harvests were less abundant so that the price of wheat remained satisfactory. (55) In Dorset, however, arable farming was not the basis of the economy as in some counties. Wet weather may have benefited the arable farmer by keeping grain prices up, but it harmed the sheep farmer by killing his sheep. Thus "The Dorset County Chronicle" reported in 1829 that 100,000 sheep had been lost in the west of England in that season and that one farmer near Marnhull had lost every cow and sheep on his farm. (56) The dairying industry was harmed by other factors too. Imports of Dutch butter were stealing the market and a shortage of legal tender, apparently caused by the ending of the war-time paper money in 1829, seemed to make it difficult for the butter factors to pay the farmers. (57) Agriculture was depressed after the war but the war-time rents and taxes continued for some years. (58) Unless the farmer met these demands and those of his creditors he could not survive. The one outgoing which he could reduce was that on labour and therefore wages fell and unemployment grew.

- 52. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, *op.cit.*, Vol.I p.110.
- 53. Fussell, *op.cit.*, p.130.
- 54. The Times, 9. 10. 1822.
- 55. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.173.
- 56. Dorset County Chronicle, 11. 6. 1829.
- 57. A letter from A. Lillington of Warwick describes these difficulties which faced a Dorset friend who had written to him asking if he could find a market for butter in Birmingham. Home Office Papers- HO/44/22.
- 58. Prothero, Pioneers and Progress of British Farming, p.91.

Industry in Town and Country.

Miss Barbara Kerr in an excellent article on the Dorset agricultural labourer (1) held that Dorset was not much affected by industry before 1850. If by this is understood large scale mechanised urban enterprise, her statement is no doubt true. If, however, the production of manufactured articles is meant, the statement is by no means justified. There was a great deal of industry in Dorset before 1850, both in the towns and in the countryside. It would probably be true to say that more Dorset people in the early nineteenth century than in the early twentieth century derived at least a part of their livelihood from industry. In most areas of the county some sort of industry was carried on in the cottages of the poor, the profits of which provided an essential supplement to the meagre agricultural wages of the time. It is in this, perhaps, that the real significance of early Dorset industry lies.

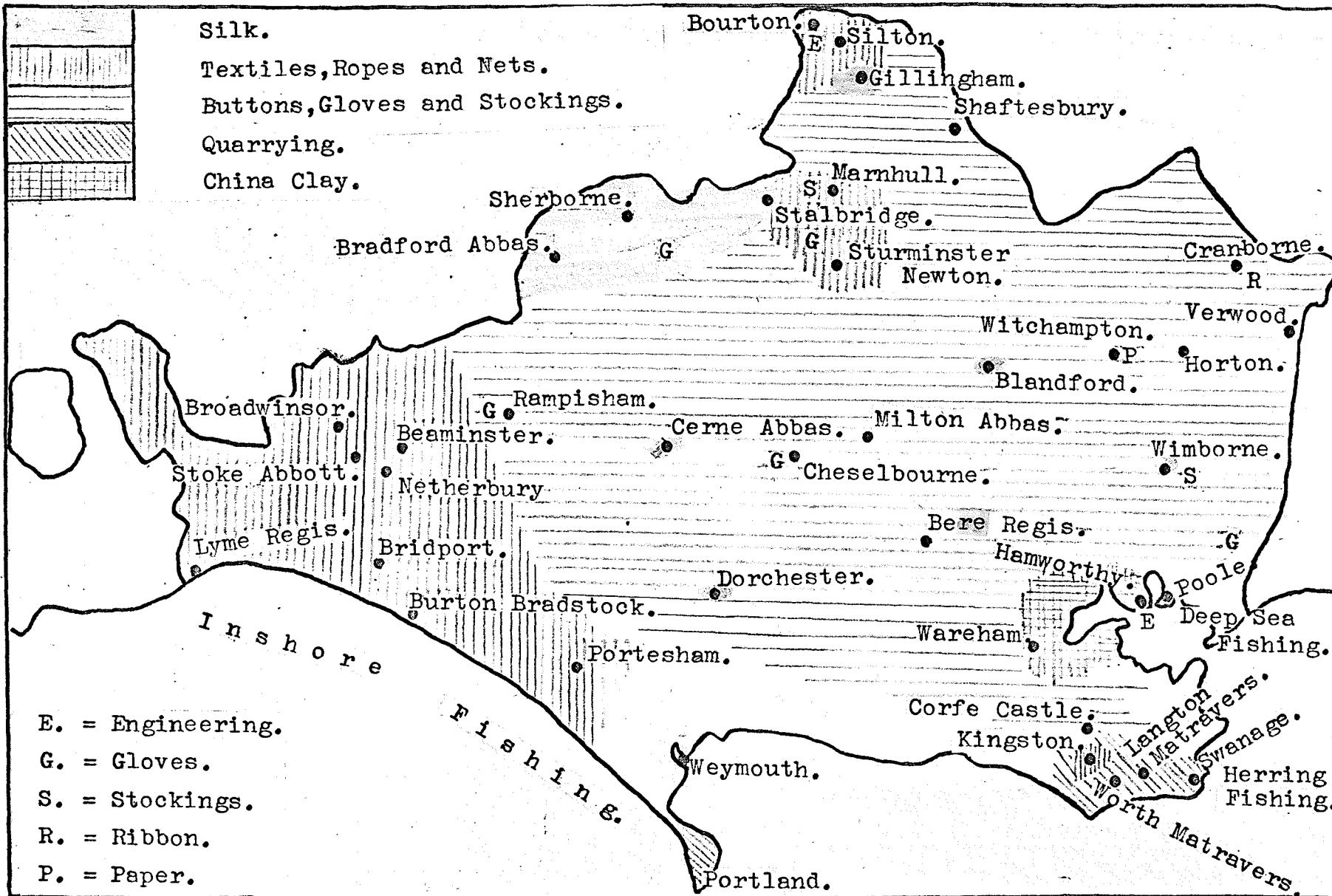
In West Dorset a group of textile industries thrived. In and around Bridport, according to Stevenson, hemp and flax were grown and every year 1,500 tons of the prepared fibres were manufactured as lines, twines, small cordage, suds and fishing nets of all kinds. These products were largely exported to Newfoundland, the West Indies and other parts of North America. The British fisheries also bought a considerable amount. (2) In Bridport, the centre of the industry, some 1,800 persons were employed and about 7,000 more within seven or eight miles of the town. About 2,000 of them were employed at Beaminster where sail cloth was woven (3) and others at Burton Bradstock, Broadwinstor, Netherbury and Stoke Abbott among other places. (4)

1. B.Kerr, The Dorset Agricultural Labourer 1750-1850, D.P., 84, p.158.
2. Stevenson, op.cit., p.27.
3. Claridge, op.cit., pp.37-38.
4. H.S.L.Dewar, The Windmills, Watermills and Horsemills of Dorset, D.P., pp.118-9; and M.R.Dacombe, Dorset Up Along and Down Along, p.50.

Map III.

Industrial Dorset.

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A great deal of the work was done in the homes of the workers. At Portesham, for example, nets were made in the cottages. The employers' agents, who brought the cord and collected the finished nets, did not pay in cash but took orders for household goods to be brought on their next visit. (5) In other places payment was made in cash and Claridge found that women could earn eightpence per day. (6) This industry flourished greatly in the French wars but suffered somewhat after 1815 when the Baltic was open to British trade again. (7) Nevertheless, in 1832, when D.O.P. Okeden made his report to the Poor Law Commissioners, he described the industry as a thriving one in which women were able to earn 4/- per week and children from 1/6d to 1/9d a week. (8)

There were similar though rather smaller industries in the north of Dorset around Gillingham and especially in the village of Bourton. Flax which was locally grown and some which was imported through Poole was used. As much of this imported flax came from the Low Countries the trade was badly hit at the beginning of the French wars. Yet it recovered and in 1800 Daniel Maggs installed flax-spinning machinery powered by water. Others in the neighbourhood followed his example and in the next village of Silton, weaving machinery was installed too. Most of the weaving, however, was done by hand and in the late eighteenth century there were 400 or 500 handlooms working in the cottages of the surrounding villages. (9) The industry in this district survived to the late nineteenth century when it failed in face of competition from the north of England. There were also small sail-cloth manufactories at Poole and at Kingston in Purbeck. (10) At Sturminster Newton, in the north of the county, there was a small manufactory which specialised in the weaving of a coarse woollen cloth or flannel called "Swan-skin". About 1,200 people were employed in it and some 5,000 pieces were made every year. It was used in the

5. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.50.
6. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.38.
7. B.Kerr, *op.cit.*, p.161.
8. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p. 12.
9. F.C.Warren, Dorset Industries, S.D.22, pp.75-78.
10. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.38.

making of soldiers' uniforms and special clothes for the Newfoundland fishermen. (11) Similar cloth was woven at Marnhull nearby and in this case the factory had been established by a Huguenot refugee named A'Court. (12)

Silk-throwing, or spinning, was a well-established industry in Sherborne, Gillingham and Stalbridge and some silk work was done at Cerne Abbas, Wimborne, Blandford, Dorchester and Bradford Abbas where it was encouraged by the parishes to provide employment for the poor. (13) The principal centre was undoubtedly at Sherborne where the industry started about 1740 and by 1772 it was operating on quite a large scale. The history of one of the main firms, that of William Willmott and George Ward, has been well recounted. It had two centres, one at Sherborne and the other at Bruton in Somerset. At Sherborne, Willmott managed the works and looked after the branches in nearby places, such as Cerne Abbas. The silk was supplied by London concerns and thrown by machinery at Sherborne, although some of the preparatory work was taken home by the workers or sent out to workhouses such as the one at Dorchester. (14) The Gillingham silk industry was smaller, employing about 160 persons in the factory itself. These included many apprentices who had been imported from London workhouses and who slept in a dormitory at the top of the factory. The winding of the silk threads on the bobbins in preparation for the actual twisting was done in the homes of the workers. (15)

The letter-books and accounts of William Willmott, on which Miss Weinstock based her account of this firm, show some of the problems which the small, eighteenth-century manufacturer faced. Willmott was handling 15,000 to 19,000 lbs of silk a year but his supply was irregular and he was

11. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.39; and Anon., Reminiscences of Sturminster Newton, p.19.
12. M.Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.49.
13. Warren, *op.cit.*, pp. 42-44; H.C.Mayo, Gillingham Silk Industry, S.D.14, pp. 289-292; and M.B.Weinstock, Studies in Dorset History, p.93. Cf. also the vestry minutes of Blandford and Wimborne.
14. M.B.Weinstock, *op.cit.*, pp. 83-102.
15. Mayo, *op.cit.*, S.D.14, pp. 289-292.

constantly under the necessity of laying off some of his workers. Thus, in January 1773, he wrote to his suppliers begging for contract work; explaining that he had laid off many of his hands "which are either starving or are become burdensome to the town.....[and] it is enough to move a heart of a stone to hear their complaints." (16) Some while later, he had so much work that he was refusing orders and working his mills "overhours to make seven days in the week" (17) As Willmott's mills were turned by water he was much affected by the weather. In 1774 he was held up by floods, and in 1782 by a severe drought. On this occasion he approached Lord Digby, asking him to let him have more water by lowering the level of his artificial pond by one-eighth of an inch every Thursday, "just to gain enough head to serve me of my people." Lord Digby refused this request because "her ladyship wishes to see their pond always full." A month later, the drought continuing, Willmott was bribing the man who had charge of the water, "so that this week I hope to go on pretty briskly." (18) A small business in a small town draws on a fairly small supply of labour, so that when a rival firm was established in 1776, Willmott was hard hit. When a little later the rival firm began to import children from workhouses and hospitals in London, Willmott was gleeful for, he wrote, this "has amazingly incensed the neighbourhood against them." (19)

The industries considered so far have been town-based although they provided work to be done in the homes of the cottagers in the neighbouring villages. There were also several industries which seem to have used part-time domestic labour entirely. Such was the ribbon-making craft around Cranborne; button-making, carried out throughout north-east Dorset and especially around Blandford and Shaftesbury; glove-making in central and north Dorset; and

16. M.B. Weinstock, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-89.

17. *Ibid.*, pp.90

18. *Ibid.*, pp.91-92.

19. *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

Cf. F. Warner, The Silk Industry on this section generally, esp. p. 334.

stocking-making around Wimborne, Corfe Castle and Stalbridge. (20) The making of cloth buttons had been introduced into Dorset in the early eighteenth century by Abraham Case of Shaftesbury. At first a small horn disk was used as a base to be woven over by hand. Later a wire ring was used. The craft spread widely and centres soon appeared at Bere Regis, at Blandford where, in 1793 according to Claridge 3,000 persons were employed in the trade, and elsewhere. (21) In the late eighteenth century Lady Caroline Damer of Milton Abbas established a school in the village where the children were taught reading, spinning and button-making. (22) The wire rings were made by the boys and girls twisting wire around a spindle and then dipping the end in solder. The women and older girls then stretched threads across the ring and wove into them. (23) The Case firm of Shaftesbury established depots widely over the eastern part of the county to which on certain specified days an agent went to purchase the buttons brought in from the nearby villages. When the trade was prosperous the Cases' turnover was about £10,000 a year. (24) By 1834, however, this craft was going into decline, and James Frampton of Moreton in his return to the Poor Law Commissioners reported that button-making was growing less profitable. (25) The decline continued and by about 1850 the trade had almost ceased. (26)

Glove-making was also a home industry and was widely practised in the county. At Kinson and Chesebrough, knitted gloves were made and at Chesebrough, Bradford Abbas, Cerne Abbas, Rampisham, Marnhull, Sturminster Newton and Sherborne leather gloves were sown. (27) Stockings were knitted in the cottages around Stalbridge, Wimborne and Poole and at Wimborne over a thousand women and children were employed in this work in 1793. They were paid between 1/- and 1/6d per pair. (28)

20. Warren, *op.cit.*, pp. 42-44; Claridge, *op.cit.*, pp. 37-40; and M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-53.
21. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.39.
22. For this paragraph generally see cf. J.E. Acland, Dorset Buttony DP.35, pp. 71-74.
23. M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.52.
24. Acland, *op.cit.*, p. 73.
25. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B2, Q.9. Cf also P.12 of the report.
26. A. Jackson, Dorset Buttons, S.D.27 p.140.
27. M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.52.
28. *Ibid.* p.51. Cooke, *op.cit.*, p.128. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.40.

Several small engineering works existed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of these, the most important was at Bourton where Daniel Maggs, the linen manufacturer, was making small, edged tools in the late eighteenth century, and in the early nineteenth century he established a small blast furnace and foundry which employed at its peak some 200 men. It is claimed that the first threshing-machine developed in the west of England was made by Maggs' works at Bourton. (29) There were other foundries at Dorchester, Marnhull and Hamworthy near Poole. (30) Another small industrial concern was that of paper-making at Witchampton near Wimborne which had been established in 1775. (31)

The extractive industries were represented by clay-mining and quarrying. In the late eighteenth century there were about 800 men and boys quarrying stone on Portland and about 150 small ships of 30 to 150 tons engaged in carrying it away. About 9,000 tons a year were quarried and the men received 11/- per ton. (32) In the Isle of Purbeck, the quarrying was chiefly in the parishes of Corfe Castle, Langton Matravers, Worth Matravers and Swanage. The men could earn up to 20/- per week and in 1793 about 400 were employed. Between 1764 and 1771, Hutchins estimated that about 14,000 tons a year were quarried and during 1801-1806, 38,000 to 39,000 tons a year were sold (33) Potters' clay was exploited around Wareham, Corfe Castle and Poole, where upwards of a hundred men were employed, digging the clay at 3/6d per day. (34) Some 16,000 to 20,000 tons of good clay were shipped annually to Liverpool for the Staffordshire potteries, some 3,000 or 4,000 tons were sent to Bristol and London to be made into brown stoneware while some was used locally at Hamworthy, Verwood and Horton. (35)

- 29. Warren, op.cit., p.78. M.Dacombe, op.cit., p.48.
- 30. M.Dacombe, op.cit., p.48.
- 31. Ibid., p.53.
- 32. Stevenson, op.cit., pp.54-55.
- 33. Ibid., pp.55-59.
- 34. Ibid., p.60.
- 35. M.Dacombe, op.cit., p.48.

This local pottery was regarded as a somewhat precarious industry in the 1834 Poor Law Report. (36)

Dorset is a maritime county and the sea has always provided a livelihood for many of her inhabitants. The county had four main ports: Poole, Weymouth, Bridport and Lyme Regis. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, Lyme Regis had ceased to be of any importance except as a centre of local fishing. (37) When in the 1790's the ports had to find men for the navy, Lyme's quota was 23, whereas Poole's was 279. (38) Bridport also had fallen into decay by the early eighteenth century but in 1751 a new harbour was constructed and this led to a revival of the port. It became important for the export of its own local cordage and nets, and also as a ship-building centre. (39) The building of ships began at Bridport about 1779 and reached a peak in the French wars. The industry could not compete, however, when the iron-built ship replaced the wooden ones and it soon ceased. (40) Weymouth was declining as a port although to a lesser extent than Lyme Regis. The highest number of ships which sailed from Weymouth to Newfoundland in the late eighteenth century was eight (in 1773) whereas Poole in the same period, was sending between 60 and 70 a year. Weymouth's quota for men for the navy in the 1790's was 139 compared with Poole's 279. (41) On the other hand Weymouth was discovering another way of exploiting the seas: by the mid-eighteenth century the town was becoming known as a sea-bathing resort and in 1783 its popularity was such that a tax of 2/6d per year could be put on each bathing-machine. (42) Poole was by far the most important port and in 1793 Claridge described it as "by much the greatest port in the county, and where at least 200 sail are said to belong: and an extensive trade is carried on to Newfoundland; which imports above 2,000 tons of seal oil annually besides 1,000 tons of train oil." (43)

36. Poor Law Report 1834, p. 18.

37. G. Roberts, Social History of the Southern Counties pp.540-546.

38. V.C.H.Dorset Vol. 2, p.224.

39. *Ibid.*, p.225.

40. H.Symonds, Bridport Harbour, D.P.33, pp.161ff.

41. V.C.H.Dorset Vol.2, pp.222-224.

42. V.C.H.Dorset Vol.2, pp255.

43. Claridge, *op.cit.*, p.44.

The Newfoundland trade was engaged in supplying the deep-sea fishing bases and in bringing back the cod caught off the Newfoundland banks as well as the oils mentioned above. (44) Besides this, as has already been noted, the port was used for the export of butter and calves to Portsmouth and London.

The main local fishing was catching mackerel between Weymouth and Lyme Regis, (45) while at Swanage there was a herring fishery where a large number of the fish were smoked and dried. (46)

It can be seen then that the industry of Dorset was not inconsiderable and it may be suggested that its significance lay not in the full-time work which has just been described but in the piece-work done at home, which enabled so many families to supplement their incomes. The opportunity of earning a few extra shillings a week was available in all parts of the county and played an important part in the budgets of many poor families. The rope, net and sail-making industry of the western parts of the county and the silk industry of the north both had their central manufactories but a great deal of the work was done in the cottages of the workers. Some men, no doubt, supported themselves wholly in industry but much of the work seems to have been done by women and children. The button, glove and stocking industries of the north and east of the county were, it appears, entirely cottage industries in which the work was done by the women and children. Only the extractive industries of the south-east, the small engineering industry and the maritime industries were fully specialised in that they relied on full-time male labour. Of these, only the stone and clay industries seem to have been of major importance and then only in limited areas. The engineering factories were too small to matter outside their particular locations, as far as the labouring population was concerned. The maritime industry was necessarily confined to the ports and especially

44. M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.45.

45. *Ibid.*, p.45; and Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p.77.

46. Cocke, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111.

to Poole; moreover most of those involved were non-resident much of the time. Nevertheless it would be wrong to consider it of no importance to the life of the labouring population of Dorset; for it provided a steady outlet for apprentices, besides bringing wealth into the county.

After the French wars, these small industries entered into a period of fierce competition and in many cases found that they could not compete with the more efficient concerns of the north of England. It seems to have been only the rope, net and sail industry of the Bridport area and the extractive industries of south-east Dorset which were able to survive the immediate post-war depression. The extractive industries were producing commodities for which there was usually a ready market and no substitute more conveniently placed. The Bridport industries were favourably situated to find a market in the south coast ports and seem to have prospered as long as the sailing ship survived. Elsewhere the industries declined; the lack of good transport and easily accessible power made them uncompetitive. As they were employing increasingly less labour and paying less for the work done in the cottages this was probably an important factor in the poverty of north and east Dorset.

Chapter Five.

The Labourers.

Some of those who have studied the village labourer between 1760 and 1834, such as J.L. and B. Hammond on a national scale and Miss M.R. Dacombe on a county scale (1), have held that these years saw the transformation of the independent, prosperous peasant into the cowed and poverty-stricken labourer. Enclosure was said to have been the cause. Thus Miss Dacombe remarked, "On the whole, enclosures bore hardly on the cottagers who had found it possible to eke out a living by farming a few acres, cutting furze for fuel and putting out a cow or pig and a few geese to graze there. Their rights were so limited that when enclosure came, the portion of the land which was their due was not big enough to be of any use and they agreed to be bought out by some more important neighbour. They did not know anything of the new farming science and they were unwilling and unable through lack of capital to make any changes, so they soon lost their few arable acres and had to accept employment on some bigger farm at a weekly wage." (2) This point of view was not generally accepted by contemporary writers. The secretary of the Bath and West of England Society wrote in 1796 that far from injuring the poor, enclosure benefited them by increasing production. He considered that the open-field rights were often more harmful than beneficial; for the poor man had to sell his stock before the winter, a time when prices were bad. Through the winter he had to "peach, purloin or creep into debt." (3)

Modern writers, likewise, have challenged this point of view: for example Prof. Chambers argues that it was not enclosures that were responsible for the reservoir of landless labourers but the increase of population. (4)

1. J.L. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer, *passim*.
M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.35ff.
2. M. Dacombe, *op.cit.*, p.35.
3. W. Mathews, in Letters and Papers of Bath and West of England Society, Vol 2, 1802 Ed., pp. 283-295.

Miss B.Kerr has studied the situation of the Dorset labourer between 1750 and 1850 and concludes that it was not enclosure nor the use of agricultural machinery that brought about the labourers' plight but "an unprecedented strain put on the village economy by the population increase." (5) It would appear that the conclusions of these writers are well-founded in that they dismiss enclosures as a major cause, although it may be questioned whether population increase, in itself, was responsible. Further consideration of this aspect of the subject must be left until Part III of this work. For the purposes of the present chapter, these views are important, because, when taken together with the fact of the relatively small amount of enclosure which actually took place in Dorset in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they indicate that views such as that of Miss Dacombe, cited above, need reconsideration. There were smallholders in Dorset in 1760 but the land was mostly worked by wage-earners. Characteristic was the labourer who was either hired by the year and lived in his master's house; or who was hired by the week or day and lived in his own home. The decrease in the number of smallholders by 1834 was probably due to the consolidation of farms rather than to enclosure. There had been no harsh expulsion of the smallholders but rather a cessation of the granting of small leaseholds. This process had been continuing throughout the eighteenth century but only by the end of the century was its effect noticeable. In some cases, the big farmer of the early nineteenth century was the son or grandson of the smallholder of fifty years before. (6) The contemporary criticism of the engrossing of farms was not that men were dispossessed but that the big farm by its extensive methods provided less employment than did several smaller ones. (7) Examples of the prosperous smallholder are hard to uncover, for they were not the sort of men to leave records or to attract the attention of writers although the case of William White related by Young has already been noted. (8)

5. B.Kerr, op.cit., p.162.
6. See Chapter II above, pp.15-19.
7. See Chapter II above, p.19.
8. See Chapter III above, p.32.

Another was that of Thomas Candy of Stoke Wake who in 1830 rented a dairy and by hard work and ability built up a considerable dairy-farming business. (9) His family still farm in the neighbourhood.

The wages paid to the labourers are better documented. When Arthur Young came to Dorset in 1771, he thought that the average weekly wage paid was reasonable. From the evidence of the places he visited, this seems to have been as follows:

Sum paid during five weeks of harvest.....13/- ,

Sum paid during six weeks of haymaking.....6/6d.,

Sum paid during the rest of the year.....6/-.

Young thought that the labourers could subsist on these wages and that this was the correct criterion to use in fixing them. He considered that if the labourer earned more than was essential for his necessary expenses he would be unwilling to work. (10) The Rev. Davies collected his evidence from his correspondence over the years in which he was compiling his book, "The Case of the Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered." As the book was published in 1795, his figures are probably those of the period 1790-1795. At Affpuddle, a man earned between 7/- and 9/- per week and his family could earn a little in addition. Thus, a family consisting of a man, his wife and four children, aged six to fifteen years, earned 10/- per week, which was gained as follows:

Man. 8s. 0d.

Wife. 6d.

Children 1s. 6d. (11)

At Bishops Caundle in the Vale of Blackmore wages were lower. There a man could earn between 5/6 and 8/- per week. The total earnings of a typical family were:

Man. 6s. 0d.

Wife. 1s. 0d.

Children 2s. 6d.

9. B. Kerr, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

10. A. Young, *op.cit.*, IV, pp. 312-313 and 320.

11. D. Davies, The Case of the Labourers in Husbandry, pp.148-9.

There were seven children aged one to twelve years in this family, supported on an income of 9/6d per week. (12) At Stinsford, near Dorchester, a man earned from 6/6d to 7/6d per week. A typical family, consisting of a man and his wife, with five children aged eight to seventeen years, earned as follows:

Man	6s. 6d.
Wife	8d.
Children.	4s. 6d.

Thus a family of seven had an income of 11s. 8d. (13) The wages paid at Affpuddle were probably above the average; for Claridge gave the figure of 6/- per week as the average cash wage for the county. In addition to the cash payment labourers were usually allowed to buy wheat from their masters at a reduced price and thus the real wage would be slightly above 6/-. (14)

After the time of Davies and Claridge, that is in the early 1790's, the rate of wages appears to have risen slightly. Stevenson in 1815 found a great variety in the wages paid. In Frampton, for example, where labour was scarce, a man got 7/6 a week plus the extra concessions of cheap grain, a rent-free cottage, free furze for fuel and the right to keep a pig and to grow potatoes. (15) Labour was also in short supply at Kingston Russell where wages were decidedly higher than in 1795. A man earned up to 9/- per week plus rent-free cottage. In other cases the cash payment was lower but the man was allowed to buy grain cheaply and to keep a pig. (16) In a few places higher wages were paid, as at Morden and Corfe Castle where 12/- per week was the rate but where there were no concessions. At Symondsbury, men got 2/- per day and cheap corn too. At Wimborne the rate was 10/6 without any extras or 6/- per week with them. 6/- or 7/- per week plus a rent-free cottage and cheap grain seems to have been the most usual rate. Stevenson mentions these wages as those paid

12. D.Davies, The Case of the Labourers in Husbandry, pp.150-1.
13. Ibid., pp. 154-5.
14. Claridge, op.cit., p.22.
15. Stevenson, op.cit., pp. 428.
16. Ibid., p. 428.

at Stinsford, Warmwell, Fleet, Foxwell, Winterborne Whitechurch and Tarrant Crawford among other places. (17) These wages had been paid for quite a long time before 1815 (18), so it may be assumed that the rise in wages had occurred early in the wartime period. Eden, writing in 1797, lends some support to this conclusion by mentioning that at Durweston the rate of wages had recently gone up from 6/- per week to 8/- or 9/-. (19) In the period after the war, wages seem to have declined again. Thus, in the 1834 Poor Law Report, Okeden, the assistant commissioner who reported on Dorset, and the squire of More Crichel near Wimberne, recorded that the normal rate of wages at Hazelbury Bryan was 7/- per week. (20) This is a figure which is largely confirmed by the parish returns included in the appendices to the report, although in a few cases higher figures are given. (21) It seems, too, that the extras such as cheap grain which had been given less often in 1815 had ceased. (22)

The labourer could undertake piecework after his daily work was done but the opportunities for this were irregular and only a few places, such as Cranborne, could offer regular employment of this kind: for in the woodlands there hurdle and fagget-making offered almost endless work. (23) There was also work available for women and children but after the French wars this became less profitable, except perhaps in the western parts of the county. In their replies to the Poor Law Commissioners, most parishes said that there was some piece-work available but sometimes it was only seasonal agricultural work. At Buckland Newton, for example, women could earn 4/- to 6/- a week in button-making, gloving or in agriculture, and the children 1/- to 1/6d. (24) Other reports were less favourable. Thus Fontmell Magna replied

17. Stevenson, op.cit., p.428-9
18. Ibid., p.428.
19. Eden, op.cit., (Ed. Rogers), p.178.
20. Poor Law Report, 1834, p.20.
21. Ibid., Appendix B 2, pp. 37ff.
22. Stevenson, op.cit., p.452.
23. Poor Law Report 1834, p.18.
24. Ibid., Appendix B 2, p.37ff.

that button-making was available but that it did not pay. They added, however, that a woman with four children could earn 10/- per week during the spring and summer in agriculture. Hazelbury Bryan, with work of the same kind available, estimated 6/6d per week as the maximum; and Longfleet's estimate was 5/-. (25)

There were also other sources of income - legal and illegal. In many parts of the county there were sparrow clubs; groups of men with lanterns and nets to catch the birds and gain the churchwardens' reward. (26) At Wyke Regis and on Portland, wheatears were captured to sell in Weymouth as a delicacy. (27) Nutting was a profitable sideline in the villages around Cranborne Chase in the north east Dorset. (28) Of the illegal sidelines, poaching was the most common amongst the labourers. After the 1816 Peaching Act, the number of convictions rose rapidly. In 1814, there had been six convictions at the Dorset Quarter Sessions. In 1816, there were twenty-seven and in the two following years forty-one in each year. (29) The other illegal sideline was smuggling but this was operated by men far more important than labourers. The smuggling rings included men from all levels of society and operated over large areas of the county, but doubtless many a labourer supplemented his income by playing a humble part in the operations. (30)

At this point it will be useful to return to the vexed question of the labourers' losses in the enclosures. It has already been shown that the enclosures in Dorset did not have much effect on the comparatively few smallholders, (31) but it has been suggested that the labourer had a steady supplement to his income from the common land of the parish. The weight of the evidence, however, tends to show that the commons were stinted, that is, the right

- 25. Poor Law Report, 1834, Appendix B 2, p.37ff.
- 26. M.Dacombe, op.cit., p.41.
- 27. Ibid., p.41.
- 28. Ibid., p.41.
- 29. B.Kerr op.cit., p. 163.
- 30. c.f. Dorset Year Book 1949-50, p.55ff. 1953-4, p.16; 1959-60, - 99ff and Sherborne Mercury of the period, e.g. 21. 1. 1779, and 1. 4. 1779.
- 31. See Chapter II above, pp.19-23.

to pasture was specific in number of stock and limited to the holders of certain tenements, (32) as at Caundle Marsh which has been cited above. Only in very rare cases did the cottagers have grazing rights in the common pasture, as at Ashmore where it was granted to them as a special concession by the commoners in 1776, and where they paid the commoners 2/- per year for the right to keep a cow. (33) The right to cut turf and furze was often restricted too. At Arne, for example, the right of turbary was in the hands of the principal tenants by 1750, except for four acres of maritime scrub on the edge of Poole Harbour. (34) A restricted study of enclosure awards and commissioners' minute books suggests that the cottagers put forward no claims-except occasionally for the right of turbary. (35) The enclosure of the commons of Lytchett Minster and Lytchett Matravers in 1829 provides a typical example, for only the holders of old leases had common rights of any kind. Neither the holders of more recent leases nor the cottagers possessed common rights. (36) At Owermeigne, the only claim that could possibly have been put forward by a cottager was one of turbary. "I have lived in my cottage for twenty-nine years," said Robert Sanson, "and I have paid persons for cutting turf for me in Ower Heath." It is significant that he paid ~~as~~ others to cut it and was probably not a cottager in the usual sense of the word. (37) The right of turbary was sometimes recognised and compensation was given. At Litton Cheney the poor received an allotment of furze for fuel cutting. (38) Similarly at Stockland, 200 acres of waste were set aside on which the poor could cut furze (39) and at Pimperne 20 acres were allotted to the rector, churchwardens and overseers on trust for the poor "to preserve and promote the growth of furze" for fuel. (40)

- 32. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p. 171.
- 33. Fussell, *op.cit.*, p.118; and Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p.173 for a reference to the cottagers' right to keep cows and geese on Gillingham common.
- 34. B.Kerr, *op.cit.*, - 170.
- 35. D.R.O., 21A, Pidalehinton; D.124, Dewlish; M.C.11,732, Owermeigne; M.C.10,942.Winterborne Stickland; D.124, Abbotsbury; D.60, Lytchett Minster and Matravers.
- 36. D.60, Lytchett Minster and Matravers.
- 37. M.C. 11, 732, Owermeigne.
- 38. B.Kerr, Dorset Field Names and the Agricultural Revolution D.P.82, p.141.
- 39. Dorset County Chronicle, 27. 7. 1826.
- 40. Hutchins, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, (third edition) p.298.

It can be concluded then that enclosures did little to diminish the income of the poor, and this conclusion is reinforced by a consideration of the limited extent of Dorset enclosures. Indeed the poor may well have gained more than they lost. There was work to be done in fencing the new enclosures, and on the reclaimed waste brought into profitable agricultural use.

The way of life of the labouring class reflected their low income. The cottages which have survived from the period are very mean and these in their day were the better ones. Stevenson considered that many of the homes of the poorer people were unsatisfactory; they usually had two to four rooms, and many of them were built from ~~read~~ scrapings with chalk and straw. During the war it was difficult to obtain sufficient labourers to work the land but there was nevertheless a great shortage of cottages and those that existed were overcrowded. (41) Miss Kerr has pointed out that the "model" cottages at Milton Abbas were grossly overcrowded in 1843, with, on the average, a family of nine in every room. (42) These were perhaps a particularly bad example and a more balanced picture is given by the population returns of 1811. (43) which show that there were 26,821 families in Dorset, occupying 23,210 houses. It must be remembered that these figures applied to the whole population and therefore the overcrowding of the cottages of the poor would have been somewhat higher than they suggest.

The contents of the homes of the poor are well illustrated by the inventories often recorded in the poor-books. The general picture is of bare and comfortless homes as a few examples will show. George Mitchel of Caundle Bishop possessed a bed and bed-clothes, a table and two chairs, a pot, a pail, a tea-kettle, a washing tub, a box, several barrels and a few tools. (44) Eli Williams of Sturminster Marshall had two beds, bed-clothes, a table, a deal dresser with three drawers, a frying-pan, a pot, a kettle,

41. Stevenson op.cit., pp. 84-87.
42. B.Kerr, The Dorset Agricultural Labourer, 1750-1850 D.P. 84, p.168
43. Population Returns (1811) cited in Anon., A Description of the county of Dorset, in D.C.M.
44. Caundle Bishop Poor Book, 1790-1812.

and a few other household utensils. (45) It seems that he had no chairs! Sarah Camel of Burton Bradstock had a bed and bedclothes, a large and a small table, two chairs, a corner-cupboard, a dresser with shelves, a brass boiler, a bacon-rack and a few pewter dishes. (46) Finally mention may be made of the goods of a smallholder, James Winter of Caundle Marsh. He had a leasehold cottage, two leasehold orchards, and one other orchard and a piece of land by unspecified tenure. He possessed a horse, harness and cider-making utensils. His house contained a bed and bed-clothes, a clock, a dresser, a chest, a box with legs, a settle with a cover, an oak table, and a variety of household utensils and tools, including a gun. (47)

The diet of the poor was decidedly monotonous and about half their income was spent on bread. Davies gave the budgets of twenty families from various parishes and out of a total weekly expenditure on food of £5/5/2d, they spent £4/15/8d on bread. The rest of the money was used to buy potatoes, vegetables, cheese, bacon, meat, tea, sugar and butter, together with soap and candles, and mending-materials. (48) Eden gave an account of the domestic economy of a fifty-two year-old man and his family near Blandford. There were five children and the eldest girl, aged eighteen, managed the house since the mother was dead. The other children, aged eight, six, three and two, did not earn anything. The parish paid the house rent but gave no other relief. The father earned 6/- per week for most of the year, 7/- in the spring and early summer and 9/- during the four weeks of harvest. For breakfast the family ate bread and cheese and drank tea. For dinner and supper they had bread and cheese, or potatoes which were sometimes mashed with fat from a stew and sometimes with salt alone. Once a week they had a bullock's cheek from which they made stew. The only sweetening substance was treacle and only a very little milk or beer was drunk. (49) The potatoe was just becoming common in Dorset in the 1790's when Davies and Eden wrote their accounts, and Stevenson reported the opinion of Mr. Park,

45. Sturminster Marshall Papers, P.98/OV14.
46. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 1, P97/OV1.
47. Caundle Marsh Poor Book.
48. Davies, op.cit., pp.148-155.
49. Eden, op.cit., (Ed.Rogers), p.172.

Lord Shaftesbury's steward, that this vegetable had contributed greatly to improving the lot of the poor. It had enriched their own diet and made it possible for them to keep a pig and to have bacon and pork. (50) Stevenson himself found that bread with skimmed-milk cheese, and potatoes and vegetables and a small amount of bacon and pickled pork made up their diet. Those who lived in the Vale of Blackmore, however, had little besides bread and cheese in 1812. (51) In part of northern Dorset the poor ate "bannock", a barley cake, with treacle or cheese; for wheaten bread was a rarity only to be enjoyed after gleaning in the harvest fields. They had meat, other than their own pork and bacon, only at Christmas when the squire distributed it. (52) The evidence of the 1834 Poor Law Report is in agreement. To a question asking whether the poor could subsist on their earnings, the authorities of Winterborne Kingston answered "Yes, such a family would probably kill two pigs in the year, the greater part of which they would consume themselves. Butchers' meat is seldom used by them. Bread, cheese, butter and potatoes with tea is their usual diet." (53) The Rev. John Davis of Cerne Abbas thought that they could subsist only if they could get potato ground cheaply, which was rarely possible; while the parish officers of Buckland Newton replied that the poor could subsist only with the help of parish relief. Messrs Portman and Elliott, however, whose answer related to the Blandford division generally, thought that the poor could subsist and indeed could do better than in former times. (54) Possibly they had in mind Mr. Portman's extensive estates around Blandford, on which he had recently lowered the rents to enable the farmers to pay more generous wages. (55)

In what has been said so far, the life of the labouring class has been viewed through the eyes of the well-to-do, for there are few records from the poor themselves. There was, however, an anonymous writer of Sturminster Newton whose status was plainly closer to that of the labourers than any of the writers to whom reference has just been made.

50. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p.454.

51. *Ibid.*, p.452.

52. M.Dacombe, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36.

53. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, pp.37f.

54. *Ibid.*, pp.37f.

55. Dorset County Chronicle, 3. 2. 1831.

As an old man he described how in his young days, the poor labourer worked from six in the morning until six at night and earned six shillings a week if he were single, and seven shillings if he were married. "Only think," he commented, "a man with a wife and a number of children to live on that small pittance." He added that in harvest-time the labourer could earn a little extra while his wife and children were allowed to glean in the harvest field and the grain gathered in this way was a godsend, for it meant a good loaf of bread and barley cakes for the man's dinner in the field or the barn. The writer described also how the poor roasted and ground beans gathered by gleaning to use as an infusion instead of tea and coffee. (56)

There were some labourers who were more favourably placed; men who were in regular employment and who had good masters. One such man was Charles Warren whose handbill advertising for a wife was reported in "The Dorset County Chronicle" in 1832. It ran thus:

" Marnhull. July 1832.

My family is as follows; the eldest boy is thirteen years old, the younger boy five years old and a girl eight years old. My house is my own and I have no rent to pay. I have an acre of potatoes, half blues and half white this year. My wife has been dead 12 months ago last Shroton fair. The children live with themselves in the daytime, but I am always with them at night. I think that it would be better if there was a woman to look after them both for the children and for myself. I have 8/- a week for my work and the boy 2/- a week and have constant employ. I want a steady woman between 30 and 40 years old for a wife. I do not want a second family. I want a woman to look after the pigs while I am at work." (57)

Warren was satisfied with his success in life and was confident that he was offering a good business proposition. His case demonstrated that it was possible to rise above the poverty level but to do so meant that there was no time left for the more orthodox methods of finding a wife. He was a man whose master thought him worth keeping and perhaps in those days of poverty there were women who thought he was worth marrying.

56. Anon., Reminiscences of Sturminster Newton, p.13, D.R.O., MR44.

57. Dorset County Chronicle, 23. 8. 1832.

Chapter Six.

A County in Transition.

The fact that has emerged most clearly from the preceding chapters is that the social and economic life of Dorset was changing. The growth of the population was perhaps the most striking change, although it was less rapid than in the country as a whole. No doubt the reason for this slower growth was that Dorset had no great industrial cities to attract people. Nevertheless there was an increase of about 76% between 1760 and 1834, and of 40% between 1801 and 1831. An expansion on this scale must inevitably have caused great social pressure. (1) In Chapter I the population figures of the several districts of Dorset were distinguished and were related both to the area and the annual value of the land. (2) It was shewn that the population increase in the Weymouth Triangle was well above the average in the county. It was slightly above the average in West Dorset, and slightly below in the Chalkland and the Heathland. In the Isle of Purbeck, the Vale of Blackmore and the Somerset Fringe, however, the increase was well below the average. It is clear that population increase is a factor likely to have created social problems, but whether poverty was related to this cause in the period under review or whether a high rate of increase was associated with the districts of greater prosperity can only be determined after a survey of the extent and distribution of poverty in the county.

In Chapter II it was shown that there were considerable changes taking place on the land, which was slowly being redistributed to form larger farms. As the old, small leases fell in, they were not being re-granted as such but were put together to form larger farms. This made the landowner's estate more manageable and, in theory at least, seemed likely to encourage improvement. In practice, however, it often led to the land being farmed less productively, as the farmers regarded large flocks of sheep as the best farming method. There were other reasons too: such as the low rents which enabled the inefficient tenant to survive; and the growing practice of granting short-term leases which

1. See Chapter I above, pp.6ff.
2. See Chapter I above, pp.8ff.

discouraged him from undertaking the kinds of improvement that would not pay immediately. (3) The enclosures, also, brought changes to the land. The area most affected was the chalkland and since this was an area of great estates, it was here too that most of the engrossing of farms probably took place. It appears that Dorset enclosures were often closely related to the latter, being a tidying-up of remnants of common land left from an earlier age. In north and west Dorset, the enclosures were far fewer and were nearly all those of pasture commons. (4) It was pointed out that there was very little reason to suppose that the poor lost directly from the enclosures but that, on the contrary, they may have profited from a more efficient use of the land. (5) This is another problem which can only be resolved by examining the facts of poverty in the county.

There was a considerable change in the methods of agriculture, especially after 1790 when the war-time prosperity made experiment worthwhile. Turnips and potatoes became an important part of Dorset husbandry and threshing-machines and drills began to appear. (6) The potato unquestionably helped the poor man, but it was sometimes claimed that the threshing-machine ruined him. As a result of the changes in land-tenure and in agriculture, the farmer himself was changing. The larger enclosed farms were rented by more business-like men, ready to introduce new methods and to borrow money from the bank to finance them. Moreover in order to meet their bank interest and the higher rents charged on shorter leases, they were anxious to make large and speedy profits: a policy which was bound to lead to hardship for the labourers in their employ. (7) Three phases in the development of Dorset farming between 1760 and 1834 can be distinguished. First, a static phase in which returns were low and improvements few. The farmers were satisfied with little and, since their rents were low, were reluctant to learn new ways. Secondly, there was a period of great prosperity, beginning about 1795, as a result of the war.

3. See Chapter II above, pp.14-15.
4. See Chapter II above, pp.19-23.
5. See Chapter II above, pp.18-21 to note 40.
6. See Chapter III above, pp.31-34.
7. See Chapter III above, pp.32-35.

Rapid changes took place in agriculture and farmers borrowed money to capitalise their land, pledging future prosperity to do so: a prosperity which came to a sudden end in 1813. Finally there was the post-war period of serious agricultural depression. Prices paid for produce were low and the farmer was in the hands of his creditors. The result was a crop of bankruptcies, and a drop in the wages paid and the growth of unemployment. After 1823 there was an improvement in the agricultural prospects but this seems to have affected only arable farming; for dairying and sheep-farming remained in a depressed state. (8)

In Chapter IV it was seen that there was a similar pattern of development in the industrial side of Dorset life. Before the war, the industries were static and the employment they offered relatively constant. During the war, there was a period of boom, encouraged by war-time conditions and sometimes by the lack of foreign competition. After the war, the economic climate became harsher. There was fierce competition from the more mechanised industries of the north and from areas of better communications than existed in the west country. It is clear from the 1834 Poor Law Report that the silk industry and button-making were both in a depressed state, and it seems probable that this was also true of stocking-making and glove-making. On the other hand the sail-making, rope and net industry of the western parts of the county seem to have weathered the storm more successfully. Bridport, having access to the sea, was better placed to compete, especially in the sale of maritime goods. The stone and clay industries, producing materials of unusually good quality, soon recovered from the post-war depression. The growing popularity of Weymouth as a watering place seems to have helped that area not only to maintain but also to increase its prosperity. (9)

These facts suggest that after 1815 the Isle of Purbeck and the Weymouth Triangle were able to provide many with a livelihood of a non-agricultural kind and that in West Dorset there was still a place for the industrial worker and plenty of part-time work for the women and children. Elsewhere, however, the picture was more gloomy. Throughout

8. See Chapter IV above, pp.34-35.
9. See Chapter IV above, pp.36ff.

north, central and east Dorset the rural industries either stopped altogether or ceased to pay enough to make the work worthwhile. This disappearance, or virtual disappearance, in many parts of the county of a vital supplement to the income of the labouring family is probably a fact most relevant to this study.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to draw firm conclusions but to suggest certain possible reasons for poverty and distress which seem to arise out of the facts surveyed in the preceding chapters. They are to be regarded as a hypothesis based on a preliminary study and therefore they require further consideration in the light of an examination of other relevant evidence.

PART TWO.

The Administration of the Poor Laws in
Dorset between 1760 and 1834.

Chapter Seven.

The Relief of Poverty.

The fact of poverty in Dorset has been sufficiently established in the introductory part of this study. (1) The extent of this poverty and the probability that it was growing can be seen from the following figures showing the expenditure on the poor at various dates in the period. These figures are either those given in the parliamentary reports on poor-law expenditure or are estimated from the limited number of parochial figures available. (2)

	Total Spent on poor. in £s.	Spent for each £100 spent in	Spent for each £100 spent in
		1760-1	1802-3
1760-1	18,850	100	-
1775-6	24, 538	133	-
1782-5*	31,528	165	-
1792-4*	38,250	204	-
1802-3	66,981	353	100
1812-5*	89,584	475	134
1822-5*	78,906	419	118
1831-4*	89,221	473	133

* The figure given is the average of the three years.

The 1802-3 figure represents an expenditure of £.58 per head of the 1801 population. The expenditure per head in 1821 was £.665 and in 1831 was £.568. (3) It must be remembered that the whole population of Dorset was not receiving parish relief and therefore, while figures of expenditure per head of the population are useful as an index of poverty, they do not show the relief actually given to the pauper. The

1. See Chapter V above.
2. The figures for 1760-1 and 1792-4 are estimated from the available parish poor-books, in the first case from 27 parishes, and in the second case from 28 parishes. The other figures are the county figures given in the returns to the House of Commons relating to the year or years stated published in the House of Commons papers. Full details of these will be found in the bibliography.
3. These figures are based on the population figures given in the V.C.H. Dorset Vol 2, pp.266-273, and the relevant reports on poor-law expenditure published by the House of Commons.

number of those receiving relief in 1802-3 is given in the returns of 1803-4 as 19,646. (4) The population in 1801 was 114,452, and thus (ignoring the slight increase in population between the two returns) one person in 5.85 was wholly or partially supported by the parish in 1802-3. (5)

Besides the statutory system of poor relief other agencies contributed to the alleviation of the poverty described above. Important among them were the charitable funds established by former generations, the subscriptions and donations of contemporaries and the organisations such as friendly societies and penny clubs, which enabled the poor to make provision for their own needs in adversity. In 1833, according to Edward Beswell, (6) the charities of the rural parishes and smaller towns of Dorset yielded an income of about £2,000 per year and those of the larger towns about £1,500. These figures are of actual income in cash and to this must be added a considerable invisible income from schools, almshouses and other buildings.

The rural charities included schools for the young, homes for the aged, funds for apprenticing boys and girls and more general funds to be used at the discretion of the trustees for the ordinary relief of the poor. There were twenty-seven educational charities providing schools such as the Free Endowed Grammar School at Evershot which was supported by an estate worth £145 per year, (7) and the Mackrell School for fifty-two children at Sturminster Marshall, with an endowment of £36 per year. Another such school was the one at Toller Porcorum which was endowed with £21 a year and took children not only from Toller Porcorum but also from Maiden Newton, Frome, Vauchurch, Toller Fratrum and Chilfrome. (8) The Mackrell School may have been larger than many others but it is a convenient example since its minute book survives. The school was founded in 1799 by William Mackrell of Spettisbury. It was staffed by two mistresses

4. Poor Returns, 1802-3, H. of C. 1802-3, H. of C.
Sessional Papers, Vol. 13, p. 714-715.
5. See Chapter XIX for a further discussion of poverty.
6. E. Beswell, Civil Division of the County of Dorset, 2nd Edition (1833), *passim*.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
8. Beswell, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-83.

who taught fifty-two poor children selected by the churchwardens and overseers of Sturminster Marshall. Boys remained at school until they were thirteen years old and the girls until they were fifteen. The children were taught to read and to recite their catechism. The girls also learned knitting.

(9) There were thirteen charities which provided almshouses or cottages for the aged poor. Occasionally the almshouse was a properly regulated one such as that at Milton Abbas which accommodated six widows; more often, however, it was unsupervised and consisted of one or more cottages, as at Broadwey and Netherbury. (10) Fourteen charities provided funds for the apprenticing of poor children. In some cases, as at Netherbury, the capital was invested and yielded an annual income to be used for this purpose. In other cases, however, the capital itself was expended on paying premiums. This happened at Hilton, where £75 was thus used. (11) The more general charities were often limited to specific groups among the poor such as the "second poor", the term applied to those not getting parish relief; or to the provision of some specific article, such as bread or clothes. Sometimes the expenditure was entirely at the discretion of the trustees. There are many examples of charities of this kind since they were by far the commonest. At Bishop's Caundle £4.10.0 a year was spent on clothes for the poor, and at Milborne St. Andrew £6.10.0 was likewise spent. At Buckland Newton, bread was given to the poor. (12)

Most of the larger towns were well provided with charities of all kinds. Wimborne, for example, had three almshouses and two cottages; a school at Pamphill and the Queen Elizabeth Free Grammar School in the town; and general charities yielding £63 a year. Blandford had two schools, an almshouse and an income of £402 from the general charities. At Dorchester were Hardy's Free School, the Under-school for teaching reading, three almshouses for twenty-seven persons

9. Mackrell School, Sturminster Marshall; Minute Book.

10. Boswell. op.cit., pp.14, 52 and 55ff.

11. Ibid., p.42.

12. Ibid., pp.15, 18 and 52; and Bishop's Caundle Charity Book; Milborne St. Andrew Charity Book and Buckland Newton Incumbent's Book, (D.R.O., Pl8/IN2).

in all, and the "Hospital" which served the three parishes of the town as a workhouse. The hospital was endowed with a fund yielding £55 a year but most of its income was contributed by the parishes, in proportion to the number of parishioners being supported by the institution. (13)

These charities established by past generations were very unevenly spread through the parishes of Dorset and were commonest where there had been wealthy families in residence. Likewise it was the presence of a resident squire or a well-to-do clergyman, merchant or farmer that determined whether there would be gifts of food, fuel and money to help the poor in times of hardship. Innumerable examples of such gifts are recorded in the pages of the local newspapers. Such benefactions, however, while easing the lot of the poor, especially in times of crisis, were too spasmodic and too localised to overcome the problem of poverty. In many villages, the squire regularly gave food - especially meat - to the poor at Christmas. Joseph Daubeny Esq. of Ibberton gave twenty pounds of beef and a peck of peas to the poor of the parish at Christmas 1805. (14) At Evershot, during the previous winter, George Denisthorpe Esq. had given two fat bullocks and a considerable quantity of peas as well as weekly gifts of soup and bread to the poor. (15) In the winter of 1830-31, Mr. John Bridge of Piddletrenthide gave his "usual annual gift of Beef" and also rugs and blankets "during the recent cold weather". (16)

Farmers, too, sometimes gave generously to the poor. There was the custom of selling grain cheaply to their own labourers (17), but this should perhaps be considered as a part of the weekly wage. In some small parishes, such as Poxwell and Winterborne Monkton, where the whole of the parish was in the hands of a single farmer, private arrangements of this kind took the place of the statutory system of relief. The poor-books of these two small parishes show that the money

13. Boswell, op.cit., pp. 5ff, 26ff and 89ff; and Anon. Notes on Dorchester Charities, passim and esp. p.1-5. (D.R.O., M.C.10, 448.)

14. Sherborne Mercury, 3 - 2 - 1806.

15. Ibid., 11 - 2 - 1805.

16. Dorset County Chronicle, 10 - 2 - 1831.

17. See page 49 above.

raised by the poor-rate was rarely used except for the payments of county rates and in the occasional removal case. (18) The local newspapers occasionally give accounts of singular generosity shown by individual farmers. Thus in 1800, one farmer, who during the scarcity of grain a few years before had sold his wheat to the poor at 9/- per bushel at a time when other farmers were receiving a higher price in the markets, was letting small pieces of land to the poor and giving them the money with which to buy the seed. (19)

The form of charity most frequently practised in the towns seems to have been the raising of subscriptions to relieve the poor. "The Sherborne Mercury" reported in 1800 (20) that such a subscription had been raised at Poole to import 7,000 quarters of wheat to be made into bread and sold to the poor at a reduced price. Sometimes an occasion of public rejoicing was celebrated in this way. Thus, At Blandford, a public meeting held in the town to arrange the celebrations to mark the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill, decided that instead of illuminating the town, they would raise a subscription for the poor. Mr. E.B. Pertman headed the list with a gift of £20, (21) and it is likely that the proposal was his; for he was a man deeply concerned about the state of the poor.

Closely related to these subscriptions raised to help the poor living in the neighbourhood, were the Mendicity Societies which relieved the "trampers" who wandered about in search of work. These societies were supported by voluntary gifts and offered relief to the bona-fide poor traveller. The Dorchester Society gave relief consisting of a quarter of a quatern loaf, a quarter of a pound of cheese and one pint of table beer, as well as lodging for the night with "the comforts of the fireside". (22) There were at least three of these societies in the county - at Dorchester (23), at Sherborne (24) and at Shaftesbury (25). The Dorchester Society gave relief

18. Poor Books of Poxwell and Winterborne Monkton, *passim*.
19. Sherborne Mercury, 11 - 7 - 1800.
20. Ibid., 21 - 7 - 1800.
21. Dorset County Chronicle, 21 - 6 - 1832.
22. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 21 - 1 - 1822.
23. Dorset County Chronicle, 7 - 5 - 1829.
24. Ibid., 17 - 10 - 1833.
25. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 19 - 1 - 1829.

to 14,407 persons between 1820, the year of its foundation, and 1832. In the same period it discovered 147 impostors, who were punished as vagrants. It is interesting to note that the number of impostors applying to the society rapidly declined after the first year of its existence. Those punished in 1820 and 1821 numbered thirty-eight and twenty respectively. After 1821, however, the number of impostors only once exceeded ten. (26) It may be supposed that the society had gained a reputation for astuteness.

The second way of relieving poverty was to enable the poor to help themselves and, in Dorset, friendly societies, penny clubs and savings banks were founded and encouraged to this end. Closely related to these enterprises, were the beginnings of trade unionism but these were different since they aimed to remove poverty, rather than to mitigate its effects. They are not, therefore, relevant at this point. Okeden, in his report to the 1834 Poor Law Commission, said "Dorsetshire abounds with friendly clubs or societies". He considered that the great success of this movement was due to the almost universal practice in the parishes of not taking friendly society payments into account when assessing parish relief for the family. He knew of only ten or twelve cases where this rule was not applied. (27) It is clear that without this custom the friendly society movement would have made no progress; for if each benefit from the society resulted in an equal deduction by the parish, the contributions would have been worthless. The first known friendly societies in Dorset were founded in Shaftesbury in 1748, and at Wimborne Minster and Blandford Forum in 1755. After 1755, the movement spread slowly into the smaller towns and one or two larger villages. It had not, however, made much headway before the registration of friendly societies with the quarter sessions began in 1794; for only twelve societies having a date of foundation earlier than that year were subsequently registered. (28) (There may have been others which were not registered; as it was not until 1812 that a Blandford society, founded in 1755, was registered.)

26. Dorset County Chronicle, 7 - 11 - 1833.

27. Poor Law Report, 1834, Appendix A, p.13.

28. Dates and figures from Minute Books of Dorset Quarter Sessions, 1794, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1806, 1808 and 1812.

In 1793, "Roses Act" regulated and gave legal status to those friendly societies which submitted their rules to the quarter sessions of the county and received its confirmation. (29) From this time onwards there was a rapid growth in the numbers of Dorset societies. The first registrations took place in 1794 and between that date and 1819 when a new Act of Parliament was passed, thirty-seven new societies were established. (30) The new Act, 59 George III c.128, required the justices to ascertain that the financial basis of the society was sound, before approving the society. It also authorised the quarter sessions to delegate the investigation to committees of not less than three justices. (31) In 1821, the Dorset Quarter Sessions made its own rules for the implementation of George III c.128. It would not approve any friendly society with less than fifty members and it required to see a full list of the names, occupations and ages of the members. Further it required to see a table setting forth the contributions and proposed benefits and to be given the names and the actuaries to whose professional judgement the table was to be submitted. (32) In 1827, the sessions resolved that it would receive no friendly society rules for filing and approval, unless they had already been approved and signed by the justices of the division of the county in which the society proposed to function. (33) It was after the 1819 Act that the most rapid growth of the friendly societies took place in the county. Between 1820 and 1834 fifty-nine societies came into existence, many of them in rural areas. (34)

The character of these societies and the benefits they offered can be illustrated by the one which was founded at Beaminster in 1762. All parishioners under thirty years of age might be admitted and on admission had to pay an entrance fee of 3/- plus their first regular contribution of 1/-. In sickness a member received 6/- a week for the first month and

- 29. Report of Select Committee on Friendly Societies, 1825, pp.323-4
- 30. Minute Books of Dorset Quarter Sessions 1794-1819, *passim*.
- 31. Report...on Friendly Societies, 1825, pp.326-7.
- 32. Minute Book of Dorset Q.S. Vol.7, f.111.
- 33. Ibid., Vol 8, f.3.
- 34. Ibid., 1820-1834, *passim*.

then 4/- a week for up to eighteen months. At the age of sixty-three, he received a pension of 2/- a week until he was seventy and thereafter 2/6 a week for life. When he died the society paid £3 towards his funeral expenses and to cover this all the other members paid threepence into the common fund. Besides the system of insurance, the friendly society offered to its members the social pleasure of regular club meetings, and at Beaminster they were held every six weeks. There was also an annual procession and dinner and in the case of the Beaminster Society, this took place on the Friday before Trinity Sunday. (35) It is probable that the satisfaction of belonging to a society with meetings limited to members, and with its own rules and club emblems, gave to the poor man a sense of dignity which counted for as much as the material benefits offered. It gave to him experience of working together for the common good and in organising his own affairs; experience which doubtless contributed to the emergence of rural trade unions after 1830.

Most of the friendly societies were small and therefore financially precarious. In 1802-3 there were thirty-seven societies in the county with 3,759 members, (36) that is with an average membership of about one hundred. Thus most of these Dorset societies must have been considerably smaller than the size recommended by the 1825 Select Committee, which proposed a minimum membership of two-hundred members. (37) Some gentry were aware of this financial hazard and to avoid this proposed the establishment of "The Friendly Society of the County of Dorset." At the July meeting of the Dorset Quarter Sessions, in 1826, a proposal was put forward that a county friendly society should be established which by virtue of its size and of its management by more experienced men, such as a group of interested gentry and clergy, would offer the poor contributor complete security. This scheme was based on one proposed elsewhere by the Rev. Thomas Becher and seems to have been put forward by Mr. E.B. Portman of Bryanston (38). The proposal was approved by the other

- 35. R.Hine, Friendly Societies, D.P. 49, pp.115-118.
- 36. Answers and Returns 1803-4, Vol.13, pp.714-715.
- 37. Report....on Friendly Societies, 1825, p.334.
- 38. Dorset County Chronicle, 28 - 12 - 1826.

justices and a committee was set up to launch the new venture. (39) The new society proposed to give relief in cases of sickness, accident or infirmity. It was to be open to all Dorset men and women between fifteen and fifty-five years of age. (40) Initially the society was to have eight local branches, each with its own local committee, secretary, surgeon, visitors, stewards and so on. Other branches would be founded as soon as fifty members had been enrolled, or an existing friendly society of that number of members wished to merge with the larger and safer society. (41)

The first meeting to launch the society was reported in "The Dorset County Chronicle" on the 20th of July 1826, but the response does not seem to have been as great as expected. "The Times" of the 31st of August reported that a speaker at a meeting of farmers held at Stalbridge had commented that little interest was being shewn in the new friendly society. At the end of 1826, however, another attempt was made to get the new venture established. Mr. Portman and Mr. Okeden advocated the founding of the new society and a committee of management under Mr. Portman was set up. (42) The Dorset Friendly Society was formed eventually but it does not seem to have achieved what was probably its purpose - to replace the small, weak societies by one far more secure. Perhaps the labourers, not appreciating the financial arguments, feared to lose their independence by merging and saw the new venture simply as a move on the part of the gentry to intrude into their private concerns. If so, it suggests that the labouring class was already losing its trust in the leaders of local society; an attitude which helped to produce the events of 1830.

Another project promoted by Portman was the "penny club". He established these clubs in all the villages where his estates lay. The labourers were encouraged to save by putting a few pennies in the club whenever the collector came round. The pennies put in by each person were totalled up at the end of the year and Mr. Portman doubled the amount in each account. (43) The "penny clubs" spread far beyond

39. On whole paragraph; Minute Book of Q.S. Vol. 8, f. 348.

40. Dorset Friendly Society Rules D.C.M. Chest 2, Box 2.

41. Dorset County Chronicle, 20 - 7 - 1826; & 28 - 12 - 1826.

42. The Times 1 - 1 - 1827.

43. Dorset County Chronicle, 3 - 2 - 1831.

Portman's estates and there is a report of one at Stalbridge where the contributions of the poor were augmented by a public subscription and the fund was used to buy clothes for the children. (44) In 1834, Okeden commented favourably on these clubs which he said were usually intended to assist in purchasing clothes or fuel. He thought that the poor greatly preferred help given in this concealed way to direct charity, (45) and, moreover, it gave them a sense of doing something for themselves.

Another agency through which the poor might help themselves was the savings bank movement. Between 1817 and 1833 eleven such banks were established in the main towns of the county. It is impossible to say how many, if any, of the poor were able to make use of them, but they seem to have had many small accounts. The Dorchester Bank in 1824 had 661 deposits and of these 277 were under £20, 191 were under £50 and 103 under £100. (46) It seems probable that those who benefited most from the savings banks were those who were just above the poverty line, because their savings would "keep them off the parish" in hard times.

Charities of the past and of the present; contributions and benefits; savings and subsidies; all these added together did not involve more than a few thousand pounds every year and therefore played a very minor part in solving the problem of poverty. Under the statutory system of poor relief, however, a sum between £75,000 and £120,000 was expended in each year after 1800 for which figures are available. The foundation of the old poor law was the statute (43 and 44 Eliz.c.2) of 1601. (47) It placed the prime responsibility for the care of the poor on the parish - the only course possible at that time since the state had robbed the church of its capacity to undertake the task, and was itself too immature to perform it. The Act required "that the churchwardens of every parish and four, three or two substantial householders there.... to be nominated yearly in Easter week....under the hand and seal of two or more justices of the peace in the same county....shall

44. Dorset County Chronicle, 27 - 1 - 1831.

45. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.20.

46. Sherborne Journal, 17. 12. 1824.

47. Statute 43 and 44 Eliz. I c.2, cited from Bland, Brown and Tawney, English Economic Documents, pp.380-1

be called overseers of the poorand they or the greater part of them shall take order from time to time, by and with the consent of two or more such justices of the peace..... for setting to work of the children of all such whose parents shall not.....be thought able to keep and maintain their children; and also for setting to work all such persons.... having no means to maintain them, (or) use no ordinary and daily trade to get their living by; and also to raise weekly or otherwise by taxation of every inhabitant, parson, vicar and other any occupier of lands, houses, tithes impropriate and propriations of tithes, coal mines or saleable underwoods in the said parish such competent sum and sums of money as they shall think fit, a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool thread, iron and other necessary ware and stuff to set the poor on work, and also competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind and such other among them being poor and not able to work, and also for putting out of such children to be apprentices,..... which said churchwardens and overseers, or such of them as shall not be let by sickness or other just excuse.....shall meet together at least once every month in the church of the said parish.....to consider of some good course to be taken and of some meet order to be set down in the premises....."

The work of the overseer, then, was to levy a rate on all the property in the parish and to use it to relieve the poor of the parish. A threefold approach was intended: work was to be provided for the unemployed; maintenance and education was to be provided for the children of the poor by apprenticeship; and relief was to be given to those who by reason of age, infirmity or affliction were unable to work. The "Settlement Act" of 1662 (22 Car.II c.12) added to these duties that of protecting the parish from those who had no claims to its support. The 1601 statute was frequently amended by Parliament, and even more frequently and fundamentally in the process of administration. The Webbs put it thus: "Between the statute book and the actual administration of the parish officers there was, in the eighteenth century, normally only a casual connection."(48) Dr. Marshall has recently made the same point when she wrote: "To understand the Old Poor Law it is necessary to concentrate on administration

rather than legislation." (49) It is intended to follow this precept and to avoid the temptation to write a legal history of the poor law between 1760 and 1834. This has been done by other writers (50) and the legal aspect was exactly the same in Dorset as in other parts of the country. It is intended to describe the machinery of administration and the administration itself, as it was in Dorset, and to refer to the legal position only in so far as it illuminates the administrative practice.

The normal administrative unit of the poor-law system of relief was the parish, although occasionally parts of parishes or, more rarely, unions of parishes were the unit. Within this unit the administrator of the system was the overseer of the poor, whose authority was limited by the parish vestry and the magistrates. In a few parishes the functions of the overseers were taken over, to some degree, by a committee of guardians of the poor or by a salaried assistant overseer. By the eighteenth century the original policy of the 1601 Act, summarised above, was submerged in a comprehensive system of relief. The poor expected, as of right, to receive relief in money or in kind whenever they were sick, unemployed, burdened with too many children or underpaid. Sometimes the parish gave this relief through the workhouse but more often it was disbursed to the paupers in their own homes, the latter frequently provided by the parish. If the pauper was unemployed the parish occasionally set him up in business and when he died the parish paid his funeral expenses. If a woman was deserted by her husband, the overseer had to seek him out. If a woman had an illegitimate child, the overseer had to seek out the father and force him to support the child. If a stranger who seemed unlikely to be able to support himself came to the parish, the overseer had to hasten him on his way.

It is not surprising that the office of overseer was an unpopular one, for the officer's time was filled by parish affairs, and he was disliked by the poor if he gave too little; and distrusted by his fellow ratepayers if he gave too much.

49. D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law, Econ. Hist. Rev., Vol. 8, 1937-8, p. 38.

50. Cf. among others: Tate, The Parish Chest; Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, The English Poor Law System; Nicholls, History of the English Poor Law.

