In Search of the Metabolic Rift:

Land-use, societal change and environment in the nineteenth century with particular reference to a study of eastern Monmouthshire



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Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy, 30th April 2024

Abstract:

This thesis considers nineteenth century rural change in the context of a theory which suggests that the development of industrial capitalism led to a metabolic rift between society and the environment on which it depends. Key to this theory has been the work of Foster and others, who have sought to show how Marx's critique of capitalism, far from being Promethean, contained important insights that historians have missed, particularly those coming from a twentieth century paradigm. After a discussion of the importance of the theory of metabolic rift and its place in history, the thesis considers an area of south Wales that was a borderland between industrial development of the valleys to the west and the developing marketplaces particularly in southern England. Eastern Monmouthshire remained rural, but life changed for its inhabitants, and this fundamentally altered their relationship with the local environment. The thesis reassesses some of the continuing myths about rurality and its connections with a world that has throughout history been changed by human actors. By highlighting the different ways that the transport revolution, the growth of a consumer society and agricultural changes themselves interacted to produce this rift, it shows a clear interconnection between the rift created by industrialisation and rural society.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my supervisor, Dr Martin Wright, whose expert help and guidance, especially his in-depth knowledge of secondary material, was invaluable. I would also like to thank my fellow PhD candidates in the School of History, Archaeology and Religion for their interest and many stimulating discussions, the colleagues who I have met and engaged with from various Schools at Cardiff University and especially those UCU members who stood together in our long-running disputes. The Covid-19 outbreak and lockdowns had an effect on us all and came at the start of my research and I'd like to thank those working in the NHS for everything they did at that time. Thankfully I avoided the virus, but I know many were not so fortunate. Thanks to the archivists I have worked with, especially at Gwent Archives and the National Library of Wales. I would also like to thank everyone I have worked alongside as a teacher of history over many years working in secondary schools, and every student I have taught too, for stimulating my interest in history as much as I hope I managed to stimulate yours. Thanks to everyone in eastern Monmouthshire who told me about this overlooked and often undervalued area. Special thanks to everyone who spoke to me as we walked through the countryside and took in the views. Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my amazing partner, Dr Sarah Foster, for her support over the years, for being there and putting up with my enthusiasm for history which I know she doesn't always share, as well as my two sons, Declan and Brendan, who make me immensely proud.

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Introduction

This thesis is a study of changes in rural life that led to a metabolic rift in the nineteenth century using an area of eastern Monmouthshire as its main focus, although there are some examples drawn from elsewhere. This is a small part of the wider region of south Wales and is defined in Figure 1. In Chapter 2, the individual villages will be studied in more depth in relationship to the changes they underwent in the nineteenth century.

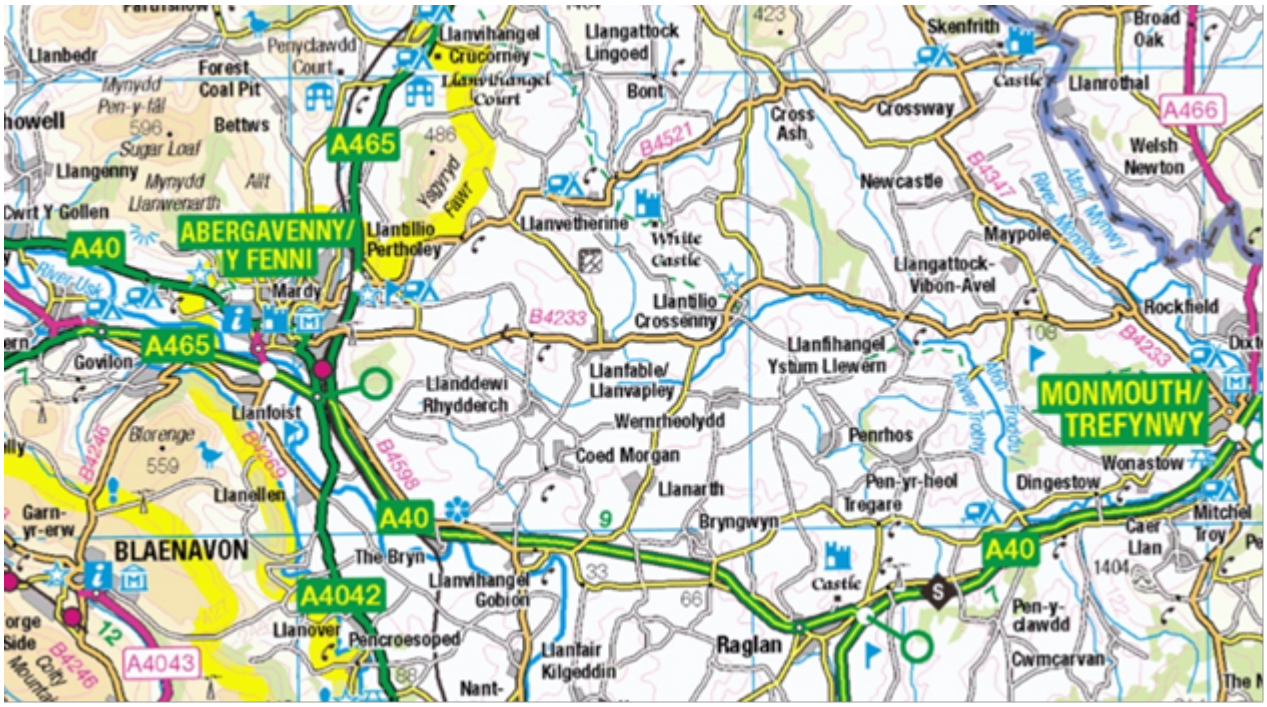

Figure 1: A modern map of Eastern Monmouthshire showing its location and pattern of villages to the east and south of Abergavenny.

This area remained rural despite its proximity to the Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire valleys further west, places which were of central importance to Britain's industrialisation. It is also within a county with a long border with Herefordshire and Gloucestershire in England, and so, while remote and for most of the nineteenth century and quite cut-off, it has always had some interconnectivity to the wider economy of southern Britain. This area, mostly rural with a patchwork of lanes and small villages along with post-enclosure fields used variously for arable and pasture in a landscape, may not look markedly different in the twenty-first century to how it would have been seen over two hundred years ago, with the obvious exceptions of power and telephone lines, tarmac roads and modern traffic, but this is illusionary. Beneath the surface the society and economy of this area is markedly different to the one that was inhabited in 1800. Part of this study will look at the changing relationship between this rurality and its basis as an agricultural economy particularly given the changing fortunes of farming in the UK in the

nineteenth century. Despite the extent of the changes, and unlike some other areas of south Wales, eastern Monmouthshire did not experience organised collective protests or resistance such as the Rebecca Riots, another aspect of the area considered in later chapters.

The main historiographical intervention of this thesis is to reconsider the developments that created this change in rural Britain, which have previously been discussed and analysed from a variety of economic and social perspectives, in the light of growing environmental concern and awareness. To achieve this, the thesis will answer questions about the nature and extent of agricultural change, while challenging the notion that the nineteenth century saw an agricultural revolution that was separate from the changes that sprang from industrialisation, and this led to a significantly different relationship between those engaged in food production and rural life and the natural environment in which they were interacting. This study will examine how during the nineteenth century a rift opened between human society and the natural world. This happened in a number of different inter-related ways. One was the development of new forms of transportation, changing the interconnectedness of south-east Wales, which became far less remote especially once the railway tunnel was opened that allowed a direct connection between Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire and the rest of southern England in the late nineteenth century. Another key change was the development of a consumer society that enabled both the rural and urban population to obtain such necessities and luxuries as they could afford or get credit for. This inevitably changed the relationship of those affected as they became consumers instead of, in most cases, producers of food, which also led to an end to their daily interaction between how food was produced and the sustainability of the environment on which this depended. Finally, this thesis will look at some of the main changes in farming methods and agriculture, aspects of change that both related to the fluctuating fortunes of the economy and opened the way to even more intensive forms of food production in the twentieth century.

Concern about the unsustainable nature of farming and food production, a concern that has intensified since the millennium, has led historians to reconsider the nineteenth and twentieth century changes in the core economies that drove the processes of industrialisation and agricultural change, and particularly the relationship between food production and the environment. While there is a significant and very useful historiography of the development of industry in South Wales from 1750 and its effects on society, economy and the environment, understanding what happened in the areas that remained rural has been less well researched by historians although it is required to help develop a more complete historical picture of a

dramatically changing landscape and its long-term effects.[1] The negative environmental effects on the associated industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain were being discussed as early as the eighteenth century.[2] The main area of debate for twentieth century historians, though, was around living standards and the economic importance of these changes. Some recent critics have described this emphasis as part of 'the de-historicization of nature' and argued instead for a historiography that revisits the era in the light of the concern about the effects of environmental sustainability of the industrialisation which affected nineteenth century Britain.[3] The urgency of responding to environmental challenges was summed up by António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations who, in a speech in 2021, put it like this:

> Today's IPCC Working Group 1 report is a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil-fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible.[4]

The problem is that for most people, it does not feel like a genuine 'code red' emergency as their everyday lives seem disconnected from it, other priorities are presented as more important, and they are told there is little that can be done to change things or even that the issue doesn't really exist. Hence, there is often a negative response to even mild reforms aimed at tackling some of the problems within the earth's system seen in the rise of populist anti-environmental movements particularly in parts of Europe and North America. In previous epochs, the necessary relationship between husbandry and negative effects of human interactions with the environment were immediately noticed, as much of human activity was based around getting enough food to eat. Where rural populations are no longer able to obtain necessary food, especially in what has been described as the 'global south', the only solution offered is to move to a city and do whatever it

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[1] Examples of the historiography of the environmental impact of South Wales industrialisation include: Newell E & Watts S, 'The environmental impact of industrialization in South Wales in the Nineteenth Century: 'Copper Smoke' and the Llanelli Copper Company', *Environment and History*, 2:3 (1996) pp. 309-336; Poulin A, 'Industrialisation, migration et anglicisation dans le sud du pays de Galles: Treherbert, vallee de la Rhondda, 1861-91, *Canadian Journal of History*, 37:2 (2002) pp. 229-251

[2] For instance, in 1777 by Anderson J, *An Enquiry into the Nature of Corn Laws; with a view to the new corn bill proposed for Scotland* (republished London, 2010)

[3] Clark B, Foster J B and York R, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*, (Monthly Review Press: New York, 2010) p. 39

[4] "Secretary-General Calls Latest IPCC Climate Report 'Code Red for Humanity', Stressing 'Irrefutable' Evidence of Human Influence" United Nations Press Release SG/SM/20847, 9 August 2021 https://press.un.org/en/2021/sgsm20847.doc.htm

might take to obtain what people need from the shops, a solution that all too often exchanges one set of insurmountable problems for another.

In response to these challenges, John Bellamy Foster's 2000 publication, *Marx's Ecology* was described as a 'thunderbolt' by one environmentalist.[5] Foster's analysis looked back at the writings of Marx and Engels, who had long been dismissed as Prometheans encouraging human society to make the fullest use of the natural world, and he rediscovered a rich vein of useful environmental work within their general critique of the capitalist system, a rediscovery that supported a radical vision encapsulated in the popular slogan of some within the environmental movement, 'system change, not climate change.'[6] Foster argues that Marx's writings, from his early manuscripts through to later works such as the *Grundrisse* and the three volumes of *Capital* contain important arguments that point to a systemic environmental critique of the unsustainability of the developing economic, social and political system, and that these writings have been ignored or misinterpreted by friend and foe alike throughout the twentieth century. Marx explained that the development of productive forces under capitalism created a 'metabolic rift', a deepening divide between human society and the natural environment. This was only possible because of the massive increase in productive forces that capitalism had developed through innovation and exploitation.[7] While earlier societies were based on transforming nature, the relationship only became problematic with the development of industry driven by fossil-fuels that have expanded since the mid eighteenth-century and have been driven globally by the competitive driving force of the capitalist system. The result has been increased production, a concentration of the workforce into urban areas and large workplaces that deny access to the relationship between humans and their environment crucial to previous economic systems.[8] By focussing largely on one area, in the case of this thesis on eastern Monmouthshire, the aim is to consider whether this general theory has anything useful to add or to say in the urgent need for a historiography that considers the environmental aspects of nineteenth century change. In particular, it will consider if changes in the nineteenth century were crucial in opening the way for the expansion of the system in the twentieth, whose effects on the earth's system has resulted in what some consider as a new

[5] Malm A, 'For a Fallible and Lovable Marx: Some Thoughts on the Latest Book by Foster and Burkett', *Critical Historical Studies*, 4:2 (2017) p. 267. This evaluation is despite that fact that Foster was building on an earlier work by Paul Burkett, with whom he later collaborated and for which he wrote a foreword: see Burkett P, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1999)
[6] Foster J B, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (Monthly Review Press: New York, 2000)
[7] Marx K, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' *in Early Writings* (Penguin: London, 1992) pp. 325-333
[8] Foster J B, *Marx's Ecology…* p. 158-9

geological epoch called the Anthropocene.[9] The study will aim to avoid what Burkett has described as 'crude materialist' or 'social-constructivist' views that only emphasise either 'technological determinist or naturist' pre-determined social reality, or over-emphasise the role of social formations in shaping history, 'to the neglect of the material content of these forms as constrained by the natural conditions of human production and evolution'.[10]

Chapter One is a discussion of the theoretical basis of this thesis. It will consider the arguments for and against the concepts of agricultural and industrial revolution, before looking at how this informs the debate about the opening of an environmental metabolic rift. Given the importance of human agency in understanding the driving for of the changes being explored, the concepts relating to this and especially with regard to an explanatory theory of alienation will be outlined. Chapter Two explores the people of eastern Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century. It will look at evidence from the 1840 Tithe survey, the censuses from 1841 and various estate and farm records and focus on eight villages. Given their importance to the processes of change, their greater agency and the contradictions between the intentions and outcomes involved, those who owned the land will be a major focus. This chapter will also investigate the complex and changing relationships between these people and the different groups who used the land and will, in doing so, challenge Laslett's description of pre-capitalist Britain as a 'one-class society', seeing nineteenth-century Monmouthshire as more like E.P. Thompson's subsequent interpretation of eighteenth-century England, in having 'class struggle without class'.[11] Some have suggested that there were concurrent agricultural and industrial revolutions, while others see them as one connected development, as discussed in Chapter One.[12]

Chapters Three to Five will look at the significant changes to some relevant aspects of rural life in the nineteenth century, including transportation, consumerism and methods of agricultural production. Transport improvements allowed villages to become home to people who earned their living further afield, often in nearby towns and in a variety of trades that were more regional

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[9] Angus I, *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capital and the Crisis of the Earth's System* (Monthly Review Press: New York, 2016) pp. 27-28 gives an interesting explanation of the origins of this term and its subsequent history. Recent usage began in 2000 and usually refers to the effects of post 1945 societal changes.

[10] Burkett P, *Marx and Nature...* p. 17

[11] Laslett P, *The World We Have Lost* (third edition) (Routledge: London, 1983), p. 22-52 and Thompson E.P., 'Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?' *Social History,* 3:2 (1978) pp.133-165. Laslett disputes the idea of class and class struggle as being relevant to an explanation of historical change, whereas Thompson argues for different categories to overcome what he describes as static (and ahistorical) models of capitalist productive relations.

[12] Mingay G.E. *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (MacMillan: London, 1968) proposes a link between industrial and agricultural revolution, while Kerridge E 'The Agricultural Revolution Reconsidered', *Agricultural History,* 43:4 (1969) disagrees.

than local. This allowed an increase in the need for village shops to provide food and other essentials. These shops often became the village post office later in the century, allowing the state to have a base in each village as it expanded its reach and its functions and service provision significantly. Even those who remained farming the land were now predominantly or, often exclusively, producing for an increasingly urbanised population through the market system where price regulation through 'supply and demand' was the key mechanism for planning food production.[13] By the end of the century, the advances in technology and industrialisation allowed many farmers to adopt mechanised methods in food production, replacing manual labourers but sometimes requiring skilled operatives instead.[14] Throughout these chapters, the thesis will also critically examine concepts of rurality and urbanity, 'improvement', land ownership and change in this county of urban/rural dichotomy, in order to assess the metabolic rift and the contradictions that have led to the current crisis. Overall, the aim is to respond to the need to understand how and why the challenges António Guterres outlined to the United Nations have come about and, in doing so, move towards an account of the totality of change.

1. Methodology: Researching rurality in eastern Monmouthshire

Stuart MacDonald's observation that 'the main problem faced by the historian of agricultural practices is… a shortage of relevant and reliable data' is important in understanding the complexities and limitations of a locally based study to investigate social and environmental change.[15] It also explains some of the methodological choices that have been made. Finding out about the attitude and influence of working farmers of two hundred years ago can be problematic. It is easier to find out what landlords were doing than working farmers and while the landowners had a relatively higher level of agency in the nineteenth century, those working on the land were also significant especially as their responses to the changes made or desired had a lasting effect on the opening up of the metabolic rift. Landed estates accumulated many records, including, quite usefully, the sales records of those that were broken up at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The small farmers, including those who subsequently bought the land, usually had no need or desire to keep correspondence and records and any that did exist

[13] A recent article on this and some of the issues it had caused is Angus A, Burgess P.J., Morris J and Lingard J, 'Agriculture and land use: Demand for and supply of agricultural commodities, characteristics of the farming and food industries, and implications for land use in the UK' in *Land Use Policy*, 26:1 (2009) pp. S230-S242

[14] Walton J.R., 'Mechanization in agriculture: a study of the adoption process', in Fox H S A & Butlin R A (eds.), *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900* (Institute of British Geographers: London, 1979) pp. 23-42 looks at the debate about the speed and adoption of mechanisation.

[15] S McDonald, 'The Role of the individual in agricultural change: the example of George Culley of Fenton, Northumberland', in H S A Fox & R A Butlin (eds.), *Change in the Countryside…* p.6

are unlikely to have been retained. At best, they may have found their way to a local descendent, a solicitor's office, a library or a museum.[16] Similarly, Hobsbawm and Rudé ask about the rural poor, 'who were they? Nobody except themselves and the rulers of the villages knew or cared, nobody except the clergyman or (much more rarely) the dissenting minister entered the few facts of their obscure lives in the parish register: birth, marriage and death.'[17] The crises that affected British agriculture in the nineteenth century led to the setting up of different enquiries that investigated agriculture and the reports were based on visiting areas, including eastern Monmouthshire, in order to assess farming. These have been invaluable in giving insights to the practices and attitudes of farmers throughout the century.

The use of a micro-historical approach will aim to locate important spatial aspects of the processes involved and overcome some of the research problems already discussed, while answering the questions posed in the introduction. Micro-historical research focuses on a particular space and place and was developed by post-modernist historians. Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon argues that the dominant paradigm of social history in the 1970s, based on empirical research in order to prove itself as a social science, led to an overemphasis on certain historical processes and a simplification of the complex social structures and meanings of different actions. Subsequently, micro-histories have been used to avoid a social science that concludes with 'generalisations that do not hold up when tested against the concrete reality of the small-scale life they claim to explain'[18]. Magnússon argues that micro-histories rediscover the lives of those living at periods in the past, including minority and oppressed groups, who are often missed by 'broad strokes of macro-historical approaches', while Giovanni Levi, another pioneer of micro-history, argues that the approach allows historians to research 'the fragmentation, contradictions and plurality of viewpoints which make all systems fluid and open' by complicating the historical picture as historians want, using the scale they want. Levi has this to say about mixing up the scale to highlight both the problem and how to address it, and why he delivered a seminar on the land market entitled "India, England, France, the United States and a village in Piedmont":

> The scope was paradoxical, it was like saying: if we continue to talk about the land market, talking about it wholesale, we don't understand anything, we don't understand why prices are so dispersed and irregular. Let us see the problem of a local market, to see the real functioning, to directly

[16] S McDonald S, 'The Role of the individual …', p.7
[17] Hobsbawm E & Rudé G, *Captain Sw*ing (Verso: London, 1969) pp.21-22
[18] S Gylfi Magnússon, The Singularisation of History: Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge, *Journal of Social History*, 36:3 (2003), p.709

> formulate the question, to observe the role of social relations in the formation of prices, in each transaction.[19]

This is analogous with the process of using a study of eastern Monmouthshire to understand the more general picture of how a metabolic rift was created. Lynn Hunt feels that microhistory, rather than "event-oriented" history, allows for the inclusion of 'ordinary people, often including women as central characters, and ties their stories into much more general narratives of long-term social changes but still remains focussed on the analytical level of events.'[20] While Carlo Ginzburg has attacked large-scale quantitative methods as distorting 'reality on the individual level,' Pomata makes the valid point that 'no conclusion reached at the microlevel can be transferred whole to the macrolevel… the historical record includes connections that are visible only at the macrolevel', which means there needs to be a combination of different types of data in order to successfully deal with a theory such as that of the metabolic rift.[21] The combination of the discussion that can be found in Chapter One and the local focus in Chapters Two to Five, aim to combine the different perspectives and approaches.

This thesis will consider a combination of different types of quantitative data, locating changes that took place locally as much as possible using local resources. Given their lower status in the hierarchy, agricultural labourers and others living in rural villages in the nineteenth century are, as already noted, much more difficult to locate in the historical record. They are named on the parish censuses before, in many cases, disappearing ten years later. Yet these are usually the people who worked on the land and their removal is given as a reason for the loss of knowledge of sustainable methods of farming. Knowing what happened to them is important to this study. Often the only historical evidence of such individuals was when they came into conflict with authority, which is why historians such as Shakesheff and Archer have used court and newspaper records to uncover other aspects of their lives.[22] However only a small minority of people broke the law and while histories based on this kind of research are interesting, it is questionable how representative lawbreakers were for a study of everyday rural life. In his recent study of the Captain Swing riots in

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[19] Levi G, 'O pequeno, o grande, o pequeno: Entrevista comm Giovanni Levi: The small, the large and the small: Interview with Giovanni Levi' (translated from Portuguese) Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH) Revista brasileira de história, 37:74 (2017) p.170

[20] Hunt L, 'The Challenge of Gender: Deconstruction of Categories and Reconstruction of Narratives in Gender History' in Medick H & Trepp A (eds.) *Geschlechtergeschichte und Allgemeine Geschichte: Herausforderungen und Perspektiven* (Göttingen, 1998) pp. 91-92

[21] S Gyfi Magnússon, *The Singularisation…*, p.719

[22] Shakesheff T, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest: Herefordshire 1800-1860* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2003) and Archer J E, *A Flash and a Scare: Incendiarism, Animal Maiming and Poaching in East Anglia 1815-1870* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1990)

southern England in the early nineteenth-century, Carl J Griffin suggests that the exceptional nature of protest as recorded in the archival record leads to an underestimation of the everyday forms of resistance that took place.[23]

Local histories located in the nineteenth century, such as Shirley Wittering's study of South Cambridgeshire, which focusses on economic and environmental change and looks the effect of enclosure and the agricultural revolution, show that local studies can reveal important historical processes that may have been missed out of the general historical account of the period.[24] This methodology is particularly applicable to eastern Monmouthshire, which was for most of the century both remote and unremarkable. Reay brings a similarly overlooked area to life using estate records, the tithe survey and census records as well as some family reconstitution to build a picture of the social and economic composition of an area of Kent in South-East England.[25] There have been previous studies focussed on Monmouthshire, including John Chapman's geographically focussed research into land use and farming in Monmouthshire, which covers a period from the eighteenth-century. Chapman produced a large amount of data, maps and charts relating to 'the variations in the total extent of the agricultural area brought about the reclamation and reversion of the 'waste' and by the alienation of land for building and industrial purpose' and looks in detail at the changing balance of uses within the 'improved' acreage itself. [26] While this has been useful, the current thesis aims to go beyond this focus and look at the environmental impacts of the changes that took place in the nineteenth century. Land ownership conferred important privileges in terms of effecting change and allowed those who owned land to be part of the political establishment and one of the most valuable resources available to find out who owned the land in the nineteenth century, who their tenants were, what type of use was made of the land and its perceived value is the survey conducted in the years following the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836.[27] The maps produced and the apportionments calculated are invaluable sources of information on rural life from the mid nineteenth century and are the basis for Chapter Two and referred to elsewhere. Specifically, a number of reports have been used to help reconstruct the

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[23] C J Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2012) p.20

[24] S. Wittering, *Ecology and Enclosure – The effect of enclosure on society, farming and the environment in South Cambridgeshire*, 1798-1850 (Windgather Press: Oxford, 2013)

[25] Reay B, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers – Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-Century England* (Breviary Stuff: London, 1990)

[26] J Chapman, 'Agriculture and the "Waste" in Monmouthshire from 1750 to the Present Day', *University of London* (PhD thesis, 1972) p. 3

[27] G Shrubsole, *Who Owns England?: How We Lost Our Green and Pleasant Land and How to Take it Back* (Harper Collins: London, 2019), kindle location 434.

social and economic scene in eastern Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century. These include government enquiries by Fox (1794) and Hassall (1812).[28] Reports for the Royal Agricultural Society have provided a good overview of farming in eastern Monmouthshire towards the end of century and the report of the *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire* produced in 1893, with its interviews and extensive summary of farming methodologies and recommendations has also been invaluable.[29] Local newspapers covering eastern Monmouthshire including *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, published between 1829-1884, have also been useful, as have documents including estate records, rent books, accounts and letters found in archives, including *Gwent Archives*, the *National Library of Wales* and the *National Archives*.

[28] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth: with Observations on the means of its improvement* (Printed by P. Norbory: Brentford, 1794); Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth with Observations on the Means of its Improvement* (Printed by B. McMillan: London, 1812)
[29] Fothergill W, 'Farming of Monmouthshire', *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* (2nd Ser, 6: 1870); NLW MS 3613E, Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire – Book II (Conclusions and Recommendations), 1896

Chapter 1: The metabolic rift and the issue of agency

This chapter will provide the theoretical basis for the thesis. The purpose is to argue that food production, agriculture and farming was, through a series of measures and due to pressure from governments and landowners, repurposed to fit a system that divorced those involved from a sustainable relationship with the land and the environment they were using. The chapter will therefore explore the context of these changes and argue that they were integral to the industrialisation of Britain, before outlining how the theory associated with the term 'metabolic rift', which has been put forward by a number of environmentalists and is influenced by the nineteenth century works of Marx and Engels, is an important contribution to our historical understanding. At the start of the nineteenth century, most people in Britain worked in agriculture and an area like eastern Monmouthshire would not have been particularly exceptional in that most people living in the villages were agricultural labourers. By the early twenty-first century, this had long ceased to be the case and Britain has one of the world's lowest percentages of people working in agriculture and food production, and even in eastern Monmouthshire, an area of rural Britain, only a small percentage of the population work in farming. This is both a cause and a result of a metabolic rift between society and the natural world and a situation which reinforces it. When only around one percent of the economically active population work in agriculture, which is broadly similar to the situation in the United States where the figure is 1.3%, it is hardly surprising that knowledge of the problematic relationship between this industry and the natural world is limited. In other parts of the world with different economies, or different levels of what is usually called 'development', the figure is much higher, although in many of these rapid urbanisations and the adoption of agrobusiness models have seen big reductions, so for instance in China around 24% are involved in agriculture, far less than even at the start of the millennium.[1]

To be clear about the issues, agriculture both globally and nationally is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, through (in order of size), methane from livestock, Nitrous oxide from

[1] Information from the following websites:
UK: https://tradingeconomics.com/united-kingdom/employment-in-agriculture-percent-of-total-employment-wb-data.html#:~:text=Employment%20in%20agriculture%20(%25%20of%20total%20employment)%20(modeled%20ILO%20estimate,compiled%20from%20officially%20recognized%20sources.
US: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/ag-and-food-sectors-and-the-economy/#:~:text=Agriculture%20and%20its%20related%20industries,percent%20of%20total%20U.S.%20employment.
China: https://www.statista.com/statistics/270327/distribution-of-the-workforce-across-economic-sectors-in-china/#:~:text=The%20statistic%20shows%20the%20distribution,percent%20in%20the%20service%20sector. (accessed 1st June 2023)

soils and wastes, Carbon dioxide from machinery, methane from manure and other causes.[2] Overall, over three quarters of such emissions are the result of livestock farming, a growth sector of British agriculture. This graphic from a report for the Centre for Alternative Technology (reproduced in Figure 2) shows the problem:

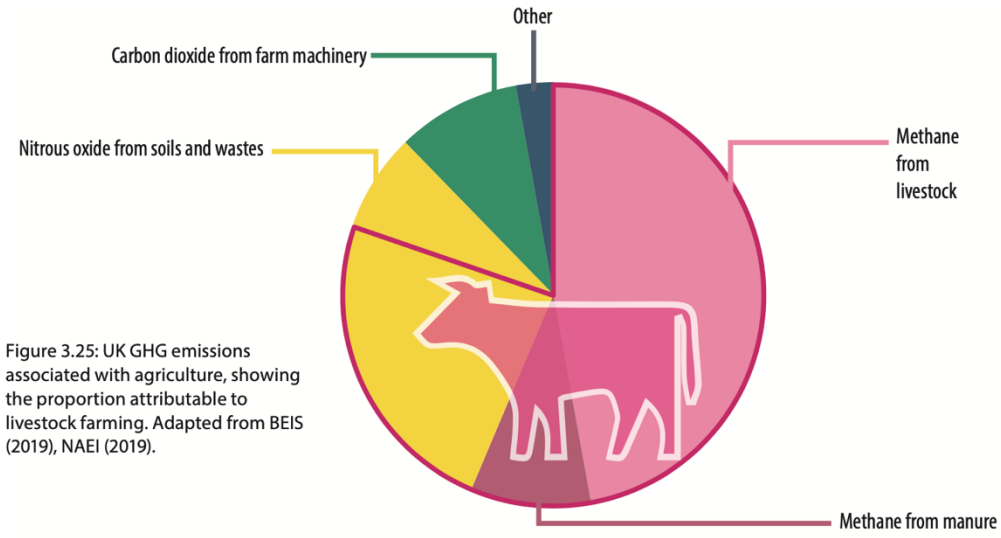

Figure 2 Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Emissions, from the report: Zero Carbon Britain: Rising to the Climate Emergency, produced in 2019

The widespread use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers as well as machinery dependent on fossil fuels, underlies a business model based on competitive capitalism, where most farms are big businesses producing for other, bigger, commercial concerns often owned by multi-national corporations and the vast majority of people living in the rural communities that exist amongst this industry have no connection to it. According to a study by researchers at University College London (UCL), practices like the spreading of manures contributes to PM2.5s particulates pollution both in the countryside and in cities, so such pollution is responsible for 25% of the total of these harmful emissions in London, 32% in Birmingham and 38% in Leicester.[3] Much of this is from the spreading of manure, the purpose of which appears to be to 'dump slurry rather than fertilise crops' as, according to a submission by the National Farmers Union to a parliamentary committee in 2023, 'the production or import of manures far outstrips the immediate need of accessible soil and crops.'[4] Other ways that modern agriculture damages the environment include ploughing,

[2] Report, *Zero Carbon Britain: Rising to the Climate Emergency* (Centre for Alternative Technology: Machynlleth, 2019) p.84
[3] The report was part of an article by George Monbiot, published in *The Guardian* on 22nd September 2023, 'We are being poisoned every day, so why do we keep voting for more pollution? Ask a lobbyist'
[4] Quoted by Monbiot G, 'We are being poisoned…'

monocultural production, intensive 'battery' farms and use of dangerous chemicals and genetically enhanced grains, etc. In the global south, the encroachment of this system has driven the dispossession and poverty of rural communities that has in turn led to increasing and unregulated urbanisation. Those who consume the end product of this business have little or no idea of the origin of the food and drink they are dependent on, nor the processes that subsequently produces the foods they recognise. Highlighting this disconnect, in 2023, Cadbury's launched a TV advert for a new chocolate-based product, *Brunch Bars* with a voiceover saying: 'An oat. Is that what they look like? Never seen one up close like that on its own. Who first saw that and thought: food?' The video shows a single processed rolled oat slowly dropping down the screen.[5] Perhaps the advertisers felt that an unprocessed oat would have been unrecognisable to most of the target audience.

The competitive nature of the business of food production has undermined the small farms who are unable to invest the sums required, especially as the return is determined by prices often set by large retail businesses, who are also part of a highly competitive market. As this study will show in later chapters, the development of a consumer society, expanding markets created by improved transport networks and direct interventions in agricultural production through political changes and industrially produced technologies in the nineteenth century in eastern Monmouthshire all helped bring about this change. As mentioned in the introduction, the proximity of eastern Monmouthshire to industrialising Wales, an important factor in deciding to centre the study here, had a significant effect on its population, social relations, agricultural practices and farm production. The long process of change in rural Britain generally and locally, was bound up with industrialisation. While the consequences of social and environmental change are easier to observe in the towns and cities that emerged from this, it is here in rural Britain that the metabolic rift was opened up and some of the consequences most acutely felt. The concept of 'metabolic rift' has been challenged by some. The radical environmentalist Jason Moore, for instance, has argued against its importance believing it undermines seeing the earth as a single system.[6] For Moore, capitalism is a system created to exploit nature, and its hierarchy and class divisions are to

[5] https://www.thedrum.com/news/2023/04/24/sunil-patel-narrates-tongue-cheek-cadbury-ads-hero-nuts-oats-and-raisins accessed 17.9.23 'The campaign is the work of agency VCCP and was inspired by the brand's new creative platform, 'But Actually Tasty', which focuses on the idea that Cadbury Brunch takes some good but slightly unexciting ingredients and makes them tasty through the addition of chocolate.
Maria Jackson, brand manager at Cadbury, said: "When it comes to snack bars, people want something tasty but expect something bland. Cadbury Brunch really delivers on taste, so it's great that we get to celebrate it through this campaign."'

[6] Moore J.W., *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso: London, 2015)

blame for the adverse effects on the earth's system, preferring to suggest that we are living in the *Capitalocene* rather than the Anthropocene. Despite this, the concept has been an important element of a radical shift in how to look at the way that the human relationship with nature has changed and the second section of this chapter will explain the theory, its relevance and why it is at the centre of this study of society and economy of eastern Monmouthshire.

1. The relationship between agriculture and industry.

Before looking at the theory of metabolic rift, it is necessary to look at the arguments about how and why agriculture changed in nineteenth century Britain. The process was established over many centuries of change although it accelerated in England and Wales in the late eighteenth- and the nineteenth centuries as a necessary counterpart to the industrial revolution. Some rural historians, such as Mingay, argue that although industry and agriculture were connected, rural changes have their own history; one that accelerated during the mid to late nineteenth century when the 'English people' experienced 'a far-reaching change in the way of life.'[7] His argument was that the scale of change in land use, the increase in cultivated area and subsequent increase in production of food without a 'correspondingly larger demand on the labour supply' were all essential in order for the changes related to industrialisation to happen, but these only later became entangled within it.[8] Farmers were compelled to make the changes because they were more profitable and made better use of the land. This utilitarian argument has merit, although the context of economic spurs such as the protectionist laws at the start of the nineteenth century would certainly have helped with the issue of increasing profit. Agricultural output outstripped the rapid population growth from around nine million at the start of the eighteenth century to over thirty-five million by the end of the nineteenth century, although the newly urbanised population were not only fed by increasing output from farms in Britain, but increasingly by imported food an important point when discussing both the concept of 'improvement' and the causes and consequences of agricultural change.[9] According to figures from Apostolides et al., the period between 1800 and 1850 saw a significant increase in arable yields – 1.05 per cent per annum - and also an important but lower increase in pastoral yields of 0.51 per cent per annum.[10] Between

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[7] Mingay G.E., 'Rural England in the Industrial Age', in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The Victorian Countryside, Volume One* (Routledge, Kegan Paul: London, 1981). Despite Mingay's use of the term "English people", he goes on to describe city growth in Glasgow as an example within the same paragraph and later discusses changes in Wales and Scotland as well as England.

[8] Mingay G.E. *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (MacMillan: London, 1968) p. 17

[9] Richards, D & Hunt, J.W., *An Illustrated History of Modern Britain: 1783–1980* (3rd ed.). (Longman: London, 1983)

[10] Apostolides A, Broadberry S, Campbell B, Overton M, Van Leeuwen B, 'English Agricultural Output and Labour Productivity, 1250-1850: Some Preliminary Results', paper 2008 accessed May 2023 at http://www.basvanleeuwen.net/bestanden/agriclongrun1250to1850.pdf. p. 48

1700 and 1850 'aggregate output more than trebled.' and that by 1851 output per worker in English agriculture was 'over double that in any other contemporary European state.' Eastern Monmouthshire was one of the areas that experienced this and up to the last two decades of the century remained a mainly cereal growing area. The productivity of agriculture in this period, outstripped that of industry by a factor of three, according to Crafts, who argued that purely in terms of economic growth, agricultural output was more important than the Industrial Revolution.[11]

Many historians including F.M.L. Thompson considered that there were concurrent industrial and agricultural revolutions, although for Thompson the nineteenth century developments were one of three parts in this dramatic change in food production. The first was the abandonment of a localised subsistence or semi-subsistence system in which peasant households were largely at the centre of food production, and the adoption through enclosure to new and more efficient forms of crop rotations, crop varieties and manuring, so that 'production functions were altered by an increase in the amounts of both capital and labour that could be profitably employed in relation to land', paid for and largely for the benefit of the landlord. Similarly, Mingay writes of the development of 'systems of convertible husbandry and strengthening of animal husbandry, with the consequent effects on the supply of manure and improved fertility of arable soils, in the late Middle Ages.'[12] In the years after 1870, agriculture experienced a depression which was prolonged and particularly affected farmers in Wales. It led to a Royal Commission on agriculture in Wales, which began in 1893 and reported in 1896 having collected evidence from those involved at different levels of farming across Wales, including in eastern Monmouthshire.[13] The report showed that there was considerable distress caused by this downturn in trade as well as considerable debate about its causes and these aspects will be analysed in more detail as part of Chapter 5. The depression will be part of the discussions in other chapters, given its importance both to the people in the area at the centre of this study and to the thesis itself.

In much of Britain the new agricultural practice involved a four-course system that ended the division between arable and pasture land, often called the Norfolk system and widely held to have been adopted by landowner Charles Townsend on his estate around 1700, although it is an

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[11] King S and Timmins G, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English Economy and Society 1700-1850* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2001) p. 165

[12] Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer…* p. 17

[13] *National Library of Wales*, NLW MS 3613E, Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire – Book II (Conclusions and Recommendations), 1896

adaption of an early system developed from the fourteenth century in Flanders. Yield improvements came about due to the increased use of land, using a rotation that involved different crops with different growing cycles including the well-known growing of turnips as winter animal feed. The grass and clover cycle allowed for a restocking of the nutrients both through the crops themselves replenishing the soil and manures from the grazing livestock. Subsequent 'improvements' that were connected to this included selective animal breeding to produce stock that produced more and better-quality meat and dairy and in the nineteenth century, the already discussed mechanisation that helped replace a lot of the hard labour, while also having the effect of reducing the number of labourers required. Fertilisation using externally sourced manure partly provided the required additional fertility. Some of this came from the use of industrial waste, while imported manures, such as guano from South America, were also widely used by the late nineteenth century.[14] Mazoyer and Roudart, also refer to the importance in northern Europe generally of non-fallow forms of farming, including the four-field rotation system, which led to a significant increase in yields and a breaking of the restrictions placed on the outputs that inevitably resulted from the use of fallow.[15] The extent of take up of this form of agriculture appears, however, to have been overstated by Mazoyer and Roudart, given that the evidence shows that many farmers in Monmouthshire were still using fallow well into the nineteenth century.[16] Buying seeds from a wider variety of providers, often based on trial and error and good local communications became possible as transport improved and newly establised agricultural shows and farmers clubs all helped disseminate information that helped change farming practice. In many cases, the estate or landowners insisted on such changes in tenancy agreements and examples from eastern Monmouthshire are explored in Chapter 5. Another major reason for increasing food production was the increase in the amount of land used and historians such as Hobsbawm and Rudé argue that it was this, rather than any success in increasing fertility and growing different crops that allowed the increasing population to be fed (and avoid the 'Malthusian trap'). This was partly through bringing previously unused or 'waste' land into cultivation, a side effect of enclosure in many cases. Some of what was described as waste was previously common land and this acerbated the exclusion of rural self-sufficiency.

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[14] King S and Timmins G, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution…* p. 165

[15] Mazoyer M & Roudart L, *A History of World Agriculture: From the Neolithic Age to the Current Crisis* (Monthly Review Press: New York, 2006) p. 352

[16] Chapman J, 'Agriculture and "The Waste" in Monmouthshire…' p. 163

Hassall described the system observed in 1812 in the area of eastern Monmouthshire around the Usk valley as follows:

> There are several veins of sandy or light loamy lands found… upon which the recurrence of turnip and barley crops is a better practice; such as, Fallow, and manure for Turnips, Barley, Clover; manure the ley or stubble. Barley, Turnips, Barley, Clover, Wheat
> The oat crops do not answer well upon the light lands; but the clay and strong loams grow good crops of that grain.

A number of other variations were then outlined by Hassall, dependent mainly on soil and the preference of the farmer as well as other factors, commenting that there was 'no such thing as any regular systematic course of crops in the clay lands, which depend so much upon the weather, that farmers find it necessary to vary their crops to suit the season'.[17] By the end of the century, farmers who had adopted new techniques still found that the decline in the price of wheat (in particular) meant they were forced to abandon growing cereals or face financial ruin. Farmers were required to be self-sufficient and 'from the tenant's point of view' the earlier changes in land use were seen as 'mainly a managerial revolution' involving 'him to manage the resources of his farm in an orderly, competent, rational and efficient manner.'[18] This was monitored by the land agent who was responsible for the everyday overview of farms on large estates that often ranged over many different counties in England and Wales. When improvements were made and yields increased, the effect usually was that farmers were obliged to pay an increased rental. Different systems of agreement by lease were used on different estates. Fox in 1794 reports that 'leases for fair periods of time are liberally granted by proprietors to deserving tenants. Twenty-one years is the most general and usual term granted' although several estates were still 'held by 'tenancy at will.'[19] Hassall's report in 1812 is less generous and considers that the practice of not granting long leases was still too common and a cause of issues on some of the estates in Monmouthshire, although he does not name them. The turnover of tenants that is evidenced by the rent books on the Badminton Estate in Monmouthshire, owned by the Duke of Beaufort, suggests either that the leases were in kind, were short-term or that they had been broken by tenants unable to pay whatever rent that had been negotiated.[20]

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[17] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* pp. 41-43
[18] Thompson F M L, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution, 1815-1880', *Economic History Review,* 21: 1 (1968) p. 63
[19] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 21
[20] *National Library of Wales*, GB0210 BMA4/92, 'Rental, 1851-1900, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate' p. 172

Thompson writes of a second stage to the agricultural revolution, which happened when the closed system of local and subsistence farming was broken open, making the operations of the 'farmer much more like those of the factory owner' in the nineteenth century.[21] Farms used new methods including fertilizers and feed for livestock, field drainage, purpose-built farm buildings, all enabled by the rapid technological advances associated with the industrial revolution. The result was a growing division between small and large-scale farms and a change in the status and work of, and in most cases, a reduction in the number of, agricultural labourers. Importantly, the labourers were less likely to be employed by, or housed on, individual farms but got work as either casual or contracted labourers, thus becoming part of the 'commodification of labour'. This is the process that to a greater or lesser extent took place in farming in eastern Monmouthshire throughout the course of the nineteenth century, with different circumstances faced by farmers who, as shown in Chapter Two and explained further in Chapter Five, were part of different estates with different priorities and methods of supporting farmers in making the changes and, of course, had to confront economic fluctuations as the century went on, which is also explored in some detail in Chapter Five. One cause of the crisis of agriculture in the later decades of the century was that the 'market' for food ceased being located in a local town where produce could be bought and sold and became a growing and international system of commodity valuation in which foodstuffs were traded along with manufactured goods and other raw materials.[22] For Thompson the process of mechanisation, which allowed for industrial-scale use of fertilizers and a move to crop specialisation, again reflecting the technology available from industry was a final phase of an agricultural revolution, resulted in an improvement so that by the 1860s, 'the English countryside has probably never looked more prosperous', as 'rents increased by about one-fifth, net farmers' incomes doubled and the earnings of agricultural labourers rose by about 40 per cent, with particularly rapid wage increases in the 1860s.'[23] The improvement did not last, as the late century agricultural depression to a collapse of arable farming in many parts of Britain, including, as will be shown later, in eastern Monmouthshire. This meant that farms across England and Wales were 'neglected [with] overgrown hedges, weed-infested meadows and pastures, decaying thatch, dilapidated buildings, untidy farmyards.'[24] This affected eastern Monmouthshire in a

[21] Thompson F M L, *The Second Agricultural Revolution, 1815-1880…* p. 64

[22] The international commodity markets were clearly a long-term development, along with banking and finance that were essential for the expansion of capitalism, but their effect on making food, a necessity for life, just another commodity for sale was essential in undermining the relationship between producers and their product. It wasa central aspect of farmers growing food for profit rather than need.

[23] Thompson F M L, *The Second Agricultural Revolution, 1815-1880…* p. 65

[24] Thompson F.M.L., 'Free Trade and the Land', G.E. Mingay (ed.) *The Victorian Countryside Vol, 1…* pp. 103-4

number of ways, with a reduction in rents and some farms going the way of the above description.[25] Thompson explains these fluctuating fortunes in terms of political decisions impacting on the economy of Britain, in particular the pursual of a policy of free trade polices after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 that had an adverse effect on agriculture.[26]

Mingay emphasises the disadvantages that the changing methods of agriculture, as well as the economic impact of changes in trading conditions, had on small farmers. He shows that in the seventeenth century there had been a reduction in small owner-occupier farmers, so that while in 1688 they outnumbered tenant farmers, by the end of the nineteenth century, they were a small proportion of land-users due to a reorganisation over a number of centuries that culminated in the most important period of enclosures from 1760 that was a 'logical conclusion' of previous land changes. Enclosure thus benefitted the landlords and those larger farms who were able to invest capital into the new systems and pay the increased rents that followed higher yields. As Mingay puts it: 'improved farming was more suited to farms of at least a moderate size' above one hundred acres and 'farmers commanding capital.'[27] This is shown in the analysis provided in Chapter 2 to be the case in eastern Monmouthshire. There was, thus, during this process an expansion of landed estates and larger farms that could benefit (at least initially) from the capitalist economy in farming and that 'those small farmers who owned their land did decline drastically, apparently between the later seventeenth and later eighteenth centuries.'[28] The demands of this system, though, tended to undermine the traditional agricultural knowledges based on understanding and utilising the natural cycles of growth, climate and demand, which was much easier to determine on a local scale. Such localism was undermined as societal changes led to production determined by 'the market' meaning producing based on price mechanisms, which were often alien to the farmer trying to plan what to grow and when. Fluctuations in price for farm produce were increasingly disconnected from the types of supply and demand that gave farmers and land managers some level of agency. They also inevitably tended towards overproduction, leading to waste. Farmers and land managers felt themselves at the mercy of this process, which as shown in the evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales in 1893, analysed in more detail especially in Chapter 5, was a cause of concern and discontent. Vandana Shiva describes a similar process happening across the global south as the

[25] Mitchell J, 'The Mather Jacksons at Llantilio Court', *Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 29 (2013) p. 88
[26] Chambers J.D. & Mingay G.E., *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (BT Batsford: London, 1966) p. 148
[27] Mingay G.E., *Enclosure and the Small Farmer….* pp. 19-20
[28] Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer…* p. 16-20.

system spreads in the twenty first century.[29] Thus, rather than 'improvement' the new forms of agriculture had the effect of consolidating ownership into fewer hands, disconnecting the majority of the population from any involvement, knowledge or understanding of food production and to largescale and systemic waste and, ultimately, to uncertainty, instability and economic depression.

The concept of improvement has been critiqued in other ways. Waites has written of the artistic interpretations of countryside that reflect a disquiet about the effects of enclosure and loss of common land. This was based partly on a growing artistic independence from patronage, allowing for a more critically engaged art, so 'more idiosyncratic landscape artists' such as 'John Crome, Peter DeWint and William Turner' chose to paint 'scenes on the basis of their own, personal artistic and aesthetic principles.'[30] This led to disparate artistic impressions but included some that harked back to a less organised landscape. Examples given by Waites include Turner of Oxford's 1853-4 painting, *Haymaking, Study from Nature, in Osney Madow, looking towards Iffley* (Figure 3) which clearly shows an unenclosed landscape.

[29] Shiva V, *The Vandana Shiva Reader* (University Press of Kentucky: Lexington, 2014) pp. 57-61

[30] Waites I, 'The Common Field Landscape, Cultural Commemoration and the Impact of Enclosure, c. 1770-1850' in Cragoe M and Readman P, *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (Palgrave MacMillan: London, 2010) p. 25



Figure 3: Turner of Oxford's 'Haymaking – study from nature, in Osney Meadow, Near Oxford, looking towards Iffley.'[31]

An earlier work by William Turner shows Stanton Harcourt (Figure 4) in a depiction that 'deliberately painted the landscape as it had been, rather than its existing state.' These are unusual artistic interpretations and many others, particularly from the eighteenth century, show instead unenclosed land as dark and dangerous waste.[32] Bonneuil and Fressoz have argued that the terminology of 'improvement' is misleading and that the process was not just wasteful in its outcomes, by producing food which ended up not being consumed because of a disconnection between the price of food as a commodity and the needs of food as a necessity for consumption, in other words it was too expensive or less competitive in a global market (an aspect explored in more detail in section 2 of Chapter 5) but also in its use of energy. They note David and Marcia Pimental's work to demonstrate that *more* calories were used to produce each calorie of food, mainly from the use of fossil fuels.[33] This undermines the idea that 'improvement' was a more

[31] (William) Turner of Oxford (1789–1862); *Haymaking – study from nature, in Osney Meadow, near Oxford, looking towards Iffley* https://www.libson-yarker.com/pictures/haymaking-study-from-nature-in-osney-meadow-near-oxford-looking-towards-iff

[32] Waites I, 'The Common Field Landscape…' pp. 26-28

[33] Bonneuil C and Fressoz J-P, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us* - translated by Fernbach D from *L'événement Anthropocène: La terre, l'histoire et nous* (Verso: London, 2016) p. 122

effective or efficient way of producing food and leads to a questioning of the motivation behind the changes that affected both agriculture and manufacturing based on use of fossil fuel energy.



Figure 4: J.M. William Turner's 'Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire: Pope's Tower and St Michael's Church'[34]

The changes, both industrial and agricultural, affected all aspects of life and changed the connections people had with the land they used, or no longer used, and the environment they lived in, or moved from. While areas of Britain that remained rural and agricultural were not subjected to the same *type* of environmental change that urban industrial areas were they were deeply affected, nonetheless. In Wales the processes were obscured by the fact that by any definition much of the change to industry took place outside of what might be considered urban areas. Jones, in a discussion about people's health, cites the unsatisfactory 1861 census attempt to differentiate between rural and urban largely based on whether an area contained 'towns of

[34] J.M. William Turner: Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire: Pope's Tower and St Michael's Church, c.1797–8, Joseph Mallord William Turner: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-stanton-harcourt-oxfordshire-popes-tower-and-st-michaels-church-d01882 (accessed 2.8.2024)

various magnitudes, either market towns, county towns or cities' whereas rurality was where there were mainly 'detached houses… villages…. and small towns without markets.' So while there are claims that almost half of Wales' population was urban by mid-century, by this criteria, this was true only in Glamorgan.[35] The scale of social and economic change was clearly larger in these industrialised areas and the move towards urbanisation saw an expansion of transport, availability of a wider range of goods, mechanisation, migration and the development of a whole new society based on these, but change also affected, albeit in more disparate and sometimes less visible forms, those areas that remained predominantly rural. For example, particularly in areas nearer to expanding towns and cities like eastern Monmouthshire, villages became more diverse so that they were less dependent on serving the needs of the local farming community and were home to an increasing number of people who had little or no connection to food production. The increasing availability of different forms of transport improved connectivity and allowed people to travel from these villages to work in the urban centres, which of course depended on the growing consumer society. Landowners in such areas became increasingly concerned with the profit from expanding industry based on mineral wealth their landholdings contained and tertiary employment also grew as state intervention into many aspects of life expanded and the effects were felt even outside the main population centres.[36]

Brinley Thomas has suggested that there were three 'acts' in the drama of industrialisation that was behind these changes. Between 1784-1800 the development of steam power was necessary due to the limits of growth imposed by water-power driving the earlier industry. 1800-1846 saw the subsequent development of machine tools, railways and steamships and between 1846-1900, Britain 'became the workshop of world and the centre of the Atlantic economy. He argues that in each act of this great drama, south Wales played a directive role.'[37] John Williams, however, believes that there was no uniform 'industrialisation process' and there was a large difference between the experiences of southern Wales and northern England and concludes that 'in all too many of the debates… industrialisation is taken for granted, both as a factual occurrence and in the presumption that it is not necessary to specify what the term connotes.' Based on 'the degree of urbanisation of the population, the distribution of the urbanised population; and the nature, methods and means of production' it is possible to argue that southern Wales did not experience

[35] Jones I G, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff University Press: Cardiff, 1992)
[36] See, *Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire* (HMSO: London, 1896) p. 830
[37] Thomas B, 'A Cauldron of Rebirth: Population and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century', in *Welsh History Review*, 13:2 (1987) p. 242

an industrial revolution as, unlike some other parts of the UK, industrial Wales did not produce any large cities.[38] Another point Williams makes is that in Wales industrial expansion was later than seen in many other areas of Britain and was dependent on the development of technology in the late eighteenth century. Thomas's concept of an energy crisis is challenged by Bonneuil and Fressoz, who argue that there has never been an energy transition and this concept leads to a serious misunderstanding of the processes, their effects and their motivations. 'There was not a movement from wood to coal and then from coal to oil, then from oil to nuclear' they argue, instead there were 'additions of new sources of energy' leading to a growing consumption of energy and this has meant that while the idea of transition may have seen oil replace coal as a source of energy, in fact 'there was never a year in which so much coal was burned as in 2014.'[39] If there was no energy crisis and transition, the move to fossil fuel dependency must by this analysis have been driven by other factors, such as the profits that could be obtained by those who owned the land who stood to gain from their exploitation. There is no doubt that there was an expansion of iron and steel production and coal extraction and that this changed the valleys of western Monmouthshire in a dramatic way. Jones, argues that the development of industry drove a wedge which broke down the 'complementarity' between town and country so that those inhabiting these different spaces 'were not the same kind of people; their lifestyles were diverging, their behaviours and moralities coming to have little in common.'[40] Certainly those living in western Monmouthshire were developing communities and lives that had little or no connection with the land and for the industrial proletariat, food was something bought and consumed mostly rather than a commodity they had any part in producing. Not surprisingly, the adjacent area of eastern Monmouthshire was greatly affected both in providing people and food. As Thompson and others have written, intensification of agriculture, a key competent of 'improvement', and industrial expansion were interlinked. Food production itself increasingly became industrialised both in the production of processed food in factories and because of the interaction of mechanisation and the land, although there is a debate about how quickly machines were introduced and the reasons for this. For instance, John Walton's study of the adoption of mechanization in agriculture in Oxfordshire concluded that farm size was the major factor in how quickly machinery was introduced - bigger farms were more able to adopt machinery quickly.[41] In Monmouthshire, there

[38] Williams J, *Was Wales Industrialised? Essays in Modern Welsh History* (Gomer: Llandysul, 1995), pp. 15-16
[39] Bonneuil C and Fressoz J-P, *The Shock of the Anthropocene…* p. 117
[40] Jones I G, *Mid Victorian Wales, The Observers and the Observed* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 1992) p. 109
[41] Walton J.R*., '*Mechanisation in Agriculture' in Fox H S A & Butlin R A (eds.), *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900* (Institute of British Geographers: London, 1979) p. 40

appears to have been a tardiness in the adoption of mechanisation and development of methods that would lead to increased yields, although the landowners, such as the Duke of Beaufort, not only sometimes paid the costs involved but were also partly responsible for initiatives such as the Monmouthshire [agricultural] Show designed to show off new breeds of cattle and encourage local farmers to adopt what were considered 'improved' practices.

Despite these developments, the nineteenth century also saw the construction of a false sense of bucolic idealism, where the countryside was associated with the past, peace and quiet and a more simple - and better - way of life. Raymond Williams suggested that much of the narrative about the countryside was based on 'myth functioning as memory' and masked the reality of class conflicts and animosity. The city is inextricably linked to the countryside for Williams, and the romantic visions of many nineteenth century novelists, such as Dickens and Hardy, helped create a vision of a mythical past that contrasted to the dirt and poor conditions associated with life in the greatly expanded towns and cities.[42] Raymond Williams grew up in rural Monmouthshire which may have informed some of his criticisms of the romanticised view of the countryside and gave him a more realistic and rounded picture. Certainly, as Pincombe suggests, the proximity and connectedness of Monmouthshire's rural and industrialised areas meant it was 'only natural' that there was a close relationship between 'the rural and urban-industrial' within Monmouthshire because of the connections between agricultural production and the needs of the urban centres in the county.[43] Those farmers who initially found themselves closest to the new industries benefitted from a ready market and the workers who had moved to those places also benefitted from good prices for meat, dairy and other produce. Subsequent improvements in transport, in particular the building of canals and railways, led to the expansion of towns such as Abergavenny, where the market became a major hub for providing food for the 'valley towns' providing a further stimulus for expansion and intensification of agricultural production locally, part of the development of a consumer society further analysed in Chapter 4 below. The rift was not between those living in the city and those who lived in the countryside, but a rift created by the capitalist system that came to dominate all aspects of production between humans and the natural world.

A key factor that is important in understanding both the nature of agricultural change and the agency of that change is a consideration of what has been described as the 'Agricultural Enlightenment'. Historians have looked at how knowledge was used to 'improve' agriculture from

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[42] Williams R, *The Country and the City* (Chatto & Windus: London, 2011) p.289

[43] Pincombe I, 'The Rural Economy' in Williams C & Rhiannon Williams S.R. (eds.), *The Gwent County History: Industrial Monmouthshire, 1780-1914, Volume 4* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 2011) p. 45

the sixteenth century onwards. Thirsk, for instance, has looked at how new ideas were spread in a world where education and literacy were far from universal.[44] Certainly, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a significant increase in agricultural literature. James D. Fisher has recently questioned the basis of such analyses, suggesting that they imply a simplistic understanding of knowledge as a 'socially neutral' entity and books as 'inert vehicles that merely increase the efficiency for such knowledge diffusion'. Noting that books were rarely produced by experts in the field, were rarely read by farmers and food producers and that studies have failed to show any sign that literature was behind higher crop yields, at best they were only able to inform those whose class position gave them the authority to drive change. Fisher seeks to identify a critical analysis of the use of books to inform knowledge using changes in rural Britain as the case study, intersecting therefore a useful discussion of agency and change: 'As books both represent and act within the world, we can gain insights into books as causal agents by fully contextualising how they represent their own cultural role' locating the periodisation of the study as being relevant because it saw a growth of literature on agriculture, linked to the 'dominance of 'improvement' discourse' and because this saw the early signs of 'agrarian capitalism'.[45] He argues that literature enclosed knowledge of husbandry and custom in books, which reinforced the division of labour which 'required a corresponding structure of knowledge, whereby mental labour was largely extracted from those performing manual labour and concentrated in managerial positions' giving the estate managers and larger farmers another form of control over the processes of change. The printed word thus was 'both stimulated by and a contribution to significant changes in the social system of agricultural knowledge'.[46] The development of new forms of knowledge based on the printed word and formal learning was an important way that the landed gentry took control of farming, knowledge of which had previously been disseminated to those involved in production orally through community and family. As Fisher says, 'Hence, the fact that agricultural books were mostly read by the gentry was not a design flaw, but a design feature.'[47] This formalisation of agricultural knowledge was therefore about control of the process, a crucial aspect of the move towards capitalist agriculture. Deborah Valenze has shown how this affected the largely female skills involved in dairy production, where 'scientific agriculturalists' published their knowledge in manuals on dairying, redefining 'the art of women' and

[44] Thirsk J, 'Plough and pen: Agricultural writers in the Seventeenth Century', in Aston T.H. et al (eds.) *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R.H. Hilton* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983)
[45] Fisher J.D. *The Enclosure of Knowledge: Books, Power and Agrarian Capitalism in Britain, 1660-1800* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2022) pp. 19-22
[46] Fisher J.D., *The Enclosure of Knowledge…* pp. 31-34
[47] Fisher J.D., *The Enclosure of Knowledge…* pp. 52-53

appropriating it as their own.'[48] A similar process took place in all other areas of agricultural knowledge, so the appropriation of knowledge from practitioners, male and female, moved via the academisation of knowledge to those in power who used it to control production.[49]

The key battleground was the land, or more precisely what became known as the land question and the obvious protagonists were the landowners, who maintained a position of wealth and power in the early nineteenth century that to try and ensure the antagonism between the needs of the capitalist system and those of the landlords did not undermine their position. The contradiction was that in many cases these were the very people who, as landowners, were both benefiting from and driving forward the industrialisation that led to the expanding profits they and others were dependent on. While protecting the price of commodity production, which the landowning class saw as essential to survival of farming and in consequence the rural way of life, the same people were intent on the preservation of landownership and the privileges it gave them and from which they had derived wealth and power for centuries. In eastern Monmouthshire this was played out largely by landowners with a foot in both camps, deriving more and more of their wealth from the expanding industries on land they own, and, in some cases, from industries they made money from to buy the land they owned, yet seeing the results of the system they depended on in this way undermining their position as landowners a conflict that caused some unusual alliances around the issue of Corn Law repeal as discussed in Chapter 5. Of course, the demise of the landed estates in areas like eastern Monmouthshire also shows that while the landowners were the main agents of the change having, for much of the century, almost exclusive rights to political power and being very much in charge of the locality, they were subsumed into the new economic realities too, even if they fought to maintain their dominant position in society. The consequence of the breakup of some of the larger estates was not a change to the type of collective land ownership which would have made planning food production more centralised and envisaged by radicals of the nineteenth century, but a change to a different type of private ownership of land, benefitting those who came to dominate the distribution of food. This contradiction highlights a key component of the metabolic rift. It was not driven by individuals or even by a group of like-minded enthusiasts but was the inevitable consequence of the system that

[48] Valenze D, 'The Art of Women and the Business of Men: Women's Work and the Dairy Industry c.1740-1840', *Past & Present*, 130 (1991) p. 153

[49] Fisher notes a process similar to that referred to by Braverman, whose critique of 'scientific management' in industry was based on managers appropriating knowledge from producers in order to reinforce their control over the process. Fisher J.D., *The Enclosure of Knowledge…*, p. 57; Braverman H, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: The Deregulation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (Monthly Review Press: London, 1974) pp. 113-19

grew and developed in the nineteenth century, one that enveloped the whole of society and ensured the old was replaced by the new. Capitalist agriculture was dynamic as well as competitive and this logic engulfed the relationships that had grown for millennia between the people who worked and used the natural world, alienating them from decisions about the way that land was used and maintained.

The nineteenth century saw a large increase in the population of Britain, which Wrigley and the Cambridge Group of demographers argued was caused by the fall in the age of marriage over the period from the sixteenth century.[50] Although concurrent with the industrialisation of Britain, Griffin instead argues that it is difficult to locate a general cause of population growth, and notes that rates of overall growth mask significant local variations. This applied in south Wales, where 'Monmouthshire's five-fold increase in population between 1800 and 1871', which was considerably in excess of the average across Britain as a whole, masked 'a more complex local picture, with pockets of the county growing far more rapidly and much of the rest growing slowly or barely at all.' Examples of rapid expansion included Newport where the population grew fourteen-fold based on a shipbuilding industry and a dockyard and Tredegar in the upper valleys, which experienced a ten-fold increase largely driven by steel production. Rural eastern Monmouthshire on the other hand was largely unaffected by population expansion and in some places suffered a decline. Griffin notes that these demographic changes and local variations were a 'recurring characteristic' of change at this time, which was uneven and often 'limited to one social group, one area or industry sitting in a sea of relative continuity.'[51] Throughout the century a major pre-occupation of politicians and others was population. The eighteenth-century writings of the Reverend Thomas Malthus informed much of the debate and his influence was significant in both political discourse and decision making at all levels. This, however, tended to mask the importance of other social issues such as inequality, created by the growth of industrialisation and the consequent agricultural changes. The problem of ensuring food production kept pace with population growth became a significant issue in the late eighteenth century, as the growth of industry and the subsequent demand for labour that drove the process of urbanisation, took people away from farming and producing food, requiring a different mechanism to ensure people were fed. The success of the processes, including the development of consumer-based society, international trade and higher agricultural yields, meant that the population 'time bomb' warned

[50] Wrigley, E.A., *Population and History* (Weidenfield & Nicholson: London, 1969) and Wrigley E.A., *An Introduction to English Demography: From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (Weidenfield & Nicholson: London, 1966)
[51] Griffin E, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Palgrave: London, 2010) p.56.

of by Malthus did not happen despite a rapid expansion of population. However, these technological developments were based on interventions which have proven not to be sustainable. It is this change in how society interacted with the natural world that is at the centre of twentieth century concerns about the basis of food production and will be at the heart of the next section of this chapter.

2. How and why capitalist food production created a metabolic rift.

This section will begin by considering the ideas of some of the radical environmentalists who have been influenced by an interpretation of the works of Marx and Engels around their belief that a metabolic rift had been caused by economic and societal changes that took place in the period prior to the late nineteenth century. This is based around their concept of alienation, in which producers become detached or 'alienated' from the products of their labour and appears in its most overt form in their 'early' notebooks. Later, they argued that socialism would be able to better serve people and in their Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx writes that a future socialist society would be based on the principle of 'from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs!'.[52] Some consider that this ignored the limits of the natural world in providing those needs, leading to the accusation that Marx was a Promethean. This accusation has been challenged by a number of environmentalists, including John Bellamy Foster who has argued that far from ignoring the issue, Marx saw a future socialist society based on developing a complementary synthesis of human needs and the natural world. Foster for instance, notes that in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx disagreed with those who argued that labour is the source of all wealth, arguing that 'nature is just as much the source of use-values (and surely these are what make up material wealth) as labour.'[53] This is consistent with earlier writings, such as that of 1844, when Marx wrote:

> Nature is man's inorganic body, that is to say, nature in so far as it is not the human body. Man *lives* from nature, i.e. nature is his *body*, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature.

He goes on to use the term 'estranged labour' to describe the process of work under capitalism, meaning that such labour '(1) estranges nature from man and (2) estranges man from himself.'[54]

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[52] Marx K, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875)' in Marx K, *The Political Writings* (Verso: London, 2019) p. 1031.
[53] Mark K, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme…" p. 1025
[54] Marx K, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' in Marx K, *Early Writings* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1992) p. 327 (emphasis is in the original)

The evidence, particularly that produced in Chapter 5 of this thesis, points to such an estrangement happening in eastern Monmouthshire. The agricultural labourers were fewer in number by the end of the century and those that remained became increasingly disconnected from their previous association with individual farms or subsistence agriculture and, given they were providing the labour for the production of food, this means their local knowledge was either lost or disseminated. There was a higher turnover of farmers, some driven into debt and others forced by the commodity price fluctuations to change to different types of farming. Chapters 3 and 4 explain other ways that communities that had for centuries been remote and dependent on local knowledges lost that direct connection with the land, the natural environment that they had been dependent on. While Marx uses the word nature in this way, it has been difficult to define 'natural' and Gould notes that there is a tradition of critical analysis of 'societies which are widely considered to be failing' using the 'problematic' word *nature* as a symbol of 'all that is not man-made.' Such a view of 'nature' tends towards seeing it as having certain 'desirable social and moral values' and is the basis of late nineteenth-century reformist movements that argued for a return to a reconnection between an increasingly urbanised society and the land, Back to Nature and Back to the Land.[55] Marx and his followers were critical of such initiatives, arguing instead that the development of industrial capitalism was incompatible with sustainability not because a return to a simpler land management system was preferable, but because at its heart the issue of ownership and competitive pressures over-rode any consideration of maintaining the balances required for human society to utilise the natural world efficiently. Industry itself was not the problem and innovation could be sustainably harnessed in a more democratically run co-operative system that was possible because of the potential political power of the proletarianized workers.

For many concerned with the environmental disaster that looms in the twenty-first century the idea that Marx and Engels have a contribution to make remains problematic. It was important therefore for Foster and others to argue against the dominant interpretation of their writings developed in the twentieth century and known as 'Western Marxism', and associated with thinkers such as Marcuse and Althusser. The Western Marxists argued that while the early writings of Marx and Engels display a concern with the effects of capitalism in causing alienation, including a metabolic rift, this was dropped in later writings that were much more developed critiques of the economic system. Foster and Japanese Marxist Kohai Saito argue that there was no such break

[55] Gould P.C., *Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to the Land and Socialism in Britain, 1880-1900* (Harvester: Brighton, 1988)

in the works of Marx and that both alienation and the metabolic rift are in fact central to later works including the three volumes of Capital, which contains a coherent and consistent argument that the capitalist system is incompatible with environmental sustainability.[56] Saito in particular goes on to argue that the Western Marxists were keen to differentiate the two eras of Marx's writings as his early word directly contradicted the arguments used to justify and explain the need for the rapid industrialisation of the USSR, based on intense exploitation of the natural world as well as those who worked on the land.[57] While both Foster and Saito consider that Marx's critique of capitalism is important in providing an explanation and possible solution to the problems encountered by the earth's system, Saito has taken this argument in a different direction to Foster and has developed an argument for 'degrowth communism.' These two writers also disagree on the importance and influence of Engels. However, they both agree on the need to redress the balance and see the environmentalism within Marx's critique of capitalism as important.

In terms of understanding the shift from this critique of unsustainability in capitalism, it is important to contextualise the arguments within 'Marxism' particularly in the wake of the revolution in Russia in 1917. Sparrow argues that in the early years of the revolutionary government in Russia, there was a concern for environmental sustainability and protection and decrees such as 'On Land', which made trees, water and minerals protected properties of the soviet state and 'On Forests' which 'nominated protected zones to secure water basins, stop erosion, and preserve 'monuments of nature' are far more in line with an understanding that socialism was based on redressing the ecological balance rather than continuing the capitalist exploitation of the earth. These early concerns were over-ridden after 'socialism in one country' became policy in 1925 based on the idea that 'rather than transforming the capitalist West, Russia should outcompete it' and the earlier decrees were replaced by the slogan of 'War on Nature', which was based on repeating the exploitation of nature inherent in the development of capitalism in places like Britain as part of this competition.[58] It was not just Stalin's policy, though, that required critical re-examination, but Lenin and Trotsky had also argued that there needed to be an industrialisation process that would enable Russia to overcome a historical legacy of backwardness and underdevelopment. For instance, Trotsky wrote 'man will occupy himself with re-registering mountains and rivers' and will 'rebuild the Earth according to his own taste'.[59] Lenin

[56] Saito K, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism – Capital, Nature and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (Monthly Review Press: New York, 2017) p. 10
[57] Saito K, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*… pp. 32-33
[58] Sparrow J, *Crimes Against Nature: Capitalism and Global Heating* (Scribe: London, 2021) pp. 246-248
[59] Trotsky L, *Literature and Revolution* (Redwords: London, 1991) p. 279

had, in 1920, argued that in order to transform Russia from a small peasant economy and undermine the 'roots of capitalism', it was essential 'to place the economy of the country, including agriculture, on a new technical basis, that of modern large-scale production. Only electricity provides that basis. Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.'[60] While this was understandable in the context of the new regime trying to overcome extreme poverty and hunger, especially in the wake of Russia's disastrous experience in the First World War and the civil war that followed the revolution, and that the addition of 'soviet power' to the equation would, in better circumstances, have provided a crucial and essential democratic element to the process, these were arguments that were easily equated with a Promethean approach, and they were being put forward in the name of socialism.

Hardly surprising then that, given this weight of evidence, Marx and Engels were dismissed by many in the environmental movement and these policies and statements were also used by opponents of the USSR such as the Polish writer Kolakowski, who argued that opposition to Malthus showed that Marx could 'scarcely admit that man is limited either by his body or by geographical conditions' and that he 'refused to believe in the possibility of absolute overpopulation, as determined by the earth's area and natural resources.'[61] While Marx clearly did not envisage socialism leading to overpopulation and was highly critical of the ideas of Malthus and his followers, Saito shows that Marx was in fact very concerned with the limits of productivity involving the natural world and this was a central part of his critique of the way that the competitive dynamic of capitalism inevitably led to an environmental crisis. For instance, his interest in the work of Justus von Liebig to advance a theory he called 'ground rent' was pivotal in his explanation of value. In opposition to the prevailing views of progression that underpinned the idea of 'improvement', Marx saw the relationship with nature that had developed in the period of industrialisation as part of a law of diminishing returns that required 'a rational interaction with nature through the transcendence of the reified power of capital.' Thus Marx's theory of ground rent has greater significance when seen as a part of what Saito calls 'a genetic emergence of an ecological critique of capitalism' integrated into his theory of revolution.[62] Marx considered that 'rational intercourse with nature is… not possible in capitalism because the whole of social production is organised by private labour and, accordingly, the social-metabolic interaction is

[60] Lenin V.I., *Collected Works Vol. XXXI* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) pp. 513-518
[61] Kolakowski L, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution, Vol. 1: The Founders* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1978) pp. 413-414
[62] Saito K, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism...* pp. 141-2

mediated by value… it is necessary to transform the social practice that bestows capital with an independent force beyond human control.'[63] Marx cites the highland clearances and enclosures as forcing peasants, defined as subsistence farmers, to become landless labourers instead, working for a class of capitalist farmers. Those who could no longer obtain work became homeless 'vagabonds' and punitive poor laws were used to make them move to towns, eventually obtaining work in the expanding industries.

As Chapter 2 of this thesis shows, at the start of the century, most people in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire were agricultural labourers and nearly all were involved in farming in one way or another. By the end of the century, the area was still predominantly agricultural, but the number of people who worked in agriculture had declined and those employed in the service sector was significantly higher, while there had also been a noticeable overall population decrease. This may have been because of the hardships during the agricultural depression of the last two decades, but while it is not possible to generalise from the individual cases in Chapter Two, the likelihood is that the people moving from these villages moved to one of the nearby urban areas. Marx argued that this process was a 'primitive accumulation of capital' necessary for the investment required to develop industry, although Harvey has suggested that the early processes of change described here are not primitive at all and are integral to the system and that 'some of the mechanisms of primitive accumulation that Marx emphasized have been fine-tuned to play an even stronger role now than in the past.'[64] Harvey bases his argument on the analysis of imperialism developed by Rosa Luxemburg who argued that the continued expansion of capitalism and its competitive pressures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were key drivers of the outbreak of war in 1914.[65] The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in places outside the core of Europe and North America, such as the exponential grown of the Chinese economy since the 1990s, has also tended to see patterns of displacement of the rural population through a development of capitalist agriculture and a resultant urbanisation albeit as part of an unequal expansion of global trade.[66] While there are important local differences, the underlying changes that have taken place in many parts of the world over recent decades have similarities with what happened in Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, processes that are at the heart of this thesis. These

[63] Saito K, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism…,* pp. 161-162
[64] Harvey D, *The New Imperialism* (OUP: Oxford, 2003) p. 147
[65] Luxembourg R, 'The Accumulation of Capital', in Hudis P & Le Blanc P, *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg, Vol II, Economic Writings 2* (Verso: London, 2015)
[66] Harvey D, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (Verso: London, 2010), pp. 311-12. The fact that China has a one-party system has led to a more directed state-led policy of expansion but, despite the Communist Party controlling this state, it is hard to differentiate it in other ways from the logic of other capitalist economies.

are global developments and may appear to have little connection to changes seen in an area like eastern Monmouthshire two centuries earlier, but while not an exact replica, many of the motivations and agencies driving these processes are similar. There is, therefore, a lot to learn from studying the early form of agricultural change that led to a rift between society and the natural world. Some have criticised aspects of Harvey's analysis, including fellow Marxist Michael Roberts, who believes it leads Harvey to underplay the internal contradictions of the system and in arguing that there has been continued expansion of capitalism ignores one of the drivers of globalisation, the tendency of the 'rate of profit' to fall, which Roberts considers to be the main reason capitalists have sought more profitable outlets in the periphery.[67] Capitalism has undoubtedly become a globalised economic system, although in an unstable and deeply unequal way, creating large urban areas in which significant numbers are dependent on an 'underground economy' to survive as the core economies continue to extract value from the periphery and low wage, high output industries are the result. The change from subsistence agriculture, which is similar to that seen in nineteenth century Britain but on a bigger scale, continues to force millions to migrate to expanding megacities where life is still a struggle for survival. In many ways replicating processes that are studied in this thesis, farming in the global south has become industrialised, exploitative, and alienated, reducing the relationship between human society and the soil, and therefore to natural environment, to that of a capitalist commodity on a global scale.

It is this diminishing relationship between society and the soil that was at the heart of the chemist von Leibig's development of agricultural science, which was a major influence on Marx as well as many others in the nineteenth century. Von Leibig was, in turn, building on the earlier work of James Anderson who developed the 'rent theory' that defined rent as a charge for the use of the most fertile soils and thus was both the result of historical changes in soil fertility and eventually part of the cause. Human activity could improve the soil using fertilisers and manures etc., or, conversely, it could degrade the soil. Where general failures in the improvement of soil fertility occurred, these were largely a consequence, Anderson argued, of the failure to adopt rational and sustainable agricultural practices. This was the basis of Marx's argument about rent and value. It also links with the explanation of how land ownership was an impediment to developing rational and sustainable agriculture in a system where land was owned by an elite whose claim on the land

[67] The argument continues that the 'expansion' of the system is not only unsustainable but results in global instability as investors seek ways to make money when investment in industrial production in the core economies cannot guarantee a profitable return. Michael Roberts, https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2021/08/25/the-rate-and-the-mass-of-profit/

was based on historical legacy of conquest and religious change and relied on capitalist tenant farmers, who often saw little incentive and had insufficient capital to adapt their farming methods. Certainly, the reports on agriculture that form the core of section 3 of Chapter 5 tend to support some of this critique. Anderson considered that urbanisation had led to a removal of a key element of the nutrient cycle, so that nutrient rich excrement was removed and flushed into rivers and the sea. For instance, in London:

> with its gargantuan waste of such natural sources of fertility, "which is daily carried to the Thames, in its passage to which it subjects the people in the lower part of the city to the most offensive effluvia." [68]

The breaking of this cycle required inputs of nutrients from other means, including imported manures and artificial fertilisers but even this ignored the impact of the removal of nutrients and their effects on rivers and seas. The use of manures could replace the nutrients lost but if they were not applied efficiently, they also risked being washed into water sources, acerbating the problem in rivers and the sea. The transporting of such inputs was both time consuming and wasteful. By the end of the nineteenth century, advertisers in local newspapers were targeting the audience of famers in eastern Monmouthshire to purchase guano from Peru and other parts of South America as shown in the chapter on the development of a consumer society, Chapter 4. For Anderson, von Liebig and the Scottish agricultural chemist, James F W Johnston, this breaking of the nutrient cycle was a key part of the way that consumer-based capitalism broke human society's relationship with the environment via the unsustainable use of the soil.[69] This was also a theme of the work of Edwin Chadwick, whose writings, in particularly the 1842 'Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain', were a key influence on government decisions in the nineteenth century. One of these was the move towards developing a modern sewerage system, particularly in urban areas, which resulted by the twenty-first century in the recycling of most human excrement in Britain.[70] The rapid development of urbanisation in other areas of the world in the past few decades has not replicated this system, however, and as Davis shows, the resultant lack of proper sewerage has been an environmental disaster on a huge scale.[71] Flushing away nutrients produced by people and animals as waste products degrades the

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[68] Foster J.B., *Marx's Ecology…*, p. 145. F.M.L. Thompson also uses James Anderson's work as a source on manuring in his writings on the Second Agricultural Revolution and elsewhere.
[69] Foster J.B, *Marx's Ecology…,* p. 154
[70] R Dring, 'Closing the Nutrient Cycle', *Farming Magazine* (15th May 2015) https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/articles/human-manure-closing-the-nutrient-loop/ (accessed 290420) Dring says "Already in Britain we recycle 77% of our sewerage onto agricultural land."
[71] Davis M, *Planet of Slums* (Verso: London, 2006) p. 137-142

soil, pollutes rivers and seas and has changed their metabolic structures in the process. This is a grim consequence of the metabolic rift and an example of how the system has undermined the balance between human society and nature.

Enclosure, another aspect of the history of agricultural and land use change in England and Wales and one that dramatically altered the ability of most of the population to maintain themselves through subsistence farming, had by the nineteenth century already led to the patterns of land use described by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reports referred to below in Chapter 5. Enclosure was part of a process that undermined long established customary rights. Enclosure had only a marginal effect on increasing yields, but it did increase field size, ended the system of strip farming and with it peasant subsistence food production, encouraged new and more efficient rotational methods of cropping and, most importantly, brought significant areas of land under cultivation for the first time. However, it was not just the peasantry that got in the way of the expansion of food production in this new system, but also elements of the natural world that were seen as problematic. Cragoe and McDonagh show how the development of intensive agriculture required the control of competing birds and mammals, who were seen as vermin taking what was not theirs. By linking this directly to the poverty and hunger that were the immediate effects of enclosure, the landowners encouraged the local population to comply with as much elimination from this natural competition as possible, with disastrous effects on ecosystems that have only recently been highlighted. This was linked in government initiatives as Poor Laws combined parish-based charges for the upkeep of the local poor with imperatives that 'sought to eliminate unwelcome competition for scarce food supplies.'[72] Keith Thomas has described the resultant slaughter as 'colossal' as the definition of vermin was anything that wanted to eat the expanding stores of food, which were required due to increasing yields.[73] The poor laws, the creation of a new consensus and the law all combined to ensure that the elimination of nature became a communal act amongst a population that had previously co-existed with it. Another intended consequence of enclosure was the increasing production of monocultures, which increased yields but were another target for the natural world as they allowed insects, bacteria and viruses to thrive. The result was an increasing reliance on pesticides and developing new varieties that could resist the challenge of nature.

[72] Cragoe M & McDonagh B, 'Parliamentary enclosure, vermin and the cultural life of English parishes, 1750–1850' in *Continuity and Change*, 28 (2013) p.29

[73] Thomas K, *Man and the Natural World – Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1983) p. 274

Accumulation based on this new system allowed the landowners to invest in industrial production, which was as has already been highlighted, from the mid-eighteenth century based on exploiting fossil fuels. The disparity between the industrial development in the coal-rich valleys of western Monmouthshire and the remaining rural areas of eastern Monmouthshire are testimony to this. Malm and Angus have argued that this 'fossil capital' was central to the development of industrial capitalism and a major contributor to climate change and a 'crisis of the earth system.'[74] Some scientists and historians believe that the resultant changes to this system, particularly their acceleration after the end of World War Two, means that the earth has entered a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. The 2001 Amsterdam Declaration argued:

> the Earth System has moved well outside the range of the natural variability exhibited over the last half million years at least. The nature of changes now occurring simultaneously in the Earth System, their magnitudes and rates of change are unprecedented.[75]

While now being more widely accepted within scientific circles, the idea of the Anthropocene has faced criticism, including that its title implies that humans *as a species* have adversely affected the Earth System. Jason W. Moore for instance argues that 'the Anthropocene makes for an easy story' that fails to challenge class, capital, imperialism and culture. Instead of using the term Anthropocene ('the age of man') he uses the alternative Capitalocene ('Age of Capital), locating the issues as relating to a particular mode of production'[76] Felli agrees that, 'in blaming humanity as a whole for the transformations taking place in a nature portrayed as standing outside of society, the concept of the Anthropocene risks obscuring things more than it clarifies them.'[77] This ignores the importance of the term and the nature of the change that it describes. Even if capitalism is replaced by a different economic and political organisation of human society (as Moore and Felli advocate) the earth system cannot be simply repaired. Humans have been intervening in and changing their environment throughout their history and developments like agriculture and early forms of property and the state which led to conflict and war have made a significant impact in the past, although the acceleration in the past two centuries has been rapid and had significantly more impact. Anthropocene is a useful term to define this impact. While there is a developing consensus amongst scientists and historians that the Anthropocene started

[74] Angus I, *Facing the Anthropocene…* p. 19
[75] From the 'Amsterdam Declaration on Earth System Science, 2001', http://www.igbp.net/about/history/2001amsterdamdeclarationonearthsystemscience.4.1b8ae20512db692f2a680001312.html (accessed 14.4.23)
[76] Moore, Capitalism in the Web of Life… p. 77
[77] Felli R, *The Great Adaption: Climate, Capitalism and Catastrophe* (Verso: London, 2021) p.6

in 1945, the nineteenth century changes in agriculture seen in eastern Monmouthshire helped undermine societal relationships with the natural environment and paved the way for what has happened since.

