CHAPTER 11.

Winkleigh's Bread and Butter.

Ubi mel, ibi apes.

It may seem paradoxical that the most difficult subject for which to find material in a rural parish is a reasonably clear picture of the way in which the land has been made to yield its increase for the benefit of man. The processes of agriculture cannot be summed up in a monument of stone for the leisurely inspection of those who come after. An old countryman will perhaps remember the coming of the binder, or the appearance of a motor van of a new kind of higgler but it is difficult to persuade him that farming has changed much except in its exterior aspects. In some ways he would be right. The economy of the village has always been dependent to a greater or lesser extent upon agriculture and its allied trades. But slow changes under the surface of the annual round of the seasons have radically altered the kind of farming which has been carried on. Even within the initial limits set by the character of the soil and the type of

climate much depends upon the technical knowledge of the farmer and the destination of his product.

In medieval times the same soil and climate as exists today probably provided enough for the farmer's family and a little over which had to be surrendered to the Lord of the Manor, to the priest in the church, and the rest exchanged for the necessities of the packman or an occasional luxury. When all is added up the yield was slight compared with the toil of the cultivator. What could a mere forty light ploughs, scratching a few acres each, do on a manor the size of Winkleigh, with a population which consisted of only seventy six souls, man woman and child?

Certainly not all the land which we know today as Winkleigh parish was cultivated at the time of Domesday. The parkland under Norman would probably have been virgin wood-land or waste glades, with occasional grazing. Other land, too, might not have been in cultivation. Through the centuries this has been encroached upon, the plough following the axe, the land divided among tenantry and then sorted and resorted

in little parcels until many tenants became owners of land they themselves farmed. But these changes are hidden from us until the late eighteenth century. So we must reluctantly leave the Pictures which the medieval artist has left us in his illuminated manuscripts.

Yet when we take up the story again in relatively modern days much that the old paintings showed seems to remain. To read Marshall or Vancouver we might imagine little change in the mode of farming. The yoke of oxen is there, a little fatter and taller perhaps and certainly more powerful; their plough is still a simple wooden affair, weighted down by stone and lightly tipped with iron. The sickle is still in use and the labourer who wields it still resembled his medieval brother in his smock (although the cloth may have been rather different.) Here the resemblance cease and from now on we can see in ever increasing detail the changes that come over the land.

Let us pause before we plunge into our material to see what sources are and what we may expect of them. Firstly there is Marshalls "Rural Economy of the West of England" published in 1796 which gives a generalised picture of farming and which will be useful chiefly for sketching in some of the background

to our second and most important early source. This is a survey made by Charles Vancouver for the war time Board of Agriculture in 1808. The material here is quite detailed and gives a picture of local conditions in each parish, along with comment which to us can be both revealing and interesting. Then in 1846 a list of every field in the parish, together with the use to which it was being put was provided by the surveyors to help the assistant Commissioners who were arranging for the commutation of tithes. A analysis of this very detailed work can give us a clear picture of how the land was being farmed just before the period of great agricultural prosperity. In 1869 Winkleigh provided its first really satisfactory returns to the Board of Trade of its crops and stock and since that date it has been possible to trace the year to year fluctuations of farming practice. Since this would have been an over laborious task we have used only the returns at ten yearly intervals. There are dangers here, for the year chosen may have been exceptional and give a wrong impression. But the hesitations which a professional agricultural economist might feel can be passed over in our brief survey.

The broad outlines will be enough for us. In passing it would be proper to add that these statistics have been made available by the Ministry of Agriculture and that the confidential character of these returns has been preserved, not only in publication here but in the form which they were seen by the author. Finally, as we approach the present day our own memories and observations can clothe these dry figures with the form of the fields and farms we know so well; and our understanding becomes more complete.

We can now survey the scene at the beginning of the last century, starting with the kind of arable cultivation. The common white wheat was grown. The old ley was pared and

burned every three years. Ashes were spread over the soil soon after burning. In addition, a recognised quantity of lime (80 Winchester bushels or 8 gallons) mixed in the proportion of one to twenty of road scrapings was heaped on the land and remained there until near seed time until spread. The field was then ploughed into ten furrow ridges, sown broadcast with seed, about eight to ten pecks per acre. After the seed was harrowed in, it was rapped with the beating mattock, the furrows shovelled out and spread upon

the ridges. This practice was considered to leave a much cleaner wrish (arish) or stubble. This system, with little variation, was in vogue well into the nineteenth century. Sheep were sometimes driven over fairly light soils to make them firmer and in that case the quantity of lime (at 13d to 16½d a ¼ bushel) was probably reduced.

The harvest was expected to begin between the 1st and 10th August. This is earlier than is usual today, and apart from changed weather cycles, the type of wheat used is later maturing.

Thoughts

The reaping hook was used to harvest the grain. Its smoothed edges were preferred to the sawed sickle type (The scythe was not much used hereabouts before the mid Century) Alternate winter and summer fallows then followed. Meantime threshing proceeded with the aid of four horses and six fully occupied men, on the more modern or larger farms, although the flail and hand driven winnowing machines were still largely in use. The yield was considered heavy if it reached over 20 bushels an acre; the remaining straw was less stiff but probably better fodder. Although the Church Accounts show rye to have been much used in the seventeenth century and old people can still remember being fed with it in the

L. Molland

middle of the nineteenth Century[1]. Vancouver's Survey does not mention it except to say that "it was formerly grown to a considerable extent." Barley at this period yielded 28-32 bushels an acre and oats about 25 bushels. But nothing is said of any practices of tillage. Dredge corn, or barley and oats mixed, is usually the alternative to wheat today. Other crops included tares, beans, peas, carrots, turnips and flax (which was used in the cottage industry). About one seventh of the cultivated area was in grass. A discription of the planting of potatoes by the delightfully named "fresh lazy bed" method must serve to illustrate the way in which an important root crop was raised, bearing in mind that in a stock rearing area its importance was greater in the days before the importation of cattle cake. The ground was ploughed in the winter and afterwards made up into beds three and a half feet wide, with a trench of eighteen to twenty inches. Sets of potatoes were planted ab

ANTI-QUUM REP--ET--ENT IT--ER--UM

CHAOS OMNIA.

seven or eight inches distant. when the shoots appeared another covering of earth was obtained from the trench and sides and a third covering given when the plants again penetrated the soil.

Marshall in 1796 was most enthusiastic in his description of the Devon breed of cattle, stating they were "the most perfect in the Island although even at this period they were not considered good dairy cattle. The drawings which Vancouver gave show that they resembled the South Devons of today, rather than the Sussex type mentioned by Marshall. The head was smaller and, of course, they were altogether much lighter in weight than the breeds today. A description of their colourings ends with the information that the steers made "good draught animals and good feeders". Marshall adds that "they are beyond comparison the best workers I have anywhere seen". Labour began at two or three years old, when they were broken in, and worked "gently" for twelve months. Then they toiled until they were five years old[2]. If they were not sold to other counties they were fattened at home.

The sheep breeds used were Exmoors mainly but on some farms they were crossed with Spanish merino or Old and New Leicesters. Washed wool sold for fourteen or fifteen pence a pound. Hogs were large coarse boned creatures, high in the leg and flat sided. Improvements

were made if crossed with the Leicester Boar, or Hampshires. Marshall reports them as being of the white kind, once the prevailing if not the only breed in the Island. Arms were small, somewhere between the "pack" and larger cart horse type and their slender rations show they were not well regarded at this time.

Dairying was carried on as a subsidiary by the farmers wife who thus obtained her housekeeping money. Nevertheless they took great pride in their work. Cream was skimmed off the milk and placed in a butter tub. It was then patted and rolled with the palm of the hand (if the hand was too warm a rounded bottle was sometimes used). When the butter was formed the buttermilk was drained off and salt worked well into the butter. Finally it was washed with cold water in the tub, usually with three fresh lots of water. However if overdone the product to was held to be tasteless. "Scotch hands", a simple wooden instrument, like a small bat, but with grooves for the design was used to shape and emboss a device upon the pat. Every farm had their recognisable "trade mark". Marshall also gives

Depending on an account of the making of cream. All farmhouse kitchens had a circular erection with a bowl shaped cavity for embers and a grating in front for the removal of ashes. Earthenware pans nearly filled with milk were placed over the gently heating wood embers and judgement had to be exercised when the milk was sufficiently scalded, much on the quality of the milk and the degree of heat. In summer the morning's milk was heated the same day, otherwise it would turn sour. In winter it was not scalded until the following day. The tough cloth like texture which the cream acquired in the course of making was known as "clouted" cream, later as "clotted".

