



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bound to the soil (part II): the political economy of compulsory apprenticeship schemes in eighteenth-century rural England

James D. Fisher 

Archaeology and History, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK
Email: j.d.fisher@exeter.ac.uk

Abstract

This is the second of two articles examining a distinctive but overlooked system for organizing child and youth labour in rural England. It reveals how parishes used their powers under the 1601 Poor Law to allocate children as unpaid indentured farm servants (for up to 17 years) to local landholders occupying properties of a certain value. As both apprentice and master could be compelled by law, parish authorities were able to implement centralized rotation schemes. This article (Part II) examines the political and economic aspects of these compulsory apprenticeship schemes in the South-West. First, it reviews their scale and the policies for regulating the distribution of children to landholders, including calculations for the optimum apprentice-to-acreage ratio. Second, it presents a case study of Awliscombe in Devon, which bound one-quarter of local children, offering a new model of governance whereby the leading farmers were able to control both poor relief and the labour supply through their multiple roles as policymakers, administrators and masters themselves. It concludes by reflecting on the distinctiveness of farm apprenticeship schemes as a system of labour that combined elements of life-cycle service with a serfdom-like bond between land and labour.

1. Introduction

When Rebecca Hayman, a poor seven-year-old in the village of Awliscombe, Devon, was bound by the parish as an apprentice in housewifery in 1739, she entered a complex and obscure system for organizing local labour.¹ Rebecca's new home, where she would work as an involuntary and unpaid servant for the next 14 years, was determined by a parish scheme designed and administered by a small coterie of landholders, of which her new master was himself a prominent member.² Her indenture specified that she was bound 'for and in respect of an Estate called Chilstones Hill', near the centre of the village.³ Chilstone Hill was one of more than 50 landholdings or 'estates' participating in a rotation scheme to distribute poor children among the majority of ratepayers,

where they worked as a servant in exchange for food and lodging.⁴ Each property took one child, then the cycle began again. Rebecca was the latest in a series of children bound every generation to Chilstone Hill in 1690, 1716, 1739, 1758, 1768, 1790 and 1818.⁵

The occupier of Chilstone Hill in 1739 was the yeoman Thomas Bampffield, which qualified him to be Rebecca's legal master until she reached the age of 21 or was married, for which the parish paid him a fee of 10 shillings.⁶ Thomas Bampffield was a leading figure in parish affairs, although does not appear to have held significant property within Awliscombe.⁷ In 1739, he was probably over 40 years old and had six children with his wife Susanna, including a daughter the same age as Rebecca Hayman.⁸ Yet Rebecca was neither his first nor his last parish apprentice, having previously taken Robert Bucknoll (1710) and Elizabeth Grigory (1733) for his own estate in town, and later Thomas Griffen for 20 shillings around 1741.⁹ In addition to acting as a master himself to four apprentices, he was extensively involved in managing the apprenticeship scheme as a whole, and perhaps one of its key architects. Through serving in the local office roles administering poor relief (churchwarden and overseer of the poor) for at least eight years between 1728 and 1750, Bampffield was personally involved in binding 18 children as apprentices to fellow parishioners.¹⁰ Further, Bampffield was a core member of the vestry, the small governing body of around 8–12 men that controlled parish affairs, judging by his frequent signatures approving minutes and accounts between 1731 and 1752.¹¹

Bampffield was only one of a group of yeomen exercising significant control over the families of his poorer neighbours. The officers that bound Rebecca Hayman in 1739 were Josias Husey, John Husey and Thomas Pring, who sat alongside Bampffield making poor relief policies in vestry meetings, took turns with him in deciding when to bind local children when serving as officers, and accepted multiple children as apprentices themselves in respect of their landholdings.¹² Such men were always wearing three hats, acting simultaneously as state official, local employer and taxpayer. The fact that young Rebecca Hayman was forced to become a member of Bampffield's household, without consent required from her or her parents, was not a spontaneous decision in response to sudden circumstances but the latest in a series of relatively predictable outcomes produced by a planned system for allocating children that Bampffield and his fellow leading landholders had constructed.

A hundred similar tales could be told about Awliscombe, and thousands more from similar parishes across rural England in the eighteenth century. Awliscombe was fairly typical for east Devon, and broadly representative of pastoral areas in the South-West generally, in how it developed a compulsory scheme that bound apprentices by property. The 'compulsory' dimension here refers to the power of the parish to compel masters (or mistresses) to take apprentices, which contrasts with the 'voluntary' agreements parishes could make with individual masters to take pauper children as apprentices, incentivized by a small payment.¹³ Parish apprenticeship was *always* legally compulsory for the child and their parents. The Acts of 1598 and 1601 gave discretionary powers to parish officers (with the consent of two magistrates) to bind poor children by indenture as 'apprentices' until the ages of 21 for girls or 24 for boys, which in rural areas usually meant a long-term unpaid and involuntary service in husbandry.¹⁴ In 1697, a further statute clarified that appointed masters could be compelled

to take an apprentice, which was usually interpreted to mean that occupiers of property within the parish could be forced to take an apprentice (resident or not), as eventually clarified in case law in 1789.¹⁵ Effectively, ratepayers were liable to maintain poor children in their households as servants for the same reasons they were liable to pay the poor rates to contribute to relief payments. On the basis of this power, many rural parishes developed organized schemes to bind children to 'estates' and their occupiers in a systematic manner, usually on a rotational basis. However, with the exception of the early account by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1927 summarizing the evidence for these schemes in the 1834 Poor Law Report, we know very little about their history.¹⁶

This is the second of two articles offering the first examination of compulsory apprenticeship schemes in rural England. As Part I outlined, the approach departs from most historiography by analysing parish apprenticeships as a distinctive mode of organizing labour, rather than framed primarily as a device of poor relief or as an inferior species of craft apprenticeship.¹⁷ Part I set out the key contexts and presented a survey of parish schemes in the South-West, arguing that they constituted a new kind of rural institution for managing poor youth in the way that the parish apportioned workers to property holders. Its primary contribution was to establish a new chronology. It explained the origin of the schemes in the late seventeenth century, in which the anxious climate of rising poor rates, labour shortages and failure of national reform stimulated local experiments in putting the poor to work. It then demonstrated how property-binding schemes evolved through custom and formalized gradually, developing from the 1670s and becoming widely established by the mid-eighteenth century. Its secondary contribution was to place the South-West schemes in national context by showing that existing evidence indicates a broad regional pattern: schemes mostly flourished in the wood-pasture macro-region of the North and West of England, and were especially prevalent in the South-West. Further, it identified a subregional zone and suggested that apprenticeship schemes may have been the favoured policy in areas where farmers struggled to secure a local labour supply owing to the relative independence of cottagers. In light of the broader regional patterns in relation to the Poor Laws and the labour market, it hypothesized that the West and the North preferred to bind poor youth into long-term service to maintain a stable local labour force through apprenticeship schemes, whereas the East and the South preferred to regulate the short-term employment of adult paupers to maintain a flexible labour force through Speenhamland-style policies.

In the following, Part II, the policies and governance of these schemes are examined more closely, in order to identify with greater precision the principles underlying this mode of organizing labour and the type of communities in which it operated. In contrast to the historiographical focus on either individual or aggregated apprenticeships, this study is attentive to how they were linked together within coordinated local schemes. As Steve Hindle perceptibly observed, parishes had the power to 'reconstitute households ... by redistributing the burden of children from the less well-off to the more prosperous households within and beyond the parish'.¹⁸ It is precisely this *redistribution between households* by the parish that remains to be investigated, understood and integrated into our understanding of the early modern rural economy. While the coercive dimension is stressed here, the focus is on policy and administration rather than the experience of the individuals affected.

The first section shows how rotation schemes operated in the South-West and the common policies that parishes developed to regulate the distribution of children to landholders. The second section presents a detailed case study of Awliscombe parish, as representative of a medium-sized rural parish in an area with a high density of schemes. It is interesting precisely because it is the kind of parish that has previously been considered economically uninteresting, since every child was bound to farm service ('husbandry' or 'huswifery'). The analysis outlines the scheme's development over time, discusses its extensiveness across households in the parish and examines its structures of governance and administration. The third section considers the ambiguity of whether children were bound to persons or property. The final section reflects on the distinctive political economy of the farm apprenticeship system, which combined elements of life-cycle service with a serfdom-like bond between labour and land to reproduce a class of dependent adult labourers. It further suggests how such planned systems of unfree farm labour can be reconciled with accounts of the transition to agrarian capitalism.

2. Scheme policies in the South-West

Despite the numerous references to the existence of rotation or lottery schemes, there has been minimal attention to how these schemes actually functioned.¹⁹ As the Webbs recounted, the main finding in the *Assistant Poor Law Commissioners Reports* (1834) was the sheer variety of methods for allocating children to occupiers, with 'no fixed rule by which a master is liable to take an apprentice' in the key areas of the South-West and Yorkshire.²⁰ Such diversity was owing to an absence of any guidance on how the statutory power to compel parishioners (affirmed by the 1697 Act) was to be applied in practice. Hence, each parish developed its own practices, which often evolved gradually through custom and were only occasionally formalized into explicit policy. Yet schemes in the 1830s exhibited a few common themes: masters were selected either by lot or by order of rotation; the smallest occupiers were often exempted; and proportional criteria were frequently used to allocate children in relation to the size or value of properties.²¹ As the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner James Kay observed with respect to the Eastern counties, the underlying principle was seemingly to 'accomplish an equal distribution of the burthen of compulsory apprenticeship upon the rate-payers' – with varying and competing notions of equity.²² The only attention to the policies of early rotation systems appears in two studies. Sarah Child has shown that in the Devon parish of Rackenford (1728–1844) the pattern of bindings 'suggests that the basic principle was to allocate them in turn' with no clear correlation with farm size.²³ Decades earlier, H. Fearn drew attention to how the method of allocating compulsory apprenticeships in the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk (1779–1834) was generally a ratio of one apprentice per £50 per annum of land, noting that differing qualifications produced 'a somewhat complex system' in many areas.²⁴

The following evidence from a survey of South-Western parishes shows that the policy profile found in 1834 had its roots in the early eighteenth century. The analysis here is based on evidence collected from 49 parishes for property-binding schemes in the counties of Devon, Somerset and Dorset, focused on 40 parishes whose schemes began before 1750.²⁵ Whereas Part I focused on the origins, evolution and geographical

Table 1. Estimates for the average number of children bound per year before 1750, for a sample of 17 registers

Parish	County	Average no. of bindings per year	Selected date range	Total no. of bindings in select period	Population in 1801
Cullompton	Devon	12.5	1709–1750	527	3,138
Halberton	Devon	8.8	1684–1750	589	1,436
Ottery St Mary	Devon	8.7	1682–1750	460	2,415
Cheriton Fitzpaine	Devon	5.1	1729–1750	112	884
Awliscombe	Devon	2.9	1708–1750	126	426
Wedmore	Somerset	2.5	1723–1750	69	2,122
North Tawton	Devon	2.2	1736–1750	31	1,436
Nettlecombe	Somerset	2.1	1698–1750	113	329
Combe St Nicholas	Somerset	2.1	1731–1750	42	870
Bishops Hull	Somerset	2.0	1696–1750	110	683
Washfield	Devon	1.8	1693–1750	106	422
Ide	Devon	1.4	1679–1716	53	507
Broadwindsor	Dorset	1.3	1733–1752	25	1094
Withycombe Raleigh	Devon	1.1	1726–1750	26	692
Kenn	Devon	1.0	1720–1750	32	818
Drayton	Somerset	0.9	1697–1750	46	370
West Bagborough	Somerset	0.8	1691–1750	45	352

spread of the schemes, this section considers their scale and organizing principles. It is primarily based on two kinds of records: formal policies recorded in vestry minutes or memos, and systematic registers from which policies can be reconstructed.

The basic template was a simple rotation, with one apprentice bound per estate in turn until all estates had participated, then beginning again. To give a sense of the administrative scale, [Table 1](#) displays the size of schemes in terms of the numbers of children bound for 17 parishes (where reliable estimates allow) for select periods up to 1750.²⁶ The average number of bindings per year mostly range between one and eight, showing that schemes were scalable and could be adopted for small and large parishes.²⁷ [Table 2](#) displays the size of the rotation schemes for a sample of 12 parishes with sufficient records, in terms of the number of estates, the number of bindings per rotation and the typical length of rotation.²⁸ Most schemes involved more than 40 estates, and sometimes more than 100 were included for larger parishes, or those with more complex schemes that involved the participation or contributions of large numbers of smaller estates.²⁹ As more complex schemes were more likely to produce detailed records, this sample likely overrepresents large schemes. Nonetheless, it is clear that many apprenticeship schemes were operating on a substantial scale across the South-West from the end of the seventeenth century and therefore constituted a significant method for organizing young labour.