As well as being a critic of the Anthropocene, Moore has also argued that the idea that there was a metabolic rift created in the nineteenth century is based on 'Cartesian dualism', an acceptance of a false dichotomy between human society and nature. Instead, he has proposed using a theory called oikeios, derived from the Greek word for home, 'that names the life-making relation that includes all forms of human organisation, which is both a product and producer of the oikeios.'[78] Moore's argument that this is dialectical in a way that develops Marx's ideas has been seen by some as providing a radical response to the environmental crisis. McKinney, for example, suggests Moore is intersectional and allows, for example, the inclusion of feminist theory of patriarchy.[79] Instead of causing a metabolic rift, Moore says that capitalism 'is not an economic system; it is not a social system; it is *a way of organising nature*.'[80] For Moore, the metabolism is conceptualised as a 'flow of power, capital, and material nature characterised by an "unbroken coincidence of our being, our doing, and our knowing."'[81] His suggestion is that the development of capitalism was just another way of organising nature, while Foster's interpretation of Marx and the metabolic rift suggests the opposite. Moore, basing his conclusion on a revised version of the law of value, believes that capitalism developed steam power due to the cheap supply of coal, one of four 'cheaps' in nature. He suggests that capital is forced to 'ceaselessly search for and find ways to produce…low-cost food, labour-power, energy, and raw materials…'[82] The environmental crisis, by making the raw materials on which capitalism is based more expensive, creates a crisis of capitalism, a reduction in the rate of profit. Saito, defending the idea of metabolic rift, points out that it was Marx himself who used the term and goes on to suggest that Moore's attempt at using a revised form of Marx's theory of value ignores its real meaning and purpose, arguing that 'Marx's value theory must not be too narrowly understood, as if it was limited to class struggle', which he believes Moore and some others including Nancy Fraser, have done. Saito says that the theory of value 'provides a method to analyse how capital, in accordance with its own logic of self-

[78] McKinney L, 'Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital (review), *Human Ecology Review* 23:1 (2017) pp. 205-210, p. 205
[79] McKinney L, 'Capitalism in the Web of Life (review)'… p.209
[80] Moore J.W., *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso: London, 2015) p.2 (emphasis in the original)
[81] Moore J.W., Capitalism in the Web of Life…, p. 77 (quote is from Maturana and Verela, *The Tree of Knowledge* (1987) p. 250)
[82] Moore J.W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life…* p. 53 In a later publication this is extended to seven 'cheaps'.

valorisation, reorganises and transforms various spheres such as family, nature, the state, and appropriate natural elements as 'free natural power of capital.'[83] Also in response to Moore's criticisms of their pointing to Marx's writing as the basis of an understanding of capitalism leading to a metabolic rift, Foster and Burkett have suggested that Moore's attempts to redefine the Marxist concept of value to include nature is problematic and 'in the name of combatting dualism, Moore strives to conflate nature and society, subsuming the former within the latter.'[84] Malm, whose work on centring the use of fossil fuels as a key dynamic of the whole capitalist system also disagrees with Moore and believes that he is basing his theory on a rather old-fashioned and long-discredited interpretation of Marx.[85] He points out that Moore's catastrophic predictions in which capitalists are forced to adapt in order to survive cannot be evidenced in real world experiences. Capitalists are content to continue to profit from the system they have created, whatever the consequences, something highlighted by Naomi Klein:

> The wealthiest people in the wealthiest countries in the world think they are going to be OK, that someone else is going to eat the biggest risks, that even when climate change turns up on their doorstep, they will be taken care of.[86]

Moore has redefined the concept of value, a central part of Marx's critique of the system and in doing so undermines an important element of that critique. Its replacement by the concept of 'cheaps' is itself problematic. The move to use coal to produce steam was far from cheap, despite the fact that coal was naturally abundant, as it involved significant investment and capital, especially in terms of mining it, changing land use and in building productive capacity that could make use of its ability to create steam. Fossil fuels and steam replaced water power which had been developed over centuries and had the advantage of using a cheap source of energy that was renewable. The difference, though, is that steam power was capable of increasing value far more through the use of labour, was capable of being located away from water sources and therefore could be adapted to fit more accessible location and was developed in the nineteenth century as a means of propulsion. Fossil-fuels, in the first place mainly coal, may have required significant capital and labour to exploit but the competitive edge it gave to those who invested meant they

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[83] Saito, 'Marx in the Anthropocene: Value, Metabolic Rift, and the Non-Cartesian Dualism' in *Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialtheorie und Philodophie*, 4, 1-2 pp. 276-295 (2017) p. 284. The last part of the sentence is a quote from Marx K, *Manuscripts of 1864-1865* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) p. 883

[84] Foster J.B. & Burkett P, 'Value isn't everything', *International Socialism* (160, 2018) p. 50

[85] Malm A, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (Verso: London, 2017) pp. 308-9

[86] Klein N, 'Let them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World', *London Review of Books*, (2 June 2016) p. 14

quickly usurped previous methods of making power. Once the process of turning coal to coke had been discovered in the mid eighteenth century, this also quickly became the main method of producing steel and in much large quantities. Coal drove the industrial revolution and even though other fossil fuels, predominantly oil, have replaced it as the main driver of the system, as Malm and Angus suggest, the system of fossil capital remains.

Some other critics of Foster, such as Vettese and Pendergrass, maintain that the conventional twentieth -century view of Marx as a Promethean is valid and suggest those who attempt to use Marx's writings as a foundation of anti-capitalist environmentalism are 'reading Capital with viridian-tinted glasses.'[87] Instead, they propose a twenty-first century utopian vision based on a fusion of ideas from a range of sources, including, at times, Marx himself. Their argument, though, contains serious weaknesses, like the nineteenth century tradition it is based on, and does not address either the nature of the system nor why it has created an unsustainable system in the first place and they do not suggest an agency that could drive the transformation they deem necessary. Saito sees this weakness in Moore too, arguing that by reducing labour power to being just one of four 'cheaps' on which Capitalism develops and thrives, he ignores the key element in Marx where 'the associated producers govern their metabolic interaction with nature rationally, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power.'[88] Vettese and Pendergrass also appear to have misinterpreted some writers as supporting their critique. For instance, they cite an article by Malm as part of their argument, although it was written from a position of agreement with the fundamentals of the theory of metabolic rift. In the article, Malm criticises a recent book by Foster and Burkett, suggesting that they were guilty of overemphasising the environmental credential of Marx and Engels concluding 'there are many Marxes; one takes the Marx one likes best and makes use of him in this intolerable condition that one must continue to oppose, as effectively as it can ever be done.'[89] But elsewhere Malm is very clear in his support of the concept of the Metabolic Rift and against what he considers Moore's misunderstanding of it, arguing:

> Foster et al. would be Cartesian if they thought that labour and nature consisted of different substances or inhabited sperate spheres, so that the one could be analysed without reference to the other – a very common

[87] Vettese T and Pendergrass D, *Half-Earth Socialism: A Plan to Save the Future from Extinction, Climate Change, and Pandemics* (Verso, 2022) p. 59
[88] Marx K, *Manuscripts of 1864-1865…* p. 885, quoted in Saito K, 'Marx in the Anthropocene…' p. 293
[89] Malm A, 'For a Fallible and Lovable Marx: Some Thoughts on the Latest Book by Foster and Burkett', *Critical Historical Studies*, 4:2 (2017) p.275: The 'latest book' referred to in the title was Foster J.B. & Burkett P, *Marx and The Earth: An Anti-Critique* (Brill: Leiden, 2016)

> perception in the history of capitalist modernity but precisely the opposite of what the metabolic rift school teaches.[90]

Malm uses his position, an agreement with the concept of the Metabolic Rift and a partial agreement with Marx, to suggest different possible courses of action about the way forward for those concerned with the environmental crisis. So on the one hand he argues for direct action of different kinds and on the other declaring the need for a form of what he describes as 'war communism' as well as the kind of determination' espoused by Lenin' in the lead-up to the October revolution.[91] The point being that how different writers understand the cause of the problem is important in how they imagine the possible solution. This thesis is largely about looking at the cause of the problem.

3. Agency, resistance and change

> Men make their own history, but not of their own free will, not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted[92]

The changes that led to a rift between human society and the natural environment were largely, as indicated in the previous section, driven by a landed elite who were acting in the interests of preserving their wealth and power. The metabolic rift affected different sections of society in different ways and this thesis will show that decisions made that led to a growing disconnection between society and the environment were made in the interests of a landowning elite, who were also often part of developing industries. They were not the only actors involved in the implementation of the process though, as land agents who working for the estates, farmers, who were largely acting as business managers and employing agricultural labourers to work on the farms all made decisions that changed how food was produced, distributed and exchanged. While all these actors were involved their ability to affect this change, how it worked and, importantly, how it affected the relationships that had been in place previously that were based on sustainable use of the land, varied considerably. To encourage the adoption of new methods, landowners employed a range of devices, including the farmers clubs and agricultural shows that are explored in Chapter 5. The various reports into the state of agriculture in Monmouthshire that are a key component of that same chapter found that there were complaints and concerns about the

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[90] Malm A, *The Progress of this Storm…* p.307. The whole book is an argument against what Malm calls Hybridism and in support of the concept of metabolism.

[91] Malm A, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (Verso: London, 2021) especially pp. 185-191; Malm A, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century* (Verso: London, 2020) especially pp 190-192

[92] Marx K, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' in Marx K, *The Political Writings* (Verso: London, 2019) p. 480

changes being implemented in the name of improvement. This took many and sometimes contradictory forms, as agricultural labourers found their importance enhanced by scarcity as the lure of higher wages and better job security took people from the land, often to the neighbouring industrial areas that required ever more labour. Farmers complained about this scarcity and the need to offer higher pay, while the reports into living conditions still found that important aspects such as housing were poor for the labourers who stayed in rural areas.

On the surface there appeared to be little direct evidence of conflict in eastern Monmouthshire. However, as Thompson has shown, the creation of a class consciousness in the period of change was often also located in small acts that show how the actors involved in the process were trying to stake a claim on it. He uses the concept of a 'moral economy', a common notion of rights and customs that have served communities for centuries and this is useful to understand some of what took place in nineteenth century eastern Monmouthshire. [93] The attitudes towards farming practices, animal husbandry and the values attributed to nature were part of this set of ethical values which were being undermined by the move towards intensive agriculture necessitated by wider changes in the nineteenth century.[94] Bonneuil & Fressoz, this concept to show that 'Anthropocenic undertakings that massively disturbed moral and natural economies did not proceed without criticism, challenge and struggle.'[95] This focus places reluctance to embrace change as resistance, often accompanied low-level law breaking and small acts of defiance. Peter Linebaugh developed some of Thompson's ideas to show resistance in rural as well as urban communities as part of the formation of a class consciousness in the nineteenth century shaping the way that a local economy and the social life within it is changed.[96] Linebaugh showed in his study of early eighteenth London that what was regarded as crime and reported in court records provides evidence of discontent and resistance.[97] Laws were seen as an imposition of power from above and were often part of redefining economic and social relationships.

Clive Emsley has argued that criminal acts were often rooted in a reluctance to accept that 'game', as well what washed up along the shoreline, had any ownership, despite the laws that protected these items as 'property' of landowners that were passed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth

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[93] Thompson E.P., *Customs in Common* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1983), particularly Chapter Four, 'The Moral Economy and the Crowd' pp185-258 and 'The Moral Economy Reviewed' pp259-351.
[94] Thomas K, *Man and the Natural World…* is particularly illuminating on the theme of how people considered nature and their relationship to it in the period just before the nineteenth century.
[95] Bonneuil C & Fressoz J-P, *The Shock of the Anthropocene…*, p. 287
[96] Linebaugh P, *Stop Thief! The Commons, Enclosures and Resistance* (PM Press: Oakland, 2014)
[97] Linebaugh P, *The London Hanged – Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1989)

centuries.[98] The central concept of a moral economy is also important in considering both what constituted 'crime' in an increasingly regulated society and, perhaps more importantly, what that 'crime' meant to people. Laws were often used to deal with dissent. E.P. Thompson, for instance, described the way that Parliament in 1723 passed a series of Acts that made private property out of bounds for most of the population. As well as making hunting deer, rabbits and fish capital offences, the Waltham Black Act went further and

> included breaking down the head or mound of any fish-pond; maliciously shooting at any person; sending anonymous letters demanding 'money, venison, or other valuable thing'; and forcibly rescuing anyone from custody who was accused of any of these offences.[99]

The very fact that these actions were made illegal suggests they were becoming more commonplace and therefore problematic for those at the top of society. While Pincombe has suggested that Monmouthshire 'was not subject to quite the level of violence [and criminal activity] found in many English counties' and that incendiarism was rare, the pages of local newspapers, such as *The Monmouthshire Merlin* suggests otherwise. While assault may have been 'by far the most common fined offence', along with convictions for 'poaching, stealing turnips, game trespass and killing game and cutting underwood' these were not the only forms of crime commonly brought to the Quarter Sessions and, of course, these are the very 'crimes' that suggest that local people were reluctant to accept the reinforced property rights given to the landowners.[100] These property rights were being used by those landowners to bring about changes to farming and the rural economy that was driving a rift between local people and the environment on which they depended and the numerous examples of such law-breaking shows that some people were unhappy with this. While Pincombe argues that there was 'social peace' in rural areas of Monmouthshire, based on the closeness of relationships as agricultural labourers were often living in the houses of and dependent on the good will of their employers alongside factors such as the proximity of the ironworks 'as an alternative source of employment' provided the opportunity for higher wages, the research contained in this thesis challenges some of these conclusions. Faced with a growing rift between the local environment and the societal changes that affected people's lives, people from different levels of society used what methods they could to express disapproval. For instance, there were many petitions circulated and meetings held in

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[98] Emsley C, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900 – fourth edition* (Routledge: London, 2013), pp. 3-4

[99] Thompson E.P., *Whigs & Hunters: The origin of the Black Act* (Breviary Stuff: London, 2013) p.1. Thompson points out that these laws were passed without any recorded Parliamentary opposition.

[100] Pincombe I, 'Rural Society…' pp. 138-139

eastern Monmouthshire, especially around the impassioned arguments about protectionism and the Corn Laws that affected politics in the early nineteenth, as well as changes to property and access rights that accompanied transport improvements. These are discussed in the relevant chapters below.

There were, within the wider region of South Wales, more direct forms of protest, including the rurally-based Rebecca riots in the 1840s, which Williams explains as based on changing land use and the overzealous introduction of tolls to fund road improvements.[101] David Jones, looking at the precursors to the Rebecca riots, suggests these protests were part of a fairly widespread and repeating pattern of resistance in south Wales in the period after 1793, which roughly coincides with the increasing introduction of industry to the area.[102] Some recent studies have offered new perspectives on these protests, such as that of Rhian E Jones, who has re-evaluated the Rebecca riots from the perspective of 'gender, culture and popular protests.'[103] She discusses the importance of shifting attention towards 'studying examples of popular political activity on their own terms, outside the constraints of any linear master-narrative or pre-determined teleological outcomes.' Her aim in studying popular protests in South Wales is to re-evaluate 'aspects [which] have not been fully appreciated in previous scholarship and consider their integration of symbolic and ritual elements of popular culture into social and economic protest.'[104] Clearly the use of symbols and rituals in protest movements such as those seen in the 'Rebecca Riots' combine forms of cultural legacy with protest at what is perceived to be an adverse change from above. Jones argues 'from this perspective, Rebeccaism may be seen as forming part of the dislocation, conflict and resistance generated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain by the shift of a society regulated by paternalistic obligations, the authority of popular custom, and what E. P. Thompson dubbed a pre-existing 'moral economy'', to an economy, politics and society informed by industrial capitalism.[105] While there is no evidence of 'Rebeccaite protest' in eastern Monmouthshire, it does not mean that rural society subjected to similar changes was unaffected by similar concerns. Reasons for protests and lack of protest are more complex than a simple correlation between outbreaks of active resistance and the appearance of passivity. Crucially, the

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[101] Williams D, *The Rebecca Riots*, (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 1955)
[102] Jones D, *Before Rebecca – Popular Protests in Wales, 1793-1835* (Allen Lane: London, 1973)
[103] Jones R.E., 'Symbol, Ritual and Popular Protest in Early Nineteenth Century Wales: The Scotch Cattle Rebranded' in *Welsh History Review*, 26 (2012) pp. 34-57; R E Jones, *Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 2015)
[104] Jones R.E., 'Popular Protest and Popular Culture in South Wales c1820-1844', *paper presented at the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Conference, St Hugh's College, Oxford*, January 2006 p.1
[105] Jones R E, *Petticoat Heroes: Gender Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 2015) pp. 5-6

fact that toll-gates were not smashed in eastern Monmouthshire does not in itself signify that the people in the area were either compliant or accepting of the changes that affected their lives. The micro-study of the villages in the area that forms part of this thesis show the contradictions within the experience of everyday life in a rapidly changing nineteenth century rural society. This study, which forms the central part of the next chapter of the thesis, will continue to look at the theme of agency and how the different groups, or classes, in society reacted to the opening of a rift between the society they were part of and their local environment they still depended on, but were losing connectivity with.

Chapter 2: The people of eastern Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century.

To locate a metabolic rift developing between society and the environment in the nineteenth century requires an in-depth study of that society. As explained in the introduction and methodology, this thesis will use the scale of micro-history to help investigate nineteenth century change. The aim of this chapter is to look at the factors that affected people and changed their relationship with the locality and the environment on which they had, for centuries, depended. The reasons for these changes will also be explored, along with the main actors and their motivations. The population of eastern Monmouthshire was relatively small at the start of the nineteenth century, although not by the standards of some parts of mid-Wales, and it was a relatively prosperous area. The topography of gentle hills, river valleys and good quality soil allowed agriculturally based village communities to develop. The county was described by Fox in 1794 in glowing terms:

> The county is not surpassed, if it be equalled, by any other part of this kingdom. The delightful diversities of hills and dales, woods and water, corn fields and meadows, are so beautifully scattered throughout the county that nature, wherever we turn our view, gives to art a rule of perfection for the ornamental and intrinsic improvement of almost every estate. [1]

Fox goes on to say that 'from the scarcity of hands, some will venture to assert, population may be presumed to be rather decreasing' suggesting that canal building was taking off 'a great number of men.'[2] As shown later in this chapter, censuses show that the population fluctuated during the nineteenth century and by the end of the century there was a significantly smaller number of people living here than at other times, particularly during the middle years. The development of industrial capitalism, which accelerated with the technological breakthroughs of the mid eighteenth century, came to affect virtually every aspect of society and with its proximity to the mineral rich western Monmouthshire, this was of particular importance here. Mineral extraction and iron and steel production provided alternative employment opportunities, and this is one explanation for the decline in population in eastern Monmouthshire, although as shown by adverts in local newspapers highlighted in Chapter 4 the lure of emigration may have also accounted for some of it. Population loss in rural areas of Britain, at a time of a general large increase, led to a loss of local knowledge and expertise in the field of agriculture and a growing

[1] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth with Observations on the Means of Its Improvement* (Brentford: Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement, 1794) p. 10
[2] Fox J, *General View…* p18

dislocation between a society that had for centuries combined food production with consumption and sustainable management of the natural environment on which this depended. In other words, as this chapter will show, some people moved from the villages to the towns, while others moved to the villages to work in trades that no longer had a connection with food production or the local environment.

The people who lived or influenced life here can be grouped into three categories. There were landowners, many of whom didn't live in the area, but all of whom made decisions which greatly affected the rest of society. The second category were land-users, farmers and agricultural workers, while the third category were trades people and non-agricultural workers living in the villages in the area. This chapter will identify who some of these people were, their relationship with each other and the changing rural society and within that, consider their level of agency with regard to effecting change. It will begin by looking at some of the landowners, the group who benefitted most directly from the developing market system and resultant changes in agriculture. They also had the most influence in a society in which they were politically and socially dominant, a situation they maintained despite changes during the century. Most of the farmers were tenants, renting from the landowners, sometimes with a high degree of autonomy and sometimes at the behest of land managers working for estates. Many of the agricultural labourers, especially at the start of the period, worked for local tenant farmers on an ad-hoc basis while others 'lived-in' at the farm. The analysis of the census which forms a later part of this chapter shows that there were still many such labourers throughout the century, perhaps surprisingly as their number reduced in many other parts of rural Britain. The overall population of this area, though, had reduced and was lower in 1900 than at the time of the earliest census of 1841.

According to the land survey which followed the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, the people living in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire in the 1840s were mainly engaged in agriculturally related trades such as blacksmiths and wheelwrights, while the villages usually had at least one pub, a school and a church with an associated rectory. The villages were mostly self-sufficient and the people living there were unlikely to have a need to travel far outside of the area. They were both connected to their locality and had a direct knowledge and understanding of how their society interacted and affected the local environment. The first useful national census took place in 1841 and was thus conducted at roughly the same time as the Tithe Survey. The following chapter is based on an analysis in nine villages in eastern Monmouthshire, from the 1840s onwards, to find out more detail about the people who lived in the area and locate social and

economic changes. The northernmost village used for this case study is Llanwytherin, about four miles north-east of the area's main market town of Abergavenny on the main road to Ross-on-Wye, which was an important route between Wales and England. Llanfable and Llandeilo Gresynni lie on a road that connects Abergavenny and Monmouth, while to the south of these villages is Llanarth, on a minor north-south route that connects the road to Monmouth with another main road between Abergavenny and Raglan. In between these villages is Llanddewi Rydderch, which is not on any main route. The locations of these villages is shown in Figure 5. To the south of Abergavenny are the villages of Llanellen, Llanofer and Goytre / Penperlleni all of which are on the main road to Pontypool and Newport and shown in Figure 6.[3]

[3] A note on naming of villages:
Many of the villages of eastern Monmouthshire have an original (Welsh) name and an Anglicised version which is, in most cases, now in everyday use. Except where when quoting secondary sources, or when using house or site names that use the Anglicised version, the original (Welsh) versions of the places will be used throughout this thesis. As the area has been predominantly English speaking since at least the nineteenth century, it may be that the original Welsh names will not be familiar, although they do appear on modern Ordnance Survey maps.

Original (Welsh)	**Anglicised**
Blaenafon	Blaenavon
Llanddewi Rhydderch	Llanthewy Rytherch
Llandeilo Gresynni	Llantilio Crossenny
Llanfable	Llanvapley
Llanofer	Llanover
Llanwytherin	Llanvetherine

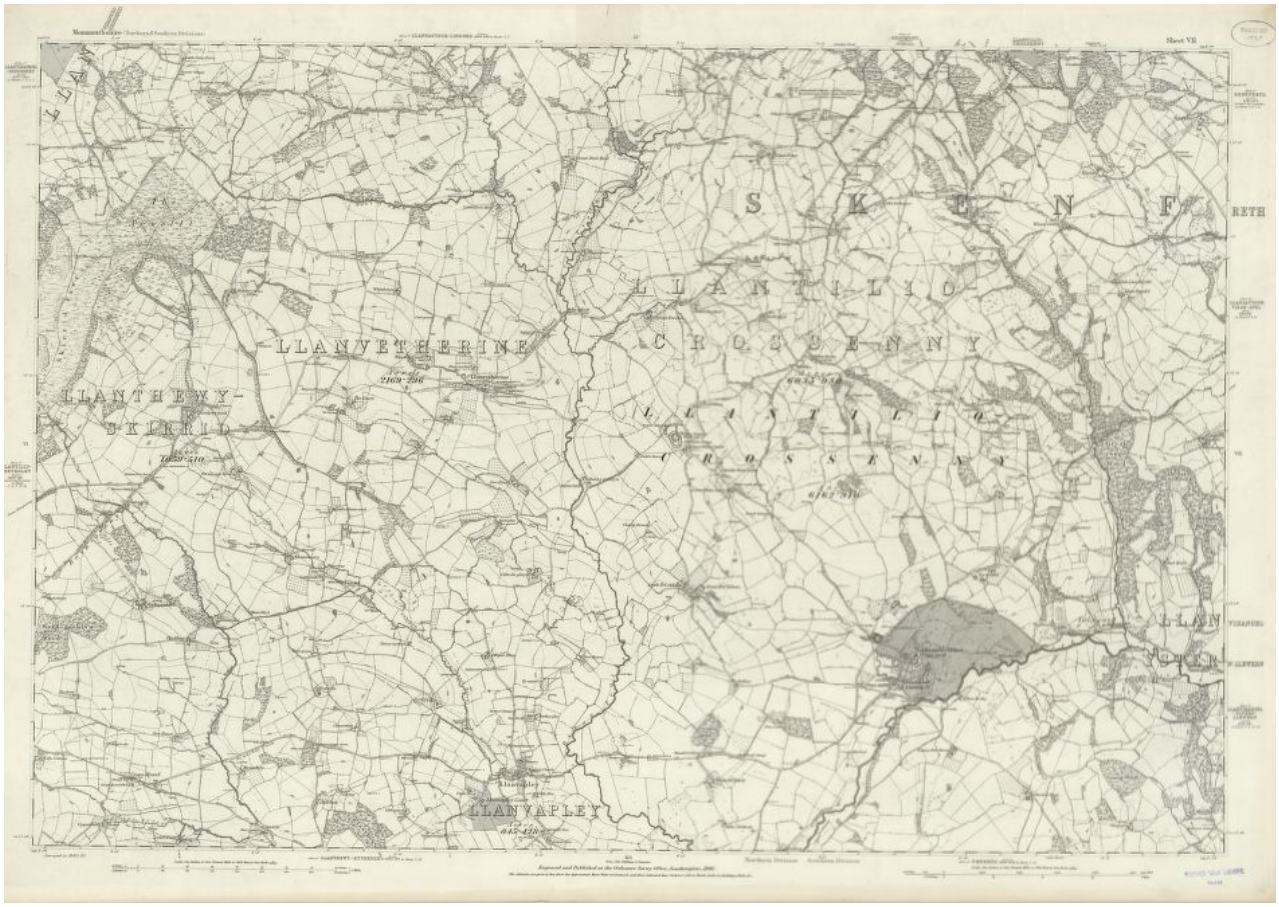


Figure 5: 1890s Ordnance Survey map of Llanwytherin (Llanvetherine), Llanfable (Llanvapley), Llandeilo Gresynni (Llantilio Crossenny) and Llanarth.[4]

[4] https://maps.nls.uk/view-full/102346171#zoom=3&lat=5419&lon=7660&layers=BT
https://maps.nls.uk/view-full/102345989#zoom=3&lat=5229&lon=7704&layers=BT
The map shows the English names for the villages (see footnote 3)

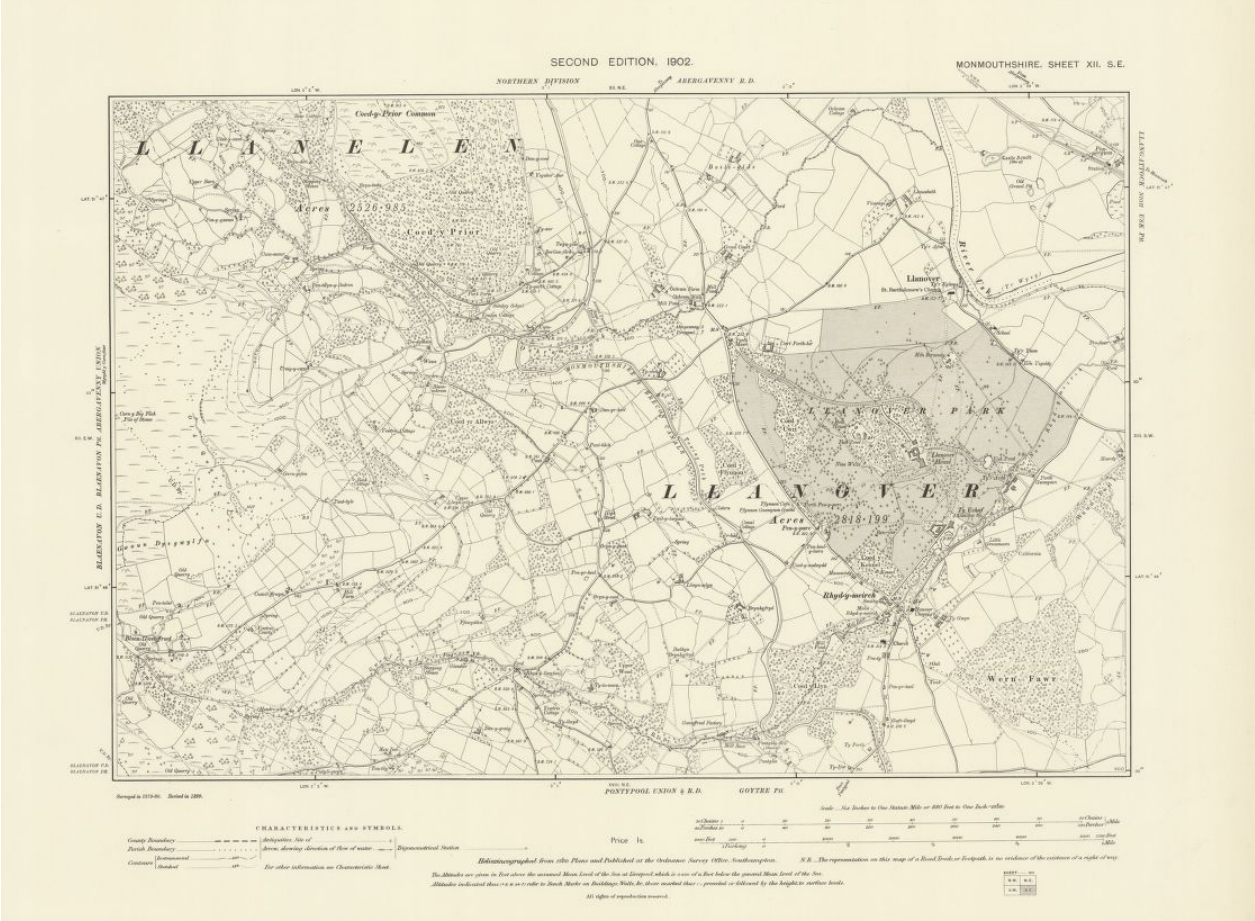


Figure 6 : 1890s Ordnance Survey map of Llanellen, Llanofer (Llanover) and Goytre.[5]

The censuses from 1841 onwards show some of the changes that took place in the villages, reshaping their function to some extent and changing the types of occupations that the people were engaged as well as revealing information about mobilities. The period saw the development of a consumer culture and economy, increased use of agricultural mechanisation and production for the market, improvements in transport and communications and changes in demography, all of which helped create a metabolic rift and will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

1. Landownership in eastern Monmouthshire.

Landownership was almost entirely in the hands of a small elite and the changes that will be described were made to benefit these people and increase their wealth and power. This growing level of inequality was another type of societal rift, although this thesis is concentrated on how the methods that were employed to achieve this outcome created and widened a metabolic rift. There was a hierarchy amongst the people of eastern Monmouthshire, which may be simplified as having landowners at the top, farmers below them and then everyone else, although there were

[5] https://maps.nls.uk/view-full/102186127#zoom=3&lat=3407&lon=4584&layers=BT.

also differences in status between the traders and the agricultural labourers who lived in the villages. Those who owned the land were, through the privileges this gave them, at the forefront of change in agriculture and therefore it makes sense to begin the survey of people who lived in eastern Monmouthshire by looking at who they were. The disjointed pattern of landownership in the area is shown in the first set of maps based on the Tithe Survey in the appendices. While farms were tenanted according to this pattern, there are examples where land owned by one person did not even adjoin other fields that were part of the same estate which must have made life more difficult for farming across different portions of land.

This landownership gave extensive rights and political power to those who had inherited the land. Many felt this caused many of the problems in farming during the century and, by the end of the period, there was a serious debate about how this was undermining the environmental basis of food production.[6] In 1873, in response to a question in the House of Parliament by the Lord Privy seal, Edward Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, who wanted to challenge perceptions about the domination of a small elite over the land, a survey was undertaken on behalf of the government. The idea was that the survey would disprove the claim made by some radicals that this landowning elite was only a few thousand strong. The resultant survey, though, confirmed what many had suspected, that a small group of highly influential landowners did dominate Britain's countryside. Locally, this survey (known as the *Return of Owners of Land*), revealed that across Monmouthshire the largest of these landowners were (in alphabetical order) Crawshay Bailey, the Duke of Beaufort (who was the largest landowner), H. Morgan-Clifford, J.C. Hanbury. J.A.E. Herbert, William Herbert, W. Perry-Herrick, C.E. Lewis, Lady Llanover, J.A. Rolls, Lord Tredegar and C.J Kemeys-Tynte.[7] These were the 'great landowners' who owned 37.4% of the land and received 25.1% of the rent in the county.[8] Most of these were also influential in industry too, as they owned land in the mineral-rich land in the western half of the county. In effect, it was this class that led the way and had by far the greatest agency. As in industry, so with agriculture and land-use, sustainability took second place to economic developments and competitive pressures individual landowners faced. Ironically, given their predominance in driving change, by the end of the century, some of these owners were selling all or part of their estates. The effects of agricultural

[6] For a description of such movements (such as 'Back to Nature and 'Back to the Land') in the latter decades of the century see Gould P.C., *Early Green Politics…*

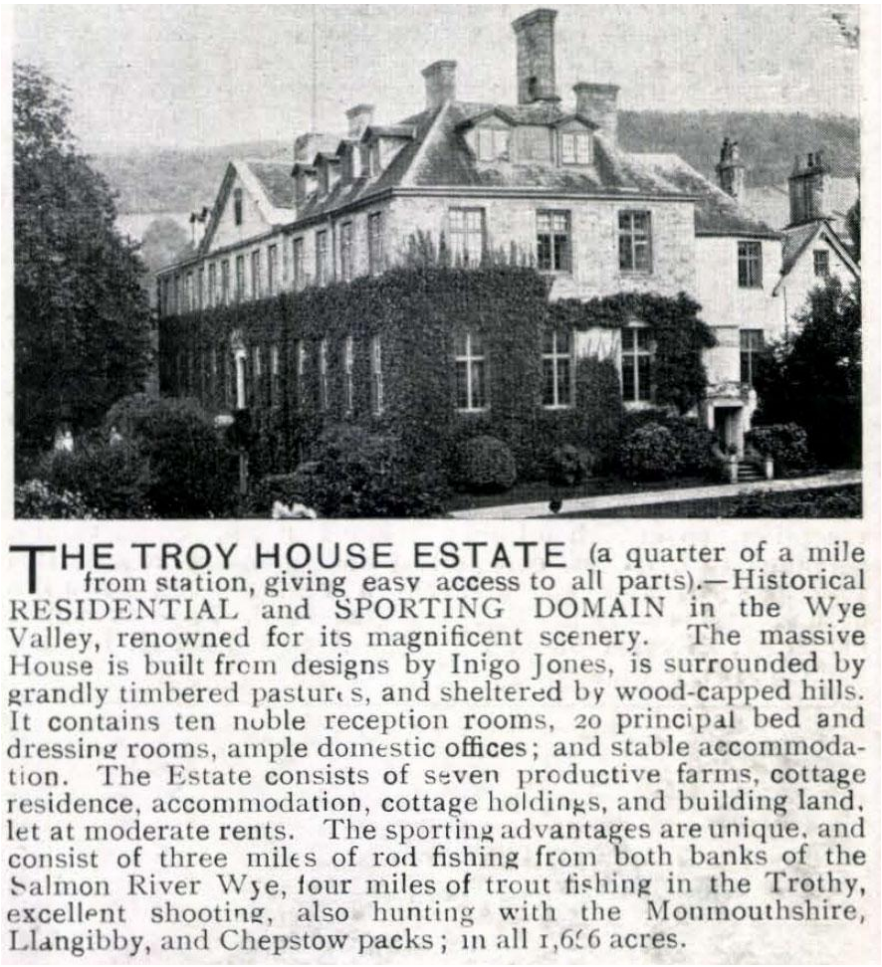
[7] C1097, England and Wales (Exclusive of the Metropolis) return of owners of land, 1873. H.C. (1874) LXXII (herafter called the *Return of Owners of Land, 1873*. Monmouthshire was grouped with the English counties in Vol. I of the report; the rest of Wales was in Vol. II

[8] James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales' in *National Library of Wales journal*, 14:3 (1964) pp. 317 and 319. James has analysed the report of the Return of Owners of Land, 1873 cited above.

'improvement' and the free-trade that followed the ending of the protectionist Corn Laws had created a situation where eastern Monmouthshire, a previously profitable agricultural area, was experiencing a significant upheaval in farming, involving farms being sold, farm tenants losing out, people moving away from the area and, importantly for the current thesis, an increasing adoption of farming methods that would prove to be unsustainable. Subsequently, local knowledges were lost when many of those who knew the best way to manage use of local soils left the area, and often left farming altogether. These changes are all key aspects of the creation and widening of the metabolic rift.

As already mentioned, the earliest survey of land ownership in the nineteenth century was the Tithe Survey, from which maps in appendices 1-8 have been drawn. In summary, these confirm that land in eastern Monmouthshire was mostly owned by a few large landowners, farmed by their tenants and mainly used for arable farming. Across the whole of Monmouthshire, the largest landowners at the time of the Tithe Survey were Charles Morgan, based at Tredegar House on the outskirts of Newport and the Duke of Beaufort, who was based at Badminton House in Gloucestershire. Together they owned around one-sixth of the land in the county. Morgan's land was mainly in the south and west of the county and he does not appear as a landowner in any of the maps for eastern Monmouthshire. His election in 1816 as a Fellow of the Royal Society was 'in recognition of his investment in agricultural improvements' and he did help found Farmers Clubs and Agricultural Shows that were designed to spread modern farming methods within the county and was influential in farming practices across the county. In eastern Monmouthshire, the main landowners were the Duke of Beaufort, Crawshay Bailey, the Earl of Abergavenny, Robert Salusbury MP, John Hanbury of Pontypool, Hanbury Williams, John Jones of Llanarth, the Waddington's of Llanofer, Elizabeth Taddy of Llantilio Court and William Jones of Clytha House. The rest of this section will look in detail at some of these landowners.[9]

[9] Pincombe I, *The Rural Economy*… p43 He comments that these smaller landowners were 'directly beneath' Morgan and Beaufort and groaning 'under their weight.'



THE TROY HOUSE ESTATE (a quarter of a mile from station, giving easy access to all parts).—Historical RESIDENTIAL and SPORTING DOMAIN in the Wye Valley, renowned for its magnificent scenery. The massive House is built from designs by Inigo Jones, is surrounded by grandly timbered pastures, and sheltered by wood-capped hills. It contains ten noble reception rooms, 20 principal bed and dressing rooms, ample domestic offices; and stable accommodation. The Estate consists of seven productive farms, cottage residence, accommodation, cottage holdings, and building land, let at moderate rents. The sporting advantages are unique, and consist of three miles of rod fishing from both banks of the Salmon River Wye, four miles of trout fishing in the Trothy, excellent shooting, also hunting with the Monmouthshire, Llangibby, and Chepstow packs; in all 1,616 acres.

Figure 7: Troy House, the base for management of the Duke of Beaufort's Monmouthshire Estate

The Duke of Beaufort, who also owned extensive areas of land outside of Wales, owned 32,55 acres across Wales of which just over 27,299 acres were in Monmouthshire at the time of the Return of Owners of Land, 1873. His Welsh land earnt him an estimated £32,564 in rent, of which £24,582 came from his Monmouthshire estate.[10] He had therefore by 1873 become the largest landowner in the county. This included land in the mineral rich western areas of the county and the Duke also owned land in adjacent southern Breconshire, which meant he had a large part to play in the development of the iron, steel and coal industries, including In 1779 establishing the Beaufort Iron Works. Despite selling the works to the well-known local iron and steel magnates Joseph and Crawshay Bailey in 1833 as an extension of their nearby Nantyglo works, Beaufort kept a local interest and led an annual 'rough shoot' from the *Rhyd-y-Blew* drovers inn on his land there. Even when the iron works at Beaufort closed in 1862, the landholdings owned by the Duke remained productive in mineral extraction providing a significant income. In eastern Monmouthshire, Beaufort's extensive landholdings included land in Llanwytherin, Llandeilo

[10] Figures collated from the *Return of Owners of Land, 1873* by James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales…' p. 305

Grysenni and Llanfable and this remained mainly used for agriculture. The estate was managed for the Duke from Troy House, in Mitchell Troy near Monmouth (see Figure 7) and the Duke also owned Raglan Castle. There is still a pub bearing Beaufort's name in Raglan.[11]

Several individuals held the title in the nineteenth century. Between 1835 until his death in 1853, it was held by Henry Somerset, the 7th Duke of Beaufort. Somerset was Tory MP for Monmouth Boroughs, from 1813 to 1832, when he was defeated by Benjamin Hall for the Liberals and although that result was overturned on petition, he again lost to Hall in 1832. Undeterred, he resumed his political career elsewhere and became MP for West Gloucestershire briefly in 1835, although on the death of his father later that year he left the commons for the House of Lords. A keen supporter of the Corn Laws, he tried to use his influence to stop their repeal in the elections in the 1840s, as will be shown in Chapter 5. Like other landowners, the various Dukes of Beaufort often used their position to ensure that government policies were in their interests. According to Pincombe, the Duke was still attempting to apply undue influence to steer electors as late as 1885 when, despite the introduction of secret ballots in 1872, he told a supporter of the liberal candidate Henry Jackson that he 'would be punished' if he voted for him and that clergymen 'intimated that they knew which way the farmers voted.'[12] Beaufort died in 1853, aged 61 and was succeeded by Henry Somerset, 8th Duke of Beaufort. Before his accession to the Lords, the 8th Duke had a military career and had been MP for East Gloucestershire from 1846. As with the previous Dukes of Beaufort, the 8th Duke resided at Badminton House in Gloucestershire, but also maintained an interest in eastern Monmouthshire and, in 1857, worked alongside another local landowner, John Ethrington Welch Rolls, to provide funds and help start a new cattle show that became an annual event.[13] The significance of this and similar agricultural shows as drivers of change in farm practice is discussed in Chapter 5. Beaufort was also involved in Lord Tredegar's Show in Newport and Coedkernew, which had started earlier in the century.[14] The 8th Duke had, what Pincombe claims to be a progressive and paternalistic attitude. He provided 'slate, timber and mortar and paid the wages of masons and carpenters when some buildings were in need of repair, while the tenant was expected to do the haulage and contribute towards payment for pipes in drainage installation'. The rent books for the Duke's estate do show a fairly regular, albeit

[11] https://www.abergavennychronicle.com/news/the-duke-of-beaufort-the-hereditary-keeper-of-raglan-castle-dies-at-the-age-of-89-73357
[12] Pincombe, 'Rural Society…' pp. 133-134
[13] *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 10th and 17th October 1857; Information on the 8th Duke of Beaufort from Morris S, Bosberry-Scott W; Belfield G, eds., "Beaufort" in *Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage Vol. 1, 150th ed.* (Debrett's Ltd: London, 2019). pp. 500–507.
[14] see, for instance, *Weekly Mail*, 28th November 1885

small, amount paid out for repairs each year.[15] Of course the arrangements for farmers allowed the Duke to benefit as well by increasing their rent, which given the turnover of farmers revealed by the rent books analysed in Chapter 5, clearly some were unable to pay. When the 8th Duke died in 1899, he was succeeded by his eldest son, Henry Somerset, who became the 9th Duke of Beaufort. It was at this point that the Monmouthshire estate was sold.[16]

The break-up of the estate in Monmouthshire, which took place in order 'to evade payment of the death duties' by the new Duke, did not proceed smoothly and the *South Wales Daily News* of 11th May 1899 reports that land around Usk was sold off in lots, some to large landowners but mostly in small plots.[17] Selling land that had been devalued during the agricultural depression of the last decades of the century, as discussed in detail in Chapter 5, proved more difficult than it would have been in earlier times, and this allowed some smaller-scale investors to buy plots of the estate. The rental income from the Monmouthshire estate reduced from £30,205 in 1851 to £16,454 in 1891, even though rents for the farms that remained part of the estate had increased during the period.[18] Henry Somerset had, prior to his father's death, declared bankruptcy In Bristol County Court, citing the agricultural depression as one of the causes of his debt according to the *Evening Express* 19th January 1897, as some of the landed gentry faced 'financial embarrassment or social disgrace' as a result of reduced income from rentals and a refusal to curtail their spending accordingly. The offspring of the 8th Duke were no strangers to scandal. His second son, Henry Richard Charles Somerset was revealed as homosexual by his wife, Lady Georgiana Charlotte (neé Curzon) who went to court for an official separation in 1878. He left to live in Italy, while it was Lady Georgina who was spurned socially for her indiscretion and public revelations. The Duke's third son, Henry Richard Charles Somerset was named as part of the 'Cleveland Street scandal' and identified by several male prostitutes as a customer of a male brothel in central London. He also left Britain (where homosexuality was illegal) to escape arrest and went to live in France.[19] Cannadine suggests this showed that 'aristocratic lineage was no longer a guarantee of immunity' to the law, although it also shows how even the wealthy were affected by moral values that accompanied the legal reinforcement of the nuclear family in the late nineteenth century. Despite these financial woes and scandals, the Beaufort estate retained some land in eastern

[15] *National Library of Wales,* BMA 4/92-111, Rental, 1855, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate
[16] *Evening Echo*, Cardiff, 7th June 1898 and *South Wales Argus*, 12th May 1898
[17] *South Wales Daily News*, 11th May 1899
[18] Information from: *National Library of Wales,* BMA 4, rents rolls, Badminton Estate. An analysis of the rents on the estate appears in section 4 of Chapter 5.
[19] Cannadine D, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy (MacMillan: London, 1992) p. 381

Monmouthshire into the twentieth century and while changes were made to improve farming on the estate, the economic realities that impacted on cereal growing in particular undermined the position of Beaufort in the county. The role of the different Dukes of Beaufort in expanding the distance between the people of eastern Monmouthshire and their local environment was nevertheless substantial.

In terms of the connection between industrialisation and changes in rural Britain, the Bailey family, whose wealth derived from establishing iron and steel works in Merthyr Tydfil and elsewhere, is a prime example of the 'new money' that became established at this time. By the time of the *Return of Owners of Land,* 1873, Joseph Bailey was based at Glanusk Park in Breconshire and owned 22,644 acres of land, mainly in that county with a small amount in Radnorshire and Monmouthshire as well as some outside of Wales, while Crawshay Bailey II, of Maindiff Court, Abergavenny, owned 12,284 acres of land and received a rental of £11,658 on land mainly in Monmouthshire, Glamorganshire, Breconshire and a small amount in Carmarthenshire.[20] Crawshay Bailey's father (also called Crawshay Bailey and so referred to below with the suffix I) had been part of the development of both steel and coal industries in western Monmouthshire before he became a significant local landowner in his own right.[21] This land was purchased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was mainly to the east of Abergavenny, especially around the villages of Llantilio Pertholey and Llanwytherin. Becoming a landowner opened doors to power and Bailey became a Conservative MP for Monmouth Boroughs from 1852 to 1868. Bailey was the son of Richard Crawshay's sister, Susanah. Richard Crawshay had moved from his birthplace of Normanton in Yorkshire to establish ironworks at Merthyr Tydfil in the late eighteenth-century. He also used his wealth to build Cyfarthfa Castle. Crawshay Bailey I helped manage Crawshay's ironworks, moving from his birthplace of Suffolk in 1801 at the age of 12 and went on to inherit some of the wealth when Richard Crawshay died in 1809, later helping develop ironworks at Nantyglo and Rhymney. Bailey bought land in the coal and iron-ore producing western Monmouthshire valleys as well as agricultural land in the east. Despite the family's fortune being made from industry, with which he was still involved, Crawshay Bailey I sided with the other landowners over the protectionist Corn Laws, supporting their retention in the 1840s.[22] After he retired in 1869, he sold most of his interests in iron and coal production, keeping his agricultural land in eastern Monmouthshire; essentially he had used his industrial wealth to

[20] James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales' p. 305
[21] https://biography.wales/article/s-BAIL-NAN-1789
[22] More on this in Chapter 5.

replicate the life and interests of the landed aristocracy at the very time the landed aristocracy was finding their way of life threatened by industrially derived wealth. Crawshay Vailey I was succeeded in 1873 by his son, Crawshay Bailey II, who continued to concentrate on managing these landholdings until his death, aged 46, in 1887. Crawshay Bailey II's inherited wealth and his landowning interests also allowed him to become a local benefactor and philanthropist, for instance donating land for a park in Abergavenny that bears his name. Once again, the role of the Baileys in driving the changes that affected life for the people of eastern Monmouthshire left a similarly lasting impression by helping change the connection that they had with their local environment. After Bailey's death, his daughters Augusta and Clara managed the estate, which was eventually sold off by auction in 1920.

The Earl of Abergavenny, who lived in Elridge Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent had significant landholdings in eastern Monmouthshire. His name appears as a landowner in most of the local parishes according to the Tithe Survey (shown by the maps produced in the appendices) and owned 2,639 acres with a gross estimated rental value of £2,660 in 1873. However, this was just a small part of the estate, with the Earl also owning around 15,000 acres in Sussex, 6,000 acres in Kent and land in the Midlands and East Anglia. William Nevill was the 4th Earl of Abergavenny, succeeding his brother in 1845 and he was the fourth son of Henry Nevill, the 2nd Earl. He had been ordained as a clergyman in 1816 and succeeded his unmarried older brother, John (the 3rd Earl) – also a clergyman - when he died, aged 55. William died in 1868 and was succeeded by his son, also called William Nevill, who was later made 1st Marquess of Abergavenny (as well as Earl of Lewes) in 1876. The Marquess bought a house on the edge of the town of Abergavenny, called The Brooks, originally built for James Charles Hill of Blaenafon Ironworks in the 1860s, and renamed it 'Nevill Hall' in 1890. This site now functions as an NHS hospital. The Lords Nevill claim to be descended from 'Walter, earl of Herefordshire and constable of England, the brother-in-law of Hamelyn (d.s.p. 1090), the Norman conqueror of Over Gwent and first feudal lord of Abergavenny.'[23] The Earl inherited land that included the Blaenafon iron works from 1787-1942, Nantyglo & Blaina Ironworks, 1859-1943 and the Ebbw Vale Iron and Coal Company 1919-1933. The income from these far surpassed that from farmers rents on the Earl's Monmouthshire estates, signifying once again the changes that affected society in the nineteenth century and the consequential prioritising of industry over agriculture.

[23] *Gwent Archives*, GB0218.D1583, Bibliographical/Historical note about Abergavenny, Lord, manuscripts [c.1560] – 1958

At the time of the Tithe Survey, the Llanover Estate was owned by Benjamin and Augusta Hall, who married in 1823 and therefore united two former estates. Benjamin Hall was the third person of that name who owned land in Abercarn and Cyfathfa, while Augusta was the youngest daughter of Benjamin Waddington, who bought the Llanover Estate in 1792, another example of money made from industry being used to buy land and the associated privileges that went with landownership. Benjamin Hall bought some of the estate after he married Augusta and when her father died, she inherited the rest. The whole estate was amalgamated into one in 1850. Both Benjamin Hall and, following his death in 1867, Augusta added to the estate, notably by purchasing Coldbrook Estate, which owned land just to the east of Abergavenny and was sold in 1888.[24] By the time of Augusta's death in 1896, therefore, they owned much of the land in and around Llanofer and to the north of the village. At the time of the *Return of Owners of Land, 1873*, the estate was 6,533 acres, receiving a rental return of £8,138.[25] On her death the estate passed to her only surviving child, also called Augusta, who was the widow of Arthur Herbert of Llanarth Court, and so the two estates became merged.[26] Augusta Herbert also had a house in London at Great Stanhope Street and as shown in Chapter 4 below, regularly travelled and transported goods between London and Llanover. Augusta Hall, better known to historians as Lady Llanover or her 'bardic name', *Gwenynen Gwent* (bee of Gwent) has her own historiography given the role she played in helping support the traditions, costumes and language of Wales during the nineteenth century.[27] The household had Welsh titles and costumes to wear, and the estate employed Welsh speakers. This was unusual for the gentry in Wales and was particularly noticeable in eastern Monmouthshire which was by this time not an area where the Welsh language was much in use (some discussion of this appears later in this chapter). Augusta Hall's efforts in promoting the language were an important part of her legacy, and amongst her achievements was first prize at the 1834 Cardiff Eisteddfod for the essay *The Advantages resulting from the Preservation of the Welsh language and National Costume of Wales.* Both Augusta and Benjamin were also early and prominent members of the *Cymreigyddion y Fenni*, a local Welsh language society. However, there is evidence that in other respects, Lady Llanover was less well regarded. Pincombe has written that

[24] Information from *Gwent Archives,* D1210, 'Catalogue of records of the Llanover Estate and of the Waddington, Hall and Herbert Families', pp. 2-4
[25] James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales' p. 308
[26] Arthur Herbert (born: John Arthur Edward) had previously been called Jones but had his name changed by Royal sign manual in 1848
[27] This includes: Fraser M, 'Benjamin and Augusta Hall', *Journal of National Library of Wales* (13:3, 1964); *Gurden Williams C, Pwy Oedd Arglwyddes Llanofer: Gwenynen Gwent?: Who Was Lady Llanover: The Bee of Gwent* (Coleford: Cymdeithas Gwenynen Gwent; 2016)

she had a 'matriarchal reign' over the estate which included enforced temperance, with Pincombe commenting that life 'may have been nasty, brutish and short for the agricultural working class, but on the Llanover estate it also had to be self-abnegating.'[28] Chapter 5 includes evidence from letters between Lady Llanover and her steward, as well as from accounts and wage books of the style and some of the substance of the management of Llanover Estate. These show that the estate was largely run along the same lines, with the same expectations of using increasingly intensive agriculture in a competitive farming system as elsewhere, despite Lady Llanover's promotion of 'Welsh traditions'. The resultant management of land on the estate was therefore not much different in terms of sustainable farming as any other in eastern Monmouthshire.

Other significant landowners in Monmouthshire at the time of the *Return of Owners of Land, 1873* some of whom appear in the landowners maps in appendices 1-8, were John Capel Hanbury of Pontypool Park, who owned 11,310 acres and received £27,996 in rent, on land mainly in Monmouthshire but also a small amount in Glamorganshire and Breconshire, John Arthur Edward Herbert, of Llanarth Court, with 4,641 acres receiving £24,355 in rental and William Herbert of Clytha House, with 4,543 acres receiving £10,624 in rent. William Perry-Herrick, of Beaumanor Park, Leicestershire owned 3,619 acres, mostly in Monmouthshire and a small amount in Radnorshire, as well as land outside of Wales, Sir Arthur Digby Macworth, with 3,204 acres receiving £3,649, George Whitlock Nicholl, with 3,065 acres in Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire receiving £3,735 in rent, John Allan Rolls of The Hendre, who owned 3,505 acres and received £3,075 in rent and last but definitely not least, Lord Tredegar, with 38,750 acres of land across Monmouthshire, Breconshire and Glamorganshire receiving £124,598.[29]

At the time of the Tithe Survey, the largest landowner in the parish of Llandeilo Gresynni was Frances Elizabeth Taddy, who lived at Llantilio Court and was the daughter of Richard Lewis, whose father, John (Frances Elizabeth's grandfather) had the house rebuilt in c.1775.[30] John Lewis had married Mary Powell a decedent of Walter Powell whose seventeenth-century diaries give a picture of the changing fortunes of a royalist supporter during the civil war and lived in an earlier house on the site.[31] After his father's death, Richard Lewis acquired more land and some properties in the village of Llandeilo Grysenni in the early nineteenth century to add to the already

[28] Pincombe, 'Rural Society…' p. 133
[29] James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales' pp. 305-311
[30] https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/45092/
[31] Bradney J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire from the coming of the Normans into Wales down to the Present Time,Vol. 1 Part 1: The Hundred of Skenfrith* (Academy: London, 1991) p. 95

extensive landholdings of the estate in the area.[32] Frances Elizabeth married William Taddy (who died in 1845) but the land, house and estate remained in her name after her father's death. Notably therefore, Taddy was a woman landowner and continued to be the named owner even after her marriage, similar in some ways therefore, to Augusta Waddington/Hall. McDonagh's work shows about nine percent of landowners in the nineteenth century were female, although in many cases this was due to the death of a spouse.[33] Although obviously this gave her a privileged position in society, it did not allow her the same status as a man. She could not be a JP nor could she be an MP and McDonagh argues that this meant as a woman she would have had to justify her 'right to rule' in different terms to male landowners by referring for instance to her 'superior moral and religious character, usually exemplified by referring to [an] involvement in charitable and educational projects'.[34] It has not been possible to find evidence that Taddy did this, although (unusually for eastern Monmouthshire) the estate did have 'poors land' at the time of the Tithe Survey.

Taddy died without children in 1846 and the estate was inherited by her cousin, Henry Morgan Clifford who added this to the land he already owned, mainly in southern Herefordshire. The inheritance was subject to an unsuccessful court challenge in the High Court of Chancery in 1852.[35] Clifford was Liberal MP for Hereford from 1847 to 1865 and subsequently was an unsuccessful candidate for Monmouthshire in 1868, which was won by the Conservatives (Clifford came third). At the time of the *Return of Owners of Land,* 1873, the estate consisted of 3,585 acres, with a rental of £3,979.[36] Llantilio Court was sold to another former Liberal MP, Sir William Jackson in 1873. He had 'made a vast fortune' from palm oil imports, railway engineering and property – including extensive developments around Birkenhead.[37] Like the industrialists described earlier in this chapter, Jackson was therefore involved in nineteenth century ventures made a significant contributed to the environmental change at the heart of the metabolic rift. The reason for the change of ownership appears to have been financial. The new owner painted a picture of decay in Llantilio Court and the surrounding estate, 'wages had been unpaid, roofs un-mended and small

[32] The Mather-Jackson papers in the National Library of Wales archives reveal between 1790 and 1831 the purchase of several farms and village properties (accessed 24.7.23).
[33] McDonagh B, 'Propertied Women and the Moral Economy of Landed Estates', *Working paper presented at the European Social Science History Conference, University of Glasgow, 11-13th April 2012*, accessed at https://www.academia.edu/4458406/Propertied_women_and_the_Moral_Economy_of_Landed_Estates?email_work_card=view-paper, 7.8.23, p.3
[34] McDonagh B, 'Propertied Women and the Moral Economy of Landed Estates'… p.10
[35] https://vlex.co.uk/vid/clifford-v-clifford-804963877
[36] James B Ll, The 'Great Landowners of Wales' p. 306
[37] https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2121874

holdings neglected for many years'. One of the farms on the estate had been left empty and allowed to become overgrown with weeds and thistles.[38] The timing of the purchase, which only just pre-dated the agricultural depression, meant it was never likely to be other than a problem. Jackson bought the estate for his son, Henry in order to further his ambitions as he had recently been given the title of Baron and elevated to the House of Lords (after an unsuccessful attempt to regain his seat as an MP). His son, Henry, appear to have been a rather reluctant proprietor of the estate, being based mainly in London and having no experience of running a landed estate. After an accident on the road between the house, Llantilio Court and Abergavenny, Henry's health suffered and he died at the age of 49 in March 1881, leaving the estate to his son, Sir Henry II, the 3rd Baronet. He failed in his political ambitions but, having married into the family of the Duke of Beaufort, took on the running of the estate and spent more time at Llantilio Court than his father. He did become a county councillor and continued in the Liberal tradition of the family. Managing the estate remained problematic and a significant drain on Henry II's wealth, though, and during the First World War much of the estate was sold, along with Llantilio Court which, when it was sold in 1922, was in such a state that the new owners, who had initially hoped to turn it into a miners' convalescent home, instead decided to have it demolished a year after buying it. In a telling summary about the decline of the estate and others like it in the area, Mitchell writes:

> It was the end of Great House and Llantilio Court… In British upper-class life, at least since the sixteenth century, lawyers and merchants like the Mather-Jacksons had been able to buy their way to the top by acquiring enough land to sustain an aristocratic way of life and the political power which went with it. By the time Sir William bought Llantilio, this was already ceasing to be so and by the time his grandson sold it, the way of life based on a country house and its agricultural revenue was over.[39]

Henry Mather-Jackson II moved to nearby Llanfair Kilgeden and continued as a local dignitary, becoming Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire in 1934, his wealth being sustained by successful business interests, as by this time he was the chair of the Alexandra Docks in Newport, a director of the Ebbw Vale Colliery, on the board of Great western Railways and Eagle Star Insurance Company and had inherited the family interest in Canadian railways. The nineteenth century may have seen dramatic changes in agriculture largely driven from the landowning class who perceived these as being in their interests. By the end of the century, it was becoming clear that these changes had the effect of undermining not only the relationships between people in the rural

[38] Mitchell J, 'The Mather-Jacksons at Llantilio Court', *The Monmouthshire Antiquary*, Vol XXIV (2013) p.88
[39] Mitchell J, 'The Mather-Jacksons at Llantilio Court'… pp 101-2

communities and between society and the natural environment but also the importance of landownership as a driver of wealth and power. The change in land ownership meant that 'five centuries of aristocratic history and hegemony were irrevocably reversed in less than one hundred years'.[40] Such are the contradictions of history and such was the scale of change. Even though the landowners were the main drivers of the developments that had created the new economic system and despite being able to maintain their place in the hierarchy of the established society, they were often unable to keep their place as rural landlords. Even more importantly, the land they had overseen was now subjected to the competitive logic of a capitalist system that, as Marx had warned, was increasingly unsustainable.

2. Land-use, farmers and population change

The main group of people who were both directly responsible for managing the land-use changes and were often affected by them were farmers. Appendices 9-14 show the land that each farmer was using at the time of the Tithe Survey and as already pointed out, most of these farmers were tenants and their landholdings were small. As they paid rent to the landlords that were analysed in the previous section, it is not surprising that the patchwork that made up landownership is to an extent replicated and magnified by the pattern of farm holding. Farmers, as will be explained in Chapter 5, were often managing the production of food on the land they rented, rather than being land-users in their own right, employing farm labourers, some of them described in the census as male servants, some live-in labourers or workers with specific titles such as cow-hand or shepherd. While many of these farm workers lived in cottages that were owned by the landlords and tied to particular farms, others were general farm labourers living in the villages and gaining employment at various times of the year.[41] In the early part of the century at least there would have been no shortage of work available. The tithe survey also showed that most of the farms were small, usually less than 200 acres. Horn shows that the agricultural depression discussed in Chapter 1, increased the number of farmers who were tenants and across England and Wales and by the later 1880s, 82% of farmers were renting their land, while the rest, a small minority, were either owners or part-owners of the land they farmed.[42] This position as tenants meant they were often subject to covenants within their lease that gave them no choice about the types of farming they pursued. The need to pay the rent in an increasingly competitive market also determined that concern for sustainability came second to the need for profit and survival. These themes are developed further

[40] Cannodine D, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (MacMillan: London, 1996) p. 5
[41] Census, 1841
[42] P Horn, *The Changing Countryside in Victorian and Edwardian England and Wales*, London (1994) p.63

in Chapter 5 below. When land was sold, such as by the Duke of Beaufort, who sold a number of farms in the 1850s, it was usually bought by other smaller-scale landowners rather than the tenant farmers.[43] However, there were examples of land bought by other local landowners, such as happened with the sale of most of Coldbrook Estate to Lady Llanover in 1888. The Tithe survey showed that the land was mostly used for arable with some areas of grass and meadow, a few orchards and only a small amount of pasture. This pattern of land-use, which is similar across the different parishes, is shown in appendices 15-19.

Not surprisingly, farming dominated rural life in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the villages were mainly based around agriculture and food production, with few villages having shops or trades except those that were relevant to farming, such as blacksmiths, millers, carpenters/wheelwrights and masons.[44] The Corn Laws protected the price that was obtained by wheat and other cereal crops and this meant that there was a guaranteed market for arable production. The rudimentary transport in eastern Monmouthshire, as a system described in Chapter 3, meant much of the produce would have been sold to provide food for the expanding markets in the South Wales valleys. The agricultural labourers in eastern Monmouthshire were often able to supplement their income by growing food and keeping a few animals in the land around the cottages they lived in. This situation was highly praised by the report into farming in Monmouthshire by Hassall in 1814, who wrote:

> The severe scarcity of corn experienced in Great Britain in 1800 and 1801, called forth the skill, the exertion and the liberality of all the higher ranks of society in the kingdom; who, either by their knowledge, example or wealth, could alleviate the distresses of the labouring poor… the greatest and most lasting benefit to the community, is the occasion to which that calamity gave rise, for establishing the use of potatoes among the lower orders of society.

Potatoes were apparently a boon in that they were a garden crop, easily grown with simple fertilisation, were nutritious and the scraps were enough to feed a small flock of chickens to provide eggs. Hassall, having exhorted their utility, then even went on to provide instructions on how to boil the potatoes. Of course, this also had the benefit of providing an alternative to increasing the wages provided to agricultural labourers that may otherwise have been required to avoid malnutrition. This is one example whereby the middle of the nineteenth century decisions

[43] BMA 4/92-4/100, Rentals, 1851-60, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, *National Library of Wales* show the sale of a number of farms in parishes across Monmouthshire. In some cases, this led to disputes with the existing tenant. (see below pp.194-195)

[44] Census, 1841

made by landowners, land agents and farmers based on the need to compete effectively in a changing economy where land ownership and use was far less profitable than the development of industry and manufacture. Even so, merely the fact that there was a need for most people to produce some of the food they needed meant that there was a widespread understanding of basic husbandry and how to sustainably use small areas of land. Another aspect of life that connected people to the land and their local environment was the fact that mostly life was local, given that this was before the development of new forms of transport. The changes that happened, and are considered in more detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, all affected how most people lived by the end of the nineteenth century. Even if there were still those amongst the farmers and labourers who maintained a lifestyle in 1900 that was to most purposes little changed from that of their forebears in 1800, the possibilities for consumerism and transport were greatly expanded and this meant they were part of the new social system. What is clear is that the people who lived in eastern Monmouthshire had far less connection to their locality and to the environment at the end of the nineteenth century than they did at the beginning.

There was a notable change in eastern Monmouthshire through the nineteenth century, with a significant movement in and out of the area and a changing profile. The population of eastern Monmouthshire reduced between the 1841 census and 1901 by over 20%, at a time when the overall population of Britain was rapidly increasing.[45] This, however, is not the entire picture as Figure 8 shows there was an increase between 1841 and 1871 before a steep decline up to 1901. The most obvious explanation for this later reduction was the agricultural depression, but there were also specific local factors at work, as the coal fields and steel works offered better paid and regular work. Between 1861 and 1911, 48,000 people moved from Monmouthshire to the industrial area of Glamorganshire.[46] The proximity of the industrialised Monmouthshire also had the effect of expanding the market for farm produce, allowing farmers to prosper and to be able to pay wages to their labourers that were higher than elsewhere. Pincombe certainly suggests this happened, although not on a scale that has sometimes been claimed. He shows that agricultural labourers' wages were higher in Glamorganshire than Monmouthshire, but lower in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, 'the source of in-migrating agricultural hands.'[47] The report of the 1893 Royal Commission mainly placed the blame for a shortage of agricultural labour on the

[45] Censuses 1841 and 1901.
[46] Thomas B, 'The Migration of Labour into the Glamorganshire Coalfields', pamphlet reprinted from *Economica* (Nov 1930) p. 293
[47] Pincombe I, 'Rural Society…' p. 130

availability of alternative employment in the industrial districts, leading to a 39% decrease in the number of labourers across Wales. There was at the same time a 25% increase in the number of 'farmers and graziers', while the population of Wales had 'more than doubled.'[48] Cooper's work on nineteenth century migration from Cardiganshire in west Wales has some relevance to help explain aspects of patterns in eastern Monmouthshire, despite differences in the connectivity and other spatial aspects of Cardiganshire. Cooper argues that the main reason for migration was economic and most of the migration was limited in scope – in other words people did not tend to move very far, although she does show that there was some migration to London.[49] Lawton, analysing the censuses of 1871 onwards, points to machinery replacing seasonable and unskilled labour as well as the loss of jobs in arable areas like eastern Monmouthshire from the 1870s as explaining 'heavy population losses' in rural England and Wales.[50] Cooper's explanation of push and pull factors affecting migration includes the demise of rural trades and crafts, poor rural working and living conditions, communications and the migrant networks that had been established in urban areas and these all affected rural eastern Monmouthshire. She also agrees that scarcity led to wage rises for those agricultural labourers who remained, complicating the supposed correlation between the late century agricultural depression.[51] What is more certain is that the expansion of iron and steel production and of coal mining led industrialising south Wales to experience a significant inward migration and a large overall population growth. So, 'in 1801 less than 20 per cent of the people [of Wales] lived in the two southern counties of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire but by 1911 this proportion had risen to almost 63 percent.' The number of males employed in agriculture in Wales dropped from 35 per cent in 1851 to less than 12 per cent in 1911 and that census data indicates this was a decline 'in the number of farm workers rather than in the number of farmers' which was down to the wages in the industrialising areas of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire being higher. But it was not just industry that pulled people. There was also a movement within South Wales of agricultural labourers, moving from west to east, partly due to the increased wages they could obtain in the farms there.[52] Population movements in the nineteenth century were on a historically unprecedented scale. For those who

[48] Royal Commission report, p. 600
[49] Cooper K. J., *Exodus from Cardiganshire; Rural-Urban migration in Victorian Britain* (Cardiff, 2011) p.62
[50] Lawton R, Population Changes in England and Wales in the Later Nineteenth Century: An Analysis of Trends by Registration Districts in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, No.44 (May 1968) p.60
[51] Cooper K. J., *Exodus from Cardiganshire; Rural-Urban migration in Victorian Britain* (Cardiff, 2011) p.86 Quoting from local sources as well as the Royal Commission on Agriculture final report, Cooper shows that in fact wages had increased and Wales was less affected than some parts of England by the agricultural depression
[52] Cooper K.J. *Exodus from Cardiganshire…* pp. 102-104 citing a quote from a Cardiganshire farmer used in the *Royal Commission on Agriculture.*

chose jobs in industry, life was substantially different from the more sustainable connection with the locality and environment that went before, a key underpinning of the theory of metabolic rift.

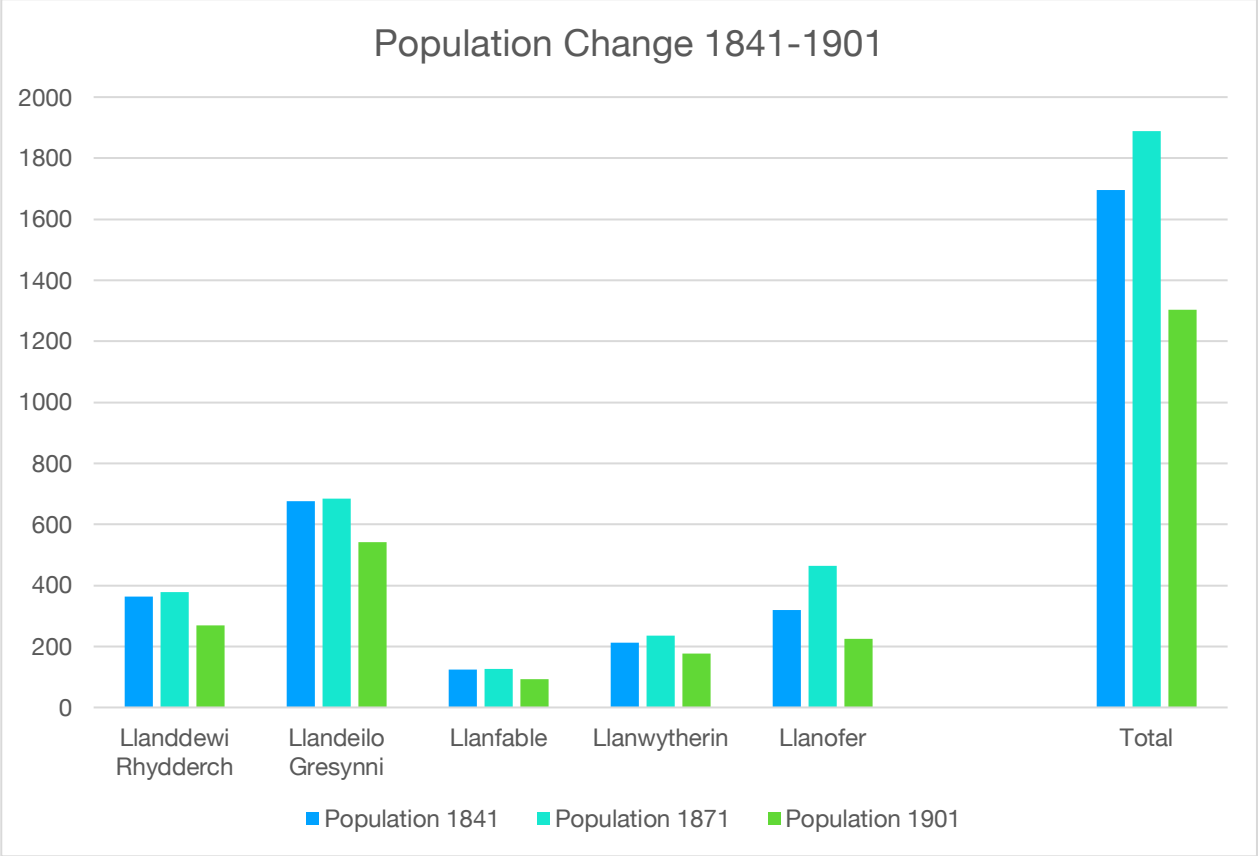


Figure 8: Population Change in eastern Monmouthshire using 5 villages as the basis of analysis according to the censuses

A closer look at the census data for the villages in eastern Monmouthshire shows that the migration within eastern Monmouthshire was generally quite local - see Figure 9 and Figure 10. Most people were not born in the village in which they lived at the time of the census, but they had been born in Monmouthshire and usually in a village close by. The 1851 census shows that numbers coming from other parts of England and Wales was small and the amount of migration from other countries was negligible. It is likely that those people who moved from eastern Monmouthshire migrated to the western valleys of Monmouthshire or possibly to towns like Abergavenny, Newport or Cardiff, which experienced population growth at this time. In order to locate individuals who moved, a micro-study of one of the smaller villages, Llanfable, was conducted and is the next section of this chapter and this does show some rural to urban migration. Population movement even within a locality is important in disrupting local knowledge and attachments to specific locations and villages, a key aspect of rural metabolic rift. The evidence points to a changing pattern of population movement accelerating during the nineteenth century and while poverty and economic depression provided push factors, the expansion of

consumerism and transportation provided the means that enabled decisions to leave. Towns and cities promised a new life, free from concern for everyday survival based on food production. This life also tended towards the erosion of a connection between society and the environment.

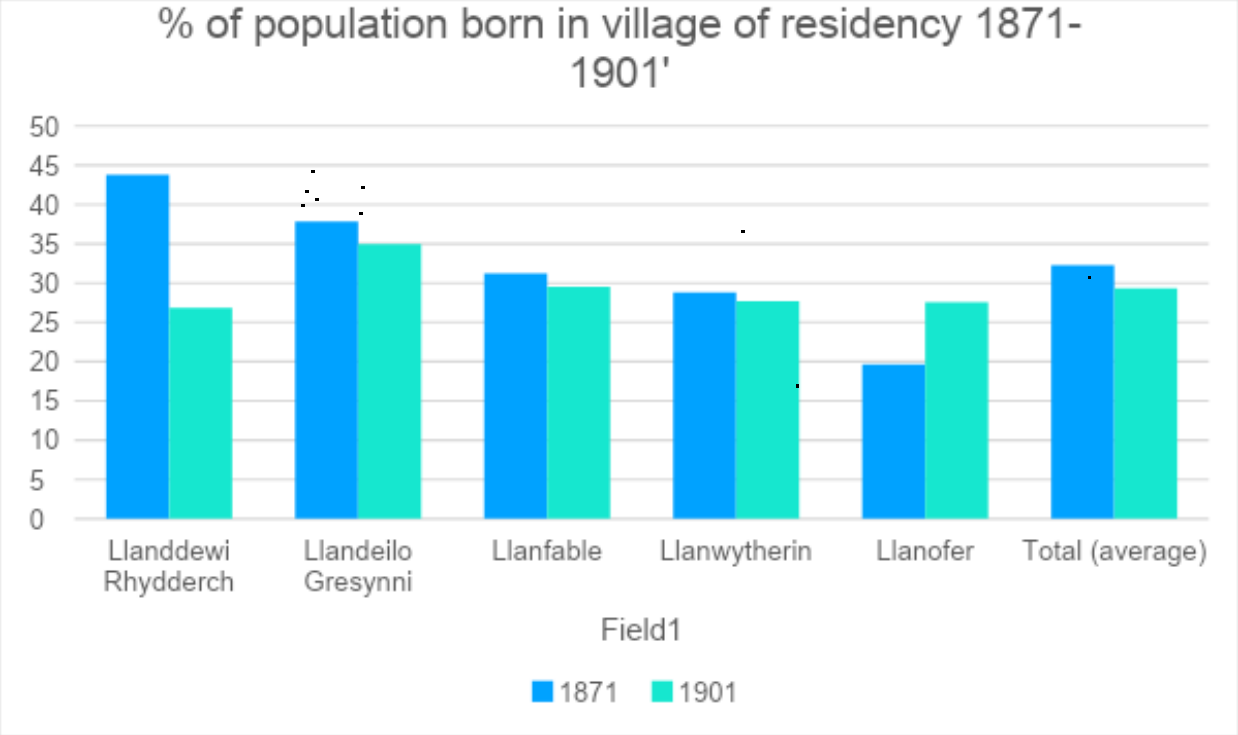


Figure 9: Percentage of population born in the village of residency, comparing data from 1871 and 1901 censuses (the question was not considered in the 1841 census)

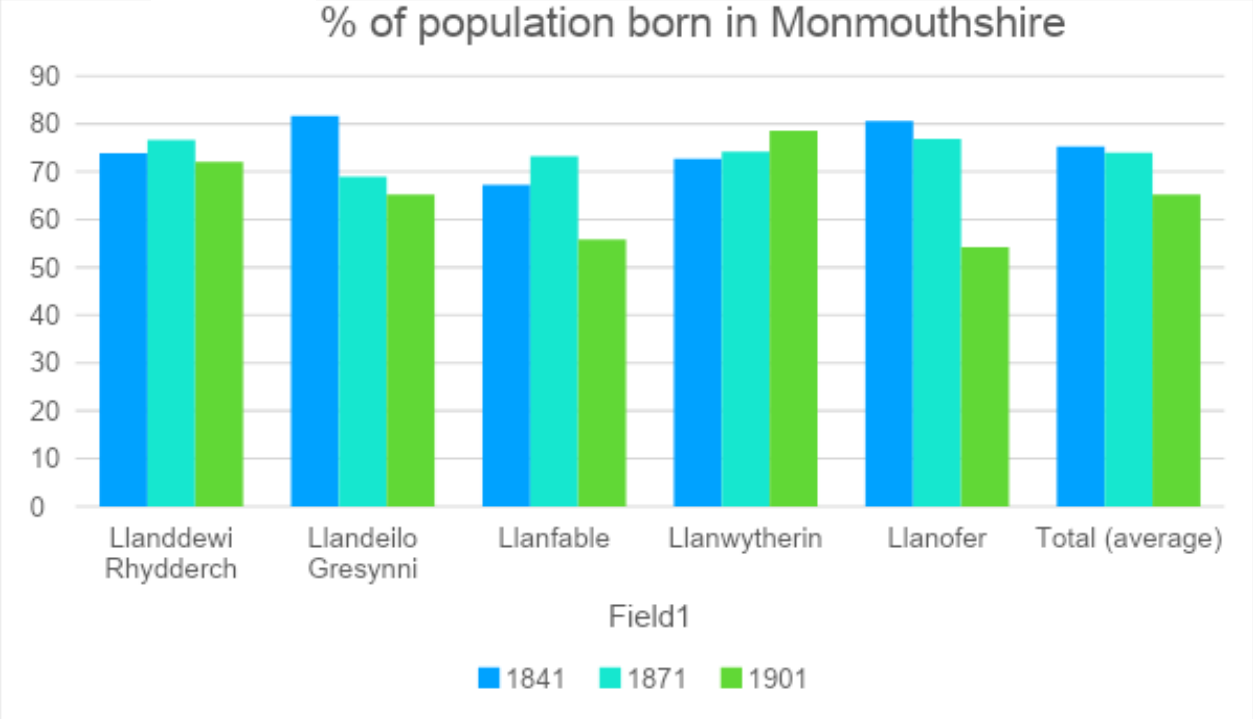


Figure 10: Percentage of population born in Monmouthshire comparing data from 1841, 1871 and 1901 censuses

Another aspect of the changes to society that were also connected with the expansion of consumerism, transport, and the subsequent increase in population movement, was the reducing use of the Welsh language in eastern Monmouthshire. This again suggests a disconnection between those who had been living in the area for generations and their place as English replaced Welsh for a number of reasons, including population movements between the two countries, increasing trade and an end to rural isolation. It is hardly surprising therefore that an area adjacent to the border with the much more populous England experienced a decline in what had been its traditional language.[53] The subject of the use in Welsh has an extensive historiography which points to many causal factors in areas in areas of decline. By the 1891 census, very few people told the census enumerator that they used or understood Welsh in eastern Monmouthshire (see Figure 11).[54] By the end of the century, the numbers of residents moving to the area from somewhere in England was nearly a quarter of the total, suggesting it was one reason for this. Bradney suggested that Welsh was seen as a 'low-down thing' that would mitigate against being employed by the English-speaking gentry who preferred to employ staff from Scotland or England than a Welsh-speaking local, although Williams notes that by the end of the nineteenth century some of the gentry, notably Lady Llanover, were gaining an interest in the language.[55] The census tends to support the idea that while most domestic servants working in farms were local, the larger houses often employed servants from further afield, often places in southern England.[56] The decline of Welsh speaking in eastern Monmouthshire probably pre-dated the century especially in areas close to the border, although there is evidence that some people continued to speak Welsh in eastern Monmouthshire villages at least until the middle of the nineteenth century. So, as Williams points out, Bradney 'noted that the Baptist chapel at Llanddewi Rhydderch was all Welsh in 1850, but by 1906 Welsh was seldom heard there' a sign that employment practices and migration had an effect and even amongst those who may have grown up speaking Welsh, unless there were compelling reasons to continue with the language at home, English became the norm.[57] There was an exception on the Llanover Estate where, as already mentioned, the owners required use of the Welsh language to help preserve it. Despite a population profile not markedly

[53] Some areas of Herefordshire close to the border with Monmouthshire did contain Welsh speaking village communities in the nineteenth century, but in the majority of county people only spoke English.
[54] Census, 1891
[55] Bradney J. A., *A Memorandum being an attempt to give a chronology of the decay of the Welsh language in the eastern part of Monmouthshire* (Abergavenny, 1929) p. 6; Williams S. R., 'The Languages of Monmouthshire', in Williams C & Williams S.R. (eds.), *The Gwent County History Vol. IV* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2011) p.150
[56] Censuses, 1841-1901
[57] Williams S. R., 'The Languages of Monmouthshire…' p. 148

different from the other villages in that most people had been born in Monmouthshire, but not in Llanofer itself, the policy of promoting the Welsh language was clearly effective, as the 1891 census showed that over half of people living in the village were bilingual (see Figure 11).[58] This also suggests either that people from elsewhere in Monmouthshire learnt Welsh to get work on the estate or had a family knowledge of the language that was not evident in the censuses of the villages in other parts of eastern Monmouthshire.[59] In any case, the demise of the Welsh language in most of eastern Monmouthshire is important not just as a phenomenon connected to industrialisation, but also an indicator of shifts in population and connectivity with the locality and the land, a further indication of the metabolic rift and one that would not have been detected in areas of Britain that experienced similar social and economic changes to eastern Monmouthshire but where there was not a language difference to detect. Regional languages came under pressure in many areas of Europe that experienced capitalist industrialisation in the nineteenth century, so in this sense the demise of the Welsh language in eastern Monmouthshire was part of a general pattern with similar causes and consequences.

