

Chapter Three

The Nature and Scale of the Cottage Economy

I

This chapter uses the evidence of surviving probate inventories to examine two major sets of issues. Firstly, when the cottage population (agricultural labourers, rural artisans and small village traders) in unenclosed villages engaged in agriculture what kind of agriculture did they practice? What was the relative importance of different kinds of livestock? How many animals did they keep? How important was arable agriculture compared with the keeping of livestock and on what scale was it practiced? What differences were there between different occupational groups within the cottage population and how did cottage agriculture compare with that of full-time farmers, if such existed? Secondly, how reliable or meaningful are these occupational categories? Were those described in the documents as labourers, carpenters and yeomen sharply differentiated from one another in the ways they made their livings? Or alternatively, as is sometimes suggested, did individuals chop and change between different economic activities to an extent that renders these occupational descriptors highly misleading as indicators of what they did for a living?

The term cottage agriculture is used here to refer to the agricultural enterprises undertaken in their own right by agricultural labourers, rural artisans and the smaller village traders. The word 'cottager' will be used, as a convenient umbrella term, to refer collectively to these three groups in village society. Some light can also be shed on the incidence of cottage agriculture, though as will be seen this is more problematic because the coverage of the population is incomplete in these documents. The proportion of cottagers engaging in cottage agriculture is the subject of chapters five, six and seven. The focus here is on the nature and scale of cottage agriculture rather than its incidence. Before discussing the data something should be said about the nature of the documents on which this chapter is based.

Probate inventories are inventories of the moveable goods of deceased persons. In order to get full legal control over the estate of a deceased person (to be granted probate) the executor or administrator (in the case of an intestate estate) had to exhibit an inventory at the relevant probate court. Probate inventories are not full accounts of the property of the deceased. When compiled correctly they list those items whose transmission was governed by the ecclesiastical courts rather than by common law, equity or manorial courts.¹ Strictly speaking this included the moveable goods (including money) of the deceased, any debts owing to the deceased and leases for lives but not leases for years.² Debts owed by the deceased were not supposed to be recorded nor was real property (land and buildings) or any fixtures deemed to be part of the freehold. In practice perishable foodstuffs or any items of very small value were unlikely to be mentioned.³

¹ See Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 24, for the jurisdictions covering the transmission of different forms of property.

² Cox and Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', p. 32.

³ Glennie, 'Acknowledging Consumption', p. 170; Cox and Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', pp. 30-31; Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 33-4.

The poor in general and labourers in particular are very heavily under-represented in collections of surviving probate inventories.⁴ Weatherill, for example, found only 28 labourers in her national sample of 2,902 inventories.⁵ It is often stated that an inventory was not required if an estate was worth less than £5.⁶ In fact the law clearly required the exhibition of an inventory on behalf of all deceased estates.⁷ In practice this did not always happen and probate inventory collections are clearly skewed towards the wealthier groups in society. Whilst the exact mechanisms underlying this pattern are not understood it is clear that the wealthier occupational groups were more likely to be inventoried than were poorer occupational groups. Jan de Vries notes that not only are poorer social groups under-represented in probate inventories but those who are present are likely to over-represent the richer members of that group but that this is less likely to be a problem with the 'middling sort.'⁸ Peter King makes the same point with respect to labourers' probate inventories but notes that 'it is difficult to gauge the *extent* to which the few labouring families that left inventories were from the higher end of the wealth spectrum within their group.'⁹

It is sometimes supposed that collections of probate inventories are dominated by those in the final stages of the life-cycle who had already disposed of much of their material wealth.¹⁰ If this were so then evidence culled from probate inventories would be a highly misleading guide to the moveable goods of those in earlier phases of the life-cycle. This issue has recently been the subject of systematic investigation suggesting rather different conclusions. In early eighteenth century England death was common at all phases of the life-cycle and most inventories were in fact left by individuals in the middle phases of the life-cycle. Furthermore, whilst there is

⁴ Glennie, 'Acknowledging Consumption', 170; Moore, 'Probate Inventories', p. 18; Overton, 'English Probate Inventories', p. 209.

⁵ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 210-211.

⁶ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 33; Overton, 'English Probate Inventories', 209; Moore, 'Probate Inventories', p. 18.

⁷ Cox and Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', p. 26, fn. 65, report that they can find no evidence for this 'misconception' and correctly note that the 1529 Act (21. Hen VIII, c. 5) which is sometimes cited as evidence instead laid down that fees were not to be levied by the ecclesiastical courts for granting probate where the estate came to less than £5 in value. They also argue that while the 1529 act implied a requirement to exhibit an inventory the act itself did not stipulate such a requirement. This latter claim is hard to reconcile with the wording of the legislation:

And that the Executour and Executours named by the testatour or person so deceased or such person or persons to whom such administration shalbe [committed] ... shall make or cause to be made a trewe and perfyte Inventory of all the goodes catells wares marchaundyses ... and the same sall cause to be indented, whereof the one part shalbe by the said Executour or Executours Administratour or Administratours, upon his or her oathe or othes to be taken before the said Bysshops or Ordinairies their Officials ... and delyver it to the kepping of the said [Bishop] Ordynary ... and the other parte theroeof to remain with the said Executour or Executours Admynstratour or Admynstratours ... (21. Hen VIII, c. 5)

In other words the Act required all administrators or Executors to make two copies of an inventory one to keep for their own use and one for the probate court. No exemption for estates worth £5 or less was mentioned. Nor was such an exemption mentioned by either Burne or Swinburne, both contemporary authorities. Burne, *Ecclesiastical Law*; Swinburne, *Briefe Treatise*. But the Act did prevent probate courts from charging fees in such cases. Arkell, 'Probate Process', p. 12, suggests that this led the ecclesiastical authorities to encourage those with estates valued at £5 or more to apply for probate but to discourage those with estates worth £5 or less from doing so. Whether there is any evidence for this is unclear but the argument is clearly consistent with the financial incentives created by the act.

⁸ De Vries, 'Between Purchasing Power', p. 104.

⁹ King, 'Pauper Inventories', pp. 156, 176. My italics.

¹⁰ Spufford, 'Limitations.'

evidence for some shedding of goods towards the end of the lifecycle moveable estates appear to have remained substantially intact.¹¹ Inventories are therefore a reasonable, though not perfect, guide to the moveable goods of individuals across adult life.

II

This chapter is based on an analysis of probate inventories recorded in Northamptonshire during the first half of the eighteenth century. The sample is deliberately non-random. Since poorer occupational groups left inventories relatively infrequently random sampling of inventories is inappropriate for most analytical purposes because it will inevitably lead to an overwhelming predominance of inventories left by wealthier occupational groups. In a rural area, such as early eighteenth century Northamptonshire, yeoman and husbandmen would thus dominate any random sample. The strategy adopted here was to take a structured sample with two components making use of the N.R.O. occupational indexes to probate documents.¹² The first part of the sample comprised, for the period 1700-1749, all the indexed probate inventories for those described (either in the inventory itself or in the associated will) as a labourer or a shepherd or as following one of eight of the most frequently occurring craft or trade occupations.¹³ This approach ensured that there were sufficient inventories for each occupational group to allow reliable analysis. The vast majority of these inventories were recorded between 1714 and the early 1730s. The second part of the sample comprised all indexed inventories, for the years 1714-1718, where the decedent had a farming occupation (attributed either in the inventory itself or the associated will).¹⁴ Taking a continuous sample of farming occupations over a four year period ensured both a sample sufficiently large for reliable analysis and one spread over the farming year (as was unavoidably the case with the inventories in the first part of the sample).

These two procedures resulted in a sample of 423 usable inventories. The numbers in each sampled occupation are shown in the first column of table 3.1.¹⁵ This does not, of course, provide any guide as to the relative numbers in these groups in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. But these were the most numerous occupational groups in the county in 1777 between them comprising eighty per cent of the adult male population at that date.¹⁶ But not all of these inventories were derived from settlements which were rural and unenclosed. The second column of

¹¹ Overon and Dean, 'Wealth, Lifecycle and Consumption'.

¹² These take the form of two card indexes, one for the Consistory Court of Peterborough and one for the Archdeaconry Court of Northampton. The indexes are virtually non-existent for years prior to 1714 and may not be complete for years thereafter. However, no attempt has been made to locate probate inventories not listed in these two card indexes. There are undoubtedly further surviving probate inventories in the N.R.O. for the occupational groups discussed in this chapter for the first half of the eighteenth century.

¹³ These eight occupations between them accounted for 62 per cent of all men in non-agricultural employment in the county in 1777 at which date it is possible to ascertain the most important occupations from the county-wide militia list of that year: Hatley, *Northamptonshire Militia Lists*, p. xv.

¹⁴ In hindsight it would have been more satisfactory to take four samples of one year each spaced evenly over the period 1714 to 1732 to mirror the chronological distribution of the non-farming inventories. However, this would be most unlikely to make any detectable difference to the data presented in this chapter.

¹⁵ Not all the indexed inventories were usable as a small number failed to enumerate goods separately. These were rejected and have been excluded from the analysis.

¹⁶ Hatley, *Northamptonshire Militia Lists*, p. xv.

table 3.1 shows the numbers of inventories from parishes which were both rural and had not been enclosed at the time the inventory was drawn up.¹⁷ Three hundred and twenty two inventories fell into this category. Unless otherwise stated all subsequent discussion in this chapter is restricted to this core sample.

Table 3.2 provides some summary characteristics of this core sample. All probate inventories are abbreviated to some extent. But some are more abbreviated than others. To calculate the proportion of inventories which do or do not record the presence of a particular item it is sensible to try and exclude from both the numerator and the denominator any inventories that appear to be too abbreviated to have enumerated the item in question had it been present. Inventories which are too abbreviated to include high value items such as livestock have been excluded from the sample altogether. But some inventories whilst detailed enough to include livestock are insufficiently detailed to enumerate low value items such as a butter churn or a carpenters' tools. Each inventory has been labelled as either abbreviated or not according to whether it was judged sufficiently detailed to include such items. Column two indicates the numbers of unabbreviated inventories. This approach is crude and subjective but is preferable to ignoring the problem altogether.¹⁸

Column three of table 3.2 gives the median value of the inventories for each occupational group.¹⁹ This is the value the accountants recorded at the bottom of the inventory. It includes the value of any moveable goods owned by the deceased as well as the value of any leases held or debts owed to the deceased. But it does not include the value of any debts owed by the deceased or of any real property owned. This is not therefore a very meaningful total and cannot provide a reliable guide to wealth levels.²⁰ Column four shows the median value of the total value of moveable goods listed in the inventory. This is likely to be a more reliable indicator of wealth levels. In general, each occupational group has been listed in increasing order of this measure of wealth. However, shepherds, as a specialized form of agricultural labourer, have been listed just after labourers. Cordwainers and shoemakers have

¹⁷ The enclosure status of parishes was determined by consulting Hall's list of Northamptonshire enclosures: Hall, 'Enclosure'. Urban settlements were defined as those having a population of over 1,000 in the 1801 census. On this basis 60 inventories from Daventry, Kettering, Northampton, Oundle, Rothwell, Peterborough and Wellingborough were classified as urban.