Before turning to the position of the farm worker we may glance at some of the improvements which that improving age thought applicable to Winkleigh farming. The land was considered badly drained; on the other hand irrigational methods of feeding the land uniformly were recommended although not much hope was entertained of their application due both to apathy and the congenital inability of neighbouring farmers to get together and plan the necessary operations in unison. The practice of burning and paring of good land was considered iniquitous although a coarse ill drained moorland grass would be improved by such methods. Again, the habit of scattering straw on the highways led to a decrease in the manure which could be directly applied to

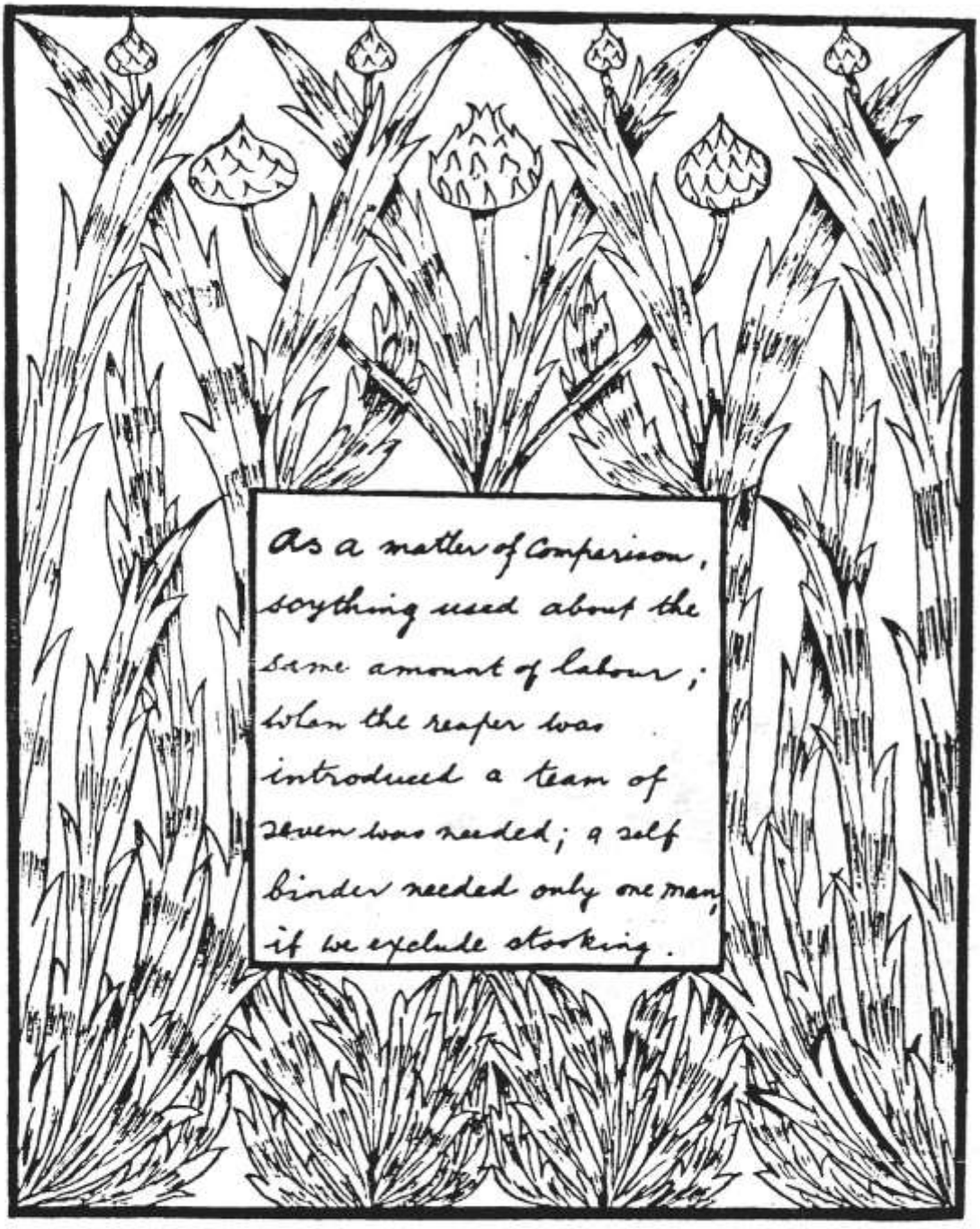
the land, the subsequent road scrapings mixed with lime being less ~~beneficial~~ effective. Shell sand was one of the few fertilizers used, since it "never failed to bring forth a very sweet and valuable herbage," but its cost was almost prohibitive due to the cartage charges (thirty to forty shillings up to two miles for enough for one acre - and proportionately more as the distance increased).

Yet the real obstacle to improvement was held to be the system of life tenures. ~~was paid for a lease, valid for three lives named by the~~ Eighteen years purchase, or for ninety nine years, reserving a small annual rent and heriot, or other forfeiture, on the death of each nominee. By this means

all capital was drained from the farmer and this dogged him until the second or third life of the lease. The business was carried on by auction at a public house by either the landlord or his steward. If the reserve price was not reached it was withdrawn and disposed of by private treaty. The old tenant could expect no preference, and accordingly the custom was to bleed the land in the last years. An important clause in the lease sought to prevent this. Forty measures of lime per acre were supposed to go down at the start of each course and no more than three white straw crops were to be taken in succession. The leases favoured were for multiples of seven years with a minimum of fourteen.

On the side of the landlord, he often agreed to discharge the tithes at 2/6 or 3/- in the pound, for the farmer objected to the uncertain charge which they represented.

What now of the labourer? Medieval cartularies often defined a days work as mowing an acre or less of hay, or the cutting of half an acre of corn. But this was a standard used in computing the amount of work to be done and was expressed in terms of so many day's work for the sake of a common standard. Two acres of wheat could easily be managed between sunrise and sunset by one man using a sickle. But for each field there was needed twenty eight helpers.

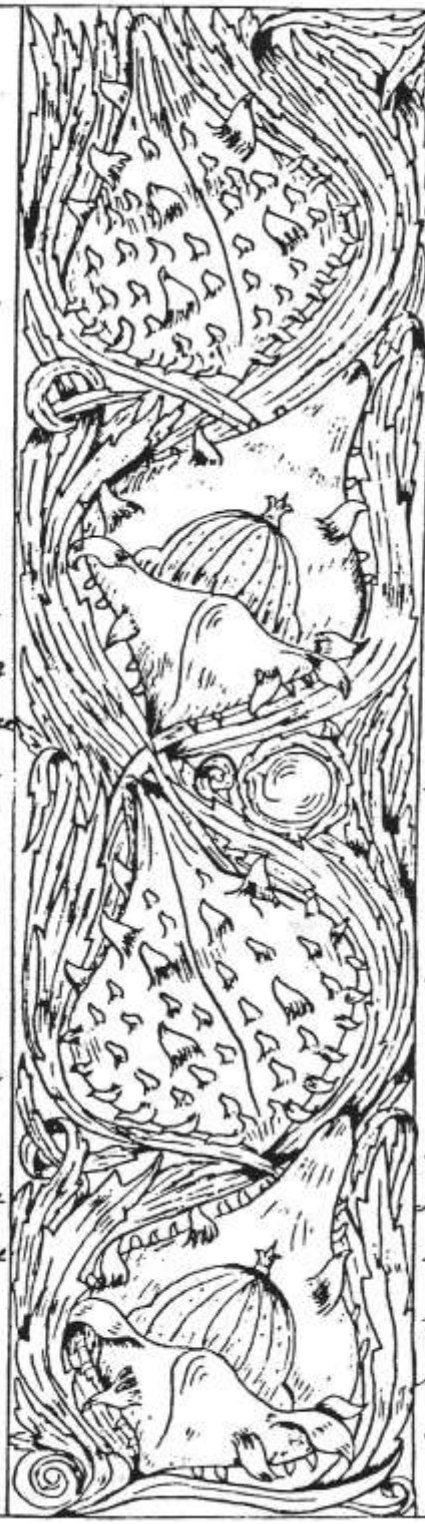


In passing it might be added that the latter reached Winkleigh as late as 1897, for besides the initial prejudice against the inventeon, the smallness of the fields worked against its most

conomical use. Harvesting was paid at so much per acre, including after "shocking"; in other cases there was a half a crown a day with as much ale, cider and "eating" as was demanded. At nightfall, if they were lucky, they might retire to the farmstead and carouse. At this time cider was fifteen shillings a hogshead of sixty three gallons. Any stint of drink would probably have led to a threat to withdraw labour. The excessive quantities drunk may have caused the famous "Devonshire Colic" Today the labourer starts off with his bottle of tea and is not subjected to the ridicule of his fellow workers as he would have been at any time during the nineteenth century. The regular worker was paid about seven shillings a week in 1870 as he was almost a century earlier. In addition he was allowed from a quart to three pints of milk a day, wheat at reduced prices (about 1900 wheat was 4/- a bushel and barley 3/- a bushel). For a small family the allowance at this reduced rate was two bushels of barley and one of wheat. He was also allowed about twenty perches (ie an eighth of an acre) of land for potatoes at sixpence to eight pence per perch and this enabled him to feed a pig. And, of course, he usually got a cottage if he was married. Single men received about half the

cash wage and their maintenance at the farm.

