THE FARMING INHABITANTS OF APPLEBY AND AUSTREY:
TWO MIDLAND PARISHES,
1550-1700.

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This thesis is a comparative study of the inhabitants of two Midland parishes over a century and a half of economic and social upheaval. It will examine and test in a local context a series of hypotheses about early modern English society, taking into account the strengths and deficiencies of the material evidence.

An introductory historiographical survey looks at various approaches to the study of the 'local community', with particular regard to the approaches of the 'Leicester School' and 'Cambridge Group' historians.

The first chapter of my analysis begins with a broad survey of thirty contiguous parishes which form an agricultural sub-region of which Appleby and Austrey are an integral part. An investigation of the growth of marketing, communications and trade in this agricultural region provides a topographical context.

Chapter two focuses upon changes in the landscape and farming economies of the two parishes, with particular emphasis upon the changes brought about by enclosure.

The social and demographic analyses are based upon a 'family reconstitution' of each parish, using data from the registers supplemented by information from wills, inventories and hearth tax listings. A detailed analysis of population growth in chapter three reveals that both parishes escaped the worst effects of population expansion in the late Tudor and early Stuart period, while the slowing down of growth in the post Civil War period as a result of an internal population adjustment was partly offset by immigration.

Studies of economic and social polarization in chapter four, and of family and kinship linkages in chapters five and six, shed some light on the process of change in each of the parishes and help to account for their specific responses to outside developments. Particular attention is given to two important, interrelated factors: the dramatic increase in the labouring population and the expansion of cottage craft industries.

A final assessment of 'attitudinal' changes in each parish in chapter seven takes into account the religious and political alignments of the inhabitants immediately before and after the Civil War.

Emphasis is placed throughout upon the complex interaction of events and causes and upon the central importance of the inhabitants themselves in formulating responses to economic and social change. While they were influenced by other concerns, their priorities and interests remained primarily agricultural.
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INTRODUCTION

The following analysis traces economic, social and political developments in two adjoining early modern parishes in the classic open-field farming region of the Central Midlands. Although the prime agricultural land in both Appleby Magna in Leicestershire and Austrey in Warwickshire has been occupied and farmed for at least a millenium, neither parish has any special claim to uniqueness. Before the final enclosure of their common fields, Appleby's by Parliamentary Award in 1776, Austrey's by a series of private agreements between 1744-1796, their inhabitants practised a system of mixed farming which combined communal use of the arable with fattening stock on enclosed pasture. Here, as in other parts of rural England, family status, kinship, landholding, religion and custom were the prime determinants of economic and social behaviour throughout the one and a half centuries from 1550 to 1700 that are examined here. The parish church, where most of the inhabitants met together each week, was the central focus of the parochial world. Ownership of land and family status determined each person's place within the social hierarchy, the regulatory stricture of religion and custom provided the villagers with a common sense of unity, marketing and kinship connections consolidated links with the outside world. The changing balance between parochialism and links with the wider world beyond the parish is the principal theme of this investigation.

It is by now widely accepted that social and economic changes in early modern English society are best observed within a local context. Any analysis which relies wholly upon the fragmentary surviving records of individual parishes, will give an incomplete picture of the social order. But, as C.V. Phythian-Adams carefully reiterates, the complex interrelationships that constitute and give meaning to social change can
only be fully explored by examining settlements, parishes or townships as 'wholes'\(^1\). A substantial proportion of the early modern inhabitants of Appleby and Austrey can be identified from surviving documents. The parish registers, running from 1570 and 1558 respectively, provide comprehensive records of baptisms, marriages and burials. This vital registration data is complemented by wills, inventories, rentals, Protestation Oath listings, hearth tax assessments, quarter sessions indictments and archdeaconry court proceedings, to name only a few of the more important sources. From them it is possible to 'reconstitute' most of the families living in each parish between 1550 and 1700, using demographic techniques developed by Louis-Henry and the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.\(^2\)

