



## Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England.

Review Author[s]:  
Alan MacFarlane

*The Economic History Review*, New Series, Volume 35, Issue 3 (Aug., 1982), 459-460.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0013-0117%28198208%292%3A35%3A3%3C459%3ASIHIEEM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T>

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

*The Economic History Review* is published by Economic History Society. Please contact the publisher for further permissions regarding the use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ehs.html>.

---

*The Economic History Review*  
©1982 Economic History Society

JSTOR and the JSTOR logo are trademarks of JSTOR, and are Registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. For more information on JSTOR contact [jstor-info@umich.edu](mailto:jstor-info@umich.edu).

©2003 JSTOR

analyzed by Robert Mandrou in 1964. Her conclusion that "English society was less subservient, more aware of the possibilities of upward social movement, and more liable to ridicule its 'betters' than the French" is mirrored in Bernard Capp's study of English almanacs which, although they shared many features of the French, were "characterized by political, religious and social speculation, and by an awareness of change and progress". So, here again, we have a tantalizing contrast between the two societies, between a conservative France which relied for its heroes on saintly, chivalrous, and aristocratic models and a much more materialist England in which popular books about poor boys made good could glorify upwards social mobility and the capitalistic ethic.

*London School of Economics*

PETER EARLE

ANNE KUSSMAUL. *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp. xii + 233. 28 figures. 27 tables. £19.50.)

Service in husbandry was of central importance in the economy and society of England between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. About sixty per cent of the population aged 15-24 were servants (p. 3), and between one third and a half of the hired labour in early modern agriculture was supplied by such servants (p. 5). There was hardly any change in the form of the institution during these centuries (p. 119). It was a central peculiarity, which we know differentiated north-western Europe from all other agrarian civilizations. Anne Kussmaul now explains its nature, causes, and consequences. She has written an excellent book: elegant, witty and scholarly.

Through the use of parish listings, muster rolls, militia lists, settlement examinations, the 1851 census, and some very unusual Spalding Statute sessions records, Anne Kussmaul has made servants visible again. She has described them through the observations of Young, Marshall, and Howitt and through manuscript and printed diaries and autobiographies, particularly that of Fred Kitchen. Where there are gaps, the author devises ingenious indirect measures, particularly the seasonality of marriage.

Five major reasons for the existence of the institution in England are suggested. Animals need year-long labour and hence the pastoralism and mixed agriculture favours permanent, year-long contracts. Casual labour was often absent with widespread by-employments in country industries and moderately ample wastes and commons. The many small and medium-sized farms required just a little extra labour. The problem of redistributing labour over the life-cycle was not dealt with by expanding the amount of work done as in Chayanov's description, but by sending-out and hiring-in labour. Finally, the precarious demographic situation made servants an important insurance against sickness and death. Especially intriguing are the various discussions of the way farm service provided an alternative to the extended families and domestic mode of production elsewhere: "Service in husbandry solved the cyclical problem by eliminating it. The family was simply redefined" (p. 24).

The institution helps to explain Hajnal's "unique European marriage pattern" of late and non-universal marriage. Service was a "covenanted state of celibacy" (p. 83), marriage could be allowed to be late. When service disappeared, marriage age dropped. The possibility of artificially creating a family labour force of the right size made it unnecessary to have large numbers of children. The total absence of adoption in English history has long been a puzzle as has the absence of any pressure towards high fertility. But as the author, following Wrigley, points out, "the institution of service was a form of *ex post facto* family planning". The institution, by slowing down population growth, allowing private savings, and providing labour mobility, was of central importance in explaining economic growth over the period.

The author provides a tantalizing appendix which fails to explain when widespread

servanthood started; all we know is that it was widespread from the later fourteenth century. It then collapsed in the south and east of England very rapidly indeed between 1790 and 1850. This resulted from a rise in the population, which provided alternative, cheaper, day labour; a rise in the cost of living, which made it more expensive to have living-in servants; and a change from mixed to highly-seasonal grain production.

*University of Cambridge*

ALAN MACFARLANE

P. B. MUNSCHÉ. *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws, 1671-1831*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981. Pp. x + 255. 10 illustrations. £18.59.)

This new study of the Game Laws, filling a long-standing gap in the literature of the countryside, takes its starting point as 1671 because, as the author remarks, though there were Game Laws in force before that date they did not make hunting the exclusive privilege of the landed gentry; and the work is brought to a close in 1831, because the Game Reform Act of that year marked the end of this era of exclusiveness.

Why did the Act of 1671 create a landowners' monopoly in the taking of game? The author believes that the new measure sprang from the growth of tensions between town and country, and reflected the desire of the gentry to "redefine and enhance their own social position *vis-a-vis* the urban bourgeoisie, rather than to punish the activities of 'disorderly persons'. . .". This seems rather far-fetched: why not take the Act at its face value as a measure deliberately framed to give the gentry control over who should and should not be permitted to sport after game, shutting out the lower orders in the countryside? The restriction on the taking of protected game (strictly, hares, partridges, pheasants, and moor fowl) could be relaxed as the individual landowner might see fit, and in practice was permitted well below the ranks of those who commanded the necessary qualification in property—land to the value of £100 p.a. or copyhold or a 99-year leasehold to the value of £150 p.a. Only the qualified were permitted by law to own a gun or keep a lurcher, but with the express or tacit approval of landowners, parties for shooting or coursing often included small landowners, tenant farmers, tradesmen, and even servants. The growth of enclosures for game preservation, however, was accompanied after 1750 by a greater reluctance to allow such freedom, with a consequent alienation of the groups affected and an increase in poaching.

Who were the poachers, and how repressive was the landowners' enforcement of the law? Surprisingly, many convicted poachers—farmers and tradesmen, but also clothmakers, labourers, and shepherds—were able to pay a fine of £5 or £10, and only 27 per cent of those convicted of game offences in Wiltshire between 1750 and 1820 went to prison. Numbers of poaching gangs were made up of industrial workers, miners, stocking-makers, ribbon-weavers, watchmakers and the like. To the poor labourer the money he could obtain on the lucrative black market in game was more valuable than a partridge or pheasant in his pot: the author finds no direct correlation between the fluctuations in the prices of wheat and those in game offences. It has to be remembered here, however, that the author confines his attention to those animals that came within the scope of the Game Laws. Much poaching by poor men concerned with filling their pots was of rabbits, and the conflicts which arose in forest areas like Cannock Chase and Waltham Forest revolved round the claims of landowners to exclusive rights of property over rabbits and deer. Since these did not come within the ambit of the Game Laws the author omits any consideration of them, a limitation which severely narrows the value of his study for those interested in the wider question of the effects of landowners' extension of their territorial claims.