¹⁸ I am unaware of any probate inventory study that explicitly confronts this problem. Where it is ignored it will lead, in some cases, to an understatement of the ownership of some less valuable items. As can be seen, from table 3.2 the problem is most acute in farming inventories where household goods were often highly abbreviated. If this pattern were more geographically widespread then it would raise doubts about the robustness of Weatherill's conclusion that farmers were less likely to acquire novel household goods than were craftsmen. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*.

¹⁹ The mean or average can be misleading as it is easily distorted by a small number of high values. The median (the value in the middle of a distribution) is a better guide to the 'typical' wealth level of each group.

²⁰ Margaret Spufford used this measure of wealth to compare the wealth levels recorded in a sample of Lincolnshire probate inventories with the final value of the same estates recorded in probate accounts. She concluded that 'there was no predictable relationship between the total value of a probate inventory and the net value at the end of the account.' Given the peculiarity of this particular measure of 'wealth' this is unsurprising. Furthermore, Dean and Overton point out that Spufford's calculations based on the accounts included expenses incurred after death. They too are therefore a misleading guide to the wealth of the deceased. Dean and Overton compared the value of moveable goods listed in inventories from the parish of Milton in Kent during the seventeenth century with the value of the net worth of estates derived from probate accounts. These calculations show a correlation of 0.65 and Dean and Overton thus conclude that the value of moveable goods in an inventory, which they term 'material wealth' is after all a good guide to other measures of wealth. Spufford, 'Limitations'; Deane and Overton, 'Wealth, Lifecycle and Consumption.'

been amalgamated, in this and subsequent tables, to produce a sample of meaningful size. The same principles have been used in all the tables which follow. In addition, to simplify the presentation, in most subsequent tables all the artisans have been amalgamated since there were only very minor differences between their characteristics.

As can be seen from column four the inventoried labourers' moveable goods with a median value of £13 were worth less than half the median value of the moveable goods of inventoried shepherds at £28. This reflects the higher earning power of the latter as more skilled and specialised agricultural labourers who were also more likely to be employed all year round.²¹ Labourers' moveable goods were typically worth around 40 per cent less than those of the inventoried artisans other than tailors.²² Again this reflects the higher earning capacities of artisans. With the exception of the relatively impoverished tailors differences in the wealth levels of different groups of craftsmen were relatively small ranging from a low of £19 for carpenters to a high of £24 for cordwainers and shoemakers.

Bakers' moveable goods were worth around 50 per cent more than artisans and butchers' approaching twice as much. Whilst artisans may have been substantially dependent on wage labour bakers and butchers were engaged in trade and were less likely to be dependent on waged income to any major degree.²³ In the case of butchers the value of livestock was a major component of their moveable wealth.

Those with farming occupations were clearly at the top of the village wealth hierarchy.²⁴ Even those described as husbandmen had moveable goods worth four times those of artisans and six to seven times those of labourers. Yeomen's inventories were worth significantly more than those of husbandmen and the median value of inventoried yeomen's moveable goods was more than ten times that of inventoried labourers. Farm goods naturally dominated the value of these inventories. In subsequent tables each of these three farming occupations has been lumped together under the general heading 'farmer'.²⁵

In summary the hierarchy of wealth between occupations is much what one would expect. Down at the bottom were the agricultural labourers. The village artisans were significantly wealthier than the agricultural labourers. Comfortably above the artisans were the bakers and butchers and this throws into question whether bakers and butchers should be considered as cottagers. Subsequent references to cottagers in this chapter therefore refer to labourers, shepherds and artisans but not to bakers and butchers. Significantly wealthier than any of these groups though were the farmers at the apex of the village hierarchy.

However, the real levels of inequality in the value of moveable goods are almost certainly understated by the data in table 3.2. Most decedents in early eighteenth century England did not leave probate inventories. The poorest groups were the least likely and the wealthiest groups the most likely to leave inventories. Hence it is likely that those labourers who were inventoried were atypically wealthy. To a lesser extent the

²¹ In late sixteenth century Norfolk, Nathaniel Bacon's shepherds benefited from year-round employment in sharp contrast to his general labourers. Smith, 'Labourers', pp. 19, 26-28.

²² A fuller treatment of the likely wage earnings of labourers and other wage earners can be found in chapter four.

²³ This argument would not, of course apply to apprentice and journeymen bakers and butchers. But it is unlikely that apprentices and journeymen would have left inventories.

²⁴ Gentry and clergy aside, of course.

²⁵ The term *grazier* does not appear to have come into use in Northamptonshire probate documents until after 1750. As will become apparent from subsequent tables the term 'yeoman' is a reliable indicator of a farming occupation rather than a mere status ascription.

same is probably true of artisans' inventories. Inventoried farmers, on the other hand, may well be relatively representative of the wider farming population. Certainly they would be the least un-representative. If this logic is accepted it follows that at the top of this and subsequent tables, wealth levels are an exaggeration of those that would have been found between the same occupational groups in the population at large, but that the further one moves down the table the less this is the case and the nearer the tables will approximate to the underlying reality. We will return to this point again and again but here the implication is simply that the hierarchy of moveable wealth would, in reality, have been considerably starker in Northamptonshire villages in the early eighteenth century than that shown in table 3.2.

III

Table 3.3 shows the percentages of each major occupational group in the core sample (unenclosed rural Northamptonshire) owning livestock.²⁶ As the first line indicates, just over half of all the inventoried labourers owned cattle and about one quarter kept pigs or sheep but only one in eight owned a horse. However, as stressed above, it is reasonable to suppose that only the wealthiest labourers left probate inventories. In other words the figures shown in table 3.3 should be considered as upper bounds for the ownership of stock by agricultural labourers. Unfortunately there is no way of assessing the degree to which these figures are upper bounds.

Nevertheless, it is striking those labourers who were inventoried were rather more than twice as likely to keep cattle as they were to keep pigs or sheep and nearly five times more likely to keep cattle than horses. Moreover, as the last two columns of table 3.3 reveal, labourers who did not own cattle were most unlikely to own sheep or pigs. It will be documented later (see table 3.14) that virtually all inventoried individuals who kept cattle in fact kept cows. Thus, inventoried labourers who kept food-producing livestock almost invariably kept cows and only those who kept cows were likely to keep sheep or pigs. With some partial exceptions this pattern holds true across all the inventoried occupational groups.

Inventoried shepherds appear to have been more heavily involved in cottage agriculture but were no more likely to own a horse than were labourers. Nearly three-quarters of them kept cows, over half kept pigs and just over three-quarters kept sheep while only one in ten had a horse. But it was still unusual for a shepherd to keep pigs or sheep without keeping cattle. However, shepherds were more likely than any other sampled occupational group to keep sheep without keeping cattle and the only group that was more likely to keep sheep than cattle. One possible explanation for this is that their employers allowed them to run some sheep with the flocks they supervised.²⁷ Since shepherds were better off than labourers and hence more likely to

²⁶ There were no goats in the entire sample of 423 inventories. In the core sample no labourers, five per cent of shepherds, two per cent of artisans, five per cent of bakers, no butchers and nine per cent of farmers were recorded as keeping poultry of some kind. These figures are suspiciously low. Overton, following Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law*, suggests that legally all poultry ought to have been listed. Steer and Erikson suggest that in practice poultry, where kept in small numbers, may have often been omitted. Hey suggests that poultry were often not recorded because they were perceived as the responsibility of the decedent's wife. It therefore appears possible that poultry keeping was systematically under-recorded in these inventories. In consequence poultry keeping has not been analysed here. Overton, 'English Probate Inventories'; Steer, *Farm and Cottage Inventories*, p. 58; Erikson, *Women and Property*, p. 34; Hey, *Dictionary*, p. 160.

²⁷ The Swedish traveller, Pehr Kalm noted this practice in eighteenth century England. Nathaniel Bacon, the sixteenth century Norfolk squire, extended the same privilege to shepherds in his employ and Everitt suggested that this was a common practice in early modern England: Smith, 'Labourers';

leave probate inventories the differences between labourers and shepherds in the wider population are likely to be understated rather than exaggerated here.

Inventoried artisans appear to have been no more likely than inventoried labourers to keep cattle or sheep but half as likely again to keep pigs and almost twice as likely to own a horse. But since artisans were in general wealthier and hence more likely to be inventoried than labourers it is probable that in the wider population artisans were more likely to keep animals of all sorts than were labourers. But like labourers, artisans who kept pigs or sheep in the absence of a cow were highly unusual.

Bakers' inventories present some highly distinctive patterns. They were the only occupational group to show a really marked propensity to keep pigs without keeping cows. The very high level of horse ownership (60 per cent) and the frequent mentions of bakers' panniers in the inventories suggest that bread deliveries were commonly made to customers. More surprisingly, inventoried bakers, despite their relative wealth, were less than half as likely to keep cows as any other inventoried occupational group. One possible, but purely speculative, answer lies in the work patterns of bakers' wives or daughters.²⁸ Milking cows and turning the milk into butter or cheese would normally have been the concern of women within the household. It is likely that bakers' wives and daughters were often heavily involved in the preparation of dough, the baking of bread, in looking after the shop, and perhaps even in delivering the bread. Equally it is likely that the wives and daughters of labourers, shepherds, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, shoemakers, butchers and farmers were less heavily involved in their husbands' work. Perhaps this was even true of tailors' and weavers' households. If these suggestions are correct then the women in bakers' households may have been rather more fully employed than those in the other occupational groups examined here. Keeping a cow would then have made less economic sense as a way of utilising surplus female labourer. This would then explain why bakers' households, despite their relative wealth, were so much less likely to own cows than were other occupational groups.

An examination of butchers' inventories suggests that the term 'butcher' designated an individual engaged in both fattening and slaughtering livestock. Whether they kept their cattle, sheep and pigs for only relatively short periods, as seems likely, is not a point which can be determined from examining a snap-shot document like an inventory. Butchers' inventories in many respects look much like those of livestock-orientated farmers and in this and subsequent tables they have been grouped together with farmers on the basis of this resemblance. Nevertheless the presence of slaughter houses containing 'block and tackle' in butchers' inventories and the absence of these in farmers' inventories shows that the differences were real enough. Inventoried butchers were somewhat more likely to keep cattle than were inventoried artisans and labourers and considerably more likely to keep sheep or pigs and much more likely to have horses (83 per cent). Butchers were a much wealthier group than labourers or artisans and hence were more likely to have been inventoried. Butcher's inventories are therefore much less likely to exaggerate their ownership of animals than are those of artisans or labourers.