Chapter Eight.
The Machinery of Administration.

The unit of poor-law administration was normally the parish, although, under 14 Car.II, c.14, parishes might be divided into smaller units called townships or tithings. The parish of Canford Magna may be taken as one example of the few places of this kind in Dorset. In the parish there were four tithings: Canford, Longfleet, Kinson and Parkstone, each of which maintained its poor separately. (1) In such cases the division of the parish was legally recognised and the overseers were appointed separately for each ~~tithing~~; the rates were made and confirmed separately and the accounts were separately confirmed by the justices. There appear to have been five parishes in Dorset divided under 14 Car.II, c.14, (2) but far more were divided unofficially into what were, in effect, separate administrative units. Wimborne Minster, for example, was divided into "The Town", and the three rural areas, Holt, Leigh and Kingston. (3) Corfe Castle was divided into borough, north and south divisions(4). Powerstock, a large rural parish in west Dorset, was split into six tithings: Powerstock, Wytherstone, Nethercombe, Milton, South Poorton and Loscombe.(5) East Stoke and Symondsbury were each divided into north and south divisions.(6) The majority of the larger villages of Dorset were divided in this unofficial way and of these there appear to have been two separate types. First there was the parish which was a mere geographical expression and which included several separate settlements. Secondly, there was the large settlement which for convenience was divided into north and south divisions. The degree of separation between the divisions varied. At Wimborne the vestry laid down the policy to be followed by the divisions and also settled the difficult cases. There was, moreover, a common workhouse.

1. Boswell, op.cit., p.137f. and Various Poor Expenditure Returns.
2. Ibid., pp. 70, 104 and 140.
3. Cf. Wimborne Minster Books, *passim*.
4. Corfe Castle Books, *passim*.
5. Powerstock Books, *passim*.
6. East Stoke and Symondsbury Books, *passim*.

It could indeed be argued that this was not an unofficial division of a parish but the union of four separate settlements. The overseers of the separate divisions collected their rates and paid their regular poor but met in the vestry meetings to coordinate their work and unify their accounts. (7) At Symondsbury, on the other hand, the overseers for the north and south parts of the parish collected the rates for their own area, but paid the poor of the whole parish in alternate months. (8) At Whitechurch Canonicorum, the overseers of the four "quarters" worked separately, except that they met four times a year to work out a common account. (9)

Another variation of the normal pattern was the union of several parishes to maintain their poor together in a common workhouse. This had become possible in 1723 under Geo. I, c.7, but more satisfactory arrangements had been made by Gilbert's Act (22 Geo. III, c. 83) in 1782. This Act provided for the voluntary union of parishes to provide a common workhouse controlled by a committee of guardians of the poor. These unions, however, did not achieve much success in Dorset. There was an abortive attempt in 1772 to form a union between Maiden Newton, Frampton, Toller Porcorum and Toller Fratrum but nothing was achieved. (10) In 1797 there was a proposal that Winfrith Newburgh should join with Wool which had recently adopted the provisions of Gilbert's Act, but on this occasion the justices refused to sanction the union. (11) Yetminster and Leigh, two tithings in the same parish, which maintained their poor separately, obtained the sanction of the quarter sessions in 1813 for their proposed Gilbert Union. (12) It does not seem, however, to have functioned for long, if indeed at all. (13) There appears to have been no case in the county of a union of several parishes actually taking effect,

7. Wimborne Minister Minute Books, *Passim*.
8. Symondsbury Account Books, *passim*.
9. Whitechurch Canonicorum, Account and Order Books, *passim*.
10. Maiden Newton, Account Book, 1764-92, 20th April, 1772.
11. Wool, Workhouse Minute Book, p. 11.
12. Dorset Q.S., Minute Book, Vol. 4, f. 11.
13. Cf. Yetminster Minute Book, 1794-1901. Years 1813 on.

although several parishes had adopted other provisions of Gilbert's Act. (14) One of these, Cranborne, provided the nearest approach to a Gilbert Union, since it was a parish of several, quite well separated tithings and the parish as a whole had adopted the system of administration laid down in the Act. (15) It has already been noted that Wimborne Minster might be considered as a union since several separate settlements were within the same parish. The same could be said of some of the large parishes of West Dorset which contained several distinct settlements. Such a place was Broadwinstor, a huge parish which contained five distinct hamlets, and which ran a common workhouse. (16) It is clear then that little use was made of the legal methods of dividing or uniting the parochial administration of the poor laws. Such divisions as existed had developed through informal local practice, which was often a reflection of the scattered nature of the parish. The unit of poor-law administration was normally the parish and, if these informal arrangements be ignored, there seem to have been extremely few variations in Dorset. ^{Three}

Three authorities shared in the administration of the poor laws: the magistrates, the parish vestry and the overseers [or the guardians of the poor if Gilbert's Act had been adopted; or the assistant overseer, a paid official, permitted by ⁵⁹ George III c.3.]

According to the Act of 1601, the churchwardens and four, three or two substantial householders were to be nominated each year as overseers of the poor. (17) The magistrates had legal authority to nominate any substantial householder of the parish whom they wished and neither the person nominated nor the ratepayers' meeting in the vestry meeting had any legal say in the matter. In practice, however, the magistrates usually appointed whoever were nominated by the vestry. In the selection of overseers two methods were followed in Dorset. In the western part

14. E.g. Cranborne, cf. Poor Law Report 1834 Appendix A, p.18. Poole, cf. ibid., pp.15-6.
15. Iwerne Courtney, cf. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 4, f.11.
16. Broadwinstor Books, *passim*.
17. Act of Parliament, 43 Eliz, I c.2, s.1.

of the county generally, and elsewhere occasionally, the office was served by the occupiers of the principal properties in turn. At Halstock, for example, the office went round the estates in a fifteen years' cycle. (18) This system was not so clear and straight-forward as it seemed; for the estates or farms changed hands; were divided or combined. Thus after a few years it might well be impossible to determine the correct succession. A situation of this kind arose at Chardstock in 1791 when it was reported that the appointment of overseers was leading to quarrels and frivolous disputes, owing to the confusion in the old poor-books and the changes in holdings. The vestry decided to spend £4. 4s. Od. to have the matter sorted out and a new rotation arranged. (19) In some cases the obligation of the occupier of an estate was not to serve the office but to find someone who would do so. At Burton Bradstock in 1769, for example, Mr. John Best was nominated to find an overseer to serve for Batten's estate which he occupied. (20)

The other method is less clear but it appears to have been based on some means of persuasion. Sometimes a fee was offered for serving the office, a quite illegal inducement. Sometimes the office was given to the man least able to resist. The poor returns published in 1787, said in reference to West Stafford, "No return, overseer insane." (21) It seems to have been quite generally accepted that the parish vestry might authorise a small payment to the overseer. At Ashmore, in 1788, the vestry allowed the overseer £1. 1s. Od. (22) while at West Orchard, in 1824, the serving overseer was allowed £1. 0s. Od. and it was agreed to pay the overseer £2. 0s. Od. a year in future. (23) In other parishes it seems to have been the opinion that if a man agreed to serve the office for a second year he ought to be paid. At Cann, in 1816, Henry Harris agreed to serve again and was promised an unspecified salary. (24) In a few parishes, one man continued to hold

18. Halstock Poor Book 1815-34, front cover.
19. Chardstock Poor Books, 27 - 4 - 1791.
20. Burton Bradstock Poor Books, 29 0 3 0 1769.
21. Poor Return, 1787, 1787, p.585.
22. Ashmore Poor Book. 1788.
23. West Orchard Vestry Minutes, Sept. 30th 1824.
24. Cann, Poor Book, March 21st. 1816.

office as overseer for many years. Henry Slade of Broadwinstor gave up his office in 1779, according to a memorandum in the account book, after having kept the books for fifty-six years during most of which time he was overseer. He had been paid £4. 4. 0. a year for the work. (25) At Mintern Magna, Levi Groves served for many years and Admiral Digby paid his poor-rates, "so that he should have no interest in frugality." Groves was assessed at 10/4½ out of a total assessment of £3. 10. 0. (26) Another "long-service" overseer was Henry Davis of Compton Valance where he was the principal occupier and also churchwarden. Davis served the parish from 1763, when his father gave up the office, to 1808, when his son took it on. (27) In this case, however, there appears to have been no payment made.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Dorset justices had completely abdicated their authority to nominate the overseers, but it is clear that the vestries sometimes forgot to whom the right belonged. In 1799 the poor-book of Gussage All Saints was presented to the justices containing the words "appoint Charles Morgan overseer." The word "appoint" was struck out, apparently by one of the signing justices, and the word "recommend" inserted. (28) Towards the end of the period, however, the justices of the new Wimborne division of the county were taking a more active concern in the appointments and a circular letter was sent to the parishes requiring a list of "a competent number of substantial householders" from which the justices would appoint the new overseers. (29)

The vast majority of men appointed to the office of overseer were farmers or tradesmen as the answers to the 1834 commissioners suggest. (30) Women were occasionally appointed but never appear to have acted in person. Thus in 1760 Mary Hillier, widow, was appointed overseer for Buckland Newton but the poor-book shows that her son acted for her and kept the book. (31) A few years later Mrs. Priscilla Morgan was appointed at Wootton Glanville but

- 26. Mintern Magna Poor Book P73/OV2, front cover and *passim*.
- 27. Compton Valance Poor Books, *passim*.
- 28. Gussage All Saints Poor Book April 1799.
- 29. Sturminster Marshall papers. P98/OV19.
- 30. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B2, Q.7.
- 31. Buckland Newton, D.R.O., P18/OV2. April 1760.

she does not appear to have performed the duties. (32) It was very unusual to find the overseer appointed from the higher orders of society but there was a case at Corfe Castle between 1760 and 1770 when the Rev. T.B.Janson held the office. He was the rector of the parish and a justice of the borough who in 1769-70 served as mayor. He not only signed the accounts in his capacity as overseer but also confirmed them as justice. He signed the poor-rate as "assessor of the poor-rate" and confirmed it as justice of the peace for the borough. (33) Another "gentle" overseer was Thos. Gould who, in 1765, signed a certificate of a man going to work at Broadwey three times-as churchwarden, as overseer and as one of the magistrates. (34) On the whole, however, the gentry and clergy seldom served the office and when, at Winterborne Monkton, all the land of the parish was in the squire's occupation, the overseer was not a ratepayer at all. (35)

Most of the overseers were men of limited knowledge and experience and to many of them the office was disagreeable, according to the 1834 report, (36) which further pointed out that in these circumstances there was a very grave danger that the officers might attempt to turn a troublesome burden into something of profit to themselves. There was the risk of actual embezzlement of funds but more likely was the possibility of partiality in administration. This might be due to the desire to benefit self or friends; it might be due to a desire to avoid unpopularity or hostility; or it might be due to a desire to avoid the waste of time involved when a troublesome pauper who had been refused relief complained to the magistrates. If this occurred the result would be a summons for the overseer to attend the petty sessions and give an explanation of his refusal. The overseer had the task of making a rate on his neighbours, collecting it and, if necessary, taking legal action to compel payment. Rates are never popular and they must have

- 32. Wootton Glanville, D.R.O. P7/0V1. 23 - 4 - 1763.
- 33. Corfe Castle, D.R.O., P11/0V4. 1760-70 *passim*.
- 34. Broadwey Papers, certificate of 1765.
- 35. Cf. Winterborne Monkton Poor Book, *passim*.
- 36. Poor Law Report 1834, p.98.

been less so when the rating authority was a neighbour and an equal and, moreover, a man with no special qualifications who was working on the precedents of a muddled poor-book which often related more closely to the state of the land fifty years before than at the time of making the rate. Inevitably disputes arose and over a hundred of them reached the stage of appeal to the quarter sessions. (37) In the circumstances, however, it is surprising that there were not more. The overseer's task of relieving the poor also led to quarrels but in this case the most likely outcome was violence, either to the person of the overseer or to his property. At Shipton Gorge, for example, in 1817, the vestry allowed £3. 7. 1. to Benjamin Bartlett, the overseer for the year, to pay the expenses attending the prosecution of Elizabeth Brown who assaulted him. (38) Sometimes the overseer seems to have been over-sensitive, as in 1819 when the Rampisham overseer dragged Jane Rose before the magistrates and accused her of "complaining against the overseers for not relieving them [her family] without the smallest reason." In this case the complaint was dismissed. (39)

The office of overseer was usually unpopular but there is at least one case of a man who actually wanted to remain an overseer. On April 11th 1774, at Corfe Castle, Benjamin Bowring and John Symonds met and wrote in the poor-book as follows. "We Benj. Bowring and John Symonds do in our own names and in the names of the major part of the parishioners.....assembled in vestry on the 5th of April... do nominate the said Benjamin Bowring to be appointed overseer of the south division thereof and John Symonds... for the north division thereof." On May 1st, however, the vestry met and disowned the whole affair: "wedo hereby solemnly declare that the above writing signed by Benjamin Bowring and John Symonds is an impudent falsehood and seems to have been calculated for no other view than to have misled the justices in the appointment of overseers of the poor." It is to be supposed that the two would-be overseers had something to hide or some profitable malpractice to continue,

37. Cf. Dorset Q.S. Minute Books 1760-1834, *passim*.

38. Shipton Gorge Poor Book, 27 - 3 - 1817.

39. Dorchester Division, Record of Convictions, 1. 5. 1819.

but as far as can be discovered from the poor-book there was no more than £1. 2. 0. involved. On May 4th Bowring was required to pay that sum to the new overseers. (40)

There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the majority of overseers were dishonest, since a study of approximately one-third of the parishes of Dorset during a period of seventy years has revealed only half-a-dozen cases. In one instance, at Stanton St. Gabriel in 1823, proceedings were taken against an overseer who had refused to settle his accounts with the parish and a distress warrant was issued on his goods. (41) This case may reflect dishonesty but it was possibly due to incompetence. A case of undoubted dishonesty was uncovered at Cann in 1819, when the overseer reduced his own rates and covered it up by adding small sums to the assessments of other parishioners. (42) Another and more serious incident occurred at Wimborne, in 1817, when the overseer for the Holt division of the parish was paying his own labourers from the poor-book and charging the poor-book with far larger sums than he was actually paying to the poor. On this occasion the threat of prosecution brought a settlement whereby the overseer paid the parish £50. (43)

The 1834 commissioners considered that the appointment of shopkeepers as overseers was a particular source of trouble, for the shopkeeper would be inclined to favour those who spent their money in his shop. (44) Okeden reported that at Hinton Martell the overseer, who lived at some distance from the village, used the village shopkeeper as his deputy to pay the poor each Saturday. Under these circumstances persuasion and the fear caused by outstanding debts to the shopkeeper led the poor to spend most of their money in his shop. Okeden also mentioned that sometimes the overseers paid the poor by an order on the village shop. The object behind this practice may have been to ensure that the money was not wasted in the alehouse but Okeden pointed out that it tied the poor to one shop where they could be exploited by being made to buy poor quality goods at the highest prices. (45)

- 40. Corfe Castle, D.R.O. P11/0V6., 11.4.; 1.5.; 4.5. 1774.
- 41. Stanton St. Gabriel Poor Book, 1823. D.R.O., M.C.10,941.
- 42. Cann, Vestry Order Book, 19.11.1819. D.R.O. ,P39/VE1.
- 43. Wimborne ~~Minster~~ Vestry Order Book 1809-49 for 1818. and Select Vestry Order Book 1818-22, for report of committee set up to examine accounts.
- 44. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix C, p.98.
- 45. Ibid., Appendix A, p.20.

The reports of corruption belong mostly to the later years of the period but from earlier times come stories of brutality such as occurred in 1763 when a poor child, who had been removed from Lyndlinch to Pulham and committed to the care of the overseer at 1/6 a week, was beaten to death. (46) Another account of cruelty tells of a poor lad who in 1797 was dying at Long Criche. While he was in the agonies of death he was hurried over the border into Tarrant Monkton, so that the funeral expenses should fall on that parish. (47) Stories of this kind are comparatively few and, while there must have been many cases of minor ill-treatment which did not attract the attention of the law-courts or the newspapers, the impression gained is that by and large the administration was not inhuman. Indeed, the manner of reporting the few examples of inhumanity and corruption which found their way into the newspapers, gives the impression that they were considered exceptional.

The overseer's work had always been burdensome but by the early nineteenth century it had grown into a task of great magnitude. In 1775-6 the total sum of money raised by the poor-rates in Dorset was £27,415. In 1802-3 the figure was £78,358. (48) This indicates the growing burden of administration and a scrutiny of the poor-books bears this out. Thus at Burton Bradstock the number of the poor more than doubled between 1760 and 1800 and at Wootton Glanville it increased from seven to twenty-three over the same period. (49) This indicates that the task was growing to such an extent, as to be beyond what could be reasonably expected of the normal overseer. In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that, in the second half of the period, various expedients were tried in the hope of improving the administration. These were the appointment of permanent overseers or assistant overseers, the adoption of Gilbert's Act and the establishment of select vestries. These arrangements usually led to a more efficient administration and usually a reduction in the amount of the rates. Of assistant overseers Okeden said, "I perceive no difference in the management of the poor in towns and villages, except that where there is an assistant overseer

46. Sherborne Mercury, 21.3.1763.

47. Ibid., 14.8.1797.

48. Poor Returns of 1777 and 1804.

49. Cf. Poor Books of two parishes, *passim* in years cited.

the management is best." (50) He mentioned further that the adoption of the provisions of Gilbert's Act at Poole led to a reduction of the expenditure by about one-third. (51) If there was an increase in efficiency, there was not necessarily an increase in honesty. The assistant overseer and the acting guardian were professional administrators, often poorly paid, who had no personal ties with the parish and they often had to be watched carefully by the vestry and the magistrates. Okeden, discussing the need for a regular and expert audit of the accounts, related how the acting guardian at Cranborne falsified the accounts and nearly got away with it. At Lady Day of 1833, the accounts of Cranborne were laid before the magistrates for signature, after having been passed by the churchwardens, overseers and visitors. There appeared to be a balance of £7.12.0. due to the guardian, but one of the magistrates had suspicions that all was not as it should have been. This magistrate persuaded his fellow justices to delay signature and to recommend a further investigation by the vestry. As a result of this further investigation, which included an examination of the vouchers for the first time, the balance in the guardian's favour was changed to one of £178, 10. 0. against him! (52)

Of the several expedients to improve the administration, the earliest was the appointment of a permanent overseer, an expedient for which there seems to have been no legal basis. It is hard to draw the line between the overseer who held office year after year and received a small salary and the professional permanent overseer, though the former can often be distinguished by the fact that he was liable to be made overseer in any case, while the latter was frequently an outsider who came to the parish to undertake the work. At Burton Bradstock, in 1812, William Williams was appointed "standing overseer" or "sidesman" at the annual salary of £5.0.0. a year. Half this sum was to be paid by the parish and half by the overseers for the year. (53)

50. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.14.

51. Ibid., pp.13-14.

52. Ibid., p.14.

53. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 1803-15, D.R.O., P97/0V3.

At Beaminster, in 1810, William Clift was appointed "special overseer" at a salary of £50. a year. Clift's duties were to superintend the poor and the workhouse, though it does not appear that he personally managed the workhouse, for a ~~governor~~ continued to receive payment. (54) At Blandford, in 1798, the vestry resolved to appoint "a proper person....as assistant to the overseers" to pay the poor, to manage and inspect the workhouse and to keep the accounts. (55) In these cases the officials do not appear to have been legally overseers at all but clerks paid to do the work. At Halstock, however, Thomas Barge, whose duties as permanent overseer from 1815 onwards were collecting rates, paying the poor and keeping the books, was clearly a legal overseer for he verified the accounts on oath before the magistrates. (56) These expedients were anticipations of the "assistant overseers" authorised by 59 Geo. III c.12, in 1819. In some cases the permanent overseer continued under the new name, as at Stalbridge where there had been a permanent overseer since at least 1813. (57) Okeden stated that there were very few assistant overseers in the county. (58) Yet if it is remembered that there were very many small parishes in Dorset the number does not seem to have been inconsiderable, for returns made to the House of Commons for the years 1820-1834 show that the number of parishes with assistant overseers varied between forty-one and fifty-two. This means that approximately one parish in six had an assistant overseer. (59) The assistant overseer did not replace the annual overseers but relieved them of their duties. His task was to manage the poor under the directions of the vestry which sometimes expected him to combine these duties with others. Thus when Marnhull appointed Thomas Dean in 1829, he was to be both assistant overseer and surveyor. This was not an unreasonable combination since, at the time, Marnhull was employing many of its paupers on the road. (60)

- 54. Beaminster Poor Book, 6.5.1810, D.R.O., P57/0V13.
- 55. Blandford Vestry Book, 9.4.1798, D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 56. Halstock Poor Book, 1815 and *passim*.
- 57. Stalbridge Poor Book 1803-19, cf. 1813, D.R.O., P107/0V5.
- 58. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, pp. 13-14.
- 59. Poor Returns for 1820-34.
- 60. Marnhull Vestry Book 28.10.1829, D.R.O. P32/VE1.

Similarly at Iwerne Courtney, in 1829, there was a proposal to combine the office of assistant overseer with that of constable. (61)

The provisions of Gilbert's Act were adopted by a number of larger parishes which had or were proposing to have workhouses. As has already been mentioned, no actual union of parishes was successfully accomplished, but the machinery laid down in the Act was adopted by individual parishes. The Act (22 Geo.III, c.83) could be adopted by any parish where two-thirds of the ratepayers (both in number and rateable value) were in favour. They had to sign an agreement in prescribed form which included an undertaking to provide a workhouse. Under the provisions of the Act the overseers became merely rate collectors and the "guardians of the poor" took over the other duties. The guardians were supervised by a visitor who was a person of some standing in the neighbourhood. The guardians, the visitor and the governor of the workhouse were appointed by the magistrates from names suggested by the parish vestry. (62) One of the earliest adoptions of this system took place at Iwerne Courtney in 1798. The quarter sessions received a report that the necessary resolution had been passed by the vestry and that two justices had certified the parish "to be of such a magnitude sufficient to have a workhouse provided in it". The court then appointed a visitor, a guardian and a governor of the workhouse. In this case both the visitor and the guardian were "gentry" and so perhaps it should be concluded that it was the governor who was intended to do the work. (63) Soon after, Gilbert's Act was adopted at Sturminster Newton and Yetminster. (64) The provisions of the Act were also adopted at Wool, apparently before Iwerne Courtney, but the only evidence is from the parish records. The new arrangements took effect in 1797 when the Rev. B. Mosse was appointed as visitor, James Frampton of Moreton as inspector and treasurer, and two parishioners as guardians. Frampton seems to have taken great interest in the affairs of the parish and to have recommended the diet for the workhouse inmates. (65)

61. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 2, 22.7.1829.

62. Cf. Act mentioned and general works on the subject.
e.g. D. Marshall, The English Poor in the 18th Century,
pp.13-14.

63. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.4. f.11.

64. Ibid. F.91 and f.153.

65. Wool Workhouse Minutes, pp.6 and 18.

Poole, which in the period under consideration consisted of one large parish of some 6,000 inhabitants, was the best example in the county of this kind of administration. Okeden described it as being "as perfect as the present working of the poor laws will permit." (66) There were visitors and guardians both of whom met monthly to examine the accounts, while the guardians alone met weekly to attend to requests for occasional relief. Most of the work, however, was performed by the paid acting guardians. This system of administration was adopted at Poole in 1813 when a Mr. Hooper was appointed acting guardian with a salary of £130 a year. Hooper, who had previously been a farmer in Wiltshire, proved to be an extremely efficient manager of the poor. Okeden commented on the speed and efficiency with which the out-poor were paid, on the well-run workhouse and on the profitable parish farm. (67) It is clear that the character of the acting guardian was far more important than the system, for at Cranborne an unscrupulous acting guardian nearly defrauded the parish. The advantage of the system provided by Gilbert's Act was that it gave the parish an opportunity to employ a man whose character, experience and aptitude made him suited to the work. Unless, however, the parish chose to employ such a man there seems to have been no inherent virtue in the machinery itself. This consideration applies equally to the employment of assistant overseers. Obviously a man of the kind described above would require a reasonable salary and this meant that the smaller parishes could not make effective use of these improved systems of administration.

The second authority involved in the administration of the poor laws was the parish vestry which was responsible for most of the affairs of the parish. In poor-law matters however, the authority of the vestry was parallel to that of the overseers, whose responsibility was primarily to the magistrates. The vestry did not appoint the overseers in law although it often did so in practice. It did not give authority to the overseers nor enforce their decisions for it was the magistrates who did this. The vestry,

66. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, pp.13-14.
67. Ibid., p.14; and Appendix B 2, Q.2.

however, did have certain statutory responsibilities, including that of meeting at Easter and drawing up the list of those who were to receive regular relief in the next year, and the duty of approving the overseer's accounts. The legal right of the vestry to grant occasional relief was ill-defined, (68) but in practice some vestries took a great part in deciding what should be granted. The vestry as it is known in Dorset was a meeting of all the ratepayers of the parish or rather of all those who chose to attend. The cottagers rarely paid rates (69) and those who did apparently did not attend. No doubt it was felt that the farmers and private residents were the proper people to run affairs. If the minister of the parish was present at the meeting, he usually took the chair. Okeden considered that it was a rare thing for the clergyman to attend but the poor-books seem to contradict this observation for they show that in country districts, at any rate, the clergyman was an active member.

The part which the vestry played in the administration of the poor laws varied greatly. In four out of five country parishes it seems to have met on poor-law business once a year in the week after Easter, or, after 1814, in the week after March 25th, to approve the overseers' accounts, approve the rate list for the next year, nominate the next year's overseers and approve the list of regular recipients of relief. (70) In a few villages and in the towns, the vestry was much more active; laying down rules to govern the work of the overseers, deciding rules to be observed by the paupers and often meeting monthly to audit the accounts and approve applications for relief. At Bishop's Caundle, for example, the overseers were instructed to relieve no one who did not wear the parish badge and no one whose name had not been placed on the parish list by the vestry and further they were to meet in the church once a month, according to the law. (71) At Yetminster the vestry was active in determining appeals for relief, urging the overseers to arrest the fathers of

68. Cf. Poor Law Report 1834, p.107 and the general works such as S. and B. Webb, The Parish and County.
69. Cf. Parish poor-books generally.
70. Cf. Poor-books of the county generally.
71. Bishop's Caundle Poor Books, fly leaves.

bastards and to remove non-parishioners. (72) At Lydlinch the overseers were to produce the poor-book in church once a month for the other ratepayers to examine and were to give no relief above 5/- without the vestry's approval. (73) Most of the parishes with active vestries seem to have been in the Vale of Blackmore, although there were a few elsewhere. In the towns the rules were more elaborate and more exacting. At Wimborne Minster, for example, the overseers were not to relieve anyone who was not wearing a parish badge or whose request had not been approved by the vestry, except in the "utmost necessity". Relief was always to be given in money unless the vestry made a special decision otherwise, and was always to be given to the pauper himself unless he was incapable of coming to the vestry. All relief was to be given in full, without any deduction for the debts of the pauper. Vagrants were only to be relieved by the town overseer. The overseers were to preserve all vouchers and legal papers and to give the monthly account of their work and expenditure to the vestry. (74) These rules had been first adopted in 1745 and in 1760 a committee was set up to work with the overseers, meeting each Tuesday to receive the requests of the poor and on the first Tuesday in the month to examine the overseers' accounts. (75)

The setting up of special committees of the vestry to supervise the overseers' administration was an anticipation of the select vestry of later times, and was an expedient practised in many of the town parishes of Dorset. At Blandford, a committee was established in 1768. It consisted of the churchwardens, the overseers and eleven other members of the vestry, and the officers plus three other members were authorised to act in all matters relating to the poor. (76) In the town parish, the vestry was clearly stronger than the overseer and sometimes disowned his actions. At Sherborne in 1777, for example, when the overseer had reached a settlement with one John

- 72. Yetminster Poor Book, 1697-1792, *passim*.
- 73. Lydlinch Poor Book, undated minute, D.R.O. P106/0V2.
- 74. Wimborne Order Book, 1745-1808, cf. beginning of book.
- 75. *Ibid.*, 20.4.1760.
- 76. Blandford Order Book, 10.1.1768, D.R.O. P70/VE3.

Wakefield, the father of a bastard child, whereby Wakefield was to pay the expenses to date and £10. 0. 0., the vestry repudiated his action, formally forbade any overseer to enter into such arrangements in the future and insisted on the normal legal proceedings against Wakefield. (77) On occasion a town vestry was prepared to defy the magistrates, as at Blandford in 1798 when the overseers were ordered to relieve Elizabeth Myall in money. The vestry met to consider this order and instructed the overseer to ignore it and to take the woman into the workhouse. This apparently ended the matter. (78)

In 1819 an Act of Parliament (59 Geo.III c.12) gave the right to the vestry to set up a special committee called a select vestry, to supervise the management of the poor. These select vestries were to be elected annually by the ordinary vestry and were to consist of between five and twenty persons who were to meet every fourteen days to "inquire into and determine the proper objects of relief, and the nature and amount of relief to be given". The overseers were subject to its authority, as was the assistant overseer, if one were appointed. Its authority over the overseers was vaguely expressed, however, and the 1834 report considered that they were not legally obliged to follow its instructions. (79) These select vestries do not appear to have differed much from the supervising committees which had existed in the town parishes of Dorset. The Act did, however, put such committees on a statutory basis and gave them more clearly-defined powers. They could, indeed, exercise all the powers which the ordinary vestries exercised in poor-law matters. Select vestries soon came into existence in most town parishes and a few villages; in all there were about thirty to forty in the county between 1820 and 1830. After the latter date, however, there was a decline in the numbers, so that by 1834 there were only nineteen. (80)

- 77. Sherborne Order Book, 1592 - 1633, p. 14.7.1777.
- 78. Blandford Order Book, 24.8.1798, D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 79. Cf. 59 Geo.III c.12, The Poor Law Report 1834, p.113; and the general works on the subject.
- 80. Cf. the annual returns of poor expenditure, listed in the bibliography.

Wimborne, which adopted the provisions of the 1819 Act promptly, provides a good illustration of the new administration. The select vestry, which consisted of the minister of the parish and a number of the leading business-men of the town, met regularly and was always well attended. Great attention was paid to the circumstances and character of the applicants for relief and the magistrates rarely had occasion to interfere. The parish was divided into four divisions consisting of the town and three rural districts, and in each there was a resident overseer who was expected to visit each applicant to discover if his case was one of genuine hardship and to find out if there were parents or children able to contribute to the pauper's support. (81) The order books make it clear that the overseers did not normally give relief except on the instructions of the select vestry and in many cases the relief seems to have been paid in the vestry meeting. The questions of policy rested entirely with the select vestry. (82)

In the assessing of the relief, the character of the applicant seems to have counted to a considerable extent and the vestries frequently specified whom they would not relieve. At Wimborne the frequenters of alehouses and those who kept dogs were to be denied all relief. (83) Correct observance of Sunday was often regarded as an essential qualification. Thus at Manston, in 1819, the vestry resolved that paupers who did not attend the parish church on Sundays were to lose their allowance for the following week. (84) Sometimes the ruling was not strictly Anglican, as for example at Charmouth, where "some place of divine service" was the requirement. (85) In other parishes nonconformity was a disqualification as at Studland where Charles Balson was given notice that if he permitted preaching in his house, the parish would cease to pay his house rent. (86) Other disqualifications included the suspicion of being a poacher; at Cann in 1823 a man was refused relief on the

81. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.17.
82. Cf. Select Vestry Order Books of Wimborne, *Passim*.
83. Wimborne Order Book 1818-22, 8.5.1821.
84. Manston Vestry Minute Book, 8.6.1819.
85. Charmouth Vestry Book, 14.10.1784.
86. Studland Vestry Book, 17.11.1831.

grounds that he had been seen carrying a gun, "to shoot contrary to the law." (87) After the beginning of trade union activities in 1834, overseers were encouraged by James Frampton of Moreton to deny relief to members of a union and their families. (88)

The third authority involved in the administration of the poor laws was that of the justices of the peace. Their authority was exercised at three levels: in the quarter sessions, in the petty sessions (or by the two justices acting together) and by each justice individually. There were two quarter sessions in Dorset, for the town of Poole had its own commission of the peace, whereas the rest of the county was under the jurisdiction of the Dorset Quarter Sessions which in the course of the year met successively at Blandford, Sherborne, Shaftesbury and Bridport. After each of these sessions the court was adjourned to Dorchester to meet again as often as necessary. In 1825, however, this rotation was discontinued and the sessions always met in Dorchester. In the words of a modern scholar: "The driving force in the public business of the county was the court of the Quarter Sessions, a judicial, administrative and quasi-legislative body." (89) The Dorset Quarter Sessions played an important part in shaping poor-law policy. It was, for example, the quarter sessions, meeting at the Antelope Inn in Dorchester on December 1st. 1792, which passed a resolution authorising a system of making up the pay of the labourer to such a sum as would provide "a comfortable support" for his family. (90) It was also in the quarter sessions that Okeden proposed a motion in 1831 declaring "the impolity and illegality of making up the wages of able-bodied labourers out of the poor-rates." (91) It was not, however, the only policy-making body in the county; for much of the poor-law policy was decided in the petty-sessional divisions. The quarter sessions was also a law court and, down to 1810, it

- 87. Cann Vestry Book, 3.1.1823. D.R.O., P39/VE1.
- 88. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 41567L, Letter from Frampton to Viscount Howick, May 3rd. 1834.
- 89. J.D. Chambers, Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century, p.50.
- 90. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 3., f.340.
- 91. Ibid., Vol.8, f.177.

determined many of the bastardy and desertion cases, many of the cases against relatives who had refused to support their dependents and many cases in which apprentices or their masters were accused of misconduct. After 1810, however, such cases were tried almost invariably before the magistrates in the divisional petty sessions. (92) A further function of the quarter sessions was to act as a court of appeal where the decisions of the petty sessions or of individual justices might be challenged. To it were brought appeals against removal orders, bastardy orders, maintenance orders and the placing of apprentices. (93) The quarter sessions raised a county rate on the parishes, to be paid by the overseers out of the poor-rate. Among other purposes this was used to pay the vagrant carriers and the expenses of the county goal at Dorchester and also of the house of correction at Sherborne until its discontinuation in 1793. At that time a new county gaol was built at Dorchester to serve both as prison and as house of correction; (94) There was also a combined gaol and house of correction at Poole. (95) In theory the house of correction was intended for poor-law offenders such as men who deserted their families, or the fathers of bastards who refused to support them, or the mothers of the bastards. It was also intended for vagrants. In Dorset, however, the gaol and the house of correction were both used in exactly the same way; prisoners, of whatever kind, being sent to whichever was the more convenient. (96)

The authority of the justices of the peace was exercised also in the petty-sessional divisions of the county. The petty sessions existed throughout the period but became much more active in the nineteenth century. The county was divided into the following petty sessional divisions: Blandford North, Blandford South, Bridport, Cerne, Dorchester, Shaston East, Shaston West, Sherborne and Sturminster Newton. These divisions had been formed by grouping together the hundreds of the county and the result was somewhat

92. Cf. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim* and Calendar of prisoners, *passim*.
93. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim*.
94. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 3.f.361 and *passim*. and House of Commons sessional papers 1821, Vol 21, pp.499ff. for "An Account of all the Gaols and Houses of Correction."
95. *Ibid.*
96. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim*.

illogical, since there were many parishes quite detached from the rest of the division to which they belonged. (97) In 1830 the divisions were reformed to remove the anomalies and some were re-named after the principal town in the area. Thus Shaston East became the Wimborne Division and Blandford South became the Wareham Division. (98) These divisions were in existence by 1760 but it appears that they became of increasing importance in about the year 1810. The calendar of the county gaol and the quarter sessions minute books suggest that certain aspects of the work previously done in the quarter sessions were being transferred to the justices working in their divisions. Amongst the work left to the petty sessions were most of the cases concerning bastardy, vagrancy, desertion and maintenance as were a host of minor crimes, such as poaching, and cases involving breaches of contract between master and man. (99) It appears also that considerable independence was given to the divisional judges in the making of poor-law policy and as a result distinct differences of policy between the divisions are found. In the Sturminster Newton division, for example, the system of making up pay was started later than in some other areas, but once it had been adopted it was applied more thoroughly than elsewhere. In the Bridport and Dorchester divisions, on the other hand, this policy was rarely, if ever, applied. (100)

The study of the minutes of the quarter sessions, the gaol calendars and the parish books and papers suggests that the administration of the poor laws attracted the attention of about a dozen or so justices at any one time. The same names occur in the poor-books again and again. It seems that one or more forceful individuals dominated each divisional bench and shaped its policy. In the Dorchester division, James Frampton of Moreton signed almost every poor-book from about 1800 onwards. He seems to have dominated the Dorchester bench, as it is reflected in its record of convictions. (101) In the Cerne division

- 97. See appendix to this chapter for map 5 and lists of parishes in each division. Cf. also Boswell, *op.cit.* 1st. Ed., 1795.
- 98. *Ibid.*, for map 6.
- 99. Cf. the Gaol Calendar and the Dorchester division, *Record of Convictions*, *passim*.
- 100. Cf. Chapter 16 for a full discussion of this.
- 101. Books and papers of the Dorchester division generally.

it was the Rev. John Davis of Cerne who signed most of the books, made many of the orders and wrote to the overseers, (102) while it was the Rev. Harry Farr Yeatman whose influence shaped the policy of the Sturminster division. (103)

The magisterial authority in poor-law matters was exercised also either by two justices together or, in certain matters which had some urgency about them, by a single justice. The "double justice" supervised and enforced the work of the overseer. They appointed him and allowed his rate and if anyone refused to pay it, the magistrates could order the offender's goods to be seized. The two magistrates could make an order on an overseer to relieve a pauper; an order of removal, sending a non-parishioner home to his proper settlement; a bastardy order requiring the father of the child to support it; and they could sanction the apprenticing of a poor child. (104) In the early part of the period the functions of the "double magistrate" were sometimes exercised whenever two magistrates found it convenient to meet. Long before the end of the eighteenth century, however, these functions were normally exercised when the justices met in their monthly divisional sessions.

The single magistrate could act in certain specified matters which, by their nature, needed some dispatch. He could order relief for a pauper if he considered the case to be urgent. He could take examinations of those suspected of not being settled in the parish where they lived and if such persons were vagrants he could commit them to the house of correction. He could hear the examination of a woman with a bastard child and issue a warrant for the arrest of the alleged father. (105) These were his legal rights but much work was done informally. When a pauper came to complain of the treatment which he had received from the overseer of his parish, the justice would often write to the overseer, pointing out the merits of the man's case and suggesting a solution. If the magistrate heard of some irregular practice in one of the parishes in his division, he sometimes wrote to say that this must cease. (106)

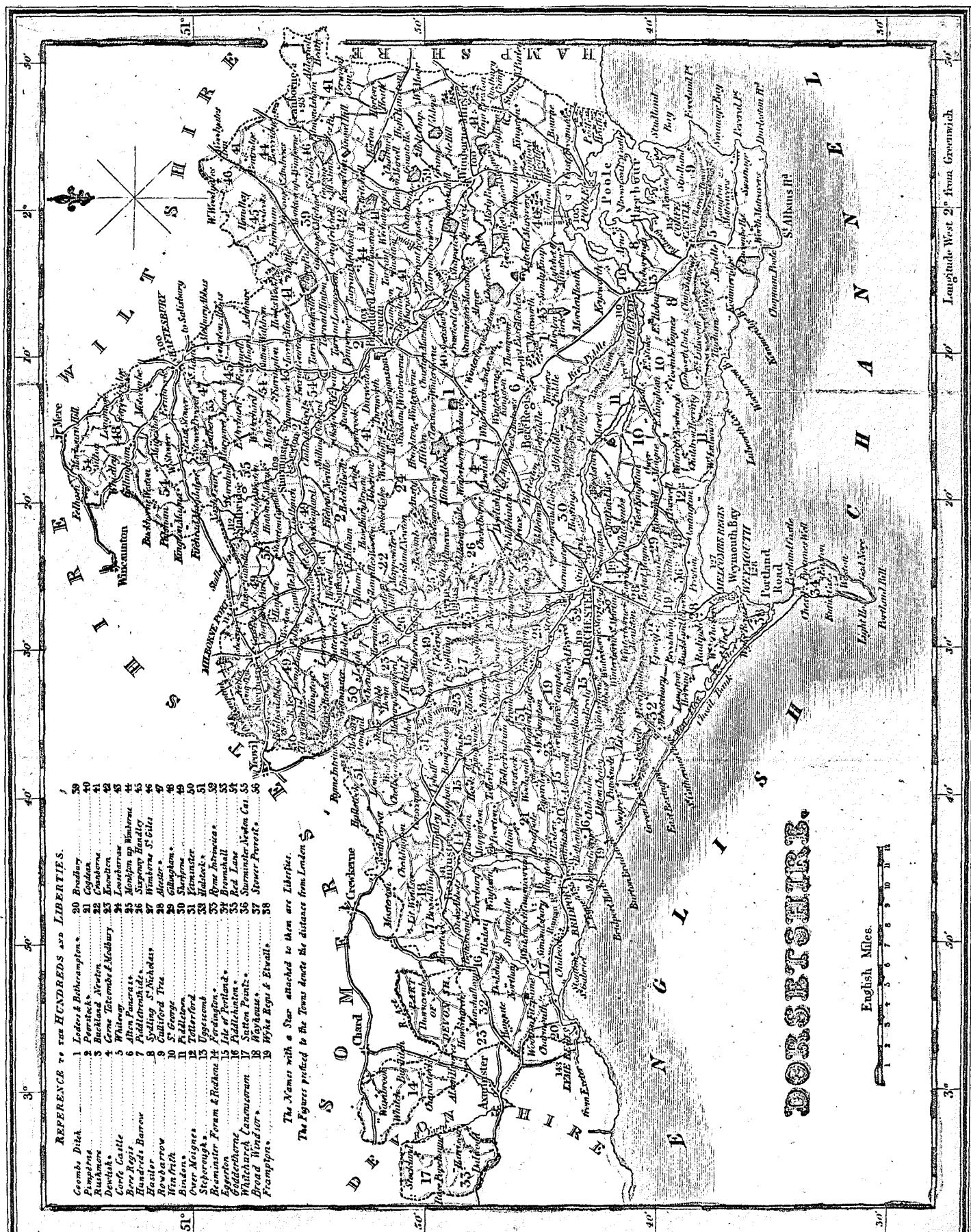
- 102. Books and papers of the Cerne division, esp. of Hilton P21.
- 103. Ibid., and his own writings and for these cf. Bibliography.
- 104. Cf. the general works on the subject given in the bibliography and the later chapters of this work for details and examples.
- 105. Ibid.
- 106. Cf. Correspondence of the Rev. J. Davis in Hilton papers. D.R.O., P21/0V12.

Most of the evidence relating to the activity of the justices dates from the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century and especially before 1795, the indications are that the magistrates interfered little with the work of the overseers. The vestries, likewise, took far more interest in the relief of the poor after 1795 when the great increase in poor-rates began. The overseers were obliged to give their attention to the poor but it was under compulsion and not out of interest that they did so. The characteristic mark of the poor-law administration was inefficiency rather than inhumanity or corruption. After 1813, however, the poor-rates became an increasing burden on the farmers and in many parishes there was a new concern for efficiency and economy; an attitude which necessitated more frequent magisterial interventions.

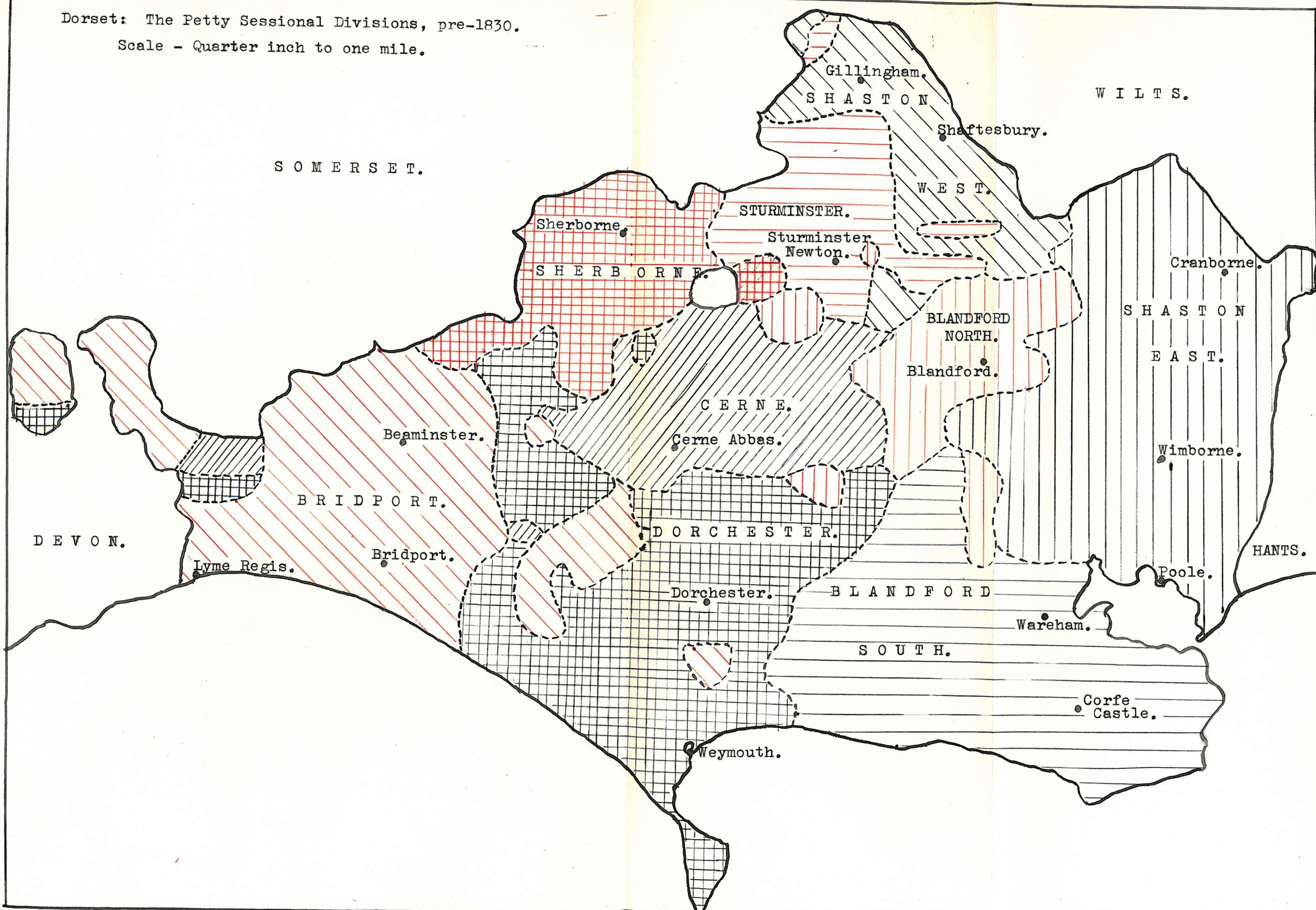
Map IV.

Dorset c.1800.

(A reproduction of a map published by Fullarton and Co. of Glasgow.)

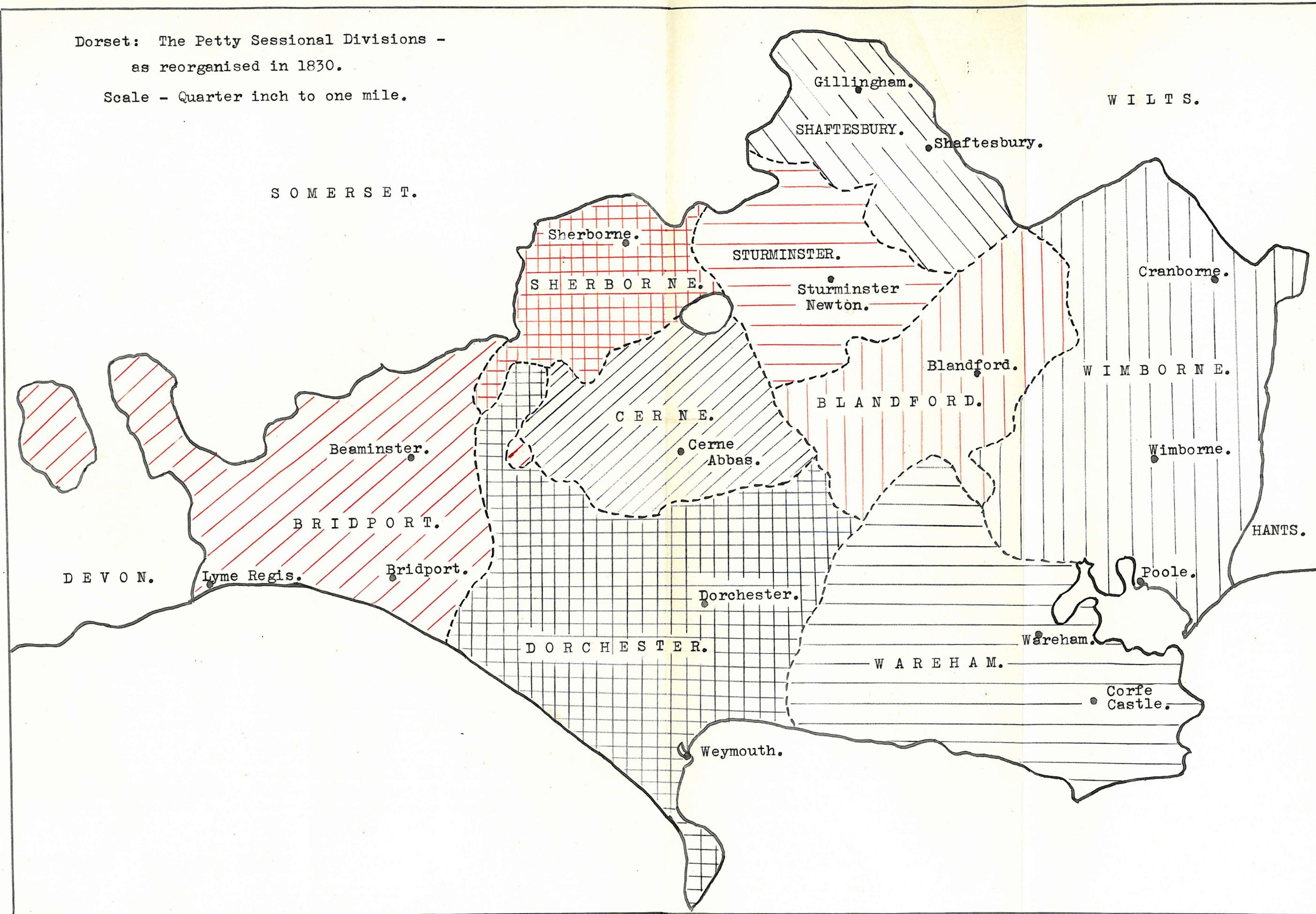


Dorset: The Petty Sessional Divisions, pre-1830.
Scale - Quarter inch to one mile.



Dorset: The Petty Sessional Divisions -
as reorganised in 1830.

Scale - Quarter inch to one mile.



Appendix.

The Administrative divisions of Dorset.

Dorset Quarter Sessions.

The Petty Sessional Divisions.

The Blandford North Division (in 1830 renamed Blandford Division).

Blandford Forum.	Transfers to the division in 1830:
Anderson.	Charlton Marshall.
Blandford St. Mary.	Chettle.
Bloxworth.*	Hilton.
Bryanston.	Milborne St. Andrew.
Dewlish.	Milton Abbas.
Fifehead Neville.*	Spettisbury.
Hammoon.*	Tarrant Gunville.
Hazelbury Bryan.*	Tarrant Monkton.
Iwerne Steepleton.	Turnworth.
Langton Long Blandford.	
Pimperne.	
Stourpaine.	
Tarrant Hinton.	
Tarrant Keynston.	
Tarrant Launceston.	
Tarrant Rawston.	
Tomson.	* Transfers from the division in 1830.
Winterborne Clenston.	
Winterborne Houghton.	
Winterborne Stickland.	
Winterborne Whitechurch.	
Winterborne Zelston.	

The Blandford South Division (in 1830 renamed the Wareham Division).

Wareham:	Transfer to the division in 1830:
Holy Trinity parish.	
Lady St. Mary parish.	Bloxworth.
St. Martin parish.	
Affpuddle.	

N.B. For the location of the parishes listed on this and the following pages see Map 4.

Arne.
Bere Regis:
 Bere Regis tithing.
 Milborne Stileham tithing.
Chaldon Herring.
Church Knowle.
Combe Keynes.
Corfe Castle.
East Holme.
East Lulworth.
East Stoke.
Kimmeridge.
Langton Matravers.
Moreton.
Poxwell.*
Owermoigne.
Steeple.
Studland.
Swanage.
Turners Puddle.
Tyneham.
Warmwell.*
West Lulworth.
Winfrith Newburgh.
Winterborne Kingston.
Woodsford.*
Wool.
Worth Matravers.

The Bridport Division.

Bridport.
Allington.
Askerwell.
Beaminster.
Bettiscombe.
Bincombe.*
Bothenhampton.
Bradpole.
Broadwinstor.
Burstock.

Transfers to the division
in 1830:
 Chilcombe.
 Dalwood.
 Halscock.
 Hawkchurch.

* Transfers from the
division in 1830.

Burton Bradstock.
Catherston Leweston.
Chardstock.
Charmouth.
Cheddington.
Chideock.
Compton Valence.*
Corscombe.
Frampton.*
Hooke.
Loders.
LongBredy.*
Lyme Regis.
Marshwood.
Mosterton.
Netherbury.
North Poorton.
Pilsdon.
Powerstock.
Shipton Gorge.
South Perrott.
Stanton St. Gabriel.
Stockland.
Stoke Abbott.
Symondsbury.
Walditch.
Wambrook.
Whitechurch Canonicorum.
Winterborne Abbas.*
Winterborne Came (part of) *.
Wootton Fitzpaine.
Wraxall.

The Cerne Division.
Cerne Abbas.
Alton Pancras.
Buckland Newton.
Cattistock.
Cheselbourne.
Compton Abbas (or
West Compton).*

Transfers to the
division in 1830:
Batcombe.
Frome St. Quintin.
Hermitage.
Melbury Bubb.
Up Cerne.

Gedmanstone.	* Transfers from the
Hawkchurch:	division in 1830.
Wyldecourt Tithing.*	
Hilton.*	
Ibberton.*	
Mappowder.	
Melcombe Horsey.	
Milton Abbas.*	
Minterne Magna.	
Nether Cerne.	
Piddletrenthide.	
Pulham.	
Stoke Wake.*	
Sydling St. Nicholas:	
Sydling St. Nicholas tithing.	
Hilfield tithing.	
Woolland.*	
Wootton Glanville.	
The Dorchester Division.	Transfers to the
Dorchester:	division in 1830:
All Saints parish.	Bincombe.
Holy Trinity parish.	Compton Abbas.
St. Peter parish.	(West Compton).
Abbotsbury.	Compton Valance.
Athelhampton.	Dewlish.
Bradford Peverell.	Frampton.
Broadwey.	Long Bredy.
Broadmayne.	Poxwell.
Buckland Ripers.	Warmwell.
Burleston.	Woodsford.
Charminster.	Winterborne Abbas.
Chilcombe.*	Winterborne Came.
Chilfrome.	(part of)
Dalwood.*	
East Chelborough.*	
Evershot.	* Transfers from the
Fleet.	division in 1830.
Fordington.	

Frome St. Quintin.*
Frome Vauchurch.
Hawkchurch:
 Phyllyholme tithing.*
Hermitage.*
Kingston Russell.
Langton Herring.
Little Bredy.
Litton Cheney.
Maiden Newton.
Melbury Sampford.
Melcombe Regis.
Milborne St. Andrew.*
Osmington.
Piddlehinton.
Puddletown.
Portesham.
Portland.
Preston.
Puncknowle.
Radipole.
Rampisham.
Stinsford.
Stockwood.*
Stratton.
Swyre.
Tincleton.
Toller Fratrum.
Toller Porcorum.
Tolpuddle.
Upwey.
West Chelborough.*
West Chickereell.
West Knighton.
West Stafford.
Weymouth.
Whitcombe.
Winford Eagle.
Winterborne Came (part of).
Winterborne Herringston and
 Farringdon.
Winterborne Monkton.
Winterborne St. Martin.
Winterborne Steepleton.
Wyke Regis.

The Shaston East Division (in 1830 renamed Wimborne Division).

Wimborne Minster.	Transfer to the
Almer and Mapperton.	division in 1830:
Canford Magna.	Farnham.
Canford tithing.	
Kinson tithing.	
Longfleet tithing.	* Transfers from the
Parkstone tithing.	division in 1830.
Chisbury.	
Charlton Marshall.*	
Chettle.*	
Corfe Mullen.	
Cranborne.	
Edmondsham.	
Gussage All Saints.	
Gussage St. Michael.	
Hampreston.	
Hamworthy.	
Hinton Mar tell ell.	
Hinton Parva.	
Long Criche l .	
Lytchett Matravers.	
Lytchett Minster.	
Morden.	
More Criche l .	
Pentridge.	
Shapwick.	
Sixpenny Handley.	
Spettisbury.*	
Sturminster Marshall.	
Tarrant Crawford.	
Tarrant Monkton.	
Tarrant Rushton.	
West Parley.	
Wimborne St. Giles.	
Witchampton.	
Woodlands.	

The Shaston West Division (in 1830 renamed Shaftesbury division).

Shaftesbury:

- Alcester Liberty.
- Holy Trinity parish.
- St. James parish.
- St. Peter parish.

Ashmore.
Belchalwell.*
Cann.
Compton Abbas.
East Orchard.
Farnham.*
 Farnham Royal tithing.
 Farnham Tollard tithing.
Fontmell Magna.
 Fontmell tithing.
 Hartgrove tithing.
Gillingham.
 Gillingham tithing.
 Bourton tithing.
Iwerne Minster.
Melbury Abbas.
Motcombe.
Shillingstone.*
Tarrant Gunville.*
Turnworth.*
West Orchard.
The Sherborne Division.

Transfers to the
division in 1830:
Buckhorn Weston.
East Stour.
Kington Magna.
Silton.
Stour Provost.
Todber.
West Stour.

* Transfers from the
division in 1830.

Sherborne.
Batcombe.*
Beer Hackett.
Bishop's Caundle (or
 Caundle Bishop)
Bradford Abbas.
Castleton.
Caundle Marsh.
Clifton Maybank.
Folke.
Halstock.*
Haydon.
Holnest.
Lillington and Leweston.
Long Burton.
Lydlinch.*
Melbury Bubb.*
Nether Compton.
North Wootton.
Oborne.
Over Compton.
Purse Caundle.
Ryme Intrinseca.
Thornford.

* Transfers from the
division in 1830.

Up Cerne.*

Yetminster:

 Yetminster tithing.

 Chetnole tithing.

 Leigh tithing.

The Sturminster Newton Division.

Sturminster Newton Castle.

Transfers to the
division in 1830:

Buckhorn Weston.*

Belchalwell.

Child Okeford.

Fifehead Neville.

East Stour.*

Hammoon.

Fifehead Magdalen.

Hazelbury Bryan.

Hinton St. Mary.

Ibberton.

Iwerne Courtney (or Shroton).

Lydlinch.

Kington Magna.*

Shillingstone.

Manston.

Stoke Wake.

Marnhull.

Woolland.

Margaret Marsh.

Okeford Fitzpaine.

* Transfers from the
division in 1830.

Silton.*

Stalbridge.

Stock Gaylard.

Stour Provost.*

Stourton Caundle.

Sutton Waldron.

Todber.*

West Stour.*

Poole Quarter Sessions.

Poole St. James.

Chapter Nine.

Rates and Accounts.

According to the 1601 Act providing for the relief of the poor, the overseers of each parish were to raise sufficient money to relieve the poor and to meet other expenses by raising a rate on "every inhabitant, parson, vicar and other and every occupier of lands, houses, tithes....., coal mines or saleable underwood," within their parish. (1) This involved making an assessment of the property of the parish which would be fair and equal, raising sufficient rates based on ~~this~~ assessment to cover expenses, and the collection of these rates. Each of these processes was found to be fraught with difficulties.

The valuation of the property and the fixing of the assessment was sometimes based on custom which had been enshrined in the old poor-books of the parish. In the Blandford division of the county, according to Mr. Portman and Mr. Elliott who replied to the questions of the 1834 commissioners, the overseers were guided by the old rate-books, which were regarded as a fair assessment. When property changed hands or was divided or combined, the overseers made the necessary changes with the advice of the vestry if necessary. Sometimes it was found that the alterations could not be agreed upon so easily and then the qualified land surveyor was employed to make a completely new valuation. (2) The assessments in the old poor-books were derived possibly from some expert valuation made long before. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, this was far from satisfactory and quite a number of parishes employed surveyors to make a new assessment. Some parishes, such as Hampreston, were fortunate; for they could use the valuation made at the time of the enclosure. (3) Others laid out considerable sums of money in having the land and other property valued as did Litton Cheyney which spent £50 in 1825. (4)

1. 43 Eliz.I c.2.
2. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 1, Q.34.
3. Ibid.
4. Litton Cheyney Poor Book, March 1826.

The basis of the assessment was usually the annual rack rent value, though in some parishes a certain percentage was deducted as at Blandford St. Mary where a quarter of the annual value was deducted; but in others as at Rampisham the full annual value was used. Sometimes both practices were employed as at Longfleet where the full value of the land and two-thirds of the value of buildings were the basis. (5) Once the basis of the assessment was settled, the overseers or the vestry had to alter the list from time to time as changes in the occupation of land occurred. These alterations were often made inaccurately and were a frequent cause of disputes. In 1780, for instance, John Beaminster appealed to the quarter sessions against the Swanage rate, alleging that some houses were assessed over the true value while some were below and that others had been omitted altogether. (6) Again in 1830 James Drew of Tarrant Gunville appealed, alleging that he had been omitted from the list of ratepayers. Drew's motive was desire not so much to pay the rate, as to gain settlement in the parish thereby. (7)

When the list had been brought up-to-date, it had to be entered in the book kept for the purpose which was normally the poor-book, although some town parishes such as Poole and Bridport had special rate-books. (8) The churchwardens and overseers had to sign the list and take it to the justices for their sanction. Then the rate had to be published by being read out in church on the next Sunday and by being made available in some public place so that all ratepayers could study it. Anyone who considered that the rate was in some way incorrect could then appeal to the quarter sessions. (9) The process of making a valid rate was complicated and the overseers, who were usually inexperienced, sometimes made mistakes. They might then have to face an appeal against the rate on the grounds that it was incorrectly made. At St. James, Shaftesbury, in 1810, the overseers omitted to have the rate sanctioned by the justices and did not publish it. The result was a successful appeal. (10) In 1785, a rate

5. Poor Law Report 1834. Appendix B2 Q.30.
6. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol.2, f.318.
7. Ibid., Vol 8, f.159.
8. Cf. records of Poole and Bridport.
9. 17 Geo.II c.3; 17 Geo.II c.38.
10. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.5, f.375.

was quashed by the quarter sessions on the grounds that it was made by one overseer only " in a secret and clandestine manner contrary to the statute and without giving public notice ", and because the overseer had "illegally, wrongfully and unjustly taken it upon himself to alter and new model the poor-rate or assessment.....without concurrence, approbation or consent of thechurchwardens and overseers of the parish. " (11)

Okeden's investigations for the 1832 Poor Law Commissioners led him to conclude that the rating system worked fairly in the county and he found no allegations of unfairness. He also observed that the cottages of the poor were not generally rated, (12) and this seems to have been usual in the years just after 1830, as the replies of the various parishes to the Poor Law Commissioners show. Typical answers included: "All rated but some excused." "Often exempt!" "Generally exempt!" "All exempt!" "If under £6." "If poor, not enforced." (13) The exemption of the poorer people from the poor-rate was permitted by 54Geo.III c.170 in 1814 but the cottagers seem frequently to have been exempted from the rate before that date. On one occasion the overseers of East Stoke included on their list thirteen cottagers paying twopence or three-halfpence each. When, however, the rate was taken to the magistrates for sanction, the names of the cottagers were struck out. (14)

Most of the property rated in Dorset was either land or houses. Thus in 1823, for example, £70,744 was levied on land; £14,572 on dwellings; £1,353 on mills etc; and £1,513 on manorial profits. (15) That the rating of non-agricultural property was a constant source of disagreement is reflected in the business of the quarter sessions and the vestries. In 1833 the quarter sessions resolved that stock in trade, shipping and tonnage dues, tolls and the revenues of water companies ought to be rated. (16) This decision did not introduce a new principle but simply clarified a situation which had led to many disputes.

Stock in trade had been rated at Bere Regis in

11. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol 3, f.97.
12. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.15.
13. Ibid., Appendix B2 Questions 21 and 55.
14. East Stoke Poor Book April 1804.
15. Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, H. of C. Sessional Papers 1824, Vol.6, p.371.
16. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 8, f.245.

1760 (17) and other places followed the same practice. Dorchester achieved the same result in a different way.

The rate was assessed on a double basis, first on land and houses and secondly there was a "personal assessment" which took into account the man's trade and the stock he carried.(18) Sherborne varied its practice from time to time and in 1834 a move to rate stock in trade was defeated in the vestry; the opponents arguing that the proposal would mean a double taxation, for trade houses were assessed at a higher rate than private houses. In the end the two sides compromised. Stock in trade was to be rated but trade houses were to be assessed in the same way as private houses. (19) Sherborne had had an earlier experience of rating stock in trade and the attempt had ended with a defeat in the quarter sessions. In 1806, Messrs. Burnet and Andrews, silk-throwers of Sherborne, appealed to the quarter sessions against the assessment of the silk on their premises. It was said to be usual to rate stock in trade in the parish but the firm argued that their case was unusual in that they did not own the stock. They received raw silk from their London employers and when they had worked it returned it to its owners. They neither owned the silk in their possession nor offered it for sale. The quarter sessions decided that the silk in the appellant's possession was not rateable and ordered that the rate should be altered by striking out their names. (20) Another issue which had arisen concerned the legality of rating clay-pits. The overseers of Church Knowle had rated the pits belonging to Thomas Browne, who appealed; claiming that, like quarries and limekilns, such pits were not liable. The quarter sessions, however, held that clay mines producing profitable china clay were rightly rated and dismissed the appeal. (21) The problems of a port were demonstrated when the Melcombe Regis authorities decided to levy a rate on the shipping in the harbour there. The April vestry in 1823 imposed a rate of one penny per ton on each vessel and ordered the overseers to collect it. In July the overseers

17. Bere Regis Poor Book 2, April 1760.

18. Dorchester All Saints Poor Book, *passim*.D.R.O., P35/0V6.

19. Sherborne Order Book 2, 20.8.1834.

20. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 5,f.32.