The rural parish has long been regarded as the basic functional cell of English pre-industrial society. Historians, anthropologists and sociologists have all adopted it at various times as a convenient unit for intensive 'field' studies. Unfortunately, in doing this they invariably emphasise the communal aspects of village life at the expense of other equally important links and relationships. Traditional approaches to parish history, from seventeenth-century antiquaries such as Burton and Dugdale to Victorian classical-empiricists such as Maitland and Vinogradoff, reveal how each new generation re-interpreted the past from its own unique cultural perspective.\(^3\)


2. For an explanation of 'family reconstitution', see below p. 12; Dr. V.B. Elliott reconstituted 865 Austrey families listed in the registers between 1558-1800 in 1971. I reconstituted the 396 Appleby families between 1570-1730 in the Summer of 1977-8.

3. Cf. Keith Thomas' description of the function of myth as 'a validating charter for current relationships' in 'History and Anthropology', *Past and Present*, 24 (1963), 13. The following account (pp. 3-10) is based on a series of lectures by C.V. Phythian-Adams to English Local History students at Leicester University in 1978.
Antiquarian scholarship with its emphasis upon the social and economic elite reflects the seventeenth-century view of society as an ordered hierarchy dominated by the landed gentry. In the period from 1600 to 1640 almost all of the most celebrated midland antiquaries were friends or associates of Sir Simon Archer of Tamworth (1581-1662), the grand ambassador of antiquarian scholarship. It would be difficult to over estimate the contribution of William Burton in Leicestershire, Thomas Erdeswick in Staffordshire, Henry Ferrers and William Dugdale in Warwickshire to the history of individual midland towns and villages. These scholarly pioneers were the first to collect and record systematically a body of material relating to individual towns and villages for historical purposes, even if they did dwell rather exclusively upon their more notable inhabitants. Yet while none would question that their research provided a framework for later analysis, their reluctance to fit this evidence into an historical narrative pre-empted the search for meaning. A similar criticism can be levelled at the second wave of antiquarian endeavour at the turn of the eighteenth century, which produced as its crowning achievements John Nichols' monumental eight-volume history of Leicestershire and Stebbing Shaw's survey of Staffordshire. Neither of these exhaustively detailed works advanced far beyond the marshalling of historical evidence.

4. See P. Styles, Sir Simon Archer, 1581-1662: 'A lover of antiquity and of the lovers thereof', Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, No. 6, (1946), 14, 20 passim.; Although Archer engaged in lively discourse with other midland antiquaries on 'matters of Antiquities' and helped to provide material for their county histories, most of his own collections are still in MS form.


Almost another century elapsed before scholars began to formulate 'scientific' approaches to the study of local communities. A number of separate developments contrived to focus attention upon England's disappearing 'peasant' culture. Among them was the experience of Empire, which brought scholars into contact with 'primitive' societies, a phenomenal growth of interest in the natural sciences, and the great agricultural depression of the 1890s. Vinogradoff echoed the optimism of his age when, in 1892, he began his quest for 'laws of development and generalisations that shall unravel the complexities of human culture, as physical and biological generalisations have put in order our knowledge of the phenomena of nature'. Vinogradoff, with several other eminent scholars, including Gomme, Seebohm and Maitland, assumed that the 'village community' awaited only an explanation of its origins. Much of the early discussion of rural settlement was therefore arrested by a protracted and largely irrelevant debate on the origins of village institutions.

Maitland ended this flood of ethnomorphic speculation when he demolished the 'argument from survivals' upon which much of the theory rested. However, his major contribution to the study of rural communities lay in a precise analysis of primary sources to settle points of contention.


8. G.L. Gomme, The Village Community (London, 1890) argued that village institutions pre-dated both Roman and 'Teutonic' settlement, i.e. much older than any of his contemporaries would acknowledge; F. Seebohm traced village institutions to the thirty-acre Roman 'peasant-holding' which seemed to be inseparable from the open-field system 'into the nooks and corners of which it was curiously bound and fitted': The English Village Community (London, 1890), xii.