Virtually all the inventoried farmers had cattle and over three-quarters of them had pigs, sheep and horses. Farmers' inventories thus contain direct evidence against the proposition that the inventoried population was dominated by individuals who had

Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p. 414. The large numbers of sheep owned by some inventoried Northamptonshire shepherds are also suggestive in this regard (see table 3.18).

²⁸ A point to which we will return in the next chapter.

withdrawn from active economic life in the final stages of the lifecycle. Again the inventories are likely to understate differences in the incidence of stock-keeping between farmers on the one hand and the cottage population on the other.

Three general patterns can now be considered. Firstly, all inventoried occupational groups except shepherds and bakers showed a markedly higher level of cattle keeping than they did of pig and sheep keeping. Possible reasons for the exceptions have already been discussed but what accounts for the underlying pattern? Secondly, with the clear exception of bakers and the partial exception of butchers all other occupation groups were most unlikely to keep a pig unless they kept a cow. Thirdly, all social groups, with the partial exception of shepherds, bakers and butchers, were most unlikely to keep sheep without keeping a cow.

At first sight these patterns are rather surprising. Sheep and pigs were much cheaper to purchase than cows and sheep can be fed on around one tenth of the area of grass required by a cow. The feed requirements of pigs are quite different from those of cows and sheep but it has often been suggested that pigs were fattened on household waste. One might therefore expect that those who were not able to keep a cow would often have kept a pig or sheep.²⁹ However, this was clearly not true of the inventoried population.

Bakers, and to a much lesser extent butchers, stand out as being much more likely than any other inventoried group to keep pigs without keeping cattle. On the other hand bakers were only marginally more likely than other social groups to keep sheep without keeping cattle. These are important clues. Before the widespread adoption of potato cultivation in this part of England, towards the end of the eighteenth century, skimmed milk may have been the principal feed for fattening a pig.³⁰ This probably goes a long way to account for the fact that pig keeping appears to have been highly unusual in the absence of cow keeping amongst labourers, shepherds, artisans and farmers. But 13 per cent of butchers and 35 per cent of bakers kept pigs without keeping cattle. Butchers' long-term management plans for their animals were inevitably different from those of other occupational groups and they may sometimes have purchased fat hogs almost ready for slaughter. In such cases the availability of skimmed milk to fatten the hogs would not have been of any great importance. In the case of bakers it seems likely that they used pigs to turn bad flour and stale or mouldy bread into bacon.³¹

But this logic cannot explain why sheep keeping appears to have been so dependent on cattle keeping. Bakers' and butchers' divergences from this general pattern were only minor. Both sheep and cattle required grassland for their upkeep. As the evidence of the last chapter indicated those who had common pasture rights for either animal would normally have had rights for both. So a strong association between the keeping of the two animals is to be expected. But why should it be unidirectional? There are grounds, outlined in the next chapter, for thinking that sheep-keeping may have been relatively unprofitable for the small-scale agriculturalist.

It remains possible that cottage pig and sheep keepers without cows were too poor to be inventoried and that the patterns discussed here are therefore highly misleading. This proposition can be tested, albeit in a limited way. Although the reasons why inventories were or were not made are not fully understood it is clear that

²⁹ Neeson suggested that this was the case in pre-enclosure Northamptonshire. Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 66-69, 80. This claim does not fit easily with the present evidence.

³⁰ Salaman, *Social History of the Potato*; Humphries, 'Proletarianization.'

³¹ It would be interesting to know if millers' inventories exhibited a similar pattern in this respect.

the fundamental reason inventories were not made was that the deceased's moveable goods were of low value. It follows that the moveable goods of the uninventoried population would look more like those of the least wealthy inventoried individuals in each occupational group and least like those at the wealthier end of the distribution. Tables 3.4 to 3.7 show the proportions of each occupational group owning cattle, pigs, sheep and horses. But this time each occupational group has been split into quartiles ranked according to the total value of their moveable goods.

In each of these tables there is a general tendency for the wealthier quartiles within each occupational group to exhibit higher levels of ownership of each animal than the poorer quartiles. This is hardly surprising since for most inventoried households livestock comprised a major proportion of total moveable wealth.³² Nevertheless it still follows that the uninventoried population would have looked more like the bottom quartile of the inventoried population than the upper three quartiles.

Amongst the bottom quartile of inventoried labourers only 13 per cent kept cattle. But pig and sheep keeping were even less common at a mere 7 per cent. It comes as no surprise that none of the bottom quartile owned a horse. Thirty four per cent of the bottom quartile of inventoried artisans kept cattle. But only 6 per cent kept a pig and 12 per cent kept sheep. Three per cent kept a horse. No support can be found here for the proposition that labourers and artisans too poor to keep a cow were likely to keep sheep or pigs instead. All the evidence here suggests that labourers and artisans who could not keep a cow kept no livestock at all.

Table 3.7 shows very clearly that horse ownership was restricted to the upper echelons of the labourers, shepherds and artisans. Horse ownership must have been rare indeed amongst the uninventoried population. But for farmers, butchers and, to a lesser extent, bakers two factors suggest that horse ownership may have been the norm. Firstly, as relatively wealthy groups, relatively high proportions would have been inventoried. It is therefore much less likely that the inventoried population differs markedly from the wider population. Secondly, the high levels of horse ownership in the bottom quartile, may indicate that horse ownership was significant even amongst those not inventoried.

IV

Having examined the patterns of livestock holding in broad outline we can now turn to examine arable agriculture. Table 3.8 shows the incidence of involvement in arable agriculture amongst the inventoried population. Before the analysis can proceed some rather convoluted interpretational issues need to be considered. Given the numbers of inventories available it was not feasible to restrict the analysis to inventories taken in the months of June and July when any crops sown during the year ought to have showed up as standing crops in an inventory. The percentages with growing crops, shown in the second column, may therefore be something of an understatement.³³ The field crops enumerated were restricted to wheat, barley, oats, peas and beans. Many inventories list the same crops stored in yards, barns or houses but other references to foodstuffs are restricted to very occasional mentions of bacon

³² However, the same relationships hold, albeit rather more weakly, when livestock are excluded from the inventory values.

³³ Rather surprisingly these exhibit no seasonal pattern, though this may reflect the small sub-samples obtained once each occupational group has been broken down into twelve monthly samples.

flitches. Foodstuffs are not usually enumerated in inventories.³⁴ John Moore has suggested that the presence of any foodstuffs in an inventory indicate production for sale.³⁵ Whether for sale or not it is clearly at least possible that mentions of stored grains, peas or beans are themselves evidence of arable production. The third column of table 3.8 therefore gives the percentage of inventories with growing or stored crops which provide alternative (and higher) figures for the proportions involved in arable production.

The inventories contain other evidence which provide grounds for suspecting that this latter measure may be a more reliable indicator of arable crop production. The penultimate column of table 3.8 shows the percentages of inventories with crops growing but without livestock. Across all social groups virtually no one without livestock was recorded as growing crops.³⁶ The obvious reason for this was that before the widespread diffusion of off-farm inputs after 1815, arable production was not viable in the absence of supplies of manure.³⁷ The final column shows the percentage without livestock but with either crops growing or crops stored. The pattern is essentially identical with the stark exception of bakers, 15% of whom had crops in store without owning livestock. Only one explanation makes sense of this pattern. For all these occupational groups except bakers, crops in store had been grown by the decedent's household. Why else would virtually no-one without livestock have crop foods in store? But bakers, of course, unlike any of the other groups considered here, would have made bulk purchases of grain or flour and this in no way depended on the ownership of animals.

We can now turn to a substantive consideration of the data presented in table 3.8. On the stricter measure of growing crops recorded in the inventory, only 17 per cent of inventoried labourers were involved in growing arable crops. On the more generous measure of crops growing or stored this rises to 32%. This is only just over half the numbers keeping cows. Inventoried shepherds, artisans and butchers were rather more likely to be involved in arable agriculture than inventoried labourers at around 40% on the more generous measure. Such differences are likely to have been rather starker in the wider population. It follows from the argument above that the more generous measure of crops growing or stored is unreliable for bakers. On the stricter measure of growing crops, bakers were no more likely than inventoried labourers to be involved in arable agriculture and less likely than were inventoried shepherds, artisans, and butchers.³⁸ On the more generous measure of crops growing or stored all the inventoried farmers appear to have been engaged in arable agriculture. Differences between farmers and those with non-farming occupations were rather more marked than was the case with livestock.

Across all occupational groups those without livestock almost never engaged in arable agriculture. Since, bakers aside, those without cows almost never had any

³⁴ Cox and Cox, 'Probate 1500-1800', pp. 32-33; Erikson, *Women and Property*, pp. 33-34.

³⁵ Moore, 'Probate Inventories', p. 13.

³⁶ In fact when the highest figures are as low as 1 or 2 per cent it may be more accurate to say 'no-one' rather than 'virtually no-one' since such low figures were most likely generated by purely temporary circumstance such as selling an old cow in advance of purchasing a new one. Similar points could be made elsewhere in this chapter. For instance the figure of 97% of farmers owning a cow probably suggests that all farmers owned cows but that occasionally a farmer might not have a cow for a few months.

³⁷ Thompson, 'Second Agricultural Revolution.'

³⁸ Why bakers should have been less inclined to arable crop production is an interesting question to which no answers can be proffered here. Perhaps, like low levels of cow keeping it hints at heavy female involvement in arable agriculture. But the explanation may lie elsewhere.

other livestock it follows that in general those who did not have cows were almost never involved in any kind of agricultural activity in their own right. This is of major importance for understanding the cottage economy because it suggests that the ownership of a cow was the entry point to agriculture. The cow was the lynchpin of cottage agriculture. Put the other way around, if there was no cow there was no cottage agriculture.

Table 3.9 shows the incidence of arable agriculture broken down by moveable wealth levels into quartiles. Farmers were engaged in arable agriculture at all wealth levels. For other occupational groups arable agriculture was concentrated in the wealthier quartiles. For all groups except farmers the virtual absence of crop growing among those in the poorest quartile suggests that those who were too poor to be inventoried would not have been engaged in arable agriculture on their own account. The sharp distinctions between those enumerated with farming occupations in the inventories or in the associated wills and those described as having other occupations begins to suggest that the occupational descriptors really do describe an individual's major source of income. The point comes home with more force when the scale of arable activity is examined.