21. *Ibid.*, Vol.5.f.48.

reported to the vestry that the Board of Customs had refused to disclose the exact tonnages of the ships. The vestry instructed the overseers to estimate the tonnages and demand the rate. When this was done the masters of the ships refused to pay and an unsuccessful attempt was made to prosecute one of the masters. At this point the vestry thought better of the scheme and the attempt was abandoned. (22)

If the assessment and making of the rate were beset by problems, so too was the collection. This duty fell to the overseers and if any of the persons assessed refused to pay, the overseers were to approach the justices and seek a distress warrant enabling them to seize and sell some of the person's goods. (23) It is clear that most of the overseers were reluctant to press too far with those who after all were their own neighbours. From time to time the vestry would urge the overseers to collect the rate and, if necessary, to enforce payment. (24) Delays, and no doubt arguments, often occurred but it was not often that legal proceedings were started. Even Sturminster Marshall, a large parish and one somewhat disposed to litigation, obtained only five summonses for rates in the three years after April 1822. (25)

The amount of any one rate was usually fairly low in relation to the money to be raised. Thus the total of a single rate at Shapwick in 1802-3 was £7.10.7., whereas the total amount raised in that year was £424. (26) It can be seen from this that the rate would have to be raised a good many times in the course of the year. The normal practice was to have the rate properly made at the beginning of the overseer's term of office and to collect this rate as many times as was necessary. (27) It was only in towns, such as Bridport (28), that each rate levied was separately made and allowed. This practice of collecting many small rates doubtless had an advantage for the payers since a large farmer might have to pay a

- 22. Melcombe Regis Order Book, cf. April 1823 to April 1825.
- 23. Cf. 43 Eliz. c.2.
- 24. e.g. Wyke Regis Poor Book, 31.3.1812, P5/0V4.
- 25. Sturminster Marshall, Account of H. Rowden 1825, P98/0 V2.
- 26. Shapwick Poor Book, e.g. April 1810, P123/0V1.
and Poor Returns, 1802-3.
- 27. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B2 Q.33.
- 28. Bridport Poor Rate Books, *passim*.

total of £75 to £100 per year. (29) It was less convenient on the other hand for the parish officers, and it was perhaps for this reason that when new assessments of the parish were made, the amount of the individual rate was far larger. For example, the new assessment made at Shapwick in 1818 resulted in a rate of £242.2.11. (30)

The rector of Buckland Newton, in his reply to the 1834 commissioners, said that the vestry of his parish never opposed the collection of rates when these became necessary but often interfered in the spending of the money. (31). This seems to summarise the general state of affairs; for, considering the great amount of irregularity and uncertainty in the local methods, it is surprising that the rates were ever collected at all. It can only be supposed that the ratepayers realised that the money had to be raised and preferred not to make difficulties. The vestry was usually more concerned about the way in which the money was spent and this concern was inspired by the need for economy, rather than by a desire to obey the law. As was remarked in the 1834 report the poor-rate was often used for all parochial purposes. (32) The only check on the legality of the expenditure was the necessity to submit the accounts to the justices for examination at the end of the overseers' term of office. (33) It does not appear, however, that this duty was taken particularly seriously by the magistrates until near the end of the period. Normally they seem to have been content with the overseers' oaths that the accounts were correct; for the books available show extremely few examples of alteration by the signing justice. An instance of the latter is to be found in the Yetminster accounts where, in 1769, the certificate was qualified thus; "Except what relates to the highways." (34) Sometimes illegal payments came to light when an appeal was made to the quarter sessions against the accounts of the overseer. This was a right which every parishioner could exercise if he felt aggrieved. The appeals normally sprang from a motive of

- 29. e.g. Occupier of Court Farm, Bere Regis, paid about £75 in 1802-3. Calculated from Poor Book of year.
- 30. Shapwick Poor Book, April 1818. P123/0V1.
- 31. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B2 Q33.
- 32. Ibid., Appendix C, p.102.
- 33. 43 Eliz.I c.2; 17 Geo.II c38; and 50 Geo.III c.49.
- 34. Yetminster Poor Book 18.4.1769.



economy but often made use of illegalities as a means of getting the accounts altered. There were twenty such cases before the quarter sessions between 1760 and 1834. (35) In one instance Lazarus Showers of Stockland appealed against the accounts of the overseers of the parish in 1770. He alleged that the overseers had spent a great deal of money on their own expenses at sundry legal actions which the parish had undertaken during the year and that they had paid themselves salaries of £3.0.0. each. The court ordered most of the offending entries to be struck out and the overseers to pay £32 to the parish. (36) The overseers, likewise, had a right to appeal to the quarter sessions, should the justices disallow of any part of their accounts. (37) Only two such cases occurred in the county, and both affected the accounts of the Marshwood overseers. The first, in 1821, was against the disallowance of items totalling nearly £57. and in this case the court reduced the amount disallowed to nearly £18. (38) The other case, in the next year, resulted in the amount disallowed being reduced from £53 to £1.8.6. (39)

The money raised from the poor-rates was used for a good many purposes besides the relief of the poor and the legal proceedings related to it. Some of these other uses, however, were obligatory, such as the payment of the county rates, the support of the families of militiamen and the giving of bounties to recruits for the army and navy. The militia was a reserve army for which each parish had to provide a certain number of men selected by ballot. The men chosen could serve either in person or by substitute. Whenever this force was called out, the parish was responsible for the support of the wives and families. In the case of the family of a substitute this could involve a great deal of trouble for they probably lived in another village and possibly another county. (40) The relief to be paid to militiamen's families was fixed from time to time by the quarter sessions. (41) The money was paid by the overseer of

35. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim*.

36. *Ibid.* Vol. 1., f. 433f.

37. 17 Geo. II c. 38.

38. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol. 5, f. 94.

39. *Ibid.*, f. 140.

40.

41. For example on 4.10.1803. Cf. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol. 4, f. 492.

the parish where the family lived and if the man was serving as a substitute for someone belonging to another parish, the latter made a reimbursement. If the latter parish was in another county, the payment was made through the treasurers of the counties concerned. (42) Examples of transactions of this sort are common and are well illustrated in the accounts of Stalbridge for August 1799, when the families of six men were getting militia pay, two of them being: "Uriah Homer's wife and 3 children... £1.6.8.", and "Geo. Jeans's wife and 2 children... £1.0.0." (43) In November of the same year is this entry: "From the county treasurer on account of George Jeans.. £7.1.0." and "From the Sturminster Overseer to October... £3.2.0." (44) It would appear from these entries that one of the militia families, that of Jeans, was supported by a parish in another county, and that another family was supported by Sturminster Newton. Thus Stalbridge was reimbursed the expenditure on the account of two of the six families. Another wartime expense was that involved in finding men for the navy. The parishes were ordered to find a certain number of men or to pay a fine. In many cases the number was so small that several parishes shared the expense. Stalbridge and Hinton St. Mary provide an example for in the Stalbridge accounts for 1795 these entries occur: "April 9th. Two men to Sturminster on acc't of being to serve the navy but not accepted.. 5/-" "April 10th. Expenses to Sturminster on account of raising men for the navy and attending the justices, 2/-, dinner and beer to the men agreed with but they was objected to, 2/-." "April 23rd. To Joseph Lucas a volunteer to serve in his majesty's navy... £28.7.0.

Expenses to Sturminster etc with the man agreed with.... 3/9."

(undated) "Rec. £14.8.9. of the overseer of Hinton St. Mary towards raising volunteers to serve in the navy." (45)

A number of other expenses frequently appear in the accounts and are often authorised by the vestry. In most

- 42. cf. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol III, f.386-7 for orders to repay to county treasurer money paid to other counties.
- 43. Stalbridge Extra Book 4, 11.8.1799, D.R.O., P107/0V11.
- 44. Stalbridge Poor Book, 30.11.1799; D.R.O. P107/0V11.
- 45. Ibid., 30.8.1810.

parishes the poor-rates were used for the upkeep of the roads. At Cerne Abbas the vestry decided in 1764 that "expenses accruing to the surveyors of the highways...should be paid out of the poor-rate." (46) Rewards for the killing of vermin are also quite common and sometimes, as at Powerstock in 1810, the vestry decided on an approved scale. The Powerstock vestry agreed that the overseers should pay threepence a dozen for sparrows, one penny each for adders, snakes, crows, magpies, jays, kites, hawks and rats and a halfpenny each for half-grown rats. (47) At Burton Bradstock the poor-rate was used for expenses in repairing the parish pump, (48) for the expenses of the children's schooling (49), for paying "four men for watching the fire at John Atwell's" (50), and for paying the singing master. (51) Quite a lot of money was spent on entertainments at the annual vestry meeting but nowhere was the matter put quite so plainly as at Halstock where a minute of 1815 reads: "At an adjourned vestry meeting held at "The Quiet Woman", it is agreed that on account of the non-attendance of the principal landowners and other tenants at the yearly vestry....it is agreed that....the overseers or churchwardens shall have it in their power to spend one pound in order that those payers who attend the said yearly vestry shall have a sufficientsey [sic] without spending their own money." (52)

A brief consideration of the accounts themselves shows that those kept in the larger towns were different from those kept elsewhere. Of the latter, Okeden said that the same system of accounting was used all over the county and that the books were unintelligible to anyone but the overseer himself and the vestrymen. He mentioned that the entries were very brief, usually giving only the sum paid and the person to whom it was paid. (53). Okeden, who was anxious to see the end of the system of parochial relief, was painting a somewhat unfavourable picture although one which is partly correct. A study of about ninety sets of

- 46. Cerne Abbas Poor Book 1746-1778, 30.1.1764, D.R.O., P22/0V13.
- 47. Powerstock Poor Book 1791-1813, 30.8.1810, D.R.O., P51/0V2.
- 48. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 1756-80, March 1771, D.R.O., P97/0V1
- 49. Ibid., March 1772.
- 50. Ibid., April 1772.
- 51. Ibid., May 1773.
- 52. Halstock Poor Book, 29.3.1815.
- 53. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.14.

parish poor-books has shown that the books were indeed often so badly kept as to be meaningless. This observation applies particularly to legal business of all kinds where, as Okeden said, only the sum and the name of the person paid was noted. The entries which relate to the payment of paupers in the parish are sometimes of this vague kind but more usually they give some detail. In the majority of cases all the poor-law entries were kept in the same book and it included rates, minutes of the vestry, accounts of expenditure, and inventories of paupers' goods. In some parishes, including a few quite small ones, there was a separate book for vestry minutes, especially towards the end of the period. In the larger parishes and particularly in the larger towns, the records were much more extensive. At Wimborne each tithing had its own register of regular recipients of relief, its own book of extra payments and ledgers into which the balances were entered monthly. Besides these there were books for the workhouse, vestry order books and rate-books. Most of the other larger towns and some of the smaller ones had a similar range of books, although of the extant records those of Wimborne are the most elaborate. Okeden made special reference to the system of accounting at Poole, which he regarded as particularly thorough and exact. (54) Since, however, only the rate-books survive there, no opinion can be formed of their methods. Okeden added that only Poole, Bridport and Weymouth had their accounts printed and published. (55) The books of the larger places were usually kept in a fuller and more correct manner but this does not mean that they are necessarily more useful to the research worker; for while they make the purpose of each item of expenditure clear, they often lack the "chatty" detail which appears in the poor-book of a small village. It is often this sort of detail which makes it possible to discover the attitudes of the overseer and the feelings of the pauper.

54. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.14.
55. Ibid.

Chapter Ten.

Settlement and Removal.

The idea of "settlement", that every person belonged to some particular parish, was a very ancient one. It was brought into the poor-law system by an Act of Parliament passed in 1662 (14 Car.II c.12) which legalised and made of general application a practice already evolved in certain large towns.(1) The Act asserted that great numbers of the poor were wandering about to the detriment of the parishes which had to support them and declared that "it shall and may be lawful upon complaint by the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of any parish to any justice of peace, within forty days after any such person or persons coming to settle,....in any tenement under the yearly value of ten pounds for any two justices of the peace whereof one to be of the quorum....., by their warrant to remove and convey such person~~s~~ or persons to such parish where he or they were last legally settled....."(2) The effect of this Act was to make every labourer who was working outside the parish of his settlement liable to be forcibly returned there. Even if he was supporting himself and his family without parish aid and was guiltless of any act of vagrancy, these were matters of no significance under the law and could not prevent his removal.

Among both older and modern writers, opinions have run high on the law of settlement and its implementation. In the eighteenth century the Rev. Richard Burn contended that the time of the overseers was largely occupied by a constant watch for the arrival of strangers and by frequent trips to the neighbouring justices to secure orders for their removal. He described their concern to prevent any farmer hiring a non-parishioner for a year, as this would give him settlement, and their desire to apprentice the poor children to non-parishioners. (3) Similar views have been expressed in more recent times by J.L. and B. Hammond who contended that the laws confined the poor to

1. Chambers, op.cit., p.262.
2. 14 Car.II c.2, cited from Bland, Brown and Tawney, op.cit., p.647.
3. R.Burn, History of the Poor Laws, p.121.

their own parish and that those who did migrate were usually sent back to their proper homes. (4) S. and B. Webb, more judicious in their opinions as a rule, spoke of "so much hardship on individuals, and, indirectly, also on the whole body of manual-working wage-earners," adding that the law interfered with economic prosperity and involved a colossal wastage of public funds. (5) It is true that the last mentioned writers recognised that the operation of the law did not amount to an "imprisonment" of the poor in their own parishes and that the number removed in any year would average out at one or two per parish. (6) Prof. Chambers has pointed out that in Nottinghamshire, at least, even this average was too high and suggested that in many parishes one removal in every five or six years would be likely. (7) Miss Marshall painted a rather different picture of the working of the law of settlement. She considered that the evidence suggested that the parish officers usually left the non-parishioner alone unless he seemed likely to become chargeable in the near future and that it was only when accident or death removed the breadwinner that the overseer aroused himself to action and obtained an order of removal. (8) Miss Marshall's work relates to the eighteenth century, that is to the period when a poor man could be removed as "likely to become chargeable". In 1795 the law was changed (9) so that only those who were actually chargeable could be removed. If Miss Marshall's thesis is correct this change in the law would not have led to much reduction in the number of legal removals. If, however, the view expressed by Burn and his modern followers is correct, there should have been a considerable reduction. In fact, the number of removals apparently increased after 1800. Unfortunately this cannot be held to prove Miss Marshall's opinion for there were other factors involved.

4. J.L. and B. Hammond, *op.cit.*, pp.79-91 and 114-119.
5. S. and B. Webb, *op.cit.*, p.315.
6. *Ibid.*, p.334.
7. Chambers, *op.cit.*, p.262; cf. Ashton, An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century, pp.14-15.
8. D. Marshall, *op.cit.*, p.166.
9. Cf. 35 Geo III c.101.

Before the Dorset evidence is examined to see which point of view, if either, it supports, it will be useful to describe and illustrate the method employed in dealing with non-parishioners. If a stranger arrived in a parish and gave notice of his arrival in writing to the overseer, and if it was apparent that he had arrived with the intention of settling, it was the duty of the overseer to effect his removal to his proper parish. This meant that he had to take the newcomer to the justices and, after having had him examined as to his proper place of settlement, he had to obtain from the justices an order of removal commanding that the non-parishioner be returned and that he be received by the other parish. Although these were the overseer's duties they were usually performed by a lawyer in the nearest town. The overseers of Sturminster Marshall, for example, normally approached William Castleman, attorney-at-law in Wimborne. Castleman would then interview the man whose arrival had occasioned the trouble and, if convinced that the case was sound, would advise the overseer accordingly. If the parish decided to proceed, Castleman (or whichever lawyer it was) would approach Henry Rowden, the clerk of the Shaston East justices, and arrange for the case to come before the next petty sessions at Wimborne. When the order of removal had been granted, the overseer of the removing parish, or perhaps the constable, had to escort the person being removed to the place named in the order as his proper place of settlement and hand him over to the parish officers there, together with a copy of the order of removal.

At this point in the proceedings, the receiving parish had to decide whether to accept what had been done or whether to appeal to the quarter sessions to quash the order. The lawyers would be called in if there was any likelihood of action. If the matter were to be carried to the quarter sessions, proper notice had to be given to the court and to the defending parish, and often counsel would be employed. The case might drag on over several sessions and result in considerable expenses. When the quarter sessions gave its decision it settled the matter between the two parishes. If the order was confirmed it was established that the receiving parish was the place of legal settlement. If the order was quashed it was decided that the receiving parish was not the place of settlement, but the matter was left open as to where the man did belong.

If either parish felt that the quarter sessions had made the wrong decision in law, it could carry the appeal to the court of King's Bench for a final ruling on the legal point.(10)

In practice, matters did not often follow this sequence. First the newcomer did not give notice of his coming; for to do so was to invite removal. In these circumstances the overseer, usually a busy farmer, felt no urgency to act; for the man might be able to support himself and might even be a useful worker or craftsman. In any case, since notice had not been given, the man could not gain settlement merely by residing forty days and so could be removed at any time should he become chargeable to the parish. (11) After 1795 this became the legal position. (12)

Secondly, there were certain types of newcomer who were in a protected position and so could not be removed and in some cases these persons could gain legal settlement in the parish by staying. These included persons of substance who could give security to indemnify the parish should they become chargeable, though there seems to have been no case of this in the county probably because such persons secured the right to stay by other means which would in due course give them settlement. The acquisition of freehold or leasehold property carried the right of occupation so that the owner could not be removed from the parish. In 1786, Fontmell Magna sought a counsel's opinion on the case of a man who was admitted to be settled in a nearby parish but who owned and occupied a cottage worth £15 a year in Fontmell. The opinion given was that the man could not be removed unless he became chargeable and the parish seems to have made no attempt to do so. (13)

10. On this see Webb, *op.cit.*, Ch 5 *passim* and the letters and lawyers' bills on the papers of Sturminster Marshall, (P98/0V2) For quarter sessions procedure see the minute books of the court, *passim*. Notices of appeal etc. appear in the rolls of the quarter sessions.
11. Cf. many settlement examinations of persons who have lived for years in a parish without gaining any settlement there. Nearly a quarter of those extant are of this kind.
12. 35 Geo.III c. 101.
13. Fontmell Magna papers. D.R.O., P33/0V14.

In another case, from Bere Regis, the counsel's advice was that if the widow of a copyholder had lived forty days in the cottage after the death of her husband she was settled in the parish. (14) The value of the property seems to have been relevant if the estate had been acquired by purchase: according to 9 Geo.I c.7 it had to be worth at least £30 per year. In other cases - as in that of George Harris of Affpuddle - this was held to be irrelevant. Harris had been expelled by the lord of the manor from a leasehold cottage, of which he had obtained possession from his wife at the time of their marriage and for which he had since paid the quit rent of twopence per year. The parish of Affpuddle had then removed him but the affair led to an appeal to the quarter sessions. In 1801 the quarter sessions, with the agreement of the parties, submitted the case to the arbitration of a barrister whose decision the court endorsed. It was held that Harris was legally settled at Affpuddle; for he had resided there for forty days on an estate from which he was irremovable and that the value of the estate was irrelevant since he had not purchased it. (15)

The practice was, then, to regard anyone living on his own property as 'irremovable and anyone who had thus lived for forty days as settled, unless he or she had purchased the property and it was worth less than £30 a year. The essential point was residence on the property and so Mary Swetman who, in 1786, had a rent charge on property in Fontmell Magna, was removable since she could not "reside on nor occupy a rent charge." (16). Again, in a case which came before the quarter sessions in 1768, a man who possessed leasehold property worth £30 a year in Stoke Wake but who lived over the boundary in Hazelbury Bryan in a cottage rented at £2.10.0., was held to be settled in the place of residence. (17)

A person of some substance could secure the right to settlement in a parish by renting a tenement for at least £10 a year. After 1819 this renting had to be of a distinct

14. Bere Regis papers, Opinion on Widow Lane, 1797.
15. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.4, f.102 and f.243.
16. Fontmell Magna papers. D.R.O., P33/0V10.
17. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.1, f.362.

and separate tenement for a whole year, and actual occupation was required. (18) Not many cases of settlement by renting seem to have occurred in Dorset; for the tenements occupied by those most liable to removal were rented at a far lower figure. One small group of cases is of particular interest and relates to the renting of dairies.

As has been described above, it was a common practice to rent a dairy of cows with the right to make use of the land necessary for their keep. (19) It occasionally happened that a dairyman would fall on bad times and become chargeable to the parish. The question which then arose was whether renting a dairy was the same as renting a tenement. This issue was settled in 1790 when Piddlethreathide appealed against the removal of John Betty and his family from Chaldon Herring. Betty had rented a dairy of thirty cows at the latter place, some at £5 and some at £510.0. per year, and had lived there for several years. The quarter sessions rejected this argument for a settlement in Chaldon Herring and had confirmed the order of removal. Piddlethreathide was not satisfied, however, and moved for a writ of certiorari transferring the case to the Court of King's Bench. The case was tested in the King's Bench and the decision of the quarter sessions was reversed. It was held that renting a dairy for more than £10 was a renting which gave settlement. (20) After 1790, this case was cited by counsel as settling the law on this matter. (21) The decision did not stand for long, since 59 Geo. III c.50 declared that renting a dairy could not give settlement. (22)

In certain circumstances people of humble means could take up residence in a parish and secure a settlement there. One way was through serving an apprenticeship in the parish and another was by serving a contract of employment of at least one year's duration. The gaining of settlement by apprenticeship, however, seems to have

18. cf. 59 Geo. III c.50.

19. cf. Chapter III above.

20. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol 3, f.263. and P.R.O., Doggett of King's Bench, Trinity Term 30 Geo. III.

21. Opinions of 1791 and 1808 and Canford papers. D.R.O. P34/0V7.

22. cf. Act cited and report in Dorset County Chronicle 16.7.1839, on East Lulworth v. Cerne Abbas when it was held that renting a dairy before 1819 still gave settlement but that renting after that date was excluded by the Act cited.

involved problems which gave rise to many settlement disputes. The period of apprenticeship was not always finished and it was often hard to decide when the servitude had been legally completed. This is illustrated by the case of Joseph Hooper who was removed ~~to~~ Cerne Abbas in 1769 and was shortly afterwards examined as to his settlement, no doubt to see if there were grounds for an appeal. Hooper had been apprenticed to Esther Hodges of Cerne but before his indenture expired, she handed her tanning business on to her son. Hooper was instructed by his mistress to serve her son and he did so until he was twenty-one years old. Then, after a disagreement with young Hodges, Hooper asked for his indenture to be given up and Hodges agreed to do so on the following Monday. Before Monday came, however, Hooper ran away to Yeovil and worked there and later elsewhere. In his examination Hooper said that he understood that he would have been obliged to return to young Hodges if his mistress had required him to do so. It does not appear that Cerne Abbas thought it worthwhile appealing against the order of removal on these grounds. There is no doubt that had the indenture been given up the apprenticeship would have been regarded as properly completed; but the question was whether the promise to give it up, which was not actually carried out, had the same effect. It is true that Hooper regarded himself as still bound in which case his settlement might be held to be in the place where he was living when the term of the apprenticeship expired, but then he was undoubtedly a run-away apprentice. The parish officers probably decided that the case was too uncertain to justify the expense of an appeal. (23)

In another case a boy was bound apprentice at Blandford and lived there with his master for more than forty days. His master ~~then~~ moved to Corfe Mullen and the boy was there also for more than forty days. Sometime later he visited his father's house at Blandford but stayed longer than his master expected, so that when he returned his master claimed that he had broken the term of the apprenticeship and refused to have him back or to give up the indenture. As a result Matthews, the apprentice,

23. Cerne Abbas papers; for order of removal and examination; D.R.O., P22/0V20.

finished the term of servitude living with his father in Blandford. This case led to an appeal to the quarter sessions which decided that the indenture was not broken and that since the boy spent the last night of the period of servitude at Blandford the settlement was there. The King's Bench, however, reversed this decision. (24) The unfinished apprenticeship was clearly not the fault of the apprentice, who had in fact returned to his master. In this case the quarter sessions were obviously guided by the principle that an apprentice gained settlement in the parish where he had slept the last night under indenture, provided that he had spent the total of forty nights in that place. These were the criteria used to settle difficulties which arose when the master moved his residence or when an apprentice slept away from his master's house. This latter problem arose in the parish of Lady St. Mary at Wareham in 1781. This parish appealed against the removal from Lytchett Minster of Peter Langdown who had been apprenticed in Lady St. Mary. Langdown had lived there and served his master until his term of apprenticeship had almost expired. It was just forty-nine days before the end of the term when his master gave him permission to go home to Wool to comfort his mother who had just been widowed. Thus Langdown spent the last forty days and slept the last night in his own home at Wool with his master's approval. On these grounds the quarter sessions quashed the order of removal to Lady St. Mary. (25)

The place in which an apprentice slept the last night under servitude was especially important in deciding the settlement of maritime apprentices. It was a matter of such great concern to Melcombe Regis that Weymouth ships usually spent the night on the Melcombe side of the harbour (which the two parishes shared), in order that the apprentices serving in Weymouth ships should gain their settlement in Melcombe, that they took the matter up with their Member of Parliament. (26) Burton Bradstock suffered especially from this rule; for Burton was merely a rural

24. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 4, f.676; and Doggett of the King's Bench 1806, (P.R.O.)
25. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.2, f.375.
26. Melcombe Regis Vestry Book, 14.4.1823.

parish but it so happened that in a remote corner of the parish was Bridport Harbour. The consequence of this was that the large town and seaport of Bridport escaped the gaining of settlements by its maritime apprentices while the unfortunate parish of Burton Bradstock gained them! (27)

The other way of moving into a new parish with immunity from immediate removal and by which a new settlement could be gained in due course was by contracting to serve a master for at least one year and actually serving the year. This method of gaining a settlement was open only to single persons and it appears that this was one of the commonest ways in which a young man started his career as an agricultural labourer or a young girl began in domestic service. Probably about half the disputes over settlement which can be traced in Dorset turned on hiring for a year. This was partly because settlement by this means was so common and partly because of the practices followed by the employers to avoid giving settlement. Only in one parish, Bere Regis, is there evidence of any formal agreement to prevent outsiders gaining settlement in the parish. In 1816 an agreement was made there between the farmers and other inhabitants not to employ in agriculture any person who did not belong to the parish, except for carters, shepherds and harvesters. (28) Harvesters were usually travelling workers who had no intention of settling. Carters and shepherds were usually older men who did not seek employment by the year and if they did gain settlement were less likely to become unemployed.

If a new settlement were to be gained the term of the contract of hiring and the actual period of service had to be one year. It was, however, a fairly common practice in Dorset to hire labourers for less than the full twelve months. (29) Sir Frederick Eden considered that this practice was a fraudulent evasion of the law (30) and if there were reasonable grounds for supposing that the term of service had been shortened solely to evade the gaining of settlement, the courts usually held that never-

27. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.1.f.278.

29. Bere Regis Papers, Agreement of Farmers and others 1816.

29. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.15.

30. Eden, op.cit., Vol.3.p.743.

-the/less settlement had been gained. A case which came before the quarter sessions in 1764 provides an instance of this. (31) Thomas Bason, whose original settlement had been in Winterborne Kingston, was hired by a farmer for eleven months. When the term of service had expired Bason was told by his employer that he would hire him by the day for a fortnight and then take him on for another eleven months. The employer clearly had a good grasp of the practice of the courts; for when two periods of service of less than a year and both of the same kind were served without interruption, the courts normally coupled them together and regarded them as one hiring. This seems to have been so well known that cases of this kind never led to an appeal. In this particular instance, however, the employer attempted to prevent this occurring by hiring Bason for fourteen days as a day labourer between the two periods of covenanted service. His plans were spoilt by his own talkativeness, for he repeatedly told Bason that this was done in order to prevent a settlement being gained. Later on Winterborne Kingston removed Bason and his family to Tomson and the latter parish appealed to the quarter sessions. The quarter sessions, however, held that these hirings, "being intended to evade the statute....were fraudulent with regard to the parish of Winterborne Kingston and that the pauper had acquired settlement in Tomson by... [these] hirings and service. "

The contract for eleven months or even for fifty-one weeks was not in itself considered fraudulent by the justices and it was certainly not worth appealing on this ground alone. Many examinations extant in the county make this quite clear. It was the additional evidence, such as a second term of service following immediately or a clearly expressed statement of intention to evade settlement, that made it worthwhile to try an appeal. The law, then, required that the term of one year should actually be served. If, however, the employer terminated the service before the end of the year in such a way that it appeared to be in order to prevent a settlement being gained, the courts decided that nevertheless settlement had been gained.

31. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol.1, f.248.

A case of this kind came before the quarter sessions in 1806, in which one of the justices, the Rev. Roe King, was involved. King had hired Cornelius Freep for a year but dismissed him from his service by notice to expire three days before the expiration of the year. Freep supposed that his master was giving him the three days and agreed to accept the notice but when King paid him and deducted three days' pay, he protested and expressed his willingness to work out the year. King would not permit this so Freep left his service, but unwillingly. In this case the quarter sessions decided that the contract was not dissolved by King's action and remained in force until the end of the year so that the settlement was gained. (32)

Several ways have been noted in which a new settlement could be gained to replace that derived from parents: by acquiring property, renting a £10 tenement, living forty days after having given notice of arrival, by serving an apprenticeship and, if unmarried, by serving for at least a year. There were two other grounds on which settlement could be acquired: namely by living in a parish and paying the parish rates, and by serving an annual office in the parish. (33) These two means of acquiring settlement were decidedly rare in the county. There were also certain circumstances in which a poor man might take up residence in a parish without fear of removal although without gaining settlement thereby. A settlement certificate signed by the parish officers and allowed by the magistrates acknowledging that the person named was a parishioner and agreeing to receive him back should he become chargeable, provided one way of doing this. Among the poor-law records of Dorset there are many of these certificates but the majority are dated before 1760 and there are very few dated after 1780. Of those which are dated after 1760 about half are of an informal kind. At Canford Magna, for example, there were eight properly signed and allowed certificates and six unofficial ones. (34) Sometimes the

32. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol. 4, f. 672.

33. Cf. S. and B. Webb, op.cit., p. 333.

34. Canford Magna Settlement Certificates, D.R.O., P34/0V4.

only difference in these informal certificates was that they were not signed by the justices. Often, however, they were merely letters such as this one from Buckland Newton to Sherborne, signed by the churchwardens and overseers and dated 1767.

" To the Gentlemen of the Town of Sherborne to whom it may concern.

" We do not agree to sign the certificate but if this will satisfy you we whose names are undersigned do own and acknowledge Jno Watts and family as an inhabitant legally settled within our parish of Buckland Newton. As witness our hands. "(35)

The fact that certificates are so limited in number after 1760 could suggest that the poor were rarely ~~able to~~ leave their own villages but it could also suggest that the parishes were not very concerned about the arrival of a newcomer who was able to support himself. The latter conclusion is supported by the fact that about a quarter of those examined as to their settlement had ~~failed~~ to gain a new settlement in the parishes where they had been living over a considerable period. It is further supported by the considerable numbers of poor people being relieved away from their own parish. This last point will be considered again below.

The certificate had little value after 1795 when the law was changed to prevent the removal of anyone (except unmarried pregnant women, vagrants and those with a conviction for felony) from any parish unless actually chargeable. (36) The families of ~~soldiers~~ and sailors (37) and the members of friendly societies (38) had already been granted this degree of exemption from removal.

It now becomes possible to consider the extent to which the settlement laws were implemented in Dorset. The evidence is not entirely satisfactory; for the account books are often extremely vague on all legal matters so that it is impossible to calculate the number of removal cases with certainty. The removal papers are obviously

35. Sherborne Papers, John Watt's certificate.

36. 35 Geo.III c.101.

37. 24 Geo.III c.6.

38. 33 Geo.III c.54.

incomplete even where they survive. In the books there are entries obviously applying to removals for which there are no corresponding papers or papers which do not seem to fit the entries in the books. It cannot be claimed, then, that any final solution has been reached.

From the books of nearly a hundred parishes, the impression gained is that the number of removals was small in relation to the size of the parish. A few examples will illustrate this. At Hammon, a small parish in northern Dorset, there seem to have been only two removals in the whole period. Manston, a similar parish, seems to have removed on the average considerably fewer than one person a year. Buckland Newton, a large parish of 650 persons in 1801, also removed fewer than one person a year, while Litton Cheyney, with about 350 persons in 1801, removed twenty-one persons between 1792 and 1836. (39) A study of 1,122 orders of removal from twenty-six parishes covering the seventy-five years of the period, (40) suggests a rate of just over one removal per parish every two years. This figure agrees fairly well with the impression gained from the poor-books. It may well be objected that this calculation based on the orders of removal available, has resulted in such a low figure because the records appear to be incomplete. As far as these particular twenty-six parishes are concerned this is no doubt true. It must, however, be pointed out that these twenty-six parishes include Blandford, Dorchester All Saints and Wimborne: three urban parishes where removals were much more common than they were in the rural areas generally. (41) Taking all the evidence into account, however, it seems likely that the average rural parish saw more than one removal in two years.

The question now arises whether it is possible to distinguish any particular classes or persons who were likely to be removed. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that young, unmarried men were the most likely to

39. Cf. the books of the parishes mentioned, *passim*.

40. Orders of removal from Stour Provost, Kingston Magna, Longburton, Folke, Hilton, Buckland Newton, Sydling St. Nicholas, Wootton Glanville, Cerne Abbas, Charlton Marshall, Sturminster Marshall, Canford Magna, Lydlinch, Corfe Castle, Fordington, Wyke Regis, Beaminster, Broadwey, Powerstock, Stoke Abbott, Broadwinton, Chardstock, Bere Regis, Blandford, Dorchester All Saints and Wimborne.

41. Cf. the three places cited; they provide 269 of the 1,122 orders.

leave home to seek their fortune elsewhere. If, then, all strangers were removed as soon as they arrived, young unmarried men might be expected to head the list. In fact this is not the case. Of the 1,122 orders of removal two distinct groups are the most common form; those relating to unmarried women and those relating to families with young children. 304 or 27% of the orders relate to unmarried women and one in four of these describe the woman as pregnant. 465 or 41% of the orders relate to families and the remaining 32% include the aged and infirm, men with their wives, women with children, and finally unmarried men, in that order. In other words the frequency of removal of each kind of pauper is related less to the numbers likely to be moving about, than to the probability of their becoming chargeable to the parish, and even before 1795, a high proportion of those removed were actually chargeable. If, as has been suggested, legal removal was usually a result of a pauper becoming chargeable to a parish, it is likely that this would be more frequent when the poor were suffering distress. The period after the French wars was the time of the greatest poverty and it must be noted that of the 1,122 orders of removal studied, 408 date from the period after 1815; in other words rather more than a third of the total date from within a period of eighteen years. On the other hand only 301 date from the period before 1790, that is from within a period of thirty years. Unfortunately the probable incompleteness of the records makes it hazardous to draw conclusions from particular years and places.

The subject can be taken further by turning to the records of the quarter sessions which provide a complete record of appeals. It is reasonable to presume that the proportion of removals which led to an appeal to the quarter sessions was fairly constant. If then a clear picture emerges from the variation in the number of cases from time to time, it will be evidence relevant to this issue. The number of appeals in each decade is set out below. (42)

42. Figures based on Dorset Q.S. Minute Books.

1760-69.....	86.	average per year was	8.6.
1770-79.....	62.	"	6.2.
1780-89.....	88.	"	8.8.
1790-99.....	72.	"	7.2.
1800-09.....	97.	"	9.7.
1810-19.....	175.	"	17.5.
1820-29.....	170.	"	17.
1830-34.....	97.	"	19.4.

From this table it can be seen that the number of appeals and so probably the number of removals was higher at the end of the period: the time when the economic conditions were most unfavourable. It will be shown in Chapter XIX the the late 1760's generally were difficult years and the numbers of appeals for the years 1766-69 were 10, 6, 11, and 10 respectively, that is above the average for the decade in three cases out of four. The middle 1780's were also bad and the numbers of appeals for the years 1784-86 were 12, 11, and 17 respectively; in each case above the average for the decade. The years 1800, 1801 and 1802 were again years of exceptional hardship and the appeals numbered 14, 23 and 13, which were markedly higher than the ten-year average. Finally the years 1817, 1818 and 1819 were difficult ones and the appeals totalled 49, 24 and 23; figures above the average of 17.5 for the decade. These figures deduced from the quarter sessions records relating to the number of appeals against removal orders support the conclusion that poverty and hard times were the main reason for the legal removal of the poor. It follows that in better times removals were fewer and it seems probable that the parishes were not unduly concerned if the labourers and others disregarded the parish boundaries and sought work wherever it was available. The latter supposition is strengthened by the fact that 73% of removals were to parishes within a ten-mile radius. (43) This suggests that men moved when they heard of work in a nearby village rather than because they set out from home to find employment wherever it might be. It is further supported by the fact that the majority of settlement cases involved one or other of three issues. The place of the parents' settlement was the issue in 25% of the cases, which suggests a freedom to move without being in one of

43. Figures based on 907 settlement examinations from the places cited in note 40 above.

the specially favoured groups described above. In 50% of the cases the issue was whether a particular hiring constituted hiring for a year. The fact that many did not do so, shows that there was a greater willingness to permit freedom of movement than to further the gaining of settlement. The third major group of settlement disputes (14%) concerned apprenticeship and normally turned on whether the term of service was technically completed. The implication is that it was relatively easy for a boy to go off and seek employment without questions being asked. (44)

It must now be considered whether the parish officers were as preoccupied with removal procedure and whether as much money was wasted in this way as has been suggested. The first part of the question has already been partially answered but it will now be suggested that legal removal was not resorted to until other expedients had failed.

The poor-books show a variety of ways of getting rid of the unsettled pauper. The first move was often a discreet hint from the overseer: thus at Blandford in 1760 the vestry instructed the overseers to tell Elizabeth Cummins that if she did not leave the parish, she would be sent to the house of correction. She was possibly unmarried and pregnant, for that would provide grounds for the proposed action. (45) Again a gift of money at the right moment would often produce the desired result. In July 1833 Elizabeth Fox was removed to Wool and in October produced her bastard child. In January 1834 the gift of a few pounds sent her off to find the soldier whose child she had borne. (46) In another case in 1818, Wootton Glanville "paid John Mitchell for leaving this parish to take possession of his property at Sparkford....£14." (47)

These easy solutions did not always occur and frequently it was necessary to approach the other parish.

- 44. Figures based on 907 settlement examinations from the places cited in note 40 above.
- 45. Blandford Vestry Book, Aug. 1760. D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 46. Wool Poor Book, July 1833, Oct. 1833 and Jan. 1834.
- 47. Wootton Glanville; Newlands Poor Book 3, 24.5.1818; D.R.O., P7/OV5.

First the place of settlement had to be decided upon and if the two parishes and their lawyers could not agree they sometimes agreed to the arbitration of a barrister, as did Sturminster Marshall and Shapwick in 1809. (48) When there was agreement on the place of settlement the parishes usually tried to find an acceptable arrangement whereby the parish in which the person lived paid the relief necessary and was reimbursed by the parish to which the person belonged. In 1809, the overseers of Poole wrote to those of Sturminster Marshall about the widow of Richard Florance. They said that the widow would swear that she belonged to Sturminster but that they had not yet removed her. They continued, "If you will give us orders we will give her the money you should allow her weekly and give in the account at Easter to you but if you had rather for us to remove her legally we will do it, but I hope, Sirs, you would not want to give us unnecessary expense, as we would wish to do the like for you if such circumstances should turn up in yours towards our parish." (49)

Suggestions of this sort were normally taken up and Sturminster Marshall supported at least twenty-seven of its parishioners living away from home between 1794 and 1832. (50) It must be added that the number is certainly incomplete for the papers are only a fragment of what once existed. Wimborne was relieving seventeen of its parishioners outside the parish in 1824 and in 1832 the number was nineteen. (51) References to these arrangements are to be found in nearly every parish in the county and from every part of the period. In 1761 the vestry at Melbury Osmond ordered that Mr. Daw should pay Widow Ireland the sum of one pound for her house-rent when he went to Lady Day fair at Salisbury. (52) Towards the end of the period, Wool gave Joseph Chaffey "who came down from Portsea to claim parochial relief" the sum of three shillings. (53)

48. Sturminster Marshall papers; Letter from Wm Castleman 18.7.1809, 22.7.1809. D.R.O. P98/0V17.
49. Sturminster Marshall papers, 9.12.1809. D.R.O. P98/0V17.
50. Ibid., *passim*.
51. Wimborne Minster Parish Cash Books 1 and 2, for years cited in text.
52. Melbury Osmond Vestry Book 1, 23.3.1761, D.R.O., N.C.2
53. Wool Poor Book 14.5.1833.

Sometimes the pauper himself took the initiative as in the case last cited. Thus the overseer of Sturminster Marshall received this letter in 1820:

"Lyndhurst.

May 13th 1820.

"Sir,

I write to inform you that I have got a master for my son but he will not take him for no less than 20 pounds. I should be thankfull if you ould allow them more than 5 shillings a week as it is not in my power to do with that as the children have neither shoes nor stockings nor chainges be so kind as to shoe this letter to the gentelman. My husband is afflicted with Rumatisam that him is not abel to do anything toward getting a living for my family. So I hope that you will consider them and do the best that you can for them.

Yours Janean Fhithyan." (54)

In very few parishes does correspondence of any kind survive but wherever it does many letters of this kind are to be found. Although the total number of such letters is comparatively few, they illuminate the quite common entries in the poor-books referring to paupers in other parishes. They make it possible to see that most parishes were ready to avoid legal proceedings if the place of settlement was clear or could be easily established. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that orders of removal were normally sought only in a last resort and when no agreement could be reached. This conclusion agrees well with the earlier findings relating to the freedom of the poorer classes to move in search of work. It indicates that there was no great preoccupation with legal removal and with litigation arising therefrom. This last point is confirmed by the actual expenditure involved.

From the various returns on poor-law expenditure it is possible to see how much was spent on legal and administrative matters but it is important to remember that this heading included far more than settlement expenses alone. It included the legal fees involved in appointing the overseers and making the rates, and the expenses involved in binding apprentices and forcing the

54. Sturminster Marshall papers, D.R.O., P 98/0V17.

fathers of bastards to pay for their support. The following table will illustrate this point.

Expenditure on the poor and on law and administration.

	<u>On Poor Relief.</u>	<u>On Law etc.</u>
1775-6.	£.24,538.	£.1,454.
1783-5 (average)	£.31,528.	£.1,702.
1802-3.	£.66,981.	£.2,209.
1813-5. (average)	£.89,584.	£.3,594. (55)

These figures do not suggest a "colossal and long-continued waste of public funds," (56) even if, as was certainly not the case, the whole of the money was spent on removals and the resulting litigation. If it be noted further that more than half the money was spent by a dozen or so larger places (e.g. in the averages for 1813-1815, £2,146 was spent in fourteen places) it will be seen that in most parishes the amount spent was very small indeed. In the same two years £1,448 was spent in about 280 places, that is, just over £5 per place for all legal and administrative charges. (57)

It must not on the other hand be supposed that these low figures indicate that there were no removals; for removal expenses were not usually as high as is sometimes assumed. In fact an uncomplicated removal certainly paid the parish unless it could make an arrangement with the other parish to avoid removal altogether. In 1800 Stinsford removed Luke Clark at the total cost of 16/6d. (58) This was obviously to some nearby village- as were the majority of removals - but even a removal to a distant place was not very expensive. When Blandford removed Edith Stokes in 1760, the legal charges and the cost of taking her in a waggon to Berkshire amounted to £3.10.8. (59) This might seem quite a large sum but it should be remembered that it was equivalent to a pension of 1/6 a week for less than a year.

55. Figures from Poor Returns of dates cited, cf. Bibliography for details.
56. S. and B. Webb op.cit., p. 315.
57. Cf. Poor Return of 1813-15.
58. Stinsford Poor Book, Dec. 12th to 22nd, 1800.
59. Blandford Overseers' Accounts 2nd Sept. 1760. D.R.O. P70/OV2.

It was only in the case of an appeal against the order of removal that the expenses mounted. Even then they were not always unreasonable and it sometimes paid the parish to remove and defend the subsequent appeal. When Winford Eagle removed Cornelius Smith to Hartbridge in Hampshire in 1819, there was an appeal which went against that parish and Smith was returned. In the next month, however, Smith was removed again - this time to Crewkerne - and there was no appeal. In this case the whole affair cost the parish £14. 17. 6. a sum which would have relieved Smith at 2/6 a week for only just over two years. (60)

It is very unusual to find a parish taking up a case and persevering with it until all hope of benefit had gone. One such case was that of Abigail Hawkins whom Cerne Abbas tried to remove in 1763. When Jacob Hawkins died in March 1763, his wife and their three children were destitute and sought parish relief. Now Cerne had ignored the presence of Jacob Hawkins for several years before his death; for the baptisms of his children are in the parish register. (61) When, however, Abigail asked for relief the overseers took notice, and in May she was taken off to Dorchester to be examined and an order of removal was obtained. Under this order the Hawkins family was taken to West Coker in Somerset but that parish appealed against the order and the case was carried to the quarter sessions. When the appeal was heard at the July sessions meeting at Shaftesbury the order of removal was quashed and West Coker was awarded 15/- for maintaining the family while it was there. (62) The Hawkins family accordingly came back to Cerne Abbas, but the overseers were determined to get rid of them and once again Abigail was examined. This time it was decided to remove her to Portsea in Hampshire. The order seems to have been made in July, but it was not until later in the year that she and her children were transported there, or so it seems since the overseer did not enter his expenses in the book until October.

60. Winford Eagle Poor Book, Jan. to May 1819.
61. Cerne Abbas Register, D.R.O., P22/RE3.
62. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.1, f.232.

Once again there was an appeal and the Cerne Abbas overseers were obliged to attend the quarter sessions at Bridport. Again the order of removal was quashed and Cerne had to pay 17/6 for the maintenance of the family at Portsea. (63) Thus Abigail and her family came back to Cerne for the second time and this time to stay; for the parish had spent £46. 18. 3. and decided to pursue the matter no further. (64) This case certainly did not pay the parish; for within a few months Abigail's name disappears from the poor-book except for very occasional relief. There are, however, very few cases of this kind which led to so much expense and in the vast majority of occasions where removal was resorted to it probably paid the parish well.

Three main conclusions may accordingly be put forward about the operation of the settlement and removal laws in Dorset. First, that the settlement laws were applied in such a way that the poor had considerable freedom to move about and take work where it was offered. Secondly, that the practice of legal removal was comparatively unusual and was only used when the non-parishioner became or was in immediate likelihood of becoming chargeable, and when no other more economical means of preventing expense to the parish could be found such as an arrangement to support the parishioners living elsewhere. The third conclusion is that the expense of removal was in most cases quite moderate and probably was more economical than supporting the pauper. Moreover, the total amount of money spent in the county on all legal and administrative metters was quite small and cannot be considered a colossal waste.

In general, then, the Dorset evidence supports the position expounded by Dr. Marshall, to which reference was made above.

63. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol.1, f.249.

64. Rest of details from Cerne Abbas Poor Book. D.R.O. P22/0V13.

Chapter Eleven.

Vagrancy.

Vagrancy does not appear to have been a major problem in Dorset despite the fact that alarmed resolutions were sometimes passed in parish vestries and gloomy accounts were given by the local newspapers. In 1823 Wimborne vestry resolved that since the town had "been lately much infested by vagrants" a special search was to be made. (1) "The Dorset County Chronicle" noted in 1829 the great amount of fraudulent mendicity in Dorset and described how vagrants were coming to the county with forged passes. (2)

The actual number of vagrants is hard to estimate; for as they moved about the countryside they would be recorded in each parish from which they sought relief. The figures of the mendicity societies will also tend to include the same people. Before 1790 the numbers seem to have been very small indeed. In Stinsford, a small parish off the main road, there seems to have been only one vagrant relieved between 1771 and 1793. (3) A village on a main road, such as Lytchett Minster, would have rather more. Here there were about eight to twelve vagrants a year in the 1780's and early 1790's. (4) During the French wars the numbers increased greatly owing to the numbers of soldiers and their families on the move. After 1795 Stinsford was relieving two or three a year and Lytchett Minster had considerably increased numbers, rising to a peak in 1799-1800 when fifty-two parties were relieved. Litton Cheney (5), which had been relieving about five vagrants a year before 1795, relieved about twice that number during the French wars with a record number in 1810 when thirty-one persons were relieved. The period about 1809-10 was a bad time elsewhere: at Chickerell the normal twelve to fifteen parties rose to thirty in 1809 and

1. Wimborne Vestry Order Book 2, 25.3.1823.
2. Dorset County Chronicle, 25.6.1829.
3. Stinsford Poor Book, *passim*. Also for later references in this paragraph.
4. Lytchett Minster Poor Book, *passim*. Also for later references in this paragraph.
5. Litton Cheney Poor Book, *passim*.

forty-one in 1810. (6) Out-of-the-way villages were still little affected and one of these, Toller Porcorum, relieved only sixteen parties between 1800 and 1819. (7) After the war the numbers soon fell. At Chickerell, the fall came in 1819, after which the parish seldom relieved more than four or five vagrants a year. (8) The numbers at Litton Cheyney had fallen earlier - 1814 - to two ordinary vagrants and one soldier, and after that date the number relieved never rose above four. (9)

The towns were somewhat more troubled by vagrants and in the bad year of 1799-1800 All Saints' parish in Dorchester was relieving about forty of them a month. (10) After 1820, the work of relieving vagrants in the towns seems to have been taken over by the mendicity societies and they provide some useful statistics (11). From these statistics it can be seen that the Dorchester society relieved 1,087 persons in 1820 and that after 1820 the numbers declined year after year until 1825 when 517 people were relieved. From 1826 onwards, however, the numbers began to increase again, reaching 2,150 in 1832. The figures show also the number of imposters who were punished as vagrants. The number of these remained remarkably constant after the first two years of the society's operation, and only once after this did it exceed ten.

There were many different kinds of people who sought relief from the overseers and the mendicity societies. Some were the ordinary "trampers", as they were called, who were either poor people travelling in the only way open to them or those who preferred to live by wandering about. Others were those who were travelling with some sort of authority to do so: harvesters with passes from the magistrates or soldiers and sailors with passes from their officers. Yet others were those seeking to make money out of the weaknesses or credulity of ordinary people: confidence tricksters, gamesters, prostitutes and unlicensed hawkers.

6. Chickerell Poor Books, *passim*, years cited.
7. Toller Porcorum Poor Book, *passim*.
8. Chickerell Poor Book, 1819 *passim*.
9. Litton Cheyney Poor Book, 1814 and *passim*.
10. All Saints Dorchester Overseers' Accounts. 1799-1800, D.R.O., P35/0V7.
11. In Dorset County Chronicle, 7.11.1833.

Most of these people were liable to prosecution under the vagrancy laws but normally only the last mentioned attracted the attention of the justices.

The vagrancy laws can be traced far back into Tudor times when the country was much troubled by numerous beggars; but for the period between 1760 and 1822 the basis of the law was the Act 17 Geo.II c.5 which codified and revised the previous law. Vagrants were divided into three categories: idle and disorderly persons; rogues and vagabonds; and incorrigible rogues. Idle and disorderly persons were not really wanderers at all but people who misbehaved within the parish: the idle who neglected their families (12) or preferred to beg from their neighbours rather than work for a living. Others were men who threatened to run away and leave their families chargeable to the parish or returned to the parish after they had been legally removed from it. Rogues and vagabonds were those who wandered about begging, defrauding, hawking goods without licence, pretending to have been hit by misfortune or to be soldiers, or sailors; those who lived rough in barns and out of doors, those not able to give a good account of themselves and those committing an offence for which they had previously been convicted as idle and disorderly persons. Incorrigible rogues were those who repeated an act of vagrancy for which they had been convicted previously as rogues and vagabonds and those who resisted arrest or escaped from custody. These persons, together with "lewd women with bastards" and those who deserted their families under 7 Jac.I c.3 and 4, were to be sought out by the parish constables and taken to the nearest justice. A single justice could commit a vagrant to the house of correction or to gaol and order a whipping if he thought fit. An idle and disorderly person was confined for seven days and then given a prison pass which permitted him (or her) to beg his way home. Rogues and vagabonds and incorrigible rogues were confined until the quarter sessions met and then they could be sentenced to a further period of confinement or a whipping. Then they were either sent

12. By Geo.III c.45, those who neglected their work to spend their time in alehouses and houses of ill repute were explicitly brought into this category.

home or enlisted in the army or navy; if they were incorrigible rogues they could also be sent to the plantations. (13) In 1824 a new Act recodified and reformed the law in many ways. The changes were not fundamental - a system of rewards for apprehending vagrants was ended, the composition of the three classes was slightly modified and the periods of confinement were altered. (14) The changes were not such as to affect the character of the system and need not be examined in detail.

Three particular aspects of the operation of the laws concerning vagrancy in Dorset must be examined: the measures taken to discover vagrants; the sort of people who were arrested on vagrancy charges; and the way in which the offenders were dealt with.

There is little evidence which suggests that there was any active concern to discover vagrants. The quarter sessions rarely showed any particular interest in the matter unless it was prodded by Order in Council. This happened in 1775 and resulted in the sessions ordering a general search to be carried out. (15) Normally, however, the county authorities were concerned solely to expedite the passage of vagrants through the county and for this purpose there was a vagrant carrier at Charmouth in the west of the county to convey them to Martin in Wiltshire. (16) Down to 1795 the county reimbursed any money that the parishes paid to vagrants passing through. (17) Indeed, except for a resolution in 1796 which required soldiers and sailors begging on passes to be prosecuted as rogues and vagabonds, (18) the evidence suggests that the policy was to move them out of the county as quickly as possible. The desire to move them on seems to have characterised the policy of the parishes also. Occasionally, it is true, vestry resolutions were passed such as that cited above from the Wimborne vestry book or like one at Beaminster in 1789 in which the overseers were instructed to take beggars

13. On this summary see the general works, such as S. and B. Webb, *op.cit.*, pp. 350-356.
14. In fact 5 Geo. IV c.83. re-enacted a temporary Act of two years earlier.
15. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 2, f.144.
16. *Ibid.*, e.g. Vol. 3, f.75 and *passim*.
17. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, f.386 and 396.
18. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, f.458.

to the justices as vagrants. (19) Usually, however, the parishes sought to move them on as quickly as possible and if necessary to pay them to go. In the poor-book of Lytchett Minster occurs this entry, dated February 12th, 13th and 14th, 1784. "Came to my house the evening of the snow, a soldier and his wife with a pass. Sick three days before I could get them off 3/-, first to give them a shilling to go on their road, they insisted to be carried to Crookhorn 1/-. " (20) Another such entry is to be found in the Wool poor-book under 1833. (21)

"July 20th. Relieved a woman and her two children...1/-

July 22nd. The above woman being in the family way,

having refused to leave the parish,

gave her to leave.....2/-

Also paid Christopher Brown for conveying her

to the next parish.....1/-".

The authorities paid little attention to wanderers such as these since they caused little expense but there was another group of vagrants which did arouse the overseers and parish constables to action - those who ran away from their homes, leaving their families chargeable to the parish. Many entries are to be found in the parish books and the calendars of the gaol and house of correction concerning such men. The other poor-law offenders, men who would not work to support their families and the "lewd woman having bastards", were also brought to justice by the parish officers, but far less often. (22)

Consideration must now be given to the sort of people who found themselves apprehended for vagrancy offences. Broadly speaking they can be divided into two categories - first those described here as "poor-law offenders" and secondly the real vagrants, the wanderers who troubled the county. The poor-law offenders included people such as John Bird who was committed to the house of correction in Sherborne as an idle and disorderly person in 1761, because he refused to work and support his family so that they had become chargeable to the parish of St. Martin at

19. Beaminster Poor Book 2, 8.11.1789. D.R.O., P22/0V11.

20. Lytchett Minster Poor Book, 12-14th Feb. 1784.

21. Wool Poor Book. 20.7.1833.

22. Examples and references to cases of this sort are given later in the chapter.

Wareham. Although an idle and disorderly person was normally confined for only seven days, the quarter sessions required him to give security for his good conduct in the future and since he could not do so kept him in confinement for several months. (23) There were also people like Elizabeth Gillingham who had been removed from Corscombe but had returned there. She was committed as an idle and disorderly person and had to wait until the meeting of the quarter sessions for her release. (24) "Lewd women" included people like Jane Hoods of Wool (who was committed to the county gaol sometime before February 1820 since she was expecting a third bastard) (25) and the eight women, all from other counties, arrested for hanging around several army camps in the county, and accused of "wandering and being at the camp there and as loose, idle and disorderly persons". (26) The punishment meted out in cases such as these was usually one year's hard labour. (27) It appears that the women did not mind that too much for one "old lag" threatened with a year's hard labour in Dorchester gaol exclaimed "Punish me! they won't punish me there. I know that place well enough. I've been there once before for a twelve months." (28)

For the more serious vagrancy offences the punishment was often whipping. Among those punished in this way was John Perrett of Hermitage who was committed in 1820 as a rogue and vagabond for deserting his family. Perrett was sentenced to a month's confinement and was then taken to Hermitage and severely whipped there. (29) The purpose of sending the man to his own parish was, no doubt, that his punishment might have a cautionary effect. The anonymous writer of Sturminster Newton gives a graphic account of a similar occasion. The man in this case was a quiet inoffensive person, "but he had a tartar of a wife. She led him a miserable life until he could bear it no longer" and ran away. In due course he was located working

- 23. Dorset Quarter Sessions Rolls for October 1761.
- 24. Dorset Quarter Sessions Rolls for April 1794.
- 25. Wool Poor Book, 12.2.1820.
- 26. Dorset Q.S. Rolls, January 1798.
- 27. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 4, f.521, & Vol. 6, f. 313.
- 28. Cutting from unnamed newspaper of 1816, in D.C.M.
- 29. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, 6.8.1820. D.R.O., P61/VE1
Hermitage Vestry Book, Vol. 7, f.69.

for his living in Poole and brought back for trial. The magistrates sentenced him to be flogged and "it was a painful and disgusting spectacle." The man was stripped to the waist and tied to a frame which had been erected on a waggon. Then, bound so that he could not move, he was flogged. The writer describes "his naked body streaming with blood under the lash, while among the crowd of witnesses were women fainting and screaming carried from the scene." (30) Grim though the punishment was, the Hermitage man referred to above soon "set off on his travels without allowing an halfpenny for the support of his children." (31)

The real vagrants varied from fairly harmless beggars, who were usually left alone, to thorough rogues. Beggars were occasionally arrested and committed to the house of correction as was a certain Mary Nott who had been sent back to Dorset on a vagrant pass from Surrey. She had been wandering and begging there when she was arrested as a rogue and vagabond. On her arrival in Dorset she was arrested again and put in the house of correction until the next quarter sessions. When the sessions met at Sherborne in April 1773, she was sentenced "to be publickly and severly whipt in Sherborne and then discharged." (32) This is one of the very few cases in which a woman was flogged in Dorset after 1760.

William Davis, who received exactly the same treatment as Mary Nott, seems to have been a far greater rogue. He came to Dorset in June 1766 and he had what appeared to be a pass signed by two Welsh justices. The pass stated that Davis had lost £600 through the ship in which he was travelling being burnt at sea. On June 6th he came to Yetminster and approached Mr. John Vincent J.P. and asked for charity. Mr. Vincent gave him threepence but refused to sign the pass because he was off the route he ought to have been following to Battle, his alleged home. Davis also told Mr. Vincent that his two children and a travelling companion, one Samuel Johnson, were on the way to Cerne Abbas. Mr. Vincent told him that Cerne lay off his road and he set off to fetch them back. The next day Davis

30. In D.R.O., MR44.

31. Hermitage Vestry Book, 3.9.1820.

32. Dorset Q.S.Rolls, April 1773, & Minute Book, Vol.2,f.60.

turned up in Sherborne and approached Mr. John Hutchins who, suspecting nothing, signed the pass. Davis was now able to seek parish relief and to beg in Dorset and during the day he got 1/- from the Sherborne overseer and begged around the town. Later the same day, Mr. Vincent went over to visit Mr. Hutchins and, on hearing of Davis' visit to his host, told him that he also had been visited by the man and that he suspected him of being an imposter. The two justices decided to make further inquiries and had Davis arrested and brought before them. Mr. Hutchins examined Davis and his story was taken down and a copy was later sent to the quarter sessions. Davis claimed that he had been born in Battle which was his place of settlement. He had lived there until the previous November, working in the woolen factory. Then, he, his wife and two children, together with a friend, Samuel Johnson, went to London and embarked on a merchant ship, the "Brilliant", intending to go to New England. On the voyage the ship caught fire and Davis, his two children and Johnson were picked up by another merchant ship, the "Elizabeth", but Davis' wife died in the disaster. The party was on board the "Elizabeth" for six months and then in May they were landed at Swansea. Davis persisted in the story that they obtained a pass from two justices in Swansea, permitting them to beg their way to Battle. He related how he had visited the two justices and concluded by explaining that his companions had gone on ahead with the pass and that he had remained in Sherborne because of his rheumatism. (33) This was Davis' story but Mr. Hutchins was unconvinced so he committed the man and wrote to the overseers of Battle, who replied to the effect that William Davis of that place, who would be about thirty-five years old, had enlisted as a dragoon and was believed to have died in Germany of a fever. As for Johnson, the overseer said that there had not been anyone of that name in Battle for many years. (34) At this point Mr. Hutchins wrote to the quarter sessions giving them a full account of the whole affair. (35) When the sessions met in July,

- 33. William Davis' Examination; in Q.S. Rolls, July 1766.
- 34. Letter from N. Palmer of Battle; Ibid.
- 35. John Hutchins' Letter, in Q.S. Roll for July 1766.

Davis was sentenced to be immediately and publicly whipped and then discharged. (36)

Among other vagrants were sellers of ballads such as Mary Hutchins who was committed as a rogue and vagabond and sent home to Staffordshire, (37) and idiots such as Richard Cockram who was found wandering about at Moreton and could only speak Erse. Cockram told another prisoner that he had been pressed into the marines and had been landed on the Dorset coast after they had had a closer look at him. (38) There were yet others such as Thomas Dunkerley who was charged with "wandering and not giving a good account of himself."

The number of these offenders was not large. In a bad year the total might be six or seven but in most years it was far less. The punishments meted out to the vagrants do not appear to have been very severe in most cases although no well-defined pattern emerges from the practice of the courts. On one occasion a beggar was confined for four years because she appeared to have no settlement, (39) but normally those settled out of the county got short sentences, or occasionally a flogging, and were passed on to their place of settlement. The impression gained is that in Dorset vagrancy, except when it applied to poor-law offenders was never a serious problem and that as a result it was never approached systematically or with any sense of urgency. It was only the poor-law offenders who met with treatment which suggested a real determination to stamp out the offences which they had committed.

- 36. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol.1, f.223.
- 37. Examination in Roll for January 1785.
- 38. Examination of Daniel Gordon on Cockram; Roll for April 1763.
- 39. Ann Tawsell; cf.Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 3, f.240 and Vol. 3, f.357.

Chapter Twelve.

Parish Apprenticeship.

The 1601 Act imposed on the overseers the duty of apprenticing those children "whose parents they judge not able to maintain them." This parish apprenticeship differed from ordinary apprenticeship in that it was compulsory for the child and the parents and also for the master, if he were a parishioner of the same parish. It differed also in that the term of service was longer, since it lasted until a stated age (usually twenty-four in the case of boys and twenty-one in the case of girls) rather than for a specified period. Another difference was that the master undertook to relieve the parish of all responsibility to support the child. (1)

One authority(2) has suggested that the parishes followed three policies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although no parish adhered to any one of these exclusively. The individual child was sometimes bound to a master in return for a premium paid by the parish and the master undertook to maintain and train him for some specified trade or craft. An apprenticeship of this kind was similar to that arranged by parents for their children. On other occasions, the overseers contracted with manufacturers to supply them with large numbers of parish children, often sent in wagon loads, to work in the factories. The third method was to allot the parish children among the ratepayers, who were compelled to take them without any premium, or to pay a fine of £10. (3) Another authority, who had London particularly in mind, cited Burn to the effect that the usual practice was to apprentice the children out of the parish, for this gained them settlement elsewhere. The same authority mentioned that some places in the southwest of England apprenticed their boys to the farmers in their own parish. (4) Okeden, in his contribution to the 1834 report, said that the apprenticing of parish boys to farmers was quite unknown in Dorset. (5) In fact, as it

1. D.M. George. London Life in the Eighteenth Century, p.224.
2. S. and B. Webb, op.cit., pp.196f.
3. £10 fine imposed by 8 & 9 Will.III c.30.
4. D.M. George, op.cit., pp.223-4.
5. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.13.

will be seen later, he was wrong in this observation although it probably was truer of the eastern part of the county, which he knew well.

Turning to a consideration of the system as it was practised in Dorset, attention will first be given to the machinery and its working. The overseers had a legal responsibility to place poor children as apprentices in some useful trade so that the parish was relieved of the expense of supporting them. The interests of the children, however, were often ignored and little or no attention was paid to their training. Some parishes - especially in the northern and eastern parts of the county - disposed of them as covenanted servants for a year and occasionally longer. At the back of the overseers' account books of Sturminster Newton there are many agreements of this kind and in one of the books there is a resolution to the effect that girls who completed their year with one master or mistress and who retained a good character were to get a reward of one guinea or clothes to that value. (6) The terms of these agreements are well illustrated by this example from Gussage All Saints dated April 27th, 1801. "Agreed with Thomas Coles of Monkton in the parish of Cranborne to take John King for a year for his victuals. The parish of Gussage All Saints to clothe him out and the said John King to leave as well clothed at the end of the year at his expense." (7) This practice probably replaced apprenticeship in many parts of the county; for in the period in which it mostly occurred, that is after 1780, there were exceedingly few references to the binding of apprentices and very few apprenticeship indentures, even in parishes which have plenty of an earlier date. This observation does not apply at all to the parishes of the western parts of the county which will be considered later. The practice probably seemed to the overseers a more convenient way of disposing of the children. It involved no visits to the justices and no legal fees. It could gain a new settlement for the child if the contract was for a year or more and it seldom

6. Sturminster Newton Overseers' Accounts, especially No.2 and No.7.
7. Gussage All Saints Poor Book, date cited.

involved any premium. In other words it achieved all that the parish desired, and at much less cost and trouble than apprenticeship involved.

Apprenticeship was practised everywhere occasionally and in some parts frequently. The usual custom was to bind the children to serve until they reached the maximum age allowed and before 1778 that was until twenty-four years of age for boys and for girls twenty-one years, or until they married if that should be earlier. In 1778 the maximum age for boys was lowered to twenty-one but that of girls remained the same. (8) Occasionally there were agreements in which boys were permitted to leave before the maximum age as is illustrated by one at Blandford, dated 1770. One John Pottle had been bound until he was twenty-four but his master had signed a bond for £40 in which he undertook to release him at the age of twenty-two. (9) If the master were a parishioner he was obliged to take a parish child as an apprentice or to pay a fine of £10. There are not many cases of this being enforced but one occurred at Stockland in 1826 when John Newbury refused to accept a child and paid the fine instead. (10) On another occasion at Marshwood in 1767 Francis Symes appealed to the quarter sessions against the placing of an apprentice and against a distress warrant on his goods for levying the £10. Symes' case was that although he occupied land in Marshwood he did not live there. The court, however, decided that he was liable to receive an apprentice from Marshwood and rejected the appeal. (11) If the master were not a parishioner, he had no obligation to receive a parish child and would only do so if it were to his advantage. This usually meant that the parish would have to give a premium and this varied considerably in amount. In 1767 Cerne Abbas paid £10 to apprentice a boy to "a mariner of Portland." (12) In 1773 All Saints, Dorchester, paid £8 to a butcher for taking an apprentice. (13) Usually, however,

8. 18 Geo.III c.47 extended 7 Geo.I c.39 (which included this but applied only to London) to the whole country.
9. Bond of John Pitt, in Blandford Papers; D.R.O., P70/0V13.
10. Stockland Apprentice Register, under 1826.
11. Dorset Q.S.Minute Book, Vol.1, f.345,
Vol.2, f.345, and Vol.4, f.670.
12. Cerne Abbas Poor Book, 28.11.1767.
13. All Saints Dorchester Apprentice Indentures, 25.3.1773; D.R.O. P35/0V14.

the amount was far less, or at least until after 1800 when larger premiums were normal practice. The premiums paid by Cerne Abbas after this date included sums of £10, £7, £5, £12, £20, £10, and £12. (14)

In the case of children apprenticed to parishioners there is usually no reference to trade or craft, except husbandry and housewifery, but when the master was not a parishioner he was usually pledged to teach the boy some specified trade or craft. If the master failed to do this or if the boy or girl were ill-treated, complaint could be made to any justice, although cases of this kind were in fact very few. The children themselves would rarely complain through ignorance or fear; and the overseers were negligent in these matters. One occasion when action was taken was at Iwerne Courtney in 1827 when the vestry resolved that application should be made to the justices on behalf of John Newell, complaining that his master was neglecting to teach him his trade. (15) This particular application was presumably made to the petty sessions where the justices normally exercised their functions at this date, but it could have been made to any justice. Only four complaints of this sort reached the quarter sessions in the whole of the period; two concerned masters failing to instruct their apprentices, one concerned a boy who had been assaulted and one a girl who was not being supported. (16) The records of the Dorchester division petty sessions, which are extant from 1811 onwards, contain no cases of this kind.

