

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

The Cattle Plague of 1865-67: A comparative study

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Doctor of Philosophy

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This Thesis has been completed as a requirement for  
a postgraduate research degree of the University of Winchester

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ABSTRACT

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#### Abstract

This thesis presents a comparative study of the 1865-67 outbreak of Cattle Plague in Britain. Reactions to and the effects of the outbreak are investigated through local newspaper reports in Cheshire, Norfolk and Wiltshire. A quantitative investigation demonstrates no link between the number of newspaper reports and cattle losses or the number of outbreaks, indicating other factors were involved. Selected themes are investigated, one of which considers attempts to control the outbreak and reactions to these, which reveals failures to follow national and local restrictions by local authorities, groups and individuals. These failures indicate variations in local societies at county and sub-county levels. It is shown that Norfolk was agriculturally more market-orientated than Wiltshire which was more market orientated than Cheshire. Another approach considers support measures for those who suffered loss and investigates national compensation, local assurance societies and public subscriptions. Expectations of, and actual landlord support provided, differed between and within counties and indicates variations in the levels of paternalism at national, county and sub-county levels with Norfolk generally the least paternalistic and Cheshire the most. A study of how the outbreak affected local communities, through the focus of the local hunts, reveals variations in more general social attitudes. The importance of hunts to local economies is demonstrated and the importance to the hunts of being seen as open to all is shown to be related to changes in paternalism and class. Thus, through the prism of the Cattle Plague, this thesis engages with the historiography of English class structure and the relationship between local and central government in the mid-nineteenth century

Keywords: Agriculture, Agricultural revolution, Cattle Plague, Class, Centralisation, Cheshire, Compensation, Dairying, Hunting, Newspapers, Nineteenth century, Norfolk, Paternalism, Public subscription, Rinderpest, Wiltshire.

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## Abbreviations

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
BNA	British Newspaper Archive, British Library
BPP	Bovine Pleuropneumonia
bTB	Bovine Tuberculosis
CoI	Community of Interest
CPA	Cattle Plague Act
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ESHCPA	East Sussex and Hailsham Cattle Plague Association
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FSA	Friendly Societies Act
IP	Infected Place
KE	Knowledge Exchange
JSA	Joint Stock Companies Act
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MFH	Master of Foxhounds
NA	National Archives
NCPA	Norfolk Cattle Plague Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGR	National Grid Reference
OCR	Optical Character Recognition
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
QAA	Quality Assurance Association for Higher Education
SVD	State Veterinary Department
VWH	Vale of the White Horse
VWHHC	Vale of the White Horse Hunt Club
WSHC	Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre (Wiltshire Archives)

## 1 Introduction

Attached to a humble farm cottage in northern Wiltshire is a monument with an intriguing inscription, which reads 'In grateful memory of the preservation of this and the adjoining properties from the fatal cattle plague AD 1866'.



Figure 1-1 Memorial to the Cattle Plague at Plague Cottages, Marston Maisey, Wiltshire<sup>1</sup>

The plaque is a simply decorated, yet high-quality, memorial expertly incised on a thick shield-shaped stone, an expensive piece (the cost was far greater than was at first apparent, the cottages themselves had been built to commemorate the outbreak).<sup>2</sup> That the farmer went to the expense and effort of commemorating *not* catching a disease raised the question of exactly how worried he must have been and how severe the disease was. At the same time, research on another Wiltshire manor, undertaken for a completely different study, located a report of a meeting of local farmers called in response to the same Cattle Plague.<sup>3</sup> Further investigation revealed that the outbreak, at least so far as Wiltshire was concerned and as evidenced by accounts in the county newspapers, had a significant impact even though actual losses appeared to have been very limited. It was also, apparently, now forgotten. The Wiltshire memorial is unique; several monuments to cattle that *died* during the epizootic are known in the north-west of England,

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph © Tony Pratt, 2016, by kind permission of the householder. A different image of this memorial forms the frontispiece to Clive Spina's *Cattle Plague: A History*, (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> James Miles Hobbs, JM Farming, *pers. comm.* October 2020.

<sup>3</sup> 'New Hall, Chippenham, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1865', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 24 August 1865, 2. The referencing convention followed throughout this thesis is Chicago v.17 (*The Chicago Manual of Style 17th edition* by The University of Chicago, 2017, at <https://www.chicomanualofstyle.org/home.html> accessed 26 December 2021).

but this appears to be the only example commemorating escape from the disease.<sup>4</sup> A contemporary comment in the local newspaper, that 'in several cases what was thought to be Cattle Plague was *nothing more* than foot and mouth' (my emphasis), again raised the question of just how bad this disease was, given that Foot and Mouth disease (hereafter FMD) is now regarded as one of the world's worst cattle plagues.<sup>5</sup>

An early review of the literature showed that, whilst a limited number of papers had been published on the Cattle Plague in particular areas, no comparative studies had been undertaken. It was not possible to see whether different areas had the same experience and, if not, what the reasons for this might be. This thesis was designed to address these gaps in understanding. The initial questions that this study set out to consider are to what extent reactions to the Cattle Plague were uniform across the country and whether reactions to the Cattle Plague can be explained by the severity of the outbreak, at scales from the national to sub-county. These questions are directly addressed in investigations detailed in the Regional Topographies chapter, (section 3). This showed that the outbreak was very uneven across the country, with vast numbers of cattle being lost in north-western England and elsewhere. Some areas, notably parts of Wales and highland Scotland, did not suffer any attacks. Taking that newspaper reports on a subject indicate public interest in it, an overview of Cattle Plague reports across the country (Section 3.1.1.2) suggested that reaction to the outbreak was also non-uniform and not significantly related to losses at national or even local levels. This being the case, alternative explanations for the reactions to the disease, and reasons for the variations observed across the country, have to be found. These form the subjects of the research chapters which use qualitative newspaper reports and other literary elements to investigate these and secondary research questions. The chapters identify differences between or within geographic and subject areas by comparing three English counties from several viewpoints, loci and scales. Using local newspapers this thesis seeks, through a comparative, history-from-within approach, to investigate the reasons behind the differences in responses to the plague and what the significance of these reasons are, especially with regard to historical issues. These include the progress of centralisation, class and the agricultural revolution in the mid-nineteenth century at both local and national scales. This review informed the selection of areas for the current research.

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<sup>4</sup> For example in Shropshire at Market Drayton and Norton in Hales and in Staffordshire at Bearstone and two separate memorials at Mucclstone. (James Bowen, 'Memorial to a Cow' at <https://stories.field-wt.co.uk/memorial-to-a-cow/index.html> accessed 21 January 2022). More have been located as part of a nascent project to investigate Cattle Plague burial sites lead by Dr Gareth Pearce of Cambridge University.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 31 August 1865, 3. FMD was considered a relatively minor problem at the time, see below.

The thesis begins with a detailed review of the literature, which gives an overview of the outbreak and considers how the epizootic had been previously discussed. The relationships between national and local government and how these were affected and revealed by measures to control the epizootic are also investigated. As suggested, this study uses 'local areas', supported by a review of the historiography of geographical and cultural areas, at national and regional, to county and parish scales. This review informed the selection of areas for the current study. This chapter also details the research methodology based on the literature previously reviewed, including a consideration of the opportunities given by and limitations of the primary sources.

The Regional Topographies chapter follows, which provides detailed information to support the other research chapters and the conclusions reached are then presented. As this thesis considers a number of local and national social issues and areas, the background ranges from the disease itself to areas, communities and transport links, local and national government in the nineteenth century and agriculture and dairying. The chapter then considers a primary research question, whether the amount of local concern as evidenced through newspaper reports was related to national or local losses. Losses are investigated at national and local scales, revealing significant variability in the number and timing throughout the epizootic. These are then compared to the numbers of newspaper reports in the individual study areas and linkages between the two considered. Statistical tests and observations indicate that the numbers of newspaper reports were not significantly influenced by the losses sustained locally although some linkage was suggested with national levels. All study areas showed considerable reporting after local and national losses decreased, clearly indicating other factors were involved. These are considered in the following chapters. A quantitative investigation of the numbers, temporal and spatial locations of cattle reported as 'recovered' from the disease, and thus both definitely infected but not slaughtered, again showed considerable variations between the study areas.

The 'Control' chapter, (Chapter 4) investigates attempts to control the outbreak and then employs examples of breaches of the regulations by individuals, groups, local dignitaries and local authorities to consider how these measures were received, implemented and whether there was resistance or even defiance of the law. It is shown that, although there were numerous offences against the regulations, few were active resistance or defiance. Moreover, reactions to market closures reveal differences in the amount of 'market orientated' farming in the study areas, which develops debates about the timing and completeness of the 'agricultural revolution' in England, showing that Norfolk agriculture was generally more market orientated than either Cheshire or Wiltshire by the 1860s. Additionally, the reactions to and compliance with national control requirements by local authorities are considered, indicating that in

Norfolk, control was more centrally organised than in more locally organised sub-county areas of Cheshire and Wiltshire. Cattle that recovered after the passing of the control Act, detailed in the Regional Topographies chapter (Chapter 3) indicate non-compliance with the slaughter requirement and these were mostly in Cheshire. Evidence for apparent magisterial support in the 'turning of a blind-eye' to the Act's slaughter requirements in the county is discussed. These investigations reveal differences between the three study areas, showing that Norfolk was a more centralised and market orientated area than either Cheshire or parts of Wiltshire, where traditional 'paternalistic' structures more reminiscent of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were evident.

The Compensation chapter (Chapter 5) considers the various methods available to alleviate the outbreak's effects on individual cattle owners and local communities. A case study of a Cattle Plague assurance society in Cheshire deepens and develops previous work on the subject and draws additional conclusions about its problems and effectiveness. Differences between the study areas were discovered and are reported here for the first time. In Cheshire and Wiltshire, numerous local assurance societies, some estate based, were formed but in Norfolk one county-wide association was organised. It is concluded that differences associated with these varied organisational methods were, in turn, affected by differences in agricultural and rural society. Local public subscription funds, set up to support those who lost cattle, are investigated and variations between the study areas assessed; in Cheshire subscription appeals for the county, the city of Chester and of an individual were opened, whereas in Norfolk there was a only county-wide appeal that operated differently to that in Cheshire. No public appeals were necessary for Wiltshire, and none were made. The distribution of compensation from the funds also varied; in Cheshire the individual fund was paid out after a few weeks, but money from the general subscriptions was not distributed until the epizootic was effectively over. In contrast, in Norfolk, the subscriptions were paid into the funds of the county-wide Assurance association and were available 'on demand'. The amount of landlord support for tenants is considered and was found to vary considerably between the study areas. Evidence for this, and suggested reasons, are presented. These investigations are related to discussions about tenant-landlord relationships and expectations of gentry behaviour and 'paternalism' and contribute to these debates from a novel perspective, indicating that Cheshire was a more 'paternalistic' area, with very local organisations and concerns whereas in Norfolk there was a much greater sense of being part of a county-wide area. Some areas in Norfolk and in the industrialised border areas of northern Cheshire displayed more class-based characteristic than others. Attempts by a Cheshire newspaper to influence some gentry behaviour (the local hunt) are discussed and evaluated.

The next chapter (Chapter 6) is entitled 'Cattle Plague and Hunting: Social elements revealed', but is henceforth referred to as the 'Hunting chapter' for convenience.. It considers reactions to local hunts and hunting during the epizootic and through the prism of the rituals of hunting considers wider social elements than have been discussed above. Variations about continued hunting within the study areas are demonstrated, and linkages with local infection and losses are considered. It is shown that, whilst there was some connection these factors were not controlling. The chapter then investigates Cattle Plague-Hunting reactions in the study areas and the broader country concerning several issues. Tenant-landlord relationships and newspaper behaviour and power have already been mentioned. Others consider local relationships between the gentry and other levels of Victorian rural society, and equality within society, expectations of behaviour by the elite and the 'middling sort', class and patriarchy. It is concluded that the desire of hunts to be seen as open to everybody was a response to the changing role of the gentry to generate a sense of community. The financial impact of hunting leads to a consideration of the importance of gentry activities to rural economies. One of the main concerns about hunting during the Cattle Plague was the possibility of hounds spreading the infection, but dogs of all sorts were already a significant issue with regard to general public health. This, and the use of Cattle Plague specific legislation to control general dog concerns, is also investigated.

This thesis demonstrates that reactions to the Cattle Plague were both affected by and indicate differences in local conditions and communities. It is shown that in Norfolk agriculture was more 'market orientated' leading to a more county-based point of view compared to the very local, even estate-based areas of concern seen in most of Cheshire and parts of Wiltshire. The variations in the views of and reactions to hunting in the study areas indicates that the more market orientated areas and those close to industrialised areas were less supportive of the tenants than 'traditional' farming areas. These effects are shown at sub-county levels, indicating that rural communities were more varied than usually assumed, as evidenced by variety of responses to the Cattle Plague, and a more nuanced approach is necessary.

Thus, this study shows, from a number of different viewpoints, that rural society and communities were affected by expressions of the relationships between, and expectations of behaviour by different levels of society and individuals of differing status and power and that these were evidenced at local as well as county, regional and national scales.

## 2 Chapter 2 – Literature Review and Methodology

### Literature review

#### 2.1 The Cattle Plague

The subject of this thesis is a specific example of human reactions to epizootics and epidemics. Charles E Rosenberg considered historical reactions in an AIDS-focused 1989 paper.<sup>6</sup> The essence of an epidemic, he claimed, was ‘emotional urgency... fear and sudden widespread death’, all of which were seen with the Cattle Plague. For Rosenberg a defining characteristic of an epidemic, important in the 1865-67 outbreak, was its ‘episodic quality’. A true epidemic, he maintained, ‘is an event not a trend. It elicits immediate and widespread response [and] it is highly visible’. Response to the Cattle Plague was not, it will be seen, as ‘immediate and widespread’ as it might have been, but Rosenberg identified reasons behind reactions to epidemics that were clearly evident in those to the Cattle Plague. ‘Most communities’ he stated ‘are slow to accept and acknowledge an epidemic’ because they are threats to ‘specific economic and institutional interests and... the emotional assurance and complacency of ordinary men and women’.<sup>7</sup> He went on to observe that ‘Merchants always fear the effect of epidemics on trade [and]... authorities fear their effect on budgets, on public order, on accustomed ways of doing things’.<sup>8</sup> Reactions to the Cattle Plague manifested all of these, as will be demonstrated below. Rosenberg’s paper was mostly concerned with epidemic as ‘social phenomena’, and it is this aspect that is particularly relevant to the current study. As he noted, at some length,

Epidemics start at a moment in time, proceed on a stage limited in space and duration, follow a plot line of increasing and revelatory tension, move to a crisis of individual and collective character, then drift toward closure. In another of its dramaturgic aspects, an epidemic takes on the quality of pageant - mobilizing communities to act out proprietary [sic] rituals that incorporate and reaffirm fundamental social values and modes of understanding. It is their public character and dramatic intensity - along with unity of place and time - that make epidemics... well suited to [those] seeking an understanding of the relationship among ideology, social structure, and the construction of particular selves.

For the social scientist [and cultural historian], epidemics constitute an extraordinarily useful sampling device - at once found objects and natural experiments capable of illuminating fundamental patterns of social value and institutional practice. Epidemics constitute a transverse section through society, reflecting in that cross-sectional perspective a particular configuration of institutional forms and cultural assumptions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Charles E Rosenberg, ‘What is an Epidemic? AIDS in Historical Perspective’, *Daedalus*, 118, no. 2, (Spring 1989): 1.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg. ‘What is an Epidemic?’, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Rosenberg. ‘What is an Epidemic?’, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenberg. ‘What is an Epidemic?’, 1-2.

The acting out of 'rituals that incorporate and reaffirm fundamental social values and modes of understanding' is identified and discussed in the 'Hunting' chapter (Chapter 6) where it is shown that, although this ritualistic aspect was intrinsic to the activity, it was brought into focus through reactions to the Cattle Plague. This extract supports the use of the Cattle Plague to investigate Victorian rural societies through its consideration of those same fundamental patterns of social values, cultural assumptions and institutional practices and forms.

Although not unknown before, historical considerations of the Cattle Plague grew in number in the 1960s, when papers by Arvel Erickson and Sherwin Hall separately investigated the origins, spread, and course of the disease, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) included a detailed account of the outbreak in its history of the government Veterinary service.<sup>10</sup> All three emphasised the ineffectiveness of the government and the difficulties encountered in imposing controls to combat the disease. The government's commitment to 'Free Trade' made controlling imports difficult, even after other control measures were belatedly put in place, derided by Ralph Whitlock as 'a decision that can only be described as closing the attic windows while leaving all the doors open'.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the twentieth century several studies emerged that explored the impact of the outbreak on agricultural production. Christine Hallas and Roger Dalton separately concluded that the Cattle Plague encouraged farmers, at least in the north of the country, to change from producing cheese to liquid milk.<sup>12</sup> Edith Whetham disagreed and claimed that farmers were reluctant to do so as they would have been 'dangerously dependant on a single market'.<sup>13</sup> Dalton also maintained that the Cattle Plague gave an impetus to the development of national policies to cope with contagious disease outbreaks, a conclusion also drawn by MAFF.<sup>14</sup> These included the development of professional veterinarians and veterinary services which, although not investigated by this study, have been claimed to be a result of the Cattle

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<sup>10</sup> Arvel Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague in England, 1865-1867' *Agricultural History* 35, no. 2 (April 1961): 94-103.; Sherwin Hall, 'The Cattle Plague of 1865', *Medical History*, 6, no. 1 (1962), 45-58.; MAFF, *Animal Health: A Centenary 1865-1965*, (London: HMSO, 1965), 17-26, 125-134.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph Whitlock, *The Great Cattle Plague*. (London: Country Book Club, 1969), 13. Although about the FMD outbreak of 1966, it is equally relevant to the 1866s Cattle Plague epizootic.

<sup>12</sup> Christine Hallas, 'Supply Responsiveness in Dairy Farming: Some Regional Considerations', *The Agricultural History Review*, no. 21, (1991): 1-16; Roger Dalton, 'The Cattle Plague in Derbyshire 1865 to 1866', *Derbyshire Miscellany: The Local History Bulletin of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society*, 14, (Spring 1997): 146.

<sup>13</sup> Edith H. Whetham, 'Supply Responsiveness in Dairy Farming: a Note', *The Agricultural History Review*, 39, no. 2 (1991): 169.

<sup>14</sup> Dalton, 'Derbyshire', 147; MAFF, *Animal Health*, 125.



Plague and have been considered in depth by Abigail Woods.<sup>15</sup> Sophie Riley maintained that the outbreak had 'significant consequences' for the commodification of farm animals and the professionalisation of vets.<sup>16</sup> In 2000, Fisher likened the outbreak of 'mad cow disease' (BSE, bovine spongiform encephalotomy) in the 1990s to the Cattle Plague, claiming that both were the result of 'disastrous failures of public policy', also identified and developed by Woods in her investigations of Foot and Mouth outbreaks.<sup>17</sup>

Terrie Romano believed that the uncertainties over how the Cattle Plague was transmitted, and the confusion over effective control measures, adversely affected British acceptance of the idea.<sup>18</sup> The most complete investigation of the disease itself is Clive Spinage's 2003 account of the Cattle Plague throughout history. Unlike other works, this treatise was global in scope.<sup>19</sup> Spinage described the 1865-67 British outbreak, which supported and deepened previous accounts by confirming what happened and providing additional detailed information on historical outbreaks and the course of this epizootic at a national level, whereas this study uses a local scale.<sup>20</sup> A 'local studies' approach to British history was developed at Leicester after 1949, but the methodology was not applied to the Cattle Plague until 1997, with Dalton's investigation of the Cattle Plague in Derbyshire.<sup>21</sup> Three years later, a study by John Fisher considered the outbreak in Nottinghamshire and, from that year, Stephen Matthews published several papers on the Cattle Plague in Cheshire and Lancashire.<sup>22</sup> Matthews' initial paper supported the national picture, painted by Erickson and Hall, of confusion and lack of government leadership at the local level. His 2003 paper considered the economic impact in Cheshire and the effects this had on farmers' attitudes, their interactions with (mostly urban) society, and the methods used to relieve the outbreak's impact on cattle owners.<sup>23</sup> He briefly mentioned local cattle assurance associations, cow clubs, and local subscription schemes and returned to these themes in his next paper, where he used local records to investigate Cattle

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<sup>15</sup> Abigail Woods, 'A historical synopsis of farm animal disease and public policy in twentieth century Britain', *Phil. Trans. Royal Soc. B*, 366, (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2010.0388>.

<sup>16</sup> Sophie Riley, *The Commodification of Farm Animals*, (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 89-118.

<sup>17</sup> John Fisher, 'A Victorian farming crisis: The Cattle Plague in Nottinghamshire, 1865-67', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 104, (2000): 113; Abigail Woods, *A manufactured plague: the history of foot and mouth disease in Britain*. London: Earthscan, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Terrie M Romano, 'The Cattle Plague of 1865 and the Reception of "The Germ Theory" in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 52, no. 1 (Jan. 1997): 51-60.

<sup>19</sup> Donal O'Toole, 'Cattle Plague: A History', review of *Cattle Plague: A History* by Clive Spinage, *Journal of Wildlife Diseases*, 40, no. 3 (2004):612.

<sup>20</sup> Clive Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*. (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Dalton, 'The Cattle Plague in Derbyshire, 146-7.

<sup>22</sup> Fisher, 'Farming crisis', 113-124; Stephen Matthews, 'Who's to pay? Cheshire attitudes towards paying for the cattle plague of 1865-1866', *Trans of the Hist. Soc. of Lancs. and Cheshire*, 152, (2003): 79-100.; Stephen Matthews, 'Stockport and east Cheshire in the Cattle Plague', *Trans. Lancs. and Cheshire Antiquarian Ass.*, 103, (2007): 113-126.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire 1865-66', *Northern History*, 58, no. 1 (2002): 107-119.

Plague insurance and compensation.<sup>24</sup> This paper was one of the inspirations for this thesis in general, and the 'Compensation' chapter in particular, where an in-depth case study of one cattle association, and more detailed investigations of local responses and support, including subscription initiatives, extends Matthews' evidence and conclusions.<sup>25</sup> Matthews considered agricultural risks and contemporary ways to mitigate these in greater depth in his 2010 paper. He concluded that 'landlords felt compelled to lend some support to their tenants.... for various reasons, including a sense of responsibility towards them, but also out of a long-term concern for the future of farming and the landscape on their estates.'<sup>26</sup> This paper supported and developed the work of David Stead, who had shown that landlords used tenancy agreements to transfer farming risk to their tenants, a point which James Caird had made in 1865.<sup>27</sup> As Dorothee Brantz observed, 'risk management is always a contentious issue, especially if different interest groups, such as farmers, butchers, medical experts and government agencies are involved' as they were here.<sup>28</sup> The studies of Fisher and Matthews demonstrated that local context is vital for understanding both local and national issues. Matthews showed that reactions to the disease varied locally, but no comparative studies were undertaken. The study most comparable to the present thesis, in that it considers the control of Cattle Plague outbreaks at a regional level in depth, uses comparative elements and also considers events in Britain, is Filip Van Roosbroek's 2016 PhD thesis that considered the Cattle Plague outbreaks in the Austrian Netherlands between 1769 and 1785.<sup>29</sup>

The present study addresses this gap in understanding. The thesis adopts a local comparative approach but looks beyond the county model to consider and recognise areas of difference both between counties and at a sub-county level.

## 2.2 National and Local government

This thesis considers how local and national authorities attempted to control the disease. Van Roosbroeck noted that

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen, Matthews, 'Underwriting Disaster: Risk and the Management of Agricultural Crisis in Mid-nineteenth Century Cheshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 58, no. 2 (2010): 222.

<sup>25</sup> Matthews, 'Who's to pay?', 79-100.

<sup>26</sup> Matthews, 'Underwriting Disaster', 217.

<sup>27</sup> Matthews, 'Underwriting Disaster', 223; David Stead, 'Risk and risk management in English agriculture, c1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 57, (2004): 335ff.; James Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-1*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1852, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. this edition London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 254.

<sup>28</sup> Dorothee Brantz, "'Risky Business": Disease, Disaster and the Unintended Consequences of Epizootics in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France and Germany', *Environment and History*, 17, no. 1 (February 2011): 36.

<sup>29</sup> Filip Van Roosbroeck, *To cure is to kill?: State intervention, cattle plague and veterinary knowledge in the Austrian Netherlands, 1769-1785*. unpublished PhD thesis University of Antwerp, 2016.

the received image of ... [Cattle Plague's] dread march throughout history is overwhelmingly one of helpless farmers, desperate measures, and cattle keeling over from the back to the front.

When deviations from this standard scenario occur, they are commonly explained by human interference—and not just any human interference, but that of the apparatus of the state. Historiographical analysis has for the most part been focussed on the national level and/or on the action (or inaction) of policymakers.<sup>30</sup>

This historical focus, on both the national picture and the actions of government to explain the control and effects of epizootic Cattle Plague was avoided by Van Roosbroek and by the current thesis. This reveals relationships between national and local government and other groups. Considerable work has been undertaken on the relationships between central and local authorities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which informs this study. Arvel Erickson identified one of the problems faced by the national government in the nineteenth century: developing a system of government that would allow the retention of the 'highly-prized' reality of local government at a time when the activities of the central government were 'expanding in every direction'.<sup>31</sup> This expansion, in the 1830s, was through a number of 'centralising' measures, the 1833 Factories Act, the 1834 New Poor Law and the 1835 Prisons Act. These were all formulated, according to Henry Parris, under two Benthamite assumptions, that in specific areas of activity countrywide administrative uniformity was necessary and that it would be impossible to attain this without increased government involvement.<sup>32</sup>

Richard Price maintained that government should be 'the fount of information and wisdom' for local areas and that different levels of central involvement were necessary at times.<sup>33</sup> Erickson investigated what controlled these levels of intervention and concluded that some concerns were national, requiring the government to deal with them, some were purely local and best left to the local authorities, and some needed input from both local and national bodies (which, disastrously, was how the epizootic was actually dealt with).<sup>34</sup> In 1990 John Prest demonstrated three ways in which the government could respond to the issues noted by Erickson; they could allow the local authorities to obtain Acts of Parliament to empower them to deal with whatever the problem was, such as sanitation or highways. Secondly, the government could enact general 'permissive' legislation that local authorities could adapt under moderate review by the

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<sup>30</sup> Van Roosbroek, *To cure is to kill?*, 21-2

<sup>31</sup> Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague', 6.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised', *The Historical Journal*, 3, no. 1 (1960): 33.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Price, *British Society 1680-1880: Dynamism, Containment and Change*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 158, referencing John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Parker, Son & Borum, 1861).

<sup>34</sup> Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague', 6.

central authority.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, the government could pass a ‘public general’ Act requiring local authorities to carry out the legislation themselves or create new local bodies to do so. For example, the New Poor Law of 1834 introduced a role for central government in the care of the poor, and the local Poor Law Boards were responsible to the Central Commission in London. Derek Fraser considered that the requirement for a national Poor Rate to support the provisions of the New poor Law, ‘underlay resistance to the centralisation’ contained in the New Poor Law because it was at odds with the desire for local control.<sup>36</sup>

This is relevant to one of the themes investigated by this study, whether reactions to the Cattle Plague demonstrate local resistance to central government control, part of a consideration of the degree to which government was ‘centralised’ in the 1860s. The Warwick Commission considered that the government would not take ‘strong action’ without public support and claimed that all attempts to impose local controls and improvements were ‘met with extraordinary hostility by the local establishment[s]’.<sup>37</sup> This study investigates whether this was the case and, if so, how this manifested. Resistance may not have been overt - James C Scott maintained that even ‘*everyday* forms of peasant resistance’ to ruling edicts were rarely outright defiance and were instead actions by individuals ‘working the system to their minimum disadvantage’.<sup>38</sup> The current study is informed by this idea whilst noting Scott’s caution that ‘hidden resistance’ is often expressed as ‘rumours, gossip, folk tales, and songs’.<sup>39</sup> The Control chapter presents evidence of individuals ‘working the system to their minimum disadvantage’ but concludes this was not, usually, active resistance, and the study does not find evidence for extensive resistance, despite demonstrating considerable non-compliance with government and local authority regulations.

Robert M Gutchen asserted that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the populace was ‘in full revolt against the principle of centralisation’ and that what he termed ‘experiments in administration’ had all ended in failure. However, he cautioned that central intervention and oversight had not ceased and that *laissez-faire* local control had ‘returned’.<sup>40</sup> This thesis does not find evidence of anything like ‘full-revolt’

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<sup>35</sup> John Prest, *Liberty and Locality: Parliament, Permissive Legislation and Ratepayers’ Democracies in the Nineteenth Century*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 15ff.

<sup>36</sup> Derek Fraser, ‘Introduction’ in *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Derek Fraser, 1-24, (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 4.

<sup>37</sup> The Warwick Commission 3<sup>rd</sup> report, *Elected Mayors and City Leadership; What is the Role of Elected Mayors in Providing Strategic Leadership in Cities?*, (Warwick: University of Warwick, 2012) , ‘The History of Local government’, 17.

<sup>38</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvi, xv quoting Eric Hobsbawn. ‘Peasants and Politics’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1, no. 1 (1973): 3-22.

<sup>39</sup> James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xii-xiii ff.