Table 2. Approximate size of rotation schemes in terms of the number of estates, the number of bindings per rotation and the length of average rotation in years, for a sample of 12 parishes

Parish	County	No. of estates (no. of classes)	Bindings per rotation	Length of rotation (approx. years)	Example rotation dates	Note
Awliscombe	Devon	53	53	18	1708–1726	
Broadwindsor	Dorset	47	47	28	1733–1761	
Burnham-on-Sea	Somerset	125 (in 75)	75	32	c.1768–1800	As per policy c.1801
Cheriton Fitzpaine	Devon	82	82	17	1729–1746	Total 88 estates listed in register, but fewer would have participated at any one time. First rotation reconstructed from register
Ide	Devon	42	59	14	1789–1803	
Nettlecombe	Somerset	20–25	21	4–5	1698–1702/3	Register states 3 rotations 1698–1720, after 66 bindings
North Tawton	Devon	58–88	Unknown	Unknown	n/a	Total 88 in register, but only 58 estates listed in index c.1800
Sandford	Devon	150–160	Unknown	Unknown	n/a	
Wedmore	Somerset	600+ (in 62)	62	43	1740–1783	
West Buckland	Somerset	106 (in 29)	43	Unknown	n/a	As per policy c.1701
West Monkton	Somerset	160 (in 24)	24	Unknown	n/a	Estates divided into parts in order to create equal units
Withycombe Raleigh	Devon	47	47	37.5	1727–1785, 1785–1802	Two rotations of very different lengths, average taken for length

In terms of policy, some parishes do not have sufficient records for a detailed reconstruction, which in many cases probably reflects the simplicity of their scheme: a 'flat' rotation of one apprentice per estate did not require detailed policies or elaborate registers.³⁰ However, even the simplest rotation was complicated by the variations in the lengths of contracts, which depended on the age and gender of the child, since indentures expired at age 21 for girls and 24 for boys. For example, taking an 8-year-old boy was a legal commitment for up to 16 years, whereas a 13-year-old girl was only half that. While children were typically bound between the ages of seven and nine, older children could be bound if family circumstances changed (e.g. the death of one parent). Hence, rotation schemes were not distributing equal contracts among parishioners, which posed a greater problem for schemes with a fixed sequence than those that allowed the order to change within each cycle. An additional complication was the potential for the premature ending of a contract owing to either the death of the apprentice or master, or a discharge ordered by the court because of a failure to fulfil contractual responsibilities, which could release an estate from its responsibility many years earlier than scheduled.

However, parishes could build flexibility into their schemes by operating hybrid systems in which masters could also be bound 'by ability', that is, their non-landed wealth, or occasionally 'by consent', in which the master was paid a small premium.³¹ Alternatively, some parishes allowed for negotiated exemptions: rather than fining those refusing to take an apprentice the maximum penalty of £10, they allowed parishioners to avoid their obligation for a much smaller fee.³² For example, in Withycombe Raleigh in 1728, Isaac Baker was 'Excused on paying two pounds & two shillings untill it shall come his turn again'; and in Broadclyst in 1714 Joseph Dunscombe successfully paid £4 'to be freed & discharged from an Apprentice to be bound unto him by the space of seventeen years'.³³ Such refusals and exemptions could have various motivations: not wanting any parish apprentice; not wanting the specific individual allocated to them; not wanting to participate in a system that gave them no choice; or a protest at the perceived unfairness in how children were being allocated. The last might have prompted the creation of formal policies to regulate the liability of masters and the distribution of children.

Table 3 presents a summary of the key policies for eleven well-documented parishes, primarily concerning the two major kinds of regulation: minimum thresholds for participating estates and proportional rules for allocation. Parishes incorporated a proportional element either by creating a *scale* to apportion the number of apprentices to the size of estate or by grouping estates (or parts of estates) into units of equal size and then binding apprentices per unit. The frequent use of minimum thresholds suggests that parishes were concerned about the suitability of binding children to ratepayers who lacked the capacity to maintain them and put them to work. At the same time, however, smaller estates were often grouped into larger units to ensure that those exempt from taking an apprentice would instead contribute financially to whichever estate took the apprentice. The growing implementation of proportional scales and classifications based on property values over the eighteenth century suggests a desire to ensure that larger estates took a higher allocation of children.

The most comprehensive early policies are found in Somerset, in the Vale of Taunton, indicating some mutual influence. On 11 June 1701, the vestry of West

Table 3. Summary of key policies relating to minimum thresholds for size of estates, proportional scales and classifications, for a sample of eleven parishes

Parish	County	Minimum threshold	Proportional scale	Proportional classification
Awilscombe	Devon	£10 p/a [from 1708]	n/a	Groups of £30 p/a (every estate over £5) [1741]
Bishops Hull	Somerset	£40 p/a [1743], 2s. Rate [1779]	n/a	Estates £40–£80 p/a grouped with smaller estates to total £80 p/a [1743]; Estates Rated 2s.–7s. joined by smaller estates [1784]
Burnham-on-Sea	Somerset	30s. Rate [1743], £10 p/a [1800]	n/a	Groups of £100–£150 p/a [1800]
Cheriton Fitzpaine	Devon	5d. Rate [1807]	Rated 5d.–1s. = 2 apps; 1s.–18d. = 3 apps; 18d.–2s. = 4 apps; over 2s. = 5 apps [1807]	n/a
Kentisbeare	Devon	£10 p/a or ‘Ability’ [1798]	£10–£80 p/a = 1 apps; £80–£180 = 2 apps; £180–£380 = 3 apps; over £380 = 4 apps [1798]	n/a
North Tawton	Devon	£10 p/a or ‘Ability’ [1789]	Rated < 9d. = 1 app; 1s. 6d. = 2 apps, with additional apprentice per extra 1s. [1799]	n/a
Sandford	Devon	30s. Rate [1798]	Rated 30s.–50s. = 2 apps; 50s.–80s. = 3 apps; 80s.–100s. = 4 apps; 100s.–150s. = 5 apps; 150s.–200s. = 6 apps; 200s. ≤ 12 apps [1798]	n/a
Shirwell	Devon	£10 p/a [1798]	n/a	Groups of £50 p/a [1798]
West Buckland	Somerset	none	£15 p/a = 1 app; £30 p/a = 2 apps; £45 p/a = 3 apps; £60 p/a = 4 apps, etc. [1701]	Groups of multiples of £15 p/a [1701]
West Monkton	Somerset	unknown	£100 p/a = 1 app; £100–£200 contribute to 2nd app; £200 = 2 apps; £200–£300 contribute to 3rd app; etc. [1757]	Groups of multiples of £100 p/a [1757]
Wooton Fitzpaine	Dorset	unknown	n/a	Groups of multiples of £40 p/a [1801]

Note: Dates of the policies have been included in brackets, especially to indicate where policies changed. Some policies were based on the valuation of property, while others used the assessed rate as a proxy measure for property value.

Buckland decided to bind poor children to parishioners 'by an equal pound Rate'; the same calculation on which they were taxed for poor relief.³⁴ The vestry classified parish land into multiples of £15 per annum, with one apprentice to be allotted to each class (or two for £30, three for £45, etc.). A total of 106 estates were grouped into 29 classes to take 43 apprentices per rotation. Decades later in nearby Bishops Hull, in 1743, leading parishioners agreed that 'no Apprentice shall be put or bound to any Single Estate or Tenement only' below £40 per annum; and that estates rated £40–£80 per annum were to be joined by smaller estates (such that the surplus of the first estate would be supplemented by the smaller to reach a further £40) to take another apprentice, with the smaller estate paying a contribution. However, later resolutions reveal that the parish struggled to enforce a strict rotation, as in 1779 the vestry found it necessary to order officers to bind children 'as soon it may become necessary'. By 1790, a practice of binding children in groups had created a loophole whereby prospective masters could haggle over a particular apprentice, leading the vestry to stipulate that as soon as a chargeable child turned nine they were to be bound immediately to the 'owners or occupiers of lands liable to take an apprentice whose legal turn it may happen to be'.³⁵ West Monkton faced a similar challenge. It developed its own proportional scale on 12 April 1757 for a 'more Equitable method', classifying estates into 24 groups approximating £100 each, with smaller estates paying a contribution.³⁶ The policy insisted that 'no one proprietor or occupier of Lands shall have the liberty of chusing his or her Apprentice' and that children were to be 'Bound out in rotation as he she or they shall become chargeable ... to the person whose Turn it is to take according to Roll of the Classes & Lotts now established'.³⁷

Most formal policy statements from Devon survive at the end of the eighteenth century. North Tawton had a highly organized scheme from 1736, but the earliest surviving policy was recorded on 12 July 1789, and established that every estate valued over £10 per annum was to take an apprentice, and also those judged to have 'an ability' through other wealth, which was adjusted to be more proportional in 1799.³⁸ Similarly, Sandford had clearly operated a proportional system since at least 1765, yet the earliest policy was dated 15 December 1798, and allocated children on a proportional scale from 1 to 12 apprentices per estate rated above a minimum of 30 shillings.³⁹ In north Devon, Shirwell grouped estates into units of £50 per annum from 1798 and exempted those under £10 per annum.⁴⁰ Few early policies have been identified in Dorset, but Wootton Fitzpaine set out its 'scheme for binding Apprentices according to the value of Estates' on 26 February 1801 as agreed by the 'Occupiers of Land'; it divided land into rough multiples of £40 per annum with between one and four apprentices bound to each group.⁴¹

Elsewhere, parishes with no recorded policy show clear signs of estate classifications or proportional bindings in their registers. An early list of names from Wedmore (Somerset) covering 1723–1777 was replaced by a register divided into classes of estates covering 1727–1780 whose damaged title declared that it included estates assessed above 6 pence and 'Intended for more equal placing Poor Children Apprentices'.⁴² The register for Nettlecombe (Somerset) did not state its underlying principles, but the larger estates were receiving children more regularly, and a note in 1720 observed that 'every Estate hath Paid his full Proportion three times since the beginning of this Scheme'.⁴³ The register for Winsford (Somerset) from 1753 shows estates united

or divided into groups, later referenced in 1790 as the 'antient method of binding apprentices (that is) every 8 shilling Rate shall take an apprentice'.⁴⁴ In Broadwindsor (Dorset), the main list of apprentices indicates a flat rotation scheme from 1733, but two inserted slips listing estates in the 1770s both show groupings of estates to make totals of 8 pence in the Rates.⁴⁵ A rare illustration of a parish introducing a proportional policy in direct response to judicial instruction was recorded in the register for Ide (Devon) on 14 June 1776: it was 'by the order of Justice Carrington & Justice Cooke that the Capitle Estates which are above forty pounds a year should take two apprentices'.⁴⁶

All the proportional schemes established a particular relationship between land and labour, but the most meticulous example is from Burnham-on-Sea (Somerset). The parish had been binding by property since at least 1745, but around 1800 it developed a new and elaborate proposal for the consideration of the magistrates. The authors observed that over the previous 32 years 75 apprentices had been bound across the 4,000 acres of the parish, a ratio of 1 apprentice per 53 acres, or every £133 of property.⁴⁷ Whereas the old method had allocated children equally to estates ranging from £30 to £600 per annum, the new method was designed to ensure that children were bound to units of between £100 and £150 per annum, or around 50 acres. All parish land (above £10 per annum) was classified into 75 units of between £100 and £150 in a table displaying the precise breakdown of acreage.⁴⁸

While every scheme was unique and developed in its own way, the basic custom of exempting smaller estates and apportioning apprentices according to property value was widely shared. Indeed, the former became so embedded in Devon that it was later mistaken as a statutory provision. In his 1808 agricultural report, Charles Vancouver inaccurately stated that the 1601 Act 'subjects the occupier of 10 [pounds] per annum to the receiving regularly in turn, a parish apprentice', but the original Act contained no property qualification at all.⁴⁹ To explore these complex administrative arrangements further, the following case study reconstructs how one such scheme operated in practice.

3. Case study: Awliscombe, Devon

Awliscombe is a parish in east Devon, situated at the edge of the Blackdown Hills and covering more than 2,500 acres.⁵⁰ It had a population of approximately 400 around the year 1700, which remained stagnant into the nineteenth century.⁵¹ Just over one-third of households were too poor (34 out of 95) to pay the Hearth Tax in 1674, close to the average for Devon.⁵² There were no major resident gentry families and landholding was widely distributed among a broad band of small to large farmers (see Table 4).⁵³ Based on known and estimated acreages within the parish for 1705, more than half the ratepayers were small farmers or husbandmen (under 24 acres); around 12 were medium-large farmers (over 72 acres); only two occupiers were clearly substantial yeomen (over 100 acres). But Awliscombe, like many English parishes, underwent a process of polarization in the first half of the eighteenth century, as the smallest farmers were squeezed out and the middling and larger farmers accumulated more parcels of land.⁵⁴ As will be discussed, this divergence in landholdings probably amplified the use of parish apprenticeships.

Table 4. Social structure of Awliscombe, reconstructed from the Hearth Tax records for 1674

Category	Wealth assessment: number of hearths	Social position	Number of taxpayers	% of taxpayers
I	6 to 20	Gentry and very large farmers	2	2.1
II	3 to 5	Yeoman, wealthy craftsmen	21	22.1
III	2	Husbandmen, craftsmen	20	21.1
IV	1 and excused	Labourers, poor craftsmen, poor widows	52	54.7
Total			95	100.0

Awliscombe developed a compulsory apprenticeship scheme based on a rotation between properties from at least 1708. Records for the seventeenth century are patchy, but the apprenticing of poor children possibly began in 1609.⁵⁵ Early apprenticeships were most likely funded through charitable donations rather than local taxation, such as the £5 bequeathed by the yeoman Peter Bartow in 1619.⁵⁶ Children were being bound with relative frequency between 1619 and 1637.⁵⁷ The only two surviving accounts for the latter half of the seventeenth century (1686 and 1690) both show frequent bindings.⁵⁸ The earliest indenture is dated 26 July 1647, but they only survive regularly from 1669, with a total of 414 by 1839.⁵⁹ A total of 36 indentures have survived from 1669 to 1698, which is an average of at least 1.24 children bound per year. The first sign that children were being allocated with respect to property is found in the third and fourth indentures in this series dated 1672: with Unity Hayman bound to Thomas Pyne for 'his own estate' and Samuel Hayman bound to John Pring 'for estate of William Serle'.⁶⁰ Both of these were small inserted notes next to the name of the master, squeezed into the space within the template. From 1686 to 1698, 10 out of 19 indentures specified the estate. In 1686, a memo recorded that the apprentice was 'bound to the above named Gawen Thorne for John Redwoods Estate'.⁶¹ Between 1699 and 1707, however, there is an unexplained gap in the apprenticeship records, which could be owing to the loss of indentures or perhaps be because the 1697 statute prompted rethinking and the development of a more formalized system a decade later.