Complaint could also be made by the master if the apprentice misbehaved himself or refused to work and cases of this kind were rather more common. The punishment was usually a month or two in the house of correction as is illustrated by the case of Samuel Cuff who in 1766 was committed for misbehaving as an apprentice and the quarter

14. Cerne Abbas Indentures; D.R.O., P22/0V22.

15. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 1, 26.4.1827.

16. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 1, f.256, Vol.3. f.394; Vol.3, f.365, and Vol.4, f.679.

sessions ordered that he should remain in the house of correction until the next session, unless two justices released him in the meantime. (17)

It has been possible to study 686 apprenticeship indentures from eighteen parishes (18) and from them several interesting points emerge. Of the 686 indentures, 434 belonged to five (19) large rural parishes in the western parts of the county and of these 434 only eleven related to children apprenticed outside the parish. The remaining 252 indentures came from parishes elsewhere in the county and of these, 176 related to children apprenticed to non-parishioners. This is significant because it demonstrates a markedly different policy in the rural areas of West Dorset from that elsewhere. In most areas of the county, the usual policy of the overseers was to find a place for the child where he or she would eventually gain a new settlement. In the rural west, however, the policy was to apprentice within the parish. A further scrutiny of the indentures reveals that of the 434 from the five West Dorset parishes, 288 relate to boys apprenticed to husbandry, 118 to girls apprenticed to housewifery and only 28 boys or girls apprenticed to any other form of service or to trade or craft. This makes clear the policy in these rural parts of West Dorset and shows that Okeden's statement cited above was quite inaccurate. Further examination will be given to this matter below.

A study of the other 252 indentures from several towns and villages in other parts of the county reveals a very different picture. Only thirty-four boys were apprenticed to husbandry and twenty girls to housewifery. On the other hand, 198 of the children were apprenticed to some other kind of service or to trade or craft. The vast majority of these 252 indentures were from the larger urban parishes of eastern Dorset. The small number of indentures (twenty-four in all) from purely rural parishes in north-east Dorset (20) suggests that here, as in West Dorset, agricultural and housewifery apprenticeships were common

17. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol 1. f.316.
18. The 18 parishes are Stour Provost, Longburton, Folke, Wootton Glanville, Cerne Abbas, Corfe Castle, Fordington, Dorchester All Saints, Wareham Holy Trinity, Sherborne, Wimborne, Beaminster, Stoke Abbott, Whitechurch Canonicorum, Broadwinstor, Chardstock, Powerstock and Stockland.
19. The five parishes are Whitechurch Canonicorum, Broadwinstor, Chardstock, Powerstock and Stockland.
20. Viz:- Stour Provost, Longburton, Folke and Wootton Glanville.

at least in the eighteenth century. The most striking feature of the rural areas of eastern Dorset as a whole, however, is the rarity of apprenticeship of any kind and the preference for the alternative of covenanted service. The evidence for this is chiefly negative, there being few indentures for the period after 1760 whereas there were considerable numbers before this date. Moreover, there are few references to apprenticeship in the poor-books where the legal charges involved were invariably entered.

The figures discussed above are set out in the following table:

The Distribution of Apprenticeship.

	To P.	To N.P.	To TCS.	To A.	To H.	Total.
Rural West.	423	11	28	288	118	434
Rural North.	19	5	5	9	10	24
Mostly Urban.	57	171	193	25	10	228
Total.	499	187	226	322	138	686

Key. P= Parishioner. N.P.= Non-parishioner.

TCS= Trade, Craft or Service.

A= Agriculture. H.= Housewifery.

From the foregoing evidence three important points have emerged. First that in the urban (21) areas of Dorset the pattern was typical of that found in most parts of the country. Most of the children were apprenticed to non-parishioners and to a great variety of trades, crafts or services, including the Newfoundland fishing ships which used Poole as a base. (22) Others were apprenticed to the sail-cloth and cordage industry of Bridport (23) but there is no evidence to suggest that the parishes contracted with factory owners to supply children in large numbers. (24) Secondly it has emerged, although with less clarity, that apprenticeship was disappearing in most of rural Dorset and that it was being replaced by covenanted service. It

21. More correctly "mostly urban", for some of these parishes such as Wimborne and Sherborne had large agricultural areas within the parish.
22. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.13.
23. Ibid.
24. There is no case of Dorset children being sent in large numbers to work in the factories but references have been found to London children being brought into the county, in considerable numbers to work in the silk industry of Gillingham and Sherborne. Cf. D.P.82, p.118; and M.B. Weinstock, Dorset Studies, p.94.

appears further from what slight evidence there is that the form of apprenticeship which was falling into disuse was to agriculture and housewifery. The survival of apprenticeship of this kind in the rural parishes of West Dorset is the third point. Throughout the period it was usual there to bind children to parishioners to serve as housemaids and farm boys. Apprenticeship of this kind was known elsewhere but its existence in Dorset was not expected after Okeden's statement cited above. Its existence is important not merely because it was unexpected but because it was a part of a system of relieving the poor practised in the western part of Dorset. This system will be considered in a later chapter but it will be useful to examine the apprenticing policy further at this point.

About 1830 the vestry at Fordington near Dorchester met to take stock of their poor-management. They were clearly impressed by what they knew of the West Dorset system and passed a resolution to the effect that they would henceforth apprentice poor children to those ratepayers who employed servants, in rotation. They added: "N.B. This practice prevails in the western parts of the county, Devonshire and Somersetshire. The poor like it since they see their children doing well and do not lose them." (25) In these West Dorset parishes the estates or farms were arranged in a rotation in which each specified amount assessed to the poor counted as one turn. At Powerstock, for example, occupiers had to take one apprentice each for 3/4d of their poor-rate assessment. (26) At Chardstock the figure was 1/1½ (27) and at Broadwinstor 8d. (28) If the value of a holding was less than the sum specified two or more holdings were grouped together for a turn in the rotation. The largest of the group took the apprentice and the others "contributed". It may be supposed they contributed to the keep of the boy or girl. (29) This may be illustrated by an instance from Chardstock in 1767 when John Matthews was bound apprentice to Robert Deane whose assessment was 4½d, and Robert Guppy and Benjamin Parris were ordered to contribute in respect of their estates. (30)

- 25. Fordington Vestry Papers, undated resolution which appears to be about 1830; D.R.O., P86/VE1.
- 26. Powerstock Poor Book 1, 10.3.1771; D.R.O., MC4832.
- 27. Chardstock Poor Book 3, 8.4.1766.
- 28. Broadwinstor Poor Book 1, Flyleaf; D.R.O., P58/0V70.
- 29. Chardstock Poor Book 3, 8.4.1766.
- 30. Chardstock Poor Book 3, June 1767.

In some cases the parish paid a premium to parishioners who took an apprentice, and at Chardstock this was £3 each. (31) There was no option about it, however, for if the apprentice was refused the parish enforced the statutory £10 forfeit. (32) Moreover, the parishes did not favour the taking of apprentices from outside their boundaries and if any parishioner did take an outsider he could expect to have a parish child immediately placed with him. (33) If there was discipline for the ratepayers there was discipline for the poor too. Powerstock resolved that if any family there should apply to the overseers for relief, one or more of the children should be apprenticed as soon as possible. (34) In this way the families of the poor could be kept down to such a number as could be supported out of their earnings. If the family raised any objections to the apprenticing of a boy or girl, the parish would cut off the aid they had been receiving. At Marshwood in 1784, for example, the vestry resolved to treat in this way two parents reluctant to have their children apprenticed. (35) There is no evidence to suggest that the system just described was resented for its authoritarian ways; rather there is the Fordington minute mentioned above which claimed that the poor liked it. No doubt the parents preferred to have their children apprenticed in their parish rather than to have them sent to some distant master and probably the children ~~fed~~ better in the houses of their masters than they would have done at home. The system had the further advantage that there were plenty of friendly neighbours at hand to see that the children were not ill-treated. Indeed, the fact that many of the labouring class lived for some time under the roofs of their masters may have helped the western parts of Dorset to escape the resentments which culminated in the events of 1830.

31. Chardstock Poor Book 3, 8.4.1766.

32. Cf. p. 148 supra.

33. Powerstock Poor Book 2, 3.10.1777; D.R.O., M.C.4832.

34. Ibid., 3; D.R.O. P51/0V2.

35. Marshwood Poor Book No.2. 14.6.1789. D.R.O., MQ1.

Chapter Thirteen.

Bastardy.

D.O.P. Okeden, in his contribution to the 1834 Poor Law Report, spoke of the unsatisfactory way in which bastardy matters were recorded in the overseers' accounts. He said that the entries were so irregular as to make it difficult to base any conclusions on them. In many places the practice was to hand the money received from the father straight to the mother and to make no entry in the books. Only when the father failed to pay the sums due, was an entry made of the relief given to the child. (1) It appears that in this case Okeden was not exaggerating, for although in some parishes the whole of the bastardy transactions were faithfully entered up, in many others the entries were few and unintelligible. In these circumstances it is exceedingly difficult to estimate the numbers of bastards supported and the amounts of money involved. Some light is thrown on the matter by the parish returns given in the 1834 report, which seem to agree with the evidence of those parishes which did record their bastardy matters fully. The return from Blandford St. Mary, a small parish near Blandford, showed that they had had two bastardy cases in the previous five years and that in one case the father had paid the expenses in full but that in the other case he had absconded so that the whole of the expense had fallen on the parish. (2) Broadwey, a small parish near Weymouth, said that they had had two bastards on their books but that no money had been recovered. (3) Chettle, a small parish in north-east Dorset, replied that there had been no recent bastardy case there; while Fontmell Magna, a much larger parish, said that they had had between nine and thirteen cases on the books in each year since 1827. Fontmell had recovered rather more than half the maintenance cost from the fathers. (4) Hazelbury Bryan, a large parish

1. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A. p.14.
2. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B1, Q. 48.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

in the Vale of Blackmore, reported four to six cases in each of the previous five years and More Crichel, a small parish near Wimborne, only two in the same period. (5) The same picture emerges from the parish records. Buckland Newton, a large parish in the Vale of Blackmore, kept its Bastardy Orders and from these, supported by the account books, it appears that there were fourteen bastardy cases between 1816 and 1834. (6) At Broadwinstor, a large parish in the West of the county, the same evidence suggests twenty-four cases between 1816 and 1834. (7)

The towns had rather more cases of bastardy. Poole had twenty-five bastards on the books in 1833 and was unable to collect more than one-third of the maintenance cost from the fathers since many of them were sailors who came to the port and were never heard of again. (8) Sherborne was maintaining between thirty and fifty bastards in the five years between 1827 and 1832 and likewise was unable to collect any more than one-third of the expense from the children's fathers. (9)

A similar situation prevailed in other places and it can best be summarised by saying that in the period after the French wars any parish, in town or country, might expect to have one bastard born in each year for each four or five hundred persons in the population. It is far harder to be sure of the exact numbers of bastards born before 1816, for the only evidence for the earlier periods is the parish books and papers. It can be suggested that the figures for the period between 1790 and 1815 were about the same but that those for the years before 1790 were considerably lower. Thus at Stalbridge the number of bastards on the books was about ten in each year down to the late 1780's and after 1790 it rose steadily to thirty-eight in 1800 and fifty-two in 1810, but after that the number declined slightly. (10) At Broadwinstor the number

5. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B1, Q.48.
6. Buckland Newton Bastardy Papers and Poor Books; D.R.O., P18/OV3-4 and 23.
7. Broadwinstor Bastardy Papers D.R.O. P58/OV95.
8. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.13-15.
9. Ibid., Appendix B1, Q48.
10. Stalbridge Overseers' Accounts, P107/OV1-3.

was eight or nine on the books down to about 1800 when an increase began: the number being doubled by 1810. (11)

It will be clear from what has been said so far that the illegitimate child was a frequent object of parish relief and that the parish was entitled to recover the expense involved from the father of the child. In fact, the parish was entitled also to recover the expenses, or part of them, from the mother but this was rarely possible. In the majority of cases the mother looked after the child and this was regarded as her contribution but when the mother did not do so, the parish occasionally tried to make her contribute. An example of this occurred at Hooke where Maria Russell, who had had a bastard child in 1811 and a year later had gone into service, was summoned in 1815 for failing to pay the parish her share of the child's maintenance. (12) In order to recover the expenses from the father the parish had to undertake the proper legal actions to establish the paternity and enforce payment. The procedure was often troublesome and expensive and occasionally led to quarter sessions appeals. Indeed, after settlement disputes, bastardy cases were the commonest legal actions to come before the court.

Such actions began when the overseers discovered that one of the unmarried women of the parish was pregnant. If the woman was not legally settled in the parish, their first step was to have her taken before a magistrate in order to establish her pregnancy and her proper place of settlement. Before 1795 her condition was sufficient evidence that she was likely to become chargeable. After the 1795 Act, unmarried, pregnant women were one of the few classes who were removable without actually being chargeable, (13) so that it was necessary to establish the pregnancy in the eyes of the law. When this had been done and the woman's place of settlement had been established, the overseers could obtain an order of removal from the two justices. This was usually done and accounts for the considerable proportion of pregnant, single women among those removed. (14)

11. Broadwinstor Poor Books 3, D.R.O., P58/0V71.
12. Hooke Poor Book 2. Cf. July 1811, June 1815 and end of book.
13. 35 Geo. III c.101. Cf Webbs *op. cit.*, p.343.
14. Cf. Chapter XII above.

The reason for removing them was that the illegitimate child was settled in the parish in which it was born. In 1765 Canford Magna removed Sarah Shepherd to neighbouring Kinson. Sarah was originally a Canford girl but had acquired settlement in Kinson by serving an annual hiring there. In December 1765, she was found to be "probably pregnant" and was removed; but on her arrival in Kinson she persuaded the overseer there that she was not pregnant and the officer permitted her to return to her parents in Canford. Sarah's return was not known to the overseers of Canford and in due course she gave birth to a child there. Then the problem of the settlement of the child arose. Canford argued that the return was illegal and that since they had done all that the law required to get rid of the girl and since the Kinson officer had given her permission to return, the settlement of the child was in Kinson. In this case Canford sought and accepted counsel's opinion which was that the child was settled in the parish of its birth despite the legal removal to Kinson. (15)

Cases of this kind would have been dealt with in a rather different way after 1795 when an Act of Parliament permitted an order of removal to be suspended. (16) After that date the order of removal would have been obtained and suspended until after the birth of the child. The parish of legal settlement would have been informed and the child would be settled there just as if an actual removal had taken place. Thus when a Sturminster Marshall girl was found to be pregnant at Lymington in Hampshire, and the Sturminster overseer received the following letter.

Lymington.

10th. August 1831.

Sir,

We shall send you a bargain but not of the most profitable sort. It is Fanny Lacey who is confined in childbed at present. The order of removal is suspended until she can bear the journey.

Wm Noakes,

Guardian.

(17)

15. Canford Magna Legal Opinions; D.R.O., P34/0V7.

16. 35 Geo.III c.101.

17. Sturminster Marshall Papers; D.R.O., P98/0V17.

In most cases, however, the overseers could not pass the problem onto another parish, for the woman belonged to the parish where she was living. If the woman was settled in the parish the overseers had to have her examined in order to establish three facts; that she was pregnant, that the child was likely to be chargeable and the name of the father. If the woman refused to give the information she could be committed to the house of correction until she did so. That this occasionally happened is illustrated by the case of Rebecca Poulter who was committed in November 1829 and was ordered to be detained until she gave the required information. (18) In the vast majority of cases there seems to have been no difficulty at this stage in the proceedings and the overseers were then able to ask the justices for a warrant to apprehend the "putative father" as he was termed. In many parts of the country women seem often to have named some well-to-do man as father hoping thereby to obtain more money. (19) There is no evidence that this happened in Dorset except on very rare occasions. One such fraudulent attempt is suggested by a letter found in the quarter sessions rolls although the court itself accepted the woman's story and made an order on the man. The parish officers and seventeen parishioners of Okeford Fitzpaine wrote: "Roger Hames was never known to be guilty in all his youthful days of any such crime as keeping any lewd woman company. He has been a very sober, careful man and bred up a large family.

"Such a common whore that have had four bastards born to life and three miscarriages we doth think her oath not fit to be taken in any court of justice. So we doth desire your worship to be as favourable as you can." (20) It is impossible to say whether justice was done, for the quarter sessions probably had more evidence than is available now. It is, however, significant that in not one of the 220 cases which were decided by the quarter sessions did the court fail to make an order on the man accused. (21)

18. Dorset Q.S., Calendar of prisoners 1830.
19. S. and B. Webb, op.cit., pp.308 ff.
20. Dorset Q.S.Rolls, October 1766; Minute Book Vol.1, f.222.
21. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book - *passim*.

It appears probable therefore that the policy was to accept the word of the woman rather than the man and to see that the parish was indemnified at all costs.

The woman was usually relieved by her parish with the sum which the justices required the putative father to pay so that she had an interest in obtaining as large an award as possible. To remove the temptation which she might have of thus accusing an innocent but well-to-do man, it was the practice in at least one division in Dorset to take no account of the station of the father in fixing the sum to be paid. (22) Indeed a scrutiny of the many bastardy orders which survive suggests that this may have been a fairly general practice, for very few of them vary more than a few pence from the norm. and then with little regard for the status of the man. Once the woman had named a man, a warrant for his arrest was issued and he was required to give security for his future appearance before two justices or the quarter sessions and for his fulfilment of the bastardy award then made. If he were unwilling to give security he was committed to the house of correction or the county gaol. It must be noted that the man accused had no opportunity to answer the charge until the court met to make the order at least a month after the birth of the child. Many cases, it seems, did not reach this final stage. In some instances the man no doubt fled before he could be arrested but of this there is no evidence except perhaps the fact that there were bastards born without the parish taking any apparent action. An example of this occurred at Hammoon in 1769 when Catherine Woolridge was examined and no further action was taken. (23) On other occasions the parish reached an agreement with the father whereby he paid them a single sum of money in return for complete indemnity from liability to support the child. The sums accepted by the parishes varied from as low as £15 to as much as £45. (24) Often the parish agreed to return all or part of the money if the child died young. This was done several times at Beaminster where receipts for the payments

22. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B, p.23.

23. Hammoon Poor Book 1, under 1769.

24. £15 at Chardstock; Cf. Poor Book 5, 1780.

£45 at East Stoke; Cf. Poor Book, March 1803.

were copied into the poor-book. As an example here is an entry of October 11th 1788.

"By Cash for Ann Gudges' bastard, £20. To be returned in case the said bastard child shall be made a parishioner in some other parish or shall happen to die without being chargeable to the parish of Beaminster." (25) Similarly in September 1822, Wimborne accepted £24 in full discharge of the liability and agreed to return £12 if the child died within six months. (26)

Another common outcome of a bastardy charge was an enforced marriage. If the man had no money this might be the only alternative to the county gaol and it could even be profitable to him. Examples are common all over the county and a case which occurred at Blandford in 1780 is typical. A certain Mary Harvey named one John Hardy as the father of her bastard child. Hardy was at once arrested and the sequel is suggested by the following entries in the overseers' accounts:

June 26th. Licence to marry John Hardy.....	£2.0.6.
To John Hardy as a premium.....	£2.2.0.
A gold ring.....	7.6.
Marriage.....	7.6.
Expense at the White Hart.....	£1.15.0.
To two men guarding John Hardy two nights and part of two days.....	8.0. (27)

In a case of this sort the man was usually a non-parishioner and as a result of the marriage the parish could remove both the man and the woman. The Vestry Book of Blandford records such an event in a minute of 1763 which ordered that Elias Collisfield should be examined concerning his settlement and when he had been married to Jane Clark, both of them should be removed. (28) In the case of a troublesome woman like Catherine Woolridge of Hammoon a marriage of this kind would be beneficial to the parish. She had already had three bastard children and might well have burdened the parish with many more had the overseers not been able to get her married and removed to Blandford

25. Beaminster Overseers Accounts, Oct.11th 1788; D.R.O., P57/OV11.
26. Wimborne Minster Select Vestry Order Book 1, Sept.1822.
27. Blandford Forum Overseers Accounts, 3, June 1780; D.R.O., P70/OV3.
28. Blandford Forum Vestry Book 3, 10.4.1763., D.R.O., P70/VE3.

in 1782. (29)

The cases which ended in the ways just described were comparatively few and as a rule nothing occurred to remove the necessity of the hearing before two justices (or the quarter sessions.) There seems to have been no distinguishing feature between the cases which were settled by two justices and those which went to the quarter sessions. In both there were men who had given security and those who were in gaol. In both there were men who admitted their responsibility and those who did not. Probably it rested with the parish to decide in which court to take up the case. (30) Down to 1810 a good proportion of the cases came before the quarter sessions but after that date very few were heard in that court. Indeed of the 220 bastardy cases heard by the quarter sessions only twenty were after 1810. The explanation seems to have been that the quarter sessions referred these cases to the petty sessions which were much more active after 1810. In the quarter sessions rolls there are many certificates from the two justices notifying the sessions of the decisions in the bastardy cases. One of 1814, for example, is from Henry Digby and Harry Farr Yeatman relating to a case referred to them by the Blandford sessions. They reported that they had heard the case and had made a bastardy order for the man concerned. (31) The calendar of prisoners produced at the quarter sessions also shows that pairs of justices were dealing with a considerable number of bastardy cases. (32) Although two justices were competent to make a bastardy order at any time, they normally performed this and other functions which required two of their number in their monthly petty-sessional meetings.

In whatever court it was made, the order in bastardy established the legal paternity of the man and made provision for the reimbursement of the parish. If the order was made by two justices the man could appeal to the quarter sessions to set it aside and on fourteen occasions accused men took this course. In four of the fourteen cases the sessions

- 29. Hammoon Poor Book, 26.10.1780; N.B. The three bastards mentioned in the text would remain Hammoon's responsibility.
- 30. Cf. E.G. Dowdell, A Hundred Years of Quarter Sessions, p.62.
- 31. Dorset Q.S. Rolls, April 1814.
- 32. Dorset Q.S. Calendar, 1810-1834.

set the order aside but in three of them they did so only because of technical flaws in the making of the original order. (33) Normally the order specified the amount that was to be paid to the parish to cover the expenses incurred at the birth of the child and in maintaining it up to the date of the order. It specified also amounts to be paid weekly by the man and the woman. The woman's share was usually half of the man's and was rarely paid, provided that she looked after the child. The amounts which the man was required to pay did not vary much at any particular time. Thus between 1780 and 1790 there were among the quarter sessions cases thirty-two labourers paying 9d., 1/- or 1/3d per week; six yeomen paying 1/- or 1/3d per week; a butcher and a dairyman each paying 1/6d per week and a woolstapler paying 2/- per week. In this last case, however, the woman was dead. (34) It can be seen from these examples that not much attention was paid to the status of the father. The normal amounts awarded by the court rose as the period went on. Thus before 1785 the normal award was 1/- and from 1785 to 1805 1/3 was the usual amount. After 1805 1/6 became normal until 1814 when 2/- was awarded for a few years until the figure dropped again about 1820 to 1/6. (35)

When the man admitted his responsibility the actual amount of the award was sometimes agreed in advance as the following letter from the Blandford papers suggests:

Dr. Mother,

Being aware that Elizabeth Homer has sworn a bastard child to me I must request that you appear for me at the next meeting of the justices at Blandford and consent to an order being made on me for the usual lying-in expense and a 1/- per week for the maintenance of the said child from the end of the first month which I have agreed to allow and am ready to abide by.

29th Dec. 1805.

Thomas Crumpler. (36)

At the January meeting of the petty sessions on January 11 th, 1806, an order was made on Crumpler for this amount. (37)

33. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim*.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. Blandford Forum Correspondence; D.R.O., P70/0V15.

37. Blandford Forum Bastardy Papers; D.R.O., P70/0V14.

The making of an award was a relatively simple matter but the collecting of the money was fraught with difficulties. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the parishes in their replies to the questions of the 1834 commissioners reported that they collected only about half the amount due. In the papers of Wimborne Minster there is a list of the bastards supported by the parish, which gives details of the fathers. (38) From this list it can be seen that out of forty fathers twenty-three were dead or missing, the whereabouts of thirteen were known but they were not paying what was due to the parish and only four fathers were paying as the order specified. The state of affairs at Wimborne was, perhaps, exceptionally bad in 1829 but the bastardy arrears are a constant feature of every poor-book. In many parishes the overseers did not exert themselves unduly and it is probable that they realised the hopelessness of the situation. Yet in a few cases there was great persistence on the part of the parish to exact the money. The case of Maria Russell at Hooke which has already been mentioned is a relevant example. Maria gave birth to her child in 1811 and a bastardy order was made against Thomas Legg of Netherbury. During the years from 1811 to 1826 Legg was summoned ten times and on at least two of these occasions was committed to prison. (39) At Halstock there was a great deal of trouble taken to exact payment from William Warr, a mason. In 1824 the vestry urged the overseers to take action in the matter. As a result Warr was summoned and began to pay off some of the arrears. He could not have been successful in this for in 1825 he was repairing the workhouse and the money "paid" to him for this exactly equalled his bastardy payment in that month. In 1830 Warr cleared off another £26.2.8. by building a poorhouse for the parish. (40)

If the law appears to have been much harder on the man, this is only because of the way the authorities administered it since in actual fact the law was sterner towards the woman than the man. He only had to take

38. Wimborne Minster papers.

39. Hooke Poor Books 2 and 3, *passim*.

40. Halstock Poor Book, 8.11.1824, 30.7.1825, 28.3.1830.

financial responsibility for his child but the woman was to be punished for bearing it. By an Act of 1610 (41), a woman having a bastard was to be sent to the house of correction for a year. This was the law until 1810 when a new Act (42) gave the justices discretion to commit such a woman for from between six weeks to a year. In fact the law was hardly ever applied, as appears from the following replies to the 1834 commissioners. (43) "Not often for the first or second offence." "Rarely enforced." "Sometimes punished for the second offence, generally for the third." "Seldom punished except in bad cases." Other replies were of the same tenor, showing that it was only in bad cases, usually when the offence was committed for the third time, that the woman was punished. The poor-books also suggest that legal action against the woman was extremely rare and not very effective. Thus when Grace Jenner of Yetminster was sent to the house of correction in 1766 and was brought home sick she was not deterred from her way of life and a few years later was sent there again. (44) The situation had not changed by the end of the period, when Okeden made his report. He said that the committal of these women to the house of correction did little good, for there was no female treadmill at Dorchester and the hard labour of the women consisted of washing the gaol linen and cleaning the female wards. Okeden had visited one of the female wards and found fifteen women in a clean room with a good fire. They all told him that in the winter they would rather be there than at home. (45) There were two major drawbacks in punishing the women, first that the punishment was not effective and secondly that the parish was left with the problem of boarding out the children they left behind. These sometimes included children other than their own, for the overseers had found that these unmarried mothers could serve a useful purpose by looking after the orphans in the parish. An example of a woman used in this way was Louisa Bennett of Cerne Abbas who seems to have had two bastard

41. 7 Jac.I c.4.

42. 50 Geo.III c.51.

43. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B2, Q49.

44. Yetminster Poor Book 1.12.1766 and 6.9.1773.

45. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.18.

children in 1770 and 1771. She was constantly mentioned in the books as receiving small payments for looking after children, the sick and old people. (46)

There were some thoroughly bad women among these unmarried mothers but Louisa Bennett was probably not one of them and she eventually married the father of her children, after he had been encouraged by a small gift. (47) In those days there was a great shortage of houses as has been shown in an earlier chapter, and the wages of a young man were extremely low. These circumstances probably led to a great deal of irregular intercourse. Excluding ports like Poole and Bridport where the visits of strange sailors were likely to attract the women who lived by these means, it seems that very few of the women who had bastards were really bad and the overseers and justices acted in the appropriate manner in treating them as they did. The typical case was probably that of Ann Rawles of Cerne Abbas who had a bastard child in 1775. The father was Thomas Francis who was committed to the county gaol because he could give no acceptable security to the parish. When the case appeared before the quarter sessions Francis accepted responsibility and his father gave security for his release. (48) In fact it was the father who paid the bastardy money to the parish, for young Thomas could never afford it. (49) It appears that Thomas intended to marry the girl but it is doubtful if he ever did. Sometime before the trial he wrote a letter to Ann which suggests his good intentions.

Bridport Feb. 15th.

My dear,

Nancy I have sent this to you with pleasure, to let you know that I am got into work here for a constancy and have the care of a shop and shall carry on the trade for one Mr. Carton of the place above mentioned. So my dear cast yourself down not at all. I'll be with you soon which will be next Sunday if I can by any means. Tho the people of Cerne have said so much against us, we will not mind them. So I am and in hast and remain your only true and constant love till death.

Thomas Francis. (50)

46. Cerne Abbas Poor Book 1770-1, *passim*.

47. *Ibid.*, Sept. 1772.

48. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, Vol 2, f.139; and the Bond in Cerne Abbas Bastardy papers, D.R.O., P22/0V23.

49. Cerne Abbas Poor Book 1775-6, *passim*. For the father's payment see 22.12.1776.

50. In Cerne Abbas Bastardy Papers. D.R.O., P22/0V23.

Indoor Relief.

The term "indoor relief" implies the relief of the poor in a workhouse where their lives are regulated by the rules of the house, where they are fed and where they are required to do such work as they can. In practice, however, the workhouse of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was often very different from this. The name was frequently used to cover all kinds of houses which provided shelter for the poor, most of which would be better termed poorhouses. (1) Conversely, the parish records used the term poorhouse for what appears to have been a properly run workhouse. (2) This being so, it will be advantageous to define the terms as they will be used in this chapter. The term "workhouse" will be used for the institution which maintained the poor, laid down rules to govern their lives and provided or attempted to provide work for them to do. There seem to have been fifteen larger houses of this sort and eight smaller ones functioning in Dorset at one time or another. The term "poorhouse" will be used for the institution which did not attempt to provide work for its inmates on any significant scale. It will be further qualified by the terms "regulated" and "unregulated" in order to distinguish the places in which the poor were fed and supervised as in a workhouse from those which merely provided them with living space and a weekly sum of money. References have been found to at least twenty-five poorhouses and probably most of them were of the unregulated kind. There may well have been more since it is often impossible to distinguish these unregulated poorhouses from what are best designated "poor cottages". While the poorhouse was a large building which was intended to house several families, the poor cottage was intended for a single family, although quite often more than one family was put into it. A parish which relied on poor cottages usually possessed several of them whereas the poorhouse accommodated all or most of the resident poor. Finally there were "schools of industry" which provided work for the young and similar institutions which offered work for adults too.

1. Poor Law Report 1834, p51.
2. E.g. Marnhull Vestry Book 1, 22.11.1811.

Okeden wrote that the workhouse system had almost been abandoned in Dorset by the time of his report. He thought that there were not more than six or seven workhouses in the whole county and that these contained mostly the old and infirm together with a few orphans and bastards, most of whom were incapable of doing much work. Except for this tendency to become a place of refuge, the workhouses were well run and that at Poole gained his especial praise for it maintained its inmates under a hard regimen at just under 5/- per head per week. (3) Other evidence, however, suggests that Okeden was underestimating the number of workhouses and that at least fifteen were functioning about 1830. (4) It is true on the other hand that some workhouses which had been functioning during the French wars, had since been discontinued. It was the smaller village workhouses, such as those at Wool and Milton Abbas, which suffered in this way. (5) Okeden's statement that the workhouses had degenerated into places of refuge for those unable to work is undoubtedly true. Whereas in the eighteenth century they had usually taken in the able-bodied rather than the aged and infirm, by 1832 it was these latter groups together with orphaned children who usually lived in the house. Blandford had been prepared to relieve only the aged and infirm in their own homes, (6) while Beaminster thus relieved only the blind and those too sick to be moved. (7) The years 1795-1802, however, transformed the situation; for the number of those seeking relief rose to such an extent that the workhouses could not cope. Beaminster had pursued its policy of refusing relief to those out of the house since 1774 but when a series of justices' orders to relieve paupers for whom there was no room in the house resulted, in the winter of 1795-6, it was forced to relax its rules. (8)

The rise in the numbers of the poor was not the only factor contributing to the change in the character of

3. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.12.
4. At Beaminster, Broadwinstor, Wimborne, Gillingham, Marnhull, Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton, Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Sherborne, Poole, Swanage, Hampreston and Melcombe Regis.
5. Cf. Wool Minute Book, 11.3.1814; and Milton Abbas Poor Book (D.R.O., P91/0V1) Governor's salary ceased in 1825.
6. Blandford Vestry Book, 24.4.1797; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
7. Beaminster Poor Book, 23.5.1774. D.R.O., P57/0V11.
8. Beaminster Poor Book, 1795-6 *passim*; D.R.O., P57/0V12.

the workhouses. The rise in the price of bread which occurred in the late 1790's, led to many men in employment seeking relief for their families. If such men were to be relieved, it would clearly not be profitable to take them and their families into the workhouse and to support them entirely. It was not easy at the best of times to find profitable work for the poor in the workhouse and a man in employment could earn more out of the house than in it. In these circumstances it was clearly better for the parish to use the workhouse to support those who would have to be wholly supported in any case. If any were able to do a little work, it was provided but the earnings usually represented a minor element in the economy of the house. After 1814 the old rural crafts of Dorset, some of which ~~had been~~ followed in the workhouses, ceased to pay and it became increasingly difficult to find ~~work which~~ could be done profitably by the inmates. The result was a decline in the number of workhouses and a degeneration of many more into poorhouses. The Poole workhouse which Okeden regarded as the best run in the county, showed signs of this degeneration in 1832 for it contained thirty-seven old and infirm men, forty-two old and infirm women, twenty-one boys under thirteen and twenty-nine girls under fourteen. The less infirm of the women did the work of the house and some of the old men picked oakum and swept the streets of the town. (9) At Wimborne the composition of the inmates was similar and a few of the older boys used to go out daily to work on nearby farms but otherwise the only work was that involved in running the house and working its garden. (10)

The smaller workhouses, such as those at Stour Provost and Wool, had another problem stemming from their size. The houses at both places seem to have been able to take about twenty inmates (11) but needed a capable governor just as much as a large house did. A man capable of running a workhouse successfully and economically would have required a reasonable salary and such a salary would have made the smaller house an expensive way of supporting the poor. In 1798 the master of the Wool workhouse was

9. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.16.

10. Ibid., p.17.

11. Wool Minute Book, p.45 and Stour Provost Poor Book 4, 10.3.1808.

paid £5.8.0. per year and received in addition the earnings of the poor. (12) By contrast the governor of the larger town workhouse at Blandford received a cash payment of £28. per year. (13) The provision of suitable work for the inmates was a particularly difficult problem for the smaller workhouse, for it would not be worthwhile to invest capital in any but the simplest implements. At Wool, for instance, the girls were employed in spinning twine, the boys in farm work and the women in knitting and washing. The spinning work was subcontracted from a factory at ~~King~~ston in Purbeck. (14)

The difficulties of running a small workhouse successfully soon led the parish authorities to experiment with "farming" the house to some person who was willing to undertake the whole concern of feeding, managing and employing the poor in return for a specific sum per head from the parish, together with the earnings of the poor. Stour Provost soon turned to this solution. The workhouse there was opened in 1807 and in 1808 they contracted with John Whittaker, the manager of the workhouse at Marnhull, to undertake the whole responsibility for running the Stour Provost house at 3/3d per head per week. (15) The arrangement with Whittaker proved to be unsatisfactory, for he could not be resident in the house and put a deputy in charge. (16) The parish did not renew the contract and made a new agreement in the following year with William Rotley who undertook full responsibility for the house at 3/- per head. (17) Again the arrangement does not seem to have been renewed in the next year, 1810, and the parish appears to have resumed direct management of the house. The evidence for this is that the earnings of the poor which had previously been received by Rotley, (18) reappeared in the parish accounts. (19) Many of these small workhouses had a short life, for after a few years of constant experiment the parishes decided to give up the workhouse system. The

12. Wool Minute Book, pp.32 and 45.

13. Blandford Vestry Book, 10.5.1798; D.R.O., P70/VE3.

14. Wool Minute Book, p.32.

15. Stour Provost Poor Book 4, 10.3.1808.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 4, 3.9.1809.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 5, passim.

house at Stour Provost was established in 1807 and was discontinued in 1812. (20) The Wool experiment survived a little longer: the workhouse was established in 1797 and was closed in 1814. (21) One at Milton Abbas, certainly started after 1815, (22) was discontinued in 1825. (23)

All the Dorset workhouses whether they were large or small were regulated in much the same way. The rules of the Stour Provost workhouse are fairly typical of the others which are extant and, no doubt, were based on the rules of larger houses in the county. The master of the house was to keep a book in which he was to record the full particulars of each person admitted to the house, together with the exact details of the personal property brought in by each new entrant. Every inmate of the house who was fit to do so was to attend church each Sunday and if any failed to do this he or she was to miss the next hot meal served. If they were in good health the paupers were to be kept at work and no outside labour was to be employed in the workhouse except when the overseers had contracted to have some maintenance work done. If any of the inmates refused to work they were to be kept on bread and water and if they still refused to work they were to be expelled. The master was to keep the keys of the house and the courtyard but if he had to go out on any occasion he was to choose a reliable pauper and entrust the keys to him. No inmate might go out of the courtyard of the workhouse without special permission and if anyone did he was to forfeit his next hot meal. If any inmate was allowed out and then was found loitering in the village, or was begging or drunk or if he was late in returning, he was to be gated for one month or more. No outsider was to be admitted to the house who had not gained authority from the overseers or the master of the workhouse. Anyone in the house who made an unreasonable amount of noise was to lose a day's food. Finally the master was to read the rules aloud to the assembled inmates once a week. (24) Elsewhere there were refinements of these rules. At Wool the paupers were

- 20. Stour Provost Poor Book 5, Oct. 1812.
- 21. Wool Minute Book, 11.3.1814.
- 22. Poor Returns of 1815 show no workhouse there.
- 23. Milton Abbas Poor Book shows no governor's salary after 1825; D.R.O., P91/0V1.
- 24. Stour Provost Workhouse Rules. Undated but probably 1807.

to have three-halfpence out of each shilling they earned and the governor of the workhouse had his share too, for, as James Frampton the inspector of the house put it, this served "to encourage the one to work and the other to keep them at it." (25) Frampton attached great importance to cleanliness and amongst the rules he drew up for the house are those requiring that the clothes of each newcomer to the house should be boiled and those requiring the provision of clean lined every week. Likewise the rooms were to be kept clean and the windows were to be always open. (26) At Chardstock the governor of the workhouse was as strictly confined as the paupers, for he was not allowed to leave the premises in ordinary circumstances and any necessary purchases were to be made by the overseers. (27) At Beaminster there was a system of contracting for workhouse supplies. There was a box attached to the workhouse wall and into it any would-be supplier of goods to the house had to put a note saying at what price he would supply his goods for the following month. Then when the vestry met for its monthly meeting it decided which tender to accept. (28)

The diet of the inmates was carefully regulated and this Beaminster example of 1774 is typical. (29)

Beaminster Workhouse Bill of Fare, 1774.

Sunday.

Breakfast. Bread.

Dinner. Six to eight ounces of bacon or beef with vegetables.

Supper. Bread.

Monday.

Breakfast. Broth and oatmeal.

Dinner. Bread.

Supper. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Tuesday.

Breakfast. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Dinner. Bacon and peas.

Supper. Peas broth and oatmeal.

25. Wool Minute Book pp.9 and 19.

26. Ibid. p.19.

27. Chardstock Workhouse Rules dated 10.5.1793.

28. Beaminster Poor Book 11.5.1784. D.R.O., P57/0V11.

29. Ibid, April 1774.

Wednesday.

Breakfast. Milk broth.
Dinner. Bread.
Supper. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Thursday.

Breakfast. Milk broth and oatmeal.
Dinner. Bread.
Supper. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Friday.

Breakfast. Milk broth and oatmeal.
Dinner. Bacon and vegetables.
Supper. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Saturday.

Breakfast. Milk broth and oatmeal.
Dinner. Bread.
Supper. Milk broth and oatmeal.

Each person in the house was to consume in each week 96 ozs of bread, 12 ozs of bacon or 18-24 ozs of beef 2 ozs of vegetables, 11 ozs of oatmeal, 1oz of peas and 9 ozs of milk. This somewhat monotonous and unimaginative diet was usual but at Wool the care of James Frampton produced something much more varied. Frampton suggested that the inmates should have meat on Sundays but on the other days only potatoes and vegetables or bread gruel with flour and salt. "Add a little red herring to the potato," he suggested, "for it is very savoury and cheap as a little goes a great way and no salt is required." The gruel could be improved, according to Frampton, by adding bread which had been fried in lard. He did not consider that the inmates should have cheese, butter or beer but urged that a good fire should be kept burning, "as warmth will contribute greatly to their health and comfort." (30) Clearly this youthful squire of Moreton thought that he knew how to handle the poor in 1797, just as he did in the events of 1830 and 1834!

The practice of farming the workhouse was not confined to the smaller establishments but was common in the large ones too. The earliest known instance of it in Dorset was at Wimborne where the workhouse was farmed by a Richard Mitchell in 1784. Mitchell was paid 1/9d per head per week and was to feed, clothe and provide the poor with

"fire and candle." In addition to the payment per head Mitchell was to receive whatever the poor earned. (31) This arrangement did not work to the satisfaction of the parish for in the next year Mitchell was dismissed and the workhouse reverted to the old system. (32) Blandford soon followed suit for in 1787 the poor were being farmed by a Mr. and Mrs. Howard at 2/- per head; (33) but again the results of the experiment did not satisfy the parish authorities, for in 1791 the vestry resolved that John and Mary Howard "are not capable of managing the workhouse having run into debt." (34) The next contractor was paid 2/3 per head (35) but the arrangement was apparently no more satisfactory, for in 1794 he also was dismissed. (36) Perhaps he was less efficient than the Howards or perhaps hard feelings had died down, for they were reinstated in their old place until 1798 when the house was enlarged and reorganised and the management was brought under direct parish control again. (37)

Blandford did not try farming the poor again but Wimborne returned to the practice in 1808 when James Ball undertook the contract at 3/- per head. (38) It soon became clear that Ball was not feeding the poor as well as the parish authorities wished, for in 1810 a payment of £17 was made to enable him to improve the diet. (39) Then in 1812 the rate per head was raised on condition that a new diet was introduced and the children were taught to read in the evenings. (40) The new diet included meat on four days in the week and fish on one, cheese for supper twice a week and table beer three times a week. (41) When a contractor underfed the poor, the fault was often that of the parish, for farming the workhouse was regarded as a cheap way of providing for the poor in the house. The authorities did not see at first that they were employing not a philanthropist but a businessman, and that unless they paid him enough to feed the poor properly and make a profit, it would be the poor that suffered. Wimborne seems to have discovered this

31. Wimborne Minster Order Book 1, 26.4.1784.
32. Ibid., 3.5.1785 and 7.6.1785.
33. Blandford Forum Vestry Book 3, 30.7.1787; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
34. Ibid., 28.2.1791.
35. Ibid., 4.5.1791.
36. Ibid., 20.4.1794.
37. Ibid., 24.4.1797, 10.5.1798 and 28.10.1798.
38. Wimborne Minster Order Book 1, 5.1.1808.
39. Ibid., 2, 4.9.1810.
40. Ibid., 3.2.1812.
41. Ibid.

fact during their second experiment with workhouse farming and they probably found that this system cost them just as much as the ordinary one of employing a governor and paying the bills. Certainly farming the poor in the workhouse ceased in Wimborne in 1815 although it was renewed for a few years in 1818. (42)

The biggest problem facing the Dorset workhouse authorities was that of finding work on which the poor could be profitably employed. It was not so difficult before the French wars nor was it so severe in West Dorset for this was the area of the Bridport textile industry. This meant that there was suitable work which could be done in the house and a market for it. It meant, also, ~~and~~ this was important, that among the poor would be a sprinkling of men and women who had already had some experience of the work. Several of the most successful workhouses were in the west of the county, although Okeden, who was unfamiliar with that district, seems to have been unaware of their existence. One of the more successful West Dorset workhouses was at Broadwinstor and here the poor in the house worked at preparing and spinning hemp and flax and weaving some of it. (43) This was at the end of the eighteenth century but the situation remained practically unchanged until the 1820's when outdoor work became more important than the textile work in the house. (44) A considerable amount of work was done in the Broadwinstor workhouse for the earnings were often well over £100 per year. In 1799-1800, for example, when there were about sixty inmates the earnings amounted to £154, (45) and ten years later in 1809-10 the total was £178. (46) After the end of the war the earnings began to decline but so did the number of inmates. In 1819-1820 the forty paupers in the house earned £104 only. (47) At its most prosperous time this workhouse seems to have paid its way. Thus in 1809-10 £108 was paid over to the parish by the master of the house but to be set against this there were certain items of expenditure in the overseers' accounts some of which must

- 42. Wimborne Minster Order Book 2, 3.2.1812, and 23.4.1818.
- 43. Broadwinstor Workhouse Petty Cash Book 1791-1801, *passim*. D.R.O., P58/0V97.
- 44. Broadwinstor Workhouse Accounts 3, *passim*; D.R.O. P58/0V99.
- 45. *Ibid.*, 1, Accounts for 1799-1800; P58/0V97.
- 46. *Ibid.* 2, Accounts for 1809-1810; P58/0V98.
- 47. *Ibid.*, 3, Accounts for 1819-1820; P58/0V99.

have been for the workhouse. In most years the overseers paid bills for grain, meat and other items amounting to £50 or £60 per year and in addition the master's salary of £16 a year. (48) The secret of this success lay not only in the profits of the work done but also in the production within the house and its grounds of much of the food required. A pig-sty and potato ground were mentioned, for example, in an inventory of goods in 1796. (49) Then in 1800 the overseers bought a cornmill "to grind for the use of the poor in the workhouse." (50)

The workhouses in the eastern part of the county were far less successful and found it exceedingly hard to find profitable work on which to employ the poor. Another factor was that the workhouses there tended to buy most of the food consumed in the house. In the eighteenth century work was being done in the workhouses at Blandford and Wimborne, although the records disclose few details. When the Wimborne house was started in 1760 the master employed was "well skilled in both linen and woollen manufacture." (51) Later on in 1784 when the workhouse was farmed, the contractor was to have the earnings of the poor. (52) The Blandford workhouse, likewise, seems to have had no particular problem in finding work for its inmates in the eighteenth century. The workhouse was established in 1758 and replaced several small poorhouses in various parts of the town. (53) The work in the early days was button-making which was then a profitable craft greatly practised in the cottages throughout that part of Dorset. In 1785 it was decided to take up textile work in the house and a contract was made with John Ashman of Blandford St. Mary, a village just outside the town, to provide an instructor in the craft of spinning. Ashman was to provide the wool and to buy the finished product. (54) It appears that the weaving of linsey was started about the same time for sales of this cloth were mentioned in the

- 48. Broadwinstor Workhouse Accounts 2, Accounts for 1809-10 P58/0V98; and Overseers Accounts 1809-10, *passim*; P58/0V72.
- 49. Broadwinstor papers (P58/0V105), Inventory of 1796.
- 50. Broadwinstor Overseers Accounts 3, Nov. 1800; P58/0V71.
- 51. Wimborne Minster Order Book 1, 12.2.1760.
- 52. *Ibid.*, 26.4.1784.
- 53. Blandford Forum Vestry Book 3, 1758; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 54. *Ibid.*, 31.8.1785.

overseers' accounts in 1786-7, together with those of buttons.(55) Spinning, weaving of linsey and button-making remained the crafts practised in Blandford workhouse for many years. It may be, however, that the standard of work was too low to make the work an economic proposition for in 1798 Thomas Whicker was employed to develop the textile crafts,(56) and George Davidge in 1805 to instruct in button-making. (57) It seems too that work was growing difficult to obtain, for in 1801 the vestry discussed a proposal that the women and children should be sent out to spin thread for a certain Philip Barnes. (58)

From the turn of the century onwards there was at Blandford a growing dissatisfaction with the workhouse, which was reflected in the constant changes in management and culminated in 1813 in the decision to adopt Gilbert's Act. (59) The reorganisation involved the construction of a new workhouse which was called the "house of industry."(60) There is no evidence to suggest what work, if any, was done in the house after its reorganisation and probably it amounted to very little. In 1823, however, it was decided to establish a mop manufactory there. (61) In the same period Wimborne workhouse also seems to have faced a crisis. After 1800 there were frequent attempts to establish a watch-chain manufactory and to reach a satisfactory arrangement with a number of silk-throwers to employ the workhouse people at a branch-business to be established in Wimborne. The watch-chain work was started in the workhouse at Wimborne in the early years of the century and by 1807 the annual receipts had risen to just over £310.(62) When the workhouse was farmed to James Ball in 1808, one of the terms was that the children should continue to be employed on the watch-chain work, (63) and Ball seems to have received the resulting profits. By 1814 the work had apparently grown, for children from outside the house were going in daily to work. The vestry decided that in order

- 55. Blandford Overseers' Accounts 3, cf. account for 1786-7; D.R.O., P70/0V3.
- 56. Blandford Vestry Book 3, 28.10.1798; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 57. Ibid., 22.6.1805.
- 58. Blandford Papers, Proposal of P. Barnes; D.R.O., P70/0V36.
- 59. Blandford Vestry Book 3, 19.4.1813; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 60. Blandford Forum Vestry Book 3, 11.3.1814; D.R.O., P70/VE3.
- 61. Ibid., 3.4.1823.
- 62. Wimborne Minster Workhouse Accounts 2, March 1807.
- 63. Wimborne Order Book 1, 5.1.1808.

to encourage this practice no account would be taken of their earnings in assessing the relief to be allowed the families from which they came. (64)

Ball gave up the workhouse in 1815 and two years later came a clear sign that all was not well, for on February 3rd, 1817, the overseers went to Stalbridge to make enquiries about silk work. (65) The workhouse at Stalbridge had made a contract with the local silk-throwers in 1768 whereby the latter employed the poor in workshops established in the house. (66) It would seem then that the object of the visit was to discover exactly how the system worked and whether it was satisfactory. The visit apparently convinced the Wimborne overseers, for within a few months they negotiated a contract with Henry Gouger of Sherborne to set up a silk-workroom in Wimborne workhouse and to employ children and others in the work. The contract is not extant but some of its terms can be deduced from later references, especially from the contract with James Ball when the workhouse was farmed to him again in 1818 (67) and from a letter written by Gouger in 1820. (68) The workshop was a room in the workhouse but children from outside were encouraged to go daily to work. Since Gouger lived at a considerable distance from Wimborne he provided a trained woman to supervise the work there. The "silk woman" was apparently paid partly by the parish and partly by Gouger and the children were paid so much per piece - presumably each spool of silk wound. In 1820, the silk work was much criticised by the parents of the children who came into the workhouse to work. They said the earnings of the children were far too small and that Gouger had reduced the rate of pay. They also objected to the children being disciplined by the superintendent. (69) Gouger replied to the effect that he was paying the same rate to the children as he had contracted to pay at the

- 64. Wimborne Order Book 2, 1.3.1814.
- 65. Wimborne Cash Book 1, 3.2.1817.
- 66. Stalbridge Poor Book 2, Flyleaf: Agreement with William Willmott and George Ward of Sherborne, 9.10.1798; D.R.O., P107/OV2.
- 67. Wimborne Minster Papers, Contract with J. Ball 1818.
- 68. Wimborne Minster Papers, Letter from H. Gouger 1820
Cf. Order Book 2, 16.12.1817 for date of contract with Gouger.
- 69. Cf. Letter from Gouger cited above.

beginning but that he had raised the pay for a time when the market was good and reduced it later to the original figure. He thought that a child should have been able to earn a reasonable sum at the rate of pay as it was then and that if the figures the parents were quoting were true the children must have been very idle. He saw a connection between this complaint and the one concerning the disciplining of the children. "They are not to be corrected if they do amiss" he wrote, "and still they are to bring home the same money on Saturday night." (70) He found that things at Wimborne were thoroughly unsatisfactory and wrote a letter ending the whole arrangement in 1823. (71)

Wimborne was anxious to continue the work and probably advertised for a successor to Gouger. They received an application from a London silk-thrower who offered to employ fifty to a hundred children on a seven-year contract. He would also employ a few men turning the machinery. (72) There is no direct evidence to show whether this offer was accepted or not but in November 1829 the select vestry instructed the overseers to find some profitable employment for the persons in the workhouse. (73) This suggests that they were preparing for the end of a seven-year contract.

In 1819, the watch-chain manufactory was re-established or perhaps reorganised. The parish contracted with Henry Jenkins of Christchurch to employ twelve girls, aged nine to ten, in watch-chain making in the workhouse. (74) At first this enterprise went well for by 1820 there was another workshop at Holt employing daily the children of parish paupers. It was over this Holt workshop that trouble began, for according to a letter from Jenkins the girls only came when they could find nothing else to do. At the time of the letter, August 28th, they were gleaning. (75) Another letter, written on October 18th, 1820, complained that the Holt workshop always had to be employing new girls,

- 70. Wimborne Minster Papers, Letter from H. Gouger, 4.8.1820.
- 71. Ibid., 22.2.1823.
- 72. Ibid., Proposal of T. Drin, 25.6.1823.
- 73. Wimborne Select Vestry Book 3, 27.11.1829.
- 74. Ibid., 1, March 1829
- 75. Wimborne Papers, Letter from H. Jenkins, 28.8.1820.

who left as soon as they became experienced, and it concluded by threatening to close the workshop unless the parish could ensure a more satisfactory state of affairs.(76) There was clearly no improvement in the situation for in the next letter which survives Jenkins referred to his having given up the Holt workshop. He appeared unwilling to use any but workhouse children, for if children came from their homes he would lose them as soon as the parents could manage without parish aid. (77) This appears to have been the end of the watch-chain craft in the workhouse, for when a certain Benjamin Sims contracted to farm the house in 1822 the terms referred to silk winding but not to watch-chain making,(78) and when Okeden visited the house in 1832 there was no work except housework and gardening. (79)

It was, then, exceedingly difficult in the nineteenth century to find work for the paupers in the workhouse especially when they tried to bring in from outside the less-disciplined labour of the pauper children. The relatively unskilled work, which was renumerative in the eighteenth century was no longer profitable and the houses became less like places of work and more like homes for the aged and infirm. It was thus that Okeden described the Wimborne workhouse: "a mere refuge for the age and infirmity and deserted children." (80)

The workhouse was considered by some people in Dorset to be an expensive way of maintaining the poor. When Stevenson visited Dorset about 1812, he was told by a Mr. Russell of Beaminster that it was far less expensive to relieve the poor in their own homes. Russell had added that the paupers could not earn money so easily in the workhouse as used to be the case before machinery was introduced. (81) The small places like Wool and Stour Provost certainly found their experiments very costly. Corfe Castle went into the question of whether a workhouse

- 76. Wimborne Papers, Letter from H.Jenkins, 18.10.1820.
- 77. *Ibid.*, 15.1.1821.
- 78. *Ibid.*, Agreement with B.Sims 1822.
- 79. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.17.
- 80. *Ibid.*,
- 81. Stevenson. *Op. cit.*, p.452.

was an economic proposition and decided that it was not. This was in 1797 when the workhouses elsewhere appear to have been thriving. A committee was set up to consider the matter and reported that at Dorchester it cost 2/7d a head and at Christchurch 2/9d a head to support the poor in a workhouse. The houses at Blandford, Beaminster and Wimborne were considered to be even more uneconomical. The committee looked at the situation in Corfe Castle itself. There were 113 persons on the regular list of paupers and on the average they received relief valued at 1/7½d per week plus, in some cases, rents or lodgings. If the workhouse system were adopted in Corfe and if the cost of maintenance were the same as at Christchurch, 113 persons would cost the parish £772.4s. a year. To that figure the committee added the estimated total of the extra relief which would still be paid to those who would not be taken into the house and so reached a grand total of £949 a year. Next the committee looked at the recent expenditure in Corfe on the old system. They deducted the items which could not be considered expenditure on the poor, such as the county rates, and found that the real expenditure on the poor in 1795-6 was £776 and in 1796-7 it was £889. They pointed out that in their estimates they had made no allowance for the interest on the capital which would be invested in a workhouse. The committee concluded that it would considerably raise the cost of maintaining the poor if a workhouse system were introduced and it would do nothing to increase the happiness of the poor. (82)

The argument of the Corfe committee is not quite sound. They were assuming that all their regular paupers would be supported in the house, a situation which Dorset parishes were rarely able to achieve. The policy in Wimborne and most other places was to put those people in the workhouse who needed almost complete relief and the average cost of their relief outside the house would have been higher than that calculated by the Corfe committee for the whole of their out-poor. It could, then, be argued that a house to support 50% of the poor would perhaps have paid the parish, provided

82. Corfe Castle Papers, Report of the Committee set up to consider the advisability of building a workhouse, 1797; D.R.O., P11/0V200.

that it was of sufficient size to be economical. Another factor which was ignored by the committee was the effect a workhouse had in deterring paupers from seeking relief. Nevertheless the Corfe report illustrates a common point of view which regarded the workhouse as uneconomical. Stour Provost and Wool certainly found the system uneconomic but their houses were very small ones, taking only about twenty inmates. The house being considered by Corfe Castle, however, was intended to take their 113 paupers and was, therefore of a sufficient size to avoid the special problems of the small establishment.

It is very difficult to make a statistical comparison between those places with workhouses and those without, for this would tend to be a comparison between large places and small ones. There were, however, two towns in Dorset which did not have workhouses: Shaftesbury and Wareham. (83) The table below shows the cost of maintaining the poor in those two places and in two other comparable places with workhouses.

Cost per head of maintaining the poor
in certain places, two with workhouses and two without.

	1802-3			1821		
	Pop.	Exp.	per head.	Pop.	Exp.	per head.
<u>Without Workhouses.</u>						
Shaftesbury.	2519	1679	.66	2903	2519	.87
Wareham.	1627	1024	.68	1931	1547	.79
<u>With Workhouses.</u>						
Wimborne.	3039	2595	.85	3563	2363	.66
Sturminster Newton.	1406	1132	.80	1612	1258	.78
	1831			(84)		
<u>Without Workhouses.</u>						
Shaftesbury.	3061	2606	.86			
Wareham.	2125	1283	.60			
<u>With Workhouses.</u>						
Wimborne.	4009	2298	.58			
Sturminster Newton.	1831	1585	.87			

83. Estimates from Poor Returns of 1776, 1785, 1803 and 1815.
84. Figures from the Poor Returns of 1803, 1821 and 1831.

The table shows that in 1802-3 the parishes which supported their poor in workhouses, did so at a relatively higher cost than those which did not. In 1820-1, on the other hand, the workhouse system appears to have been more economical than the outdoor system. This was at a time when the practice of making up pay was prevalent in the northern and eastern parts of Dorset where the four places under discussion lie. Of the two which had workhouses, Sturminster was maintaining its poor only at a slightly lower cost than the places which relieved all their poor in their own homes, whereas the cost at Wimborne was strikingly lower. The reason for this was probably that great efforts were being made at the latter place to stimulate work in the house and they were probably having some effect. In the figures for 1830-1 there is a clear contrast between Shaftesbury and Sturminster in the Vale of Blackmore, which were expending over £.85 per head of the population and the heathland places, Wimborne and Wareham, which were expending about £.6 per head. In other words the influence of the area appears to have been stronger than that of the system of poor relief employed. Some figures relating to West Dorset in 1821 tend to confirm this conclusion. The expenditure per head on the poor was £.58 for the whole area whereas that in the places with workhouses varied very little, that of Beaminster being £.63. (85) In 1802-3 many workhouses were still undertaking profitable work and so there appears to have been some advantage in the system at that time. By 1832, however, they had mostly become places of refuge for the old and infirm (86) and the significant variation in expenditure was between towns in different areas of the county rather than between towns with and without workhouses.

A modern writer has pointed out that the eighteenth-century workhouse was vitiated by the delusion that pauperism properly managed could be made to pay. (87) By the 1820's the impossibility of this had been realised and they were allowed to degenerate into poorhouses. Okeden's remarks about the Wimborne workhouse and his figures relating to

85. Calculations from 1821 Poor Return.

86. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.12.

87. Chambers, op.cit., p.214.

that at Poole (88) show that both houses were well on the way to becoming regulated poorhouses. The small house at Cranborne was described by him as a poorhouse where no work was done but where the aged and infirm together with a few children were maintained at 3/10d per week each. (89) There do not appear to have been many regulated poorhouses in Dorset for when a workhouse ceased to be economical the parish usually changed it into an unregulated house. Once this had been done there was no master or mistress to be paid and no food bills to be met. The poor were lodged in the former workhouse and received a weekly pension from which they fed and clothed themselves. Such an unregulated poorhouse existed at Buckland Newton and it consisted of a lower floor divided into two, probably as apartments for men and women, and an upper floor which was divided into six rooms. These rooms were for families and in one lived a woman and her two children and a second woman with one child, while in another was a woman and her three children. (90) These unregulated poorhouses were fairly common in Dorset and some probably were built for this purpose, as was the one at Beer Hackett which was erected in 1822. (91) In other cases they were probably a row of cottages joined together or a former workhouse.

The most usual accommodation provided for the poor was the "poor cottage", which was usually a tiny cottage built for a few pounds and intended for a single person or family. In 1801 Hilton bought three such cottages for £7.7.0., (92) but the £19 which Minterne Magna paid in 1807 to have a cottage built was the more usual amount. (93) Most parishes possessed a number of these poor cottages. Hazelbury Bryan, for example, had eight in 1832. (94) If

88. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.12ff.

89. Ibid., p.18.

90. Buckland Newton Rough Poor Book 1, back flyleaf; D.R.O., P18/0V5.

91. Beer Hackett Poor Book 1, cf. 1821-2 passim; D.R.O., P83/0V3.

92. Hilton Poor Book, 16.6.1801; D.R.O., P21/0V1.

93. Minterne Magna Poor Book 2, 1807; D.R.O., P73/0V2.

94. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.22.

there were too few parish cottages to house the poor, the overseers frequently rented others. (95) The paupers did not become tenants of these cottages and could be turned out or moved around exactly as the overseers wished. This is illustrated by a minute in Yetminster poor-book: "The overseers are to pay 7/6d for Wm Gillingham's house-rent to Michaelmas last and to move him into the parish house with Thos. More and to move Wm More out of that house for he is able to provide for himself." (96) Again at Cann occurs this entry: "James Whitemarsh [to be moved] to the house where Hannah Lines lives. Hannah Lines and her sister Harriet Foot and child to go to the house occupied by John Dean and family. Dean and family to the house now occupied by Whitemarsh." (97)

Work without residence was another variant of the workhouse system as it was practised in Dorset. It has already been noted that Wimborne provided work for the children of paupers living in their own homes, both at the workhouse and in a workshop at Holt. Some work may have been available for men at Wimborne and at Cerne Abbas work for women was provided in the "silk house". Most of the employment in craft under skilled supervision was for children and the establishments which provided it were usually known as "schools of industry". In 1802-3 there were 323 children from sixteen parishes working in these institutions (98) which included a spinning school established at Fordington in 1801 and run by a Jane Dowding who was paid 4/9d per week. (99) In 1818 a knitting school and school of industry was established at Beaminster under the direction of a committee of seven parishioners and the clergyman. The accounts show that worsted yarn was bought and the children knitted socks and stockings

95. e.g. Kington Magna, cf. papers P4/OV10 in D.R.O.

96. Yetminster Poor Book, 7.11.1763.

97. Cann Vestry Book 2, 26.9.1830; D.R.O., P39/VE2.

98. Poor Returns, 1802-3, 802-3, pp. 714ff.

99. Fordington Overseers' Accounts 5, April and July 1801; D.R.O., P86/OV7.

for the poor of the parish. Some of the socks and stockings were also sold but not in large quantities, perhaps twenty to twenty-five pairs a month. (100)

In 1824 there was a school of industry in the Vale of Blackmore which probably took children from many surrounding parishes. It had been established at Stalbridge but in 1824 was moved to Stourton Caundle. This school was regarded as an important experiment and an advertisement was placed in the local newspapers inviting the gentlemen of Dorset and neighbouring counties to visit this "experimental school, designed to prove the practicability of enabling poor boys to provide for their own wants." It urged gentlemen to visit the school soon, since a public meeting would be held in the following month to promote the growth of the scheme. (101) The editor of "the 'Sherborne Journal'" had been to see the school and commented in his column that it was a great experience to see the children who had previously been paupers earning their own keep. He commented further on their healthy and contented appearance. (102) Unfortunately there does not seem to be any more evidence bearing on this experiment to show what the boys did and how successful it was. What is extant, however, shows that the upper classes were not indifferent to the fate of the poor in the 1820's.

In conclusion it may be suggested that the workhouse system was never well suited to the small parishes of Dorset and little was done to overcome the inherent disadvantages. Although there were parishes in the county which adopted the provisions of Gilbert's Act there were no successful unions of parishes. A union of sorts existed at Dorchester where the hospital which belonged to the borough, served the three parishes as a workhouse. (103) This house did not take all the paupers in the town but only those whom the parishes chose to send, and this is a second characteristic of the workhouse system as it was

100. Beaminster Poor Book 5, 20.1.1818; and Workhouse Ledger.
101. 1818-21 *passim*; D.R.O., P57/0V13 and 0V33.
e.g. Sherborne Journal, 15.10.1824.
102. *Ibid.*
103. Cf. Notes and Extracts re 17th, and 18th-century Dorchester D.R.O., M.C.10448.

practised in Dorset, for as far as is known, the houses never aimed to take the whole of the poor (except in Beaminster for a while and possibly for a far shorter period in Blandford.) This meant that they tended to take the people less able to support themselves and accordingly less able to do worthwhile work in the house.

The workhouses were seldom well run and most of them experienced frequent changes of management. The masters or governors were often paid little more than the labourers and could hardly be expected to make a success of institutions which were already labouring under difficulties. Finally the workhouses suffered from the lack of suitable and profitable work which was only to be expected in a county where there was little industrial experience and where the old popular crafts were ceasing to be renumerative. Only in West Dorset was there a partial exception to this; for the Beaminster and Broadwinstor houses were probably the most successful in the county although after 1815 even these appear to have become less economic. Okeden praised the Poole house as the best in the county but the evidence which he gives suggests it was little more than a poorhouse with a deterrent regimen. The excellence of the poor-law administration there lay rather in its well-organised outdoor relief. (104)

104. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A. pp. 14-16.

Chapter Fifteen.

Outdoor Relief: The Eighteenth-Century Methods.

In this chapter it is proposed to examine the methods of outdoor relief which were in use everywhere in Dorset before 1800 and which remained in use in many parishes until 1834. By "outdoor relief" is meant relief which was given outside any institution intended specifically for the poor.

Outdoor relief was the basis of the arrangements for caring for the poor in nearly every parish in the county and even where a workhouse existed it was seldom more than a supplement. In the normal Dorset parish the accounts of the expenditure on the poor were usually divided into two parts; the first being for regular payments and the second, for extraordinary ones. The list of regular recipients of relief was approved by the vestry at its statutory Easter meeting. The accounts of Radipole dated 1770 provide an example of this. (1) "April 18 Being Monday in Easter week at a vestry this day held being duly summoned the last Lord's day
.... the following monthly pay was ordered.