<sup>40</sup> Robert M Gutchen, ‘Local Improvements and Centralization in nineteenth-Century England’, *The Historical Journal*, 4, no. 1 (1961): 85.

based on evidence from the Cattle Plague an. In the early 1990s, although there was considerable 'resistance' to the control measures and requirements, see the Control chapter (Chapter 4). Angus Hawkins suggested that, with the 1866 Sanitary Act, centralized compulsion continued to assert itself, however Richard Price still saw a 'healthy reciprocity' between local and national government. He maintained that parliament was the 'guardian of localism', partly supporting Prest's conclusions.<sup>41</sup> David Moore claimed that, despite the distancing of central authority, the British government was still 'more able to implement its policies in rural, outlying regions than contemporary governments such as France'.<sup>42</sup> He declared that this was the result of local British officials being members of the same class as the members of parliament. Many MP's and ministers also served as county magistrates, so laws were made and implemented by people with common interests and outlook, and that outlook was local.<sup>43</sup> The idea that the government could easily implement its policies without support has been challenged however. Even Moore himself maintained that 'government was constrained from interfering with landowner's powers both by appropriate doctrine and by the presence of many members of the aristocracy and gentry within it'.<sup>44</sup> Carl Zangerl asserted that the control of local administration was monopolized by landowners through their total dominance of the local Quarter and Petty Sessions.<sup>45</sup> This dominance of local authorities by non-elected Justices of the Peace was seen as the 'most aristocratic [i.e. least democratic] feature of English government' by KB Smellie.<sup>46</sup> Zangerl and Smellie both believed that local government was not controlled by government but by the elite, non-elected landowners and magistrates who were, according to EP Thompson 'more nearly allied to the Masters by rank and fortune and also more familiar with them by convivial interviews' However, national government had developed a system that would also permit the retention of 'highly-prized' local government.<sup>47</sup> The centralizing tendencies identified above were not all-pervading, and attempts were made to 'de-centralize' and give more power to local areas. As Peter John noted, the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act made the Local Authority a legal entity that could run a number of complementary local services. It provided a flexible framework that could adapt to new

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<sup>41</sup> Angus Hawkins, 'Review' (untitled) of Prest, *Liberty and Locality : Parliament. Permissive Legislation and Ratepayers' Democracies in the Mid-Nineteenth Century in Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 23, no. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 577; Price, *British Society*, 156-7.

<sup>42</sup> David Cresap Moore, 'The Gentry', in *The Victorian Countryside*, 2 vols, vol 2, ed. Gordon Mingay, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 387.

<sup>43</sup> Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815*, (London: Penguin, 2007). It is noted that many MP's were from the aristocracy rather than the gentry/squirearchy; Clive Emsley, 'A typology of nineteenth-century police', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*, 3, no. 1 (1999): 33.

<sup>44</sup> Moore, 'The Gentry', 387.

<sup>45</sup> Carl H E Zangerl, 'The Social Composition of the County Magistracy in England and Wales, 1831-1887', *Journal of British Studies*, 11, no. 1 (1971): 113.

<sup>46</sup> KB Smellie, *A History of Local government*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1946), 46.

<sup>47</sup> Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague', 84; Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 67. After the New Poor Law of 1834 the Poor Law Commission was replaced by the Poor Law Board.

problems and demands for services which was the genesis, John maintained, of the 'essence of English local government: multi-functional, local public bodies that owe their powers to Parliament'.<sup>48</sup>

This was certainly not the creation of a government determined to exert total central control. The 1858 Local Government Act went even further; according to its movers it was based on the idea of 'local self-government, of releasing localities from the interference and control of the central authority'.<sup>49</sup> However, Royston Lambert maintained that many historians have mistakenly seen the Act as 'a turning point in the relations between central and local government in England' as it did not actually result in less central control.<sup>50</sup> This thesis indicates that reactions to the epizootic support the idea of local autonomy and reveal a more complicated and nuanced relationship between local and national authorities than previously suggested.

### 2.3 Agricultural change

The idea of an agricultural revolution in Britain, generally understood to have taken place after the sixteenth century and been complete sometime between 1759 and 1850, is an important concept in rural and agricultural history. However, it is not just important in rural development, but was crucial for the nation as well; Jeremy Burchardt, amongst others, has claimed that 'rising farm output and productivity enabled and sustained the industrial revolution'.<sup>51</sup> This study addresses the debate about the agricultural revolution and provides evidence that it was still not complete by the mid-1860s, contrary to previous suggestions.

It is clear that the agricultural landscape of the mid-nineteenth century was very different from that of the early eighteenth, but when the change occurred, and how complete it was, is contested. The uncertainty about the timing and even the concept of the 'Agricultural revolution' is discussed below by considering different ideas of 'when' it happened. Numerous historians have considered the issue and consensus is hard to find. An important element in the discussions about 'agricultural evolution' is that of enclosure. Michael Havinden and Eric Jones both argued for significant early development in both enclosed and open-field areas, *contra* Arthur Young's view that 'improvement' was only possible with enclosure and that English agriculture had undergone a 'transformation in its techniques out of all proportion' to the limited

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<sup>48</sup> Peter John, 'The Great Survivor: The Persistence and Resilience of English Local Government', *Local Government Studies*, 40, no. 5 (2014), 687-704. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2014.891984> accessed 12 February 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Royston Lambert, 'Central and Local relations in Mid-Victorian England: The Local government Act Office, 1858-1871', *Victorian Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1962): 123.

<sup>50</sup> Lambert, 'Central and Local Relations', 124.

<sup>51</sup> Jeremy Burchardt, 'Agricultural History, Rural History, or Countryside History?', *The Historical Journal*, 50, no. 2 (2007): 466.

increase in available markets by 1800.<sup>52</sup> Robert Allen maintained that the revolution, between 1750 and 1850, was caused or at least encouraged by parliamentary enclosures, an idea he credited to Young and other eighteenth-century commentators.<sup>53</sup> However as Alun Howkins pointed out, land was being (informally) enclosed since at least the fifteenth century and that much more land was enclosed before the start of the eighteenth century than was generally believed, stating that twenty percent of the land in England was enclosed by 1730, indicating that enclosure predated most dates suggested for the 'revolution' and was not necessarily associated with it.<sup>54</sup> In 1983 Ross Wordie, acknowledging that 'Enclosure undoubtedly contributed significantly towards increasing the productivity of English agriculture', claimed an even greater figure, of over seventy-five percent, before 1750 and BA Holderness stated that 'inclosure [sic] had largely run its course by 1800'.<sup>55</sup> However, there is still uncertainty as to whether enclosure was a *requirement* for the agricultural revolution and increases in productivity or 'merely' assisted their development.

Alongside the debates behind the catalysts for the agricultural revolution, the timing of the 'revolution' has been long and hotly debated; Lord Ernle, barrister and writer, claimed in his influential account of English agriculture that developments began after 1760 and characterised them in a way that suggested capitalistic agriculture.<sup>56</sup> John Chambers and Gordon Mingay supported the 1750-1850 timescale and saw land use for 'production' rather than subsistence as fundamental to the revolution. They also continued the cult of personality seen in earlier views of agricultural development and credited iconic individuals, such as 'Turnip' Townsend and Coke of Holkham, with progressive developments. However, Chambers and Mingay acknowledged, these luminaries were more the 'popularisers of the new intensive production methods' than their innovators and were only 'reaping what their predecessors had sown and benefitting by the existence of inferior publishing agencies', as Christopher Hill had said thirty years earlier.<sup>57</sup> This orthodox

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<sup>52</sup> Michael Havinden, 'Agricultural Progress in Open-field Oxfordshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 9, no. 2 (1961): 73; Eric L Jones, 'Agriculture and Economic Growth in England, 1666-1750: Agricultural Change', *The Journal of Economic History*, 25, no. 1 (March 1965): 1.

<sup>53</sup> Robert C. Allen. "Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England". *Economic History Review*, 52, (1999): 209–235. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0289.00123>.

<sup>54</sup> Burchardt, 'Agricultural History', 465; Alun Howkins, 'The Use and Abuse of the English Commons. 1845-1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 78, (Autumn 2014): 108; Alun Howkins, 'From Diggers to Dongas: The Land in English Radicalism, 1649-2000', *History Workshop Journal*, 54, (2002): 1-23.

<sup>55</sup> J Ross Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosures 1500-1914', *Economic History Review*, 36, 4 (November 1982): 294; BA Holderness, 'Investment, Accumulation and Credit', *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* ed. EJT Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Vol VII, 883.

<sup>56</sup> Rowland Prothero (Lord Ernle), *English Farming Past and Present*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd and Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1961), 6<sup>th</sup> ed, 149.

<sup>57</sup> John Chambers and Gordon E Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880*, (London: BT Batsford, Ltd, 1966), 61-2; Christopher Hill, 'Review of *The Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk* by Naomi Riches', *Science and Society*, 3, no. 2 (Spring 1939): 262.

celebration of foundational individuals was one of the features of agricultural history that Mick Reed targeted half a century later, when he complained that ‘one could almost be excused, when reading many works on agricultural history, for failing to realise that agriculture is not simply something that happens autonomously, or simply at the behest of a wealthy farmer or landowner’ and which Mark Overton called ‘a grossly misleading caricature’ of what occurred, characterising it as ‘a late Victorian tale that captured the popular imagination with its emphasis on particular innovations... and the Great Men associated with them’.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to Chambers and Mingay, Naomi Richards identified the agricultural revolution as being entirely within the eighteenth century, indeed one of her chapter sections is entitled exactly that, stated that it was called by contemporaries ‘the Norfolk system’ and defined it as being ‘the application of new methods of farming for the purpose of making money’, the very definition of capitalistic farming.<sup>59</sup> She maintained that even after the industrial revolution ‘capitalistic farming remained in England...and farmers planted clover, rotated their crops and practiced convertible husbandry whether or not they had heard of the Norfolk system’. In the nineteenth century Norfolk agriculture had long experienced its revolution and was at peace with itself.

In the 1960s several revisionist academics challenged the ideas detailed above, concluding that the change was much earlier, between 1660 and 1760. In these debates the development of capitalistic production in agriculture was seen as a necessary precursor for the agricultural revolution. Eric J Hobsbawm argued that, by the end of the eighteenth century, England was ‘a country of mainly large landlords, cultivated by tenant farmers, working the land with hired labour’, which Eric Kerridge initially supported but later disputed, deciding the idea of an agricultural revolution was a myth;<sup>60</sup> Kerridge was not alone; after investigating several economic measures, Gregory Clark concluded that the idea of an agricultural revolution at any time between 1670 and 1869 was ‘mistaken’.<sup>61</sup> Several authorities, including Richard Thomas, considered that the agricultural revolution was under way earlier, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>62</sup> However Thomas stated that describing evidence of a significant increase in the size of domestic animals, used to indicate that the “agricultural revolution” occurred several centuries before 1760-1840, as ‘revolutionary’

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<sup>58</sup> Mick Reed, ‘Class and Conflict in Rural England: Some Reflections on a Debate’, in *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1880*, ed. Mick Reed and Roger Wells, 13-21, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 1-2; Mark Overton, ‘Agricultural Revolution? England, 1540-1850’, in *New Directions in Economic and Social History* ed. Anne Digby and Charles Feinstien, 9-22. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 9.

<sup>59</sup> Naomi Riches, *The Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk*, (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1967), 3, 15, 155.

<sup>60</sup> Burchardt, ‘Agricultural History’, 468; Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967), 15; Eric Kerridge, ‘The Agricultural Revolution reconsidered’, *Agricultural History*, 43, no. 4 (Oct 1969): 463.

<sup>61</sup> Eric J Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 98; Gregory Clark, ‘Farm Wages and Living Standards in the industrial revolution: England, 1670-1869’, *The Economic History Review*, 54, no. 3 (2001): 499.

<sup>62</sup> Marijke van der Veen, ‘Agricultural innovation: invention and adoption or change and adaptation?’, *World Archaeology*, 43, no. 1 (2010): 1-12, 8. URL <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25679724>



was 'misleading'. He cautioned that increasing stock size did not indicate that all the criteria necessary to identify an agricultural revolution were met but did support the idea of general agricultural improvement from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>63</sup> The agricultural revolution was not seen to unfold uniformly; Leigh Shaw-Taylor concluded that a change to capitalistic farming varied temporally by location and that, whilst it was dominant in south and eastern England (i.e. in Wiltshire and Norfolk) by 1700 it 'came later' to northern England (Cheshire).<sup>64</sup> He supported the view that a tri-partite social structure of landlord-tenant farmers-waged labourers was dominant in English agricultural areas by 1800.

Mark Overton agreed with the 1750-1850 date, stating that the critical features of the revolution were an 'unprecedented increase' in agricultural output, the result of an 'unprecedented increase in land ... [and] labour productivity' in the late eighteenth – early nineteenth centuries. This view was still accepted by John Edwards twenty years later, who considered that developments in financial accounting were also necessary.<sup>65</sup> Overton noted that *Volume V* of the influential *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, declared that the innovation and enterprise of the period after 1650 could not be realised until the middle of the eighteenth century when, as Joan Thirsk commented, the enterprise of yeoman farmers (generally, rather than just one or two individuals) made it possible, thus supporting the idea of a 'revolution' after 1750;<sup>66</sup> however in *Volume 6*, although according to Overton himself the changes in agriculture after 1750 were remarkable, it 'could hardly be said that they amounted to an agricultural revolution'.<sup>67</sup> Rather than one continuous revolution Richard Allen identified a 'yeoman's agricultural revolution' of the seventeenth century, which saw increased productivity, and a 'landlord's revolution' in the eighteenth century which redistributed income from farmers to landlords.<sup>68</sup> The agricultural revolution was not just the result of new techniques; the economic historian Robert Byer claimed that a change in mentality necessarily preceded these developments. He maintained that the revolution was not the use of new techniques or crops but a change in thinking about economic activity, a change to capitalistic thinking.<sup>69</sup> He placed the earliest development of this in East Anglia, suggesting that capitalistic farming developed through capitalistic ship-

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Thomas, 'Zooarchaeology, Improvement and the British Agricultural Revolution', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 9, no. 2 (2005): 85.

<sup>64</sup> Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise in agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England', *Economic History Review*, 65, no. 2 (2012): 26-60.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Overton, 'Re-establishing the English Agricultural Revolution', *Agricultural History Review*, 44, no. 1 (1996): 1-20; John Richard Edwards, 'ACCOUNTING ON ENGLISH LANDED ESTATES DURING THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION — A TEXTBOOK PERSPECTIVE', *The Accounting Historians Journal*, 38, no. 2 (2011): 1-45.

<sup>66</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'Agricultural innovation and their diffusion' in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol 5 1640-1750 Part 1 Vol 2, Agricultural Systems*, ed. Joan Thirsk, 533-589. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

<sup>67</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'Introduction', in Thirsk, *Vol 5*, xxx-xxxi; Gordon E. Mingay (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol 6 1750-1850*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 953, 957.

<sup>68</sup> Overton, 'Re-establishing', 2, fn 9, quoting Robert C Allen.

<sup>69</sup> Rob A Bryer, 'The genesis of the capitalist farmer: towards a Marxist accounting history of the origins of the English agricultural revolution', *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, 17, (2006): 367-397. DOI: [10.1016/j.cpa.2004.04.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2004.04.007).

builders who were the earliest improvers of the hinterlands of ports, such as Ipswich, Kings Lynn and Yarmouth. These, he noted, became important cradles of capitalist mentality. This supports the idea that East Anglian agriculture was capitalistic, or at least more market orientated, earlier than elsewhere; Bryer noted that, for example, 'the Holkham tenantry were headed by... very progressive farmers who had enough capital to improve their large farms' in the eighteenth century.<sup>70</sup> It is noteworthy that Bryer listed Liverpool as one of the ports that supported the genesis of capitalistic ship-owners and yet he does not suggest that 'hinterland' farming areas there, such as the Cheshire Plain, were capitalised early on, or even by the mid-nineteenth century. Bruce Campbell and Mark Overton argued that Norfolk experienced a revolution, they claimed it 'clearly emerges as having undergone the most rapid and profound transformation of technology and productivity' after 1740 and that the generation between 1790-1820 had seen an 'almost complete break with the past'.<sup>71</sup> These observations clearly indicate that the geographical and temporal spread of the revolution was not uniform and therefore has to be investigated at local scales. FML Thompson had already considered, in a 1968 paper, that changes were temporally and geographically varied, if not entirely distinct from one another.<sup>72</sup> He disagreed with the idea of a 'single, unitary agricultural revolution', then recently reinvigorated by Chambers and Mingay's *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880*, and proposed that British agriculture was remodelled through three different kinds of technical and economic changes to move from 'the traditional open-field farming of medieval Europe to twentieth century factory farming'. He saw three main periods, with the first being changes in crop production (notably the development of crop rotations), livestock improvement, enclosure and economic practices, where extra capital and labour was employed on the land.<sup>73</sup> He claimed that farmers became more market orientated in their cropping decisions but that the capital for necessary developments was provided by landlords. Thompson characterised this 'revolution' as mainly a managerial one, at least from the tenant's point of view. He saw the development of the mixed, essentially self-sufficient farm as the major enabling process. This, Thompson maintained, made British agriculture of the mid to late eighteenth century 'an extractive industry', even if 'a model and unparalleled type which perpetually renewed what it extracted' (the 'self-sufficient' element noted above).<sup>74</sup> During the period 1815 to 1880, and so relevant to agriculture, farmers and landlords of the Cattle Plague, Thompson considered that the 'closed-circuit' system of the eighteenth century was broken and that farming developed production systems closer to those employed by the factory owner and became 'properly commercialised'; it became 'a manufacturing industry' in which tenant farmers invested increased capital and saw farming as an activity where raw materials (frequently

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<sup>70</sup> Bryer, 'The genesis of capitalist farmers', 376-7.

<sup>71</sup> Bruce Campbell, and Mark Overton, 'A New Perspective on Medieval and Early Modern Agriculture: Six Centuries of Norfolk Farming c.1250-c.1850', *Past and Present*, 141, (1993): 105 and 75; Bryer, 'capitalist farmer', 368.

<sup>72</sup> FML Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, 21, no. 1 (April 1968), 65.

<sup>73</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 63.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 64.

purchased off-farm) were used to produce a saleable finished product', a change in thinking later supported and developed by Byer.<sup>75</sup> Importantly he considered that this tenant-farmer financed and managed transformation occurred within 'an un-regulated institutional framework of landlord-tenant relations' although farming was, he believed, increasingly a joint enterprise between the two.<sup>76</sup> Thompson saw middle nineteenth century agriculture as being increasingly commercial and, to some extent, capitalistic. He saw the third period, after about 1914, as characterised by the replacement of labour by machinery and the vastly increased use of fertilizers to enable continuous cropping and grazing which allowed the development of more specialist arable or livestock farms, rather than the mixed farming of the earlier period.<sup>77</sup> Kerridge saw this as an example of attempts to salvage the idea of an agricultural revolution by chopping it into a number of separate pieces and that this 'fragmentation is the way of escape sought by Thompson'.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, it has been suggested that by the middle of the nineteenth century traditional peasant agriculture and village society had been effectively replaced by capitalist agriculture and a capitalist class society. James Obelkevich agreed that 'traditional village society, a society of *ranks*....[had] dissolved into a society of classes' by the middle nineteenth-century and that this was essentially capitalistic, with landlords receiving rent from land, the farmers' profits from production financed by their own capital and labourers earning wages from physical work.<sup>79</sup> He accepted that changes did not happen uniformly in time or location and that social change lagged behind economic change by a considerable period, an observation that implies that agricultural change changed society.<sup>80</sup> As seen above capitalistic agriculture had the ultimate aim of maximising income through the markets. This view of landlords, farmers, and labourers has been challenged by many authors, including Dennis Mills and Mick Reed, who identified a fourth, 'very large group in the nineteenth century countryside that cannot be subsumed within the traditional triadic class structure of [this] historiographical orthodoxy'.<sup>81</sup> These equate to those generally referred to, in European studies, as 'peasants' but which, Reed maintained, is a problematic label in England. He used the term 'household producer' to mean those farmers described by Mills as 'a self-employed man below the rank of the large tenant farmers and the yeomen... [who] does not rely entirely on wages ...[or] directing

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<sup>75</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 65; Bryer, 'The genesis of capitalist farmers', 367-379.

<sup>76</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 72-73

<sup>77</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 65.

<sup>78</sup> Kerridge, 'The Agricultural Revolution Reconsidered', 469.

<sup>79</sup> James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society, South Lindsey 1825-1875*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), viii, 23.

<sup>80</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, 23.

<sup>81</sup> Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England', 5.

the work of others'.<sup>82</sup> This does not mean that family farms did not employ some labour, Berkley Hill considered that they used hired labour for specific tasks or at particular times of year, but did not rely on it.<sup>83</sup> Household producers were, essentially, what are conventionally defined as 'family farms', that use mostly family, rather than hired labour, in contrast to capitalistic enterprises which rely on employed labour, their wages being (more than) covered by market profits. Reed did not see household producers as capitalistic as their focus was on 'earning a living rather than accumulating capital'. This parallels an argument made by Alexander Chayanov, that what a family farm might consider profit is different from a labour-employing one. Harold Brookfield concluded that the family-labour farm aims to cover the family needs rather than make a profit.<sup>84</sup> In Reed's view, markets were one destination among many in a system where barter and localised mutual obligations, what he called 'neighbourhood exchange', were more important and more commonly employed.<sup>85</sup> As Marijke van de Veen observed:

In most subsistence or self-sufficient economies farmers tend to focus more on security, stability and flexibility, with the aim of feeding the family and minimizing risk, rather than increasing output or profit.<sup>86</sup>

English agriculture was not in a subsistence economy but the focus of family farms was nearer to that quoted above than market orientated ones. A major part of the agricultural revolution theory was the disappearance of family or household farms and their replacement by capitalistic ones. As noted above, Shaw-Taylor maintained that, by the middle of the nineteenth century 'agrarian capitalism was utterly dominant' in the south and east of the country with almost no family farming whereas in the northwest family farming 'came close to rivalling capitalistic farming in importance'.<sup>87</sup> Shaw-Taylor suggested four 'types' of agricultural enterprise - small-holdings and family, transitional and capitalist farms. He based his analysis on labour used, 'what distinguishes the capitalist farm from the family farm...is the proletarian

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<sup>82</sup> Dennis R Mills, 'The Nineteenth-Century Peasantry of Melbourn, Cambridgeshire' in *Land, Kinship and Life cycle*, ed. Richard M Smith. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 481 quoted in Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England', 9.

<sup>83</sup> Berkley Hill, 'The "myth" of the family farm: defining the family farm and assessing its importance in the European Community', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 9, (1993): 359-370.

<sup>84</sup> Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England', 9-10 and 21; Harold Brookfield, 'Family Farms Are Still Around: Time to Invert the Old Agrarian Question', *Geography Compass*, 2, no. 1 (2008): 114, online journal at [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00078.x?saml\\_referrer](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00078.x?saml_referrer) accessed 23 October 2021; AV Chayanov, David Wedgewood (trans.), *The Theory of Peasant Co-operatives*, (Columbus: Ohio State University press, 1991), 198.

<sup>85</sup> Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England', 11. Reed credits Christopher F Clark, 'Economics and Culture: Change in Rural Massachusetts', unpublished paper presented to the *Peasant Seminar* (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 13 March 1987).

<sup>86</sup> van der Veen, 'Agricultural innovation', 8.

<sup>87</sup> Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism', 58.

nature of the farm workforce'.<sup>88</sup> Shaw-Taylor saw small holdings as land ownership that could not support the land owner, who had to have additional means of support to survive. Examples of these are found in the census, for example Thomas Dean in Cheshire 'farmer of 3 acres and labourer'<sup>89</sup> but these were much more common than the 'Occupation' category in the census would suggest.<sup>90</sup> Shaw-Taylor's definition of family farms matches that of Mick Reed, those large enough to support the landholder and immediate family and which could be worked almost entirely with family labour and capitalist farms were those large enough that the majority/entirety of the labour was provided by waged labour. Transitional farms, Shaw-Taylor maintained, were those 'on the border between family farms and capitalist farms' but which could not be allocated with certainty to either category. This is understandable when only the labour use was being considered, but FML Thompson's consideration of the amount of 'external' resources being used by the farms helps clarify the definition, a capitalistic farm bought in most or all of its necessary resources such as labour, seed, fertiliser and fodder for production and motive-power animals, whereas a transitional farm was much more self-sufficient but bought in additional resources when necessary.<sup>91</sup> With these 'definitions' a significant proportion of Norfolk's agriculture was either capitalistic or very close to it, whereas much of Cheshire holdings were family/transitional operations. The situation in Wiltshire was more varied, farms on the clay were often family/slightly transitional farms but on the chalk farms were either capitalistic or transitional farms closer to capitalistic than family enterprises. Shaw-Taylor's data consistently show both Norfolk and Wiltshire as exhibiting capitalistic farming characteristics and Cheshire the reverse. However, Brookfield made the case that this *still* has not happened. In Brookfield's words, 'Family farming is not dead... and they have competed successfully with capitalist farms for a long period' and other evidence from this thesis shows that Wiltshire was not entirely or even mostly agriculturally capitalistic (see the Conclusion Chapter 7).<sup>92</sup> Finally, for now, Paul Brassley *et al* claimed that the agricultural revolution only happened in the second half of the twentieth century between 1939 and 1985.<sup>93</sup> After noting that various dates had been suggested as seen above Brassley argued that, whilst someone from 1815 would be able to understand a small English farm of 1939 he would be 'baffled' by a farm in 1982, suggesting that there was no significant change in farms in the nineteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Reaction to this paper is not yet (April 2022) available.

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<sup>88</sup> Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism', 31.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Dean of 2 Blackden Heath in 1861 census Cheshire, Church Hulme, Sandbach area (RG9/2608, 3]

<sup>90</sup> Number of holdings less than one acre: Cheshire 17,691 out of 23,720 landholders (74.6%), Norfolk 15,552 / 26,648 (62%), Wiltshire 9,635 / 14,013 (68%). Totals compiled from data in *Return of the Owners of Land 1873* (London: HMSO, 1875), Vol 1 (Cheshire & Norfolk), Vol II (Wiltshire).

<sup>91</sup> Thompson, 'The Second Agricultural Revolution', 65.

<sup>92</sup> Brookfield, 'Family Farms Are Still Around', 110.

<sup>93</sup> Brassley, Paul, Harvey, David, Lobley, Matt and Winter, Michael, *The Real Agricultural Revolution: The Transformation of British Farming 1939-1985*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2021).

<sup>94</sup> Paul Brassley, 'The Real Agricultural Revolution', *Rural History Today*, 42, (February 2022): 3.

Through a study of responses to the Cattle Plague this thesis demonstrates that the progress of the agricultural revolution was uneven across the country. EP Thompson observed ‘history knows no regular verbs’, and any ‘revolution’ was incomplete even by the time of the Cattle Plague.<sup>95</sup> The thesis contributes to the considerable academic debate about the extent and timing of the ‘agricultural revolution’ by exploring how agriculture and agricultural change were non-uniform across the study areas and even within them. It supports the argument that the revolution was incomplete even after the 1850s.

#### **2.4 Paternalism, entrepreneurs and the ‘middling sort.’**

The relationships between different levels of society in the nineteenth century, such as between national and local governments or landlords and tenants, directly affected how people reacted to the Cattle Plague. They can be seen as the result of two centuries of development of power structures following the removal of absolutist monarchism during the seventeenth century through the effects of the English civil wars. Generally, there were three major ‘divisions’, of society which may be termed the aristocratic and gentry elite, the increasingly numerous and powerful middle classes and the working poor. The different views taken of these is considered below, starting with the historiography of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and moving on to the time of this study, the later nineteenth.

An early view of society in the eighteenth century, prominently expressed by Harold Perkin, was of a ‘finely graded hierarchy based on property and patronage’ where a paternalistic landed-elite controlled and mitigated the lives of the poor, with responsibilities on both sides.<sup>96</sup> In this view, the eighteenth century was a ‘society of consensus, ruled within the parameters of paternalism and deference, and governed by a rule of law which attained (however imperfectly) towards impartiality’.<sup>97</sup> EP Thompson agreed, in part, that the ruling principle was the ‘law’ rather than ‘birth-right’ of the aristocracy and the monarchy which partly differentiates this system from a religio-monarchistic feudal one.

The hegemony of the eighteenth-century gentry and aristocracy was expressed, above all, not in military force, not in the mystifications of a priesthood or of the press and not even in economic coercion but in the rituals of the study of the Justice of the Peace, in the quarter-sessions, in the pomp of Assizes and in the theatre of Tyburn.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> EP Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, (London: Merlin, 1978), 238.

<sup>96</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London: Routledge, 1985).

<sup>97</sup> EP Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act*, (London: Allen Lane, 1975, this edition London: Breviary Stuff Publications, 2013), 204.

<sup>98</sup> Peter King, ‘Edward Thompson’s contribution to eighteenth-century studies. The patrician: plebian model re-examined’, *Social History*, 32, no. 2 (1986): 222; Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*, 205.

Douglas Hay, Thompson's contemporary and collaborator on the influential *Albion's Fatal Tree*, maintained that the ruling oligarchy was vigorous in defence of their power and that the 'rulers of eighteenth-century England cherished the death sentence', hence 'the theatre of Tyburn'.<sup>99</sup> Thompson agreed that the law 'underpinned and legitimised the rule of the eighteenth-century elite'. However, he challenged the uncritical use of the term 'paternalistic' and claimed that the 'deference' exhibited in his source materials, anonymous letters of the period, showed that their writers did not love their masters but, 'in the end, they must be reconciled to the fact that for the duration of their lives they will remain their masters'.<sup>100</sup> Peter King, developing and expanding Thompson's ideas, demonstrated that the law was not under the elite's control but was affected by 'layers upon layers of opportunities for discretionary choices' that multiple layers of society employed to a greater and lesser extent.<sup>101</sup> King declared that the 'images, rituals, discretionary opportunities and legitimating functions' of the law were not effective in reinforcing the 'cultural hegemony of the elite'. He maintained that the 'vibrant plebian culture described by Thompson' invaded and subverted or influenced the 'pomp of the Assizes and the theatre of Tyburn' to an (unknown) extent and criticized Thompson for focusing on the 'JP's study'.<sup>102</sup> King complained that Thompson ignored the body that he considered ruled many labourers' lives, the Vestries, which were dominated (at least in Thompson's mostly rural areas of focus) by the farmers. King's work outlined a rural tri-partite power structure of Vestries, the gentry and the artisans and poor and he noted that, although the Vestries might encourage the local JP to 'punish the disorderly poor', the poor frequently appealed successfully to 'gentry or pseudo-gentry magistrates' to obtain relief denied by the vestries. He stated that it was the middling sort who dominated the everyday working of the law in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>103</sup> The development of the middle class changed these power relationships; King accepted that the labouring poor, the middling sort and the 'ever-more distanced or absent gentry' were developing as increasingly separate groups throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>104</sup> This idea was not new, and Perkin had noted an anonymous contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1820, who claimed that the 'upper orders' were distancing themselves from those 'whom nature, providence and the law' had made their 'inferiors' indicating that paternalism was in decline in the early nineteenth century.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Douglas Hay, 'Property. Authority and Criminal Law', in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, by Douglas Hay et al, (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 17.