[58] This conclusion, based on examination of census records from 1841-1901 contradicts Williams' claim that 'The majority of her [Augusta Hall's] tenant farmers hailed from Cardiganshire or Carmarthenshire' (Williams S. R., 'The Languages of Monmouthshire…', p. 150) – although it is based on analysis of the whole population of the parish, not just (the small number of) tenant farmers.

[59] Interestingly, Williams suggests that a belief that the local (Monmouthshire) dialect, *Y Wenhwyseg* was inferior to the Welsh spoken 'by more educated people' may have affected people's view of the language. Although Williams herself does not suggest it, this idea that if they spoke Welsh in the local dialect, it wasn't 'proper Welsh' may have also affected their answer to the question in the 1891 census. See William S. R. 'The Languages of Monmouthshire…' p. 162

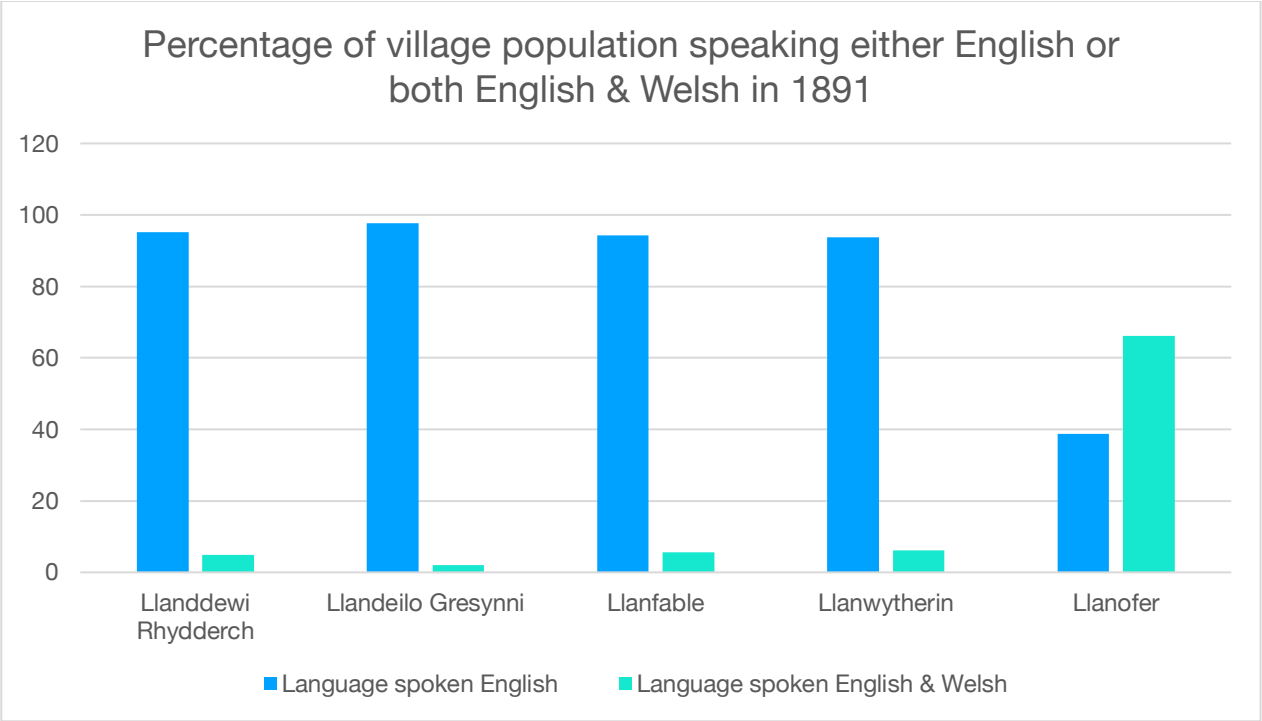


Figure 11: Percentage of population speaking only English, or both English and Welsh, according to the 1891 census

In terms of employment, rural Monmouthshire continued to be predominantly agricultural. In fact, unlike the figures for Britain as a whole, the proportion employed directly in farming increased according to an analysis of the census data. The only category that fell significantly is domestic service, although this may be explained by the failure of the 1841 census to differentiate between agricultural workers who were 'living in', often designated as 'male servants', and others in domestic service. Even if this is taken into account, and it would have probably meant that overall, the proportion of those working in farming would have been lower in 1871 and 1901 than in 1841, the proportion of the population in eastern Monmouthshire who were employed directly or indirectly in agriculture is over half throughout the century. This masks a change in what these agricultural workers were doing, of course. There were small changes detectable as the century progressed and these do point to a change in the relationship between people and their local environment. In 1841, farmers were directly providing employment for a significant number of people locally. In addition, other people were involved in trades that were in some way connected with agriculture, from blacksmiths and wheelwrights to millers. By the end of the century, the diversity of employment within each village had expanded, with new occupations being represented amongst the people living in them including 'professionals' such as post office managers and schoolteachers. There was also an increase in the proportion of non-agricultural trades, mostly between 1841 and 1871. The biggest change detected though, was the reduction in the number of people living in these villages.

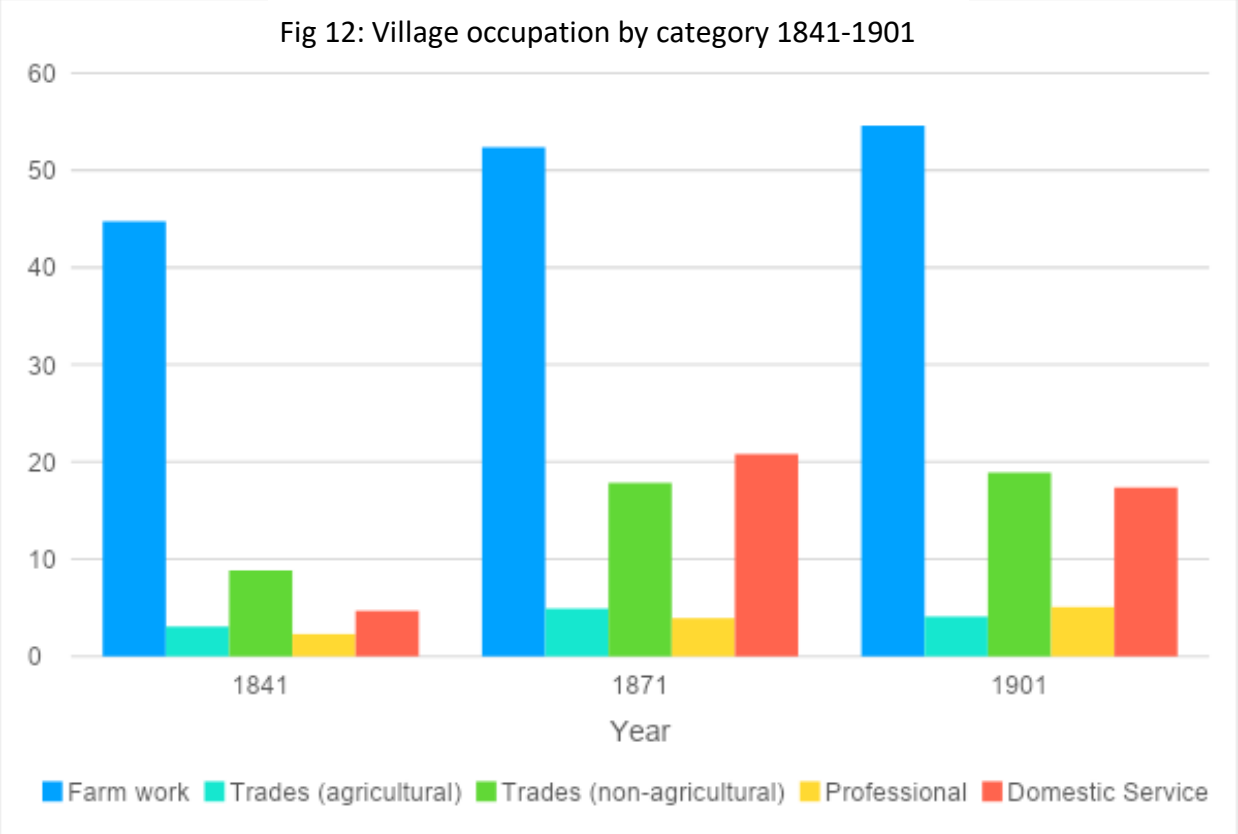


Figure 12: Growing number of trades in the villages, 1841-1901[60]

The work that women did, and their contribution to society, was undervalued in the nineteenth century, not least in official reports on agriculture and rural society, and yet they played an important role in some of the changes that are central to this thesis. Censuses generally ignored women's occupations except when they were the head of household or not yet married. Often married women were recorded only as wives. Large numbers of mainly young single women were employed as servants and their experiences would have been very different to those of the women at the other end of the social scale. As already outlined in section 1 of this chapter, there were some women landowners, such as Elizabeth Frances Taddy at Llantillio Court and Augusta Waddington (Lady Llanover), whose social status gave them access to a life and an agency not available to most other women. For instance, they were clearly in a very different position to women working as servants, who tended to have few alternatives or choices in the type of work they did. Domestic work tended to fit into the increasingly dominant ideology that cast women as carers and 'homemakers' rather than people who could be involved in industry or agriculture. Using working-class clothing as a means to understand more about change in the nineteenth century, Rachel Worth shows there was a decline in opportunities for women to work on the land

[60] The figures are cumulative totals for all 5 villages surveyed using census data 1841-1901

and a significant change towards young women, usually from the countryside, becoming domestic servants. This was reflected in attitudes towards 'acceptable forms of dress' amongst women:

> By the 1860s, strong views had emerged on the 'morality' and appropriateness of the idea of women working in agricultural pursuits outside the home.[61]

The Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales in 1893 suggested that of the 49,066 wage earning agricultural labourers in Wales, only 2,990 or about 6% were women.[62] This may have been an underestimate, but is reflected locally as the number of female agricultural labourers that were recorded in the census data for eastern Monmouthshire throughout the century was negligible. The Royal Commission made a number of suggestions as to why women were so economically marginalised in rural communities and these included the effects of the provision of schooling for girls in the last three decades of the century, which the commissioners felt gave young women unprecedented opportunities to gain employment away from farming:

> Prior to the passing of the Education Act in 1870, it was regarded in many rural districts as an act of folly to give a labourer's daughter the same advantages as to elementary education as her brother received. Welsh parents in those days, and in fact at all times, had the keenest desire to give their sons a good education; but there existed a strong prejudice against extending this to their girls. Since 1870, however, the girls have had their revenge…

The result, the commission argues, was a significant reduction in female participation in agricultural work. The report went on to partly blame the attitudes of Welsh girls themselves for this and, in particular, their desire for making friends:

> The typical Welsh girl is sensitive to a degree, as to the neatness of her dress and the general effect of her personal appearance. It is only by abandoning farm service that she can properly indulge her tastes in this respect, and the removal to a town brings her into a wider circle of acquaintances which the almost excessive sociability of the Welsh character is too often hungering for.

Women's work, according to the report, became narrowed to a small range of jobs, 'operations that cannot very well be done by men' such as milking. It was not suggested why this was best done by women and in fact the commissioners noted it was sometimes not done by women so that:

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[61] Worth R, *Clothing and Landscape in Victorian England: Working Class Dress and Rural Life* (London, 2018) p.28

[62] *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales*…, p. 599. This information was based on the census – and despite the already mentioned limitations of this, it is the only data available.

> In North Monmouthshire, however, the Welsh girls introduced into the district by farmers who have migrated from West Wales were said to do the milking, but in course of time they discontinue to do so on discovering the practice among the older settlers is for the milking to be done by men.[63]

The move to male-dominated rural employment seems to have come about in a number of ways and signified a changing relationship with earlier family forms where women's labour in farming was as important as that of men. Although centred in an area of eastern England, Nicola Verdon's research into use of the gang system, focussing on evidence from Norfolk farms, is useful in showing that how its decline by the mid-nineteenth century was part of a general reduction in women's opportunity to work. While it was an intensely exploitative form of labour and so its decline may have been welcomed by some, Verdon shows that the gang system's decline had the effect of drastically reducing the employment of women, despite this work being an economic necessity within individual families due to the lack of other opportunities.[64] In this way women therefore, as well as being forced into economic dependency on men, were subject to a more intense form of metabolic rift, having been deprived of their traditional role in food production. Discussing the Poor Law reports of the 1830s, Verdon suggests a difference in England between the north (where more women continued to work in agriculture) and the south, but in areas such as Norfolk, 'women's work had become increasingly seasonal and marginal, limited to weeding, stone picking and haymaking.'[65] This marginalisation caused significant problems for many women, especially when they were widowed. Pat Thane argues that the 1834 new Poor Law 'ignored or underestimated severe problems of poverty amongst adult able-bodied women' and that the law 'failed to recognise women's problems'. She gives numerous examples of how women were disadvantaged by the provisions of this Act and assumptions about women contained within it. The Act, for instance, 'reinforced the notion of women as non-wage-earning dependents' and allowed for the Boards of Guardians to sue a husband for repayment if his wife claimed poor relief even if they no longer lived together. Other aspects of the law included:

> If the husband entered the workhouse, the wife would have no choice but to follow. A destitute wife could be refused entry to the workhouse if her husband would not enter, or permission to leave if he would not leave. If a male pauper was officially classified 'not able bodied', so was his wife,

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[63] *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales*…, pp. 605-606

[64] Verdon N, 'The Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture: A Reassessment of Agricultural Gangs in Nineteenth Century Norfolk', in *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol 29, No.1 (2001) pp. 41-55

[65] Verdon N, 'The Rural Labour Market in the Early Nineteenth Century: Women's Employment, Family Income, and the 1834 Poor Law Report', *The Economic History Review*, 55:2 (May 2002) p.314

> whatever her personal physical condition. If he received outdoor relief, including medical relief (until 1886), for himself alone, she was also listed as a pauper.[66]

She also notes Sidney and Beatrice Webb's comment about the Act that

> the single independent woman is nowhere mentioned. The wife is throughout treated exactly as is the child; it is assumed that she follows her husband… With regard to the really baffling problems, presented by the widow, the deserted wife or the wife of an absentee soldier or sailor, the wife of a husband resident in another parish or another country – with or without children – the report is silent.[67]

This was a deliberate policy of exclusion of women, who previously played an important role in the production of food. Growing the food on land adjacent to agricultural labourers' cottages and houses was often done by women, for example. This marginalisation of women's participation in the rural workforce reduced led to an increasing disassociation of women with labour on the land, alienating a key section of the population. On the other hand, women were often employed in other occupations that became more important in the nineteenth century such as shopkeepers, teachers or running a post office, although even where these jobs were done by women, they received lower pay. In terms of metabolic rift, women were in many ways at the sharp end, with a reduction in involvement in their local environment and often being forced to move away from the area they grew up in to find domestic or other forms of work.

It is interesting that despite being side-lined in this way, the censuses in eastern Monmouthshire shows that there were still numerous examples of women as head of household throughout the nineteenth century. In one village, Llanfable, for example, by 1901 nearly 20% of those recorded as 'heads of household' were women. There were also many households that contained extended family members, often widows who lost their home when their (working) husband died, another result of women's marginalising from the workforce. Despite this, there were some women farmers in eastern Monmouthshire and they stand out for being the exception to the largely male-dominated rule. The evidence shows that some were successful in their role. For instance, Jane Richards was a 36 year-old head of household and a farmer of 92 acres in Chapel Farm, Llanfable in 1861 and lived there with her family, employing a live-in carter, a shepherd and a house

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[66] Thane P, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England' in *History Workshop Journal*, No.6 (Autumn 1978) pp.30-31

[67] Webb S & B, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910) p. 3, quoted in Thane P, 'Women and the Poor Law…' p.31

servant. Her husband, Thomas, had died in 1858.[68] By the time of the 1871 census, she had moved to the larger 'Skyrrid Farm', where she is recorded as being 'farmer of 160 acres' still living with her family including 22 year-old Thomas, working as a 'farmer's son'.[69] Jane remained at this farm in 1881 and 1891 along with her son Thomas, still working as a 'farmer's son' and daughter Anne, working as a 'farmer's daughter.' Jane died in 1895, four years after her daughter Anne, while Thomas married in 1903 and continued farming, moving to Tynywern Farm about three miles away.[70] Clearly successful as a farmer, Jane Richards' example suggests that the ideology that drove women from agricultural employment opportunities in the nineteenth century was not to do with their ability to perform the role, especially as she appears to have prospered through the years of agricultural depression that drove many others, mainly men, out of agriculture.

3. A micro-history case study of some of the inhabitants of Llanfable

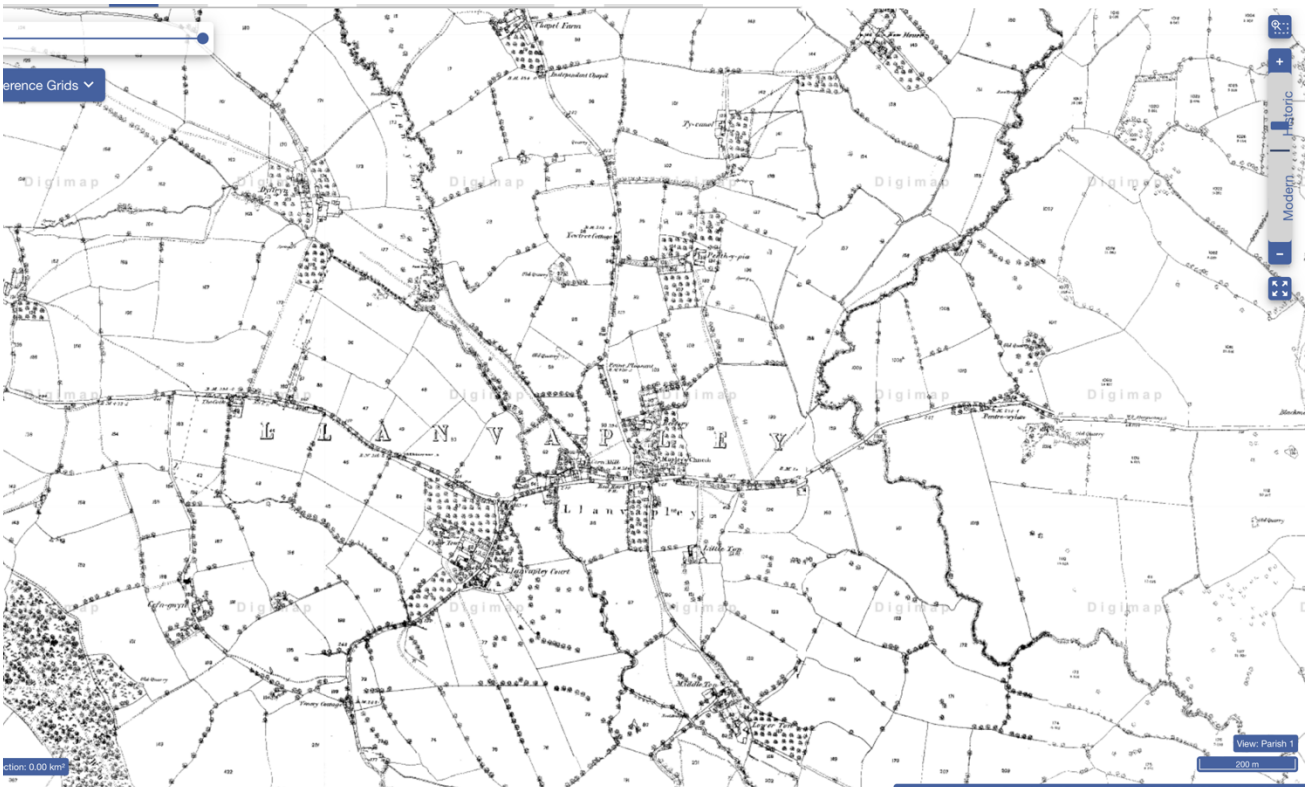

Figure 13: Map of Llanfable (Llanvapley) in the 1880s

The focus on eastern Monmouthshire has located several aspects of a developing metabolic rift. To see how this affected the area at an even more intimate level, this section of the chapter will

[68] Some of this information was collated in a family tree with links to the evidence data from censuses etc., that appears on the Archives.com website: https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/157941464/person/162075156294/facts?_phsrc=sdx21&_phstart=successSource (accessed 14/3/24)

[69] 1861 Census, Llanvapley, Monmouthshire, District 2, p1 and 1871 Census, Llanthewy Skirrid, Monmouthshire, District 1, p4

[70] 1911 Census, Llantilio Pertholey, Monmouthshire, Schedule 8 (image 18)

look in detail at the people living in the small village of Llanfable, located on a road that connects Abergavenny, about four miles to the west, with Monmouth, around eleven miles to the east. Pincombe says that in the early nineteenth century, the village contained 'many cottages that were actually owned by the parish, which had obtained them by making weekly allowances to the paupers who owned them and then eventually taking them over.'[71] This would have helped people retain their connection with their locality even after their working life was over. The 1851 census does find a number of 'paupers' living in agricultural labourer's cottages, such as Hannah Jenkins and Mary Thorley, who are described as widows, although no other evidence was found to support Pincombe's assertion.[72] Jenkins and Thorley lived in adjacent cottages that were owned, according to the Tithe Survey, by the local Independent Chapel located on Firs Road, Llanfable, which had only been in existence since the early years of the century. The Chapel must, therefore, have acquired the property around this time and, being a non-conformist chapel, may well have had a charitable intent in buying them.[73] Llanfable's population throughout the century was overwhelmingly local but less than a third were born in the village, and most of these were children, whose parents had been born elsewhere (see Figure 9 and Figure 10). Clearly, the people living in Llanfable were as migratory as everywhere else in eastern Monmouthshire – within the same short distances. The overall population of the village fluctuated but, like other villages in the area, showed an overall decline as the century progressed.[74] Given the importance of population movement and change to the search for a metabolic rift in the nineteenth century, three examples

[71] Pincombe I, 'Rural Society…' p.142
[72] See appendix 17, spreadsheet of residents of Llanvapley 1841-1901, based on the censuses.
[73] The properties themselves are estimated to have been built in the late 17th or early 18th century. The Independent Chapel closed in the mid-1960s and was demolished around 1972. The two cottages (which as will be explained became one with a workshop in the middle of the 19th century) remained in its ownership, rented to tenants, until 1962 when the sitting tenant's wife and daughter bought it – information from title deeds.
[74] The on-line version of the 1861 census, which indicated a significant decline in population in Llanfable, is incomplete.

were chosen to demonstrate how this affected people in the village. The aim here is to give examples that help to illuminate some of the complexities of societal change.

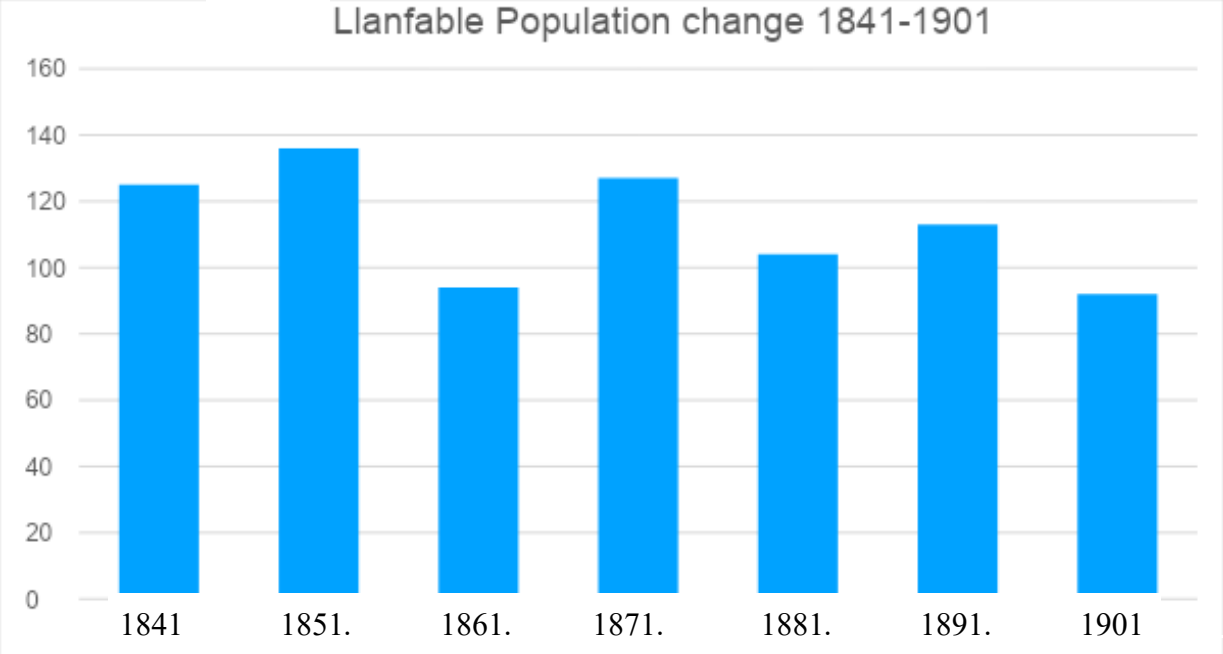

Figure 14: Population change in Llanfable according to the census data for the parish, 1841-1901

John Cox at the age of 16 was recorded by the 1871 census as a shopkeeper, a brief period when Llanfable, with only about one hundred residents, had two shops. John had been born in Penrhos a village about 10 miles away and was the son of George and Margret Cox. George had been born in Blakeney, Gloucestershire in 1818 but by 1851 was a servant in a farm in Wanastow, Monmouthshire moving to the Three Horseshoes, Penrhos, Monmouthshire where he is recorded in the census as living with his wife, Margret (sic) and their children, including John. George and most of the family (except John) were still there in 1871, but in 1881, George and the family had moved to Great Goff Farm in Llantillio Pertholey, about five miles north-west of Llanfable. According to this census, John had moved back to live with the family, although he was now a 'Cattle Dealer'. Ten years later, George had stopped farming and was a publican living at the Old Mitre Inn in Llantillio Pertholey with Margret and some of the family. John, however, had died in December 1881, aged 27 years, having moved to Holmer, Herefordshire. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to ascertain the cause of John's early death. Both George and John had migrated around a fairly small area of this border country and both father and son changed occupations. This example shows the kind of upheavals that people had to navigate in the changing social situation in the nineteenth century and how this also created different relationships to food and its production.

Richard Woodward lived in the *New Cottage* in Llanfable in 1841 and was a 30-year old tailor, who had been born in Llandeilo Fawr, Carmarthenshire. He was living with his 50 year-old wife, Sarah and her sister, Catherine Jones, aged 60. They also had a lodger, Thomas Numan a 45-year-old tailor, described in the census as 'foreign'. Richard's life underwent some major changes over the next decades as his first wife died and, having remarried in 1852, his second wife also died, three years after the death of their only child. Again, it has not been possible to find the cause of these deaths, but they do suggest that life in rural communities in the mid-nineteenth century was often precarious and short. Richard was still living in the village but by 1851 he was described as a 'farmer, tailor and shopkeeper' and the house he was living in was called the *old shop*. By 1861, Richard was recorded as a 'grocer and farmer of 20 acres', had married his third wife, Mary (neé Jones) who had been born in Clodock, Herefordshire and they lived with Mary's 4-year-old daughter Anne (Richard's 'stepdaughter'), who had been born in Raglan. In 1871, Richard was described as a 'butcher and farmer of 25 acres', still living with wife Mary, stepdaughter Anne (who now had his surname) and they had two other children, Mary aged 8 and Emily aged 6. They were living in the *New House* and had a lodger, agricultural labourer John Morgans, aged 60. Richard and Mary had moved within the village, to *Lower Ton* farm by 1881, where Richard was a farmer and he remained there in 1891. To summarise, Richard, who lived continually in Llanfable from at least 1841, moved to a number of different houses and, having started out as a tailor and then a shopkeeper, ended up as a farmer. His example is one of someone leaving farming and then returning later in the century, despite the depression that affected cereal growing in the area. Richard's return to the life of a farmer may have been prompted by a decline in the need for village-based tailors, his intermediate profession, due to the development of a consumer society and the proximity of a town where clothes could be readily bought. Richard started as a small-scale farmer although was successful enough to move to Lower Ton, a larger farm, later in his life. It was not unusual to see farm tenancies changing hands from one census to another throughout the century, both here in Llanfable and in most of the other villages in eastern Monmouthshire. The possible causes and consequences of this will be discussed in the later chapter on changing agricultural practices, especially given its importance in the search for a metabolic rift.

Continuing with this family example, and demonstrating a considerable amount of movement within her life, Richard Woodward's youngest daughter Emily had been born into a life of farming but later became a shopkeeper and moved eventually to Cardiff. She married schoolteacher James Griffin Brownhill, who had been born in March 1851 in Dudley, Worcestershire, and by 1901 they had moved to Llanelly, Breconshire, which is about 10 miles to the west of Llanfable. By this time,

Emily was 36 and they lived with their three children, Ida aged 10, Ivy aged 8, Hendel, aged 5. In a Kelly's Directory in 1910 James Brownhill had left teaching and was a shopkeeper, in nearby Llanelly Hill. Between 1918-1922, the electoral register recorded James and Emily living at 82 School Street, Ystrad Mynach. In the 1939 Register, Emily is recorded as a widow and a shopkeeper living at 16 Blosse Road, Llandaff, Cardiff. Emily died there, aged 88, in 1954. Their son Hendel – who later used his other name, James - was recorded by the Kelly's Directory of 1923 as living in 45 School Street, Llanbradach. The 1939 Register showed Hendel/James as living with his wife, Mary at 129 Windway Road, Cardiff and by this time he was a director of a motor garage. Windway Road is a couple of miles from his mother's 1939 address. He died in Cardiff in 1981, aged 86. The point of this example and its extension beyond the scope of the thesis into the twentieth century is to show the subsequent movement of this family away from food production and any connection with the land. Emily had been born into a farming family in a small village before marrying a teacher who became a shopkeeper in a more industrial area of south Wales before eventually moving to the city, where she was a shopkeeper and her son involved in the motor trade. This rural to urban movement may not appear typical in some senses, but nevertheless it does provide some evidence of how societal changes impacted on people in eastern Monmouthshire. Losing a connection with the land that existed through small-scale and then larger-scale farming, the metabolic rift is, in a way, encapsulated in this one family.

Another example of someone who moved to Llanfable and became a long-term resident was James Probert. He had been born in Madley, Herefordshire and in the 1841 census was recorded as the eldest son of an agricultural labourer, also called James. In 1851, 20 years old James had moved to live in Wormbridge, Herefordshire, as an apprentice wheelwright. He married Margret Jones in 1856, who was the youngest daughter of Llanfable blacksmith Evan Jones and they moved into the cottages that had been the homes of Hannah Jenkins and Mary Thorley, mentioned at the start of this chapter. James Probert appears to have converted the two cottages to one property, adding a carpenter's workshop. As tenants, this change to the property must have been approved by the owners and it is not known how the workshop was paid for or who by. By 1871 the cottage had been re-named, appropriately, *Carpenters Shop* and James and Margaret were living there with their four children, Martha (8), John (7), Anne (5) and Margret (3). At the time of the 1881 census, John and Margret were still living in the house, but Anne had moved in with her Aunt, Mary (blacksmith Evan Jones's eldest daughter) who was a grocer and ran the village shop. Anne remained living and working in the shop from this point onwards and did not marry. Anne survived her aunt, Mary Jones who died in 1909, aged 73. In the 1911 census, Anne was recorded as the

head of household and postmistress assisted by her 16-year old niece, Edith M Hill who had been born in Llanvapley.

James Probert's son John followed his father's trade. He was, in 1881, an apprentice with his father and by 1891 both were carpenters & wheelwrights. In 1901 James was still living and working at the Carpenter's Shop but John had married Elizabeth (born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire) and had moved into Llanvapley Court, a large house previously home to Richard Carlisle a local landowner and JP, who died in 1893 and whose widow remained the owner of the property but is believed to have moved abroad.[75] James Probert died in 1905 at the Carpenter's Shop cottage, but son John and his wife were still living in Llanvapley Court in 1911, now with an apprentice, his 17 year-old nephew, Percy Evans, who had been born in Llanllwchaiarn, Montgomeryshire and continued the family trade. The Carpenter's Shop was empty according to the 1911 census, although at some time afterwards, it was re-occupied by either John Probert or Percy Evans. By 1939, John had retired and was living with his sister, Anne, at the village shop, while Percy Evans was now working as a carpenter and wheelwright from the Carpenter's Shop with his wife, Winifred and two children, John Harold (14 and 'assisting his father') and Margaret E.V.(7).[76] It was Winifred and Margaret (Percy Evan's wife and daughter) who bought the property from the owners, the Llanfable Independent Chapel, in 1962.[77] Percy Evans died in 1974 and the property was sold three years later during which time it had mainly stood empty.[78] This example shows someone moving into the village in the middle of the nineteenth century from England, involved in a trade that had a connection with agriculture (as a wheelwright) and whose son and then nephew continued and developed the business in the village until the late twentieth century, by which time most of the carpentry involved was making coffins. Despite this shift in what the business was producing, in some senses this was an example of trade developing and changing in the nineteenth century and continuing and adapting to the changing circumstances of the next century or so, largely intact. When Percy Evans died, much of the equipment from the workshop was donated to the local museum of rural life, which had been founded by local farmer William "Bill" Powell in Llanfable village hall in 1966 before moving to its current location in Usk in the 1981.[79] Some of these carpentry tools were from the mid-nineteenth century andPercy Evans was also famous locally for never having any form of transport other than

[75] https://llantiliogroup.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/TNT-April-2011-2.pdf
[76] According to the 1939 Register.
[77] According to the title deeds for the property.
[78] This information came from a discussion with Jason and Leslie Stoker who bought the property in 1977.
[79] Information from a visit to Usk Rural Life Museum, 2nd May 2019.

a bicycle. The fact that James Probert's daughter became a shopkeeper, also running the village Post Office meant that, while she stayed living in the village, she was employed as part of the growing consumer society and, through the postal service, the changing state intervention in people's lives. The development of consumerism and its consequences, a key aspect of a developing metabolic rift, is explored further in Chapter 4.

This chapter has focussed on the people of eastern Monmouthshire and the changes to their lives and their status as the nineteenth century went on. These changes, which are further explored in the next three chapters, are an essential element of the theoretical underpinning of this thesis. The metabolic rift between society and the environment on which it is based is evident in the shifts and changes that affected everyone in this locality. The landlords were undermined by their changing ability to make money from the rents charged to the farmers. This was a key aspect of the Corn Laws debate that is explored in the first section of Chapter 5, as the contradiction between the interests of the landed proprietors who no longer were key to economic advancement, and those of the industrialists and others connected with the expanding market economy turned to bitter argument. Eventually, much of the food production that helped Britain's expanding urbanised population was imported, a development that was logical given the increasingly globalised, colonial based nature of capitalism. The people swept up in these changes were often responding in individual and personal ways to them, being forced to adapt in some cases and seizing new opportunities in others. Whatever was happening to the different people living in eastern Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century, their connections with the locality and especially their ability to utilise the land sustainability was being undermined through economic realities, as well as increased migration, travel and becoming part of a consumer society that increasingly separated production from consumption. The next chapters explore these themes in greater detail.

Chapter 3: Travel, transport and the redefinition of rurality in the nineteenth century

> Cosher Bailey had an engine
> It was always wanting mending,
> And according to the power,
> She could do four miles an hour
> Chorus:
> Did you ever saw,
> Did you ever saw
> Such a funny sight before?
> On the night run up from Gower
> She did twenty mile an hour
> As she whistled through the station
> Man, she frightened half the nation.[1]

One way that a metabolic rift opened between society and the environment was through the new forms of transportation that was designed to ensure industry could become established and expand. These had the effect of making it possible for goods and people to travel great distances at much greater speeds than previously and opened up areas that had been remote, such as eastern Monmouthshire to much greater involvement in wider society. The new forms of transport in the nineteenth century were, with few exceptions, reliant on exploiting resources of fossil fuels, yet the unsustainability of such a driver of expansion was largely hidden from view for those who used them. The fireman may have spent the journey ensuring levels of coal were maintained to drive the steam engine but the hundreds of passengers that were in the train carriages that were being hauled by the engine were remote from this process, their main concern to safely and efficiently arrive at their destination. There were a number of innovations, each with a different history and trajectory of development, so this chapter will look at how some of these affected both eastern Monmouthshire and the wider society, with reference to the different levels of environmental impact and ultimately how they helped cause a metabolic rift. Canals, tramroads, trains and improved roads were the main forms of transport that were involved and it is these that are considered in this chapter.

Canals were mainly built towards the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth centuries to provide horse-drawn, water-born transport of heavy goods and materials as industry expanded. They were connected by a series of tramroads (also horse-drawn) that connected the industries

[1] First two verses and chorus from one version of *Cosher Bailey's Engine*, a humorous description of a tramroad engine built in the early 19th century for ironmaster Crawshay Bailey, who also bought extensive landholdings in eastern Monmouthshire: https://www.musicanet.org/robokopp/welsh/cosher.htm (accessed 27.12.23)

sited where the raw materials were found with the canals and roads required to transport the finished products. At this point, fossil-fuel exploitation was at an early stage and did not directly play a part in the new forms of transport. From the early nineteenth century, however, this changed as railways were built to utilise much faster and more efficient steam-power. Roads that had for centuries allowed travel by foot or, in some cases, horse-drawn carriages, were improved so that they could carry heavier loads and connect with the railways. Like the other changes seen in the nineteenth century, these 'improvements' required largescale investments and were only seen as viable and when a profitable return on this could be expected, so while enablers of other aspects of economic development they were, like consumerism and farming, expected to make a profit in their own right as part of the development of capitalism in the nineteenth century.

Eastern Monmouthshire experienced all of these developments in transportation, but each of them affected how people lived in different ways and this is one of the main things that this chapter will consider. Located between the South Wales valleys to the west, one of the centres of the industrial revolution, and southern England to the east that provided a large part of the consumer market for the goods created by this, eastern Monmouthshire was ideally placed to experience both the benefits and drawbacks involved in the expansion of transport that had a major and lasting impact, changing along the way how, where and why food was produced and how people related to their locality and the natural environment. The main motivating factor for the improvements in transport in South Wales was the need to move raw materials required for its industrial development. This meant getting iron ore and coal to the factories as well as transporting finished products like steel and the coal that was sold for export to the ports. The remoteness and topography of the valleys in the west of the county, where the coal and iron industries were based, created one set of problems which were solved by building canals, tramroads and, later, railways. These were largely funded by the landowners and industrialists. The Breconshire and Monmouthshire Canal is an example, built from Brecon to Newport and running through eastern Monmouthshire as part of its route. Mostly, though, the east of the county had little need for the development of these forms of transport and road connections were both easier and more developed, although they did in many places require improvement. This chapter will focus on the expansion of transport, look at how this happened, why some objected and how the resultant changes affected the people living here.

While there is an extensive historiography dealing with the importance of transport developments to the industrial expansion of the British economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, this

chapter will concentrate on some aspects which have received less attention.[2] These include the way that the new systems of transport reinforced the divisions between landowners and the rest of society particularly, but not only, in rural Britain, and further concentrating their power and wealth. The wealthy had both the means and reasons to utilise the new forms of transport, unlike most people who lived in villages in the nineteenth century.[3] Building canals and railways meant changing the landscape and was one example of how the development of industrial capitalism, including the industrialisation of agriculture, relied on the privatisation of public space. This meant that while the horizons of possible travel and transportation of produce expanded, people also found new barriers to traditional footways, fields were reshaped and access to them altered and ownership of land became reasserted. Travel by foot was free, while travel by canal, train or turnpike roads incurred a cost. Transport innovations did, however, alter the sense of space that people were able to consider as part of their lives. For instance the possibilities of travel, and the subsequent limits and restriction placed upon travel, helped create a sense of national space and the definition of national boundaries. Once travel expanded so that international journeys were possible to a much larger number of people, governments perceived a need to place certain agreements and restrictions, which led to the introduction of passports after the First World War. [4] Even before this, there were issues that earlier, slower and less accessible forms of travel had not encountered. For instance railways allowed people to travel quickly across the country and for the first time required standardisation of time on a national scale.[5]

Despite any restrictive changes and the cost imposed on travel, the new forms of transport helped with an ease of movement that enabled people to move and migrate more easily and especially when leisure time expanded for more people towards the end of the nineteenth century, to experience new opportunities such as seaside holidays and travelling to watch sport or go shopping, etc., although as with many of the other nineteenth century 'improvements', it also led to wider differentiation of opportunity based on income. This was not to only issue, though as the space that people inhabited also affected their relationship with the locality in which they lived. People were able to buy what they needed and had less dependence on what was provided by

[2] Examples of useful writing on this subject include: Simmons J.E., *The Railway in Town and Country* (David & Charles: Newton Abbot, 1986), *Railways of England and Wales, 1830-1914: Vol 1, The System and its Working* (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1978) and Kellett J.R., *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (Routledge, Keegan and Paul: London, 1969)

[3] Bagwell P.S., 'The Decline of Rural Isolation', Mingay G.E., *The Victorian Countryside Volume One* (Routledge & Keegan Paul: London, 1981) p.31

[4] Salter Mark B, *Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations* (Lynne Riener: London, 2003) p. 4

[5] https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/standardising-time-railways-and-electric-telegraph (accessed 23.12.2023)

their own efforts or by traders in their village and from visits to the local town, blurring and in many ways eliminating the distinction that had previously existed between town and village. This was a theme highlighted by Raymond Williams. In his novel, *Border Country*, some of the characters living in the village worked on the railways and one bought his own lorry to facilitate his business.[6] Williams was born in Pandy in rural eastern Monmouthshire in 1921 and was a critic of the idea of an urban/rural divide, so, for instance, he defined the specificities of social interactions in villages and compared them to cities, arguing that 'we have, finally, to refuse any simple contrast between country and city… our actual history is one of constant and increasing interaction between them' and the improved transport that became available in the nineteenth century expanded the availability of this interaction for the rural population, and also eventually allowed more urban dwellers to visit the countryside.[7] While horizons expanded, there was an inevitable trade-off in terms of a relationship between those living in the countryside and their local environment, as well as a redefining of rurality in order to make it saleable and relevant to those living in the cities. For all the advantageous consequences of the developments of nineteenth century transportation, there were those who resented them and these real or perceived disadvantages of transport innovations led to forms of resistance, from local petitions to lawbreaking and the motivation and outcomes will also be considered in this chapter.

1. Canals and tramroads

> The Canal… is completed… With the iron treasures of our hills, we hope to grow daily more truly rich that the Spaniards are, with their mines in Mexico and Peru; as ours occasion industry and population, whilst theirs purchase slothful dependence and are destructive of both.[8]

The first largescale project to improve the transport links in Britain was the building of canals and this started in the late eighteenth century. Horse-drawn in the eighteenth century and still for the most part the nineteenth century, these did not, therefore, originate as fossil-fuel driven means of transport but canals had a significant impact in changing the environment of areas they passed through and had a major effect on the ability of those who wanted to develop industrial production to do so. The canals in South Wales were, as will be seen in this section, largely centred in the more industrial areas to the west of the area at the centre of this thesis, but one, now called the Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal, did run through the area around Llanofer and Llanfoist.

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[6] Willams R, *Border Country* (Parthian, Library of Wales: Cardigan, 2005)
[7] Williams R, *Country and City in The Modern Novel: W.D. Thomas Memorial Lecture, delivered 26 January 1987* (University College of Swansea: Swansea, 1987) p.15
[8] Letter to Glocester Journal (sic), 12 February 1796 quoted in Hadfield C, *The Canals of South Wales and The Border* (David & Charles: Newton Abbot, 1967) p. 18

These canals had a major effect on the ability of industrialists to connect the coal mines and steel that was being produced to the markets they needed to reach as, despite not being a fast method of transport, especially when compared to later developments, water borne transport was capable of moving a large tonnage of freight efficiently and therefore allowed greater access to previously remote parts of Monmouthshire and the adjacent county of Glamorganshire. This was an area of particular importance due to the coal, iron ore and limestone that were found there and access required the building of a canal, as the River Taff which ran from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff was not navigable north of Llandaff.[9] The remoteness of the valley meant that the road system in the area was rudimentary and underdeveloped. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century roads were a much slower way to transport goods (and people) than water. Given the importance of canals, therefore, they were supported by those wishing to develop industries in the mineral-rich valleys, although the topography of these valleys tended to make building canals difficult, and this necessitated the building of iron tramroads to connect with canals where these were more possible.

Unlike the later road improvements and railway building, the canals were exclusively designed to transport goods and there was no passenger traffic. This meant that canals did not have the same effect on interconnectivity for people living in places like eastern Monmouthshire that other forms of transport had. Their main impact was to enable industrial development and provide transport to the coast of South Wales, where Cardiff and Newport saw a rapid and sustained expansion as ports because of this trade. There was scope for some movement of agricultural produce, although in practice this rarely happened due to the priority given to industrial produce. Some of those who opened the South Wales steelworks brought experience of canals with them. For instance, Francis Homfray, owner of the Penydarren Steelworks near Merthyr Tydfil, which opened in the 1780s, had previously invested in an ironworks near Stourbridge in Worcestershire that was connected to the River Severn by the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. Homfray supported the building of a similar canal from Merthyr, and engaged the same engineering contractors for the Glamorgan Canal as had worked on the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. Other iron foundry owners such as Joseph Bailey, also provided financial backing for the construction, which eventually opened in 1794 and connected Merthyr with Cardiff, a 25 mile journey with a drop of 165 metres, negotiated by 50 locks. The canal meant that what had started as a small-scale iron industry expanded massively to become one of the centres of the

[9] Hadfield C, *The Canals of South Wales…* p.15

industrialisation of South Wales.[10] As well as providing a transport route, the Parliamentary Act required to enable its construction gave the owners of the canal, a statutory limited liability company, rights both over the canal and the towpath that was built next to it. For instance, the Act gave the canal company compulsory purchase rights over the land it passed through, creating potential conflicts with the landowners, farmers and anyone who required access that might be blocked by the construction of a canal.[11] This was the start of an increasing encroachment of privatisation of land used for modern developments that continues to the present. The eventual cost of the Monmouthshire Canal was £220,000 and the associated tram roads cost another £119,330, which made it the most expensive to build and this might go some way to explaining why it was also the most expensive canal in the area for transporting freight.[12]

The canal that helped open the trade to the industrialising Monmouthshire valleys further east, around Blaenafon and down the similarly unnavigable Afon Lwyd to Pontypool, was what became the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, which opened in stages and was completed by 1812.[13] Two other Stourbridge ironworks owners, Thomas Hill and Benjamin Pratt, had opened ironworks at Blaenafon in the late 1780s, in another a remote upper valley area with only basic transportation to move the finished products. The success of this investment depended on the building of the Monmouthshire Canal for eleven miles between Newport and Pontnewydd, which was authorised by an Act of Parliament dated 1792.[14] This time the canal was built in the lower land of eastern Monmouthshire, and therefore required a method of crossing imposing hills such as Mynnydd y Garn-fawr and the Blorenge, which peaks at 559 metres above sea level. To negotiate this barrier, a six-mile tramroad was built down the Afon Lwyd valley from Blaenafon to connect with the canal and the ironworks became the largest producer in Wales.[15] Later tramroads went directly over the Blaenafon from to Gilwern, Gofilon and Llanfoist near Abergavenny where wharves were built. This also enabled food to be taken back uphill the shops in Blaenafon. The agricultural area to the east of Abergavenny at the centre of the thesis would have been well-placed to supply at least some of this extra demand. Thomas Hill was one of the major subscribers that paid for this canal to be built, committing £4,500. In 1793, an Act of Parliament was passed that authorised the

[10] Hadfield C, *The Canals of South Wales…* p. 19
[11] *Amgueddfa Cymru Collections on-line*, Library 48670, 'An Act for Making and Maintaining a Navigable Canal from Merthyr Tidvile (sic), to and through a Place called The Bank, near the Towne of Cardiff, in the County of Glamorgan'. 30 Geo. III. 1790 (accessed 20 June 2023)
[12] Boyns T, 'Communications and Commerce'… p. 68
[13] Pearson M*, Pearson's Canal Companion: Welsh Waters, Extended 10th Edition* (Way2Goose: Burton-on-Trent, 2016) p. 88
[14] Monmouthshire Canal Navigation Act, 1792: 32 Geo. 3 c.102
[15] Barber C, *Hill's Tramroad: Blaenavon World Heritage Site* (Amberely: Stroud, 2019) p. 10

building of the canal, then called the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal, at a cost of £100,000. Other main subscribers included colliery owner Josiah Wedgwood, local landowners Charles Morgan, the Duke of Beaufort and a Bristol-based coal importer, John Bowsher.[16] Once again, the Act included important changes to land rights giving extensive powers to the company operating the canal, including the right to charge tolls, prosecute those who did not follow the rules set out and place restrictions on the size of boats and what they could carry.[17] Once again, this was a significant imposition of privatisation of space and in terms of providing a unique route for such

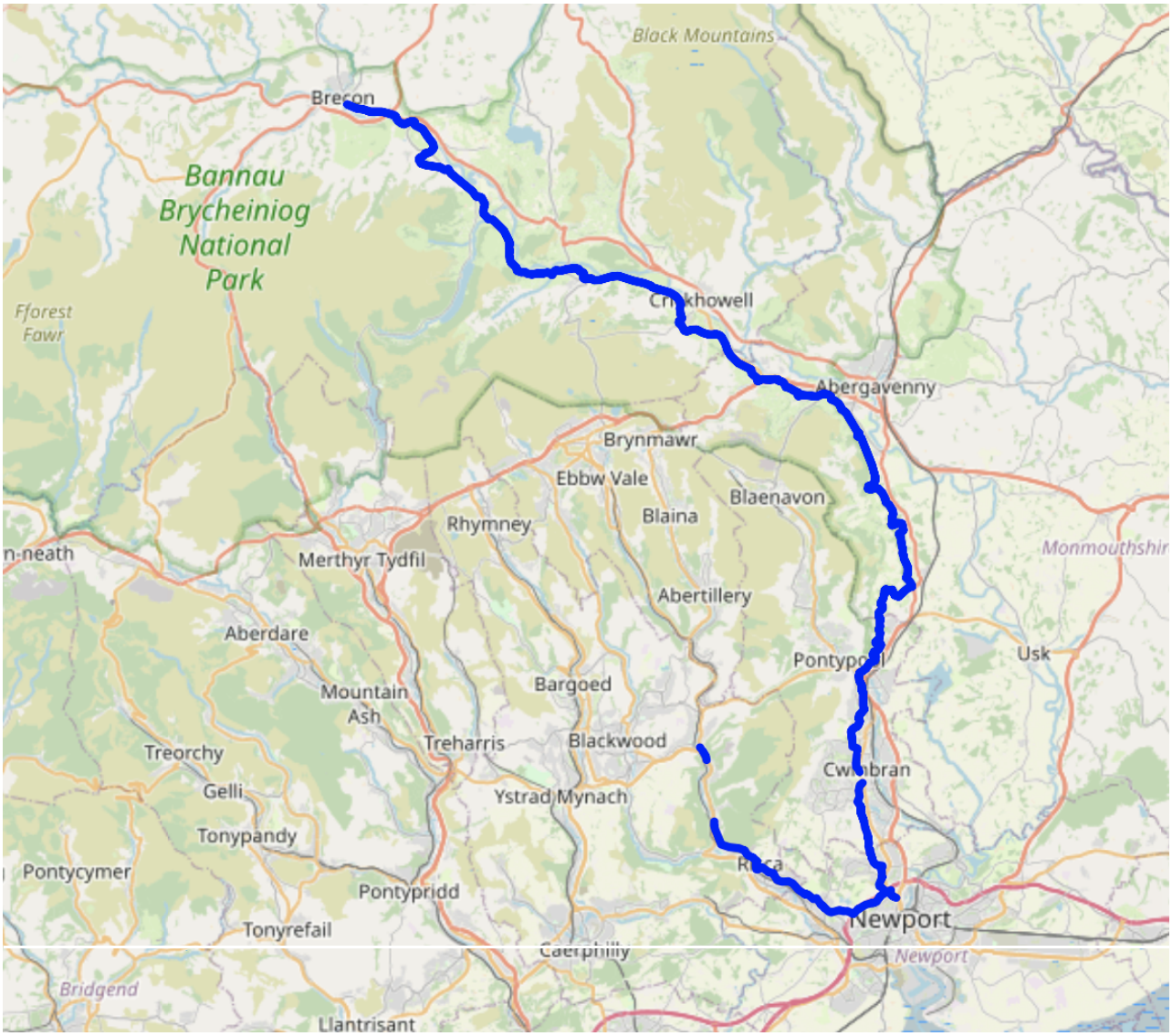

Figure 15: The route of the Brecon, Abergavenny and Monmouthshire Canal systems

trade, the company that the Act set up had an effective monopoly, two points of contention both prior to the passing of the enabling Act and subsequently. The prominent shareholders for this canal included the Duke of Beaufort, the Hanburys of Pontypool House, as well as some of the

[16] Hadfield C, *The Canals of South Wales…* p. 127

[17] *Gwent Archives,* D4625/94 'Index to the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal Acts, 1793 and 1804' (dated c.1810) is a list of the different clauses.

same investors as before including Charles Morgan, although according to one commentator at the time, the canal was the only one in South Wales that 'originated with the consumers; being undertaken with the laudable view of lowering the price of coals, lime, etc.'[18] After some delay and raising of extra funds required, the canal was extended from Gilwern to Pontymoile where it joined the eastern arm of the already functioning Monmouthshire canal, completing in 1812.

New tramroads connecting this canal were built, despite the difficulties involved. One, known as 'Hill's Tramroad' (because it linked the Blaenafon ironworks that were owned by Thomas Hill), made it possible to transport the iron to a wharf at Llanfoist just outside Abergavenny around the steep-sided Blorenge hill. This was a major and costly undertaking, but despite this, the reduced rate of transporting the iron using the Brecon & Abergavenny Canal made it more profitable. Carriage rates on the new canal were lower than on the Monmouthshire Canal, but the Act of Parliament stated that any goods that originated on the Brecon & Abergavenny Canal would be allowed through to Newport on the Monmouthshire Canal at the lower rates.[19] Although the Monmouthshire Canal had originally supported the linking of the Brecon & Abergavenny at Pontymoil, they became fierce competitors and rivals. The competition forced a reduction in the rates charged by the Monmouthshire Canal, so iron was carried at 3½d per ton, rather than the previous toll of 5d per ton, although this was still higher than the 3d charged by the newer canal. The rate reduced further to 2d per ton to accommodate tramroads from Ebbw Vale and Beaufort., and the competition led to further reductions in the price per ton of iron in the 1820s. By 1830, an economic depression had reduced the price of iron and the iron producers in Monmouthshire who were still dependent on their earlier tramroad links with the Monmouthshire Canal were demanding a reduction in the rate, from the rate they were being charged of 3d per ton when the iron works in Glamorganshire were being charged by the Glamorganshire Canal at a rate less than half that, 1¼ d per ton. This competition may have helped reduce costs, but there is also no doubt that it helped increase production and with it the subsequent use of resources and fossil fuels. Industrial expansion also required more people to work in the foundries and coal mines, affecting the supply of labour for agriculture and removing a significant section of people from involvement in food production.

Building canals also changed land-use pattern in rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire, often dividing fields and farms. In many places their presence remains, a permanent reminder of the

[18] Hadfield C, *The Canals of South Wales…* p. 161
[19] Barber C, *Hill's Tramroad…* p. 69

importance of canals in the early industrial period. They passed through areas of agricultural land and presented a barrier only crossable by bridges or locks. The building of the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal, on the western edge of eastern Monmouthshire canal changed access to the land as the canal had to be built following, as far as possible, contours rather than established field boundaries. The high cost of building bridges to mitigate this meant that this was mainly only done where roads or established rights of way connecting villages were affected. Figure 18 shows the route of the canal as it went through Penperlleni near Goytre in eastern Monmouthshire, cutting into fields and following a winding route to keep a level course. However, the canals played only a marginal role in ending rural isolation or on the lives of most of the people in rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire. Transportation of agricultural produce using the canals was minimal because, as Perren notes, they 'were not particularly convenient for the transport of crops, and not at all suited to livestock or dairy products'.[20] The tramroads, as already mentioned, did have the potential for increasing access to the newly industrialising areas for local food producers, but not the canals themselves. Bagwell points out that another advantage of canals was that they were much more efficient at carrying heavy loads and there was a subsequent reduction in the price of transporting heavy materials such as lime, so farmers were able to apply much more to their land.[21] This may have been a form of agricultural 'improvement' that enabled more profitable and potentially efficient farming, but, once again, it came at an environmental cost.

The canals did directly provide some work opportunities, mostly around the wharves such as at Llanfoist and Gilwern but there were also lockkeepers and toll houses to staff along the course of the canal. Bagwell concluded that 'the principal contribution of the canals to the decline of rural isolation was through the spread of commerce.'[22] This was an important factor in changing relationships in eastern Monmouthshire, especially prior to the 1840s when canals were at the height of their importance. They were, however, soon to be eclipsed as the main means of moving goods in an age of rapidly developing technology and many canals fell into disuse in the twentieth century. Ironically, given their involvement in the environmentally destructive industrial expansion of areas like south Wales in the nineteenth century, the canals that have been restored and re-opened in recent times have enabled leisure activities which allow people to re-connect with their natural environment in the twenty-first. They may have been an early form of transport that

[20] Perren R, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce'… p. 970
[21] Bagwell P.S., 'The Decline of Rural Isolation'… p. 34
[22] Bagwell P.S., 'The Decline of Rural Isolation'… p. 34

opened the metabolic rift but may now play a part in helping heal it.[23] One example is the restored Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal which is now is a popular tourist attraction, allowing for a walking and cycling route along the towpath and for pleasure craft on the water along its route from Newport to Brecon.

[23] Even though canal boats themselves are mainly driven by fossil fuels.

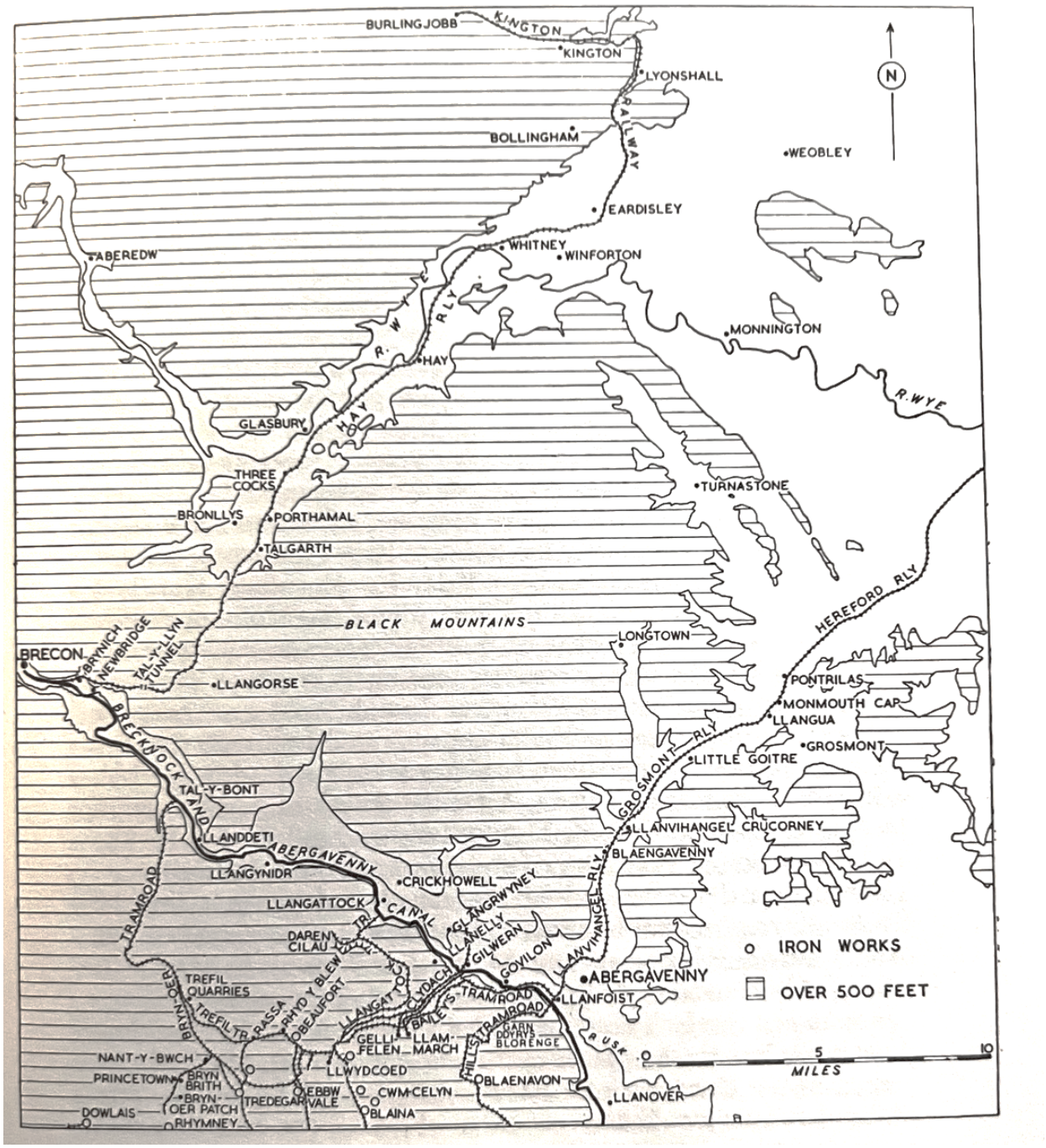

Figure 16: The Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal and its tramroad connections in the 19th Century[24]

[24] From Hadfield C, Canals of South Wales and the Border…

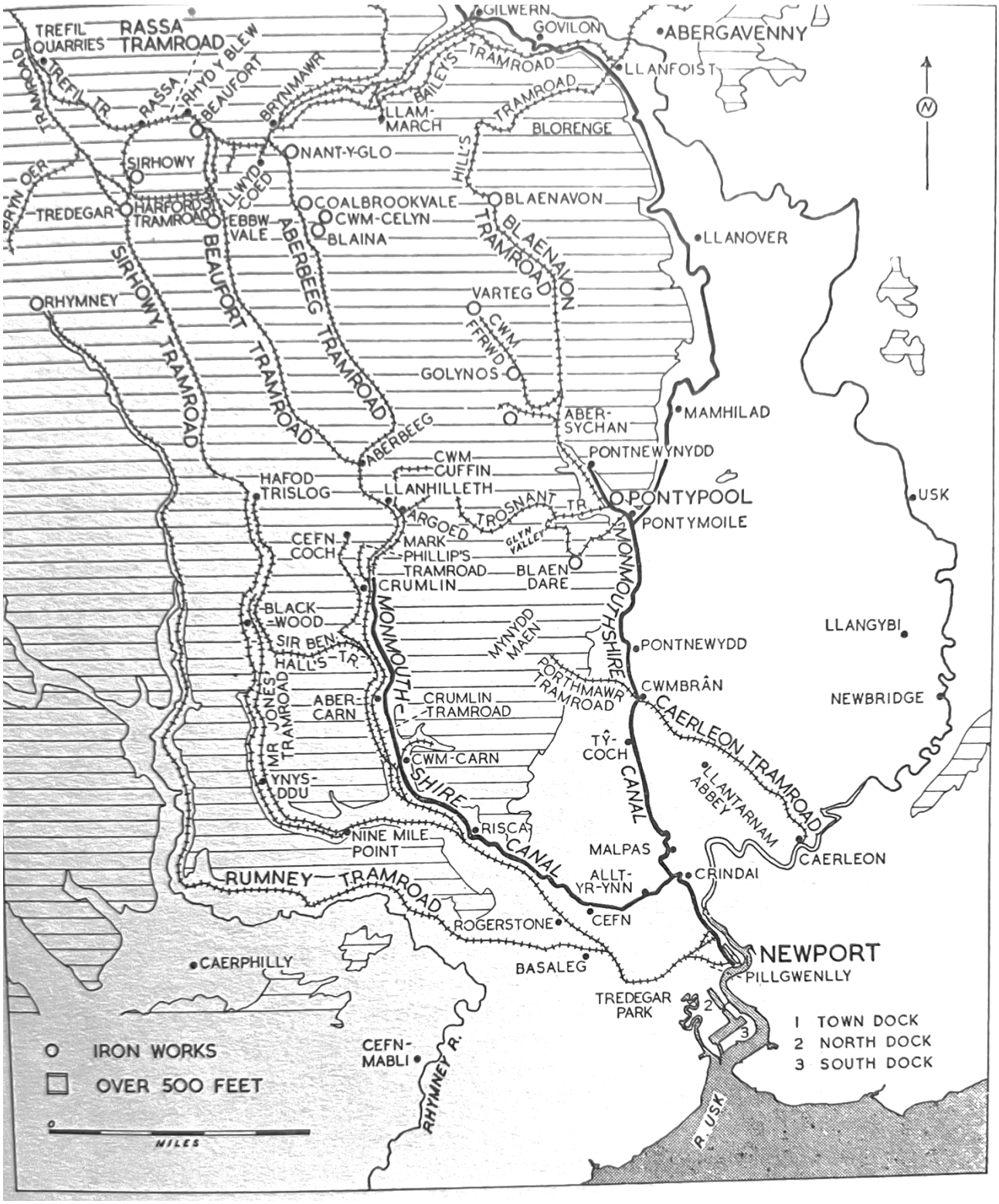

Figure 17: The Monmouthshire Canal and its tramroad connections in the 19th Century.[25]

[25] From Hadfield C, Canals of South Wales and the Border…

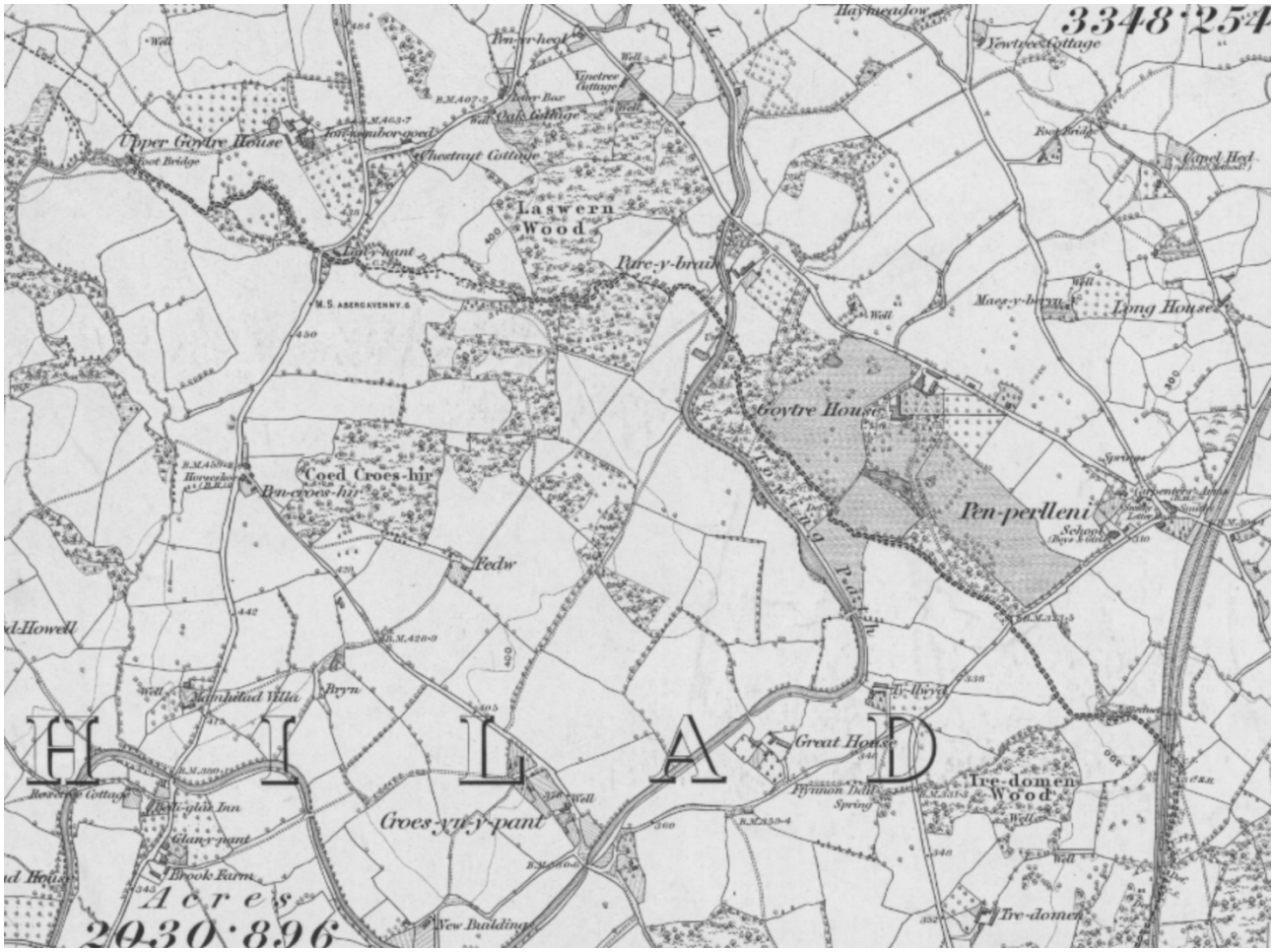

Figure 18: Ordnance Survey Six Inch series map showing land near Goytre in eastern Monmouthshire affected by the building of the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal on its way to meet the Monmouthshire Canal at Pontymoil.[26]

2. Railways

Railways that were developed using steam-power often replaced earlier horse-drawn or hydraulic tramroads and exacerbated the growing metabolic rift between society and the environment in the nineteenth century. As well as fossil fuel exploitation, railways also changed trading arrangements, providing a fast and efficient method for distributing goods produced by industry and therefore also subsequently helped change how and where people obtained food, created possibilities for population movements that went far beyond anything that had existed previously and, as with the canals, affected the local environment in the places they passed through. Many modern trains use different forms of energy to power their propulsion and, in turn, offer a much more efficient and sustainable form of travel, but the introduction of trains in the nineteenth

[26] *National Library of Scotland (on-line*), Ordnance Survey Six Inch series map, Monmouthshire Sheet XVIII, surveyed 1879-1881, published 1886,*),* https://maps.nls.uk/view/102346016 (accessed 29.12.23)

century led to a society based on increased levels of transportation, using a noisy and polluting fuel source that was, for all these reasons, a major cause of the metabolic rift.

While the canals were vital for the establishment of industry in the South Wales valleys and helped change the relationship between these new areas of urbanisation and the agricultural areas of eastern Monmouthshire, railways had an even bigger and longer-lasting impact on the connectivity of all areas of South Wales from the 1830s onwards. In a discussion of Welsh language and community in the 'mid Victorian era' and commenting on 'improved physical communications – railways, roads and better, more reliable and faster transport all round', Jones argues that this 'enormously eased the movement of people and made possible the rapid distribution of ideas', while also noting the negative effects such as enabling outward migration from Wales. He concludes that 'there is no denying the impact of the railways and the means these placed at the disposal of the main cultural organisations for the rapid dissemination of ideas and thus for the growth of a sense of cultural unity.'[27] Schwartz et al. argue that the introduction of railways revitalised rural areas, giving the 'communities a second chance at stability or limited growth' and opening 'new cultural horizons' as the world appeared smaller. Mingay agrees that socially, railways had a 'permanent and far-reaching influence', not only transforming many towns, villages and their surrounding landscape as embankments, viaducts and bridges were built, but also providing employment including to many of the lower paid labourers who could not afford to travel by train themselves. Railways, he says, 'offered village lads a new and more attractive means of employment, and country men made up a fair proportion of the quarter of a million employed by the railways in the 1870s and the 600,000 employed before 1914.'[28] Working on the railways thus replaced working on the land for a proportion of the rural labourers. As travel became easier and cheaper, more people began to use the trains and take part in the leisure pursuits that developed in the latter part of the century, including spectator sports such as cricket, rugby and association football, as well as the development of a tourist industry, discussed as part of the analysis of the commodification of leisure time in Chapter 4. This was an example where the creation of demand followed supply. The initial reason railways were built was to make it easier to transport raw materials and the finished goods produced by industry. In both use cases, the environmental impact was substantial and the effect on the rural economy significant. Railways, unlike canals, were used to transport foodstuffs and farm produce and so open the market for the

[27] Jones I G, *Mid Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 1992) p.59
[28] Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England* (Heinemann: London, 1977) p. 11

growing consumer market. Local production suffered and, especially when trade increased across the Atlantic (as steam-powered ships led to similar advantages in terms of sea travel) and from other parts of Europe, production of most arable crops went into decline. Railways allowed the imported food to be transported quickly and easily from dockside to markets around the country. Crucially, this meant that railways helped undermine the connection between local communities, farming and the local environment, a major factor in creating a metabolic rift. Those adversely affected by this were also able to use the trains to travel to urban areas where they could find different employment.[29]

The invention of steam powered locomotion by Richard Trevithick was associated with his work in South Wales at the Penydarren ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil in 1804. This came about when the Glamorgan Canal, which linked Merthyr Tydfil with Cardiff, led to such an expansion of production that the canal became too congested. The different ironworks were competing for space on the canal and, with a controlling interest, Richard Crawshay was able to pull rank and get priority. The owners of the other ironworks had a horse-drawn rail link from Merthyr to Abercynon built, by-passing the nine miles of congested canal, which therefore lost revenue. In 1803, Samuel Homfray, owner of the Penydarren ironworks, commissioned Richard Trevithick to develop a steam powered engine to pull the trams up and down the incline to Abercynon with loads of iron. The experiment, reportedly as a result of a bet with Richard Crawshay, did not lead initially to regular steam powered engine use on the tramroads, but it is seen as a significant step in the development of steam engines designed for transport as Trevithick had shown what could be achieved.[30] It was not until the 1830s that steam trains were introduced on a commercially viable scale. The initial period of railway building, which lasted until the mid 1850s, was largely about connecting urban areas and tended to by-pass the countryside, although the rural environment was affected by noise and steam from the passing trains.[31]

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[29] Schwartz R, Gregory I and Thévenin T, Railways, Uneven Development, and Population Change in France and Great Britain 1850-1914 in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 42, No.1 (Summer 2011) p.56

[30] Burton A, *Richard Trevithick: Giant of Steam* (Aurum Press: London, 2000) pp. 87-92 provides an entertaining historical account of this experiment.

[31] Perren R, *The Marketing of Agricultural Produce…* p. 973 He argues that the early railways 'made little impression on the countryside'.

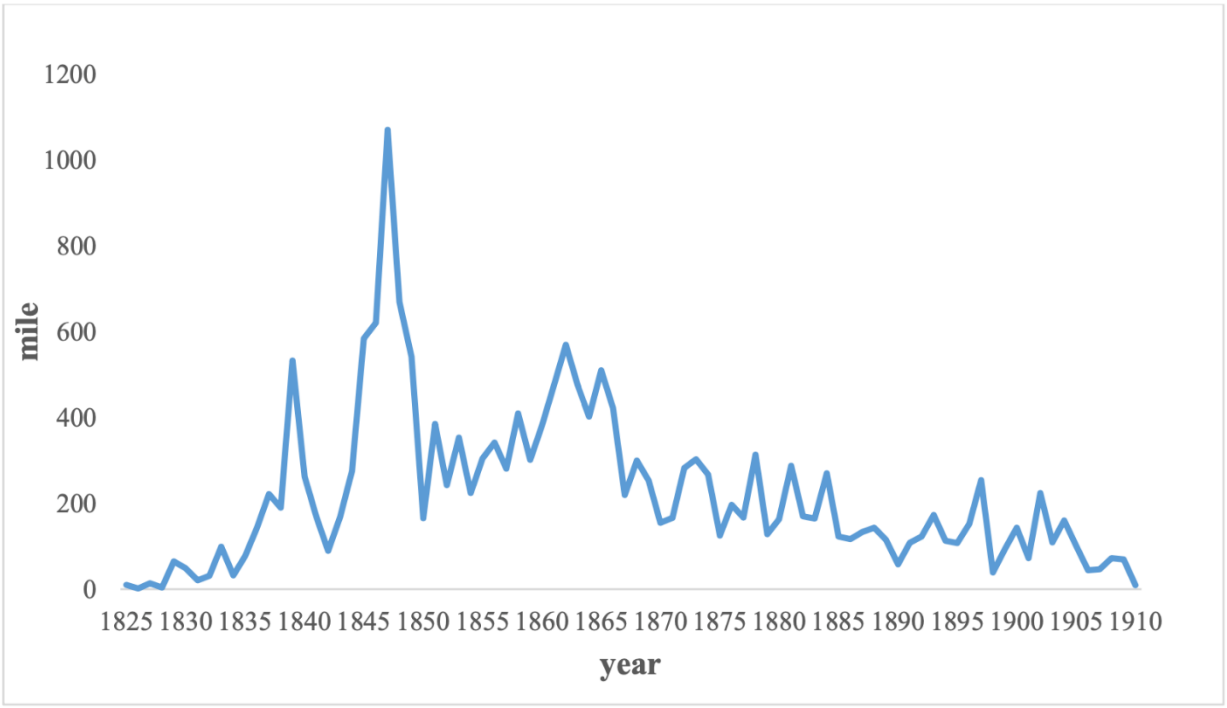

Figure 19: The annual growth of railway mileage 1825-1911[32]

In an article written in 1916, O'Donaghue noted that south-east Wales had an 'extreme' density of railways compared with the sparsity elsewhere in Wales and that the lines generally ran southwards towards the coast, although also noting the important line running east to west from Abergavenny to Merthyr Tydfil. This was because 'South-east Wales, consisting largely of extremely valuable coalfields [was] given over almost entirely to the coal and iron and allied industries, therefore transport facilities are needed on an extensive scale' unlike the rest of Wales, where the 'population, which is sparse, is mostly engaged in farming.'[33]

[32] Shaw-Taylor L & You X, 'The Development of the railway network in Britain 1825-1911…' p. 12
[33] O'Donaghue D, 'The Great Western Railway in South Wales [No.1]', *The Railway Magazine* (Feb 1916) pp. 85-86



Figure 20: The South Wales Railway system at amalgamation with the GWR in 1863:[34]

The first railway project that affected South Wales was the building of the line to connect Bristol and London, which became the Great Western Railway. Bristol was well connected to the South Wales ports of Newport and Cardiff through local shipping over the Bristol Channel. After the successful passing of the Act of Parliament that authorised the building of the railway in August 1835, planning for the building of it began, according to an article in *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* with a meeting of the proprietors of the Great Western Railway which took place in the City of London on 7th November. Sections of the railway were constructed over the next twenty months, from London to Maidenhead and Bristol to Bath.[35] The economic importance of new railways meant over-riding land ownership rights and approving changes to the environment of localities they passed through, as contained within the Act. The Great Western Railway Act was authorised in Clause III to raise shares to the value of two million, five hundred pounds and the Act then went on in Clause VIII to empower the company, agents and workers and anyone else they gave permission to

> enter into and upon the Lands, or any Lands adjoining thereto, to bore, dig, cut, embank, and sough, and to remove or lay, and also to use, work, and manufacture, any Earth, Stone, Rubbish, Trees, Gravel, or Sand, or any other Materials or Things which may be dug or obtained therein…[36]

This and the fact that land was bought from those who owned it along the route at what was deemed 'market value' meant that railways were built according to economic needs, driven by political will and at a significant economic cost. The Acts of Parliament allowed expropriation in

[34] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SWalesRly1863.png (accessed 2.12.23)
[35] 'Railways: The Great Western Railway', *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 7th November 1835, p. 4
[36] *National Archives (on-line),* 'Great Western Railway Act, 1835, UK Local Acts . 1835 c.cvii (Regnal 5_and_6_Will_4), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Will4/5-6/107/enacted (accessed 20.12.23)

extreme cases, although this was only occasionally necessary. Kostal claims that the building of railways in the early to mid-century was 'the most dramatic infringement of private property rights in England since the Civil War' an infringement that led to a situation where 'many wealthy and politically influential landowners steadfastly resisted railway projects up to and beyond the railway mania of 1844-5'. Despite this, railway building proceeded apace as railway companies used 'divide and rule' tactics, where the largest landowners were effectively bought off, leaving those with smaller landholdings and less wealth and power without the means to continue to challenge the railways.[37] Further to this, land was more was more expensive close to urban areas. Kellett quotes a submission by John Moxon, Chair of the London and Croydon Railway to the House of Lords in 1839, that sought to explain the rising cost of railway building. This had nearly always exceeded the costs agreed, which had been based on earlier estimates and Moxon said this was because 'the first mile [out of the town centre] costs more than in any other part of the line.'[38] In addition, some landowners drove a hard bargain knowing that the railway companies could not go ahead without their Parliamentary support. To build the Great Western Railway, for instance, the company paid the Marquis of Aylesbury £19,000 for 'land and convenience', an example of where it was considered better to pay the money than face objections in Parliament or in the courts.[39]

While most of the landowners in Monmouthshire welcomed railway expansion because of the benefit trains brought to their industrial investments, estate owners in some other parts of Britain objected to and tried to place barriers to the construction of railways ruining what they saw as *their* environment. A famous case was the so-called 'battle of Saxby Bridge' in Leicestershire where Lord Harborough of Stapleford House sent estate workers to remove surveyors for a rail company, which ended up having to build a railway that by-passed his property.[40] Across rural Britain, land agents 'kept a wary eye on the proceedings of canal and river navigation companies, to see that the boatmen caused no damage to crop or fences, and that farms were not affected by changes in water levels.'[41] In terms of railways, land agents negotiated about things like the routes they took, how they affected traditional rights of way, the sale of land to the railway companies and where they built the stations, which were another significant expense.[42] Despite all these

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[37] Kostal R.W., *Law and English Railway Capitalism 1825-1875* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1994) pp. 144-151
[38] Kellett J.R., *The Impact of Railways…* p. 5
[39] Thompson F.M.L., *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century…* p. 258
[40] https://leicestershirecollections.org.uk/Full-Steam-Ahead-The-Railway-Reaches-Melton/full-steam-ahead-the-battle-of-saxby
[41] Mingay G.E., *Rural life…* p. 129
[42] Kellett J.R., *The Impact of Railways…* p.5 quotes Robert Stevenson in his submission to a House of Lords enquiry that 'the very principal excess, or at least a large part of the excess, arose entirely from stations on the line.'

supposed concerns for the effect of railway building on the local environment, railways were built anyway. The fact that estate owners were concerned suggests they could feel the effect of the rift in the metabolism of the local environment through railway development, even though they were often also the main beneficiaries of changed economic circumstances.

Locally, a number of interested parties objected to the building of the Newport to Pontypool Railway. This included the proprietors of several iron works, including those at Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Sirhowy, Blaina and Cwmcelyn.[43] They feared that the new railway would put their competitors in a better position in terms of getting products to market. The proposal to build the railway drew a number of petitions, including from Joseph and Crawshay Bailey, The Blaenavon Iron and Coal Company, Messrs Darby and others, Ebbw Vale and Sirhowy Iron Works company, Messrs Guttwell and others, Blaina and Cwmcelyn Iron Company, John Griffiths Esq and others, Sir Benjamin Hall, Mrs Mary Jones, Joseph Bailey Esq. and others, Rumney Railway Company, Sirhowy Tram Road Company and Samuel Homfray and others.[44] Their objections shared quite a few areas of concern including the proposal to allow the railway company to

> take and use for the purposes thereof parts of certain wharfs and also a certain warehouse and Offices of which your petitioners are lessees and occupiers and the so taking thereof by the said company will cause great injury and inconvenience to your Petitioners who wholly object thereto.