Inventories provide three possible ways by which the scale of arable activity may be compared. They are all documented in table 3.10. In a small number of cases the acreage under crop could be calculated from the inventory. These are shown in the second column. For labourers the median acreage under crop was 2.5 acres and for artisans it was 3 acres. These are small areas and under one tenth of the acreage that those described as farmers had under cultivation.³⁹ Column three shows the median values of growing crops while column five shows the median values of crops growing or stored. The latter may be a better indicator of arable activity and has the further advantage that it generates the largest and hence most reliable samples. These figures suggest that farmers' arable undertakings were typically fifteen times larger than those of the minority of labourers so engaged and nine times larger than those of the minority of artisans so engaged. In other words, when labourers and artisans did engage in arable agriculture they did so on a very small scale compared with farmers. The evidence suggests that labourers and artisans who engaged in arable agriculture did so as a small scale sideline to supplement their principal economic activity.⁴⁰

Did those who farmed on such a small scale have even the most basic farming equipment? Table 3.11 compares the ownership of farming equipment with the scale of arable activity. A minimal level of farming equipment has been defined here as one horse and one or more pieces of horse-drawn farming equipment such as a plough, harrow, roller, cart or wagon. In some farmers' inventories the vaguer terms 'instruments of husbandry' or 'gears' were used. In these cases it has been assumed that this included at minimum one piece of horse-drawn farm equipment. Only one of the labourers and a small minority of the farming artisans owned even the most basic farming equipment. Amongst the cottage population (defined here as shepherds, labourers and artisans), farming equipment was concentrated amongst those artisans farming on a scale comparable to the medium-sized farmers. Relatively few of the smaller farmers had basic farming equipment. But nearly three quarters of inventoried farmers and all of the larger farmers did so. The great majority of those engaged in small-scale agriculture, whether labourers, artisans or small farmers would

³⁹ It does not follow that the median farm size was thirty acres. This figure excludes any pastures, meadows or land left fallow.

⁴⁰ This argument is developed more rigorously in the next chapter in the context of the economic return on different activities.

have needed to borrow or rent farming equipment from the larger farmers.⁴¹ To this extent their farming activities were not independent operations. Even relatively wealthy individuals farming on a small scale might not possess basic farming equipment. The diarist parson Woodforde needed to borrow a couple of horses and a wagon to bring in his harvest from eight acres of land.⁴² But he probably did so without placing himself under any unduly bothersome obligations. Agricultural labourers approaching their employers might have been in a rather different position. It is often assumed that the cottage economy gave the labouring poor some independence of their social superiors. But this is one of a number of ways in which the cottage economy may have locked the poor into relations of unequal obligation.

Horses served two major functions in the rural economy. They could be used either for personal transport or for draught power. The number of horses owned offers a clue as to the uses to which they were put. Table 3.12 documents the basic patterns. Amongst the cottage population the horse owning minority overwhelmingly owned only one horse. This might suggest that horses were primarily used for personal transport rather than for draught power in agriculture. However, three-quarters of these individuals had crops either growing or in store. It seems likely that such individuals would not have used the same horses for both draught power and personal transport. In contrast, virtually all horse owning farmers owned more than two horses and over one quarter of inventoried farmers owned six or more horses, clearly suggesting the predominance of draught power. Bakers, who often delivered bread but had a low level of involvement in arable agriculture, did not normally own more than two horses. Butchers, who were more heavily involved in arable agriculture than any other group except farmers, mostly owned multiple horses. But none of the inventoried butchers had teams of six or more as farmers did, reflecting the smaller scale of their arable operations. Again these distinctions suggest that the occupational descriptors in inventories and wills really do indicate what the individuals so described did for a living.

V

George Sturt, writing of mid to late nineteenth century Surrey, described the cow as the keystone of the cottage economy.⁴³ The evidence reviewed above suggests that this was true of the early eighteenth century Northamptonshire cottage economy as well. The cow was the most widely owned animal and inventories showing evidence of agricultural activity in the absence of cow ownership are so infrequent that such inventories may be snapshots of individuals only temporarily without a cow.⁴⁴ Moreover, it will be argued in the next chapter that keeping a cow was easily the most valuable use that labourers and artisans could make of common land. Much of the rest of this book will therefore be concerned with assessing the proportion of rural labourers and artisans who were in fact able to keep cows on common land before enclosure. Cow keeping clearly merits further attention.

So far cattle and cows have been discussed as if they were synonymous. The incidence of cattle keeping has already been examined, but what kind of cattle were kept? Table 3.13 shows the structure of cattle herds while table 3.14 shows the percentages of cattle owners with each type of cattle. Cows (i.e. adult females)

⁴¹ This was nothing new. Chris Dyer suggests such arrangements must have been widespread in medieval England. Dyer, *Standards of Living*.

⁴² Beresford, *Diary of Parson Woodeforde*, pp. 125.

⁴³ Sturt, *Change in the Village*.

⁴⁴ As discussed above bakers seem to have been exceptions to this rule.

clearly predominate, accounting for around three-quarters of cattle across all social groups.⁴⁵ The great majority of the remaining animals were immature females (calves and heifers). Such a herd structure clearly suggests the overwhelming predominance of dairying. Conversely the very low numbers of immature males (bullocks) indicate that animal fattening was not a major feature of the local economy. Such very low figures suggest that most immature males and some immature females may have been sold out of the county at a young age for fattening elsewhere. It is striking that even butchers' herds were dominated by adult females and that none of the inventoried butchers had immature males. The latter suggests that butchers, in this area, were not involved in long term fattening. Whether their female animals were essentially dairying animals or were animals destined for imminent slaughter which had recently been purchased from dairying households cannot be determined from examining the inventories. As can be seen from the second column of table 3.14 cattle ownership was almost synonymous with cow ownership. Farmers were considerably more likely to have immature animals, especially males, than were other occupational groups. The ownership of bulls was rare even amongst farmers. Only two of the cattle-keeping farmers (3 per cent) and no other inventoried individual in the sample owned a bull. Two complementary explanations are possible. The first is that a single bull could service a large number of cows and widespread bull ownership is not to be expected. The second is that in many unenclosed villages the private ownership of a bull was rendered unnecessary by the presence of a common bull. The 41 inventories from enclosed Northamptonshire is too small a sample to test whether there were significant differences in this respect between enclosed and unenclosed districts.⁴⁶

Table 3.15 shows the numbers of cows kept. The typical labouring cow keeper clearly kept either one cow or two with only relatively small numbers keeping more. Shepherds and artisans show a similar pattern. Given the evidence of the previous chapter that cottage common rights were typically for two cows and for one immature animal this is readily explicable. Butchers kept cows on a slightly larger scale than cottagers but farmers did so on a considerably larger scale. Over two-thirds of inventoried farmers kept four or more cows and the average and median figures were both seven cows.

Given the predominance of dairying it is natural to ask what was done with the milk. Many inventories contain evidence of milk processing and this is documented in table 3.16. Butter churns were generally less prevalent than evidence of cheese making (stored cheese, cheese presses or cheese boards).⁴⁷ Thus cheese making would appear to have been more important than butter making. Only one-third of the labourers who owned cows had milk-processing equipment, compared with nearly half the artisans and two-thirds of the farmers. Analysis of these patterns must remain tentative because, since these were small value items, they may have been under-recorded in the inventories. But for what it is worth the evidence would suggest that most cottagers and some farmers lacked the equipment to process milk. Unless they consumed larger quantities of whole milk within their households than seems likely this suggests that many cow-keeping households either sold their milk to end consumers or to those who did have milk processing equipment. Alternatively they

⁴⁵ The bakers' inventories are rather different but the sample size of five is too small to hazard generalisations.

⁴⁶ The 41 inventories from enclosed villages, only one of which belonged to a farmer, contained one bull, which belonged to a butcher.

⁴⁷ Cheese boards refer to boards used for pressing cheese. No references to stored butter were found.

may have borrowed equipment or paid, though not necessarily in cash, to have their milk processed.

On what scale did cottagers keep pigs and sheep? As can be seen from Table 3.17 cottage pig keeping was generally limited to one or sometimes two animals. Keeping more was relatively unusual. Only 9 per cent of those labourers who kept pigs and 18 per cent of pig-keeping artisans owned more than two animals. In contrast 55 per cent of pig-keeping farmers kept more than two pigs while 31 per cent kept more than five. Pig-keeping bakers and butchers occupied an intermediate position with most owning one or two animals only but with a substantial minority owning between 5 and 20. Sow ownership was relatively unusual across all occupational groups but especially among the cottage population. It follows that the majority of those who fattened hogs must have purchased their piglets each year.

Cottage sheep keeping was also typically on a small scale, as can be seen from table 3.18. The median labourer's flock comprised nine sheep and the median artisan's flock eleven sheep. By contrast the median farmers' flock contained seventy sheep. Shepherds kept sheep on a considerably larger scale than the rest of the cottage population with a median flock size of forty. As has already been suggested the much larger size of shepherds' flocks may have been a consequence of employers allowing shepherds to run sheep with their own flocks. It was documented in the last chapter that cottage stints rarely exceeded ten sheep. Yet 35 per cent of sheep-keeping labourers and 45 per cent of sheep-keeping artisans kept more than ten sheep. If these animals were kept by virtue of cottage stints this raises the question as to how these animal numbers were sustained. Since many labourers and artisans kept cows without keeping any sheep it follows that many cottagers had sheep stints to spare. In the last chapter it was documented that there was an active market in rented common rights within many manors.⁴⁸ It is therefore possible, though no positive evidence can be offered, that a significant minority of sheep-keeping cottagers increased the scale of their operations by renting further rights from those who, for one reason or another, did not stock their rights.

VI

So far the county of Northamptonshire has been treated as a homogeneous unit. But there were differences between fen parishes, forest parishes and upland non-forest. There were also differences between open-field and enclosed parishes and these are discussed after a consideration of the ecological variations.

Table 3.19 shows the proportions of inventoried labourers with particular kinds of livestock in fen and forest areas compared with the rest of the county. Only three of the labourers' inventories came from fen parishes and only four from fen parishes as against fifty-three inventories from other rural settlements in the county. Table 3.20 shows the median numbers of livestock kept by inventoried labourers keeping the type of livestock in question. The sample sizes are small but the stark differences between the stock-holding characteristics of inventoried labourers in the fens and those elsewhere remain suggestive. Inventoried labourers in the fens were around twice as likely to keep cows as their upland non-forest counterparts and four times as likely to have immature cattle in addition to cows. But they also kept cattle on a larger scale with the median herd being four times the size of that in the non-forest uplands. They were three times as likely to keep pigs as labourers in the non-forest uplands and most dramatically they were fifteen times as likely to keep a horse. On

⁴⁸ Though renting rights to those outside the boundaries of a manor was allowed much less often.

the other hand they were no more likely to keep sheep than upland non-forest labourers. Given the wide ranges in the numbers of sheep held by inventoried labourers little can be made of the differences in the median sizes of sheep flocks.