3.1 Policy and scale

A systematic register was compiled around 1740 but backdated to 1708, which notably followed an agreement the year before by the leading inhabitants to 'act joynly' for the 'better managing' of parish affairs, signalling a new zeal for organization.⁶² The register contained not only the name of the apprentice and the master, and the date of binding, but the 'names of the Estates for which they were bound'; what each estate 'pays to the Poor'; the year when the Apprenticeship expired; and the year when the 'Estate again fil[ed] up'.⁶³ The combination of the register, the indentures and the rates and accounts allows the scheme to be reconstructed, including the relationships between individuals.⁶⁴ The norm from 1708 to 1741 was for apprentices to be bound in rotation to the current occupier of each property assessed at or above 2 pence (equivalent to

rental of £10 a year or around 10–14 acres). Aside from this minimal threshold, which excluded the smallest ratepayers from taking apprentices, there appears to have been no further qualification. One apprentice was bound to one estate, regardless of its size, with the lowest rated receiving apprentices at the same frequency as the highest rated. It is important to note, though, that masters took children *in respect of* occupying a particular estate, which did not necessarily mean that they would live and serve on that estate if the master had multiple properties.

A timeline of bindings for each estate in Awliscombe from 1708 to 1750 is shown in [Figure 1](#). For each estate, the years are highlighted from the year the child was bound to the year the apprenticeship was due to expire (when the girl or boy reached 21 or 24 years of age). The chart shows that between 1708 and 1745 the apprenticeship scheme went through two full rotations, with some exceptions, the second rotation beginning around 1727 (indicated by a dotted line). The first rotation bound children to 53 different estates over 18 years (1708–1726), with another estate paying a fine; the second rotation included 50 estates (1727–1745).⁶⁵ However, the second rotation did not precisely follow the order of the first, and included a slightly different set of estates as six were added (owing to the new 1741 policy described later). Further, five of the nine remaining estates from the first rota took a second apprentice by 1750, such that 1746–1750 was an overlap between the rotations. However, various complications may explain deviations from the rotation. Where there is evidence of cases not completing their full term (whether through discharge by the courts, mutual agreement or death of the master) with no record specifying rebinding to a particular estate, these have been shortened on the chart – although in some cases we know they were rebound somewhere.⁶⁶ However, there are likely more cases that ended prematurely but informally, as illustrated by settlement examinations. When Margaret Cork was examined in 1749, for example, she explained that after 12 years ‘she left her Masters service by his consent but the Indentures were not cancelled’, a year and a half before her term was due to expire.⁶⁷ Overall, the scheme appears to have balanced predictability with flexibility: the occupation of a particular estate must have been the primary criteria, otherwise the rotation would not function properly, yet it does not appear that there was a planned order, allowing other factors to be considered when selecting the next master (although logically the range of candidates would diminish towards the end of each rotation).

The first recorded policy was made at a parish meeting on 23 November 1741, at which it was ‘agreed the Small Estates should be putt together and contribute one to the other so as to make up 30 pounds a year to take each apprentice’, such that ‘all the Small Estates in the said parish that are five pounds a year or upwards to bear proportionable share in contributing thereunto’. That is, all estates between £5 and £30 per annum were combined into groups totalling £30 per annum, with the largest estate in the group taking the apprentice and smaller estates contributing money. This meant that some of the smaller estates that had previously taken apprentices without any assistance would now receive a cash contribution.⁶⁸ The accounts show that smaller estates were contributing 15 shillings per 1 pence Rate, such that a small estate rated 2 pence would now receive £3 in contributions from other smaller estates (corresponding to the remaining 4 pence Rate). This represented a considerable increase from the standard 10-shilling premium paid by the parish for taking an apprentice. Yet the new policy also obliged the smallest

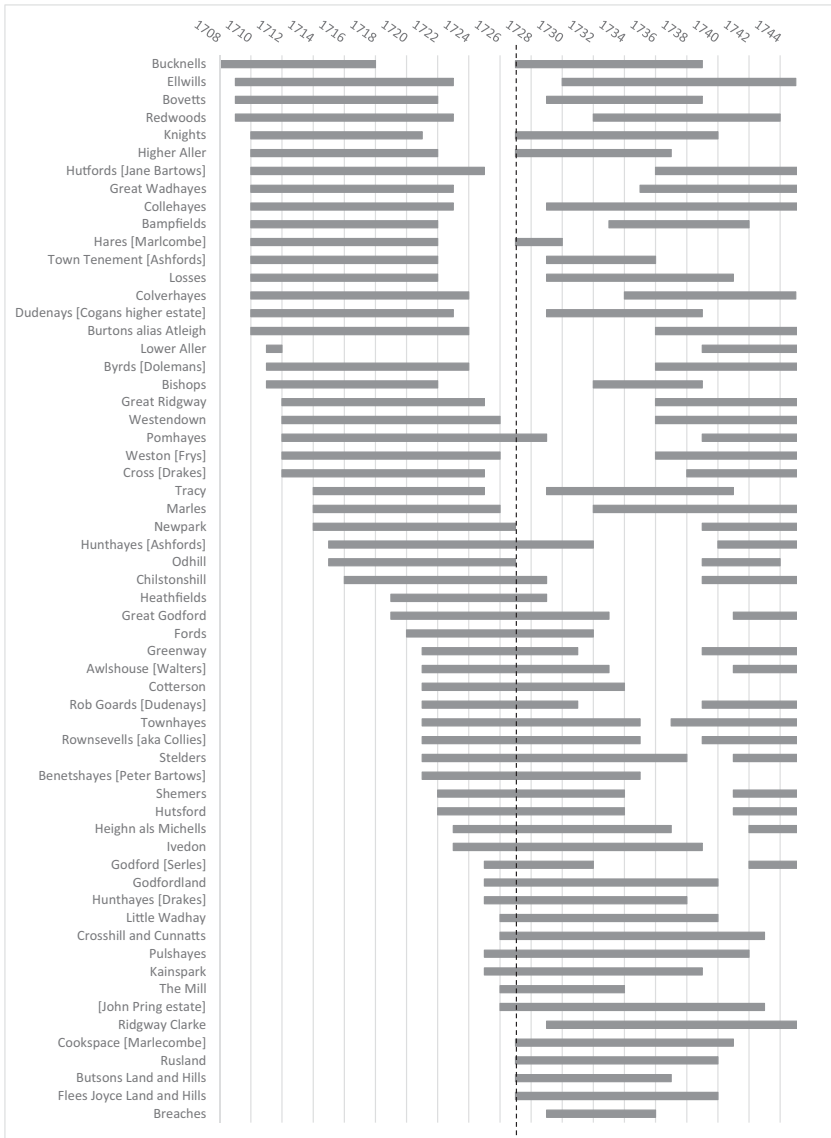


Figure 1. Timeline of the years apprentices were bound to each estate in Awliscombe, showing two rotations from 1708–1726 and 1727–1745.

estates who had previously been exempted from the rota to provide a direct financial contribution to other small estates.⁶⁹ The overall effect, therefore, was to extend the burden to smaller estates, but spread more evenly.

It appears that this basic policy was maintained until a parish meeting in 1818 modified 'the plan or sceme[sic] of Binding poor Children as Parish Apprentices' by classifying estates into units of £40 per annum rather than £30 per annum, and forming

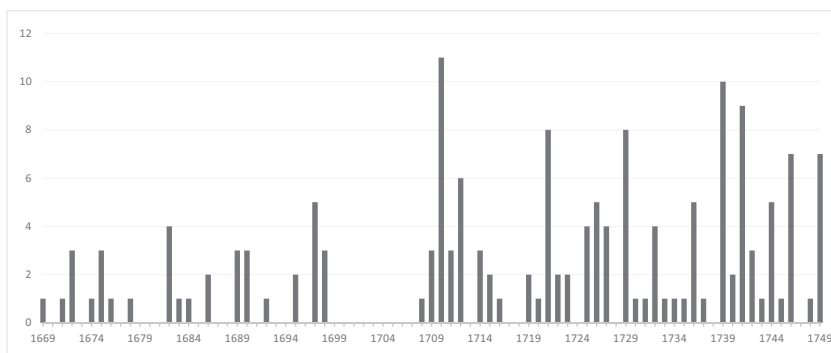


Figure 2. The number of bindings per year in Awliscombe, 1669–1749.

larger classes to take multiple apprentices if they were occupied by the same individual, which incorporated what was a practical effect of the previous policy (i.e., occupiers of multiple estates had more apprentices bound to them).⁷⁰ The order of rotation appears to have become more rigid over time, as illustrated in 1828 when the vestry convened to discuss an error, by which two masters had taken apprentices nine years ‘before they should have taken them’, and resolved a new process to ‘prevent any Farther mistake’.⁷¹ It was agreed that ‘the Names of Occupiers of Estates that are charged with the apprentices should be entered in the apprentice book as they are to take the apprentices in succession’. A table followed which listed the masters 1–48 in the order in which they would take apprentices, in respect of the class of estates.⁷²

One of the most striking features of the Awliscombe scheme was its extensiveness. Between 1669 and 1749, a total of 158 children (in 164 bindings) were bound; an average of almost two children (1.98) per year rising to almost three children (2.98) per year from 1708 to 1749, and continuing at 2.94 per year (262 bindings) from 1750 to 1839. [Figure 2](#) shows the fluctuating number of bindings each year between 1669 and 1749. For comparison, the binding of an apprentice was more common than marriages but less common than births or deaths in the parish. Awliscombe had a higher rate than most parishes in other studies, with estimates ranging from 0.6 (Doveridge, Derbyshire, 1669–1818) to 2.95 (Colyton, Devon, 1650–1837), but typically less than two per year.⁷³

These numbers may seem small, but cumulatively they equate to a high proportion of parish children. Between 1708 and 1749, Awliscombe recorded a total of 504 baptisms and bound 122 children apprentices.⁷⁴ Once we take into account infant and child mortality, and discount the children born outside of the parish, we arrive at a remarkable estimate that 26 per cent of all parish-born children who reached the age of seven were apprenticed.⁷⁵ Hence, Awliscombe was binding around one-quarter of all local children.⁷⁶ The scheme was therefore a significant local institution and a typical pathway for many poor children.

The profile of the children was generally younger and more female than was typical. The gender ratio was almost exactly 1:1, with 80 girls and 78 boys bound in this period,

a higher proportion than girls found in other studies.⁷⁷ The most common ratio elsewhere averaged over time and place is around two-thirds boys to one-third girls.⁷⁸ The average age of children when bound was under nine years old, with almost all bound before the age of twelve, a majority before the age of ten, and almost one-third aged seven or under.⁷⁹ While this was a lower age profile than found elsewhere, it was similar to other Devon parishes.⁸⁰ The young binding age means that almost all children would initially have been an additional burden to maintain, as it was not until around 13–15 years old that children became sufficiently productive to be a net benefit for rural households.⁸¹

A significant number of households were participating in the scheme at any one time. In principle, all estates rated 2 pence or over qualified to take an apprentice, which in 1705 corresponded to almost 75 per cent of all rated properties and represented 95 per cent of land value and therefore acreage.⁸² Between 1708 and 1749, 60 different estates had apprentices bound to them, and during one full rotation (1727–1745) these 60 estates had an apprentice around 58 per cent of the time. Therefore, the scheme encompassed almost the entire farmland of the parish, with more than half of the farms keeping an apprentice at any one time.

3.2 Governance

To understand how the scheme was administered we need to challenge the implicit assumption made in most previous studies that masters and parish officers (the churchwardens and overseers of the poor who possessed the immediate power to bind children) constituted separate groups with different motivations.⁸³ This is partly a manifestation of a deeper assumption that the interests of the state or community (represented by the officer) and the interests of the employer (the master) are distinct and often conflicting, and partly a result of viewing each binding as a isolated event within which the different roles of individuals are clearly demarcated. Yet, for well-organized schemes, the position of the master was analogous to holding a parish office, such that it should be understood as a fundamentally *political* role and the performance of a duty. There are numerous parallels. First, the requirement was similar: masters, like officeholders, were meant to fulfil the patriarchal ideal of being independent householders of 'honestie' and 'abilitie'.⁸⁴ Second, officeholders were often selected among ratepayers by rotation or by lot according to a principle sometimes called 'house-row', in the same manner as masters. Third, this method was partly a consequence of the fact that officeholding had a compulsory element, including fines for refusal, just like masters.⁸⁵

The Awliscombe scheme demonstrates that in practice – as already highlighted through the example of Thomas Bampffield – the degree of overlap and interchange between masters and officers was so considerable that it is misleading to discuss these groups independently. Indeed, this is because Awliscombe had a fixed rota for the offices of churchwarden and overseers of the poor based on the occupation of roughly the same list of estates used to organize the apprenticeship scheme, suggesting that the property qualification was effectively the same.⁸⁶ In short, every landholder above a certain threshold was obliged to take their turn serving in an office role and receiving a poor child as an apprentice. As it happens, these duties were not only formally equivalent but logistically similar, since on average the parish required two householders

to serve their 'mastership' to a parish apprentice (since two children were bound per year on average), comparable to the need for two householders to serve as overseers. However, there is a key difference between the two roles, since women were in practice excluded from officeholding (or were never selected) but could serve as the mistress to an apprentice.