Susanna Bartlett	8s. 0d.
Dorothy Chamberlain's child	5s. 0d.
Thos Hunt for keeping Ann Scriven	6s. 0d.
Thos Hunt for his family	4s. 0d.
	<hr/>
	£1. 3s. 0d. "

The list at Radipole was a short one partly because the parish was small and partly because the numbers of paupers were generally small before about 1798. Another example, dated 1793, is provided by South Perrott, another small parish, where there were eight old persons, four seriously ill or infirm people, six children, three widows of whom two had children, and two lunatics. (2) The people whose names were thus placed on the list at the Easter vestry were to be paid by the overseers until the vestry reversed its decision. It is doubtful whether the overseers were legally entitled to relieve anyone whose

1. Radipole Poor Book, 18.4.1770.
2. South Perrott Poor Book 4, April 1793.

name was not on this list unless ordered to do so by the magistrates (3), but in practice they often did. These additional payments and expenses were called "the extraordinary disbursements" and in theory were help given in emergency. The character of the "extras" is shown by this extract from the Radipole accounts. (4)

"1764. Disbursed to the poor of Radipole.

Pd for a shirt for Abrham Screever	3.	6.
Pd for a new pair of shoos dito	3.	0.
Pd for stockings dit.	1.	10.
Pd for breeches dito.	2.	0.
Pd for two sherts dito.	5.	9.
Pd for new pair of shoos dito.	3.	6.
Pd for mending shoos dito.	1.	0.
Pd for mending Martha Screevens shoos.	1.	1.
Pd for a new paire shoos dito.	2.	6.
Pd for mending of Anne Screevens shoes.	1.	0.
Pd for two sheets for Martha Screeven	6.	0.
Pd Anne Ellis is Hous rent due midsumer daie.	1.10.	0.
Pd Thos Hunts House rent due Chrismaslas.	1. 2.	6.
Pd for a new coat and wastcoat.	7.	8.
Abraham Scn for meaking.	3.	0.
Pd for a new paier of breeches dito.	2.	0.
Pd for new hat dito.	1.	9.
Pd for a new paier of shoos for Anne Screeven.	2.	6.
Pd at the vestry for Martha Screeven.	3.	0.
Pd Susanah Spencers hous rent.	7.	6.
Duct out of the above to the parish for one years hire of Abraham Scriven to Farmer Kibber at 18d. a week which the Farmer took him for on the parish cloathing him.	3.18.	0.
	1.12.	7. "

The extras at Radipole in this particular year were mainly concerned with clothes and house-rents but in other years and elsewhere there was great variety in the form of relief given.

Most parishes insisted that those people who received parish relief should wear the parish badge. The object of the badge was partly to make it clear to all and sundry that the wearer was a pauper and partly to shame the person who wore it. The poor appear to have disliked

3. 3 & 4 Will. and Mary c.11. and 9 Geo.I c.7.
4. Radipole Poor Book, 1764.

the badges and as the overseers were not over-zealous in enforcing the rule the vestries frequently passed resolutions insisting on its being carried out. At Canford in 1760 badges were being bought and put on the clothes of the poor (5), and at Toller Porcorum in 1801-2 the vestry resolved that no monthly pay was to be given to those who were not wearing the parish badge, which consisted of a large T.P. in red and blue worn on the shoulder. (6) This minute was re-enacted yearly until 1804 when it was written in the book but struck out. By this time the use of badges was in decline but in a few places they were in use far later - East Stoke and Litton Cheney were both buying badges as late as 1824. (7)

Most Dorset parishes seem to have offered a comprehensive welfare system covering almost every eventuality of life. Relief in money or in kind was available to meet the expenses of child-birth, of sickness, of unemployment, of infirmity, and of death.

At Oborne in 1800 this entry was made:

"Gave Wm Lambord, his wife lying in, 2/- " (8)

If need arose the parish doctor would be called in too.

At Cerne Abbas in 1776 was recorded:

"Paid Jos, Thorn the shoo-maker for his daughter having the smallpox, £1.10.0 (9)

Again the parish would supply the doctor's services.

At the same place in 1766 there is this entry:

"Paid Mr Bowring's bill in going to catch buckes on Joan Thorne 15/- " (10)

If a man were without employment the parish came to his aid. Thus the entry "no work" is frequently found as the reason for relief while occasionally there are records of payments which suggest that the overseers found work for the unemployed. At Lydlinch, for example, this entry was made in 1786:

"Dec. 22nd, To Stephen Isles 12 days work throwing anthills on the common. 8. 0. " (11)

5. Canford Magna Poor Book 1, 1760; D.R.O., P34/0V1/2.
6. Toller Porcorum Poor Book, 4.4.1801.
7. East Stoke Poor Book, March 1824. Litton Cheney Poor Book, June 1824.
8. Oborne Poor Book, 1801-2.
9. Cerne Abbas Poor Book, 11.8.1776; D.R.O., P22/0V13.
10. Ibid., 16.3.1766.
11. Lydlinch Poor Book 2, 22.12.1786; D.R.O., P107/0V2.

Again, at Stour Provost there were paupers employed on the roads and in quarrying stones in 1781 and 1782. (12) In infirmity the parishes were usually generous as is illustrated by the treatment of Thomas Harben at Cerne Abbas in 1771 and 1772. The entries relating to September 1772 are typical.

"Pd for turffs and soap for Thos Harben	1. 5.
Pd Louisa Bennett for Thos Harben	1. 6.
Pd for bread and meat for Thos Harben	1. 5.
Pd for making and thread for Thos Harben's shirt	6½.
Gave Thos Harben in bread	1. 2.
Louisa Bennett 1 weeks pay for Harben	9.
Gave Thos Harben pork and soap	7½.
Gave Thos Harben and Louisa Bennett pork	6½.
Pd for fuel for Thos Harben	2. 0.
Richard Knell for cleaning Thos Harben	1. 0.
Thos Harben in meat	4½.
Pd Molly Hodges for cleaning Thos Harben	4. 0.
Gave Thos Harben in meat	5.
Pd Edith Hodges for looking after Harben	3. 0."

(13)

Finally, when the pauper died the parish would look after the funeral arrangements. The entries relating to the burial of William White of Cerne Abbas are typical.

"June 12th. Paid Jno Thorne for W. White's coffin	7. 0.
Digging W. White's grave	1. 0.
Pd for drink and laying out	1. 0.
J. Knutt's wife for laying out W. White and making his shroud	1. 6. "

(14)

Sometimes difficulties arose between the parish and the family, for when the parish paid the expenses the overseers made such arrangements as they thought fit. In 1790 when Dorothy Wakefield died at Burton Bradstock, her father ordered the coffin without consulting the overseers. The vestry went into the matter and decided that the parish would pay 6/- towards the coffin and the father would have to pay the rest. (15) Sometimes the

12. Stour Provost Poor Book 2, 1781 and 1782 *passim*.

13. Cerne Abbas Poor Book, Sept. 1772; D.R.O., P22/0V13

14. *Ibid.*, 12.6.1768.

15. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 2, 2.5.1790; D.R.O., P47/0V2.

relatives left the parish to defray the entire cost of the funeral despite the fact they could have paid for it themselves. A particularly bad case of this kind occurred at Maiden Newton in 1785 and the feelings of the overseer were clearly aroused for he wrote:

"1785, March, Paid Charles Groves in sickness, 2. l. 0.

Memorandum. At the same time paid for his coffin and shroud when his inhuman and brutish son, Chas, became possessed of his estate and yet refused to afford him the least support in his illness or to bury him or even to attend the funeral." (16)

At this juncture it will be useful to examine in more detail some of the forms which outdoor relief took. Relief in kind frequently took the form of clothes or materials from which clothes might be made. At East Stoke the overseers had the custom of summoning all the paupers to a "clothes parade" in the autumn so that they could hear the paupers requests, check on their needs, and take the necessary measurements. (17) In the spring the overseers went round the parish "to view the paupers to see what was wanting." (18) At the end of the poor-book there are lists of the requests made from time to time, such as this one dated April 15th, 1805 and headed "The complaints of the poor for clothes." (In the list the items marked * were rejected.)

"John Niths - a pair of shoes.

Geo. Payne - a pair of shoes, a smock-frock* and a shift for his wife*.

Jacob Bryan - two shirts*.

Ann Legg's boy - breeches*, a shirt, pair of shoes and a pair of shoes for Jos.

Betty Basket - linen for four children, mending shoes*, more pay* and a "porrage" pot*.

John Wilcocks' wife - A sheet and blanket, a linen coat, a smock-frock for her husband and the two boys to be breeched.

Thos Cox's wife - a change for four children* and a shirt for her husband*. " (19)

16. Maiden Newton Poor Book 2, March 1785.

17. East Stoke Poor Book, 3.11.1805.

18. Ibid., 8.4.1804.

19. Ibid., 15.4.1805.

In the Sturminster Marshall papers there is a considerable number of bills relating to the goods given to the poor. (20) There are bills for fabrics and tailors' bills for making up the garments. Thus a bill of 1796 shows that the parish spent £12. 9. 0 between April 1795 and February 1796 on cloth of various kinds, and a bill of 1799 shows that the tailor was paid £11. 1. 0 for his work in that year. Between August 1800 and March 1801, the parish bought 254 yards of dowlas and 54 yards of linsey at the cost of £23. 14. 10. The Sturminster bills include many for shoes and shoe-repairs. In 1794 repairs cost £6. 1. 0 and in 1810-11 twenty-five pairs of new shoes cost £11. 8. 5. There are bills also for coal, fire-wood and faggots.

Relief in kind was sometimes in the form of food. That it was given to the infirm Thomas Harben at Cerne Abbas has already been noted and those who were in good health were relieved in the same way. At Edmondsham, for instance, gifts of wheat and barley such as those referred to in the following entry dated 1773 were common. (21)

"Oct. 17th. Let Thos Stratten have a bushel of wheat, 3. 3.

Let old Bungay have wheat, 3. 3. "
At Winterborne Monkton is found, (22)
"1763. February, John Orchard $\frac{1}{2}$ bushel of wheat 2. 0.
milk 3. "

Similar examples might be instanced from almost every parish where records are extant.

The payment of rents was another mode of relief widely practised in the county. Three references to the practice occurred in the quotation from the Radipole accounts given above and other illustrations could be given from almost every parish and every year of the period. It is hard to draw a clear line between this practice and that of putting the poor into parish houses. Yet the two were different in principle: in the one case the poor man lived in his own home with help from the parish; in the other he lived where the parish put him and could be moved whenever the overseers chose to do so. In practice, however, the one often became the other. Thus at Iwerne Courtney in 1820 when a parish pauper was failing to pay

20. Sturminster Marshall Papers; D.R.O., P98/0V1.

21. Edmondsham Poor Book 2, 17.10.1773.

22. Winterborne Monkton Poor Book, Feb. 1763.

his rent the parish decided to pay the rent directly to the landlord and to deduct the amount from the man's pay. (23) Doubtless the owner would prefer to regard the parish as the tenant and soon it would be a parish house. Closely related to the payment of rents was the remission of rates. This was a hidden form of relief but none the less real to those who occupied cottages and it seems to have been usual in the county. (24)

Often the accommodation paid for by the parish was in lodgings with or without board, especially in the case of old persons and children. The latter were usually orphans as were Hannah and James White who were boarded out by Caundle Marsh in 1814. They were boarded with relatives at 2/- and 3/- per week respectively. (25) Quite frequently there was a woman in the parish who took in the parish children as her livelihood. At Caundle Bishop, Sarah Busey and Honor Phillips were looking after children at about 1/6 per head per week in 1795. (26) That such women did not always do so by choice is suggested by this Wimborne minute. "..... Widow Kerley is to superintend Wm Allen's family and to have a shilling extra per week but if she refuses her own pay is to be suspended." (27)

Medical aid of all kinds is indicated in the poor-books and frequently the parish contracted with a local doctor to tend the poor, often including those not actually chargeable, for a yearly salary. At Stour Provost, a parish which had over 600 inhabitants by 1801, the parish doctor was paid £5. 5. 0 in the 1760's and £12. 12. 0 just after 1800. (28) Often these medical contracts excluded certain cases such as smallpox, venereal disease, midwifery, fractures and large operations. (29) The doctors seemed to exclude those cases which

- 23. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 1, 24.12.1820.
- 24. Cf. Chapter IX above.
- 25. Caundle Marsh Poor Book, 27.1.1814.
- 26. Caundle Bishop Poor Book, e.g. each month in 1794-5.
- 27. Wimborne Minster Select Vestry Book 1, 24.6.1819.
- 28. Stour Provost Poor Books 1 and 4, cf. accounts for March in any year in 1760s and just after 1800.
- 29. Stalbridge Extra Book 4, 5.4.1790; D.R.O., Pl07/OV10.

involved visits to the paupers' homes for "journeys" are often explicitly excluded. (30) The amount paid to the doctor rose steadily throughout the period and often the parish concern for cheapness led to unsatisfactory arrangements. In 1816, for example, Burton Bradstock made a contract with a doctor for £5. 0. 0 per annum which included journeys. This was exceptionally low for a parish of nearly 700 inhabitants and it is not surprising to read in the following year that "last year's doctor neglected the poor." The next year the contract cost the parish £8. 0. 0 plus an extra 3/6 for each journey. (31) At Corfe Castle Mr. Galloway, who had been parish doctor from time to time since 1802, refused to renew the contract at £20 a year. "I could not act justly to the poor or myself on those terms," he wrote. (32) He pointed out that the number of applicants had doubled in the nineteen years since he first took charge of the poor and that without the contract the work involved would have cost the parish at least £240 in the previous year. The parish apparently urged him to continue, for on April 6th he wrote to the effect that he would continue but only "by order", that is he would attend when called and he would charge for each case individually. He further undertook to make the charges as reasonable as possible and to allow a 10% discount if the bills were paid within six months.

(33) This proved more expensive than the parish expected and in 1823 it accepted the offer of another doctor to attend the poor and the terms were fixed at £30 per annum. (34)

Smallpox was the great scourge of the Dorset countryside in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It caused expense to the parish because extra relief had to be given to the victims of the disease and because preventative measures were taken. In the earlier part of the period inoculation was common. The method was to inject the smallpox germ in order to give a mild

- 30. Fordington Poor Book 4, April 1810; D.R.O., P86/0V8.
- 31. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 3, cf. March 1816 and 1817; D.R.O., P97/0V3.
- 32. Corfe Castle Papers, Letter of Thos. Galloway, 12.3.1821; D.R.O., P11/0V199.
- 33. Ibid, Letter of Thos. Galloway, 6.4.1821.
- 34. Ibid, Letter of W. Cribbs, 24.3.1823; D.R.O., P11/0V199.

attack which would give some immunity. This motive was clearly expressed in a minute of the Stalbridge vestry in 1771. The overseers were to visit the poor and "to warn them they will have smallpox by their inoculation so that they shall not have it again to the detriment of the parish." (35) In this case an agreement had been reached with the parish doctor to inoculate the poor at 3/- per head. Later in the period the parish authorities' medical advisers became hostile to the practice of inoculation since they realised its dangers. Minutes are found reflecting this changed attitude such as this one from Studland dated 1826. "John Coake and George Summis are to be summoned before the magistrate to show cause why they inoculated their families with smallpox before Mr. De La Mothe could vaccinate the parish for cowpox." (36) Even when inoculation was carried out by a skilful doctor, there was danger involved and at Wimborne in 1780 an order was made that those inoculated should be removed to the infirmary unless their houses were very isolated. (37) At Wimborne the vestry had been attempting to stop "the spread of smallpox by inoculation" by unauthorised persons as early as 1768. (38) In 1833 they were still troubled in the same way, for several persons "are endeavouring to propagate smallpox by inoculation." The select vestry decided to instruct the medical men of the town to vaccinate the poor and they asked the town lawyer, Mr. Castleman, to write to Elliott, "a person who has come hither to propagate smallpox by inoculation", and to a Mrs. Bailey of Canford and threaten them with inditement if any of their patients were allowed to come into contact with other people. (39)

Cholera broke out in Wimborne in 1831. The authorities met the trouble by setting up in November 1831 a board of health - a course of action which had recently been authorised by an Order in Council. (40) In August 1832 an all-out attack on the scourge was authorised by

- 35. Stalbridge Poor Book 2, 27.2.1771; D.R.O., P107/0V2.
- 36. Studland Vestry Book, 12.7.1826.
- 37. Wimborne Order Book 1, 14.12.1780.
- 38. Wimborne Order Book 1, 5.4.1768.
- 39. Wimborne Select Vestry Order Book 4, 30.4.1833.
- 40. Wimborne Order Book 2, 26.11.1831.

the select vestry. (41) Medical supplies and nurses were to be obtained to treat the sick poor in their own homes and those who could not be treated at home were to be removed to the cholera hospitals. Infected houses were to be cleaned and whitewashed and any "corrupt, offensive and dangerous matter" found in or near houses was to be removed. The slaughter houses of the town were to be cleaned up and inspectors were to be called in to visit and report on the sanitary arrangements in Wimborne. Later in the month, after the inspectors' report perhaps, it was decided to open up and scour out the drains and watercourses of the town and also to visit the lodging houses to find any vagrants who might be spreading the disease. (42)

Besides references to disease there are frequent allusions in the poor-books to insanity. The treatment of this affliction was in a very primitive stage in 1760 as this group of entries from Canford suggests.

"May 19th. A. Sturmey in her distress	1/-
"May 27th. Expenses going to Wimborne to	
remove Ann Sturmey.	2/-
Paid to guard her home from Wimborne.	1/-
Paid for two locks to chain her.	1/3d
Paid for a pad lock.	6d
Paid for a pair of hand bolts.	1/6d
Paid for a chain.	3/6d
Paid for bedding her.	17/3d
Paid Richard Lock for making	
the bedding.	1/6d. " (43)

The Canford authorities were taking no chances with poor Ann!

The emphasis was still on physical restraint forty years later when John Husk of Stinsford was giving trouble. An entry in the poor-book dated 1803 ran:

"Jan. 18th Pd for 7 bottles of strong beer for the people that bed up along with John Husk.	3/6d "
and again,	
"Jan 27th. Strait waistcoat for John Husk,	10/6 " (44)

41. Wimborne Select Vestry Order Book, 15.8.1832.

42. Ibid., 29.8.1832.

43. Canford Magna Poor Book 1; D.R.O., P34/10/1

44. Stinsford Poor Book, Jan. 1803.

Despite the beer Husk was obviously wearing his bed-fellows out! The end of the period saw the opening of a county lunatic asylum at Forston House near Dorchester and the disappearance from the villages of problems such as those mentioned. At Buckland Newton there are records of the parish paying quarterly bills to the asylum for the keep of an insane parishioner. (45)

Persons with other types of illness had long been sent to institutions when it appeared to the overseers to be necessary. Many parishes subscribed annually to the Bath or the Salisbury hospitals and sent their seriously sick people there to be cured. Yetminster, for instance, sent John Cheesem to Salisbury to see if his eyesight could be restored at a cost of not more than £6. 6. 0 (46) and Caundle Bishop sent Martha Bartlett to Bath for an unspecified reason and John Morris to London to have his sight restored. (47)

The typical methods of relief in the eighteenth century involved gifts in both money and kind. It was left to the discretion of the overseer, aided sometimes by the vestry, to decide which method should be used and how much should be given. The giving of relief in kind seems to have been associated in many cases with particularly bad times but a few parishes gave most of their relief in this way at all times and the reason might well have been that it could not be spent in the alehouse. Other parishes tried to deal with this problem in another way. For instance Burton Bradstock, in 1787, passed a vestry resolution threatening to prosecute licensed houses which sold liquor to parish paupers. (48)

The amount of relief to be given was decided with a view to economy and to the necessity of satisfying the pauper that his needs had been met for if the overseer and the pauper disagreed too markedly there would be an appeal to a local justice and a summons to answer. The decision was sometimes the result of a certain amount of bargaining and bluff. Thus when John George sought relief at Corfe

45. Buckland Newton Bills; D.R.O., P18/0V14.

46. Yetminster Poor Book, 20.4.1767.

47. Caundle Bishop Papers, Letter from Mr, Pinfold (u.d.) and Poor Book 2, 15.4.1799.

48. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 2, 6.5.1787; D.R.O.; P97/0V2.

Castle in 1765 he was obviously closely questioned about his circumstances and he admitted that he had a loaf of bread in the house. The overseer then offered him three shillings which he seems to have taken at first but then returned as insufficient. Apparently he pretended to leave - hoping to be offered more. When he found that no better offer was forthcoming he came back and took the three shillings. (49) On other occasions the pauper appealed to the justices and a document such as this one from Fordington would be issued. (50)

"Dorset. To the churchwardens and overseers of the parish of Fordington.

"Whereas Richard Chapman of your parish hath made oath before me one of his majesty's justices of the peace for the said county. That he is very poor and utterly unable to provide for himself and his family and he has applied at a public vestry of the said parish for relief and was denied the same. And whereas the overseers of the poor of the said parish have been duly summoned to show cause why relief should not be given to the said Richard Chapman and family and no cause hath been shown to the contrary.

"These are therefore in his majesty's name to command you to pay unto the said Richard Chapman the sum of eighteen shillings per week for and towards the support and maintenance of the said Richard Chapman and his family until such time you shall be ordered to forebear such weekly allowance.

"Given under my hand and seal,
the twentieth day of March 1801.

James Frampton."

If it were at all possible the magistrate would deal with the matter more informally. Thus when a pauper from Hilton complained to the Rev. John Davis of Cerne Abbas, Davis sent the overseer the following note dated December 18th, 1818.

"Mr. Davis hopes that the overseers of Hilton will pay their earliest attention to the contents of the enclosed letter and supply the pauper with the articles of apparel etc. named by Mr. How. Their doing so will render it

49. Corfe Castle Poor Book 2, 26.9.1765; D.R.O., P11/0V5.
50. Fordington Papers, Order to Relief; D.R.O., P86/0V20.

unnecessary that an order should be issued for relief in money adequate to the purpose." (51)

Some parishes were in a stronger position in such cases for they could offer a place in the workhouse to the pauper instead of refusing his request for relief. When William Horst asked the guardians of Wool for relief in 1798, they offered to take two of his children into the workhouse. Horst refused the offer and demanded 1/- per week but the guardians refused to give this. Horst then appealed to the petty sessions at Wareham and one of the guardians attended, in answer to the usual summons. When the case of the parish was explained and the offer of a workhouse place was mentioned, the justices reprimanded Horst and dismissed him without an order. (52) The case of the parish was strong in this instance for the justices could not order outdoor relief in a parish which applied Gilbert's Act. The overseers were sometimes tempted to retaliate when a pauper applied to the magistrates. When the Rev. John Davis had granted relief to Charles Swyre of Hilton, the overseers resolved to move him into a hovel. As a result Davis wrote again: "Nothing I hope will be done vexatiously or unfeelingly to require further interposition of a magistrate." (53) Sometimes the mere threat to appeal to the magistrates provoked retaliation. At Wool, for example, Samuel Harris applied for clothing for his family and was refused. Harris threatened that he would seek an order from the justices to force the guardians to grant relief. The guardians then passed the following resolution: "It was resolved unanimously that John Harris (son of the said Samuel) for his nastiness should be dismissed the house." (54)

The overseers and the parish vestries could relieve generously but they did not give readily or continue to give when they considered the need had gone. The parish vestry books show how the relief was constantly readjusted. At East Orchard for instance an

51. Hilton Papers, Letter of Rev. J. Davis of 18.12.1818; D.R.O., P21/0V12.

52. Wool Order Book, pp. 33 and 36.

53. Hilton Papers; Order to Relieve C. Swyre, 2.12.1818; Letter from Rev. J. Davis, 7.12.1818; D.R.O., P21/0V12.

54. Wool Minute Book, p. 33.

entry dated 19th, April 1774 shows that Catharine Metyard was to have "only 2/6 for the future." Susannah Cook's pay was "to be discontinued whilst she and her children are so well provided for." "Uriah Hunt's widow and boy were to have a shilling taken off their pay." (55) At Lytchett Minster the vestry decided that if any of the regular poor receiving monthly pay should try to improve their lot by taking in a lodger, they were to lose their allowance. (56) The reason for this decision may have been that the lodgers would probably be persons not settled in the parish and the vestry were no doubt also anxious to economise.

Although the parish was obliged to support its poor it was entitled to recoup itself if it could. If an applicant for relief had relatives who were in a position to help, the parish could force them to do so. If the applicant for relief had property, the parish could take possession of it as a condition of giving relief. If a man had deserted his family and had left property behind as well, the parish could seek a warrant from the magistrates authorising its seizure.

The 1601 Act had laid it down that parents and grandparents, children and grandchildren of paupers were liable to support them, if they had the means to do so. In practice the parishes were not over-zealous in enforcing the law and their attitude was often similar to that shown by the Burton Bradstock vestry in 1794. Their minute ran: "The overseers are to speak to Wm Bishop's sons about supporting him. If they refuse he is to be supported by the parish." (57) The sons apparently did not refuse for there is no mention of relief to William Bishop in the accounts. Shipton Gorge, however, adopted a firmer policy towards John Seaward in 1800. He was told to support his grandchildren or application would be made to the magistrates for an order to force him. He may have agreed at the time but nine months later the magistrates were approached and eventually Seaward was sent to gaol because he still refused to support the children. (58)

55. East Orchard Order Book, 19.4.1774.

56. Lytchett Minster Poor Book, May 1786.

57. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 2, 4.2.1794; D.R.O., P97/0V2.

58. Shipton Gorge Poor Book, 4.3.1800 and 8.12.1800.

Between 1760 and 1834 only seven cases of this kind came before the quarter sessions and concerned the support of sons, a daughter-in-law, grandchildren and parents. (59) In the petty sessions of the Dorchester division only two cases of this kind were heard between 1811 and 1834. (60) This evidence does not suggest any great zeal in enforcing the law, although it must be remembered that often the relatives would be nearly as poor as the pauper.

There seems to have been rather more zeal in taking possession of the property of paupers, probably because it could be done without resort to the justices. At Wool, John Hatchard agreed with the guardians in 1797 that the parish was to receive "the whole rents and profits of my living called 'Paties' which I now hold under Thos. Weld Esq. Lord of this manor, from midsummer to Lady day in consideration of an allowance of 5/- per week." (61) Again when Judith Darbey of Burton Bradstock asked for relief "duly in church", the vestry resolved that the rent of her property in Burton, let to Mr. Best, should be paid to the parish for use in her relief with whatever addition the parish considered necessary and, moreover, that an inventory should be taken of her goods. (62) At Blandford under 1778 is found:

"Dec. 10th. Pd Widow Bardy's rent and took an inventory of her goods. £1. 15. 0" (63)
A vestry minute at Swanage, dated April 7th, 1773, described the whole policy. Whenever a poor person applied for relief the overseers were to go to his or her house and take possession of all the goods found there. An inventory of the goods was to be made "to the intent that the said goods shall be kept for the use of the said pauper as far as they are necessary to them, and that what goods do not appear to be necessary to be disposed of or kept in the hands of the overseers until the pauper shall reimburse the parish...." (64) The

- 59. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book, *passim*.
- 60. Dorchester Petty Sessions, Record of Convictions, *passim*.
- 61. Wool Minute Book, p. 16.
- 62. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 1, 1.8.1764; D.R.O., P97/0V1.
- 63. Blandford Overseers' Accounts 3; D.R.O., P70/0V3.
- 64. Swanage Overseers' Accounts, 7.4.1773

parish did not always enforce its rights to sell the goods. On one occasion, for example, East Orchard resolved that the late Catherine Metyard's children were to have their mother's goods equally divided among them. (65)

Men who deserted their families were always pursued by the overseers with the utmost rigour of the law and they found no sympathy with the justices. If they left any property behind, the parish applied for a warrant to recoup itself from it. When George Mortimer of Horton ran off and left his family, the parish applied to two justices for a warrant to seize his "goods, chattels, rents and profits" and from them to recover the £2. 5. 6. which it had cost to support the family. The parish then took possession of a cottage and land with the annual value of £1. 11. 6. and applied to the quarter sessions to confirm the order and the action which it had already taken. This the sessions duly did and instructed the overseers to sell goods and chattels sufficient to pay off the rest of the debt. (66) In some cases the parish allowed the man to go off in search of work and it supported his family while he was absent, on the understanding that he would pay off the debt on his return. This was done frequently in the case of men working in the Newfoundland fishing trade. In the Corfe Castle papers is a letter from a man working in Newfoundland to his wife and this illustrates the arrangement and its problems.

"Fort Monston. Nov. 18th 1783.

"My Loveing Wife this comes with my kind love and blessing on my children. Hoping in the Lord this will find you in good health as I thank him it leaves me at the present my dear. We had a very sudden discharge which have been very hurtful for the money I had saved in order as I thought to have sent to have the children clothed I have been obliged to spend in rideing and walking about in order to get work but I thank God at last by meeting with the Duke of Richmond I have got a jobb. Jem and I work together and I believe we shall have a winters if not a summers work. So you may tell the officers I shall make good the money to them as usel.

65. East Orchard Vestry Book 16, 7.1783.

66. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol. 3, F.364.

give love to all friends and tell them that Jem wants his clothes for he cannot go to church or anywhere as he would. we work at that job Mr. Chandler serve so William Turner can sent it in the vessel they load

"James Summers," (67)

The letter was probably written with the knowledge that the wife would show it to the overseer as, of course, she must have done since it survives in the parish papers. When a man came home from Newfoundland, he was not always so ready or able to pay as he had promised years before. The following Halstock minute, dated February 22nd, 1821, suggests unwillingness: "Unless John Eastment will reimburse the parish of Halstock £10 for part of the charge that his wife and family have been to the parish in his absence for five years in Newfoundland and in case of his not paying £10 the churchwardens and overseer are hereby ordered to procure a warrent to bring the said Jn Eastment to Justes." (68)

The system of relief just described was practised generally in Dorset until the last year or two of the eighteenth century. Just before 1800 there was a change in many parts of the county to the systems to be described in the next chapter. Nevertheless the older system continued in use in most petty-sessional divisions. In some cases it persisted in a few villages at a time when some other system was more general in the division. Thus Arne in the Blandford South division persisted in using the older methods when many parishes in that area had adopted the system of making up pay. (69) The Dorchester and Sherborne divisions, except for a very few parishes, never adopted any means of relieving the poor other than the system just described. In the Dorchester division none of the sixteen parishes studied seem to have changed their methods, with the single exception of Hermitage which was an isolated parish in the middle of parishes where the system of making up pay was practised. (70) There are rare entries in some of the other fifteen parishes which refer to supplementary pay. There are a

67. Corfe Castle Papers, Letter from J. Summers; D.R.O., P11/0V195.
68. Halstock Poor Book, 22.2.1821.
69. Arne Poor Book, cf. 1816 onwards *passim*; D.R.O., D133.
70. For the parishes in each division see the appendix to Chapter VIII.

few entries at Maiden Newton, for example, dated between 1800 and 1802 which indicate some kind of family allowance. This was during the worst crisis the Dorset poor ever faced and the practice did not become permanent. (71) Again, at Stinsford in the same period is found an occasional entry such as this:

"May 3rd. Paid John Trim 3/- to make his wages up to 12/- per week. He to have 9/- of Mr. Pitt and the parish to 'low 3/-." (72)

The detail given indicates the exceptional nature of the arrangement, which does not in any case suggest the use of a scale based on the price of bread. It is true that there are one or two entries in the Stinsford book which do mention bread but the amounts and the wording point to the fixing of an arbitrary amount rather than to the use of a scale. There is found, for instance, an entry dated 1800 as follows:

"Aug. 22nd Marey Squib 2/- extra for bread 2/-" (73)

Entries of this sort suggest emergency measures rather than a system and their rarity together with the fact that they do not continue after the immediate crisis supports this conclusion.

Finally it must be noted that there was a return to the older system in many parts of the county in the 1830's but this will be considered at a later stage.

71. Maiden Newton Poor Book, 1800 to 1803 *passim*.

72. Stinsford Poor Book, 3.5.1800.

73. *Ibid.*, 22.8.1800.

Chapter Sixteen

Outdoor Relief: The First Changes.

The last decade of the eighteenth century was a difficult one for rural labourers and the expenditure on poor relief rose rapidly. Then from 1799 to 1802 the countryside experienced times worse than any within living memory. In the ten years from 1793 to 1802 the methods of poor relief in many parts of England were profoundly altered and Dorset shared to some extent in those changes.

The first sign of change in Dorset was the holding of a meeting at Dorchester in 1792. The meeting, described as being of the acting justices for the county, passed a resolution which the quarter sessions sanctioned and recorded in its minutes when it met by adjournment a few days later, on December 1st. The resolution was as follows: "That having taken into consideration the difficulties the poor labour under, from the present high price of corn and other necessaries, the justices within their respective divisions will make an order on the parish officers on the complaint of every industrious and peaceable poor person which shall seem to be well founded, to relieve him or her with such sum as shall make up, together with the weekly earnings of him, her and their family, a comfortable support for them.

"And the justices having thus provided for the necessary subsistence of the industrious and peaceable poor, declare their determination to enforce the laws against such as shall meet together for any unlawful purpose." (1) This resolution implies that the price of wheat was unusually high (2) and seems to presuppose agrarian unrest in the county. The local newspapers, however, which usually mention troubles of this kind, are silent on this occasion and the calendar of prisoners at

1. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol. 3, f. 340.
2. The local newspapers do not record the wheat prices at Sherborne or Poole at this particular time but since the harvest had been a bad one, it is reasonable to assume that there had been a considerable rise. London prices had risen from 42/10d per quarter in August 1792 to 49/6d per quarter at the end of November.
cf. Sherborne Mercury, 20.8.1792 and 3.12.1792.

the next quarter sessions was little longer than usual. (3) On the other hand there was good reason to anticipate trouble; for the rains of July and August had damaged the wheat crop and the early frosts of September had spoilt the potatoes still in the ground. (4) There was certainly a feeling abroad that something would have to be done to reduce the hardships of the poor, and in mid-November at a meeting in Dorchester a group of farmers decided to sell wheat to their labourers at 5/- below the market price. (5)

The situation was evidently less serious than had been anticipated, for there are no reports of rioting or violence and the poor-books do not suggest that the policy laid down by the justices was implemented to any significant extent. About one-sixth of the possible parish records bearing on this period are available for study and this seems a fair sample on which to base conclusions. In these records one case has been found at Burton Bradstock which appears to reflect the policy indicated in the resolution. The minute dated April 23rd 1793 was as follows: "John Woodward is to have his pay made up to a shilling a day, six days a week." (6) This clearly refers to the making up of the earnings of a man, probably able-bodied, to a sum considered adequate; but there is no suggestion that a bread scale was used to make up the total income. It must be remembered that 6/- per week was the normal wage for the labourer at this time. Besides this single example at Burton Bradstock, there were also two other less explicit ones - at Winterborne Whitechurch in 1794 and at Sturminster Newton in 1795. (7)

This Dorchester resolution of 1792 differed in one respect at least from the more famous Speenhamland decision of 1795. (8) Both resolutions stated that the justices would order relief to supplement applicant's pay, if they thought that he could not subsist on his earnings. The Berkshire resolution went further and introduced the bread scale: it stated in effect that a man, his wife

3. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol. 3, f. 344.
4. T. S. Ashton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
5. Sherborne Mercury, 19.11.1792.
6. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 2, 23.4.1793, D.R.O., P97/0V2.
7. Winterborne Whitechurch, cf. P68/0V1. (D.R.O.)
Sturminster Newton, cf. P71/0V4 (D.R.O.).
8. S. and B. Webb, *op.cit.*, pp. 177-8 for details.

and their children needed a certain amount of bread to enable them to subsist and were entitled to the price of that amount of bread - thus as the price of bread varied so would the sum by which they were relieved. The Dorchester resolution, on the other hand, spoke only of making up the earnings to a "comfortable support" and did not provide any means of defining that standard. In fact it was wider in its scope, for while it authorised the use of the poor-rate to subsidize able-bodied men in full employ, its vagueness allowed for a variety of ways of implementation. When innovations began on a significant scale in 1795, the use of the bread scale was not one of them. Two methods of relief were in fact introduced and both of them were covered by this broad interpretation of the resolution of 1792.

On May 21st, 1795, at a meeting in Dorchester of the noblemen, gentlemen, clergy and freeholders of the county it was decided to relieve the distress caused by the high price of bread by raising a county subscription from which to subsidize the price of bread sold to the poor. A committee was set up to administer the scheme and the clergy were requested to urge their parishioners to contribute to the fund. On the following day the committee met and appointed sub-committees for each division of the county. These sub-committees were instructed to arrange for the importation of adequate supplies of wheat and to discover the names and numbers of the poor in their respective divisions. They were to instruct the overseers in each parish to draw up a list of those deserving assistance from the fund and bring it before them for approval. Copies of each list were then to be given by the overseers to the bakers of their respective parishes. The bakers would be asked to sell a specified quantity of bread to the families on the lists at a reduced price. The difference between this price and the prevailing market price was to be paid by the overseers from parish funds, but the sum so expended would be reimbursed to the parish from the county subscription. (9) Some reference to the operation of the scheme is to be found in the parish

poor-books as, for instance, at Broadwey where this entry occurs:

"July - Three journeys to Dorchester, attending the committee and the justices about bread for the poor, 7/6d" Again at Mosterton it is recorded that in July 1795 the overseer went to Bridport to obtain the "bread money" for the poor. (10)

The scheme seems to have been a voluntary one for the Beaminster vestry decided to raise their own subscription and not to participate in the "general subscription raised in the county." (11) There is no evidence to show how long the county scheme operated except the lack of reference to it after the summer of 1795 but it may be supposed that when the funds subscribed were exhausted, some parishes continued to subsidize bread from the poor-rates. This certainly happened at Beaminster where the sale of subsidized bread began in June 1795 to persons on an approved list at 1/3d for the standard wheaten loaf and at 1/1d for "household" bread. In July the parish authorities began to buy wheat and have it ground and baked for sale to the approved poor at 4d below the prevailing price. By August the fund seems to have been exhausted and the bread was being subsidized from the rates. (12) The county subscription, however, did not originate the sale of subsidized bread in Dorset, for there are examples of it earlier than the summer of 1795 when the practice became general. At Lydlinch, for instance, the parish made its own plans and put them into effect in January 1795. Between January and April in that year Lydlinch parish bought 1,191 loaves of bread and sold them to the poor at 6d each. The loss to the parish on these transactions was £7.18.9d. In the next year to April 1796, it sold 4,268 loaves to the poor at 6d, 7d and 8d each; the operation costing the parish £45.12.5½d. (13)

10. Broadwey Poor Book, July 1795; and Mosterton Poor Book 3, July 1795.
11. Beaminster Poor Book 4, 14.6.1795; D.R.O., P57/OV12.
12. Ibid., June to August 1795; D.R.O., P57/OV12.
13. Lydlinch Poor Book 2, April 1795 and April 1796; D.R.O., P107/OV2.

The practice of giving family allowances to those of the poor who had many children seems also to have originated in the crisis of 1795. The evidence at this date is not extensive but the system was undoubtedly in use at South Perrott, Whitechurch Canonicorum and Winterborne Whitechurch. (14) The importance of these slight beginnings is that the practice very soon became an important part of Dorset poor relief. The area where it became most common was the Bridport division where it appears to have been adopted by almost every parish. In a return made by Broadwinstor in 1832 to the Poor Law Commissioners (but not published by them) the parish reported that they were accustomed to make allowances to large families on the basis of the number of children who were too young to be employed but that they were not relieving any "able-bodied persons as such". (15) In a letter written in 1804, a Blandford pauper who was resident in Netherbury supported his appeal for relief by describing how families in that part of the county received 6d per head per week. (16) This information may not have been strictly accurate, for the impression given by the poor-books of the neighbouring parishes is that there needed to be a minimum number of children in a family to qualify for relief and that 1/- per head per week was the usual amount given. (17)

The system of family allowances seems to have been often combined with the apprenticing policy described in Chapter XII above. If a family with children of an age for apprenticing (that is aged nine years or over) applied for relief, the overseer refused it unless one or more of the children were bound apprentice. In the case of a family which was already receiving relief, each child was apprenticed as he or she reached the age of nine. It was the combination of these two policies concerning apprentices and family allowances which characterised the management of the poor in West Dorset in the early nineteenth century.

14. Cf. Poor Books of parishes cited under 1795.
15. Broadwinstor; Copy of Return to the Poor Law Commissioners; D.R.O., P58/0V111.
16. Blandford Papers; Letter of D. Stevens; D.R.O., P70/0V16.
17. Cf. parish records e.g. Broadwinstor 1800 onwards; P58/0V74 to 81; and Symondsbury, P93/0V3 and 4.

Similar methods of relief seem to have been in use in Devon and in most of Somerset, according to the parish returns to the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages which reported in 1824. (18) The 1834 Poor Law Report and the parish returns given in its appendices are consistent with this conclusion. (19) In Dorset the family allowance system was not confined to the western division for it was in use also in parishes along the western fringes of the Dorchester division, such as Rampisham, Maiden Newton, Litton Cheney and Swyre. (20) There are also examples of its use in the Shaston West and Blandford South divisions; in the former as an occasional reaction from the prevailing system of making up pay and in the latter as the normal practice to 1810. (21) It was used also, though only very occasionally, in the Sherborne, Cerne and Sturminster divisions of the county. (22)

From 1795 to 1799 the sale of subsidized bread or grain and the family allowance system (although the latter was still uncommon before 1799) were the main modifications of the earlier methods of poor relief. The period of crisis had been at its worst in 1795 and 1796 but the two years which followed were decidedly better. The average price of wheat, which had been 78/7d in 1796, fell to 53/9d in 1797. (23) Then after a wretched harvest in 1799 it rocketed. (24) In November the price at Sherborne reached 91/4d per quarter, (25) and it seemed clear that a situation had developed similar to that in 1792 and 1795; except that it was far worse. Once again a meeting was called, this time of "Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders", at Dorchester on December 7th. The meeting approved three proposals: first that bread

18. Abstract of Returns on Labourers' Wages, pp. 372-3, 402-3.
19. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A 1, p. 435 and Appendix B 2, pp. 397-409.
20. Cf. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.25 and the poor-books of Rampisham c. 1825, Swyre c. 1825, Maiden Newton c. 1800 to 1806 and Litton Cheney c. 1800-1806.
21. E.g. Fontmell Magna, Motcombe and Ashmore in the Shaston West, and East Stoke, Winterborne Kingston and Wareham Holy Trinity Without in the Blandford South.
22. E.g. Iwerne Courtney (Sturminster), Bishop's Caundle (Sherborne) and Buckland Newton (Cerne).
23. National averages from Prothero, op. cit. pp. 440-1.
24. T. S. Ashton, op. cit. p.25.
25. Sherborne Mercury, 11.11.1799.

should be made only partly of wheaten flour; secondly that each parish should make arrangements in the light of local circumstances to reduce the consumption of bread by encouraging the use of other articles of food; thirdly that the magistrates should order allowances from the poor-rate to enable the poorer people to survive. These allowances were to be calculated with reference to three things: the size of the family, the amount of the earnings and the amount of bread considered necessary for their support. These allowances were to be considered as "in aid of earnings and over and above all other parochial relief." In assessing the amount of relief to be paid it was assumed that in each week a half-peck or gallon loaf (about eight pounds) was necessary for each person in the family. The amount of relief was to be the difference between the cost of the appropriate amount of bread at the time of granting the relief and its cost in normal times (i.e. when the price of wheat was 48/- per quarter and that of barley was 24/-). Finally if any man with a family earned less than 8/- per week, then the deficiency was to be made up before the scale was applied. (26)

The first of these proposals reflected a national policy and the Duke of Portland, the Home Secretary, had sent a circular letter to the various quarter sessions urging that regulations should be made reducing the quality of bread. Thus when the Dorset sessions adopted the proposal at the January meeting held at Blandford, (27) it was probably as a result of Portland's letter rather than the resolution passed at the Dorchester meeting. (28) The second proposal probably led to a revival, or perhaps a continuation on a much wider basis, of the sale of subsidized food. At West Chelborough peas and potatoes were sold to the poor at a loss. (29) Powerstock sold potatoes, rice and barley, (30) and

26. Sherborne Mercury, 16.12.1799.
27. Dorset Q.S. Minute Book Vol. 4, f.174.
28. Dorset Q.S. Rolls, Jan. 1800, Letter from the Duke of Portland.
29. West Chelborough Poor Book 2, 1800-01.
30. Powerstock Poor Book 3, 1800-01; D.R.O., P51/0V2.

Beaminster barley and potatoes. (31) Quite a number of parishes made similar arrangements in 1800 and of these a high proportion were in the western part of the county. It was, however, in 1801 that this approach to the problem of poverty reached its fullest development. An Act of Parliament (41 Geo.III c.9) emphasised the duty of the magistrates to consider the price and quality of the commodities consumed by the poor and this acted as a spur to the Dorset justices. The petty sessions (32) issued rules for their divisions instructing the overseers to make arrangements in their respective parishes to sell foodstuffs cheaply to the poor. The Sturminster justices sent out a circular letter to the parishes under their jurisdiction which began with a reference to the Act and then laid down a number of rules, some of which are relevant to this argument. One was that the overseers should buy a stock of provisions for consumption by the poor and it suggested that barley, potatoes, rice, peas, herrings and pilchards, but not wheaten bread, should be included. A suitable person was to be entrusted with the sale of these goods to the poor for cash only. Another rule concerned the price to be charged for these supplies. The basis was to be the actual cost of the provisions to the parish plus a small percentage to cover the expenses involved. The final figure was to be fixed by the overseers subject to the consent of the justices. (33) Rice and barley were bought in at Kington Magna and resold to the poor (34) and barley and potatoes at Sturminster Newton. (35) In other divisions there are similar references. (36)

The fullest implementation of this policy was in the Bridport division. At Burton Bradstock the vestry met in February 1801 to consider the "regulations

31. Beaminster Poor Book 4, 1800; D.R.O., P57/0V12.
32. Although there is direct evidence for this only in the Bridport and Sturminster divisions, the widespread adoption of the policy enjoined suggests that such rules were issued in all the divisions.
33. In the Kington Magna papers; D.R.O., P4/0V9.
34. Kington Magna Poor Book; D.R.O., P4/0V2.
35. Sturminster Newton Poor Book; D.R.O., P71/0V6.
36. Inter Alia Oborne (Sherborne div.), Maiden Newton (Dorchester div.), Gussage All Saints (Shaston East div.). Cf. Poor Books c. 1801.

transmitted by the magistrates of the Bridport division." The magistrates had suggested that barley and potatoes should be sold to the poor at 8/- per sack and "Scots barley" and rice at a halfpenny per pound under cost price. The vestry decided to do what had been suggested and to lay in a stock of these and other commodities. They decided to purchase one hundred and fifty bushels of coal, two hundred bushels of barley, fifty sacks of potatoes, six barrels of herrings or pilchards, one tierce (a small barrel) of rice and two hundredweights of Scots barley. One John Everett was put in charge of the selling arrangements at an annual salary of £2.12.6., and was instructed to sell for cash only. (37) Similar arrangements were made at Symondsbury, but in this case the goods were delivered to the homes of the approved poor in quantities determined by the size of each family. (38)

In many places these arrangements continued for a long time. At Powerstock, for instance, the system was still in use in 1825 (39) and it was not until 1824 that the Swanage vestry decided to discontinue the parish store except for the sale of bread. (40) There is evidence for the sale of provisions at Stalbridge as late as 1819 (41) and at Halstock as late as 1817. (42) The part of the scheme which related to the sale of coal became a permanent feature of poor relief in many places. The arrangements were regulated at Stour Provost in 1826 and since they are fully explained in the poor-book, they will serve as an illustration of what probably happened in other parishes. The coal at Stour Provost was brought from the mines at Radstock or at Riddleton by ratepayers, if they chose to undertake the task. Those who did the work were paid 1/4 a hundredweight for the coal and this included the cost of transport. The coal was then sold by the overseer from the parish store every Monday morning at 1/- a hundred-weight. (43)

Arrangements of this kind, especially those relating

- 37. Burton Bradstock Poor Book 2, Feb.1801, D.R.O.,P97/0V2.
- 38. Symondsbury Poor Book 2, 14.1.1801. D.R.O.,P93/0V3.
- 39. Powerstock Poor Book 4. cf. 1825, D.R.O., M.C.4832.
- 40. Swanage Vestry Minutes, 25.3.1824.
- 41. Stalbridge Extra Book 7, Aug.1819. D.R.O.,P107/0V13.
- 42. Halstock Poor Book, Jan. 1817.
- 43. Stour Provost Poor Book 6, 29.6.1826.

to food, were not so popular as might be supposed when it is remembered that the poor obtained the goods more cheaply than in the ordinary shops and that the quality was often much better. In his report Okeden gave his opinion that the ordinary shopkeepers overcharged, gave light weight and sold articles of very poor quality. One shopkeeper had told him that having bought his goods cheaply he sold them at such a profit that he could afford to give long credit to most unreliable people; for if only one in three of his customers paid, he could still make a satisfactory profit. Okeden concluded that this long credit made the ordinary shops more popular than the parish stores, which usually sold only for cash. (44) He also described how his neighbour at More Criche, Mr. Sturt, had pensioned off two elderly shopkeepers in his parish and had set up a new shop which sold only goods of the best quality but at prices 25% lower than those which the former shopkeepers had charged. Yet because the credit was restricted to two weeks the villagers soon turned against it and a year later the old shopkeepers threw up their pensions and resumed business, "selling bad goods at the highest prices"; within a short time the new shop had been superseded. (45)

The meeting of gentlemen, clergy and freeholders at Dorchester in December 1799, whose first two proposals have been considered, proposed as their third suggestion the elaborate system (already described on p. 211 above) of supplementing pay by a variable amount based on the price of bread. This was not "the making up of pay" as it was normally practised in Dorset and elsewhere - a system by which the labourers' pay was made up to a specific total calculated from the price of bread prevailing at the time. In this Dorchester proposal it was the supplement and not the total that was to be calculated and this calculation was to be made from the amount by which bread had increased in price since normal

44. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.20.

45. Ibid.

times. (46) It cannot be decided with certainty whether this proposal was ever put into practice in the county, for very few poor-books contain any details of the way in which the relief was calculated but none in which there are such calculations used the "Dorchester method". (47)

Although the poor-books rarely contain the actual calculations it is usually possible to recognise when a bread scale was in use, since the amount of the relief was often irregular. Some rough calculations found at the back of the Iwerne Courtney vestry book illustrate this point and will serve to demonstrate how the system worked. (48)

	Allowance.	Earnings.
Mary Lambert.	1/6.	-
Sarah.	1/1.	1/6.
William.	1/-.	1/-.
3 others @ 1/-.	<u>3/-.</u>	<u>-</u>
	6/7.	2/6.
Less Earnings ...	<u>2/6.</u>	
Relief...	4/1.	
George Yeatman.	1/10.	6/-.
Wife.	1/6.	-
Maria.	1/1.	-
5 others @ 1/-.	<u>5/-.</u>	<u>-</u>
	9/5.	6/-.
Less Earnings ...	<u>6/-.</u>	
Relief...	3/5.	

46. The difference between this method and the more usual system of making up pay can be illustrated by the following hypothetical case. If it is assumed that in "normal times" a gallon loaf cost 1/3d, then when such a loaf cost 1/6d, a family of five would be entitled to relief equal to the difference in the cost of five loaves, i.e. 1/3d. The earnings of the family would not have been taken into account unless they were less than 8/- per week, in which case they would have been made up to that sum before the allowance for bread was added. Thus if the family of five earned 6/- in all, their total relief would have been 3/3d. By the more usual methods it would have been calculated that the total family income should have been the price of five such loaves, i.e. 7/6d, and the actual earnings, i.e. 6/- would have been deducted. Thus the relief given to such a family would have been 1/6d.

47. It must be noted that it was the method of calculation which was apparently never used. The proposal that a half-peck or gallon loaf should be considered the amount of bread required by each member of the family was put into effect in the Shaston East and Blandford North divisions from 1799 on. Cf. below for further discussion of this.

48. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 1, cf. end of the book.

In these examples it is possible to see the process of calculation and that the resulting relief was likely to be an irregular sum of money, rather than sums such as 3/6d or 4/- usually given under other systems of relief. It must be borne in mind that the scale might have been less rigidly applied and the nearest round figure given, in which case this test would not operate successfully. In such cases it is useful to see whether the amounts of poor relief fluctuated with the price of bread. This can also be illustrated from calculations in the Iwerne Courtney book. (49) Thus when bread was 9d per quatern John Painter's allowance was calculated as in the first column below and when the price of bread was 8d as in the second column.

	Bread 9d.	Bread 8d.
John Painter.	2/4.	2/1.
Wife.	1/10.	1/8.
Child 1.	2/4.	2/1.
Child 2.	1/10.	1/8.
Child 3.	1/3.	1/2.
	<hr/> 9/7.	<hr/> 8/8.

If the family income was 6/- per week, Painter would have received 3/7 when bread was 9d and 2/8 when bread was 8d per quatern. If the parish generously made these sums up to 4/- and 3/- respectively, or, less generously reduced them to 3/6 and 2/6, there would still be an obvious fluctuation with the price of bread and it would be clear that a bread scale was in use. It must not, however, be expected that variations would be frequent because in some places, as for example at Parkstone, it was the custom to use "a common average of the price of bread without attending to its constant fluctuations." (50) If the amounts varied only from year to year, the use of the bread scale must be suspected. It is therefore often possible to detect the making up of pay system although it is not possible to distinguish the "Dorchester method" from the more usual "Speenhamland method" unless details of the calculations were recorded. In every case, however, where these details exist, they show that the latter method

49. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 1, cf. end of book.

50. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.35.

of calculation was in use. In addition to this consideration, it can be supposed that the meeting at Dorchester would probably have had more people present from that locality than from remoter parts of the county. Yet it was in these remoter parts that the making up of pay began on a significant scale, whereas in the Dorchester division it was an extremely unusual practice. Finally it must be remembered that the "Speenhamland" type of calculation was much simpler than that which had been proposed at Dorchester.

It is contended, then, that the 1799 resolution did not originate the system of making up pay in Dorset, although it was fruitful in other directions, as has been seen. At the most, the proposal gave a stimulus to a practice which had already started in the eastern part of the county where it did not begin as a result of any policy formulated at Dorchester, although no doubt it was authorised by the resolution of 1792. However, the rate of one gallon loaf to each member of the family may have been adopted as a result of the Dorchester proposals; on the other hand this standard may have been included in the resolution because it was already being used in the east of the county. According to Okeden the system of making up the pay of able-bodied labourers in full employ, based on the bread scale, began in Dorset "about 1798 when the price of bread had risen to a tremendous price." (51) Yet it seems improbable that it should have started in 1798 for in that year there was no great increase in bread prices. (52) At Poole and Sherborne the wheat prices remained steady until the spring of 1799 but in April the price reached 60/- per quarter and in August 80/-. (53) The first clear indications of the use of the bread scale in Dorset are in the parish books of Wimborne St. Giles and Edmondsham (54) relating to the late autumn of 1799. The two villages are near Cranborne in the Shaston East division, the area which Okeden knew best. Soon afterwards other villages in the division began to use it: Luton Minster, Gussage All Saints and Canford Magna all did so by 1801. (55) It appears then that Okeden's

51. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.13.

52. Prices from Prothero, op.cit. pp. 488-9.

53. Sherborne Mercury, esp. 22.4.1799 and 19.8.1799.

54. Poor Books of parishes cited for Oct. to Dec. 1799.

55. Poor Books of Gussage, Luton and Canford, 1800-1801

statement was fundamentally correct although the date was probably 1799 and not 1798. The system, moreover, was already in use in some parishes around Cranborne when the Dorchester meeting was held. This part of the county adjoins Hampshire where the making up of pay had begun in 1795. (56) It seems probable, therefore, that the system was introduced in the Shaston East division in 1799 under the influence of the Hampshire practice.

The use of the bread scale soon spread into other divisions. It appears to have been in use in a few parishes in the Shaston West (57) and Blandford North divisions (58) in 1800. It did not spread further until 1810 when it was adopted by a number of parishes in the Blandford South division. (59) The Sturminster division began to use the system of making up pay in 1813, according to the Rev. H. F. Yeatman; (60) and in 1815 the Cerne division followed suit. (61) Of the Blandford South scale nothing is known; but that of the Sturminster division was copied from the Wincanton division of Somerset. (62) The Cerne scale was very similar to that of Sturminster and this suggests that it was under the influence of the latter division that the practice was adopted. The Sturminster scale differed from the one which had been adopted earlier in other divisions in that the allowance was graduated according to the age and sex of each member of the family. (63) The dates cited above (1810, 1813, and 1815) show only the time when a few parishes adopted the system and it cannot be assumed that it became general in the area concerned at that time. Once it had been introduced into a division the making up of pay tended to spread to an increasing number of parishes, although there were cases where it was abandoned after a few years' trial. Stour

56. S. and B. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp.176-177.

57. E.g. Motcombe, West Orchard and perhaps Tarrant Gunville.

58. E.g. Tarrant Hinton and perhaps Winterborne Whitechurch.

59. E.g. Corfe Castle 1810, East Stoke 1810 and Wool 1810?.

60. H. F. Yeatman, *A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden Esq.*, p.38.

61. E.g. Buckland Newton 1815, Milton Abbas and Minterne Magna 1818.

62. H. F. Yeatman, *op.cit.*, p.41.

63. See below for details of Cerne Scale.

Provost and West Stour, for instance, were making up pay in 1817-18 but the former parish had ceased to do so in 1818-19 and the latter one by 1822-23. (64)

In the other three divisions of the county there is little evidence of the system of making up pay. In the Sherborne division it apparently spread to a few villages in the extreme south of the district and in the Vale of Blackmore. At Halstock, for example, there are occasional entries which show that the system was sometimes used there (65) and at Caundle Marsh and Lydlinch there are possible references. (66) In the division as a whole, however, the system does not appear to have been used. There is no evidence to suggest its use at Oborne, Nether Compton, Beer Hackett, Longburton, Yetminster and Melbury Osmond (the other parishes in the division whose records are available.) The same state of affairs prevailed in both the Dorchester and Bridport divisions.

In the light of the foregoing evidence the statement that Dorset was a county where the making up of pay on the bread scale was generally practised (67) requires some reconsideration. This opinion seems to have had three sources. Stevenson in 1812 stated that the magistrates regulated relief so that the earnings of a poor family were made up to a sum which would buy a half-peck loaf for each member. (68) This observation is a contemporary one but it does not appear to have been true of the county as a whole. Stevenson was revising an earlier work by Claridge and his personal knowledge of Dorset was probably limited. He certainly knew the eastern and more accessible parts better than the others and his statement cited above was probably true of the eastern parts in 1812. The second source for the statement was the evidence collected by the 1824 Select Committee on Labourers' Wages. In their "Abstract of Returns" published in 1825, they gave the replies of a

64. Cf. years cited in Stour Provost Poor Book 5 and in West Stour Poor Book 3.

65. Halstock Poor Book, 1.1.1818.

66. Caundle Marsh Poor Book, 1817 and Lydlinch Poor Book 3, 1823.

67. E.g. Clapham, Econ. Hist. of Mod. Britain, Bk 1, p.124.

68. Stevenson, op.cit. p.457.

limited number of places, as the following extract shows: (69)

"Question. Do any labourers in employ get wages in whole or part out of the poor rate?

Blandford Division.

Yes.

Dorchester Division.

Yes, in part in a few parishes.

Dorchester.

Yes.

Shaftesbury.

No.

Wareham.

Yes in part in some parishes."

The last three answers applied to three particular towns and cannot be considered evidence for large areas of the county. The first answer is probably from the Blandford North division and there is no doubt that the making up of pay and other systems to be considered in the next chapter did prevail there. In the second answer for the Dorchester division the phrase "in a few parishes" must be emphasised: for very little evidence for the relief of men in employ has been found and even this related to family allowances rather than to the bread scale. The evidence given by the committee was representative of only a small part of the county, and the relevant question was so framed that places practising entirely different systems could give the same answer. It was apparently on this limited evidence that the committee concluded that the system of making up pay prevailed in Dorset. Doubt was cast on the accuracy of the report in this respect by Mr. E. B. Portman of Bryanston when he spoke to the Dorset Agricultural Society in 1824. He said that the report asserted that the making up of pay prevailed in Dorset but that he was confident that this was not the case. (70) The third source of the opinion that this system was the general practice in Dorset was William Cobbett, who wrote in 1826 of the introduction of a new scale at Sturminster Newton. (71) This was used by J. L. and B. Hammond to imply that

69. Abstract of Returns respecting Labourers' Wages, House of Commons Sessional Papers 1825, Vol.19, pp. 363 ff.

70. Sherborne Journal, 6.9.1824; Cf. Report p.6.

71. W. Cobbett, Weekly Register, 9.9.1826.

"the scale" dominated Dorset. (72) It was not made clear by Cobbett that the scale which he mentioned applied only to the Sturminster division and as a result was not evidence for the county as a whole. Cobbett's statement that the Sturminster division introduced an especially mean scale in 1826, has been used by the Hammonds and the Webbs as part of an argument showing that the scales became progressively worse. (73) The argument may well be true of the country as a whole although to base it on a sequence of scales drawn haphazardly from a few counties is dangerous. In any case Cobbett was being misleading; for this scale was the one which Yeatman said was first introduced into the Sturminster division about 1813 and as the most active magistrate in the division he was in a better position to know the truth of the matter than Cobbett, who could easily have confused a new printing of the scale with its first use.

The validity of the view that the scales grew progressively worse can be judged only from a comparison of the scales. Several survive in Dorset and more can be reconstructed from the answers to the 1834 Poor Law Commissioners. The scale used in the Cerne division is cited in full below: (74)

"Scale of Allowances for the Cerne Division.

"When the standard loaf is sold at:-

20d, 19d	17d, 16d,	14d, 13d	11d, 10d
18d.	15d.	12d.	9d.

For a labouring man. 4/8. 4/-. 3/4. 2/8.

For a woman or boy
or girl over 14. 3/6. 3/-. 2/6. 2/-.

For a boy or girl
of 12 to 14 years. 2/11. 2/6. 2/1. 1/8.

For a boy or girl
of 9 to 11 years. 2/4. 2/-. 1/8. 1/4.

For child under
9 years. 2/-. 1/9. 1/6. 1/3.

"In no case is the allowance to be less than the above and where the paupers are deserving characters it is recommended to be increased."

72. J. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer, p.161.

73. J. and B. Hammond, op. cit., p.161 and S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.183.

74. In Sydling St. Nicholas Vestry Book; D.R.O., P36/VEL.

The Sturminster scale, which excited Cobbett to write about it under the heading "Dorsetshire Fare", was very similar except that the allowance varied with each rise of a penny in the price of bread. This is illustrated in the following table.

A Table comparing the Cerne and Sturminster Scales.

	<u>Cerne.</u>	<u>Sturminster.</u>		
Price of Bread.	20d, 19d, 18d.	20d.	19d.	18d.
Allowance for a Man.	4/8.	5/1.	4/10.	4/7.
Price of Bread.	11d, 10d, 9d.	11d.	10d.	9d.
Allowance for a Man.	2/8.	2/10.	2/7.	2/4.

It will be seen that when bread was dear the Sturminster scale was slightly more generous, whereas when bread was cheap the reverse was the case. (75)

The Shaston West scale was similar in structure to those just considered although decidedly more generous. In the other divisions where the making up of pay was practised the scale was quite different in structure, for it allowed one gallon loaf for each member of the family. (76)

This was less generous in the amount of bread considered necessary for a labouring man; for it meant two quartern loaves a week whereas the Cerne and Sturminster scales allowed nearly three. It was, on the other hand, more generous to the large family, as the next example shows in which the scales of the several divisions are compared. Since the scale of the Shaston West division is missing, the calculations of the allowance and relief of William Dennis of East Orchard in that division will be used as the basis of the comparison. The Dennis family had a total income of 11/6, 8/- having been earned by himself and the rest by his wife and eldest child. In his own division he was given 6/- relief and the following table shows what he would have received had he lived in

75. The Sturminster scale is given by Cobbett op.cit. and in H. Walter, A Letter to the Rev. H. F. Yeatman, p.17.
76. Given in Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2. Q.25.
It is the same as that to which Stevenson referred and that which was proposed at Dorchester in 1799, thus it is probably the original Dorset scale.

other divisions. (77) The price of bread has been taken at 1/4d for the quartern loaf.

A Comparison of the different Dorset Scales.

	Shaaston West.	Cerne.	Sturminster.	Shaaston E. Blandford N.
W. Dennis.	4/2	4/-	4/1	2/8
Wife.	3/4	3/-	3/-	2/8
Child aged 15.	3/4	3/-	3/-	2/8
Child aged 10.	2/4	2/-	1/11	2/8
Child aged 7.	2/2	1/9	1/9	2/8
Child aged 4.	2/2	1/9	1/9	2/8
	17/6	15/6	15/6	16/-
Less earnings	11/6	11/6	11/6	11/6
Relief	6/-	4/-	4/-	4/6

This comparison shows that variation in the relief given in the county was between the divisions. Shaaston West was clearly the most generous to a family of this size, although in the case of a very large family the scale used in both the Shaaston East and Blandford North divisions would give more relief. On the other hand this latter scale would be less generous to a small family than would be the Cerne and Sturminster scales. There is no evidence to suggest that the scales grew worse as the years went by; indeed, it appears that the same scales remained in use from their introduction until 1830 and perhaps afterwards. There were new scales introduced in many divisions after 1830 (78) but the overseers seem to have chosen whichever scale they preferred; thus at Iwerne Courtney a minute stated that relief was to be regulated by the old scale. (79)

Several points emerge from this survey of the various experiments in poor relief which had their beginnings in the great crisis that marked the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It appears that the immediate response to that crisis was

77. For the Dennis family cf. East Orchard Vestry Book under 1831. Although post-1830 the relief is not regulated by the post-1830 scale of which a copy survives in the Cann Vestry Book (P39/VE2).

78. Cf. H. Walter, op.cit. p.17-18.

79. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 2, 21.4.1831.

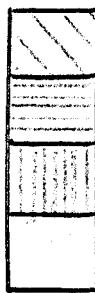
not to introduce the bread scale but to supply the poor with provisions at reduced prices and to help large families by giving fixed sums to those with more than two, or more often than three, children. This system prevailed throughout large areas of the county for the whole of the period. (80) It further appears that the use of the bread scale originated in the east of the county about 1799 and may well have been copied from Hampshire. From this first "bridge-head" the system spread into about half the county. In the case of the Sturminster division, the scale came from the Wincanton division of Somerset and as the Rev. H. F. Yeatman was a magistrate there as well as at Sturminster it is possible that this extension of the system had no relation to the practice in the east of Dorset. In 1815 the making up of pay spread to the Cerne division and from the scale which came into use there, it may be concluded that its adoption was a result of the influence of the Sturminster division. The evidence of the poor-books in the other three divisions does not suggest that the system was operated there to any significant extent. (81) At the period of its maximum use, then, the system of making up pay was practised in rather more than half the county, but even there not every parish followed the practice all the time. This being so, the 1824 report and later writers overstated the case when they said that the making up of pay prevailed in Dorset.

It has been shown that the practice of giving family allowances in the Bridport division was combined with a system of apprenticing poor children to parishioners and also, in bad times at least, with the sale of subsidized food on a considerable scale. This West Dorset system appears to have been much the same as that which prevailed in Devon and most of Somerset.