9. See Maitland's scathing review of Gomme in 'The Survival of Archaic Communities', Law Quarterly Review ix (1893), 37–50; In Domesday Book and Beyond (Cambridge, 1896) he demonstrated that pre-conquest villages were governed by peasant oligarchies rather than by a true communal system.
beginning to lose faith in attempts to discover scientific laws of human society. A growing awareness of the complexity of social organisation made it difficult to scientifically examine a single facet of human behaviour divorced from its social context.

The Great Agricultural Depression of the mid-1890s, by highlighting the process of breakdown and decline, shifted attention away from the issue of village origins to that of rural disintegration. In 1871 Erwin Nasse, a German agricultural historian, published a survey of the effects of Tudor enclosures which showed that farm labourer's living standards had deteriorated as landlords and tradesmen grew more prosperous.10 Interest in agricultural living standards was further heightened by J.E.T. Rogers' compilation of a compendious series of statistical indices of commodity prices and wages from medieval to early modern times.11 Nineteenth-century agricultural historians played a major part in laying the groundwork for the new, regional synthesis of 'farming history' later undertaken by Hoskins, Finberg and Thirsk.

But although the Victorians recognised that there were regional differences between farming communities, they failed to examine the history of individual parishes and townships in a local context, choosing instead to investigate the pre-industrial village as a generalised construct from widely scattered sources. The writing of parish history meanwhile continued in the antiquarian mold, highlighting notable families, monuments, 'curiosities' and lists of incumbents.12


12. For a typical example, see H.P. Stokes' History of the Wilbraham Parishes... in the County of Cambridge (Cambridge, 1926).
The groundwork for another methodological breakthrough was laid in the 1920s and 1930s, not by professional historians but by enthusiastic amateur topographers and fieldwalkers, encouraged by specialist organisations such as the English Place-Name Society, founded in 1924, and the compilers of the Victoria County Histories. This early geographical emphasis co-incided with an awakened interest in the minutiae of the English landscape, its hedgerows, footpaths, fields and farmhouses, and in the structure of manorial administration.\textsuperscript{13}

Local history took a major step towards becoming a respectable academic discipline in 1947 with the formation of the Department of English Local History at Leicester University. This provided both facilities and funds for an academic approach to the study of local "communities in the round". From its first inception the Leicester School placed emphasis on close analysis. W.G. Hoskins, the first occupant of the Leicester chair, recommended that researchers put local communities "under the microscope", while his successor, H.P.R. Finberg urged his students to study the 'Origin, Growth, Decline and Fall' of their chosen community.\textsuperscript{14} The issue of whether or not a 'community' encompassed partial or total networks of individuals (or whether indeed towns and villages had a separate organic existence) was scarcely considered. Scholars evidently thought that the term needed no explanation. Investigators have only recently begun to question the assumption that the village community was a prime reality to the individuals within its

\textsuperscript{13} See, in particular, Sidney and Beatrice Webb's \textit{History of Local Government: Manor and Borough} (London, 1925), N.S.B. and E.C. Gras, \textit{Economic and Social History of an English Village} (Cambridge, 1930), a survey of the village of Crawley, Hants, and A.G. Ruston and D. Whitney, \textit{Hooton Pagnell: the Agricultural Evolution of a Yorkshire Village} (London, 1934); Early volumes of the VCH are particularly rich in topographical material.