To be specific about numbers, a total of 115 distinct masters have been identified in the 164 recorded bindings from 1669 to 1749.⁸⁷ The majority (85) were recorded as a master only once (although some may have been master after 1750), but about one-quarter of all masters (29) received two or more apprentices. Only ten were women, of which nine were described as a 'widow' and one as a spinster.⁸⁸ When the identities of masters and officers are cross-referenced, we find that out of a possible 184 officer roles across 46 years from 1704 to 1749 (two churchwardens, two overseers), an overwhelming 91 per cent (167) were filled by men who were also named as a master to an apprentice at some point.⁸⁹ On only 17 occasions in almost half a century was one of the four officer roles not filled by a past or future master. From the reverse perspective, in the first half of the eighteenth century more than half of all masters (50 out of 83) also served as a parish officer.

To complete our picture, we must add the crucial third and neglected role to the administration of apprenticeships: those active in the vestry, the central governing body of the parish that managed local affairs, including poor relief.⁹⁰ For decisions about binding children were not simply left to the judgement of current officers but were subject to the policy established by the vestry. Therefore, we need a model that accounts for the extent to which parishioners acted in the different roles of master, officer and vestry member, which determined their level of power and participation in the scheme as a whole. A proxy list of vestry members from 1728 to 1749 can be gleaned from the list of signatories who approved the annual overseer accounts (although it is possible that the vestry meetings were attended by a wider circle of parishioners).⁹¹ Figure 3 displays the spectrum of participation across the three roles during this period by listing the parishioners who are recorded at least once as having an apprentice bound to them, or as serving as an officer, or as attending vestry meetings, along with the number of times for each. We can roughly divide this spectrum into three groups: those who dominated the vestry, those who served regularly as officers but only rarely or never attended the vestry, and those who served only as masters.⁹²

The first group can be labelled the *governors*: the main policy- and decision-makers, and the most likely to take apprentices themselves. It was composed of the male social elite, the yeoman farmers who were the highest resident ratepayers. This was approximately eight to ten householders or around 20–25 per cent of ratepayers in any particular year. With the exception of a few gentlemen whose interests extended beyond the parish, these men also dominated the parish offices. Hence, it was this controlling elite that exercised the greatest control over the apprenticeship scheme as a whole, as well as most often binding and receiving apprentices. The second group can be labelled the *administrators*: they were regularly responsible for binding children as well as receiving them, but were not regular vestry members (either never or occasional) and therefore had less influence over the nature of the scheme as a whole. This was approximately 20 householders, or around 40–50 per cent of the ratepayers.⁹³ The third group can be labelled the *participants*, since it consisted of those who

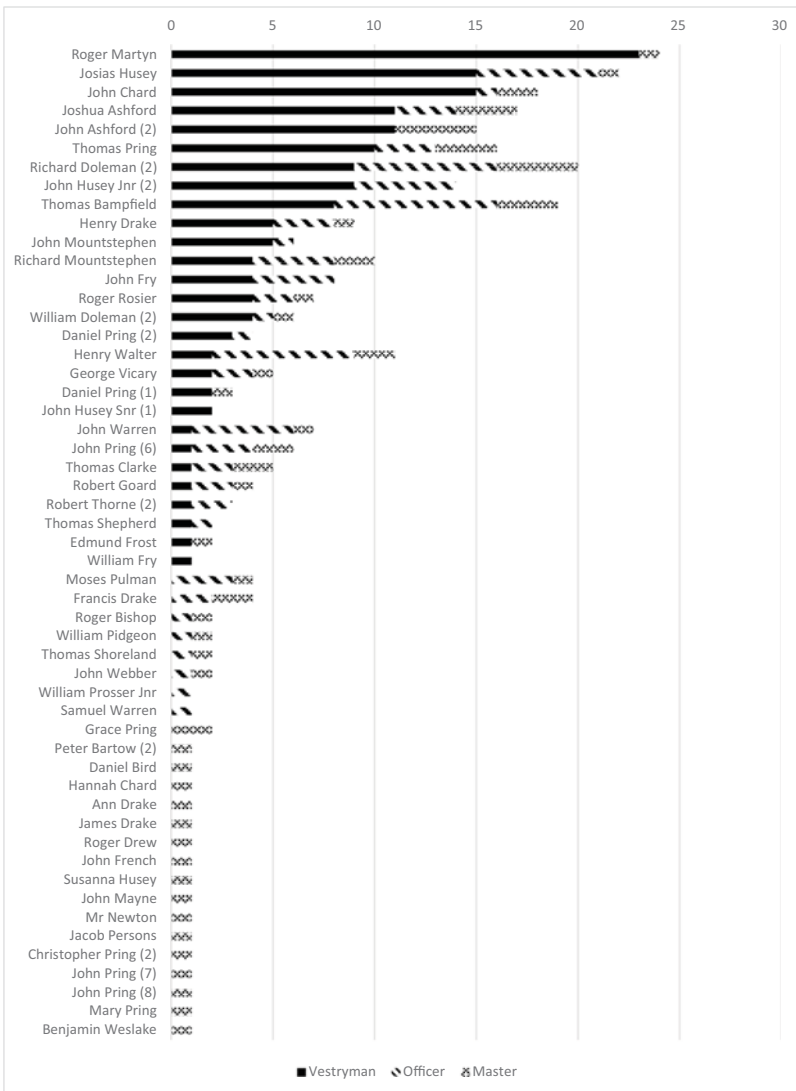


Figure 3. The number of times masters took apprentices, served as parish officers and attended vestry, 1728–1749.

participated passively as masters obliged to receive apprentices, but who never (or rarely) served as parish officers or as vestry members, and hence were unlikely to have exerted any significant influence over the scheme beyond their inclusion in the body of ratepayers. This was approximately a further 15 householders, or around 30–35 per cent of ratepayers. This was a mixed group. It included female occupiers who were conventionally excluded from formal governing roles, and those who may have held only short-term occupancies or whose main residence was outside the parish.⁹⁴ The

statutory power to bind children was therefore implemented in Awliscombe as a collectively managed labour allocation scheme that was dominated by a governing elite but whose administration and participation were relatively widespread among around 40–50 householders.

Aside from overall policy, there are signs that the vestry made collective decisions about individual bindings (at least on occasion), rather than these being solely decided by serving officers. Indentures from the 1720s often stated that the child was bound to an estate 'upon a full hearing', 'by consent' or 'by consent of all parties'.⁹⁵ Individual memos recorded the vestry decision for more complex cases, such as binding a sick child, and became more common in the 1780s and 1790s.⁹⁶ In 1788, 1789 and 1795 public meetings were held to select the next batch of estates and masters in the rotation.⁹⁷

This governance structure can be understood in terms of the general style of government typical of so-called open parishes. The open–closed model developed by Dennis Mills is underpinned by a fundamental distinction between 'estate' and 'peasant' socio-economic systems, since the 'social distribution of landownership was the crucial causative factor in rural life'.⁹⁸ Whereas a closed parish or estate system was dominated by a single (or few) landowner(s) who held a monopoly on land, an open parish or peasant system was characterized by a dispersed landownership among freeholders, copyholders, small tenant farmers and craftsmen.⁹⁹ Devon was a county with highly diffused landholding, and Awliscombe in particular fits the model of an open parish.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the evidence points towards the tentative conclusion that property-binding schemes were developed by parishes with fragmented landownership typical of open parishes.¹⁰¹ A small sample of land tax records from the 1780s shows high numbers and densities of proprietors, including 39 owners and 66 acres per owner for Awliscombe.¹⁰² The largest landowner in Awliscombe was Francis Rose Drew Esq., who controlled only 11 per cent of the parish by land value, much less than Mills' lower threshold for a closed parish (for which a single owner must have paid more than 50 per cent of land tax).

4. Person or property

The peculiarity of the system of rural apprenticeships described here was epitomized by an underlying legal ambiguity and its consequent practical dilemmas. The interpretation of the 1697 Act, which limited the power to force an unwanted apprentice only onto those who occupied parish land, had profound legal implications. The inconsistency was forcefully pointed out in 1829 by the parliamentary solicitor John Meadows White in his review of the law after being commissioned by an incorporated hundred of Blything in Suffolk to resolve complications of local by-laws on the matter.¹⁰³ White argued that, whereas the law binding apprentices by indenture was 'wholly personal', placing an obligation upon the individual master, the master's liability was based on property, and effectively placed an obligation on the estate to receive an apprentice.¹⁰⁴ Yet, if the latter outweighed the former, then 'one grand principle of our constitution would be infringed; for the fixing an apprentice upon an occupation would be a manifest retrogression to feudal slavery; and the children of the poor ... would at

once become serfs and vassals.¹⁰⁵ By binding children primarily to *property*, not *persons*, parishes were accidentally re-creating serfdom-like relations between land and labour; the children of the labouring poor were obliged to offer labour services to wealthier parishioners in exchange for their maintenance. Consequently, compulsory schemes had converted parish apprenticeship 'into a binding upon the soil, instead of the occupier'.¹⁰⁶

This was no mere theoretical curiosity, but one which raised genuine practical problems. Two scenarios in particular forced authorities to confront this ambiguity: the death of the master or the departure of the master from their occupied land (through sale or ending of a tenancy). The former was relatively simple as the individual contract was void, yet if property was primary then the new occupier may be considered to take on liability.¹⁰⁷ Yet the latter had no clear solution: should the apprentice go with the master or stay with the estate?¹⁰⁸ The published handbooks for justices and officers consistently held that if an apprentice was put to a tenant of a farm, and the lease expired before the apprenticeship, then the apprentice must 'go with the Farm if his Master will permit him'.¹⁰⁹ White pointed out the perverse consequences of binding by property: 'an occupier on changing his residence had often to take with him a host of apprentices, although they were a burthen imposed on him in respect of the occupation he had left', while at the same time a 'new occupier might take his place with an equal number from another parish, but still be liable to the like number his predecessor had taken'.¹¹⁰ As such, property-binding schemes were often felt to be an interference in the land market as well as the labour market.¹¹¹

The case of Awliscombe highlights another layer of complexity. The widespread practice of subtenancy in rural England – as much as 50 per cent in some areas – compounded the ambiguity between the liability of persons or property.¹¹² While the surviving manorial records are insufficient to systematically reconstruct subtenancy arrangements, it probably explains many of the frequent discrepancies between the name of the master recorded (in indenture or register) and the name of the ratepayer for that year. It could be that the named master was the legal tenant of the property, even if it was currently occupied by a subtenant who paid the poor rates.¹¹³ However, in some cases the precise relationships are difficult to disentangle: for example, whereas the register stated that John Thorne was bound to Elizabeth Serle (widow) for the estate she occupied (25 September 1710), the corresponding indenture recorded that the master was William Pring, but bound 'for Elizabeth Serle's Estate'.¹¹⁴

The uncertainty over these questions may have been the reason for certain cases being resolved at the Quarter Sessions, the county court responsible for adjudicating Poor Law disputes. On 25 September 1710, Bernard Serle was bound to Rev. John Burrough with respect to 'Mrs Bartows' [*sic*] estate (recorded in the register as Hutsford in Marlecombe), but two years later Burrough successfully had him discharged because the boy was bound 'in respect of an estate he then had at a rent in that parish and hath since left'.¹¹⁵ Yet the Rates had consistently listed 'Mrs Jane Bartow & Mr Peter' as occupiers from 1704.¹¹⁶ It is possible that Burrough was a subtenant of Jane Bartow for a period around 1710, but had left by 1712. Bernard Serle was then rebound on 2 May 1712 to Peter Bartow, son of Jane and resident of Tiverton (and witnessed by John Burrough).¹¹⁷ Another tricky subletting situation perhaps explains the discharge of Joana Baily alias Salter from John Fry in 1721, for the reason that 'John

Fry manageth the estate for w[hi]ch the said apprentice was bound as a Serv[ice] to another'.¹¹⁸

In both cases it seems that property was the primary qualification and the dispute rested on the correct master liable through their relationship to that property. This is consistent with other disruptions resulting in the apprentice being rebound to the same estate, maintaining the integrity of the rotation scheme where possible. On three occasions children were rebound to the same estate after the death of a master, although all to relatives of the previous master.¹¹⁹ However, the property principle could be overridden by premium. When John Bartlett (alias Druller) was rebound in 1743 after the death of his master Moses Pulman four years into his apprenticeship, he was passed on to Thomas Pring 'with a sum of Money' (a high premium of £3 15s.).¹²⁰

5. Political economy of compulsory apprenticeships

We can attempt a more general characterization of the political economy of compulsory apprenticeship schemes by considering three broad questions. First, what kind of labour system did it create? Previous studies have presented parish apprenticeships as either a combination of fostering and service or an inferior form of craft apprenticeship, without fully incorporating the degree of legal coercion and the managerial role of the parish.¹²¹ Abstractly, the combined deprivation of personal freedom and binding to the land lends it a curious resemblance to serfdom. Indeed, the direct use of extra-economic coercion, the effective legal right of parishioners to access the unpaid service of local pauper children and the apportioning of child workers to local farms present striking similarities. Yet the apprenticeship system was limited to children and adolescents, not adults, whose service was full-time, not intermittent, whose bondage was temporary and contractual, not a lifetime status or tenurial condition, whose master had a nominal regard for their training, whose tie to local land was more ambiguous and fluid in practice, and who were under the split authority of the parish vestry and their individual master rather than a manorial lord. Therefore, to designate them as a kind of temporary young serf would be overstating the comparison.