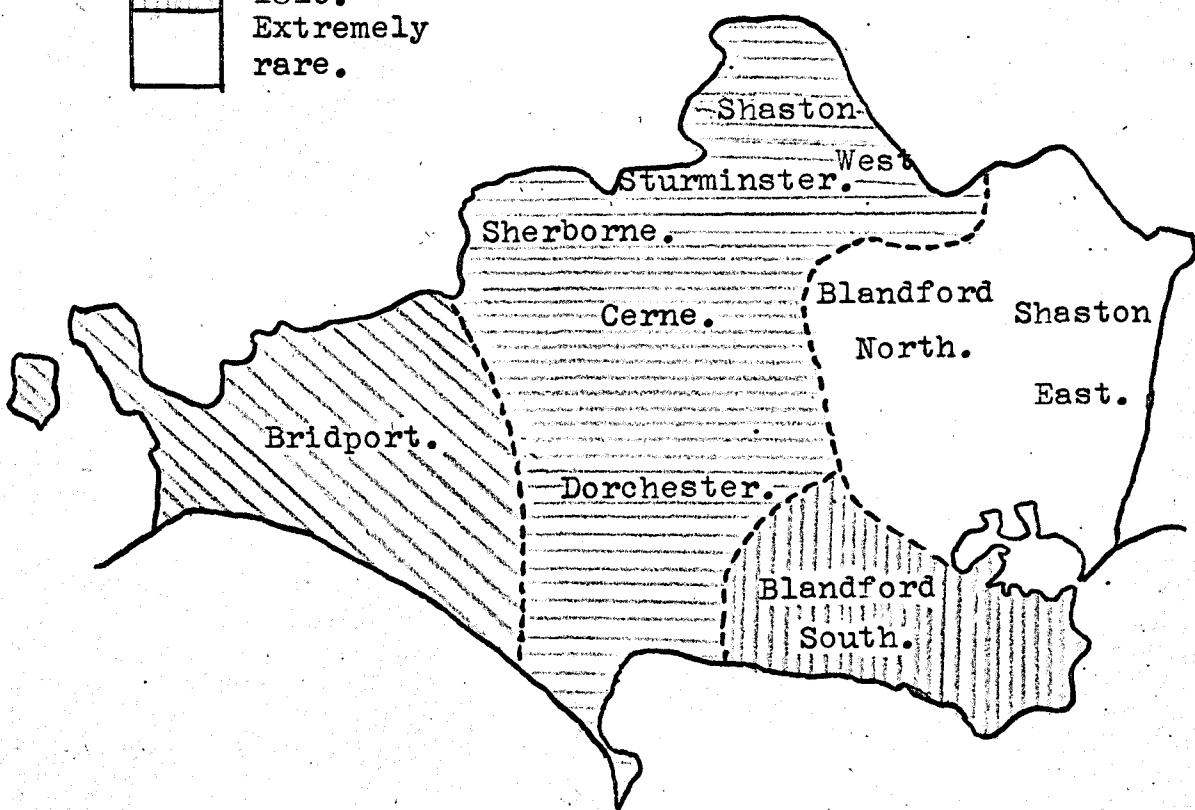
80. See map VII, p. 225.
81. See map VIII, p. 225.

Map VII.

Family Allowances.



Common
throughout.
Occasional
throughout.
Common before
1810.
Extremely
rare.

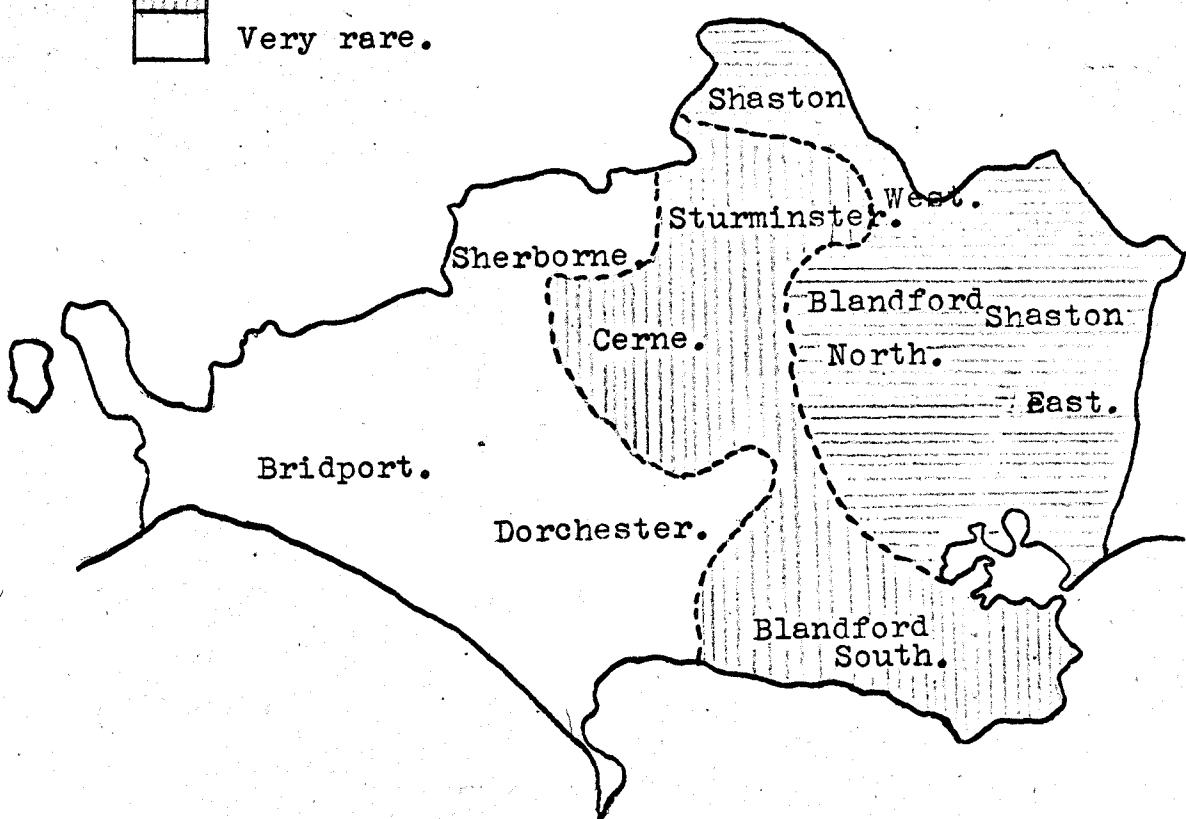


Map VIII.

Making up Pay System.



From 1799.
Introduced later.
Very rare.



The final point to be noted is that the main initiative in poor-law administration lay with the justices in their respective divisions rather than with the quarter sessions of the county. Each division had its own distinctive policy and decided for itself whether it should adopt the making up of pay and what scale should be used; whether it should continue with family allowances; or whether it should refuse to make any change at all.

Chapter Seventeen.

Outdoor Relief: Setting the Poor to Work.

The family allowances and making up of pay considered in the preceding chapter were means of overcoming the hardships due to the low wages. There was, moreover, another problem which had existed to some extent from an earlier date, but which became urgent and pressing just after the end of the French wars: namely that of unemployment. Even in the eighteenth century there had been cases of men receiving relief because they were without employment and of being set to work on the roads or the common. For example, men were set "stone picking" at Bere Regis in 1772. (1) Entries of this kind, however, were only occasional before 1814 as unemployment was only a minor problem up to that time.

The ending of the French wars brought to a head the problems of a growing population. There were more men seeking employment and larger families to support. At the same time farming entered a period of depression and many of the industries which had prospered during the war also declined. (2) Thus there was less demand for labour. In consequence from about 1814 to 1817 signs of a new trend appeared in the poor-books of Dorset. Everywhere the "no work" and "on the roads" entries became much more frequent. The following entry, for example, was made at Motcombe: (3)

"Jan. 17th, To Harry Huse scraping the roads - 2 days, 2/4d.
18th, To J. Extance, drawing 4 roots, 10/-
To Peter Tomkins, Jn. Do and Jas.
Stacey - drawing 17 roots £1.13.0."

Entries of this kind are found throughout the county but they are far more common in the east and north - where Motcombe is situated - than elsewhere. In the western parts of the county and in the southern coastal areas they are decidedly less common.

The problem of unemployment was dealt with in a number of ways. Sometimes the unemployed man was relieved by the parish and was then expected to spend his time

1. Bere Regis Poor Book 3, Nov. 1772.
2. On this see Part I, Chapters III and IV above.
3. Motcombe Poor Book 2, Jan. 1815; D.R.O., M.C.10, 479.

looking for work. The 1834 Report pointed out that relief given in this way was, strictly speaking, illegal, for the 1601 Act authorised the relief of the able-bodied only in return for work. (4) It was so given, nevertheless, and allowed by the magistrates. The Report added that the men thus relieved sometimes preferred to enjoy their leisure at the parish expense, rather than to spend their time seeking work. (5) Often, however, work was found for them by the parish. At Wool, for instance, a group of men was told to go and work for Mr. Sanders of Bovington Farm from Lady Day, after which date no more relief would be given. (6) At Studland in October 1824 the authorities arranged to place John George with Mr. Talbot for twelve months at 5/- per week, (7) and in the same year other men were struck off the parish pay-roll and told to obtain work for themselves. (8) In some cases the parish helped men to move elsewhere in search of work. Thus in 1834 East Orchard paid for the carriage of a man's goods to Poole and gave him the money to pay his first quarter's rent. (9) Occasionally the parish even set a man up in business, as Halstock did in 1818 when it bought Henry Lawrence a horse and his first load of fish. (10)

It was soon found unsatisfactory to give relief to the unemployed without requiring work from them, for the sight of the idle members of the village community being paid by the parish was a bad influence upon the rest of the labourers. Moreover, the lazy man felt no great urge to find himself work when his wants were already supplied. On the other hand if his relief were ended by the parish, there was the danger of an appeal to the justices which might lead to the granting of a larger allowance than he already had. These considerations led the vestries to discuss how they could make the parish allowance less attractive. The obvious answer and the one arrived at by most parishes was to extend the practice

4. Poor Law Report 1834, p.35.
5. Ibid., p.20.
6. Wool Minute Book, p.49.
7. Studland Minute Book, 1.7.1824.
8. Ibid., 5.10.1824.
9. East Orchard Vestry Book 2, 25.3.1834.
10. Halstock Poor Book, 31.5.1818.

which had been followed occasionally for many years, namely that of setting the unemployed to work on the parish roads. In many parishes there are entries in the poor-books such as these from Wimborne St. Giles, dated 1816:

"Sept. Robt. Perry, 1 week on the ways -	14/8d.
Wm. Scott and sons, 1 week on the ways -	9/-.
Jacob Bradley, 1 week on the ways -	4/-.

and so on for ten more names. (11)

There was a growing feeling that work must be exacted in return for relief, as is suggested by an entry dated 1822 in the books of Iwerne Courtney: (12)

"Dec. 26th, John Vanner is to get 3/4d and to work for it." The magistrates showed a similar concern and when two Hilton men went to the Rev. John Davis of Cerne to complain of their treatment, he wrote to the Hilton overseers as follows: "It is the duty of the overseer to set them to work which if you do at wages sufficient for the support of themselves and their families, my further interference will be rendered unnecessary." (13) There was, however, a limit to the amount of work to be done on the road even if, as at Allington, resort was made to the collection of pebbles. (14) Moreover, the work needed to be supervised but often the overseers failed in their duty. Okeden, referring to road work and other parish work, stated: "That work, however, is in general a mere superfluity, lazily executed, and may be termed an excuse for labour rather than labour itself." (15)

Some parishes attempted to meet the situation by embarking on a major project. At Maiden Newton, for instance, the vestry decided in 1817 to build a new road "for the purpose of employing the poor that apply for relief" and this scheme was executed. (16) At nearby Toller Porcorum the authorities had men "digging out rock,

11. Wimborne St. Giles Poor Book 4, Sept. 1816.

12. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 1, 26.12.1822.

13. Hilton Papers, Letter from Rev. J. Davis (undated):
D.R.O., P21/0V12.

14. Allington Poor Book, 1815 onwards, e.g. 11.10.1829.

15. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.13.

16. Maiden Newton Poor Book 3, 29.4.1817 and passim.

hauling it, fetching chalk and sand and clearing foundations" for a new poorhouse. (17) At Swanage the parish embarked on quarrying on quite a considerable scale and stone worth some £200 was sold each year. (18) Similar projects of public works were planned in towns such as Sherborne where the vestry in 1833 considered a scheme to use pauper labour to put drains in Cheap Street; (19) and Wimborne where the unemployed were used to drain the nearby marshes. (20) Of these projects to employ the poor usefully one of the commonest was to set them to work on the parish farm. There was a scheme of this kind at Blandford in 1826 and also at Hazelbury Bryan in 1829 where Park Close was rented from the rector, dug by hand and sowed with potatoes and oats. It seems that ten to twelve men were usually working on the land and were paid twopence per lug for their digging. The experiment was a failure and the parish lost £60. (21) H. F. Yeatman considered that the Hazelbury experiment proved a costly failure because the affair was mismanaged and neglected by the overseer who was in charge of it. (22) At both Sherborne (23) and Wimborne schemes were mooted to rent land on which to employ the poor but at the latter place the project was abandoned when a local farmer undertook to employ the poor at spade-husbandry on his own farm at twopence per lug. (24)

The most successful of all these experiments in employing the poor on parish farms was at Poole. The management of the poor was in the hands of John Hooper, the assistant guardian, who had formerly been a farmer. Hooper, therefore, was able to bring to the enterprise not only his extremely sound administrative gifts but also a practical knowledge of farming. Poole had bought twenty acres of land and the poor were sent to work on it as soon as they sought relief - indeed it was the condition of

17. Toller Porcorum Poor Book, Nov. 1817.
18. Swanage Vestry Minutes, *passim* e.g. 27.3.1820.
19. Sherborne Order Book 2, 18.1.1833.
20. Wimborne Order Book 2, 21.12.1830.
21. Hazelbury Bryan Vestry Book, 31.12.1829, and Poor Book 3, for Account of Work done at Park Close; D.R.O., Pl13/0V2.
22. H. F. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden Esq. p.13.
23. Sherborne Order Book 2, 18.1.1833.
24. Wimborne Order Book 2, 27.11.1829; 26.11.1831 and 28.11.1831.

of relief. The men were paid for their digging according to the size of their families, the amount per lug varying from $2\frac{1}{2}$ d in the case of a man with six children to one penny for a single man. (25) Hooper considered that the parish farm had been a great deterrent as before the purchase of the farm "the idle and lazy were a great pest to us almost continually: but this is now at an end, as they say they may as well work for other parties as for the parish." (26) The success of this experiment was estimated by Poole not in terms of profit and loss but according to the requests for relief which were presumed to have been deterred.

In some parishes there was a concern to find employment for the men which would be more useful than setting them to work on the roads or on the often badly supervised parish farms. Sturminster Marshall had achieved this aim since the early years of the nineteenth century by hiring paupers out to whoever would have them and in the parish papers there are many references to this system. Thus in 1806 Mr. Farquharson of Langton wrote to the overseers asking for men to be employed on hedging. (27) The overseers frequently noted the receipt of payment for work done, as for example this one dated 1812: "Rec'd of Mrs Joyce for Wm Barfoot's labour 2/-." (28) Halstock also employed this method after the war. Thus twelve men were paid in 1820 for drawing stone for Mr. Kenney and in the same month, January, the vestry resolved that "if the labourers force the parish to find them in work" the parish will pay "but 6/—" to a man with one child. (29) This method probably grew tedious for the overseers and therefore in 1823 the Halstock vestry decided that if an employer took a man off the roads for his own work, he was to pay him himself at the rate of 1/- per day. (30)

In some parishes this somewhat haphazard method of

- 25. Wimborne Workhouse Stockbook, cf. flyleaf.
- 26. Poor Law Report 1834, p.267.
- 27. Sturminster Marshall Papers. Letter to A. Farquharson, 10.2.1806. D.R.O., P98/OV17.
- 28. Ibid. Notes of payments for work. P98/OV1.
- 29. Halstock Poor Book, Jan. 1820 and 20.1.1820.
- 30. Halstock Poor Book 13.2.1823.

finding employment was inadequate for the numbers involved. The solution found was some kind of parish agreement to employ the poor. The simplest form of it is illustrated by an example from Sturminster Marshall. Sometime after the end of the war, the ratepayers decided that they would employ the paupers sent to them at their own expense according to a rotation which took account of the size of their farms. (31) At Powerstock they adopted a more radical approach to the problem. In 1823 the overseers were instructed by the vestry to find out exactly how many labourers there were in the parish. Then the overseers were to divide all the labourers who needed 6/- per week among the ratepayers in proportion to the rates they paid. (It must be supposed that this meant all the married men.) The rest of the labourers, who would be young unmarried men, were to be employed by the surveyor of the highways. Schemes of this sort were common enough in the country as a whole and often worked to the disadvantage of the smaller ratepayers though at Powerstock the vestry excluded those who paid threepence or less. (32)

The most elaborate project to employ the poor on the land at the expense of the occupiers was at Hilton. Here the vestry evidently decided that twelve was the usual number of unemployed and so the scheme was drawn up to employ that number. Any further men were to be given work on the roads. The labourers were divided into two classes: those with family responsibilities who were paid 6/8d per week by whoever employed them, and those without a family who were paid 4/5d. The ratepayers were divided into twelve groups so that the rates paid by each class were approximately £1.10.0. Once a month the unemployed men were allotted by ballot and the group for which the particular man was drawn employed him at the appropriate rate of pay for the following month. Those employers who in one month employed a man qualifying for 4/5d per week, would have to take a man who qualified for 6/8d per week in the next month. If it so happened that in a

31. Sturminster Marshall Papers. Undated parish agreement which from the names appears to be about 1818-20.
The paper is watermarked 1818; D.R.O., P98/0V22.
32. Powerstock Poor Book 4, 24.4.1823; D.R.O., M.C.4832.

particular month there were less than twelve men to be placed in work then the groups of employers which did not have a man would receive the first allocations in the next month. (33)

This scheme which came into operation in November 1818 brought the parish into conflict with that active magistrate, the Rev. John Davis of Cerne. It appears that the farmers paid the parish for the labour of the "ballot men" and the parish paid the men, adding whatever relief was considered appropriate. On the first list was a certain Charles Swyre and this method resulted in his being paid a total sum of 8/- per week and in addition his son earned 2/-. (34) Swyre did not think that 10/- a week was sufficient for his family of five children and went to Cerne Abbas to see the Rev. J. Davis. The latter agreed that the sum was not enough and wrote to the Hilton overseers complaining about three matters. First he informed them that the amount of relief given was not enough, saying that if the earnings of Swyre and his family could not be increased it would be necessary to increase the sum given to them as relief. Secondly he objected to the time of payment and pointed out that the law required relief to be paid weekly and in advance. Both of these criticisms seem to have concerned the working of the ballot scheme. The third referred to the grossly inadequate quarters in which the family was housed by the parish. (35) The Hilton authorities were evidently unwilling to accept Davis' advice and so on December 2nd he made an order on the parish requiring the overseers to pay Swyre 5/- relief weekly. (36) In the next few months Davis had to intervene several times to check the hardship caused by the ballot system at Hilton and in his last known intervention stated his opinion of the system. It arose over Thomas Hannem who had evidently complained to Davis about his low wages. Davis wrote: "It appears to me a peculiar hardship that an able young man should be

33. Hilton Poor Book, end of book; D.R.O., P21/0V1.

34. Ibid., Nov. 1st, 1818.

35. Hilton Papers, Letter from Rev. J. Davis, Dec. 1818; D.R.O., P21/0V12.

36. Ibid., Order to Relieve Charles Swyre.

reduced to the necessity of working for such inadequate wages as four shillings a week. I attribute this to a system recently adopted in your parish, which is oppressive in its operation and, if persevered in, will, I fear, tend to impair the principles and degrade the character of your poor to a sad extent. I therefore feel it my duty to recommend the discontinuance of this and the adoption of some less objectionable mode of employing and maintaining them. I consider your mode of proceeding as a combination to limit wages and as depriving your labourers of the equitable privilege of choosing their own masters." (37) The parish abandoned the system in April and reverted to the practice of giving road work to the unemployed labourers. (38)

The employment of workless labourers was fraught with difficulties. As agriculture was depressed it was a considerable burden to the farmer if he had to employ extra men whose labour he did not require. In order to distribute the burden equally, schemes were evolved such as the ballot system at Hilton, the planned distribution at Powerstock and the rotation at Sturminster Marshall, which distributed the labourers with some regard to the size of the farm. The farmer could still argue, however, that he was paying for the relief of the poor twice over, once through the poor-rates and once by employing an extra man. As a result some parishes evolved a new scheme for employing the workless labourers - the roundsman system under which the parish usually paid the labourers and the farmers provided the work. In the former scheme the labourer had often suffered because the wages paid were usually very low and the assessment of extra relief paid by the parish was frequently ungenerous. They did, however, have the merit that those who received the men's labour were paying them their basic wages and were regarded by the men as their employers. The roundsman or stem-man system, as it was usually called in Dorset, did not have this merit and as a result the men did not regard the farmer on whose land they were working as

37. Hilton Papers, Letter from Rev. J. Davis, 22.2.1819.
38. Cf. Hilton Poor Book, March and April 1819; P21/OV1.

their employer and they thus considered the work to be an imposition.

The roundsman system was widely practised in the southern half of England (39) and was based on the principle that the man was employed by the parish and paid in relation not to the work he had done but to his supposed need. The condition of relief was that the man should work on the farms of the parish; he was given a ticket and sent round the parish to seek work from the farmers. A farmer who did not require his services signed the ticket to show that he had been approached. When the man had finished his round and had returned to the overseer with a completed ticket, showing that there was no work to be had, he was given relief. Such a ticket would be similar to this example from Iwerne Courtney:

"The bearer of this is out of employ it is therefore requested that the persons to whom this is presented, will if they cannot employ him sign their names to certify to the overseers that application has been made to them." (40)

If the ticket or note was not duly completed there would be delay and perhaps no relief, as this Iwerne Courtney minute suggests:

"June 3rd. John Painter, two days no work - inadmissible 'till a satisfactory note is received from Fryer." (41) There was some variation in practice concerning the farmers' payments for the services of stem-men. Sometimes the farmer made payment in accordance with his estimate of the worth of the man's labour either to the man himself or to the overseer, but, more frequently, he paid either half the standard wage or nothing at all.

The earliest recorded example in Dorset of this stem-man system was at Motcombe in the far north of the county. It began there in 1816 and the practice was for the farmer to pay the man his full wage and to recover half from the overseer. If the man was not employed,

39. Cf. S. and B. Webb, *op.cit.*, pp.191-2; Poor Law Report 1834, pp.31-32; and Report on Labourers' Wages 1824, p.3.

40. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 2, draft on back-cover.

41. *Ibid.*, 3.6.1830.

an entry such as this was recorded:

"Oct. Philip Alford not 'excepted' [sic] on the stem 1/-" (42)
In 1818 the system was modified and six ratepayers agreed to pay in full for the labour of the stem-men whom they employed. (43) It is hard to see why six should have done so when others did not make the change. Perhaps they were a minority group who wished to end the scheme and who decided to carry on alone when their opposition was over-ruled. In the year which followed, 1818-1819, the number of "men on the stem" grew alarmingly. In the summer of 1817 there had been less than twenty but in the winter which followed the number rose, no doubt for seasonal reasons, to fifty. The numbers continued to grow and in the following winter there were between ninety and a hundred men on the stem. In the early months of 1819 there was an increasing number of quarrymen added to the list and it seemed as if the whole labour force would soon be in parish employment but at the annual vestry meeting in that year the scheme was discontinued. (44) In the table below the annual figures of expenditure on the poor are set out. Motcombe it should be noted had a population of 1,184 in 1821.

Expenditure at Motcombe on the Poor.

Year ending March 1816	-	£1,227.
" " " 1817	-	£1,369.
" " " 1818	-	£1,932.
" " " 1819	-	£2,228.
" " " 1820	-	£1,800.
" " " 1821	-	£1,446.

The figures show no sign of trouble in the year 1816-17, the total being only slightly above that of the preceding year but in the next year there is a considerable increase. This suggests that the farmers, finding that they could get stem-men cheaply, were dismissing their own employees and so throwing more and more unemployed on the parish. In the next year, 1818-19, the iniquity of the system had become so clear that it was abandoned. The first year after its ending saw a modest reduction of expenditure on

42. Motcombe Poor Book 2, cf. March and October 1816;
D.R.O., M.C.10,479.
43. Ibid. 3, Agreement of 15.1.1818.
44. Ibid. 3, cf. change in accounts in April 1819.

the poor which was probably partly due to a general decrease in the county which occurred in that year. In 1820-21, however, there was a further more considerable reduction. These figures demonstrate how much it could cost a parish in money alone when a stem-man experiment got out of hand. What it meant in human relationships is impossible to estimate.

Between 1816 and 1820 this system seems to have spread through the villages in the north-east of the county and to have made its appearance in the centre of the Vale of Blackmore around Hazelbury Bryan and further west in the Vale at Hermitage and in a modified form in Rampisham. In this last place, however, there seems to have been no payment or part payment of wages from the poor-rates for work done for private individuals. (46) At Hermitage the system began rather later (in 1822) and entries such as these were made in the poor-book: (47)

"Dec. 1st. Pd Jno Ridout, a moety of 11 days labour	3/8
Pd John Pauly a moety of 11 days labour	
Mr. C.	6/9d.
Pd Mattw. Collis a moety of 13 days	
labour, C.B.	9/9."

This demonstrates quite plainly that the parish was paying half of the men's wages. The experiment at Hermitage was short-lived and ended in April 1823. At Hazelbury Bryan, and probably some of the villages around, the stem-man system was introduced in 1822. (48) It may well have been a modification of the system practised there in 1818 and described as "roundsmen". In 1818 the practice had been introduced of sending paupers to work on the farms in rotation on the principle that a 2/- assessment entitled the ratepayer to the benefit of one day's work. It seems that the men were not "paid" but "relieved" and the emphasis was on making the poor work for their relief. (49) In October 1822, a subtle variation

45. Motcombe Poor Book 2 and 3; D.R.O., M.C.10,479.

46. Cf. Rampisham Poor Book; D.R.O., P111/OV1; and Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.27 and 28.

47. Hermitage Poor Book, 1.12.1822; D.R.O., P61/0V3.

48. cf. Rev. Henry Walter's evidence to Select Committee on Labourers' Wages: cf. 1824 report.

49. Hazelbury Bryan Vestry Book, 16.10.1818; D.R.O., P113/VEL

was introduced into this system and the men were described as "stem men". Instead of the men being sent by the overseer to seek work from the farmers in rotation, the farmers informed the overseers whenever they wanted a man. This was quite different from the "stem-man" system practised elsewhere by which the men were sent round and either accepted or not accepted by the farmers. It has been seen that this practice could be gravely abused as at Motcombe, and the Hazelbury system was clearly even more dangerous for the initiative rested with the would-be employers, who could safely reduce the number of men in their regular employ and send for men who would be paid by the parish. The accounts make the system quite plain, as this example shows:

"1822.

"Oct. 26th. Pd John Elsworth at Jos. Barnes and

C. Upshalls, 6/-.

Pd Henry House at Farmer Samways, 6/-.

"Oct. 27th, Paid Thos Rolls to Mr. Hooper, 4/-.

Pd John Lush to John Roberts, 6/-." (50)

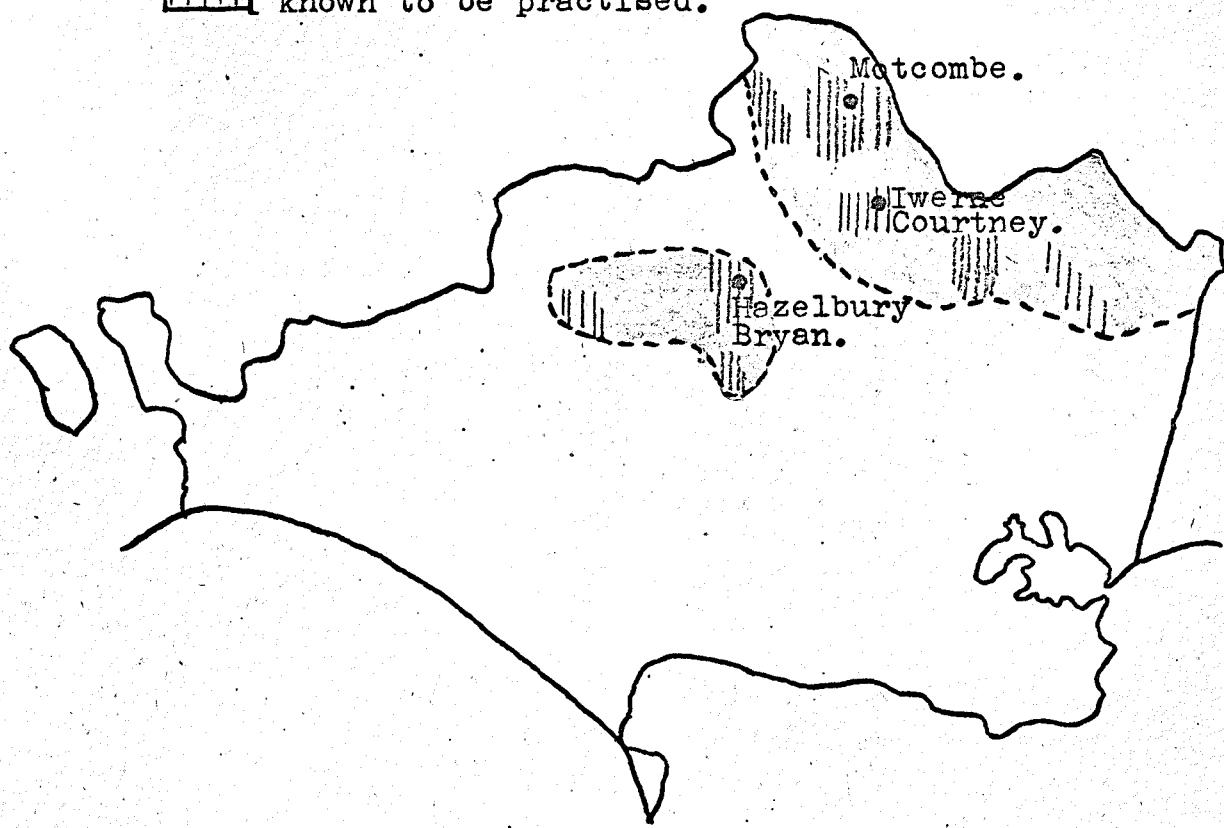
In December 1822 the Rev. Henry Walter went to Hazelbury Bryan as rector, and found that some of the best labourers in the village were unemployed. He investigated this strange circumstance and found that they were men who owned cottages with gardens attached. It appeared that their former masters had dismissed them and taken stem-men from the parish, but as cottage owners were disqualified from receiving money from the rates they themselves could not go "on the stem". Further enquiries revealed that this system had started in October and since then the "extras" in the poor-book had increased from £7.6.8. to £13.10.7. and yet there was hardly an old or infirm person in the parish. Walter discovered that if a farmer wanted a job done he sent to the overseer, saying "I want two, three, four or five men whom you will place on your books." Walter spoke to the tradesmen and found that they considered that they were paying the farmers' wage bills. It is not surprising that he decided that this system was a thoroughly wrong, dangerous and illegal one and resolved to stop it. He

Map IX. The Distribution of the Roundsman System.



Probable extent
of the system.

Area where it was
known to be practised.

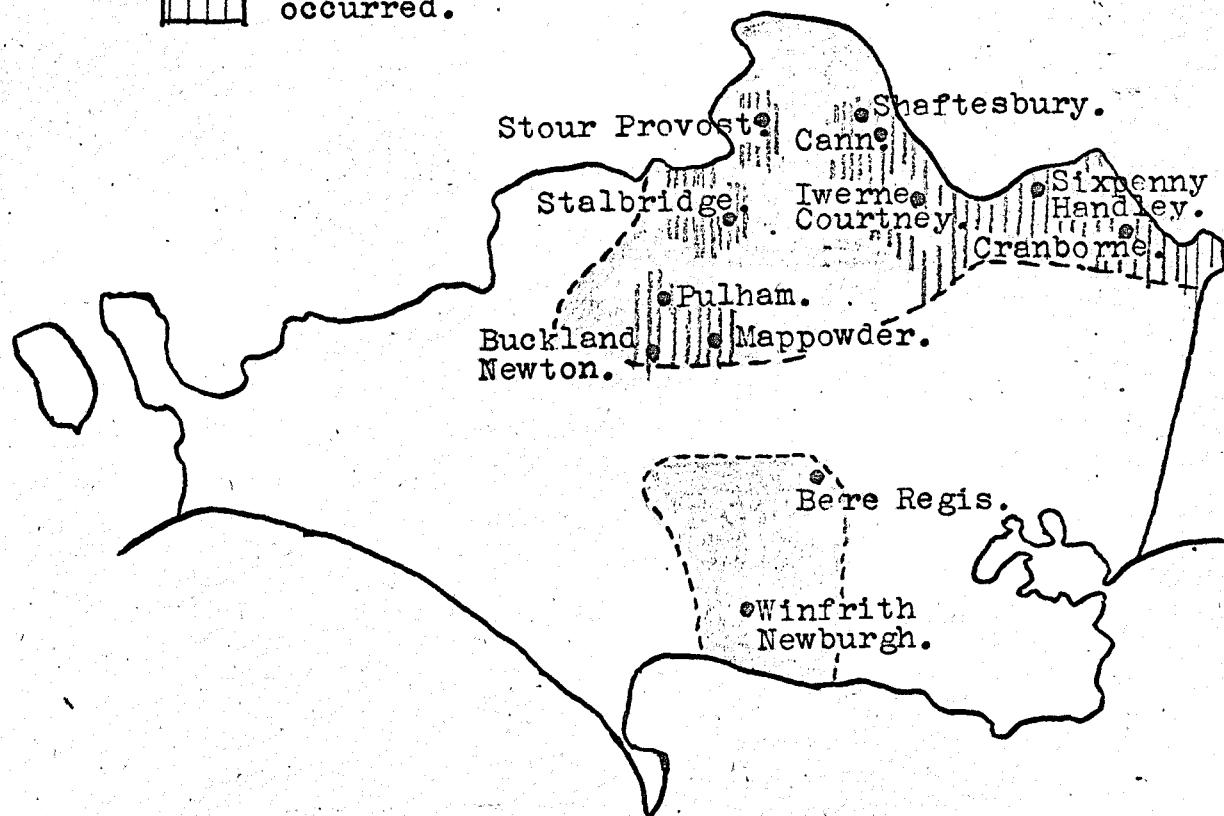


Map X. The 1830 Disturbances.



Areas of particular
unrest.

Areas where lawlessness
occurred.



first asked the vestry to put an end to it but they refused, saying that the Blandford magistrates approved of it. He then approached a local magistrate and tried to persuade him that the system was illegal, but without success. When the end of the poor-law year came in March, he asked to be permitted to state his objections to the Blandford petty sessions before they allowed the Hazelbury poor-book, but was refused permission to attend the court. He did, indeed, see one of the magistrates and gave him a statement of his views in writing. The only response he got was a message sent through a local farmer to the effect that if he could think of a better means of employing the poor they would be obliged to him. Walter was not easily deterred and decided to appeal to the quarter sessions. (51) At the Sherborne sessions which met in April the case was merely adjourned to the July sessions at Shaftesbury when it was at last heard. (52) Walter appealed as a ratepayer against the accounts of the overseers. His case was that eighteen men who were not old, infirm or unable to work had received payments from the parish. These payments had not been ordered by any magistrate and were in fact quite illegal. (53) The quarter sessions allowed Walter's appeal and the decision virtually ended the stem-man or roundsman system in Dorset, although there was a revival at Iwerne Courtney and probably some of the villages nearby in 1829 and 1830. (54)

Another method of employing the poor was the "labour-rate system" by which the number of labourers in the parish was calculated and a rate was made which would support all of them. The ratepayers then had the choice of paying their rates in the form of wages to the labourers or as rates to the parish. This system clearly benefitted the large farmer but was detrimental to the man who did not employ labour, whether he was a small farmer or a tradesman. (55) There is only one clear case of

51. Cf. Walter's evidence to the 1824 Select Committee on Labourers' Wages.
52. Dorset Q.S. Vol. 7, ff.192 and 200.
53. Ibid., f.200.
54. Cf. Iwerne Courtney Vestry Book 2, 1829-30; cf. also the Poor Books of Manston, West Orchard, West Stour and Stour Provost.
55. Cf. Poor Law Report 1834, pp. 42 and 195.

this method being employed in Dorset and that lasted for a week! This experiment was at Wimborne in 1831. It was a somewhat modified form of the labour-rate system for only the unemployed were reckoned in the calculations. Moreover, it contained elements from the roundsman system since the men concerned were to work for the farmers in rotation for periods proportional to the annual value of their respective farms. Finally the option to pay the rate instead of giving employment was limited to those with property other than land, provided it was worth less than £50 per year. (56)

The decision in the Walter case was the signal for the few parishes which practised the stem-man system to return to the system of making up pay combined with work on the roads or on other parish enterprises. The climate of opinion, however, was beginning to turn against the practice of supplementing wages in any form. The adverse comments of a series of parliamentary reports from 1817 onwards no doubt influenced some people and the more forthright condemnations in periodicals and pamphlets drove the new opinions home. (57) In Dorset there was a growing group of magistrates and others who had serious doubts about the wisdom of supplementing wages. Some of the magistrates, such as Mr. E. B. Portman, regarded the system as an evil but, in the existing state of society, an unavoidable one. It has already been noted how Mr. Portman implied his opinions on the matter when he spoke about the 1824 "Report on Labourers' Wages". (58) Nevertheless, the making up of pay continued to 1832, at least, in his own Blandford North division. At that time Mr. Portman and Mr. Iliott, another magistrate, replied to the commissioners that the ending of the system would be very oppressive

56. Wimborne Minster Order Book 2, 18.12.1831.

57. Cf. S. and B. Webb, op.cit. pp. 183 ff.

58. Cf. p.220.

in its immediate effects, although the ultimate results would be most advantageous. (59)

There were more forthright views on the matter and they found clear expression in the leading article in "The Dorset County Chronicle" in 1826. "The first objection to this custom is its direct tendency to increase pauperism and to increase it not indirectly and circuitously, but immediately and obviously. There is no reason either in politics or in morals why a labourer should feel any degradation in receiving his hire. On the contrary, the manly feeling of honest independence is one of the best rewards of his toilsome life..... [This system] makes him a pauper against his will a pauper who has no reason to feel grateful for present assistance, and no motive for future exertion." (60) The same paper in 1831 attributed to the "abuses which have crept into the administration of the poor laws" the creation of "the evils of unmitigated poverty", "a disposition to idleness", a willingness to rely on parochial relief and the demoralisation of the labourers. (61) Other local papers, although less outspoken, took the same point of view; "The Sherborne Journal" asserting that the labourers' "pittance must not be portioned out by the overseer." (62)

Among the magistrates, the most outspoken opponent of the system was D. O. P. Okeden who in 1830 wrote a pamphlet entitled "A Letter to the Members of Parliament of Dorsetshire on the subject of Poor Relief and Labourers' Wages". (63) In this pamphlet he argued for a general rise in the wages of the farm labourer, which would "go a long way to obviate all necessity for parochial relief." He regretted that

59. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 1, Q.40 and B 2, Q.25.
60. Dorset County Chronicle, 28.7.1826.
61. Ibid., 21.6.31.
62. Sherborne Journal, 9.12.1830.
63. Available in the Dorset County Museum.

instead of this obviously just solution, most parts of England had resorted to the making up of pay. "A more unjust, a more impolitic, a more illegal, a more destructive measure was ever devised." (64) He was prepared to put his views into practice and by 1832 the use of the bread scale had ceased in the northern part of his division, the district where he was most active. Answering the Poor Law Commissioners' questionnaire on behalf of More Crichel, he wrote: "The magistrates who hold their petty sessions at Cranborne have made some attempts, during the last year, to discontinue the system of making up pay in the surrounding parishes where it has prevailed. Their attempts have been very successful; the farmers have raised their wages and enter into the better system on conviction." (65)

Okeden did what he could to end the system in other parts of the county. After the risings which took place in parts of Dorset in December 1830, the magistrates of the north and east of the county met at Blandford to take stock of the situation and to see what could be done to improve conditions for the poor. Okeden proposed that the first step was to stop relieving able-bodied men in employment and argued that this would result in a rise in the level of wages. On this occasion he gained the support of only one other justice and this was probably Mr. Sturt his neighbour who was a colleague on the Cranborne bench. (66) A month later Okeden gave notice that he intended to ask the quarter sessions to declare the making up of pay to be impolitic and illegal. When the motion came before the quarter sessions there was some discussion but Okeden yielded to the persuasion of Mr. Bankes of

64. Cf. Work mentioned in text p. 9.

65. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.11; and Appendix B 2, Q.39.

66. H. F. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden Esq., p.16. D.O.P. Okeden, A Letter to the Rev. H.F. Yeatman, p.6. In the copy in the London School of Economics Library, a contemporary hand has written "Mr. Sturt" in the margin.

Kingston Lacy who argued that such a change of policy would be ill-timed, coming so soon after the riots of the previous December and its immediate implementation would only inflame the labourers. (67) It may appear that Okeden's endeavours outside his own division were unsuccessful; but that would be a too hasty conclusion. In fact, his proposal was quietly adopted in a good many parts of the county. The Rev. John Davis of Cerne replied to the Poor Law Commissioners that the bread scale was not used in his division and that he considered it to be very objectionable. (68) From Fontmell Magna in the Shaston West division came the reply that the magistrates there were discouraging any reference to the scale. (69) Even in the Sturminster division, dominated by the Rev. H. F. Yeatman, the Rev. H. Walter of Hazelbury Bryan told the Poor Law Commissioners in 1832 that the magistrates had recently begun to deny the existence of an official scale, but he added that the overseers there were of the opinion that the scale was still in use unofficially. (70) The Rev. H. F. Yeatman was the champion of the making up pay system in the county. He was the man who first introduced the system to the Sturminster justices about 1813. (71) In 1833 he wrote a pamphlet criticising Okeden's report on the administration of the poor in the Sturminster division. (72) Yeatman strongly defended the practice there and argued that it was the only possible one in the circumstances which prevailed: the problem of low wages and the large numbers of unemployed could be tackled in no other way. He did concede that the scale could be abandoned in other areas where other conditions prevailed. (73)

67. D.O.P. Okeden, A Letter to H.F. Yeatman, p.7.
68. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.25.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. H. F. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, pp.38 and 41.
72. H.F. Yeatman, A. Letter to D.O.P. Okeden Esq. together with an Inquiry into the Merits of his Poor Law Report.
73. Ibid., pp.56-58.

After 1830, then, there was a definite reaction against the making up of pay especially against its mechanical application to every applicant for relief, regardless of other factors. In its place came an emphasis on the importance of providing work and on the need to take into account the character of the applicant. Large landowners such as E. B. Portman reduced their rents to enable the farmers to pay higher wages (74) and they themselves embarked on or revived schemes of land reclamation. Mr. Portman had begun the reclamation of Durweston Common in 1825 and between then and 1840 spent over £10,000 on it. This tract of waste was divided into seven fields and these were divided into squares which were dug by hand by labourers who had no other employment. (75) The stress on character is to be seen in some of the poor-books and in the 1834 report in which the parishes were asked to state how far they took account of the applicant's character in assessing the poor relief to be given. In the Wimborne vestry minutes, entries occur such as these dated 1831:

"April 19th, Charles Clarke to be relieved with 8/- in consequence of his good character." (76)

"May 31st, John Gill applied but had his pay cut to 5/- per week, it being understood that he was fighting on Whitmonday and is able to do some work." (77)

The reply from Fontmell Magna to the Poor Law Commissioners' question mentioned above stated that great attention was paid to character and to the causes of the distress both by the parish officers and the magistrates. James Frampton from Moreton and Messrs Portman and Iliott from the Blandford division replied to the same effect although the latter added that in cases of sickness or infirmity character was not considered.

74. Dorset County Chronicle, 3.2.1831.

75. G. E. Fussell, Four Centuries of Farming Systems in Dorset, in D.P.73, pp.132ff.

76. Wimborne Minster Select Vestry Order Book 2, 19.4.1831.

77. *Ibid.*, 31.5.1831.

Replies from others were more cautious, being similar to that given by the Rev. J. Davis of Cerne who wrote: "In very few cases." From a few places came replies that very little attention was paid to character and of these the Buckland Newton answer is typical: "Very little: the worst and the most improvident gain most." (78)

78. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 2, Q.26.

Chapter Eighteen.

An Assessment of Dorset Poor Law Administration and the Report of D. O. P. Okeden.

It has been shown in the preceding chapters that the administration of the poor laws in much of Dorset was similar to that in most of England and Wales. It may be suggested, however, that the views of some of the older writers on the subject need some qualification. In the writings of S. and B. Webb, (1) and more especially in those of J. L. and B. Hammond, (2) there was an emphasis on the importance of the making up of pay and the roundsman systems, and likewise on the extent of the application of the law of settlement which cannot be justified by the Dorset evidence. More recent writers such as Miss D. Marshall (3) and Prof. J. D. Chambers (4) have already given a more balanced picture with which the findings above are in general agreement.

Dorset has emerged as a county where outdoor relief predominated and where the workhouse system seldom worked satisfactorily. There were very few properly regulated workhouses in the county but every parish had its poorhouse or poor cottages where the paupers looked after themselves, supported by a small pension. There were, however, some workhouses both in villages and in the towns. In the villages they did not achieve much success except in some of the larger ones in West Dorset. In the towns workhouses were more successful but never seem to have entirely satisfied their parish authorities. Okeden mentions the Poole workhouse as the one good example in Dorset but, on the evidence available, it is hard to agree with him, for the house seems to have been similar to those elsewhere. What he admired about the administration of the poor at Poole was its deterrent character but this resulted from the use of its parish farm to provide work for those who sought outdoor relief, rather than from its workhouse. At Poole and elsewhere in the county the

1. S. and B. Webb, *op.cit.* *passim*.
2. J. L. and B. Hammond, *op.cit.* *passim*.
3. Cf. her The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century and her article The Old Poor Law in *Econ. Hist. Review* (old series) Vol. 8.
4. Cf. his Nottingham in the Eighteenth Century.

workhouse became a refuge for the aged and orphans. The most striking feature of workhouse administration in the county, except perhaps in the far west, was the way in which the parishes tried first one method of administration and then another. It may be argued that the parishes failed to find a satisfactory solution because they expected the workhouse to provide a more economic way of supporting the poor, and this it rarely did. Since a workhouse was liable to inspection, the standard of maintenance there had to be higher than that which the poor would accept in their own homes. Moreover, the parishes took into the house only those who were incapable of supporting themselves and who could not be expected to do much work. As a result the workhouse had little or no deterrent value. There were three factors which made Dorset workhouses unprofitable to their parishes. First, there was little work which could be done profitably in them. The exceptions to this were the workhouses of West Dorset where there was work available, usually under contract from the Bridport textile industry. The comparative success of these West Dorset houses was also partly due to their rural surroundings which enabled them to produce a considerable proportion of their own food. The second adverse factor in running the workhouses in Dorset was the difficulty of obtaining governors or masters who were of sufficient ability to manage the houses successfully. In many cases this was due to the very low salaries the parishes were prepared to pay. Thirdly, most of the workhouses were far too small to make efficient organisation possible. Except in a few large parishes before 1800, the workhouses were never big enough to accommodate all of the poor. There were no successful Gilbert Unions in Dorset and the only enduring workhouse which served more than a single parish was the borough workhouse at Dorchester which took paupers from the three parishes of the town. The parishes found that it was usually cheaper, however, to maintain most of their poor outside this borough workhouse. (5)

Outdoor relief provided for most of the poor of Dorset. Before 1800, there was comparatively little

5. See Chapter XIV above.

change from the methods which had been in use from 1760 at least. Small gifts in money and in kind were doled out according to the overseers' judgement of the merits of each individual case. This system of relief seems to have worked fairly adequately in the period before 1790, except, perhaps, in times of greatest hardship when private charity usually stepped in to meet the need.

The crises of the 1790's put a strain on the older system and on private charity, which could not cope with the magnitude of the situation. This decade saw the beginnings of change which in and after 1800 transformed the methods of Dorset poor relief. Three innovations made their appearance in this period: first, the sale by the parish of subsidized food to the poor; secondly, the giving of family allowances to help those with large families; and thirdly the making up of pay according to a bread scale. None of these three developments was peculiar to Dorset but the first two seem to have been much more prevalent in the county than in most other counties, except probably those of the extreme south-west of England. The making up of pay was less prevalent in Dorset than has been often asserted; before 1810 it was practised in the Shaston North, the Shaston South and Blandford North divisions. The giving of family allowances however was the usual practice in the Bridport, Cerne, Sturminster and Blandford South divisions. In the other two divisions, namely Dorchester and Sherborne, there were few departures from the eighteenth-century system. Between 1810 and 1815 there was a difficult period and a number of the divisions changed their practice: Blandford South (1810), Sturminster (1813) and Cerne (1815) adopted the making up of pay. These changes meant that the system was practised in about half the county but it must be remembered that every parish in these divisions did not practise this method the whole of the time. (6)

From 1816 to 1820 the county was confronted with another crisis and once again new methods were tried. A number of varieties of the roundsman system were introduced into the Vale of Blackmore, especially in the

6. See Chapter XVI *supra*.

area around Motcombe and Iwerne Courtney in the east and Hazelbury Bryan in the centre of the region. In 1822 a particularly bad form of the system was introduced at Hazelbury Bryan and the Rev. Henry Walter, the rector of the parish, appealed against the overseers' accounts. The decision of the quarter sessions was given in his favour and ended the roundsman system in Dorset, save for a short-lived and local revival around Iwerne Courtney in 1829 and 1830.

After the 1830 risings there was a fairly widespread decline of the making up pay system, at least to the extent that there was no published scale in many divisions where it had formerly been used. (7)

Particular attention should be paid to the divisions where the system of making up pay was not practised and especially to the successful management of the poor in the Bridport division. The administration in this part of the county was based on a system of family allowances: on the custom of apprenticing the children of pauper families to the farmers of the parish; and on the generous use of food subsidies when conditions necessitated it. In the larger villages these methods were supplemented by workhouses which were among the most successful in the county. (8) It must be remembered further that the Dorchester and Sherborne divisions seldom departed from their eighteenth-century practices and there is no evidence to suggest that their poor suffered as a result. (9)

These conclusions indicate that poor-law policy was in the discretion of the divisional justices (10) but the character of the administration was imparted by the parish officers. In Dorset there seems to have been little of the ruthlessness and corruption which has been found elsewhere, but there was a great deal of inefficiency and indifference to the letter of the law. The parish apprentice system was being allowed to fall into disuse, except in West Dorset. In the eastern parts of the county

7. See Chapter XVII above.

8. See Chapters XIII, XIV and XVI above.

9. See Chapters XV and XVI above.

10. See Chapters VIII, XVI and XVII above.

it became more usual to send the pauper children out as covenanted servants for a year, and apprenticeship was rare in rural parishes after about 1780. However, the practice in the west (found sometimes in other areas too,) was not the real intention of the law for it amounted to binding the children to be farm boys or housemaids in return for their keep. (11)

The treatment of bastardy was typical of the practice in the country as a whole. The overseers showed no moral fervour in treating the problem but approached it from a purely economic viewpoint. In fact a high moral approach would often have been misplaced since in many cases it was the impossibility of marriage which had led to the trouble. The entries in the books suggest that the overseers were able to turn the mothers of bastards into useful members of village society who looked after children and nursed the aged and infirm. The law against women was rarely applied unless it appeared to the parish that a woman was becoming a prostitute. (12)

The overseers do not seem to have made any attempt to enforce the law of settlement strictly. It appears that poor people were able to move about comparatively freely, as long as they could support themselves or needed only temporary relief. It was only when there appeared to be a probability of a long or permanent need of relief that the law was applied. Thus it was usually a young, single and sometimes pregnant woman, or a couple with a growing family who were removed. Legal removal was not readily resorted to and the parishes preferred other means of getting rid of a burdensome pauper if this were possible. Often they reached an arrangement with the other parish concerned, whereby they relieved the pauper and the other parish refunded the money. When they did resort to legal removal it did not usually result in any very great expenditure. There were many cases of removal where the cost amounted to no more than a pound or two especially when the case was a strong one and the place of settlement was nearby. A person so removed could easily have cost the parish many pounds in relief as a permanent pensioner. The very

11. See Chapter XII above.

12. See Chapter XIII above.

rare cases which proved excessively expensive must not be regarded as typical: the overseers did not embark on removal proceedings unless they thought it would profit the parish to do so. (13)

In the making of rates and the keeping of books in Dorset there were the greatest irregularities. It was the normal custom to have a single rate allowed by the justices at the beginning of each year. The overseer would collect this rate as many times in the year as he found necessary. Only in the larger urban parishes was each rate separately sanctioned by the justices - the correct procedure. In the keeping of his accounts the overseer frequently failed to give the reason for the payment as the law required. In fact the irregularities were such that the administration of the poor laws in the majority of rural parishes could have been obstructed by appeals against rates and accounts; yet such appeals were comparatively rare and appear to have sprung from a sense of "moral" rather than legal injustice or from knowledge of a wasteful administration. In such circumstances some legal irregularity was taken up to form the basis of the appeal. If the overseer satisfied the parishioners that he was being just and that he was not wasting the parish money, no one worried if he made illegal payments, did not keep the books correctly or made his rate in an irregular way. (14)

In the parochial organisation there was the same mixture of legal muddle and practical commonsense. There were very few parishes in Dorset which had been legally divided into tithings but in practice most of the larger parishes were so divided and functioned as single units only once or twice in the year when the overseers met to put the accounts into one book and to make rates. There were comparatively few assistant overseers in the county. This was partly due to the large number of small parishes which neither needed nor could afford one, and partly due to the fact that many Dorset parishes employed permanent overseers long before the practice was sanctioned by Parliament. If they already had someone who was

13. See Chapter X above.

14. See Chapter IX above.

performing the duties of an assistant overseer, they could see no reason to pay the lawyers to have such an officer legally appointed. (15) The Dorset administration of the poor was inefficient and muddled but it was marked by a lot of commonsense and by regard for economy. It showed no sign of deliberately neglecting or ill-treating the poor but its organisation and its methods were quite inadequate when confronted by poverty on a large scale as in the Vale of Blackmore. On the other hand where the poverty was less severe as in the Sherborne district, West Dorset or the coastal regions, the old poor law proved moderately effective.

It is proposed to conclude with a consideration of the treatment of Dorset in the 1834 Poor Law Report. The contribution of D. O. P. Okeden is open to the criticisms of distortion and over-emphasis. His account of the Dorset administration gives very little attention to the areas of the county where the system was working reasonably well. He scarcely mentions the Sherborne and Dorchester areas and in one of the few references to the Bridport division, he refers to Beaminster in the middle of a passage on the making up of pay, saying that in the Cranborne and Beaminster districts the magistrates had made a determined effort to get rid of scales. (16) The only scale, however, which was used in the Beaminster area was the size of the family, and to couple this district with another which used the bread scale is misleading. It may be that this was due to a misunderstanding on his part for he was not well-informed on the state of affairs in West Dorset and apparently was ignorant of the workhouses there.

If Okeden gave too little attention to areas where the poor law was working fairly well, he gave far too much to the Sturminster division where it was working less well. Moreover he seems to have given undue prominence to Hazelbury Bryan, a parish which had been transferred to the division only in 1830, and to its rector the Rev. Henry Walter, an able critic of the Sturminster bench. The Rev. H. F. Yeatman was so incensed by Okeden's report that he wrote a pamphlet criticising his methods and conclusions.

15. See Chapter VIII

16. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.11.

He regarded the report as an inadequate account of the practical operation of the poor laws in the Sturminster division. He pointed out that Okeden had chosen a few parishes to illustrate his own views, and during his visit to Sturminster the overseers of the eighteen parishes of the division had been summoned to meet him but he retired into a private room and saw only a selected few. In fact his evidence was mostly collected from a small group of persons who were opposed to the policy of the justices.(17)

Okeden in his reply said that the "private room" had been open to all who had wished to enter and that his criticisms of the Sturminster policy represented his own opinion. (18) No doubt Okeden was reporting matters as he saw them and his opinions were genuinely held but he was an outspoken advocate of poorlaw reform and he clearly allowed his own opinions to influence his judgement. It seems to have been quite true that the management of the poor in the Sturminster division was the worst in Dorset and that Okeden's views on the problems of poverty were very much sounder than those of the Rev. H. F. Yeatman but he clearly selected his evidence in such a way as to present a somewhat exaggerated picture of the position in that division.

The same bias seems to emerge in the selection of the parish returns printed in Appendix B. of the report. They appear to have been selected either from parishes where the management of the poor was inefficient and where the methods were such as Okeden and, no doubt, the commissioners regarded with disfavour, or selected from parishes where the methods they preferred worked successfully. Not a single parish from the Bridport division is included but there are four from Okeden's own Shaston East division. Poole is included and it is significant that Okeden greatly admired the work of Mr. Hooper, the assistant guardian. There is a report from Hazelbury Bryan, written by the Rev. Henry Walter of whom Okeden wrote "a man of intelligence and the most correct views on the poor law." (19) It must be concluded that Okeden set out to present a case for poor-law reform rather than to give a balanced account of Dorset poor-law administration.

17. H. F. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, cf. pp.5-6
18. D.O.P. Okeden, A Letter to the Rev. H.F. Yeatman, pp.8-9.
19. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, p.20.

PART THREE.

Agrarian Distress and
the Administration of the Poor Laws.

Poverty: 1760 to 1834.

The chief sources of information concerning the extent and growth of poverty in Dorset are the poor-books of the parishes. Additional information can be obtained from newspapers and other publications which, although limited in scope and extent, is useful in the interpretation of the fluctuating figures of expenditure derived from the parish records or the periodic surveys of poor-law expenditure carried out by order of the House of Commons. (1) These figures, reduced to an index based on 100, are given in the table below, together with other statistics relating to population and the price of wheat. The relationships between the different sets of figures are subsequently set out in graph form.

1. The parliamentary figures are derived from:

Report on Overseers' Returns (1777), First Series,

Vol. 9, pp. 297 ff.

Report on Overseers' Returns and Appendix (1787),

First Series, Vol. 9, pp. 543 ff. and 553 ff.

Abstract of Answers and Returns, Sessional Papers 1803-4,

Vol. 13, pp. 117-132.

Abridgement of Abstract of Returns, Sessional Papers 1818,

Vol. 19, pp. 101-114.

Poor Rate Returns, Sessional Papers 1835, Vol. 47,

pp. 185.

(For full details of these publications see the Bibliography and for an account of the method employed in using these figures and those from the poor-books see the appendix to this chapter.)

A Table Setting Out the Index of Expenditure on the Poor in Dorset from 1760 to 1834, together with the population figures and the price of wheat in each year. (2)

Key to the Columns.

- A. Index of expenditure based on poor-books.
- B. Index of expenditure based on parliamentary reports in which 1760 = 100. (see note 1)
- C. Index of expenditure based on parliamentary reports in which 1812-13 = 545, figure as in column A.
- D. Population figures.
- E. Index of population in which 1760 = 100.
- F. Price of wheat.
- G. Index of price of wheat in which 1760 = 100.

	Expenditure.			Population.		Wheat Prices.	
	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.
1760-61	100	100		91,000	100	33/5	100
1761-62	104					27/7	82
1762-63	98					35/9	106
1763-64	99					37/2	111
1764-65	95					42/8	128
1765-66	106					49/6	148
1766-67	111					44/5	133
1767-68	121					59/1	176
1768-69	136					55/5	165
1769-70	128					41/10	125
1770-71	124					44/10	134
1771-72	136					48/7	144
1772-73	134					52/3	156
1773-74	141					52/7	157
1774-75	155					54/3	162
1775-76	155	133				49/10	149

2. For the basis of the index of expenditure see the appendix to this chapter where the actual figures are set out. It should be remembered that the poor-law year ran from March/April to March/April. The population figures are from the Victoria County History; Dorset Vol. 2, pp.266-275. The prices of wheat are from Prothero, op.cit. pp.440-441. Those from 1760 to 1770 are the prices at Eton but from 1771 onwards they are national averages. The price given in each line is for the first year mentioned.

	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.
1776-77	147				39/4	117	
1777-78	145				46/11	140	
1778-79	152				43/3	129	
1779-80	159				34/8	103	
1780-81	169				36/9	110	
1781-82	167				46/-	137	
1782-83	176)				49/3	147	
1783-84	179}	-165			54/3	162	
1784-85	198)				50/4	150	
1785-86	212				43/1	128	
1786-87	204				40/-	119	
1787-88	184				42/5	126	
1788-89	198				46/4	138	
1789-90	212				52/9	157	
1790-91	216				54/9	163	
1791-92	203)				48/7	145	
1792-93	195)	-204			43/-	128	
1793-94	244)				49/3	147	
1794-95	244				52/3	156	
1795-96	314				75/2	222	
1796-97	342				78/7	231	
1797-98	288				53/9	160	
1798-99	291				51/10	155	
1799-1800	372				69/-	203	
1800-01	611		114,500	126	113/10	340	
1801-02	610				119/6	356	
1802-03	417	353			69/10	204	
1803-04	388				58/10	175	
1804-05	396				62/3	186	
1805-06	402				89/9	268	
1806-07	398				79/1	238	
1807-08	399				75/4	222	
1808-09	392				81/4	242	
1809-10	450				97/4	290	
1810-11	475		124,700	137	106/5	314	
1811-12	457				95/3	282	
1812-13	545)	545			126/6	379	
1813-14	477)	-475	466		109/9	323	
1814-15	396)	382			74/4	221	
1815-16	422	396			65/7	196	

	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.
1816-17	462	478			78/6	232	
1817-18	580	592			96/11	289	
1818-19	559	542			86/3	257	
1819-20	553	522			74/6	222	
1820-21	499	478	144,500	159	67/10	210	
1821-22	436	426			56/1	165	
1822-23	409)	390			44/7	133	
1823-24	431} -419	392			53/4	159	
1824-25	437)	398			63/11	190	
1825-26	442	408			68/6	202	
1826-27	440	413			58/8	175	
1827-28	450	401			58/6	175	
1828-29	459	420			60/5	180	
1829-30	498	451			66/3	197	
1830-31	488	450	159,400	170	64/3	180	
1831-32	502)	462			66/4	197	
1832-33	510} -473	450			58/6	157	
1833-34	477)	420			52/11	137	

(3)

3. To indicate the actual totals which lie behind the indices, the sums expended in the county for the years to which column B applies are given below.

1760.	£18,850.	1802-3.	£66,981.
1775-6.	£24,538.	1813-15.	£89,584.
1783-5.	£31,528.	1823-25.	£78,906.
1791-4.	£38,250.	1832-34.	£89,221.

The significance of the figures in the table above can be shown most clearly in graph form and on the following pages four graphs will be found:

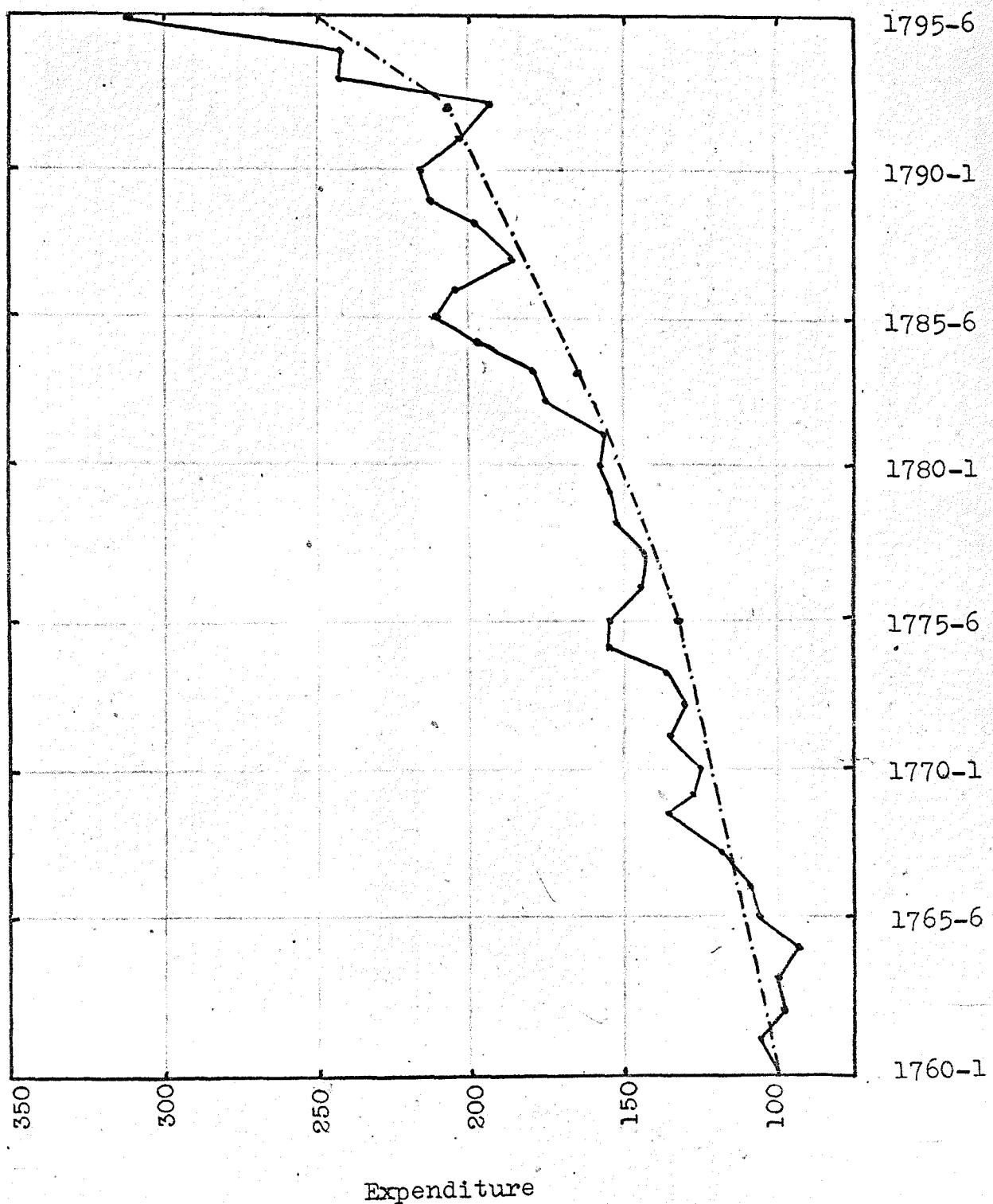
1. A graph showing the three poor expenditure indices.
2. A graph showing poor expenditure and population.
3. A graph showing poor expenditure and the price of wheat.