<sup>100</sup> EP Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity', in Douglas Hay et al, *Albion's Fatal Tree*, (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 307.

<sup>101</sup> JA Sharpe, Review, untitled, of *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* by Peter King, *Urban History*, 29, no. 2 (2003): 605-6.

<sup>102</sup> Peter King, *Crime, Punishment and Discretion in England 1740-1820*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 372;

King, 'Edward Thompson's contribution to eighteenth-century studies', 222, 226.

<sup>103</sup> King, *Crime, Punishment and Discretion*, 373.

<sup>104</sup> King, "Edward Thompson's contribution to eighteenth-century studies', 226.

<sup>105</sup> Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society*, 183.

Responses to the Cattle Plague provide examples of the continuation of landlord obligations, and failures of the same, the continuation and decline of the idea of paternalism in rural society, and what was expected of these groups by themselves and each other. Examples are given in this study in the Compensation chapter (Chapter 5), which shows that some landlords supported those who had lost cattle in various ways, such as remission of rent or contributing to compensation appeals, and that others did not. The Hunting chapter (Chapter 6) provides different examples of paternalistic actions and expectations by examining the reactions of landlords and the elite to requests for them to suspend hunting.

The decline of paternalistic relationships has been demonstrated by a number of historians. For example, Lowri Ann Rees commented that eighteenth-century Welsh landlords were expected to show support for their tenants but that things had changed by the mid-nineteenth century and landlords distanced themselves from the unrest of the tenantry.<sup>106</sup> Following DV Jones, she stated that the landed interests were worried about 'the long-term prospect of tenant independence and political change'.<sup>107</sup> From the last quarter of the eighteenth century, land was no longer the only source of wealth and power with the rise of commercialism and capitalistic and industrial production, members of the middle class could be owners of considerable landed estates.

Christopher Herbert stated that, after 1850, there was a shift of influence from traditional structures of wealth based on the 'massive fixities of landed properties' to ones based on manufacturing, commerce and speculation, and noted the 'ascendancy' of new money in Victorian Britain.<sup>108</sup> This is relevant for the relationships between landlords and their tenants. The land of traditional landlords had usually been in their control for generations, and many landlords still felt paternalistic obligations to their tenants. However, where members of the *nouveau-riche* middle classes displayed their wealth and power through the acquisition of landed estates, they did not necessarily feel any obligations to their tenants and so reacted to the Cattle Plague's demands differently from their established land-owning peers. In 2001 FML Thompson, following Perkin, believed that non-aristocratic entrepreneurs were spurred on in their 'unremitting efforts' by the desire to 'emulate the styles and status of the aristocratic elite'. To do this required acquiring considerable wealth and then considerable appropriate possessions, such as landed estates and membership, if not ownership, of hunts and similar visible attributes of wealth and power.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Lowri Ann Laws, 'Paternalism and rural protest: The Rebecca riots and the landed interest in south-west Wales', *The Agricultural History Review*, 39, no. 1 (2011), 6.

<sup>107</sup> Laws, 'Rebecca Riots', 60, quoting DJV Jones, *Rebecca's Children: a study of rural society, crime and protest*, (1989).

<sup>108</sup> Christopher Herbert, 'Filthy Lucre: Victorian Ideas of Money', *Victorian Studies*, 44, no. 2 (2002), 188.

<sup>109</sup> FML Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780-1880*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.



Perkin had gone so far as to claim that 'the pursuit of wealth was the pursuit of social status, not merely for oneself, but for one's family'.<sup>110</sup> Looking after one's family was laudable but, in FML Thompson's view, new landed gentry generally did a 'hatchet job on the traditional aristocratic lifestyle, slicing out the agreeable and pleasurable elements and ignoring the responsibilities for tenants and labourers, and as for local governance that had gone with them'.<sup>111</sup> In his opinion they did not engage with local social organisation or administration and so they were less inclined to support their tenants and local society in the traditional ways of benevolent and paternalistic behaviours.

These *nouveau-riche* entrepreneurs were not gentry, they were members of the developing middle class and by the 1850s and 1860s, 'middle classness' was 'associated with individual comportment and behaviour; its meanings were no longer confined predominantly to moral or political domains'.<sup>112</sup> Perkin maintained that there were two 'middle classes', the capitalist entrepreneurial industrialists and the middle class professionals, the doctors, lawyers and public officials.<sup>113</sup> FML Thompson saw the professional middle class as essentially urban and so, instead of acquiring estates and riding to hounds or shooting, they 'discovered civic pride... and set about conferring some dignity and presence on their Victorian cities with town halls and libraries, museums, galleries and parks'. This suggests they were involved in their local communities to a much greater extent than the entrepreneurial industrialists, who bought estates, were with their generally rural, ones.<sup>114</sup> According to Lauren M E Goodland, both of these classes could claim to be 'self-made men' but that the former 'proved himself by competition in the market place' whilst the latter did so by 'persuading the rest of society... that his services were vitally important and therefore worthy of guaranteed reward'.<sup>115</sup> These distinct differences in attitude became marked enough that, by 1868, Matthew Arnold could write of 'a professional class... with fine and governing qualities... and an immense business class ... without governing qualities', which supports FML Thompson's view of the minimal-involvement of the land-owning middle class in local government.<sup>116</sup> The 'Compensation' chapter (Chapter 5) considers whether events during the Cattle Plague support this view. Of particular value to this study was the work of HR French, who reviewed the historiography of the 'middling sort' and came to the

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<sup>110</sup> Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society*, 85.

<sup>111</sup> FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830—1900*, (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1988), 164.

<sup>112</sup> Simon Gunn, 'Class, identity and the urban: the middle class in England c1700-1950', *Urban history*, 31, no. 1 (2004): 39.

<sup>113</sup> Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society*, 252.

<sup>114</sup> Thompson, *Respectable Society*, 271.

<sup>115</sup> Lauren ME Goodland, "'A Middle-Class Cut into Two": Historiography and Victorian National Character', *E.L.H.*, 67, no. 1 (2000), 148.

<sup>116</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Schools and Universities on the Continent*, 276-7, quoted, but not directly referenced, in Jennifer Ruth, 'Between Labour and Capital: Charlotte Brontë's Professional Professor', *Victorian Studies*, 45, no. 2 (2003): 280.

conclusion that a definition of the middle class is impossible to construct because the concept of the middle sort have a 'national and absolute focus' whereas the groups we see are 'local and transient', the middle class differs in its make up depending on when, and at what scale, they are being observed.<sup>117</sup>

There is a vast literature on the working class of the Victorian period from numerous political viewpoints, ranging from the Marxist to the ultra-Conservative. The work of EP Thompson was of foundational importance to these discussions, *The Making of the Working Classes* was, Michael Kenny claimed, solely responsible for 'spark[ing] into life the study of social and cultural history and popularising the concept of "history from below"', a view which others might dispute whilst still admitting the influence of Thompson's work.<sup>118</sup> The conclusions of FML Thompson are mostly considered here; in a 1981 paper he asked how between the start of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries there was considerable 'social transformation, towns became less rough and disorderly, cleaner, more decorous and predictable and that the poor were generally thought to be better behaved and less wild and dangerous?'<sup>119</sup> He did not consider this a success of the law, although he acknowledged that much improvement resulted from larger, more professional, police forces enforcing laws that were 'less of an ass and hence more obviously to be respected by rational man'.<sup>120</sup> This presupposes that the poor and lower classes were made up of rational men, which would have been contentious to the elites of the eighteenth century. Thompson was at pains to emphasise that 'the arm of the law fell almost entirely on the shoulders of the lower orders.....[and the police] may well have been perceived as agents of the propertied classes', which somewhat undermines the previous assertion. FML Thompson considered that, rather than the rule of law it was the organised work procedures developed during the industrial revolution that were a civilising influence. Examples included 'the discipline, punctuality, regularity and routine of factory work and indeed non-factory work such as the post office and the railways'.<sup>121</sup> The adoption of GMT itself, after the Cattle Plague, was the direct result of 'the introduction of the railways... there was a need in Britain for a national time system to replace the local time adopted by major towns and cities' to allow the rail network to be 'punctual' and 'regular' as above. EP Thompson had noted that 'Machinery means discipline in industrial operations', in other words that with machinery the operatives had to be disciplined in how their work and attendance or the processes were either dangerous or inefficient, or both, and that this discipline was carried forward into other areas of life. This discipline, Susan Easton *et. al.* maintained, was often a direct result of 'moralized sections of the elite who felt an obligation to bring the gospel to those below them', in other

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<sup>117</sup> HR French, 'The Search for the "Middling Sort of People" in England, 1600-1800', *The Historical Journal*, 43, no. 1 (2000): 293.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Kenny, 'Introduction' in EP Thompson, *Making*, v-x.

<sup>119</sup> FML Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic Review*, 34, no. 2, New Series (1981): 190.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, 'Social Control', 195.

<sup>121</sup> Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', 195.

words religiously engendered paternalistic obligations felt by elite evangelical owners of ‘workshops and factories’, whilst EP Thompson saw Methodism as a ‘carrier of work-discipline’.<sup>122</sup> However, as Eric Evans commented ‘working men had evolved their own criteria for improvement’ and these criteria included ‘hard work, seriousness, competition and religious observance’ which Evans equated with the bourgeois middle class but applied equally to many of the working class.<sup>123</sup>

One of the historical discussions, still ongoing, that are relevant to this thesis, is that of the agricultural revolution or agricultural revolutions. This Literature Review investigates the extensive historiography, showing that views of this have been many and various; it also indicates that there has been little agreement as to when the ‘Revolution’ happened or was complete or even how many there have been with the times suggested running from the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth century. A number of historians have maintained that the revolution varied in its timing both geographically and temporally. Evidence presented in this thesis indicates that the changes associated with the concept were most complete in Norfolk but incomplete in Wiltshire and Cheshire at the time of the Cattle Plague. This thesis takes the view that the idea of an ‘Agricultural revolution or revolutions’ is unhelpful and is based on the idea of periods of greater or lesser amounts of agricultural change and that what is found varies between locations.

Although rejecting the idea of three or (possibly) four distinct revolutions as proposed by FML Thompson, this thesis is influenced by his assertion that agricultural change moved agricultural production systems from subsistence farming, through essentially ‘self-sufficient’ farms to market orientated farming where ‘off-farm’ inputs (such as fertiliser) were purchased by the sale of produce at market. It is accepted that agriculture in England in the mid-nineteenth century was mostly market orientated. This does not require, however, that agriculture was capitalistic. A key aspect of capitalism is that goods are produced by entirely waged labour, and it is clear that, at the time of the Cattle Plague and in various places (for example Cheshire and parts of Wiltshire), this was not the case. Following Mick Reed much production was mostly by family members with restricted amounts of paid labour at busy periods, such as harvest. To reflect this the term ‘market orientated farming’ is used in the discussions with the understanding that the degree of market orientation varies from place to place. It is accepted, however, that greater market orientation also meant greater reliance on waged labour.

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<sup>122</sup> EP Thompson, ‘Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism’, *Past and Present*, 38, (1967): 75; Susan Easton *et al.*, *Disorder and Discipline: Popular Culture from 1550 to the Present*, (Aldershot: Temple Smith, 1988), 57; EP Thompson, *Making*, 918.

<sup>123</sup> Evans, Eric, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-c.1870*, (London: Routledge, 2019), 369.

This review of previous work demonstrates that the foci of the current study are based on considerable previous investigation and debate and that many of these debates are ongoing.

## Methodology

### 2.5 Areas and Community

The main methodology of this thesis is that it is focused through a comparison of selected areas using contemporary newspaper reports as primary sources and that these are undertaken at both county and sub-county scales. In 2008 Alun Howkins and Nicola Verdon used a somewhat similar methodology to investigate males in farm service after 1850 in a number of counties using Census records.<sup>124</sup> While the work of Stephen Matthews between 2000 and 2014, as already noted in the Literature Review, considered the Cattle Plague in Cheshire from a local and history-from within perspective, again at county and sub-county levels.<sup>125</sup> The present study was inspired by this methodological heritage and combined the multi-county comparative method of Howkins and Verdon with the localised investigations employed by Matthews to produce a methodology that could investigate the cultural and social significance of the Cattle Plague. The concepts of regional agriculture and communities, developed by Joan Thirsk, Charles Pythian-Adams and Alun Howkins (discussed below), are central to this study. Still, it addresses smaller areas than either regions, in their most commonly used sense, or even counties.<sup>126</sup> These small local areas were fundamental to the worldview of their inhabitants. The parish or, in more northern counties (including Cheshire), the township remained a vibrant and important concept in the nineteenth century until well after the Cattle Plague. KDM Snell asserted that an 'invigorated localism' lasted into the 1870s and beyond,

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<sup>124</sup> Alun Howkins and Nicola Verdon, 'Adaptable and Sustainable? Male farm service and the agricultural labour force in midland and southern England, c.1850-1925', *Economic History Review*, 61, no. 2 (2008), 468.

<sup>125</sup> Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, 1865-1866', *Northern History*, 38, no. 1 (2014): 107-119; Stephen Matthews, 'Underwriting disaster: risk and the management of agricultural crisis in mid-nineteenth century Cheshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 58, no. 2 (2010): 217-235; Stephen Matthews, 'Stockport and east Cheshire in the Cattle Plague', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 103, (2007): 113-126; Stephen Matthews, 'Explanations for the Outbreak of Cattle Plague in Cheshire in 1865-1866: 'Fear the Wrath of the Lord'', *Northern History*, 43, no. 1 (2006): 117-135; Stephen Matthews, 'Cattle clubs, insurance and Plague in the mid-nineteenth century', *The Agricultural History Review*, 53, no. 2 (2005): 192-211; Stephen Matthews, 'Who's to pay? Cheshire attitudes towards paying for the Cattle Plague of 1865-1866', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 152, (2003): 79-100; Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire 1865-1866', *Northern History*, 38, (2001): 107-119; Stephen Matthews, ' "Our Suffering County": Cheshire and the Cattle Plague of 1866. Correspondence received by Rowland Egerton Warburton of Arley Hall', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 96, (2000): 95-121.

<sup>126</sup> Joan Thirsk, *England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500-1750* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, for the Economic History Society, 1987), 14; Charles Pythian-Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History' in *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History*, ed. Charles Pythian-Adams (London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 6-9; Alan Everitt, *Landscape and Community in England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985).

and this study's results support this.<sup>127</sup> Vigorous localism is important to this study, information presented demonstrates that much of the response to the epizootic was influenced by localism and conversely, responses to the Cattle Plague evidence localism in action. Xenophobia, however mild, was directly relevant to the control of the Cattle Plague; Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews maintained that many farmers were 'suspicious of outsiders [and] when they deemed external aid was necessary, they consulted other farmers, their landlords, local healers and unqualified vets... The qualified vet was summoned only as a last resort', which with Cattle Plague was often too late to prevent the entire herd from being infected.<sup>128</sup> As Woods noted, vets mostly attended horses and 'rarely visited sick cows, which were usually treated by their owners or by lay-healers, known as cow-leeches'.<sup>129</sup> 'Xenophobia' is evidenced in several places in this thesis, for example, the case of the Irish drover seen in the Control chapter. Local details, such as local prejudices, are why considering the Cattle Plague at the county level and above cannot tell the whole story.<sup>130</sup>

It is foundational to the comparative methodology employed by this study that there are identifiable areas and that these have real-world meaning. The methodology rests on the work and methodologies of numerous historians, for example, Joan Thirsk's further insistence on the need to consider both economic and social factors when investigating an area, her identification of distinctly different settlement and farming patterns in lowland and highland areas, and 'agricultural regions'. W.G. Hoskins' observation that predominant farm scales affect the characteristics observed in a farming area and Alan Everitt and Charles Pythian-Adams' understanding that identifiable areas have cultural and physical meaning for their inhabitants, were also important developments. These are all relevant to the current study because it is based on the premise that local areas influenced how local communities reacted to and were affected by the Cattle Plague and that the comparison of these reactions clarifies national responses.

This prompts consideration of what is meant by areas and how they were identified. If, as W. G. Hoskins claimed, 'the history of farming must be studied on a regional basis', it is first necessary to understand what a region is.<sup>131</sup> The concept arose from that of the *pays* developed by Carl Ritter in Germany and Vidal de la Blanche in France, and which is usually understood to be a 'relatively narrow area smaller than a

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<sup>127</sup> KDM Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>128</sup> Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, '“Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow-Leech”: The English Veterinary Surgeon, c 1860-1885, and the Campaign for Veterinary Reform', *Medical History*, 54, (2010): 43.

<sup>129</sup> Abigail Woods, *A manufactured plague: the history of foot and mouth disease in Britain*, (London: Earthscan, 2004), 1.

<sup>130</sup> For example, Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire 1865-1866', 107–119; Stephen Matthews, 'Cattle clubs, insurance and plague in the mid-nineteenth century', *Agricultural History Review*, 53, no. 2, (2005): 192–211.

<sup>131</sup> W. G. Hoskins, 'Regional Farming in England', *The Agricultural History Review*, 2, (1954): 11.

[geographical] region or province' and having 'a unique geological configuration, climate and customs', la Blanche's *genre de vie*.<sup>132</sup> The *pays* idea influenced the work of Hoskins, whose foundational book on the development of the English countryside was underpinned by the concept.<sup>133</sup> Hoskins defined a region as 'a territory, large or small, in which the [physical] conditions .... combine to produce sufficiently distinctive characteristics of farming practices and rural economy.... to mark it off from its neighbouring territories'.<sup>134</sup> He argued that regions are not defined by scale and do not conform to administrative boundaries, both of which conclusions are accepted by this study. Paul Claval noted that 'everybody relies on regional categories to classify spatial information'.<sup>135</sup> This observation implies that people habitually operate at a regional level, that a regional approach is more meaningful than a 'national' one. These ideas influenced Joan Thirsk's important development of agricultural regions, which Alun Howkins considered 'shaped all subsequent writing of agricultural history', and these formed the basis for the spatial scaling of the current work.<sup>136</sup> Thirsk demonstrated that there are identifiably different agricultural areas and emphasised variations within and between regions. At a scale above the region, she identified two major zones of agriculture; pastoral areas in the north and west of the country and arable, which predominated in the south and east.<sup>137</sup> These differences were considered when selecting the areas to investigate in this thesis and are important to the conclusions drawn in this work. Thirsk also understood that social factors influenced agricultural practice and were associated with distinct settlement patterns which differed between the north-and-west and the south-and-east of the country.<sup>138</sup> These were investigated in great detail by Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathwell, who proposed 'three fundamental cultural landscape regions, running north-north-east to south-south-west, approximately parallel to the escarpments of lowland England'.<sup>139</sup> They demonstrated dispersed settlements with hamlets and single farmsteads in Cheshire and central and eastern Norfolk, with Wiltshire having nucleated settlements on the chalk and dispersed settlements elsewhere.<sup>140</sup> These observations confirm and refine Thirsk's conclusions. Alan Everitt maintained that social or community elements are involved in considerations of local areas, as did Charles

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<sup>132</sup> Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 30. The 'unique geographical location' quote was attributed to an, unnamed, 1855 'dictionary of French Institutions and mores'.

<sup>133</sup> W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955).

<sup>134</sup> Hoskins, 'Regional Farming', 5.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Claval, 'Regional Geography Past and Present (A Review of Ideas/Concepts, Approaches and Goals)', *Geographica Polonica*, 60, no. 1, (March 2007): 3.

<sup>136</sup> Alun Howkins, review of Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History from the Black Death to the Present Day*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, in *History Workshop Journal*, 47, (Spring 1999): 305.

<sup>137</sup> Howkins, review, 306.

<sup>138</sup> Joan Thirsk (ed) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: Vol V 1650 -1750 Part I Regional Farming Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>139</sup> Brian K Roberts and Stuart Wrathwell, *Region and Place: A study of English rural settlement*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2002), 6-8, figs 1.1-1.4.

<sup>140</sup> Roberts and Wrathwell, *Region and Place*, 53, fig 2.10.

Phythian-Adams.<sup>141</sup> They both argued that a local or regional area needed to be clearly definable, larger than that covered by any one community and yet small enough to still be meaningful for its inhabitants.

Clarification of what was meant by a community is necessary; Ruth Liepins considered community a useful concept but that it was 'rarely adequately defined in explorations of rural areas'.<sup>142</sup> She said that a community existed when people feel an 'affinity or compatibility' with a location and its inhabitants. As Helen Fletcher suggested, they see each other as having similar interest and values.<sup>143</sup> Benedict Anderson introduced the concept of 'imagined communities' that explained how social groups could have a sense of identity over a wide area.<sup>144</sup> Anderson was considering nations, but the idea has been applied to regions and smaller areas and is relevant in this study when considering both actual communities and those related to the influence areas of local newspapers, where feelings of identity are expressed especially by sub-groups such as farmers, landlords or labourers, as suggested by Claval.<sup>145</sup> Bingham claimed that reading and discussing reports in the London-based newspapers 'fostered a feeling of engagement in a national, rather than a merely local community' in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>146</sup> A century earlier local newspapers had a similar effect at local scales, 'fashioning and sustaining local networks and identity'.<sup>147</sup> RM Romero usefully defined a community, whether 'merely local' or not, as being

an association of individuals sharing and creating ways of interpreting their experiences, which builds a particular identity connecting individuals and groups, reinforcing their common issues without effacing their differences

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<sup>141</sup> Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Introduction: An Agenda for English Local History' in *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History*, ed. Charles Phythian-Adams (London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 6-9. Phythian-Adams claimed the idea was from Alan Everitt's *Landscape and Community in England* but it was originally from Everitt's 1977 paper, 'River and Wold: Reflections on the Historical Origins of Regions and Pays', *Journal of Historic Geography*, 3, no. 1 (1977): 1-19.

<sup>142</sup> Ruth Liepins, 'New energies for an old idea: reworking approaches to 'community' in contemporary rural studies', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16, no. 1 (2000): 23.

<sup>143</sup> Helen Fulcher, 'The Concept of Community of Interest', paper prepared for the South Australian Department of Local government, 1989, Rose Bowey (ed), 1991 online at <http://www.lgc.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/The-Concept-of-Community-of-Interest-Discussion-Paper.pdf> accessed 13 April 2021.

<sup>144</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>145</sup> Claval, 'Regional Geography Past and Present', 14.

<sup>146</sup> Adrian Bingham, *Family newspaper? Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16.

<sup>147</sup> Andrew Jackson, 'Provincial newspapers and the development of local communities: the creation of a seaside resort newspaper for Ilfracombe, Devon, 1860-1', *Family & Community History*, 13, no. 2 (2010): 101.

and, as Alan Ovens noted, involved ‘localised time, space and membership’.<sup>148</sup> The concept of community brings human emotions and feelings into the consideration of regions. Maria Giuliani asserted that the feelings we experience towards certain places strongly influence personal identity, which was supported by the observation of Richard Jones and Katrina Navickas, that ‘though local and regional history can be bounded physically by geography, it is not [limited] by connections and [has] networks that stretch over time and space. Local history drills down to find the meaning of place at all levels, from the micro to the global’, although the metaphor would have worked better if the terms had been reversed.<sup>149</sup> This observation also supported the importance attached to researcher knowledge of study areas by Gesa Kirsch, concepts which also influenced thesis study-area selection.<sup>150</sup> As Paul Reedman noted, history is ‘deeply inscribed in landscape – indeed, it is intimately connected to the cultural values assigned to landscape’.<sup>151</sup> These elements are important to the thesis because it is fundamentally concerned with local communities, their sense of place and how these both affected reactions to the Cattle Plague and are revealed by them.

## 2.6 Communications – Newspapers, Journals and Literature

As the primary sources for this thesis are reports from newspapers, how they were produced, used and seen in the Victorian period and how other historians have investigated them are essential concerns for this study.<sup>152</sup>

Printing has been significant for a very long time. Benedict Anderson claimed that the very idea of nation-states could not develop until easily available books and pamphlets in ‘print-languages’ laid the ‘bases for national consciousnesses’ after the Reformation. He maintained that the novel and the newspaper made it possible for ‘rapidly growing numbers of people to think of themselves, and relate themselves to others, in

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<sup>148</sup> RMM Romero, ‘Educational change and discourse communities; representing change in post modern times’, *Curriculum Studies*, 6, no. 1 (1998): 52; Alan Ovens, ‘Discourse communities and the social construction of reflection in teacher education’, HERDSA Conference, Perth (2002): 506.

<sup>149</sup> Maria Vittoria Giuliani, ‘Theory of Attachment and Place Attachment’ in *Psychological theories for environmental issues* edited by Mirilia Bonnes, Terence Lee and Marina Boniauto, 136-170, (London: Routledge, 2003).

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315245720>; Richard Jones and Katrina Navickas, ‘Senior Editors’ Preface’ in *Farmers, Consumers, Innovators: The world of Joan Thirsk*, ed. Richard Jones and Christopher Dyer, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2018), xi.

<sup>150</sup> Gesa Kirsch, ‘Being on Location: Serendipity, Place and Archival Research’, in Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan (eds), *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 20-27.

<sup>151</sup> Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 8.

<sup>152</sup> Details of newspapers based in the study areas and used in the thesis, indicating some of their history, political stances and world-views (where known) are given in Newspaper details

Table 9-2 Study area newspaper details, in the Appendix: Additional information. This table does not include all newspapers consulted.



profoundly new ways' and that these new ways of thinking included the concept of the nation, which he characterised as an 'imagined community'.<sup>153</sup> Development of the idea of 'nation' does not mean that local identities were unimportant; Graham Law observed that the serial fiction of the Victorian provincial press demonstrated that this 'imagined national community still often had to compete with affiliations more local in character'.<sup>154</sup> This thesis supports this view by considering serialised stories in newspapers and journals at the time of the outbreak. Ginzburg credited the easy availability of printed works with also decreasing the power of literate elites, maintaining that 'the idea of [transmitted] culture was seriously impaired.... by the invention of printing'.<sup>155</sup> He was discussing the *litterati* and the Church of the Counter-Reformation Italy, but this is also relevant to many in nineteenth-century England. People could ever more easily access information and ideas for themselves and were not dependant on their educated landlords and clerics to transmit information from 'outside' and could form their own opinions.

'The major importance of newspapers to many [historians]', Michael Murphy claimed, 'is their urgency and immediacy. They are a record of history as it is being made'.<sup>156</sup> How a community reacts to events is influenced, in part, by what they perceive the events to be. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the 'provinces' received information about events. The development of newspapers and periodicals influenced the perceptions of increasing numbers of people in the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff considered that by the time of the Cattle Plague, and for ever-increasing numbers of people, this perception was influenced by 'the press [which], in all its manifestations, became ... the context within which people lived, worked and thought, and from which they derived their... sense of the outside world'.<sup>158</sup> As Louis James stated

We are dealing here not only with a growth of literacy, but with a change in the type of literature available....it is broadly true to say that the increase in the reading habit did, in this context, disrupt the traditions of the pre-industrial world and introduce new patterns of thinking and sensibility<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised edition, (London: Verso, 1991), 36, 24-25.

<sup>154</sup> Graham Law, 'British Library Newspapers: Literary Serialization in the 19th-Century Provincial Press', *British Library Newspapers*. Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2017, 1-2. Online at [https://www.gale.com/intl/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/newsvault/gps\\_britishlibrarynewspapers\\_grahamlawliteraryserialization.pdf](https://www.gale.com/intl/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/newsvault/gps_britishlibrarynewspapers_grahamlawliteraryserialization.pdf) accessed 15 July 2021.

<sup>155</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 60.

<sup>156</sup> Michael Murphy, *Newspapers and Local History*, (Chichester: Phillimore, 1991): 22.

<sup>157</sup> Murphy, *Newspapers and Local History*, 5.

<sup>158</sup> Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, 'Introduction' in Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian Periodical press: Samplings and Soundings*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), xiv-xv.

<sup>159</sup> Louis James, *The Print and the People*, (London: Allen Lee, 1976), 18.

Local newspapers did not only carry local news; Andrew Hobbs stated that local readers were aware of national events, mainly because local newspapers used considerable syndicated material from across the country and beyond. He maintained that most (working class) readers preferred the local press, indeed Joseph Priestley claimed that his father would only accept the word of the local newspaper.<sup>160</sup> However, he did not see newspaper readers as ignorant of, or uninterested in broader concerns, as local papers presented considerable material 'obtained', i.e. copied, from other newspapers.<sup>161</sup> This habit has led to criticism that nineteenth-century newspapers, especially in the provinces, indulged in 'scissors-and-paste' journalism, the 'wide-spread practice of excerpting from or recycling of articles from other publications, often from abroad'.<sup>162</sup> However, this was seen by Marianne Van Remoortel, as crucial to how 'news and other types of content travelled within national boundaries as well as internationally' and increased the information available to local readers.<sup>163</sup>

Crucially for this study newspapers, as shown by Andrew Jackson, can also capture a 'rich sense of local identity [and]... contribute to the creation of [local] communities or sense of community'.<sup>164</sup> They can also, as Adrian Bingham demonstrated, have their own 'voice' and play multiple roles.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, local newspapers allow the voices of local individuals to be heard through letters and verbatim reports of speeches and meetings. As early as the 1990s, Owen Davies warned that newspapers should not be thought of as detached from the society they reflected, they also influenced it.<sup>166</sup> This point had been emphatically demonstrated a decade earlier by Aled Jones, who maintained that organised labour supported an attempted national system of working-class press for precisely this reason, and Bingham stated that newspapers 'played a significant role in setting the agenda for public and private discussion, and

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<sup>160</sup> Andrew Hobbs, *Reading the local paper*, 20; John B Priestley, 'An Outpost' from a draft of an essay which never saw publication except in Roger Fagge, *The Vision of JB Priestley*, (London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2012): 136, ref 47.

<sup>161</sup> Andrew Hobbs 'When the provincial press was the national press (c.1836–c.1900)', *International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2009): 18.; Hobbs, *Reading the local paper*, 20.

<sup>162</sup> Laurel Blake and Marysa Demoor (eds), *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, (London: Academia Press/British Library, 2009), 561. See also Stephan Pigeon, 'Steal it, Change it, Print it: Transatlantic Scissors-and-Paste Journalism in the *Ladies Treasury*, 1857-1895', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22, no. 1, (2017): 24–39, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2016.1249393> accessed 25 July 2021.