Turning to the auxiliary crafts of agriculture, the miller ground the farmers corn and was paid in kind, the amount varying according to the seasons.[3] At the end of the eighteenth century the price of grist grinding was equivalent to fivepence a bushel for wheat four for barley and two for oats. We may also note that the parson also demanded his tenth stack of corn, a burden which was increasingly resented. Then there were the Carpenters. A Devonshire plough (called a "sevel") would be made by a "hedgerow" carpenter (so called because



journeymen usually worked with no fixed shop for their trade) for as little as fifteen shillings. Harrows and tormentors could be knocked out by a smith (who often was also the village master carpenter) Mason's work was reckoned at eighteen pence a rope of twenty feet in length, eighteen inches thick and one foot high. Cob walls fetched fourteen pence a rope. All materials were provided on the spot.

Slate was brought from Treborough and Huish Champflower. If he was paid by the day he would get the same rate as the carpenter or two shillings. Thatchers got eight shillings per

square ten feet at the rate of a hundred sheaves of wheat straw reed, weighing twenty five pounds to the square of thatch. The cutting and binding of a hundred faggots, with the binding provided, constituted a days work. Vancouver notes that the price to the consumer was nine shillings a hundred in 1779, but by 1800 the price had risen by fifty per cent to thirteen shilling and sixpence. As a matter of comparison the same prices in 1946 were nearly three pounds a hundred with cartage about sixteen shillings a hundred extra. Binding sixty cores of reed, each core being equivalent to twenty pounds in weight was another skilled job which took a day and was rewarded in like fashion.

Two other matters remain to complete the picture of Winkleigh's economy in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars — an idea of their housing and the method by which goods were marketed. The farmsteads are described by Vancouver as being well chosen (as regards siting) but there was a scarcity of cottages for the ordinary labourer.

The old Barton farmhouse would have given a good idea of their layout, the materials and the contents. The oven would have opened into the chimney. Its interior would be heated by burning small wood

until the sides had stored up sufficient heat. The food would then be placed in the oven, the door closed and sealed with hot ashes from the fireplace and the radiations from the oven walls would do the rest. This method of cooking can be watched today in some of the cottages to the wonderment of the city dweller. The furniture might well be old. Hollacombe Barton possessed an old bedstead of the Tudor Rose pattern which, after many refusals, at last changed hands with a dealer. No doubt this rare piece of domestic furniture would have been resold for a good

RIDE

but the modern craftsman who took the different pieces asunder for transportation remarked that he "would not give half a crown for the whole lot". The farm also possessed an old plain pewter service, weighing over an hundredweight, but this too was secured by a dealer during the thirties.

The walls of most cottages and farmsteads were made of cob[4]. The best local clay was selected and carefully worked to the required consistency. It was mixed with good rye straw and small quantities of water. The mixture was then placed on the lower wall which was built with stone up to the lintel and the

and the mason trod down the material firmly. One circuit of the walls, treading in cob, would be long enough for the clay to dry. The walls were two feet wide by the custom of the district and the process was repeated until the height had been reached[5]. This simple construction had its drawbacks. Once built dilapidations were neglected. Consequently, if a cottage fell into disuse and the thatch became partly stripped, the walls would quickly crumble. Rain and frost are enemies of cob walls. But when they are adequately protected by rough cast they will last for centuries.

Cattle provided the main cash crop and their marketing was little changed before the mid nineteenth century. We have a description and when we remember the dirty and uneven roads, it seems incredible today that dealers and farmers, should send cattle on foot, to the market towns of neighbouring counties, and even beyond these boundaries. Nevertheless the older people of the parish remember the old labourers tell of their experiences with cattle for Bridgwater, Bristol and Reading in the 1860's. The oxen were "cued", and should any beast cast their cue, the labourers were provided with tools, and the necessary hoof protector was replaced. The cattle were first driven into a field; the men were

experts in tripping up the beast on its side, then getting it on its back, tying its legs, and the operation was quickly over.

There were usually two labourers, and they were sent on, about one week in advance of the dealers, on a long journey, and were provided with a little money for expenses, for pasture and lodgings, which they tried to avoid. They would sleep in the hedge of the field which harboured and fed, gratis, their tired charges.[6]

The survival until as late as 1924 of a fair popularly known as "Horn Fair" would suggest that cattle dealing took place once upon a time in the parish itself. Certainly the Charter Rolls indicate a weekly Market on Mondays at Hollacombe, as well as a yearly fair on "the vigil and the feast and the morrow of the Ascension".[7] The earliest mention of a market at Winkleigh comes later.[8] It certainly remained in Lysons Day for the Cattle Fair was given as "On Monday after the 7th July unless that day should happen on a Sunday in which case it is held on the Monday se'nnight".[9] But by the nineteenth century it was only a name attached to a fair day and the actual market had gone elsewhere.

The Railways had not yet arrived to extend the radius of marketing although in 1831 a Village meeting was

Quod differtur non aufertur.

held at Winkleigh in support of a line from Bideford to Okehampton.[10] In Vancouvers time however proposals for a canal were often mooted, and, unlike the later railway, the canal would have passed through the parish. The route would have been from the North west end of the Summers Level through Winkleigh, Beaford and Torrington to unite with the navigable water of the Torridge at Wear Gifford. In default of a means of transport, marketing was difficult and except for self moving cattle was mainly undertaken by the higgler who collected for the larger markets, especially Exeter. The railways did not kill this useful middleman but the dealers in motor lorries after the Great War did. Farmers who wanted to buy regularly visited the markets of Exeter or Barnstaple: nonetheless improved machinery and new ideas were slow in reaching the parish.

We have no later records comparable for wealth of detail to Vancouver and Marshall at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Our material is increasingly statistical and for those who like to see exactly what occured there is a happy playground. They will find what they want in the two appendices attached to this work. For the general reader an attempt will be made to bring out their significant features and mingle these with the abundant material of our older memories. In this way we may be able to continue the earlier picture built up by Vancouver and Marshall and see the many changes of the nineteenth century.

The picture we have of the uses to which the land of the parish was put in 1846 might be put in its proper context by a restatement of the limiting and determining factors of soil and climate. The village was lucky in the extensive and intensive use to which its lands could be put and the minimum of waste which this entailed. Here the practice of the farmer was in alliance with the natural elements. The soil is dunland with a clay sub-soil

reas and an occasional out cropping of rock, mainly shales and grits, alluvial rather than igneous in formation. Observation would suggest that woodlands were left to the areas which were unsuitable to grow crops. The quantity of fertiliser used to supplement the natural properties of the soil had not increased since the time of Vancouver but an increase in the stock carried helped to raise the real quality of the soil. Scientific methods of soil drainage, too, were probably unpractised. The river Jaw, winding its infant way through the parish, drains the area and except in the more distant uplands where heavy clays predominate the art of drainage is not required. If fields became soggy occasionally the rolling nature of the land enabled a quick run off to the valleys. Incidentally the character of the land in part accounts for the small size of the fields (less than five acres). In addition hedges were needed in plenty to hold the soil on the slopes in face of the possibilities of rain erosion, and to act as windbreaks.

With these points in mind it is possible to turn to the Apportionment List itself. There is little point in perusing that statistical abstraction, the average farm, for an average

farm never has existed. There are two tables in the first of our appendices, one showing the division of land which was principally used for agricultural purposes, and the other showing how the remainder was utilised. To comment on the first table we can exclude the land of the village and those plots which are less than three acres in extent, as being more domestic than agric-ultural in character. These can be dismissed quickly for although they may account for an estimated 117 plots separate plots they represent less than a third of one per cent of the acreage devoted to agricultural uses. Some of the holdings of less than fifty acres were farmed in conjunction with other holdings and thus would largely explain why some holdings have no arable land, or only occasional arable: Farms of this size account for about an eighth of the cultivated acreage but nearly a half of all the holdings. This size of holding must be considered not typical for the parish. Over three quarters of their area was under the plough, some only occasionally or in conjunction with coarse pasturage. Nearly half the remainder was

coarse pasture and very little fine water meadow. But only about a third of the farms in this category had any permanent grazing at all. This indicates that most of these farmers had to keep their land under rotation and exploit it intensively to ain their living. Very few had the luxury or misfortune (we cannot tell what was due to nature and what to man's incapacity) of land mingled with furze, which is of very low marginal utility.