Tables 3.22 and 3.22 document the same characteristics for rural artisans. If, for the moment, we put aside the very small sample size, then again the fens seem to have provided a much more favourable environment for livestock keeping. The fenland artisans were twice as likely to keep cows, four times as likely to keep immature cattle, three times as likely to keep pigs and six times as likely to own a horse but were less likely to keep sheep than were their non-forest upland counterparts. Again those who kept cattle seem to have done so on a larger scale.

Given the small sample sizes these differences between the fens and the non-forest uplands are suggestive but hardly compelling. However, the existence of further evidence suggesting that the fens were particularly conducive to stock keeping by labourers and rural artisans gives an added significance to these data. Table 3.23 and 3.24 present data comparable with that in tables 3.19 and 3.20 from five seventeenth century market towns in Huntingdonshire just over the county border from Northampton.⁴⁹ In this case the fen and non-fen sample sizes are large enough to give robust results. The key differences visible in the later Huntingdonshire data are again apparent. Labourers and shepherds in the fens (Ramsey in this case) were much more likely to keep cows, immature cattle and horses than were their upland neighbours (Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Kimbolton, and St Ives) but no more likely to keep pigs or sheep. Again the scale of cattle and horse-keeping was considerably larger in the fens than in the uplands. These data, together with anecdotal evidence presented in chapter seven which indicates a strong link between fen-land environments and widespread cow-keeping by the cottage population, suggest that the differences between fen and upland environments with respect to cattle and horse-keeping in tables 3.19 to 3.23 are genuinely representative rather than artefacts of small sample sizes. The higher rate of pig-keeping in the Northamptonshire fens is not corroborated by the Huntingdonshire data. Only further research will be able determine whether the Northamptonshire fens were favourable to pig keeping or whether this is simply an artefact of small sample sizes. The fens do not emerge as a particularly favourable environment for sheep keeping. This is not very surprising since sheep do not do well in very wet conditions in which they are susceptible to foot rot.

The differences between the non-forest uplands and the forest uplands shown in tables 3.19 to 3.22 are less striking but nonetheless revealing. Given the sample sizes none of the difference shown in tables 3.25 and 3.26 between forest and non-forest upland labourers are worthy of note. Artisans on the other hand seem to have derived some benefits from the forest environment with respect to livestock keeping.⁵⁰ Although the propensity to keep cows and pigs appears to have been similar in both environments, the forest artisans were much around twice as likely to keep immature cattle, sheep and horses as non-forest artisans. The forest artisans also tended to keep larger numbers of cattle, sheep and pigs than their non-forest counterparts.

Forests do not appear to have been especially conducive to cottage pig keeping. Whereas the incidence of immature cattle, sheep and horses was higher amongst

⁴⁹ I am very grateful to Mr Ken Sneath for making this data from his forthcoming Cambridge M.Stud. dissertation available to me.

⁵⁰ An advantage mirrored by the much larger supplies of firewood to be found in the inventories of forest artisans compared with those of non-forest artisans. Again labourers in forest areas do not appear to have shared in the benefits. This is discussed in full in chapter eight.

forest artisans, the incidence of pig keeping was not significantly higher than for non-forest artisans. More pigs were kept, but more cattle, and sheep were also kept. That forest environments did not have a more striking impact on the levels of cottage pig-keeping is consistent with the argument made in the last chapter that acorn and beech mast was unlikely to provide a high proportion of the total annual feed requirements for pigs and that in consequence the presence of woodland was unlikely to be a decisive influence on whether or not cottagers kept pigs.

What differences were there between the cottage economy in enclosed and unenclosed parishes? Neeson calculates that around 87 per cent of the rural Northamptonshire population lived in open-field villages in the early eighteenth century.⁵¹ The inventories in the sample reflect this proportion very closely with 89 per cent of rural inventories deriving from unenclosed parishes. Table 3.25 compares inventories from open-field and enclosed villages. It should be noted here that very few of these 'enclosed' villages had been enclosed by parliamentary act since very little parliamentary enclosure took place before 1750.⁵² Only labourers and artisans are shown because, as can be seen in table 3.1, none of the other sampled occupational groups occurred in sufficient numbers in enclosed parishes to allow meaningful comparison. The proportions of inventoried labourers keeping cattle in the enclosed parishes was only just lower than in the open-field parishes but inventoried artisans in enclosed villages were around 30% less likely to keep cattle in enclosed villages than in open-field villages. Given the small sample sizes for the enclosed villages perhaps more should be made of the similarities between the two samples than of any differences between them. At first sight this is rather surprising and might seem to suggest that the presence or absence of common land was not a major factor in the incidence of cottage cow keeping. The much more striking differences between the proportions growing crops in open-field and enclosed villages suggest otherwise. On either measure labourers and artisans were radically less likely to be involved in arable agriculture in enclosed villages than they were in open-field villages. Both Hall and Neeson have suggested that common cow pastures of some sort commonly survived pre-parliamentary enclosure in the county.⁵³ In other words the 'enclosed' parishes in table 3.25 were ones in which the open fields, but not necessarily the common pastures, had been enclosed. The enclosure of the common pastures, in some of the 'enclosed' parishes might account for the somewhat lower incidence of cattle keeping. More striking are the differences between the incidence of arable agriculture in open-field and non-open-field parishes amongst the cottage population. These suggest that in parishes where the open-fields had been enclosed by the early eighteenth century there were major, though not insuperable, obstacles to cottagers engaging in arable agriculture. Whilst the enclosure of the open-fields is the obvious factor it should be remembered that these are cross-sectional comparisons of different parishes, not before and after comparisons of the same parishes. It is possible that one or more of the factors predisposing parishes to earlier enclosure,

⁵¹ Neeson, *Commoners*, p. 58 n. 12. The calculation is based on data extracted from Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*.

⁵² Tate, *Domesday*.

⁵³ This was clearly the case in Dorset, where there were more commons than field systems in 1700, many of which subsequently disappeared without an act of parliament. Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure and Landscape*.

such as concentrated land ownership, rather than enclosure itself, was inimical to cottage crop production.⁵⁴

VII

The analysis presented so far in this chapter rests heavily on the assumption that the occupational descriptors given in either the inventory or the associated will are more or less reliable descriptions of the decedent's principal economic activity. Scepticism on this point is widespread in the historical literature. Multiple employments or by-employments or frequent changes of employment are sometimes held to render occupational labels at best suspect and at worst useless.⁵⁵ That there were very real and consistent differences between those ascribed farming occupations (yeomen, husbandmen and farmers) and non-farming occupations should by now be very clear. Labourers, shepherds, artisans and bakers, whilst they might be engaged in agriculture in a very small way, would hardly have been fully occupied by operations on the scale described above. In contrast those ascribed farming occupations were universally involved in agriculture and usually on a much larger scale. Only butchers' agricultural activities approached those of farmers in scale. But that still leaves the question of non-agricultural by-employments. To these we can now turn.

Table 3.26 documents evidence that the inventoried individuals practiced the trade ascribed to them in the inventory or the associated will. The second column shows the numbers of inventories without obvious signs of abbreviation. The third column shows the percentages of such inventories that contain evidence confirming that the individual concerned did indeed follow the ascribed trade. To work as a labourer or a shepherd required nothing but the possession of one's own labour power.⁵⁶ Inventories therefore can contain no positive evidence as to whether individuals worked as labourers or shepherds. Hence, these entries have been left blank.

For craft and trade occupations, the inventories can contain three types of references to goods that would confirm that the decedent followed their ascribed trade. Firstly, they may refer directly to the tools of that trade. Many of the carpenters' inventories contain references to 'carpenter's tools'. Weavers' inventories often mention looms. Blacksmiths' inventories frequently list anvils or bellows. Butchers' inventories often enumerate 'block and tackle' or butchers' knives. Secondly, though less frequently, the inventories may simply refer to 'the tools of his trade'. When an individual has been described as a carpenter at the head of the document it is reasonable to suppose that such an entry describes carpenter's tools. Thirdly, inventories may indicate whether an individual owned the working materials associated with his trade: timber for carpenters; stones (often described as 'at the stonepit') for masons, iron and coals for blacksmiths, yarn for weavers, leather for shoemakers and stocks of flour and fuel for bakers. For most of the craft groups the overwhelming majority of all the inventoried individuals owned either the tools or the

⁵⁴ See Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman*, for clear evidence that concentrated landownership was a predisposing factor to early enclosure and hence that at a given point in time enclosed and unenclosed parishes differed in important ways which were not caused by whether or not they had been enclosed.

⁵⁵ Langton, 'Prometheus Prostrated' provides an extreme example of this scepticism.

⁵⁶ Four of the forty-five labourers' inventories did list agricultural hand-tools. However, this is difficult to interpret. Firstly, hand tools were of sufficiently low value that they may have been omitted altogether – they were rarely listed in farmers' inventories either. Secondly, the possession of such tools was not necessarily a requirement for employment.

materials of their trade. Given the low valuations of many of these items this may represent near universal ownership of the means to practice their ascribed trades. Tailors stand out with only 19 per cent having tools or materials listed. This probably results from their tools being too low in value to warrant enumeration.⁵⁷ In the case of butchers a more restricted definition has been adopted since the possession of animals – the materials of their trade – would hardly distinguish them from any other inventoried group. The figure of 47 per cent in column three refers to the possession of the tools of their trade. For farmers, the figure of 100 per cent simply refers to the proportions engaged in agriculture in some form.

Most inventories list possessions room by room and most artisans' inventories indicate the presence of a workshop. Column four gives the numbers of inventories that list possessions by room. Column five gives the percentages of those inventories that mention a workshop or the equivalent. Very few tailors or masons had workshops. Perhaps tailors were generally too poor to set aside a room exclusively for work purposes or maybe the space requirements of their work were too modest to have made this a priority. In the case of masons the absence of workshops may have been because their trade was largely conducted away from home either on building sites or in stone pits. Be this as it may, the majority of the inventoried artisans did possess a workshop in which to practice their trade. The majority of bakers had bakeries and sometimes sale shops as well, while butchers generally had slaughter houses. In contrast, not one of the inventoried labourers or shepherds and only one of the farmers had a workshop. This suggests that those with agricultural occupation descriptors rarely had any major commitment to any craft occupation. This begins to point to some very sharp demarcations between occupations.