<sup>163</sup> Marianne Van Remoortel, 'Scissors, paste, and the female editor: the making of the Dutch women's magazine *De Gracieuse* (1862–64)', *Women's History Review*, 30, no. 4 (2021): 555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1773041>

<sup>164</sup> Andrew Jackson, 'Provincial newspapers and the development of local communities: the creation of a seaside resort newspaper for Ilfracombe, Devon, 1860–1', *Family & Community History*, 13, no. 2 (2010): 103.

<sup>165</sup> Adrian Bingham, *Family newspaper? Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>166</sup> Owen Davies, 'Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period', *Journal Br. Studies*, 37, no. 2 (1998): 199.

in providing interpretative frameworks through which readers made sense of the world'.<sup>167</sup> Mary Lester noted that not every inhabitant could, or did, read the local paper and claimed that this weakened Davies' argument.<sup>168</sup> Hobbs, appropriately enough in a newspaper article, countered this by noting that many inns, even in villages, had newspapers and 'skilled public readers..[to]..perform the paper'; people did not have to read to be able to access the news and debate it.<sup>169</sup> Roger Schofield demonstrated that 'readers' were less by mid-century, there was 'considerable evidence for a literate culture amongst large sections of the working class'.<sup>170</sup> That newspapers reflected and helped form local opinions is a strength of the thesis primary source base and is also demonstrated by it.

Although there was little in the contemporary literary field directly related to the Cattle Plague, and the amount of influence literature had on perceptions of the epizootic is debatable, this study includes several examples from literature, poems and ballads to support particular points or demonstrate individual or societal world-views. The relationship of rural communities in general to literature, and vice versa, has been investigated by various authors. For example, William Keith wrote extensively about literary, poetic and non-fictional accounts of the British countryside. References to the Cattle Plague in his work are, at best, rare, but some of his themes are seen in an epistolary serial about the epidemic published in Cheshire during the Cattle Plague and another serialised in a family-oriented periodical in 1868.<sup>171</sup>

Several studies alleged that poetry became 'expensive and marginalised' and was largely ignored by most people in the nineteenth century. Claims that this neglect was most common among working people have been challenged.<sup>172</sup> Andrew Hobbs and Claire Januszewski acknowledged that the majority of local

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<sup>167</sup> Aled Jones, 'Workmen's advocates: ideology and class in a mid-Victorian labour newspaper system', in Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 297-316.; Adrian Bingham, 'Reading Newspapers: Cultural Histories of the Popular Press in Modern Britain', *History Compass*, 10, no. 2 (February 2012): 142.

<sup>168</sup> Mary Lester, 'Local newspapers and the shaping of local identity in North-East London c.1885–1915', *International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2009): 45

<sup>169</sup> Andrew Hobbs, 'Local newspapers in Victorian era: "rolling news" and reading as a pub activity', *Press Gazette*, 23 December 2018 at <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/local-newspapers-in-victorian-times-early-rolling-news-and-reading-as-a-pub-activity/>. Accessed 29 July 2020.

<sup>170</sup> Hobbs, 'Local newspapers in Victorian era', 23; Roger S Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy, 1750-1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10, no. 4 (1973): 451.

<sup>171</sup> William J Keith *The Rural Tradition: A Study of the Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside Heritage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); William J Keith, *The Poetry of Nature: Rural Perspectives in Poetry from Wordsworth to the Present*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Annie Gray, 'Annie Gray, A Tale of the Cheshire Cattle Plague. written for this Paper', *Northwich Guardian*, 11 instalments between 15 June 1867 and 24 August 1867; Sophie Amelia Prosser, 'The Days of the Cattle Plague', (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1872), This edition (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2012). Initially serialised in *The Sunday at Home: a family magazine for Sabbath Reading*, 19 editions 1 May 1868 – 21 August 1868.

<sup>172</sup> Lee Erickson, 'The Market,' in Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Antony H. Harrison (eds), *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 359-360, 345, 351; Sabine Haas, 'Victorian Poetry Anthologies: Their Role

newspaper verse was produced 'with little practice and no skill' and that much 'could be justifiably dismissed on aesthetic grounds' but maintained that the 'millions' of poems published helped to create 'a great sea of poetry in which authors and readers swam'.<sup>173</sup> Using newspaper and periodical poems as primary sources has its challenges. Natalie Houston warned that they functioned as topical commentaries, making them difficult to understand outside their original context. However she also stated that poems published in newspapers were part of the larger 'shared discourse' on current events and that poetry could show 'emotional responses to current events'.<sup>174</sup>

An important point made by Hobbs and Januszewski was that almost half of the poetry in the local newspapers they investigated were taken from books, other newspapers and periodicals; they were not 'locally' produced, although they were, of course, locally read.<sup>175</sup> Whilst this means that they may not express local views, they could still have influenced them. The editors selected the poems for inclusion, so they were considered valuable for the local readership. Alun Howkins incorporated poems and ballads into the very fabric of his historical methodology, he was 'convinced that to understand people's history you had to go deeply into every aspect of their lives. To know the songs for the poor was to know something about them that might not be accessible via other routes', and not only the poor.<sup>176</sup> Thus this thesis utilises numbers of excerpts from poems and ballads. The importance of literary works, particularly newspapers and periodicals, as sources of information in the period, is increasingly understood, but they are still not utilised as readily as they might be. One of the aims of this study is to demonstrate further how effectively local newspapers can provide essential data for discussions of local, regional and national events and issues not available elsewhere.

Newspapers enable this study to consider both physical communities and what have been termed 'discursive or discourse communities'. John Swales saw these as having several characteristics, including a set of common 'goals' that embodied inter-group communication of information and feedback and using a specific 'lexis' (technical terms or slang).<sup>177</sup> Local farmers' clubs/associations could be considered discourse communities, but those most important to this study are local newspapers and their readerships.

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and Success in the Nineteenth Century Book Market,' *Publishing History*, 17, (1985): 57. Both referenced in Andrew Hobbs and Claire Januszewski, 'How Local Newspapers Came to Dominate Victorian Poetry Publishing', *Victorian Poetry*, 52, no. 1 (2014): 66.

<sup>173</sup> Hobbs, and Januszewski, 'Local Newspapers', 67.

<sup>174</sup> Natalie M Houston, 'Newspaper Poems: Material Texts from the Public Sphere', *Victorian Studies*, 50, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 234, 239.

<sup>175</sup> Hobbs and Januszewski, 'Local newspapers', 74.

<sup>176</sup> Katherine Hodgkin, 'Alun Howkins: History, Plays and Songs', *History Workshop Journal*, 88, (Autumn 2019): 319.

<sup>177</sup> John Swales, 'The Concept of Discourse Community: Some Recent Personal History', *Composition Forum*, 57, (2017). Accessed 26 May 2021. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/37/swales-retrospective.php>.

Newspapers included not only reports but opinion pieces, leaders and letters presenting personal views and were (variably) responsive to their reader's comments.<sup>178</sup>

This thesis takes the view that newspapers are mostly involved with what was of immediate concern to people at a particular event or time, capture the things that official archive materials miss and thus give a different view from other archive material. As Jane-Louise Secker confirmed

Newspapers are not written or produced with the historian in mind. The press is primarily used as a source of current information and news, having little further value once events have moved on. However, the accumulation of knowledge in newspapers, each day, creates an important resource of information, highly valuable for historical enquiry. In many instances the newspaper report will be the only surviving record of events, and even where other sources do exist, the newspaper will provide a uniquely accessible summary.<sup>179</sup>

As Secker indicated, local newspapers give access to extensive, very local data rarely available elsewhere. Louise Miskell stated that 'the level of detail furnished in their regular reports and special supplements makes [them] an indispensable fund of material for any serious examination of', in this case, county level agriculture and society.<sup>180</sup> Howkins and Verdon demonstrated that the county was 'an artificial creation in terms of farming systems' and that 'significant sub-county structures' were missed if data were only considered at county level.<sup>181</sup> By using local newspapers, which have limited geographical spreads, this thesis consistently considers evidence at county and especially sub-county scales. Using local newspapers as the primary sources enables this thesis to investigate smaller 'communities of interest' and 'discursive communities' than usually undertaken whilst not being limited by administrative boundaries. Information is available across county borders as well as in-county. The methodology facilitates the detection of significant structures in the social and agricultural make-up of the study areas. Even where local newspapers have been used previously, the focus has been much narrower geographically than in the present study, and none of them were comparative studies.<sup>182</sup> Adrian Bingham stated that newspapers could provide 'an invaluable window into popular culture'.<sup>183</sup> A desire to see through this window,

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<sup>178</sup> As stated in numerous 'New year' leaders, e.g. 'The New Season', *Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser*, 30 December 1865, 2.

<sup>179</sup> Jane-Louise Secker, *Newspapers and historical research: a study of historians and custodians in Wales*, (PhD Thesis, University of Wales Aberystwyth, 1999), 2.

<sup>180</sup> Louise Miskell, 'Putting on a show: The Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Victorian Town, c.1840-1876', *The Agricultural History Review*, 60, no. 1 (2012): 39.

<sup>181</sup> Howkins and Verdon, 'Adaptable and Sustainable?', 492.

<sup>182</sup> For example the work of Stephen Mathews on Cattle Plague in Cheshire and John Fisher in Nottinghamshire.

<sup>183</sup> Adrian Bingham, 'Reading Newspapers: Cultural Histories of the Popular Press in Modern Britain', *History Compass*, 19, no. 2 (2012): 142.

supported by the work of Howkins, Verdon and Matthews, helped focus this study on local newspapers because how a community reacts to events is partially influenced by what those events are perceived to be.

Some caveats about using newspapers in research, relevant to this thesis, have been made. Both Lester and Jane Louise Secker warned that newspapers were biased by political and class loyalties, which influenced their coverage and presentation.<sup>184</sup> Developing this argument some years later, Nicholas Marshall cautioned that papers which only contained local gossip and the 'wild rants' of a 'partisan' editor could not be said to have broad social significance.<sup>185</sup> However, as Jackson noted, newspapers had 'target' groups, selected stories about the local cultural life and balanced their mix of local and national material to appeal to these groups. The *ne plus ultra* example of both the preceding points might be considered the 'working-class' press discussed by Jones. He admitted they failed because of the only features that distinguished them from the ordinary provincial newspapers: their 'strident' editorials, amateur production values and lack of funds, although the latter might not be a particularly distinguishing feature.<sup>186</sup> Gibson made the obvious but important point that what was reported was not necessarily true. However, whether a report was actually 'true' or not, it could still influence people who believed it. Secker concluded that local newspapers show the range of opinions and information to which individuals were exposed, different 'world-views'. She pointed out that the importance attached to what was said was greater when prominent people said it, a point worth considering when evaluating the effect of newspaper reports.<sup>187</sup> Mary Lester and Secker separately warned that newspapers were shaped by political and class loyalties, which influenced their coverage and presentation and Owen Davies cautioned that they should not be thought of as detached from the society they reflected, an important point when local newspapers are being used.<sup>188</sup> They could also be affected by *where* they were produced; Miskell warned that 'town-based newspapers of the period represented the urban settings in which they were produced' and also maintained that their readerships were 'discourse communities', although her phrasing was closer to the definition of 'communities of interest'.<sup>189</sup> This is certainly relevant when considering the views of the urban 'dailies' such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Times*. Van Remoortel cautioned that editors acted as 'gatekeepers...

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<sup>184</sup> Lester, 'Local newspapers', 46.; Jane-Louise Secker, 'Newspapers and historical research: a study of historians and custodians in Wales', (Ph.D diss., Uni Wales Aberystwyth, 1999), 4.

<sup>185</sup> Nicholas Marshall, 'The Rural Newspaper and the Circulation of information and Culture in New York and the Antebellum North' *New York History*, 88, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 137.

<sup>186</sup> Jackson, 'Provincial Newspapers', 111; Jones, 'Workmen's Advocates', 313.

<sup>187</sup> Davies, 'Newspapers and Witchcraft', 140; Secker, 'Newspapers and historical research', 220.

<sup>188</sup> Mary Lester, 'Local newspapers and the shaping of local identity in North-East London c.1885–1915', *International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2009): 46; Secker, *Newspapers and historical research*, 4; Owen Davies, 'Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period', *Journal of British Studies*, 37, no. 2 (1998): 140.

<sup>189</sup> Miskell, 'Putting on a show', 39.

only allowing through what they deemed suitable for republication', so editorial choice would directly affect what information readers could access.<sup>190</sup> The worldviews held by newspapers are not always obvious but must be considered. In particular, it is noted that letters which appeared in the newspapers, expressing opinions about local and national matters, were written by those who held a strong enough opinion to act and may not have been representative of the, in this case exactly characterised, 'silent majority'. However an unpopular view often generated further correspondence expressing a *contra* opinion. Editorial preference when selecting letters to print may also be an issue, although there are examples of newspapers printing letters and then disassociating themselves from the opinions expressed therein, for example when a Cheshire newspaper reported a tenant farmer's views on of his landlord's actions but made it clear that these were *his* opinions (see below, Section 6.5).<sup>191</sup> Caution is necessary when using letters to suggest wide-spread acceptance of the letter's viewpoint, a caution that is acknowledged in the 'Control' chapter. Criticism of newspaper accounts include that, when a number of papers report the same event, there are inconsistencies between them, and therefore caution needs to be exercised in accepting the 'facts' as presented by any individual report. However, as Knelman noted 'It is unfair to impugn the intergrity of newspapers as historical documents just because they don't tell one consistent story'.<sup>192</sup>

## 2.7 Micro history

This study uses, amongst others, methods that have been termed 'micro-historical', a concept generally accepted to have been developed in the 1970s but which, forty years on, Francesca Trivellato still felt compelled to try to define. She saw microhistory's central argument as being 'that a variation of scales of analysis breeds radically new interpretations of commonly accepted grand narratives'.<sup>193</sup> She also maintained that it is necessary to reconstruct what she termed 'networks of relations' to understand how meanings are formed and how power is distributed'.<sup>194</sup> Together these contribute significantly to the approach taken by this thesis, for example, when comparing power relationships between people and organisations at scales varying from the national to the very local. Other examples include investigations of how national authorities attempted to control the epizootic through local authorities, how this worked in practice at one scale, and how these same local authorities interacted with their devolved committees at another. The micro-historical use of in-depth investigations of local events and even individuals to shed

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<sup>190</sup> Van Remoortel, 'Scissors, paste, and the female editor', 555.

<sup>191</sup> 'An Observing Tradesman', *Northwich Guardian*, 6 January 1866, 4.

<sup>192</sup> Judith Knelman, 'Can We Believe What the Newspapers Tell Us? Missing Links in *Alias Grace*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 68, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 685.

<sup>193</sup> Francesca Trivellato, 'Microhistoria/Microhistoire/Microhistory', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 23, no. 1 (2015): 122.

<sup>194</sup> Trivellato, 'Microhistoria/Microhistoire/Microhistory', 122.

light on wider issues, as exemplified by the work of Barry Reay, amongst others, is also important to this study.<sup>195</sup> It is acknowledged that the thesis does not use the in-depth investigation of an individual life employed by Carlo Ginzburg in his ground-breaking 1976 book but does use a micro-historical approach as well as other techniques.<sup>196</sup> It is noted that Ginzburg himself did not coin the term, he credited it to George R Stewart's 1959 book, where Stewart suggested that 'we may be able to see .. as clearly by looking minutely and carefully .... as by looking extensively and dimly'.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Barry Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>196</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e I vermi: Il cosmo di un omagnet del '500*, Giulio Einaudi (ed), (Torino: Einaudi, 1976) this version Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, John Tedeschi & Anne Tedeschi (trans) (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

<sup>197</sup> Carlos Ginzburg, John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', *Critical Enquiry*, 20, no. 1 (1993): 10-11; George R Stewart, *Pickett's Charge: A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1868*, (Boston: Boughton Mifflin Company, 1959), xii.



### 3 Chapter 3 – Regional Topographies of the Cattle Plague

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents background information to the study. An intuitive assumption about the Cattle Plague outbreak is that public concern would increase with increasing cattle losses. The level of concern would, in this case, be indicated by the number of reports the local newspapers carried, assuming public interest equals public demand for news. This is investigated through a quantitative investigation of the losses from the Cattle Plague and Cattle Plague related newspaper reports nationally and in Cheshire, Norfolk and Wiltshire. This section shows that the numbers of Cattle Plague related reports were not totally linked to the numbers of cattle lost at either national, local or sub-local levels, although there was some apparent linkage at times of peak local losses, and therefore other reasons have to be sought. The data are displayed graphically in the Appendix, (Section 9.4 ). The following sections consider the background to factors that might have been involved, in shaping experiences of, and responses to, the Cattle Plague. How local areas were governed, the relationships between national and local government and how these affected efforts to combat and control the outbreak are then considered. An overview of agricultural systems in the study areas follows. The importance of markets to communities in the mid-nineteenth century and the part played by facilitators such as drovers and carriers are then explored which indicates that markets were more important in Norfolk than Cheshire or Wiltshire which in turn suggests differences in agricultural aims.

##### 3.1.1 Cattle Plague Spread, Losses and Newspaper coverage

A fundamental question for this study was whether the amount of public concern about, and reactions to the Cattle Plague, as indicated by the numbers of Cattle Plague related reports in the local newspapers, was because of the numbers of cattle lost, either nationally or locally. If not, then other factors were at work and should be identified. This section presents a quantitative comparative investigation of links between cattle losses and numbers of Cattle Plague related newspaper reports at both national and county levels.

To investigate losses the numbers of cattle that were lost (because they succumbed to the disease, were slaughtered because they had the disease or were slaughtered because they had been in contact with sick animals and so might have had the disease) were calculated from data in the official *Report of the Cattle Plague in Great Britain*, (hereafter *Report*) published in 1868, which also gave the number of outbreaks data.<sup>198</sup> The total losses nationwide for each county are displayed as **Error! Reference source not found.** I

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<sup>198</sup> From data in The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office, *Report of the Cattle Plague in Great Britain During the Years 1865, 1866 and 1867*. (London: HMSO, 1868), 'Summary Tables and Abstracts of the Reported Cases

eft. This might be the result of differences in cattle numbers between counties, but comparison of the losses with cattle numbers in 1869-70, **Error! Reference source not found.** centre, shows very clearly that this was unlikely to be the case – areas of high loss do not coincide with high cattle numbers, except in Cheshire.<sup>199</sup> The other map, Figure 3-1 right, displays the total number of infected places (outbreaks) by county. (It should be noted that the values denoted by the tints vary between each of the maps in this figure)

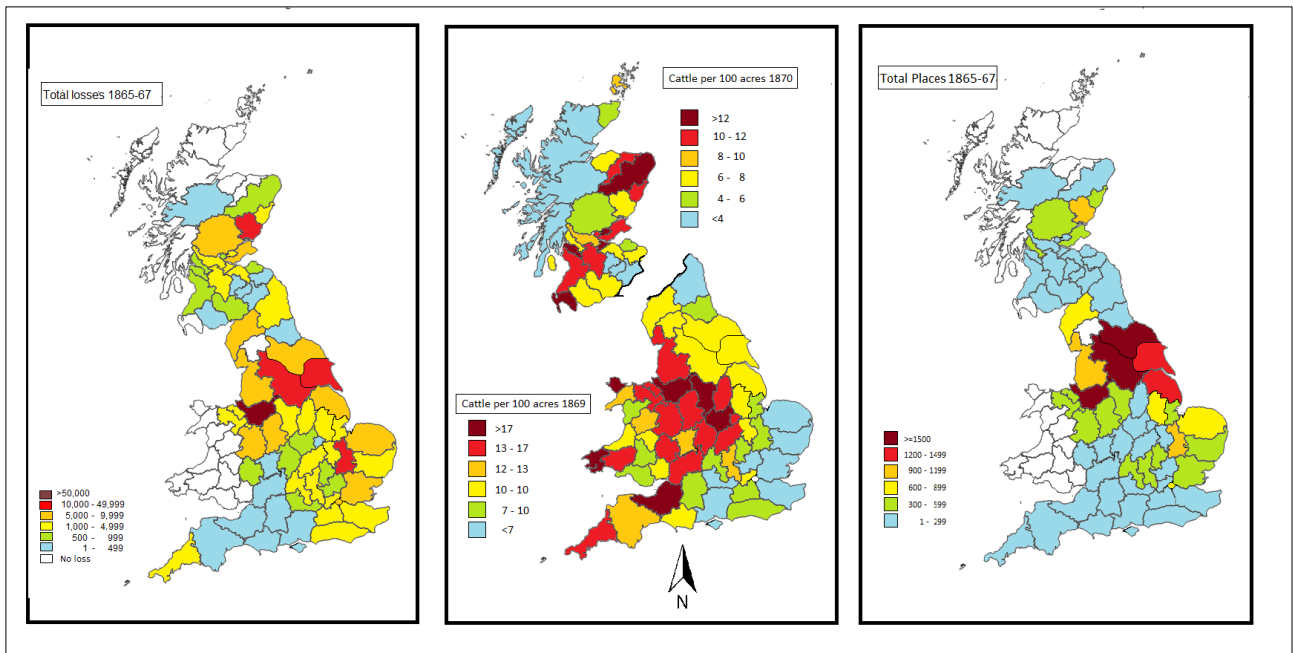


Figure 1-1

Figure 3-1 Total Cattle losses 1865-67, Cattle per 100 acres 1869-70 and Outbreaks 1865-67.

This section considers losses, outbreaks and newspaper reports throughout the outbreak and so monthly figures were calculated for all three. Comparisons between the number of reports with the losses and numbers of reports with outbreaks were made to see whether and how much the number of reports were influenced by the national and/or county losses and/or outbreaks.

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of Cattle Plague from the Commencement of the Disease to 31 December 1866’ and ‘Summary Tables and Abstracts of the Reported Cases of Cattle Plague from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1867 to the Termination of the Disease in September 1867’, 48-156 and 196-206 respectively. The maps used in this thesis are based on the Ordnance Survey Open Data ‘County boundaries – Historical dataset’ accessed using QGIS v3.16.11, unless otherwise noted. The county outlines produced by this dataset do not include the Metropolis, the Ridings of Yorkshire or the three divisions of Lincolnshire used by the *Report*, and the base map was amended to include these areas. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018.

<sup>199</sup> ‘Cattle per 100 acres’ redrawn from ‘Vision of Britain’ <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>. © Great Britain Historical GIS Project 2004-17. The site compiles maps for England and Wales separately to Scotland, which results in different category limits, and so could not be combined. Scotland no data for 1869. England and Wales 1869 at [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/atlas/map/R\\_CATTLE/ANC\\_CNTY/1869](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/atlas/map/R_CATTLE/ANC_CNTY/1869), Scotland 1870 at [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/atlas/map/R\\_CATTLE/SCO\\_CNTY/1870](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/atlas/map/R_CATTLE/SCO_CNTY/1870) both accessed 25 March 2022.

The number of infected places/outbreaks was investigated because a potential problem was identified with only considering the numbers of cattle lost; the basis by which cattle were lost varied over the course of the outbreak. At first it was just those cattle that died, then included infected cattle that were slaughtered and eventually those as well as cattle that were healthy but in contact with infected beasts.<sup>200</sup> It was suggested that the number of outbreaks would be more useful as the criteria remained constant throughout the epizootic and investigations into this are considered below. From experience of epizootics it is known that public concern is expressed because of outbreaks although this may be mediated by their severity. The numbers of outbreaks were therefore also investigated and this section considers, firstly the associations between losses and reports and then outbreaks and reports. An investigation of numbers of cattle that recovered, which forms part of a discussions in the Control chapter (Chapter 4), is also detailed.

#### **3.1.1.1 Losses**

Total losses by county give an idea of the variation seen across the country. The figure, above left, shows great variations, from no infections at all to over 50,000 total (in Cheshire). The data allow the number of cattle lost each month, for the entire country and for each county separately, to be calculated and clearly show that the pattern of losses in the study areas were very different from those for the country as a whole, and also from each other. These are shown graphically in Figure 9-2 in the Appendix. These graphs show that Cheshire losses peaked at the same time as did the national losses but did not display secondary peaks in late 1866 when the national losses did. Norfolk had two peak loss months, in November 1865 and March 1866 unlike the national losses and Wiltshire, with far fewer losses than either of the other study areas, also had most losses in November but had no more after February 1866. The losses in Norfolk were an order of magnitude more than in Wiltshire and were an order of magnitude less than Cheshire, showing great differences in total losses between the areas.

#### **3.1.1.2 Newspaper Reports**

The number of reports in each month were obtained from the British Newspaper Archive of the British Library (henceforth BNA) database using the search term 'cattle plague', the same term used to search for the reports used throughout the study. As Ireland had no infections it is not considered by this study and Irish newspapers were excluded from the report analyses. The results are shown in Figure 3-2 below and the county and national graphs are not as dissimilar as for losses. The graphs all display very similar overall shapes, despite being for separate geographical areas. They all peak in either February or March and November 1866 and, to a lesser extent, in May and August 1867 when the outbreak was in its last few

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<sup>200</sup> Abigail Woods, *pers. comm.* 9 June 2022.

weeks. This suggests some common factor(s), that they all vary in the same fashion indicates influences that are not restricted to any particular study area but affected newspaper cattle plague related reporting throughout the entire country. These remain unclear although the pattern of national losses are not entirely dissimilar and so may be a factor.

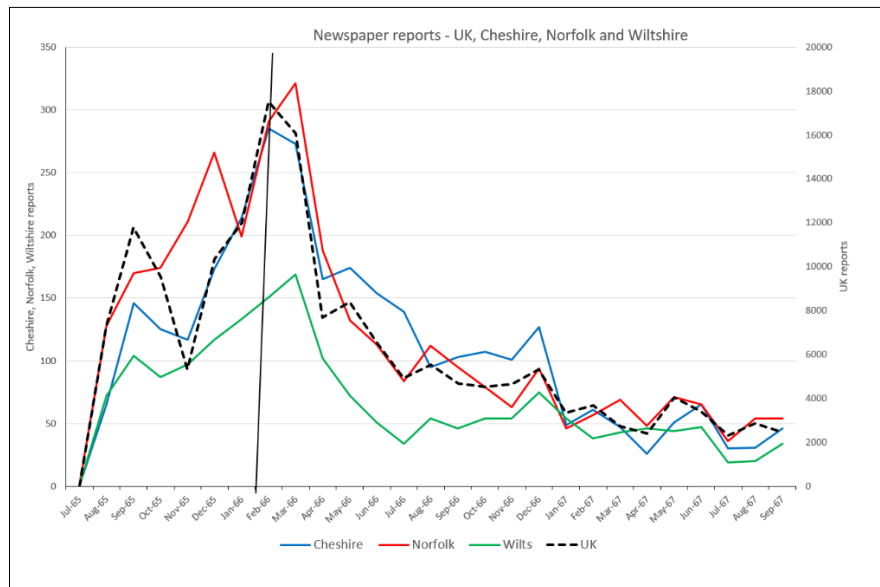


Figure 3-2 Newspaper reports per month for Great Britain, Cheshire, Norfolk and Wiltshire

The number of newspaper reports were then compared to both the national and county losses to see whether there was any linkage.

### 3.1.1.3 National losses and county reports

It is clear that the county report graphs follow the national loss curve to some extent (Figure 3-3 below) but that county reports were not completely influenced by the national losses, especially in Norfolk and Wiltshire. It might be that this was because people in the study areas were unaware of the national picture, but study of the accounts in the local newspapers makes it clear that the national situation was very thoroughly and rapidly reported. There were times when both losses and reports showed similar peaks and troughs (dashed vertical lines) especially towards the end of the outbreak.

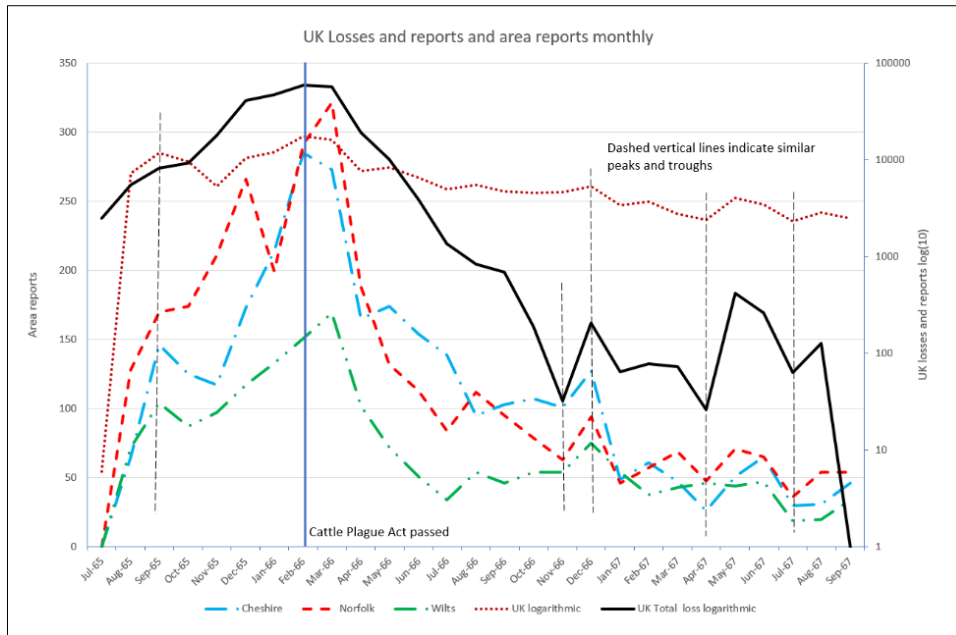


Figure 3-3 National losses and county report numbers

Whether these were statistically significant, whether there was a determining effect, is investigated in the Correlation section below (Section **Error! Reference source not found.**). It should be noted that both UK losses and UK reports are displayed with logarithmic axes.

#### 3.1.1.4 County Losses and county reports

In all three areas it was very clear that the number of newspaper reports were somewhat influenced by the local losses, but only at the times of greatest local destruction. In February 1866, the peak of the outbreak, the Cheshire reports and losses graphs (Figure 9-3 in the Appendix) were similar and this not surprising given how much of the national losses were experienced in Cheshire, and so one expects local reports to be high as well. In Norfolk both losses and reports showed a ‘double peak’ up to April 1866 that indicated that local losses may have been influential in the number of local reports but the continuation of high numbers of reports even after the local losses decreased in all the counties indicates that other factors were influencing report numbers throughout.