The third category of farm was that between 50 and 100 acres. It contained about a fifth of the farms and almost a fifth of the cultivated land. The proportions devoted to arable and permanent pasture were about the same as in the previous groups. But here meadow land was much more typical of the group, although nearly half the farms contained a few parcels of land which was furze covered. The fourth group contained a sixth of the holdings but a quarter of the land. Most of what has been said about the second and third groups applies here. These were the farms between 100 and 150 acres. The next group, between 150 and 200 acres contained a thirteenth of the holdings and a sixth of the land. Arable was of less importance, one farm having no fields.

which were wholly arable. Good permanent pasture was of greater interest and with it, coarse pasture. The remaining three groups seem to emphasise these trends. As farms became larger, the land under the plough played a decreasing part, while mixed cultivation and rough grazing increased.

It is interesting to note that 43·3% of all Primary Agricultural land is devoted to arable solely: even when all land in the parish is considered, the figures remain as high as 37·8%. According to the figures on which Aneurin Owen based his calculations oats would seem to be the main crop with over half the total production, although wheat realised more money. But we cannot tell if the figures for 1846 were typical or not. On the other hand it is curious how the area devoted to Pasture is fairly constant in all grades of farm, except those between 150 and 200 acres. If only the apportionment lists gave details of farm implements and stock, as well as land utilisation, as did the Domesday survey! For without confirmation it is inadvisable to label this group of farms as the modern "Stock" variety.

If we turn to the second table of the first appendix, that showing the distribution of all the land which was not primarily used for agriculture, we are faced with an assortment of descriptions.

For simplicity's sake they have been grouped into Woodlands, non-agricultural land, land mainly carrying agricultural buildings, and various groups in which some land is mixed with another land, defined, for instance as, "subsidiary arable land" etc.

Kind of trees.

It is difficult to determine what were the main varieties of tree. Fir and oak were undoubtedly predominant, fir especially so, for most of the plantations were certainly fir. Other types are probably strays, not properly indigenous. Woodlands are contained almost entirely in farms larger than fifty acres. Some of the coppices shown in the smaller farms were really overthick hedges.

Commenting upon agricultural buildings and domestic plots must be rather unrewarding. Orchards and gardens were general on all farms and did not vary greatly in size. Likewise the houses to which they belonged. It would seem that a house, barton, linhay and court were the standard farm buildings. Barns, stables or other outbuildings were rarely mentioned. This is not proof of their non-existence, for they may have been described as such only if detatched from the main unit of buildings. In a few cases a forge or tanyard is indicated but these can be more readily considered in connection with the "industrial side".

The small dimensions of the third group (non agricultural land) are

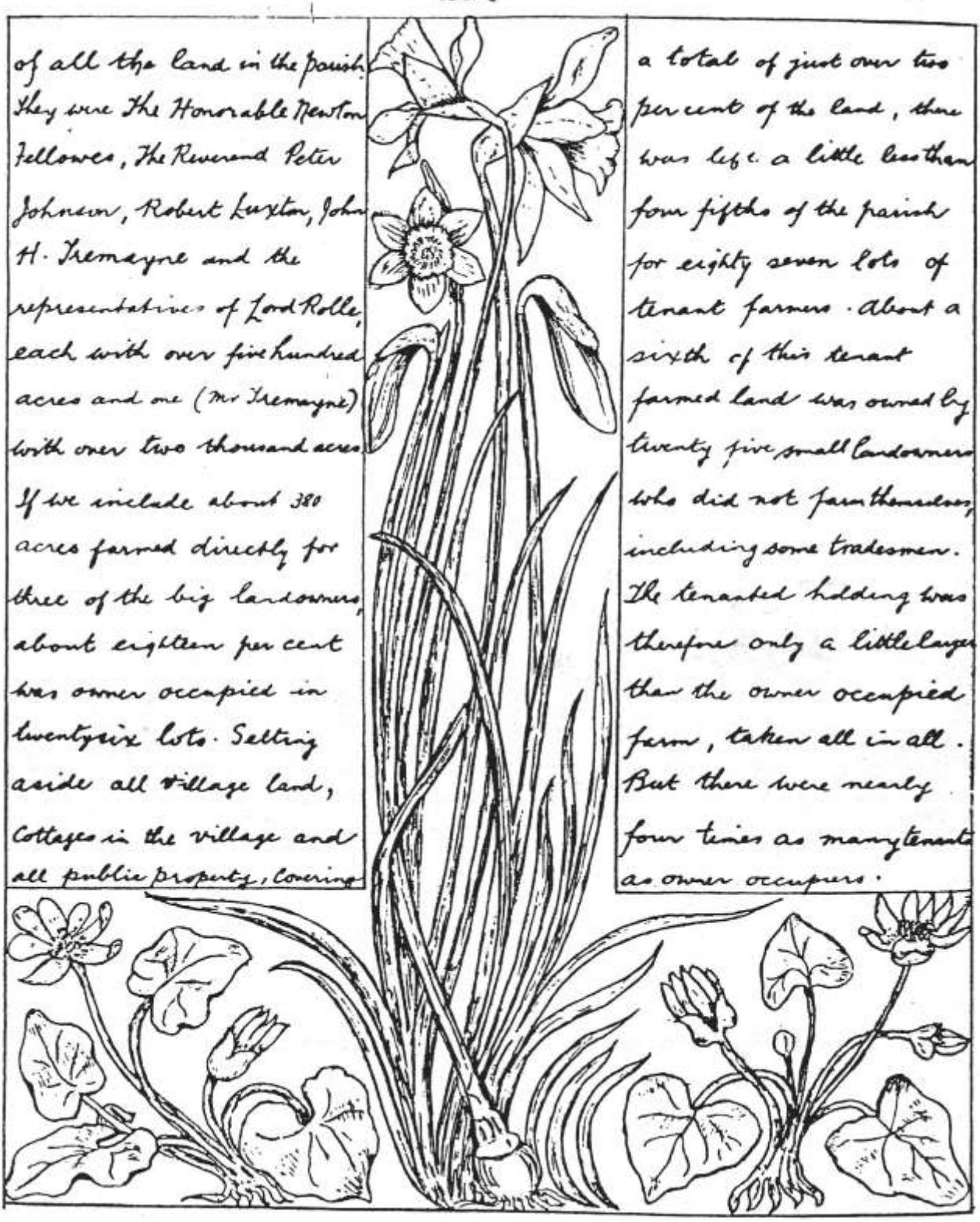
surprising and show a great intensity of cultivation upon land which was overwhelmingly suitable for cultivation. Even of that small area (183 acres) 13·8 acres are roads and road wastes.

The public buildings included the parish church, the earthworks, a National School (the upkeep of which depended upon a lucky combination of private charity and scholar's pence), a row of houses turned into an almshouse and a remarkable granite memorial at the village pump dedicated to the four heroes of the recent Reform Bill (Russell, Grenville, Althorpe and Brougham), "erected by permission of the Lord of the Manor".

The remaining groups defy any real analysis. Their rich variety however helps to explain the peculiar attraction which the visitor always feels for this part of England; gardens and bogs, good cultivated fields and close cliffed pasture, plantations and water meadow mixed in quick changing profusion.

There only remains a brief review of the ownership of these lands, and a consideration of the industries incidentally revealed by such description of land utilisation as "tanyard". There were fifty three landowners but five of these accounted for over seventy per cent

of all the land in the parish. They were The Honorable Newton Fellowes, The Reverend Peter Johnson, Robert Luxton, John H. Tremayne and the representatives of Lord Rolle, each with over five hundred acres and one (Mr Tremayne) with over two thousand acres. If we include about 380 acres farmed directly for three of the big landowners, about eighteen per cent was owner occupied in twenty six lots. Setting aside all village land, cottages in the village and all public property, covering a total of just over two per cent of the land, there was left a little less than four fifths of the parish for eighty seven lots of tenant farmers. About a sixth of this tenant farmed land was owned by twenty five small landowners who did not farm themselves, including some tradesmen. The tenanted holding was therefore only a little larger than the owner occupied farm, taken all in all. But there were nearly four times as many tenants as owner occupiers.



agriculture and its associated occupations employed the overwhelming proportion of Winkleigh's 1600 odd inhabitants. Indeed there were no alien industries in the central years of the nineteenth century. The vast majority were directly engaged in tending the soil or stock. Their womenfolk and children helped at times in the field and besides their domestic or school tasks, often worked at College manufactures. wool spinning and carding had almost ceased by glove and lace making continued until a few years before the Great War. The author can remember Ellen Brook, one of the last needle point lace makers standing outside her cottage, working at a design with a blue paper background which enabled her to see more clearly that portion of the work on which her needle was plying. 11.