The closest approximation is life-cycle service within a peasant economy. Both farm servants and apprentices were young, resident, subordinate workers available to their master at all times; yet service was (mostly) voluntary, paid and limited to annual contracts (or less). Within North-West Europe, rural service has been understood as an institution that rebalanced labour between households as their consumption needs and productive capacities fluctuated, which could operate as a form of exchange between roughly equal households or as a form of transfer from poorer to wealthier households in more polarized communities.¹²² In this sense, apprenticeship schemes approximate a formalized version of service as a net transfer of labour capacity: rather than an economic gradient pressuring poor parents to send their children to work as servants for larger farmers, the parish intervened to bind those children to local masters, in which they lost their agency, earnings and mobility. If families became too poor to be able to maintain their children until they were old enough to be productive and to hire themselves (around 13–15 years old), the parish stepped in to arrange the transfer at a much earlier age and bound them as long-term unpaid servants to ensure that their later productive years were sufficient compensation for the 'debt' accrued by their early

maintenance costs.¹²³ The result, however, was a distinctly new economic arrangement, as indentured parish servants were a far less flexible, less mobile and less incentivized labour force managed by a central body, which generated workers with little prospect of establishing independence.

Second, what was the wider social function of compulsory apprenticeship schemes? We lack many contemporary explanations around the time of their origin, but later commentators clearly believed that their principal merit was the long-term production of a superior class of labourers, rather than the short-term provision of labour.¹²⁴ In 1796, the agricultural writer William Marshall bemoaned the poor treatment of farm apprentices in Devon, but believed that with a good master a 'more natural seminary of working husbandmen could not be devised'.¹²⁵ Similarly, reporting for the Board of Agriculture in 1808, Charles Vancouver concluded that it was a highly effective system of moral and practical training for boys in particular, who were 'uniformly found to make the best servants and to prove the steadiest and best labourers afterwards', although less suitable for girls.¹²⁶ In his 1843 report on the employment of children in agriculture in the South-West, Alfred Austin noted that the remaining advocates stressed its socializing role of 'improving the morals of the apprentice' by placing them 'under certain restraints' in their master's house where they would acquire industrious and obedient habits.¹²⁷ As one local gentleman succinctly put it: apprenticeship was the 'very best mode of bringing up a robust, honest, and industrious peasantry'.¹²⁸ Hence, we should seek to understand its function as primarily a mode of controlling the future local labour structure, rather than simply an immediate response to family poverty or employer demand.

This function served the collective interests of the scheme organizers, who were simultaneously employers, taxpayers and administrators. The labour of apprentices was effectively managed as 'a common resource to which the community had rights', rather than the private property of individuals to be exchanged in a pseudo-market.¹²⁹ The parish took collective responsibility for raising a class of industrious and dependent adult labourers, carefully distributing the burdens among themselves – maintenance costs, enforcing work, instilling moral discipline – and thereby converting 'every man's cottage to a parish poor-house'.¹³⁰ In contrast to the assumption of many historians that all parishes hoped to offload their burdens to neighbouring parishes wherever possible to take advantage of the law of settlement (especially after 1691), these parishes focused their strategy on regulating poor youth within parish bounds.¹³¹

However, the parish as a whole was not the agent; rather, the acting force was the more nebulous set of dominant interests within the local oligarchy. The governance structure of Awliscombe – a core group of landholders with the active participation of a wider group of ratepayers – can be extrapolated to other open parishes in which no one or two individual landowners were able to dictate affairs. Thus, the schemes must have been the outcome of a set of shared social, economic or political interests among the chief inhabitants, balanced to some extent by smaller landholders. The principal actors were yeomen or large tenant farmers, who were able to exercise 'dual control of the poor-law administration and the labour market' through how they chose to either maintain or employ the poor.¹³² The advantages to this group seem relatively clear: as masters, taking an apprentice was no great burden, as an extra young servant could be more easily absorbed onto larger farms and become profitable over the long term;

as employers, they would benefit from a continual supply of ready-made servants and labourers who had no viable alternatives; and as ratepayers, the overall costs of producing this class of workers were spread onto smaller farmers. To some degree this anticipates the function of labour allocation schemes for adults in Eastern counties c.1790–1830, which enabled larger farmers to control surplus labour and ‘pass some of their labour costs on to non labour-hiring ratepayers.’¹³³

Third, where do compulsory apprenticeship schemes fit within broader narratives of economic change? The long eighteenth century is conventionally understood to be a period of commercialization, in which both the role of the market and the wage-dependent population expanded.¹³⁴ It may therefore seem paradoxical that during the shift towards ‘free’ labour markets we find the intensification of unfree labour and non-market institutions.¹³⁵ The simplest resolution is to identify these with parallel but distinct regional developments in which capitalist farming based on ‘free’ hired labour developed earliest and most intensely in the South and the East, while the North and the West, especially Devon, were characterized by the continued importance of small family farming and service into the nineteenth century.¹³⁶ Yet the initial paradox may be illusory, since a growing literature rejects the notion that unfree labour – especially slavery – is incompatible with a market or capitalist economy, both theoretically and empirically.¹³⁷ Indeed, rather than an obstacle to be overcome, scholars have detailed how coercive labour laws were used to create and shape markets by restructuring the labour force.¹³⁸ In particular, this basic point has already been made by Katrina Honeyman with respect to parish apprentices in textile factories; she argued that during early industrialization (c.1780–1820) ‘the parish apprentice was a flexible element in an otherwise inflexible labour market’, which ‘liberated the industrial labour market’.¹³⁹ Despite the unfortunate choice of the words ‘flexible’ and ‘liberated’ to describe the forced relocation of young workers, the underlying point is that the use of unfree apprentices *assisted* rather than *impeded* the formation of new labour markets. Similarly, Helen Berry has demonstrated that foundlings were distributed using charity apprenticeships to ‘backfill’ labour demand in rural parishes in the mid to late eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰

We should therefore be willing to adjust our understanding of the development of a flexible rural workforce of wage labourers in the transition to agrarian capitalism by incorporating the existence of unfree systems of farm labour. The notion that the more restrictive contracts for service were incompatible with capitalist farming has already been challenged by regional studies showing how farm service often expanded with the intensification of market-oriented farming in the North and the West.¹⁴¹ We can extend this to the even stricter contracts for farm apprentices by adapting the criteria of Leigh Shaw-Taylor, who used the ratio of farm workers to farmers as a measure of rural proletarianization and by extension agrarian capitalism (with 2:1 defined as the rough threshold for a capitalist farm).¹⁴² Although he focused on wage labour, his analytical category of ‘labour-employing’ farms was defined in opposition to farms relying on family labour, and could potentially encompass the addition of *any non-family labour* (waged or unwaged, free or unfree). Indeed, perhaps the crucial step in the transition to agrarian capitalism in England was not necessarily the immediate expansion of ‘free’ casualized wage labour but the increasing use of non-family labour of all kinds on profit-oriented farms. Hence, rural apprenticeship schemes could

have contributed to a shift towards capitalist farming to the extent that they raised the overall worker-to-farmer ratio by swelling the use of unpaid indentured farm servants. Indeed, parish apprenticeships existed precisely at the boundary between family and non-family labour by funnelling young children requiring care into service roles. Chronologically, the period in which these schemes flourished corresponds well with the critical phase for the transition to capitalist farming (using this metric) in the West and the North around 1700–1850.¹⁴³ Further, this is consistent with the broader argument by Marjatta Rahikainen that across Europe the increasing use and exploitation of forced child labour in farming tended to coincide with the ‘labour-intensive phase’ of agricultural modernization.¹⁴⁴

6. Conclusion

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, parishes in South-West England began using their powers under the Poor Law not only to regulate aspects of the labour supply but also to operate as centrally planned economies with respect to a significant section of young workers, coordinating the precise distribution of servants by compelling pauper children and ratepayers to enter labour contracts according to agreed policies. This fills a crucial gap in our narrative between the relative failure of parochial make-work schemes in the seventeenth century and the proliferation of new forms of local labour management c.1780–1834, mostly in response to adult seasonal unemployment in the South-East.¹⁴⁵ Whereas previous studies have tended to view parish apprenticeships as occasional, ad hoc arrangements in response to poverty or misfortune, reconstructing the coordination of bindings through rotation schemes reveals the pervasiveness and predictability of apprenticeship. While some parishes used their powers sparingly, averaging around one child per year, others took the opportunity to develop predictable systems binding groups of children in most years – with parishes like Awliscombe binding around one-quarter of all parish-born children. While simple rotation schemes required minimal organization, the addition of proportional elements could lead to detailed calculations of the ideal apprentice-to-property ratio. The consequence was that poor children were systematically bound to labour on local land for long terms in exchange for their maintenance.

The distinctive political economy of compulsory apprenticeships can be characterized in three ways. As a labour system, it operated as a formalization of service as a transfer of labour capacity from poor to rich households, which created an inflexible centrally managed workforce. As a social institution, it ensured that the parish took collective responsibility for maintaining and socializing poor children in order to reproduce a class of dependent adult labourers. As a historical process, it can be viewed as a transitional institution that facilitated the shift from conditions that favoured life-cycle service to conditions that favoured permanent wage dependency. While parish apprentices themselves were not wage labourers, apprenticeship schemes could have operated as engines of proletarianization.¹⁴⁶

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Notes

- 1 Baptized 11 April 1732, the daughter of Charles and Rebecca Hayman. Awliscombe Parish, 'Baptisms, Marriages & Burials, 1690–1800', 3020A/PR/2, Devon Heritage Centre (hereafter DHC), Exeter.
- 2 'Rebecca Hayman, Parish of Birth or Last Legal Settlement: Awliscombe, 1766', 3020A/PO/25/17.
- 3 'Robetta[sic] Hayman apprenticed to Thomas Bampfild for on estate called Chilstones Hill, Yeoman', 3020A/PO/23/108.
- 4 The apprentice did not move in rotation between farms; instead, the responsibility for taking the next apprentice rotated between farms. For an example of the former, see Marjatta Rahikainen, 'Compulsory child labour: parish paupers as indentured servants in Finland, c. 1810–1920', *Rural History* 13, 2 (2002), 163–78.
- 5 See register of apprentices in 'Memorandum book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1. Plus indenture for 1690: 'Richard Lock apprenticed to John Harding, Yeoman', 3020A/PO/23/22.
- 6 'Rate book, 1704–1727', 3020A/PO/5; 'Account book, 1728–1741', 3020A/PO/6. Regularly listed as a freeholder from 1729 to 1747, and described as 'gentleman' in 1729. *Devon Freeholders, 1711–1799*, QS/7/13–19, QS/7/23, QS/7/25, Friends of Devon's Archives: www.foda.org.uk/freeholders/intro/introduction4.htm, updated 22 May 2023.
- 7 He took over a property in 1716 from his widowed mother, rated only 3½ pence, which appears to be all he held until 1732, ranking him outside the top ratepayers. In 1720, a tithe book taxed him for possessing 3 cows, 4 calves, 4 acres (of meadow), '10 cyder', 4 fleeces, 6 lambs and a garden, at 10 shillings 6 pence. 'Tithe accounts. 1696–1720', 3020A/PB/1–8.
- 8 In 1718, Thomas married Susanna Bartlett. They had seven children together: Faith (1719), Grace (1720), Thomas (1723), Sarah (1727), Prudence (1729), Susanna (1731, died), Susanna (1732). 'Baptisms, Marriages & Burials, 1690–1800', 3020A/PR/2.
- 9 According to an undated entry in the register, with no matching indenture. 'Memorandum book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1.
- 10 3020A/PO/23/83, 3020A/PO/23/87–94, 3020A/PO/23/110, 3020A/PO/23/116–122.
- 11 'Account book, 1728–1741', 3020A/PO/6; 'Account book, 1742–1752', 3020A/PO/7.
- 12 Josias Husey took at least three apprentices (1727, 1742, 1750) and served as an officer in 13 separate years from 1724 to 1757; Thomas Pring took five apprentices (1741, 1744, 1748, 1758, 1761) and served as an officer in 1739, 1744, 1749 and 1751. John Husey also served as an officer and master on multiple occasions, although these were split between father and son and not always possible to distinguish. 'Memorandum Book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1; 'Apprenticeship Indentures', 3020A/PO/23.
- 13 Note on terminology: 'master' will be used throughout to mean 'master or mistress', as the vast majority who occupied this role were men. 'Mistress' will be used when specifically talking about women who took apprentices.
- 14 39 Eliz. I, c.3 s.4 (1598), 43 Eliz. I, c.2 s.4 (1601). The latter added that girls could leave earlier if they married.
- 15 8 & 9 Will. III, c.30 s.5 (1697); Edmund Bott, *Decisions of the Court of King's Bench*, 3rd edn (London, 1793), 559.
- 16 Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *The English Poor Law history. Part 1: the Old Poor Law* (London, 1927), vii, 197–211; 'Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834).
- 17 The main overviews are Steve Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550–1750* (Oxford, 2004), 191–226; Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914* (London, 1996), ch. 4; E. G. Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', *Local Historian* 14, 7 (1981), 400–5; J. Dunlop and R. D. Denman, *English apprenticeship and child labour: a history* (London, 1912), ch. 16. See also important discussions in Keith Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 6; Deborah Simonton, 'Apprenticeship: training and gender in eighteenth-century England', in Maxine Berg ed., *Markets and manufacture in early industrial Europe* (London, 2013); Patricia Crawford, *Parents of poor children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford, 2010), ch. 4; Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English society. Volume I: from Tudor times to the eighteenth century* (Toronto, 1969), 223–59; Jane Humphries, 'Memories of pauperism', in Steven King and Anne Winter eds., *Migration, settlement and belonging in Europe, 1500–1930s* (New York, 2013), 102–26. In relation to industrialization: Katrina