It should now be clear that the inventories provide compelling evidence that individuals generally followed the occupations ascribed to them in probate inventories or the associated will. But what positive evidence for the pursuit of other secondary employments can be found in the inventories? The second column of table 3.27 indicates the numbers of inventories without unusual signs of abbreviation. The third column shows the percentages of those inventories which contain any evidence of some kind of non-agricultural by-employment. Most inventoried individuals showed no signs of by-employment. However, it should be noted that brewing, malting or spinning have not been taken as evidence of by-employment here and have been listed separately in columns four and five. Brewing and malting could be conducted on a smaller scale simply to supply household needs or on a larger scale for sale. Only the latter would constitute a by-employment. A few of the inventoried individuals, mainly farmers, did malt and or brew on a scale sufficient to suggest a commercially orientated activity. Spinning wheels provide clear evidence for a distinct economic activity taking place within the household and have sometimes been taken as evidence of by-employment.⁵⁸ But this is not evidence that the deceased was by-employed but rather that one or more females within the household were engaged in an economic activity distinct from that of the household head. To include spinning in a definition of by-employment in this way would stretch the concept well past the point of analytical usefulness. On such a measure by-employments would be the norm in twenty-first century Britain rather than a distinctive feature of the pre-industrial economy. If brewing, malting and spinning are thus discounted then, even amongst the inventoried population, by-employed labourers appear to have been something of

⁵⁷ Holderness noted the same pattern in his study of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Lincolnshire. Holderness, 'Rural Tradesmen.'

⁵⁸ See for example, Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', pp. 428, table 9.

a rarity and no more than around ten per cent of the inventoried craft and trade households show any evidence of non-agricultural by-employments. Woodward found very similar levels of by-employments amongst building workers in sixteenth and seventeenth century Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Cheshire.⁵⁹ A mere seven per cent of the farmers' inventories show some signs of possible by-employment.

An indication of the by-employments revealed by the inventories is given in table 3.28. Some of these were clearly important: the labourer with two looms and stonepit tools or the farmer with 'a mill house and a malting' for example. On the other hand the shoemaker with a grindstone and boards or the tailor with eight boards and a saw are at best weak evidence of by-employments. In other words the percentages with by-employments in table 3.27 are if anything on the high side. In addition to these examples two inventories gave occupational descriptions that suggested by-employed individuals. One was described as a yeoman-blacksmith and the other as a mercer-tailor.⁶⁰ But these need to be set against 423 inventories where only one occupation was ascribed. In contrast to the widespread involvement in small-scale agricultural sidelines, non-agricultural by-employments appear to have been restricted to a relatively small minority of the rural population in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire.

VIII

The basic characteristics of the cottage economy in early eighteenth century open-field Northamptonshire are now fairly clear. Relatively few individuals seem to have diversified their incomes by engaging in any kind of non-agricultural by-employment. Cottage agriculture was much more important. At its heart was the possession of a cow or two (rather more in the fens). Without a cow, labourers, rural artisans and village traders were unlikely to keep sheep or pigs or cultivate arable crops.⁶¹ The keeping of pigs or sheep or the cultivation of field land was around half as frequent as the keeping of a cow. Cottagers who kept pigs usually kept only one or sometimes two. Cottagers who kept sheep typically kept around ten. In forest areas, artisans but not labourers, seem to have kept rather larger numbers of animals. Where field land was cultivated it was on a very small scale, typically two to three acres for a labourer and perhaps slightly larger plots for rural artisans. Cottage-cultivators rarely owned the equipment to cultivate their land and must generally have acquired it from their farming neighbours. Some cottagers owned a horse but, except in the fens and to a lesser extent the forests, the great majority did not. Farmers practiced agriculture on a wholly different scale. The inventories do not suggest the seamless hierarchy described by the Hammonds.⁶² Given the gulf between those described as labourers and the generality of those described as farmers it does not seem plausible that lifetime upward mobility between the ranks of labourers and farmers can have been a common experience in the open field village of eighteenth century Northamptonshire before the onset of parliamentary enclosure. A much fuller discussion of this issue

⁵⁹ Fifteen building workers' inventories out of a total of 130 showed evidence of by-employment. As here spinning and brewing were not taken as evidence of by-employment. Woodward, 'Wage Rates', p. 39.

⁶⁰ These two inventories do not form part of the wider sample of 423 inventories discussed in the rest of the chapter. They were excluded because they could not easily be fitted into the occupational categories used in the tables nor were they a large enough sub-sample to merit analysis in their own right.

⁶¹ Though they may have grown non-staple foods in cottage gardens.

⁶² See chapter one.

can be found in chapter six together with an analysis of the relative size of the land tax assessments of different occupational groups.

Significant numbers of inventoried labourers and artisans had no involvement in cottage agriculture. Thirty-five percent of inventoried artisans and 37 per cent of inventoried labourers had no livestock and no crops growing or in store. Inventories cannot tell us the proportions of either group involved in cottage agriculture. However, if it is correct that the inventoried populations represent the wealthier end of both groups then it would follow that the figure of around two-thirds with an involvement in cottage agriculture is an absolute upper bound. The real incidence of cottage agriculture is likely, especially for labourers, to have been considerably lower.

IX

But how representative are the data presented above? Until comparable studies have been published on other counties it will not be possible to provide an satisfactory assessment of how far the patterns revealed here are typical of other counties in the early eighteenth century, though there are no obvious reasons to suppose that other midland open-field areas would look radically different. J.M. Martin examined the inventories of artisans and village traders in the neighbouring midland county of Warwickshire in the same period. In the East Feldon he found that 56 per cent of inventoried artisans and traders were engaged in cottage agriculture and in the Avon valley 51 per cent. These figures while somewhat lower than those presented here are close enough to suggest a basic similarity in the incidence of cottage agriculture.

There are two early modern studies which allow direct comparison with the data presented here and hence an assessment of the extent of regional and chronological variation. The first is Allan Everitt's path-breaking analysis of sixteenth and seventeenth century agricultural labourers.⁶³ Before making comparisons with Everitt's study it is necessary to outline some reservations about the nature of his sample. Everitt's study appears to have been based on just under 300 inventories from 17 counties between 1540 and 1640.⁶⁴ Unfortunately Everitt was not able to find sufficient inventories of individuals described as labourers in the inventory. He therefore included in his sample both inventories where the deceased was described as a labourer and inventories of low value where no occupation was ascribed. Everitt excluded inventories he thought were self-evidently those of farmers.⁶⁵ But the obvious danger with this approach is that it will pick up individuals who, although their wealth levels were similar to those of inventoried labourers, were in fact small farmers, artisans or petty traders. No indication is given of the proportions of the inventories which belonged to those *described* as labourers or of those *assumed* to have belonged labourers. Everitt's discussion of by-employments suggests that large numbers of his 'labourers' were not labourers at all.

When Everitt came to analyse by-employments he concluded that 56 per cent of his 'labourers' in Midland fielden areas were by-employed.⁶⁶ This compares with the figure of two per cent reported above for early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. Part of the difference is definitional. Everitt included spinning wheels as evidence of by-employment. For reasons given earlier this is inappropriate but if the same

⁶³ Everitt, 'Farm Labourers.'

⁶⁴ Everitt states that about 8 per cent of the 3,600 inventories he examined were of labourers. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p. 419.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 413, fn. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 428, table 9.

approach were adopted in this study the figure for by-employed labourers would rise to 13 per cent (table 3.27). This is still less than one quarter of Everitt's figure. Conceivably by-employments could have declined drastically over the course of the seventeenth century. However, this is unlikely in view of Woodward's work which showed the level of by-employments amongst construction workers in sixteenth and seventeenth century Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Cheshire to be similar to that documented here for early eighteenth century Northamptonshire artisans at around ten per cent. Everitt's by-employments include weaving, carding, carpentry, coopering, tiling, nailing, and blacksmithing.⁶⁷ Perhaps these were all labourers' by-employments. But it seems inherently more likely that inventories belonging to weavers, carders, carpenters, tilers, nailers and blacksmiths have been mistaken for those of 'by-employed labourers'.⁶⁸

The important point here is that a significant, but unknown, proportion of Everitt's inventoried 'labourers' were probably not in fact agricultural labourers. Some of those may have been small farmers but rather more of them are likely to have been rural artisans or village traders. Although the better off artisans and traders are likely to have been excluded, this is still broadly the group defined here as cottagers. If this is born in mind then comparison may still be usefully made with the cottage inventories from early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. Everitt split his national sample into six regions. His midland fielden sample is the one which is closest to Northamptonshire in geographical coverage. Table 3.29 compares this sample with labourers, artisans and farmers from early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. Everitt's 'labourers' bore a much closer resemblance to early eighteenth century labourers and artisans than they did to early eighteenth century farmers. This is most apparent with respect to the incidence of horses and growing crops in their inventories.⁶⁹ This is consistent with the suggestion that Everitt's inventory sample corresponds broadly to the labourers and artisans in the present study with at most a small contribution from farmers.

Everitt's 'labourers', like those in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire were more likely to keep a cow than any other animal. In fact this was true for all Everitt's regional samples.⁷⁰ The proportion of inventoried 'labourers' keeping cattle was somewhat higher in the earlier period but given the uncertainties about the composition of the sample and/or any shifts in the propensity to draw up inventories it would be unwise to draw any inferences from differences of this magnitude. In each of Everitt's regional samples cottagers' cattle were dominated by female animals to the exclusion of fattening livestock. In the midland areas the ratio of female to male animals was almost ten to one. At its lowest in northern England the predominance was still three to one.⁷¹ Thus the primary importance of the cow in cottage livestock-keeping in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire appears to have been neither novel nor regionally distinctive. The proportion of inventoried cottagers keeping sheep and pigs was significantly higher in the earlier period. Everitt does not give figures for the numbers with pigs or sheep but without cattle. However, his figures

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 425-27.

⁶⁸ This clearly has wider implications since it follows that the prevalence of by-employments in early modern England may have been seriously exaggerated in Everitt's pioneering study. But further discussion of this point is outside the scope of the present work.

⁶⁹ Everitt's measure is crops growing listed in inventories 'drawn up in the corn-growing season.' *Ibid.*, p. 418.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 413-14.

suggest that while this would not have been the norm it may not have been so rare a practice either in the midlands or elsewhere in England as it was in eighteenth century Northamptonshire.⁷² Outside the midlands the incidence of pig keeping but not sheep keeping was considerably lower in than in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. Everitt attributed the relatively low levels of cottage pig keeping to the difficulty of fattening pigs in the pre-potato era.⁷³ The numbers of horse owners and the incidence of crop growing are remarkably similar. The cropped areas seem to have been even smaller in the earlier period with the national average at just over an acre.⁷⁴ Everitt's findings across all of his regions mirror those of the present study of early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. A cow or two was the keystone of cottage agriculture; pigs and sheep were kept rather less often and arable agriculture was practiced less frequently and on a very small scale.