Another fear was that the powers invested in the railway company would allow it to 'alter or vary the tolls… either on the whole or particular portions of their existing canals and railways' which 'might be used… to prejudice or favour particular districts intersected by their existing canals and railways or particular companies or individuals who are freighters thereon and unfairly create a monopoly in the hands of particular companies or individuals as well as in their own hands…' The railway companies were, like the canal companies before them, given control over most aspects of the running of the line, including the right to levy charges. The petitioners felt that the original proposals were 'inadequate to meet the general want of an improved line and system of locomotive railway communication throughout the mineral district intersected by and surrounding the existing canals and railways of the company' and 'that the estimate of the cost of executing the works authorised by the said bill is inadequate and insufficient for the purposes contemplated thereby.'[45] Those objecting to the new railway had spent a considerable amount investing in

[43] *Gwent Archives*, Petitions against the Newport and Pontypool Railway Bill, 1845: D3934/57, D3934/61, D3934/62
[44] *Gwent Archives,* D3934.58, 'Copy petition of Joseph Bailey, et al against the Bill, 1845'
[45] *Gwent Archives,* D3934.58, 'Copy petition of Joseph Bailey, et al against the Bill, 1845'

canals and tramroads and expected this to be repaid through the tolls levied - an expectation that may not be fulfilled if a railway line took away the most lucrative traffic. One specific fear stated by petitioners was that the two miles section of canal that connected Pontnewydd with the Brecknock and Abergavenny canal near Pontypool would be abandoned and 'filled up', depriving many of the ironworks and coal companies with access to the canal and, therefore, the docks at Newport. Mary and John Jones of Llanarth Court wrote that they were the owners of some of the length of tramroads and that they feared they would be put out of business by the railway proposals as they stood.[46] The petitions therefore were trying to get the bill amended at its committee stage. The railway was built despite these objections from local powerful people and without significant amendment to the original proposals, suggesting again that wider economic interests trumped other concerns. Railways would be built whatever the impact, on competitiveness, prior investments or, importantly, the local environment. In June 1839, it was reported that 'The sums of money authorised to be raised by acts of parliament, whereby railroad companies have been incorporated, between Jan 1st 1826 and Jan 1st 1839… amount to £57,789,444 of which £41,610,814 were to be capital in joint stock and £16,177,630 were to be raised in loans'.[47] This was a significant investment in expanding the system even before the rail building 'mania' of the next two decades. Railways did not entirely replace canals which may have been slower but were also charged lower tolls to the freighters, but they did provide a fast and efficient way to transport raw materials and finished goods.

In order to connect with other industrialised parts of Britain, a railway was built across the 'heads of the valleys' as it was known, from Merthyr Tydfil, through Tredegar and Ebbw Vale and on to Abergavenny where it could join the railway from Newport to Hereford and on to the Midlands and the north of England. Once the Newport to Hereford line was in operation, some of those who had originally opposed it being built supported the new railway spur to Merthyr because of this connection. The main obstacle for the proposed line (called the Merthyr Tydfil, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway), and a not inconsiderable one, was the challenging topography, especially the steep sided Clydach Gorge between the highest town in Wales, Brynmawr, and the railway junction just outside Abergavenny. This necessitated the construction of eight bridges, two tunnels each about a quarter of a mile long, as well as several stone-built retaining walls to allow the completion of 'one of the most severely graded railways in the British Isles, with a 3-mile section

[46] *Gwent Archives,* D3934.59 'Petition of Mary Jones of Llanarth Courth… and John Jones of Llanarth Court aforesaid but now on the Continent of Europe'
[47] 'Railways' in *The Monmouthshire Merlin* (29th June 1839) p. 4

of 1 in 34'.[48] Such a large investment shows the importance both of the line and the industrial development it helped develop. The railway itself had a dramatic and lasting impact on this narrow river valley and its environment, while limestone and iron ore quarrying scarred the local hills. The expansion of industry was the primary reason for building the rail network and for ignoring local environmental objections, but the railways (unlike the canals) were also used for passenger transport, with stations at towns and villages along the way. For instance, figure 18 shows the stations between Abergavenny Junction and Govilon. Clearly this raised the horizons of those who could afford to use the new transport system. For landowners, the connectivity the new railways brought had other advantages. In an advert for the sale of the 'Gabalva Estate and Demesne' in nearby Glamorganshire, for example, which appeared in the same edition of *The Monmouthshire Merlin* that had reported on the sums required for the Great Western Railway, one of the selling points of the 'large house with extensive grounds and land' was that the 'Taff Vale Railway is in full progress. It will pass through the Arable Land of the Estate.'[49] The building of the Severn Tunnel, which opened for goods trains on 1st September 1886 and for passenger trains on December 1st 1886, provided southern Wales a direct link with the extensive markets in southern England.[50] Before the tunnel was built, Monmouthshire had been connected to the Gloucestershire side of the Severn Estuary by a series of ferry crossings, and it was such a crossing that connected the London and Bristol railway with the line to Newport and Cardiff. These crossings were made difficult by the width of the estuary, which has the second largest tidal range in the world, and the importance of South Wales industrial development meant that, despite the technological difficulties involved, it was decided to replace the ferry that ran between Portskewett in Monmouthshire and New Passage in Gloucestershire with a tunnel. The Severn Tunnel Railway Company successfully got an Act of Parliament in 1872, allowing it to raise £750,000 to build the railway and they were given five years to complete.[51] This proved wildly ambitious and the project ended up costing £1,800,000 and the building of it took over fourteen years, but it provided a direct transport link between South Wales and England.[52] Even now, the to overcome the logistical issues involved in building and maintaining the tunnel, water is pumped out every day at a significant rate in order for it to operate.

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[48] Barber C, *The Merthyr, Tredegar & Abergavenny Railway* (Amberley: Stroud, 2017) p. 15
[49] 'The Gabalva Estate' (headline) in *The Monmouthshire Merlin* (29th June 1839)
[50] 'The Severn Tunnel; One of the Longest Under-water Tunnels in the World', *Railway Wonders of the World*, Vol. 1: https://www.railwaywondersoftheworld.com/severn-tunnel.html (accessed 3.1.24)
[51] *National Archives (on-line),* 'Severn Tunnel Railway Act, 1872, UK Local Acts.1872 c.liii (Regnal.35_and_36_Vict)', https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Vict/35-36/53/contents/enacted (accessed 30.12.23)
[52] Walker T.A., *The Severn Tunnel: its construction and difficulties 1872-1887* (Kingsmead Reprints: Bath, 1969)

A later round of railway building extended into more remote areas and had the effect of radically changing trading arrangements in even more places, including eastern Monmouthshire. The nearest town to eastern Monmouthshire, Abergavenny, became an important junction when the heads of the valleys line was built. As well as Abergavenny, there were other stations on the line within reach of eastern Monmouthshire at Pontypool Road, Nantyderry, Penpergwm and Llanfair. These made the local road improvements even more important as getting from the farm to the station required moving the produce by road using 'country carriers.'[53] Perhaps surprisingly, given the sparse population and rural nature of the area, there were also plans to extend the railway network into the eastern part of the county. This proposal was supported locally and at the third meeting of the Abergavenny Highway board, on the 21st April 1865, a petition was presented and unanimously agreed in favour of a railway from Abergavenny to Monmouth which would have passed through the eastern Monmouthshire parishes of Llanddewi Rhydderch, Llanfable and Llandeilo Grysenni (see Figure 21) The argument for this railway was that it would provide 'economical transit for the ores from the Forest of Dean to the Ironworks on the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny railway and would at the same time supply Railway accommodation much required by an important agricultural district now wholly deprived of Railway advantages and without occasioning any prejudicial interference with Public Roads.'

[53] Bagwell P.S. 'The Decline of Rural Isolation'… p.34. Bagwell says 'at a conservative estimate there were at least 20,000 carriers in business in the 1880s'

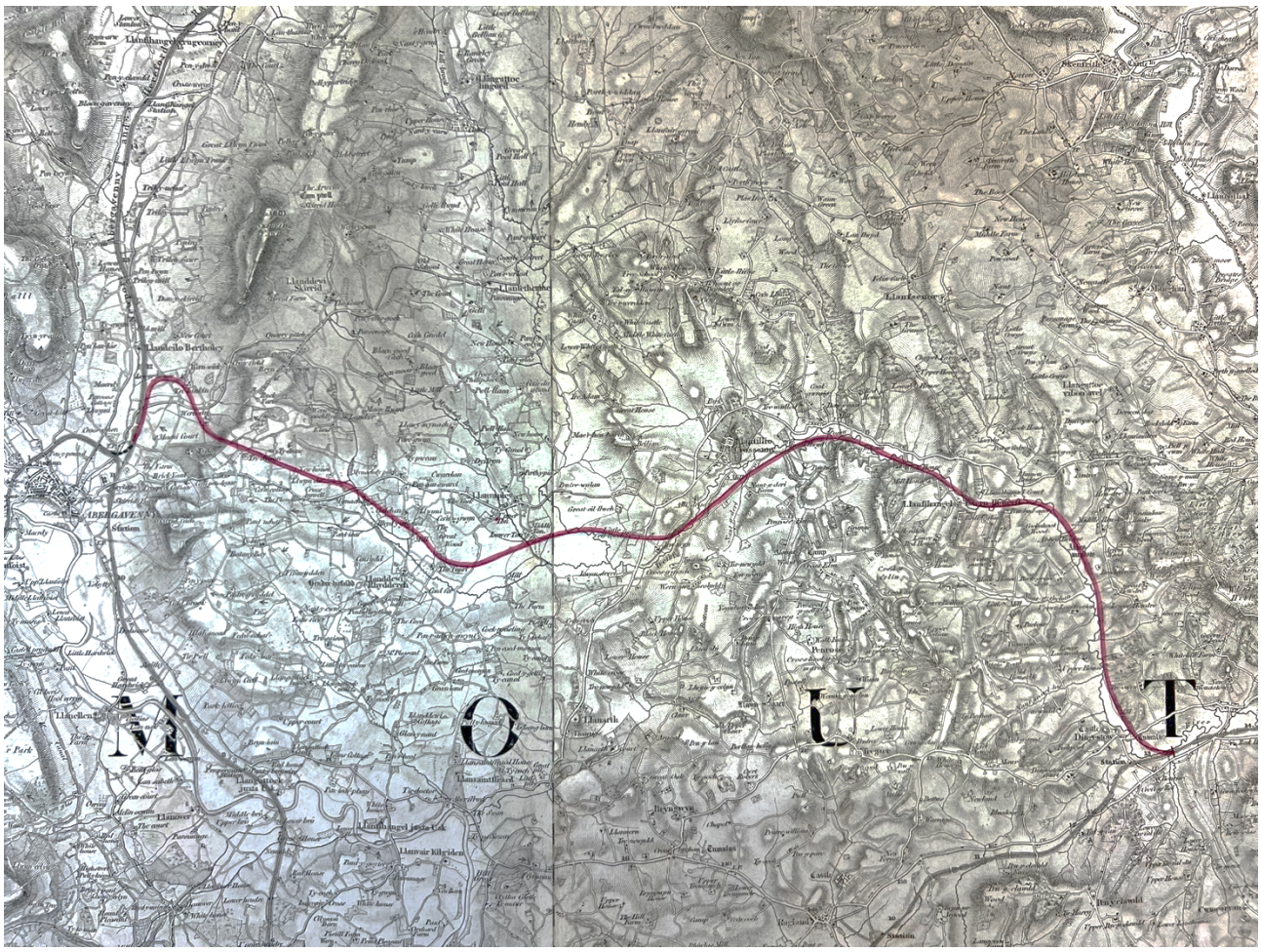

Figure 21: Map of proposed railway from Abergavenny to Monmouth through part of eastern Monmouthshire, 1864.[54]

Another railway going west from Abergavenny to Crickhowell (Figure 22) had been proposed but the Highway Board petition did not support it, considering that it had been designed 'without regard to the interests of the town of Abergavenny and through a district already supplied with Railway accommodation', that there was 'no public or local beneficial advantages, but will cause 'public inconvenience and private injury.'[55] In the event neither railway was built, although both the *Vale of Crickhowell Railway Act, 1864* and the *Abergavenny and Monmouth Railway Act, 1864* were passed by Parliament. Like many other railways, without investment by wealthy industrialists who saw value in the extension of the railway network, such endeavours were unlikely to reach fruition. The *Brecon County Times* had been a strong supporter of the Crickhowell railway, arguing that 'it will be an advantage to have direct communication with Abergavenny, Monmouth, as well as Newport' and vice versa, although by 13th July 1867, the newspaper reported that the company behind the railway was on the verge of pulling out, having not raised sufficient capital by that point and by the 4th April 1868, it was reported that the costs associated with the proposed

[54] *Gwent Archives,* Q/PANDBR/255 Abergavenny and Monmouth Railway Plans
[55] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-190

railway including buying land were rising, the likelihood of the railway being built was 'almost nil.' Thus, the railways to Crickhowell and to Monmouth from Abergavenny never got beyond an early planning stage.[56] Despite this, the support given to the proposals from influential local groups suggest that rail travel was a favoured means of transport at this time. As the next section of this chapter will show, there was less support and sometimes outright opposition to improve and extend roads at the same time. It is not possible to know how local people would have reacted to the building of the two railways as they were not consulted. Neither of these two railways served areas important to the industrial revolution, but the fact that extensive plans had been drawn up at great expense suggests that they were serious even if the money could not be found to execute these plans. The environmental impact of these railways on the local area, as shown in the plans, would have been quite dramatic and may have changed the landscape permanently, although this appears to have not been considered at the time the plans were approved. Given they were not built, it is only possible to speculate on the potential impact these railways would have had.

In other places, there was resistance to the social and environmental change that railways brought. Trains, after all, did bring steam power with the associated noise and visible pollution, into the countryside. The 1896 Royal Commission, which took evidence from many in rural communities in the wake of the agricultural depression that affected rural Wales at the end of the century, recorded that many farmers and landowners felt railways had a negative effect on land use and prices and brought little or no benefit to agricultural producers. There were other issues too. The railways largely replaced the coaching services that had previously provided travel opportunities for those who could afford them. Most of the villages in eastern Monmouthshire were on routes used by coaches and the inns in these villages were dependent on passing trade, given the small population of the villages themselves, a point that will be developed in the next section. Railways were a significant cause of a metabolic rift in the nineteenth century, paving the way for the increased use of fossil fuels, opening national and international markets for food production which had the effect of ending local independence and allowing for population movements on a larger scale than ever before, undermining the connection that had previously been experienced between local people and the environment on which they depended and

[56] The railway to Monmouth did not appear to get beyond the Act of Parliament stage. There are no further reports about progress either in the local media, the estate records or at the Abergavenny Highway Board.

interacted.

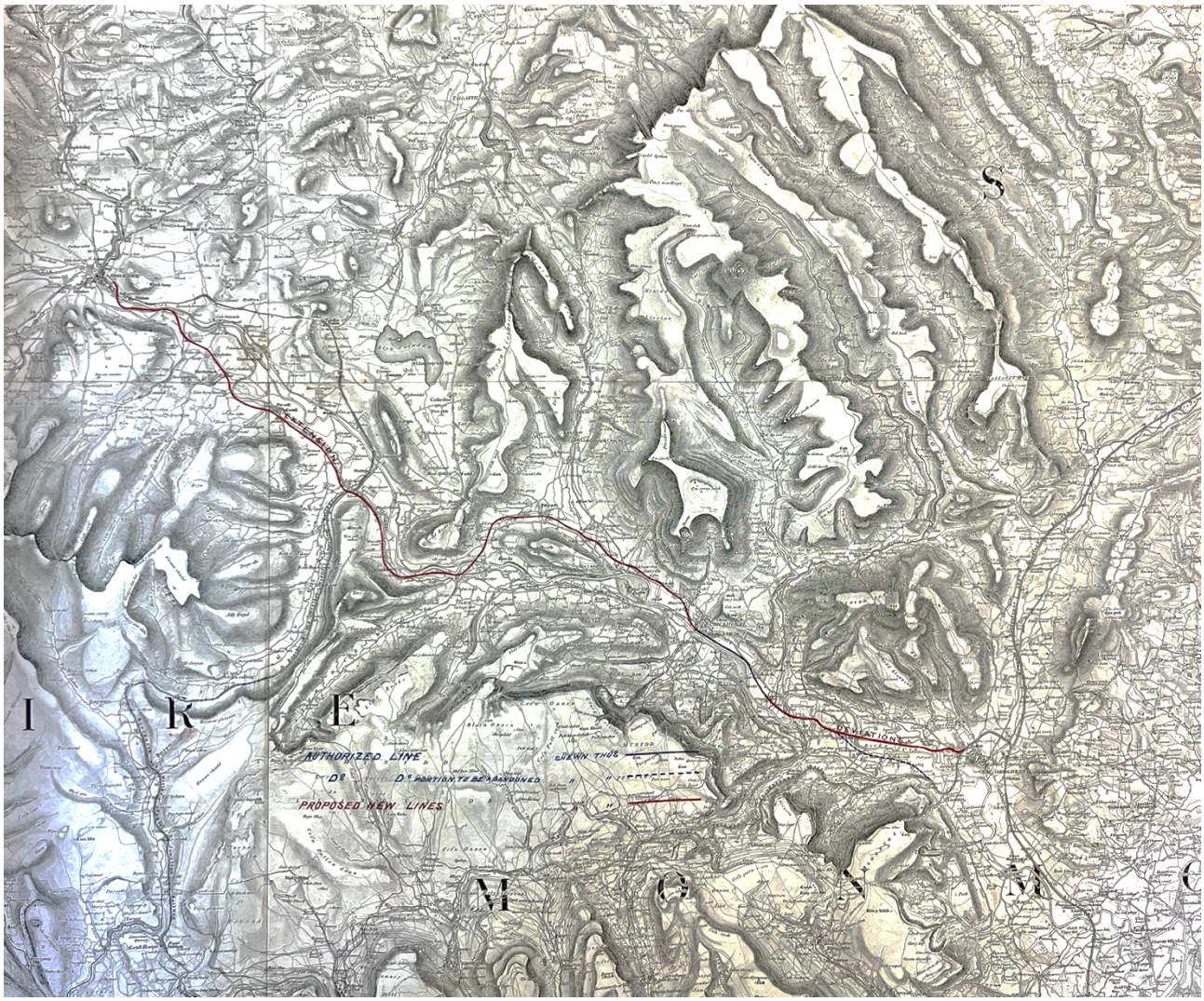

Figure 22 Map of proposed railway from Abergavenny to Crickhowell, through part of eastern Monmouthshire, 1864

3. Roads

Roads were a major factor in the opening of a metabolic rift, although the initial impact of their nineteenth century improvement was less dramatic than that felt by the building of canals and railways as this was building on existing routes. While the canals and railways provided a new level of interconnectivity by the middle of the nineteenth century, it was by road that most people and goods were transported in rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire. Even before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was an increase in road use and the first attempt to deal with the issue and create a system by which roads could be paid for and maintained was the Highways Act, 1555. This made parishes responsible for the upkeep of the roads, while owners of land with an annual value of £50 or above had to supply 'two men with horses or oxen, a cart and tools for repairing highways, to work four consecutive days a year' – and this was increased in 1563 to six

days.[57] Subsequently a continued increase in the use of roads led to new forms of paying for them, and turnpikes, roads paid for by levying a tax on those carrying loads through a particular parish, developed from the mid seventeenth century. An Act of Parliament in 1663 allowed justices in Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in eastern England to levy tolls for users of main roads, an example that was followed in fairly quick succession across England and Wales. The turnpikes were administered by trusts, corporate bodies set up by Acts of Parliament, which borrowed money on the security of expected tolls in order to maintain and improve the existing roads or to build new roads where necessary. Unlike the canals and railways, these trusts had no compulsory purchase power and had to negotiate with the landowners through whose land the roads passed. By the end of the eighteenth century, there was an extensive network of 'Turnpike Roads', newly improved with the help of engineers such as Thomas Telford and John Loudon Macadam, covering many areas in England and Wales. Despite this, the industrialisation of the late eighteenth and especially the early nineteenth century required an even larger investment. Toll gates were erected more widely as a way to achieve this, leading in some areas to protests and resentment. There is an extensive historiography of such protests, especially the 'Rebecca Riots' in areas of south-west Wales in the 1840s, which discusses their motivations and effectiveness.[58] These protests highlighted the way that rural communities had become angry at the imposition of what they saw as unfair taxation that meant they were paying for roads. While they were not centred around the impact on the environment, these demonstrations of anger did represent a resentment at the encroachment of aspects of a new economic system. It was this that connects them to the metabolic rift, as the roads that were at the centre of the protests were enabling the changes that were changing the relationship of people living in rural areas with their local environment.

At the start of the nineteenth century, many roads in eastern Monmouthshire, especially those that were not 'through routes', were 'little more than dirt tracks', used mainly by people on foot, necessitating improvement if they were not to be a barrier to change.[59] To show how much of a barrier, it has been estimated that an eighteenth century round trip from Monmouth to London took a fortnight either going via the lowest bridging point on the River Severn at Gloucester, or by

[57] Wright G.N. *Turnpike Roads* (Shire Publications: Princes Risborough, 1992) p. 3
[58] This includes: Williams D, *The Rebecca Riots* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 1986); Jones D, *Before Rebecca: Popular Protests in Wales 1793-1835* (Allen Lane: London, 1973); Jones R, *Peticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protets in the Rebecca Riots* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 2015)
[59] Boyns T, 'Communication and Commerce', Williams C & Rhiannon William S, *The Gwent County History, Vol IV…* pp. 53-54

ferry over the river to Bristol and Bath. While turnpike roads were common by the middle of the seventeenth century in many parts of England and Wales, attempts to improve roads or provide new ones faced significant barriers and opposition, particularly from sections of the landowning class who did not see them as beneficial. One Monmouthshire estate owner, Valentine Morris of Piercefield House near Chepstow, was, on the other hand, an enthusiastic supporter of road improvement and the extension of turnpikes to pay for them.[60] Promoting the Monmouth Turnpike Bill, 1754 in House of Commons, which was opposed by many of the local landowners, he made the well reported claim there were no roads in Monmouthshire and people travelled 'in ditches'.[61] In 1757, this was extended into a General Turnpike Act for the whole county, again supported by Morris and many of the gentry in Abergavenny. Over the next few years, and often despite opposition from some local landowners, the trust had some success and roads were improved providing travel routes between towns such as Usk, Chepstow and Carleon.[62] The Act allowed the trust to 'widen roads and take in land not near a house up to a distance of one hundred yards from the existing road' although one attempt to improve the road from Raglan to Usk was successfully challenged by a landowner.[63] Highlighting the problem these changes were intending to solve, the Gloucester Journal of 26th April 1757 carried a notice that:

> It is desired by the Carmarthen carriers to London, that the Gentlemen in the Counties of Carmarthen, Brecon and Monmouth, will have roads made passable for wagons, they intending to keep that stage, with wagons, constantly, when the Roads are made sufficient for that purpose.[64]

Which reads as a plea for improvement in the face of local opposition. Unlike the enthusiasm for canals and railways, there was often a reluctance to provide the required investment and most roads were left in a poor state of repair. Another problem was that by the middle of the nineteenth century most of the Turnpike Trusts were in a precarious financial position. It would not be until the early twentieth century developments of tarmac and more efficient internal combustion engines that roads began to see significant investment due to their increasing importance. Nevertheless, roads were essential for shorter journeys and in eastern

[60] Waters I, 'Valentine Morris of Piercefield', *Presenting Monmouthshire* (14: Autumn, 1962) p. 32
[61] Boyns T, 'Communication and Commerce'…pp. 54-55
[62] Waters I, 'Valentine Morris of Piercefield…' p. 32
[63] Waters I, *The Unfortunate Valentine Morris* (Chepstow Society: Chepstow, 1964) p. 13
[64] Glocester (sic) Journal, 26.04.1757,

Monmouthshire the farms and the villages were *only* connected by road and therefore a way to invest in improvements was seen as necessary.[65]

Travel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was prohibitively expensive for most people. A useful example is given by Wright of a journey across southern England:

> Parson Woodforde frequently travelled from Oxford to his home at Ansford, near Castle Cary, Somerset. In 1774 his fourteen-hour journey by post-chaise, which he shares with Coleridge's brother, cost each of them £7 14s 6d at a time when a curates pay was £30 a year, a labourer's one shilling a day.[66]

Despite this, there was enough of a growing demand for travel amongst those wealthy enough to stimulate demand that boosted rural traders in what was known as 'coaching'.[67] The type of trades that profited from being on a coach route included blacksmiths and hospitality. As an example, the turnpike road from Monmouth to Abergavenny via Rockfield, which passed just outside Llandeilo Grysenni and through Llanfable contained six pubs or inns in less than five miles. This was one of two routes between the towns, but the number of places to stay and drink suggests that it was a popular route as such a proliferation of hostelries on a route with a small population would have been unsustainable without attracting travellers. Clearly, there was a benefit for local people who were also able to meet together in these pubs and would have had discussions with those who had travelled from far and wide.

Place	**Pub name**	**Nearest milestone[68]**
Tal y Coed	The Halfway Inn	Monmouth 7
Llandeilo Grysenni	The Hostry	Monmouth 8/Abergavenny 6
Llanfable	Red Hart	Abergavenny 4/5
roadside	The Cock	Abergavenny 4
roadside	Quarryman's Arms	Abergavenny 3/4
Croes Hywel	Plough Inn	Abergavenny 2

'*roadside*' means that the pub was not in a village

Most people living in these villages could not have afforded to use stagecoaches, even though they were *relatively* inexpensive, costing between 3d and 5d per mile depending on the route. The

[65] Perren R, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Products: Farm Gate to Retail Store', Collins E.J.T. (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales VII, 1850-1914 (Part II)* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000) pp. 968-9
[66] Wright G.N. *Turnpike Roads…* pp. 15-17
[67] Bagwell P.S., 'The Decline of Rural Isolation…' p. 32
[68] As indicated by Ordnance Survey map, 6 inch to one mile series, OS Monmouthshire Sheet VII, 1882, 1886

stagecoach was not the only form of travel passing along these increasingly busy roads and the improvements allowed by setting up of turnpike tolls led to an expansion of travel for business by the different types of horse-powered coaches: stage, mail and post. The mail service had been set up in 1784, replacing an earlier less efficient system of individuals using horseback and mail carts that were badly organised and frequently subjected to robbery. The mail coaches were centrally organised by the Royal Mail and carried passengers as well as postal deliveries, running on-time to different specified destinations.[69] The main coaches were more reliable, but also more expensive than the stagecoaches, charging almost double the rate at 6d per mile (baggage extra) and usually only stopped to change horses. Catherine Hutton described a journey taken in 1797 from London to Holyhead, where fresh horses and dinner were waiting for the coach driver and his passengers at the coaching inns along the way.[70] The journey of 282 miles took 48 hours. According to the Salopian Journal of 3rd October 1838, 'The Royal Mail runs every day throughout the year… in 24 hours, almost to the minute, you are in Aberystwyth.'[71] Figure 23 shows just what the improvements meant to journey times. This form of travel, though, was soon to be eclipsed by the much faster and more comfortable railways, which undermined the viability of road coaches and they went into a dramatic and rapid decline. *The Monmouthshire Merlin* on 5th September 1840 carried a short report saying 'in various parts of the country the Public Road Commissioners have found it necessary to reduce the duty on stagecoaches in consequence of their business being so severely injured by railroad travelling.' Rogers suggests that by 1837, 'coaching had reached a remarkable peak of speed and efficiency… but 'by 1842, except as a feeder to the railways, the coach had gone.'[72] This had a knock-on effect on trade for the coaching inns, which had to rely instead on local trade. While road improvements meant there were more individual travellers, some of these inns did not survive and another connection between local people was lost.

[69] Rogers H.C. *Turnpike to Iron Road* (Seeley, Service & Co.: London, 1961) p. 30
[70] *National Library of Wales* NLW MS 19079C, 'Letters from North Wales',
[71] Quoted in https://sublimewales.wordpress.com/practicalities/travel/stage-coach/
[72] Rogers H.C. *Turnpike to Iron Road*… p. 46

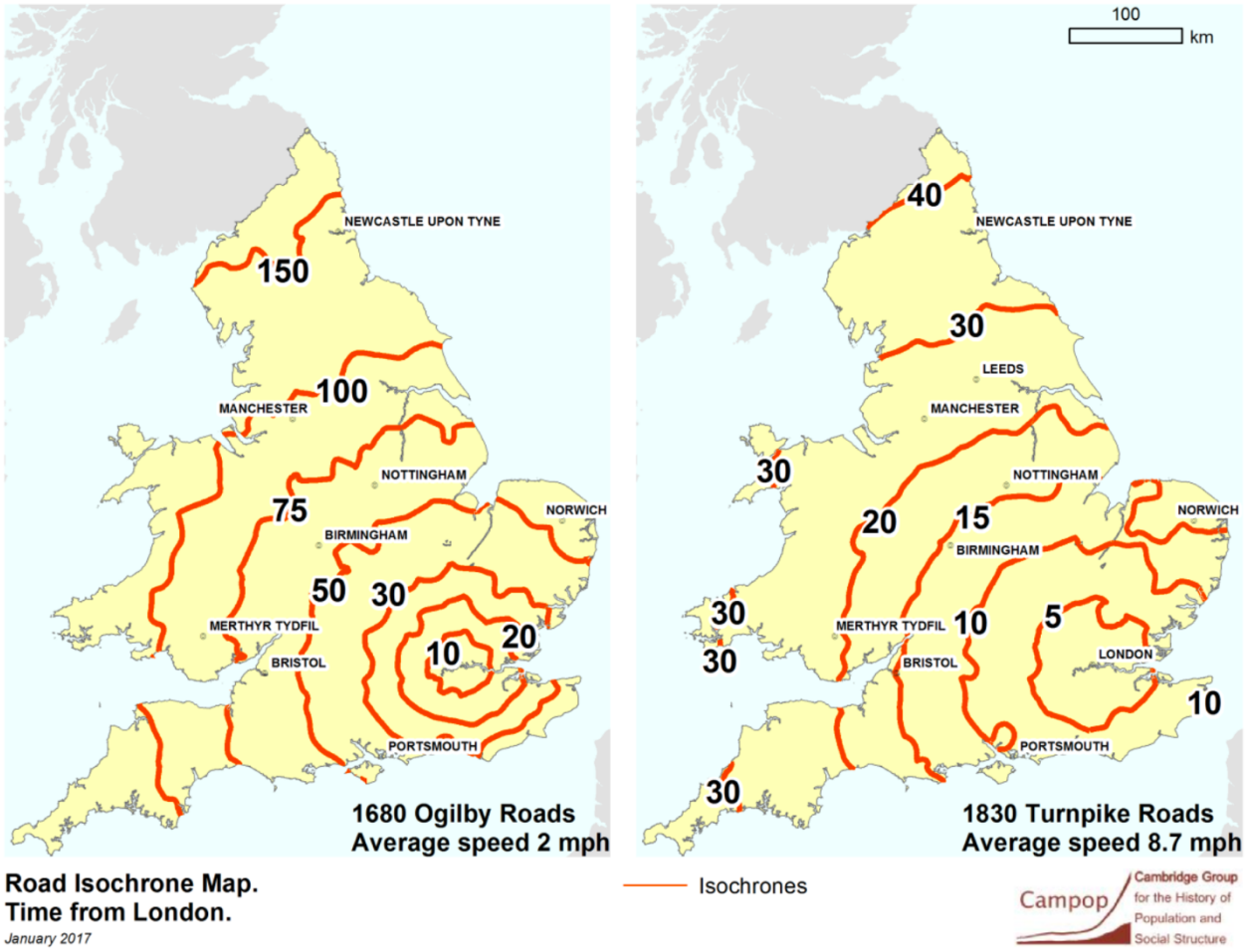

Figure 23: Road journey times in hours comparing 1680 to 1830:[73]

Road improvement was required not only between towns and the transition to more efficient agricultural practices, particularly the movement of fertilisers and the crops produced by higher yields, required better roads to connect the fields and the villages. The growing importance of roads to the developing economy of the nineteenth century is reflected in the legislation passed to ensure their upkeep. The 1835 Highways Act was one attempt to improve the situation and, in some ways, aimed to build on the sixteenth century legislation by reinforcing the duty of parishes to appoint a surveyor who had the jurisdiction to levy a rate to maintain roads.[74] The evidence from later in the century suggests that this was not effective. Certainly, the local roads in eastern Monmouthshire remained very difficult to traverse. Only the roads administered by the Turnpike Trusts saw much improvement and the more lucrative traffic from growing industrial use was more likely to use the canals, tramroads and, later, the railways. Canal tolls were cheaper and so,

[73] Shaw-Taylor L and You X, 'The development of the railway network in Britain 1825-1911', *Cambridge Group for the History of Population:* https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/transport/onlineatlas/railways.pdf (accessed 20.12.23) p.4

[74] Highway Act 1835, 1835 c.50 (Regnal. 5_and_6_Will_4) XVI p.375

in some cases, were railway. Also, the movement of large amounts of heavy materials was definitely easier and faster by railway and even in many cases by canal. Turnpike Trusts lost income and by the 1860s the Acts of Parliament that enabled them were not renewed as the trusts found it impossible to make a profit or keep the roads in a good state of repair.[75] Partly in response to this and the changing situation with regard to travel, The Highways Act, 1862, gave more power to local authorities to improve roads by enabling justices of the peace to divide the county into highway districts formed of a number of parishes and for each parish to elect a waywarden who reported to a local Highway Board.[76] Urban areas which had a Metropolitan Board of Works were not covered by this legislation and neither were areas of south Wales that were included in the earlier Highways (South Wales) Act, 1860. This had been a response to the poor state of the roads in the industrial areas of South Wales. Given that the Rebecca riots, which had taken place not too far away from the valleys, had shown the potential for violent protests against road tolls, the government decided to use other forms of taxation to improve them. The 1860 Act gave county administrations in south Wales the responsibility of raising the money and spending it on improving existing routes and building new ones. Prominent landowner, industrialist and Liberal politician Benjamin Hall had argued in favour of the bill, which he argued would help to solve the 'disgraceful state of the roads [in South Wales], which were entrusted to overseers and surveyors who were perfectly incompetent to their management.'[77] Despite Hall's enthusiasm, the county in which he owned most land, Monmouthshire, was not included in the 1860 Act. The 1862 Highways Act, which did apply to Monmouthshire, went some way to extend the provisions of the South Wales Act to the rest of England and Wales by setting up 'districts' to ensure roads were improved. However, it gave exemptions and that the Act was not welcomed in many areas was indicated by the large number of rural communities across England and Wales using this to apply to set up their own Local Government Boards. Seen as undermining the intention of Act, the exemption was closed by the Local Government, Amendment Act, 1863, which forced an often reluctant rural population to get involved in road improvements, and even worse, to pay a share towards them.

Across eastern Monmouthshire petitions were organised to oppose the setting up of specific Highway Districts and to object to a rural area being part of a board that included communities

[75] According to Wright, the last tollgate stopped working in 1895. Wright G.N., *Turnpike Roads…* p21
[76] Highways Act 1862 (25 & 26 Vict. c. 61)
[77] Debate in the House of Commons debating a committee report of the Highways (South Wales) Bill, 30th April 1851, Vol 116, cc355-9 accessed at https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1851/apr/30/highways-south-wales-bill on 3.8.23

that had little connection between them. For example, addressing 'Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Monmouth' at the General Session in Usk on 17th October 1864, a letter that was signed by some of the villagers of Llanhilleth outlined why they opposed their parish being included in a district:

> the distance between the parish of Llanhilleth and the nearest parish of the District proposed to be joined to is between seven and eight miles from us… we view the proposal as tending to give us much more trouble and inconvenience in managing our roads than would be necessary and also increase our expenditure…

It was not just cost that the petition opposed, though, but also a sense that the highways district was an imposition by a remote authority with little knowledge of the locality:

> supposing we had a heavy fall of snow on the hills which is frequently the case… the presence of the surveyor would be required in a few hours notice, which would be impossible for a person living at so great a distance to attend before the destruction to the roads is completed by the flood, such cases being frequent in the winter time…[78]

In Mahmilad, a few miles east of Llanhilleth, Christopher Cook wrote an angry letter which went along with the petition signed in his parishes.[79] Cook's work as rector at St Illtyd's Church in Mamhilad and also at St Michael's Church at Llanfihangel Pontymoel, about three miles away, would have meant he may personally have benefitted from better roads. He also had four children attending school and he and his family lived less than four miles from Pontypool Road Station which had opened in 1854 providing railway connections to other parts of Wales and many areas of England.[80] Cook may therefore have had reasons to welcome better communications, but he felt that 'the expense of maintenance of our highways would be increased and such expense would occur at a time when the agricultural community is much depressed by unprecedently low prices of corn deficient root and hay crops, and unexampled high cost of labour.' Another objection was the 'antecedent centralising acts of the character of the Act' leading to outcomes that were 'extravagantly expensive in their working and unsatisfactory in their results', making Britain like 'the worst despotic governments of the Continent.' He also complained that the Government was too busy 'addressing, at public meetings in manufacturing districts, the working

[78] *Gwent Archives*, Q/P&M/6, 'Five bundles of petitions from the various parishes against confirmation of provisional order to adopt the Highway Act, 1864'. See appendix B:1, letter/petition dated 1864 from parish of Llanhilleth, viewed at *Gwent Archives* on 4th February 2022

[79] Cook was later famous as being the oldest clergyman in Britain before he retired at the age of 100 in 1925 https://monmouthshireantiquarian.blogspot.com/2020/05/st-illtyds-church-mamhilad.html accessed 9/2/23

[80] The information about his children attending school is from the 1871 census.

and other classes' and passing laws that left 'the fair inference to be drawn… that the greater political power could or ought to be given to the working classes.' It is impossible to know how widespread such resentments were, but Cook clearly felt he was representing others when he warned that the law implied that 'we of the agricultural interest are not capable of maintaining our own highways, and having control of funds produced by ourselves, is a slur and slight upon the agricultural community which could not fail to produce a feeling that all would regret.'[81] While the other petitions from parishes across Monmouthshire were less strident and threatening, they all argued that rural communities, and particularly farmers, should not bear the cost for 'improvements' that they felt were being imposed from an outside authority and without taking into account the wishes of local people. This was a clear example of the middle layers of society, made up of small business people, farmers and traders, fearing a lack of agency over changes that were affecting their lives, changes that those in positions of power argued were beneficial to all. The stability – and remoteness - that was felt to represent a 'traditional' way of life in rural Britain, was no longer possible as transport and travel expanded. The petitions were a clear sign of resistance and opposition to this. These petitions show a sense of disquiet and disconnection from the changes that were taking place by many local people, which road improvement was seen to embody.

The anger demonstrated in of these petitions therefore suggest that some in rural society believed that they were being given a raw deal compared to those living in towns and cities. This was a recurring theme in the development of administrations designed to take on the expanding roles required of the modern economy and state in England and Wales. Rurality was moving from the centre of the economic system to the periphery with a diminishing consideration of local knowledges. For instance, Parr has argued that the 1835 Highway Act that created municipal boroughs 'gave no consideration to surrounding rural areas, despite there being significant economic and social interaction between the two'. Similarly, later nineteenth century legislation in 1888 and 1894, which created county boroughs and urban districts, along with other more recent changes, saw urban areas as a separate entity not a 'focal point of a more extensive unit of administration.'[82] This urban/rural divide in terms of administration, planning and decision making goes some way to explain the somewhat entrenched differences in political allegiance and opinion

[81] *Gwent Archives*, Q/P&M/6, 'Five bundles of petitions from the various parishes against confirmation of provisional order to adopt the Highway Act, 1864'. See appendix B:2, letter/petition dated 17th October 1864 from Mahmilad
[82] Parr, J, 'Local government in England: evolution and long-term trends', *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*. 23 (Dec. 2020), ID 7382.

found between urban and rural areas of Britain, even in the twenty-first century, in spite of their interdependence. This lack of acknowledgement of the importance of the rural economy to the overall health of the urban one is another aspect of developing rift between society and the environment on which it depends. These local government level changes were part of the subsuming of the rural economy into a national economic system that was increasingly dominated by industry in the nineteenth century and has subsequently been overtaken by tertiary sector activities. They reflect a very real rift between the importance of a rural economy and the needs of administration in an urban-centred society, a metabolic rift at the heart of local government. The fears of the farmers and local middle classes were probably increased by the way that the landowners, many of whom were also industrialists, ensured they held on to the levers of power and maintained their wealth in spite of the momentous changes that were taking place.

Despite the objections and petitions, Highways Boards did convene with the aim of surveying and improving local road connections. One covering most of eastern Monmouthshire was set up in January 1865 at Abergavenny, and at the initial meeting the chair was elected, local farmer Thomas Watkins, while waywardens were appointed from each of the local parishes. Also in attendance at the first meeting was Lord Llanover. Despite the fear that farmers and the middle class of rural society were losing agency, they were clearly over-represented on this board. A minute of the Abergavenny Highway Board in 1870, for instance, shows the names and occupations of incoming parish waywardens. Sixteen were farmers, one a corn dealer and one a 'gentleman'.[83] This choice of representatives from the local parishes to sit on the Highway Board undermined its effectiveness in improving local roads. The board met monthly and appointed surveyors to report on the state of the roads locally, recommend repairs and estimate the costs involved. At the sixth meeting of the Abergavenny Highway Board, held on 16th June 1865, the agreed survey of the roads in each parish in the district was considered and the report in the minutes provides a detailed description of the length of the road network that was under the board's jurisdiction and the state of repair of the roads in each parish. The surveyor also provided an estimate of the costs of repairing the roads. Quite a number of smaller local roads were described as 'little used' and these were clearly not a priority for the Board. Some were in a good state of repair, although a large number of roads were in need of improvement. The report by the District surveyor and his assistant shows that the board was in charge of 149 miles, 72 furlongs

[83] *Gwent Archives* CRBHB1, 'Abergavenny Highway Board Records, 1864-1906', p. 34

and 93 yards of road.[84] The report suggested a number of remedies. Llanddewi Rhydderch, for example, had a total of 10 miles, 8 furlongs and 55 yards of road surveyed and the surveyor remarked that some of the roads that were 'most used' were in best repair, but

> the whole want something done to them such as culvert repaired, sidings and slopes done, hedges put down and drawn in and trees pruned and some required mowing & c. The other roads in this parish are such as may be expected in an unlevel county where materials are of inferior quality and expensive to procure.[85]

Low expectations aside, the costs of any repairs were, according to the board's minutes of 28th July 1865, to be based on the parish surveyors' estimates, paid for in the first instance by the board's treasurer and then by each parish according to their poor rate.[86] Despite the scale of the problems reported, the board was unable to deal with any but the most urgent repairs as the amount that the parishes paid to the board in July and September totalled £534 10s.[87] The Turnpike Trust still operated the main roads in Monmouthshire and the *National Gazetteer* of 1868, described them as 'numerous and well kept' including the one from Monmouth via Llandeilo Gresynni to Abergavenny.[88] This road was described in 1770 as a 'good stone causeway.'[89] The surveyor's report for the village of Llanfable suggests that a century later this road (Road No. 1 in the report quoted below) remained in good condition but, away from the turnpikes, the roads were far less passable:

> The road No. 1 from the North boundary to the village is the principal road for traffic and is in a fair state of repair – some hedge work plashing and some trees should be cut down and one or two additional culverts should be made. No.2 is a narrow road leading to Ton Farm not much used – very narrow deep and fences high – No. 3 road is in very bad repair deep narrow wet and rough – hedges almost meeting – little used except cattle &c.[90]

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[84] *Gwent Archives* CRBHB1, 'Abergavenny Highway Board Records, 1864-1906', p.28-29: Furlongs and Yards were part of the imperial system of measurement.
[85] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906, p.28
[86] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906, *Gwent Archives*: minutes of Abergavenny District Highways Board, 28.7.1865
[87] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906, p.30
[88] The National Gazetteer: A Topographical Dictionary of the British Islands (1868) available at: http://www.mongenes.org.uk/monmouthshiremap.html (accessed 31.7.23)
[89] Atkinson M & Baber C, *The Growth and Decline of the South Wales Iron Industry, 1760-1880: An Industrial History* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1987) p.39
[90] *Gwent Archives*, CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906: 'Abergavenny Highway District Minute Book' for 16th June 1865, p.28.

Road 'No. 3' is known as *Ty Tac Lane* and runs between Llanfable and the neighbouring village of Llanddewi Rhydderch. As well as this connection, there were two houses on this road as well as numerous fields which were tenanted by different farms, but apparently none of this generated much traffic given its description as 'little used except cattle & c.'[91] Most people in rural villages in the nineteenth century did not travel far and had no need or, it appears, desire to do so. As Bagwell notes the 'dramatic improvements in accessibility were much discussed and keenly appreciated by the small number of property owners and professional people of the countryside but they did very little to change most villagers' concept of distance.'[92] This might help explain the continued reluctance of the farmers and villagers to pay for road improvements, which led in February 1871 to 'Mr Morgan' of Coed Morgan to object to the widening of Ty Tac lane (road no. 3 in the above surveyor's report) on the grounds of cost. He stated that the parishes of Llanfable and Llanddewi Rhydderch were 'willing to put the road into repair and build a bridge over the Midlas Brook, but not to go to further expense.' The resolution at the meeting appears to have been to over-ride these objections, as 'after a long discussion the Surveyor was directed to apply to Mr. Herbert (of Clytha), Mr John Watkins and Mr Carlisle to give land required for the widening'. [93] Clearly the Board had the power to direct the Surveyor, although any land given by the landowners had a minimal effect as even today this is still a narrow lane, although there a bridge over the brook. It was this type of maintenance that the Board was mainly concerned with, often meeting a local reluctance to pay the costs. In January 1870, there was a dispute about a footbridge near Llanfable over the River Trothy/Afon Troddi that was partly in Abergavenny Board district but partly the responsibility of Monmouth & Skenfrith Highway Board, as this covered the adjacent village of Llandeilo Grysenni. However, the minutes note that 'the parishioners of Llanvapley did not wish to have the bridge repaired.'[94] The reason for this isn't given but perhaps they no longer valued the link, which was travelling away from the town of Abergavenny. If a journey to Llandeilo Grysenni was required, there was the turnpike road that provided a better route. The bridge was not replaced, and the Abergavenny Board wrote to the Monmouthshire & Skenfrith Board to say that they were 'responsible for any damage that result therefrom.'[95] Such petty disputes suggest that the Highway Boards were not only reluctant to pay for necessary repairs, but also not able to get different villages to co-operate where this was necessary. Also,

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[91] *Gwent Archives* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906: 'Abergavenny Highway District Minute Book' for 16th June 1865, p.28
[92] Bagwell P.S. 'The Decline of Rural Isolation'… p.31
[93] *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 'Report in Abergavenny Highway Board', 21st February 1871
[94] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906, p. 204
[95] *Gwent Archives*, CRBHB1, Abergavenny Highway Board records, 1864-1906, p. 199

footbridges were seen as being of less importance than road maintenance, as there was a new bridge built over a brook on the main (Turnpike) road through the village in summer 1886 at a much greater cost.[96] Once again, the needs of long-range travellers were prioritised over those of local people, undermining their connection with the land on which many of them worked and depended.

Few new roads were built in the area. The only one of note was on the turnpike between Abergavenny and Monmouth, where the owners of Llantilio Court had a road built to the north of the village in c.1820.[97] In general, the roads in the area followed well-established routes, often winding around fields and sometimes going up steep inclines in order provide a more direct connection to a farm or avoid areas prone to flooding in the winter. This left a situation where even the more main roads through the area were difficult to navigate, while the smaller lanes were narrow, with overgrown hedges and poor surfaces. One aspect of Thompson's moral economy was the traditional *right* to access footpaths connecting villages and farms, but increasingly there were barriers, which included hedges and fences. An example of the way that rights of way could lead to disputes was shown in the village of Llanfable, when in 1864 Richard Woodward was charged with 'removal of a style and fencing up a public footpath' that led through the churchyard. Woodward claimed in court that the path was a private one and that there had previously been 'bad feeling' between him and Thomas Jones who made the complaint, while Jones said: 'I have lived at Llanvapley for fifty-one years, and during that period the path in question was always a public one…' The case was adjourned to give Woodward's solicitor time to prove it was a private path.[98] The economic benefits of the new systems of production and consumption that transport enabled were divisive in themselves, and while small disputes like this may have happened throughout history, they became more commonplace in the nineteenth century. Busier roads were also becoming a physical barrier to those who relied on short distance travel by foot, just like the canals and railways. In this case, their improvement allowed for a more symbolic societal rift, as transportation of goods and people, by canal, rail or road, passed through a countryside in which those able to travel had less involvement. Nineteenth century road improvements also paved the way for increasingly privatised and individualised forms of transportation that were to have an even bigger impact on the rural environment, creating

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[96] *Gwent Archives,* CRBHB1 C11 Tenders & Specifications: detailed report on rebuilding Llanvapley Bridge,
[97] Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Llantilio Crossenny, *Monmouthshire County Council* (2012) https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/08/Llantilio-Crossenny-CAA-Main-Body-nov14.pdf (accessed 3.8.23) p. 11
[98] *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 'Rights of Way dispute', 6th Feb 1864, p.3

pollution and increasing carbon emissions from cars, vans, lorries, agricultural vehicles and other traffic. These improvements began in the 1820s, when John Loudon Macadam invented a crushed stone method that, while still prone to rutting when used by heavy vehicles, had the effect of preparing routes that later were able to be improved far more substantially with the early twentieth century development of tarmac. This was produced using a combination of (coal or oil derived) tar and stone and allowed even heavier and faster vehicles once the internal combustion engine had been developed.

Transport itself was therefore a component of the kind of rift between society and the environment described by Marx, but it also was an essential part of a wider economy. The movement of people and goods and raw materials to and from the mass production base, which of course included the mass production of food, was essential to the new system. Interrelated therefore with the changes in production and transportation was the development of a consumer society. It is impossible to separate these vital aspects of nineteenth century change and they also all contributed to the growing divide between how people lived and the environment on which they depended. The next chapter will look at how a consumer society developed and how it came to dominate in rural eastern Monmouthshire.



Figure 24: The railway between Abergavenny and Pontypool Road as it passed through eastern Monmouthshire

Chapter 4: Developing a rural consumer society

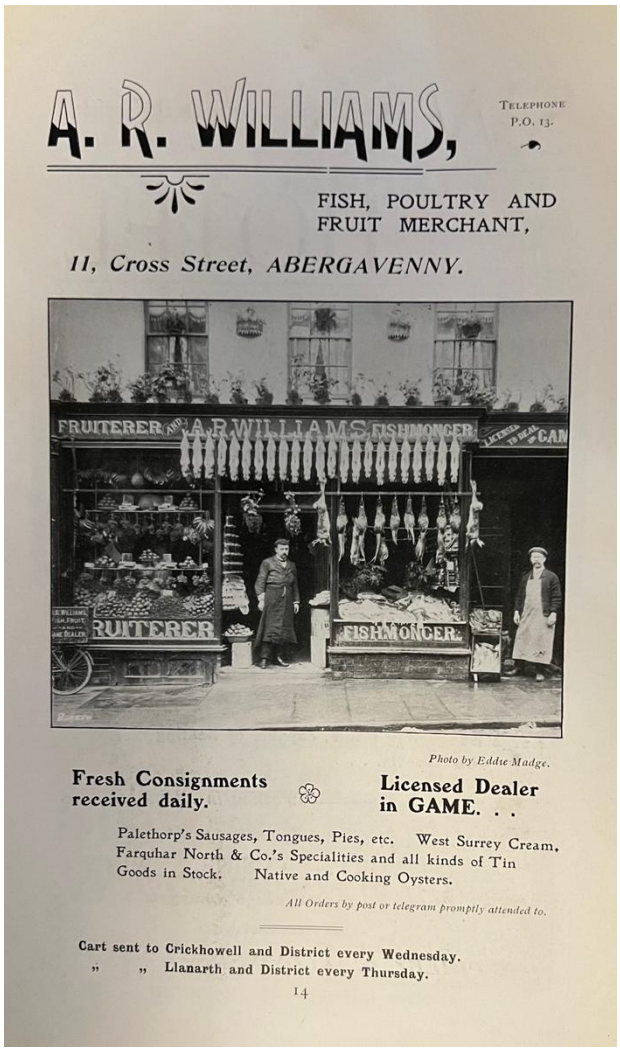
> Arriving in Abergavenny on an early-closing day the visitor might be pardoned if he jumped to the conclusion that it was a remarkably quiet place; but change the scene to Tuesday, when the country folk come in to do their week's shopping, and all is different; there is a long row of vehicles all up the main street, and the pavement is thronged with farmers and their women-folk, to each of whom Abergavenny is the hub of the world.[1]

The development of a consumer society had a massive environmental impact which is still felt two centuries later. The question is, did this include opening a metabolic rift and if so, how? This chapter will consider various aspects of the increasing dependence of rural people on being consumers for all their needs, replacing their previous connection with food production and, in turn, with their interaction with the local environment. To produce food requires a knowledge and understanding of sustainable soil use. To consume simply requires a means of exchange, money. The locality that forms the main case study for this thesis changed from being largely self-sustaining and self-sufficient and containing a number of trades whose customers were other villagers or local farmers, to having a growing interdependence on retail for every aspect of life. Many of the new technologies and inventions that were produced on a growing scale in factories in industrialised Britain and elsewhere required a mass market and, as will be shown below, the people of eastern Monmouthshire were customers for these goods too. The production was competitive, and this led to overproduction, where waste was inevitable. Even in the nineteenth century, the need for consumers to be repeat customers so that retailers could stay in business led to new advertising techniques and methods of enticing sales, including an emphasis on changing fashions. This system of waste, based on increasing exploitation of natural resources, where scarcity increases the cost and value of goods, was driven by the division between consumption and production inherent in the theory of the metabolic rift. Consumerism was essential to the development of the nineteenth century economy and according to some orthodox economic theorists was a success, providing for the demands of consumers in an increasingly wealthy society. It is important that this perspective is challenged through the lens of environmentalism as we face up to the realities of the crisis being faced in the twenty-first century.

Abergavenny like many other towns around Britain, became a significant retail venue, with links to a much wider area. Eastern Monmouthshire was part of this wider area and the transport

[1] Burrow E.J. 'Abergavenny: The Gate of Wales', *The Official Handbook to Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Usk and Raglan* (No. 18 of Burrow's "Royal" handbooks, 1903) p.46

developments, including a canal, railways and better roads and that were described in Chapter Three were important in enabling people and goods to get to Abergavenny. The town was within easy reach of the industrialising and more populous valleys, especially after the railway to Merthyr was built in the 1850s, enabling the growth of a retail sector serving a much larger catchment than just that of the town itself. This is reflected in the breadth of the retail businesses that advertised in the 1903 guide from which the above quote was taken. A small number of adverts in the guide were for businesses in other local towns, and one was for a tourist hotel in England, but of the 62 that advertised businesses in Abergavenny, 11 were for food outlets, mainly for butchers or fishmongers and poulterers, and the rest were spread over 27 different categories (see Appendix 20 – spreadsheet analysis of Burrows 1903 Handbook of Abergavenny). Many of the adverts were aimed at attracting a rural clientele, including the one for A.R. Williams, 'fishmonger and poulterer', who advertised that 'a cart' was sent to Crickhowell and Llanarth once a week (see Figure 25). This shows that the town was connected to a larger area that contained rural villages by the end of the nineteenth century. The population of this area had started to embrace consumerism and this led to a growth of retail. Pigot's 'directory for Abergavenny', for example, listed only 14 shopkeepers in 1830, increasing to 38 by 1845.[2] Like similar towns all over England and Wales, Abergavenny also had a weekly market and regular 'country fairs', which attracted people from a wide geographical area, many of whom came to frequent the shops as well.[3] As well as this connection between the rural hinterland and the market town, where people travelled to


A. R. WILLIAMS,

TELEPHONE P.O. 13.

FISH, POULTRY AND FRUIT MERCHANT,

11, Cross Street, ABERGAVENNY.

Photo by Eddie Madge.

Fresh Consignments received daily.

Licensed Dealer in GAME. . .

Palethorp's Sausages, Tongues, Pies, etc. West Surrey Cream, Farquhar North & Co.'s Specialities and all kinds of Tin Goods in Stock. Native and Cooking Oysters.

All Orders by post or telegram promptly attended to.

Cart sent to Crickhowell and District every Wednesday.
" " Llanarth and District every Thursday.

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Figure 25: Advert in Burrow's Royal Handbook, Guide to Abergavenny… (1902) p.14

[2] *Gwent Archives*: LIBRARY/7, 579 *Pigot's Directory for Monmouthshire*, 1830 and 1845

[3] Chartres J.A., 'Country Tradesmen' in Mingay G.E., *The Victorian Countryside…* p. 305

Abergavenny to buy and sell goods and produce, 'local' shops opened in every village in eastern Monmouthshire, further expanding the reach of and dependence on consumerism.

This chapter will explore the growth of the society that developed because of this, starting with an examination of the historiography before using a range of primary source materials to demonstrate some aspects of how the process worked here. The development of a consumer society was a fundamental aspect of the changing relationship between human society and the environment. Benson suggests that the first problem in a study of the development of consumerism is that 'there is still no agreed way of defining, and identifying, a consumer society' and goes on to highlight some of the difficulties historians have had in trying to do so.[4] The over-riding concern of this thesis is to consider the development of consumerism in the context of undermining the knowledge and relationship between nature and the people who at the start of the century were part of an overwhelmingly rural Britain. Prior to the development of industry, people produced food on a subsistence or semi-subsistence basis, and what 'luxury goods' there were tended to be only available to the very wealthy. While the economic and social formation that this was based on was divisive, exploitative, and based on unfair distribution, to feed themselves and their families, most people had to know about, understand and work in tune with the land, soils and local environment. By the end of the nineteenth century, the growth of consumerism meant that rural life was subsumed by the interests of the businesses and trades in a predominantly urban society. This was part of a developing metabolic rift.

The consumer society developed on the basis of a division between production and consumption. Shops became an important part of people's way of life introducing many to a different economic reality in which even those involved in producing commodities depended on retailers to be able to acquire these products. This had wider implications including that the countryside was reinterpreted as a place of tranquillity and leisure rather than work and production – a vital component in the commodification of leisure time and the development of tourism. Eastern Monmouthshire played a central in this. Countryside and rurality became compared favourably to the noise and pollution of the towns and cities, in the eighteenth-century artistic form of the picturesque and similarly in the nineteenth century arts and crafts movement. These helped promote a different image of rurality as representing the natural, traditional (and sustainable) remnant of the past, and something else to consume. Shops, then, were just one, but the most direct, manifestation of consumerism in a century that saw its expansion to encompass most

[4] Benson J, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (Longman: London, 1994)

aspects of people's lives. In the industrialising areas of Monmouthshire, those working for wages in the steel works and coal mines were reliant on shops to provide their needs as they were no longer food producers. Earlier, the enclosures had largely deprived those working on the land of a direct relationship with the produce of their labour but when people moved to the towns and pit villages, their employment as factory workers and miners meant they no longer had access to land or time for growing food or keeping animals. Trade unionist and Labour Party pioneer Edmund Stonelake's autobiography describes the conditions of working class people in the west of the county, where 'at the pits it was a ten hour day, except Saturday, which was an eight hour day', although the need to increase pay meant many worked twelve hours or more.[5] Working these hours meant workers became dependent on spending their wages on the food they needed to sustain themselves as they had no time for anything else. Life was also changing in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire as the increasingly industrialised agriculture was leading to working conditions and regulated hours that replicated those in the cities and, as described above, the population were buying what they needed from shops. By the end of the century, agricultural labourers and their farmer employers were as dependent on retailers and being consumers for the food they needed as the factory worker in the town or city.

1. Consumerism: supply, demand and expansion

A recognition that consumerism has had a detrimental effect on the environment and is at least partially to blame for some of the ways that humans have adversely affected the earth's system has, as Glickman points out, undermined what was a dominant historical perspective that emphasised its positive outcomes. For Glickman, the environmental movement has created a new category of historical analysis, which like others will soon be 'assimilated into existing fields.' A recognition that the younger generation in North America and Europe are increasingly working and living in a situation of precarity, means that earlier narratives that see 'consumption as either liberation or as a ground of resistance' are no longer valid.[6] Consumer society created the conditions for the exponential expansion of production that created the global economy based on a system of inefficiency and waste, built-in obsolescence and processes dependent on increasing use and dependency on fossil fuels. Crucially to this thesis, it separated production and a necessary concern for environmental sustainability from consumption. How this happened has

[5] Stonelake E, *The Autobiography of Edmund Stonelake* (Mid Glamorgan County Council: Bridgend, 1981) p. 19
[6] Glickman, L.B. 'From the History of Consumption to the History of Capitalism (a review of Frank Trentman, *Empire of Things: How we Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, New York: Harper Collins, 2016)' in *History Workshop Journal* (89, 2020) p. 274

been the subject of some debate amongst historians and while it is difficult not to agree with Glickman, that much of this based on an outdated perspective, it is where the section will start.

McKendrick believes consumers stimulated demand as a trigger for the manufacturing expansion from the mid eighteenth century onwards, and in doing so changed the 'attitude and thought', 'prosperity and standards of living' of most of the population, who had to develop a range of new skills. This is a historical narrative that sees consumerism as liberation. His argument was that a subsidiary industry emerged based on marketing and promotion of goods and services on offer in order to drive demand and change the habits of the prospective consumers, prompting a concurrent significant change in ethical thinking and legal practices. This change, for McKendrick, was centred in London, which was unique in both size and the importance it played socially, economically, and politically, a centralisation which helped when new forms of trade developed, stimulating a wider demand for everything from tea, coffee and sugar to new fashionable clothes and shoes. Consumerism was thus a 'top down' development and once the expanding middle class that emerged from the trade and associated legal, financial and other services particularly from the eighteenth century onwards looked to create an identity, it differentiated itself by adopting new fashions and forms of behaviour, such as frequenting coffee and tea houses. Once these fashions became accepted amongst the wealthy, they also, according to this view, tended to diffuse (or 'drip-down') to the rest of society. These new fashions required people to work in retail and hospitality and thus provided job opportunities and introduced 'marked changes into so many people's lives'. Socially, this was seen as having wide-ranging consequences, allowing access to a much wider range of goods and services to the whole population, who were only limited by their ability to pay for them.[7] Similarly, while the wealthy in eighteenth century England and Wales, the large landowners and industrialists, played a major role in creating fashions and trends on which consumerism depended, Brewer sees them as increasingly 'the top end of a large market rather than the market *tout court*' and so transformed 'the relationship between producers, distributers and consumers.'[8] Not just the landowning industrialists, but everyone played multiple roles as the separation between producing and consuming became entrenched. There is much in this analysis that helps with an understanding of processes in the eighteenth century, although this version of the 'trickle down' economic theory does not really explain the emergence of consumerism.

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[7] McKendrick N, 'Introduction. The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England' in McKendrick N, Brewer J, Plumb J.H., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (Europa: London, 1982) pp. 2-5

[8] Brewer J, 'Commercialisation and Politics', in McKendrick N, Brewer J and Plumb J.H., *The Birth of a Consumer Society…* p.198

McKendrick and Brewer's argument depends on the defusal of demand taking place throughout society, based on increasing opportunity, which as Margairaz argues, was 'brutally at odds' with the 'frugality of rural food habits' where luxury tastes were certainly not widespread.[9] As the analysis of those living in eastern Monmouthshire that follows later in this chapter shows, only a very few wealthy people had time or money to develop such tastes in the nineteenth century, and their example was not one that others could follow.

While other historians, such as Fine and Leopold, note that the fashion created by the wealthy led other people to want the items, the inability of most to get them except through the purchase or gifting of 'cast offs' meant that they did not help create a demand for increased production. However, this 'cast-off' fashion culture is likely to have helped undermine rural domestic production, where clothes had been made by a village dress or shoemaker, who were unlikely to be able to keep up with the changing fashions. The census analysis of eastern Monmouthshire shows a decline in the number of tailors, shoe- and dress- makers.[10] Fine and Leopold argue that mass production came before demand, based on large-scale production of 'homogenised goods' followed by the creation of demand for these goods, through advertising, media, and other types of marketing.[11] This will be further explored in section 3 of this chapter. The development of manufacture and trade depended on the expansion of the consumer market based on the separation of production and consumption. It was also based on the separation of the producers from the product of their labour, a central part of the Marxist concept of alienation and also at the heart of the theory of metabolic rift.

Another historian who has analysed early production, Thirsk, argues that the development of consumerism in the sixteenth- and seventeenth- century started with small-scale production of non-essential commodities in 'scattered and undistinguished communities' which stimulated 'economic energies that filtered through to the very heart of the national economy, making it beat faster and more strongly.' The tools required to produce clothes were available from the sixteenth century and cottage industries helped increase production.[12] Although this did not generate much income for those involved in the production of small items, Thirsk gives the examples of 'toys, button, pins, or lace', she argues it did make the difference between 'a precarious existence and a

[9] Margairaz D, 'City and Country: Home, Possessions and Diet, Western Europe 1600-1800' in Trentmann F, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (OUP, Oxford, 2012) p. 193
[10] Wales Census, Monmouthshire 1841-1901.
[11] Fine B and Leopold E, 'Consumerism and the Industrial Revolution', *Social History* (15:2, May 1990) pp. 166- 167
[12] Dyer C and Jones R, *Farmers, Consumers, Innovators: The World of Joan Thirsk* (University of Hertfordshire Press: Hatfield, 2016) p. 121

modicum of comfort.' From relative 'modest beginnings projects' she argues that there was an unprecedented diversification of agriculture and industry, which embraced 'not only the nobility and gentry and the substantial English yeomen, but also included humble peasants, labourers and servants as well'.[13] Weinzierl, has argued that Thirsk, while righty emphasising how production preceded demand, exaggerated the extent of the development as 'far too optimistic and harmonizing, especially for the sixteenth century' and cites factors such as a lack of spending power, real poverty and lack of any opportunities to use or access retail venues that were, until the middle of the nineteenth century at the earliest, mainly concentrated in towns and cities. It wasn't until the latter part of the nineteenth century that consumerism really expanded.[14] The census shows that small-scale trades supplying local (village) needs existed across eastern Monmouthshire during the early part of the century and it wasn't until later that shops opened in most villages. The table below is from an analysis of the census data of the villages in eastern Monmouthshire and shows a significant decline during the latter half of the nineteenth century in the types of trade that helped produce clothes for those living there.[15]

	1841	*1871*	*1901*
Shoemakers	19	12	5
Dressmakers	9	19	6
Tailors	7	5	2*

*plus two people listed as shirtmakers rather than tailors.

While the change may have taken place significantly later than proposed by Thirsk, it does appear that these villages went from being largely self-sufficient to becoming part of a wider consumer society during this fairly short period. There were some benefits, as mass production did allow consumers to have more choice and availability through local retail was part of destroying what Marx described as 'the isolation of village life', the development of a consumer society that

[13] Thirsk J, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1978) pp. 8-9

[14] Weinzierl M, 'review of Thirsk J, *Economic Policy and Projects…*', *The Journal of Modern History* (51:4, 1979)

[15] From Census data of Llanwytherin, Llanfable, Llanddewi Rhydderch, Llandeilo Grysenni, Llanarth, Llanellen and Goytre for 1841, 1871, 1901. The full analysis is in the appendices. The other local village, Llanofer was excluded because of the landowner's attempt to retain at least some of the features of the pre-capitalist village life, which is discussed below.

included farming areas like eastern Monmouthshire, was key to the growing separation between the people living there and their local environment.[16]

The changing nature of production that required the development of mass consumerism also affected how what was being produced was valued. This is another important aspect of the theory of metabolic rift as it explains why when people became consumers, they lost a connection with the processes that produced the things they consumed. In earlier economic systems, only those who were at the top of society were able to be so detached from the production process, for instance the Kings, Emperors, and landlords whose luxury lifestyles involved expropriating what they needed from those who produced it. The development of industrial capitalism, which as explained in Chapter two encompassed agricultural production too, made this different. Marx described the changing nature of attitudes towards production in consumer society as 'commodity fetishism', a concept explained by Harvey using the purchase of a lettuce as an example.[17] In this market exchange, there is a *hidden* relation between the consumer and those whose labour helped produce the lettuce and get it to the shop, but the consumer has no knowledge about this labour or the labourer. This is because the 'highly complicated systems of exchange' mean that it is impossible for the consumer to have any such knowledge, and this affects how they see the relationship:

> you cannot, for example, figure out in the supermarket whether the lettuce has been produced by happy labourers, miserable labourers, slave labourers, wage labourers or some self-employed peasant.[18]

The dislocation between the producers and consumers could not exist outside of the type of alienated market exchange central to capitalist relations of production, which is thus dependent on consumers *not knowing* about how food (and anything else) is produced. It makes the purchase of the goods the only aspect of importance in terms of ownership and control, an aspect of alienation between the producers and the products they help to make. Capitalism transformed value from the pre-capitalist 'use-value' into 'exchange-value'. Gurney notes that 'many literary and cultural critics have found the notion of 'commodity fetishism' very useful and this includes those looking at how advertisers used the idea of the commodity as possessing a 'mystical or

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[16] The Marx quote is from Marx K, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' (New English Version) in Draper H, *The Adventures of the Communist Manifesto* (Haymarket: Chicago, 2020) p. 123. Draper translates the word *idiotismus* in the original German text as more similar to the English word *isolation.* In other translations the word *idiocy* has been used, but the German word for that is *idiote.* The meaning of the two words is clearly different and as Draper argues the use of the word *idiocy* changes and undermines the original meaning.

[17] Marx K, *Capital Volume One…* pp. 81-96

[18] Harvey D, *A Companion to Marx's Capital…* pp. 39-40

'phantasmagorical' nature.[19] While this may be alienating in terms of buying goods manufactured by labour in a factory, it also explains why there is so little understanding of the nature of the production of food. This is at the heart of the concept of a metabolic rift and is why the development of consumer-based society on which such alienation is based is so important to this thesis.

In Chapter 1, the difference in agency between different sections of society was explored, but in terms of the division between production and consumption there is an even bigger divide. The early twentieth century philosopher Lukacs commented that commodity fetishism is 'a specific problem of our age, of modern capitalism' where what is produced is alien to the producer in a process known as reification.[20] Food is thus taken for granted, something that appears in the shops in order to be purchased without consideration of the processes that enabled it to exist. As Kohan notes, 'the use of the terms 'fetished' or 'alienated' assumes that there are autonomous social subjects who suffer a loss of their autonomy, their rationality, their capacity to plan social relations democratically and their control of the conditions of their own existence.'[21] The subsequent changing relationship between producer and what they were producing led to a situation where everyone, including the farmers and labourers who were directly involved in growing food and keeping animals, became consumers and a part of a much larger economic system driven by seemingly mysterious market forces over which the producer has as little control or agency as the consumer. This new social relationship fundamentally altered everything about rural life and was fundamental to undermining knowledge and concern with husbandry and sustainable farming practices. Provision of food was reduced to a value system that was remote and increasingly dependent on international commodity markets and competition, which also meant that what and how food was produced had no link to the producer except in terms of income, which in the long-term has been disastrous in terms of the environment. The other sections in this chapter aim to show how consumerism developed and affected the relationships in eastern Monmouthshire.

Consumerism was largely about expanded production and new markets for goods and that had previously not been available or known. To generate a demand for such items required promotion and marketing as explored in section 3 below, but these new goods included many that relied on the development of colonisation and empire, which in turn depended on the development of

[19] Gurney P, *The Making of Consumer Culture in Modern Britain* (Bloomsbury: London, 2017) p.6
[20] Lukacs G, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Merlin: London, 1971) p. 84
[21] Kohan N, 'Postmodernism, commodity fetishism and hegemony', *International Socialism* (105: 2005) p.141

modern slavery based on racial characteristics. Retailers such as the giant *Home and Colonial Stores* acknowledged this link in their title. Without this trade and exploitation, the consumption of a wide range of goods that was important in the development of a consumer society would not have been possible. International trade developed from the use of slavery to produce raw materials on plantations in the Americas, including commodities such as sugar and tobacco that became valued for their ability to create and sustain a consumer demand where none had previously existed. Historians have shown the importance of tea and coffee drinking which required not only the commodities themselves, but also the other aspects of the rituals they became associated with - a 'panoply of material accoutrements.'[22] Blackburn links slavery with the expansion of commodity consumption in North America and Britain: 'While all the European powers sought to channel their colonial trades, British Atlantic exchanges, both licit and contraband, were the more diversified, fostering a more extensive regime of accumulation.'[23] It was a very lucrative trade and an important element of the primitive accumulation discussed in Chapter 1. Plantation owners that relied on slavery in eastern Monmouthshire included Valentine Morris of Piercefield House (who was discussed as part of the development of the local turnpike trust in the previous chapter) and Samuel Bosanquet of Dingestow House in Mitchell Troy. Bosanquet is particularly interesting as he links banking, the slave trade and the local gentry, as he and his decedents became key in developing new forms of agriculture in the county. He was the governor of the Bank of England, when he bought Dingestow House and Estate in Mitchell Troy, just south of Monmouth, in 1801.[24] Not only was the Bank of England involved in helping fund the trans-Atlantic trade, plantation ownership, and the indebtedness that was central to the new economy, but Bosanquet himself was a slave-owner and was one of those who claimed compensation when the trade was abolished.[25] His purchase of the estate and its expansion after he was succeeded by his son in 1843 to include other local farms (Gwaelod-y-Wlad, Trealy and Church Farm) shows how those who were making money through other branches of the economy were becoming involved in farming and agriculture, including in eastern Monmouthshire. They brought with them the 'entrepreneur spirit', capitalist ethics and production methods that had helped bring the fortunes that enabled such purchases and incorporated these into their land management. The involvement of some of these businessmen in the enslavement and use of

[22] Gurney P, *The Making of Consumer Culture…* p. 11
[23] Blackburn R, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (Verso: London, 2013) p. 99
[24] https://gwentarchives.gov.uk/media/dlmm1u1t/d2184a-bosanquet-family-records.html (accessed 25.10.23)
[25] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/maps/britain#show=markersFiltered&region=south%2520wales&county=monmouthshire&zoom=13&lng=-2.837734&lat=51.806174&address_id=2118253128 (accessed 25.10.23)

Africans on plantations in the Americas suggests that they were unconcerned with the human suffering in such enterprise. The consequences of the changes they brought to eastern Monmouthshire will be analysed further in Chapter 5. The case of Bosanquet (whose ancestors were Huguenot refugees from France) supports Blackburn's view that the slave trade and its production was fundamental to the new class society in Britain and other parts of western Europe. Part of this development led to a growing fissure between the European settlers and the colonial masters which led to the development of newly independent trading nations on the other side of the Atlantic, particularly the United States. This was able to expand its production - until the 1860s by the use of slavery - and the produce found a ready market in Britain. The transport revolution discussed in Chapter 3 helped develop this trade which was also therefore a factor in undermining agriculture in eastern Monmouthshire as elsewhere in Britain in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

As mentioned above, banking was essential in allowing the development of consumerism, as well as making the capital available for the expansion of production. Credit was used to facilitate the growth in demand and through a variety of means, consumers were encouraged to borrow to fund purchases. Trentmann points out that this was by no means a new phenomenon and indebtedness has been a feature of commerce in societies throughout history. In England in 1700, for instance, half of the population had unpaid debts after the death of the head of household and a quarter 'had debts that exceeded their credit and movable goods.'[26] The expansion of the system of debt, though, was ingrained from the start of the consumer revolution. Trentmann writes that in 1900, across Europe most people, 'rich and poor alike' used credit to buy things, while for Brewer even in the eighteenth century, 'credit and debt…were almost universal.'[27] Shopkeepers would get supplies on credit and would also offer credit on transactions that 'were conducted in a bewildering variety of ways' which included cash, bills of exchange, barter, local and national bank notes as well as individual credit, with the shopkeeper in this case providing loans to forty-two people. It was also common for individuals to provide loans, particularly to enable the establishment of small businesses like local shops. By the middle of the nineteenth century, many larger purchases were on a 'tally system' or a formal system of hire purchase, 'often accompanied by the prototype of high-pressure salesmanship.'[28] This increased demand above the

[26] Trentmann F, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first* (Allen Lane: London, 2016) p. 405
[27] Trentmann F, *Empire of Things…* p. 407; Brewer J, 'Commercialisation and Politics…' p.20
[28] Hamish Fraser W, *The Coming of The Mass Market 1850-1914* (MacMillan: London, 1981) p. 87

level that wages would have allowed, while allowing new inventions to spread more widely. Farmers were encouraged to borrow to buy new machinery, fertilisers and breeds of cattle, etc., and amongst the people who lived in the villages, credit allowed them to become dependent on buying what they needed or wanted from shops. In the next section of this chapter there are numerous adverts for farm improvements and new inventions that could be and often were obtained using credit. The establishment of an economic structure that integrated aspects of the state and private finance in the early eighteenth century was an enabler as well as an integral part of high levels of public indebtedness, necessary to help drive demand.[29]

Banks were concentrated in towns and performed a range of different roles, including lending, and they expanded significantly in the nineteenth century.[30] Before this, small-scale credit agreements were common in village life, which usually involved 'face to face' type borrowing from other local people, and was 'built around personal trust'.[31] The newly established banks allowed borrowing based on security that could be a lease or traders' tools, leading to a growth of debt and this enabled more people than ever before to borrow money. This expansion of credit went partly into largescale capital investments including industry, as well as the building of railways and canals referred to in Chapter 3. These required significant investment. For example, the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal, discussed in Chapter 3, cost £170,000 a significant amount in the 1790s and required the establishment of limited liability companies formed of local wealthy individuals as shareholders.[32] Locally, new banks were established in the early nineteenth century in Abergavenny and Monmouth and the credit facilities they provided help establish small businesses as well as fund farm improvements. These were small, private banks, set up by local wealthy people as a 'subsidiary occupation.'[33] Local industrialists Sir Joseph Bailey and William Morgan set up Bailey, Morgan & Co, which was also known as the *Monmouthshire Agricultural and Commercial Bank* in 1837.[34] As suggested by its name, one of its founding purposes was to provide credit for farmers and the establishment of new forms of commerce locally. Other local banks included the *Abergavenny Finance Company*, established in 1885.[35] Pigot's Directory of 1835 lists two banks in Abergavenny, one called *Hill and Co.*, at 'Old Bank' and *Jones' and Davies, Monmouth*

[29] Brewer J, 'Commercialisation and Politics…' p. 203
[30] Roberts R.O. 'Banks and The Economic Development of South Wales Before 1914', Baber C & Williams L.J*., Modern South Wales: Essays in Economic History* (University of Wales Press: Cardiff, 1984) p. 66
[31] Trentmann F, *Empire of Things…* p. 407 and Brewer J, 'Commercialisation and Politics…' p.197
[32] Boyns T, 'Communications and Commerce'… p. 69
[33] Roberts R.O. 'Banks and The Economic Development of South Wales…' p. 66
[34] https://www.natwestgroup.com/heritage/companies/crawshay-bailey-and-co.html (accessed 23.10.23)
[35] https://home.barclays/who-we-are/our-strategy/backing-the-uk/wales/history/ (accessed 23.10.23)

& Abergavenny Bank. In the 1845 edition, there were still two banks, but they had different names. *Bailey, Bailey, Gratrix & Williams*, in High St., also owned by Joseph Bailey, this time in partnership with his son, Crawshay Bailey and other local businessmen Thomas Gratrex and



Figure 26: A banknote drawn on the Monmouthshire Agricultural Bank, Abergavenny, early 19th Century

William Williams, may have been an amalgamation of the earlier bank. According to the archives of NatWest, this was sold to the National Provincial Bank of England, a forerunner of NatWest, in 1868.[36] There was also a bank called *Jones, Jones & Davies*, in Cross St.[37] The interrelation between the expansion of the local and national banking and credit system, the expansion of trade and production, agricultural change and new retail businesses provided the basis for the creation of a consumer-based society in the county in the later nineteenth century.

2. Marketing and the creation of consumerism in eastern Monmouthshire

Production on an industrial scale was only possible with the expansion in the number of consumers on a similar scale. Great efforts were therefore made to ensure that there was a continually growing markets for all sorts of goods. This required changing how people acquired what they needed and also significant levels of persuasion to ensure they also desired and bought new inventions and discoveries. It was largely to create the necessary market for non-essentials, that an advertising industry was created. The retail revolution massively expanded what people

[36] https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300002419-the-old-bank-natwest-abergavenny (accessed 23.10.23)
[37] Pigot's Directory of Monmouthshire, 1835, p.514 and Pigot's Directory of Monmouthshire, 1845, p. 22

could buy and often competing businesses marketed the same products, giving people the ability to choose between them. However, this suggests a level of 'agency' that was an illusion as the 'choice' was between similar products with different labels on them, at a similar price, where the beneficiaries were the producers who had created a demand (and sold their goods at a profit). Duplication also led to waste as products with a short 'shelf-life' were discarded and often people had been convinced to buy goods they found they didn't actually use or need. Furthermore, the emphasis on developing systems that were able to overcome the 'Malthusian trap of overpopulation', ignored the fact that it was impossible for anyone within the system to exercise control.[38] Marketing, especially advertising, was the mechanism that helped develop consumers in an increasingly complex economic system that normalised the way it operated. In turn, people became alienated from the processes that produced the goods they bought, as these rarely played any role in the persuasion of the customer. Adverts tended to present the commodities they were marketing as finished goods, almost as if they were naturally occurring. In this way, demand for products either imported, manufactured, or locally produced as part of the expansion of capitalism was created by different the strands of marketing. The connections between society and the environment were (often deliberately) obscured and a rift driven between consumption and production.