Then there was the bark mill and Tan yard at Wood Tenil, which still processed local skins, a malthouse and a flour mill - all speaking for themselves. Smith and Cooper, carpenter and Wheelwright, beer engine

Decscire fas est omnia.

fitter and brass foundryman, cobbler and quarryman: these men together were the farmer's simple requirements, making and mending his rather primitive wood and iron sheathed ploughs, the truss for his mixed team of oxen and horses, his best cart for market days, or his sons first shoes, repairing the crumbling road over which he passed and at last pitching the coffin of the dead. Some of these craftsmen won fame beyond the village. Mr Miller was to shine at one of the Paris Exhibitions. The ironwork of the Church and the weather vane of the shingled steeple of Hollacombe Mission Church were both executed by him. Another brother was saddler to several crowned heads of Europe. Robert Manning is said to have won a world prize at an American Exhibition for making a perfect wheel. Curiously enough, however, the Apportionment does not mention a shop or an inn.

There are another twenty years before we can start upon the ministerial agriculture returns. It would be wise to repeat here what was said earlier about these series of figures. Schedules were (and still are) completed by occupiers of agricultural holdings larger than one acre in extent. Compulsory powers were not always used to obtain a full return by all such farmers and for some time the totals must be deemed slightly

defective. The relevant figures are shown in the second appendix in a handy form. The material will be described in broad subjects so that a picture of continuous change can be

seen.

Firstly, the farmers and the labourers themselves. In 1846, about eighteen per cent of the parish, in twenty six holdings, was occupied by the owner. By 1870 the proportion had dropped to 13% in fifteen lots. By 1900 they owned less than 12% of the land in cultivation. But somewhere in the early years of this century the picture began to change rapidly. From a falling force in the parish they grew. In 1910 they represented almost exactly 20% having in the ten years caught up on nearly sixty years of slow decline and extermination. By the time the first war ended they represented a full third of the land. In number the picture is similar. In 1910 they represented 14 farmers out of 85, in 1920, 18 out of 78. It is a great pity that this trend cannot be followed further or it might be seen that right up until this last war the

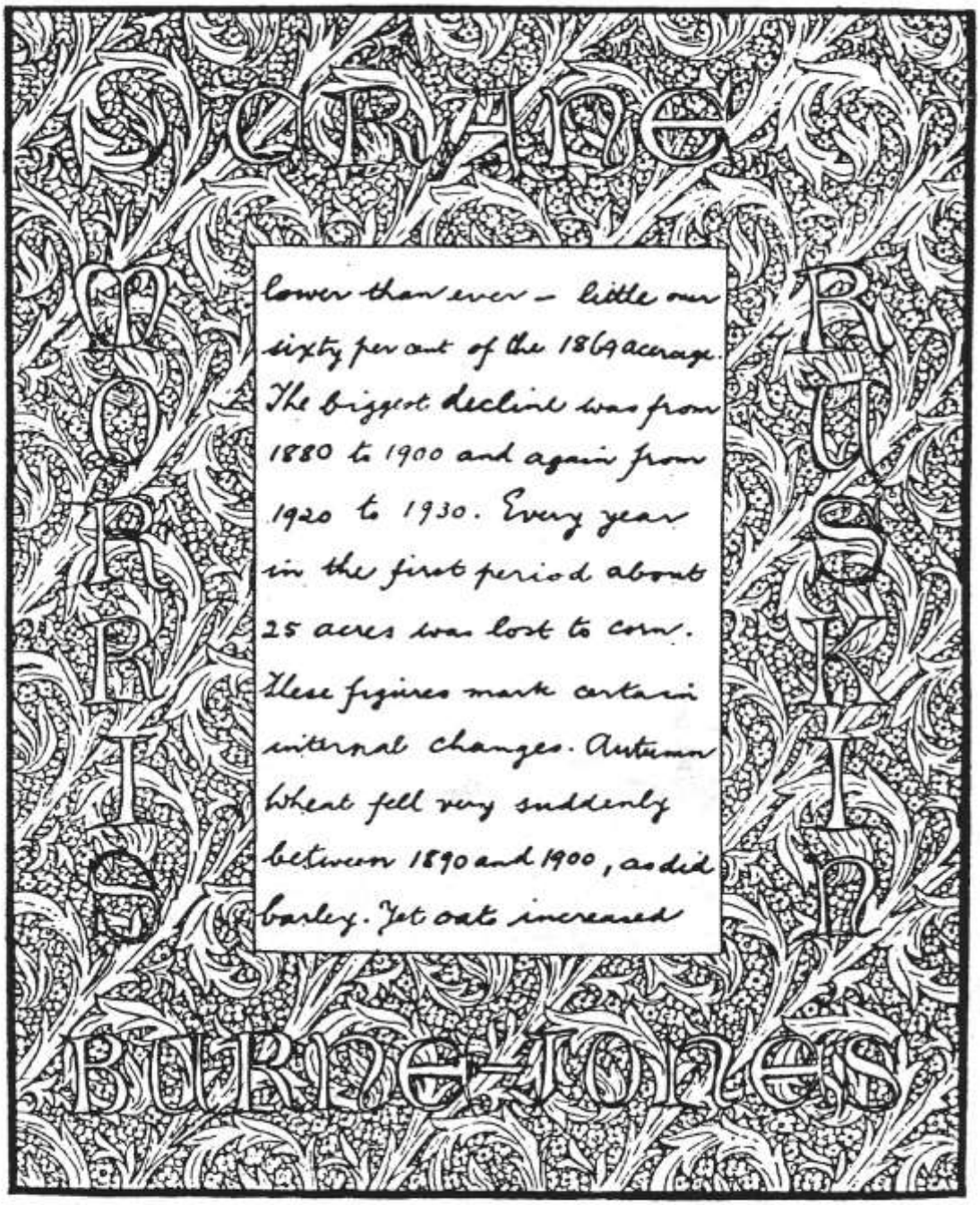
owner occupier would have increased in importance. Whether the class developed from that small class of large landowners which we discovered in the Apportionment Lists, or at the expense of existing tenants it is impossible to say. At the risk of a faulty guess the former is the more likely explanation. Death duties and a more profitable form of farming probably account for the decline of [illegible] class of owner and the rise of the other.

Another way of looking at the distribution of land is the relative size of various holdings. Holdings between 1 acre and 5 acres decreased from 22 in 1846 to 13 in 1910, to 3 in 1920, back to 10 in 1930, down to 5 in 1939, rising to 7 in 1940. Peace time in the 19th century seems to have reduced this class of farmer, and the Great war almost wiped them out. Then came the pressure for small holdings in the twenties which collapsed in the hard thirties. Between 1846 and 1910 all groups of holdings suffered a numerical decline, correspondingly greater in the 5 – 50 acre groups than the 50 – 300 acre group. The extra large farms (over 300 acres) of which there were 8 in 1846 dropped to 2 in 1910 and in 1920 only one was left. The war years increased this tendency to fewer farms of larger size, the biggest increase being among the owner occupied 50 – 150 acre class. The inter war years did little to alter this decay of the small farmer and the concentration of land

into holdings, mainly owner occupied, of between 50 and 150 acres. Disregarding the smallholdings of under five acres, the number of farms declined steadily until only 69 were left, so the effect of the changes already noted is emphasised.

Not until 1930 are there satisfactory figures of labour, and by then most of the interesting changes had already occurred. The chief fall 1930 & 1939 is in the regular labourers under 21 years of age, and in all casual workers. Between 1939 and 1943 men of military age declined, although casual males increased. Their place was taken by regular workers under 21 and by an increase in women and girls. Yet in 1943 there were only 90 regular workers, not more than one per farm – a striking commentary upon the self contained nature of the owner occupier and small tenant family.