Honeyman, *Child workers in England, 1780–1820: parish apprentices and the making of the early industrial labour force* (Abingdon, 2007); Mary B. Rose, 'Social policy and business: parish apprenticeship and the early factory system 1750–1834', *Business History* 31, 4 (1989), 5–32. Important case studies include: Pamela Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830', *Continuity and Change* 6, 2 (1991), 253–70; Alysa Levene, 'Parish apprenticeship and the old poor law in London', *Economic History Review* 63, 4 (2010), 915–41; Ann Minister, 'Pauper apprenticeship in south Derbyshire: a positive experience?', in Anne M. Scott ed., *Experiences of poverty in late medieval and early modern England and France* (London, 2012), 63–84; I. Fitzroy Jones, 'Aspects of poor law administration, seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, from Trull overseers' accounts', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 95, part II (1950), 72–105; H. Fearn, 'The apprenticing of pauper children in the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* 26 (1955), 85–97; Jerome Farrell, 'Lutterworth pauper children and apprenticeship, 1673–1856', *Leicestershire Historian* 3 (1983), 17–24; S. A. Cutlack, 'The Gnosall records, 1679 to 1837: Poor Law administration', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire, Part I* (Stafford, 1936), 53–62; F. H. Hinton, 'Notes on the administration of the relief of the poor of Lacock 1583–1834', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* 49 (1940), 166–218; Ethel Hampson, 'Settlement and removal in Cambridgeshire, 1662–1834', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 2, 3 (1928), 273–89; F. G. Emmison, *The relief of the poor at Eaton Socon, 1706–1834* (Martlesham, 1933), xv, 64–70; Pamela Horn, 'Pauper apprenticeship and the Grimsby fishing industry, 1870 to 1914', *Labour History Review* 61 (1996), 173–94. For colonial role and practice in early America: Misha Ewen, "'Poore soules": migration, labor, and visions for commonwealth in Virginia', in Paul Mussellwhite, Peter C. Mancall and James Horn eds., *Virginia 1619: slavery and freedom in the making of English America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2019), 133–49; Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray eds., *Children bound to labor: the pauper apprentice system in early America* (London, 2009).

18 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 194–5.

19 W. E. Tate, *The parish chest: a study of the records of parochial administration in England* (Cambridge, 1960), 221; Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 76; Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', 401; Frank Crompton, *Workhouse children* (Stroud, 1997), 24; G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales, 1601–1834* (London, 1974), 75–6.

20 Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, vii, 209. See Captain Chapman, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 15 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 432; J. D. Tweedy, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 20 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 729.

21 Edmund Walker Head, 'Appendix B. No. 14. Report on the County of Hereford', *Second annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 403–5. Reporting on Devon, William Gilbert stressed the 'many different modes' for 'allotting the apprentices', with no parishes sharing the exact same system. William John Gilbert, 'Appendix B. No. 9. report on the country of Devon', *Second annual report of the poor law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 342–50.

22 James Phillips Kay, 'Appendix B. No. 1. Report on the administration under the poor law amendment act, in Suffolk and Norfolk', *Second annual report of the poor law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 167.

23 Sarah Child, 'Parish apprentices in Rackenford 1728–1844', *Report and Transactions of the Devon Association* 136 (2004), 135–48.

24 Fearn, 'The apprenticing of pauper children in the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk', 87.

25 Records were primarily searched for evidence of estate-binding before 1750, but a few parishes with records only after 1750 have been included. The survey covered records from the following 25 Devon parishes: Alphington, Awliscombe, Axminster, Bishops Tawton, Bratton Fleming, Broadclyst, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Colyton Cullompton, Dodbrooke, Feniton, Halberton, Ide, Kenn, Kentisbeare, Kilminster, Kingsnympton, Landkey, Loxbeare, North Tawton, Ottery St Mary, Sandford, Shirwell, Sidbury, Washfield, Withycombe Raleigh; the following 19 Somerset parishes: Aller, Banwell, Bishops Hull, Bleadon, Burnham-on-Sea, Combe St Nicholas, Crowcombe, Drayton, Horsington, Huntspill, Langford Budville, Nettlecombe, Stogumber, Wedmore, West Bagborough, West Buckland, West Monkton, Winsford, Yatton; and the following 5 Dorset parishes: Broadwindsor, Litton Cheney, Marshwood, Whitchurch Canoncorum, Wooton Fitzpaine.

26 Apprentice Registers used in Table 1: Cullompton, 'Register of apprentices 1709–1757', 2404A/PO/66, DHC; Halberton, 'Parish records book, 1684–1804', 4074A/PZ/1, DHC; Ottery St Mary, 'Minutes of election of overseers and churchwardens and apprenticeship rotas, 1682–838', 180A/PO/1, DHC; Cheriton

Fitzpaine, 'Churchwardens and Overseers account books, 1676–1723', 1633A/PO/1, DHC; Awliscombe, 'Memorandum Book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1, DHC; Wedmore, 'Register of apprentices, proprietors of land 1727–1780', D/P/wed/13/6/7, SHC; North Tawton, 'List of apprentices bound, 1713–1732', 2914A/PO/9, DHC; Nettlecombe, 'Apprenticeship roll. 1698–1821', D/P/net/13/6/2, SHC; Combe St Nicholas, 'Vestry notices. [1725–1775]', D/P/com.n/9/1/1, SHC; Bishops Hull, 'Vestry minutes. 1743–1825', D/P/b.hl/9/1/1, SHC; Washfield, 'Register of parish apprentices, 1686–1802', 1146A/add/PO/1, DHC; Ide, 'Apprentice Book, 1679–1817', 1857A/add/PO/83, DHC; Broadwindsor, 'Account book 1723–1789', PE/BDW/OV 1/1/2, DoHC; Withycombe Raleigh, 'Accounts, 1714–1841', 2868A/add99/PW/1, DHC; Kenn, 'Volume entitled "A Rotation for Binding out Parish Apprentices in Kenn formed from inspecting the Counterparts of the Indentures, the Book of Orders and the Poor Books since the year 1716", 1716–1833', 2668A/PO/39, DHC; Drayton, 'Accounts and rates. List of apprentices bound out and to whom bound, 1697–1742', D/P/dton/13/2/3, SHC; West Bagborough, 'Overseers' accounts with assessment and list of apprentices from 1691 to 1800, 1718–1802', D/P/w.bag/13/2/2, SHC.

27 Population data in Table 1 from the 1801 census available at *A Vision of Britain through Time*, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census, accessed 24 May 2023.

28 Additional records used in Table 2 (not in Table 1): Burnham-on-Sea, 'List of Burnham parish apprentices 1745–1791. 18th century', D/P/b.on.s/23/8, SHC; Sandford, 'Apprentices Register, 1764–1838', 1238A/add2/PO/1, DHC; West Buckland Parish, 'Poor Book with rating assessment. 1700–1719', D/P/w.bu/13/2/1, SHC; West Monkton, 'Agreement. 12 Apr 1757', D/P/west.m/13/6/2, SHC.

29 The parish of Nettlecombe is a lower outlier with a relatively small number of estates (approx. 20–25) owing to the small size of the parish and the more concentrated landownership.

30 The more detailed and consistent registers for Halberton (from 1684), Broadclyst (1686), Alphington (from 1689), Washfield (1693), Ottery St Mary (from 1696), Drayton (from 1697), Cullompton (from 1709) and Combe St Nicholas (from 1731) show no clear sign of additional rules regulating the basic rotation. The same is true for the patchier lists for Banwell (from 1684), West Bagborough (from 1691), Washfield (1693), Yatton (1706), Bleadon (from 1709), Loxbeare (from 1721), Sidbury (from 1724) and Kilminster (1736). The separate estate registers for Cheriton Fitzpaine show that children were bound in roughly equal numbers to all estates, which implies a flat scheme. Colyton and Feniton (Devon), Huntspill and Aller (Somerset) and Litton Cheney and Marshwood (Dorset) all record binding children to estates in short lists or memos, but lack signs of systematic rotations. Papers from the Carew estate strongly suggest that a customary rotation was in operation in Stogumber and Crowcombe (Somerset), as it was in Langford Budville, but further parish records are lacking. In Kenn and Withycombe Raleigh, the surviving estate 'rotas' listing the order of estates with corresponding years almost certainly display a flat scheme. The vestry minutes for Whitchurch Canonorum appear to show case-by-case decisions to bind children to particular estates rather than a planned rota, while the retrospective register appears 'flat' from 1738 to 1769.

31 This was the custom in Cullompton, for which the register mostly recorded children bound for specific estates, but on occasion to masters 'By Ability' (especially from 1738). Similarly, the registers for Sandford (from the 1760s) and North Tawton (from the 1770s) both contained separate lists of apprentices bound 'By Consent', explained as 'Apprentices taken by Consent or Voluntary and not Bound on the Occupiers of any Estates' (Sandford Parish, 'Apprentices register, 1764–1838', 1238A/add2/PO/1; North Tawton Parish, 'Register of Apprentices 1736–1829', 2914A/PO/10).

32 Some parishes did enforce the maximum penalty: for example, the Broadwindsor register noted that 'Jonathan Mory paid his penalty of £10 for not taking Elliotts daughter his apprentice'. Broadwindsor, 'Account Book 1723–1789', PE/BDW/OV 1/1/2, Dorset History Centre (DoHC), Dorchester.

33 Withycombe Raleigh Parish, 'Accounts, 1714–1841', 2868A/add99/PW/1; Broadclyst, 'Burials, 1678–1830', 3594A/add99/PR/16; Halberton Parish, 'Parish Records Book 1684–1804', Halberton Parish, 4074A/PZ/1, DHC.

34 West Buckland Parish, 'Poor Book with rating assessment. 1700–1719', D/P/w.bu/13/2/1, Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC).

35 Bishops Hull Parish, 'Vestry minutes. 1743–1825', D/P/b.hl/9/1/1, SHC.

36 Estates over £100 were split between multiple classes (e.g. the 'Parsonage' was split between Classes 4 [£103], 12 [£34] and 16 [£103]). Every estate over £100 to receive one apprentice, with those of excess value between £100 and £200 to contribute to smaller estates; every estate over £200 to receive two apprentices, with those of excess value between £200 and £300 to contribute to smaller estates; and so on.

- 37 West Monkton Parish, 'Agreement. 12 Apr 1757', D/P/west.m/13/6/2, SHC. In 1779, a further mini-rotation was added within each class (for every estate over £10).
- 38 Memo recorded in North Tawton Parish, 'Register of Apprentices 1736–1829', 2914A/PO/10, DHC.
- 39 Sandford Parish, 'Apprentices Register, 1764–1838', 1238A/add2/PO/1, DHC. Similarly, Cheriton Fitzpaine had a highly organized register from 1729, but we have only a vestry policy dated 25 October 1807. Cheriton Fitzpaine Parish, 'Register of apprentices, 1739–1844', 1633A/add/PO/11, DHC.
- 40 Shirwell Parish, 'Shirwell, 1787–1843', B15Z, North Devon Record Office (NDRO).
- 41 Wootton Fitzpaine Parish, 'Court book of manor of Wootton Fitzpaine containing original presentments. 1755–1896', D-232/1, DoHC.
- 42 Wedmore Parish, 'Register of Apprentices and Masters, List of Overseers 1701–1782. 1723–1777', D/P/wed/13/6/6; 'Register of Apprentices, Proprietors of Land 1727–1780', D/P/wed/13/6/7; 'Register of Apprentices. 1740–1793', D/P/wed/13/6/8, SHC.
- 43 Nettlecombe, 'Apprenticeship roll. 1698–1821', D/P/net/13/6/2, SHC.
- 44 Winsford, 'Apprenticeship indentures, registers, receipts for apprenticeship fees etc', D/P/wins/13/6/215, SHC.
- 45 Lists showing estates 'without apprentices 1778' and the 'Turns of Estates' (as rated 1773). Broadwindsor, 'Account Book 1723–1789', PE/BDW/OV 1/1/2, DoHC.
- 46 Ide Parish, 'Apprentice Book, 1679–1817', 1857A/add/PO/83, DHC.
- 47 Burnham-on-Sea Parish, 'Survey of Burnham related to binding of apprentices. 18th century', D/P/b.on.s/23/3, SHC. A similar calculation of the apprentice:acreage ratio was made in an earlier register for 1745–1791: Burnham-on-Sea Parish, 'List of Burnham parish apprentices 1745–1791', D/P/b.on.s/23/8, SHC.
- 48 An accompanying list showed the resulting distribution of apprentices to each of the 84 owners per rotation: for example, Gabriel Stone Esq, owner of Units 7, 33 and 65 (combined 226 acres, £450) was to take three apprentices, whereas Mr P. Bower, owner of an estate in Unit 43 (18 acres, £40), was to take only a '1/2' apprentice – meaning an apprentice every other turn with financial contributions in alternate years.
- 49 Charles Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Devon* (London, 1808), 359–60.
- 50 The parish encompasses four settlements with corresponding manors: the central village of Awliscombe with the parish church of St Michael; the southern hamlet of Weston (or Waringstone) which spreads into neighbouring Buckerell; the northern hamlet of Wolverstone (or Woolstone); and a smaller hamlet of Godford above Awliscombe. Lucy Ryder, *The historic landscape of Devon: a study in change and continuity* (Oxford, 2013), 55, 109–10.
- 51 In 1674, the Hearth Tax shows that Awliscombe had 95 households, which we can use to estimate the population at around 368–450 ($409 \pm 10\%$), using an accepted multiplier of 4.3. See Tom Arkell, 'Multiplying factors for estimating population totals from the Hearth Tax', *Local Population Studies* 28 (1982), 51–7, 55. In 1801, Awliscombe had a population of 426: GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Awliscombe AP/CP through time, *A Vision of Britain through Time*, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10093739/cube/TOT_POP, accessed 24 May 2023.
- 52 The one-third (36 per cent) who were exempt was consistent with the average within the hundred of Hemyock and Devon as a whole. T. Stoate ed., *Devon Hearth Tax return, Lady Day 1674* (Bristol, 1982).
- 53 The social structure in Table 4 has been extrapolated from the Hearth Tax returns for 1674, following a familiar method of linking house size to wealth. The returns list shows both the taxpayers (anyone who occupied a house with a hearth) and those excluded for their poverty, and therefore comprised a complete list of the heads of households and the number of their hearths. Method follows use in Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting communities: English villages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), 39; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and piety in an English village: Terling, 1525–1700* (Oxford, 1995), 29; Henry French and R. W. Hoyle, *The character of English rural society: Earls Colne, 1550–1750* (Manchester, 2007), 68–71.
- 54 There was a significant concentration in landholdings: the 71 ratepayers in 1705 declined by a remarkable 24 per cent to only 54 occupiers in 1725, before stabilizing until 1750. The lower ratepayers between 1d and 3d almost completely disappeared, while the very smallest (under 1d), the mid-ranking (3d–1s) and the elite (more than 1s) payers all remained steady in numbers and therefore grew slightly in proportion. 'Rate book, 1704–1727', 3020A/PO/5; 'Account book, 1728–1741', 3020A/PO/6.
- 55 A handwritten label on the back of a 1671 indenture (presumably the top of a stack) stated 'Indentures for Binding Apprentices some Hundreds years back from 1609 to 1749' (3020A/PO/23/3).