\textsuperscript{14} H.P.R. Finberg, \textit{The Local Historian and His Theme} (Leicester, 1952); A restatement in H.P.R. Finberg and V.H.T. Skipp, \textit{Local History: Objective and Pursuit} (Newton Abbot, 1967).
bounds. Of three exploratory studies by J.W.F. Hill, W.C. Hoskins and H.P.R. Finberg, Hoskins' nine-hundred year survey of Wigston Magna was the most successful attempt at a 'total history' of a single community, the inspirational model for the so-called 'Leicester School' which Hoskins himself helped to establish. 15 Essentially, it is a work of synthesis, a complex narrative history built around the general framework of population growth, the first successful attempt in England to investigate an historical community as a social organism. Hoskins' unique contribution lies as much in the range of his sources, wills, inventories, manorial terriers, court rolls, aerial photographs, parish registers and tithe maps, as in his choice of an ecclesiastical parish rather than a provincial town (Hill) or a monastic estate (Finberg) as the analytical focus.

The Wigston study set the pattern for 'small histories' using the rural parish as the frame of reference. Hoskins' primary theme, the inherent resilience to social change of Wigstons' inhabitants, harks back to an arcadian notion of an ideal 'village community'. However, Hoskins did not attempt an ethnographic analysis of the sort undertaken by Comme and Seebohm, but set out rather to dissect the actual process of change in a particular village. He helps to explain, for example, how a small nucleus of sedentary smallholders, practising an elementary 'thrift economy', staved off outside social and economic pressures for centuries before their hegemony over the village was finally broken; demographic and locational forces, a phenomenal late nineteenth-century population surge and proximity to the county capital, all hastened the process of disintegration. In short Hoskins saw Wigston swamped by a tide of industrialisation (the introduction of framework knitting looms) which

transformed the village from a living community to an industrial suburb of Leicester.

Hoskins' innovatory methods of defining and testing hypotheses, coupled with the attempt to study the parish as a whole, gave new insights into the process of change in Wigston. However, the extent to which Wigston can be regarded as typical of midland parishes is open to debate. There is certainly evidence to suggest, for example, that Wigston was atypical, even of that group of predominantly mixed-farming, open-field parishes to which it belonged. The presence of a ruling coalition of freeholders in place of a resident squirearchy insured against the great inequalities of wealth which characterised neighbouring settlements. Social links beyond the parish also call into question Hoskins' notion of community, as later studies have demonstrated.

Conceptual developments in the social sciences are largely responsible for undermining the methodological foundations for local studies laid down in the 1950s by Hoskins and Finberg. Margaret Stacey summarises the arguments against this type of circumscribed study by pointing out that administrative areas seldom coincide with natural groupings. Indeed her attempt to divorce sociological analysis of small groups living in proximity from the local or communal context has led to the introduction of a new concept: that of the 'local social system'. Since her expose of the 'myth of community studies' in 1969, the debate on what exactly constitutes a community has become so tortuous that some theorists have shied away from general usage of the term altogether in favour of a more precise, activity-specific usage. Macfarlane, for

16. At nearby Mowsley, for example, three quarters of the personal wealth of the village was in the hands of three yeoman families: Midland Peasant, 14, 142-3.

example, proposes communities of kinship, of cultural affinity or of religious associates. He is careful to stress that the lines of demarcation cannot be precisely drawn because functions overlap and functional areas may be subject to seasonal or even daily fluctuation.18 This functional categorization is an attempt to separate socially interacting neighbours from mere 'aggregations of people'.19

Social scientists are in the vanguard of those seeking new methodological approaches to the study of past societies. Keith Thomas, for example, argues that the precise techniques used by anthropologists to study small group interactional behaviour have a particular application to family history and to small town social groupings.20 Peter Adams, a sociologist convinced that history and sociology differ only in their separate 'explanation strategies', urges historians to explore the newly-developed techniques of social network theory.21 According to J.A. Barnes, E. Bott and J. Boissevain, who played a major part in developing this theory, society resembles a web or network of social relations rather than a 'static moral corporation'.22 The 'degree of connectedness' between individuals varies with their economic


19. The differences are parallel to the German distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft which postulate a sense of communal identity. These issues are dealt with more fully in J.C. Calhoun, 'Community: towards a variable conceptualization for comparative research', Social History, 5 No. 1 (1980), 105-29.


situation, their geographical and social mobility and their perception of
kinship affinity. A community in this context is understood in terms of a
comparatively dense or tight-knit network of relationships rather than as
a distinct social entity. It is not always possible or appropriate to
employ the rigorous analytical armoury of modern sociology as a method of
probing historical evidence. However, where opportunities present
themselves, network analysis will be undertaken in this study to explore
the social links between villages.