#### 3.1.1.5 Correlation between county newspaper reports and county and national losses

There was sufficient data to allow statistical analysis of the average number of newspaper reports and the national and local losses for each county in turn. Both Pearson’s Correlation and Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficients were calculated.

Pearson Correlation ( $\rho$ ) Average number of reports			
	Cheshire	Norfolk	Wiltshire
National loss	0.00000003	0.00000000	0.00000000
County loss	0.00000026	0.00000000	0.02416244

Spearman Rank Correlation ( $\rho$ ) Average number of reports			
	Cheshire	Norfolk	Wiltshire
National loss	0.00263772	0.00010828	0.00028214
County loss	0.00005357	0.00003471	0.00027970

Table 3-1 Pearson Correlation and Spearman Rank Correlation coefficients ( $\rho$ ) for average number of reports, national and local losses.

None of these results are significant; the highest value, between Wiltshire reports and local losses using Pearson’s correlation, only indicates a 2.4% probability that the linkage was not due to chance. All the results support the null hypothesis, that the number of reports in the local newspapers were not significantly linked to the number of cattle lost, either nationally or locally. These results do not show whether these reports did, or did not, have significant effect on people at the local level but strongly suggest that the reason for how many reports were carried by local newspapers was not simply the experience of the disease and its effects, but reflect interest in, and-or concern about the outbreak.

### 3.1.1.6 Outbreaks

The figure below (Figure 3-4) shows the number of outbreaks per month for the entire UK, and the three study areas. Because of the great difference between national and Wiltshire data the vertical axis is logarithmic to allow smaller values to be seen.

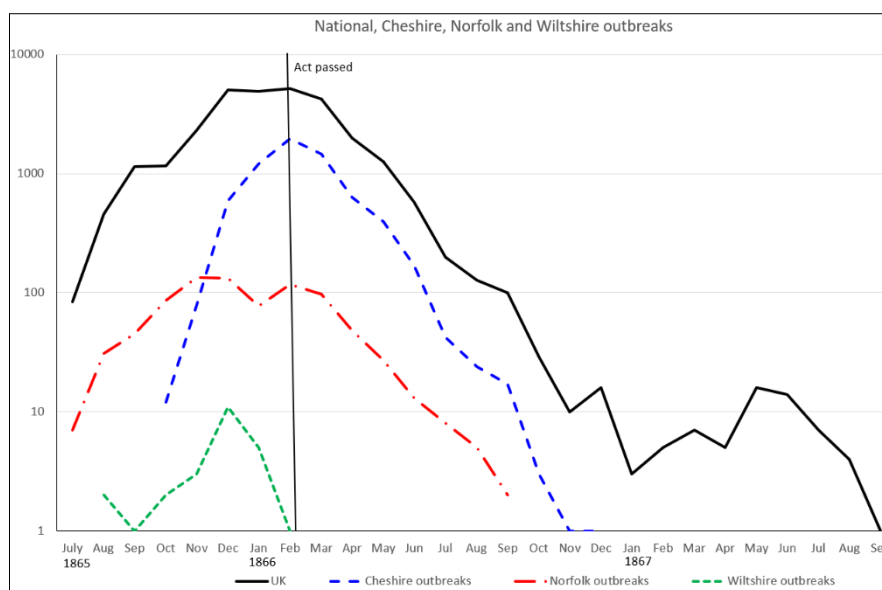


Figure 3-4 Number of monthly outbreaks for UK and study areas

There appears to be some similarity to the national and Cheshire graphs after the Act was passed but the differences between the study areas and the national picture remain clear.

### 3.1.1.7 Comparisons of outbreaks and county newspaper reports

As with the loss-reports investigation national and county outbreaks were investigated. Fewer similarities are evident than for the loss comparison, with peaks in all four graphs only in December 1866.

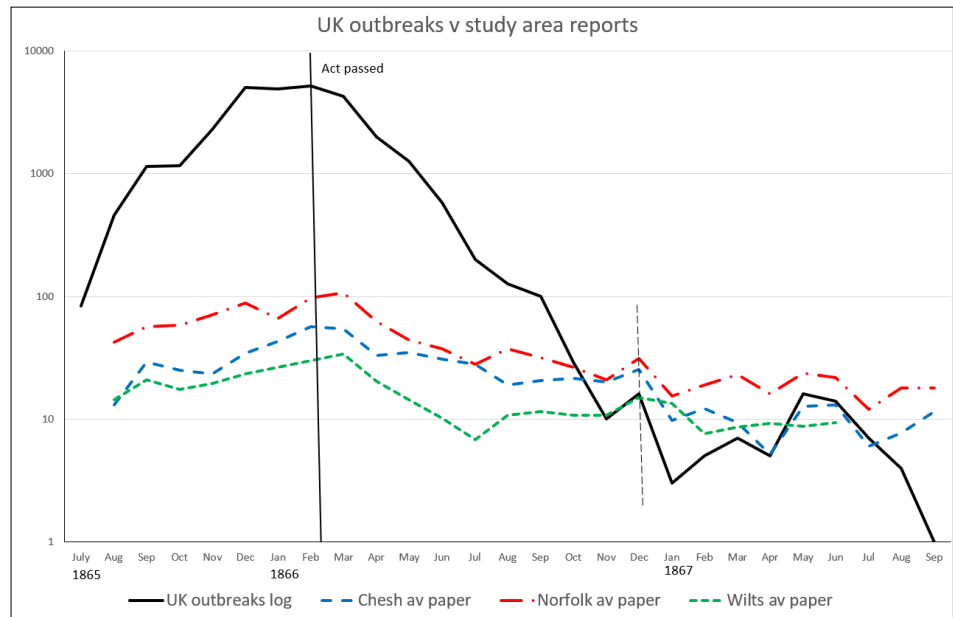


Figure 3-5 National outbreaks and county reports

The national outbreak data and those for the individual areas and their newspaper reports were then compared – (Figure 9-4 in the Appendix).

Unsurprisingly the Cheshire outbreaks graph closely followed that of the national. Peaks and troughs in the national numbers of outbreak were mirrored by the county reports in December 1866, and January and April 1867.

There were no correspondences between the county outbreaks curve and the county reports, indicating that compared with the number of Cattle Plague related reports in the newspapers of the individual study areas the number of reports in the county were not controlled by the number of outbreaks.

In Norfolk there was a peak and trough in all three graphs in December 1865 and January 1866 respectively and four common peaks and troughs in the national outbreaks and Norfolk reports in December 1866, January, March and April 1867, which suggests that Norfolk report numbers in the later part of the

outbreak were influenced by the number of national outbreaks. (**Error! Reference source not found.** in the appendix).

In Wiltshire the only correspondence was a peak in December 1866 between national outbreaks and newspaper reports, there was no correspondence between county and national outbreak figures.

In all three areas the numbers of reports after the area outbreaks ceased are conspicuous, showing that local outbreaks alone were not relevant at these times.

### 3.1.1.8 Correlation between county newspaper reports and county and national outbreaks

Pearson Correlation coefficients, (Table 3-2) calculated for all three study areas between the numbers of area reports and both national and local outbreaks did not show any significant correlations, confirming that neither local or national losses or outbreaks significantly influenced the number of reports about the Cattle Plague carried by local newspapers.

	Pearson Correlation (p)		
	Cheshire	Norfolk	Wiltshire
GB Outbreaks	0.00000006	0.00000000005	0.000000000
County outbreaks	0.00000001	0.00000000000	0.000000000

Table 3-2 Pearson Correlation reports to outbreaks

The only time when all the graphs showed a peak, for both outbreaks and reports, was December 1866. There was a sharp increase in cattle losses nationwide from the Cattle Plague in that month (from 32 in November to 206 in December and back to 52 in January 1867). The Privy Council made an order on 7 November 1866 relaxing the restrictions on cattle markets and effectively re-opened them. It is suggested that the peak in newspaper reports in all the study areas in December was the result of both increased Cattle Plague losses and discussions about the advisability of re-opening the markets, for example the *Chester Courant* published a report on a meeting between the Central Agricultural Committee and the president of the Privy Council when the agriculturalists ‘express[ed] disapproval of the Order....relaxing the restrictions on the removal of cattle and authorising the re-opening of markets’.<sup>201</sup> There as such concern that this would lead to a re-emergence of the Cattle Plague, that the same report noted that the Mayor of Stockport had ordered the revival of the local Cattle Plague committee to deal with any new cases. The peak in December may well have been a result of this relaxation and the con-commitment running of

<sup>201</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague’, *Chester Courant*, 19 December 1866, 5.



Christmas Fatstock markets. This may have been valid, as seen above the national losses also peaked in December 1866

The outbreak totals, both national and county, showed less correspondence to the numbers of county newspaper reports than with the loss figures, which was borne out by the Correlation figures where the values for outbreaks against reports were even less significant than for the losses although in no case was there a significant correlation.

### 3.1.1.9 Cattle recovery numbers

As noted at the start of this section the Control chapter (Chapter 4) considers cattle that recovered after the passing of the Cattle Diseases Prevention Act (hereafter CPA or ‘the Act’) as this has implications for discussions about compliance with and resistance to control legislation. The *Report* included recovery figures and these are presented below.

	Recovered	Recovered after Act	Recovered as % total recovered	% of total recovery after Act
UK	46899	14659	100	100
Cheshire	13905	8965	29.65	61.16
Norfolk	349	67	0.74	0.46
Wiltshire	18	0	0.04	0.00

Table 3-3 Recovered cattle, numbers and percentages.

Cheshire accounted for nearly a third (29.7%) of the cattle that recovered nationally, and for nearly two-thirds (61.2%) of those that did so after the passing of the CPA. 64% of the cattle that recovered in Cheshire did so after the Act, compared with 17% in Norfolk. Some of the post-Act recovery cattle in Norfolk were associated with homeopathy trials carried out there. The trials were a failure but a few cattle did recover, although no more than would have been expected without the treatments. The numbers of recovered cattle in Cheshire were far greater and reported far later in the year than in either of Norfolk or Wiltshire. Given the attitudes of some of the Cheshire authorities, presented in the Control chapter, this is not entirely unexpected but goes some way to support the contemporary views about Cheshire’s compliance with the regulations expressed in the *Report* and noted in the Control chapter (Chapter 4). These figures are also discussed in the Control chapter; they suggest very strongly that there was failure to comply with the requirement to slaughter infected cattle after the CPA and that the extent of this varied, with Cheshire exhibiting the greatest non-compliance. It is noted that Wiltshire’s apparent compliance, with no recovered cattle after the Act, was inevitable as the county had no infected cattle *to* recover after the Act was passed. The large numbers of recovered cattle in Cheshire, compared to the rest of the country (Figure 9-6 in the Appendix) indicate a real difference between the county and elsewhere.

The correlation results (Table 3-1 Pearson Correlation and Spearman Rank Correlation coefficients ( $\rho$ ) for average number of reports, national and local losses and Table 3-2) indicated that observed similarities were not statistically significant. It is noted that this conclusion contradicts that of Richard Adelman and Lois Zeebrugge that ‘news coverage is sensitive to epidemiology, especially to mortality. [Their] analysis provides a scientific basis for the colloquial statement, "Death makes news."'.<sup>202</sup> It is not denied that ‘death makes news’, and it is accepted that many newspaper reports during the Cattle Plague were about cattle and (inaccurately) human losses, however, many more were about other concerns - for example, the effects of those deaths, the control measures and compensation.<sup>203</sup> There were no definite reports of death from the disease itself in humans, although one incident raised the possibility, and it was certainly feared. At least eight newspapers carried (exactly) the same report of the supposed death of a Liege (Belgium) butcher from accidental infection from a diseased animal but, as Clive Spinage suggested, reports of human fatalities from the disease were most likely due to anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*).<sup>204</sup> The conclusion that Cattle Plague concerns were predominantly not related to cattle losses or the numbers of outbreaks, particularly after peak loss and outbreaks, validates the need for the rest of this thesis, which investigates what those reasons were and what they show about rural society, communities and agriculture in the middle of the nineteenth century.

### 3.1.2 Overview of the Cattle Plague epizootic

It is important to recall that at the time of the Cattle Plague the causes of all disease were unknown. As a newspaper correspondent noted in late 1865, the Cattle Plague was ‘shrouded in as much mystery as “the Potato Blight” or “the Cholera”’.<sup>205</sup> The epizootic is referred to throughout the thesis as the Cattle Plague because, whilst it was also known as Russian or Steppe Murrain and Rinderpest, most newspaper and official accounts used the term ‘Cattle Plague’ and included the capital letters, a convention that is followed here. It was not a one-off event, several infectious animal diseases were established in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, including Bovine pleuropneumonia (BPP) and FMD, before the outbreak of the Cattle Plague. Indeed, as Sophie Riley noted, John Gamgee considered that ‘over a quarter of the national

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<sup>202</sup> Richard C. Adelman and Lois M Verbrugge, ‘Death Makes News: The Social Impact of Disease on Newspaper Coverage’, *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 41, no. 3 (2000): 347.

<sup>203</sup> The three Cattle Plague related ‘human losses’ uncovered were all the result of suicide, one of which was reported in at least five different newspapers: ‘Murder and Suicide in Cambridgeshire’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 June 1866, 3 (also *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 30 June 1866, 3, *Cheshire Observer* 30 June 1866, 3, *Northwich Guardian* 30 June 1866, 5); ‘The Cattle Plague’, *Congleton and Macclesfield Mercury*, 13 January 1866, 8; ‘Suicide’, *Lynn Advertiser*, 29 December 1865, 5; ‘The wife of Thomas Wilson....’, *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 7.

<sup>204</sup> ‘Death of a Butcher from Cattle Plague’, *Norwich Mercury*, 20 February 1867, 4. Original source unlocated; Clive Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 37.

<sup>205</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague’, *North British Agriculturalist*, 29 November 1865, 5.

herd was disease ridden' by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>206</sup> Before 1865 BPP was the most dangerous cattle disease, with a morbidity (infection) rate of between 10-40% and mortality of around 50%.<sup>207</sup> Cattle Plague was considerably more deadly, with morbidity and mortality rates of 90%; eight times more cattle died in an attack of Cattle Plague than would succumb to BPP.<sup>208</sup> Additionally, as both Abigail Woods and Richard Perren observed, the relaxation of import controls on livestock in 1846, combined with increasingly efficient and rapid transport systems and an ever-increasing demand for meat, well-evidenced by newspaper reports at the time, meant that the disease was able to enter the country and then spread faster and more widely than had ever been possible before.<sup>209</sup>

John R Fisher considered that, by the 1860s, animal disease was regarded as 'an inevitable risk of [a farmer's] occupation.'<sup>210</sup> The threat posed by infectious livestock diseases had not been ignored; numerous authors have recorded that John Gamgee of the New Veterinary College in Edinburgh warned of the dangers well before the disease arrived.<sup>211</sup> The combination of high infectivity and rapid, country-wide transportation had serious repercussions when the disease arrived in a shipment of cattle from Revel to Hull in May 1865. The origin was the subject of intense debate for months and many people believed, like the London correspondent of the *Congleton & Macclesfield Mercury*, that 'there is no doubt this grievous disease... has appeared spontaneously' encouraged by crowded insanitary conditions.<sup>212</sup> This perception was very common - almost every account and paper written on the outbreak mentions it. Such a belief necessarily affected attempts to control the disease.<sup>213</sup> It was, however, denied by many others that 'crowded insanitary conditions' were a factor; for example, in September 1865, the journal *John Bull*

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<sup>206</sup> Sophie Riley, *The Commodification of Farm Animals*, (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 96.

<sup>207</sup> John Campbell. 'Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia' at <https://www.msdevetmanual.com/respiratory-system/respiratory-diseases-of-cattle/contagious-bovine-pleuropneumonia>, (March 2015) Accessed 15 December 2020.

<sup>208</sup> Jeremiah T Saliki, 'Rinderpest' at <https://www.msdevetmanual.com/generalized-conditions/rinderpest/rinderpest> (2020); 'Rinderpest', CABI Invasive Species Compendium at <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/66195#tooverview> (April 2019) both accessed 16 December 2020; Riley, *The Commodification of Farm Animals*, 96.

<sup>209</sup> Abigail Woods, 'A historical synopsis of farm animal disease and public policy in twentieth century Britain', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 366, (2011): 1943-44; Richard Perren, *The meat trade in Britain, 1840-1914*. (London: UK: Routledge, 1978), 216-217. Example newspaper comments: 'Beef is the favourite food of working men, and eating more meat is the first luxury to which a hard-working man naturally turns' ['The Advance in the Price of Meat, *Coventry Standard*, 7 December 1866, 3 and 'The Price of Meat', *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 21 December 1866, 9] and 'labouring men... have been able to eat more meat than previously' ['Our London Correspondent', *Kentish Independent*, 24 October 1863, 2.]

<sup>210</sup> John R Fisher, 'The economic effects of Cattle Disease in Britain and its containment, 1850-1900', *Agricultural History*, 54, no. 2, (1980): 285. Fisher was discussing FMD but it applies generally to attitudes to infectious diseases in the period.

<sup>211</sup> See, for example, Michael Worboys, 'Germ Theories of Disease and British Veterinary Medicine, 1860-1890', *Medical History*, 35, (1991): 310, and MAFF, *Animal Health: A Centenary 1865-1965*, (London: HMSO, 1965), 126-128.

<sup>212</sup> 'From our London correspondent', *Congleton \* Macclesfield Mercury*, 19 August 1865, 3.

<sup>213</sup> Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, 1865-1866', 107.

considered it 'singular' that, although there were no cases within the crowded City of London 'that all around the more open and airy parts of Islington the cows were first attacked'.<sup>214</sup> As noted in the literature review the idea that invisible 'germs' caused disease had been proposed by the time of the Cattle Plague but was far from accepted. This had implications for contemporary control measures; if it was believed that disease arose spontaneously rather than by 'germs' then people who disputed control measures such as import controls or movement restrictions that did not affect 'miasma'-encouraging conditions were not being arbitrary or obstructive in their opposition.

As noted above, Cattle Plague was first reported in the London area (Islington) in May/June 1865, and by the time of the first official reaction, nearly six weeks later, there were already another eighty-two infection loci in the country.<sup>215</sup> Parliament was prorogued at the time, following the recent general election, and it did not sit again until the start of the new year, which seriously affected the effectiveness of official reactions. There was little early concern, as late as September 1865 the editor of the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* complained about the 'dead season' and that the 'ordinary elements of human affairs have fallen into the state of stagnation more or less prevalent at this time of year'.<sup>216</sup> It suggested, with what *might* be a slight nod to the developing Cattle Plague, that journalists were 'now suffering under a more grievous epidemic than people have any idea of – the *News Famine*', although it is more likely to have been a reference to the Lancashire Cotton Famine that had only ended the previous year. The *Gazette* admitted that 'we have been hunting in vain for something worth telling our readers', which turned out to be somewhat complacent, given that seven cows had already been lost to the disease in the county. However by the end of 1865, it was clear that the epizootic was out of control and that government actions had been ineffective.

By the time the CPA was passed, in late February 1866, every county in England (excepting Westmorland and Sussex), twelve counties in Scotland and one in Wales, were infected.<sup>217</sup> Strict, although not always

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<sup>214</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *John Bull*, 16 September 1865, 6.

<sup>215</sup> 'Cattle Disease', *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette*, 27 July, 1865, 3; 'Disease in Cattle', *Congleton & Macclesfield Mercury*, 29 July 1865, 5; 'Current events', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 29 July 1865, 3; 'The Cattle Plague', *Wiltshire & Gloucestershire Standard*, 5 August 1865, 3; Veterinary Dept, *Appendix II*, 'Digest of Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council issued by the Queen in Council or by the Lords of the Privy Council relating to the Cattle Plague', July 1865, in The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office, *Report of the Cattle Plague in Great Britain During the Years 1865, 1866 and 1867*, The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office, 3-43. (London: HMSO, 1868), 354; MAFF, *Animal Health*, 16.

<sup>216</sup> 'The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 15 September 1865, 2.

<sup>217</sup> From data in Veterinary Dept, *Report*, 'Summary Tables and Abstracts of the Reported Cases of Cattle Plague from the Commencement of the Disease to 31 December 1866', 48-156. The Act's full title was 'An Act to amend the Act of the Eleventh and Twelfth Years of Her present Majesty, Chapter One hundred and seven, to prevent the spreading of contagious or infectious Disorders among Sheep, Cattle, and other Animals', Public General Acts, 29 & 30 Victoria, c.15.

strictly applied, movement controls, the closure of markets and fairs and the slaughter of infected and ‘in contact’ cattle eventually brought the epizootic under control, although the country was not free of the disease until September 1867, as Charles Rosenberg noted ‘Epidemics [and epizootics] ordinarily end with a whimper, not a bang’.<sup>218</sup> By then, at least 278,943 cattle had been attacked, and 266,065 infected animals plus an additional 68,494 healthy cattle had been slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease, giving a total loss nationwide of at least 334,559 cattle.<sup>219</sup> Losses varied enormously geographically (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Cheshire lost at least 77,635 animals, Norfolk 7,123 and Wiltshire only 138, one of the reasons for this study using a multi-area, comparative methodology. These are the official figures, but in reality losses were probably far higher; in the preface to the c1872 book version of her, initially serialised, story about the Cattle Plague, Sophie Amelia Prosser wrote ‘The full extent of its ravages cannot be accurately ascertained, as many farmers suppressed the fact that the disease had broken out in their herds, in order to escape the destruction of the rest’.<sup>220</sup> This seems very likely given the frequency of prosecutions for failing to inform an inspector, which are discussed in the Control chapter (Chapter 4.)

It is easy to focus entirely on the numbers, but behind the reports of lost cattle lie deeply personal tragedies. The dead cattle were the livelihoods of those who owned them, at a time when support for the destitute was either lacking or dependant on the goodwill of others. Discussing the effect of the Cattle Plague on his neighbours, Lincolnshire farmer Tom Holman lamented that the Cattle Plague had ‘swept their all away, plunging them in [sic] sorrow and dismay and opening to their view a dreary prospect for the future.... [that] will terminate in their utter ruin’.<sup>221</sup> Farmers have an emotional attachment to their stock as well as a financial investment in them. An account published in the *Chester Chronicle* made this clear.

We drove away to another larger farm, where no less than forty-five cows had died.... The tenant was an old man (he had been seriously ill, our conductor told us, from the shock he had experienced), and the savings of a lifetime were gone.

“I’ve lost my little all,” he said to us, heartbroken. ....There was real trouble in this man’s quivering tone, and a real ruined home at the back of the scene.

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<sup>218</sup> Charles E Rosenburg, ‘What is an Epidemic? AIDS in Historical Perspective’, *Daedalus*, 118, no. 2, (Spring 1878): 8.

<sup>219</sup> It is noted that these figures differ, slightly, from those given by Stephen Matthews (Matthews, ‘The Cattle Plague in Cheshire’, 107) but not enough to invalidate the point.

<sup>220</sup> Sophie Amelia Prosser, *The Days of the Cattle Plague*, (London: The Religious Tracts Society, 1872?), 9. Originally published in serialised form in *The Sunday at Home, a family magazine for Sabbath reading*, first instalment 1 May 1868, 305-307. The uncertainty about the publication date for the book version is because it was undated, the 1872 is from WorldCat

([https://www.worldcat.org/search?qt=worldcat\\_org\\_all&q=Sophie+Amelia+Prosser%2C+The+Days+of+the+Cattle+Plague%2C+%28London%3A+the+Religious+Tracts+Society](https://www.worldcat.org/search?qt=worldcat_org_all&q=Sophie+Amelia+Prosser%2C+The+Days+of+the+Cattle+Plague%2C+%28London%3A+the+Religious+Tracts+Society) accessed 19 July 2021) but seems likely, the book features in the Society’s ‘New publications’ list in November 1872 (‘Religious Tract Society New List’, *The Globe*, 19 November 1872, 8.)

<sup>221</sup> ‘Letter - The Cattle Plague’ *Lynn Advertiser*, 3 March 1866, 8.

With a trembling hand, he pointed silently to a field about a quarter of a mile distant, where a huge letter T was described by the arrangement of forty great mounds. In the graves under the mounds lay forty animals and buried with them the thrift and industry of forty years of the farmers' life.<sup>222</sup>

The passage emphasises the reality of the distress and loss experienced. A herd is usually the result of decades of breeding and development and, even if compensation for financial loss is available, the 'industry' of the farmer's life is irretrievably lost with their cattle. A good herd was also a source of pride and good standing, which were inevitably lost with the cattle. Sentiments such as these are found in newspaper accounts but do not generally appear in official records, and so are not easily visible in the sources more usually consulted but are clearly evident here.

### 3.1.3 Control, national and local government

Attempts to control the epizootic, mentioned above, were necessarily implemented at local levels that, in the mid-nineteenth century, were not administered directly by the national government. The Orders in Council and the legislation of the CPA were applied through the local authorities, the basic principle was 'local provision, for local wants, identified locally'.<sup>223</sup> Filip van Roosbroek stated that the development of government policies was influenced by the political culture of the country and noted Fisher's comment that Britain was, in contrast to many European states, 'more commercial in orientation, less centralized and bureaucratic and less prone to interfere in the economy and society' which, van Roosbroek concluded, was why 'an effective stamping out program was dismantled after the last of the eighteenth-century outbreaks'.<sup>224</sup> That government actions against the Cattle Plague were seen as 'alien actions, as tyranny imposed from without' is clear in academic and local sources.<sup>225</sup> Both Sherwin Hall and Stephen Matthews concluded the government was reluctant to control cattle imports, necessary to avoid renewed infection from the continent, because any restriction 'was regarded as intolerable interference with legitimate trade'. Letters in a Wiltshire newspaper showed concern over Government actions, one complained that

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<sup>222</sup> 'Rounds with a Vet', *Chester Chronicle*, 12 May 1866, 2. Original *Chambers' Journal*, Part XXVIII, 14 April 1866, 238-40.

<sup>223</sup> E Peter Hennock, 'Central/local government relations in England: An outline 1800-1950', *Urban History*, 9, (1982): 39-40.

<sup>224</sup> John Fisher, 'To kill or not to kill: the eradication of contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia in western Europe', *Medical History* vol 47, No. 3 (2003): 316; Filip van Roosbroeck, *To cure is to kill?: State intervention, cattle plague and veterinary knowledge in the Austrian Netherlands, 1769-1785*. unpublished PhD thesis University of Antwerp, 2016, 235; John Broad, 'Cattle Plague in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Agricultural history review*, 31, no. 2 (1983): 23

<sup>225</sup> Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867) this edition *Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution*, Oxford World's Classics, (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 186-187; Arvel Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague in England, 1865-1867' *Agricultural Historical Review*, 35, no. 2 (April 1961): 104.

the powers of entry and disposal allowed to Inspectors by an Order in Council were 'unheard of and arbitrary'.<sup>226</sup>

Concern about the perceived attack on local independence by central government was expressed in a poem in *Punch* in 1866. This example portrayed the CPA as a direct attack on self (local) government:

Bos Locutus Est (extract)<sup>227</sup>

Local government for cow or man  
To live or die by, as the case might be,  
I fondly hoped was England's settled plan,  
But with self-government it is all U.P.!

While gentle GREY controlled the English roast,  
Local authorities were potent still;  
By varying light from centre unto coast  
To read the Council's Orders at their will.

But loud and louder in bucolic roar,  
"Slay, isolate, stamp out!" exclaimed the squires;  
Remonstrant GREY and BARING backward bore,  
And quenched the Council's ineffectual fires.

And HUNT rushed to the squirearchy's front,  
And smote self-government between the brows,  
And where GREY scourged with whips, determined HUNT  
With scorpions scourged us miserable cows

This poem refers to the perceived old order, of 'local government for man or cow,' which allowed local authorities to interpret government Orders as they saw fit ('at their will'), but with the continued increases in Cattle Plague attacks the squirearchy demanded tougher controls, including the 'stamping out' slaughter, than the Privy Council had ordered, ("Slay, isolate, stamp out!" exclaimed the squires'). George Hunt, a Conservative MP from Northamptonshire, introduced his own Bill for control of the Cattle Plague, which was even more rigorous than that brought in by Lord Grey for the Government.<sup>228</sup> Hunt's Bill, which eventually failed, would have removed the ability of local authorities to choose to implement controls, reducing local autonomy. The imagery of the poem is evocative as 'smiting... between the brows' was one

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<sup>226</sup> Sherwin Hall, 'The Cattle Plague of 1865', *Medical History*, 6, no. 1 (1962), 47; 'To the Dairy Farmers, Graziers, and other Stock Masters in the Devizes Union', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 September 1865, 3; Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, 1865–1867', *Northern History*, 58, no. 1 (2002): 107.

<sup>227</sup> 'Bos Locutus Est', *Punch*, 550, (3 March 1866): 87. This is a Latin tag which translates as 'An Ox has spoken'. Susanne William Rasmussen stated that in Republican Rome reports of speaking cattle were seen as significant omens. [Susanne William Rasmussen, *Public Portents in Republican Rome*, (Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider, 2003), 40.]

<sup>228</sup> Erickson, *Cattle Plague*, 97.

way the poleaxe was used to slaughter cattle and would have associated the image of the cattle's violent end with the attacks by Hunt.

Just as government was in a power relationship with the counties which was at times resented, so too there were different levels of authority within local areas. One theme within this thesis considers and involves power- and social- relationships between these local area levels, requiring an appreciation of the relative social-power positions of individuals and groups within county hierarchies. These are not always easy to determine, but Jane Ridley presented one mid-nineteenth century 'order of precedence', for Warwickshire, originally compiled by hunting man Richard Grenville Verney, whom George Dangerfield described as

a genial and sporting young peer, whose face bore a pleasing resemblance to the horse, an animal which his ancestors had bred and bestridden since the days before Bosworth Field ... He had quite a gift for writing, thought clearly, and was not more than two hundred years behind his time.<sup>229</sup>

As will be seen below it was not only Verney who was considered behind the times. He gave the Warwickshire hierarchy, in descending order, as:

- The Lord-Lieutenant
- The Master of Foxhounds
- The Agricultural Landlords
- The Bishop
- The Chairman of the Quarter Sessions
- The Colonel of the Yeomanry
- The Member of Parliament
- The Dean
- The Archdeacons
- The Justices of the Peace
- The lower Clergy
- The larger Farmers<sup>230</sup>

The relative positions of some individuals might have varied, as Verney himself noted the order was 'liable to change depending on the position of the person compiling it'.<sup>231</sup> It was also the case that one individual might, and often did, occupy more than one position. For example, in Cheshire in 1866, the Duke of Westminster, Hugh Grosvenor, was Lord Lieutenant, MFH of the Cheshire Hunt, a major agricultural landlord, and a Justice of the Peace, which meant he directly influenced many different parts of society.