56 When the yeoman Peter Bartow died in 1619 he bequeathed £5 'to be freely lent with poore children to bynde them apprentices to husbandry or trades', as a loan to be repaid by the respective masters and redeployed for other children. 'Will of Peter Bartowe or Bartow, Yeoman of Awliscombe, Devon, 17 June 1619', PROB 11/133/738, National Archives, Kew. Bartow's donation was being used in 1626 and 1627, as churchwarden accounts referenced the '5L to be ymployed in placing out of poore children Apprentices' (3020A/PW/5).

57 Based on payments for indentures in surviving accounts (3020A/PO/1, 3020A/PW/2-8).

58 3020A/PO/2, 3020A/PW/11.

59 'Apprenticeship Indentures', 3020A/PO/23.

60 3020A/PO/23/6; 3020A/PO/23/5.

61 3020A/PO/23/20.

62 Memo dated 29 October 1707, signed by 16 men: 'Resolution concerning parish meetings, 1707', 3020A/PZ/2. The Vestry Memorandum Book contains two registers of apprentices, the first covering 1708–1756 and a later copy covering 1708–1839. The first register was titled 'A List of the Apprentices that have been bound out by the Parish of Awliscombe and the Names of the Persons to whom they were bound and the Estates for which they were bound since the year 1708'. The book cover was labelled 'Awliscombe 1736'; all other records in the book date from 1736 or later; the record on the previous page to the register is 1739; the writing is in a neat and consistent hand up until around 1740. 'Memorandum Book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1.

63 For the period 1708–1749, there are 109 indentures matching the majority of register entries, but 19 entries have no corresponding indenture, and 4 additional indentures have no register entry. The register also contains additional and often contradictory information to the indentures, which makes it likely that it was compiled using additional records that no longer survive.

64 The method combined manual nominal record linkage across transcribed records, which were subsequently imported into NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, that allowed the digital exploration of those connections without extracting the data from its context.

65 In 1727, four children were bound to estates that last took an apprentice at the beginning of the previous rotation around 1708–1710.

66 For example, the indentures rebinding Abraham Corke (to Francis Drake in 1744, 3020A/PO/23/133) and Mary Daw (to Thomas Pring in 1748, 3020A/PO/23/140) do not specify the new estate.

67 Margaret Cork was bound in 1727 at the age of seven (see indenture 3020A/PO/23/84). Ottery St Mary Church Corporation, 'Settlement Examinations 1755–1765', 3327A/PO/81.

68 For example, Awlshouse (rated 2d. 1/2) took an apprentice in 1721; but when it took another apprentice in 1741, it received contributions from Hallescombe (1d. 1/2) and 'Mr Marwood's Ashford at Town' (2d.).

69 There may also be a third consequence, as the rota scheme after 1741 included new small estates that would henceforth take apprentices with contributions. These included 'Flees Joyce Land and Hills' (rated 5d. 1/4), Butsons Land and Hills (3d. 1/4) and Breaches (2d.).

70 Memo dated 16 August 1818. 3020A/PV/1.

71 Similarly, another memo in 1821 agreed that two children should be bound and that therefore overseers must 'give due notice thereof to the proprietors or occupiers of the Estates next in rotation'. 3020A/PV/1.

72 Memo dated 4 December 1828. 3020A/PV/1.

73 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 220.

74 3020A/PR/1/2.

75 Based on estimated average infant and child mortality (deaths under age five) from 1690 to 1749 as 188 per 1,000, meaning that just less than one in five children did not live to reach the age of five. Hence, we can estimate that 20 per cent of children born in Awliscombe did not reach the apprenticing age of seven. E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, 'English population history from family reconstitution: summary results 1600–1799', *Population Studies* 37, 2 (1983), 157–84, 216. Further, 17 children in the register seem to have been outside of the parish, which reduces the proportion to 26 per cent (105/403) of parish-born children apprenticed.

76 Hindle used a different method: he calculated the proportion of the parish population aged 7–16 (assumed to be 20 per cent), which produced an overall estimate that 'between 0.5 and 1 per cent of all eligible children were apprenticed each year' or 'between 5.85 and 8.73 per cent of boys and girls' over the lifetime of each cohort – although it is not clear how the second figures have been calculated. Hindle, *On the*

parish?, 220. If we used this method for Awliscombe (with population 400–450), then around 80–90 were aged 7–16 and 3–4 per cent of this group were bound each year.

77 In Colyton, the gender ratio changed over time: roughly equal in the first cohort before 1600, then increasingly dominated by boys by the late seventeenth century, before equalizing again in the second half of the eighteenth century. Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830', 259. In contrast, only around five per cent of parish apprentices were girls in a sample of three Derbyshire parishes c.1750–1837. Minister, 'Pauper apprenticeship in south Derbyshire', 72.

78 Based on samples of the statistical reports of the 1630s for more than 2,000 children across five counties, Hindle found a ratio of over two-thirds boys to one-third girls. Hindle, *On the parish?*, 213. Snell also found that 34 per cent of apprenticeships were for girls, based on 1,748 apprenticeships up to 1834. Snell, *Annals*, 278.

79 Average of 8.75 years for 107 children with baptism or birth dates, excluding rebindings at later ages.

80 The age profile is similar to that of another small Devon parish, Rackenford (1728–1844), with most boys bound 7–9 and girls 8–11, with very few 13–15 year olds (Child, 'Parish apprentices in Rackenford 1728–1844', 139). In Colyton, the average age was similar for the first cohorts before 1630, with a mean age of 8.7, but it increased over time and averaged 11.9 from 1598 to 1740 (Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830', 255). In Cambridgeshire, the average for girls at 9 was much younger than for boys around 12: Hampson, 'Settlement and removal', 284. In Lutterworth, Leicestershire, from 1754 to 1852 more than half children (with known ages) were bound over age 13 and none were bound under 9: Farrell, 'Lutterworth pauper children and apprenticeship, 1673–1856', 19–20. In South Derbyshire c.1750–1837, the average was 12 years of age: Minister, 'Pauper apprenticeship in south Derbyshire', 77.

81 Based on a number of studies, children became net contributors around 15 years of age across Europe. Marjatta Rahikainen, *Centuries of child labour: European experiences from the seventeenth to the twentieth century* (London, 2004), 54. See also Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), 43–4, 74–5.

82 In 1705, properties rated under 2d. paid a total of 1s. 7d. $\frac{3}{4}$, or around five per cent of the total Rate of £1 11s. 8d. $\frac{1}{4}$. 3020A/PO/5.

83 For example, see key studies in Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830'; Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 4; Hindle, *On the parish?*, 3.

84 *An ease for overseers of the poore abstracted from the statutes* (London, 1601), 27; Jonah Miller, *Gender and policing in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2023), 26–7.

85 Mark Goldie, 'The unacknowledged republic: officeholding in early modern England', in Tim Harris ed., *The politics of the excluded, c.1500–1850* (London, 2001), 153–94, 166–8.

86 The Churchwardenship was to be rotated among 62 estates (31 pairs), while the Overseership was to be rotated among 58 estates (29 pairs), two of which were not in the Churchwardenship rota. Hence there were 6 estates not shared between the two rotas. However, there is no obvious pattern to the order in either rota, and seemingly no connection between their respective orders, that is, an estate's position in one rota bears no relationship to its position in another. 3020A/PV/1.

87 It is difficult to give a precise number of masters with any certainty as there are discrepancies between records and it is not always possible to distinguish two individuals with the same name.

88 Seven named as 'Widow' in the indenture: Elizabeth Weeks, Mary Serle, Hannah Chard, Grace Pring, Ann Drake, Susanna Husey and Joan Cawley; two named elsewhere as 'Widow': Elizabeth Serle and Mary Pring in the Rates; two named 'Spinster': Ann Holway and Joan Cawley (also widow).

89 The names of churchwardens and overseers of the poor were recorded on the Rates from 1704 to 1749, as well as on surviving overseer accounts and the indentures for pauper apprentices for 22 out of 34 years from 1669 to 1703. Two officers were masters in 1751: John Holcombe (1744) and William Searle (1749).

90 David Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces, 1700–1870* (New York, 1997), ch. 2.

91 Note that this cannot be done with precision as any period will fail to capture roles filled before and after (for example, Daniel Pring of Ivedon was a vestry member in 1728 and 1729 before he died in 1730, but his eight years as an officer between 1704 and 1726 are not counted). 3020A/PO/6, 3020A/PO/7.

92 French and Hoyle differentiated ratepayers into the following groups: 'Vestrymen attending more than average', 'Officers and vestrymen', 'Vestrymen only', 'Officers only', 'Non-officers'. French and Hoyle, *Character of English rural society*, 255–6.

93 For example, George Vicary, John Warren, Robert Goard, Thomas Shepard, Moses Pulman, Roger Bishop and William Pidgeon.

94 For example, Mary Pring, Jacob Parsons, James Drake, John French, John Mayne and Benjamin Weslake.

95 3020A/PO/23/72-4, 3020A/PO/23/78 and 3020A/PO/23/94.

96 For example, a vestry meeting in 1733 agreed that if the apprentice Edward Griffin continued to 'have his fits' then his mistress Mary Pring would be discharged of her responsibility (3020A/PO/6). In 1785, the vestry agreed to prosecute Mrs Mary Drake and her son Henry for 'Refusing to take Care of Henry Hellins her Apprentice Bound to her husband Francis Drake' two years earlier in 1783 for the Beneththayes estate (3020A/PV/1).

97 For example: 'At a Publick Parish Meeting held at Church on Thursday the 16th day of June 1788 for Binding out Apprentices pursuant to publick Notice Given in the Church for that purpose on Sunday Last it was unanimously agreed by us to Bind an apprentice to William Loaring for the Mills ...' (3020A/PV/1).

98 Dennis R. Mills, *Lord and peasant in nineteenth century Britain* (London, 1980), 116. Early development of ideas in D. R. Mills, 'The poor laws and the distribution of population, c. 1600–1860, with special reference to Lincolnshire', *Transactions and Papers (Institute of British Geographers)* 26 (1959), 185–95. See discussion in Andrew J. H. Jackson, 'The "open-closed" settlement model and the interdisciplinary formulations of Dennis Mills: conceptualising local rural change', *Rural History* 23, 2 (2012), 121–36.

99 Mills, *Lord and peasant*, 28. See the critique of overly ambitious claims in Byung Khun Song, 'Parish typology and the operation of the Poor Laws in early nineteenth-century Oxfordshire', *Agricultural History Review* 50, 2 (2002), 203–24.

100 W. G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Cheltenham, 2003), 74. Sharpe characterized Colyton as an 'open' parish in which the local labour force was largely controlled by yeomen farmers. Pamela Sharpe, *Population and society in an east Devon parish: reproducing Colyton 1540–1840* (Exeter, 2002), 116, 155.

101 A later impressionistic picture can be gleaned from the semi-standardized descriptions in the *Imperial Gazetteer* (1870), following Mills (88). Of 43 parishes, the property arrangements for 21 were described as 'much subdivided' or 'subdivided', consistent with an open parish, although 12 were divided 'among a few' and a further 10 had no clear description. Selected transcripts for 'Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales Circa 1870' available at www.parishmouse.co.uk/devon/. Original source: *The Imperial Gazetteer of England & Wales* [Wilson, John M]. A. Fullarton & Co. N. d. c. [1870–1872].