The Leicester school has demonstrated its ability to incorporate
new methodologies without abandoning its faith in the uniqueness of each
settlement. On his appointment as Hatton Professor of English Local
History at Leicester in 1967, Alan Everitt reiterated his predecessor's
charter for history which treats each settlement as 'a complete society
or organism with a more or less distinct and continuous life of its
own.' In practice this definition is open to broad interpretation.
The Leicester school has widened the scope of its activities to take
account of the regional context, as can be seen, for example, in
Everitt's innovatory work on seventeenth-century gentry communities and
nineteenth-century dissent. The systematic survey of pre-industrial
farming history undertaken by Finberg and Thirsk has provided a sound
foundation for setting community studies in their regional context. A
flood of specialist works on the expansion of trade, economic and social
upheavals before and after the Civil War, urban migration and popular


24. A.M. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60
(Leicester, 1973), 'Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional
Evolution in England', TRHS 5th Series, 29 (1979), 79-108, and The
Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century, English Local
History Occasional Papers, 2nd Series No. 4 (Leicester, 1972).

25. H.P.R. Finberg and Joan Thirsk (eds.) The Agrarian History of
England and Wales, 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1967), hereinafter cited
as Thirsk, AHW IV.
religious movements provides further opportunities for placing communities in their demographic, economic and social context.

One theme which has sparked particularly lively debate in recent years is the interdependence of agricultural parishes and local market towns. Economic and social historians have been slow to adapt the geographical concept of an 'urban field' or catchment area to pre-industrial towns. In fact an historical geographer studying Chinese provincial towns in the early 1960s was the first to suggest that traditional towns might have exerted economic, cultural and social hegemony over their surrounding villages in much the same way as modern urban centres. Despite an initial scepticism about comparisons between traditional Chinese and medieval or early modern English society, some local historians have come to see the market town as an essential organisational focus or unit in the English pre-industrial economy. The early modern period marks the final phase of the integration of village economies into those of nearby market towns, which has important implications for both the subjective and objective meaning of the village community. If the economic network is extended to include both parishes and market towns there is less need to emphasise the separateness of individual parishes within the market catchment area. Unfortunately, in his analysis of the market town of Ashby de la Zouch, C.J.M. Moxon neglects to take into account the town's marketing or social area, which


can be shown to have extended to at least one of the parishes in this survey. 28

The past two decades have also witnessed a growing demographic and ethnocultural interest in the family, which has important implications for community studies. Peter Laslett and E.A. Wrigley, both historical geographers, founded the Cambridge Group in 1964 with the avowed aim of refining techniques for the analysis of population change. Laslett's study of the pre-industrial household and Wrigley's work on family reconstitution, a systematic method for abstracting demographic indices from vital registration data, have revised orthodox views about the nature and function of the early modern family. 29 Their focus on the family opposes the issue of community with a new set of emphases. The family too can be seen to have its own unique history as a social organism.

While the Cambridge Group concentrates upon household size and family structure, others study the quality of family life. Lawrence Stone's epic narrative-history of the early modern family asserted that changes in attitudes and feelings ultimately undermined communal loyalties to neighbours and kinsmen. 30 His introduction of the concept of 'affective individualism' puts further emphasis upon individuals rather than close-knit 'communities'. Stone points out that local officials acquired more and more local administrative functions over


the course of the seventeenth century. The patriarchal family was encouraged by the Puritans for ideological reasons and by the civil authorities as an instrument of social control. The growing importance of the family is further suggested by John Demos, P.J. Greven and Kenneth Lockridge who seek 'organic explanations' of social change in the transplanted society of the New World. 31 Although the colonists retained traditional, 'local' customs of inheritance and land tenure these characteristic cultural forms were transmitted by individuals and families rather than by whole communities.