Donald Woodward's investigation of the agricultural activities of sixteenth and seventeenth century carpenters in Lincolnshire, Cheshire and Lancashire provides further data for comparison with the present study.⁷⁵ As in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire involvement in agriculture was much more prevalent than any non-agricultural by-employment. The basic characteristics of carpenters' farming activities are set out in table 3.30. In Northamptonshire the inventoried carpenters were somewhat less likely to be involved in cottage agriculture than most other inventoried artisans, though this may be an artefact of the small sample size rather than a real difference. The most obvious feature of the table is the much higher degree of agricultural involvement in the earlier period than in the later period. The inventoried sixteenth and seventeenth century carpenters in Lincolnshire, Cheshire and Lancashire were rather more than twice as likely to own cattle, pigs or sheep or to cultivate arable land as were their eighteenth century Northamptonshire counterparts. The most striking difference is that the former were three times more likely to own a horse than were the latter. But these differences should not obscure two basic similarities: that livestock were more important than arable agriculture and that the most commonly kept animal was a cow. Nevertheless the incidence of agricultural activity was clearly much higher in the earlier sample. It was also on a larger scale. Most of these carpenters owned more than two cattle whereas most of the Northamptonshire cattle keepers owned only one or two beasts.⁷⁶

Differences between the two data sets may reflect geographical differences or changes over time or possibly differences in the propensity to record inventories (or some combination of the three). Woodward provides evidence which suggests that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the incidence of agricultural activity amongst inventoried building workers was considerably lower further south. The figures were 63 per cent in Essex, 50 per cent in Gloucestershire and 50 per cent in Oxfordshire as opposed to 100 per cent in rural Lincolnshire and 96 per cent in rural Lancashire and Cheshire. The 'southern' samples were much smaller at 8, 16 and 8 inventories respectively than the 'northern' samples at 60 and 21 respectively.⁷⁷ Despite the

⁷² In Everitt's sample the numbers without stock are much lower than the numbers without cattle. So it is clear that significant numbers kept stock without keeping cattle. However, since stock included poultry and horses it is not possible to calculate the proportions keeping pigs or sheep without keeping cattle. Upper bounds may be calculated though and for Everitt's midland fielden sample the upper bound for the proportion of cottagers keeping pigs or sheep but not cattle would be 19 per cent.

⁷³ Everitt, 414.

⁷⁴ Everitt, 418.

⁷⁵ Woodward, 'Wage Rates'.

⁷⁶ Woodward, 'Wage Rates', p. 41.

⁷⁷ Woodward, 'Wage Rates', pp. 40-42,

small sample sizes the differences between the ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ craftsmen remain unmistakable and the ‘southern’ levels were very similar to those found in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire.

Everitt’s findings, across all of his sampled regions, mirror those of the present study of early eighteenth century Northamptonshire. A cow or two was the keystone of the cottage economy; pigs and sheep were kept rather less often and arable agriculture was practiced less frequently and on a very small scale. However, doubts remains as to exactly which occupational groups these inventories refer to and the mix may vary from one region to another. Woodward’s study of sixteenth and seventeenth carpenters in Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Cheshire also suggests the pre-eminence of the cow and the secondary importance of arable agriculture. But the scale of carpenters’ agricultural activities and the incidence of horse ownership amongst them distinguishes them sharply both from the eighteenth century Northamptonshire carpenters and from the general patterns exhibited by any of Everitt’s regional samples. But Everitt’s two northern samples did contain a substantial minority practicing agriculture on a larger scale.⁷⁸ Around 30 per cent of his northern ‘labourers’ kept three cows or more while around 40 per cent of them kept horses.⁷⁹ These data may reflect northern craftsmen in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries practicing agriculture on a much larger scale than either sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth century craftsmen in southern England or sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century labourers in both southern and northern England. Given the uncertainties surrounding Everitt’s samples, the possibility of geographical and chronological differences in probate practice and the shortage of datasets comparable with that from Northamptonshire this must remain a tentative suggestion.

In the absence of studies of cottage agriculture in other parts of England in the eighteenth century the argument in the rest of this book proceeds on the tentative assumption that cottage agriculture in early eighteenth century Northamptonshire provides a good model for other midland counties and perhaps for much of southern England in the early eighteenth century.

⁷⁸ As did his midland forest sample.

⁷⁹ Everitt’s regional samples are described as: northern lowlands, northern highlands, eastern England, midland fielden, midland forest, and west of England. The counties that make up each of these regions are not specified. Everitt, ‘Farm Labourers’, p. 413.

Tables for Chapter Three

Table 3.1 *The probate inventory sample*

Occupation	Total number	Number in open rural settlements	Number in enclosed rural settlements	Number in urban settlements
Labourer	72	60	8	4
Shepherd	34	21	7	6
Tailor	33	23	6	4
Carpenter	40	28	6	6
Mason	28	19	4	5
Weaver	30	21	1	8
Blacksmith	29	23	1	5
Cordwainer	9	8	0	1
Shoemaker	13	8	0	5
<i>All Artisans</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>34</i>
Baker	28	20	1	7
Butcher	35	23	6	6
Husbandman	21	21	0	0
Yeoman	48	44	1	3
Farmer	3	3	0	0
<i>All Farmers</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Totals</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>60</i>

Table 3.2 *Summary characteristics of the core sample of probate inventories*

Occupation	Number of inventories	Number without signs of abbreviation	Median inventory value £s	Median value of moveable goods £s
Labourer	60	45	16	13
Shepherd	21	14	38	28
Tailor	23	21	17	13
Carpenter	28	19	22	19
Mason	19	17	29	19
Weaver	21	18	20	20
Blacksmith	23	15	24	23
Shoemaker*	16	13	25	24
<i>All Artisans</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>19</i>
Baker	20	16	40	33
Butcher	23	19	73	38
Husbandman	21	14	101	85
Yeoman	44	28	163	141
Farmer	3	2	150	150
<i>All Farmers</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Totals</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>241</i>		

* Shoemakers and cordwainers

Table 3.3 *The ownership of livestock*

	Sample size	Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %	Poultry %	Pigs but not cattle %	Sheep but not cattle %
Labourer	60	57	23	25	12	0	0	3
Shepherd	21	71	57	76	10	5	5	14
Artisan	130	56	34	28	19	2	5	5
Baker	20	25	55	20	60	5	35	10
Butcher	23	65	57	52	83	0	13	9
Farmer	68	97	79	74	78	9	0	1

Table 3.4 *Cattle keeping by value of inventoried goods*

Occupation	Sample size	First quartile %	Second quartile %	Third quartile %	Fourth quartile %	Whole sample %
Labourer	60	13	67	60	87	57
Shepherd	21	43	71	71	100	71
Artisan	130	34	43	69	78	56
Baker	20	0	40	20	40	25
Butcher	23	17	48	100	100	65
Farmer*	66	88	100	100	100	97

*Note: two farmers, whose inventory values could not be calculated, have been excluded from this table. This results in slight discrepancies with table 3.3.

Table 3.5 *Pig keeping by value of inventoried goods*

Occupation	Sample size	First quartile %	Second quartile %	Third quartile %	Fourth quartile %	Whole sample %
Labourer	60	7	13	33	40	23
Shepherd	21	38	76	52	62	57
Artisan	130	6	25	40	65	34
Baker	20	0	60	60	100	55
Butcher	23	17	43	83	83	57
Farmer*	66	64	82	94	94	83

* Note: two farmers, whose inventory values could not be calculated, have been excluded from this table. This results in slight discrepancies with table 3.3.

Table 3.6 *Sheep keeping by value of inventoried goods*

Occupation	Sample size	First quartile %	Second quartile %	Third quartile %	Fourth quartile %	Whole sample %
Labourer	60	7	20	27	47	25
Shepherd	21	24	100	100	81	76
Artisan	130	12	22	34	46	28
Baker	20	0	0	40	40	20
Butcher	23	30	30	65	83	52
Farmer*	66	48	79	88	94	77

* Note: two farmers, whose inventory values could not be calculated, have been excluded from this table. This results in slight discrepancies with table 3.3.

Table 3.7 *Horse-keeping by value of inventoried goods*

Occupation	Sample size	First quartile %	Second quartile %	Third quartile %	Fourth quartile %	Whole sample %
Labourer	60	0	0	13	33	12
Shepherd	21	0	0	0	38	10
Artisan	130	3	0	18	55	19
Baker	20	20	80	80	60	60
Butcher	23	52	78	100	100	83
Farmer*	66	36	79	100	100	79

* Note: two farmers, whose inventory values could not be calculated, have been excluded from this table. This results in slight discrepancies with table 3.3.

Table 3.8 *Incidence of arable agriculture*

	Sample Size	Growing crops %	Growing or stored crops %	Growing crops but no livestock %	Growing or stored crops but no livestock %
Labourer	60	17	32	2	2
Shepherd	21	29	43	0	0
Artisan	130	21	38	0	1
Baker	20	15	40	0	15
Butcher	23	30	43	0	0
Farmer	68	84	100	1	1

Table 3.9 *The incidence of arable agriculture by value of inventoried goods*

Occupation	Sample size	First quartile %	Second quartile %	Third quartile %	Fourth quartile %	Whole sample %
Labourers growing crops	60	7	20	33	7	17
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	60	7	40	40	40	32
Shepherds growing crops	21	5	33	52	24	29
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	21	5	52	52	62	43
Artisans growing crops	130	3	9	32	38	21
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	130	3	25	57	66	38
Bakers growing crops	20	0	0	20	40	15
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	20	20	60	40	40	40
Butchers growing crops	23	0	0	35	87	30
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	23	0	0	87	87	43
Farmers growing crops	66	67	79	94	94	83
<i>Crops growing or stored</i>	66	100	100	100	100	100

Note: the sample size for farmers is reduced by two because the total value of inventoried goods could not be calculated in two cases. This accounts for the slight discrepancy with table 3.8.