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<sup>229</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1935), 42, online at <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.175390/page/n9/mode/2up> accessed 28 September 2021.

<sup>230</sup> Richard, *The Passing Years*, 57-8.

<sup>231</sup> Verney, Lord Willoughby de Broke, *The Passing Years* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1924), 57-8.



Despite the value placed on it by local communities, local government was not well placed to deal with an epizootic of any kind, let alone one as severe as the Cattle Plague. An effective response to the Cattle Plague was hindered by an almost complete lack of understanding of, and preparation for, an epizootic on the part of medical and veterinary authorities and by a complacent public. As the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* stated in August 1865

We are threatened with one of those calamities that Englishmen in these days think they have a right to be exempt from. We expect a cattle plague as little as we do a return of the great plague of London or the sweating sickness, or locusts, or rivers of blood or showers of fire.<sup>232</sup>

Similarly, considering the AIDS epidemic in the late twentieth century, Rosenburg echoed the *Gazette's* comment over a century later, stating that

We have become accustomed in the last half century to thinking of ourselves as no longer subject to the incursions of such ills; death from acute infectious disease has seemed - like famine - limited to the developing world.<sup>233</sup>

Thus, the lessons to be learnt from a consideration of the Cattle Plague remain relevant.

This opinion makes the *Gazette's* perception of there being nothing newsworthy to print about six weeks later (see above, Section 3.1.2) even more strange. The calamity being faced in 1865 was a direct and potent threat to a major part of British agriculture and the income of vast numbers of farmers, even the potential loss of the dairy sector.

#### **3.1.4 Agriculture and dairying in the study areas**

One of the possible explanations for variations in the effect of the Cattle Plague throughout the country is differences in agriculture production. As discussed in the Literature review, this has been the subject of much previous investigation, and various explanations have been proposed for these differences. This study provides evidence that develops discussions on mid-nineteenth-century agriculture in the study areas and debates about agricultural development, and the agricultural 'revolution' generally.

Based on previous work this study accepts that local areas varied in their agriculture. Some general trends have been identified, with the clay areas of northern Wiltshire and the south and western areas of Cheshire having many cattle for dairy, not beef, production. The Cheshire baronet Sir Harry Wainwright of Peover Hall observed, in 1862, that the farmers of Cheshire 'know how to make cheese, but not how to feed cows'

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<sup>232</sup> Comment, *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette*. 3 August 1865, 3.

<sup>233</sup> Rosenburg. 'What is an Epidemic?', 2.

and was against beef production, 'They should never give a prize for fat stock in a Cheshire show. What they wanted... was lean stock - useful stock'.<sup>234</sup> In contrast, in Norfolk much smaller numbers of cattle were found, and these were reared mainly for beef by 'grazier' farmers. The Norfolk dairy industry was important in the eighteenth century but had largely disappeared by the mid-nineteenth.<sup>235</sup> The corn-sheep-(beef) cattle farming seen on the chalk downlands of Wiltshire, was also important in Norfolk. Charles Foster maintained that the rural societies of north-west England, specifically Cheshire, were 'significantly different' from those found in the south and east. In the latter, which included Norfolk, parishes typically had a few large very market orientated farms owned by landlords and farmed by tenants with considerable seasonal hired labour.<sup>236</sup> In contrast, Cheshire farms were generally small and worked by a single tenant family with little or no hired labour. An American visitor to Cheshire in 1852 stated that

the farms of the country... in Cheshire were generally small, less, I should think, than one hundred acres. Frequently the farmer's family supplied all the labour upon them himself and his sons in the field, his wife and daughters in the dairy except that in the harvest month one or two Irish workers would be employed.<sup>237</sup>

Peter de Figueiredo depicted Cheshire as

a flat green landscape dotted with cows, of black and white houses, a county remote from the great events that have shaped the nation's history. This reflects the endurance of the old manorial class that maintained its hold on the land and ensured the survival of the county's agrarian character. It derives too from the quiet and continued profitability of agriculture over a long period. For Cheshire is a county of manor houses, not power houses, of minor gentry rather than dukes and statesmen. They managed and improved their estates, tended to the needs of their tenants, rode with the hounds, and attended the social season in Chester.<sup>238</sup>

There are a number of claims in this statement that could be debated, but it gives a picture of the county that is useful for this study. However, as Figueiredo appreciated, 'this picture does not reflect the impact of the industrial revolution'.<sup>239</sup> By the time of the Cattle Plague 'many of the merchants, manufacturers and

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<sup>234</sup> 'Cheshire Agricultural Society', *Northwich Guardian*, 27 December 1862, 5.

<sup>235</sup> Deborah Valenze, 'The Art of Women and the Business of Men: Women's Work and the Dairy Industry c 1740-1840', *Past and Present*, 130, (1991): 146.

<sup>236</sup> Charles F. Foster, *Cheshire Cheese and Farming in the Northwest in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Northwich: Arley Hall Press, 1998), 86-7.

<sup>237</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*, (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, 1857), 2 vols, Vol. 1, 113.

<sup>238</sup> Peter de Figueiredo, 'Cheshire Country Houses and the Rise of the Nouveaux Riches', *The Historian*, 86, (Summer 2005): 36.

<sup>239</sup> de Figueiredo, 'Cheshire Country Houses', 36.

bankers who did business in the fast expanding cities of Liverpool and Manchester moved out to Cheshire in search of a life in the country' and by 1879, he claimed, just under a third of the leading Cheshire families 'had made their money in manufacturing or trade'.<sup>240</sup> The small farms were characterised by Mick Reed as being 'household producers' and were outside the orthodox tri-partite 'landlord-tenant-labourers' organisation of nineteenth-century agriculture.<sup>241</sup>

In Cheshire and northern Wiltshire cheese and dairy production were of great importance from at least the seventeenth century. In 1852, James Caird observed that 'Cheshire has long been famous for its cheese', indeed dairying was so crucial to both the finances and society of these areas that Caird was of the view that the farmer's wife (who ran the dairy) was

the most important person in the establishment; the cheese, which is either made by her or under her directions, forming the produce of two-thirds or three-fourths of the farm; the remaining fraction of which comprises the business of the farmer.<sup>242</sup>

He made similar comments concerning Wiltshire dairies. The suggestion that cheese was responsible for up to 75% of the farm's output indicates how important the enterprise was. Henry Holland, commissioned by the Board of Agriculture to report on the agriculture of Cheshire in 1808, recorded that 'the farmer... is secure of having his rent made up for his landlord by the industry and excellence of the female presiding in the dairy, who is usually his wife, daughter or some other person connected with the family', not, tellingly, employed labour.<sup>243</sup> The 'remaining fraction' of the farm's production provided the farmer's income. This was still the case in the 1860s, as shown by comments made to the Tarporley Agricultural Society at their 1865 Annual Meeting dinner. The chairman noted that, in a dairy district, '[with] the loss of their milking stock they lost their cheese and butter which paid the rent'.<sup>244</sup> Such statements emphasised how vital cheese production, dairying, and the women who ran the dairies were and also indicated the large percentage of farm income that Cheshire landowners took in rent.<sup>245</sup> This praise was slightly unusual, Nicola

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<sup>240</sup> de Figueiredo, 'Cheshire Country Houses', 37.

<sup>241</sup> Mick Reed, 'Class and Conflict in Rural England: Some Reflections on a Debate', in *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1880*, ed. Mick Reed and Roger Wells, 1-2. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>242</sup> James Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51*, (London: Longman, Brown Green and Longmans, 1852, 2nd ed, facsimile edition, London: Forgotten Books, 2018) 78, 252-3.

<sup>243</sup> Sir Henry Holland 1788-1873, physician to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, born in Knutsford, Cheshire. Great nephew of Josiah Wedgwood, nephew of Mrs Gaskell. Traveller. Writer. [GT Britany, 'Holland, Sir Henry' in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol 27, *Hindmarsh-Hovenden*, ed. Sydney Lee, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1891), 144-145.]

<sup>244</sup> 'Tarporley Agricultural Society', *Northwich Guardian*, 23 September 1865, 5.

<sup>245</sup> Henry Holland, *General View of the Agriculture of Cheshire*, report to the Board of Agriculture and Internal Development orig. (London: Richard Phillips, 1808), 100, in William Marshall, *The Review and Abstract of the County*

Verdon noted that the true value of the women's work was not always realised, in monetary terms, when farmers negotiated their sale with cheese factors, but 'the farmer's wife continued to be indispensable in the nineteenth century'.<sup>246</sup> The prestigious Cheshire Agricultural Society saw dairy produce as so important that one of the toasts at the annual dinners was 'The Cheshire Dairymaid', and in 1863, a respondent claimed that

as no kind of crop in Cheshire would scarcely pay growing except cheese, it was desirable they should make it of the best quality, and to that end he would advise every farmer to have a wife for his dairymaid.<sup>247</sup>

This indicates that the value of the cheese made by the family dairywomen was widely and favourably recognised and contradicts Alun Howkins' assertion that it was only an acceptable activity for women as long as it was a hidden part of the household accounts, and 'uncommercial'.<sup>248</sup> He maintained that as dairy and cheese making became commercial after the 1850's 'women were replaced by men'. The evidence given above does not support this and suggests that the supposed date of their replacement by men by 'the mid nineteenth century', proposed by both Deborah Valenze and Howkins, was too early.<sup>249</sup> An explanation for this apparent contradiction is that *generally* men replaced women in the diaries by the mid-nineteenth century and Cheshire was 'behind the times'. This suggestion, of Cheshire being behind the times, receives some support in the Hunting chapter (Chapter 6). Cheesemaking by the wives of the larger farmers did, however, become less common as the century progressed, by 1881 it was, George Broderick claimed,

notorious that very few wives of wealthy farmers are now either trained or disposed to undertake the incessant toil of dairy-management. Cheese making is, therefore, carried on for the most part.... on farms of moderate size, where the farmer's wife is her own dairy-maid<sup>250</sup>

Nonetheless, this comment was more aimed at denigrating the reluctance of the wives of the larger farmers to engage in the work (part of a perception that the larger farmers wrongly considered themselves 'better' than others), than on the importance of dairying, indeed even fictionalised accounts support the

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*Reports to the Board of Agriculture from the several Agricultural Departments of England*, (York: Longman, Hurst, Reed, Orme, and Brown, 1818), Vol 2 *Western Department*, 157.

<sup>246</sup> Nicola Verdon, "'Subjects deserving of the highest praise": Farmers' Wives and the Farm Economy c 1700-1850', *The Agricultural History Review*, 51, no. 1 (2003), 38; Nicola Verdon, *Working the Land: A History of the Farmworker in England from 1860 to the Present Day*, (Sheffield: palgrave macmillan, 2017), 67-8.

<sup>247</sup> 'The Cheshire Dairymaids', *Northwich Guardian*, 31 October 1863, 6.

<sup>248</sup> Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925*, (London: HarperCollinsAcademic), 1991), 100-101.

<sup>249</sup> Valenze, 'The Art of Women and the Business of Men', 142-169.

<sup>250</sup> George Broderick, *English Land and English Landlords: An Enquiry into the Origin and Character of the English Land System, with Proposals for its Reform*, (London: Cassel, Petter, Galpin & Company, 1881, this edition New York: Augustus M Kelley, 1968), 397.

importance of cheese and dairying to Cheshire; a serialised story, published in the *Northwich Guardian* in 1867 and based on the Cattle Plague, the eponymous heroine of which was a dairymaid, included a song that celebrated Cheshire cheese and its importance to the county's farmers and economy.<sup>251</sup>

'All hail to thee, famed Cheshire cheese!  
All hail to thee, famed Cheshire cheese!  
Enjoyed where blows the torrid breeze;  
To thee we give our richest fields;  
The best of all our county yields.

CHOROUS

O Cheshire Cheese. O Cheshire Cheese!  
Should thou be killed by Heaven's decrees,  
We'll pray upon our bended knees,  
That thou mayest come to life again.

All hail to thee, famed Cheshire Cheese!  
Enjoyed within the Polar seas;  
Best milk and cream be ever thine --;  
None is too rich and none too fine.

Chorus &c

All hail to thee, famed Cheshire Cheese!  
Sweeter far than Samson's beer;<sup>252</sup>  
We'll spare no pains to make thee old;  
And do what good Sir Harry told.<sup>253</sup>

Chorus &c'

Although fictional, this song gives an idea of the meaning and significance of cheese to the Cheshire farmers; it expresses the pride the Cheshire farmers had in their cheese production, it is seen as the best thing Cheshire produces, 'the best of all our county yields'. Good cheese production was one of the ways a farmer could gain a good reputation, similar to the importance to stockmen of the ability to cure sick animals identified by Jane Rowling in Yorkshire.<sup>254</sup> The song emphasises the great investment of resources, for example the work and time invested in allowing the cheese to mature (we'll spare no pains to make thee old') and the use of the best land, milk and cream ('best milk and cream is ever thine – / none is too rich and none too fine'). The poem elevates the cheese to divine status, and there are elements of worship, and the 'come to life again' suggests the belief in the resurrection of the faithful.<sup>255</sup> Yet despite this, all was at risk from the Cattle Plague, the disease is seen to be sent by God ('killed by Heaven's decrees,') and the *only* recourse was to 'pray upon bended knee', a deferential action appropriate in a traditional,

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<sup>251</sup> Annie Gray, *Northwich Guardian*, 22 June 1867, 2, Part 2.

<sup>252</sup> An allusion to the honey that bees made in the corpse of the lion killed by Sampson (*Holy Bible*, Judges, 14:14)

<sup>253</sup> 'Sir Harry' was Sir Harry Wainwright, Bart. of Over Peover. What he said about cheese is not known.

<sup>254</sup> Jane Rowling, 'Trust in a Masculine Space and a Community within a Community: Pre-1950 Auction Mart Culture in Lower Wharfedale, Yorkshire', *Rural History*, 26, no. 1 (2015): 84-5.

<sup>255</sup> *King James bible*, John 11:25.

paternalistic and religious society which reinforces the idea that Cheshire's rural society was exactly that at the time of the Cattle Plague. These were high and serious ideas, and yet the subject was a lowly cheese - a good example of *bathos*, with the lofty ideals and inflated tone of the poem, increased by the use of 'thee' and 'thou', juxtaposed with the lowly cheese, enhanced by capitalising the 'Cheshire Cheese' to increase its import. Bathos is usually a device of 'high' poetry, to see it being used in a 'common' newspaper poem increases the effect, making the imagery and message of the poem more powerful.<sup>256</sup> It also required readers to appreciate the irony, an indication that the readers of local newspapers were not entirely uncultured.

Cheshire cheese was not only sold in Britain, it was also a valuable and prestigious export. A late eighteenth-century ballad, 'The Cheshire Man' or 'The Cheshire Cheese' claimed the cheese to be more valuable than foreign spices, and again was an object of pride.

'The Cheshire Man'  
A Cheshire man sailed into Spain  
To trade for merchandise  
When he arrived from the main,  
A Spaniard him espies.

Who said, you English rogue, look here!  
What fruits and spices fine  
Our land produces twice a year,  
Thou hath not such in thine.

The Cheshire man ran to his hold!  
And fetch'd a Cheshire Cheese;  
And said, look here, you dog, behold!  
We have such Fruits as these.

Your fruits are ripe but twice a year;  
As you yourself do say.  
But such as I present you here,  
Our land brings twice a Day.<sup>257</sup>

It is noteworthy that the protagonist was Spanish not French, which might suggest that this ballad dates to earlier in the eighteenth century than the collection date suggests. The 'xenophobia' displayed here hardly needs to be mentioned. Pride in their cheese was not limited to Cheshire; the steward to Lord Bath at Longleat in Wiltshire, claimed that the amount of cheese produced from each cow in northern Wiltshire was 'amazingly greater than is common in any other district'.<sup>258</sup> However no contemporary literary

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<sup>256</sup> Inga Bryden, Faculty of Arts, University of Winchester, *Pers. comm*, 19 October 2020.

<sup>257</sup> Edward Jones, *Popular Cheshire Melodies*, (London: Editor, 1798), 2. Jones, the King's harpist, collected the ballad on the border between Cheshire and Wales.

<sup>258</sup> Thomas Wilson, *General View of the Agriculture of Wiltshire*, (London: Richard Phillips, 1812), 203. The information is given from Davis 'He claimed yields between 3 and 5cwt per cow', which is higher than Caird's more variable 2.5 –

appreciation of cheese and dairying was found in Wiltshire or Norfolk, although the importance of Wiltshire cheese and dairies has already been seen from other sources.

Wiltshire has traditionally been divided into two distinct regions: the 'Clay' Cheese district of the western parts of the county, and the extensive sheep-corn producing Chalklands of Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs. Henry Lancaster also noted several 'heavily enclosed butter parishes in the south-west, around Tisbury and the Donheads, which enjoyed many of the farming characteristics of the Cheese district.'<sup>259</sup> The social and economic life in Chalk areas was centred on nucleated villages, often sheltering in the deep valleys, rather than scattered communities. The 'Chalk' was described by Olmstead, an American farmer who visited Britain in 1857, as

A strange, weary waste of elevated land, undulating like a prairie, sparsely greened over its gray surfaces with short grass, uninhabited and treeless; only, at some miles asunder, broken by charming vales of rich meadows and clusters of farm-houses and shepherds' cottages... the valley lands are sometimes miles wide, and cultivation is extended often far up the hills. The farms are all very large, often including a thousand acres and it often appears that one farmer, renting all the land in the vicinity, gives employment to all the people of a village.<sup>260</sup>

Almost a text-book description of a capitalistic farm, *sans* the profit focus, which suggests that in Wiltshire both market orientated farming and family-farmed small scale production was found. Lancaster claimed that these parishes preserved a social hierarchy that allowed the gentry and clergy to wield considerable influence on the religious expression of the inhabitants. Avice Wilson stated that here 'the Church of England ... continued strictly to maintain the *status quo*'.<sup>261</sup> In contrast, Clay parishes were 'dotted with numerous isolated farms within a patchwork of small fields, a settlement pattern encouraged by labour-intensive farming' which did not require or encourage the development of compact villages; what nucleated settlements there were being mostly small towns rather than hamlets and it is noteworthy that these were also the areas of greatest non-conformism.<sup>262</sup> Manors here were increasingly sold to their

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4cwt per cow (Caird, *English Agriculture*, 260) but Caird noted that each cow also produced 15-20lb of butter per season as well, which Wilson did not report.

<sup>259</sup> E Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967), 117-120; Henry Lancaster, *Nonconformist and Anglican Dissent in Restoration Wiltshire 1660-1689*, Ph.D Thesis, Bristol University, Department of Historical Studies, 1995, 222, online at <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.363973> . Accessed 2 November 2020.

<sup>260</sup> Olmstead, *Walks and Talks*, Vol 2, 139-140.

<sup>261</sup> Avice R Wilson, *Forgotten Labour: The Wiltshire agricultural worker and his environment 4500 BC-AD 1950*, (East Knoyle: The Hobnob Press, 2007), 179.

<sup>262</sup> Lancaster, *Nonconformist and Anglican Dissent*, 227; Brian K Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell, *Region and Place: A study of English rural settlement*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2002), 53, fig 2.10.

sitting tenants as the nineteenth century progressed. As a result, manorial control weakened, and the isolated communities experienced less social regulation, especially where Wesleyan and Baptist congregations were established. Wilson observed that the growth of Wesleyism in the eighteenth century had brought into being a long period of chapel building in Wiltshire ‘particularly in the Cheese country where there were fewer villages and people often lived miles from the Anglican church’.<sup>263</sup> She maintained that chapel services, often led by lay ministers from both sides of the ‘social divide’, allowed farmers and their labourers to hear each other’s points of view more easily than in the socially stratified Anglican churches.

Agricultural production in Norfolk was different. Susanna Wade-Martins gave a concise overview of Norfolk agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century, where corn production, notably wheat and barley, was a dominant feature in most areas. She maintained that Norfolk farming was ‘still a model for the rest of the country to follow’.<sup>264</sup> For Leigh Shaw-Taylor, Norfolk farming was ‘predominantly capitalistic’, and for Nicola Verdon ‘increasingly capitalistic’, in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>265</sup> Many areas had large numbers of sheep, and cattle were of little importance.<sup>266</sup> Richard Bacon stated that the important production in West Norfolk was arable and stock breeding and noted the ‘the immense number... of flocks in West Norfolk’, whereas East Norfolk ‘was never famed for breeding stock, or for sheep but for high grazing’, for beef, not dairying.<sup>267</sup> Sheep could catch the Cattle Plague but ‘rarely show clinical signs and are epidemiologically unimportant’ and were not a major factor during the outbreak, although there was understandable concern in sheep districts.<sup>268</sup> The dry north-east of Norfolk had many similarities with the high chalklands of Wiltshire and similar production, thus there were both similarities and differences in the agriculture practised in the study areas, which affected local communities. Those areas mostly dependent on dairying and cheese production were naturally more affected by a Cattle Plague than those based on sheep-corn production or even stock breeding, and so variations in the types of farming necessarily resulted in different consequences of attacks by the Cattle Plague. The dairying areas of Wiltshire were not drastically affected by the outbreak, but only because of the very limited numbers and severity of the outbreaks

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<sup>263</sup> Lancaster, *Nonconformist and Anglican Dissent*, 227.

<sup>264</sup> Susanna Wade-Martins, ‘Agriculture in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century’ in *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, eds. Peter Wade-Martins and Jane Everett, Phillip Judge (cartography), (Norwich: Norfolk Museum Service and The Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Organisations, 1994), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 59.

<sup>265</sup> Leigh Shaw-Taylor, ‘Family farms and capitalist farms in mid nineteenth-century England’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 54, II, 183-5; Verdon, ‘The Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture: A Reassessment of Agricultural Gangs in Nineteenth-Century Norfolk’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 49, no. 1 (2001), 43.

<sup>266</sup> Wade-Martin, ‘Agriculture’, 60 map d.

<sup>267</sup> Bacon, Richard Noverre, *The Report of the Agriculture of Norfolk to which the Prize was awarded by the Royal Agricultural Society of England*. (London: Ridgeways, 1844), 140-141.

<sup>268</sup> ‘Rinderpest’, OIE: World Organisation for Animal Health Technical card at <https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/03/rinderpest.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2021.



experienced. However, as the next chapter demonstrates, there was not significantly less public concern than in Cheshire or Norfolk, where there were much higher rates of infection and loss.

### 3.1.5 Markets, drovers and carriers.

In the Control chapter reactions to the closure of local markets are employed to draw conclusions about the nature of the agriculture in the relevant areas. This can only be valid if it can be shown that markets were important to their local areas at the time, which is addressed by considering the institutions themselves and two associated groups, local carriers and drovers, from which other conclusions about local rural society are drawn. CW Chalkin stated that, throughout the country, many market towns were still of 'local importance through their markets and fairs [and] a growing variety of shops' even in the mid-nineteenth century although this importance decreased with the coming of the railways, where they were local enough to have an impact, from about 1850.<sup>269</sup> Figure 9-1 in the Appendix maps railways and stations in 1865-6 with 3-mile isopleths to indicate accessibility within one hour's walk.<sup>270</sup> This importance of markets was reciprocal, as Stephen Matthews declared 'although one hears much of the fast-growing towns of Victorian England, they were still small in area and far more integrated with their hinterlands than they are now', and this integration was (partly) through their markets.<sup>271</sup> For Chalkin, livestock markets were 'perhaps the most important form of market trading in the Victorian period' and he claimed that market day was the most important day of the week in country towns. He maintained that this was demonstrated by the large numbers of carriers that 'poured into towns on their market days', which is partially supported by an investigation of local carriers in the study areas, see below.<sup>272</sup>

Although by the time of the Cattle Plague, most long-distance cattle movements were by rail, cattle were still moved to and traded at local markets alongside cheese and other produce.<sup>273</sup> Much cheese was sold directly 'off-farm' to cheese factors, but large quantities were still sold at market; the 1850 opening of the new Chippenham Town Hall with 'an extensive market yard and shed for the pricing of cheese' which regularly 'pitched' over 150 tons of cheese a month, was a testament to this.<sup>274</sup> Markets were of great

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<sup>269</sup> CW Chalkin, 'Country Towns' in *The Rural Idyll*, ed. Gordon Mingay, 37-49, (London: Routledge, 1989), 37.

<sup>270</sup> Although this may have been closer to a 2 hour drive based on the figure of '16 miles per day' given by JH Smith for Scottish droving. [JH Smith, 'The Cattle Trails of Aberdeenshire in the Nineteenth Century', *The Agricultural History Review*, 3, no.2 (1955):114.

<sup>271</sup> Matthews, 'Stockport and East Cheshire', 113.

<sup>272</sup> CW Chalkin, 'Country Towns' in *The Victorian Countryside*, 2 vols, vol 1, ed. Gordon Mingay, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 280.

<sup>273</sup> Janet Blackman, 'The Cattle Trade and Agrarian Change on the Eve of the Railway Age', *Agricultural History Review* 123, no. 1 (1975): 58.

<sup>274</sup> 'Festivities at Chippenham: The Opening of the Cheese-Market', *Illustrated London News*, 21 September 1850, 9; 'Chippenham Great Monthly Cheese, Cattle and Corn Market – Sept 13', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 19 September 1850, 3; 'Chippenham Great Monthly Market – March 10', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 16 March 1854, 2.

importance for reasons other than trade, however. Market days were occasions when farmers could meet and strengthen the ties of the informal but powerful networks that bound local farming society together. Markets were also where farmers could exchange information and knowledge; as Beth M. Paskoff observed most agricultural information was still passed by word of mouth.<sup>275</sup> Information was often exchanged through farmers' clubs and agricultural associations but also informally when farmers congregated at the market and in the town's inns and public houses on market days. It was surely not a coincidence that the Norfolk Cattle Plague Association, hereafter NCPA, mostly held its meetings on Saturdays in Norwich, the most important market day identified in Norfolk (Table 9-1). As Brennon A Woods *et al.* remarked, 'farmers value knowledge by persons rather than roles, privilege farming experience and develop knowledge with empiricist rather than rationalist techniques' i.e., they tended to believe what their peers told them. This attitude has already been seen when Woods and Matthews showed that veterinarians, identified by their role and often addressed as 'veterinary' rather than by name, were only called in when 'other farmers, their landlords, local healers and unqualified vets' were ineffective.<sup>276</sup>

Markets lead to a consideration of two occupations (drovers and carriers) associated with them that, in the first case reveals attitudes of locals to 'others' and in the latter the importance of local markets. The cattle brought to markets and fairs were often locally produced, but huge numbers were also transported from distant areas, including the west of England, Scotland, and Ireland. As Janet Blackman observed, 'before rail transport, droving was the only feasible form of transport [for livestock] except some sea voyages', and even after the establishment of the railways, many cattle were still driven to market.<sup>277</sup> 'Drovers' were employed to move animals, especially cattle, over extended distances. They were often regarded with suspicion and local concern, especially during the Cattle Plague. A correspondent of the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* advised Wiltshire farmers to lock the roadside gates to their fields, to prevent drovers from pasturing cattle in them overnight: 'Supposing any of these beasts in a diseased state, what is more, likely than that the farmer's untainted cattle should become sufferers of this infamous intrusion?'<sup>278</sup> He may have been recalling a widely reported meeting only three years before, when a Cork farmer's cattle were infected with BPP because 'whilst he [the farmer] had been comfortably asleep in bed a drover had

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<sup>275</sup> Beth M Paskoff, 'History and Characteristics of Agricultural Libraries and Information in the United States', *Library Trends*, 58, no. 3 (Winter 1990): 332.

<sup>276</sup> Brennon A Wood *et al.*, 'Agricultural Science in the Wild: A Social network Analysis of Farmer Knowledge Exchange', *Plos One*, online journal 14 August 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0105203> accessed 28 August 2021; Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, '“Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow-Leech”: The English Veterinary Surgeon, c 1860-1885, and the Campaign for Veterinary Reform', *Medical History*, 54, (2010): 43.

<sup>277</sup> Janet Blackman, 'The Cattle Trade and Agrarian Change on the Eve of the Railway Age', *Agricultural History Review* 123, no. 1 (1975): 58.

<sup>278</sup> 'Cattle Plague – look to your field gates. To the Editor of the Devizes Gazette', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 September 1865, 3.

taken the opportunity of turning some cattle to feed upon his land.... [and] this act of trespass was the cause of a loss amounting to several hundred pounds'.<sup>279</sup> The letter to the paper indicated that drovers were suspected of 'overnighting' their cattle in farmer's fields and shows a (realistic) fear of contagion during the Cattle Plague. Drovers, particularly the long-distance men, were not well-liked, and the Cattle Plague made their position in rural areas more difficult. The way in which a Wiltshire newspaper reported a case involving an 'Irish' drover in 1866 shows no sympathy for him, and the newspaper's rendition of his accent may well have been to highlight his 'otherness', local xenophobia has been considered above.<sup>280</sup> As the person moving cattle, drovers were frequently prosecuted for breaches of the regulations, although it is clear that the fault often lay with their employers for not obtaining valid movement licences. An overseas visitor, in Britain in late 1865 to observe the outbreak, warned that in his country the disease was widely spread by 'drovers and shepherd's dog which rapidly transmit it from one farm to another'.<sup>281</sup> The problem of dogs spreading the disease and the consequences of this perception is investigated in the Hunting chapter (Section 6.6). These reports indicate that there was distrust of strangers that helps to explain the distrust of 'outside' regulations and even advice – for example that of government 'experts' such as Gamgee and Simmonds. This is partly why markets, as places where knowledge could be informally and acceptably passed between farmers, were important. That part of the problem was distrust of strangers may be indicated by a local newspaper report of Wiltshire drover John Smith, who was summonsed to Devizes court for driving cattle, for one of which no licence had been obtained. In the newspaper Smith was referred to as 'a little old fashioned drover well known in Devizes market'.<sup>282</sup> The court fined him only costs (which were paid by the farmer for whom he was driving the cattle) and the Bench ordered no conviction, Smith did not have a criminal record as a result. These all indicate that he was well regarded locally.