The current methodological debate is between those who favour the Leicester School approach and those who favour a regional or thematic approach to local history, the difference being primarily one of emphasis. 32 Both sides have their champions and detractors. Historians who restrict their investigations to a single parish or township are criticised for their failure to examine the larger picture, or to draw statistically significant inferences from the sources. The records of a single parish are usually too scattered and incomplete to provide scientifically verifiable evidence relating to a single facet or theme treated in isolation. This deficiency in raw data explains why demographic historians have tended to shy away from single-parish studies of the sort recommended by Hoskins and Finberg in favour of a regional


approach, using larger statistical samples. However quantitative analyses frequently fail to provide adequate causal explanations, discounting individual motivation and giving greater weight to numerical or 'aggregate' evidence. By excluding non-quantitative evidence, thematic approaches also tend to restrict the range of inquiry to easily verifiable hypotheses, overlooking the subtleties of group interaction.

The two most representative, full-length parish histories in the tradition of the Leicester School published within the past decade are Margaret Spufford's comparison of Chippenham, Orwell and Willingham and David Hey's narrative history of Myddle. Neither have attempted a 'total history' of their respective parishes, instead limiting the scope of analysis by concentrating upon one or two major themes within a restricted time framework. The divergence in their approach to communities helps to counter allegations that those schooled in the Leicester methods model their analyses too closely upon Hoskins' Wigston Magna study. Of the two, Spufford, who combines both regional and religious themes, is the more adventurous. She attempts to tap the springs of attitude and belief through a comparative analysis of three Cambridgeshire parishes with contrasting agricultural, geographic and demographic characteristics. The thesis is that certain types of farming

33. Two of the most notable examples are A.B. Appleby's Famine in Tudor and Stuart England (Liverpool, 1978) and V.H.T. Skipp's Crisis and Development: an Ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden, 1570-1674 (Cambridge, 1974). Appleby examines famine mortality in Westmorland and Cumberland while Skipp analyses the parish registers of five north Arden parishes to monitor the effects of an 'ecological crisis' between 1613-19, using family reconstitution rates.


35. See, for example, A. Rogers, 'Writing a Parish History', Local Historian, 9 (1970), 141-45.
landscape favoured the growth of dissent and that the spread of religious
literacy in turn fostered attitudinal changes. Unfortunately the
intractability of the evidence makes it extremely difficult to correlate
attitudes and farming landscapes. In the final analysis Spufford rejects
the notion of agricultural determinism and emphasises the uniqueness of
individual response. 'Demographic and literate man', she decides, 'are
as much abstractions as economic man.'

Hey's study of the Shropshire parish of Myddle in Tudor and
Stuart times adheres to a more conventional format. The author makes
extensive use of an eighteenth-century parish history compiled between
1700 and 1706 by Richard Cough, a resident smallholder in the parish,
even to the extent of following Cough's strategy of examining the
inhabitants according to their hierarchical seating order in the parish
church. In adopting this device Hey automatically accentuates the
more conservative aspects of the village social order, allowing the
community of the faithful, sustained by their own fixed perceptions of
order, rank and place, to interpret their own past. The result is a
conventional account of the history of the parish and its chapellries, the
tenancies and the families occupying them. Like Spufford Hey emphasises
the uniqueness of each individual parish. In an introductory statement,
for example, he asserts: 'The parish framework may have been in some
respects an arbitrary one, but for many purposes it was the one that
mattered.' This is certainly how Cough would have viewed it. Yet it
may not necessarily have have been the view of all of the inhabitants.