It would be interesting now to turn & the changes in crops grown. The acreage under corn crops fell continuously from 1869 (our first return) & the great war (1910) In 1920 the Corn Production Act was still in force and there was an increase but by 1930 the level was

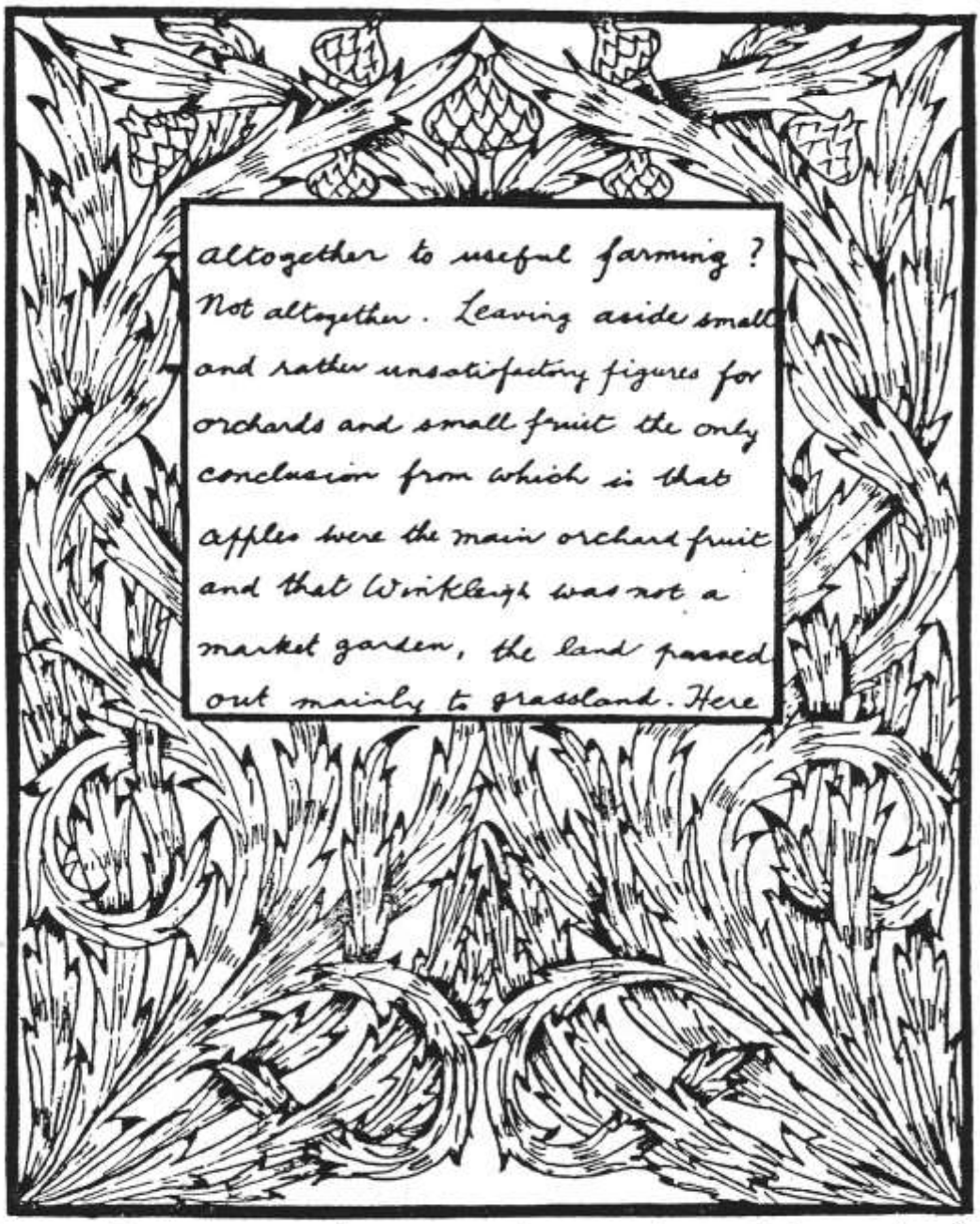


lower than ever – little over sixty per cent of the 1869 acreage. The biggest decline was from 1880 to 1900 and again from 1920 to 1930. Every year in the first period about 25 acres was lost to corn. These figures mark certain internal changes. Autumn wheat fell very suddenly between 1890 and 1900, as did barley. Yet oats increased almost continuously until the Great War and only fell thereafter and its fall was then greater than wheat. Peas sown with corn dropped out entirely after 1900 and rye corn by 1920. Their loss however was not numerically important. Oats from contributed about a third of the acreage in 1869 rose to over two thirds in 1930.

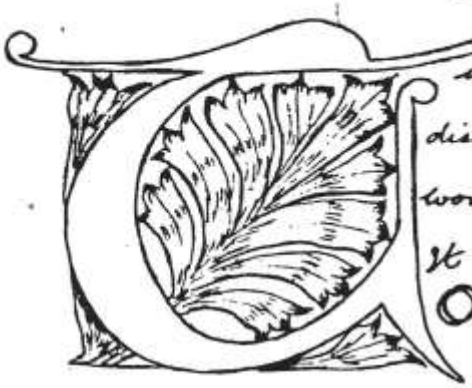
Wheat fell from about 45% to 25%. Barley from about 22% drifts to less than 2% - or 25 acres.

The story in green crops was not very dissimilar. From a peak in 1880 the acreage had been more than halved by 1930. 1920 was again an exceptional year. The years of greatest stability were in 1890 to 1900, that is while wheat was falling most rapidly. Again the totals conceal divergent tendencies, although the figures being on a small scale, the changes are not so apparent. While turnips fell, swedes increased, although they both declined thereafter. Potatoes fell to a minimum around 1910 and then slumped heavily until in 1930 only 43 acres were grown. It was a sharp revival in Rape that enabled the 1920 total of green crops to rise. Vetches and Tares, never a very important crop died out with the Great War. Small crops, such as carrots, mustard for fodder and table greens increased slowly, accounting for more acres than barley in 1930. Six acres of sugar beet were sown that year, too, for the first time in the parish.

What happened to these acres lost to the plough: were they lost



acreages, except once more for 1920, increased continuously from 1869 to 1930. The most rapid change was up to 1880, but there are doubts as to the accuracy of the figures which might have shown an undue area as heathland and other useless areas. Perhaps the most



interesting feature is the almost total disappearance of bare fallow, or land which would not have to bear a crop that year. It fell from 20% of the grassland to much less than 2% The clover and land under rotation longer than a year produced the most astonishing increase between 1869 and 1880 but the cause is limited · earlier in this paragraph It increased up to 1910 but had fallen again by 1930. This was the second most important group of grassland · It was not chiefly used for lay but left for grazing. Permanent grass increased continuously and little of the increase was used for lay · In all about 70% of the grasslands fell into this class about 1930, almost half the useful acreage. From 1900 more of the grass, of one kind or another was cut for hay · Only last said commentary upon these figures is the increase in totally derelict land which almost doubled between 1890 and 1930 until over 1600 acres were affected. The acceleration of this process and the almost total inability of wartime efforts to use these areas again is the best evidence of criminal neglect by farmer and statesman alike.

Turning from acreages, let us look at the changes in stock which provide indications of how so much land could pass into less intensive use and could still support the farmer and his family. It may seem strange today how much attention has been devoted to finding out the number of horses in a multiplicity

of categories. The questions asked in the June Schedules reflect clearly the interest which the Army Quartermaster had in adequate supplies of remounts. Only in the last decade has the attention of various other categories of livestock been so great. The horses were mainly over two years old and this indicates that the parish is not situated in a breeding area; although as late as 1920, forty mares were kept solely for breeding there were only two stallions used for service and shortly afterwards they disappear completely. The numbers of horses rose to 1880 and then sagged, not badly,

to the first years of the new century. Working horses declined continuously after 1910. Saddle horses, or those used for carriage and trap remained surprisingly constant however. None of these appear to have been born in the parish however. The complementary process to a declining horse population should be a gradual, though not so rapid use of tractor power. This information only appears in the late thirties and is insufficient to guage a trend. The figure of two tractors for the whole parish in 1939 seems singularly small, although only 13 were registered the next year.

If we relate horse power, animal or horse mechanical, to the area under cultivation it would appear that horses were used with declining economy of effort. Although the size of holdings tended to consolidate into one or two pair-horse farms, a certain superfluity resulted. Consequently we may wonder if farmers kept their horses longer than was justified out of a lingering regard for the traditional methods and for the traditional measuring rod of riches.