Drovers moved animals, but carriers were important for the movement of goods, and news. This last was important as carriers were one of the ways in which information was spread to remote areas by both word of mouth and by transporting newspapers. Alan Everitt suggested that they were the vital link between county towns and villages and that without the carriers 'no village in Victorian England could have long survived, and the wealth of the country capitals themselves would have been seriously depleted'.<sup>283</sup> Kenneth Morgan, speaking of the Bristol area, maintained that 'the number and services of the village

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<sup>279</sup> 'The Small Pox on our Wiltshire Downs', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 11 September 1862, 4.

<sup>280</sup> 'An Irish Drover in Difficulties', *The Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser*, 26 October 1867, 3.

<sup>281</sup> 'The Cattle Disease', *Norwich Mercury*, 4 October 1865, 4.

<sup>282</sup> 'Devizes Division Session: Monday May 20', *Wiltshire Independent*, 23 May 1867, 3.

<sup>283</sup> Alan Everitt, 'Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: The Role of the Village Carrier' in *Perspectives in English Urban history*, ed. Alan Everitt, 215. (London: Macmillan, 1973).

carriers *increased* in the second half of the nineteenth century'.<sup>284</sup> This importance was partly because they acted as 'shopping' agents for villagers who could not or did not want to attend the town markets and they bought and carried vast quantities of goods to the villages every week.<sup>285</sup> In most villages, the carrier's cart was the only form of public passenger transport, and they took 'the village folk, especially the women and children, to the market towns on market days for the family shopping'.<sup>286</sup> For example in Wiltshire Charles Pinchin, carrier, advertised he travelled from Lavington to Trowbridge and back every Saturday carrying 'Passengers and Luggage', and Norfolk carrier Thomas Daniels declared 'Passengers and parties forwarding Goods may depend on the strictest care and punctuality' between Plumstead and Norwich.<sup>287</sup> Thus where local carriers did not operate the ability of villagers to attend the markets was compromised. This not only affected their shopping but also stopped them interacting with non-village others, hearing non-village news and generally increased insularity. Writing just five years before the Cattle Plague, James Macaulay claimed 'the locomotive and the iron-road have already driven four-fifths of [the carriers] from the field.'<sup>288</sup> This was apparently correct as far as long-distance carriers were concerned, but, as Alan Everitt noted, local traffic and carriers were not so affected, if only because most rural communities did not have a railway station, although a greater number were within reach of one (Figure 9-1).<sup>289</sup> Morgan agreed, noting that by the end of the century 'at least a quarter of the villages linked to Bristol by carrier...had stations'.<sup>290</sup> Everitt maintained that 'the carrier's carts and country people streaming into towns like Salisbury... on market days were indeed as characteristic a feature of Victorian England as the industrial cities and slums. Yet this aspect of urban history is now largely forgotten'.<sup>291</sup>

An investigation of markets and carrier trips in the study areas (Table 9-1) showed considerable carrier activity at the time of the Cattle Plague, particularly in areas away from railway 'direct journey' catchment areas. A table of the markets and carrier trips in all three areas can be found in the Appendix, (Chapter 9). There were differences between the study areas, Norfolk had far more towns with weekly markets than either Cheshire or Wiltshire. The greatest number of carrier trips were associated with market days in all three areas, supporting Chalklin's theory that market day was the most important day of the week for

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<sup>284</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Country Carriers in the Bristol Region in the late Nineteenth Century*, (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1986), pamphlet 64, 1.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/History/bristolrecordsociety/publications/bha064.pdf> accessed 31 December 2021.

<sup>285</sup> Morgan, *Country Carriers*, 4-5.

<sup>286</sup> Everitt, 'Village Carrier', 218.

<sup>287</sup> 'Charles Pinchin' advertisement, *Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser*, 30 November 1867, 2; 'Norwich, Aylsham and Plumstead', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 22 September 1866, 4.

<sup>288</sup> James Macaulay, 'The Country Carrier,' *The Leisure Hour: a family journal of instruction and recreation*, 11, 12 September 1861, 590.

<sup>289</sup> Everitt, 'Village Carrier', 218.

<sup>290</sup> Morgan, *Country Carriers*, 2.

<sup>291</sup> Everitt, 'Village Carrier', 215.

market towns, or at least for carriers. In Cheshire 49% of market towns had market day carrier visits, Norfolk 73.5% and Wiltshire 61% - markets were more important in Norfolk than elsewhere. This in turn supports the idea that Norfolk had a much more market orientated agricultural system than the other areas.

### **3.2 Conclusion**

The chapter has outlined the methodology used to undertake this study and demonstrates that the thesis is grounded in previous work and appropriate methodologies but employs a comparative methodology using both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple counties and includes evidence from newspaper reports and literary sources. This study investigates numerous elements of mid-nineteenth-century society through the lens of the Cattle Plague and the reports it generated in the newspapers. A prominent strand in this necessarily wide-ranging background information is the agricultural landscapes of the study areas, where differences and similarities indicate differing social and local organisation. The rest of this thesis investigates these differences through selected foci. Other elements include reactions to control measures put in place to control the outbreak, how support was made available at scales from the local estate to the national, and what this reveals. The tension between central and local government has also been clearly indicated, and all of these themes are investigated further throughout the thesis. That the study areas were different, and the implications and consequences of this for life within them, is a central theme of this work.

## 4 Chapter 4 – Control, Resistance, Defiance and Prosecutions

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers how national and local authorities attempted to control the Cattle Plague and investigates how those self-same local authorities and individuals regarded these attempts. Evidence for individual, organisational and local authority resistance to measures to try to control the epizootic is considered. The chapter reviews the background to, and development of control measures and investigates how local authorities acted. A detailed appraisal of closures of local markets identifies variations, concerns and reactions at county and sub-county scales and how instructions from the centre were received, resisted and changed. These demonstrate differences in the reception of central and local control requirements and reveal variations between the study areas. It is suggested that greater concern in Norfolk over market closures was due to the greater number of 'market orientated' farms than in Cheshire and northern Wiltshire, indicating differences in the agricultural make-up of the areas, and that agricultural development was less traditional in Norfolk than elsewhere. An investigation into whether individuals, groups or local authorities actively resisted the measures, if so why, and whether this resistance constituted defiance of authority, follows. It is concluded that there was very little active defiance, although several possible examples are given. This consideration of resistance to the Cattle Plague legislation feeds into a wider debate about central versus local control in the nineteenth century.<sup>292</sup> It is argued that local authorities applied central government requirements with varying degrees of enthusiasm and compliance. Some local authorities suffered dissent and resistance from within, and the ways in which Norfolk and Cheshire dealt with this are compared to highlight differences between the two areas. One, Cheshire, essentially ignored it, whereas the other invited national powers to intervene. This indicates that Norfolk held a county (and to some extent national), outlook and was organised at a county level whereas Cheshire was apprehended and organised at a local, sub-county level. This chapter shows that compliance with, and resistance to, control measures varied both between and within study areas, and other regions, demonstrating the need for comparative multiple county and sub-county scale investigations. Possible reasons for the differences

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<sup>292</sup> The Literature Review discussed the work of Erickson, Fisher, Lambert, and Prest which are all relevant: Arvel Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague in England, 1865-1867' *Agricultural History* 35, no. 2 (April 1961): 94-103; JR Fisher, 'The Economic Effects of Cattle Disease in Britain and its Containment, 1850-1900', *Agricultural History*, 54, no. 2 (1980): 278-294; John Fisher, 'A Victorian Farming Crisis: The Cattle Plague in Nottinghamshire, 1867-67', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 104, (2000): 113-124; John Fisher, 'The Economic Effects of Cattle Disease in Britain and its Containment, 1850-1900', *Agricultural History*, 54, no. 2, (1980): 278-294; Lambert, Royston, 'Central and Local relations in Mid-Victorian England: The Local Government Act Office, 1858-1871', *Victorian Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1962): 121-150; Prest, John, *Liberty and Locality: Parliament, Permissive Legislation and Ratepayers' Democracies in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

seen throughout the chapter, based on local community and agricultural structures, are then discussed. Overall this chapter argues that there were real differences in how the control measures were viewed, and applied, both between and within the study areas, and that Norfolk exhibited an outlook closer to that of the twentieth than the eighteenth century, where people generally saw themselves as part of a wide geographical area, such as a county rather than being bounded by the village or hundred.

## 4.2 Control measures.

This section considers how local areas were managed to set specific control measures in context. At the time of the Cattle Plague, local 'governance' was still very much a matter of 'local affairs, organised locally', with most national government input was mediated through local governing bodies. These were often empowered by 'permissive' elements within legislation to deal with specific issues, such as local Highway Boards or Poor Law Unions.<sup>293</sup> The vast majority of local government was carried out by the county Justices sitting in Quarter Sessions (and their delegated committees where appropriate) or Town Councils where the towns had Borough status, in which case the Borough was a Petty Divisional area and the Mayor was Chief Magistrate. Although it had authority, central government rarely intervened directly in how legislation was enacted at the local level. The ways in which both local and national government responded to the Cattle Plague provides information on these relationships. According to Erickson the initial reaction to the outbreak 'reflected the [government's] belief in permissive legislation and minimum government interference'.<sup>294</sup> The initial responses by central authority were limited because Parliament was not in session; the Liberal government of Lord Palmerston was elected in June 1865, the same month in which the Cattle Plague first appeared and in which Palmerston died. Parliament did not recommence sitting until 1 February 1866, the return having been adjourned five times.<sup>295</sup> Within three weeks of the start of the new parliamentary session, the CPA had been rushed through both houses of Parliament in a single week.<sup>296</sup> However, for eight months, from June 1865, the only attempts at control were a raft of Orders in Council, which initially gave local authorities *discretionary* powers to enforce specific regulations, then removed some of these and finally made them compulsory.<sup>297</sup> The first Order, which only related to the Metropolis, was not made until six weeks after the first outbreak, by which time the disease had already appeared in 14 more counties.<sup>298</sup> The passing of the CPA did not mean an end to Orders in Council. These were how actions

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<sup>293</sup> John Prest, *Liberty and Locality: Parliament, Permissive Legislation and Ratepayers' Democracies in the Nineteenth Century*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 15ff.

<sup>294</sup> Arvel Erikson, 'The Cattle Plague in England 1865-1867', *Agricultural History*, 35, no. 2, (1961): 95.

<sup>295</sup> 'House of Lords', *Hansard HL Deb* 01 February 1866 vol 181 cc1-2.

<sup>296</sup> Clive Spillage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003), 217.

<sup>297</sup> Veterinary Department, Appendix III: 'Digest of Orders issued by the Queen in Council or by the Lords of the Privy Council', in The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council Office, *Report of the Cattle Plague in Great Britain During the Years 1865, 1866 and 1867*, (London: HMSO, 1868), 351-352.

<sup>298</sup> William Smith, 'The Cattle Plague in Norfolk', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 32, no. 4, (1868): 398.

were 'refined' and varied to respond to changing conditions at different scales, with Order occasionally relating to individual towns.<sup>299</sup> Hence another 15 Cattle-Plague related Orders were issued in 1865, 80 in 1866 and an additional 73 up to the end of the epizootic in August 1867, 168 in total.<sup>300</sup> These orders are reproduced in chronological order in the government *Report of the Cattle Plague* and are not considered in detail here.<sup>301</sup> Of relevance to this chapter is what sorts of control measures were, at different times, put in place as these affected reactions to them. Control measures were numerous and wide-ranging, with some given here, and other examples considered throughout the study. Orders in Council allowed responses to the disease to be 'tailored' to particular areas, although nation-wide controls were mostly imposed.

The regulations were enforced by financial penalties for any breach, usually a fine of up to £20 (plus costs) or three months imprisonment. This was a considerable amount, more than six months' income for a skilled agricultural labourer, e.g. a shepherd or carter. Their weekly income is taken to have been 15s per week following data reported in an east-coast newspaper in 1866. The amount is slightly greater than the figures given for Yorkshire by Sarah Holland, but within the upper ranges for wages in all three study areas given in Frederick Purdy's 1861 analysis of regional agricultural labourer's wages.<sup>302</sup> The requirements of the Orders varied, sometimes within a day, until the Act was passed after which they remained more stable. Examples were requirements to report infected animals, restrictions on movement of animals off-farm or along/across roads, the closure of markets and fairs to specified animals, the mandatory designation of areas as 'infected' - with enhanced controls within them - and the appointment and powers of local Inspectors. The Inspector's mandate to enter any premises and advise or order the slaughter and disposal of infected and 'in contact' animals were particularly contentious, it was an exercise of 'unheard of arbitrary power', according to a letter in the *Times* by the land agent John Coombes, secretary of the Devizes Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association.<sup>303</sup> Examples of complaints were reported in local papers employing phrases such as 'tyrannical and unnecessary' and 'despotic' and fears that the Inspectors could become 'a greater plague than the plague itself'.<sup>304</sup> The Courts backed up their rights of entry; in

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<sup>299</sup> For example the Order made 5 May 1865, which controlled removals of cattle from Liverpool market. ['Veterinary Dept. *Report*, 351.]

<sup>300</sup> Veterinary Dept, *Report*, 351-2.

<sup>301</sup> Veterinary Dept, *Report*, 341-395.

<sup>302</sup> 'The Wages of Agricultural Labourers and Artizans Contrasted', *Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser*, 7 June 1866, 5; Sarah Holland, *Contrasting Rural Communities: The experience of South Yorkshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2013, 202 & 204; Frederick Purdy, 'On the Earnings of Agricultural Labourers in England and Wales, 1860', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 24, no. 3 (1861): 358.

<sup>303</sup> 'To the Editor of the Times', *Times*, 14 September 1865, 11.

<sup>304</sup> For examples see *Northwich Guardian*, 'Tarporley Agricultural Society: The Dinner', 23 September 1865, 5; 'Altrincham Union', 4 November 1865, 6; 'In almost every direction we find the "Cattle Plague" ...', *Leader, Swindon Advertiser*, 11 September 1865, 2; 'Disobeying the Order of a Cattle Inspector', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 September 1865, 3.



October 1865, a Marylebone (in the Metropolis) inspector applied for a warrant to break into a dealer's yard where he suspected infected cattle were located. The Magistrates confirmed that under the Orders in Council he had 'the power to enforce admission... without a warrant. Recalcitrant dealers will, therefore, in future have their gates subjected to the action of sledge-hammers'.<sup>305</sup> This report in a Wiltshire newspaper showed how such warnings were made clear to the wider country. The regulations consistently applied to cattle but also included pigs, sheep, and goats at various times. These measures were similar to the controls adopted during the previous (1747) outbreak. However, the eighteenth-century government paid compensation from central funds, which was not the case in 1865-67, which did not go unnoticed and led to complaints about, and resistance to, financing compensation which is addressed in the Compensation chapter. (Chapter 5).<sup>306</sup>

The scope of the control orders changed as the epizootic progressed, and various attempts at control were put in place, modified and, at times, entirely changed in response to changed conditions. All of this might give the impression of responsive and timely reactions to the epizootic. This was not the case; Sherwin Hall stated, nearly a hundred years later, that, up until the passing of the Act, 'each [Order in Council] was as useless as the last and succeeded only in spreading the disease. It was a national problem tackled on a parochial basis'.<sup>307</sup> Partly this was because even limited government intrusion into local affairs was regarded with suspicion and alarm. The Marquis of Bath, speaking towards the end of the epizootic, 'confessed he came [to the Wiltshire Quarter Sessions in January 1866] with the intention of resisting what he then considered a tyrannical restriction' on the movement of cattle.<sup>308</sup> This view was not restricted to Wiltshire; in Norfolk Lord Bury called the 'order to slay a most tyrannical and unjust order' and complained that even when it was discretionary, the Inspectors were consistently ordering slaughter, and similar views and actions from Cheshire are considered below.<sup>309</sup> This highlights one of the problems of local control in the nineteenth century, 'the imperfect machinery' used to control the areas and the disease.<sup>310</sup> Stephen Matthews noted that part of this 'imperfect machinery' was the local authorities themselves, who did not always act decisively or consistently. He stated that, although JPs were empowered to appoint Inspectors, 'their indifference and procrastination, the ignorance of the inspectors, and deceit by farmers often defeated the purpose [of the Orders]'.<sup>311</sup> In November 1865, the *North British Agriculturalist* placed

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<sup>305</sup> 'Admission to premises where diseased cattle are kept', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 21 October 1865, 3.

<sup>306</sup> 'The Cattle Plague of 1747', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 2 November 1865, 2.

<sup>307</sup> Sherwin Hall, 'The Cattle Plague of 1865', *Medical History*, 6, no. 1 (1962), 263.

<sup>308</sup> '109<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the Devizes Bear Club', *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette*, 9 August 1866, 3.

<sup>309</sup> 'The Cattle Plague Association', *Norwich Mercury*, 6 November 1865, 2.

<sup>310</sup> J.R. Fisher, 'The Economic Effects of Cattle Disease in Britain and Its Containment, 1850-1900'. *Agricultural History*, 54, no. 2 (1980): 281.

<sup>311</sup> Stephen Matthews, 'The Administration of the livestock census of 1866', *The Agricultural History Review*, 48, no. 2 (2001): 224.

responsibility squarely on the judiciary, declaring that control measures could not be effective unless ‘magistrates, public prosecutors and those directly interested zealously co-operate together. Hitherto the laxity and apathy of magistrates and the public prosecutors have tended to spread the malady.’<sup>312</sup> The assumptions underlying the belief in local solutions for local problems, discussed by Peter Hennock, were proved wrong. The first, ‘that those who belonged to a locality knew better than anyone else what that locality needed’ might be valid, but the second, ‘that what was done locally was a local matter and did not significantly affect the lives of others’, is patently false when considering a highly contagious epizootic such as the Cattle Plague where infection rapidly spread from one area to another.<sup>313</sup> The first Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague recognised that the Orders were not effective; in its report in late 1865, it declared that ‘These orders have not arrested the march of the Plague, nor can we persuade ourselves that they will materially serve to arrest it, now that it has spread so widely’.<sup>314</sup>

In January 1866, *The Field* newspaper castigated the Privy Council for its lack of effective action and for relying on the county magistrates to deal with the problem when the only hope was the Council itself.<sup>315</sup> In February 1866, the satirical magazine *Punch* highlighted the need for united action in both a poem and cartoon. The verse supported the idea of slaughter of infected animals, isolation and appealed for the de-politicisation of the debate.<sup>316</sup>

‘United action’

My case, State Doctors, right and left,  
Must give no scope for faction.  
Unless of Beef you’d be bereft;  
It needs united action.  
You better had forthwith agree,  
By temporary paction.<sup>317</sup>  
To do the best you can for me,  
With your united action.

If you’re unable to fulfil  
Your curative intention

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<sup>312</sup> ‘The Report of the Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague’, *North British Agriculturalist*, 22 November 1865, 751. Re-printed in ‘The Royal Commission’, *Norfolk News*, 2 December 1865, 9.

<sup>313</sup> E Peter Hennock, ‘Central/local government relations in England: An outline 1800–1950’, *Urban History*, 9, (1982): 39.

<sup>314</sup> Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague, *First report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the origin and nature, &c.; of the cattle plague: with the minutes of evidence and an appendix*, (London: HMSO, 1865), xiii.

<sup>315</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague’, *The Field*, 13 January 1866, 5; ‘List of Orders’, *Report*, 351.

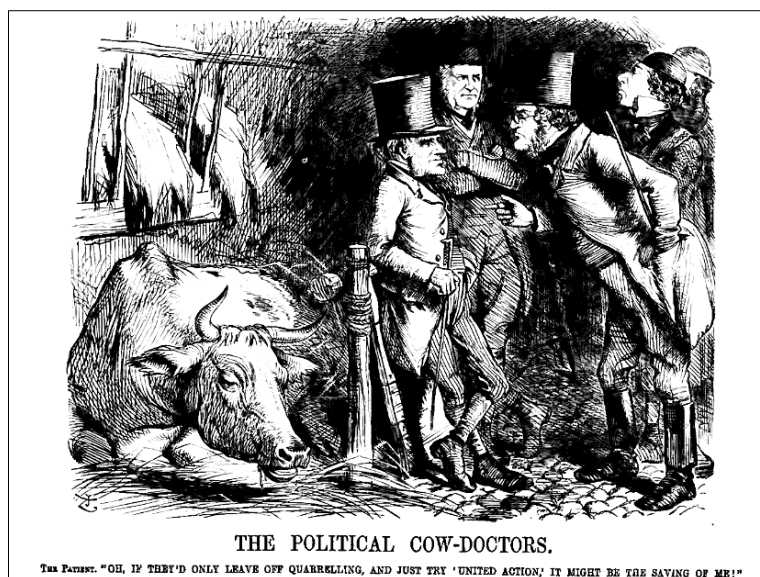
<sup>316</sup> ‘United Action’. *Punch*, 50, (17 February 1866): 67.

<sup>317</sup> ‘Paction, v b) To make an agreement’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition, (Oxford: OUP, March 2005) most recently modified version published online December 2020 at <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/135877?rskey=UzzINL&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eidhttps://www.oed.com/view/Entry/135877?rskey=UzzINL&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> accessed 15 October 2021.

In my behalf, make haste and kill  
Your patient for prevention.  
Bar, by the surest means you can,  
Sound herds from all contactation  
With tainted kine, as though one man,  
In your united action.

Don't make the murrain-stricken Bull,  
A stalking-horse for Party,  
But pull away, together pull  
With effort strong and hearty,  
To bring him, if you can, about  
By simultaneous traction  
Or else the cattle plague stamp out,  
With your united action.

The poem plainly stated that the outbreak was too serious for it to be considered along party political lines, emphasised in the final verse with the appeal not to make the cattle the 'stalking-horse for Party'. *Punch's* view was that the arguments in Parliament were more to do with party politics than about the best way to deal with the disease. The magazine also considered that consistent and coherent policies were needed. The final verse used nautical phrasing, 'pull away, together pull', to invoke an image of sailors working together to bring a vessel (here the 'ship of state'?) 'about' and change course onto a new, and safer, heading. This raised thoughts of Britain's maritime heritage, the result of hard and co-operative work. The poem also supported the ideas of slaughter of infected animals if a cure could not be found, and the strict isolation of 'sound' animals. The need for united action, emphasised once more as the final line of the poem, was made yet again in the following full-page cartoon. Here various politicians, possibly including John Bright and Lord Derby, were depicted as veterinarians arguing about how to proceed, next to an apparently resigned-to-her-fate cow. *Punch's* view of the need for consistent action by political, medical and advisory authorities, was clear from the caption. The phrasing 'just try' also suggested that the solution was, actually, very simple.



'The Patient: Oh, if they'd only leave off quarrelling, and just try "united action", it might be the saving of me'  
 Figure 4-1 'The Political Cow-Doctors'<sup>318</sup>

The *Times*, which had previously tried to minimise the seriousness of the epizootic, had made this point a month earlier, although seeing (veterinary) medicine and the government as helpless and the only hope of salvation the judiciary. The 'Thunderer' was, however, extremely optimistic in its timescale for the outbreak.

from medicine we expect little, from the government nothing; our only hope is the Magistrates if they will but stand firm, deep-seated though the evil is, we may probably arrest it by submitting to a few weeks of inconvenience which is nothing compared with the ruin and misery which is in store for us, unless the pestilence is stayed',<sup>319</sup>

'A few weeks' was optimistic and 'the ruin and misery' all too prescient. A month later, after the passing of the Cattle Diseases Prevention Act (29-30 Vict. Cap.2, the CPA or 'the Act'), but before its provisions were in effect, the *Law Times* complained that new Orders 'heap confusion on confusion', noting that the regulations requiring certificates for moving cattle did not have any enforcement provisions - meaning the Police could do nothing about transgressions, and that the regulations could differ from county to county, causing additional confusion.<sup>320</sup>

Lack of uniformity of action was seen as a problem by many and not just *Punch*. In September 1865, a leader in *John Bull*, discussing both the Cattle Plague and the prospect of cholera, had wondered 'are we to

<sup>318</sup> 'The Political Cow Doctors', *Punch*, 50, (17 February 1866): 69.

<sup>319</sup> 'Isolation, Humiliation and Vaccination', *Cheshire Observer* 27 January 1866, 6 reporting the *Times* leader of 24 January 1866, 8.

<sup>320</sup> 'Another Order of the Privy Council', *The Law Times*, 27 January 1866, 175. Re-printed in 'The Orders in Council', *Northwich Guardian* 3 February 1866, 3.

sit with folded hands while parish authorities quarrel among themselves as to who is to adopt sanitary measures?<sup>321</sup> Five months later, Wiltshireman John Phipps, endorsing the idea that united action was essential to deal with the Cattle Plague, questioned

How can there be unity of action when in comparatively so small an area as that of a county “the local authority” is hydra-headed. I refer to the Municipal Corporations making such regulations as it [sic] may think best adapted to the occasion, and its own interest<sup>322</sup>

Boroughs were empowered to make their own decisions as delegated local authorities separate from the Quarter Sessions and were often not as proactive as the Quarter Sessions. For example, the Town Council meeting in Thetford, Norfolk, called to respond to the Cattle Plague in August 1865, could not achieve anything as the meeting was inquorate. Even when it did meet, the Mayor was only empowered to appoint Inspectors ‘if there was any sign of the Cattle Plague in the local area’.<sup>323</sup> This was not unique, Chippenham Borough Council in Wiltshire passed a similar resolution - ‘and [it] was resolved that no Inspector be appointed for the present but if any case of the Cattle Plague be discovered within the Borough the Mayor is empowered forthwith to appoint a proper person as Inspector’.<sup>324</sup> These are examples of very local variations in how control was, or not, exercised and demonstrate that investigations need to be more nuanced than even a regional or county scale allows.

After the CPA gave authority for the county Quarter Sessions to designate local authorities the way in which control efforts were organised were similar in Cheshire and Wiltshire; the Quarter Sessions set up sub-committees of magistrates that were responsible for organising Cattle-Plague related judicial and organisational matters, such as making county-wide Orders to ban cattle movement on roads in the Quarter Sessional area. The Petty Sessional benches exercised local control and oversaw local requirements such as printing orders, notices and movement licences (which they also issued) and overseeing the local Inspectors by appointing and financing them, in other words, they ran the Cattle Plague provisions at their very local sub-county level. They also made locally-necessary Orders, such as specific movement restrictions or closures of local markets and fairs. In Norfolk the arrangement was different, the Quarter Sessions devolved its Cattle Plague powers to a separate organisation, the NCPA, which then devolved some powers to local Cattle Plague sub-committees but retained overall control and instructed the local

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<sup>321</sup> ‘Leader’, *John Bull*, 9 September 1865, 6.

<sup>322</sup> Letter to the Editor of the *Devizes Gazette* ‘On the Cattle Plague’ from John Lewis Phipps dated 5 February 1866, *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette* 8 February 1866, 3.

<sup>323</sup> ‘Thetford: The Cattle Plague’, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 8 August 1865, 6; ‘Thetford Town Council’, *Norfolk News* 8 August 1865, 6.

<sup>324</sup> ‘Chippenham Borough Council Minutes’, 22 August 1865, Chippenham Museum & Heritage Centre.

committees in what was required. Local committees were the local authorities designated to impose restrictions on travel, declare infected places and so on. Still, they were responsible to the NCPA Central Committee, not directly to the Quarter Sessions. The significance of this is that in Cheshire and Wiltshire much of the Cattle Plague related activity, including prosecutions and making local Orders, were under the traditional Petty Sessional courts and magistrates operating at a very local level (albeit authorised by the Quarter Sessions). In contrast, in Norfolk, a county-wide organisation made county-wide decisions through direct control of local committees. These differences are similar to those seen with regards to Compensation, see the Compensation chapter (Chapter 5).

The independence of Boroughs could be a problem for both systems, particularly through their control of local markets and fairs, primarily situated in towns. The Regional Topographies chapter discussed the importance of markets to rural towns and areas, and the effect of Cattle Plague restrictions on them throws more light onto their local importance (Section 3.1.5). The current section has indicated variability in local responses to control measures across the study areas and country, developed further below.

### **4.3 Control and Markets in Norfolk**

In this section, a case study focusing on market closures in Norfolk is employed to investigate relationships between county and borough authorities concerning Cattle Plague control and differences of opinion on what was necessary or acceptable. Comparisons with Cheshire and Wiltshire show that attitudes to market closures were different. Considerable detail demonstrates that division and differences of opinion were found even within a local authority, for example within a Borough council. The resulting confusion and uncertainties led to dissent. The depth of this indicated local differences in outlook and society. The greater concern about market closures in Norfolk suggests that agriculture was more market-orientated than in Wiltshire and Cheshire.

In October 1865 the closure of cattle markets was being widely debated, for example the Privy Council received complaints from ‘farmers and others’ in Suffolk who feared that cattle moving to and from Norwich market would spread the disease across both counties.<sup>325</sup> In passing, this shows that major ‘local’ markets were of regional importance and reach. The Privy Council wrote to Norwich corporation and suggested, as the Orders did not permit compulsion at the time, that the Norwich market be shut, which the Town Council refused to do. Norwich council’s concerns were that the ‘condemnation [from Suffolk] was too sweeping’, closing the market would adversely affect the town’s trade and that it would be useless

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<sup>325</sup> ‘Cattle Plague’, *Norwich Mercury*, 18 October 1865, 2.

‘unless [market closure] was generally adopted’, again indicating a non-local element of markets.<sup>326</sup> This last was a common view; John Phipps’ slightly later concerns have already been noted. At the same time as the Norwich council discussions (in October 1865), both Gloucestershire Quarter Sessions and the NCPA appealed to the Privy Council to close cattle markets nationally. Many places chose to close their markets; for example, seven fairs and twenty-two markets were closed in Buckinghamshire and Oxford in October 1865 alone.<sup>327</sup> The inevitable loss of trade was a common concern, in mid-October the chairman of the Wiltshire Quarter Sessions hoped that his ‘brother magistrates would think seriously before they caused the extreme inconvenience to men’s lawful business which would result from stopping the ordinary mode of dealing in cattle’.<sup>328</sup> He suggested farmers should sell cattle directly from the farms.