Table 3.10 *The scale of arable farming*

Occupation	Median acreage under crop		Median value of growing crops		Median value of crops growing and stored	
	Sample size	Sample size	£s	Sample size	£s	Sample size
Labourer	2.50	4	3.00	9	3.00	12
Shepherd	2.75	1	4.35	5	5.00	7
Artisan*	3.00	10	7.00	25	5.51	39
Baker	21.00	1	15.50	3	3.15	7
Butcher	16.00	3	13.00	7	13.05	9
Farmer	33.00	14	31.50	50	48.00	57

Table 3.11 *Distribution of farming equipment relative to the size of arable operations*

	Number of inventories	Farming equipment %
Labourers with no crops	41	0
Labourers with crops worth less than £10	12	0
<i>All labourers</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>2</i>
Artisans with no crops	81	0
Artisans with crops worth less than £10	26	4
Artisans with crops worth more than £10*	12	42
<i>All artisans</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>6</i>
Farmers with no crops	0	0
Farmers with crops worth less than £10	9	33
Farmers with crops worth £10 - £25	14	64
Farmers with crops worth more than £25	34	100
<i>All farmers</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>72</i>

Notes. The value of crops refers to the total in store and growing. In the case of seven labourers' inventories, eleven artisans' inventories and eleven farmers' inventories this figure could not be calculated. These inventories have been included in the 'all' category for each occupational group. Farming equipment has been defined as one or more horses and one or more pieces of horse-drawn equipment. In some farmers' inventories the terms 'instruments of husbandry' or 'gears' were used and in these cases it has been assumed that they owned one or more pieces of horse-drawn farming equipment.

* Only two of these artisans had crops worth more than £20.

Table 3.12 *Numbers of horses owned*

	Sample size	No horse %	1 horse %	2 horses %	3-5 horses %	6 or more horses %
Labourer	60	88	10	0	2	0
Shepherd	21	90	0	0	10	0
Artisan	130	81	15	3	2	0
Baker	20	40	25	20	10	5
Butcher	23	17	26	30	26	0
Farmer	68	24	4	7	37	28

Note: in cases where the number of horses was clearly plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that these followed the pattern of plural values which were explicitly stated.

Table 3.13 *Percentages of each type of cattle*

	Number of cattle owners	Cows %	Immature females %	Immature males %	Bulls %	Total %
Labourer	34	75	21	3	0.0	100
Shepherd	14	82	16	2	0.0	100
Artisan	74	70	25	5	0.0	100
Baker	5	56	44	0	0.0	100
Butcher	15	74	26	0	0.0	100
Farmer	66	74	19	7	0.4	100

Note: where values were clearly plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that these followed the pattern of plural values which were explicitly stated.

Table 3.14 *Percentages of cattle owners with each type of cattle*

	Number with cattle	Cows %	Immature females %	Immature males %	Bulls %
Labourer	34	100	4	6	0
Shepherd	14	93	29	7	0
Artisan	74	97	28	9	0
Baker	5	100	60	0	0
Butcher	15	100	20	0	0
Farmer	66	100	38	15	3

Note: where the number of cows was plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that the numbers followed the pattern of plural values which were explicitly stated.

Table 3.15 *Numbers of cows kept*

	Sample Size	No cows %	1 cow %	2 cows %	3 cows %	4 or more cows %	Total
Labourers	60	43	27	21	2	7	100
Shepherds	21	33	19	32	0	16	100
Artisans	130	45	28	13	7	6	100
Bakers	20	75	5	5	10	5	100
Butchers	23	35	9	17	22	17	100
Farmers	68	3	9	7	16	66	100

Note: where the number of cows was plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that the numbers followed the pattern of plural values which were explicitly stated.

Table 3.16. *Milk processing by cow-keepers*

	Cow keepers with unabbreviated inventories	Butter churn %	Evidence of cheese making* %	Evidence of butter or cheese making %
Labourer	22	18	27	36
Shepherd	10	30	50	60
Artisan	59	24	34	47
Baker	5	0	0	0
Butcher	13	15	38	38
Farmer	42	24	55	64

* Inventory containing a cheese press, cheese boards or stored cheese.

Table 3.17 *Number of pigs kept*

	Sample Size	No pigs %	1 pig %	2 pigs %	3-4 pigs %	5-10 pigs %	11-20 pigs %	Sows %
Labourer	60	77	15	7	2	0	0	2
Shepherd	21	43	24	19	5	10	0	5
Artisan	130	67	18	9	4	2	0	3
Baker	20	45	20	14	0	14	7	10
Butcher	23	43	30	9	0	9	9	17
Farmer	68	22	10	25	14	19	8	10

Note: where the number of pigs was plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that the numbers followed the pattern of those plural values which were explicitly stated. None of the inventories recorded more than 20 pigs. Pigs include sows.

Table 3.18 *Number of sheep kept*

	Sample Size	No sheep %	1-10 sheep %	11-20 sheep %	21-60 sheep %	61-150 sheep %	More than 150 sheep	Median flock size
Labourer	60	77	15	5	2	2	0	9
Shepherd	21	24	21	5	16	33	0	40
Artisan	130	74	14	8	5	0	0	11
Baker	20	80	7	7	7	0	0	15
Butcher	23	43	13	22	9	13	0	15
Farmer	68	31	7	10	15	30	7	70

Note: where the number of sheep was plural but not explicitly stated it has been assumed that the numbers followed the pattern of those plural values which were explicitly stated.

Table 3.19 *Labourers: Frequency of livestock-keeping by eco-type*

	Sample size	Cows %	Immature Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %
Fen	3	100	67	67	33	100
Forest	4	50	0	0	25	25
Upland	53	54	15	23	33	6

Table 3.20 *Labourers: Median numbers of livestock by eco-type**

	Sample size	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Sheep	Horses
Fen	3	8	4	1.5	20	3
Forest	4	1.5	1.5	-	104	1
Upland	53	2	1	1	9	1

*Median of positive values

Table 3.21 *Artisans: Frequency of livestock keeping by eco-type*

	Sample size	Cows %	Immature Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %
Fen	2	100	50	100	0	100
Forest	13	54	31	38	31	38
Upland	115	51	12	31	17	17

Table 3.22 *Artisans: Median numbers of livestock kept by eco-type**

	Sample size	Cows	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep	Horses
Fen	2	2	2.5	1	-	1.5
Forest	13	2	4	2	50	1
Upland	115	1	2	1	12	1

*Median of positive values

Table 3.23 *Labourers and shepherds: Frequency of live stock keeping by eco-type in five market towns in seventeenth century Rutland*

	Sample size	Cows %	Immature Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %
Fen	15	80	27	27	20	33
Upland	17	41	0	35	29	0

Source: Ken Sneath, Personal Communication.

Table 3.24 *Labourers and shepherds: Median numbers of livestock by eco-type in five market towns in seventeenth century Rutland**

	Sample size	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Sheep	Horses
Fen	15	7	4	1	9	3
Upland	17	2	2	1	10	-

* Medians of positive values.

Source: Ken Sneath, personal communication.

Table 3.25 *A comparison of open-field and enclosed villages*

	Sample Size	Cattle %	Crops growing %	Crops growing or stored %
Labourer (Open-field)	60	57	17	32
Labourer (Enclosed)	8	50	0	13
Artisan (Open-field)	130	56	21	38
Artisan (Enclosed)	18	39	6	11

Table 3.26 *The reliability of occupational ascriptions*

	Number of inventories	Number of unabbreviated inventories	Unabbreviated inventories with evidence of ascribed occupation %	Number of inventories with rooms enumerated	Those with rooms enumerated having a shop %
Labourer	60	45	-	52	0
Shepherd	21	14	-	14	0
Tailor	23	21	19	20	15
Carpenter	28	19	95	24	54
Mason	19	17	71	15	13
Weaver	21	18	89	14	43
Blacksmith	23	15	57	17	76
Shoemaker	16	13	85	11	73
Baker	20	16	81	19	63
Butcher	23	19	47	22	55
Farmer	68	44	100	53	1

Table 3.27 *Evidence of non-agricultural by-employments*

	Number of inventories	Number of unabbreviated inventories	Inventory evidence of non-agricultural by-employment	Unabbreviated inventories with evidence of by-employments %	Unabbreviated inventories with evidence of brewing or malting* %	Unabbreviated inventories with spinning wheel %
Labourer	60	45	1	2	16	11
Shepherd	21	14	0	0	21	29
Tailor	23	21	1	5	19	5
Carpenter	28	19	0	0	26	11
Mason	19	17	2	12	35	12
Weaver	21	18	2	11	6	28
Blacksmith	23	15	0	0	20	7
Shoemaker	16	13	2	15	15	31
Baker	20	16	2	13	38	25
Butcher	23	19	0	0	21	21
Farmer	68	44	3	7	39	14

* Taken as possession of any of: a brew house, malt, a malt mill or brewing equipment

Table 3.28 *The evidence of by-employments*

Occupation	Indication of by-employment
Labourer	Two looms and 'stonepit tools.'
Tailor	Eight boards and a saw.
Mason	Clearly running a shop from the list of goods.
Mason	A brick kiln, a lime kiln, a large stock of timber, bricks, and limestone
Weaver	Four dozen rakes and 4 dozen snaths [scythe handles]
Weaver	Six dozen candles in the 'sale shop'
Shoemaker	A grindstone and some boards
Shoemaker	Forty-eight pairs of stockings
Baker	£40 of goods 'about the combing trade.'
Baker	A 'parcel of tobacco and of hops.'
Yeoman	Some 'carpenter's tools.'
Yeoman	A mill house and 'a malting.'
Yeoman	Some butcher's utensils in the 'shop'.

Table 3.29 *Northamptonshire inventories 1700-1749 compared with midland fielden inventories 1590-1640*

	Sample size	Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %	Growing crops %
Northamptonshire 1700-49						
Labourer	60	57	23	25	12	17
Artisan	130	56	34	28	19	21
Farmer	68	97	79	74	78	84
Midland Fielden 1590-1640						
'Labourer'	c. 48*	68	50	56	12	14

* Everitt states that 8 per cent of 3,600 inventories he examined were of 'labourers.' Everitt 's sample thus appears to have consisted of about 288 inventories and was sub-divided into six regional samples. The figure of 48 is derived by dividing 288 by 6. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p. 419. The sample size in the final column must be considerably smaller since it was restricted inventories drawn up in the 'corn-growing season', *ibid.*, p. 418.

Source of midland fielden data: Everitt: 'Farm Labourers', pp. 415, 428.

Table 3.30 *Agricultural possessions of carpenters*

	Period	Sample size	Cattle %	Pigs %	Sheep %	Horses %	Arable %
Lincolnshire	1550-1600	67	87	67	51	60	40
Lancashire and Cheshire	1580-1650	24	92	54	42	58	54
Northamptonshire*	1700-1750	28	39	21	21	18	18

Source of Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Cheshire data: Woodward, 'Wage Rates', p. 40.

* Rural open-field villages only.

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