Turning to stock we can appreciate the importance of this branch of farming in the parish economy. The main interest was feeding steers for sale in the second year. Rearing was not of such great importance, borne out by the relatively low figure of bulls for service. It is interesting to note the position in the years immediately after the first world war. The number of fat cattle retained was high and the number of calves and one year olds relatively low, pointing to the rising prices then ruling. The rapid fall in the latter twenties of the number of fat cattle points to difficulties in selling profitably. The stock was presumably winter fattened and sold before ready for slaughter, or else sold at the end of summer grazing for fattening elsewhere or earlier slaughter. The practice seems to have continued into the new war years.

In passing it might be noted that the crisis in the Ministry of Agriculture's stock feeding policy in the early years of the war did not seem to affect Winkleigh very greatly, and milk production was even able to increase. This leads us to the cows and heifers. The relative stagnation of the cows in calf, either first or other, and its actual decline in the twenties and early thirties illustrates again that little breeding was carried on. Cows in milk became more important in the thirties, being a relatively paying line. The war years seemed to encourage further growth in this direction.

The importance of sheep seems to have declined into the nineties, but towards the end they pull up and advance continuously, being checked only by the war years in each case. The most rapid rise was in the thirties; for this many purpose animal proved its worth. Breeding and feeding are alike important, although some lambs are bought and added to the flocks, and this was increasing important in the thirties.

Pigs slumped until after the first war and the second war hit this expanding side again. Pigs in this part of

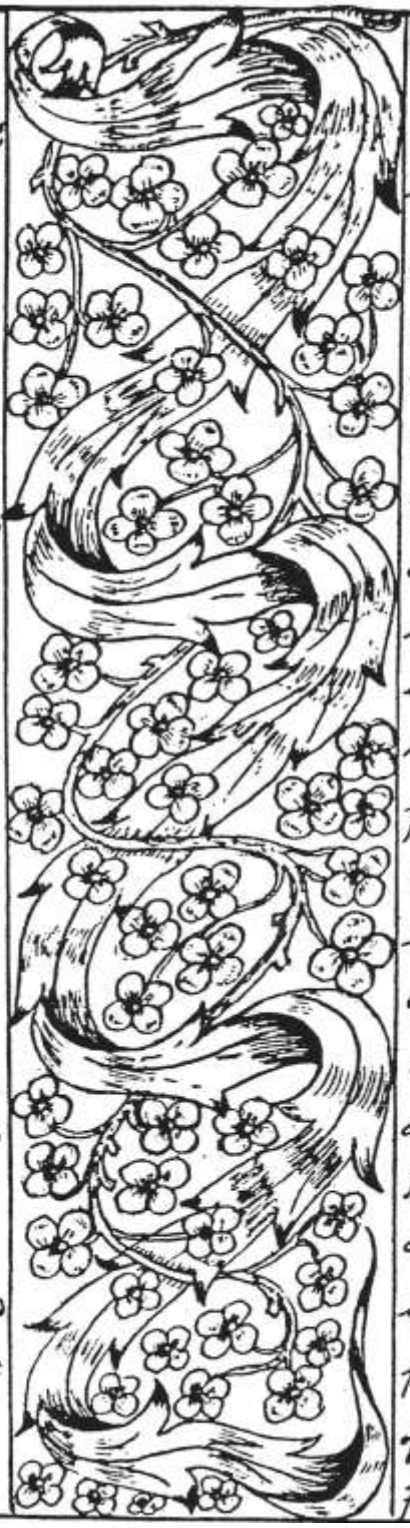
Err- -are hum- -anum

the world are mainly domestic animals in the sense that there are only one or two breeding pigs to a farm.

St. Birds were not recorded until the mid years of the inter war period. Such figures as we have, however, suggest that fowls, particularly table chicken increased in popularity while ducks, geese and turkeys remained in a constant minority. Good laying strains of poultry have supplanted the old "Barndoor class." The high prices paid for guinea fowl (gleenies") has been an inducement for improving and increasing "the foreigner".

This survey of Winkleigh's economy would not be complete without some final touches of the particular and personal. The real difficulty is to speak in such a way that the flood of reminiscence does not overwhelm more important substance. Perhaps some reference can be made to the passing of the craftsman, what has been called "the idiocy of rural life" and Hollacombe Moor. The farm servant who can feel a deep pride in his own work is seldom met with. The spirit has gone that encouraged people to stand on the hedges of Cornwall in the 1860's and watch fascinated the gangs of perambulating labourers from Hollacombe cutting

grass, their scythes
swinging through the grass,
bodies moving in perfect
rhythm, as each load
low nearby five acres a
day. The heart does not
lift at the sight of
today's mechanical farming,
where the rhythm of an
engine is accompanied
by the reek of heavy oil
fumes; the commonplaces
of science do not compel
admiration. Gone too
is the ubiquitous cider
making. The apples are
sent to the factory at
Whimple. Yet to be fair,
sheer nostalgia for the
past, sanctified in
its decay by some morbid
longing for the inefficient
and probably unhappy
days, must not hide



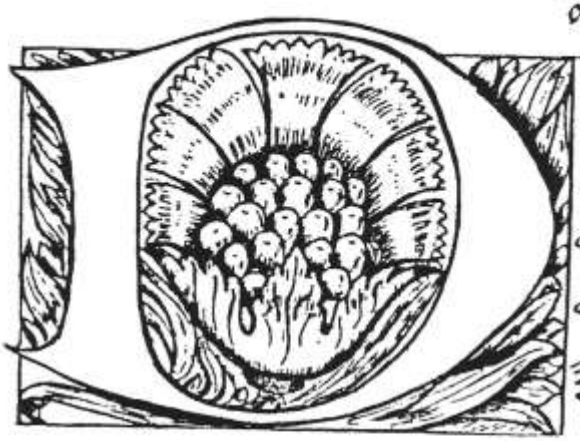
the undoubted benefits of
the development. Provided
there is a steady demand
and a fair price for good
fruit the industry will
have yet another cash
crop. Further the proprietor
of the factory give the farmers
a young apple tree each year,
in the hope that more
scientific growing will
result. The dried milk
factory at Lapford collects
milk from the farmers
increasingly. But the sale
of milk means the virtual
disappearance of cream,
and with it, farm butter.
The desire to maintain an
old skill will not stand
up to the pressure of price
policy. In 1946 a pound
of butter could be retailed
for 1/7½; yet the milk

equired to make it would be worth between 4/6d and 5/-. Turning to associated crafts the story is similar. Small stone quarries are situated in several parts of the parish, at Hollacombe Moor Head, Kingsland, Bransgrove, Stabdon, Bitteare, Bude Hill, Winkleigh Wood, Paperwells, Smytham Ball, Hawgate Wood, Timbridge and near Lake Water - a formidable list. Yet the last stone breaker has not retired and when the roads are mended the rough stones come from outside the parish. The Literature of the "Wheelwright's Shop"[12] may be applied to Winkleigh, although prices for locally made implements are not so high as in Surrey. In 1880 a Butt or Ladder cart cost about £6; in 1938 the price has risen to £15, Cart wheels nearly trebled too. These fegures reflect not the rising price of timber, for that was comparatively small, but the cost of labour. But if wages have risen, the total of conventional necessities has risen too and with it, most of the prices. In addition where waggons were made frequently, none is now made and the wooden vehicle or tool is gradually disappearing from the farm. So another craft goes its way.

In the nineteenth century, Winkleigh probably possessed five waterwheels mills, not one of which is being used today, except at Honey Mill, where the waterwheel is used for the supply of Electric Light for the dwelling house. It is popularly considered to occupy a site over a thousand years old, and this might be so. Valuable new silks were added a few years before the flour mill closed down at the end of the nineteenth century. About this time the flour also mill at Yaw mill, closed down.

At both mills, grain, barley etc were crushed, up to about 1936, when the last of the water milling operations died out Completely. Ward Mill and Wood Roberts - probably closed down about the middle of the nineteenth century, and the Bark Mill at Wood Terril in 1871. In 1931 the last saw mill, which used to employ between twenty and thirty men was destroyed by a lawsuit when a farmer complained of sawdust in his dairy. Coldharbours and Pounds long ago disappeared although the memory remains in the names of some spots.