In the early phase, the products of what Thirsk describe as 'projects… to manufacture, or produce on the farm, goods for consumption at home' were sold by pedlars who walked from village to village with back packs, were 'stowed by chapmen into packsaddles, or stacked in bales and loaded on barges that passed down river' or were transported by 'carriers who maintained a regular service on the road with carts and wagons, using the inns as bus-stops.'[39] While, as Thirsk acknowledges, not all of these early production 'projects' were successful, some were and became the backbone of an increase in production and trade that required the persuasion of a sometimes reluctant potential market to see the goods as something they wanted or needed. Early forms of this persuasion included getting the patronage of those at the top of society. Items 'discovered' and brought to Europe by colonial 'explorers', such as tobacco, coffee and sugar, were seen as essential to the expansion of trade. Once they were adopted by Kings, Queens and Emperors, it was much easier to sell them to wider sections of society. As technological developments and economies of scale followed, previously exclusive and expensive commodities like these became

[38] Foster J.B., *Marx's Ecology…* pp. 139-140
[39] Thirsk J, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society…* p.5

more affordable, leading to an expansion of demand outside the original privileged clientele. As shown below, by the end of the nineteenth century this extended to include most of the population as consumption of these goods became commonplace.[40]

In order for this to happen and to overcome what McKendrick described as 'barriers to a consumer society', a whole 'marketing' industry developed to promote goods to the consumer market. Some do not accept the importance of this, however. For instance, Marx hardly mentions marketing, while Foster considers that 'advertising and marketing in general, along with such factors as product differentiation, played only a miniscule role in the nineteenth century.'[41] On the other hand, Gurney, who highlights that consumption cannot be understood 'without placing power at the heart of things' considers that modern British history has been slow to 'appreciate fully the importance of the politics of consumption' where the development of mass markets for goods and services played a central role in societal change in the nineteenth century.[42] Certainly, the evidence produced later in this section of the chapter, which is based on an analysis of the expansion of newspaper advertising in Eastern Monmouthshire, suggests that great efforts were being made to persuade people to become part of a consumer society. Lusch has shown that from the late eighteenth century onwards potential consumers were targeted using a range of methods that are usually considered part of a more modern marketing industry, including 'market segmentation, product differentiation, prestige pricing, leader pricing, style obsolescence, saturation advertising, direct mail campaigns, testimonials, reference group appeal, ingenious discounting and a wide variety of sales promotions'.[43] Veblen, who was writing in the late nineteenth century, considered that the commonly used marketing device of endowing products with a status that was conferred to the buyer, who through purchasing the product was able to have something others did not have, which he called 'invidious pecuniary comparison', was immoral.[44] Whether people were encouraged to emulate their superiors, or as Gurney has suggested, look sideways and try to keep up with their social peers, advertisers were successful in getting more people to make purchases of things they never knew they needed.[45] That these products were produced from raw materials (that came from the environment) was not

[40] For a discussion of this process with regard to coffee, tea, sugar and morality see: Blackburn R, *The American Crucible…* p. 58
[41] Foster J.B., *Capitalism in the Anthropocene…* p. 382
[42] Gurney P, *The Making of Consumer Culture…* p. 14
[43] Lusch R.F., 'Review of *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* by McKendrick N, Brewer J, Plumb J.H', *Journal of Marketing* (49:2, 1985) p. 152
[44] Veblen T, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New American Library: New York, 1966) pp. 78-80
[45] Gurney P. *The Making of Consumer Culture…pp.6-7*

mentioned and there was a hidden assumption in this marketing and promotion that the earth was capable of facilitating limitless growth to enable unlimited demand.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, this had developed into a sophisticated and highly effective marketing operation for goods to entice customers and expand the demand for an increasing range of goods. This involved advertising directly to the public through devices such as wall posters. Hamish Fraser writes:

> every gable end, every naked wall, every unblemished railway carriage, every unspoilt station surface, indeed every surface exposed to the passing public gaze was hastily covered with posters extolling the virtues of some product or some service.[46]

Most of those were in urban spaces as in rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire, the amount of 'public gaze' would have been minimal. The rural population may have been exposed to these marketing methods when visiting town, of course, but there were other ways to reach them and their imagination in nineteenth century Britain. Newspapers and magazines, for instance, gained an expanding readership, beginning with the educated middle class targeted by specialist magazines such as The *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, founded by publisher Sam Beeton in 1859. This concentrated on 'cooking, washing, bringing up children, dress-making and flower arranging', carrying a range of adverts for associated products and led to a spin-off book, the well-known *Beeton's Book of Household Management*.[47] While the middle-class were an obvious target audience, as they had increasing spending power and higher levels of income and wealth, they were a small section of a society in which mass consumerism was required. One method for advertisers to reach more people was through local newspapers, especially as the expansion of the education system to embrace the children of all led by the end of the century to a higher literacy rate and a wider potential readership. To get adverts in local publications agencies were set up to buy space in newspapers and sell it to companies keen to expand their reach across the country.[48] *The Monmouthshire Merlin* (MM) was one of the main local newspapers covering eastern Monmouthshire with offices in Newport and Monmouth from where it reported both local and national news. It was published between 1829 and 1884 and, like many newspapers in the nineteenth century, the front page was used as an advertising space. By analysing those adverts it is possible to see trends and a development of retail. There was a growing number of adverts for

[46] Hamish Fraser W., *The Coming of the Mass Market*…
[47] Harrison M, *The Kitchen in History* (Osprey: Reading, 1972) p. 109
[48] Gurney P, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-70* (Manchester, 2015) p. Ix; Hamish Fraser W., *The Coming of the Mass Market…* p. 134

retailers and the products they were selling by the time it ceased publishing. In the early years of the study, advertising was clearly aimed at a wealthier readership, people who had enough money to spend on medicines, insurance, education and property as these were the majority of goods and services being marketed. There were hardly any adverts for retailers in 1841, nor for the products they sold (except the medicines) and the only examples of adverts for goods for sale were 'stock sales' from bankrupt companies (see Table 1 below)

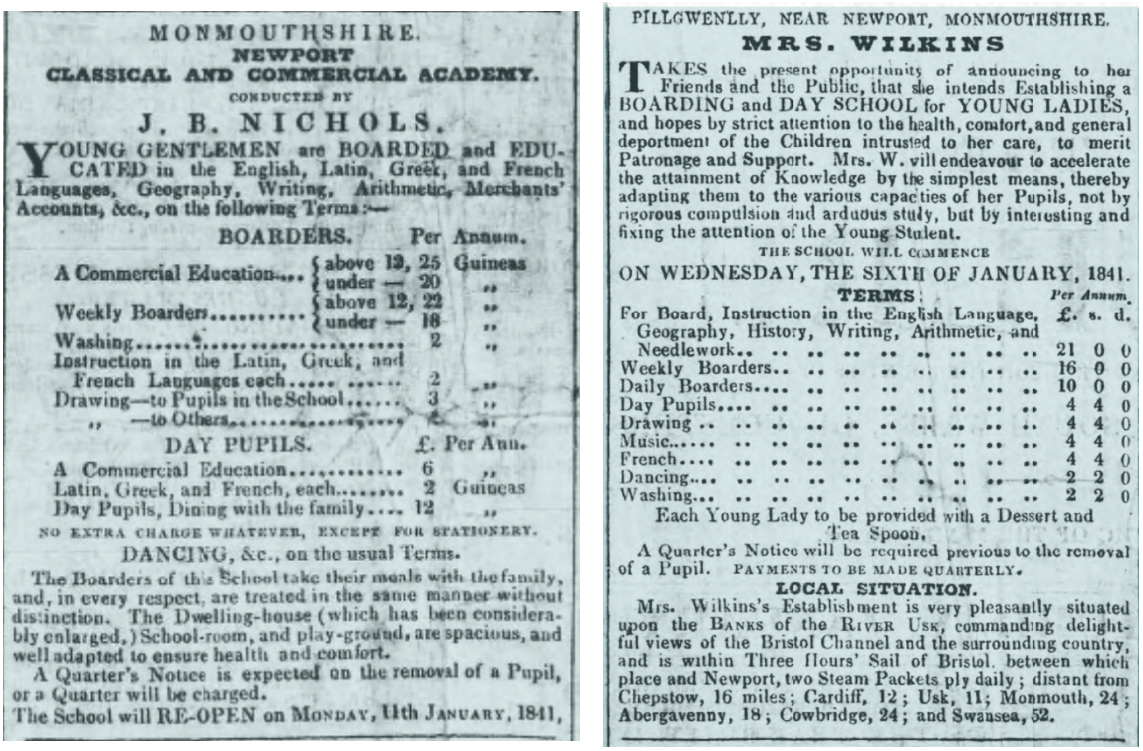
Table 1: Analysis of Advertising on front page of The Monmouthshire Merlin, 1841-1881

Newspaper Advertising Analysis - *The Monmouthshire Merlin*

		1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Goods	*Tobacco etc.*	1	2		1	
	Agricultural implements			1		1
	Inventions			1	1	3
	Manures etc.			1	1	2
	Candles			1		
	Foodstuff				1	4
	Starch				1	1
	Tea (producer)				1	1
Property	*commercial*	2	4			1
	non-commercial	4				
Commercial stock		2				
Timber		5				
Medical	*Various potions*	4	11	1	4	
	Dentistry etc.	1		5		
	Soaps and perfumes	1				
	Livestock			1	2	
Travel	*Ships*	2	2	2	2	
	Railways		1			
	Roads, turnpikes		1			
Newspapers/journals		1	1	1	3	1
Insurance	*Life*	2	5	4		
Life and Fire insurance	*Life & Fire*		1	1	1	
	Railway passenger			1		
Investments				1		
Services	*Printing*	1		1		
	Emigration				1	
	Photography				1	
	Financial				1	1
Education		1	1			
Retail/sales/shops	*Stock sale*	1		1		
	Pottery / Glass / China			1	1	
	Hairdresser			1		
	Tea & Coffee			1		
	Building merchants			1		
	Beds			1		
	Furniture			1	1	1
	General stores			1		
	Clothes			1	1	1
	Musical instruments			1	1	
	Fancy goods			1		
	Books				2	
	Grocery				3	
	Coal				1	
	Jeweller				2	1

Chemist	2	1
Corn merchant	1	
Bookseller	1	
Tailor	1	
Ironmonger	1	
Cakes	1	
Drapers		1

The adverts in 1841 included private education at schools in Newport priced well outside the affordability of all but the wealthiest (see figure 27). The advert for the girls' school includes a list of distances from other towns, showing that it was aiming to attract pupils from as far as Swansea and Bristol. There was also a significant difference in what the two schools offered, with boys offered 'a commercial education', while girls were offered language, humanities, writing, arithmetic and needlework.



MONMOUTHSHIRE.
NEWPORT
CLASSICAL AND COMMERCIAL ACADEMY.
CONDUCTED BY
J. B. NICHOLS.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN are BOARDED and EDUCATED in the English, Latin, Greek, and French Languages, Geography, Writing, Arithmetic, Merchants' Accounts, &c., on the following Terms:—

BOARDERS.		Per Annum.
A Commercial Education....	above 13, under — 25	20 Guineas
Weekly Boarders.....	above 12, under — 22	18 ,,
Washing.....		2 ,,
Instruction in the Latin, Greek, and French Languages each.....		2 ,,
Drawing—to Pupils in the School.....		3 ,,
,, —to Others.....		4 ,,

DAY PUPILS.	£. Per Ann.
A Commercial Education.....	6 ,,
Latin, Greek, and French, each.....	2 Guineas
Day Pupils, Dining with the family....	12 ,,

NO EXTRA CHARGE WHATEVER, EXCEPT FOR STATIONERY.

DANCING, &c., on the usual Terms.

The Boarders of this School take their meals with the family, and, in every respect, are treated in the same manner without distinction. The Dwelling-house (which has been considerably enlarged,) School-room, and play-ground, are spacious, and well adapted to ensure health and comfort.

A Quarter's Notice is expected on the removal of a Pupil, or a Quarter will be charged.

The School will RE-OPEN on MONDAY, 11th JANUARY, 1841.

PILLGWENLLY, NEAR NEWPORT, MONMOUTHSHIRE.

MRS. WILKINS

TAKES the present opportunity of announcing to her Friends and the Public, that she intends Establishing a BOARDING and DAY SCHOOL for YOUNG LADIES, and hopes by strict attention to the health, comfort, and general deportment of the Children intrusted to her care, to merit Patronage and Support. Mrs. W. will endeavour to accelerate the attainment of Knowledge by the simplest means, thereby adapting them to the various capacities of her Pupils, not by rigorous compulsion and arduous study, but by interesting and fixing the attention of the Young Student.

THE SCHOOL WILL COMMENCE
ON WEDNESDAY, THE SIXTH OF JANUARY, 1841.

TERMS:	Per Annum. £. s. d.
For Board, Instruction in the English Language, Geography, History, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needlework..	21 0 0
Weekly Boarders..	16 0 0
Daily Boarders....	10 0 0
Day Pupils....	4 4 0
Drawing	4 4 0
Music.....	4 4 0
French....	4 4 0
Dancing...	2 2 0
Washing...	2 2 0

Each Young Lady to be provided with a Dessert and Tea Spoon.

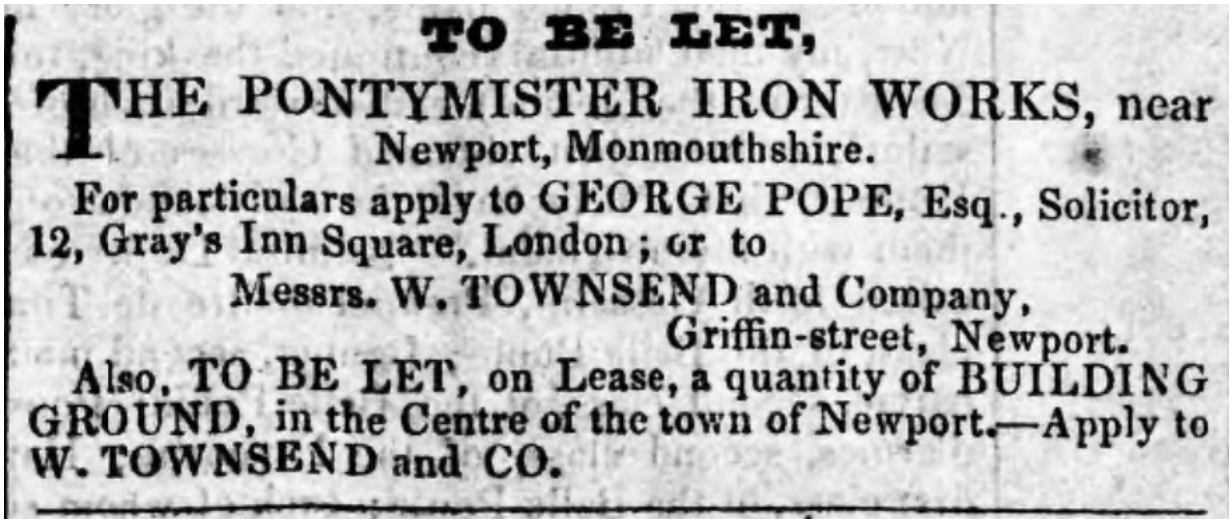
A Quarter's Notice will be required previous to the removal of a Pupil. PAYMENTS TO BE MADE QUARTERLY.

LOCAL SITUATION.

Mrs. Wilkins's Establishment is very pleasantly situated upon the BANKS of the RIVER USK, commanding delightful views of the Bristol Channel and the surrounding country, and is within Three Hours' Sail of Bristol, between which place and Newport, two Steam Packets ply daily; distant from Chepstow, 16 miles; Cardiff, 12; Usk, 11; Monmouth, 24; Abergavenny, 18; Cowbridge, 24; and Swansea, 52.

Figure 27: Adverts for schools in 1841, The Monmouthshire Merlin

Another set of adverts was for property, mostly to let. This included the following example, for an ironworks and building land:



TO BE LET,

THE PONTYMISTER IRON WORKS, near Newport, Monmouthshire.

For particulars apply to GEORGE POPE, Esq., Solicitor, 12, Gray's Inn Square, London; or to

Messrs. W. TOWNSEND and Company, Griffin-street, Newport.

Also, TO BE LET, on Lease, a quantity of BUILDING GROUND, in the Centre of the town of Newport.—Apply to W. TOWNSEND and CO.

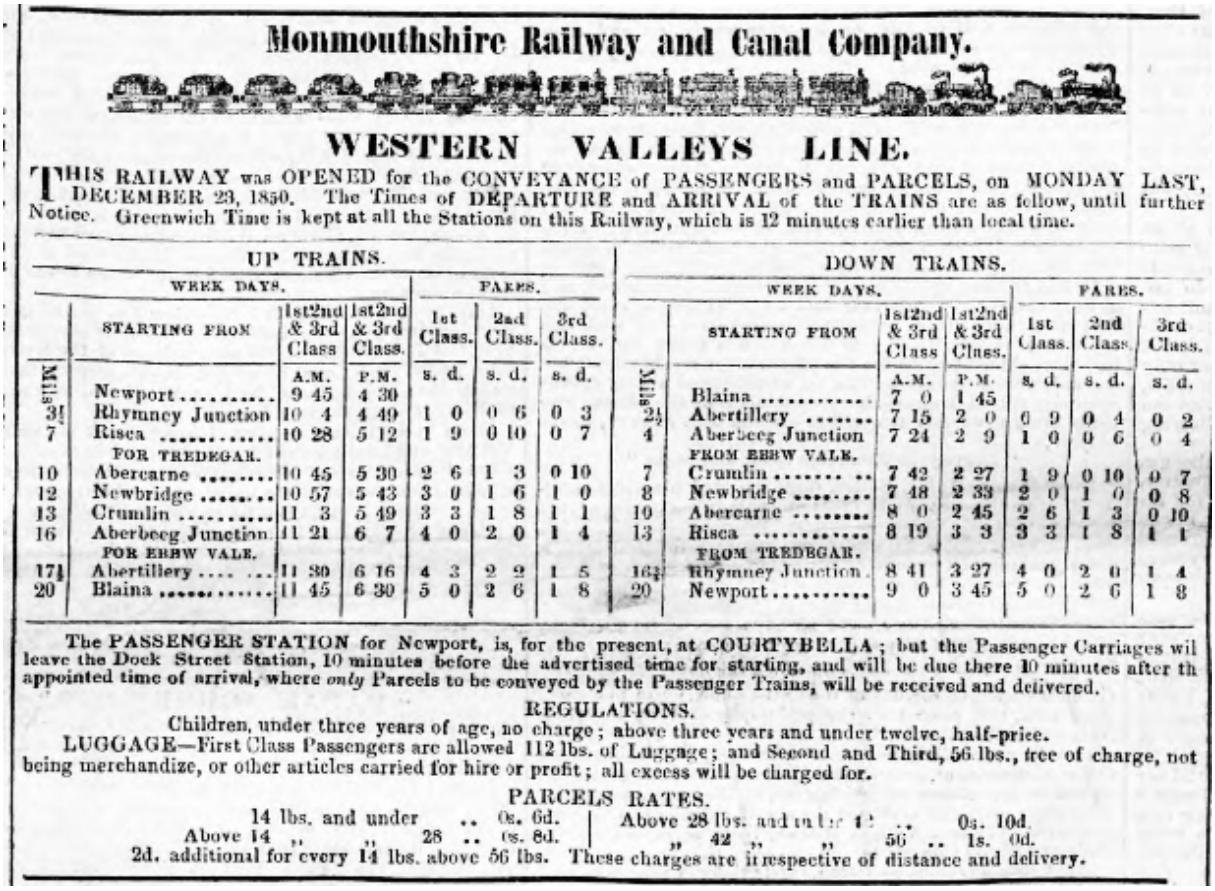
Figure 28: Advert for Pontymister Iron Works, MM 2/1/1841

Pontymister, opened in 1801, was unsuccessful as an ironworks, with most of its owners running into 'financial difficulties, and most were bankrupted'. It became a tinplate works owned by the Banks brothers in 1845 and thereafter was a successful business.[49] The fact that it was offered for let in a local newspaper is perhaps further evidence of its failure at this time.

As well as containing no retailers, the adverts in the newspaper in 1841 were mainly for businesses in and around Newport, the main town in the area and generally not for the wider geographical area, despite being a 'county' newspaper. There was a change in 1851 as there were a few more adverts aimed at a wider audience. Even so, as this advert for the Western Valleys railway line shows (figure 29), the focus tended to be on Newport, which had a significant and growing middle class. There were adverts for train services, with times and a table of charges for the different class of traveller. The reference to local time being different from Greenwich Mean Time show that this was before the national standardisation of time zones, which the

[49] Information from Risca museum website: http://www.riscamuseum.org.uk/pontymister.htm (accessed 19.12.23)

development of railway travel across the country made important.



Monmouthshire Railway and Canal Company.

WESTERN VALLEYS LINE.

THIS RAILWAY was OPENED for the CONVEYANCE of PASSENGERS and PARCELS, on MONDAY LAST, DECEMBER 23, 1850. The Times of DEPARTURE and ARRIVAL of the TRAINS are as follow, until further Notice. Greenwich Time is kept at all the Stations on this Railway, which is 12 minutes earlier than local time.

UP TRAINS.

Miles	WEEK DAYS. STARTING FROM	1st 2nd & 3rd Class A.M.	1st 2nd & 3rd Class P.M.	FARES. 1st Class. s. d.	2nd Class. s. d.	3rd Class. s. d.
	Newport	9 45	4 30			
3½	Rhymney Junction	10 4	4 49	1 0	0 6	0 3
7	Risca	10 28	5 12	1 9	0 10	0 7
	FOR TREDEGAR.					
10	Abercarne	10 45	5 30	2 6	1 3	0 10
12	Newbridge	10 57	5 43	3 0	1 6	1 0
13	Crumlin	11 3	5 49	3 3	1 8	1 1
16	Aberbeeg Junction	11 21	6 7	4 0	2 0	1 4
	FOR EBBW VALE.					
17½	Abertillery	11 30	6 16	4 3	2 2	1 5
20	Blaina	11 45	6 30	5 0	2 6	1 8

DOWN TRAINS.

Miles	WEEK DAYS. STARTING FROM	1st 2nd & 3rd Class A.M.	1st 2nd & 3rd Class P.M.	FARES. 1st Class. s. d.	2nd Class. s. d.	3rd Class. s. d.
	Blaina	7 0	1 45			
2½	Abertillery	7 15	2 0	0 9	0 4	0 2
4	Aberbeeg Junction	7 24	2 9	1 0	0 6	0 4
	FROM EBBW VALE.					
7	Crumlin	7 42	2 27	1 9	0 10	0 7
8	Newbridge	7 48	2 33	2 0	1 0	0 8
10	Abercarne	8 0	2 45	2 6	1 3	0 10
13	Risca	8 19	3 3	3 3	1 8	1 1
	FROM TREDEGAR.					
16½	Rhymney Junction	8 41	3 27	4 0	2 0	1 4
20	Newport	9 0	3 45	5 0	2 6	1 8

The PASSENGER STATION for Newport, is, for the present, at COURTYBELLA; but the Passenger Carriages wil leave the Dock Street Station, 10 minutes before the advertised time for starting, and will be due there 10 minutes after th appointed time of arrival, where *only* Parcels to be conveyed by the Passenger Trains, will be received and delivered.

REGULATIONS.

Children, under three years of age, no charge; above three years and under twelve, half-price.

LUGGAGE—First Class Passengers are allowed 112 lbs. of Luggage; and Second and Third, 56 lbs., free of charge, not being merchandize, or other articles carried for hire or profit; all excess will be charged for.

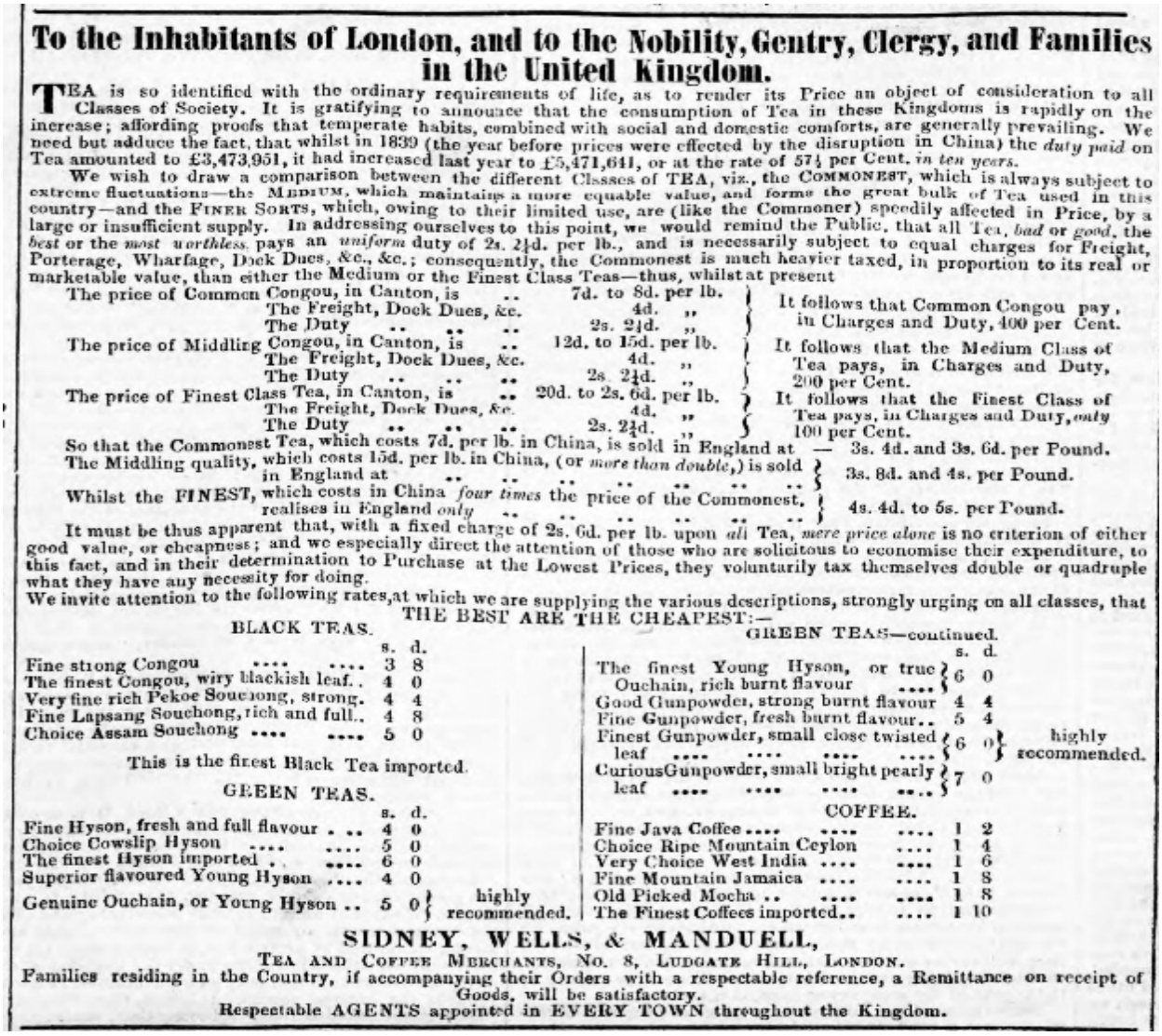
PARCELS RATES.

14 lbs. and under .. 0s. 6d. | Above 28 lbs. and under 42 .. 0s. 10d.
Above 14 ,, ,, 28 .. 0s. 8d. | ,, 42 ,, ,, 56 .. 1s. 0d.
2d. additional for every 14 lbs. above 56 lbs. These charges are irrespective of distance and delivery.

Figure 29: Advert for rail services, MM 4/1/1851

By 1851 there were also adverts for various types of tea and coffee (figure 30), in this case, to Inhabitants of London and to the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy and Families, suggesting that it was better value to buy better quality tea, sold for cheaper than it would be in China. The company

had 'agents in every town' or potential customers could send a 'respectable reference' and pay by invoice.



To the Inhabitants of London, and to the Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Families in the United Kingdom.

TEA is so identified with the ordinary requirements of life, as to render its Price an object of consideration to all Classes of Society. It is gratifying to announce that the consumption of Tea in these Kingdoms is rapidly on the increase; affording proofs that temperate habits, combined with social and domestic comforts, are generally prevailing. We need but adduce the fact, that whilst in 1839 (the year before prices were effected by the disruption in China) the *duty paid* on Tea amounted to £3,473,951, it had increased last year to £5,471,641, or at the rate of 57½ per Cent. *in ten years.*

We wish to draw a comparison between the different Classes of TEA, viz., the COMMONEST, which is always subject to extreme fluctuations—the MEDIUM, which maintains a more equable value, and forms the great bulk of Tea used in this country—and the FINER SORTS, which, owing to their limited use, are (like the Commoner) speedily affected in Price, by a large or insufficient supply. In addressing ourselves to this point, we would remind the Public, that all Tea, *bad* or *good*, the *best* or the *most worthless*, pays an *uniform* duty of 2s. 2¼d. per lb., and is necessarily subject to equal charges for Freight, Porterage, Wharfage, Dock Dues, &c., &c.; consequently, the Commonest is much heavier taxed, in proportion to its real or marketable value, than either the Medium or the Finest Class Teas—thus, whilst at present

The price of Common Congou, in Canton, is ..	7d. to 8d. per lb.	It follows that Common Congou pay, in Charges and Duty, 400 per Cent.
The Freight, Dock Dues, &c.	4d. ,,	
The Duty	2s. 2¼d. ,,	
The price of Middling Congou, in Canton, is ..	12d. to 15d. per lb.	It follows that the Medium Class of Tea pays, in Charges and Duty, 200 per Cent.
The Freight, Dock Dues, &c.	4d. ,,	
The Duty	2s. 2¼d. ,,	
The price of Finest Class Tea, in Canton, is ..	20d. to 2s. 6d. per lb.	It follows that the Finest Class of Tea pays, in Charges and Duty, *only* 100 per Cent.
The Freight, Dock Dues, &c.	4d. ,,	
The Duty	2s. 2¼d. ,,	

So that the Commonest Tea, which costs 7d. per lb. in China, is sold in England at — 3s. 4d. and 3s. 6d. per Pound.
The Middling quality, which costs 15d. per lb. in China, (or *more than double*,) is sold in England at .. .. — 3s. 8d. and 4s. per Pound.
Whilst the FINEST, which costs in China *four times* the price of the Commonest, realises in England *only* .. .. — 4s. 4d. to 5s. per Pound.

It must be thus apparent that, with a fixed charge of 2s. 6d. per lb. upon *all* Tea, *mere price alone* is no criterion of either good value, or cheapness; and we especially direct the attention of those who are solicitous to economise their expenditure, to this fact, and in their determination to Purchase at the Lowest Prices, they voluntarily tax themselves double or quadruple what they have any necessity for doing.

We invite attention to the following rates, at which we are supplying the various descriptions, strongly urging on all classes, that THE BEST ARE THE CHEAPEST:—

BLACK TEAS.

	s.	d.
Fine strong Congou	3	8
The finest Congou, wiry blackish leaf..	4	0
Very fine rich Pekoe Souchong, strong.	4	4
Fine Lapsang Souchong, rich and full..	4	8
Choice Assam Souchong	5	0

This is the finest Black Tea imported.

GREEN TEAS.

	s.	d.	
Fine Hyson, fresh and full flavour	4	0	
Choice Cowslip Hyson	5	0	
The finest Hyson imported	6	0	
Superior flavoured Young Hyson	4	0	
Genuine Ouchain, or Young Hyson ..	5	0	highly recommended.

GREEN TEAS—continued.

	s.	d.	
The finest Young Hyson, or true Ouchain, rich burnt flavour	6	0	
Good Gunpowder, strong burnt flavour	4	4	
Fine Gunpowder, fresh burnt flavour..	5	4	
Finest Gunpowder, small close twisted leaf	6	0	highly recommended.
Curious Gunpowder, small bright pearly leaf	7	0	

COFFEE.

Fine Java Coffee	1	2
Choice Ripe Mountain Ceylon	1	4
Very Choice West India	1	6
Fine Mountain Jamaica	1	8
Old Picked Mocha	1	8
The Finest Coffees imported..	1	10

SIDNEY, WELLS, & MANDUELL,

TEA AND COFFEE MERCHANTS, NO. 8, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON.

Families residing in the Country, if accompanying their Orders with a respectable reference, a Remittance on receipt of Goods, will be satisfactory.

Respectable AGENTS appointed in EVERY TOWN throughout the Kingdom.

Figure 30: Advert for tea and coffee, MM 4/1/1851

Figure 32 shows an advert from 1851 for 'choice livestock, implements of husbandry, & c.', which was being sold because Mrs Brian was 'declining the farming business.' The locations of the farm equipment being sold and the farm at which the sale was taking place are in themselves interesting in showing a changing use of space. The sale took place at Spitty Farm, Christchurch, at this time a rural area to the east of the town, which was soon to become a built-up suburb of Newport. Spitty Farm is now a park with a leisure centre in it. Mrs Brain appears in the 1851 census as a 75-year old widow living in Maindee, which had already become a suburb of Newport. The advert shows that she sold a mixed farming business with cows and horses, as well as implements such as ploughs and harrows required for arable farming, with 'twenty tons of well harvested hay' and 'eighty bushels of oats'. Being close to Newport the land in Christchurch had more value for development, the building of houses, shops and parks, than as agricultural land.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.

E. PRITCHARD

Begs to inform the Agriculturists, and the Public generally, that he is appointed

TO SELL BY AUCTION,

(WITHOUT RESERVE,)

At the SPITTY FARM, CHRISTCHURCH, within two miles of Newport, on TUESDAY, January the 12th, 1841,

THE WHOLE OF

THE CHOICE LIVE STOCK,

IMPLEMENTS of HUSBANDRY, &c., of Mrs. MARTHA BRAIN, who is declining the Farming Business,—

COMPRISING 7 young and healthy Cows in calf, in good season; two prime Fat Cows, three strong and useful Cart Mares (two in foal), four promising two-year-old Cart Colts, three yearlings ditto, excellent Broadwheel Waggon, Narrowwheel ditto, three Broadwheel Carts, Ploughs, Harrows, Drags, Four-knife Chaff Engine, three Hogsheads, several small casks, Flour Bin, together with the whole of the DAIRY UTENSILS. Also about Twenty Tons of Well-harvested HAY, and Eighty Bushels of OATS in the straw.

Sale to commence precisely at Eleven o'clock.

Figure 32: Farm livestock and implements sale, MM 4/1/1851

ACCIDENTS OF ALL KINDS, AND FROM ANY CAUSE,

May be provided against by an Annual payment of £3 to the RAILWAY PASSENGERS ASSURANCE COMPANY, which secures £1000 at death by accident, or £6 weekly for injury.

NO EXTRA PREMIUM FOR VOLUNTEERS.

ONE Person in every TWELVE insured is injured yearly by Accident.

£75,000 has been already paid as COMPENSATION.

For further information apply to the Provincial Agents, the Railway Stations, or at the Head Office, 64, Cornhill, (late 3, Old Broad-street).

ANNUAL INCOME, £40,000. CAPITAL, ONE MILLION.

64, Cornhill, E.C. WILLIAM J. VIAN,
January, 1861. Secretary.

Agent for Newport;—Mr. W. WILLIAMS, 16, Dock street. [1453

Figure 31: Advert for train accident insurance, 1861

In 1861, *The Monmouthshire Merlin*

carried adverts for several insurance companies. The one shown as Figure 31 was for railway passengers in the event of death or injury, a new form of insurance.

The decade between 1851 and 1861 saw the greatest change in the type of advertisements in *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, although the adverts were still not as professional as they were to become and most of the adverts for goods and retailers were for small businesses. These were for town-based specialist stores, selling items like clothes, pianos and fancy goods and providing services such as hairdressing and shaving. Consumer advertising at this point was still mainly an urban phenomenon.



CUPISS'S CONSTITUTION BALLS.

THIS justly-celebrated Medicine, after 25 years experience, is proved to be the best and cheapest for

HORSES and NEAT CATTLE,

cheaper because required to be given only once a week, PRESERVING HEALTH, VIGOUR, and CONDITION, their cost too is saved by the food turning to a better account, for it is an acknowledged fact, HORSES will keep up their condition better upon three feeds of Oats daily, when a Ball is occasionally given, than with four feeds without the Balls. NEAT CATTLE will also fatten much faster with the occasional use of them, and arrive at a greater state of perfection than they can be got to without the Balls. Any one doubting this sta e-ment, should try the use of them and prove for himself, for the more they are used the better they are appreciated.

The Balls will be found admirable for Coughs, Colds, Strangles, Influenza, Inflammation of the Eyes, swelled Legs, and other diseases incident to HORSES and NEAT CATTLE, as may be seen by the directions and testimonials with each packet.

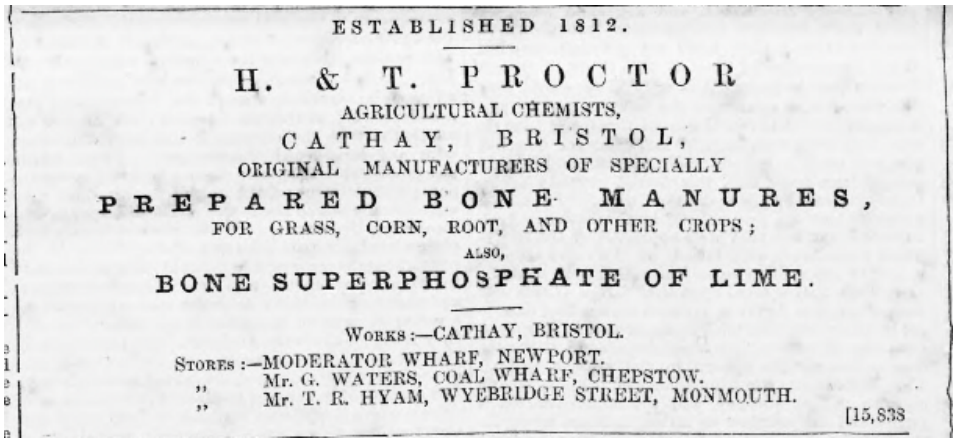
The Balls are prepared by FRANCIS CUPISS, Diss, Norfolk, Author of the Prize Essay on the Diseases of the Liver of the Horse. And may be had of all Patent Medicine Vendors, in Packets, (6 balls each,) 3s. 6d. per packet, OR 7 PACKETS FOR 21s. with full directions.

Persons using the Balls may consult the Proprietor gratuitously by enclosing a Stamp in a prepaid letter.

[1208

Figure 33: Advert for 'Constitution Balls', which provide the wellbeing of horse and cattle, MM 6/1/1871

Looking at the adverts in *The Monmouthshire Merlin* in 1871, many were for farm improvements, such as figure 33, for a food additive that was for better health for horses and could fatten cattle faster. These were *Cupiss's Constitution Balls* with the interesting promise that 'the more they are used the better they are appreciated.' Other adverts included for prepared bone manures for grass, corn, root and other crops, along with bone superphosphate of lime, available from Newport, Chepstow and Monmouth.


ESTABLISHED 1812.

H. & T. PROCTOR

AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTS,

CATHAY, BRISTOL,

ORIGINAL MANUFACTURERS OF SPECIALLY

PREPARED BONE MANURES,

FOR GRASS, CORN, ROOT, AND OTHER CROPS;

ALSO,

BONE SUPERPHOSPHATE OF LIME.

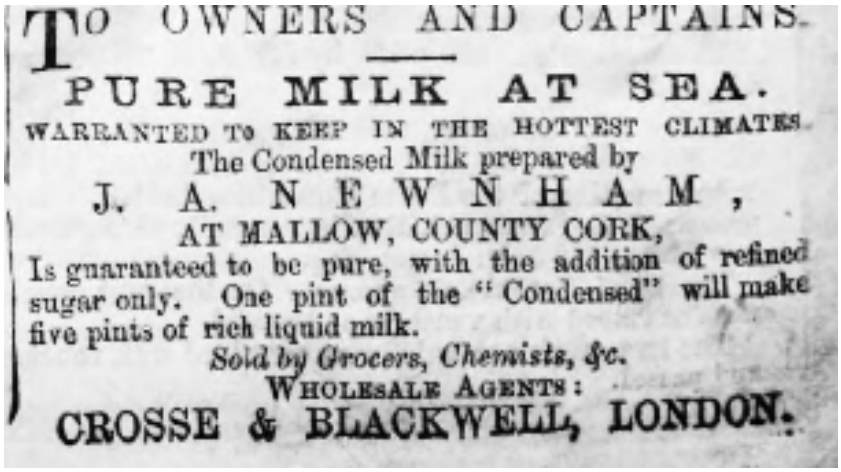
WORKS:—CATHAY, BRISTOL.

STORES:—MODERATOR WHARF, NEWPORT.
" Mr. G. WATERS, COAL WHARF, CHEPSTOW.
" Mr. T. R. HYAM, WYEBRIDGE STREET, MONMOUTH.

[15,838

Figure 34: Advert in MM 6/1/1871 for Manures and lime

By 1871, as the analysis shows, retail adverts had expanded to take up more space and had replaced some categories of adverts such as property, at least on the front page. New products such as weighing machines, pottery and cutlery, beds, decorating materials were advertised, as was international shipping to Australia and Ireland and local rail services. One of the products advertised by wholesale agents, Crosse & Blackwell was 'Condensed Milk' which was advertised for 'owners and captains' and promised to be keep in the hottest climates, presumably also at sea.


TO OWNERS AND CAPTAINS.

PURE MILK AT SEA.

WARRANTED TO KEEP IN THE HOTTEST CLIMATES.

The Condensed Milk prepared by

J. A. NEWNHAM,

AT MALLOW, COUNTY CORK,

Is guaranteed to be pure, with the addition of refined sugar only. One pint of the "Condensed" will make five pints of rich liquid milk.

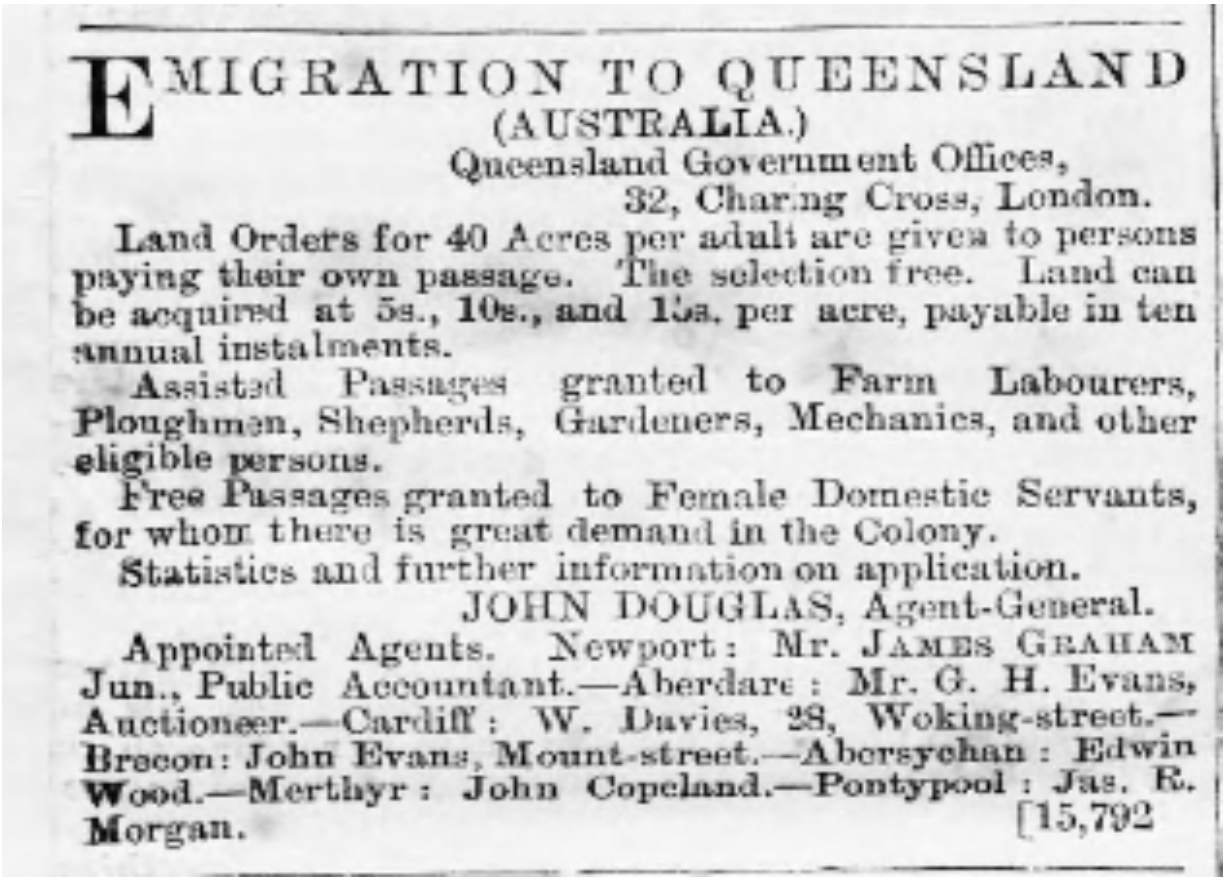
Sold by Grocers, Chemists, &c.

WHOLESALE AGENTS:

CROSSE & BLACKWELL, LONDON.

Figure 35: Advert for condensed milk, MM 5/1/1871

Figure 36 shows one advert specifically aimed at a range of agricultural workers designed to encourage emigration to Queensland, Australia. The reduction in opportunities for farm workers in Britain coincided with the expansion of colonial settlement in Australia and after transportation was ended in the late 1850s, the opportunities advertised here as available for 40 acres of land for 'persons paying their own passage', payable in instalments may have been tempting. Hatton shows that assisted passages to Australia and New Zealand accounted for 45% of all emigrants from the United Kingdom between 1870 and 1914 and peaked in the early 1870s.[50] He also shows that agricultural workers accounted for over a third of all migrants to Australia and New Zealand in



EMIGRATION TO QUEENSLAND
(AUSTRALIA.)
Queensland Government Offices,
32, Charing Cross, London.

Land Orders for 40 Acres per adult are given to persons paying their own passage. The selection free. Land can be acquired at 5s., 10s., and 15s. per acre, payable in ten annual instalments.

Assisted Passages granted to Farm Labourers, Ploughmen, Shepherds, Gardeners, Mechanics, and other eligible persons.

Free Passages granted to Female Domestic Servants, for whom there is great demand in the Colony.

Statistics and further information on application.

JOHN DOUGLAS, Agent-General.

Appointed Agents. Newport: Mr. JAMES GRAHAM Jun., Public Accountant.—Aberdare: Mr. G. H. Evans, Auctioneer.—Cardiff: W. Davies, 28, Woking-street.—Brecon: John Evans, Mount-street.—Abersychan: Edwin Wood.—Merthyr: John Copeland.—Pontypool: Jas. R. Morgan. [15,792

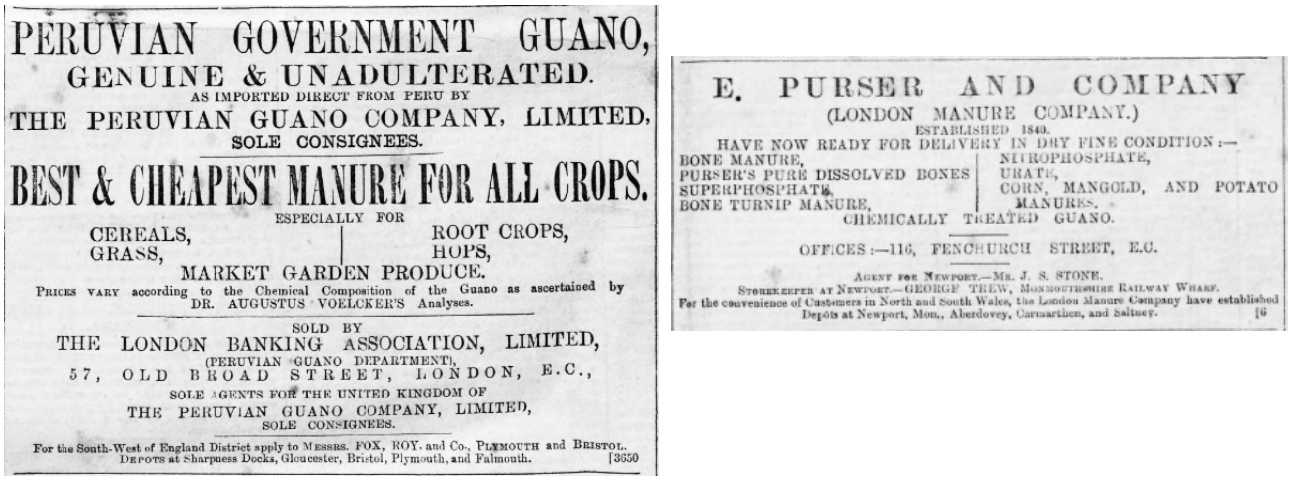
Figure 36: Advert aimed at potential emigrants to Australia.

the late 1870s, concluding that 'the provision of assisted passages by the colonial government to nearly half of the emigrants to Australia and New Zealand appears to be an important influence on the total numbers.'[51] It is not known how many people from Monmouthshire took up the offer, but the advert does show that agricultural workers in Monmouthshire were seen as a potential target market.

[50] Hatton T.J., 'Emigration from the United Kingdom to the United States, Canada and Australia/New Zealand, 1870-1913: Quantity and quality', *Australian Economic History Review* (61, 2021) p.143

[51] Hatton T.J. 'Emigration from the United Kingdom…' p. 147 and p. 152. Hatton explains that lack of statistical data makes it not possible to differentiate between migration to Australia and New Zealand.

The adverts in 1881 included these for guano (Figure 37), which was being imported in large quantities by the end of the century as a manure, suggestive of course of the need to replace the nutrients in an increasingly intensive farming system. The guano from Peru had clearly travelled across the Atlantic, another example of international trade and also an expensive and environmentally destructive system.



PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT GUANO,
GENUINE & UNADULTERATED.
AS IMPORTED DIRECT FROM PERU BY
THE PERUVIAN GUANO COMPANY, LIMITED,
SOLE CONSIGNEES.

BEST & CHEAPEST MANURE FOR ALL CROPS.
ESPECIALLY FOR
CEREALS, GRASS, ROOT CROPS, HOPS,
MARKET GARDEN PRODUCE.
PRICES VARY according to the Chemical Composition of the Guano as ascertained by DR. AUGUSTUS VOELCKER'S Analyses.
SOLD BY
THE LONDON BANKING ASSOCIATION, LIMITED,
(PERUVIAN GUANO DEPARTMENT),
57, OLD BROAD STREET, LONDON, E.C.,
SOLE AGENTS FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM OF
THE PERUVIAN GUANO COMPANY, LIMITED,
SOLE CONSIGNEES.
For the South-West of England District apply to MESSRS. FOX, ROY. and Co., PLYMOUTH and BRISTOL.
DEPOTS at Sharpness Docks, Gloucester, Bristol, Plymouth, and Falmouth. [3650

E. PURSER AND COMPANY
(LONDON MANURE COMPANY.)
ESTABLISHED 1840.
HAVE NOW READY FOR DELIVERY IN DRY FINE CONDITION:—
BONE MANURE,
PURSER'S PURE DISSOLVED BONES
SUPERPHOSPHATE,
BONE TURNIP MANURE,
NITROPHOSPHATE,
URATE,
CORN, MANGOLD, AND POTATO MANURES.
CHEMICALLY TREATED GUANO.
OFFICES:—116, FENCHURCH STREET, E.C.
AGENT FOR NEWPORT.—MR. J. S. STONE.
STOREKEEPER AT NEWPORT.—GEORGE TREW, MONMOUTHSHIRE RAILWAY WHARF.
For the convenience of Customers in North and South Wales, the London Manure Company have established Depôts at Newport, Mon., Aberdovey, Carmarthen, and Saltney. [6

Figure 37: Adverts for fertilisers

By 1881, retailers dominated the advertising space and there were adverts for new inventions such as washing machines, sewing machines and bicycles. Adverts specifically mentioned money being lent for agricultural improvements 'without removal, delay or sureties' in the case of the *National Advance Bank* and 'no investigation of title is necessary' in the case of *The Land Loan Enfranchisement Company* (see figure 38).



THE
IMPROVEMENT OF LANDED ESTATES
By Drainage, the Erection of Farm Buildings and Cottages, and the Construction of Railways and Canals.

THE LAND LOAN AND ENFRANCHISEMENT COMPANY
(INCORPORATED BY SPECIAL ACT OF PARLIAMENT)
ADVANCES MONEY
To Landowners generally, for any of the above Improvements; and to the Owners of Settled Estates in England for the Erection of and Additions to MANSIONS, STABLES, and OUTBUILDINGS. The amount borrowed being repaid by an annuity spread over a period of twenty-five years. No investigation of title is necessary.
Forms of application and all further particulars may be obtained of Messrs. RAWLENCE & SQUAREY, 22, Great George-street, Westminster, S.W., and Salisbury; of Messrs. ASHURST, MORRIS, CRISP & CO., 6, Old Jewry, London, E.C.; of Messrs. GILLESPIE and PATERSON, W.S., 81A, George-street, Edinburgh, Agents for the Company in Scotland; and at the Offices of the Company as below.
T. PAIN, Managing Director.
EDWIN GARROD, Secretary.
Land Loan and Enfranchisement Company,
22, Great George-street, Westminster, S.W. [3579

MONEY LENT BY THE NATIONAL ADVANCE BANK, 31, Wellington-street, Strand, London, W.C. £10 to £1,000, upon furniture, trade, farm stock, plant, &c., without removal, delay, or sureties. Also upon personal security, deeds, leases, or policies, at £4 per cent., without fees or publicity. Distance and time no object, Prospectus gratis.
PETER F. TAYLOR, Manager.
N.B.—Applicants are informed that this is the only Advance bank in London, and they will meet with every consideration. Deposits received from £3 per cent.
Est. 1875. [3832

Figure 38: Adverts for credit to improve land





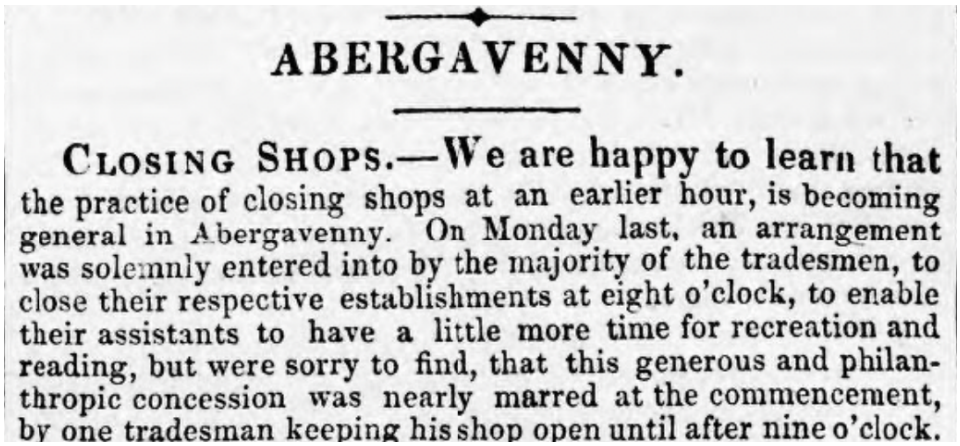
Figure 39: Adverts for 19th century inventions.

New inventions such as washing machines and bicycles were being advertised in a more professional and bolder way, in order to stand out and catch the eye (figure 39). As Gurney has pointed out, 'advertising became increasingly sophisticated and extended its reach across both society and polity…'[52] The adverts in *The Monmouthshire Merlin* highlight the benefits of buying what would have been expensive and luxurious items, so the White Sewing Machine was 'the latest improved and most perfect ever introduced to the English market', 'will sew any material', 'do more than any other machine' and can have 'a great variety of attachments', yet its 'treadle movement' was 'so light that a child' could operate it. An 'American made' quality product, it was guaranteed for five years and if that was too expensive, there was always the Peerless Hand

[52] Gurney P, *The Making of Consumer Culture…* p. 16

Machine at a price of £3 12s, 'the best and lowest prices American machine on the market.' Cambrian bicycles were ridden 'by all the best local riders on road and path.'

This commercialisation and the resultant social and economic changes did meet some resistance and suspicion, both from a religious and ethical standpoint. There was no regulation of shop opening hours and, as the report in figure 40, from *The Monmouthshire Merlin* in 1844 shows they tended to stay open until late. This report specifically mentions an attempt at a collective agreement between retailers to close at 8 o'clock, although as reported such agreements were hard to enforce. In 1871, public holidays were introduced in the Bank Holiday Act and three years later, shop opening hours were regulated by national government after pressure by the National Early Closing League.[53] The concerns were that those working in shops, banks and other public-facing jobs needed to have 'a little more time for recreation and reading' as the report in puts it. There was also opposition to unregulated 'beer houses' and a fear that the social space they gave the 'working classes' could give rise to sedition and 'insubordination' amongst other ills (figure 38). As mentioned in Chapter 2 some landowners, such as Lady Llanover, supported the temperance movement and had the pubs on their land closed. This was in stark contrast to earlier attitudes, and as shown in Chapter 5, agricultural labourers had been supplied with copious amounts of cider along with their wages in the early part of the nineteenth century.

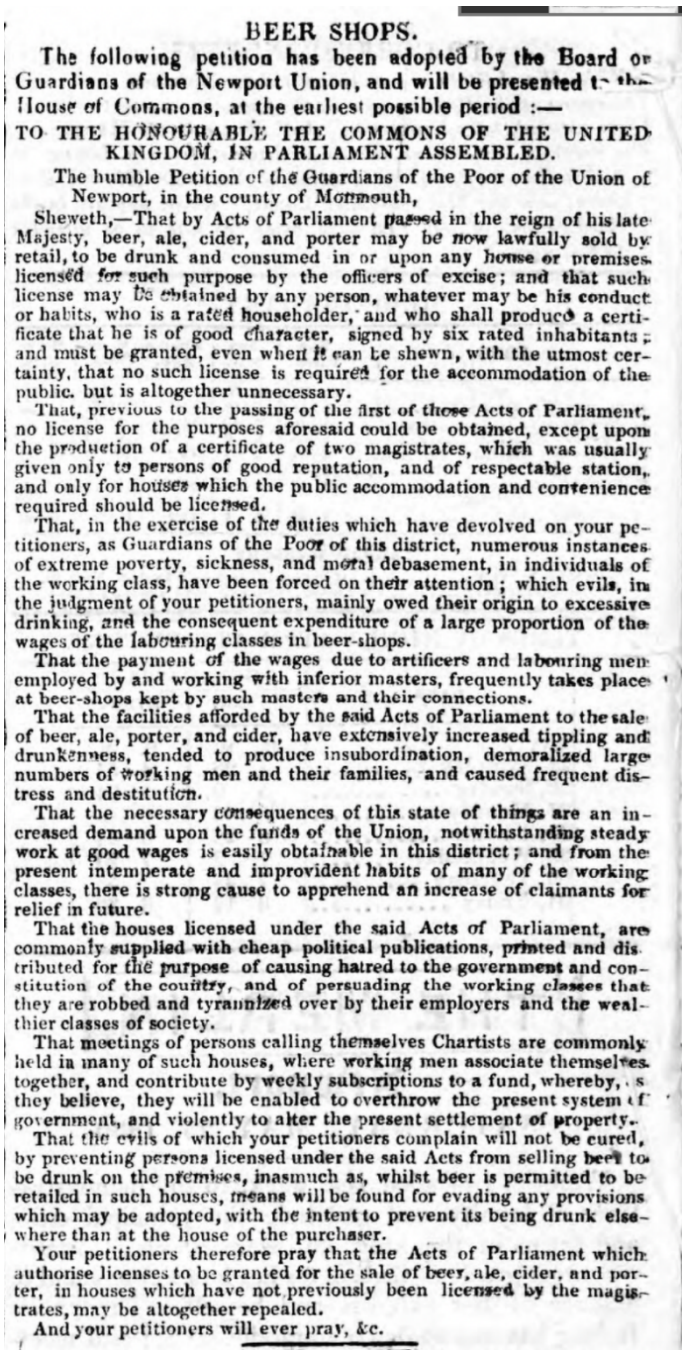


ABERGAVENNY.

CLOSING SHOPS.—We are happy to learn that the practice of closing shops at an earlier hour, is becoming general in Abergavenny. On Monday last, an arrangement was solemnly entered into by the majority of the tradesmen, to close their respective establishments at eight o'clock, to enable their assistants to have a little more time for recreation and reading, but were sorry to find, that this generous and philanthropic concession was nearly marred at the commencement, by one tradesman keeping his shop open until after nine o'clock.

Figure 40: Article about the need for regulated shop opening hours, MM, 19/10/1844

[53] Alaluf Y.B., *The Emotional Economy of Holidaymaking: Health, Pleasure, and Class in Britain 1870-1918* (OUP: Oxford, 2021) p. 54



BEER SHOPS.

The following petition has been adopted by the Board of Guardians of the Newport Union, and will be presented to the House of Commons, at the earliest possible period :—

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The humble Petition of the Guardians of the Poor of the Union of Newport, in the county of Monmouth,

Sheweth,—That by Acts of Parliament passed in the reign of his late Majesty, beer, ale, cider, and porter may be now lawfully sold by retail, to be drunk and consumed in or upon any house or premises licensed for such purpose by the officers of excise; and that such license may be obtained by any person, whatever may be his conduct or habits, who is a rated householder, and who shall produce a certificate that he is of good character, signed by six rated inhabitants; and must be granted, even when it can be shewn, with the utmost certainty, that no such license is required for the accommodation of the public, but is altogether unnecessary.

That, previous to the passing of the first of those Acts of Parliament, no license for the purposes aforesaid could be obtained, except upon the production of a certificate of two magistrates, which was usually given only to persons of good reputation, and of respectable station, and only for houses which the public accommodation and convenience required should be licensed.

That, in the exercise of the duties which have devolved on your petitioners, as Guardians of the Poor of this district, numerous instances of extreme poverty, sickness, and moral debasement, in individuals of the working class, have been forced on their attention; which evils, in the judgment of your petitioners, mainly owed their origin to excessive drinking, and the consequent expenditure of a large proportion of the wages of the labouring classes in beer-shops.

That the payment of the wages due to artificers and labouring men employed by and working with inferior masters, frequently takes place at beer-shops kept by such masters and their connections.

That the facilities afforded by the said Acts of Parliament to the sale of beer, ale, porter, and cider, have extensively increased tippling and drunkenness, tended to produce insubordination, demoralized large numbers of working men and their families, and caused frequent distress and destitution.

That the necessary consequences of this state of things are an increased demand upon the funds of the Union, notwithstanding steady work at good wages is easily obtainable in this district; and from the present intemperate and improvident habits of many of the working classes, there is strong cause to apprehend an increase of claimants for relief in future.

That the houses licensed under the said Acts of Parliament, are commonly supplied with cheap political publications, printed and distributed for the purpose of causing hatred to the government and constitution of the country, and of persuading the working classes that they are robbed and tyrannized over by their employers and the wealthier classes of society.

That meetings of persons calling themselves Chartists are commonly held in many of such houses, where working men associate themselves together, and contribute by weekly subscriptions to a fund, whereby, as they believe, they will be enabled to overthrow the present system of government, and violently to alter the present settlement of property.

That the evils of which your petitioners complain will not be cured, by preventing persons licensed under the said Acts from selling beer to be drunk on the premises, inasmuch as, whilst beer is permitted to be retailed in such houses, means will be found for evading any provisions which may be adopted, with the intent to prevent its being drunk elsewhere than at the house of the purchaser.

Your petitioners therefore pray that the Acts of Parliament which authorise licenses to be granted for the sale of beer, ale, cider, and porter, in houses which have not previously been licensed by the magistrates, may be altogether repealed.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

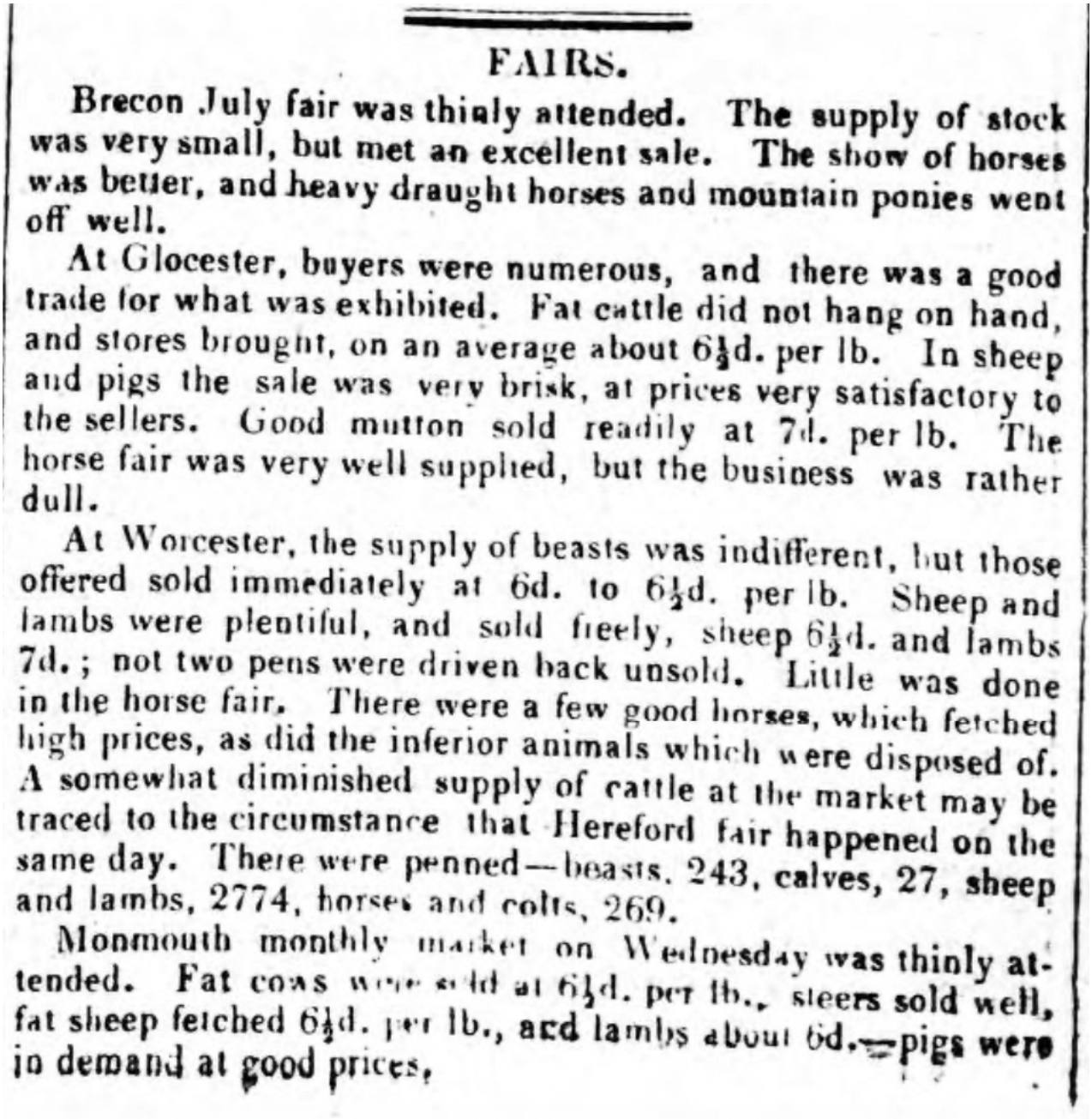
Figure 41: Petition arguing for further regulation of 'beer shops', MM, 25/5/1839

These examples of advertising in a local paper in eastern Monmouthshire are unable to provide definitive evidence to support the idea that the nineteenth century saw a consumer society develop, but it is clear that one way for manufacturers to convince people to try their products was through newspaper adverts. There were many other forms of advertising of goods and services alongside these examples and even if there was suspicion and resistance to the development of a consumer society, there can be little doubt of its success in changing society.

3. Markets, fairs and shops; how rural accessibility to consumerism grew

Even before being convinced of the need to consume more by advertising, people living in rural Britain had already taken part in various methods of exchange and retail. As with many other

historical changes, the development of consumerism had a long, slow gestation period and one earlier form of retail was through markets and fairs. These continued well into the nineteenth century, playing an important role in developing consumerism especially towards the end of the century. For those living in villages in eastern Monmouthshire visiting country fairs involved travelling to Abergavenny, Monmouth and Usk as an occasional but important part of the calendar, providing a centralised meeting place to catch up with others while taking place in the business of buying and selling. There were regular reports of the fairs in the local newspaper, with information on their location and often a report on the prices obtained at them (Figure 42).



FAIRS.

Brecon July fair was thinly attended. The supply of stock was very small, but met an excellent sale. The show of horses was better, and heavy draught horses and mountain ponies went off well.

At Glocester, buyers were numerous, and there was a good trade for what was exhibited. Fat cattle did not hang on hand, and stores brought, on an average about 6½d. per lb. In sheep and pigs the sale was very brisk, at prices very satisfactory to the sellers. Good mutton sold readily at 7d. per lb. The horse fair was very well supplied, but the business was rather dull.

At Worcester, the supply of beasts was indifferent, but those offered sold immediately at 6d. to 6½d. per lb. Sheep and lambs were plentiful, and sold freely, sheep 6½d. and lambs 7d.; not two pens were driven back unsold. Little was done in the horse fair. There were a few good horses, which fetched high prices, as did the inferior animals which were disposed of. A somewhat diminished supply of cattle at the market may be traced to the circumstance that Hereford fair happened on the same day. There were penned—beasts, 243, calves, 27, sheep and lambs, 2774, horses and colts, 269.

Monmouth monthly market on Wednesday was thinly attended. Fat cows were sold at 6½d. per lb., steers sold well, fat sheep fetched 6½d. per lb., and lambs about 6d.—pigs were in demand at good prices.

Figure 42: Report on the country fairs that had taken place in the previous week, MM 14/7/1838

While Perren has written that such fairs were in decline from the mid-century as shops and other forms of trading, as well as easier ways to travel and changes in taxation, meant they lost their importance, the adverts in The Monmouthshire Merlin show that here, at least, they were still taking place (see figure 43).[54]



FAIRS.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.—*Abergavenny :* Third Tuesday in March, May 14, first Tuesday after Trinity. third Tuesday in June, Tuesday before July 20, Sept. 25, Nov. 19. —*Blaenavon :* April 16, Sept. 17.—*Briery Hill :* July 4. —*Blackwood :* Monday after second Saturday in Feb. April, June. Sept.—*Caerleon :* Third Wednesday in Feb., May 1, July 20, Sept. 21 : market second Monday in each month.—*Chepstow :* Monday before March 1, Friday in Whit-week ; June 22, (wool,) Aug. 1, Friday before Oct. 29, market last Monday in each month.—*Castletown :* May 6, July 25, Nov. 26.—*Christchurch :* Nov. 29.— *Grosmont :* Easter Monday, May 1, Aug. 10, Friday before Hereford Oct. fair, Dec. 28. —*Monmouth :* Wednesday after Feb. 15, first Wednesday in May. Whit-Tuesday, June 18, (wool) first Wednesday in Sept., Nov. 22, second Monday in month. — *Magor :* Tuesday before April 17, Tuesday before Oct. 17 : market every third Monday in the month. — *Newport :* Holy Thursday, Whit Thursday, Aug. 15, Nov. 6. Cattle market every Wednesday.—*Peterstone :* First Tuesday in July, second Tuesday in Oct.—*Pontypool :* April 2 and 22, July 5, Oct. 10, last Monday in November.—*Raglan :* March 31, Monday before Hereford Oct. fair.—*Risca :* Sept. 26.—*Skenfrith :* First Monday in May and Nov.— *Tredegar :* April 19, Sept. 21, Nov. 18.—*Usk :* April 20, Trinity Monday, Friday before Monmouth June fair. Oct. 29, Christmas Fair, December 16 ; cattle market first Monday in every month.

Figure 43: MM 4/1/1878 ('Almanac for 1878, supplement') showing the fairs in Monmouthshire for the year.

The fairs were often, according to Williams, tumultuous occasions with a 'vigorous and often violent life of their own.[55] In Abergavenny, which had a retail market established in the thirteenth century, a livestock market brought together the previous street markets in 1863 and this also

[54] Perren R, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Products…' pp. 980-981
[55] Williams G, 'Popular Culture, Leisure and Recreation', Williams C & S.R., *The Gwent County History Vol. 4…* p. 244

largely replaced the fairs.[56] Prior to this time, the different types of livestock were traded in their own areas of town, so, for example, there was a weekly pig market near the junction of Frogmore Street and Lion Street at a location shown in figure 44, which was later part of a road widening scheme (the map is from a Conveyance which allowed the road improvements in return for a peppercorn rent).

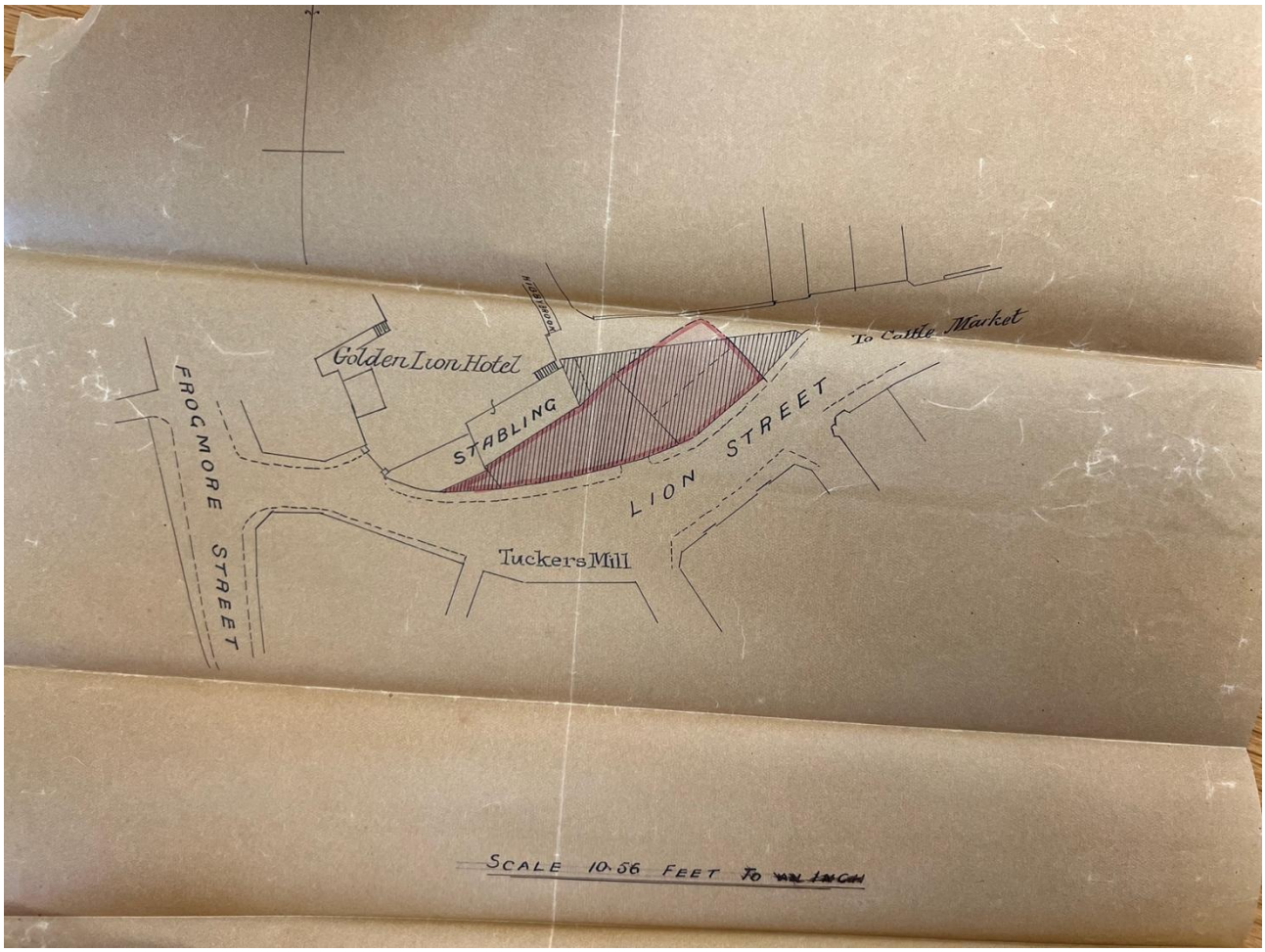


Figure 44: Map of location of former pig market, Abergavenny from a convenance originally dated 1868[57]

The weekly livestock market continued until the early twenty-first century and a 1927 government report on markets and fairs commented that it 'drew supplies from a radius of ten miles' and while it had areas for the sale of pigs, cattle and pigs, there were times when sheep sales were 'especially' important. It also says that wool and fruit were also auctioned at this site.[58] Trade was therefore an important part of the function of Abergavenny throughout this period and drew in

[56] https://growninwales.co.uk/giw_event/abergavenny-farmers-market/ (accessed 30.11.23)
[57] *Gwent Archives,* D1583.121.8, Correspondence re: Conveyance (121/6) Jan 1874-Jan 1875
[58] *Gwent Archives,* LIBRARY/2, 157,: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Markets and Fairs in England and Wales (Part II: Midland Markets)* (HMSO: London, 1927) p.43

large numbers of the population from the surrounding rural areas to the fairs and markets held in the town along with the growing number of shops.

Even before there was any evidence of general retail in eastern Monmouthshire, there were traders offering goods services for sale, including tailors, ironmongers, fuel merchants, shoemakers and butchers (see table 2). Publicans were a well-established feature of life in most of these villages and Chartres suggests that they 'may have been the earliest of the retail trades to diffuse to that level.'[59] These tradespeople, while of growing importance, were a small proportion of the rural population as they made up less than ten percent of the population of these villages, compared to over forty percent who were working in agriculture and another forty percent in domestic service.

Census 1841

	Llanvetherine	Llantilio Crossenny	Llanddewi Rhydderch	Llanvapley	Llanarth	Llanellen	Goytre		**Totals**
Blacksmith	4	3	1		2	1	2		**13**
Butcher						1			**1**
Cabinet Maker		1	1						**2**
Carpenter	2	5	1		1	2	5		**16**
Coal merchant							1		**1**
Cordwain		3							**3**
Dressmaker	1	1	1		5		1		**9**
Hatmaker					1				**1**
Laundress							1		**1**
Market woman					1				**1**
Mason	1	3	2	1	1	3	2		**13**
Publican		3	1	1		1	1		**7**
Sadler		1					1		**2**
Shoemaker	1	4	3		3	3	5		**19**
Shopkeeper	1				1				**2**
Tailor	1			2	2	1	1		**7**

Table 2: Trades offering goods and services for sale in eastern Monmouthshire, 1841

Being able to obtain goods and services locally made the villages fairly self-sufficient, but as shown in table 2, there were hardly any shops in 1841. Writing about rural England and Wales at this time, Mingay says that farmers 'lived pretty much off their own produce' and provided food for

[59] Chartres J.A., 'Country Tradesmen' in Mingay G.E., *The Victorian Countryside…* p. 303

the labourers' 'basic diet', while it was usual for the gentry to have their own farm supplies and dairies.[60] In Monmouthshire, some agricultural labourers had access to land, usually a garden or plot of about half an acre next to their house which they used to grow food for their own needs and were even able to sell or exchange some of it. Tithe Survey also shows a small area of 'poors lands' near Llandeilo Grysenni, a remnant of an earlier system of relief which allowed paupers to have land on which to grow food.[61] Some of the villages were on main routes, through which carriers, pedlars and others travelled and sold goods. In this way it may have been possible for villagers to purchase a wider range of goods such as books, newspapers, tea and coffee before there were village shops.[62] Most of the villages in eastern Monmouthshire were within five miles, or a two-hour walk of Abergavenny, which, while not an insurmountable distance, would have probably only been attempted once a month, especially in winter.[63] The development of rural shops therefore was an important extension of the consumer revolution into the villages of the area. The table above, based on the 1841 census, shows that there were only two shopkeepers in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire one in Llanwytherin, on the main road between Abergavenny and Ross-on-Wye, which therefore had passing traffic going through the village, and another shop in Llanarth, which is a little more distant from Abergavenny and where the local estate may have provided additional support and custom. In the thirty years between the 1841 census and that of 1871, there was a dramatic increase in the number of shops listed in the different villages from two to eight, with only Llanddewi Rhydderch having no shop.

	Type of work:	1841	1871	1901
1	Farm worker	42.89	47.48	44.43
2	Trades (agricultural)	4.78	4.65	7.07
3	Professional	1.75	3.2	5.15
4	Trades/workers (non-agricultural)	9.56	19.38	18.44
5	Dom service	39.74	22.38	22.4
6	Retail	1.28	2.71	2.51
	unemployed		*0.2*	

Table 3: Trades in eastern Monmouthshire 1841-1901 as a percentage of total, with retail highlighted:

Subsequently, as Table 3 shows, the proportion of the local workforce employed in retail more

[60] Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England* (Heinemann: London, 1977) p. 176
[61] See appendices 5 and 17: Maps of land ownership and land use in Llandeilo Grysenni based on Tithe Survey, commissioned in 1836.
[62] Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England…* p. 176
[63] Brown J & Ward S, *The Village Shop* (Rural Development Commission: Salisbury, 1990) p. 8 suggests that people were prepared to walk up to ten miles to get to the nearest town that had shops and fairs.

than doubled, although it was still a very small overall percentage of the total. This is roughly in line with the national trends and Chartres has calculated that the number of general shopkeepers nationally grew from 29,800 to 53,580 between the censuses of 1851 and 1901.[64] The shopkeepers in eastern Monmouthshire were variously described as a 'grocer and baker' in Llanwytherin and Goytre, 'grocers' in Llanfable, Llanofer and Llanellen and 'shopkeepers' in Llanarth, Llantilio Grysenni, and Llanddewi Rhydderch although they all were likely to have sold a similar range of goods. There was also a 'market woman' living in Llanarth, although it does not show which market she worked at. Some of these retailers also had small farms. As these villages had a population too small for specialist retailers some had to have more than one occupation. Across England and Wales, it was common to see an overlap between drapers and grocers and blacksmiths and beer-sellers and this allowed retail to develop even in small communities.

Over the next thirty years, between 1871 and 1901, a period of general population decline in the area, the number of shops remained stable, and some had added Post Office to the list of services provided. That most of the villages had a Post Office is indicative of the developing importance of this institution, an indication too of the growing presence of the state even in remote village life, also suggests that people were still not travelling frequently or very far. As shown below, some of the gentry were by the end of the nineteenth century regularly buying from shops in Abergavenny and even, in the case of the Herberts of Llanover Estate, London, but it is likely that, apart from visits to markets and fairs, many people bought from the local store. To remain viable therefore the shops had to be able to provide a range of goods to meet everyone's needs - they had to be General Stores. While it has not been possible to find details of what the village shops in eastern Monmouthshire were selling, Stobart and Bailey have looked at similar village shops in other parts of England and Wales and found that mostly they sold basic food items as well as a range of goods that were stocked in case they were needed by someone in the village or passing through.[65] This type of stock may have been important but it also carried more financial risk as 'the slow movement of certain goods and the accumulation of dead stock over time remained a problem for shopkeepers as they attempted to ensure readiness for any request.' The benefits of additional custom from passing trade, for shops on transport routes, was mitigated in some ways by the need to stock an even greater range of goods, 'just in case' and unlike the specialist retailers found in towns, village shops had to sell a wide range of items including things like crockery and cutlery,

[64] Chartres J.A., 'Country Tradesmen' in Mingay G.E., *The Victorian Countryside…* p. 304
[65] Stobart J and Bailey L, 'Retail revolution and the village shop, c.1660-1860', *The Economic History Review*, 71, (2018) p. 395

items of millinery, small hardware items such as sandpaper and commonly used medicines.[66] Brown and Ward suggest that in order to support the shop in villages with a small population the local gentry, who could more easily have the time and money to travel to local towns and beyond, still often bought some of their needs locally in order to support the village shop, although this was unlikely to be their only source of produce.[67] For local shops to be successfully established there had to be several concurrent changes taking place, including an increase in wages, an increase in working hours, more regulated working conditions, better connections with local towns in order for the shops to obtain produce to sell, as well as the promotion of the convenience of buying what people needed from a shop rather than having to grow or produce it.

4. Comparison of two different village experiences: Llanfable and Llanofer

A micro-study of two villages shows the growing incursion of consumer society into rural eastern Monmouthshire. This was a century in which, for Marx, 'the bourgeoisie [had] subjected the countryside to the rule of the town' and for those who remained living in the countryside, they slowly embraced a consumerism in their own village communities as well as having increasing access to the town.[68] The two contrasting villages that have been chosen to emphasise this are Llanfable and Llanofer. Llanfable had a small population, of around one hundred, although this number fluctuated through the century. The village was located on one of the main roads that connected the towns of Abergavenny and Monmouth and so would have had enough passing trade to help support a retail business. Llanofer, was also on a main road, this time between Abergavenny and Pontypool and, once again, had enough trade to support a shop. The village was part of the local estate, whose owner for most of the later part of the century, Lady Llanover, sought to maintain what she considered were Welsh traditions, most notably the language, but also the trades that she considered central to village life. Despite this, like most of the landowners in eastern Monmouthshire, Lady Llanover had extensive interests in industry and derived much of her wealth from the very economic and subsequent social changes she sought to resist. She did pursue her passion for Welsh tradition though and also considered herself a moral guardian for those who worked and lived on the estate.