102 Land Tax assessments for a sample of five Devon parishes show: 132 owners and 44 acres per owner in Halberton (1781); 114 and 81 in Broadclyst (1783); 73 and 107 in Sandford (1780); 27 and 199 in Cheriton Fitzpaine (1780); and 163 and 45 in Cullompton (1780). Mills suggested that 'open' parishes could be distinguished between 'peasant' communities (with a minimum of 20 owners and a landowning density below around 36 acres per owner) and a transitional 'divided' community. Hence these fall into the category of 'divided' parishes, neither an idealized estate nor a peasant system. Mills, *Lord and peasant*, 78.

103 H. C. G. Matthew, 'White, John Meadows (1799/1800–1863), lawyer', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004). Retrieved 26 Mar. 2025, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29257>.

104 John Meadows White, *Some remarks on the statute law affecting parish apprentices* (London, 1829), 5, 20–1, 32, 38, 45.

105 White, *Some remarks on the statute law*, 21.

106 White, *Some remarks on the statute law*, 56. The same sentiment was reported by Captain Chapman from the South-West: it was objected that parish apprentices in these schemes were 'a slave attached to the soil for seven and in some cases eleven years'. Nassau Senior and Edwin Chadwick, *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), Appendix A, 432; Chapman, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 15 Report', 432.

107 The responsibility of the relatives or executors upon the death of the master was in itself a legal problem: White, *Some remarks on the statute law*, 32, 41.

108 The 1834 report from the West Riding, Yorkshire, noted different approaches. For example, both Rotherham and Halifax operated a 'rotation of persons, not of property', allowing bindings to new occupiers regardless of previous bindings to the same property (846, 798). Tweedy, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 20 Report'.

109 William Nelson, *The office and authority of a justice of peace* (London, 1704), 35. This point has unclear origins, but appears in Michael Dalton, *The country justice* (London, 1635), 95.

110 White, *Some remarks on the statute law*, 5.

- 111 The farmers objected to the schemes in Gisburn, Yorkshire, 'because it would be a hindrance to their changing their farms, as they do frequently year after year' (Tweedy, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 20 Report', 747.) Similarly, in the far south-west of Kenwyn, Cornwall, the system of apprenticeship was 'discontinued, as the liability to take apprentices was found to interfere with the letting of houses' (Chapman, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 15 Report', 508).
- 112 Joshua Rhodes, 'Subletting in eighteenth-century England: a new methodological approach', *Agricultural History Review* 66 (2018), 67–92.
- 113 For example, in 1725 an apprentice was bound to Mr George Drake for Hunthayes (as entered in the register, no indenture has survived); yet the Rates listed Joshua Ashford as the occupier for 'Mr Drakes pt of Hunthayes' and an earlier rental for 1710 (in Godford Manor) listed Mr George Drake as the tenant for Hunthayes. 3020A/PV/1; 3020A/PO/5. See 'Godford Manor: 1705–1710: rents received accounts', Z1/53/Box 8/3.
- 114 3020A/PV/1; 3020A/PO/5; 3020A/PO/23/42.
- 115 3020A/PO/23/49; Devon Quarter Sessions, Sessions Order Book marked as '9', 1704–1718, QS/1/15.
- 116 3020A/PO/5.
- 117 3020A/PO/23/54.
- 118 Devon Quarter Sessions, Sessions Order Book marked as '10', 1718–1725, QS/1/16. The record of the original binding is lost, but Joana was rebound the next summer to Daniel Pring for the Stremers estate on 4 July 1722, a neighbouring tenement to that occupied by John Fry. 3020A/PO/23/71.
- 119 Margaret Daw to Losses in 1729 and 1732; Sarah Webber to Great Ridgeway in 1736 and 1741; Dorothy Stamp to Great Godford in 1741 and 1744 (3020A/PV/1).
- 120 3020A/PO/23/131; 3020A/PO/7. Similarly, in 1748 Mary Daw (alias Taylor) was bound apprentice; the register recorded the master as Edmund Frost (for Ford's Woolstone) but the indenture (with the same date) named John Mountstephen and added that the apprentice was 'not bound ... for and in respect of any of his estates in the sd parish' (3020A/PO/23/140). The accounts for 1748 show that Edmund Frost paid the parish a fine of £5 4s. to discharge his apprentice and that £5 was used to pay a premium to John Mountstephen to take Mary Daw (3020A/PO/7).
- 121 Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830', 255.
- 122 For a recent summary, see Jane Whittle, 'Introduction: servants in the economy and society of rural Europe', in Jane Whittle ed., *Servants in rural Europe* (Woodbridge, 2017), 1–18. Foundational works by Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1981); Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost* (London, 1965); J. Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley eds., *Population in history* (London, 1965), 101–43.
- 123 On question of productive age, see Rahikainen, *Centuries of child labour*, 69–70.
- 124 Consistent with Beier's general point that the labour laws from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century were primarily concerned with 'controlling labor's position in the social order' and disciplining the labour force, rather than merely securing cheap labour in conditions of scarcity. A. L. Beier, 'A new serfdom': labor laws, vagrancy statutes, and labor discipline in England, 1350–1800', in Paul Ocobock ed., *Cast out: vagrancy and homelessness in global and historical perspective* (Ohio, 2008), 35–63, 38.
- 125 William Marshall, *Rural economy of the west of England*, 2 vols (London, 1796), 112–13.
- 126 Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Devon*, 361.
- 127 Alfred Austin, 'Report on the counties of Wilts, Dorset, Devon, and Somerset, by Alfred Austin, Esq, with Appendix', *Reports of Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (London, 1843), 1–126, 54.
- 128 Austin, 'Report on the counties of Wilts, Dorset, Devon, and Somerset', 107. Appendix, No. 37.
- 129 On this widespread juridical model for early modern labour: Robert J. Steinfeld, *The invention of free labor: the employment relation in English and American law and culture, 1350–1870* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 55–65.
- 130 Gilbert, 'No. 9. report on Devon', 354.
- 131 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 199; Farrell, 'Lutterworth pauper children and apprenticeship, 1673–1856', 17; Hampson, 'Settlement and removal', 282; Hinton, 'Notes on the administration of the relief of the poor of Lacock 1583–1834', 202.
- 132 As described in Anne Digby, 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *Economic History Review* 28, 1 (1975), 69–83, 70, 77.

- 133 George R. Boyer, 'The Old Poor Law and the agricultural labor market in southern England: an empirical analysis', *Journal of Economic History* 46, 1 (1986), 113–35, 132.
- 134 For a conventional statement on commercialization, see Keith Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain, 1470–1750* (London, 2000), 316, 331.
- 135 Beier, 'A new serfdom', 38, 54.
- 136 Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England', *Economic History Review* 65, 1 (2012), 26–60. See map at 60. For a challenge to how the notion of a capitalist labour force applies to Devon in the nineteenth century, see Michael Winter, 'The development of family farming in west Devon in the nineteenth century', in Graham Cox, Philip Lowe and Michael Winter eds., *Agriculture: people and policies* (London, 1986), 61–76.
- 137 Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden eds., *Free and unfree labour: the debate continues* (Bern, 1997); Jane Whittle and Thijs Lambrecht eds., *Labour laws in preindustrial Europe: the coercion and regulation of wage labour, c.1350–1850* (London, 2023); Alessandro Stanziani, *Bondage: labor and rights in Eurasia from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries* (New York, 2018); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman eds., *Slavery's capitalism: a new history of American economic development* (Philadelphia, 2016).
- 138 On laws constituting the labour market, see Simon Deakin and Frank Wilkinson, *The law of the labour market: industrialization, employment, and legal evolution* (Oxford, 2005). Larry Patriquin flipped Karl Polanyi's argument on its head and argued that rather than the repeal of the Speenhamland policies under the Old Poor Law liberating the market economy, the Poor Laws had in fact functioned as 'an adjustment programme' during the long transition to a capitalist economy. Larry Patriquin, *Agrarian capitalism and poor relief in England, 1500–1860: rethinking the origins of the welfare state* (Basingstoke, 2007), 115; Karl Polanyi, *The great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time* (Boston, 1957), 77.
- 139 Honeyman, *Child workers in England, 1780–1820*, 13, 111. See also Marc W. Steinberg, 'Unfree labor, apprenticeship and the rise of the Victorian hull fishing industry: an example of the importance of law and the local state in British economic change', *International Review of Social History* 51, 2 (2006), 243–76.
- 140 Helen Berry, 'The occupational distribution of founding apprentices during the English Industrial Revolution', *Social History* 48, 2 (2023), 259–83.
- 141 A. J. Gritt, 'The "survival" of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire, c.1650–1851', *Agricultural History Review* 50, 1 (2002), 25–50; Stephen Caunce, 'Farm servants and the development of capitalism in English agriculture', *Agricultural History Review* 45, 1 (1997), 49–60.
- 142 Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism'.
- 143 Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism', 58. Indeed, the establishment of the Awliscombe apprenticeship scheme coincided with a notable polarization of landholdings in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.
- 144 Rahikainen, *Centuries of child labour*, 80, 93, 101; Rahikainen, 'Compulsory child labour'.
- 145 On seventeenth-century schemes, see Hindle, *On the parish?*, 174–91. On later labour allocation schemes, see Fred Block and Margaret Somers, 'In the shadow of Speenhamland: social policy and the Old Poor Law', *Politics and Society* 31, 2 (2003), 283–323; Digby, 'The labour market'; Carl J. Griffin, 'Parish farms and the poor law: a response to unemployment in rural southern England, c.1815–35', *Agricultural History Review* 59, 2 (2011), 176–98.
- 146 Further, as found by Pamela Sharp in the case of Colyton, over the long term apprenticeships shifted away from providing a home for children who had lost one or both parents towards a standard life-cycle stage for children from large families. Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830', 258, 264.

French Abstract

Cet article est le second d'une série de deux essais qui étudient un système bien particulier, mais méconnu, d'organisation du travail des enfants et des jeunes gens en Angleterre rurale. Il fait apparaître comment les paroisses ont mis en œuvre les pouvoirs que La loi des pauvres de 1601 leur donna : placer des enfants comme domestiques de ferme non rémunérés (jusqu'à l'âge de 17 ans) chez des propriétaires fonciers locaux établis sur des terres d'une certaine valeur. Comme cette loi pouvait contraindre autant l'apprenti que le

maître, les autorités paroissiales furent en mesure d'instituer des systèmes centralisés de rotation. Ce deuxième article examine maintenant les aspects politiques et économiques des programmes d'apprentissage obligatoire dans le Sud-Ouest du pays. Il évalue tout d'abord leur ampleur et les modes de régulation touchant la répartition des enfants entre les propriétaires fonciers, en particulier comment on optimisait le ratio apprenti/surface cultivée. L'auteur présente ensuite une étude de cas dans le Devon, sur la paroisse d'Awliscombe, où le quart des enfants locaux se retrouvaient engagés. On y proposait un nouveau modèle de gouvernance par lequel les principaux exploitants agricoles étaient à même de contrôler en même temps l'aide aux pauvres et la main-d'œuvre offerte, cumulant leurs positions d'acteurs politiques locaux, de gestionnaires et de maîtres. La conclusion de cette étude engage à réfléchir à la spécificité de ces programmes d'apprentissage obligatoire en milieu rural, où le mode de travail combinait à la fois des éléments de service domestique spécifique à l'âge avec un lien de type servage entre la terre et le travail.

German Abstract

Dies ist der zweite von zwei Aufsätzen, in denen ein äußerst markantes, aber bislang übersehenes System der Arbeitsorganisation von Kinder und Jugendlichen im ländlichen England untersucht wird. Er zeigt, wie Gemeinden ihre durch das Armenrecht von 1601 gegebenen Machtmittel nutzten, um Kinder (bis zu 17 Jahre lang) mit formellen Lehrverträgen örtlichen Landbesitzern mit Höfen von einer bestimmten Größe als unbezahlte Farmarbeiter zuzuweisen. Da sowohl Lehrlinge als auch Meister rechtlich zu solchen Verträgen gezwungen werden konnten, waren die Gemeinderäte in der Lage, zentralisierte Rotationsprogramme einzurichten. Dieser Aufsatz (Teil II) untersucht die politischen und ökonomischen Aspekte dieser obligatorischen Lehrvertragssysteme im südwestlichen England. Erstens prüft er deren Umfang und die bei der Verteilung von Kindern unter die Landbesitzer verfolgte Regulierungspolitik, zu der auch Berechnungen des optimalen Lehrling-zu-Anbaufläche-Verhältnisses zählten. Zweitens liefert er eine Fallstudie für Awliscombe in Devon, wo ein Viertel der örtlichen Kinder eingebunden wurde. Dort kam es zu einem neuen Herrschaftsmodell, mittels dessen die führenden Landwirte sowohl die Armenhilfe als auch das Arbeitsangebot kontrollieren konnten, indem sie mehrere Rollen zugleich spielten – als örtliche Entscheidungsträger, Verwalter und Arbeitgeber. Den Abschluss bilden Überlegungen zur Besonderheit dieser landwirtschaftlichen Lehrvertragsprogramme als eines Arbeitssystems, das Elemente der lebenszyklischen Dienstverpflichtung mit einer Verknüpfung von Land und Arbeit verband, die der Leibeigenschaft ähnelte.