The proposed instruction of the poor by the establishment of Sunday School was looked forward to with dread by Mr Varcoe



at the turn of the eighteenth century. ".If is made him more moral and more desirous of excelling in his duties, well and good, but the peasantry may be so educated as to be **discontented** with their lot and procure a passage to america," where, it may be added, few resumed agricultural work. This was prophetic. Between 1800 and 1870 there was little improvement in the labourer's lot. He still worked from 11½ to 12 hours a day for between seven and twelve shillings a week. By 1900 they were only ranged up to 12/. The rise which took place since that date might well seem incredible by earlier standards. But it was too late to reverse the condemnation of the nineteenth century. The advantages were seemingly with the towns and despite the worst features of the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath, they were probably solid advantages. Higher wages, better working conditions, shorter hours, better housing will not entice the farm labourer back to the fields, where in the past so much has been given for so little reward. His "prospects" are not improved by the necessary centralisation which has taken place. On the birth of his children he has to journey thirtyfour miles to Bideford to register the event. A death requires the same distance to be traversed. If he requires a doctor,

the nearest practitioner is six miles distant at Chulmleigh or Dolton when his children attain school age, the children from the hamlet will be motored to Winkleigh up to a certain age, and then to Chulmleigh, for the local school has been closed. With the closing of the school the County Library Branch. He can cash his postal orders at Hollacombe but has to make a trip of five miles to change a Money order. If he has a telephone it will be wired to Ashreigney exchange and calls to his own parish will be extra. Should he desire to see a moving picture, or a play, a journey of fifty miles has to be made. The economy of the virtually self contained parish has been split wide open. The new opportunities on the land have great competition from the towns and an even greater legacy of distrust and hatred to live down.

So much has already been written about Hollacombe Moor in different chapters, especially in the Flora and Fauna that it might seem unnecessary to write anything more about it. But a little cameo

his
must
in
The
riot and
ralist and
ndenominated
of beauty spots
cause to grieve
he passing
war years.
requisitioning of
oor by the
cultural Committee
une 1941 together
the removal
any hedges all
the parish has
d to increase
production but
destroyed other
resting farm
Only a
w bog

Plants now remain where all man's endeavours failed to completely drain the moor.

We cannot go back in our story of the Moor beyond Vancouver. During the Napoleonic wars he considered that any other parish would have regarded it as a valuable object for improvement. At the time of the Great War there was talk of cultivating the Moor but nothing ever came of it. So until 1941 the moor

remained much as it had for hundreds of years. The 1846 Apportionment list gives an indication of the ownership of the pasture rights, vested in six people, most of whom were landlords rather than farmers. A note on an old map of Hollacombe Barton states that the farm had a right to an undivided third part, and this proportion is probably right. The Barton certainly exercised its grazing rights and so did the Downs of Durdon.

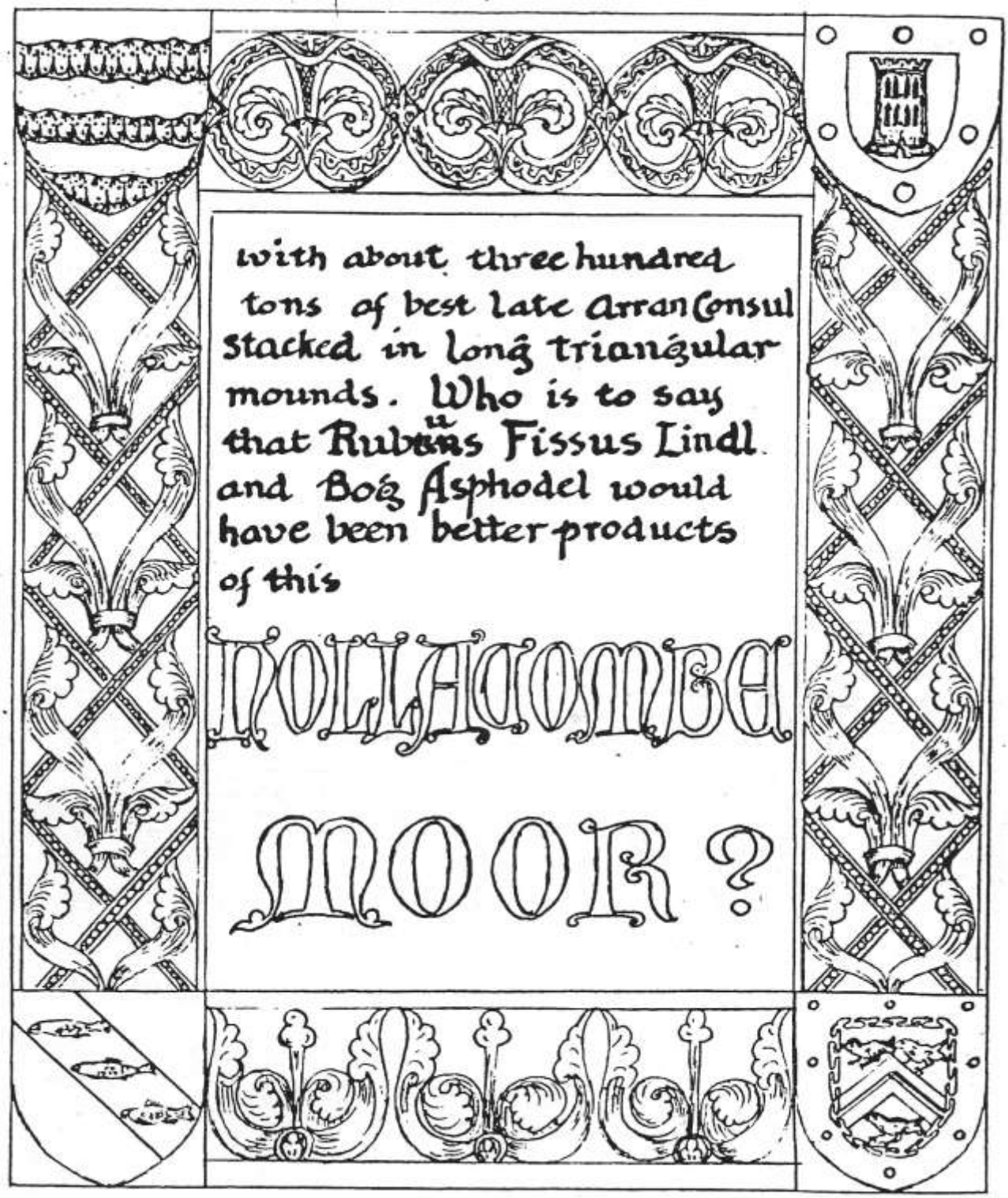
The others let their rights to various tenants, some of whom could only pasture a flock of geese (as in the case of Mitchells) Strangely enough the farm contiguous with the moor had neither rights of ownership or tenantry. Pitford, however, was always outside the Manor, never paying Chief Rents; but it may well have been carved out of the Moor itself very soon after the Conquest. The rights were not very strictly enforced after the coming of the

motor car. Stricter regulations regarding straying cattle and the confined character of the moor destroyed its utility as rough pasture. Consequently it became a paradise for birds, the smaller wild animals and rare plants.

The wandering gipsies used to ignore the notices prohibiting their caravans, and turn their horses on to the good herbage. We do not know if they stole cattle when the Moor was used as grazings, but certainly they cleared the portion of their caravans of rabbits and hares. Besides the gipsies and the naturalist, picnic parties could obtain permission to use the moor, or if not a local, used to take permission to use this waste ground. It was also a terminal point for villagers on their Sunday summer evening walk.

In June 1941 the Botanical Section of the Devon Association was notified that approximately 34½ acres of the Moor had been ploughed up by the county war Agricultural Executive Committee. This represented the rich land of the east which Vancouver described as consisting "of a tender hazel loam in a deep, dry and open subsoil, and a grey moist loam of a moderate depth on a yellow woodland clay." Later

the rest was taken over. Those with rights to the Moor were compensated for their loss with a yearly payment of about four shillings an acre, according to the extent of their rights. The returns must have been great, especially on the eastern side. The moor was thoroughly trenched and drained and later wired around. Having no obstacles such as hedges and 150 acres to work on, the land could be worked with great efficiency without stint of machinery. The farming community was profoundly impressed to see the three sets of double ploughs working in the spring, and three sets of Combine harvesters working in the autumn – the perfect object lesson in higher productivity and improved method. As a result of the natural fertility oats and wheat have been grown as tall as the average man, although the head has not been so large relatively. There were rumours that the land was going to revert to its original state but the Moor was fenced and grazing on a large scale developed. It would seem most reasonable for the Authorities to build a farm house and convert it into one largeholding. But whatever is finally settled decided it will never be the same as before the war. When the writer last saw the moor it was covered with deep snow


with about three hundred
tons of best late Arran Consul
stacked in long triangular
mounds. Who is to say
that Rubus Fissus Lindl.
and Bog Asphodel would
have been better products
of this
HOLLACOMBE
MOOR?