36. M. Spufford, 'The Total History of Village Communities', Midland
History, 10 (1973), 399.

37. The history, in two parts, 'Antiquities and Memoyres of the Parish
of Myddle' and 'Observations Concerninge the Seates in Myddle and
the Familieys to which they Belong' in Richard Cough's History of

38. Hey, Rural Community (op.cit.), 4.
especially the short-term residents. Similar reservations apply to any assumption of 'community awareness' among Appleby and Austrey inhabitants.

Investigative techniques for local area studies undergo periodic review and refinement. A.J. Macfarlane's methodological handbook for the intensive study of historical communities explains techniques for reconstructing villager populations through nominal record linkages, based on pilot studies of the parishes of Kirkby Lonsdale and Earls Colne. Macfarlane suggests a method of recording and collating every accessible reference in all available documents bearing upon the inhabitants of a particular area to build up a 'total' picture of the parochial world. While his emphasis upon a wide range of sources puts him firmly in the Leicester tradition, he fully acknowledges the difficulties inherent in the conventional notion of community. A major criticism is that even within the constraints imposed by time and resources, the documents in most cases do not exist. For instance, only a very small proportion of parishes have consecutive series of manor court rolls or parish registers suitable for family reconstitution. This is a major problem because, if the record linkages are seriously deficient, the historian is not able to delineate precisely which sets of inhabitants he is investigating. 'Total reconstitution' is usually impractical.

The Cambridge Group's contribution to local studies is a full-length analysis of the parish of Terling in Essex, which relies heavily upon quantitative methodology and social network theory. David Levine and Keith Wrightson's analysis of the Essex parish of Terling represents an important new development, an attempt to apply the precise analytical techniques used by the Cambridge Group for population studies, within a local context. Their study differs from previous


micro-historical analyses, such as Hoskins' study of Wigston and Hey's Shropshire village survey, in that no attempt is made to identify a village community as an organic entity. The authors make use, instead, of the concept of a 'local social system', a fluid network of social relationships extending over a comparatively wide area, only nominally focused on the parish. The strength of their approach, according to one commentator, lies in its capacity to provide precise, verifiable description of historical trends; its weakness is the apparent inability of the authors to explain the patterns which emerge or to integrate quantifiable and idiosyncratic behaviour patterns.  

The gap between the Leicester School and the Cambridge Group, the two contending parties in the 'debate on community', is slowly narrowing as a result of a continuous cross-fertilization of ideas. The former now make use of quantitative methodology to study economic and social changes, while the latter no longer seek purely 'ecological' or 'demographic' explanations divorced from their social context. Most local historians would probably concede that the Terling study has been a successful attempt to rectify the imbalance resulting from an excessive pre-occupation with 'demographic man'.

The present situation for students of early modern society has been described by Lawrence Stone as one of 'methodological anarchy'. In an illuminating article J.D. Marshall argues for a synthesis of these divergent methodological approaches in a regional framework.  

Professor Stone meanwhile calls for a revival of 'narrative history', arguing that 'quantitative methodology has proved a fairly weak reed

which can answer only a limited set of problems'. In an illuminating article Stone contends that historians are turning more and more from 'stratified and monocausal ... [to] interconnected and multicausal' explanations of historical change. Whatever direction they take most modern historians would probably agree with Victor Skipp that 'both the parish and the region are valid and fruitful entities for historical study': there is room for fact collecting, narrative and analysis and, indeed, all three activities are indispensable to the study of interrelationships. Deficiencies in the sources are an important constraint on the analysis that follows. Without the detailed topographic insights provided by a continuous series of manorial court records like those surviving for Kibworth Harcourt, or the anecdotal recollections of a contemporary chronicler like Richard Gough, some important aspects of parochial life must inevitably remain hidden. However, sufficient evidence remains to reconstruct at least part of the social and economic infrastructure which represented the world so far as the inhabitants of Appleby and Austrey were concerned. Through such a reconstruction of the parochial world I intend to define and explain their responses to the process of change.

44. Ibid., 24.
45. Skipp, 'Local History (Part 2)', loc.cit., 397.