According to the 1841 census, no shopkeepers lived in Llanfable. This changed in the 1851 census and Richard Woodward, who was previously recorded as a tailor, was now described as a 'farmer,

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[66] Stobart J & Bailey L, 'Retail revolution…' p. 399
[67] Brown J & Ward S, The Village Shop… p. 17
[68] Marx K, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' in Draper H, *The Adventures of the Communist Manifesto* (Haymarket: London, 2019) p. 123

tailor and shopkeeper'. He and his family lived in the 'old shop' although it is not possible to know what type of 'shop' this was. Elizabeth Meredith, aged 47, on the other hand was a grocer, living in the 'new shop' along with her 22-year-old son, William, a carpenter. Also living in the new shop were Elizabeth's daughter and her husband (an agricultural labourer), together with their young son. Elizabeth's sister who was recorded as being disabled also lived in the house. There were therefore two other sources of household income to add to what Elizabeth was able to make from being a grocer, which is not to undermine the importance of her work, but to suggest that at this time the income from selling groceries may have not been enough on their own to maintain the shop. This census also shows the village had two blacksmiths and a pub, which, like the shops, benefitted from passing trade.



Figure 45: Map of Llanfable/Llanvapley dated 1901 showing the position of the shop/Post Office (P.O.) and other buildings in the village.[69]

The 1861 census record for Llanfable is incomplete, but Richard Woodward is still recorded as living in the old shop as a 'grocer and farmer of 20 acres'. The new shop does not appear in this

[69] *Gwent Archives,* D1763/43 (extract from) Map 7/14 associated with report of Finance Act, 1910 (The map is dated 1901 and the numbers in green circles refer to the plots surveyed for the Finance Act, 1910)

census.[70] Ten years later, in 1871, 16-year-old John Cox was a grocer living in 'the shop', while in the 'Grocer's Shop' were shopkeeper Rachel Jones, aged 74, who lived there with her daughter, Mary Jones, a 35-year-old dressmaker. There were three lodgers, William Jones, 29, a gardener, David Edmunds, 23, a 'coachman' and David Jones, 23, who was a farm labourer. Rachel Jones had appeared in the 1841 census as wife of blacksmith Evan Jones living with their children at the 'Smithy' and in the 1851 census, she was recorded as a 'laundress' although the house is not named. Once again, the income from Mary's dressmaking and from the lodgers paying rent would have helped sustain the business. By the time of the 1881 census, Rachel had died and her daughter Mary was now the grocer with her 15-year-old niece, Anne Probert (daughter of the village carpenter and wheelwright) as an assistant. They only had one lodger, William Jones. Given that the shop was now supporting two employees and had only one other source of income it seems likely that the business was doing well. The same three people lived in the shop in 1891 and 1901 although by this time it was a Post Office as well as a grocer's shop. After Mary died in 1905, Anne Probert became the village postmistress and grocer. From 1871 onwards, the shop was run by women from the same family. Throughout the period the shop also had the additional income of lodgers, although of the three original lodgers only William Jones was still there by 1901 and he had left by 1910. The introduction of a Post Office alongside the grocery business appears to have helped sustain the business and the shop continued in the village until the 1970s.

By the end of the century, Llanofer had a grocery shop and a separate Post Office. In the 1841 census there are no shops mentioned, but by 1851 there was a *Shop House*, and its resident was 59-year-old Mary Jones, a grocer.[71] The shop had been renamed *Maenmachdy* in the 1861 census and this time the grocer was Caroline Lewis, while at the Post Office was David Jones, who was described in the census as a Cordwainer. In the 1901 census both the shop, *Maenmachdy* and the Post Office were still mentioned with James Evans as a grocer and Eleanor Jones as Postmistress. Figure 46 shows an advert that was on a receipt for goods bought by the Llanover Estate in 1903, by which time the grocer was James Evans. No doubt Lady Llanover, who had died in 1896, would have approved the Llanbryn Valley Teas advert, which shows the Welsh dress that she helped create.

[70] As mentioned in Chapter Two, pages 1 and 2 are repeated and pages 3 and 4 are missing on the on-line record of the 1861 census for Llanvapley.

[71] This was a different Mary Jones than the one in Llanfable.



Figure 46: An advert from a receipt for groceries bought in 1903 by the Llanover Estate for the grocers in Llanofer.[72]

Today, the Llanofer Post Office is a listed building and, as Figure 48 shows, it has a large board showing it was a Post Office written in English and Welsh and also depicting a 'Marie Lloyd', in line with Augusta Hall's promoting of Welsh traditions. Prior to this being a Post Office, the site was that of a pub that was closed by Hall, who was a supporter of the Temperance movement. This pub was recorded in the 1841 census as *The Duke of York* and in the 1861 census as *Rhyd y Meirch*. There was another Post Office within the parish boundary at nearby Nantyderry, near to the railway station that served the area. The Nantyderry Post Office had been built in the late 1860s although still being advertised in 1871 as 'an excellent shop with house now ready to be let. Desirable location for grocery/shoemaking (Figure 47).'[73]

[72] *Gwent Archives,* D1210 0348, Receipts for Cheques 24 and 25 July 1903, Llanover Estate records
[73] http://www.goytrelocalhistory.org.uk/category/houses/page/2/ (accessed 18.10.23); *The Monmouthshire Central Advertiser*, 13.5.1871, p. 1



NANTYDERRY STATION.

AN Excellent SHOP, with a HOUSE and GARDEN attached, is now ready to be LET at the above Station. It is a desirable locality for Grocery and Shoemaking business. Three COTTAGES are also to be Let near the said Station, with suitable Gardens. Rent moderate—Apply to Mr. WILLIAMS, Refreshment House, Nantyderry.

Figure 47: Advert for shop to let, Nantyderry Station, County Advertiser and Monmouthshire Central Advertiser, 13th May 1871

Nantyderry also had a pub, *The Railway Tavern*, which survived throughout the period and remains a pub, now called *Foxhunter Inn* after a famous local racehorse. The close proximity of the shops – there was another in Llanellen, two miles north of Llanofer, suggests there was enough trade from the villages and passing trade for them to be successful and an increasingly important part of village life.



Figure 48: The building that housed Llanover Post Office

The development of new methods of transport meant by the end of the century people were more able and likely to do at least some of their shopping in the local towns. Brown and Ward write that transport and improved roads, railways, etc., which had initially benefited village shopkeepers who found it easier to obtain supplies and establish their businesses, was eventually a factor in undermining them. There is some evidence that the wealthier residents of the two

villages were buying goods in towns. The recently appointed rector of Llanfable's St Mable's Church, Edward Mansel Townsend, had an account at Morgan & Evans, a general store based at 5 Cross Street, Abergavenny. The passbook in his name shows what he bought between 1901-1905. Townsend was, according to the 1901 census, 41-years-old and lived in the Rectory with his wife, Jessie and their children: Daisy (aged 9, born in Limehouse, London), Noel (aged 8, born in Waltham Abbey, Essex), Violet (aged 6, born in Warwickshire) Charles (aged 3, born in Upper Sydenham, Kent) and Grace (aged 2, born in Llanfable). Others living at the Rectory in 1901 were 21-year-old Domestic Governess, Grace, a 34-year-old cook, Elizabeth Coles and an 18-year-old Domestic Nurse, Ellen May Matthews. Although Townsend spent the rest of his life in Llanfable, he had clearly moved around prior to his appointment there. In the sense that he was not local and had connections with other parts of the country (he was originally from County Cork in Ireland), Townsend was unusual amongst the people of Llanfable, most of whom had been born in Monmouthshire. Townsend was middle class and had a stable and substantial income, which helps to explain the purchases he made. Morgan & Evans, was a 'Wholesale and Family Grocers', as well as a 'Wine, Spirit & Ale & Porter Merchants', and in the pass books is a list of the goods on sale.[74] The table below are the goods that Townsend bought over the period 1901-1903:

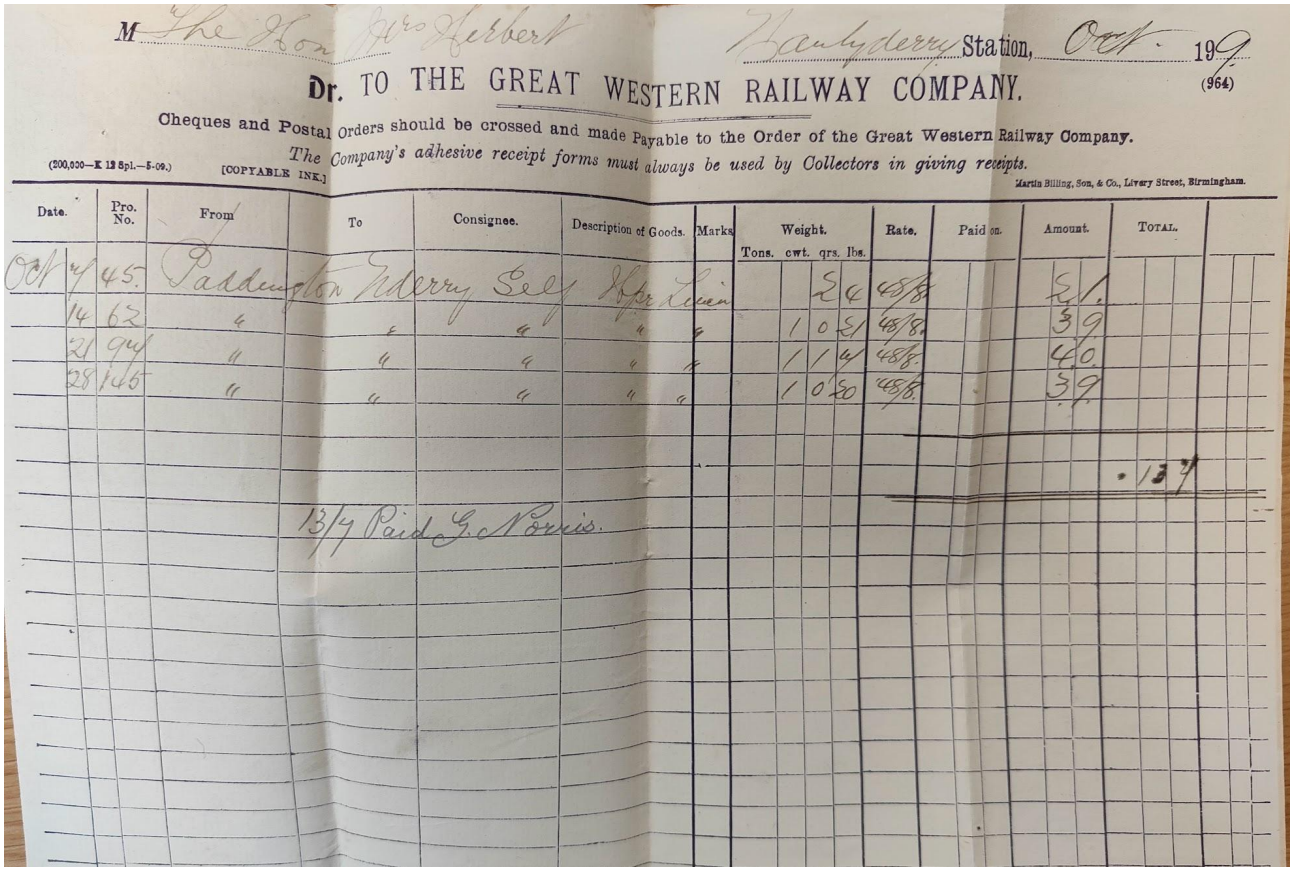
Purchased from Morgan & Evans by the Reverend Townsend 1901-1903

Basic foods	Processed foods	Fruit	Cleaning materials	Household	Other
Sugar	Biscuits	Oranges	Blacking	Vaseline	Xmas candles
Oats	Cake	Figs	Soda	Glycerine	Postage stamps
Coffee	Sausages		Matches	Toilet paper	
Tea	Chocolates		Starch		
Salt	Vinegar		Polish		
Saltpetre	Lemonade		Blacking brushes		
Baking materials	HP sauce		Turps		
Butter	Jelly		Flannel (3 yards)		
Eggs	Mustard		Chamois leather		
Rice	White pepper		Brush and handle		
Split peas	Cocoa				
Lentils	Marmalade				
Lemons					
Bananas					

[74] *Gwent Archives,* D3985/25, D2985/26 and D3985/27, Pass Books Rev. Townsend 1901-1903

There was frequent purchase of baking goods, although no flour was listed. Cleaning goods were also a regular purchase, along with processed foods, such as biscuits, cakes and preserves. Morgan and Evans offered 5% credit terms on outstanding balances and during this period, Townsend built up a fairly large debt. In December 1900, he had an outstanding balance of £2/17 shillings and 4d, having paid £15 that month. A payment of £30 in August left an outstanding balance of £3/10s/3d, but by Dec 1902, despite a cash payment of £30 the balance carried forward was £26/12s/11d and by October 1903, Townsend despite paying a cheque of £30, owed £42/18s/4½d. His growing debt was earning Morgan & Evans interest and in October 1903 this was £1/10s. Town-based retailers like this had the customer base to be able to stock more goods than village shops and in the passbook, they list fifty-four types of biscuits, ten types of crystallised fruits, seven types of fruit syrup, six types of fruit in tins, seven types of fruit in bottles, eleven types of meat in tins, twenty-one types of potted meat and fish and other preserves including jams and pickles. Clearly the people of Abergavenny had access to a wide range of produce, and this was just one of several grocers' shops in the town.

Compared this, the evidence from the Herberts of Llanover Estate, who had inherited it after Augusta Hall had passed away in 1896, shows another level of wealth and spending. Their accounts indicate that they had houses in Llanofer and London and often transported goods bought in London by train. The receipts for the different months in the first decade of the twentieth century include a number for carriage on the Great Western Railway from Paddington to Nantyderry Station. The estate had an account at the *Home & Colonial Stores* in Edgware Road, London and this shows they bought some household items including baking goods, tea and coffee and they were listed in the Llanover records, which were kept separate from the London ones. The receipts show that they also bought many items from local shops, such as butchers, bakers and fruiterers in Abergavenny so did support some local retail businesses. This included many items that were for the workers in Llanover Court. There was a list of meat eaters and a record of the meat obtained from butchers in both Abergavenny and London and a separate list is provided of servants and staff and guests.



M The Hon Mrs Herbert Hanlyderry Station, Oct. 1909

Dr. TO THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY. (964)

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made Payable to the Order of the Great Western Railway Company.

The Company's adhesive receipt forms must always be used by Collectors in giving receipts.

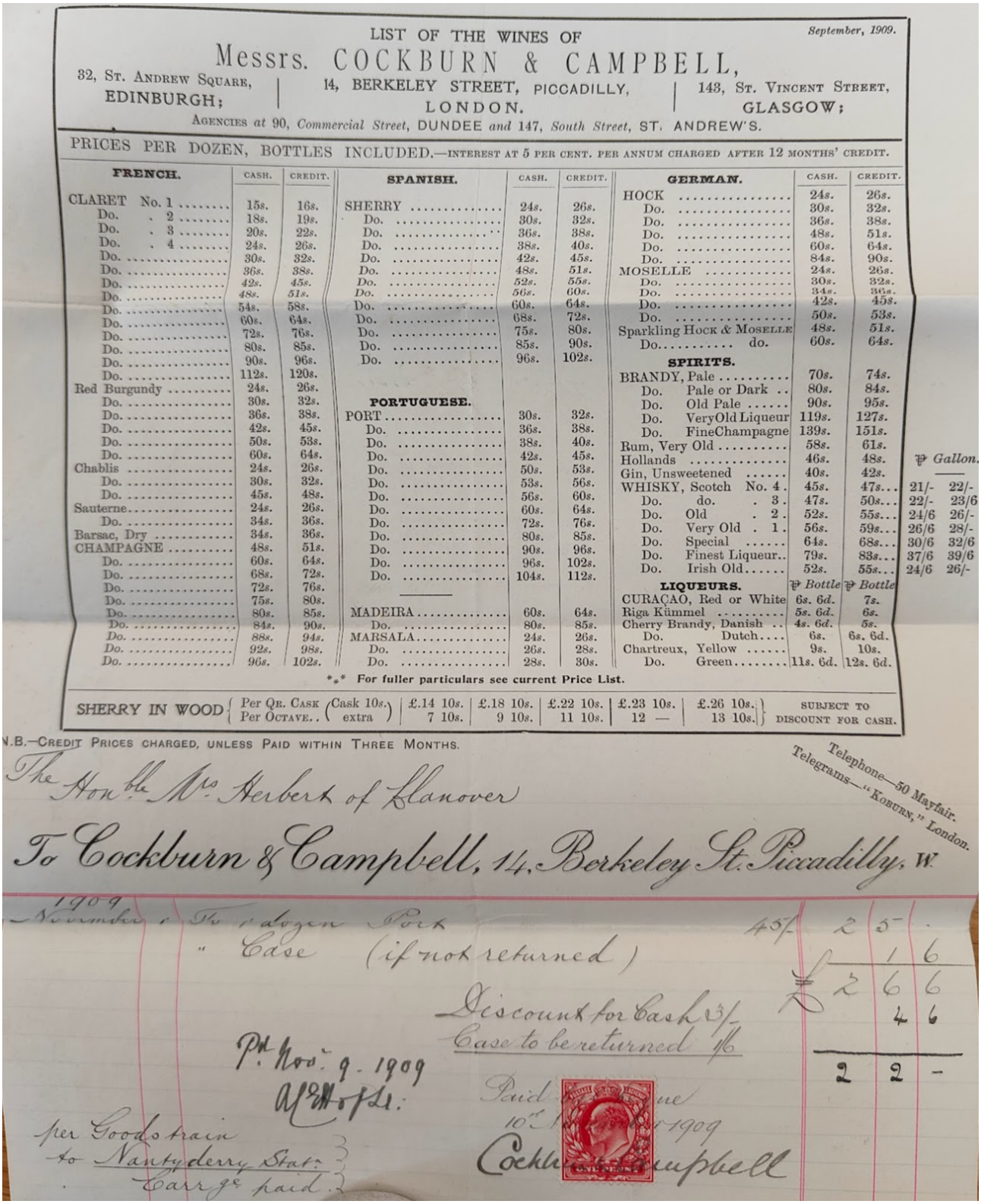
(200,000—K 12 Spl.—5-09.) [COPYABLE INK.] Martin Billing, Son, & Co., Livery Street, Birmingham.

Date.	Pro. No.	From	To	Consignee.	Description of Goods.	Marks	Weight. Tons.	cwt.	qrs.	lbs.	Rate.	Paid on.	Amount.	TOTAL.
Oct 7	45.	Paddington	Nderry	Self	Hpr Linen				2	4	48/8		2 1.	
14	62	"	"	"	"	"		1	0	21	48/8.		3 9	
21	94	"	"	"	"	"		1	1	4	48/8.		4 0.	
28	145	"	"	"	"	"		1	0	20	48/8.		3 9.	
														.13 7

13/7 Paid G. Norris.

Figure 49: One of many receipts showing carriage of goods paid for by the Llanover Estate[75]

[75] *Gwent Archives,* D1210 0424, Receipts and accounts for Llanover Estate, October 1909,



LIST OF THE WINES OF — September, 1909.

Messrs. COCKBURN & CAMPBELL,

32, St. Andrew Square, EDINBURGH; | 14, BERKELEY STREET, PICCADILLY, LONDON. | 143, St. Vincent Street, GLASGOW;

Agencies at 90, *Commercial Street*, DUNDEE *and* 147, *South Street*, ST. ANDREW'S.

PRICES PER DOZEN, BOTTLES INCLUDED.—INTEREST AT 5 PER CENT. PER ANNUM CHARGED AFTER 12 MONTHS' CREDIT.

FRENCH.	CASH.	CREDIT.
CLARET No. 1	15s.	16s.
Do. . 2	18s.	19s.
Do. . 3	20s.	22s.
Do. . 4	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	36s.	38s.
Do.	42s.	45s.
Do.	48s.	51s.
Do.	54s.	58s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Do.	72s.	76s.
Do.	80s.	85s.
Do.	90s.	96s.
Do.	112s.	120s.
Red Burgundy	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	36s.	38s.
Do.	42s.	45s.
Do.	50s.	53s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Chablis	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	45s.	48s.
Sauterne	24s.	26s.
Do.	34s.	36s.
Barsac, Dry	34s.	36s.
CHAMPAGNE	48s.	51s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Do.	68s.	72s.
Do.	72s.	76s.
Do.	75s.	80s.
Do.	80s.	85s.
Do.	84s.	90s.
Do.	88s.	94s.
Do.	92s.	98s.
Do.	96s.	102s.

SPANISH.	CASH.	CREDIT.
SHERRY	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	36s.	38s.
Do.	38s.	40s.
Do.	42s.	45s.
Do.	48s.	51s.
Do.	52s.	55s.
Do.	56s.	60s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Do.	68s.	72s.
Do.	75s.	80s.
Do.	85s.	90s.
Do.	96s.	102s.
PORTUGUESE.		
PORT	30s.	32s.
Do.	36s.	38s.
Do.	38s.	40s.
Do.	42s.	45s.
Do.	50s.	53s.
Do.	53s.	56s.
Do.	56s.	60s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Do.	72s.	76s.
Do.	80s.	85s.
Do.	90s.	96s.
Do.	96s.	102s.
Do.	104s.	112s.
MADEIRA	60s.	64s.
Do.	80s.	85s.
MARSALA	24s.	26s.
Do.	26s.	28s.
Do.	28s.	30s.

GERMAN.	CASH.	CREDIT.
HOCK	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	36s.	38s.
Do.	48s.	51s.
Do.	60s.	64s.
Do.	84s.	90s.
MOSELLE	24s.	26s.
Do.	30s.	32s.
Do.	34s.	36s.
Do.	42s.	45s.
Do.	50s.	53s.
Sparkling Hock & Moselle	48s.	51s.
Do. do.	60s.	64s.
SPIRITS.		
BRANDY, Pale	70s.	74s.
Do. Pale or Dark	80s.	84s.
Do. Old Pale	90s.	95s.
Do. Very Old Liqueur	119s.	127s.
Do. Fine Champagne	139s.	151s.
Rum, Very Old	58s.	61s.
Hollands	46s.	48s.
Gin, Unsweetened	40s.	42s.
WHISKY, Scotch No. 4	45s.	47s.
Do. do. . 3	47s.	50s.
Do. Old . 2	52s.	55s.
Do. Very Old . 1	56s.	59s.
Do. Special	64s.	68s.
Do. Finest Liqueur	79s.	83s.
Do. Irish Old	52s.	55s.
LIQUEURS.	℔ Bottle	℔ Bottle
CURAÇAO, Red or White	6s. 6d.	7s.
Riga Kümmel	5s. 6d.	6s.
Cherry Brandy, Danish	4s. 6d.	5s.
Do. Dutch	6s.	6s. 6d.
Chartreux, Yellow	9s.	10s.
Do. Green	11s. 6d.	12s. 6d.

℔ Gallon.	
21/-	22/-
22/-	23/6
24/6	26/-
26/6	28/-
30/6	32/6
37/6	39/6
24/6	26/-

*** For fuller particulars see current Price List.

SHERRY IN WOOD { Per Qr. Cask (Cask 10s. extra) | £.14 10s. | £.18 10s. | £.22 10s. | £.23 10s. | £.26 10s. } SUBJECT TO DISCOUNT FOR CASH.
Per Octave.. | 7 10s. | 9 10s. | 11 10s. | 12 — | 13 10s.

N.B.—Credit Prices charged, unless Paid within Three Months.

Telephone—50 Mayfair.
Telegrams—"Koburn," London.

The Hon.ble Mrs. Herbert of Llanover

To Cockburn & Campbell, 14, Berkeley St. Piccadilly, W.

1909
November 1 To 1 dozen Port 45/- 2 5 -
" Case (if not returned) 1 6
£ 2 6 6
Discount for Cash 3/ 4 6
Case to be returned 1/
2 2 -
Pd Nov. 9. 1909
Per Goods train
to Nantyderry Station
Carrge paid.

Paid ... ue
10th ... 1909
Cockb... ampbell

Figure 50: A receipt for port bought by the Hon. and Mrs Herbert of Llanover from a wine dealer in London and transported by 'goods train' to Nantyderry Station, carriage paid.

Much of what Townsend and the Herberts bought was imported, which was increasingly common in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Perren comments,

> Bulk buying favoured imported food which came from the docks in huge quantities often packed, marked and graded for ease of selling, rather than

> British produce available only in small amounts and poorly presented in comparison with its competing imports.[76]

In fact, by the end of the nineteenth century, *most* food consumed in Britain was imported. The consumer society was based on trade and, increasingly, global trade, especially with the empire, and this was a factor in undermining local food production. Competition favoured farmers producing the same things in other parts of the world, as improved transport and better storage systems made importing it viable. Farmers affected by the changes knew this. Evidence collected for the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, 1896 frequently referred to imports as a cause of the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century.[77] For example, Daniel Jones of Glanrafon in Caernarfonshire said:

> The agricultural depression is caused by, in the first place, foreign competition; in the second place, the enhanced price of labour; and in the third place, the continual burdening of the land to an unjustifiable extent for giving effect to what are known as reforms… This, I maintain, is an injustice which no other industry in the land would be tolerated for a moment.[78]

Jones's comment on 'burdening of the land' suggests that he had been forced to implement what he knew to be unsustainable agricultural methods, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Others added causes such as a 'very great want of capital', which E.J. Williams, a sub-agent of Lord Penrhyn in the same county believed was often ignored as a cause of the crisis and undermined farmers' ability to compete. Commenting on the evidence, The Report of the Royal Commission said 'there can be no doubt that the amount of food annually consumed in the United Kingdom, an ever increasing proportion comes from abroad,' giving wheat, as an example, where only about a quarter of flour used for bread in 1893 was home produced.[79] The report also noted that while prices being paid to farmers for the food they produced had declined, sometimes significantly, largely due to the competition from abroad, wages farmers had to pay to farm workers had increased, partly due to a shortage of such labour and partly due to competition from wages available in industry.

While the development of a consumer-based society gave advantages of an expanded market, farmers were forced to change methods and introduce even more intensified methods of

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[76] Perren R, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Products…' p. 990
[77] *National Library of* Wales, NLW MS 3613E, Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire – Book II (Conclusions and Recommendations), 1896 (hereafter "Report of the Royal Commission…")
[78] Report of the Royal Commission… p. 11
[79] Report of the Royal Commission… p. 3

agriculture in order to survive. The competition with other parts of the world which had climates better suited to growing cereal crops or more space for animal-based agriculture undermined and advantage adopting high farming methods and improvements brought. Farmers and labourers also obtained their food through purchasing it from retailers.[80] This result of market pressure meant:

> either the profit was so small as not to constitute such a fair or reasonable interest on the capital involved as to make it worthwhile to go with the adventure, or else that there no profit, but a loss…the average estate… produces under existing conditions either no profit or a profit so small as to make it doubtful if the undertaking should be carried on.[81]

Clearly the development of retailing, and a society based on a division between consumption and production was not to blame for all that went wrong with agriculture in Wales in the nineteenth century, but it was a factor. Another effect of the opening of shop in a village was the encroachment of private space as people lost the ability to get what they needed or wanted in any other way, such as growing it themselves. In this way, as with the development of roads providing a barrier or rift between people and their locality, shops had the contradictory effect of closing down local production, particularly by individual households, in favour of a centralised form of food production (and distribution). This was another element of the development of a metabolic rift as most people no longer had a necessary link with the soil on which they had depended as food producers. The only food producers in the locality were now farmers, whose production was for the market economy and for whom the competitive pressure to make a profit came above concern for the health of the environment and the land. By the time village shops began to close in the late twentieth century, their loss was lamented as they became seen as the hub of a village and its demise as important in reducing community involvement.[82] However, before village shops opened in the nineteenth century, other ways of trading such as fairs and markets were far more likely to involve more people in each community, buying and selling livestock and produce, often involving a collective arrangement to get to the fair. 'Consumerism', then, had wider implications in terms of how people managed to get goods and services, and this affected their awareness and connection with how what they consumed was produced. This was a situation unimaginable in previous societies, where people had to grow the food they needed and either make, or find ways

[80] Report of the Royal Commission... pp. 7-8
[81] Report of the Royal Commission… p.8
[82] For instance, Brown J & Ward S, *The Village Shop…* laments the loss of village shops especially in the post-war period (pp.53-93)

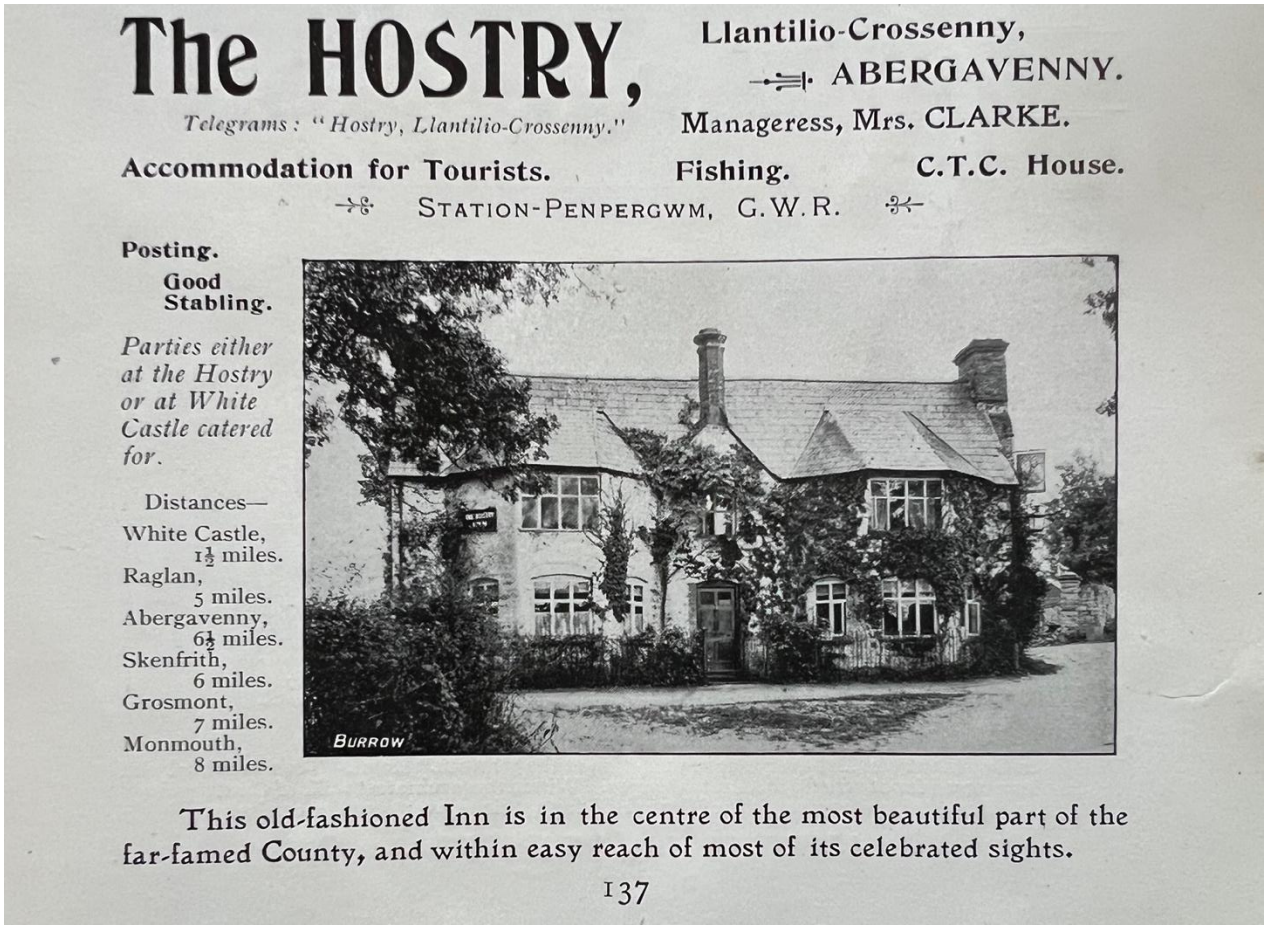
to get others to make, the clothes and other goods they required. This in turn required most (if not all) people to have a direct link and understanding of the need to maintain a sustainable system of production.

5. The commodification of leisure time and the development of tourism as an industry

The countryside, which, in reality, was being increasingly industrialised through the encroaching impact of agricultural capitalism, a process that will be explored in detail in Chapter 5, was increasingly separated in the popular discourse from the urban space. Parts of eastern Monmouthshire became an early tourist destination, and the Wye Valley became famous for its picturesque views. Looking west from the Kymin, the view is of eastern Monmouthshire as far as Ysgyryd Fawr, a striking hill just to the east of Abergavenny.[83] Tourism expanded from this early basis as a middle-class past-time to become a mass participation activity as the century progressed leading to one factory inspector to comment that 'the working class are moving about on the surface of their own country… as the upper classes did in 1800, as the middle class did in 1850, and as they themselves are doing in 1875.'[84] A much-needed break from the arduous work most of those in the expanding towns and cities endured for most of the year, the rural thus became separated from a place where a similar process of hard work went into food production, on which society depended. There were positives for some of those living in the countryside to this separation, as tourism created a welcome extra boost for traders in the villages and nearby towns. Hospitality businesses including hotels in rural villages were the second highest category in the Burrow's Guide advertising for Abergavenny and district, as shown by this advert for The Hostry in Llandeilo Grysenni, advertised as 'accommodation for tourists' (Figure 51).

[83] Walford Davies D and Fulford T, 'Romanticism's Wye', *Romanticism,* 19:2 (2013) p. 115 and Porter D, 'Maps, Lists, Views: How the Picturesque Wye transformed Topography', *Romanticism,* 19:2 (2013) p. 172

[84] Factory inspector Robert Baker, quoted in Bailey P, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (Methuen: London, 1978) p. 102



The HOSTRY, Llantilio-Crossenny, ABERGAVENNY.

Telegrams: "Hostry, Llantilio-Crossenny." Manageress, Mrs. CLARKE.

Accommodation for Tourists. Fishing. C.T.C. House.

STATION-PENPERGWM, G.W.R.

Posting.
Good Stabling.

Parties either at the Hostry or at White Castle catered for.

Distances—
White Castle, 1½ miles.
Raglan, 5 miles.
Abergavenny, 6½ miles.
Skenfrith, 6 miles.
Grosmont, 7 miles.
Monmouth, 8 miles.

BURROW

This old-fashioned Inn is in the centre of the most beautiful part of the far-famed County, and within easy reach of most of its celebrated sights.

137

Figure 51: Advert for The Trostry, Llandeilo Grysenni, in Burrow's Guide to Abergavenny… (1902) p. 137

The metabolic rift was a disengagement with the environment that was a necessary corollary to the development of an industrialised and urbanised society. As shown earlier in this chapter, this meant that everyone, including those remaining in rural Britain, had to be part of the consumer society, in which every aspect of life was bought and sold as a commodity. This included leisure time, which grew as the hours involved in the working week began to be reduced and regulated towards the end of the nineteenth century and, in turn, provided the space for a whole new industry to develop. There was, therefore, a growth not just of the retail trade, but also of cafes, tea-houses, restaurants and all the associated 'services' that began to play a significant role in the economy and society of Britain from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The availability of such goods and services also depended on the expansion of production. There was thus a development of rurality as a commodity which had a reciprocal relationship with urban industrial expansion. This development of leisure time and associated activities led to the commodification of rural Britain as a tourist destination, which affected eastern Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century. This was one of the first parts of Britain where tourism developed as the Wye Valley, part of which is in eastern Monmouthshire, became an early visitor destination because of the scenery and, when the Napoleonic Wars at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made

travel to Europe more difficult, this area replaced the artistic 'Grand Tour' for many artists and wealthy patrons.[85] Ironically, at the same time as agriculture was being commodified and commercialised, artistic interpretations of the countryside tended to emphasise its remoteness and present an image of bucolic tranquillity, often far removed from the reality. The area was central to the idea of 'the picturesque' and the belief that rurality was more connected with nature, central to the Romantic tendency called transcendentalism.[86] The emergence of the 'picturesque', that nature was an imitation of art, is often associated with William Gilpin, whose tour of the Wye Valley was published later as *Observations on the River Wye*, 1782. Valentine Morris, who as discussed in Chapter 3 played a pivotal role in improving local roads, owned the Piercefield Estate near Chepstow, which bordered the River Wye, and had it landscaped to highlight the beauty of the area. The estate was described by Charles Heath in 1793 as the 'Arcadia of Monmouthshire.'[87] Rurality was being reinterpreted from its previous association with backwardness, associated with vulgarity, dirt and hard work to a relaxing destination for those with money and time to get away from the grind of urban life. Industrialists were buying land and even whole country estates, paying for the building of large houses that, like Cyfarthfa Castle in Merthyr Tydfil, replicated the type of structures they associated with wealth and land from older times. Throughout the British countryside, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw 'country houses' being built or redesigned to take advantage of the fashion for the rural retreat, a perfect place to relax or even conduct a business deal. The reinvention of the countryside included developing the art of hunting, with exclusive rights to hunt foxes with hounds given to the landowners and their guests, with all the paraphernalia of dressing up and an invented tradition to go with it.[88] The Duke of Beaufort, for example, led his guests on an annual hunt from the industrialised 'heads of the valleys' Monmouthshire towns, where the workers were 'encouraged' to be spectators of the fun. Artists and poets were central to this reimagining. Wordsworth's 1798 poem 'Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour' is a good example of the romanticised version of the countryside and one that was central to the imagined world that attracted tourists to the area:

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[85] 'The Picturesque Wye Tour: Inspirational Valley, Birthplace of British Tourism' brochure produced by Wye Valley AONB Partnership, 2019. Available on-line at https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/dbimgs/1258_Wye_Tour_Brochure_2019_Spreads_NoCrops%20FINAL%20TO%20PRINT.pdf (accessed 11.10.23) pp. 4-8

[86] Gould J.R. & Revill G, *Representing the Environment* (Routledge: London, 2004) p. 143

[87] Whittle E, ''All These Inchanting Scenes': Piercefield in the Wye Valley', *Garden History* (24:1, 1996) p. 146

[88] And in those areas where foxes had already been driven to extinction as vermin, they had to be reintroduced so the 'sport' could be pursued.

> Knowing that nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her, 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy, for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With loft thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Not greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us or disturb
> Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings.[89]

Reinventing the countryside as representative of a more innocent past, when humanity was still in tune with nature was a nineteenth century development and Weiner argues that Tennyson's 'mid-Victorian' poetry was both 'a comfortable form of escapism for city dwellers, and as a means of redefining "Englishness."[90] The reimagining of the rural as an idyll and one that was immune to change at a time of great societal, economic and environmental upheaval, meant it was represented as 'the repository of the moral character of the nation. It could not change, or England herself would be in mortal danger.' [91] Embedded in this was a sense that there was something being lost in the changing relationship between society and the natural environment which was already seen as a separate entity. It is important to locate this in the context of an England and Wales where 'an immensely powerful and wealthy landed elite' presided over a 'waning rural economy', the decline of which it did not feel 'critically menaced' by, given it was 'established in the cities, and was drawing increasing proportions of its income from ownership of urban, mining and industrial land,' a description very apt in eastern Monmouthshire as shown in Chapter Two.[92] The result was that there was in reality little differentiating urban and rural

[89] Bentley-Taylor D, *Wordsworth in the Wye Valley* (Logaston Press: Woonton Almley, 2001) p. 4
[90] Weiner M, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981) p. 49
[91] Weiner M, *English Culture…* p.56
[92] Weiner M, *English Culture…* p.48

society, which meant that when a national myth was created it was possible to romanticise the countryside to represent the nation (see figure 52).

Such an idealisation, which was central to the picturesque and romantic nationalist vision, was inherent in what some historians have described as the early green politics of the late nineteenth century and can sometimes be found in the environmental movement today. For Gould and Revill Wordsworth's visit to the Wye Valley and the romanticisation of his poetry there needs to be seen in the context of his move away from the radicalism that had seen him embrace the ideals of the French Revolution.[93] The representation of the rural was therefore integral to the development of nationalism and national mythology and is the ideological backdrop that helps explain the development of tourism and the attraction of rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire. Once the countryside had been redefined as an area that represented beauty, nature and innocence, those seeking refuge from a world that seemed ugly, artificial and unnatural were open to persuasion that visiting the places they had read about and seen in artistic representations would bring them some of that bucolic bliss. Benson notes that academic considerations of tourism 'tend to display relatively little interest in the impact that tourism had upon those who participated in it.'[94] By taking a break from their working lives to visit areas like the Wye Valley, middle class visitors were able to find comfort and relaxation, although the image of rurality they were consuming was far from the reality of life for most who lived there. As explored below in Chapter 5, they had been, in reality, visiting the site of a changing and increasingly industrialised food production business. Tourism was a lucrative industry, though, and especially with a countryside economy in crisis as it had been in the late nineteenth century, the need to attract those with the money and time to spend it in the countryside, making use of the improving transport and interconnectivity, meant that the other aspects of rural commodification, such as village shops, could benefit. As the adverts from the Burrow's handbook of 1902 show, by the end of the century, many villages in eastern Monmouthshire were enticing visitors with a range of suggested reasons to visit. (Figure 53). Grosmont is located just to the north of eastern Monmouthshire and the advert shows the nearest

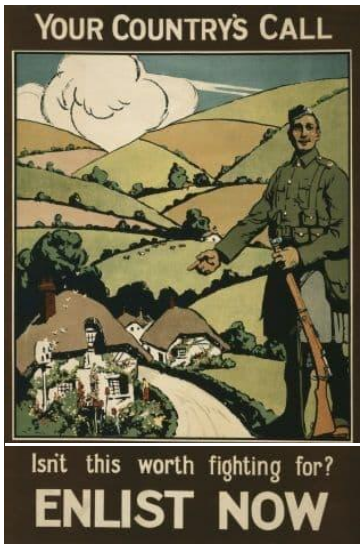

Figure 52: First World War recruitment poster

[93] Gould J.R. & Revill G, *Representing the Environment…* p. 146
[94] Benson J, *The Rise of Consumer Society…* p.82

railway station and promotes walking as a leisure activity, rather than an arduous requirement as it had been for most rural inhabitants for most of the nineteenth century. Visitors could enjoy a walk to the castle, church and the summit of the 'Graig Hill' (*Craig Syfyrddin*) with its 'views over eleven counties'.



Figure 53:Advert for the Angel Hotel, Grossmont

Llanthony is another village in north-eastern Monmouthshire, and once again the advert (figure 54) highlights the benefits of the rural location, finest rambling grounds and trout fishing amongst them. The Abbey ruins, in a remote valley where for centuries it had been largely overlooked and its stone reused as a building material for some of the cottages, farmhouses or barns in the area, were now a tourist attraction in a time when 'history' and 'tradition' was being reimagined as integral to the idea of nation. In terms of a break with the reality of the countryside, and its increasingly intensively farmed and managed fields, where enclosure and land ownership made access difficult and often risky, these adverts that highlight the opposite show another crucial aspect of the metabolic rift between society and the natural world on which it depended.

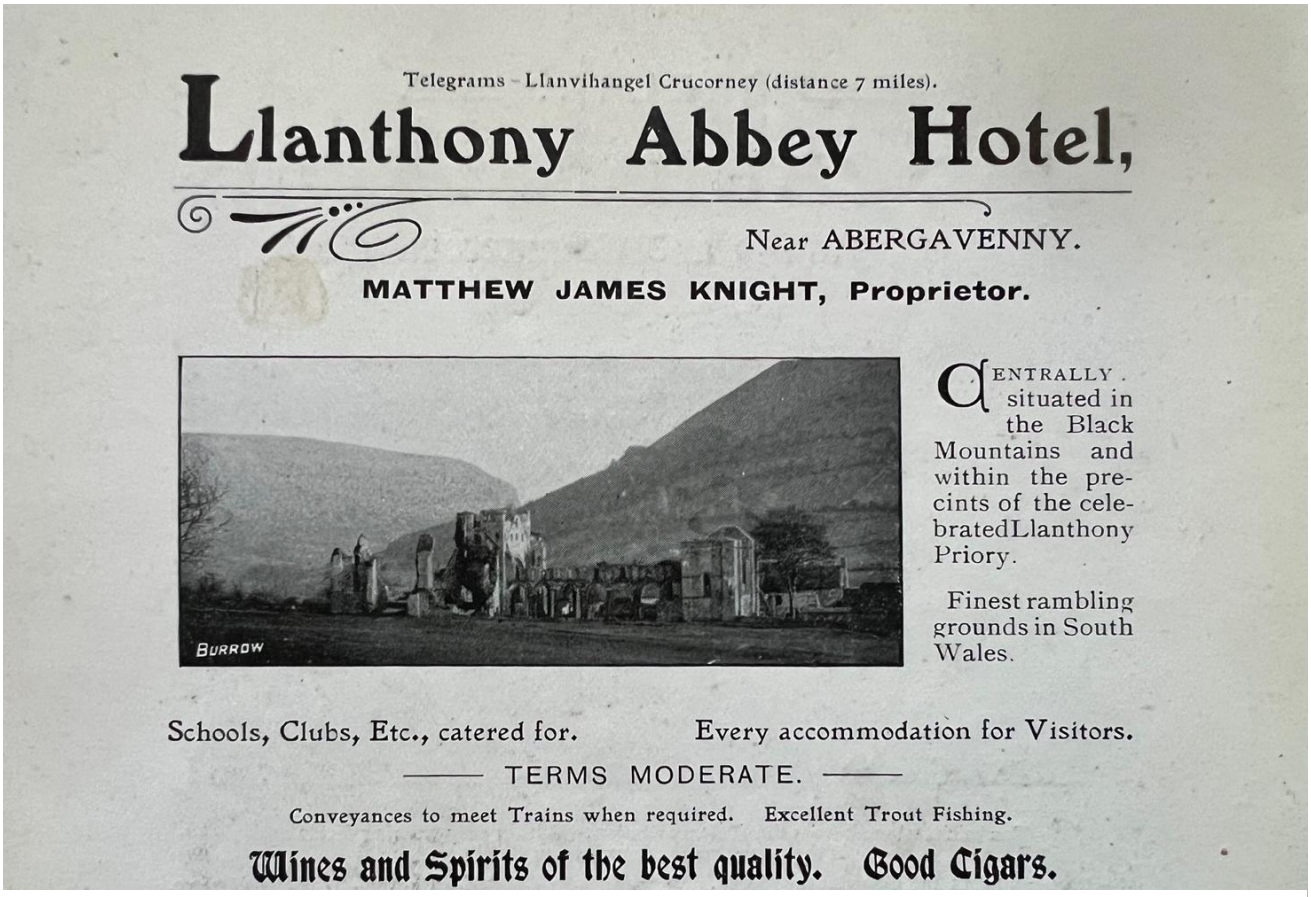

Figure 54: Advert for Llanthony Abbery Hotel, near Abergavenny

6. The Importance of consumerism to the developing metabolic rift

As these nineteenth century developments show, the advance of the consumer society had a major effect on the people of eastern Monmouthshire. Less cut off and remote due to the transport revolution explored in Chapter 3, the population of the villages became consumers as well, in many cases, as producers. They played a part in the industrialised Britain buying products made in the factories and also the produce from an increasingly industrialised agricultural economy. It was important therefore to ensure everyone was part of the consumer society and the growth of village retailers played a part. It has been claimed that the growth of employment in retail and associated trades in the latter part of nineteenth century was comparable to the growth of industry in the early nineteenth century and this time affected rural as well as urban Britain, although, as shown in this Chapter, the overall numbers directly employed in retail in country villages in eastern Monmouthshire was small.[95] Consumer society did not just affect shopkeepers, but involved everyone including food producers who also became consumers buying their food from shops. In other words, farmers no longer grew food for themselves and a local economy, but for a wider 'market'. Farmers often had a contract with a particular processing company, no other connection with the end product. Later in the twentieth century the fear that this was leading to homogenised and poor-quality food, produced by large supermarkets who dominated the supply,

[95] Chartres J.A., 'Country Tradesmen' in Mingay G.E., *The Victorian Countryside…* p. 301

led some independent butchers to name the farms that had produced the meat they sold. This attempted to reconnect consumers with the production of food, although the scale of this reconnection was small in an economy still very much dominated by supermarkets. For the success of large-scale retailers, breaking of the link between food production and its consumption was an essential corollary to the industrialisation process.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of the change from Britain being a rural society in which towns and cities were subservient to the needs of the people living there, to its opposite where the remaining rural population were a part of a society dominated by the needs of urban life. By the late nineteenth century when rural areas like eastern Monmouthshire were made up of small villages and where farming and agriculture still directly employed a significant proportion of the population, the expansion of consumerism was a success. Given that rural Britain had not undergone some of the dramatic changes seen in industrialised urban areas, this success needs to be explained. To stimulate demand, a significant investment in promotion and the publicising of wider changes that first took place in urbanised Britain expanded to take in rural society through means like advertising in newspapers. Partly these promoted consumerism with the promise of an easier way to obtain life's essentials and the possibility that some of the luxuries might also be obtainable. This also made the development of a 'tourist industry' based on the commodification of the countryside possible and the fact that access to this newly mythologised rurality was one of the luxuries made available to increasing numbers of the urban population helped develop the metabolic rift. At its heart, this contained the idea that the purpose of the countryside was to provide leisure based on peace and quiet, rather than produce food, a fundamental misunderstanding of the importance of agriculture and farming to society. Nature was transformed into the picturesque, which helped to change perceptions of the 'value' of the land, so it was less about its use for production and more about its existence as a commodity. The countryside was reinterpreted as a 'natural wilderness' a mark of sustainability, ignoring or obscuring the massive impact of human society on it over thousands of years and increasingly since the industrial age began. Finally, produce from the countryside was bought and sold like any commodity under capitalism, and this was another important aspect of the development of a metabolic rift between human society and the environment on which it depends. It has created a situation where the food that people eat appears to have little or no connection with the agricultural processes that produced it. And those agricultural processes are increasingly divorced from the environmental needs of wider society. Pesticides, chemical fertilisers and irrigation destroy ecosystems, ploughing undermines the viability and ultimately the productivity of soil as

well as releasing significant amounts of carbon dioxide (a major 'greenhouse gas') yet the commodified and redefined countryside exists alongside towns and cities still often considered only as a wilderness delivering 'fresh air' and a chance to relax. The development of consumerism has allowed the vast majority of people living on earth today to obtain goods and services that would have been unimaginable in any previous epoch and yet, as will be explained in the next chapter, the agricultural processes that have been developed since the beginning of the nineteenth century have seriously affected the connectivity of our species with the land and the natural world.

Chapter 5: Changes in Agricultural Methods and land use

> We, the undersigned inhabitants of Abergavenny, in the county of Monmouth, at a public meeting held this 25th day of August, 1841, most humbly approach your honourable House to express our deep conviction that the dire distress felt by the operatives, artisans and labourers of our beloved country and the unparalleled depression of trade experienced by our merchants, manufacturers, ship-owners, and tradesmen are mainly attributable to the existing Corn Laws; and being embarrass trade (sic), derange the currency, diminish the comfort, and increase the privations of the great body of the community most respectfully and earnestly entreat your honourable House will alter laws so inimical to our domestic comfort, and at the same time so destructive of our foreign trade.[1]

While the changes analysed in the previous two chapters were important in driving a metabolic rift between society and the environment, it was change in agriculture that fundamentally shifted the balance away from sustainability and the daily involvement of most of the population in some aspect of food production. This chapter will explore how this happened in a number of ways. The nineteenth century saw 'profound changes' in the context in which agriculture in England and Wales operated, involving industrial production, internal and external trade, the transport developments discussed in Chapter Three and the changes in commerce and consumerism that were analysed in Chapter Four. Together, these required 'new patterns of farming, the adoption of new techniques and technologies, shifting patterns of rural employment, food marketing and processing' which were necessary for the 'shift to a fundamentally urban and industrial society.'[2] Howkins describes a rural society in the nineteenth century where 'the surface order of calm and order was constantly disrupted and threatened' and below this apparent scene of a 'bucolic idyll',

> a precarious balance was usually achieved but it was never permanent – the relentless demands of agricultural production could only be met by major changes which were in turn further disruptive.

The system of food production in eastern Monmouthshire was typical of England and Wales at the start of the nineteenth century in that, despite other developments and the impact of the industrial revolution, it was still largely labour intensive and, while there were regional variations within the county, mostly followed a version of the post-enclosure rotation system, on soils that lacked good fertilisation, drainage and use of recent innovations. The nineteenth century was a tumultuous time for farming and food producers. For one thing, 'the severe fluctuations in prices,

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[1] Petition against the Corn Laws, presented to a meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League, reported by *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* 28.8.1841, p. 3

[2] Chartres J & Perren R, 'Introduction' in Collins E J T (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, *Vol II (Part II)* 1850-1914 (2000) p.947

markets and weather conditions which marked the nineteenth century made both parties [landlords and tenants] wary of fixing a rent for a long period of time.'[3] There was also uncertainty about market conditions and prices and most farms had an annual tenancy or what was known as a tenancy at will, on which landlords could give the farmers notice to quit at any time. While the tenants continued under these types of agreements for many years and so long as they (eventually) paid the rent and got along with the land manager, etc., the tenancy would usually be renewed, there was obviously a level of insecurity to these arrangements. All the reasons why prices might fluctuate, nearly all of which were outside the control of the farmers, along with the short-term nature of the tenancies, tended to produce similar short-term planning, especially as the outcomes in terms of values and prices were not known. Marx had argued that how humans organise to meet their needs involves a direct relationship with the natural environment, which will inherently impact the natural world.[4] Also that the destructive logic of capitalism was based on:

> universal exchange of the products of all alien climates and lands; new (artificial) preparation of natural objects, by which they are given new use values. The exploration of the Earth in all directions, to discover new things of use as well as new useful qualities of the old; such as new qualities of them as raw materials etc.[5]

At the core of the processes that appeared alien and beyond understanding, explanation or resistance, was a growing rift between those involved in food production, the society in which they were interdependent and the natural environment on which the whole system was based. Despite technological breakthroughs that had led to increasing crop yields, there was also uncertainty and a level of waste that would have been impossible or disastrous in previous epochs with different economic systems. The intermittent crises in food production led to different responses that will be explored within this chapter. For some, the disadvantages were worth it to create a system where improved efficiency allowed for a growing population to be fed.[6] For others, the inequality and competitive pressures involved are seen as a part of a complex web of interactions that created an unsustainable food production system.

The rollercoaster ride for food producers started in the early years of the nineteenth century with the disruption of trade due to the Napoleonic Wars and the subsequent attempt to protect the

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[3] Howkins A, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (Routledge: London, 1991) p. 113
[4] Marx's original idea was in *The German Ideology*, as discussed in Foster J.B., *Marx's Ecology*… p. 116
[5] Marx, *Grundrisse…* p.409
[6] For instance, the statement in the *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.30,

price of corn, the Corn Laws, passed in 1815. This preceded a disastrous harvest in 1816, which is now believed to have been as a result of the climatic changes caused by a series of volcanic eruptions in Indonesia, leading to it being called 'the year without a summer' in the UK. There were poor harvests across the globe, which, along with the social and economic consequences of the war, led to famine, hunger and food riots in some parts of Europe.[7] The response, both in the UK and elsewhere, was to pass or consolidate laws that were designed to help local food production and keep farmers from bankruptcy. Flying in the face of the economic orthodoxy associated with Adam Smith, David Ricardo and others that underpinned the industrial revolution, there were debates and controversies that accompanied this protectionism up until their repeal in 1846. The years following their repeal saw agriculture thrive more than those who supported the Corn Laws thought was possible, but by the 1870s many farmers faced financial ruin caused by a depression blamed largely on the competitive gains that cheaper shipping of wheat gave to producers in America and, to some extent, in parts of eastern Europe. Historians have tended to therefore view this as a delayed reaction to the end of protectionism as further improvements in transport had not just affected rural Britain but had enabled corn to be imported cheaply and in great quantities. Farmers had borrowed to invest in new techniques and new technologies that were supposed to bring higher yields and profits and many were unable to repay the loans due to the falling prices that were a consequence of this depression. The consequential reorganisation of farming in the UK left many holdings much bigger, remote and even further removed from the locality in which they were based, employing fewer labourers. In terms of a metabolic rift, this change meant that most of the rural population no longer had a connection with their local environment, via food production or any other form of economic activity.

Eastern Monmouthshire started the century dominated by arable farming, predominantly producing wheat, and ended it as a mainly pastoral farming area, supplying dairy and meat. The chapter builds on the previous chapters by looking at the different groups and people who lived in eastern Monmouthshire, how each was affected and how they interacted during these key changes. The improved transport networks and their effects on rural isolation and especially rural trade, as well as the effects of the growing consumer society that by the end of the century had become dominant are important themes as background to the changes that are explored here. The chapter will begin by looking at how debates around the Corn Laws were undertaken in this predominantly rural area and how this helped create a sense of unity between landowners and

[7] Post J.D., *The Last Great Subsistence Crisis in the Western World* (The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1977)

farmers on the one hand and an antipathy between those dependent on trade and industry and those involved in food production on the other. This is the nub of the argument in some ways. Protectionism was a way that those in positions of power tried to preserve the domain of those who owned land and produced food alongside the expansion of trade and industry that was the central feature of the economy. It was a deliberate distortion based on a fear, or understanding, depending on which side of the argument was taken, that unregulated the economic system would not in itself allow farmers to flourish, or even survive. On the other hand, this way of controlling prices upset those who depended on a different type of trade and pricing mechanism to thrive, the industrialists. Neither side of this argument considered the system itself to be at fault. The concept of metabolic rift, on the contrary, does question the system and suggests a design flaw at the heart of it, namely that capitalism is unsustainable. The second part of this chapter will be an investigation into changing agricultural methods during the nineteenth century in response to economic and other stimuli, which centres this critique. There will be a focus on how changes in this sector of the economy had a detrimental effect on societal relations with the natural world. Without access to the transport that revolutionised travel in the nineteenth century, agricultural produce could not have become part of a growing national and global market and without the development of consumerism, the products would not have been sold and without an expansion of agricultural production the population growth that all these processes depended on would have been impossible. The people living in eastern Monmouthshire identified and explored in Chapter Two were affected by these developments in different ways. This was partly because the starting point of these groups of people was different and clearly some people had much more to gain from changing agricultural practice than others. This chapter, essentially a local study of agricultural change, focussing on how and why farmers adopted different methods, is key to seeing how all the nineteenth century changes produced a metabolic rift.

1. Corn Laws, protectionism and free trade agitation in eastern Monmouthshire

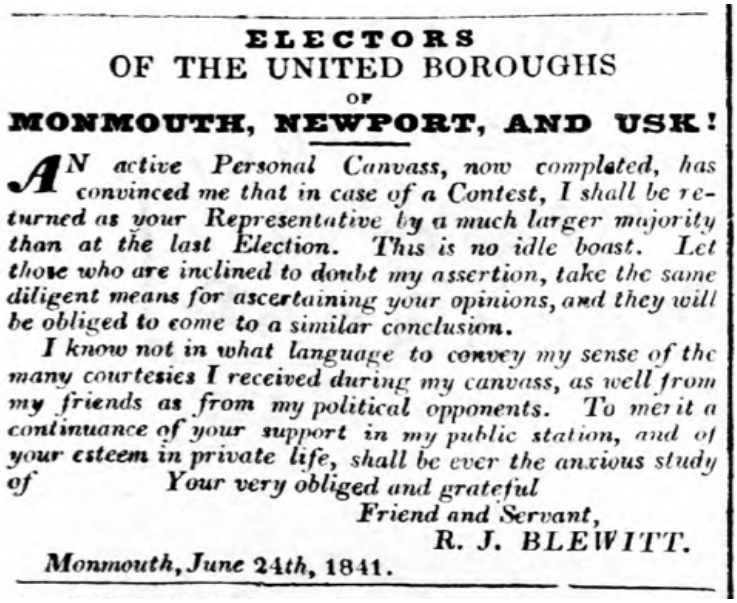
The state of agriculture reflected the fluctuating political and economic situation in Britain during the nineteenth century. These had numerous causes, many of which would have felt remote from the everyday experience of an eastern Monmouthshire farmer, even though the evidence presented to the Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire showed that farmers and others involved in food production had plenty to say on the matter. Throughout the century, wars, speculative economic upsurges and crashes, political decisions such as the repeal of the Corn Laws and the policy of laissez faire with its opposition to protection for British agricultural produce all affected farmers in different ways, resulting in a radically different situation for food production

by the end of the century. Any lasting concerns that agriculturalists had that intensive farming methods were unsustainable were undermined by the competitive need to sustain their own farming business. The Corn Laws and the agitation for their repeal was a particularly important aspect of the debate about agricultural practice and its interpretations. Both during their years of operation and following their repeal in 1846, they had an important part to play in decisions made about farming and agricultural methods in eastern Monmouthshire. These laws, first passed in 1815, restricted imports of corn, originally until they reached 80 shillings a quarter, and were later amended several times to introduce more restrictive tariffs on imports. This clearly had important ramifications for the landowners and tenant farmers in eastern Monmouthshire, where the main crop being grown at the time was wheat and not surprisingly, given the area's proximity and dependence on the market for food in the industrialising South Wales valleys, the Corn Laws became a much debated topic reflecting a divide between the interests of the farmers and landowners who benefitted from the laws and the protection they gave them from competition and those who were profiting from the expansion of industry, who wanted free trade. There was also a feeling that the Corn Laws kept the price of bread artificially high, which factory owners blamed for driving demands for higher wages from industrial workers.

The Anti-Corn Law league had been set up in Manchester in October 1838 and soon spread its agitation to London and regional towns and cities. Its urban base reflected the view that protectionism was bad for trade and hampering businesses, and its founding in Manchester, a city based on the manufacture of cotton goods, similarly showed the impact the restrictions were seen as having on imported raw materials. Cotton, much of it imported from the United States, was a central part of the economy and as Longmate notes: 'in 1815 cotton manufacture had contributed about 7-8 per cent of the whole national income; by 1830 it accounted for half the value of British exports,' which meant that this industry alone had surpassed agriculture as a wealth creator.[8] The league set up meetings across the country and *The Monmouthshire Merlin* reported on one held in Abergavenny on Wednesday 25th August 1841, attended by over five hundred people. There were numerous speeches, after which the meeting resolved to support and sign a petition calling for a repeal of the laws, in the stated hope that the price of bread and other basics would be reduced.[9] The text of this petition is the one reproduced at the start of this chapter. Speakers at this meeting called for abolition of the Corn Law, for free trade policies and expressed the opinion that the restrictions on trade were only beneficial to farmers and landowners. Similar petitions were sent

[8] Longmate N, *The Breadstealers: The Fight against the Corn Laws, 1838-1846* (St Martins Press: London, 1984) p. 35
[9] 'Abergavenny Anti-Corn-Law Meeting', *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* 28.8.1841, p. 3

from meetings of the league held around the country and between 27th January and 28th August 1842, 467 petitions from across the UK were presented to the House of Commons arguing for the repeal of the Corn Laws, gathering 1,414,303 signatures.[10] In October 1842, the Anti-Corn Law League wrote that 'petitions have been presented to the legislature with millions of signatures, praying for the redress of the great wrong under which the country groans.'[11] Pickering and Tyrell write that 'in every session between 1839 and 1843 the number of signatures on petitions demanding repeal out-numbered the entire electorate of Britain and Ireland.'[12] The petitions had largely fallen on deaf ears though, and neither the two main parties, the Whigs, who had formed the government between 1831 and 1841, nor the Conservatives who won the 1841 election, were moved to take notice and support a repeal of the laws.



ELECTORS
OF THE UNITED BOROUGHS
OF
MONMOUTH, NEWPORT, AND USK!

AN active Personal Canvass, now completed, has convinced me that in case of a Contest, I shall be returned as your Representative by a much larger majority than at the last Election. This is no idle boast. Let those who are inclined to doubt my assertion, take the same diligent means for ascertaining your opinions, and they will be obliged to come to a similar conclusion.

I know not in what language to convey my sense of the many courtesies I received during my canvass, as well from my friends as from my political opponents. To merit a continuance of your support in my public station, and of your esteem in private life, shall be ever the anxious study of Your very obliged and grateful
Friend and Servant,
R. J. BLEWITT.

Monmouth, June 24th, 1841.

Figure 55: R.J. Blewitt's election address in The Monmouthshire Merlin, 1841

In the General Election of 1841, the anti-Corn Law league attempted to get the issue at the top of the political agenda and with the Whigs, who had been in power, showing a loss of support in by-elections defeats in the run-up to the General Election, the issue became a key one. The Conservatives, whose leader Robert Peel was a staunch defender of the Corn Laws, won a landslide though and originally this was seen as a setback for the campaign against them.[13] Although the electorate was a small percentage of the overall population, the election results do indicate something about how this divisive issue was viewed in Monmouthshire, and particularly given that the 1832 Reform Act had given some farmers as well as the landowners the right to vote. In Monmouth Boroughs, which covered the south and far east of the county, including some areas included in this study of a defined areas of eastern Monmouthshire, the

[10] *UK Parliament Committees on-line*, Carpenter K, 'Petitions and the Corn Laws' (26.7.2019) https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/326/petitions-committee/news/99040/petitions-and-the-corn-laws/
[11] Longmate N, *The Breadstealers…* p. 118
[12] Pickering P.A. & Tyrell A, *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League* (Leicester University Press: London, 2000) p. 167
[13] McCord N, *The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846* (George Allen & Unwin: London, 1958) pp. 91-94

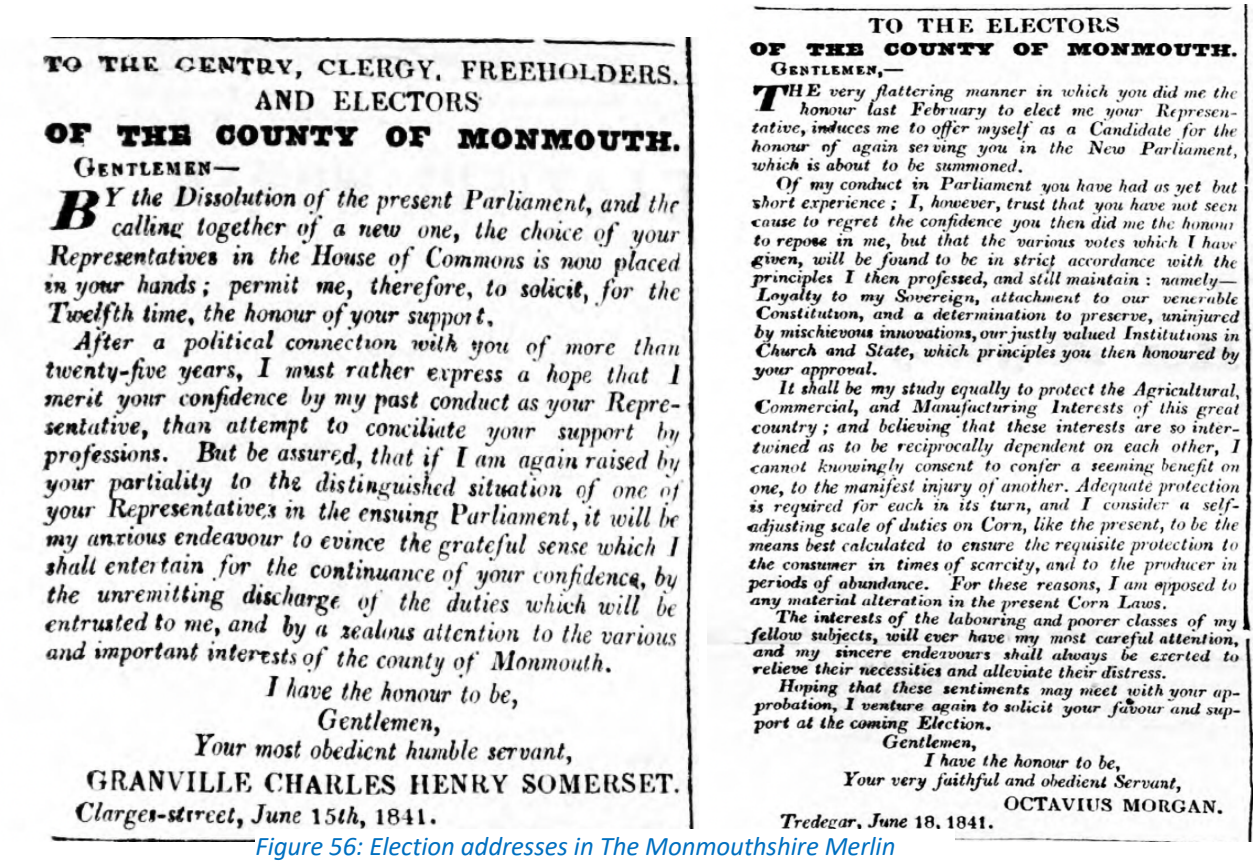
1841 election was contested between Reginald James Blewitt of the Whig Party who received 476 votes on a turnout of 37.5%, beating William Edwards, of the Chartist Party, who received no votes.[14] Blewitt, from Llantarnam Abbey, was a director of the *Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Banking Company* and the owner of *The Monmouthshire Merlin* newspaper. He had also been involved in an attempt to stop the Pontypool Chartists reaching the protest in Newport 1839 and was standing in a constituency where the Chartist trials had taken place, which explains the other candidate standing in the election. The Monmouth Boroughs constituency involved the towns of Newport, Usk and Monmouth and in elections between 1832 and 1868, the Liberals were more popular for the voters in Newport, which had both the largest population and the largest electorate. While Blewitt was vague about why people should support him in the election address published in *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, editorials published in the newspaper, which he owned, showed that he was campaigning strongly on the issue:

> They plead, it is true, that it would be a hard case if, when the inventions of Watt and Wedgwood and Arkwright had added so enormously to the manufacturers' means, they should not have been entitled to lay an additional price on their corn, and this indirectly derive a part if not all the benefits arising from those magnificent powers of art. But this is an impudent pretext for taking that which belongs to others.
> They have no right on that ground to lay any price on their corn by act of Parliament. No right to any price for it, except what they could obtain in a fair competition with the general market of the world. For the inventions of Watt and his compatriots did not increase the price of their commodities to the landed interest, but made them cheaper.[15]

In the constituency of Monmouthshire, which included the area around Abergavenny and most of eastern Monmouthshire, the election returned the Conservative candidates, Granville Charles Henry Somerset and Charles Octavius Swinnerton Morgan who were unopposed.[16] In *The Monmouthshire Merlin* of 26th June 1841, the issue after the calling of the General Election and the start of campaigning, both Somerset and Morgan posted campaigning adverts. Somerset, like Blewitt was vague about any policies on which he was standing, while Morgan specifically campaigned in support of the Corn Laws (figure 56).[17] Before Morgan, who was backed by Lord Beaufort and his estate, entered the contest a number of local landowners, including the Catholic

[14] '1841 General Election – Monmouth Boroughs', https://api.parliament.uk/uk-general-elections/elections/1435 (accessed 20.1.24)
[15] 'The Merlin' (editorial), *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* 3rd July 1841, p. 2
[16] '1841 General Election – Monmouthshire', https://api.parliament.uk/uk-general-elections/elections/1436 (accessed 20.1.24)
[17] *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 26th June 1841, p. 2

landowners of Clytha and Llanarth estates had announced their support for a proposed Liberal candidate, Charles Hanbury Tracy, but he withdrew after Morgan entered the race for the seat, when it became obvious that he would get few votes. One of the successful candidates, Granville Somerset, supported Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, leading to his brother, the Duke of Beaufort to withdraw support for him to stand in the 1847 election. Even without this significant endorsement though, and despite standing against his brother Edward who did have the Duke's support, Granville Somerset was re-elected at 1847 election, perhaps suggesting that the issue of Corn Law repeal already had less importance to the electorate than other issues.[18] The 1847 election was closely fought, though, and Morgan, who ran alongside Edward Somerset and therefore continued to have the support of the duke of Beaufort, received 2,334 votes, Granville Somerset, 2,230 and Edward Somerset, 2187. Granville died in 1848 and Edward subsequently



TO THE GENTRY, CLERGY, FREEHOLDERS, AND ELECTORS
OF THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH.

GENTLEMEN—

BY the Dissolution of the present Parliament, and the calling together of a new one, the choice of your Representatives in the House of Commons is now placed in your hands; permit me, therefore, to solicit, for the Twelfth time, the honour of your support.

After a political connection with you of more than twenty-five years, I must rather express a hope that I merit your confidence by my past conduct as your Representative, than attempt to conciliate your support by professions. But be assured, that if I am again raised by your partiality to the distinguished situation of one of your Representatives in the ensuing Parliament, it will be my anxious endeavour to evince the grateful sense which I shall entertain for the continuance of your confidence, by the unremitting discharge of the duties which will be entrusted to me, and by a zealous attention to the various and important interests of the county of Monmouth.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your most obedient humble servant,
GRANVILLE CHARLES HENRY SOMERSET.
Clarges-street, June 15th, 1841.

TO THE ELECTORS
OF THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH.

GENTLEMEN,—

THE very flattering manner in which you did me the honour last February to elect me your Representative, induces me to offer myself as a Candidate for the honour of again serving you in the New Parliament, which is about to be summoned.

Of my conduct in Parliament you have had as yet but short experience; I, however, trust that you have not seen cause to regret the confidence you then did me the honour to repose in me, but that the various votes which I have given, will be found to be in strict accordance with the principles I then professed, and still maintain: namely—Loyalty to my Sovereign, attachment to our venerable Constitution, and a determination to preserve, uninjured by mischievous innovations, our justly valued Institutions in Church and State, which principles you then honoured by your approval.

It shall be my study equally to protect the Agricultural, Commercial, and Manufacturing Interests of this great country; and believing that these interests are so intertwined as to be reciprocally dependent on each other, I cannot knowingly consent to confer a seeming benefit on one, to the manifest injury of another. Adequate protection is required for each in its turn, and I consider a self-adjusting scale of duties on Corn, like the present, to be the means best calculated to ensure the requisite protection to the consumer in times of scarcity, and to the producer in periods of abundance. For these reasons, I am opposed to any material alteration in the present Corn Laws.

The interests of the labouring and poorer classes of my fellow subjects, will ever have my most careful attention, and my sincere endeavours shall always be exerted to relieve their necessities and alleviate their distress.

Hoping that these sentiments may meet with your approbation, I venture again to solicit your favour and support at the coming Election.

Gentlemen,
I have the honour to be,
Your very faithful and obedient Servant,
OCTAVIUS MORGAN.
Tredegar, June 18, 1841.

Figure 56: Election addresses in The Monmouthshire Merlin

became MP anyway.[19] The elections indicate a difference between the electors in the two areas of Monmouthshire at this time, given that the Monmouthshire constituency returned two

[18] The extra information about the Monmouth Boroughs and the 1841 election in the Monmouthshire constituency is based on Escott M, 'Parliamentary Representation' in Williams C & S.R., *The Gwent County History Vol. 4…* pp. 270-272

[19] '1847 General Election – Monmouthshire' https://api.parliament.uk/uk-general-elections/elections/1837 (accessed 20.1.24)

Conservative MPs, one a noted supporter of the Corn Laws and the Monmouth Boroughs one Liberal, an opponent of the Corn Laws. The rift between the area of Monmouthshire which was predominantly urban and opposed the Corn Laws, with their restrictions on free trade, and the area of Monmouthshire that was predominantly rural and supported these protectionist measure suggests that even by the middle of the century there was a shift in ideas. This connects with the metabolic rift in that ending the Corn Laws, whatever the reality, was seen as ending support for local food producers, and in favour of less sustainable, but potentially more efficient and profitable imports.

As well as meetings and petitions against the Corn Laws, there were also petitions presented in favour of the laws, 1,953 in total, but these only managed to get 145,855 signatures.[20] There was a pro-Corn Law meeting in Raglan on 1st March 1844, at which, it was claimed, there was an attendance of over eight hundred, a very large turnout that must have included people outside of the farming community and, like the election result, suggests a high level of local support for the Corn Laws.[21] The meeting passed seven resolutions in favour of corn laws. Landowners were well represented at this meeting with John Ethrington Rolls and Crawshay Bailey amongst them. Bailey, of course, was a landowning industrialist, but this did not stop him supporting a resolution which argued that 'the League of Manufacturers and others' were opposing the corn laws to 'injure and ruin the Farmers, Labourers and everybody connected with agriculture.' W. Walbridge, Esq who was the chair of the meeting, was described in the newspaper report as 'a tenant of a large and fine farm.' In the 1841 census he was recorded as being in the Army, although living at Llanthewy Court, in the village of Llanddewi Skirrid.[22] In the 1851 census he is described as a 'farmer of 340 acres, employing 9 labourers'.[23] The fears of those at the meeting that the abolition of the Corn Laws would ruin farming, especially in eastern Monmouthshire, an area dependent on wheat growing, appeared in the aftermath of the vote to have been misplaced. The Corn Laws were abolished in 1846 as a result of continued agitation by opponents and the famine that led to such devastating loss of life and was threatening to stimulate a rebellion in Ireland. The reasons why Robert Peel decided to take this course of action, effectively undermining his own political future and that of the party he was the leader of, has been debated ever since and may well have

[20] Carpenter K, 'Petitions and the Corn Laws', *UK Parliament Committees*, https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/326/petitions-committee/news/99040/petitions-and-the-corn-laws/ (accessed 14.1.24)
[21] 'Pro Corn-Law Meeting at Ragland (sic)', *The Monmouthshire Merlin* 9.3.1844 p. 2 https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3424781/3424783/5/corn%20law
[22] '1841 Wales Census; Monmouthshire, Llanthewy Skirrid, District 1', p. 4
[23] '1851 Wales Census, Monmouthshire, Llanthewy Skirrid, District 2', p. 94

similarly perplexed supporters and opponents in eastern Monmouthshire. Whatever the reason, local farmers had to proceed without the price protection that the laws gave and this was a stimulus for more intensive methods to be employed.

The agricultural depression that happened in the late 1870s reopened the debate about protectionism and its consequences, after three decades of relative prosperity for arable farming appeared to assuage the fears of those who wanted to keep the Corn Laws. Many of those giving evidence to the 1893 Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales and Monmouthshire blamed the economic downturn affecting farming on foreign imports. Some other causes were mentioned, including the weather and poor farming practices, but overwhelmingly the inability of farmers to compete with imported grain was cited as a main cause. So John Watkins, of Great House Farm Llandeilo Pertholey in eastern Monmouthshire, said:

> The glutting of the English market with foreign produce is, no doubt, the cause of the depression; that is the great amount of foreign produce that is sold in our markets, bringing down the price of our English produce to a point below what allows us to make any profit from it. In this respect, wheat stands in the first place.

It was not just the price, but the quality and Watkins went on to say that the imported wheat produced 'stronger flour', better for making bread. Monmouthshire land agent, Mr W.C.A. Williams, said that low prices began in 1879, while Mr C. Lipscomb, agent for the 6,000 acres estate of Lord Llangattock agreed that the low prices were the cause but mentioned the wet seasons as a contributing factor. He also suggested that things had recovered by the 1890s, when he was giving evidence:

> I think when the bad times came in 1879 and 1880 the losses were so heavy that a great number of farmers were utterly stranded and unsettled; they lost so much capital at once.

This led to a high turnover of farmers and ending of tenancies on the estate. Despite this, few of those from Monmouthshire giving evidence to the commission argued for a return to protectionism, even if they did feel the ending of the Corn Laws had at least partially caused the depression. W.C.A Williams, mentioned above, 'did not advocate the re-imposition of duties, because he thought it impossible.'[24] Not everyone agreed with this though. Mr John Lawrence, a landowner from Carleon was very forthright:

[24] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.14

> I think there is no blinking question: if you ask what is it produced the agricultural depression, there can be no earthly doubt that the fact is that it is foreign production, and the foreign competition of wheat, oats, barley, mutton, and all those things and what I hold is this, that the growth of all these things in this country pays to the Army and to the Navy for the protection of those foreign importations, and it is for that reason that I hold that all importations here ought to subscribe to that, as well as our own country. [25]

The commissioners rejected such arguments in their report, noting that 'during the 34 or 35 years that followed the fixed charges of 1846, the profits of the agricultural industry immensely increased, and the value of land of all kinds was greatly augmented.'[26] Amongst their remedies was to accept that the free market had made growing cereals unprofitable, as they were 'the most easily and cheaply conveyed in ships and by railway companies, or run the least risk of damage in transit, and which are produced with the least expenditure of capital and labour in competing foreign districts'. Later they make a comprehensive list of the reasons for the 'enormous competition' that was inherent in their view in the 'progress of civilisation' behind the 'depressed state of British agriculture':

> The development of new countries, the operation of improvements in the art of agriculture, enlarging supply, the invention of labour saving machinery, the practical annihilation of distance by steam propelled vessels and railways, the increase of the facilities for distribution in other ways, the impetus given to international trade by the telegraph and postal facilities, and the discovery of methods for preventing the destruction of food which their perishable nature made it difficult to convey over long distances, the fiscal and commercial policy of Great Britain during the last 50 years, the prevalence of peace, are all circumstances which necessarily involve competition.[27]

In response to this, the Royal Commission advocated for farmers to adopt mixed farming, improve farming methods and increase the standards of produce such as meat and dairy.[28] The age of protectionism was over and it would take the calamity of the First World War for state intervention in farming and agriculture to return.

Both sides of the debate about the Corn Law were attempting to understand and manage a system that revealed itself as causing harm as well as wealth; indeed, both sides thought they did understand how the system should work. In reality, they were trying to mitigate a crisis, as the

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[25] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 15
[26] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.29
[27] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II*) p. 45
[28] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.49

starvation of more than a million peasants in Ireland and the potential for such a disaster to spread to the similarly dependent agricultural labourers in Wales and England demonstrated. Both sides were working within the parameters of the existing system and accepted it and its continuation. The critique therefore contained within this thesis, that the system was neither inevitable nor incapable of replacement and was itself the cause of the distress that was visible then and now, is significant. At the heart of the argument is that the system was based on an unsustainable premise and seeking an alternative within those parameters left it in place. The crisis that undermined agriculture in the heart of the system in the late nineteenth century was caused neither by the removal of the protectionist corn laws, nor by their existence, but by the logic of the system both sides accepted or, in many cases, supported. That logic, which the Royal Commission's report duly noted (although in a rather more positive way) meant that trying to control the market by different ways of managing it was both damaging and futile. The metabolic rift between society and the environment on which it depends was based on the same logic and the same system, where traditional practices, husbandry and sustainability didn't stand a chance against the competitive needs of the system.