4. A graph showing the relationship between the two lines in graph 3, in which the price of wheat has been reduced to 100 in each year. The expenditure figure has been reduced by the formula $E \times \frac{100}{W}$,

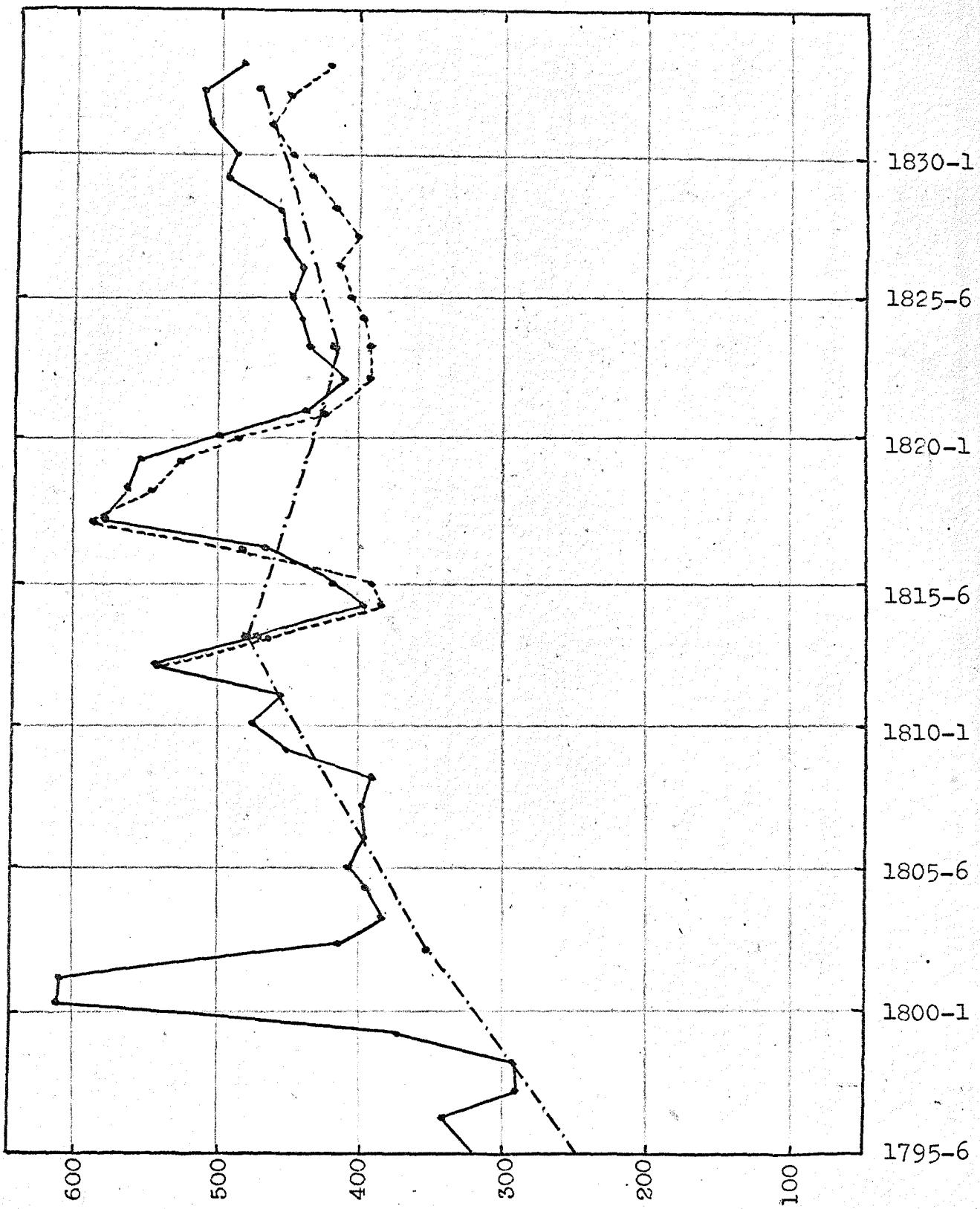
where E = expenditure and W = the price of wheat. The population increase line has been added to this graph.

Graph 1: showing the three indices of expenditure on the poor given in columns A, B and C in the preceding table, viz:-

A (—) = the index based on the poor-books (1760 = 100).
B (---) = the index based on the parliamentary returns (1760 = 100).
C (-----) = the index based on the parliamentary returns from 1813-1834 (the figure for 1812-13 equated to 545, the figure given in index A).



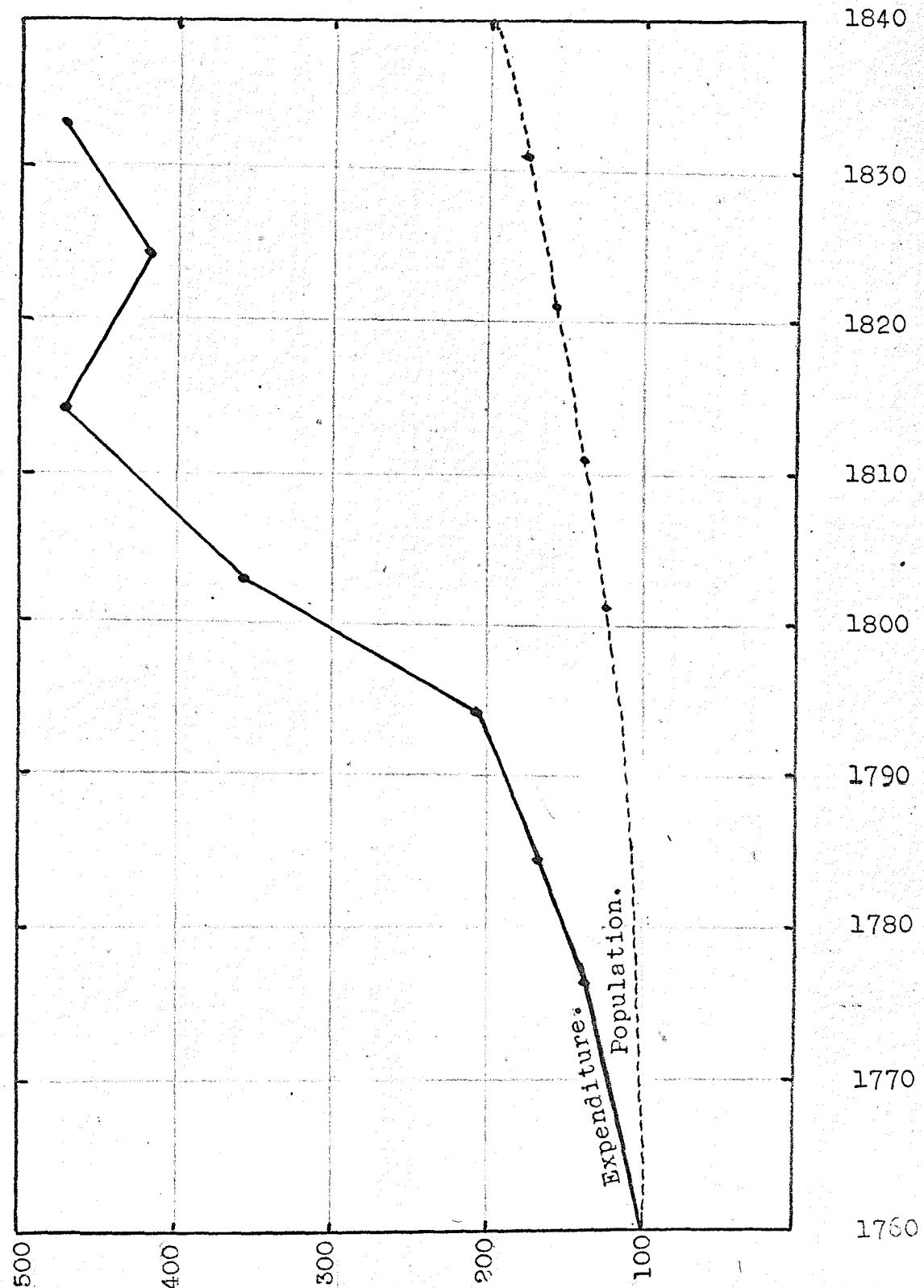
Graph 1 continued (Vertical Scale Reduced).



The three lines agree reasonably well and the similarity between lines A and B suggests that line A is a reliable guide for the earlier period. Line B is rather lower than the real average would be, probably because the estimated figure for 1760 was slightly inaccurate. Nevertheless it does represent the pattern of the average growth of expenditure and so has been used in graph 2 as a comparison with the population increase line.

Graph 2: Poor Law Expenditure and Population Increases.

Expenditure and Population.

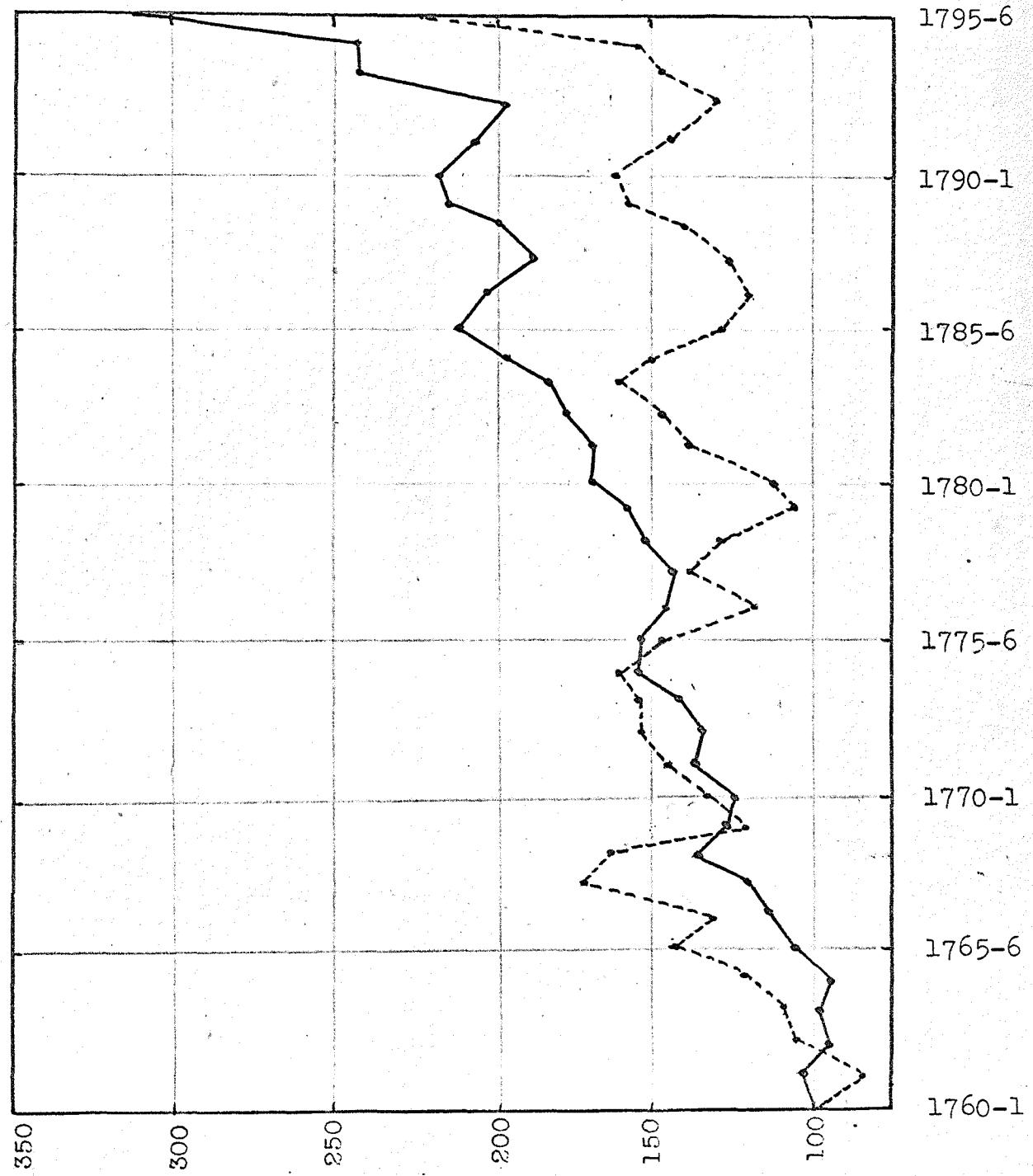


This comparison of the increase of poor-law expenditure and the growth of population does not, at first sight, suggest any very close relationship. It is obvious that both were increasing and it is reasonable to assume that an increase in numbers was an important element in the rise in the amounts expended on poor relief. From 1760 to the mid-1790's, however, population growth may have been of more significance than it was afterwards. If the effects of the "bad years" are disregarded for the moment, the main cause of the growth of expenditure was the increase in the number of "regulars", that is of the aged, the infirm and orphans. Thus at South Perrott the regulars increased from nine to thirteen between 1760 and 1790. At Canford the increase was from thirty-nine to forty-three, at Tarrant Hinton from six to eleven and at Wimborne St. Giles from six to ten. (4) Similar increases were shown in almost all the parishes where it was possible to examine the books.

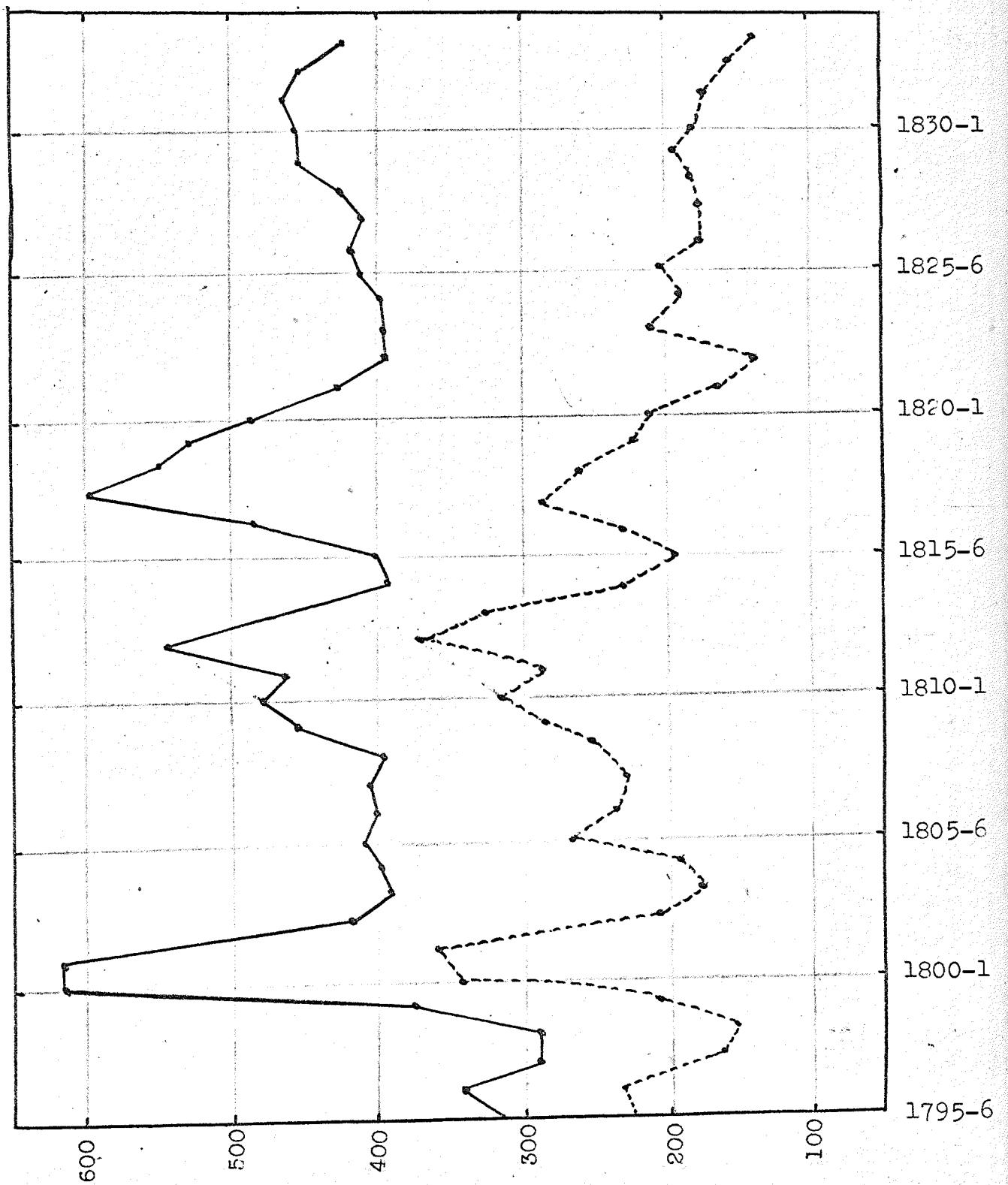
It is, then, reasonable to attach considerable importance to the population factor in the earlier part of the period but there were clearly other factors too as the yearly variations shown in graph 1 demonstrates. After the mid-1790's these other factors appear to have become far more important; the relationship of expenditure to population growth is less obvious even in graph 2 where the expenditure line does not show the yearly variations. It must be remembered, however, that a population increase may affect the poor expenditure in other ways besides increasing the numbers of the aged, infirm and orphaned. If this were the only effect, the implication would be that the community was successfully absorbing the growing numbers of the working population. On the other hand if this were not the case, unemployment would result and, as has been already shown, (5) this problem did become serious in the early nineteenth century.

4. Cf. Poor Books of the parishes mentioned.
5. Cf. Chapter XVII above.

Graph 3, comparing the expenditure on the poor with the average price of wheat. Line A (—) represents the poor expenditure and line B (----) the prices of wheat.



Graph 3 continued.



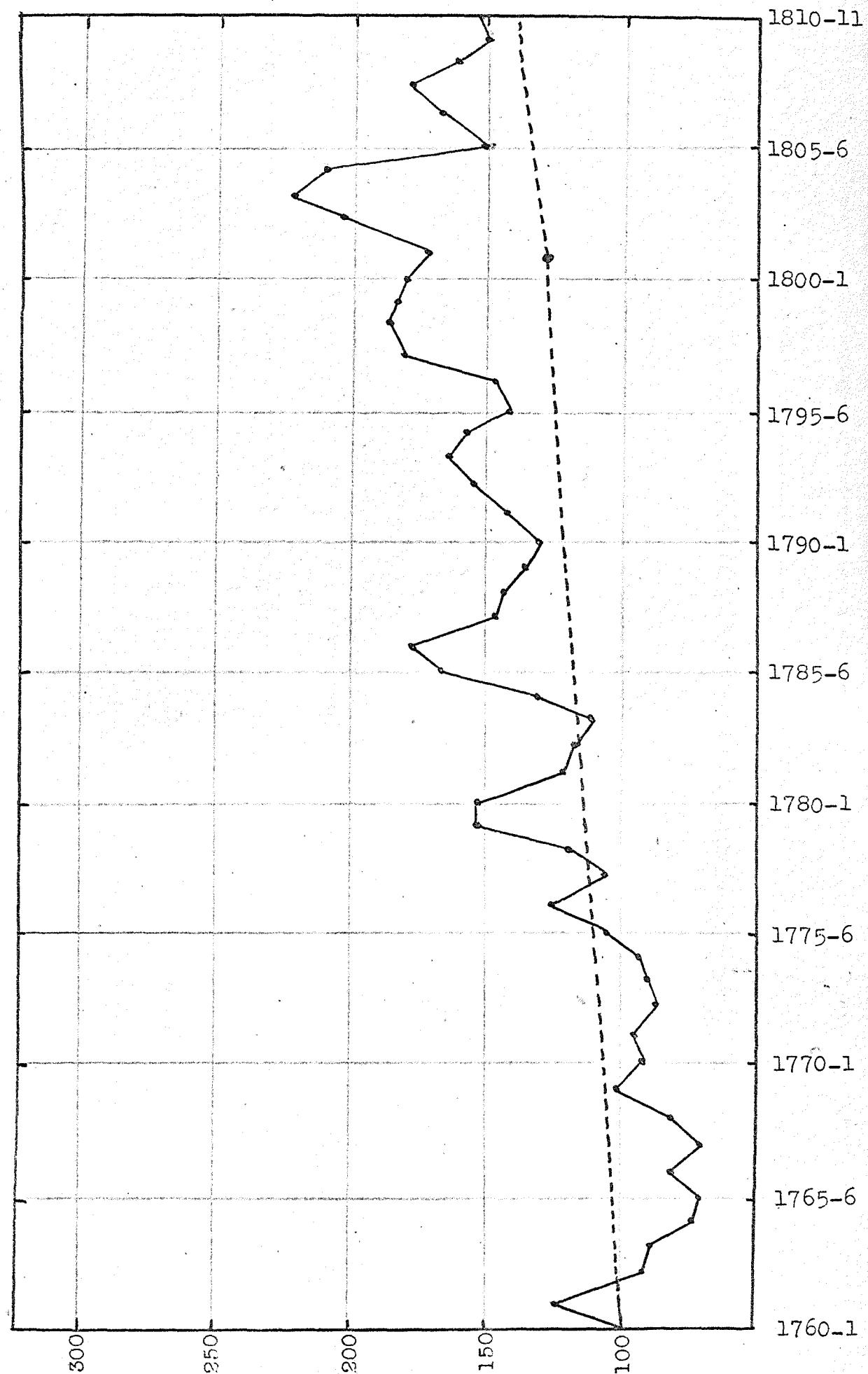
N.B. The vertical scale is half that on the previous page.

The year 1787-88 divides graph 3 into two parts. The first part of the graph suggests that some relationship existed between poor-law expenditure and the price of wheat but it is much less obvious than in the second part where a close relationship is indicated. Thus in the first part of the graph it will be noted that the rise in expenditure in the late 1760's corresponds to a rise in the price of wheat. The same observation applies to the early 1770's and the early 1780's but the falls in the price of wheat in the late 1770's and the mid-1780's did not lead to comparable falls in the expenditure on the poor. In the second part of graph 3 the lines representing expenditure and the price of wheat are very similar: almost every variation in the price of wheat being matched by a corresponding variation in expenditure. This indicates that the price of wheat was a major factor determining the amount of relief given in any year after 1787. The system of making up pay on a bread scale would produce this pattern if it was universally applied but, as has been seen, this practice was not found to a significant extent in Dorset before 1799. The graph, however, shows that the relationship began twelve years before the system of making up pay started. It cannot, then, be argued that this close relationship between the two lines could only be produced by a bread scale. Rather it may be suggested that since bread was the major item in the diet of the poor, the overseers must have been guided by its price in assessing the relief to be given, whatever system of relief was in use. The fact that poor-law expenditure was so sensitive to variations in the price of wheat indicates that the poor were living at subsistence level in the later part of the period so that any rise in their cost of living, not immediately compensated by increased parochial relief, would result in severe distress.

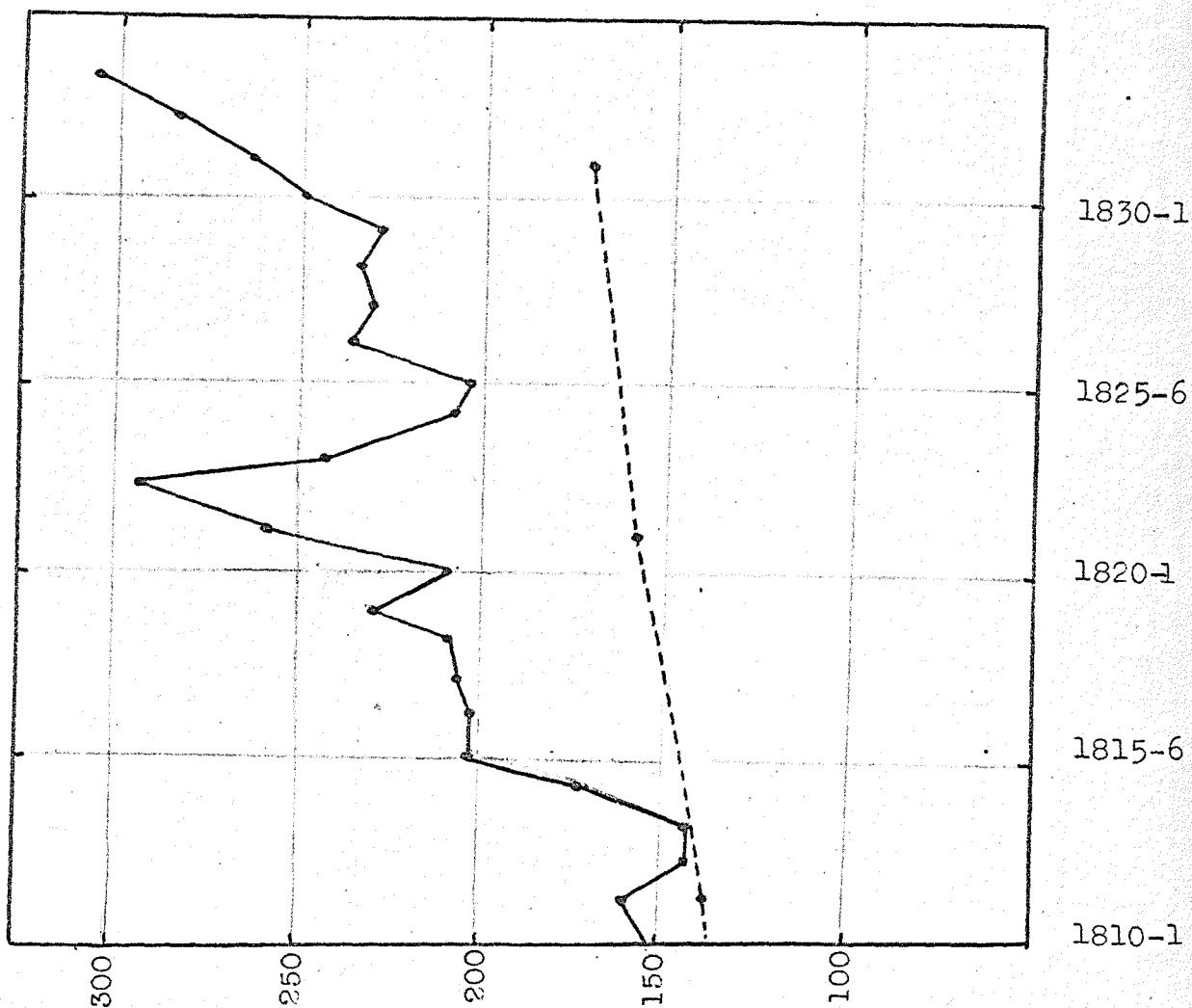
Although graph 3 shows the close relationship between the price of wheat and poor-law expenditure after 1787, there are certain variations not accounted for. Between 1802 and 1805, for example, the expenditure on the poor appears to be higher than the price of wheat would justify. Another noticeable feature is the progressive divergence of the two lines, especially in the late 1780's and between 1802 and 1811, and after 1813.

Graph 4 is an attempt to express these divergences by eliminating from the expenditure line the fluctuation which corresponds to the variation in the price of wheat. The graph has a serious weakness in that there is no reason why 1760, or indeed any other year, should be regarded as normal, as has been done by equating the price of wheat and expenditure on the poor in that year. As a result the graph does not show variations from normal but from what happened to be the case in 1760 and it should, therefore, be regarded with caution especially where it applies to the years before the great increases in the wheat price and of poor-law expenditure in the 1790's. These increases should minimise the effect of any possible initial abnormality on the later years of the period. The graph, for what it is worth, is included since it can be usefully interpreted as indicative of factors besides population increase and the price of wheat causing distress. The average upward trend of the expenditure line in graph 4 is similar to that of population. It does indicate, however, two periods - 1795-1805 and after 1813 - when neither the price of wheat nor the increase in population can wholly explain the rise in expenditure on the poor. This feature and other lesser variations are best examined in conjunction with the study of the other graphs.

Graph 4 showing the variation between the two lines in graph 3. Wheat = 100, Expenditure = ——, Population = -----



Graph 4 continued.



It must now be considered whether the fluctuations revealed by these graphs bear any relationship to the situation suggested by other sources. Graph 1 shows that expenditure rose in the second half of the 1760's, reaching a peak in 1768-9. 1767-8 and 1768-9 were years in which the price of wheat rose considerably (see graph 3). The increase seems to have started after a bad harvest in 1766 (6) and in the following winter there were references in the local papers to the distressed state of the poor. In January 1767, 'The Sherborne Mercury' reported the raising of subscriptions to help the poor and advocated the importation of foreign wheat and the use of rice as the only way in which to

6. References to weather and harvests are based on T. S. Ashton, Economic Fluctuations in England 1700-1800, pp. 21-26, unless otherwise stated.

avoid famine. (7) Later the same paper described how the poor could afford no drink other than water and suggested that water in which rice had been boiled was more palatable. (8) It would seem that Dorset was particularly badly affected at this time for the newspapers described how local prices were higher than those elsewhere and how wheat imported from London was sold at prices lower than those which had been paid for the local crop. (9) In 1768 the situation was much the same for the newspapers gave similar accounts of subscriptions to help the poor in their distress. The price of wheat was slightly lower in 1768, but despite this the poor expenditure rose above the figure for the preceding year. (Graph 4 shows this by a sharp rise). It may well be that this was due to the prices of animal products remaining high in 1768, (10) or it may have been that the higher relief of the preceding year continued to be paid after the need for it had started to decline. Graph 4 suggests that this time-lag in the fall of expenditure after a period of dear bread was a frequent occurrence.

After an easier year in 1770-1, the expenditure on the poor began to rise again and graph 3 shows that the price of wheat was a major factor. In January 1773 "The Sherborne Mercury" gave accounts of gifts to the poor and commented that "the industrious poor never stood in more need of assistance than at this present time as in many places, however willing or desirous they may be, they cannot get employment sufficient to subsist on." (11) There does not appear to have been a general unemployment problem at this time however and the reference was probably to conditions at Sherborne where in January 1773 William Willmott, the silk manufacturer, was experiencing great difficulties in obtaining contracts. He wrote of having to stand off many of his hands and expressed his concern

7. Sherborne Mercury, 19.1.1767.
8. Ibid., 9.3.1767.
9. Ibid., 16.3.1767 and 30.3.1767.
10. T. S. Ashton, op.cit., p.22.
11. Sherborne Mercury, 4.1.1773.

at their distressed condition. (12) A period of slack trade in the silk industry was evidently an important factor contributing to the distress of the poor in the Sherborne district.

In 1775 the prices of wheat began to decline and except for 1777 remained low until the early 1780's. The rise in 1777 did not result in distress and the expenditure on the poor was at the lowest level since 1773-4. In 1779-80 and 1780-81 the price of wheat was very low but the expenditure on the poor rose slightly in both years and as a result there is a marked rise shown in graph 4. It may be that poor-law expenditure remained high because it was already at the minimum level as the close correspondence between the expenditure line and the population line in graph 4 suggests. On the other hand it may have been caused by the hard winter of 1780, (13) and perhaps by the depressed state of agriculture due to the low prices of wheat. (14) From 1782-3 to 1785-6 the expenditure on the poor rose sharply and in 1782 and 1783 the rise in the price of wheat was probably responsible. After 1783, however, wheat fell in price, whereas expenditure on the poor continued to rise. (cf. graphs 3 and 4). The reason for this continued rise is probably to be found in the exceptionally severe winters of 1784-5, when there were eighty-nine days of frost, and of 1785-6 when there were one hundred and twelve days of frost. The local newspapers indicate that the poor suffered greatly as a result and there are reports of gifts made in order to help them. (15) In 1788 there was a bad harvest which led to a sharp increase in the price of wheat in the following year. The winter of 1788-89 was a hard one and there are reports of gifts and subscriptions to relieve the distress of the poor. (16) After the early months there are no further reports of distress despite the fact that the price of wheat and the expenditure on the poor continued to rise until 1790. It may be concluded that

12. Cf. Chapter IV above, and M. B. Weinstock, Studies in Dorset History, pp.89-90.
13. Account of hard winters in The Guardian of 28.2.1963.
14. T. S. Ashton, op.cit. p.23.
15. e.g. Sherborne Mercury, 9.2.1784 and 27.12.1784.
16. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 29.12.1788, 19.1.1789 and 16.2.1789.

except during the winter of 1788-89 there appears to have been no particular hardship at this time and graph 3 suggests that the rise in the price of wheat was fully compensated by increased relief.

The year 1793 saw the beginning of a sequence of crises which considerably altered the character of Dorset poor relief. The harvest of 1792 had been a bad one and in November and December there had been meetings both of farmers and magistrates to discuss extraordinary measures to meet the needs of the poor. (These meetings are discussed in Chapter XVI.) The winter proved to be less grim than had been expected and the level of poor relief remained low in 1792-3. In 1793, however, the price of wheat rose and poor expenditure went up even more sharply. These higher levels were maintained in 1794 and the hardships of the poor were increased in the winter of 1794-5 by the extremely cold weather. The magistrates' policy, although clearly not implemented in detail, and that of the farmers, show that there was a willingness to meet the needs of the poor generously and this probably resulted in adequate relief which led to the rapid rise in total expenditure shown in graph 3. (17) The winter of 1794-95 was one of the severest on record and the frost which lasted from January to March destroyed much of the winter wheat. The summer of 1795 brought dry easterly winds and the ears of wheat did not fill. The result was a bad harvest with a great shortage of both wheat and potatoes, and the price of wheat rose to the highest level yet known. In 1795 the national average price was 72/5d and in 1796 it was 78/7d. The local prices, however, appear to have been lower, ranging from 50/- to 70/-. (18) In 1795-6 and 1796-7 the expenditure on the poor increased considerably and new methods of poor relief were tried.

17. Graph 3 suggests that in this period expenditure on the poor rose to a greater extent than did the price of wheat. This impression may be partly due to the fact that the poor-law year did not coincide with the calendar year for which the average wheat prices have been calculated. In a period of rising prices the poor-law expenditure figure, which includes about three months of the year following that for which the related wheat prices are calculated, will tend to rise more rapidly.
18. Cf. occasional reports in The Sherborne Mercury in these years.

As was shown in Chapter XVI, parishes sold wheat to the poor at reduced prices and in some places family allowances were given.

The next two years were easier, since the harvests of 1797 and 1798 were good ones. The summer of 1799, however, was wet and stormy and many fields were left unharvested. The winter of 1799-1800 was severe and there was a late spring. August 1800 was wet and the harvest was a wretched one. 1801, however, saw a better harvest and the price of wheat fell later as a result. Two extremely bad harvests, together with the war-time boom (19) and the activities of some farmers who held up supplies in order to push the prices up further (20), led to the wheat price rising to a fantastic level. The national average in 1799 was 69/- per quarter, while in 1800 it was 113/10 and in 1801 119/6. It has been shown in Chapter XVI how this crisis led to the making up of pay being introduced in some parts of Dorset and to the great expansion of the sale of foodstuffs to the poor at a cheap price. The local papers contain many reports which reflect the distressed state of the poor. Men were committed to the county gaol for stealing wheat, turnips or peas (21) and riots in many parts of the county were reported. At Sherborne in September 1800, the news of a bad harvest provoked the poor into assembling "in a riotous manner" and breaking into food shops to "purchase butter, cheese etc. at their own prices." (22) At Askerwell a farmstead was set on fire by unknown persons, apparently because of the high price of farm produce. (23) The editor of "The Sherborne Mercury" was convinced that the prices of wheat were artificially high because farmers were holding up supplies and he seemed to connect the Askerwell incident with this practice. On the other hand there are reports of charitable measures to relieve the poor. Thus at Lymes Regis a subscription was raised and the money was used to establish a soup shop in which "good beef soup" was sold cheaply to three hundred poor persons daily. (24) At Poole also a subscription was raised to help the poor while at Weymouth a combined

19. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy, Vol. 1, p.9.
20. Sherborne Mercury, 4.8.1800.
21. Ibid., 23.12.1799 and 10.2.1800, for example.
22. Ibid., 22.9.1800.
23. Ibid., 29.9.1800.
24. Ibid., 13.1.1800.

concert and ball was held for the same purpose. (25) Farmers who treated their labourers generously were praised in "The Sherborne Mercury" and held up as examples to others who hoarded their wheat. One man was reported to be letting small pieces of land to the poor and giving them money with which to buy seed. (26) Another was allowing twelve families to occupy his cottages rent free and selling them wheat at 4/- a bushel. (27) In the three years 1799, 1800 and 1801 Dorset faced the most serious crisis which anyone then living could remember and a glance at graph 1 and graph 3 will show the vast increase in expenditure on the poor that resulted, for relief was given on a scale never before known. The way in which the crisis was met suggests that the poor-law system was adequate to meet the challenge of distress of this kind and thus of preventing serious disturbances.

By the end of 1801 the situation had improved and there were no further reports of serious distress until 1810. Graph 4 suggests that the fall in the price of wheat did not produce an equivalent fall in the expenditure on the poor until 1805 and this was probably due to the continuance of the measures devised in the period of crisis although perhaps they were no longer necessary. In 1809-10 expenditure on the poor began to rise sharply again and this increase was sustained throughout the next year. It seems to have been due to bad harvests in 1809 and 1810. (28) There are not many references to the state of the poor in the local papers at this time, although the jubilee of George III was used as an occasion to raise subscriptions for the poor at Poole (29) and at Lyme Regis. (30) The harvest of 1811 was slightly inadequate and that of 1812 decidedly so. In normal times these deficiencies of corn would have been made good by imports from the continent but Napoleon's policy made this impossible and the price of wheat rose in 1812 and 1813. The harvest of 1813, however, was a good one and by

25. Sherborne Mercury, 17.3.1800.
26. Ibid., 11.7.1800.
27. Sherborne Journal, 25.4.1800.
28. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, op.cit. Vol. 1, p.85.
29. Sherborne Mercury, 30.10.1809.
30. Ibid., 27.1.1810.

December in that year the price had fallen. (31) The local newspapers do not suggest that these years were especially hard on the poor although poor-law expenditure rose to the highest level since 1801-02. It may well be that the adoption of the system of making up pay in the Blandford South and Sturminster divisions led to greater expenditure. Graph 4 suggests that the expenditure was a close reflection of the price of bread.

The harvest of 1813 was abundant and the price of wheat fell considerably. This led to a reduction in the expenditure on the poor but, as graph 4 indicates, not in proportion to the fall in the wheat price; for another factor was becoming important. The fall in wheat prices, together with the ending of the war soon after, resulted in a period of severe agricultural depression which lasted until 1823. (32) Graphs 3 and 4 show that the price of wheat was a factor of lesser importance after 1813 and it may be suggested that the depression of agriculture was of prime importance in the crisis of 1817-20. Bowley's index of agricultural wages shows that the labourers' earnings had been rising from 1790, when he evaluated them at 100, until 1806 when his scale reads 198. After 1806 wages remained constant until 1813, while from 1813 to 1824 there was a steady fall in wages and for the latter year the index gives 134. (33) These figures do not relate to Dorset in particular but a fall in wages of this kind together with the rise in wheat prices in 1816, 1817 and 1818 would explain the rise of poor expenditure in the county. Moreover the development of the roundsman system and the increase of entries in the poor-books concerning work on the roads indicate that the growth of unemployment was a contributory factor to this rise in expenditure. The years from 1816 to 1820 saw the worst distress which the poor had experienced since 1801. The local papers contain stories of riots such as those at Bridport when rioters broke into warehouses and shops to obtain food. (34).

- 31. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, *op.cit.*, pp. 85, 113 and 115.
- 32. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 33. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 54, 81, 108, 167, 238, 273.
- 34. Sherborne Mercury, 15.8.1816.

They describe the firing of ricks (35) and assaults on overseers (36). There were more legal removals than at any other time and the poor-law system was being strained to the uttermost. (37) This system, which had proved itself able to meet the distress caused by the extremely high wheat prices in 1800 and 1801, and again in 1812, was now showing signs of breaking down under the strain of agricultural depression. The reason was that in the former crises the farmers were prosperous enough to pay the higher rates necessary to meet the increase in relief but now they resisted every increase, for they themselves faced bankruptcy. (38)

After 1820 the price of wheat fell to the lowest level since the eighteenth century and the farmers faced their worst crisis. On the other hand the labourers, whose wages were still higher than they had been in 1790, were a little better off, although this did not apply to all as the period was one of high unemployment. (39) Poor-law expenditure was considerably lower in the early 1820's but, as graph 4 shows, the discrepancy between it and the price of wheat had never been greater. The reason for this seems to have been the relief necessitated partly by the considerable unemployment and partly by the decline in the labourers' incomes due to the failure of the rural industries which were unable to compete with mechanised industry elsewhere. (40) This meant that the small supplement to the labourer's budget, contributed by the earnings of his wife and children, was diminishing. The period from 1816 to 1823 is significant for it saw the emergence of the problem of poverty in a new form. In the past the whole of the labouring population had suffered equally in times of shortages and high prices and the farmers and gentry had experienced the same shortages in some degree but had been in the position to give help through subscriptions and the sale of cheap wheat. Now, however, the unemployed labouring population was suffering while others in employment were better off.

35. Sherborne Mercury, 15.8.1816.

36. Ibid., 30.9.1816.

37. Cf. Chapter X and XVII.

38. Cf. Chapter III.

39. Cf. Chapter XVII, and poor-books of 1820 onwards.

40. Cf. Chapter IV.

The farmers were faced with their own problems in a time of agricultural depression and could do less to help their poorer neighbours. Some of the gentry lowered their rents but they seemed to feel that there was less that they could do directly for the labourers. It was not that they were indifferent to the problems of unemployment but that they thought of schemes to provide employment, which in this period of depression proved impracticable, instead of giving direct help. (41) The problem was a new one and no one seemed to see any practical solution. The unemployed labourer in the 1820's could not understand his situation as food was plentiful and cheap yet the pittance which he got from the parish did not enable him to buy an adequate supply.

About 1824, arable farming began to revive and remained more prosperous until the 1830's. There were no harvests so abundant that the wheat price fell below the economic figure. On the other hand none of the harvests were so poor as to make the price of wheat rise to an excessively high level and, no doubt, the fact that grain could now be imported helped to steady the price. (42) The expenditure on the poor remained fairly steady as graph 3 shows although the gap between wheat prices and expenditure gradually widened. Unemployment remained the major problem and a meeting was held at Stalbridge in 1826 to consider the best way of employing those out of work. "The Times" described the condition of the poor at Stalbridge, showing that not only was there considerable unemployment but also that the wages of those in employment were low. It commented that it was difficult for the poor to help themselves as potato ground was very dear and that to obtain fuel the women and children were reduced to stealing wood from the hedges. There was some supplementary work provided by a branch of the Sherborne silk-throwing industry but the wages paid were very low. (43) The report of a meeting held at Stourton Caundle a few months later reflected a similar

41. On this see Chapter XXI.

42. Gayer, Rostrow and Schwartz, op.cit., Vol.1, p173-5.

43. The Times, 31.8.1826.

situation, and it pointed out that the concentration of all the land in the hands of six or seven large farmers meant that there was no competition for labour so that wages had sunk to the level of the magistrates' scale of poor relief. (44)

In 1829 there were signs that the position was deteriorating. There were reports of extensive fowl stealing in the northern parts of the county and one group of thieves obviously had a sense of humour, for they left a note when they stole six geese.

"Farmer Wright

We wish you good night,
For we cannot stay longer.
We have bought your geese
At a penny a piece,
And left the money
By the old gander." (45)

At Sherborne a subscription was raised for the purpose of providing the poor with beef soup and of selling them food at reduced prices, (46) and at Weymouth the poor were given coal by the local Member of Parliament. (47) The poor of Bridport were reported to be in a "truly pitiable condition" as a result of a depression in the local industry. There was little work available and no likelihood of an immediate improvement in the situation.

(48) The weather in 1828 and 1829 was wet and especially unfavourable to the heavy clay lands of the Vale of Blackmore. This dairy-farming area was also suffering from a depression in the butter trade. (49) Sheep-farming was also badly affected by the wet season and in the summer of 1829 it was reported that 100,000 sheep had died in the West of England; one farmer at Marnhull had lost every cow and sheep on his farm. (50) In the year 1830 there seems to have been no improvement of the position and the harvest was a moderate one. (51) Despite this the late

44. The Times, 16.11.1826.

45. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 19.1.1829.

46. Ibid., 2.2.1829.

47. Ibid., 2.2.1829.

48. Dorset County Chronicle, 14.5.1829.

49. Ibid., 7.5.1829.

50. Ibid., 11.6.1829.

51. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, op.cit. Vol.1, p.175.

autumn brought riots and protests. The violence was firmly put down but the gentry and farmers seem to have realised that a great effort would have to be made to improve the state of the poor. The sudden rise in the expenditure line in Graph 4 reflects the more generous relief given to the poor and higher wages were paid, often because the landowners reduced their rents. (52)

It appears from this summary that privation was a recurrent feature in the lives of the poor. In most decades there were several years when conditions would have been intolerable without considerable expenditure on relief. The index of poor expenditure is, of course, a reflection of relief given and only indirectly of poverty. When compared with the price of wheat in graph 3, it shows how precarious was the livelihood of the poor; the slightest change in the price of wheat after 1787 produced a variation in the level of poor expenditure. Before 1787 the relationship between the two indices can be seen, although it is not so close. It is reasonable to deduce from this that the Dorset poor existed on a bare subsistence and that their condition deteriorated in the mid-1780's. If the poor existed at subsistence level in normal times, it is easy to see that either a bad harvest, which made bread dear, or inclement weather, which forced them to buy more food and fuel and probably interfered with their work, would lead to serious distress and produce the rises in poor expenditure which did indeed occur.

The steady rise in population, leading to a larger number of aged, infirm and orphaned, would result in a growth of expenditure and the average of the modified expenditure line in graph 4 is fairly close to the population line in the earlier part of the period. It would appear that at this time society was successfully absorbing the growth in numbers but after the end of the French wars this was no longer the case. In the post-war period new factors were operating, as graph 4 indicates, and one way of explaining the situation would be to say that the population increases were now producing their effects in terms of unemployment. There is, however, another way of looking at the situation. It can be

52. Matters referred to in this paragraph are discussed more fully in Chapter XXI.

argued that the fundamental factor was the declining demand for labour resulting from the depressed state of agriculture. The period before 1814 saw many times of acute distress but these are easily associated with factors which would have been obvious to the poor themselves. After 1814 the situation was entirely different in that the distress was chronic. The seasons and the harvests played a comparatively minor role in the fortunes of the poor. The trouble lay primarily in the depressed state of agriculture, a state of affairs which improved after 1824 as far as arable farming was concerned, but which affected dairy-farming until the 1830's. This, together with the growth of population and the decline of rural industry, produced a situation which was probably incomprehensible to the poor. The sense of helplessness which was engendered was probably increased by the methods of poor relief employed in many areas, including those most affected by distress. It was out of this situation that the riots and demonstrations of 1830 arose.

Appendix.

The Basis of the Index of Poor Law Expenditure.

The figures derived from the Parliamentary Papers have the great advantage that they cover the whole of the county but their value is reduced by the very limited number of years before 1813 in respect of which returns were made: 1775-6, 1782-3, 1783-4, 1784-5 and 1802-3. From 1813 onwards, however, returns were made in respect of each year. In order to make this sequence of figures more useful as a guide to the general increase in expenditure in the period under review, additional totals have been estimated for 1760-1-the beginning of the period; and for the average of the three years ending in 1794 - the last few years before the great increase in expenditure which characterised the late 1790's. The estimate for 1760-1 is calculated from the returns of 1775-6 and from the increase in expenditure between 1760-1 and 1775-6 found in the twenty-seven parishes for which figures are available in the poor-books for both years. In the case of the average for 1791-4, the returns of 1782-5 and the rate of increase in twenty-eight parishes forms the basis of the calculations.

The figures from the parish books have the advantage that they are available for each year in the period but only a limited number of parishes have these records and few of them cover the whole period. In order, therefore, to make use of the figures from more parishes three groups have been used covering the years 1760-91, 1790-1816 and 1815-34. The parishes used in the first group are: Beer Hackett, Blandford, Broadwinstor, Buckland Newton, Burton Bradstock, Cheselbourne, Dorchester All Saints, Fordington, Lydlinch, Powerstock, Poxwell, Stalbridge, Stour Provost, Sturminster Newton, Tarrant Hinton, Wimborne, Winterborne Monkton and Wootton Glanville. The parishes used in the second group are: Anderson, Arne, Ashmore, Beer Hackett, Broadwey, Broadwinstor, Burton Bradstock, Chickerell, Corfe Castle,

Dorchester All Saints, Edmondsham, Fordington, Lydlinch, Lytchett Minster, Powerstock, Stalbridge, Stour Provost, Sturminster Newton, Swyre, Symondsbury, Wareham Holy Trinity within, Wareham Holy Trinity without, West Chelborough, Whitechurch Canonicorum, Wimborne, Winterborne Monkton and Winterborne Whitechurch. The parishes used in the third group are: Anderson, Arne, Ashmore, Beer Hackett, Broadwey, Broadwinstor, Burton Bradstock, Chickerell, Corfe Castle, Dorchester All Saints, Hazelbury Bryan, Langton Herring, Litton Cheney, Lydlinch, Powerstock, Swyre, Symondsbury, Wareham Holy Trinity within, Wareham Holy Trinity without, West Chelborough, Wimborne, Winterborne Monkton and Winterborne Whitechurch.

In order to reduce the three sets of annual figures to a single scale, the figure for 1760-1 has been reduced to 100 and the figures for the following years to 1790-1 have been scaled accordingly. The figure for 1790-1 in the second set of figures has been reduced to the scaled figure for that year derived from the first set of figures. The rest of the figures in the second set have been scaled accordingly. The same process has been repeated with the third set of figures, those from 1815-6 to 1833-4. The result of these operations has been the production of an index of poor expenditure from 1760 to 1834, in which the expenditure for the year 1760-1 is taken as 100. The figure for each year is based on between eighteen and twenty-seven parishes which provide a good example of the county as a whole. If it should appear that there is an undue weighting of the towns in the selection of the groups, it must be remembered that these town parishes often included large agricultural districts.

After 1813 sets of figures from the poor-books and from the parliamentary returns are available and, as can be seen from the table in the text, there is a very close agreement between them. This suggests that the figures derived from the poor-books and the index calculated from them (based on about one-tenth of the county) provide a fairly reliable guide to poor expenditure in the county as a whole.

Table I.

Expenditure in the First Group of Parishes.

	Expenditure in £s.	Index as on p. 257 & 258.
1760-61.	2,787.	100.
1761-62.	2,887.	104.
1762-63.	2,741.	98.
1763-64.	2,766.	99.
1764-65.	2,613.	95.
1765-66.	2,972.	106.
1766-67.	3,241.	111.
1767-68.	3,492.	121.
1768-69.	3,785.	136.
1769-70.	3,580.	128.
1770-71.	3,460.	124.
1771-72.	3,794.	136.
1772-73.	3,738.	134.
1773-74.	3,926.	141.
1774-75.	4,326.	155.
1775-76.	4,313.	155.
1776-77.	4,105.	147.
1777-78.	4,065.	145.
1778-79.	4,250.	152.
1779-80.	4,453.	159.
1780-81.	4,716.	169.
1781-82.	4,668.	167.
1782-83.	4,908.	176.
1783-84.	5,000.	179.
1784-85.	5,538.	198.
1785-86.	5,917.	212.
1786-87.	5,711.	204.
1787-88.	5,134.	184.
1788-89.	5,527.	198.
1789-90.	5,921.	212.
1790-91.	6,035.	216.

Table II
Expenditure in the Second Group of Parishes.

	Expenditure in £s.	Index as on p.258
1790-91.	6,539.	216.
1791-92.	6,128.	203.
1792-93.	5,888.	195.
1793-94.	7,364.	244.
1794-95.	7,358.	244.
1795-96.	9,502.	314.
1796-97.	10,338.	342.
1797-98.	8,711.	288.
1798-99.	8,831.	291.
1799-1800.	11,315.	372.
1800-01.	18,455.	611.
1801-02.	18,398.	610.
1802-03.	12,617.	417.
1803-04.	11,625.	388.
1804-05.	11,964.	396.
1805-06.	12,152.	402.
1806-07.	11,979.	398.
1807-08.	12,042.	399.
1808-09.	11,843.	392.
1809-10.	13,614.	450.
1810-11.	14,380.	475.
1811-12.	13,778.	457.
1812-13.	16,504.	545.
1813-14.	14,443.	477.
1814-15.	11,991.	396.
1815-16.	12,746.	422.

N.B. From 1812-13 yearly totals relating to the whole county become available. Those relating to the years in the table above are as follows:-

1812-13.	£109,304.	545.
1813-14.	£93,770.	466.
1814-15.	£75,678.	382.
1815-16.	£79,691.	396.

Table III
Expenditure in the Third Group of Parishes and in
the Whole County from Parliamentary Papers.

	From 23 Parishes.		From Parliamentary Papers.	
	Expenditure in £s.	Index as on pp. 258-9.	Expenditure in £s	Index as on pp. 258-9.
1815-16.	8,967.	422.	79,691.	396.
1816-17.	9,902.	462.	96,009.	478.
1817-18.	12,595.	580.	119,045.	592.
1818-19.	11,873.	559.	108,750.	542.
1819-20.	11,711.	553.	104,825.	522.
1820-21.	10,679.	499.	95,857.	478.
1821-22.	9,351.	436.	85,647.	426.
1822-23.	8,770.	409.	78,124.	390.
1823-24.	9,164.	431.	78,677.	392.
1824-25.	9,367.	437.	79,908.	398.
1825-26.	9,496.	442.	81,984.	408.
1826-27.	9,415.	440.	82,795.	413.
1827-28.	9,638.	450.	80,492.	401.
1828-29.	9,837.	459.	82,462.	420.
1829-30.	10,673.	498.	90,949.	451.
1830-31.	10,426.	488.	90,667.	450.
1831-32.	10,724.	502.	92,680.	462.
1832-33.	11,005.	510.	90,489.	450.
1833-34.	10,195.	477.	84,293.	420.

The Regional Variations of Poverty.

In the last chapter it was established that agrarian distress before 1813 was mainly a result of inclement seasons and bad harvests. Factors such as these are likely to have had similar effects on all regions of the county. The figures given in the table below suggest that except for West Dorset and two of the smaller regions this was the case in 1802-03. It was shown further that after 1813 distress was more closely related to agricultural depression and so it is reasonable to look for local variations. The table below sets out the expenditure in each geographical region of the county for 1802-03, for the average of the three years to March 1822 and for the average of the three years to March 1832. (1)

A Table showing the Expenditure on the Poor and the Relationship between Expenditure and Population.

	1802-03		Av. 1819-22		Av. 1829-32.	
	Exp. £	p.h. £	Exp. £	p.h. £	Exp. £	p.h. £
West Dorset.	10,118	.49	15,627	.58	15,591	.54
Weymouth Triangle	2,268	.41	3,403	.46	3,066	.36
Chalklands.	16,592	.62	23,661	.73	20,482	.56
Heathlands.	10,030	.75	13,689	.82	11,080	.59
Purbeck.	3,359	.78	4,981	1.0	3,613	.56
Vale of Blackmore	13,709	.62	20,584	.79	21,013	.73
Somerset Fringe	2,607	.39	3,669	.43	3,659	.41
County.	66,981	.58	95,857	.66	90,667	.57

Key: Exp. = expenditure on the poor.

p.h. = expenditure per head of the population.

1. For the detailed population figures see Chapter I above. The statistics for 1802-3 have been calculated from the 1801 census figures. For the averages relating to 1819-22 and 1829-32 the census figures for 1821 and 1831 respectively have been used.

It will be seen that the Weymouth Triangle and the Somerset Fringe were the regions least seriously affected by poverty at each of the three dates selected. In the case of the Weymouth Triangle the growth of Weymouth itself as a residential centre probably affected the whole district by providing a considerable local market for agricultural produce and opportunities for non-agricultural employment. The poor-books of the district suggest that poverty was not serious there. The Somerset Fringe possessed exceptionally good agricultural land and a relatively small population which combined to make the area more prosperous and the problem of poverty less acute.

(2) West Dorset was the least poverty-stricken of the larger regions of the county and the rate of poor-law expenditure remained fairly steady throughout. Three reasons can be suggested which might have contributed to this. One was the practice of apprenticeshiping the children of the poor to the farmers of the parish, and a second reason was the primitive nature of the agriculture then practised in the western parts of the county. The small-holder survived to a far greater extent than elsewhere in the county and there were none of the very large, highly capitalised farms which had become common further to the east. The farmers of the western parts were probably more independent economically and were certainly far closer to the labourers socially. The third factor was that the local industries, sail-cloth weaving and rope and net making, remained more prosperous after the French wars than did the industries of other parts of Dorset. (3)

The table given above shows that in the Chalkland, Heathland and the Isle of Purbeck the expenditure on the poor was relatively high in 1802-3. It must be remembered, however, that in relation to the value of the land these areas were the most densely populated in Dorset. (4) This fact probably explains the high rate of expenditure in a time of food shortages and high prices. In each of the three regions the rate of

2. For details see Chapter I above.

3. See Chapters III, IV and XII above.

4. See p. 8 above.

expenditure had risen further by 1821 when agriculture was depressed and the level of relief was high throughout the county. In the Chalklands and the Heathlands the increase since 1802-3 was a comparatively slight one but in the Isle of Purbeck it was considerable. In the absence of conclusive evidence it may be suggested that the cause was a post-war depression in the quarrying industry which was an important element in the economy of this region. In the other two regions, however, agricultural depression was probably the major factor in the 1821 rate of expenditure, since by 1831 when agriculture was more prosperous the rate of expenditure on the poor had declined to below £6, a figure only slightly above that in West Dorset. The Isle of Purbeck also had recovered from its difficulties by this time.

In the Vale of Blackmore the situation was different. Expenditure was not much above the average in 1802-3 but by 1821 it had risen considerably above it. When the fortunes of agriculture improved in the mid-1820's, dairy-farming, which was the branch of the industry practised in the Vale of Blackmore, did not share in the revived prosperity. Thus the expenditure on the poor in 1831 was only slightly less than that in 1821. At this date the region was clearly a depressed area with a rate of poor-law expenditure well above that found elsewhere in the county. West Dorset also was an area where dairy-farming was important but the rate of poor-law expenditure there remained low throughout the period. Thus the existence of other factors influencing the Vale of Blackmore must be considered. It might be suggested that the methods of poor relief practised in the Vale were at fault, for Okeden held that the administration there was the worst in Dorset whereas that in West Dorset was the best. (5) In the former area the making up of pay was common practice whereas in the latter the poor were relieved by allowances based on the size of the family and by apprenticing poor children to the farmers of the parish. (6) Against Okeden's point of view

5. Okeden, A Letter to the Rev. H. F. Yeatman, p. 9.
6. See Chapter XVI.

must be set the opinion of the Rev. H. F. Yeatman who hotly contested Okeden's statement and argued that the high rate of unemployment in the Vale of Blackmore made the making up of pay a necessity there; for since there was no demand for labour, it was the only way to ensure a minimum subsistence wage. (7) The existence of considerable unemployment indicates that over-population should be considered as a possible explanation of the high rate of poor-law expenditure. The table relating to population given on p. 9, however, demonstrates quite clearly that the Vale of Blackmore was in no way more highly populated than was West Dorset. Further, in relation to the value of the land the population of the former area was one of the lowest in Dorset. The most likely explanation of the situation in the Vale of Blackmore is the character of the land and the economic structure of agriculture there. The land was flatter and less well-drained than the more hilly country of West Dorset where the farms were smaller and less highly capitalised than those in the Vale of Blackmore. In addition to this the more rapid decline of non-agricultural industry in the Vale contributed to the general distress of the district and may have been responsible for the unemployment in the towns.

It must still be considered whether the methods of poor-law administration in the Vale of Blackmore were an important contributory factor to the distress there. The statistics given suggest that the situation was far worse than in West Dorset which must also have experienced the effects of the depression of the dairying industry. It must be recalled, however, that the West Dorset practice of apprenticeship in effect transferred the cost of supporting the poor from the rates to the rate-payers in their capacity as employers. The result of this was to conceal a part of the real cost of supporting the poor so that the figures of expenditure do not reveal the full amount. That the cost of maintaining the poor in West Dorset differed considerably from that in the Vale of Blackmore may be thought to support Okeden's statement relating to the methods of poor relief; but the force of Yeatman's reply remains. The situation in the Vale of

7. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, pp. 56-58, and A (Second) Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, p. 13.

Blackmore was probably more serious and the different economic structure would have made West Dorset methods inapplicable.

There is, however, another approach to this problem which shows useful results. The Vale of Blackmore was divided between several divisions but mostly fell into the Cerne, Shaston West and Sturminster divisions. The two former ones, however, were only partly in the Vale but the same methods of poor relief were in use throughout each of them. In the table below the expenditure on the poor in the parts of those divisions within the Vale is compared with those outside.

A Table Comparing Poor-Law Expenditure in the Cerne, Shaston West and Sturminster Divisions.

Divisions	Expenditure per head in £s.		
	1802-3.	av. 1819-22.	av. 1829-32.
Sturminster .	.65	.71	.72
Cerne (Vale) .	.65	.77	.78
Cerne (non-Vale) .	.45	.69	.61
Shaston West:			
(Vale) .	.57	.84	.78
(non-Vale) .	.38	.74	.56

It can be seen from these figures that there was no significant difference between the three major parts of the Vale of Blackmore whereas in the parts of the Cerne and Shaston West divisions which were outside the Vale the rate of expenditure was markedly different and similar to that found elsewhere in the county. These considerations lead to the conclusion that the character of the poor-law administration mattered far less than that of the region itself. Thus both the idea that the Vale of Blackmore was over-populated and the suggestion that the poor-law administration was at fault must be discounted and the high level of both poor relief and unemployment must be attributed to the depression of the dairying industry and the organisation of agriculture in the Vale.

As Dorset is a maritime county it must be considered whether the coastal districts were affected by poverty in the same degree as those inland. In the

table below the expenditure per head in the neighbourhood of the larger ports and in the rural districts east and west of Weymouth has been set out. This table should be compared with that on p. 286 above relating to the expenditure on the poor in the natural regions of Dorset.

A Table Showing the Expenditure per Head in the Coastal Districts of Dorset.

	Expenditure per Head.		
	1802-3 £	av.1819-22 £	av.1829-32 £
Poole and District.	.83	.72	.47
Bridport and District.	.32	.46	.5
Weymouth and District.	.39	.36	.29
Lyme to Weymouth.	.37	.56	.55
Portland.	.19	.39	.49
Weymouth to Poole.	.73	.94	.59

It will be seen that the level of poor expenditure in each case conforms closely to that in the corresponding natural region as a whole although in nearly all cases the coastal region is ~~slightly less~~ affected by poverty. The latter observation is true especially of the figures for 1802-3 and for the area west of Weymouth. The proximity of the sea was clearly an advantage during the food shortages which characterised the first years of the nineteenth century and the coast west of Weymouth provided the greatest opportunities for local fishing which probably contributed to the relative prosperity of the villages there.

Poole was the largest of the ports and the one most seriously affected by poverty. It must be noted that the statistics given conform closely to those relating to the Heathland in which area Poole is situated. The town and its neighbouring villages were most seriously affected by poverty during and just after the war which no doubt interfered with the Newfoundland fishing trade. In the early 1830's the district was expending somewhat less on the poor than was the surrounding Heathland generally and this was probably due to the efficient administration of

Mr. Hooper, the assistant guardian of Poole. (8)

Bridport, like West Dorset generally, was less affected by poverty than was most of the county. In 1802-3 the rate of expenditure was especially low and this was probably due to the demands made on the industry of the town during the French wars. In wartime there was a great demand for ropes and sails and Bridport developed an important ship-building industry. After the war the rate of expenditure on the poor in and around Bridport conformed closely to that for West Dorset as a whole, although slightly lower both in 1821 and 1831. The figures relating to Bridport underline the importance of an industry which was still competitive despite temporary depression immediately after the war.

Weymouth and the adjoining villages show a continuous decline in the burden of expenditure on the poor despite the fact that Weymouth was declining as a port. Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, the two parishes of the town, both doubled their population between 1801 and 1831 and there was a tremendous growth in the population of the adjoining villages. The explanation of both facts was probably the growth of Weymouth as a watering-place and the settlement there of well-to-do people. Portland has been shown separately because of the distinct nature of the island. Its very low rate of expenditure on the poor was probably due to its quarrying industry. Portland stone is of unusual hardness and was not readily available elsewhere. The rise in expenditure on the poor which occurred after the war supports the suggestion made above that there was a post-war depression in the quarrying industry.

It would appear then that the sea was of advantage to the smaller places where fishing was a supplement to agriculture; and to Weymouth where the sea enabled the town to grow into a social centre. When, however, a town was wholly dependent on the sea for its livelihood, it was as liable to poverty and distress as was any other part of the county.

8. Poor Law Report 1834, p.267; Appendix A, pp.15-16; and Appendix B, p.38.

To discover whether the size of a town or a village was an important factor in determining the rate of expenditure on the poor, the following table has been compiled. Statistics for certain rural parishes in the Blandford North division are given and will serve as an example of what is found elsewhere in the county. The table contains similar statistics for the main towns in the county.

Table of Rates of Expenditure in Places of Various Sizes.

	Expenditure per Head.		
	1802-3. av.	1819-22. av.	1829-32.
	£	£	£
Blandford North:			
Nine places with a population below 100.**	1.05	.75*	.73
Thirteen places with population between 100 and 500.**	.57	.84	.71
Towns.			
Thirteen towns with population under 3,000.***	.66	.75	.64
Eight towns with population over 3,000.***	.62	.58	.49
Five of the same towns. ****	.86	.74	.58

* In this figure only eight parishes have been taken into account since the ninth, Langton Long Blandford, was exceptionally high and its inclusion would have given a misleading result (viz. £1.2).

** Population in 1801.

*** Population in 1831.

**** Bridport, Sherborne and Weymouth omitted since the rate of expenditure was exceptionally low in each case.

These statistics suggest that in the rate of expenditure on the poor there was no significant difference between smaller and larger villages except in 1802-3 when it may be supposed that there was less private charity in small parishes which often lacked a resident squire and that in consequence there was a greater call on the poor-rates. On the other hand there appears at first sight to have been a distinct difference between the smaller and larger

towns. A closer examination of the figures, however, reveals that the lower average rate of expenditure in the eight larger towns is almost entirely due to the much lower figures relating to Weymouth, Bridport and Sherborne. The exclusion of these three towns from the average results in statistics very similar to those of the smaller towns. It must be remembered that the three excluded towns are situated in districts where expenditure on the poor was generally low and thus it may be concluded that regional variations rather than size was the important factor in determining the rate of poor-law expenditure.

At this juncture it will be useful for purposes of comparison to reconsider the effects of enclosures. It has already been shown that eighteenth and nineteenth-century enclosure involved only about one-sixth of the area of the county and that one-third of this was later than 1834. (9) This consideration alone indicates that no results can be expected affecting the county as a whole, although there may have been particular parishes and particular areas where enclosure adversely affected the poor. It would be useful first to establish whether any difference in the rate of poor-law expenditure existed between those parishes which were wholly enclosed before 1760 and those which retained their common lands throughout the period. In 1834 there were still seven Chalkland parishes with considerable open arable fields and common pasture and in the table below these are compared with an equal number of similar parishes which had been enclosed before 1760.

A Table Comparing Enclosed and Unenclosed Parishes in the Chalkland Part of Dorset. (10)

	Enclosed.	Unenclosed.
Population increase 1801-31.	29%	37%
Expenditure on the poor per head of population:	£	£
In 1802-3.	.58	.61
In 1819-22.	.73	.71
In 1829-32.	.65	.67

9. See Chapter II above for a discussion of the details of enclosures in Dorset.
10. Figures calculated from the parliamentary returns of the relevant dates and from the population data given in the V.C.H.

In the Vale of Blackmore there were eight places which still had substantial pasture commons in 1834 and in the table which follows these are compared with eight nearby parishes which were wholly enclosed.

A Table Comparing Parishes in the Vale of Blackmore. (11)

	Without Pasture Commons.	With Pasture Commons.
Population increase 1801-31.	29%	23%
Expenditure on the poor per head of population:	£	£
In 1802-3.	.7	.5
In 1819-22.	.67	.8
In 1829-32.	.65	.7

The rates of population-increase differ in each of the tables above but since in the one case the higher rate was in the partially open villages whereas in the other it was in the fully enclosed ones, there is nothing significant in this. The rates of poor-law expenditure are very similar in all cases except in the Vale of Blackmore in 1802-3 when it was decidedly lower in those parishes with pasture commons. Since the crisis which was ending in 1802-3 had been one of food shortages and high prices, it could be inferred from this that the resources of the common helped the poor to subsist with less parish assistance. The rights of the poor to use the common were extremely limited, however, and so this inference must not be made with too much confidence. (12). In 1821 and 1831, moreover, the poor in these villages had the same common rights as in 1802 but the rates of poor-law expenditure were much the same as those in the enclosed parishes. If, indeed, there had been valuable common rights belonging to the cottagers, it would be reasonable to expect that they would have been as important in times of unemployment and low wages as when the crops failed at the beginning of the century. In

11. Figures calculated from the parliamentary returns of the relevant dates and from the population data given in the V.C.H.

12. See Chapter V for a consideration of common rights.

fact the frequent complaint in the 1820's and early 1830's was that the poor had no land to cultivate and thereby supplement their earnings or relief. (13) It must also be noted that in the unenclosed villages in the Chalkland the rate of expenditure in 1802-3 differed little from that in those which were entirely enclosed. It may be concluded that there was no significant difference in the state of the poor in enclosed and unenclosed villages.

In the light of this conclusion it seems unlikely that there was any long-term deterioration in the fortunes of the poor, which can be attributed to enclosures in any appreciable number of parishes, although the poor may have suffered adversely for a short while. There were forty-one parishes in Dorset which experienced the enclosure of at least one-twelfth of their land between 1760 and 1834; of these, nineteen can be considered in this context since their poor-law expenditure figures are available for the years immediately before and after enclosure. In sixteen parishes the condition of the poor (as reflected by the rate of poor-law expenditure) worsened for only a short while after the enclosure. Examples of the expenditure on the poor in the years before and after the date of enclosure are given below. To the "raw" figures are added the same figures reduced to an index showing the variation from 100 in the first year given in each example (index A). For purposes of comparison is added an index based on county or, where possible, district figures (index B).

Stalbridge is a large parish in the Vale of Blackmore which underwent partial enclosure in 1819. Its expenditure on the poor in the years immediately before and after enclosure was as follows: (14)

13. Cf. The Times, 31.8.1826, and 16.11.1826.

14. Based on figures from parliamentary returns.

	Expenditure. £s.	Index A.	Index B.
1815-16	986	100	100
1816-17	1,176	119	118
1817-18	1,574	156	149
1818-19	1,404	143	157
1819-20	1,686	171	142
1820-21	1,453	148	128
1821-22	1,205	122	117
1822-23	1,122	114	113
1823-24	1,211	123	115

It can be seen from these figures that there was a rise in poor-law expenditure in the year of enclosure (1819-20) and in the following year it remained somewhat above the average for the district. In subsequent years there is no significant variation indicated by the indices and in 1831 the expenditure per head in Stalbridge was £.75 compared with that of £.72 in the Sturminster division generally.

Sydling St. Nicholas was a moderately large parish in the Chalkland and in 1822 almost half the parish was enclosed. The relevant figures of expenditure on the poor were as follows: (15)

	Expenditure. £s.	Index A.	Index B.
1818-19	341	100	100
1819-20	287	84	103
1820-21	303	89	93
1821-22	306	90	82
1822-23	287	84	75
1823-24	253	74	78
1824-25	220	65	76
1825-26	222	65	81
1826-27	238	70	79

In this case expenditure on the poor was slightly higher in the year of enclosure than it was in the other parishes of the Chalkland part of the Cerne division, but in subsequent years there was no significant difference and in 1831 the rate of expenditure per head at Sydling

15. Based on figures from parliamentary returns.

St. Nicholas was £.47 whereas that in the district around was £.61.

These two parishes were typical of the majority of those which underwent enclosure and for which figures of expenditure on the poor are available. There were, however, a few parishes where the effects were more enduring and of these there are three for which records of expenditure are available. One of these, Owermoigne, is indecisive since the enclosure took place in 1830 and it is impossible to distinguish the rise in expenditure due to enclosure from that resulting from the more generous relief paid after the 1830 disturbances. The figures relating to the other two, Gussage All Saints and Abbotsbury, are given below. At Gussage All Saints in the eastern part of the Chalklands about half the parish was enclosed in 1798 and the relevant figures were as follows: (16)

	Expenditure.	Index A.	Index B.
1793-94	90	100	100
1794-95	125	133	100
1795-96	180	200	129
1796-97	198	220	142
1797-98	179	199	118
1798-99	175	195	119
1799-1800	198	220	153
1800-01	505	562	250
1801-02	429	476	250
1802-03	269	299	171

In evaluating these statistics it should be noted that Gussage All Saints, which had a population of 303 in 1801, was expending £.71 per head of population in 1802-3 whereas the comparable figure for the whole of the chalk part of the Shaston East division was £.81, and this suggests that while the increase shown in the table was considerable, the parish was not more impoverished than most in the district. The only neighbouring parishes for which figures are available between 1793-4 and 1802-3

16. Figures from the Poor Book of Gussage All Saints and the county statistics in the previous chapter.

are Wimborne St. Giles and Edmondsham but in these two parishes the rise of expenditure on the poor conformed closely to the county averages. The rate of expenditure, however, varied considerably - that relating to Edmondsham in 1802-3 being £.98 and that relating to Wimborne St. Giles in the same year being £.52. The only possible conclusion is that there was no consistent trend in the district and this, together with the fact that the rise in expenditure above the county average noted in the figures relating to Gussage All Saints began well before the date of enclosure in 1798, makes it impossible to attribute the increase of poverty to the latter event.

Another parish where enclosure seems to have had a more serious and prolonged effect on the poor was Abbotsbury in the Weymouth Triangle which was enclosed in 1814. The relevant figures were as follows: (17)

	Expenditure. £.	Index A.	Index B.
1810-11	270	100	100
1811-12	268	99	96
1812-13	288	107	114
1813-14	296	109	100
1814-15	311	115	83
1815-16	363	135	89
1816-17	443	164	127
1817-18	519	190	122
1818-19	563	204	118

In this instance the figures of expenditure before enclosure in 1814 conform closely to those of the district, but after that date they are significantly higher and it seems clear that the enclosure did adversely affect the poor so that increased expenditure on relief was necessitated. By 1821, however, Abbotsbury was not more burdened by poverty than was the rest of the Weymouth Triangle. In that year the rate of expenditure per head in the parish was £.58, a figure similar to that for the other rural parts of the district.

Another approach to this problem shows that of the eight places which were enclosed in the decade prior

17. Parish figures from Abbotsbury Poor Book and the Weymouth Triangle figures from the books of other parishes in the area.

to the poor returns of 1802-3, four (Charlton Marshall, Gussage All Saints, Sixpenny Handley and Tolpuddle) had an excessively high rate of expenditure in that year. In 1831 the two latter parishes were still expending unusually large sums on the poor. Again, of the ten parishes which were enclosed in the decade prior to 1821, three had rates of expenditure on the poor well above the county average in that year but of these only one, Shapwick, was still expending unusually large sums in 1831. (18)

It now becomes possible to assess the effects of enclosure on poverty as it is reflected by parish expenditure on the poor. It would appear that all enclosure led to a rise in the rate of expenditure per head of population but in most cases this had returned to the average for the district within two years. A cautious suggestion might be made that in about one parish in each six enclosed after 1800 this increased poverty was more prolonged and that in extremely rare cases it might have become permanent. The evidence for the earlier period is much more limited but it would appear that enclosure may have seriously harmed the poor in rather more cases, possibly as many as one in two of the parishes enclosed. It must be remembered, however, that it is necessary to rely on the poor returns of 1802-3 in all cases except one; and that these returns were made at the end of the severe crisis of 1799-1802. Moreover, as only a small proportion of Dorset parishes underwent enclosure in the period the few in which the poor suffered as a result can hardly have affected the county as a whole.

From the foregoing consideration of regional variations it has emerged that the economic state of a region had a far more important effect upon the fortunes of the poor than had its poor-law administration. Thus the problems of the Vale of Blackmore arose less from the mistaken policy of the justices than from the depression of agriculture. Equally, the lower

18. Figures from parliamentary returns on the poor.

expenditure on the poor in the Weymouth Triangle, the Somerset Fringe and West Dorset resulted, as in all probability did the poor-law methods employed there, from the greater prosperity of those districts. It has been shown that when fishing was possible, the coastal parishes had a marginal advantage over those inland but that on the whole such parishes conformed closely to the average of the region in which they were situated; that the size of towns and villages mattered less than the character of the area to which they belonged; and finally that both enclosed and unenclosed villages, if otherwise similar, experienced poverty in much the same degree and that enclosure itself had only a marginal effect on poverty. It is clear that of all the factors reviewed only the physical character of a region - and more especially its economic state - can be considered of major importance.

The 1830 Disturbances.

After the French wars agriculture in Dorset was in a depressed state and the poor experienced chronic distress: wages fell and many were unemployed. Yet in most parts there was a considerable improvement after 1824 except in the Vale of Blackmore where dairy-farming remained depressed. Ways and means to overcome the Vale's problem of unemployment and to raise the level of wages were discussed by those who were anxious to alleviate the conditions of the poor. One project that was much debated was the improvement of the roads in the Vale. E. B. Portman introduced a bill in the House of Commons which was devised to facilitate the improvements on a regional basis. (1) It seems that the scheme was to establish something in the nature of a turnpike trust to employ men and force wages up by competition but the proposal was not adopted. A few months later a voluntary society was formed to improve the roads gradually by compelling the parish waywardens to do their duty. (2) The society's activities resulted in the unemployed being set to work on the roads: a practice for which the poor-books provide so much evidence after 1824.

Another project which was welcomed in Dorset because it would solve the unemployment problem was a Somerset and Dorset Ship Canal. "The Sherborne Journal" thought that it would provide employment for the poor and enlarge the market for agricultural products; the farmers would benefit and be able to pay higher wages. "Surely the expenditure of a million of money in the hire of labourers, and the increased consumption of these labourers, and the energies which these circumstances will excite and employ, cannot fail to produce a most important effect." (3) Unfortunately, however, the project came to nothing.

1. Sherborne Journal, 2.4.1824.
2. Ibid., 15.10.1824.
3. Ibid., 31.12.1824.

In 1826 a meeting was held at Stalbridge to consider the employment problem and after commending the provision of smallholdings for the poor and road improvements it proposed the establishment of a Dorset Friendly Society as the best means of helping the poor. (4) Another meeting held at Stourton Caundle saw the repeal of the corn laws as the only solution. It was argued that in the existing situation the farmers had to keep all their land in order to survive but if the corn laws were repealed they would be more willing to let small plots to the labourers, many of whom had been reduced to crime in order to live and had lost the habits of virtue and industry. It was pointed out that these social and moral issues were not the farmers' concern but that they were the responsibility of the government which had to judge the corn monopoly in the light of them. (5)

These meetings show that there was an awareness of the problems of both employed and unemployed labourers but little action was taken and the labourers were left to the mercies of the poor law. In 1830, D. O. P. Okeden wrote a pamphlet in which he argued that the root of the problem lay in the poor law and in particular in the system of making up pay. He considered that if the latter were abolished, wages would rise to their proper level. (6)

At the end of November 1830 it was made clear to the gentry and farmers of Dorset that the labourers were not to be satisfied by good intentions and could endure their plight no longer. James Frampton of Moreton sensed a change in the attitude of the Dorset labourer; (7) anticipating trouble, he began early in November to discuss with some of his fellow magistrates the revival of the Dorset Yeomanry. (8) The restless and discontented manner of the labourers was alarming because of events elsewhere: since August 1830 there had been

4. The Times, 31.8.1826.
5. Ibid., 16.11.1826.
6. D.O.P. Okeden, A Letter to the Members of Parliament for Dorsetshire on Poor Relief and Labourers' Wages.
7. J. Frampton, Account of the Dorset Yeomanry, p.1, (ms) D.R.O., D29/X4.
8. Ibid..

orderly meetings of labourers demanding higher wages and also unruly mobs destroying threshing-machines and firing barns. The trouble had started in Kent and had quickly spread into Sussex and Surrey. Early in November disturbances occurred in Berkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. (9)

On November 22nd riotous mobs assembled at Sixpenny Handley and Cranborne. In the course of the proceedings threshing-machines were broken up and individuals were threatened. The next day the mob reassembled and went to the house of a land-surveyor at Alderholt (a township in Cranborne parish) but stood some distance away while a ringleader banged on the door and demanded money. He succeeded in extracting 8/6d; and later he was sentenced to death for this offence. (10) This behaviour was typical of the mobs in Dorset; they were ready to assemble and to shout but only a very small number of the men were ready to attack property and even fewer were willing to attack persons. From November 22nd to 27th mobs were assembling in many parts of eastern Dorset and occasional acts of violence occurred; while west of Dorchester the labourers remained peaceful. (11) The violence was chiefly confined to breaking up threshing-machines in three areas: around Sixpenny Handley and Cranborne, around Shaftesbury and Stalbridge, and around Buckland Newton, Pulham and Mappowder. (12) Outside these three areas there was hardly any violence except for the mysterious night fires which occurred in a number of places all over the county. It was believed that these fires were the work of two strangers who had been seen in the areas concerned questioning shepherds and labourers about the farmers. (13) In some cases the local labourers took part in helping to put the fires out. (14)

9. On the disturbances elsewhere see J. and B. Hammond, *op.cit.* pp.220ff.
10. Frampton, *op.cit.*, p.2; and *Calendar of Special Assize*; cf. also Dorset County Chronicle, 13.1.1831.
11. Dorset County Chronicle, 13.1.1831.
12. *Calendar of the Special Assize*.
13. Printed notice issued in Blandford, given in D.P.52 p.87 and Sherborne Mercury, 6.12.1830.

Another outsider who was active in the county was an agitator claiming to be Orator Hunt, who did much to inflame the labourers with his "republican speeches". (The authorities knew that the real Hunt was elsewhere and that although he had in fact been in Dorset shortly before the troubles he had been concerned solely with his own business. (15))

The mobs, the speeches, the occasional violence and the reports of more serious troubles elsewhere helped to build up an anticipation of extreme violence in the minds of the gentry and others; an anxiety which was strengthened by threats made to certain individuals such as William Castleman, the Wimborne attorney, who received a "swing letter". (16)

Blandford 1830.

"Mr Castleman, Sir,

Sunday night your house shall come down to the ground for you are an inhuman monster and we will dash out your brains. Bankes and yourself ought to be sent to hell. The Hanley Torches have not forgot you. " (17)

Many of the farmers also received similar letters. (18) The atmosphere of insecurity thus created made the tasks of the magistrates easier; for men of all classes rushed to be enrolled as special constables and in a very short time there were quite considerable forces available in every part of the county. (19)

As soon as the news of the first violence - at Sixpenny Handley - reached James Frampton at Moreton, he hastened to Dorchester with the Earl of Ilchester who had brought the news, and began to swear in special constables. (20) Other magistrates were doing the same thing elsewhere but Frampton seems to have attached more importance to suppression of disorder than did the others.

14. Dorset County Chronicle, 13.1.1831.
15. Report of Capt. Hovenden dated Dec. 3rd 1830; P.R.O. HO/40/27.
16. So called since such letters were often signed "Swing".
17. In D.P.52, p.88.
18. Letter from J. Peyton of Wimborne; P.R.O., HO/44/22.
19. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 29.11.1830.
20. Frampton's Account, p.2.

His part in the later "Tolpuddle Martyrs" affair suggests that he was determined to discipline the labouring classes and to make an example of any of them who attempted to take action to improve their lot whether by violent or non-violent means. (21) In the Blandford North division E. B. Portman and other magistrates enrolled special constables but they also promised that the wages of the labourers would be raised as soon as the troubles were over. (22) Frampton regarded the giving of this promise as most dangerous and likely to encourage more serious uprisings. (23) It seems that most of the magistrates disagreed with him on this point and when he went to Bere Regis on the second day of the disorders to swear in special constables, he found that Mr. Drax of Charborough was already there. The two magistrates disagreed publicly about the need to enrol constables and to raise wages. When Drax raised the latter subject, Frampton left in anger declaring that he would not suffer such things to be said in his presence. (24) Even in the Dorchester division where Frampton had been a most active justice for many years, he was asked to keep in the background unless he would agree to the promise to raise wages. (25) In Frampton's own account of the affair, he related how his opposition to Drax at Bere Regis so angered the labourers that they plotted an attack on Moreton House. It is not clear whether this attack was ever seriously intended, for the county was full of rumours at the time, and they were mostly false or exaggerated. (26) It is quite clear, however, that Frampton himself took the rumour very seriously and began to prepare his house to face a siege. He sent a message to Dorchester asking for help but Mr. H. M. Pitt of Kingston who received the message decided to disregard it. As a result a second appeal for help was addressed to the mayor of Dorchester later in the day and

21. Frampton's Account, p.17; and the Melbourne-Frampton Correspondence, B.M., Add. MSS., 415671.
22. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 29.11.1830.
23. Frampton's Account, p.3; and Mundy, Journal of Mary Frampton, pp.361f.
24. Frampton's Account, p.2.
25. Ibid., p.3.
26. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 29.11.1829.

this time a party of militiamen was sent to Moreton. It took the relief party some hours to get there and when they arrived in the middle of the night, they found the squire and his retainers maintaining a watch. In the end no attack was made and probably none was intended. (27)

The Blandford magistrates raised a force of two hundred armed and mounted special constables and about twelve hundred more to operate on foot. (28) Each day Portman, Farquharson and Smith, three of the magistrates, led the mounted squadron through the division and beyond. These sorties were primarily intended to warn those who might be ill-disposed and to give heart to those who were peaceable. (29) In the parishes around Blandford the magistrates were well received when they spoke to the labourers and promised to raise wages. (30) Further afield in the Vale of Blackmore the labourers were "evidently disaffected". (31)

The disorders reached their climax on November 27th when large numbers of discontented labourers assembled and smashed threshing-machines at several places in the Vale of Blackmore but the local magistrates and the special constables dispersed them and made some arrests. There was some unrest around Moreton also and when James Frampton heard that many of the labourers of Winfrith Newburgh, East and West Lulworth, Owermoigne and other villages were to assemble in Winfrith early in the morning of the 27th, he decided to confront them there. Setting out from Moreton with a posse of mounted special constables at about 8 a.m., he came upon the mob assembling on the turnpike road near Winfrith. They were orderly and listened to him for a long time while he tried to persuade them to go home. When he saw that they were not dispersing, he read the proclamation of the Riot Act and some of the men became insolent. No doubt they had expected the promise of better wages and the reading of the Riot Act indicated that this

- 27. Frampton's Account, p.4; and Letter from C.B.Wollaston, in Okeden Letters, D.R.O., MC/OPL; Mundy, op.cit. p.361.
- 28. Letter from E.B.Portman, Okeden Letters.
- 29. Second letter from E.B.Portman, Okeden Letters.
- 30. Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 29.11.1830.
- 31. Letter from Sir J. Smith, Okeden Letters.

was not forthcoming. When Frampton responded to insolence by trying unsuccessfully to seize one of the leaders of the men, the mob threw stones at the posse. At this Frampton ordered his constables to disperse the crowd and after a scuffle they scattered and many were persuaded to go home. Meanwhile men from Lulworth were just coming into sight and Frampton rode off to send them home again. It appears that the Lulworth men did as they were told but while Frampton had been preoccupied with them, the Winfrith men had reassembled and attacked the special constables. The latter seized three of the rioters and the rest made off. (32) (These three were later brought before the special assize at Dorchester; two of them were acquitted and one was sentenced to three months' hard labour. (33)) It appears that while all this was happening the labourers from Osmington came into the area unnoticed. When they saw the special constables, they hid behind a hedge to appraise the situation and then made their way home again. (34) The whole incident suggests that Frampton was lacking in diplomacy and turned an orderly crowd into an angry mob; for the number of demonstrators does not seem to have been particularly large nor were they unduly aggressive. One hundred and sixty special constables had had no difficulty in dispersing the crowd and "the mob coming from Osmington" (35) had been able to hide successfully behind a hedge! Moreover Frampton got a hearing from the Winfrith men and those from Lulworth and Osmington quickly abandoned their purpose.

After November 27th, there seem to have been no more serious disorders and Frampton ascribed this to the number of special constables and prisoners taken. (36) When Sir Colin Campbell brought the 9th Lancers into Dorset on November 29th, he found that the trouble was ended and the only task which remained was rounding up the ringleaders in the Buckland Newton district and around Shaftesbury. He reported on November 30th "that owing to the activity of the magistrates and mounted constabulary,

- 32. Frampton's Account, pp.4-5.
- 33. Calendar of the Special Assize.
- 34. Frampton's Account, p.5.
- 35. Ibid., p.5.
- 36. Ibid., p.5.

the rioting in that neighbourhood [Blandford] has been put a stop to." Campbell moved on from Blandford to Dorchester and since all was quiet there, he left Dorset for Bristol. (37) On December 1st, Capt. Hovenden led another detachment of the 9th Lancers into Dorset. Some of his troops were used in rounding up rioters near Shaftesbury but there was little else to be done. (38) On December 3rd, Hovenden reported that it was the opinion of the local magistrates that the trouble was over. (39) This was indeed the case and the magistrates began to consider how they could implement the promises they had made when serious disorder seemed to be threatening.

Before considering the steps taken as a result of the 1830 disturbances it will be useful to reflect for a moment on what had happened. There had been some difficult days but the worst fears had proved unfounded. In a number of places agricultural machinery had been smashed; ricks and occasionally barns had been set on fire but probably not by local men; threatening letters had been written but except for the few demands for money and an attempt to rescue prisoners, no violence had been used against persons. (40) It should be remembered that violence had been confined almost entirely to limited areas, in the Vale of Blackmore and around Sixpenny Handley and Cranborne. Among the prisoners brought before the special assizes in January 1831, only three came from places outside these areas. (41) It must, moreover, be stressed that even within these three areas, only some of the labourers were involved. Thus Lord Uxbridge could write to D. O. P. Okeden, after the disturbances were over, saying that the people of Sixpenny Handley had remained quiet during the troubles and that this justified the magistrates' plans to improve wages and poor relief. (42) The farmers of Sixpenny Handley raised a subscription for the benefit of those labourers who had not taken part in the risings; this resulted in each of those eligible receiving 11/-. (43)

- 37. Sir Colin Campbell's Report, 30.11.1830; P.R.O., HO/40/27.
- 38. Capt. Hovenden's Report, 1.12.1830; P.R.O., HO/40/27.
- 39. Ibid., 3.12.1830.
- 40. Cf. Calendar of Special Assize.
- 41. Ibid.
- 42. Lord Uxbridge's Letter, Okeden Letters: D.R.O., MC/OP1.
- 43. Dorset County Chronicle, 6.1.1831.

Unfortunately the total raised is not recorded but the implication is that the number of recipients was considerable.

An examination of the calendar of the special assize held at Dorchester as a result of the risings confirms the view that they were not particularly important. There were fifty-three prisoners on seventy inditements, whereas at the Winchester special assize a few days earlier there had been three hundred prisoners. (44) Of these fifty-three prisoners brought for trial at Dorchester sixteen were acquitted, seven were released on recognizances and one was found guilty but discharged. Thus there were twenty-nine serious cases out of which six were sentenced to death and ten to transportation for seven years. At Winchester there had been one hundred and one capital convictions, that is to death or to transportation for life, and thirty-six more sentences to transportation for various periods. (45) "The Times" in its comments on the special assize at Dorchester declared: "No one case was brought which might not just as well have been disposed of by the magistrates in quarter sessions without the parade of bringing two learned judges to this distance from London." (46)

The location of the riots, the type of man placed on trial and the smashing of threshing-machines all point to unemployment as being one of the chief causes of the disturbances in Dorset. (47) Of the men who appeared in court, most of them were described as ring-leaders, (48) thirty-eight were under thirty years of age. (49) If these men and boys were typical of the rioters, then it would appear that the disturbances were almost entirely a protest by the younger men who were the ones most liable to suffer unemployment. In many parishes it was the

44. J. and B. Hammond, *op.cit.* p.254.

45. *Ibid.*, p.264. For Dorset details see *Calendar of Special Assize*.

46. The Times, 14.1.1831.

47. Whether threshing-machines were a real cause of unemployment is another matter and such evidence as there is suggests that they were not. When, for example, George Jesty of Druce Farm, Puddletown laid up his threshing-machine, he could not find men willing to thresh by hand and had to set his own labourers on the work. The men themselves begged him to use the machine again. (Jesty's letter to The Dorset County Chronicle, 13.1.1830).

48. Cf. Reports of arrests in reports of Sir Colin Campbell and Capt. Hovenden cited before.

49. Cf. *Calendar of Special Assize*.

practice to place the older married men in the employment of farmers but to occupy the younger unmarried men on the roads and to pay them at an extremely low rate from parish funds. (50) This was a common practice in the Vale of Blackmore where unemployment was particularly serious and Maps IX and X (see p.139) show the close correspondence between the areas where the roundsman system was practised and those where disorders occurred in 1830.

In seeking the causes of the disturbances attention must be given to contemporary opinion, a good cross-section of which was reported in the parish returns to the Poor Law Commissioners in 1832. Some of the parishes mentioned what they supposed to be the causes of the hardships of the poor: the rapid growth of population, the depressed state of agriculture and the use of threshing-machines. Other parishes stressed the low wages and unemployment which had resulted, while yet others attributed the unrest to the lack of measures to relieve these conditions and to the adverse effects of bad poor-law administration. Yet other parishes pointed out the immediate causes: gangs of men working on the roads, agitators from other counties, inflammatory newspapers and the reports of disturbances elsewhere. Beer-houses were thought to have provided a meeting place in which agitators spoke to the local men and where the newspapers were read and circulated. (51) The newspapers referred to were of a kind likely to foment unrest. No doubt Cobbett's "Twopenny Trash", which was first published in July 1830, was one of them. The second issue of this paper had been devoted to "the causes of your being miserably poor", and suggested that these were the taxes, which were levied in order to enrich the aristocracy and the clergy. (52) There were other more virulent papers such as "Common Sense", "The Truth", "Swing Eh!", "A Monitory Herald" and "Englishmen Ready". The content of these papers, often mere broadsheets, was very much the same: a contrast of the incomes of the poor with those of the peers of the realm and the bishops. (53) The beer-shops were no doubt becoming a nuisance in many parts

50. Cf. Chapter XVII above.

51. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 1, Q.53.

52. Cobbett's Twopenny Trash, August 1830.

53. Copies of the papers mentioned at P.R.O., in H0/40/25 and H0/44/22.

of Dorset in the late 1820's. Hampreston, a parish with about nine hundred inhabitants, had three public houses and five beer-houses in 1832. (54) In the Vale of Blackmore the latter were numerous and the Rev. H. F. Yeatman described how a house in Stalbridge had had on one occasion seventy persons drinking in it at two o'clock in the morning, besides others fighting outside. (55) He too considered that the agitators in 1830 met the labourers in these beer-houses. (56) It may be concluded that the disturbances resulted from the factors suggested by the parishes in 1832 but it must be stressed that the underlying cause was the distressed state of the poor in the Vale of Blackmore where agriculture had suffered prolonged depression. These conclusions are broadly similar to those of W. Pike in a thesis entitled "The Administration of the Poor Law in the Rural Areas of Surrey" where he shows that the condition of the labourers had been steadily deteriorating in the years before 1830 and that the risings were a protest against this state of affairs. (57) Miss A. M. Colson's thesis on the Hampshire risings agrees with this, stressing the post-war depression, the adoption of new agricultural methods, the decay of cottage crafts and the aggravation caused by a pernicious system of poor relief. (58)

The results of the risings remain to be considered. The national results are beyond the scope of this study and it may be doubted whether the Dorset riots contributed much to the impact of the more serious troubles in other counties. Indeed, but for the connection with the riots elsewhere, the Dorset troubles in 1830 appear little different in kind from those which had occurred in the county from time to time throughout the period. There were, however, developments within the county which can be attributed to the 1830 troubles. The failure of violence influenced the labourers and gave strength to those among them who

54. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix B 1, Q.53.
55. H.F.Yeatman, Inquiry concerning the County Rate, p.77.
56. Ibid., p.86.
57. W.Pike, Administration of the Poor Laws in the Rural Areas of Surrey 1830-50, London University Thesis (1950), pp.26ff.
58. (Miss) A.M.Colson, The Revolt of the Hampshire Labourers and its Causes 1812-1831, University of London thesis 1937. pp1ff. and p.43.

favoured peaceful means. Indeed, most of the incidents in 1830 were little more than demonstrations of strikers and the sudden collapse of the militant movement after November 27th may have been as much due to the unwillingness of the majority of the labourers to become involved in violent methods, as it was to the show of force by the authorities.

It seems likely that the failure of violence enabled more responsible leaders to emerge from among the labourers and to organise a more peaceful approach. There seems to have been a turn towards trades unionism in a number of villages around Bere Regis but it was the Tolpuddle labourers who contacted the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union and formed a local branch. (59) In the course of so doing they took secret oaths which gave James Frampton the opportunity to use legal means to crush the union. Frampton was not alone among the leaders of the county in his dislike of combinations of labourers to raise wages. E. B. Portman who had done a great deal to help the poor wrote to Frampton expressing full sympathy with his proceedings. (60) The other magistrates and clergy seem to have been in full agreement. In 1838 the rector of Preston, near Weymouth, wrote a pamphlet addressed to the labourers in which he set forth his opposition to the methods of trade unionism. He stated that the object of the combinations - the raising of wages - was good although utterly impracticable, but that the method of combination was evil. (61) At the same time the rector wrote another pamphlet addressed to the landowners and farmers urging them to raise wages. (62)

The troubles in 1830 made a great impression on the higher orders of society and the local newspapers were unanimous in demanding action to relieve the distress of the poor. On December 13th, "The Sherborne Mercury" expressed its sympathy with the labourers in their plight and insisted that employment had to be found for all who were able and willing to work and that increased wages had

59. Details from T.U.C., The Martyrs of Tolpuddle, *passim*.

60. Portman's letter to Frampton, 1.3.1834. Frampton-Melbourne correspondence, B.M., Add. MSS. 41567L.

61. O.Piers, An Affectionate Warning to the Labourers, *passim*.

62. O.Piers, A Few Hints to Landowners and Farmers.

to be paid. (63) "The Sherborne Journal" urged the landlords to reduce their rents and the clergy to abate their claims. It suggested to the farmers that they should keep the labourers employed at proper wages and pointed out that the landowners could help by improving their estates. It advocated the provision of allotments and insisted that the support of the poor by means of a pittance doled out by the overseer must cease. (64)

"The Dorset County Chronicle" likewise advocated reduced rents and allotments for the poor and suggested that many of the large farms should be divided into smaller ones so that a more personal relationship between master and man might be created. (65)

The Rev. H. F. Yeatman later wrote of the strong feeling among the gentry and farmers in 1830. He said that the landowners were decidedly of the opinion that strenuous efforts would have to be made to employ all the labourers and that the farmers were in agreement out of dread of the consequences of not doing so. (66) Even while the riots were taking place the magistrates of the eastern parts of the county arranged a meeting to discuss the problems and to resolve what action could be taken. E. B. Portman writing to D. O. P. Okeden on November 27th said, "When all is quiet, we will meet and talk about the wages of labour", (67) On November 30th, Sir John Smith wrote to Okeden saying that at the proposed meeting he intended to suggest that able-bodied men should be paid 10/- per week which would be supplemented from the poor rates if the man had to support more than a wife and two children. He also expressed the opinion that the whole of the increases in wages could not be met by reductions in rent since as far as he was concerned he would be left with no more than £1,000 per year. (68) Some landlords felt able to take upon themselves the whole burden of the wage increases and E. B. Portman was

63. Sherborne Mercury, 13.12.1830.

64. Sherborne Journal, 2.12.1830 and 9.12.1830.

65. Dorset County Chronicle, 9.12.1830.

66. H.F. Yeatman, An Inquiry into the County Rate, p.80.

67. Portman's first letter to Okeden. Okeden Letters, D.R.O.

68. Smith's letter to Okeden, Okeden Letters, D.R.O., MC/OPL.

amongst them; he also provided land for allotments on his estates. (69) H. F. Yeatman described how the promises to raise wages were actually carried out in 1830 but only for a short while, for the farmers reduced them again at a later date in a "manner most treacherous and dishonourable". (70) Even so, the wages in 1833, the year in which Yeatman wrote, were 7/- and more often 8/- per week, whereas in 1830 they had been 4/- to 6/- per week. (71)

The raising of wages dealt with only part of the problem, as an anonymous correspondent pointed out at the time in "The Sherborne Mercury". He showed that with a surplus of labourers, wages were bound to be low and that this could only be overcome if the landlords were prepared to employ many men on estate improvements. (72) Some of the landlords were doing this already (73) but the evidence suggests that more often the men were employed on public works. A scheme to embank the river and to drain low-lying land was commenced at Wareham (74) whilst at Sherborne plans were made to drain water-logged land and to improve roads. (75) At Gillingham arrangements were made to employ all the labourers on the farms in proportion to the amount of land occupied, at the wage of 9/- per week. (76) A similar scheme was devised at Hazelbury Bryan also but in this case the older men were to get 8/- per week and half an acre of land. (77)

In 1832 there was a movement among the gentry and clergy to promote the Labourers' Friend Society which sought to provide allotments for the poor in every parish. A meeting was held in July 1832 at Sturminster Newton to launch the society in the Vale of Blackmore and the Rev. H. F. Yeatman was the chief speaker. After outlining the sufferings of the poor he commended the society's plan to provide each labourer with a quarter or half an acre of

- 69. Dorset County Chronicle, 3.2.1831.
- 70. H.F.Yeatman, Letter to D.O.P.Okeden, p.15.
- 71. H.F.Yeatman, Inquiry into the County Rate, p.81.
- 72. Sherborne Mercury, 6.12.1830.
- 73. e.g. Mr. Portman. Cf. Chapter XVII, p 245.
- 74. Dorset County Chronicle, 14.4.1831.
- 75. Sherborne Mercury, 13.12.1830.
- 76. Broadsheet in Gillingham Museum.
- 77. Poor Book 2; D.R.O., Pl13/0V2.

land at a reasonable rent. Speakers from other parts of the county described the beneficial results from such schemes in their districts. (78) In many places the scheme was adopted and at Gillingham a committee was set up to organise its operation there. Land was rented by the committee and sub-let to labourers in plots of an acre or less. These allotments were to be worked by spade-husbandry only but the committee was prepared to help by manuring the plot as well as by providing the seed. (79)

Attempts were also made to improve the operation of the poor laws. At the meeting of magistrates of the eastern part of the county held just after the riots in 1830, D. O. P. Okeden had proposed that the making up pay system should be abandoned but the suggestion had won no support. (80) The scales were, however, improved and later were gradually allowed to fall into disuse. (81)

Thus although the 1830 disturbances led to measures to improve the lot of the poor, they did not provide a permanent solution as the Tolpuddle affair of 1834 suggests. The labourers remained discontented and angry meetings continued. "The Dorset County Chronicle" reported a meeting in 1838 at which the speaker, a working man, said, "There wasn't a bigger set of rogues than them farmers, who were ready to 'scrunch' the poor labourers for nothing.... Then there were the rich men too, all great sinners and oppressors." (82)

- 78. Dorset County Chronicle, 5.7.1832.
- 79. Broadsheet in the Gillingham Museum.
- 80. H.F. Yeatman, Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, p.16.
- 81. Cf. Chapter XVII.
- 82. Dorset County Chronicle, 15.11.1838.

The Administration of the Poor Laws and Agrarian Distress.

It has been shown that agrarian distress in Dorset before and after 1813 differed in character. From 1760 to 1813 the distress was periodic and was closely related to natural factors such as bad harvests and inclement weather. During these years the poor-law system supplemented by private charity appears to have met most of the demands made on it. Nevertheless the impression given by the poor-law records is that the condition of the poor declined in the period and especially after 1787. After 1813 the distress was primarily due to the depressed state of agriculture, although both the natural variations of climate and harvests, and also the problems of transition in the economic life of the county were secondary factors. Among these problems of transition the growth of population, the changes in agricultural methods and organisation and the decline of rural crafts were particularly important. Thus within the period under review the administrators of the old poor law were confronted with two quite distinct situations, and the adequacy of the system in meeting them must now be considered.

Before 1813 the problems of poverty which faced the overseers were mostly of three kinds. First there was the need to pension the aged and infirm, and to provide for orphaned and bastard children. Secondly there were the difficulties which confronted the parents of large families whose earnings were inadequate. This problem was generally solved by gifts of clothes and sometimes of food and money. Thirdly, there was the acute poverty caused by poor harvests and inclement weather and in this case the need was met by gifts of money and food, supplemented by private charity. The relief given before the mid-1790's did not result in any excessive pressure on the ratepayers and the indications are that the overseers were usually disposed to be generous. The standard of living of the poor was very low and in bad times they often suffered considerably but there is little evidence to suggest that they blamed their masters and the gentry for their situation. At those times in which poverty became acute

the poor could see some obvious reason for their distress and all classes experienced hardship to some degree. There were occasional disturbances especially in the towns but they were never particularly serious and do not seem to have been a result of carefully made or concerted plans. In any case they were taken by the authorities as signs that more generous relief and private charity were required.

It may be suggested then, that although the poor-law system as it was operated in the eighteenth century was often inefficient and sometimes wasteful, it was applied usually with commonsense and humanity so that it met the more urgent needs of the poor and prevented serious unrest. It is useful to remember the views of Miss E. M. Leonard concerning the effects of the poor law in the seventeenth century and to suggest that they may well apply to much of the eighteenth century too. She showed that the method of poor-law administration ensured that the gentry knew something of the lives of the poor and that every ratepayer suffered whenever the poor became distressed. She considered that for many who never received relief the struggle for existence was rendered less brutal because a degree of security was available should misfortune make them destitute. (1)

In the middle of the 1790's a great increase in the amount of poor relief and therefore also of rates took place. Agriculture was prosperous at this time, owing to war-time demands, and although the ratepayers of several parishes were concerned about the high rates, (2) there is no evidence to suggest that the need for economy as yet weighed more heavily than the well-being of the poor. This is demonstrated by the arrangements made in the acute crisis of 1799-1802 when very large sums of money were expended on relief and in private charity. The continuation of these expensive measures after the crisis had passed, indicated by the high expenditure in the years from 1802-05, shows there was no pressing demand for economy. The period of crisis saw the beginnings of new methods of relief which

1. E.M. Leonard, Early History of English Poor Relief, p. 302-3.
2. e.g. Corfe Castle in 1797. cf. p. 140

as they were applied at first suggest a concern for the poor rather than for more economical administration. The new methods were of three kinds: the giving of family allowances to large families, the sale of subsidized food and fuel and the making up of pay on the bread scale. (3) All three of these expedients were probably intended as emergency measures only and, if they had been discontinued when the crisis had passed, little harm would have resulted. The two former expedients in any case are not open to the same serious criticism which can be levelled against the making up of pay. They did not take away from the labourer the opportunity of raising his income by harder or longer work. In the making up pay system, however, the enterprise and industry of the labouring class was impaired but this defect was not apparent when the system was introduced as an emergency measure nor could its social consequences be realised until some years had passed. When it was first employed its superficial attractions were more obvious than its long-term effects. Its attractiveness lay in the fact that an unskilled administrator could relate relief to an extremely variable cost of living while avoiding difficult decisions concerning individual cases which could easily have led to apparent injustices. The administrative decisions of the overseers were simplified and the justices were relieved from the burden of many appeals. It was no doubt for such reasons as these that the making up of pay became a permanent part of the poor-law system in the Shaston East and Blandford North divisions in 1799-1800, and was later adopted in other parts of northern and eastern Dorset. In the Sherborne, Dorchester and Bridport divisions, however, it was not practised except in a few rare cases. In the first two of the divisions named the older eighteenth-century methods of relief remained the normal practice; while in the third the giving of family allowances, combined with a limitation of the size of families by the enforced apprenticing of boys and girls when they reached the age of nine, was the rule. (4)

3. Cf. Chapter XVI.

4. Cf. Chapters XII and XV.

After 1813 the situation in which the poor-law system operated was, as has been seen, a completely different one. Agricultural depression brought the problems of unemployment and low wages to the fore in place of the effects of poor harvests and bad weather. Previously, wages had been inadequate to meet the additional hardships of these natural disasters but after 1813 they were frequently deficient in the best of seasons. Agricultural depression not only led to a deterioration in the livelihood of the poor but also reduced the capacity of the farmers to meet the rates necessary for their relief. In striving to maintain the higher standards of living to which they had become accustomed during the war-time prosperity, the farmers resented the heavy burden of rates and a new element of parsimony entered into the administration. The landlords, likewise, were seeking to preserve the higher returns of wartime when they had been able to demand and obtain increased rents from the farmers. The situation after 1813 was such that only if the landowners were prepared to accept lower rents could more money be diverted to the solution of the problems of the poor. A few of the larger landlords did in fact reduce their rents but this does not seem to have been the general practice. On the whole the gentry, as justices, preferred to use the poor law to palliate a situation which they were reluctant to remedy as landlords.

The failure of the authorities to produce any constructive measures to ease the situation was due, perhaps, to a lack of understanding rather than to ill-will. Nevertheless prolonged agricultural depression and the absence of concrete measures to provide employment and to raise wages led to the discontent and resentment amongst the labourers which found expression in the 1830 disturbances. Although the unrest cannot be regarded as a result of bad poor-law administration, it is clear that in some parts of Dorset the methods employed by the overseers contributed to the labourers' plight. When some of the methods which had been employed effectively in the crisis of 1799-1802 were applied and developed in the different circumstances of the period 1813-30, they served to aggravate rather than to relieve the situation. In the areas where the 1830 troubles were most serious three

poor-law expedients were common: the making up of pay, the roundsman system and the practice of setting the unemployed to unproductive and deterrent labour especially on the roads. It will be useful to consider the effects of these three expedients in more detail.

"The Dorset County Chronicle" published a leading article in 1831 in which it described the change in the character of the Dorset peasantry. It ascribed the degeneration of their character and condition to the agricultural depression and to the abuses which had crept into the administration of the poor laws. The abuses to which the article referred were the various forms of making up pay and this was held to have produced "unmitigated poverty", "a disposition to idleness", a "dependence on parochial assistance" and "demoralisation".

(5) The view that the system of making up pay had demoralised and pauperised the labourers was shared by D. O. P. Okeden. At the meeting of the magistrates of the eastern divisions of Dorset held at Blandford immediately after the 1830 riots, Okeden protested against "the baneful curse" - the relief of able-bodied men who were in employment. Sir John Smith, one of the Blandford magistrates, asked him whether he was prepared to see poor men and their families "lie down and die by the roadside". Okeden replied that this could never happen, for the ending of the system of making up pay would be followed by the rise of wages to their proper level and if necessary private charity would be ready to assist. (6) Shortly before, Okeden had written a pamphlet developing at length his views on the relationship between wages and poor relief. He considered that the labourer was entitled to such wages as would enable him to live plus a little over to save up for times of sickness and for old age. He pointed out that the labourer did in fact receive what was his due, partly as wages and partly as poor relief, but it was given in such a way that he was humiliated and pauperised. The system of poor relief had so operated in many parts of Dorset as to depress the part of the

5. Dorset County Chronicle, 21.6.1831.
6. D.O.P. Okeden, Letter to H.F. Yeatman, p.5.

labourer's due which he received as wages and to increase the poor rates. Okeden held that the only way in which the destruction of the native virtues of the peasantry could be checked was by ending the making up of pay and by paying the labourers full and fair wages. (7) Yet when in 1831 he formally proposed a motion in the quarter sessions to the effect that the system of making up pay should no longer be tolerated, he found little support among his fellow magistrates; many of whom considered that his policy would cause more immediate hardship than could be endured by the labourers so soon after the disturbances. (8) Many of the justices, however, sympathised with his aims and in the following years the system was gradually discontinued. (9)

On the other hand the magistrates of the Sturminster division were firmly opposed to any change in the methods of poor relief and their leader, the Rev. H. F. Yeatman, entered into a pamphlet controversy with Okeden after he had seen the latter's contribution to the Poor Law Report. (10) Yeatman argued that Okeden had his own area too much in mind, for around More Crichel, where the country was far less densely populated, there was a resident gentry and little unemployment. He argued that since none of this was true of the Sturminster division where there was a great deal of unemployment, it was impossible to abandon the making up of pay in hope of a rise ~~in~~ wages and "the cold hand of charity". He insisted that in the economic conditions which prevailed in the Vale of Blackmore where profits were small and employment scarce, wages could not rise and without relief to supplement his pay the labourer would "lie down and die by the roadside". He pointed out too that if economic conditions deteriorated further, the farmers would reduce wages and since there was a surplus of labour the men would accept whatever pay was offered. In these circumstances, without the making up of pay, the result would be a disaster. (11) Again, at a meeting at

7. D.O.P. Okeden, Letter ... on Poor Relief and Labourers' Wages, pp. 4, 5, 8, 9, and 14.
8. D.O.P. Okeden, Letter to H.F. Yeatman, p.7.
9. Cf. Chapter XVII supra.
10. Poor Law Report 1834, Appendix A, pp.11-24.
11. H.F. Yeatman, A Letter to D.O.P. Okeden, *passim*.

Sturminster Newton held in 1832, Yeatman spoke about the problem of unemployment in the Vale of Blackmore and said that he considered that the poor laws needed amending, for under them it was impossible to relieve the poor effectively. He said that the provisions of 43 Elizabeth which instructed the overseers to set the poor to work could not be implemented, for farm labourers could not be turned into textile workers and even if the attempt were made the products would be unsaleable. He conceded that the poor-law methods in use in the Sturminster division were technically illegal but argued that the magistrates had to connive at a breach of the law to prevent the overseers driving the labourers into revolt. (12)

The rector of Hazelbury Bryan, the Rev. Henry Walter, then wrote a pamphlet defending the views of D.O.P. Okeden against Yeatman's criticisms. He pointed out that the use of the scale took away from the labourer all incentive to work harder or longer, for the overseers deducted from his relief any extra he earned. He thought that it was the practice of supplementing pay from the poor rates that had depressed the level of wages in the Sturminster division but he did not suggest that the system could be suddenly abandoned for that would undoubtedly cause great hardship. He did say, however, that its gradual abolition should be accomplished by paying more regard to the circumstances of particular cases and only granting relief in extremities. He gave instances in his own parish where men had been denied relief and had soon found work at satisfactory wages. (13) Okeden replied to Yeatman in similar terms stressing that he advocated a gradual rather than a sudden termination to the system of making up pay. (14)

There was thus a sharp division of opinion in Dorset concerning the relationship between the low level of agricultural wages and the use of the system of making

12. Yeatman at a meeting at Sturminster Newton organised on behalf of the Labourers' Friend Society, reported in The Dorset County Chronicle, 5.7.1832.
13. H. Walter, Letter to H.F. Yeatman, *passim*.
14. D.O.P. Okeden, Letter to H.F. Yeatman, p.6.

up pay. Okeden and his followers thought that the system was directly responsible for depressing wages and that its abolition would lead to an improvement of the situation. Yeatman, and probably others, considered that this line of argument was unsound since it ignored the unemployment which existed in the Vale of Blackmore. They thought that wages were low because the supply of labour exceeded the demand for it and that while agriculture in the Vale of Blackmore remained in a depressed condition, only relief to supplement wages could save the labourers from severe distress. It would appear that both points of view had some basis in fact although both Okeden and Walter seem to have given too little consideration to the unemployment problem. If there had been full employment, Okeden's case would have been sound but as things were the problem was probably less simple than he supposed. Where there was no unemployment problem, as for example in the More Crichel district, it seems likely that the making up of pay would tempt the hard-pressed farmer to reduce his costs by lowering the wages since he would know that the labourer would still receive the same total income and that the resulting higher poor rate would be spread over the whole body of ratepayers. Where unemployment was a major problem, as in the Vale of Blackmore, Yeatman's point of view seems to have been correct. It is hard to see how the hard-pressed farmers of the Vale could have increased wages and extremely doubtful if they would have done so when there was keen competition for employment. The labourers, confronted with the choice of work at low wages or starvation, would have had to accept whatever wages the farmers offered. It thus appears that it was unemployment rather than the manner in which the poor laws were administered that was the real cause of trouble in the Vale of Blackmore.

More serious criticism can be made of the way in which the unemployment problem was tackled. Few attempts were made to increase the employment available but where schemes designed to do this were adopted the results were favourable. In 1825 the distress of the poor around Blandford was so acute that E. B. Portman undertook the reclamation of Durweston Common to provide

them with work. This project was continued until about 1840 and cost Portman about £10,000 (15), but it is significant that the villages in the neighbourhood remained quiet in the 1830 troubles. (16) This particular scheme was possible because of the wealth of Mr. Portman but in the Vale and especially in the Sturminster division there were few resident and wealthy landowners. H. F. Yeatman, a small landowner as well as a clergyman, had provided allotments for the poor in his own parish of Stock Gaylard and the labourers there had not been drawn into the 1830 troubles despite the fact that the area was a centre of unrest. (17) Measures of this kind appear to have had good results wherever they were tried but in most of the villages of the Vale there was no squire to tackle the problem. There had been discussion of several larger projects to provide employment in the area in 1824 but these had not materialised (18) and the unemployed were left to the care of the poor-law authorities. The poor laws did provide, in theory, for the employment of those without work, but, as Yeatman pointed out, the textile crafts, which the 1601 Act stipulated, could not be practised by labourers whose only skill was that of agriculture. Provision was made, however, for the children of the poor by setting up a school of industry at Stourton Caundle where they were taught industrial skills. (19) The usefulness of this was limited by the absence of any industry in the area except for silk-throwing at Stalbridge and some weaving of heavy cloth at Sturminster Newton, neither of which trades were very prosperous after the end of the French wars. (20)

Thus although the poor-law authorities were left to provide for the unemployed, this was a task quite beyond the scope of the old poor law. The solutions offered were to employ the labourers either on the farms by methods such as the stem-man (or roundsman) system or on the roads or in the quarries. (21) Both of these methods had very

15. Fussell, *op.cit.*, p.132.
16. Sir John Smith's letter in the Okeden letters; D.R.O.
17. Yeatman's speech at the meeting at Sturminster,
cf. Dorset County Chronicle, 5.7.1832.
18. Cf. Chapter XXI.
19. Cf. Chapter XIV.
20. Cf. Chapter IV.
21. Cf. Chapter XVII.

grave disadvantages and probably aggravated the situation which they were intended to relieve. The stem-man system was practised in two limited areas around Hazelbury Bryan and around Shaftesbury, both of which were centres of disaffection in the 1830 troubles. It would be unwise, however, to conclude that the two factors were necessarily linked, for the system was not long in use before it was condemned by the quarter sessions in 1823, although it was revived by the overseers of Iwerne Courtney in 1829 and perhaps elsewhere. One of the disadvantages of the stem-man scheme was that it tended to drive men out of employment since the farmers found that they could employ men from the parish more cheaply and proceeded to dismiss the men already in their employ. Another disadvantage was that the labourers saw that most of their remuneration came from the parish rather than from the farmer and as a result were unwilling to do more than a minimum of work. The other expedient used to provide work for the unemployed was deterrent work on the roads and in the quarries. It had the underlying assumption that the men were without employment through some fault of their own so that heavy and often pointless labour would impel them to accept normal employment. In the Vale of Blackmore, however, there was no employment available and thus the effect of the method was to bring together into one place all the discontented labourers in circumstances which could only increase their resentment. This latter expedient was practised for many years in the Vale and probably had a far larger part in the shaping of disaffection than did the stem-man system but both methods indicate that the fundamental problem was unemployment. (22)

It is contended, then, that poor-law administration in the northern and eastern parts of Dorset and in particular in the Vale of Blackmore aggravated rather than relieved the very difficult social situation which existed. At the same time it is suggested that within the framework of the poor laws there was little else that could have been done. Faced with the problem of unemployment which existed in the Vale of Blackmore, Yeatman's case for

22. Cf. Chapter XVII for details of the poor-law administration.

retaining the system of supplementing pay seems to have been sound. Nevertheless, his critics' arguments indicated some very serious defects in the system and he himself saw the need for a reform of the poor laws. More serious criticism must be levelled against the use of the poor laws to relieve unemployment when measures beyond their scope were required. The particular measures adopted under the poor laws were harmful in that they tended to foment rather than relieve discontent. The final judgement on the administration of the poor laws in north-east Dorset and in the Vale of Blackmore in particular must be that the system was breaking down because it was inadequate to deal with such a complex social problem as that which confronted the area. A system in which the unit was the parish depended for its resources on the prosperity of the latter. If, however, the parish was in a depressed area, such resources did not exist. The inadequacy of the parish unit, together with the inexperience and limited outlook of the administrators, indicates one reason for the failure of the poor-law system after 1813.

Three divisions of Dorset (Dorchester, Sherborne and Bridport) seem to have been free from serious trouble in 1830 and it is necessary to ask whether there is any direct relationship between this and the fact that different poor-law methods were employed. There were, however, other factors which have to be taken into account. The population (23) in relation to the value of the land was higher in West Dorset, in the Weymouth Triangle and in the western part of the Chalkland which comprised most of the Dorchester and Bridport divisions than it was in the Vale of Blackmore. In the Somerset Fringe (most of the Sherborne division) the population in relation to the value of the land was the same as in the Vale. Moreover the rate of population increase in the areas within the three divisions mentioned was significantly higher than in the Vale. If these facts are compared with the figures of expenditure on the poor given on p. 286 it will be seen that despite a relatively larger population and a higher

23. Cf. tables relating to population on pp. 8 and 9 above.

rate of increase the expenditure on the poor was significantly lower in 1802-3, 1819-22 and 1829-32. (24) It might be argued that the poor laws were here administered more effectively but it was demonstrated (25) that the rate of poor relief bears a closer relationship to the physical nature and economic state of the area concerned than to the poor-law methods employed. It would appear, then, that the three areas under consideration were less stricken by poverty than was the Vale of Blackmore (26) and their greater prosperity led to a more rapid growth of population, made possible different poor-law methods and prevented the severe distress among the labouring population which elsewhere led to disturbances. No doubt there were contributory factors; for example the poor-law methods possible in those circumstances (27) led to better personal relationships between the classes. Again, in West Dorset at least, the smaller farms and the system of apprenticeship (28) lessened the division between master and labourer.

This conclusion is in agreement with those above which suggest that whereas the administration of the poor laws was a contributory factor in the social discontent which found an expression in the 1830 disturbances, the source of the trouble lay in the severe and prolonged depression of agriculture and especially of dairy-farming after 1813.

24. In the table to which reference has been made in the text, the figures for the Weymouth Triangle apply to one part of the Dorchester division. The other part of the division was mostly in the Chalkland and the figures for that area in £s per head of population are as follows: 1802-3 - .48, 1819-22 - .56, 1829-32 - .52. These figures should be read in conjunction with the table mentioned.
25. Cf. Chapter XXI.
26. Cf. Chapters III, IV and VI.
27. Cf. Chapters XV and XVI.
28. Cf. Chapter XIII.

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S. and R. = Settlement Certificates, Orders of Removal, Legal Opinions bearing on Settlement and Orders of Court.

Ba. = Bastardy Orders, Examinations, Warrants and Bonds.

App. = Apprenticeship Indentures, and other papers relating to apprenticeship.

M. = Militia papers.

Bi. = Bills and Receipts relating to Overseers' expenditure.

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Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Bi., Corr., M., inventories and lists, justices' orders, workhouse rules.)

Bradford Abbas. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1809-1835 (Summary of Accounts only).

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Corr.)

Bridport. (Town Clerk's Dept.)

Poor Rate Books 1781-1795, 1827-1832.

Broadwey.

Poor Books 1787-1816, 1816-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.)

Broadwinstor. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books:-

Whole Parish 1723-1789, 1789-1827.

Broadwinstor tithe 1810-1828, 1828-1836.

Childhay tithe 1783-1809, 1809-1823, 1824-1834, 1834-1836.

Drimpton tithe 1783-1803, 1803-1820, 1821-1836.

Littlewinstor tithe 1793-1803, 1803-1824, 1824-1836.

Register of Apprentices 1811-1816.

Workhouse Accounts 1791-1801, 1801-1813, 1813-1822, 1823-1835.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., M., Bi., Corr., inventories, lists, rough accounts, copies of returns).

Buckland Newton

Poor Books 1745-1766, 1802-1820, 1826-1833.

Rough Poor Books 1751-1775, 1776-1795.

Incumbent's Notebook (18th Century).

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Bi., Corr., census returns).

Burton Bradstock (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1756-1780, 1780-1803, 1803-1815, 1815-1834.

Canford Magna (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1755-1771, 1784-1802.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., inventories and rough accounts).

Cann. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1816-1829, 1830-1883.

Poor Books 1814-1822, 1822-1832.

Caundle Marsh.

Poor Book 1804-1836.

Cerne Abbas. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1746-1778, 1815-1824, 1818-1825, 1824-1836.

Workhouse Accounts 1808-1818.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., M., Bi., Corr.).

Charlton Marshall (D.R.O.)

Rate Book 1831.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., census returns).

Chardstock.

Poor Books 1751-1766, 1767-1779, 1780-1783, 1783-1795,
1825-1832.

Charity Book 1806-1874.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Charmouth.

Vestry Minutes 1818-1859.

Cheselbourne. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1753-1805.

Papers (rough accounts).

Chickerell.

Poor Books 1775-1816, 1816-1836.

Chideock. (Parish Council)

Poor Book 1793-1814.

Compton Valance.

Poor Books 1670-1765, 1765-1836.

Corfe Castle (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1830-1836.

Rate Books 1763, 1797, 1833-1835.

Poor Books 1743-1763, 1764-1770, 1770-1779, 1788-99

(Borough only after 1793), 1799-1805 (Borough),

1805-1815 (Borough), 1815-1821 (Borough),
1821-1828 (Borough), 1828-1836 (Borough),

North division:- 1792-1804, 1804-1815, 1815-1824,
1824-1836;

South division:- 1806-1820, 1820-1832, 1832-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., M., Bi., Corr., Returns on

population and the poor, rough accounts, lists of paupers and their earnings, report of a committee of the vestry on the wisdom of providing a workhouse).
Corscombe.

Poor Books 1805-1817, 1817-1830.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Dorchester All Saints. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1722-1769, 1770-1783, 1783-1800, 1800-1810,
1810-1828, 1828-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Bi., Corr., census return
1821, rate lists).

East Orchard.

Vestry Minutes 1772-1785, 1831-1856.

East Stoke.

Poor Book (North division) 1803-1825.

East Stour.

Papers (Misc.).

Edmondsham.

Poor Books 1721-1765, 1766-1805, 1805-1816.

Folke. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1787-1812.

Papers (S. & R., App.).

Fontmell Magna. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books:-

Fontmell tithings:- 1758-1770, 1771-1780.

Hartgrove tithings:- 1766-1782, 1795-1817, 1817-1830.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., M., inventories, census
return 1831).

Fordington. (D.R.O.)

Rate Books 1755-1824, 1825-1836.

Poor Books 1742-1765, 1782-1792, 1793-1803, 1803-1810,
1811-1822.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Corr.).

Gillingham. (Gillingham Museum)

Poor Book 1740-1777.

Gussage All Saints.

Poor Book 1788-1804.

Halstock.

Poor Book 1815-1834.

Hammoon.

Poor Books 1718-1780, 1780-1836.

Hazelbury Bryan. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1813-1839.

Poor Books 1715-1772, 1803-1820, 1820-1836.

Hermitage. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1819-1894.

Poor Book 1813-1836.

Hilton. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1798-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Bi., Corr., census returns).

Hooke.

Poor Books 1770-1794, 1795-1822, 1822-1844.

Iwerne Courtney.

Vestry Minutes 1811-1824, 1824-1832.

Kimmeridge. (In the possession of Col. J. Mansel, of Smedmore.)

Poor Book 1795-1836.

Kington Magna. (D.R.O.)

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., M., Bi., Corr., census return 1831, rules issued by the Sturminster magistrates for guidance of the overseers).

Langton Herring. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1801-1824, 1824-1836.

Papers (Misc.).

Litton Cheney.

Poor Book 1792-1836.

Long Bredy.

Vestry Minutes 1829-1903.

Longburton. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1810-1823.

Register of Apprentices 1809.

Papers (Misc.).

Lydlinch. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes

Poor Books 1734-1781, 1781-1821, 1821-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Lyme Regis.

Vestry Minutes 1834-1921.

Papers (In D.R.O.) (Misc.).

Lytchett Minster.

Poor Book 1783-1820.

Maiden Newton.

Poor Books 1764-1792, 1792-1808, 1809-1830, 1830-1836,
(in D.R.O.)

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Manston.

Vestry Minutes 1819-1852.

Poor Book 1821-1879.

Marnhull. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1802-1921.

Poor Books 1741-1779, 1779-1793.

Papers (Account of the population in 1821).

Marshwood. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1781-1793, 1809-1816, 1819-1834.

Melbury Abbas.

Poor Book 1830-1848.

Melbury Osmond. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1731-1761, 1761-1790, 1790-1812.

Poor Books 1730-1778, 1825-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Bi., Corr.).

Melcombe Regis.

Vestry Minutes

Milborne St. Andrew.

Lady Morton's Charity Book.

Milton Abbas. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1818-1830.

Minterne Magna. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1806-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., census return 1831).

Motcombe. (D.R.O.)

Rate Books 1817-24, 1824-1830, 1830-1834.

Poor Books 1768-1778, 1800-1817, 1817-1822, 1822-1827,
1827-1832.

Mosterton.

Poor Books 1774-1794, 1794-1813.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Nether Compton. (Parish Council).

Poor Book 1814-1894.

Piddlehinton. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1745-1791.

Poole.

Rate Books 1764-1773, 1773-1777, 1777-1795, 1822-1827,
1827-1831, 1831-1835.

Powerstock. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1759-1775, 1775-1796, 1796-1813, 1813-1825,
1826-1835.

Poxwell.

Poor and Churchwardens' Book 1689-1836.

Radipole. (In possession of St. Mary's Melcombe Regis).

Poor Book (fragment) 1757-1770.

Papers (copy of poor return of 1777).

Rampisham. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1825-1834.

Shaftesbury St. James.

Papers (Misc.)

Shapwick. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1810-1827, 1827-1835.

Sherborne.

Vestry Minutes 1592-1833, 1833-1878.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Shipton Gorge.

Poor Books 1798-1822, 1823-1833, 1833-1836.

South Perrott.

Poor Books 1740-1765, 1765-1790, 1790-1799, 1808-1827,
1827-1837.

Stalbridge. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1756-66, 1766-1782, 1782-1792, 1792-1803,
1803-1819, 1819-1825.

Extraordinary Disbursement Books 1758-1767, 1767-1778,
1778-1785, 1785-1792, 1792-1800, 1800-1812, 1812-1822.

Stanton St. Gabriel. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1823-1836.

Stinsford.

Poor Book 1771-1802.

Stockland.

Register of Apprentices 1802-1827.

Charity Book 1761-1814.

Stoke Abbott. (D.R.O.)

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Stourpaine.

Poor Book 1796-1810.

Stour Provost.

Poor Books 1750-1767, 1768-1784, 1784-1797, 1797-1810,
1810-1819, 1819-1830.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Studland.

Vestry Minutes 1823-1893.

Sturminster Marshall. (D.R.O.)

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Bi., Corr., lists and rough accounts).

Sturminster Newton. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1752-1764, 1765-1780, 1780-1796, 1796-1800, 1800-1815, 1815-1824, 1833-1836.

Rate Books 1819-20, 1823-1836.

Workhouse Accounts 1800-1833.

Workhouse Day Book 1800-1822.

Swanage.

Vestry Minutes 1819-1872.

Select Vestry Minutes (D.R.O.) 1823-1833.

Poor Book (Town Clerk's Dept.) 1750-1780.

Sydling St. Nicholas. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1790-1870.

Papers (S. & R., Ba.).

Symondsbury. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1771-1796, 1796-1817.

Tarrant Hinton. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1744-1762, 1763-1808.

Toller Porcorum.

Poor Book 1800-1819.

Wareham Holy Trinity. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1816-1894.

Poor Books;

Holy Trinity Within:- 1791-1818, 1818-1836.

Holy Trinity Wihtout:- 1773-1808, 1808-1837.

Papers (Misc.).

Wareham Lady St. Mary. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1770-1838.

Poor Books 1805-1812, 1816-1820, 1821-29, 1829-64.

Wareham St. Martin. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1708-1835.

West Chelborough. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1688-1763, 1763-1834.

West Orchard.

Vestry Minutes 1799-1962

Poor Book 1786-1828.

West Stour.

Poor Books 1767-1774, 1777-1789, 1819-1836.

Whitechurch Canonicorum. (D.R.O.)

Vestry Minutes 1772-1796.

Rate Books 1761-1814, 1815-1836.

Ledger (Summary of Accounts) 1771-1820.

Overseers' Accounts:-

Abbot's Wootton division: 1754-1795, 1795-1824.

Barn division: 1783-1808, 1808-1832.

.Vale division: 1754-1795, 1795-1830, 1830-1836.

Wild division: 1754-1798, 1799-1827, 1827-64.

Wimborne Minster.

Books relating to the whole parish:-

Vestry Minutes 1745-1808, 1809-1849.

Select Vestry Minutes 1818-1822, 1822-1828, 1828-1831,
1831-1834, 1834-1835.

Rate Books - annual books.

Poor Books 1771-1783, 1783-1798.

Ledger 1830-1834.

Parish Cash Books 1814-1827, 1827-1836.

Books relating to the town division:-

Registers (payments of regular paupers): 1818-1819,
1819-1820, 1820-1822, 1723-1826, 1826-1831.

Rough Registers 1825-1830, 1830-1832.

Extra Books (extraordinary disbursements): 1816-1818,
1820-1823, 1825-1826, 1831-1834.

Books relating to the Holt division:-

Registers 1818-1820, 1820-1822, 1822-1826, 1826-1831.

Rough Register 1817.

Books relating to the Leigh division:-

Registers 1818-1821, 1821-1828, 1828-1836.

Rough Register 1817.

Extra Books 1817-1818, 1818-1822, 1823-1825, 1825-1830.

Books relating to the Kingston division:-

Registers 1818-1821, 1821-1824, 1829-1830, 1832.

Rough Registers 1814, 1815, 1817.

Extra Books 1814, 1817.

Books relating to the Workhouse:-

Ledger 1776-1784.

Cash Books 1760-1771, 1798-1814.

Stock Book 1830-1832.

Time Book 1829-1831.

Papers (S.&R., Ba., App., M., Bi., Corr., workhouse
agreements).

Wimborne St. Giles.

Poor Books 1731-1770, 1771-1810, 1810-1825, 1825-1837.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App.).

Winford Eagle.

Poor Book 1733-1832.

Papers (Misc.).

Winterborne Monkton.

Poor Book 1829-1835.

Winterborne Whitechurch. (D.R.O.)

Poor Book 1791-1828.

Wool.

Poor Book 1819-1834.

Workhouse Minutes 1796-1815.

Wootton Glanville. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1731-1771, 1771-1803.

Newlands Hamlet Poor Books 1751-1764, 1764-1780,
1808-1829, 1829-1836.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., App., Bi., Corr.).

Wyke Regis. (D.R.O.)

Poor Books 1717-1769, 1807-1817.

Papers (S. & R., Ba., Corr.).

Yetminster.

Vestry Minutes 1794-1901.

Poor Book (made up book of minutes and accounts from
varying dates) 1694-1792.

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In Public Record Office:-

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The Frampton-Melbourne Correspondence.

In the Gillingham Museum:-

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Broadsheet concerning "The Labourers' Friend Society".

In the Dorset County Museum:-

Rules of the Dorset Friendly Society.

In the Dorset County Record Office:-

Enclosure Awards:

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Dewlish (D124)

Chilfrome (98),

Bincombe (8),

Preston (93).

Minute Books of Enclosure Commissioners:-

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Winterborne Stickland (M.C. 10,942).

Abbotsbury (D. 124).

Lytchett Minster and Lytchett Matravers (D. 60).

Dairying Agreement between James Wood and Angel James (D69/T5).

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James Frampton, Account of the Dorset Yeomanry (MS) (D.29/X4)

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