2. Price mechanism as a driver of agricultural change

The contradictions of a system that developed because of the growing importance of trade and a market through which commodities could be exchanged continued to be played out in agriculture in the nineteenth century before and after the acrimonious debate about protectionism. The effects of both the Corn Law and its repeal were probably similar in the wheat growing area of eastern Monmouthshire as elsewhere. In the early part of the century, farmers and landowners may well have benefitted from the protectionism that the laws gave them, and they certainly found wheat growing profitable. Arguably, though, this may have undermined an interest locally in adopting measures that advocates argued were necessary for improving the land and yields. As noted above, the immediate effect of the repeal of the Corn Laws, however, was not a collapse in the price of corn as their supporters had suggested was the most likely outcome. There have been several reasons suggested for this, including poor harvests in the years following the repeal, which kept the prices high. Thompson notes that the years from the 1850s to the early 1870s were a period of prosperity for British agriculture generally, allowing rents to increase by about 20%, farmers income to double and agricultural labourer's wages to rise by around 40%. Retail and agricultural prices also rose, by an estimated 25%, although these outcomes 'had to be worked for.' There was an increase in imported bread grain, from around 10% of the annual consumption in the late 1840s to 50% by the early 1870s but the period of economic success in the economy

generally allowed employers to pay when workers demanded wage increases, particularly for the better unionised skilled workers, which in turn led to a more prosperous population as a whole, who were able to take advantage of the concurrent, and possibly related, expansion of consumerism to diversify what they ate. While bread prices remained stable, the returns on meat and dairy produce, which, unlike wheat, were still mainly produced by farmers in Britain, increased by 40-50 per cent.[29] Despite this, farming in eastern Monmouthshire remained predominantly arable, suggesting that other factors were more important than price in terms of decision making by farmers. Clark suggests that price fluctuations in the earlier part of the century were driven by supply. He suggests that prior to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, '…if the relative price of an item such as wheat increases in a given year then it is assumed to be because the relative supply of wheat by the farm sector has dropped proportionately.' In turn, supply was mainly driven by the effects of the variable climate on harvests.[30] After the repeal, he argues that the increasing supply of imported corn tended to undermine this assumption and affected choices made by farmers regarding adopting new methods or investing in technologies. Land use change might also be affected by the issue of quality, which could show considerable differences between farms and regions, and brought the skill and adoption of better farming methods into focus and so while fluctuations in prices of farming outputs help explain changes in land use to an extent, other factors, such as quality of land and soil, proximity to markets, traditional farming practices, local skills and availability of labour also affected the success of farmers. According to Clark's calculations no single causal factor explained price fluctuations and often the nature of farming and rural life meant that the response to these fluctuations was slow and accumulative. He shows this using a number of charts comparing the prices of different commodities over a longer period of time, leading him to conclude that long-term there was a cycle of success in different types of farming. Pasture output prices fell significantly after the mid-sixteenth century and were below the output price of hay from the early seventeenth century rising to being around the same as hay by the end of the nineteenth century. Arable prices relative to pasture were significantly in favour of pasture for the period of 1200-1600 and then the reverse was true for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and most of the nineteenth. Despite this analysis that attempts to challenge the initial belief that imports were to blame for the agricultural depression, Clark agrees that dairy farming began to be more profitable after around 1870.[31] This suggests that there was a

[29] Thompson F.L.M. 'Free Trade and the Land' in Mingay G.E. (ed), *The Victorian Countryside, Vol One…* p.104
[30] G Clarke, The Price History of English Agriculture, 1209-1914, in *Research in Economic History*, 22, Amsterdam (2004) p.43
[31] G Clarke, *The Price History…* pp. 48-49

correlation between price and success in farming, although changing from growing cereals to mixed farming required different skills, labour and investments not all of which were available to farmers in an area like eastern Monmouthshire at the end of the nineteenth century. The attempt to show a correlation between price and practice therefore is complicated by the everyday reality faced by farmers and is far from a direct or simple one.

The Royal Commission report suggests that farmers were slow to adapt to the realities of the agricultural depression and despite being faced by falling prices and profits felt unable to do much to change their production. Skilful farmers would, according to the authors of the report, have produced higher yields than a farmer who 'picks his fields injudiciously, sows insufficiently, makes mistakes in the time of the performance of the various operations, or effects them carelessly and imperfectly.' In other words, the commissioners felt that many farmers were at least in part to blame for their own woes.[32] Thompson has argued that a simple view of the agricultural depression was that it was a delayed response to the ending of protectionism earlier in the century. The delay was due to a number of factors including the Crimean War and the American Civil war causing interruptions to international trade and the growth of grain production in Russia and north America an once these interruptions were over and transport improved including 'low-cost long-distance steam shipping', unlike continental Europe which retained or increased tariffs, 'industrial Britain, a nation of consumers, contentedly fed itself from the cheapest sources the world could offer, and allowed its agriculture to go to the wall.' Thompson, though, suggests that 'the truth was more complicated' a conclusion that concurs to some extent with the findings of the Royal Commission. In Thompson's view, successful farmers were 'studying the markets, and by adapting farming practices and the mixture of products to trends in demand' able to overcome the price falls for commodities such as wheat.[33] The Royal Commission similarly argued that farmers should be helped to move towards a mixed farming base that meant they could more easily respond to, or ride out, price fluctuations amongst different items. This did not just mean arable and pasture, but had wider implications:

> Welsh agriculturalists have neglected market gardening, including fruit culture, dairy farming, poultry farming and the other branches of the art which up to the present time have been deemed subsidiary… the development of butter manufacture in Denmark… forms an object lesson to every British farmer, which he ought to study, and also afford valuable indications as to one class of remedy for depression[34]

[32] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 21
[33] Thompson F.L.M. 'Free Trade and the Land' in Mingay G.E. (ed), *The Victorian Countryside, Vol One…* p.104
[34] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 47

As a solution, this may have seemed obvious to commissioners steeped in the common sense of economic orthodoxy (they had quoted Adam Smith and David Ricardo in their report) but they also noted significant logistical barriers that confronted farmers, landowners and land managers in determining such a shift. The commissioners compared the situation with Denmark, where there had been state support for the dairy industry, commenting that 'we have no doubt that the success of Danish dairy farming is largely due to the energy and skill of the experts appointed by the Government' although they stopped short of suggesting a similar arrangement in Wales.[35]

One of these barriers to overcoming the problems was a lack of understanding of market mechanisms. The comments by farmers giving evidence to the commission show just how obscure and remote these appeared to them. As already mentioned, some felt that the rainy summer of 1879, which had ruined the corn harvest across Wales, was the start of the depression. But the evidence from farmers and land agents suggests that there was a more general uncertainty about cause or solution. For instance, one land agent for an estate in Merionethshire said:

> Since I have known Wales, the chief causes of depression were the large number of sheep that were lost in 1885. I do not go back to 1879. Of course, that was the first cause; and the bad prices of all sorts of stick from 1885 to 1888; and again, the great drop in the value of sheep in 1892 and 1893.[36]

Another land agent from Criccieth in north Wales, commented, 'I cannot fix it. Depression came very quickly and in the case of smaller products it has not come at all…' and commenting on the causes of the depression suggested:

> supply greater than demand. Foreign meat sold as prime Welsh. The producers are injuriously affected, the consumers cheated and robbed by being charged the same price for a sirloin of beef from Canada marked 'Prime Welsh.' I pay the same for meat now as when I sold bullocks at 9d a pound. I now get 6½d to 7d.[37]

Price fluctuations appeared out of control and had the potential to undermine farmers, although they seemed to many farmers to be as changeable as the weather and the cause of this unpredictability just as baffling. This is hardly surprising given the different things that could affect prices farmers received for their crops, which had become commodities for the market, rather than food grown to provide for people's needs, a change that had steadily grown in pace over the

[35] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 49
[36] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.10
[37] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.11

preceding period. It does suggest though that caught up in the middle of such change, it would be unreasonable to expect agricultural practice to change direction due to the 'price mechanism' of the market. Chapman makes the claim that the period of agricultural depression was the first time that Monmouthshire agriculture came under the 'dominance of national, rather than local influences', which perhaps ignores the effects of interventions such as the Corn Law, which gave a national protection to cereal growers.[38]

On a wider scale, the agriculture of Monmouthshire, as elsewhere in Britain, had been part of a national and international market at least for most of the nineteenth century. Specifically, it is hard to see that farmers in the county were able or willing to simply respond to the fluctuations in price, for some very good reasons. As described, prices changed frequently, but farming is based on longer-term planning. This means that low prices may mean farmers were unable to make enough money to turn a profit, requiring either a rent reduction by the landowner to help them out or a termination of their agreement which would have meant landowners looking for replacement farmers, which during a time of agricultural depression may have been difficult. Also, there were different requirements for arable production, in which farmers may have invested heavily, and pasture-based farming. The Royal Commission recommended a move to mixed farming and in some cases this was already practiced in eastern Monmouthshire but the Tithe Survey of the 1840s does not show widespread use of land for pasture and there had been a decline in the area used for orchards.[39] For the period following the Tithe Survey, the 1840s through to the mid 1870s, Chapman's analysis shows that eastern Monmouthshire remained mainly arable, producing grains - mostly wheat, along with some oats and barley. This was a period of high cereal prices, and the produce would have found a ready market in industrial south Wales and elsewhere, due to the improved transport links as explored in Chapter Three. During this time, the area had physical advantages for cereal production, and better soils, combined with 'improved agricultural methods', led arable farming being profitable, although the area still was not as productive as areas in southern and eastern England.[40] The 1870s, though, saw a dramatic fall in the price of cereals and had a profound effect on farmers locally. Chapman argues that the ability to make a profit in the market conditions that led to high prices both before and after the repeal of the Corn Laws, meant that farming across the county had ignored 'considerable defects, for, though fertilizers were widely used, outmoded rotational patterns remained remarkably

[38] Chapman J, 'Agriculture and "The Waste" in Monmouthshire…' p.250
[39] See appendix 8-15 land use in eastern Monmouthshire, maps based on the Tithe Survey
[40] Chapman J, 'Agriculture and "The Waste" in Monmouthshire…' p. 163

common.' Similarly, the Royal Commission had argued that farming across Wales showed similar defects and needed to change to adapt. In fact, the report claimed that agriculture in Wales was neither profitable nor sustainable. This was as much an effect as a cause of the metabolic rift, as prior to the nineteenth century, as shown in previous chapters, agriculture in areas like eastern Monmouthshire and many other parts of Wales had been pretty much self-sufficient and was based on employing methods that were both sustainable and allowed farmers to make a living.

While there was a small recovery in the price of some cereals in the 1890s, the price of wheat in particular remained low. There was a small increase in land used for arable farming in eastern Monmouthshire, but the rise was largely in growing crops that could be fed to animals and therefore further supported the shift towards dairy and sheep farming. It should be noted that the county contained many differences in terms of soil, topography and methods. Chapman suggests that the area between Llanwytherin and the Usk, which covers much of the land being studied here, constituted one of several areas where 'recurrent land-use… can be defined.' Both of these reports suggest that market prices for cereals had not stimulated agricultural change up to the 1870s, although Chapman notes some evidence that eastern Monmouthshire moved away from a predominantly cereal-based farming led towards a more 'normal balanced agriculture' with an expanded livestock farming base during the agricultural depression.[41] The Royal Commission also commented on the evidence that suggested 'there is an absence of clearness of thought oftentimes visible in the remarks made about co-operation in agriculture.' Competition between farmers, made more intense by the need to pay the bills during a period of depression, made co-operation difficult and the commissioners considered that while large-scale poultry production was not viable anyway, 'in regard to butter and cheese making… we think co-operation in production would likely to be successful' with a vague suggestion of doing this through County Councils.[42]

Eastern Monmouthshire had a tradition of fruit growing, particularly apples and pears. It also borders one of the main apple growing areas of Britain, Herefordshire. It is worth, therefore, looking at the evidence for how and why this changed in the nineteenth century. In the early part of century, the agricultural depression that followed the Napoleonic wars undermined apple production as the market for fruit, seen as a luxury in times of hardship, shrank. The small-scale orchards in rural Wales supplied mainly a local market, they were probably less affected than

[41] Chapman J, 'Agriculture and "The Waste" in Monmouthshire…' p. 250
[42] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 47

similar growers in England, although production was not on a commercial scale in most of Wales, except for 'a small number of farmers in Monmouthshire and surrounding areas.' The report into agriculture produced by Hassall in 1812 referred to 'orchards in all vale parts of the county' but he considered that the uncertainty of crops meant that while in some years there was an over-production of cider for domestic use, it was not considered profitable to plant orchards on a bigger scale. He mentions that apples were sold in 'great quantities' at Abergavenny and other markets and while some of this supply was from local farms, most was from Herefordshire.[43] Bowstead noted that cider was 'one of the natural products of Monmouthshire' as the soil was 'particularly suited to the growth of the apple.' His 1872 report went on to note an extensive acreage of apple growing in some farms but he considered that the problem was that much of this cider went as an allowance in part-payment to the labourers, men 'commonly receiving two quarts of cider per day, and women and boys with one quart' increasing during the harvest season so that 'three gallons per man is no unusual daily allowance,' commenting that this was a serious health and social problem and could have been why there was so little commercial apple production in the county.[44] The increasing dependence of Britain on imported fruit, also a result of easier and cheaper transport after 1870, led to government initiatives to support fruit growing. By 1879, the amount of fruit imported was valued at over £5 million, so the government incentivised an increase the amount of land used for orchards by 3,000 acres a year in the 1880s and 1890s. This did lead to an increase in the acreage of orchards in Monmouthshire between 1878 and 1899 from 3,954 to 4,035, but this was very small compared to the expansion seen in neighbouring Herefordshire, where there were around 25,000 acres of orchards. According to Basham, in 1899 most of the orchards in Monmouthshire were small scale and 'situated in sheltered spots near to the homestead to which they belong.' He goes on to describe the preparation of the soil, including improving drainage and hedges of Willow and Elm to provide shelter and describes a visit to Trostrey farm near Bettws Newydd in eastern Monmouthshire, where there was 'an excellent crop of fruit' most of which is sold in the Pontypool and Abergavenny markets.[45] In some places that Basham visited, such as a farm at Llandeilo Grysenni, the trees had been pruned too closely. This was designed to make the tree look good but it meant the tree produced little in the way of fruit. Basham goes on to make this observation:

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[43] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth with observations on the means of its improvement* (The Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement: London, 1812) p. 57

[44] Bowstead T, 'Report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* (2nd Ser. V.8, 1872) … pp. 323-324

[45] Basham J, 'Fruit in Monmouthshire and South Wales' in *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society,* (23: 1899) p. 275

> One of the things which struck me very forcibly in the remote and out-of-the-way parts of the county was the difficulty of finding a ready sale for the fruit, and also the want of a better method of gathering and packing for market. I have thought that possibly something might be done to remedy this state of things by establishing a good fruit market in one or more of the largest towns.

The potential for orchards and apple growing in the area to offset some of the effects of the agricultural depression was thus not being realised.

> At the present time the greater part is sold to dealers, who go round the farms at gathering time and generally purchase the whole of the crop for a lump sum. This does not apply to the districts near to good markets; in these places growers take a few hampers regularly as long as the fruit lasts, and retail them in small quantities to their customers.[46]

Of course, it takes time to grow apple trees and the industry was far less able to respond to market demands and price fluctuations Apple growing retreated to just a few areas of Britain, such as Kent and Herefordshire, where large-scale orchard were established and commercial growing continued. Capitalist agriculture was based on every aspect of food production being motivated by profit and price, rather than anything else, and has led to a system that has undermined the necessary diversity of production and towards monocultures. This gives a natural advantage to pests and diseases, which has been another outcome of the rift between society and the environment.

Overall, the evidence points to a deficiency in the model that assumes farmers could and did respond to commodity market prices. It was not just that they were being conservative, but their relationship with the land and land-use required understanding and knowledge that was accumulated over time and tended to be focussed on one or two types of farming and now they were being told to abandon this. The next section will look at how different aspects of nineteenth century developments in technology affected land-use. These types of change required significant investments that farmers were not in a position to make and landlords not willing to countenance. The fact that many of the landowners were also industrialists may have been significant here – an investment in industry was likely to return more profit that one in farming. As shown later in this chapter, some farmers went out of business as they were unable or unwilling to shift their production to mixed farming as suggested by the Royal Commissioners and some other advisors.

[46] Basham J, 'Fruit in Monmouthshire and South Wales…' p. 279

In other words, food production became national or even globally based, rather than local and the result was a growing rift and alienation between what people consumed and how it was produced.

3. Investment, technology and land-use change

> Gentlemen would gradually learn to estimate the advantages of such researches, and warmly adopt them; and instead of losing or abusing their time, in low temperance, in the degrading and vicious intrigues of provincial politics and parliamentary elections, which seldom offer to the mind a rational and justifiable object, and which disseminate and perpetuate dissention and hatred, they would employ their talents to enlighten and assist their tenants and neighbours, to improve, dignify and diffuse that species of knowledge and industry which, of all others most directly tends to the increase of useful population, the habits of virtuous temper and beneficial activity, the peace and harmony of social intercourses and all modifications of society, to lay the sure and permanent foundations of free constitutions of civil Government, and to promote the general happiness of mankind.[47]

To locate the source of this rift, it is necessary to consider how and why farming methods changed. The farming in eastern Monmouthshire at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth century was seen as antiquated and inefficient and there were a number of reports commissioned at the time which were designed to help identify impediments to change and 'improvement'. A growing population and the onset of war with revolutionary France meant that food supply became a pressing issue for the governments of the time. In 1794, John Fox produced a report on agriculture in the county for the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement. This report provides some useful evidence about the state of agriculture at the turn of the century. Fox began with a description of the countryside as a bucolic idyll, perhaps appropriate for a county that, as already mentioned in Chapter 4, was at the heart of the picturesque art movement:

> The delightful diversities of hills and dales, woods and water, cornfields and meadows, are so beautifully scattered across the county that nature, where we turn our view, gives to art as a rule of perfection for the ornamental and intrinsic improvement of almost every estate.[48]

Fox considered that the main landowners in the county were 'bringing forward gradually into more and more improvement' and this was well-managed and practised good examples of husbandry.[49] However, he does criticise some aspects of agriculture amongst the 'less intelligent farmers', who do not follow the rotation system well. There were also problems with land

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[47] Williams D, *The History of Monmouthshire* (Printed by H. Baldwin: London, 1796) pp. 359-360

[48] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth: with Observations on the means of its improvement* (Printed by P. Norbory: Brentford, 1794) p. 18

[49] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 13

drainage and irrigation in some areas. Fox suggested that there should be improvements to farm buildings, roads (see Chapter 3) and an end to rack rents based on copyholder tenancies that existed in some areas of the county.[50] He also argued that farmers should 'receive instruction' commenting that on some farms, the methods of fallowing were not properly understood and that some crops had failed 'for want of dibbling, drilling and hoeing' as well as being sewn too thickly.[51] Small farms were, he says, promoting 'plenty, population and industry', preventing monopoly by 'constantly supplying the markets.'[52] Fox considered that 'the rate of wages and the price of labour, are very much advanced' for agricultural labourers who worked from six in the morning to six in the evening in the summer months, although later he also notes that many of the 'peasantry' work hard but find it hard to provide for their families.[53] Some landowners encouraged cottages to be built for such people and their families:

> and permitting them to annex thereto a small slip of land, the cultivation of which, by supplying potatoes and other garden stuff for the occupier and his family, will be a considerable alleviation of their present distress. [54]

This appeared to have been a widespread practice in eastern Monmouthshire where many of the cottages that date to this time (and before) were built on a large enough plot of land that would have allowed agricultural labourers to have been semi-subsistence farmers. Overall, Fox painted a fairly reassuring picture of the state of agriculture and the support given by landowners to help improve productivity, although of course caution should be exercised in accepting this fairly brief government commissioned report as an accurate description.

Hassall, writing in 1812, also noted that a garden was often provided along with what he described as a frugal-sized dwelling for farm labourers, although he considered that the land was only really suitable (and used) for growing 'common vegetables' and maybe keeping a small flock of poultry mainly for eggs. He commented at length that keeping a cow, which might 'in theory' appear desirable, presumably for milk and dairy, was not practicable.[55] Hassall did suggest that it was expected of those, 'in whom Providence has blessed them with large possessions to relieve poverty and distress in every direction around their domains' by ensuring job security and paying better wages so that

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[50] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 21
[51] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 18
[52] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 23
[53] Fox uses the term 'peasantry' presumably as a description of landless labourers.
[54] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 31
[55] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 27

> With his earnings he buys the necessaries for his family on the best terms; his cares are few, and he runs no risk of being ruined in his circumstances by the sudden death of a cow.

In addition, he also argued that labourers should be able to have land to grow potatoes in order to feed the family, 'and to lend the men a team and plough, to manure and plant the potatoes, furnishing also the dung; for which, and the rent of the land, a reasonable and fair payment ought to be made.'[56] The potato, of course, was a relatively recent introduction into the diet of the British worker and perhaps this explains why Hassall felt it necessary to include an explanation of how they should be cooked. As Salaman has highlighted, the crop failures of 1800-1804 were central to the expansion of their acceptance as a good source of minerals and one that also led to people being full.[57] The nutritional yield from potatoes made them a good garden crop, although at this time they were not grown commercially, at least not in eastern Monmouthshire, perhaps because of their association with subsistence and subsequent low economic value. Salaman makes a general point about the backwardness of Welsh agriculture and husbandry which he considered to be 'of the lowest', and where potatoes were likely to have been grown 'in the home plot for immediate use of the family, and scarcely any of being raised in the field.'[58] The hidden message in Hassall's support for potatoes was that this was a way to keep farm labourers happy that was low-cost, could improve efficiency amongst them and lead to more profit which could be reinvested in the other improvements he recommends. Potatoes were, of course, the subject of some debate in the nineteenth century. Reformer William Cobbett argued that they should only be fed to pigs not people, and were the cause of 'slovenliness, misery, filth and slavery'. In 1830, he argued that one of the causes of the Swing Riots in southern England was that 'forty-five years ago, the labourers brewed their own beer, and that now none of them do it; that formerly they ate meat, cheese and bread, and they now live almost wholly on potatoes.'[59] Cobbett was not really describing a metabolic rift, but the changes he blamed on the consumption of potatoes may well fit into the growing rift between how people ate and their local environment.

David Williams followed Fox's report with a historical account of the county in 1796, which also included contemporary descriptions and commentary on the state of agriculture in the county. In general, he felt there was much need for improvement and presented a radical suggestion for a

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[56] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* pp. 27-28
[57] Salaman R.N., *The History and Social Influence of The Potato* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1949) pp. 538-540
[58] Salaman R.N., *The History and Social Influence of The Potato*… p.413
[59] Cobbett W, *Political Register,* 27 November, 1830.

county-wide Committee, to develop practices proposed by local economic and agricultural societies. The committee would provide expertise and also invest in the necessary improvements, given the farmers and landowners were not making the necessary changes themselves. Instead:

> The necessary attention in economical and agricultural societies to processes which sound formidable, because denominated science but are inferior in the talents they require and the objects they immediately affect to the wise direction of all the possible processes of a good farm – that species of attention would convert the societies into little academies of the most useful and important nature.[60]

His observations were that tenures, leases and rents 'seem to vary at random' and one important suggestion was that stewards, middle-men and farming auctioneers should be regulated by the committee and reduce rents that he considered too high, a further barrier to those farmers who did want to adopt more effective and efficient methods.[61] Williams recommendations were not acted on and such a solution would have been seen to undermine the landowners' rights but they do show the level of concern about the state of farming. Hassall's 1812 report similarly found problems with the county's farming and also did not spare in criticising the landowners. For instance, repairs to farm buildings, for which they were responsible, were 'very indifferently attended to.' He went on to say:

> Most landlords endeavour to throw as much of the repairs as possible on the tenant who, if he has not a lease, is willing to patch up and mend from time to time, and make what shift he can to keep his buildings standing, for fear of offending his landlord by too frequent importunity for repairs and therefore incur an advance of rent, or a notice to quit the premises.[62]

This unequal power-relationship would not just affect farm building repairs, but also investments in other ways to improve farming to use land more efficiently and sustainably. The farms in the county were small compared to the east of England, about 140 acres being an average. Short (or, sometimes, no) leases led, in his opinion, to short-term decisions and a reluctance for farmers to invest in the kind of improvements that had led to farms in other counties (Norfolk is given as an example) becoming more profitable. 'A lease of twenty-one years, would encourage the farmer to advance his capital with confidence in draining, manuring, and otherwise improving his lands.' Hassall also offers the possibility that this would increase the number of supportive freeholders

[60] Williams D, *The History of Monmouthshire*… p. 360
[61] Williams D, *The History of Monmouthshire*… pp. 252-253
[62] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 26

who would be therefore entitled to, and presumably likely to, vote for the landlord 'at county election'.[63] Despite this, there was no change in the arrangements on any of the county's estates.

Hassall found that improvement of agriculture in the county was slow and varied across the county. In the Hundred of Abergavenny, which included much of eastern Monmouthshire, there was a 'mixed course of husbandry; tillage, dairy and raising stock' noting that the 'tram-roads greatly assist [the farmer] in bringing his lime to the lands, and in carrying the produce to market.' He also considered that the recent building of the canal would help improve agriculture there:

> Because until the introduction of the canal and the tram-roads gave the farmer an opportunity of conveying lime in large quantities, he had no way to carry it but on the back of horses or mules, and of course could not carry a great deal in any one year.[64]

Perhaps the most salient point of Hassall's report was his consideration that while fallowing was objected to because it left land without a crop for a year, it was important that farmers knew about their land and not just followed advice from those who considered they knew better.

> By hasty adoption of practices taken from books, or perhaps from hearsay reports, given without any accurate knowledge of the soil and circumstances of the land from whence such reports were made, many a cultivator gets into an error, and finds to his cost, that he has been too precipitate in taking up opinions that were not worthy of notice.[65]

These three reports into agriculture were inspired by the prospect of hunger due to population increase and war at the start of the century. It may be for this reason that the next reports did not emerge until the 1870s, as while prices and fortunes fluctuated between 1815 and 1870, and there was the debate over the Corn Laws referred to in the previous section, agricultural production was able to keep up with need. The Tithe Survey that formed the backdrop to Chapter Two provides an extensive evaluation of land and land-use in the 1830s and 40s, and as shown in that chapter, this and the decadal census records, as well as the records kept by the estates all help build a picture of agricultural change at this time. However, the depression of the 1870s led to new extensive surveys and studies of agriculture in the area that show the extent of continuing issues with local farming. The systemic changes that were taking place around them tended to engulf farmers and the rift between society and the environment on which it depends is perhaps

[63] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…*pp. 30-31
[64] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 37
[65] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p 38

most keenly felt and illustrated by the frustrated attempts at maintaining their lifestyle in the face of these changes.

The Royal Agricultural Society was a body set up in the 1830s mainly to promote the use of improved agricultural methods by 'a group of individuals with interests in agriculture – journalists, landowners and enthusiasts' who were 'convinced that science would help English agriculture become more productive and meet the growing food requirements of a booming population.'[66] In 1870, an optimistic report on agricultural progress in Monmouthshire appeared in the society's journal written by W. Fothergill. This described a farming scene in the county that was divided between the hilly areas, where there had been little change over the past sixty years, and the lowlands, areas that include eastern Monmouthshire where there had been much improvement.

> Anyone passing through the neighbourhood of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Newport and Chepstow, would be struck with the energetic way in which improvements of all kinds, in a more or less degree, are being carried out.

Many farms practised a rotation method that involved the following: 'barley follows swedes; then clover; and wheat, for the most part' with some winter oats. He also reported that many farms did not leave fields fallow but grow vetch and allow sheep to eat it, a good use of available land. Other crops seen by Fothergill were peas, beans and mangolds, although he said that potatoes had reduced in acreage 'in consequence of the disease' [67] Improvements in agriculture were promoted by the agricultural shows that had begun in the county, including the Tredegar Show at Newport and another at Abergavenny. An Agricultural Society had been formed in Usk in 1793, 'which appears, in its day, to have given a great impetus to farming.'

According to Williams and Hasssall, the leases at the start of the nineteenth century varied amongst the different landowners but were usually renewed annually allowing for rent increases or decreases depending on the returns that the farmers made. Much later in the century, though, Bowstead wrote about uncertainty of tenure being a major barrier to farm improvements, as there was an 'almost total absence of leases, or even of ordinary written agreements.' This caused a number of problems:

> It seriously retards the progress of agriculture, diminishes outlay by the tenant in permanent improvements, checks the liberal application of

[66] 'Our History' Royal Agricultural Society for England, https://www.rase.org.uk/history/ (accessed 26.1.24)
[67] Fothergill W, 'Farming of Monmouthshire', *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* (2nd Ser, 6: 1870) p. 291

> permanent manuring substances, and therefore hinders the thorough development of the resources of the soil.[68]

The absence of long-term planning or investment, once again, was the result and there was a growing divide between those using the land and their knowledge and understanding of it. The later decades of the century also saw a changing structure of landed estates, with many acres sold by owners who were no longer making a good return on their land. This had the effect of seeing farms themselves changing hands and in some cases, large farms buying up small ones, with a further increase in the scale of the operation. William Jones of Clytha Estate blamed the rack-rent system, which he considered made Monmouthshire 'one of the most unfair counties in England (sic) for agricultural operations… the tenant farmer possesses not tenure in the land he holds but may receive notice to quit at any time.'[69] Despite the apparent lack of security, many farmers preferred the rack-rent as rents were fixed annually and tended to rise and fall in line with outputs, while a lack of available, willing, or suitable tenants meant landowners were unlikely to end a tenancy without a very good reason. Amongst the list of grievances that were submitted by farmers to the 1893-6 Royal Commission, the tenancy agreements and their nature were commonly raised:

> The grievances of the tenant farmer fall upon analysis into four main heads, first, arbitrary fixing of rent; secondly, unreasonable conditions hampering his cultivation of the soil; thirdly, insecurity of tenure; fourthly, inadequacy of compensation upon a determination of the tenancy.

It was common for landowners to place conditions in leases as shown in Figure 57: An example of terms of letting below, where the new tenant of Wernycwm Farm in Llanwytherin was expected to keep the land in good condition and follow certain types of farming practice by the landowners, 'Governors of William's Schools, Carleon.'[70] This shows the importance of landowners in driving the changes that were causing a metabolic rift. In 1901, this 274-acre farm was bought from the school governors by the Crawshaw Bailey estate for £6,750 although the sitting tenant was not evicted in this instance and was still recorded as being in possession of the farm in the 1911 census.[71] Similar conditions were used by the Llanover Estate.

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[68] Bowstead T, 'Report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872…' p. 322
[69] Pincombe I, 'The Rural Economy…' p35
[70] *Gwent Archives*, GB 0208.D930/25 Agreement for Tenancy of Wernycwm Farm, Llanvetherine, 2nd Feb 1884,
[71] *Gwent Archives,* GB0208.930/26 Convenyance for sale of Wenycwm Farm, Llanvertherine, 17th September 1901; 1911 Wales Census, Llanvertherine, Monmouthshire, p. 36

MEMORANDUM OF TERMS OF LETTING.

The Farm, Lands, and Premises, called or known by the name of Wernycum *Farm, situate in the Parish of* Llanvetherine *in the County of Monmouth, shewn upon the annexed Plan or Tracing and particularised in the Schedule hereto,* BETWEEN THE GOVERNORS OF WILLIAMS' SCHOOLS, CAERLEON, *(The Landlords) of the first part,* Daniel Edward Watkins *of* Llanvetherine aforesaid, Farmer *(the Tenant) of the second part, and* William Watkins of the same place Farmer and John Watkins of Llanthewy Rytherch Monmouthshire Farmer — *(as Sureties for the said* Daniel Edward Watkins —*) of the third part.*

1. The tenancy to be a yearly one, commencing from the 2nd day of February, 1884

2. The rent to be £ 200 . 0 . 0 per annum clear of all Rates, Taxes, and deductions of every kind (except Landlords' Property Tax, if any,) and to be payable half-yearly on 2nd August and 2nd February, and a proportionate part thereof to be payable up to the day of re-entry in case the tenancy shall be determined as provided by clause 11. The Tenant also to pay an additional yearly rent equal to £5 per centum calculated upon all moneys hereafter expended by the Landlords in draining or improvements upon the farm, to commence from the time of outlay and afterwards to continue payable as if the same had formed part of the original rent.

L.L.M.

3. The Tenant shall not break up or convert into tillage any meadow or pasture land without the Landlords' consent in writing first obtained: And if he do so he shall pay an additional rent of £20 per annum per acre, and so in proportion for any less quantity than an acre of meadow or pasture land so broken up or converted into tillage as aforesaid: Such additional rent to be payable half-yearly on 2nd February and 2nd August; and the first payment thereof to be made on such of the said days as shall next follow such breaking up, and thenceforth to continue payable during the tenancy.

4. All Timber and other Trees, Underwoods, Coals, Mines, Minerals, and Quarries are reserved to the Landlords, with full powers of ingress, egress, and regress, for the purpose of selling, converting, working and carrying away the same, and all other usual and necessary powers and privileges for themselves and their Vendees, and their Agents and workmen, with respect to the same. The Landlords allowing compensation to the tenant for any damage he may sustain by the removal of the wood and timber, the amount of such compensation to be fixed by the Landlords surveyor.

L.L.M.

And the Tenant shall carefully preserve all Timber and other Trees and all Young Saplings, and not cut, lop or top any Timber or other Trees, without the Landlords' consent.

5. The Landlord to keep the roofs main timbers and outside walls of the House and Buildings in good and tenantable repair, and the Tenant to keep all other parts of the House and Buildings in good and tenantable repair, and so leave the same. The Tenant also to keep and leave in good repair the gates, posts, rails, stiles and fences belonging to the premises, but the Landlords to allow Timber in the rough for the last-named purposes if it can be had on the premises, but not otherwise, and the Landlords are to have full liberty at all times by themselves or their Agents and Servants, to enter upon the premises, to view the condition thereof.

6. The tenant to keep the Meadow and Pasture Land clean and clear from Thistles, Docks, Flags, Rushes, and other noxious or useless plants or weeds, and from time to time well and sufficiently to clean out, scour, and cast all ditches, drains and grips, as the same shall become necessary.

7. In case of default by the Tenant in the due and regular performance of the foregoing clauses numbered 5 and 6, the Landlords or their Agents, Servants, and Workmen shall be at liberty to carry them into complete effect at the Tenant's expense after giving to him, or leaving upon the aforesaid premises, one calendar month's notice of such their intention; And all expenses thereby incurred shall be forthwith recoverable from the Tenant by distress and sale as in case of rent in arrear.

8. The Tenant shall cultivate and manage the Arable Land in a regular course of good husbandry, and so as that not more than two grain crops shall be taken in succession, and that no part of the meadow land shall be mown more than two years successively ~~unless ten loads per acre at least of good and proper manure shall have been spread upon the land during the interval between such two successive mowings~~. And the Tenant shall consume and spend upon the said premises, all hay, straw, turnips and fodder produced thereon, and also every year spread upon the said premises all the manure arising therefrom, and at the determination of the tenancy shall leave upon the premises all the manure produced therefrom.

L.L.M.

Figure 57: An example of terms of letting

The Royal Commission report noted that changes in rents for sitting tenants caused the most 'dissatisfaction' and commented that 'the power of raising the rent without appeal gives enormous power to the landlord.'[72] Revaluation of entire estates and particularly the sale of landholdings was a cause of such rent increases and loss of farm holdings. Where tenant farmers paid for and implemented the improvements to the land, they were farming, they had no security under existing short-term leases, could be asked to leave or as often happened, asked to pay an increased rent.

Agricultural labourers were, according to Fothergill, well paid mainly because of the competition from iron and coal works in the county. 'On average through the county, a farm-labourer receives from 13s to 14s per week, with cottage and garden (where these are available) rent free.' He cites some cases where the pay is lower, 'but the allowance of cider and other pre-requisites, bring up to about the same' level.[73] Bowstead considered that the expense of agricultural labour was a 'source of real anxiety, if not alarm to the arable farmer' and this was down to the 'natural influence' of strikes and labour unions even though they had 'not yet extended into the Principality.'[74] Technology had led to mechanisation of some aspects of farming, according to these reports. Even at the start of the century, new machinery was being introduced. According to Hassall in 1812, Rotherham Swing-Ploughs had replaced the long Herefordshire Plough and this advance was because of proprietors of iron-works coming from other parts of the country, buying estates in Monmouthshire and using their wealth and industry to 'improve them very judiciously.'[75] By 1870, Fothergill noted that the recently invented double-furrow plough was 'coming into general use' replacing the previously universal Howard's two-horse plough. He also notes that 'on one farm, the Beverley Waggon Company's two-horse self-delivery reaper has been used, since 1861' and more generally a Scottish invention, the double-drill horse-hoe, had been introduced. He went on to suggest that there was a desire for farmers to obtain 'the very latest improvements in farm machinery' and that steam power was used on several farms for 'threshing, chaffing, grinding and sowing.'[76] This positive view of farming in Monmouthshire was, on the whole, shared by Bowstead in his report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872, which described the arable farming in the county as 'creditable', farmers using 'the newest and most approved implements' with 'no lack of skill'. However, this report differed in finding little evidence of use of

[72] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 71
[73] Fothergill W, 'Farming of Monmouthshire…' p. 294
[74] Bowstead T, 'Report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872…' p. 322
[75] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p. 32
[76] Fothergill W, 'Farming of Monmouthshire…' p. 296

steam cultivation, particularly to extend the cultivable area by reducing the size of hedges, that were 'from 6 to 10 feet wide… providing snug nurseries for all manner of filth.'[77] Machinery had replaced scythes for cutting hay and grain and this was partly driven by the high cost of labour. Steam was used for threshing grain, though, similar to the description by Fothergill. Bowstead praised sheep farming but found that cattle-farming was very poor due to 'careless indifference and inattention.'[78] The mechanisation of farming led again to a distance between rural communities and their environment, partly, as Bowstead suggested, due to fewer labourers being needed and partly because those who remained were doing different types of work. The machines were also capable of deeper ploughing, more damaging to the top soil.

According to Fox at the end of the eighteenth century, irrigation was 'not pursued so generally as it ought to be' and required improving, while 'too little attention has been paid' to the useful practice of drainage.[79] Hassall's report suggests little had been done by the second decade of the nineteenth century:

> The wetness of the pasture and hay lands keeps them in that unproductive state… instead of producing fine succulent and feeding grasses, a coarse and unprofitable herbage cover those lands; and although this sort of pasturage will rear and maintain cattle, it does not keep them so well as could be wished, nor near so well as it would do, if the stagnant waters, which cause that coarseness, were withdrawn by judicious draining.

Stones from quarries in some areas and wood from 'willow, the alder and the beech' which are abundant elsewhere in the county could easily have fixed this issue, according to Hassall.[80] The implementation of drainage was important as it was a pre-requisite for further 'improvements' including fertilisation, manuring and allowing larger herds of cattle to graze. Inventions such as that of mobile tile and pipe machines in the 1840s helped reduce the cost and so make drainage of land affordable and efficient. There is some evidence of land drainage being done at this time in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire. The rent books of the Duke of Beaufort mention that money was paid for 'draining' and 'drainage pipes' at farms in the county in 1881 and 1891, although nothing before then. The sums involved were relatively small, about £12 on two farms in 1881 and £41 on 'sundry' farms in 1891.[81] In 1861, two cottages in Llanfable were occupied by land drainage engineers and their families, although this is the only time that any land drainers

[77] Bowstead T, 'Report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872…' p. 315
[78] Bowstead T, 'Report on the Farm-Prize Competition of 1872…' p.320
[79] Fox J, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…* p.16
[80] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth*… pp. 137-138
[81] *National Library of Wales*, GB0210 BMA4/92, 'Rental, 1851-1900, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate', p. 172 and 209

were recorded by the censuses living in the area. As with many other farm improvements, employing the technology was expensive. The cost is estimated to have been around £24 million across the whole country over thirty years from 1846 and this had to be paid for by borrowing large sums, often initially at least by the landowner who then shared the costs with the tenants. Mingay says that farmers often provided the labour as part of their share, or in other cases 'the landlord undertook the whole investment but added five per cent of his outlay to the rent.'[82] Drainage loans were available on preferential rates from the government and while they set aside two million pounds, farmers, landowners and land agents only applied for half a million pounds of these funds. In Monmouthshire only £4,000 was taken up by September 1850.[83] While this implies a lack of knowledge or understanding of the benefits of drainage, it left implementation of drainage to be paid for by bank loans, with the usual rates of interest.[84] In the earlier part of the century interest rates were high and 'the interest charge and repayment of capital amounted to an annual outlay of 6¾ per cent on the sum borrowed.' Once rents started to fall after 1879 it was impossible for a tenant farmer to clear the debts.[85] Land drainage was another way to increase outputs by increasing the amount of land that was viable for agriculture. However, it was achieved by redirecting the water through pipes and into nearby water courses. This increased flooding at times where river channels were unable to cope with the run-off that more rapidly left the land. Also, especially when high levels of fertiliser began to be used later in the century, increasing levels of phosphates and nitrates found their way into streams. Clearly, drainage was an attempt to mitigate against the wet climate, but the fields were often still too wet for large cattle herds and when dairy farming replaced arable towards the end of the century, such 'improvements' were unable to allow for their use. Even in the mid-century, the investment in drainage and use of technology was not able to overcome natural hazards. For instance, in 1860 there was a particularly cold and wet summer, one of the worst since 1659 and with the wettest June on record, leading to crops being destroyed or flooded.[86]

This was not the only issue, and where there was mixed farming the increasing size of herds per acre, part of a more profitable intensification associated with improvement, led to an increasing prevalence of disease. Across Britain, including in Monmouthshire, there were outbreaks of 'cattle

[82] Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England*…p.128
[83] 'Drainage Loans', *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* p 3, 28th September 1850
[84] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p.72
[85] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 6
[86] https://premium.weatherweb.net/weather-in-history-1850-to-1899-ad/ (accessed 23.10.23)

plague' (rinderpest) and pleuro-pneumonia in 1865 and 1877.[87] The spread of foot and mouth led to a number of attempts to regulate the market in cattle and eventually to the Contagious Diseases Act, 1878 under which a range of local restrictions on movement of cattle could be ordered. There were outbreaks of the disease in 1879 near Newport and Chepstow and again in 1884 near Newport, although eastern Monmouthshire appears to have not been directly affected by Foot and Mouth.[88] There was a constant review of the working of the restrictions as this and other farmyard diseases in the 1880s. One such disease was Swine Fever and on March 21st 1884, the following order was made:

> The following shall be a Swine Fever infected place: Llwyn-y-Gaer and the Dairy Farms and the roads which intersect the same in the parish of Tregare and Penrose in the county of Monmouth
> In case anyone of the 36 pigs now in the Pigs' cot building on Llwyn-y-gaer Farm should be found by the Veterinary Inspector to be affected with Swine Fever we order the whole of the said pigs to be slaughtered.[89]

Similar orders followed at The Bottom Farm in Penrose (28.3.84), Pishtyth in Tregare (4.4.84), at a property owned by J. Watkins of Cuckoo Row, Raglan (21.5.84). The restrictions could prove problematic especially when farms were near the county borders and depended on markets in a county where movements were controlled. Here, for example, is a letter from a Justice of the Peace in Longtown, Herefordshire to Clerk of the Peace, Monmouthshire in April 1884 expressing frustration that while Herefordshire had no restriction on movement of stock, farmers who lived near the border had to comply with orders made in Monmouthshire:

> I wish to call your attention to the very great grievance that is inflicted on the farmers who live in this county on the borders of Monmouthshire. Our county is perfectly clean and allows stock to be moved into it without orders from the following counties: Brecknock, Radnor, Worcester and Monmouth. Such being the case one would suppose that this would be a reciprocity on the side of those counties. Monmouth, however, knowing Hereford to be clean still requires an order to move stock over her boundaries. The Longtown farmers attending Abergavenny Market before sending stock have to write to Luther Freeman enclosing a stamped envelope for an order. This he sends – what is the need of it? What can Freeman know about our stock 10 miles off? If such an order was required surely it ought to be given by one on the spot. Yesterday was Longtown Fair. A man bought a sow and 8 pigs. He had to send to Freeman before he could move them 10 miles there and 10 back. How long is such restriction to last?

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[87] Chambers J.D. & G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution* p. 179 for climatic conditions see also:
[88] *Gwent Archives*, 'Q/CDA/6 Contagious Diseases of Animals Orders in Council 1877-1879'
[89] *Gwent Archives*, 'Q/CDAB/1 Contagious Diseases of Animals Orders in Council 1880-1887'

Problems with investment in 'improvements', problems when they are employed and problems that have always affected agriculture such as the weather and disease, along with problems with a remote and seemingly incomprehensible pricing mechanism that was supposed to affect choices made at ground level, all point to a growing and insurmountable rift between farmers, land use and their relationship with the local environment. This, then, is another example of landlords, land agents and others driving a change that had adverse environmental effects without either consideration or understanding of its consequences. Societal shifts leading to a break with local environmental balance, a key aspect of the metabolic rift.

These changes also often left farmers in considerable debt. The 'weakness of high production based on heavy capital outlays was that it depended for success on growing markets and a high level of prices,' conditions which were met for some of the time in the middle but not at the end of the century.[90] Despite the insistence of the landowning class on improvements being made, as a result of the agricultural depression the area of cultivated land in Wales as a whole reduced from 403 acres per 1,000 acres to 300 acres, a fall of about one quarter between 1873 and 1893, and in those same years, the wheat growing acreage fell by 'considerably more than half.' Increasing wages for labourers were also seen as adding to the losses made by farmers in Wales, 'or where they do not sustain actual loss it *pro tonto* lessens profits.[91] Investing in new methods or changing the type of farming simply added to the problem of paying the rent. Sometimes estates had their landholdings reassessed and subsequently increased rents accordingly. Even more significant was the wide disparity between what tenants considered a 'fair rent' and the demands of landlords who saw their job as 'obtaining the highest money rent which might possibly be obtained for the holding.' Sales of land were one such circumstance, and when a sale transferred landownership, as for example happened when Lady Llanover bought most of Coldbrook Estate on the death of the previous owner, Ferdinand Capel Hanbury-Williams, in 1888, she gave the existing tenants notice to quit.[92] The Agricultural Holdings Act, 1883, had attempted to address the situation and tenants who had invested in their land were entitled to compensation in the event that they were evicted in some circumstances, although as the report notes many farmers were 'ignorant' of their ability to claim. It also notes that where a tenant has invested significant capital, as was often the case,

[90] Chambers J.D. & G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution* p. 177
[91] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 26
[92] *Gwent Archives*, GB0218. D433A/3/5 -D433A/3/14. Notices to Quit to various tenants on Coldbrook House Estate, all dated 20th December 1888, 'Coldbrook Estate Records'. All were given until 25th December 1889 to leave.

they still lost out. The evicted farmers mainly left agriculture, and their connection with the local environment through their skills and knowledge was lost.

The reports to government and agricultural societies all took as their starting point that agriculture needed to change (or 'improve') in order to feed a growing urban population, which was mainly removed from involvement in food production. They are invaluable as historical sources and shed a light on what Carol Beardmore has described as an 'elusive concept' of the changing rural community.[93] The Royal Commission report claimed that deficiencies in farming in Wales had contributed to the agricultural depression and led to situation where 'Welsh produce is in some respects inferior in quality in the sense that it is not equally acceptable to the consumer' who would rather buy imported goods. To elicit change required education, promotion of literature and books for farmers and land agents (notwithstanding Hassall's warning quoted above), and promotion by agricultural societies and shows, the importance of which will be discussed later in this chapter. Criticism was made by the Royal Commission of landowners too, who 'erect buildings too large for the holding', waste money on unnecessary decoration, are guilty of bad farming and are thus wasteful of their capital investment, although also conceding that 'none of the above-mentioned forms of bad farming in the existing conditions in this country affect the actual prices of commodities in the markets in any sensible degree.'[94] Even with all the investment and technologies, increased inputs and considerable cost in terms of money and the diminishing involvement of farmers and labourers in their local environment, all causes of the metabolic rift, it was not possible to guarantee that farming businesses could remain viable in areas like eastern Monmouthshire. 'Improvement' not only changed the relationship between society and the environment, it also did not increase yields or make agriculture any more viable, leading to financial loss, significant waste and, ultimately, food insecurity.

4. Landowners, land agents and rent

Landowners in eastern Monmouthshire were therefore key to driving the changes that led to a metabolic rift. Many, as shown in Chapter 2, also owned large amounts of land elsewhere in southern Britain and did not have much connection with the area. They had benefitted from the process of enclosure of arable land, which in Monmouthshire was almost complete by 1600,

[93] Beardmore C, 'The Rural estate Through the Eyes of the Land Agent: A Community in Microcosm, c. 1812-1844', in *Family and Community History* (19:1, 2016) p. 17
[94] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* pp. 22-23

although some common lands and wastes were not enclosed until the nineteenth century.[95] Many of the landowners were also industrialists who derived less profit from rents than they made from their ownership of iron works and coal mines elsewhere in the county. The farmers were mainly tenants with varying amounts of land. The larger farms usually had more money and incentive to invest in new methods and were more likely to be able to survive a downturn in their profits, than the smaller farmers, who were less able to do either of these things and often felt the 'improvements' they were being asked to invest in and use were too risky, costly and unproven.[96] Some landlords directly intervened to provide encouragement in different ways. The Halls of Llanover Estate, for example, offered prizes for the best-kept gardens, sheep flocks and farms and had model cottages built on the estate.[97] In general, though, and especially on those estates which were part of much larger landholdings such as that of the Duke of Beaufort, the main agent for encouraging change was the land manager. Beardmore considers that the complex and multifaceted embodiments of the people living in rural communities were 'expressed by the different connections and associations between: the landowner and the land agent, the farmer who used his own capital and sometimes labour to exploit the land, and the labourer who worked it.' [98] The role of the land manager was to encourage tenants to farm the land more 'efficiently' and enforce the 'rationalisation of technology and tenure.' These managers were often from the middle ranks of society, 'younger sons of country gentlemen, or farmers, lawyers or clergy' and while they needed a detailed knowledge of the workings of the land and agriculture, they were not farmers.

The landed estates at the start of the nineteenth century were large businesses and the turnover of rental income on several large estates by the middle of the nineteenth-century was over £200,000.[99] Land managers were part of a 'professional and managerial revolution' on landed estates which was happening in parallel with a similar change in industry and elsewhere, because of a similar 'increasing complexity in the economy and increasing demands for expert services' and by the 1850s, land agents were seen as part of a growing professional 'middle class,' often a critical part of improving agriculture and in many cases the management of estates was a 'co-operative enterprise' between landowners and the managers even though there was felt to be a

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[95] Chapman J, 'The Later Parliamentary Enclosures of South Wales' in *The Agricultural History Review* (39:2, 1991) p. 119 lists these later enclosures, most of which were part of *the General Enclosure Act, 1845.* These later enclosures added little to the already existing agriculturally productive land, however, and did not affect eastern Monmouthshire.
[96] Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England…*p.52 and Hobsbawm E & Rudé G, *Captain Swing…* p. 52
[97] Fraser M, 'Sir Benjamin Hall (afterwards Lord Llanover), 1802-1867', *Presenting Monmouthshire* (8:1959) pp. 7-10
[98] Beardmore C, 'The Rural estate Through the Eyes of the Land Agent…', pp. 17-18
[99] Richards E, 'The Land Agent', in Mingay G.E. (ed), *The Victorian Countryside…* pp. 439-441

need to supervise manager's work carefully in case the manager was 'lining his own pocket at the expense of his master's property and interests'. The land manager's role involved knowing the law, surveying land and knowing about farming methods, such as the use of timber, irrigation, drainage, laying of and repairing roads, housing, and technologies as well as basics such as how to make most effective use of different soils, although the shortage of trustworthy men to fulfil the role meant that many landowners adopted an attitude where 'knowledge of agricultural matters should be regarded as of secondary importance, something that anyone could pick up in the course of doing their job' [100] Monks argues that while ultimately answering to his employer, the landowner, 'it was essential that the agent remained impartial taking specific care not to choose one side over the other', while Mingay suggests that there was a level of mutual distrust and conflict between land agents and the farm tenants, especially given their role in judging whether the farmers met the conditions imposed by leases and that methods used were 'appropriate and whether it met the usual standards of the district.'[101] The Royal Commission report suggests that there had long been dissatisfaction amongst farmers concerning their 'economical and legal position', and this had been greatly deepened by the depression towards the end of the century: 'the great fall in prices has made practically every tenant farmer inquire into the legal and economic conditions on which he is carrying on his business.' [102] Gent uses the example of John Henderson, the land manager on the Castle Howard estate in Yorkshire, to show that some were instrumental in driving agricultural improvement and 'high farming.' Unfortunately, a lack of recorded evidence does not show if the land agents at work in eastern Monmouthshire pursued changed farming methods to the same extent.[103]

In common with others involved in rural life in the nineteenth century, few land managers left details of their roles, opinions or experiences. One who did, though was Thomas Herbert Cooke, an Englishman from Northamptonshire who was a land manager in Carmarthenshire in the early 1840s, and whose letters to his mother show not only some aspects about his role, his relationship with his employer, the owner of Middleton Hall estate, Edward Abadam and document the period of the Rebecca Riots. As there are no similar accounts from land managers employed in eastern

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[100] Thompson F.M.L., *English Landed Society…* p. 158

[101] Monks G, 'William Gould, Land Agent and the Rural Community in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, 1783-1788, in *Family & Community* History (21:2, 2018); p.71 Mingay G.E., *Rural Life in Victorian England…* pp. 126-127

[102] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 50

[103] Gent G, 'Stirring and advancing times'; Landlords, Agents and Improvement on the Castle Howard Estate, 1826-66' in Rees L. A, Reilly C and Tindley A, *The Land Agent…* p. 24; Gent defines 'high farming' as 'a high-input and high-output system involving an increased use of manufactures and imported material such as fertilisers, oilcake for fodder, drainage and more generally the application of new scientific knowledge and technology'

Monmouthshire this is another time that the thesis will rely on evidence from elsewhere, although there were obvious differences. Most importantly, eastern Monmouthshire did not experience the Rebecca Riots that form a central part of Cooke's written experiences, but the evidence he has left does add to the understanding of the role of land manager. He was a middle-man, working for a landowner he appears to have mainly disliked and having to collect rent and oversee tenants at a time of distress and angry discontent, including a serious incendiary attack on Middleton Hall. This revealed the contradictions of the position of the land manager. In response to threatening letters from those involved in the protests, Cooke wrote to his mother 'I am like the old man in the fable, I please neither side.' His employer considered him 'too good natured' while the letters considered that he 'grind the poor to enrich' himself.[104] Abadam, the landowner, was a reformer and in a pamphlet issued in 1835, described himself as an advocate for the ballot and a friend to the dissenter and the farmer; although his opposition to the tyranny of the 'Anglican, Conservative landlord' did not prevent him from charging high rents himself, nor forcing an overworked Cooke to ensure these were paid.[105] Cooke considered that Adabam was an example of a 'worldly minded' person 'whose sold God is Mammon, and who care little for any one thing, beyond the gratifications, which are to be bought with money.'[106] This searing indictment of the motivation behind the actions of landlords could well be applied to (at least some of) the landowners in eastern Monmouthshire, as the case of the ninth Duke of Beaufort, forced to sell most of the family's land in Monmouthshire, as highlighted in Chapter 2, shows (see page 60).

Rents and terms of leases were both possible points of conflict between the landowner and farmer and on most estates the rent was collected by the land agent and the fluctuating fortunes faced by farmers throughout the century meant many had significant arrears. These were allowed to build up for a few years if the tenant was otherwise seen as a good one (had adopted the required improvements and land use methods, etc.) and where there was a lack of prospective tenants. The evidence points to this being the case in eastern Monmouthshire. The Duke of Beaufort's land agent in the area lived in Troy House, just outside Monmouth. The estate's rent books show that by 1851 there were many farmers who were behind with their payment even before the agricultural depression at the end of the century. In some cases, these arrears were unrecoverable either because the farmer was unable to meet the payments or because he or she

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[104] Rees L. A., 'Frustrations and Fears: The Impact of the Rebecca Riots on the Land Agent in Carmarthenshire, 1843' in Rees L. A, Reilly C and Tindley A, *The Land Agent 1700-1920* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2018) p. 163
[105] Rees L. A. 'Frustrations and Fears…' p. 160
[106] *National Library of Wales*, MS 21209, Letter of C. Cooke to his mother, 16th June 1844*, quoted in* Rees L. A. 'Frustrations and Fears…' p. 157

died in debt. John Jones, who was the tenant at the 120 acre Teenewydd Farm in Llanfable, started the 1850-51 accounting year with arrears of £82, and made no leaving him with arrears of £160 by the end of the year.[107] The arrears remained the following year and there was a note made on the rent book:

> Rent decreased £78 the farm having been sold to Mr William James from the 2nd August 1851 but the tenant refuses to give up possession or to pay any rent.[108] (p. 178)

Another column showed that the estate had paid for repairs to Teenewydd on 4th February 1851 costing 17s 10d. In 1852, the debt remained and another note read:

> To be left out of next rental altogether. The farm sold to Mr William James, yet one year further on which are clearly lost from 2nd Aug 1851 to 2 Aug 1852 and a compromise aside [not readable] 120 and 210.[109]

It appears that the sale of the farm was over the head of Jones and his refusal to pay or leave had led to lost rental. By the time of the 1861 census, the farm was occupied by 35 year-old Henry Thomas, was a shepherd. In nearby Teelanbaddon Farm, Edward Williams had an annual rent of £20/14 shillings. He started 1851 with arrears of £10/7 shillings and the £15 he paid during the year left him owing £16/1. Unfortunately, by the time of the 1855 accounts Mr Williams died leaving arrears of £37.16 and rent in that year of £10 7s. A note in the rent books marks this as 'unrecoverable'.[110] The new tenant was Richard Woodward and the accounts for 1856 show him paying an increased rent of £27. He paid a total of £67 10s in that year, including 'arrears' of £40 10s. Woodward continued farming at Teelanbaddon without accruing any arears from then until 1865 when the farm disappeared from the accounts and the estate.

The turnover in tenants, which came from land sales or from other causes was disruptive in many ways as new farmers needed to get to know the land, find their way of making their farm pay, build relationships with labourers and other villagers, know the markets for the produce and all the other important parts of the job. This change is also at the heart of the concept of metabolic rift, as it was a key aspect of undermining the relationship between the land users and the local environment. The depression towards the end of the century inevitably made the situation worse and landlords were often forced to reduce rents to retain farmers. The Royal Commission reports

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[107] *National Library of Wales*, BMA 4/92, Rental, 1851, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, p. 179
[108] *National Library of Wales,* BMA 4/93, Rental, 1852, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, p. 178
[109] *National Library of Wales,* BMA 4/94, Rental, 1853, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, p. 178. A photo taken of the original is in the appendix.
[110] *National Library of Wales*, BMA 4/95 , Rental, 1855, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, p. 174

that the county treasurer 'thought that on average there was a permanent reduction from 25 to 30 per cent on properties in the neighbourhood of Monmouth.' Samuel Bosanquet similarly reported a 30 per cent reduction on his estate near Dingestow, while on Lord Llangattock's Monmouthshire estate, since 1877 the reductions were 25 percent and on 11 occasions, abatements of 10 to 50 per cent had been granted.[111] There was an even larger fall in rents charged by Llantillio Court estate, sold in 1873 by Henry Clifford. According to the estate manager employed by Henry Jackson, the new owner, before the sale, Clifford had raised the rents which raised over 4,000 per year. In 1879, because of the 'constant rains' that meant the harvest could not be gathered in, the estate allowed an abatement of 20 per cent, 'followed by permanent reductions on leases and annual tenancies alike of 33 per cent' across the estate.[112] There was also a change in the nature of the terms on which farmers were tenants. The landlord was described in Lleufer Thomas's report on the findings of the Royal Commission as the 'predominant partner' in that they had put the 'money into that partnership in the form of expenditure on improvements.' He went on to consider two points:

> To what extent does the other partner (the tenant) contribute to the undertaking and (2) How is the profit and loss of the concern shared by the respective partners.

In the earlier leasehold systems, 'the tenant was entirely responsible for all buildings, repairs and permanent improvements generally.' This was replaced later in the century by a system where landowners assumed these responsibilities and because the tenants had not been able to fulfil this side of the contract, the landlords then had to make a significant outlay in repairs. This situation was regarded by the commissioners as being 'fairly representative' across Wales.[113]

Farm rents had fluctuated during the mid-century and the amount made by the landowners also changed, although the trend was a decline. By the last decade of the century, land in Monmouthshire was providing less income for the Duke of Beaufort's Monmouthshire estate. Figure 58 shows the total income for the estate in green, while in blue is the amount of that income that derived directly from rents between 1851 and 1870. The final two years at the end of the nineteenth century are provided to show the accelerated rate decline.[114]

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[111] *National Library of Wales,* Dyb2001/A860, Lleufer Thomas D, 'Welsh Land Commission: A Digest of its Report', p. 288

[112] Dyb2001/A860, Lleufer Thomas D, 'Welsh Land Commission: A Digest of its Report…' pp. 288-289

[113] Lleufer Thomas D, 'Welsh Land Commission: A Digest of its Report…' pp. 212-213

[114] *National Library of Wales* Information analysed from BMA 4/92-111 and BMA 4/140-141, Rental, 1855, Badminton Estate Records, Monmouthshire Estate, a spreadsheet table is included in appendix

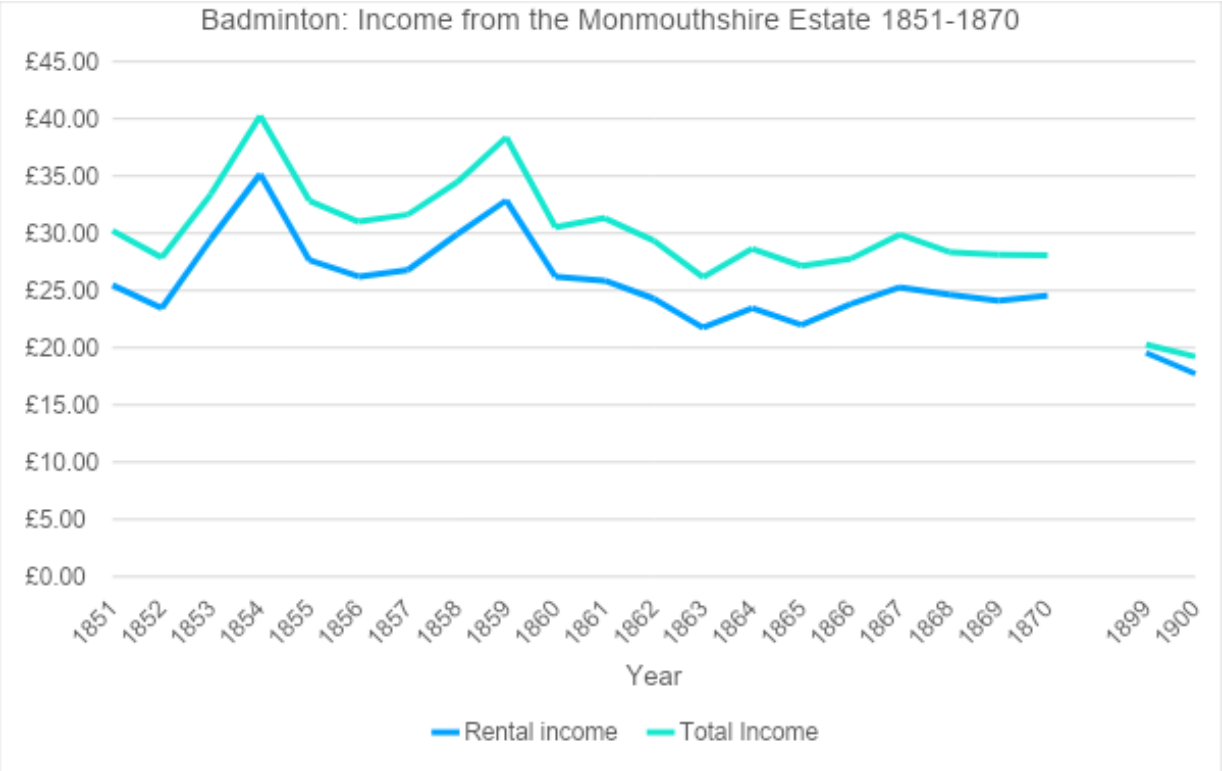

Figure 58: Rental Income, Badminton Estate, Monmouthshire; 1851-1870 with a comparison with 1899-1900

The estate had not just reduced in value, but in acreage, as land was sold. The extension of the franchise in 1867 and 1883 undermined the position where landownership conveyed important privileges and rights in terms of gaining parliamentary seats and 'political influence in Wales ceased to be entirely or even very largely dependent on the ownership of extensive estates.'[115] While land was often sold to other landowners, some of the land was sold to tenants, although their reliance on loans at high rates of interest to purchase their land led the Royal Commission report to conclude that 'the small freeholders are in a worse position than the tenant farmers' and proposed that government should help with low-cost loans and help.[116] In 1870, four farms with a combined acreage of just over 272 acres in the parishes of Llanfable, Llanarth and Penrose were sold together, as shown in figure 59.The farms were Llwynyderri, Perthypia, Little Ton and Lower Ton. The Tithe survey shows they were part of Frances Taddy's Llantilio Court estate at that time, although amongst the conditions of it states that lands around Llwynyderri Farm had been purchased in 1862 from the Duke of Beaufort. The farms were described as a 'Desirable Freehold Estate of Feeding & Dairy Farms' containing 'orchard, arable, pasture and rich old permanent

[115] *National Library of Wales,* 2009/XA1643, 'The Report of the Welsh Land Commission: Leading Articles and Correspondence from The Times', p. 330
[116] 'The Report of the Welsh Land Commission…'pp. 331-335

river-side valley meadows' and 'about four and half miles from the railway station and important market town of Abergavenny', two hours by rail of Bristol and forty minutes from Hereford. Within the description is the advice 'should this estate be purchased for residential purposes, for which it is highly qualified, sites present themselves from which a selection might be made suitable for the erection of a Gentleman's Residence, in such a position as to overlook nearly the whole of the park-like valley, or the property will be found especially worthy of notice for occupation as a profitable pleasure farm, for which it is particularly well adapted.' In other words, this area might not make much money in farming, but might be better bought for other purposes.[117] The estate was sold at auction on 24th May 1870, although there is no record of the price it was sold for. There were some instances of estates being sold either wholly or mainly to another existing landowner to add to their estates. This happened at Llantilio Court in 1873, bought by Sir Henry

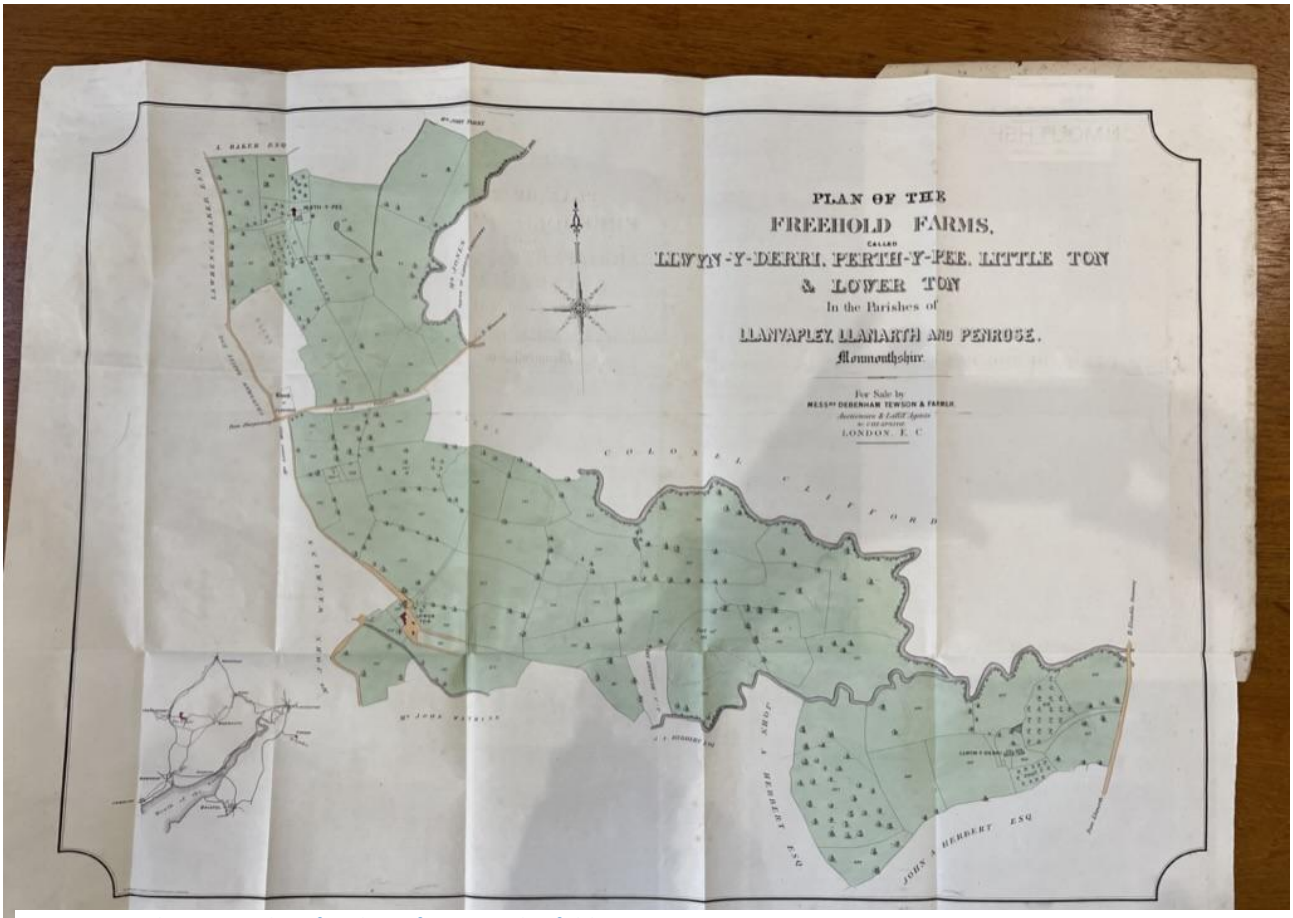

Figure 59: Sales particulars for three farms in Llanfable

Jackson and the sale of most of Coldbrook Estate to Lady Llanover in 1886 which was referred to in the previous section.[118] All these factors, indebtedness, rent fluctuations, prices reduced for cereal

[117] *National Library of Wales*, Monm233 / MMS ID 99381562002419 'The particulars plans and conditions of sale of a most ligible and freehold estate distinguished as Llwyn y Derri, Perth y Pee, Little Ton and Lower Ton / Debenham Tewson and Farmer'

[118] *Gwent Archives,* D433A/17/12 Letter from Gabb and Walford to Messrs. Lyne and Co. re: sale of Coldbrook to Lady Llanover. 13 Dec 1888

crops and poor harvests due to bad weather led to a turnover of tenants and a significant weakening of the number of farmers with local knowledge and a history of using the land, all central features of the metabolic rift. Farmers also employed fewer agricultural labourers, and as the labourers often did most of the work on the land this was another feature of the rift between land users and the local environment.

Most analyses of the agricultural changes of the nineteenth century praise the adoption of methods designed to utilise new scientific discoveries and industrial processes, amongst other things. So, for example, Gent writes that the role of two land agents, Henderson and Loch at Castle Howard estate, 'serves to confirm the recent historiography emphasising the role of land agents in 'improvement' in this period.'[119] These improvements included managing the people on the estates, 'shaping and managing their behaviour, seeking to make them more moral and better housed' and while such a judgement in terms of housing might be justified, this also points to issues. Not only does this overlook the active role of the tenant, but also underplays problems with outcomes. While the Royal Commission would like to suggest that the farmers and landlords were at least partly to blame for the agricultural depression at the end of the century through not adopting high farming, there is evidence that in eastern Monmouthshire, at least, some of these methods had been employed. The over-riding issue was that despite gains in productivity, the circumstances of the market for what had earlier in the century been profitable cereal crops, meant farmers were unable to make a living. The result was disastrous for individuals and their families, but also meant a loss of skills and understanding built sometimes over generations. Land became more intensively farmed out of necessity, and land-use determined by this same need rather than an understanding of the best way to utilise it based on soil-type, etc. To make a profit, farms became larger, few people were involved, and local communities lost connection with the local environment and the land that had supplied their needs a century earlier. This created the metabolic rift between the way that rural society had developed and the local environment on which it depended.

Even when they didn't agree with each other, the landowners clearly had by far the most agency in society and, as shown by the reports of large meetings and the number of names on petitions, they often drew others lower down the social scale behind them. While there is a level of truth in the characterisation of farmers as being 'deeply conservative in their farming and their politics', this tended to reflect a perceived shared interest, although of course, it was also wise for the

[119] Gent G, 'Stirring and advancing times…' p. 26

tenants to support their landlord's politics in the limited franchise of the nineteenth century and to look to them to represent these interests in Parliament. Some farmers feared that opposing a landlord pursuing a parliamentary seat was likely to end with eviction, even after the extension of the franchise and the introduction of secret ballots designed to end the practice of fixed elections.[120] Given the scarcity of prospective tenants for the landowner to draw on, and the very real possibility therefore that the land would become uncultivated, this fear of eviction was perhaps either exaggerated or based on a historical precedent that no longer applied.[121] For most farmers, though, their political and farming outlook was conservative because it was in keeping with their position as owners of small businesses.[122] The decisions they made were possibly based on more complex reasoning than has often been suggested. Farmers needed to make a profit and had long since become accustomed to accepting a deterioration in the importance of traditional husbandry and methods, and a consequential acceptance that soil heath may suffer. If a farmer had not adopted 'high farming' and the Royal Commission report suggests many in Wales had not, then it was much more likely due to the cost, the risk, and the fear of indebtedness. In such circumstances, it was not just conservatism that rejected change, but sticking with tried and trusted methods made sense, even if these were fast becoming outdated.

As seen in the debate over the Corn Laws, those with vested interests, particularly the landowners, dominated the debates over policy and legal changes, at least in the media and political circles. It is hardly surprising therefore that the landowning class were often blamed for the problems that pertained to the changes in agricultural life that affected people in the nineteenth century, particularly by those opposed to the status quo. Groups such as the Chartists and, later, the trade unions and the Labour Party put forward alternative proposals to replace what they considered an antiquated system of hereditary landownership which ensured 'the persistence of outmoded social hierarchies in the countryside.' One example of a supporter of land nationalisation was Alfred Russel Wallace, more famous for his work on evolutionary processes. He had been born in the eastern Monmouthshire village of Trellick, so had a local connection. He wrote that state ownership of land would 'tackle the chief cause of poverty, destroy the 'evil' of landlordism and introduce a more productive 'occupying ownership' on land whose real ownership would be vested in the state.'[123] The chief benefit of such a change would

[120] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II)* p. 72
[121] Hobsbawm E & Rudé G, *Captain Swing…* p. 51
[122] Farmers may not have owned the land, but they did run their own business, using the land they rented.
[123] Griffiths C, 'Socialism and the Land Question' in Cragoe M & Readman P, *The Land Question in Britain 1750-1950* (Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke, 2010) p.242

be the ability to plan on a national and local scale and instead of waste and inefficiency that competition amongst private owners entailed, there could be a more rational use of resources. Given that most farmers were already tenants this may have not been too much of a change at ground level, with the state replacing the estate as the rent collector. Estates tended to take a parochial approach to the farmers and so long as they paid the rent, most of the time there was little planning at estate level, even if there was some leverage and pressure to adopt measures that would increase output and profits, and therefore the ability for the estate to charge the more successful farmers a higher rent. Some in the Chartist Movement supported a land plan that involved trying to settle supporters of the charter on four-acre cottage holdings in nationally distributed colonies. Despite attracting over 70,000 subscribers, only 234 people actually settled in this way and the plan was a failure, but it showed one way that those who wanted to change the direction of travel in rural Britain attempted to deal with the situation. Cragoe argues that forced collectivisation or a radical redistribution of land were never part of the plan, which was based on a widespread belief that land ownership was a problem because of the legacy of the 'Norman Yoke'.[124] A suspicion of top-down planning and enforcement meant that the idea that gained most support involved a form of land nationalisation where land purchases and where tenant farmers worked and made decisions together in common. Recently such plans have gained adherents amongst some in the modern environmental movement.[125]

This chapter has looked extensively at evidence given to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales, which had been initiated up by Gladstone's Liberal administration in 1893, but the new Conservative administration after the election of 1895 had no intention of putting in place its recommendations. It is worth noting though that the commission's report did contain some interesting findings such as this:

> It appears to us that the effect of the prevailing system is to place the farming class completely at the mercy, economically speaking, of the estate-owning class.

Tenant farmers, the report continued, were under 'continuous pressure' from demands from the estate owner who could 'demand what rent he pleases' all of which seriously affected 'the well being and happiness from day to day of the cultivators of the soil.'[126] As a remedy for the effects of this, the commissioners proposed a land court which would aim to solve disputes and give

[124] Cragoe, 'Chartism and the Land' in Cragoe M & Readman P, *The Land Question in Britain…* p.57
[125] See, for instance, Smaje C, *A Small Farm Future: Making the Case for a Society Built Around Local Economies, Self-Provisioning, Agricultural Diversity, and a Shared Earth* (Chelsea Green Publishing: London, 2020)
[126] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II*) p. 84

tenant farmers a form of redress for complaints and disputes that was not under the control of the estate.[127] This was opposed by a minority report, which had more faith in the goodwill of landowners, but in terms of reflecting disquiet amongst land users it is interesting. This lack of 'well-being and happiness' reflects the alienation many farmers felt in their daily activities, as they were being forced to adopt methods they did not feel were correct. It was not just that the farmers were beholding to an external landowner, but that they were part of an economic system that also demanded their compliance with unsustainable farming. This was shown when, especially, after the turn of the century many landed estates were sold and some of the farmers managed to buy them. This was a far cry from the solution proposed by nineteenth century reformers and the increased competition by private farms left the possibility of a coherent planning system even more unlikely.[128] Warning that a version of land redistribution that was based on undermining the existing ownership by 'bringing the land to the public market' would merely have the effect of enabling the wealthier farmers to become landlords and 'every landlord, whether lord of five or fifty-thousand acres, would be a conservative – the sworn enemy of further change', G.J Harney, a leading Chartist writing in 1850, correctly predicted the consequences.[129] Nevertheless, faced with the new reality, the Labour Party in the 1920s and 30s was split on the how to respond with some welcoming the increasing owner-occupation by families, while others saw it as a barrier to land nationalisation, with its aim to make agriculture more efficient and modern. Griffiths argues that the expansion of family-run farms was based on a 'powerful ideal' and, unlike other industries, it was felt that agriculture 'could not be planned entirely according to scientific principles and economies of scale.'[130] This undermined the efforts of radical land campaigners in the Labour Party to successfully pursue the policy in the period after the First World War. The break-up of some of the estates in eastern Monmouthshire at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries led to an even more fragmented rurality and in many cases the inability of these small family farms to compete with the increasing intensity of the larger farms resulted in a new concentration of ownership, this time by large farms with landholdings over many square miles of the area, the economies of scale leading to even more use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and machinery that has the effect of undermining soil

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[127] *Report of the Royal Commission… (Book II*) p. 91

[128] There was such a plan during both wars, as necessity forced the issue, but this was quickly abandoned afterwards. Initiatives like the Milk Marketing Board, set up in 1933, did attempt to organise different sectors of agriculture and guarantee a minimum price, but this was abandoned by the Agriculture Act, 1993 which 'deregulated' the 'milk market' in line with the neo-liberal orthodoxy practiced by successive Conservative governments.

[129] Harney C.J., 'The Charter and Something More', *Democratic Review,* Feb 1850 pp351-2, quoted in Cragoe, 'Chartism and the Land' in Cragoe M & Readman P, *The Land Question in Britain…* pp. 66-67

[130] Griffiths C, 'Socialism and the Land Question' in Cragoe M & Readman P, *The Land Question in Britain…,* p. 245

sustainability. The metabolic rift was merely opened further by the increase in privatised land ownership by farmers acting within the logic of the system and pursuing profit by the same means as the old landowning class had.

5. The importance of Agricultural Societies, Farmers Clubs and Agricultural Shows

> It were much to be wished that societies were established under the patronage of the proprietors of the county, for the encouragement of it. A farmers club is held at Chepstow, and they meet, I think, once a month. The good effects of such clubs are felt locally, but cannot extend to any great distance from the places where they are held. Their funds are so limited, as not to be capable of doing much in the way of premiums, for encouraging improvers in farming, or of rewarding meritorious servants, and other such acts as mark the exertions of a well-regulated agricultural society… why no such institution has hitherto arisen in the county of Monmouth, is a question to which it would be difficult to give a favourable and satisfactory answer.[131]

Hassall, while collecting evidence that informed his report on farming in Monmouthshire for the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement, clearly did not come across the Monmouthshire Agricultural Society. This had, according to Fothergill, writing in 1870, been set up at the end of the eighteenth century. He wrote: 'It may be interesting to mention here that 77 years ago and Agricultural Society was formed at Usk, which appears, in its day, to have given a great impetus to farming.' He goes on to say that at a show on 12th September 1793 there had been three different prizes given to labourers hoeing turnips and six for long service in husbandry, suggesting this society and subsequent show had contributed to the 'astonishing progress' made by agriculture in the 'neighbourhood of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Newport and Chepstow.'[132] Giving prizes to those involved in farming encouraged competition, seen as a way to inspire improvement and there were other such shows set up by the different agricultural societies. That one of those who reported on agriculture in the county was unaware of the existence of such a society suggests that farmers in the area did not prioritise its activities, even though one of the aims of such societies was to bring farmers together. The nature of their job tended to mean they were often quite isolated and, as mentioned in the previous section, conservative in their outlook. Given that the economy was forcing change in farming practice in a British rural scene that was caught up in a rapidly changing, industrialising and increasingly urbanised society landlords used agricultural shows and farmers' clubs to help bring it about.

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[131] Hassall C, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Monmouth…*p. 134
[132] Fothergill, 'Farming in Monmouthshire…' *p. 291*

One of the first shows in the area began in the neighbouring county, initiated by the Herefordshire Agricultural Society, with a stated aim 'to make generally known in this county the most successful modes of husbandry adopted in others.'[133] Similarly the Monmouthshire Agricultural Society, founded in 1791 and with the Duke of Beaufort as a main benefactor, aimed 'for the encouragement of industry and good behaviour among servants in husbandry and labourers'.[134] These societies were behind shows that often drew farmers from far and wide but formed a highlight of the year for locals. The Usk Show, for example, began in 1844 as an annual event. Prizes at the show were given to ploughmen, hoers, growers and thatchers, to an agricultural labourer 'not occupying more than one quarter of an acre of land, for the cleanest cottage and best cultivated garden' and to male and female servants 'who shall have lived in the same family, or worked upon the same farm, the greatest number of years consecutively, not less than five years.' Prizes were also given for 'best in show', praising farmers who had reared particular breeds of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.[135] The membership of the Farmers Clubs, which was a requirement for anyone to able to win any of these prizes, bound farmers to the local gentry and was another means to push through what were seen as important changes in rural society. A few years later, the Monmouth Show began which was, according to *The Monmouthshire Merlin* the 'initiative of Mr. T Willams of Monmouthshire Agricultural Society', after he had secured the financial backing and support of two local landowners, John Ethrington-Rolls and the Duke of Beaufort. The first show took place on 14th October 1857 and was timed to coincide with the opening of a railway line to the town resulting in Monmouth being 'more lively and brisk than we have seen it for some time' and the town had awakened 'from the lethargy into which the long period of dullness of business had thrown them, and now signs of activity and renewed energy begin to show themselves.' Farmers were introduced to 'means of effecting vast improvement in agriculture' which would make their fertile fields 'stand thick with corn and their rich meadows produce an abundance of repast for their animals'.[136] Local businesses used the shows to publicise new machinery and other technologies, such as fertilisers. There were other shows, including the County Show, established in 1818 and other shows at Abergavenny from

[133] Fox H.S.A., 'Local farmers' associations and the circulation of agricultural information in nineteenth-century England' in Fox H.S.A. and Butlin R.A., *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England 1500-1900* (Institute of British Geographers: London, 1979) p. 47
[134] Pincombe I, 'The Rural Economy' in Williams C and Williams S.R., *The Gwent County History, Vol 4…* p. 34
[135] 'Annual Meeting of the `Monmouth Farmers Club, 1856', *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 11.10.1856 p. 3
[136] *The Monmouthshire Merlin*, 17th October 1857 p. 8

1854 and Bedwellty from 1873. As well as encouraging improvements in the breeding of livestock at Bedwellty the show included demonstrations of dairy management and butter making.[137]

Farmers clubs tended to be dominated by landowners. For example, at the annual meeting of Monmouth Farmers' Club, reported in *The Monmouthshire Merlin* on 11th October 1856, there were 'a great number of gentlemen' including J.E.W Rolls, of the Hendre, who was chair, Captain Morton Herbert, George Arkwright of Hampton Court and many more local dignitaries and landowners. Their establishment at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth centuries in many rural areas of Britain helped bring modern methods of agriculture, through means of books and periodicals, lectures, and evening meetings.[138] An 1861 report of the Monmouth Farmers Club, which ran the Monmouth Show outlined above, shows that prizes were given for the following categories: Horses; Cattle; Sheep (Short Wools and Long Wools); Pigs, Extra Stock; Farms, roots, etc; Poultry; and Ploughing. At this point, four years after the establishment of the show, the *Merlin* described it thus:

> That exhibitions of this order are beneficial cannot be questioned: they conduce alike to the interests of the tradesman, the farmer, the capitalist and the community at large'

Although the report did go on to say that

> notwithstanding the loveliness of the weather, which was all that could be desired, the number of visitors was by no means so large as might be expected – the scant attendance being the subject of remark.

The winners of the prizes were mainly not local. So for Class 41, the 'best cultivated farms' of less than a 100 acres, the winners were Mr George Lloyd of Whitchurch and Mr Henry Probert of Obaston, while many of the prize winners were local landowners themselves, Mr J. A. Herbert of Llanarth, for instance, won best and cleanest crop of Swede turnips. Looking through the list of prizes, most of the local ones went to farmers on the Llanarth estate, suggesting that the estate at least was supporting the show.[139] Usk Farmers Club appeared to have been a little more popular and in 1863, there were 51 entries in the annual ploughing match, commenting

> The promoters of the club very wisely confine themselves mainly to the object of improving the skill of the ploughmen, on the principle that a good ploughing match, although the term may be less sounding than that of "Agricultural Society" is better than something on a larger scale, which could yet result but indifferently.'

[137] Pincombe, 'The Rural Economy…' p. 37
[138] Fox H.S.A. 'Local farmers' associations…' p. 54
[139] *The Monmouthshire Merlin, '*Monmouth Farmers Club', (12th October 1861) p. 3

Despite this observation the club also awarded prizes for neatest farm, thatching, hedging, produce, 'poultry, butter and cheese and best nag'. In terms of cheese, butter and poultry the judge, Mr T. Falcolner, County Court Judge on awarding the prizes at the dinner which took place in the Three Salmons, Usk, made these comments:

> Many years ago… he had taken the liberty of commenting in not very gallant terms on these departments of the farming in this district; but if the butter samples that day had represented fairly the ability of damsels concerned in butter making, that ability ranked very high… the whole of the butter was good in its make, good in its preparation and good in its cutting up. But many of the damsels who made the butter were not sufficiently attentive to the manner in which it was turned out…

He went on to praise the introduction of machinery in Monmouthshire, particularly 'a mowing machine and a reaping machine' which had been enforced as the supply of labour from Ireland had stopped because of the 'great famine' and continued emigration to America. 'It had been necessary to supply that deficiency; and it had been supplied by machinery.' He also said that despite the widespread use of mowing machines 'there was no hostility on the part of labourers to their use… every farmer wanted money; and every landlord desired that the tenant farmer should have more capital.' [140] Other speakers commented on the usefulness of the show and the prizes given in improving farming practice. Clearly, those behind these shows and clubs were intent on changing the nature of farming and the relationship between those engaged in agriculture with the land. Intensive farming methods, designed to achieve higher yields and productivity, were supposed to give a competitive edge to farmers and landlords, although the evidence for this is scant. The main outcome that was achieved was a change in the relationship between rural society, the land and the local environment that allowed sustainability to lose its status as a crucial aspect of land-use.

Mostly this chapter has described and tried to explain the enormous shifts in agricultural production and subsequent societal changes that took place in the nineteenth century in Britain, with a specific focus on eastern Monmouthshire and the responses these changes encountered. Driven by profit and the rapid encroachment of capitalist farming, these changes were to prove both economically inefficient and environmentally destructive. Whilst the encroachment of imported food undermined the competitiveness of agriculture in England and Wales, that in itself is not an explanation, leaving open the questions of why did this happen and why at this time? The

[140] 'Usk farmers Club: Annual Ploughing Match', *The Monmouthshire Merlin,* 31st October 1863

nineteenth century politicians who saw capitalism and the market system as key to success and expansion globally, removed what they saw as barriers to that system, such as protective measures like the Corn Laws, while tightening their control on what people could and could not do. This may have had the intended effect of increasing wealth for some, particularly in the core of the system, with Britain at the centre of a massive empire that exploited vast areas of the earth in order to dive the system. But while this may have benefitted some and created a massive societal shift wherever the system spread, it did so by also spreading the internal contradictions within the system, including 'the contradiction of capitalist accumulation is that increases productivity are accompanied by a decrease in natural productivity due to robbery. '[141] This robbery, which was not evident to those who were involved in the process in the nineteenth century, was of the nutrient value of the soil and a subsequent diminishing of the dependent ecosystems that helped sustain a productive agriculture prior to the interventions made from the late nineteenth century. Marx had claimed that it was possible that an increase in what he called 'the social productivity of labour' to be able to go some way to compensate for the decline in natural productivity for a short time, but that 'despite technical development, the product does not become cheaper but is simply prevented from becoming dearer.'[142] As shown in this chapter, the crisis that engulfed agriculture in England and Wales in the late nineteenth century meant that eastern Monmouthshire, which had been para largely arable area, producing the wheat and other food products able to feed a growing population in the early years of industrialisation, was forced out of that market and became dominated by pastoral farming, dependent on the sale of meat and dairy products. The investments in fertilisation and machinery that helped produce more wheat were largely wasted, as they were very different to the investments needed to increase the productivity of cows. Many farmers were subsequently mired in debt, while millions of people left any involvement with food production altogether. The nineteenth century saw rural eastern Monmouthshire change from an area with a number of fairly self-sufficient small villages, predominantly involved in some way with agriculture and the production of food and with a direct connection to the land and the natural environment on which they depended, to a rural area with a number of small villages inhabited by people whose lives and livelihoods increasingly had no direct relationship with food production, the land or the natural environment on which they still, perhaps unknowingly, depended. Chapter Four explained how they became consumers rather than producers of life's necessities and, as Chapter Three showed, revolutions in transport had greatly affected their lives and ability to

[141] Saito K, *Marx in the Anthropocene*… p. 29
[142] Marx, *Capital, Volume III…* p.901

encounter others. The result of the changes explored in this chapter is a world where the vast majority of its inhabitants experience food only through buying it, usually after processes that hide its origin, and without any need or desire to be informed about the way it has been produced, let alone be able to understand or become aware of the issues that make food production part of a sustainability crisis that affects our species and much of the natural world. Changes in agricultural production, changes that were at the forefront of 'improvement' and the social and economic changes in rural Britain in the nineteenth century, as shown in this study of eastern Monmouthshire have created a metabolic rift.

Conclusion

The key question that this thesis considers is that of whether the changes that took place in nineteenth century society opened a metabolic rift with the environment on which it depended. The aim was to research an area of southern Wales that remained rural at a time of increasing urbanisation in order to locate if and how this rift impacted on the whole society. By separating elements of societal change and looking in depth at aspects of how these affected how people were affected by this, this study has found a number of outcomes. There is clear evidence that the effect on the natural world of decisions made that enabled a modern economy to develop and include the whole population was dramatic and yet hardly seen at the time as an important consideration. Progress was instead measured in productive output, profit and return. This has had disastrous consequences in the medium to long term and even in the short term undermined the basis of the interactions people had developed over centuries that kept a balance with nature. The main area studied for this thesis, eastern Monmouthshire, was affected by the canals, railways and improved roads that were primarily built for the expansion of industry further west. It was the tunnel under the River Severn that finally made all of southern Wales easily accessible, although even before then there was migration and trade between the area and southern England which helped develop both a consumer society and had a large impact on the agricultural economy. This rural economy was, by the end of the nineteenth century, fully integrated into and subservient to the needs of industry and the subsequent unequal trading relationships that developed. How people perceived this is important as the metabolic rift explains the breakdown of the relationship of all within society, whatever their level of agency, with the natural world. The evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in Wales in the last decade of the nineteenth century, points to a general bewilderment and frustration about the causes of problems that nineteenth century had caused. There was also a belief that wider forces were responsible, a system that had engulfed their lives and appeared both detrimental to their interests and out of their control.

The first question was about land ownership and how this affected the decisions made within the area. As described in Chapter 2, the landowners varied between those who were more remote and managed their estates through agents, with only occasional visits to the area and even more infrequent visits to the farms they leased. The main interventions of such landowners were through land agents monitoring how the farmers used the land, through rents and leases, by encouraging the adoption of more scientifically based methods and new technologies on show at

country fairs and publicised through farmers clubs and their associated shows and through their ability to influence legislation as parliamentary and local political representatives. However, not all landlords were remote in this way. For instance, Lady Llanover was both local and had a different method of intervening in the workings of her estate. This is described in Chapters 2 and 5 and the outcome was a variation in terms of tenant relations, although the estate was not dramatically different in other ways. Most of the landlords had interests in industry. In some cases, such as that of Crawshay Bailey, the land had been bought through income made in the iron and coal works in South Wales or elsewhere. In others, such as the example of Lord Beaufort, the industry was developed on land already owned. The result of this was that the economic value of the landholdings was of diminishing proportion to the wealth created in the industrial areas, providing less of a reason to promote good practice or even consider the falling rental value of lands in the agricultural depression of the late century as important as otherwise. Despite these contradictory positions, there is evidence that the landowners took a traditional view when it came to political debates. Lord Beaufort and Joseph Bailey were supporters of maintaining the Corn Laws in the debates of the first half of the century, despite the arguments that such a position was disadvantageous to the development of trade and industry. Clearly the disparity between the landowners and everyone else in society through their ability to effect change through their status in the social hierarchy and the position they gained to the levers of government meant that the decisions were made in what they considered their best interests. They may have considered that these were universal interests, but the petitions, protests and tardy response to the expectations of the landowners by those affected suggest that this view was contested. Those petitioners, along with the many others who made small or large attempts at resistance of change, were attempting to regain agency in a society that was rapidly changing without them feeling they had much chance to affect how that happened. The petitions express a feeling that decisions that were being made often felt like they were advantageous only to those with far more agency, and mainly in the case of rural Monmouthshire, the landowners. The petitions relating to road improvements explored in Chapter Three referenced the lack of need or use that the rural population felt they would make of these improvements and the concern that they were being made to pay for better transport connections that would only be of benefit to others.

By looking in detail at aspects of change that affected the people of eastern Monmouthshire it has been possible to detect the extent of that change and its effect on how daily life became disconnected from concern with the health of the land. The canals went through rural areas, but their main impact was that they changed the landscape and affected the local environment in this

way. If trade was affected by the canals, it was mainly, as indicated in Chapter 3, by allowing an expansion of the iron and coal industries and subsequent population increase in the areas that were the largest local market for the agricultural producers of eastern Monmouthshire. Few people travelled on the canals. However, the railways were different. Built for the movement of goods, they provided passenger services as well and while these may not have been frequently used by farmers and labourers, they did provide a new level of interconnectivity that changed the definition of rurality. However, it was the opening of the Severn Tunnel that greatly reduced the isolation of south Wales generally and eastern Monmouthshire specifically, providing a direct link to southern England. The overall effect of the transport revolution of the nineteenth century was to increase mobility of people, and especially the mobility of labour and trade. No longer were people limited to a small locality. This also allowed mobility inwards and massively reduced the cost of imported goods, changing the nature of farming fundamentally. The Corn Laws prevented the full effect of this becoming apparent in the first half of the nineteenth century and while their removal did not immediately undermine cereal production in eastern Monmouthshire, in the long-term the price per acre of wheat made it unprofitable for the already indebted farmers to continue. An agricultural society that had been relatively stable for centuries changed, and there was a haemorrhaging of people and skills from the area.

The other big change that undermined a direct connection between the everyday life of the rural population and their environment was the development of a consumer society. As shown in Chapter 4 this had the effect of making everyone consumers rather than producers of food, buying it from shops either in the villages or in local towns. This had a very large effect on ending the direct reliance of the people of eastern Monmouthshire on the local environment. Food as a commodity was therefore a major part of the metabolic rift and Chapter 4 explains the process by which an area like eastern Monmouthshire became part of the consumer society. For some historians, the development of consumerism was a response to demand, implying that the consumers were the driving force of the change. On the other hand, the development of an advertising industry and increasingly sophisticated methods of convincing people that buying the extensive range of goods available in shops, in markets and in fairs suggests other forces were at play. The small shopkeepers who opened retail premises in the villages of eastern Monmouthshire were part of a larger system, one that was a logical development of capitalism. Industrial production needed consumption and the expansion of that consumption across the whole of society, which by the end of the nineteenth century was the outcome, a necessary way for a system with competition at its heart to expand. This logic was not just about retail, which had a

clear and lasting effect on how people related to the land, but also how the land was envisioned and repurposed towards being a commodity for leisure and sport. Value became disconnected from use and an area such as eastern Monmouthshire became seen as picturesque, a natural and beautiful landscape to look at, ignoring its increasingly commercial and industrial use for food production as part of the wider economic system. The debates about land, its ownership and its use in the nineteenth century point to concern about the effects of this system, including the environmental degradation that followed. Eastern Monmouthshire, a supposedly natural landscape and muse for artistic expression was, in reality, an environment sculpted from centuries of human interactions, which in many ways intensified and changed in their nature during the nineteenth century.

It is the last chapter that emphasises both the extent of the change in the relationship between society and the natural world, and its contradictions. The debate about the Corn Laws was intense and divisive; an argument about the need to protect British farming and landowners' interests on one side and allow the development of trade on the other. While the mainly disenfranchised people of eastern Monmouthshire may not have seen much benefit from either outcome, the evidence provided in Chapter Five suggests that it did inflame passions here. Farmers were part of the system, mainly as employers and small business owners, and responding to the price stimuli that were supposed to determine production. That this is a wasteful mechanism, dependent on factors beyond the control of the producers, and in many ways the outcome of investment in new methods and technologies simply made it harder to respond. By the end of the century, the market had extended into every facet of village life and while family members became more important as part of farm labour, much of the rest was provided through employment on terms and conditions very different from that seen at the start of the century. The labourers had less connection with each farm, the farmers were driven increasingly by a desperate need for profit and any concern that the land was being overused or that the methods were unsustainable was no longer a priority, a result of the metabolic rift that had opened up between society and the environment. This is a systemic problem, built into the competitive dynamic of capitalist relations of production. Rendering even those with the highest level of agency, those who own the means of production (in agriculture, the landowners) incapable of control. This thesis has been in search of the opening of a metabolic rift between society and the environment in the nineteenth century and evidence from eastern Monmouthshire and the other areas mentioned in this study suggests that this was indeed one of the results of changes that took place.

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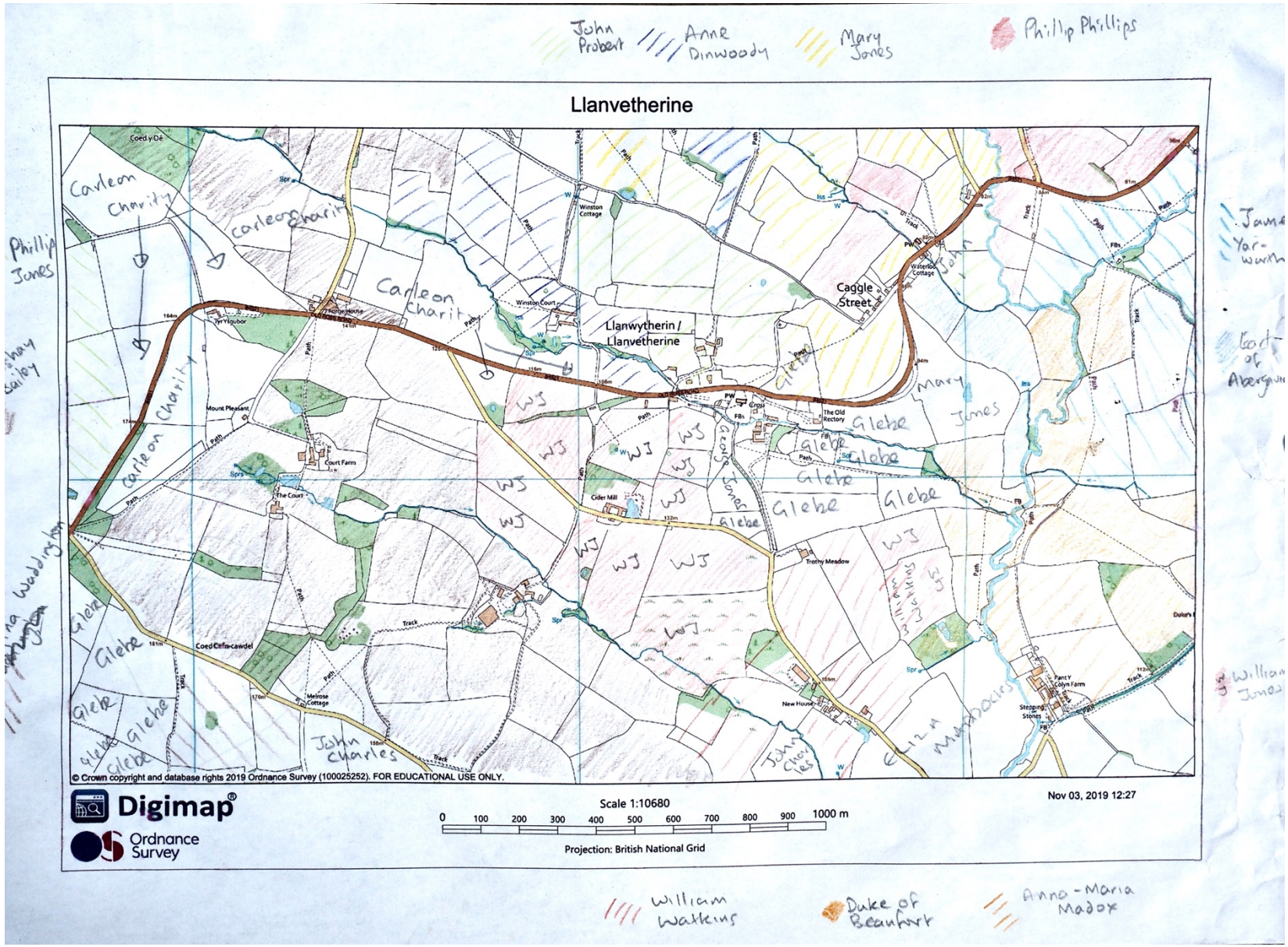
Appendices:

Appendices 1-8: Maps of landowners as recorded by the Tithe Survey (c.1840)

1. Llanvetherine / Llanwytherin
2. Llanvapley / Llanfable
3. Llantilio Crossenny / Llandeilo Grysenni
4. Llanddewi Rhydderch & Coed Morgan
5. Llanarth
6. Llanellen
7. Llanover / Llanofer
8. Penpergelli & Goytre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Mary Jones
Phillip Phillips
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Carleon Charity
Caggle Street
Llanwytherin / Llanvetherine
Winston Cottage
Winston Court
Waterloo Cottage
The Old Rectory
Glebe
Mount Pleasant
Court Farm
The Court
Cider Mill
Trothy Meadow
Coed Cefn-cawdel
Melrose Cottage
New House
Pant Y Golyn Farm
Stepping Stones
John Charles
Mary Jones
William Watkins
Duke of Beaufort
Anna-Maria Madox
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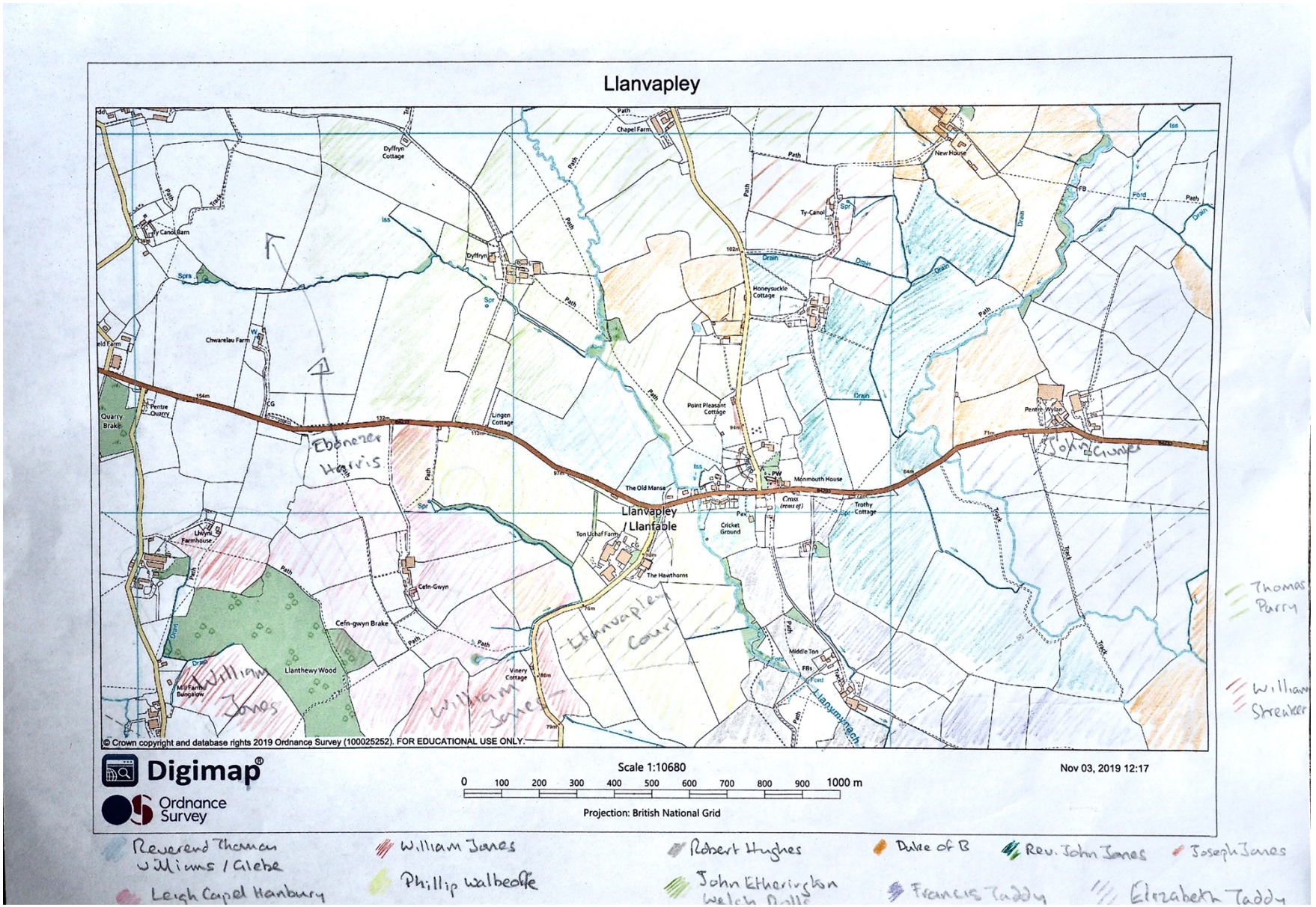
Llanvapley
Llanvapley / Llanfable
Ebonezer Harris
John Gunter
Llanvapley Court
William Jones
William Jones
Thomas Parry
William Streaker
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Duke of B
Rev. John Jones
Joseph Jones
Leigh Capel Hanbury
Phillip Walbeoffe
John Etherington Welch Rolls
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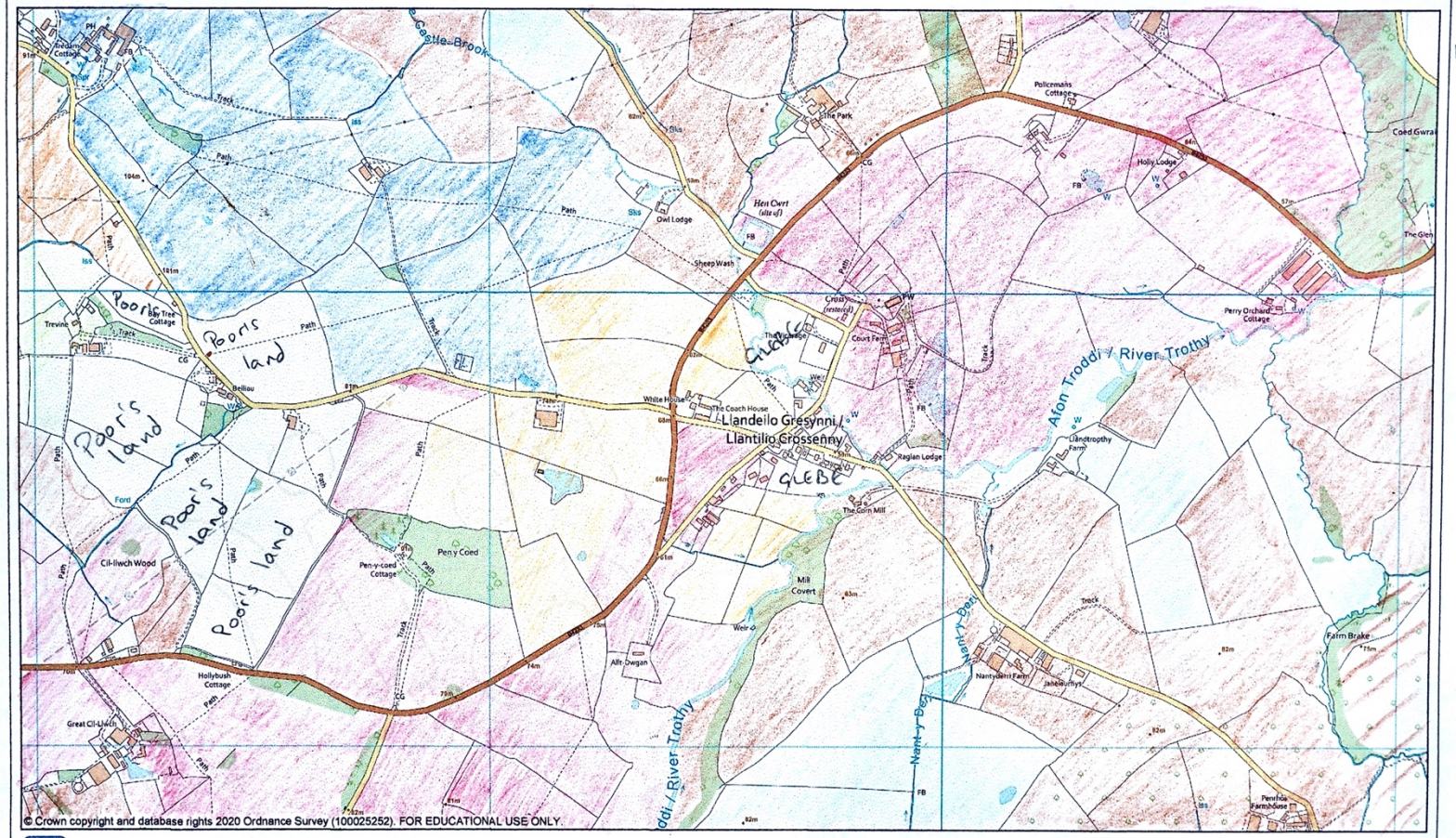
Landowmership | Illtyd Nichols | Edward Powell Lloyd | Elizabeth Taddy | Duke of Beaufort | Thomas Hughes | Henry Mostin | Henry Clifford

Reverand Bullock

Llantilio Crossenny



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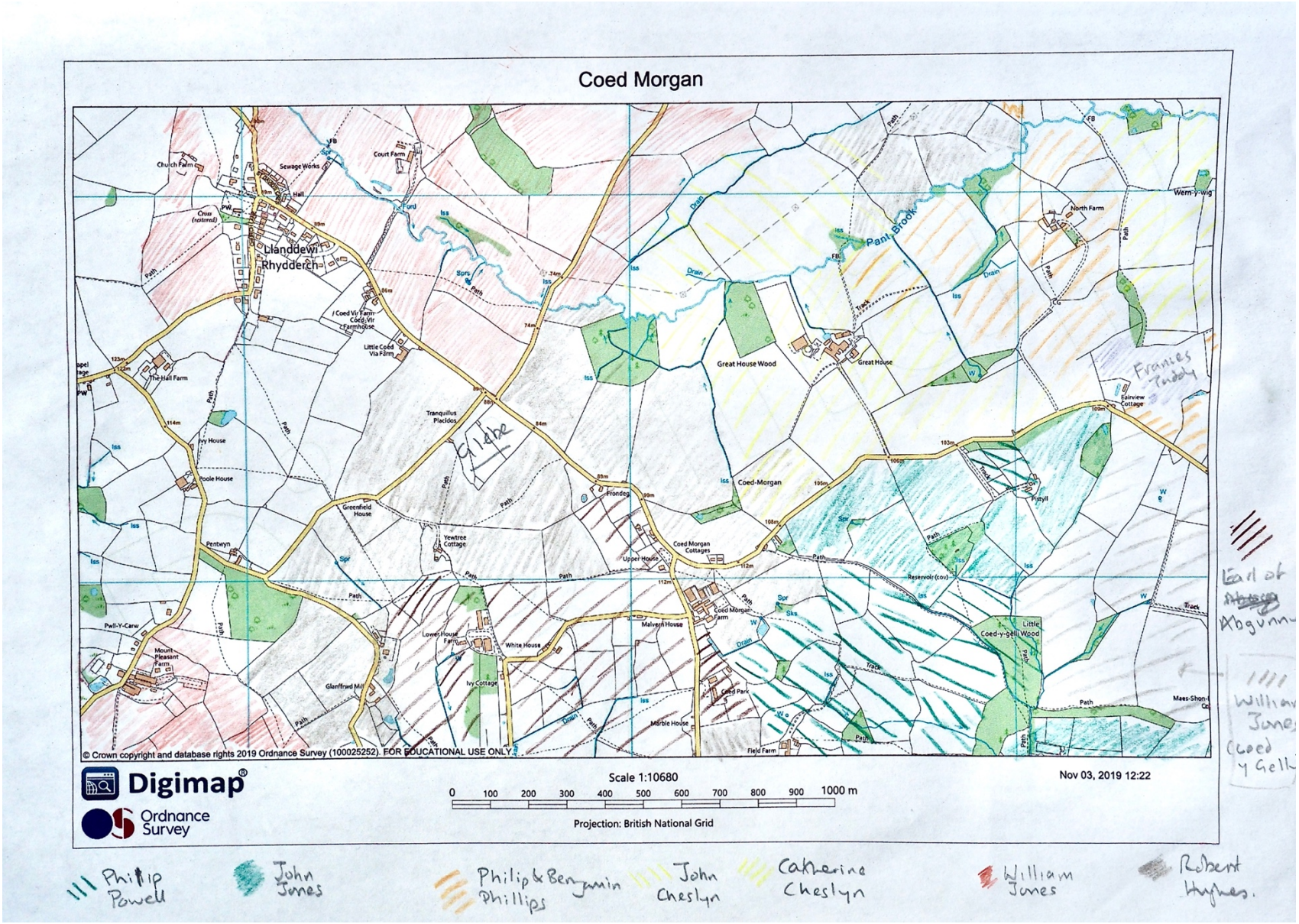
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Llanddewi Rhydderch
Church Farm
Sewage Works
Court Farm
Hall
Cross (restored)
Coed Vir Farm
Coed Vir Farmhouse
Little Coed Via Farm
The Hall Farm
Ivy House
Poole House
Tranquillus Placidos
Glebe
Greenfield House
Yewtree Cottage
Pentwyn
Pwll-Y-Carw
Mount Pleasant Farm
Glanffrwd Mill
Lower House Farm
White House
Ivy Cottage
Frondeg
Upper House
Coed Morgan Cottages
Coed Morgan Farm
Malvern House
Marble House
Coed Park
Field Farm
Coed-Morgan
Great House Wood
Great House
Pant Brook
North Farm
Wern-y-wig
Fairview Cottage
Pistyll
Reservoir (cov)
Little Coed-y-gelli Wood
Frances Taddy
Earl of Abgunn
William Jones (Coed y Gelli)
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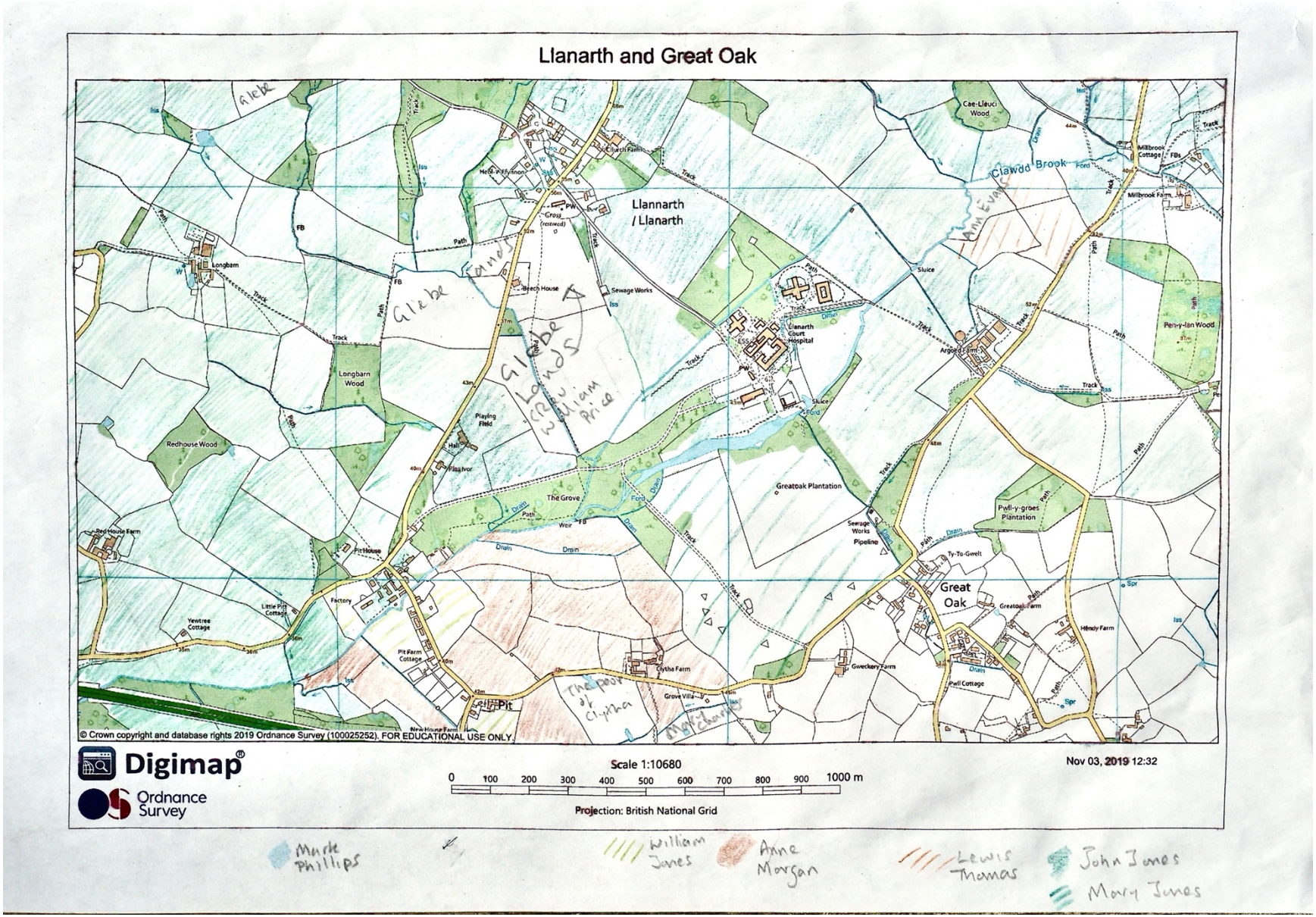
Llanarth and Great Oak
Llannarth / Llanarth
Great Oak
Clawdd Brook
Ann Evans
Glebe Lands
Glebe Lands Crew William Price
Longbarn
Longbarn Wood
Redhouse Wood
Red House Farm
Pit House
Factory
Little Pit Cottage
Yewtree Cottage
Pit Farm Cottage
Pit
New House Farm
Playing Field
Hall
Plas Ivor
The Grove
Weir
Sewage Works
Beech House
Llanarth Court Hospital
Sluice
Greatoak Plantation
Sewage Works
Pipeline
Ty-To-Gwelt
Pwll-y-groes Plantation
Greatoak Farm
Hendy Farm
Pwll Cottage
Gweckery Farm
Clytha Farm
Grove Villa
Cae-Llauci Wood
Millbrook Cottage
Millbrook Farm
Pen-y-lan Wood
Argoed Farm
Drain
Track
Path
Ford
Iss
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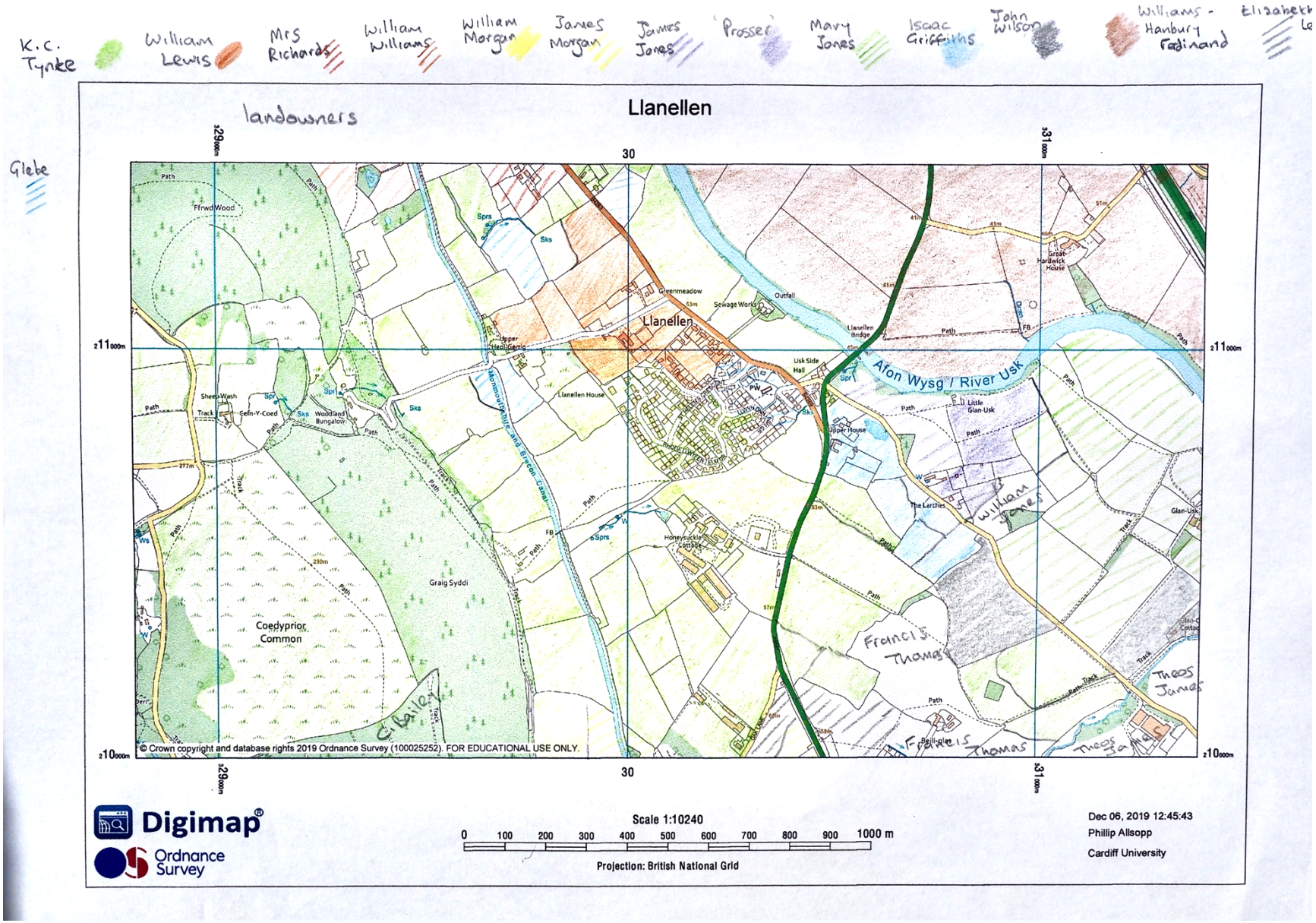
K.C. Tynke
William Lewis
Mrs Richards
William Williams
William Morgan
James Morgan
James Jones
Prosser
Mary Jones
Isaac Griffiths
John Wilson
Williams - Hanbury Ferdinand
Elizabeth
landowners
Glebe
Llanellen
Afon Wysg / River Usk
Llanellen
Coedyprior Common
Graig Syddi
Llanellen House
Upper House
Usk Side Hall
Llanellen Bridge
Great Hardwick House
Little Glan-Usk
The Larches
Honeysuckle Cottage
Woodland Bungalow
Sheep Wash
Cefn-Y-Coed
Ffrwd Wood
Greenmeadow
Sewage Works
Outfall
Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal
William Jones
Francis Thomas
Theos James
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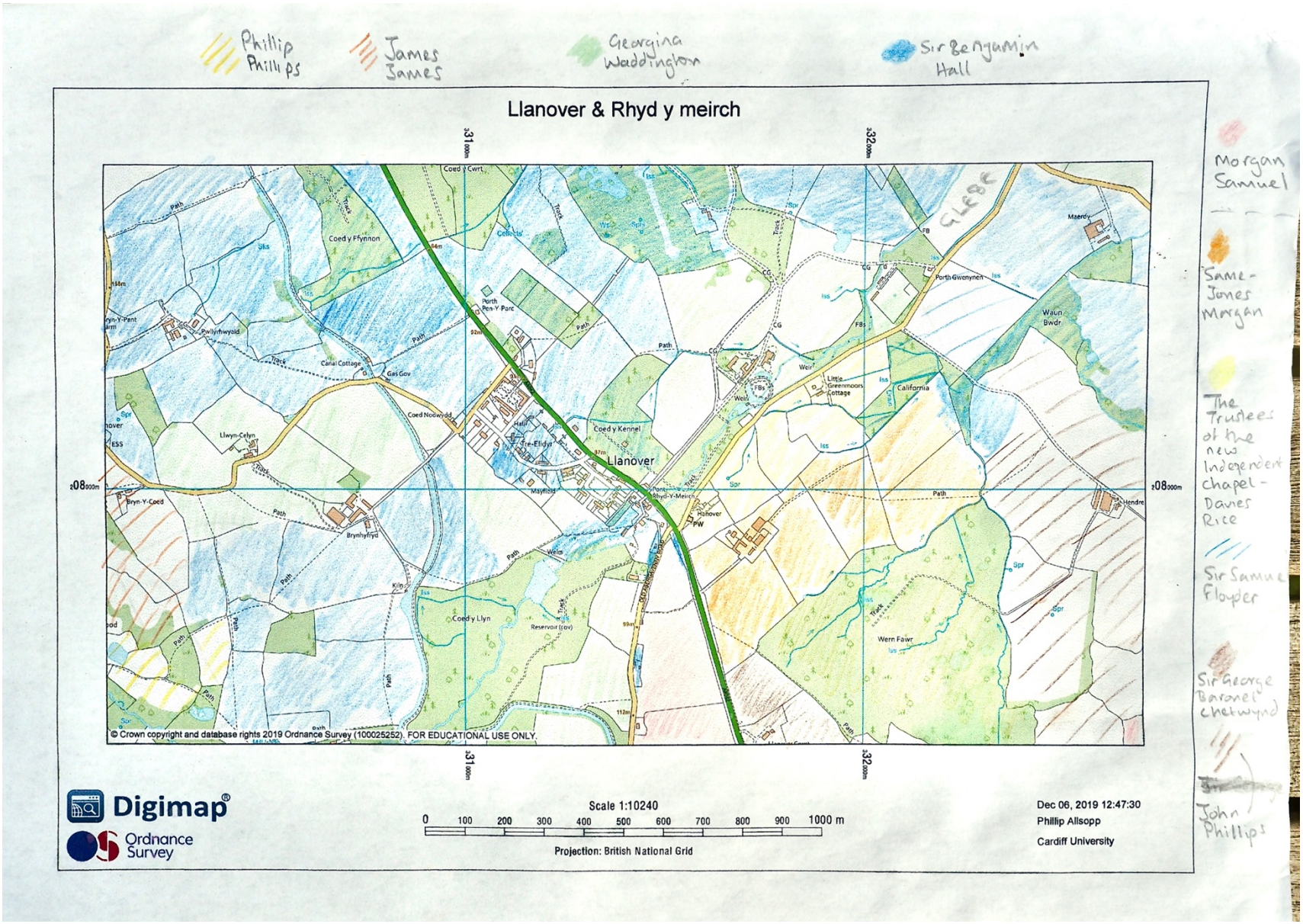
Cardiff University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James James
Georgina Waddington
Sir Benjamin Hall
Llanover & Rhyd y meirch
Coed y Cwrt
Coed y Ffynnon
Porth Pen-Y Parc
Porth Gwenynen
Maerdy
Waun Bwdr
Pwllyrhwyaid
Canal Cottage
Gas Gov
Coed Nodwydd
Llwyn-Celyn
Coed y Kennel
Llanover
Mayfield
Pont-Rhyd-Y-Meirch
Hanover
PW
Bryn-Y-Coed
Brynhyfryd
Coed y Llyn
Reservoir (rov)
Wern Fawr
Little Greenmoors Cottage
California
Hendre
Morgan Samuel
Same - Jones Morgan
The Trustees of the new Independent chapel - Daves Rice
Sir Samuel Flower
Sir George Baronet chetwynd
John Phillips
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Phillip Allsopp
Cardiff University

Charlotte Bird

Leigh Capel Hanbury

The Earl of Abergavenny

Reginald Blewitt

Thomas Newman

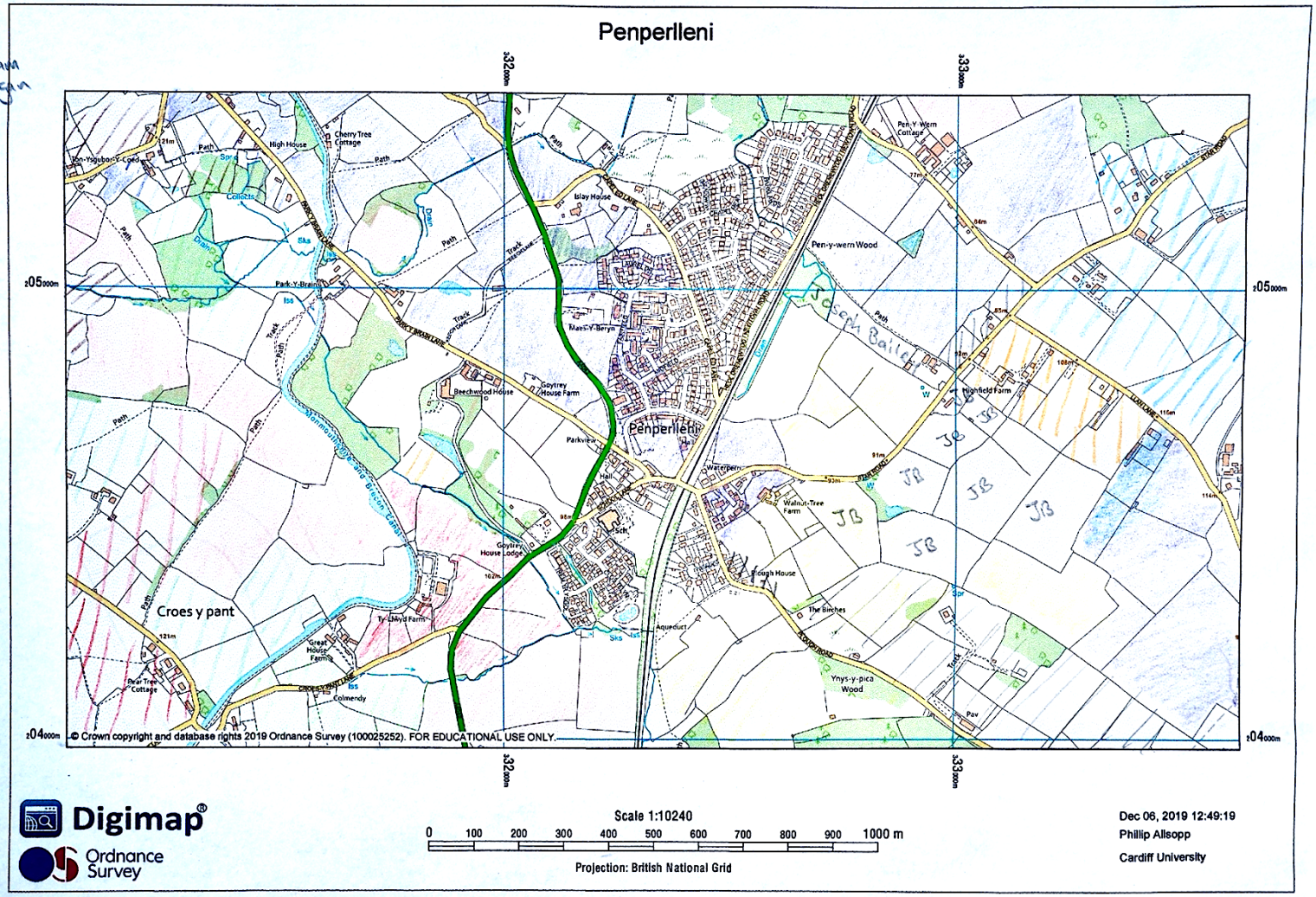
Thomas Cook

Ann Cook

Ann Jones

John Walters (Caerphilly)

William Morgan



Appendices 9-14: Farmers recorded by the Tithe Survey (c.1840)

9. Llanvetherine / Llanwytherin *(to follow)*

10. Llanvapley / Llanfable

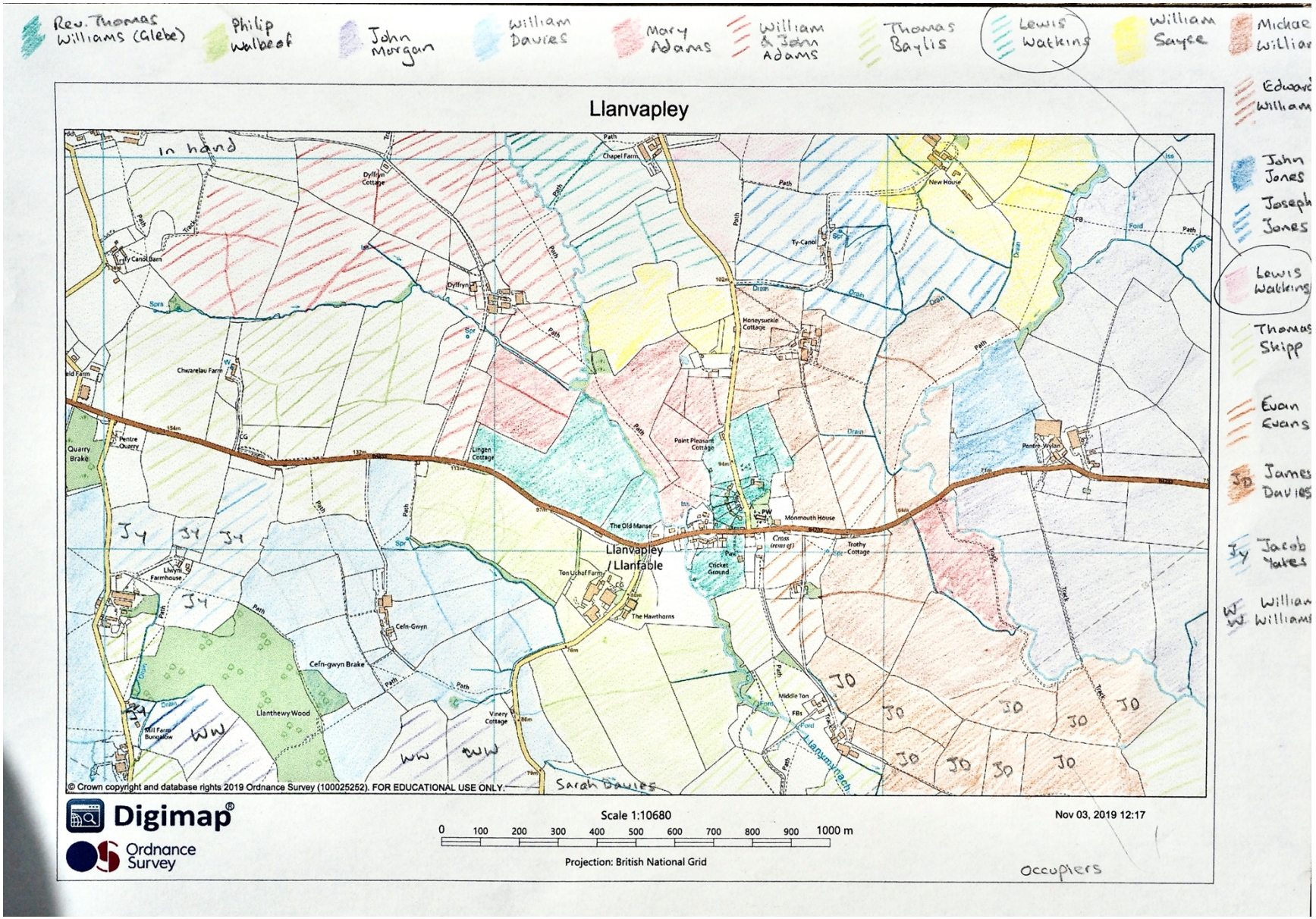
11. Llantilio Crossenny / Llandeilo Grysenni

12. Llanddewi Rhydderch & Coed Morgan

13. Llanellen

14. Llanover / Llanofer

These maps of villages in eastern Monmouthshire, to the east and south of Abergavenny, are drawn to show who farmed areas of land as recorded by the Tithe Survey.


Rev. Thomas Williams (Glebe)
Philip Walbeof
John Morgan
William Davies
Mary Adams
William & John Adams
Thomas Baylis
Lewis Watkins
William Sayce
Michae William
Edward William
John Jones
Joseph Jones
Lewis Watkins
Thomas Shipp
Evan Evans
James Davies
Jacob Yates
William Williams
Llanvapley
in hand
Llanvapley / Llanfable
Sarah Davies
Occupiers
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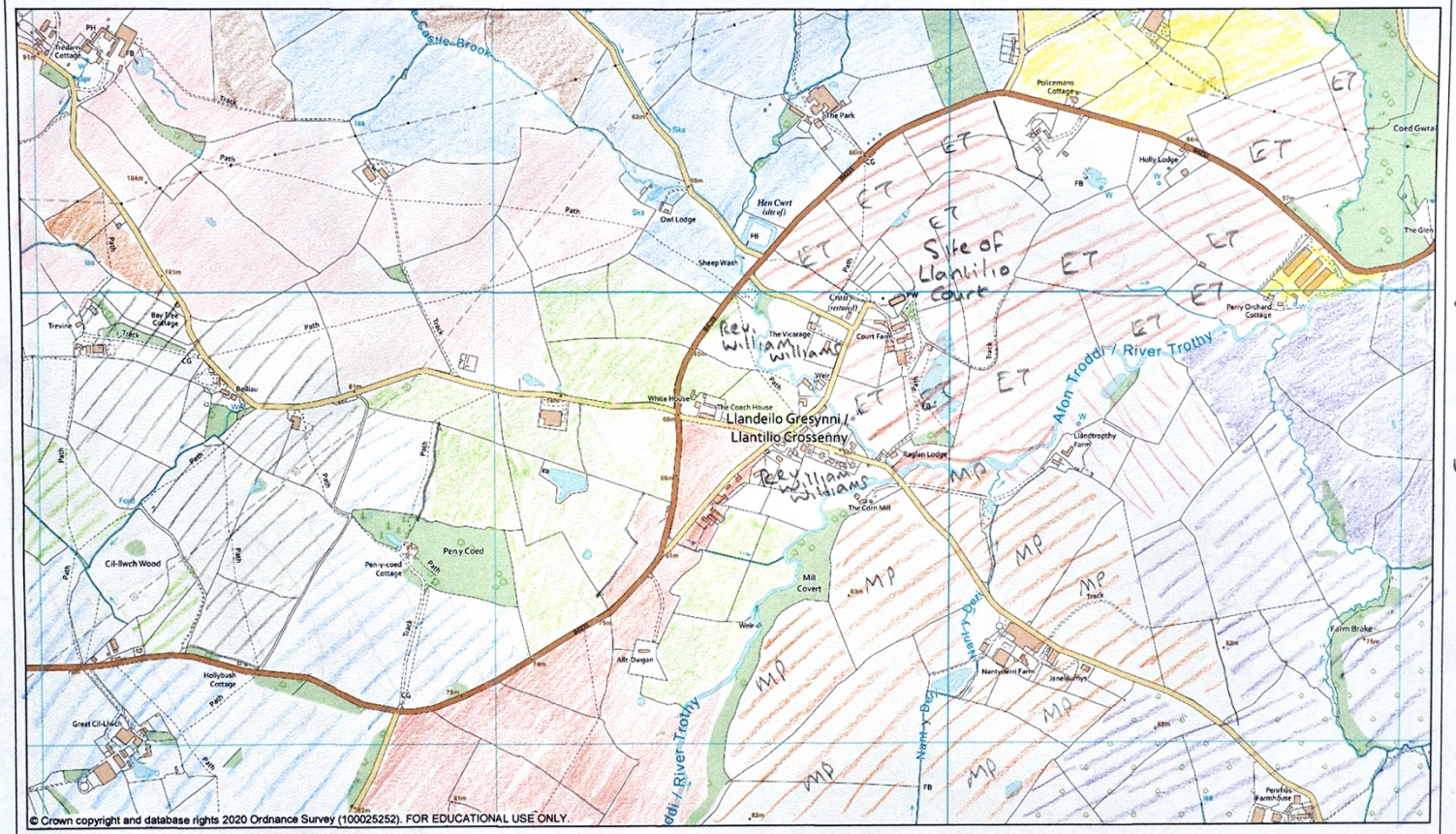
Digimap
Ordnance Survey
Scale 1:10680
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 m
Projection: British National Grid
Nov 03, 2019 12:17

David Jones | William Lloyd | John Powell | William Ford | Esther Coles | William Jones | William Edmonds | John Jones | John Morgan

Occupiers (Farmers)

Llantilio Crossenny



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Ordnance Survey

Scale 1:11340

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Projection: British National Grid

Dec 16, 2020 11:53

Mary Pritchard

MP

Elizabeth Taddy

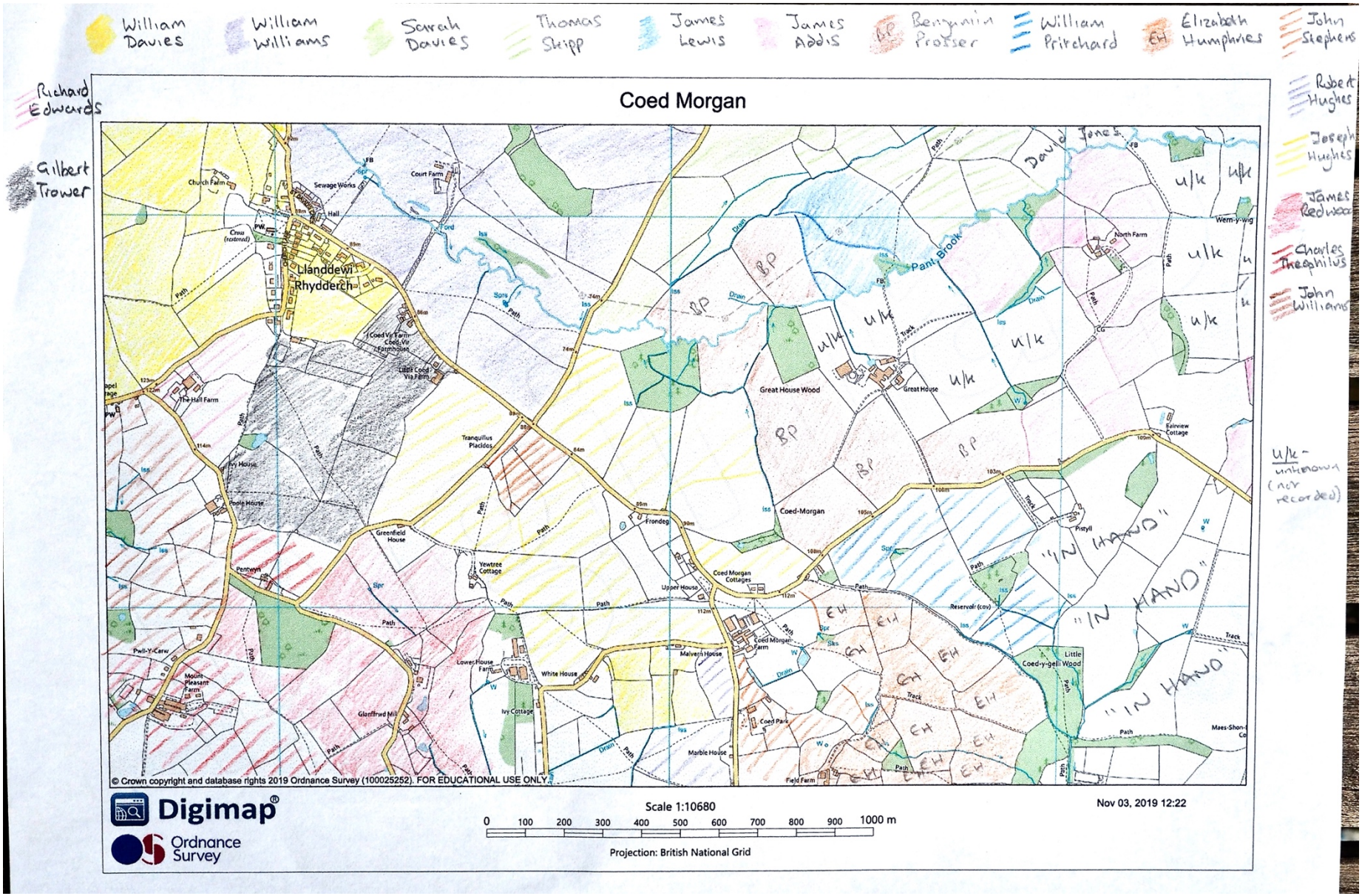
ET

Walter Davies

Miles Samuel

John Waters

Elizabeth Lewis + Hannah Roberts


William Davies
William Williams
Sarah Davies
Thomas Skipp
James Lewis
James Addis
BP Benjamin Prosser
William Pritchard
EH Elizabeth Humphries
John Stephens
Richard Edwards
Gilbert Trower
Robert Hughes
Joseph Hughes
James Redwood
Charles Theophilus
John Williams
u/k - unknown (not recorded)
Coed Morgan
Llanddewi Rhydderch
Pant Brook
Great House Wood
Great House
Coed-Morgan
Coed Morgan Cottages
Coed Morgan Farm
Upper House
Malvern House
Lower House Farm
White House
Ivy Cottage
Marble House
Coed Park
Field Farm
Little Coed-y-gelli Wood
Reservoir (cov)
Pistyll
Fairview Cottage
North Farm
Wern-y-wig
Court Farm
Church Farm
Sewage Works
The Hall Farm
Coed Vic Farm
Coed Vic Farmhouse
Little Coed Via Farm
Tranquillus Placidus
Ivy House
Poole House
Greenfield House
Penwyn
Yewtree Cottage
Frondeg
Pwll-Y-Carw
Mount Pleasant Farm
Glanffrwd Mill
"IN HAND"
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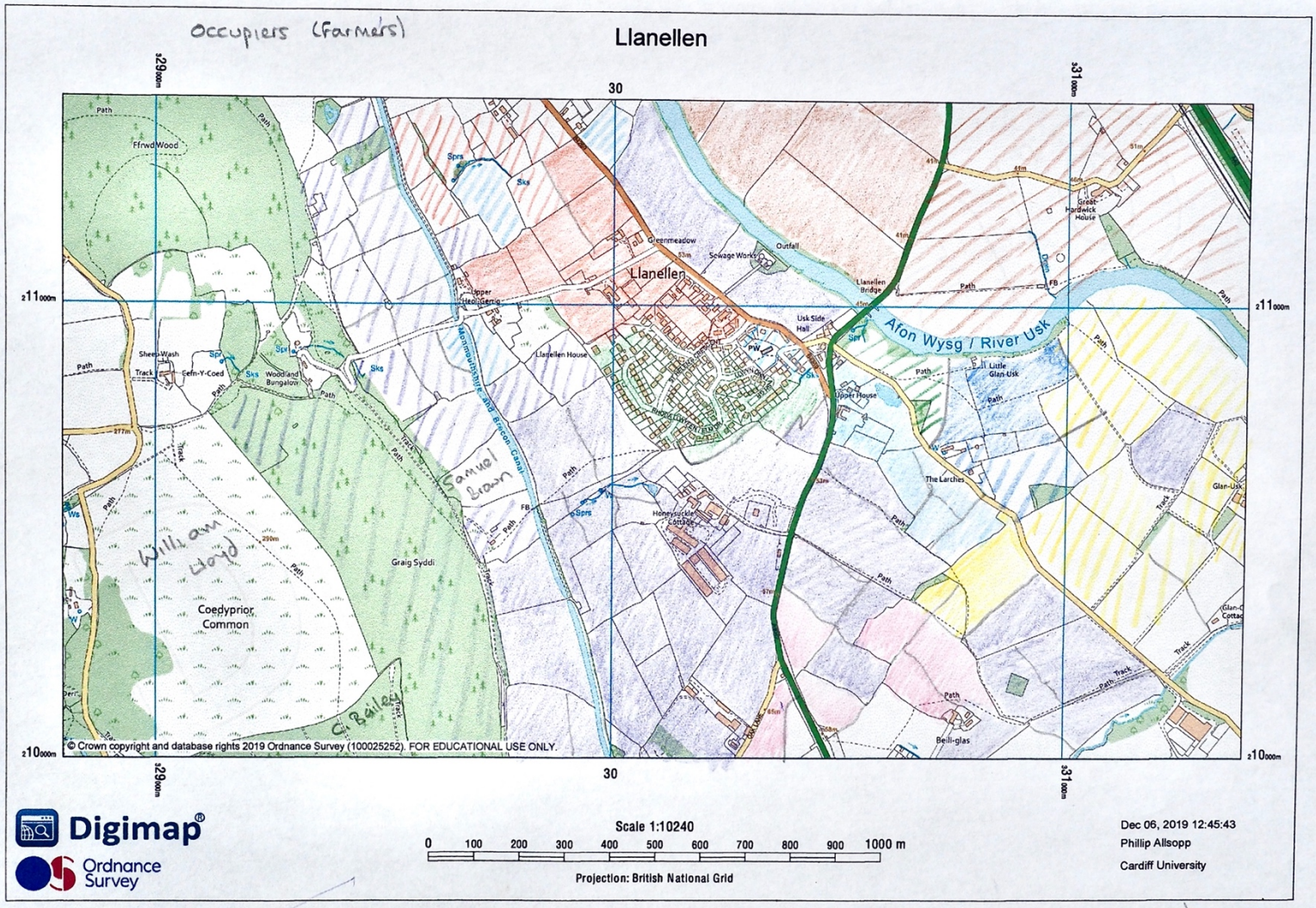
Digimap
Ordnance Survey
Scale 1:10680
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 m
Projection: British National Grid
Nov 03, 2019 12:22

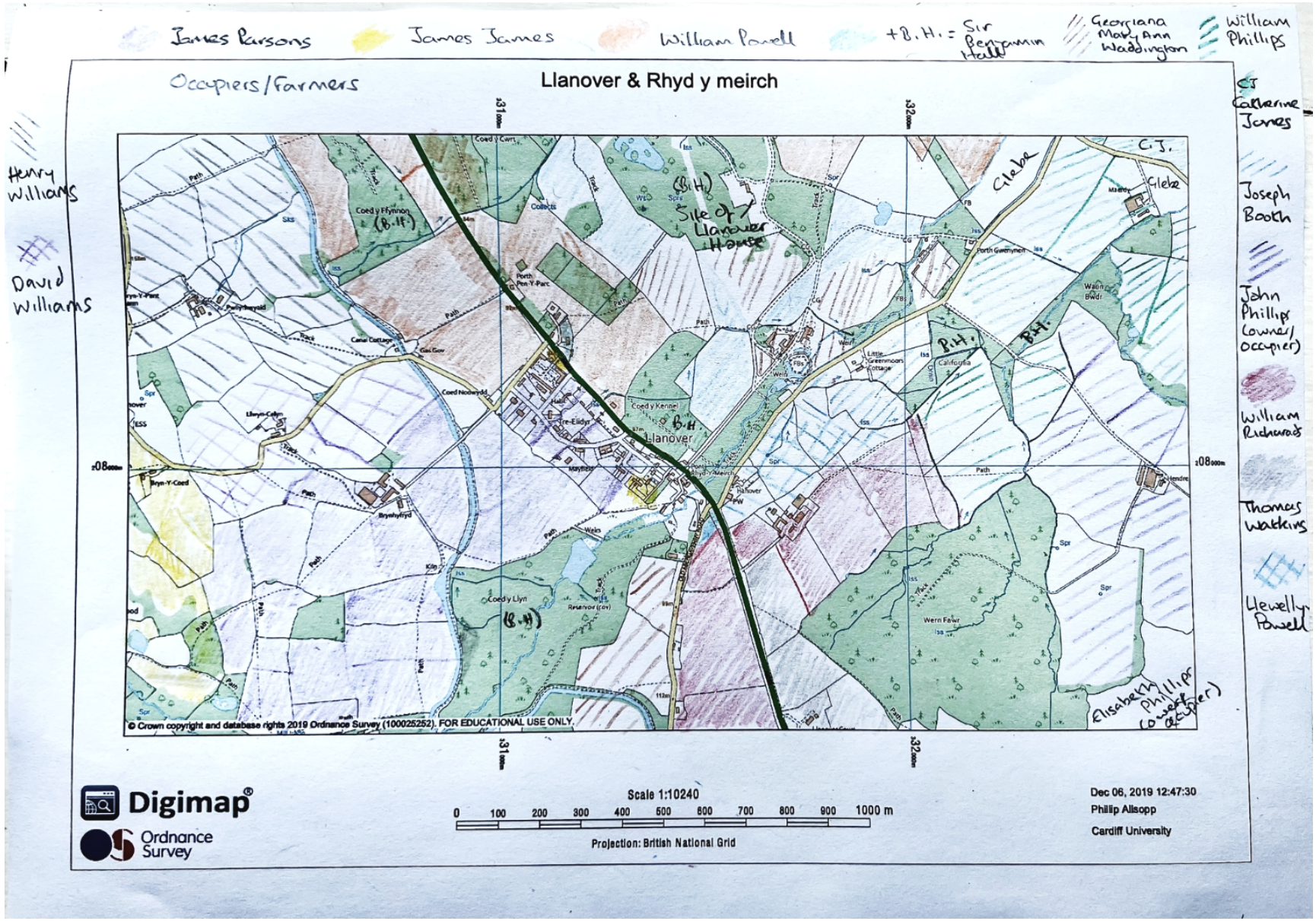
James Morgan William Lewis * John Harris John Jones Farr George Winslow Leonard Reese Charles Morris James Parry William Jones John Ferry Isaac Griffiths * Thomas Jones Mrs. Phillips

Glebe

Occupiers (Farmers)



(* = owner occupiers)


James Parsons
James James
William Powell
+B.H. = Sir Benjamin Hall
Georgiana Mary Ann Waddington
William Phillips
Occupiers/Farmers
Llanover & Rhyd y meirch
Henry Williams
David Williams
CJ Catherine Jones
Joseph Booth
John Phillips (owner/occupier)
William Richards
Thomas Watkins
Llewelly Powell
Site of Llanover House
Glebe
Llanover
Coed y Llyn
Coed y Kennel
Coed y Flynnon
Elisabeth Phillips (owner/occupier)
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Ordnance Survey
Scale 1:10240
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Projection: British National Grid
Dec 06, 2019 12:47:30
Phillip Allsopp
Cardiff University

Appendices 15-19: Land use as recorded by the Tithe Survey (c.1840)

15. Llanvetherine / Llanwytherin
16. Llanvapley / Llanfable
17. Llantilio Crossenny / Llandeilo Grysenni
18. Llanddewi Rhydderch & Coed Morgan
19. Llanover / Llanofer

These maps of villages in eastern Monmouthshire, to the east and south of Abergavenny, are drawn to highlight the patterns of land use as recorded by the Tithe Survey.


Grass
arable
orchard
Coppice
Llanvetherine
Llanwytherin / Llanvetherine
Caggle Street
Winston Cottage
Winston Court
Forge House
Tyr Ysgubor
Mount Pleasant
Court Farm
The Court
Cider Mill
The Old Rectory
Waterloo Cottage
Trothy Meadow
New House
Coed Cefn-cawdel
Melrose Cottage
Pant Y Colyn Farm
Stepping Stones
Duke's
Coed y Dé
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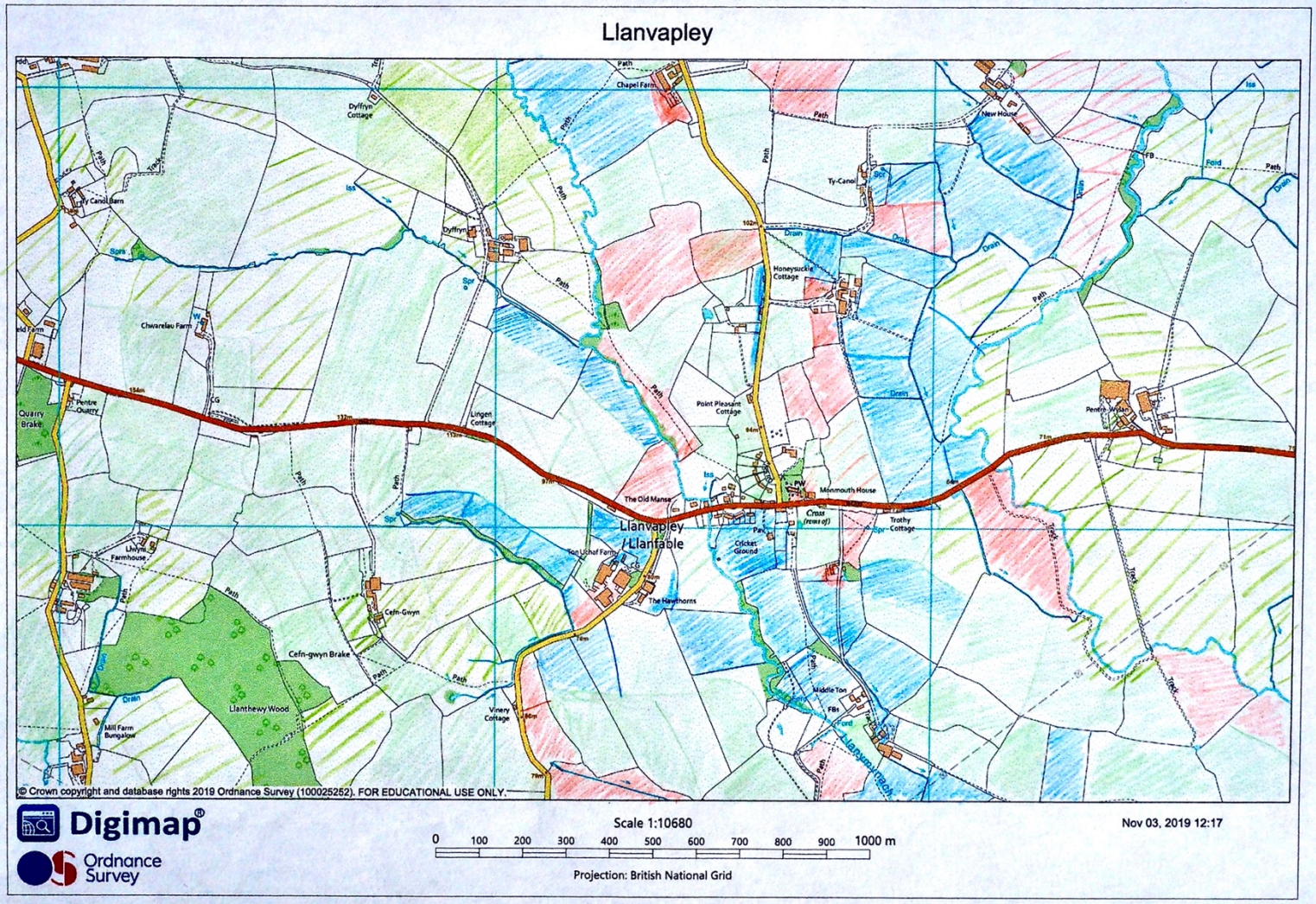
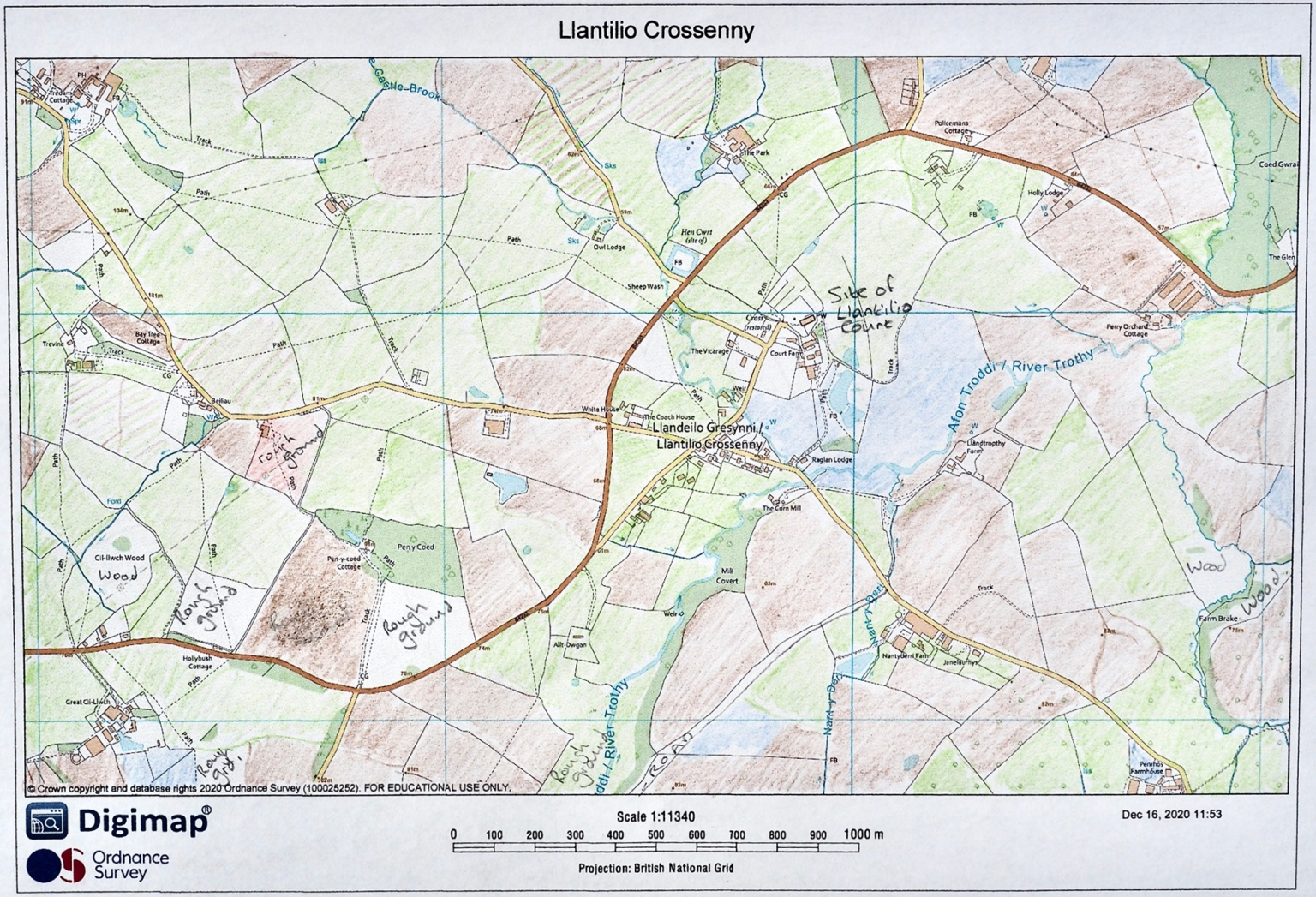
Nov 03, 2019 12:27

Grass arable pasture Meadow



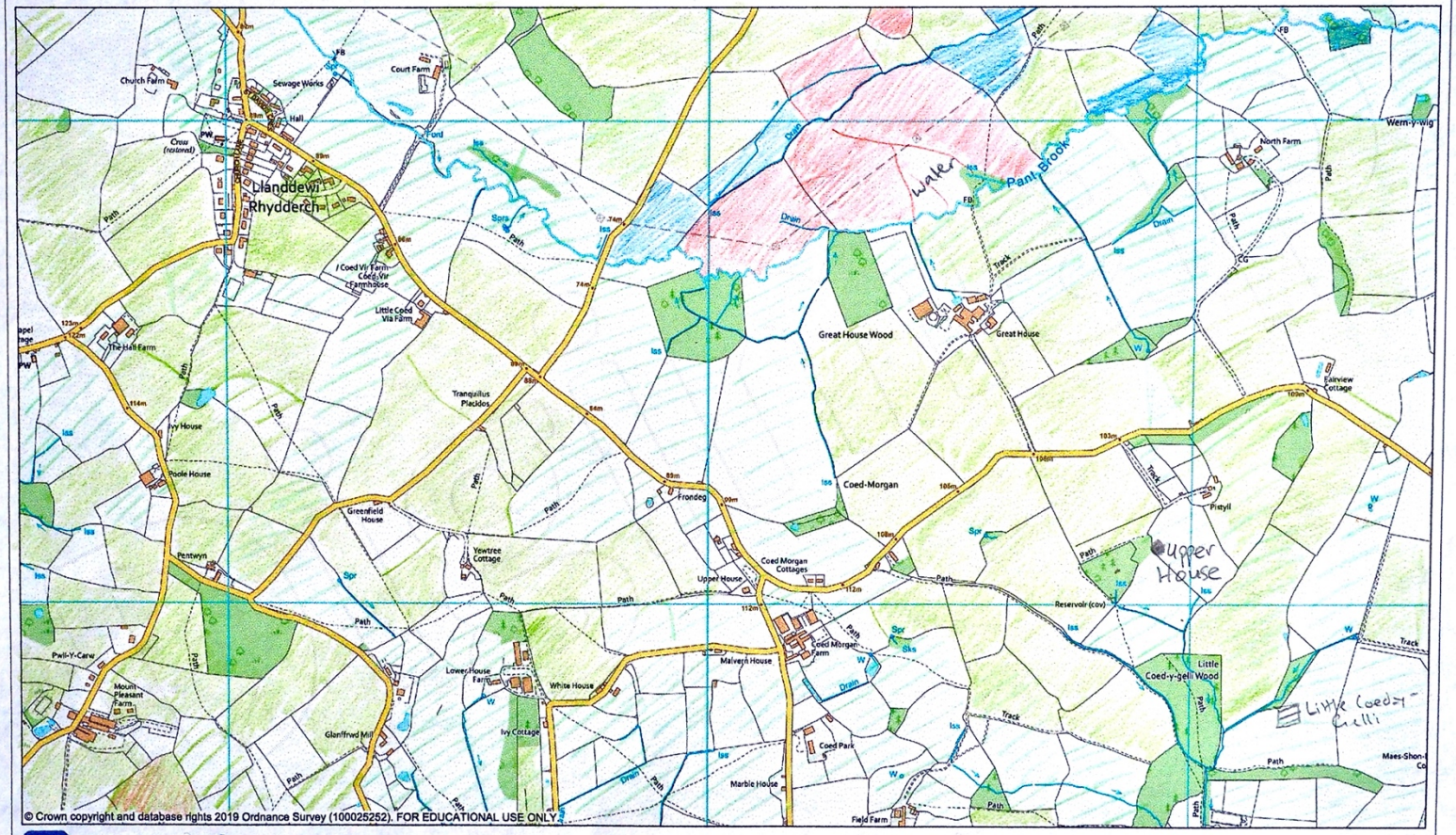
Grass Arable pasture orchard

Land use



Grass Arable Pasture Meadow

Coed Morgan



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Scale 1:10680

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 m

Projection: British National Grid

Nov 03, 2019 12:22

Grass arable pasture meadow