At a public meeting in October 1865, organised by the NCPA, a resolution to exclude cattle from all Norfolk markets and fairs until the end of the year was passed. The mayor of Norwich was again asked to close Norwich market.<sup>329</sup> At a meeting of the Corporation, the Mayor reluctantly supported the request. Still there was internal dissent, he noted that ‘he knew there were gentlemen who entertained a different opinion, and amongst them he regretted to find the Deputy mayor’. Another member of the Corporation said he ‘recollect[ed] the corn riots... and he was sure that if the poor of Norwich could not buy mutton and pork they should soon see the town in the greatest possible commotion’, so not only fears of loss of trade but also civil disruption were active as well as differences of opinion within the council itself.<sup>330</sup>

The local press was active in the debates over market closures. The *Norfolk News*, no great supporter of the NCPA, was also no great supporter of the closure of markets (in general) and Norwich market (in particular). Throughout the autumn of 1865 it sought to influence public opinion by publishing comments and opinion pieces. At the end of October the paper reluctantly admitted that closing the market was necessary, but questioned the length of closure, especially as neighbouring markets would reopen sooner. The newspaper claimed that the ‘farmers will be buying beasts at Ipswich and Bury’, supporting the fears of losing money from the city economy. The paper claimed it reflected the doubts of many as to ‘whether much real and substantial benefit has been secured by the legislative and municipal interference that has been attempted with the cattle trade in the last three months’, of which the closure of markets was but

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<sup>326</sup> ‘Norwich Corporation’, *Norfolk News*, 21 October 1865, 10.

<sup>327</sup> ‘Gloucester Quarter Sessions’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 19 October 1865, 2; ‘Suspension of Cattle Fairs’ and ‘Oxford Cattle Plague Association’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 26 October 1865, 2.

<sup>328</sup> ‘Wiltshire Quarter Sessions’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 19 October 1865, 3.

<sup>329</sup> ‘Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Propose closing of Public Markets and Fairs’, *Norfolk News*, 21 October 1865, 10; ‘Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Propose closing of Public Markets and Fairs’, *Norfolk News*, 28 October 1865, 8.

<sup>330</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague - Closing of Public Markets and Fairs’, *Norfolk News*, 28 October 1865, 10.

one example.<sup>331</sup> The paper was not encouraging people to break the regulations but was casting doubt on those that were in place.

Norfolk markets did shut; at the end of the month (October), Norwich was closed, reluctantly, to 'Cows, Heifers, Bulls, Bullocks Oxen, Calves, Sheep, Lambs, Goats and Swine', as were the markets and fairs at Diss, Eynsford, Swaffham and the Diss 'Cock Street Fair' which was regionally important.<sup>332</sup> However, even markets under the control of the Justices and the NCPA did not all close speedily, and it was the middle of November 1865 before Loddon & Clavering, Taverham and East & West Flegg Hundreds closed their markets.<sup>333</sup> There was public concern about this delay. One of the local justices reported that 'some regret, he would not say blame, had been expressed in some parts of the country, that magistrates had not made an order in Petty Sessions prohibiting markets within their jurisdictions'.<sup>334</sup> He also drew attention to 'evasions of the law', where sales had taken place on private land, as suggested by the Wiltshire Bench chairman earlier, that were not, strictly speaking, at a market. Three more jurisdictions published their prohibitions a week later.<sup>335</sup> Very similar accounts of cattle being banned from markets and fairs were seen in Cheshire and Wiltshire, mainly in October and December 1865. The three-month clustering of closure report dates was not a coincidence, the closure orders were only made for the next three months and so had to be renewed after that, and the renewals often generated fresh debate.

In contrast to Norfolk, there was very little debate, either at the meetings of the Quarter Sessions or in the newspapers in either Cheshire or Wiltshire. It is possible, with the huge numbers of cattle lost in Cheshire that the county saw market closures as necessary and so there was little debate. In Chester, the city council did not offer the market lease for tender in 1866 at all, as they believed that no one would be prepared to take it on with cattle banned from markets.<sup>336</sup> It is important to recall that general markets were not closed entirely but only to cattle, and at times and in various places, sheep and pigs. However, in Chester the concern was with the *cattle* market. There is no evidence from the meeting, or later, that they petitioned the Privy Council for re-opening. The lack of cattle were unlikely to be the reason in Wiltshire, where there

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<sup>331</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Proposed closing of Public Markets and Fairs', *Norfolk News*, 28 October 1865, 9.

<sup>332</sup> 'Cattle Plague The City of Norwich', 'Cattle Plague Division of Diss', 'Cattle Plague Swaffham Fair and Market', 'Cattle Plague Division of Eynesford' - all *Norfolk News*, 28 October 1865, 5.

<sup>333</sup> 'Cattle Plague Parish of Loddon and the Hundreds of Loddon and Clavering', 'Division of Taverham', 'Division of East and West Flegg', all *Norfolk News*, 18 November 1865, 8.

<sup>334</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Meeting - Evasion of the Order in Council as to Markets', *Norfolk News*, 18 November 1865, 10.

<sup>335</sup> 'Cattle Plague South Erpingham Petty Sessional Division', 'Cattle Plague Hundred of North Erpingham', 'Cattle Plague Division of Swainsthorpe comprising the Hundreds of Henstead and Humbleyard', all *Norfolk News*, 25 November 1865, 8.

<sup>336</sup> 'Tolls for the cattle market' *Chester Chronicle*, 16 December 1865, 6.



were very few infections at all which would seem to dispose the county to be less accepting of market closures. In Wiltshire, and Cheshire, cattle sales were much less important than the sale of dairy products, mostly cheese, and so closure to cattle would have been less of an issue and debates less likely. This acceptance of market closure was not the case in Norfolk; in September 1866, an opinion piece in the *Norwich Mercury* called for the reopening of the market 'in regard to which there can scarcely fail to be an awkward deficit in the finances of Norwich Town Council'.<sup>337</sup> For Norfolk, with its lack of dairy and relatively greater reliance on meat production, it appears that livestock sales through the markets were much more important than in Cheshire and parts of Wiltshire. These reactions to the Cattle Plague at the local level provide insight into the lack of agricultural uniformity between the different areas, with Norfolk having more market orientated farmers than Cheshire and Wiltshire. The greater need for markets in Norfolk, indicated also by the number of markets compared with Cheshire and Wiltshire (see the discussion on markets in the Regional Topographies chapter, section 3.1.5, and Table 9-1 in the Appendix), suggests that Norfolk farmers were producing for market, in other words Norfolk was a more market orientated county than the other two. The resistance to the closure of markets also indicated independence of thought and action by local government. Norwich corporation only reluctantly closed its cattle market and attempted to reopen it as early as possible. This feeds into debates on the agricultural revolution and local governances, specifically it suggests that the balance of agriculture in Norfolk was focused on producing for the market and income whereas in Wiltshire and Cheshire the focus was more on satisfying family and local requirements. This evidence does not permit quantification of how capitalistic Norfolk agriculture was but there were enough market orientated farmers there to make cattle market closure a debatable issue, which it clearly was not in the other two areas.

#### **4.4 Defiance and resistance**

Whether there was deliberate defiance of government-imposed control has not been thoroughly discussed in the literature, if addressed at all resistance was presumed. For example, Fisher stated that the government measures 'were doomed to failure in the face of the antisocial activities of a minority, the lack of coordination of local efforts and the imperfect machinery available for their implementation' but did not present evidence for these anti-social (resistance) activities.<sup>338</sup> The remainder of this chapter addresses this issue and resistance to and defiance of central and local government orders as seen through the focus of the Cattle Plague. It considers whether these activities were defiance or 'merely' non-compliance, whether there were *intentions* of disobedience or 'just' poor decision making. It is found that, contrary to previous assumptions, there was little evidence of defiance.

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<sup>337</sup> 'Social and Commercial', *Norwich Mercury*, 22 September 1866, 10.

<sup>338</sup> Fisher, 'Economic Effects of Cattle Disease in Britain', 281.

#### 4.4.1 Breaches by individuals

Although defiance was not widespread, resistance certainly was, the regulations were broken and thousands of people were convicted and fined or imprisoned throughout the country, with great variations in numbers between areas.<sup>339</sup> Breaches of the regulations had been anticipated, the Royal Commission had warned that 'it will be a long time before the rules are understood, and the period in which they are violated through ignorance will be succeeded by a period in which they are evaded by design'.<sup>340</sup>

Possible 'acts of defiance' were committed by individuals, local 'figures of authority', groups and even local authorities themselves. Examples of each is investigated below, starting with individuals. The first is an individual resisting the requirements of the 1866 national census of agricultural livestock and crops, a government initiative, which was reported from Norfolk.

On being informed that it would be mandatory to fill in the (1866) agricultural census 'Mr Wooll said he should oppose such a return, for it was an underhand and sinister attempt to extort agriculturalists statistics of their stock. He would never give the information until he was compelled by law. They had been trying to obtain it for this three years, but had always been defeated. Why should he give an account of how many beasts and sheep he had and how many acres of wheat he grew? When they got the information, it would be 12 months before it was published though it would be known to certain speculators. When commercial men gave an account of all the goods in their shops, then he would give the information required. They might think him unpatriotic or illiberal, but he should not do it. If it were for the benefit of the Cattle Plague only then would he give it'<sup>341</sup>

This quotation supports Alan Wadsworth's observation that it had taken several years to introduce this legislation precisely because of 'concerns about resistance to the collection of the data' and demonstrates distrust of central government motives.<sup>342</sup> It also supports JT Coppock's assertion that

The opposition of farmers was founded both on fear and on principle; some were apprehensive that the information would be used either by landlords against their tenants or by the Government to justify new taxation, while others regarded the returns as inquisitorial and an unwarranted interference in their affairs.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> 'Prosecutions for breaches of the Cattle Plague regulations 1866', *Swindon Advertiser*, 4 March 1867, 4.

<sup>340</sup> Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague, *First report*, xvi.

<sup>341</sup> 'Wisbech Board of Guardians Meeting', *Lynn Advertiser*, 16 December 1865, 5.

<sup>342</sup> Alan Wadsworth, *pers. comm*, October 2021.

<sup>343</sup> JT Coppock, 'The Statistical Assessment of British Agriculture', *The Agricultural History Review*, 4, no. 1 (1956):13.

The lengthy quotation above is given in full as it reveals how opposition was phrased, the concerns that prompted it, and the ability of local newspaper reports to portray the 'voice' of an individual, which is rare in other sources.<sup>344</sup> Farming distrust of the government is apparent in the 'underhand and sinister' phrasing despite the meeting being told that the government would not use the information to the detriment of agriculturalists. The quoted statement is arguably an example of a 'hidden transcript', *qua* James C Scott, being revealed in 'the comparative safety of friendship' of a local Board of guardians meeting with only Mr Wooll's peers present, rather than a 'defiant expression in the face of power'.<sup>345</sup> The objector may have been the Mr William Wooll who was fined £5 and costs at Downham Petty Sessions three months later, for illegally moving sheep from Lincolnshire to his farm at Upwell (Norfolk). This was definitely resistance of the law but again there is no evidence of deliberate defiance.<sup>346</sup>

An early example of a breach of Cattle Plague legislation was reported from Wiltshire in September 1865. It is informative as it shows the attitude of sentencing Benches early in the epizootic in a county that had experienced its first outbreaks of the disease only the previous month. A Salisbury Police sergeant, prosecuted for 'wilfully and knowingly' breaching the Order in Council relating to the burial of animals, was fined £1 and costs even though the mandated fine was up to £20 or three months imprisonment, an example of the 'laxity' of the magistrates mentioned above.<sup>347</sup> Such leniency was not uncommon, indeed it was rare to find a Bench imposing a severe fine before the CPA was passed. However, after that, substantial penalties were imposed more frequently. This suggests either that the Orders in Council were regarded more lightly than specific parliamentary legislation or that the outbreak was being taken much more seriously by the time the Act was passed, or both. Increasing appreciation of the seriousness of the outbreak is considered most likely. Local Justices had an incentive to impose and enforce fines; under the provisions of 'Jervis's' Acts (1848), 'One Half of all Penalties and Forfeitures recovered shall be paid to the Person who sues or proceeds for the same, and the other Half shall be applied in manner directed by the last-mentioned Act' (in this case the CPA) which, it was said, meant that half the money paid in Cattle Plague fines went to the County Treasurer.<sup>348</sup> This shows a good reason, apart from a desire to control the

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<sup>344</sup> Other examples are 'The Cattle Plague Association', *Norwich Mercury*, 6 November 1865, 2; '109<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the Devizes Bear Club', *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette*, 9 August 1866, 3.

<sup>345</sup> James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 5-6.'

<sup>346</sup> 'Downham: The Petty Sessions', *Norfolk News*, 3 March 1866, 6. Upwell was a parish split between Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

<sup>347</sup> 'Disobeying the Order of a Cattle Inspector', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 September 1865, 3.

<sup>348</sup> 'Cattle Plague – Application of Penalties – Jervis's Act', *Justice of the Peace*, 12 January 1867, 31, citing section 5 of the Cattle Plague Act (29 & 30 Vict. c.15). Jervis' Act was 'An Act to facilitate the Performance of the Duties of Justices of the Peace out of Sessions within England and Wales with respect to Summary Convictions and Orders', 11 & 12 Vict. c.43. [John Frederick Archbold, *Jervis' Acts 11-12 Victoria c.42, 43, & 44: Relating to the Duties of Justices of the Peace*

outbreak, for Benches to impose significant fines. However, they mostly did not, fines were not being used as 'money gathering' exercises and were therefore influenced by concerns other than the financial.

Two breaches of the cattle movement restrictions, brought before the Swindon Bench in December 1865, demonstrated different responses to dissimilar levels of offending for the same offences. In the first, a farmer was found guilty of allowing a cow and her calf to stray on the highway. The Bench accepted the animals had escaped, there was no intent and they only required the costs of 3s 6d to be paid. The following case was more serious: the offender deliberately turned his cow out onto the roadside verge to graze (a common practice for cottagers with only one or two cows and little or no land). Even worse, he had 'set the surveyor [Inspector] at defiance and... persisted in turning his cow out on the highway'.<sup>349</sup> The cow-keeper explained that he had done so because he had a wife and large family to maintain. The Bench chairman was unimpressed, noted that this was a good reason for not risking a fine and proceeded to fine him 2s 6d, with 3s 6d costs. The first case resulted from an accident or, at worst, irresponsibility. These cases were most certainly resistance, however in the first the motivation was not opposition to the Order *per se*, the offender was continuing a common practice that had been made unlawful. Although far short of the maximum fine possible, it is noted that, for a small cottager, the extra 2s 6d was a significant amount. If he were in full employment on the land it would have represented at least a sixth of his weekly income and probably much more. Breaches were widely reported, for example in Norfolk the butcher William Blade was prosecuted for driving an infected cow, which later died of the disease, along a road at Holt and was fined £2 with £1 9s costs and in Cheshire another butcher, Thomas Jones, was fined 20s plus costs for taking a 'dead carcass' down Bridge Street in Chester. He was imprisoned for a month because he failed to pay the fine.<sup>350</sup> Nor was it just men who were prosecuted, or for moving cattle; Susan Meacock, from Whitby on the Wirral in Cheshire was taken to court for burying an infected cow less than five feet deep. She pleaded ignorance of the exact depth required and the case was adjourned for a month to 'allow the defendant time to bury the carcass deeper', with a threat of the maximum penalty of £20 if it was not done properly.<sup>351</sup> None of these offences appear to have been even resistance to the regulations, merely individuals breaking them. The wide variation in the penalties imposed, from 3s 6d to a month's incarceration, is striking even though the offences were not all of a similar nature.

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*Out of Sessions, as to Indictable Offenses, Convictions and Orders: and to the Protection of Justices in the Execution of Their Office*, (London: Shaw and Sons, 1851), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition]; 'Cattle Plague – Application of Penalties', *Justice of the Peace*, 6 July 1867, 428.

<sup>349</sup> 'Swindon Police Court: The Cattle Plague', *Swindon Advertiser*, 25 December 1865, 3.

<sup>350</sup> 'Holt Petty Sessions', *Norfolk News*, 30 December 1865, 6; 'Chester Police Court', *Cheshire Observer*, 3 February 1866, 3.

<sup>351</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 24 February 1866, 5.

#### 4.4.2 Breaches by ‘authority figures’

Resistance can be suggested in the case of a local ‘authority figure’, a Wiltshire clergyman the Rev. Wightwick of Codford St Peter who was prosecuted three times, before the same Warminster magistrates, for moving cattle on a public road contrary to the Quarter Session orders. His behaviour was hardly exemplary. In April 1866, he admitted the offence but claimed a ‘misconception’ of the rules at his first, widely reported, appearance.<sup>352</sup> He was fined £1 and costs and warned of the ‘dire consequences’ of further offending. Six months later he admitted another breach but maintained the offence was committed by his cowman, albeit under his orders, and then tried to throw doubt on the character of the police constable involved. The Bench noted his previous conviction for a like offence and that the punishment should be either imprisonment or £20 but, again, only fined him £1 plus costs.<sup>353</sup> Less than six months later he was yet again prosecuted for the same offence and again maligned the constable. Even though this was the third offence, and the Police Superintendent gave evidence that Wightwick ‘acted most persistently in defiance of the known orders’, the magistrates dismissed the case although, rather bizarrely, they imposed costs.<sup>354</sup> The Rev. Wightwick’s actions certainly qualify as ‘defiance’ as claimed by the Police. The forgiving attitude of the Bench raises questions about their impartiality when dealing with a fellow member of the county elite (albeit a lesser member of it, see the Table of Ascendancy given in the Regional Topographies chapter Section 3.1.3), and their consistency and commitment to the legislation. The punishments imposed on Wightwick contrast with the penalties received by two separate cattle dealers in Wiltshire in 1866 and raise additional questions about inconsistency resulting from social position. In the first, a Brinkworth cattle dealer, Philip Whale, admitted moving cattle illegally on December 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> 1865, in two separate cases brought before the Chippenham Petty Sessions. He was fined £10 for each breach, including costs (a total of £20).<sup>355</sup> A month later, the Salisbury Bench imposed the maximum fine of £20 on another dealer, John Say, because ‘the defendant treated the matter very cavalierly, and instead of defending himself sought to make random charges against the police ....[and] there was no doubt that he had *wilfully* (my emphasis) infringed the Order’.<sup>356</sup> Whales pleaded guilty on the basis of ignorance, which was also the defence used by Wightwick but although, for Whales, there were two separate charges they were both dealt with on the same day and not on three different occasions as in the case of Wightwick. Whales was not abusive to the Police as Say had been, nor had he compounded the offence by wilful disregard of the

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<sup>352</sup> ‘Infringement of Cattle Plague Orders’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 12 April 1866, 4 and the *Wiltshire Independent*, 12 April, 1866, 2; ‘Breach of the Cattle Plague Orders’, *Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser*, 12 April 1866, 3.

<sup>353</sup> ‘Breach of Cattle Plague Orders’, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 6 October 1866, 8 and *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 11 October 1866, 4.

<sup>354</sup> ‘Breach of Cattle Plague Orders’, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 8 June 1867, 8 and *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 3 June 1867, 4.

<sup>355</sup> ‘Caution to Cattle Dealers’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 11 January 1866, 3.

<sup>356</sup> ‘Breach of the Cattle Plague orders’, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 10 February 1866, 8.

warnings he had been given, which possibly explains why Whales was only fined half the amount imposed on Say. However, both dealers were given huge penalties, both in terms of income and in comparison with the vicar. Whether the differences in disposals were because the cases were dealt with by different Benches, or because of the social positions of the defendants, or a combination of the two is impossible to tell; however, cattle dealers were frequently before the courts during the Cattle Plague and were generally not well regarded. There were examples of dealers being barred from joining cattle assurance associations during the epizootic, for instance at Northwich (Cheshire) and Norwich (Norfolk) in September, and Oxford in November 1865, although the Northwich meeting experienced some difficulty in deciding what made someone a dealer.<sup>357</sup> At Norwich, it was claimed that 'there was a strong feeling generally against the admission of dealers on any terms, and in many associations they were not admitted'.<sup>358</sup> Figures of local authority were also convicted of breaching the regulations elsewhere, for example, in Norfolk a Wisbech magistrate, John Brown, admitted breaching cattle movement orders and was fined £5 and 39s costs, the *Norfolk News* noted that 'he appeared to have acted in ignorance of the terms of the Act' which is never an excuse and, given his position, seems implausible.<sup>359</sup> The cases of the Rev Wightwick and John Brown were very public examples of non-compliance with the law by those of local consequence. These cases indicate that people of local importance were prosecuted but there are indications that they were dealt with more leniently than the 'common' offenders even though there would be an expectation that they should be leading by example. Both Wightwick and Brown appear to have been knowingly acting illegally and, in Wightwick's case, very deliberately.

For the safety of neighbourhoods and control of the epizootic, an essential requirement was that owners informed the Government Inspector of infected animals and, if members of an association, the association Inspectors, or their compensation claims would not be allowed. As Inspectors were empowered to order the destruction of infected cattle compulsion was necessary to encourage reporting; as a Cornish newspaper remarked, 'we are sorry to say that unless in the presence of [strong compulsion] many farmers are not sufficiently conscientious to do so small an act of justice towards their neighbours'.<sup>360</sup> The newspaper was actually discussing burying dead cattle properly rather than not reporting them in the first place, but the comment was still valid. The Government Inspectors had legislated powers of slaughter but did not have the 'carrot' of compensation until mandated by the Act of February 1866. They always had a more significant 'stick' than withholding compensation however, they had recourse to the 'strong arm of

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<sup>357</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: Meeting at Northwich', *Northwich Guardian*, 23 September 1865, 5; 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 9 September 1865, 9; 'Oxford Cattle Plague Association', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 9 November 1865, 3.

<sup>358</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 9 September 1865, 9.

<sup>359</sup> 'A Magistrate Fined for Removing Cattle Without a Licence', *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 5.

<sup>360</sup> 'Dogs and the Cattle Plague', *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 14 December 1865, 2.

the law' and could summons offenders for infringement of the Orders in Council, or the Act, with a (potentially) hefty fine on conviction. The ability to impose fines was a nationwide statutory provision, but the rigour with which it was applied varied from place to place, and sometimes offender to offender.

Cheshire cases demonstrated that infected or suspected cattle were not always killed, one of which involved an individual of great local and even national significance. In his September 1866 report to the Quarter Sessions, the Chief Constable maintained that Lord Westminster had declared one cow lost, but he (the Chief Constable) 'knew that there were 51 buried in his Lordship's park'.<sup>361</sup> According to the returns, four cattle recovered that week, not just the one mentioned in the Chief Constable's report.<sup>362</sup> Whether non-slaughter or not reporting animals which succumbed to the disease was 'resistance' is unclear, it was undoubtedly illegal, but no action was taken against his Lordship even though numerous other cases of 'failing to report' were brought before the courts. Only eleven days after the case involving Lord Westminster, the Cheshire magistrates reacted rapidly when the Chief Constable reported a cow that had recovered, 'showing *prima facie* an infringement of the Session's Order'.<sup>363</sup> The Inspector concerned was successfully prosecuted for failure in his duty; he had ordered the cow killed but left before it was slaughtered, it was not killed, and the cow later recovered as reported. It is unknown why this was taken as evidence of offending when the Chief Constable's observations on unreported cattle burials at Easton Hall were not, but the relative social positions of the offenders are noteworthy. In Norfolk a similar breach, where the defendant failed to notify the Inspector of a cow infected with Cattle Plague, attracted the maximum fine of 20s and a further 32s costs, but again the defendant was a farmer, not a peer of the realm.<sup>364</sup> The Cheshire Quarter Sessions then issued a stern reminder that all infected cattle had to be destroyed, which was almost redundant as only 14 more cattle were attacked and slaughtered in the county during the epizootic; the final infected cow in Cheshire was killed in the last week of October 1866.<sup>365</sup> The timing is relevant, the Quarter Sessions did not take action against 'recovered' cattle until the disease had essentially run its course in the county. Cattle recovered in other areas; sixty-five counties recorded them throughout the epizootic, fifty-two counties recording recovery after the Act was passed (80%). As an analysis of the data (presented in the Regional Topographies chapter Section 3.1.1.9, Table 3-3 and the Appendix, Figure 9-5) found, of the 46,889 cattle nationwide that recovered from the disease, just under a third (14,659, 31.2%) were recorded after the CPA made the slaughter of diseased cattle compulsory. However, of these nearly two-thirds (9,146, 62.3%) were recorded in March 1866, which

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<sup>361</sup> 'The Cheshire Quarter Sessions: The Chief Constable's Report-Cattle Plague Statistics', *Cheshire Observer*, 20 October 1866, 7.

<sup>362</sup> Veterinary Department, *Report*, 119.

<sup>363</sup> 'The Responsibility of Cattle Inspectors', *Chester Courant*, 31 October 1866, 6.

<sup>364</sup> 'Terrington Petty Sessions: Joseph Stockdale', *Lynn Advertiser*, 20 January 1866, 5.

<sup>365</sup> 'The Responsibility of Cattle Inspectors' *Chester Courant*, 31 October 1866, 6; Veterinary Department, *Report*, 119.

included cattle that recovered in February, as Inspectors did not always submit their figures on time.<sup>366</sup> Nearly a third (29.7%) of the cattle that recovered nationally were from Cheshire, and nearly two-thirds (64%) of those after the passing of the CPA. These statistics show, at best, poor regard for the regulations in Cheshire and is very different from the other study areas; in Norfolk 349 cattle recovered, of these 67 (19.2%) after the passing of the CPA, and in Wiltshire 18 animals recovered, with none after the passing of the Act.

#### 4.4.3 Group and Local authority episodes

Most of the resistance detailed in this section involve local authorities, but Cheshire provided an example of suspected group defiance by a group of tradesmen. On 3 January 1866, the Quarter Sessions made an Order banning all movement of cattle along roads in their jurisdiction.<sup>367</sup> On 19 March 1866, 'nearly thirty' Birkenhead butchers were in court, charged with breaching the order by driving cattle from the Birkenhead ferry terminal.<sup>368</sup> The butchers claimed that they had been told, by the dealers at the Cattle Market, that George Hunt's Cattle Diseases Bill had been passed – it had not and was never actually enacted - and that they could 'bring their cattle across by the ferry in the ordinary way, and drive them to their destination'.<sup>369</sup> The prosecution accepted this claim and told the Court they would only be looking for the defendants to pay the necessary taxes as the offence had been committed entirely due to this 'misapprehension'. The court felt that this was a 'strange misapprehension to have fallen into' and the Chairman, at least, suspected that it was deliberate defiance of the law, stating that

from the great number it appears to be a concert between them... if one or two had done it I could have understood it; but when the whole of them did it, it looks as if they had set the law at defiance.<sup>370</sup>

Ultimately, the Court decided that the defendants had not intended to break the law and only imposed costs on each. Although the Court did not pursue the 'defiance' angle, it seems likely that this was intended, and that the failure of the court to address this sent the 'wrong message'. It is noteworthy that

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<sup>366</sup> From data in Veterinary Department, *Report*, 'Summary Tables and Abstracts of the Reported Cases of Cattle Plague from the Commencement of the Disease to 31 December 1866' and 'Summary Tables and Abstracts of the Reported Cases of Cattle Plague from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1867 to the Termination of the Disease in September 1867', 48-156 and 196-206 respectively.

<sup>367</sup> 'Cheshire quarter sessions: The Cattle Plague within the County', *Chester Chronicle*, 6 January 1866, 6.

<sup>368</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: Meeting of the Wirral Petty Sessional Committee', *Cheshire Observer*, 3 March 1866, 5 and 'Birkenhead Petty Sessions: The Butchers and the Cattle Plague Regulations', *Cheshire Observer* 10 March 1866, 5.

<sup>369</sup> 'The Cattle Plague' *John o' Groats Journal* 8 March 1866, 4. The permission they were referring to was an exception to movement restrictions for cattle going to slaughter. ('The Report of the Royal Commission on the Cattle: Parliamentary Intelligence: House of Commons, Monday', *Oswestry Advertiser*, 21 February 1866, 8.)

<sup>370</sup> 'Birkenhead Petty Sessions: The Butchers and the Cattle Plague Regulations', *Cheshire Observer* 10 March 1866, 5 and *Chester Courant*, 14 March 1866, 6.



this rare example of group offending against the regulations involves butchers rather than farmers. It is unclear whether this is because butchers tend to be located relatively close to each other in towns, and so are more likely to come together, or because the butchers were more disposed to offend.

In 1867 six farmers in Staffordshire was summonsed, individually but to the same court, for non-payment of the Cattle Plague rate. Farmer John Salmon stated that he had lost all his cattle, bar one, before the CPA was enacted and, as he 'had not received one farthing in the way of compensation', he did not think it fair that he should 'contribute to a rate for the compensation of others'. John Forster made a similar declaration, stating that his loss had been £200 and four other farmers 'similarly answered summons against them'.<sup>371</sup> The magistrates were sympathetic and, although they found that the defendants were legally liable to pay, they were not prepared to order any of the men to do so and left it for the collector of fines to 'take what action he thought proper'. Whether further action was taken is unknown. This was definitely resistance by a number of individuals to the requirements of the Act, but the court decided it was justifiable and this would appear to have been even less of a 'group action' than the Birkenhead butchers.

Erickson noted that Cheshire's cull provisions were not enforced well even after the Act was passed and that numerous districts exercised 'local discretion'.<sup>372</sup> Some of these actions were apparently acts of defiance; Cheshire magistrates formally resolved not to order 'recovering' cattle to be slaughtered in March 1866, after the Act made this mandatory. The very first instruction, after the Act was passed, by the Quarter Sessions to guide their Inspectors was that they were 'not to destroy animals, though they had been diseased, if they were not at the time infectious'.<sup>373</sup> Such a direction was directly counter to the intent, and indeed wording, of the Act, and the vets could not possibly tell whether the animals were infectious or not. The local MP and Chair of the County Bench, John Tollemache, categorically stated that the intention of the Act was the slaughter of *all* infected cattle but that he was sure that it 'could not be carried out in its entirety in Cheshire'. He also believed that the movement restrictions, which were 'very unpopular with the farming community, did little or nothing to stop the spread of the disease'. His position was summed up in his declaration that

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<sup>371</sup> 'Heavy losses by the Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 20 June 1867, 2; 'The Cattle Plague Rate', *The Staffordshire Sentinel*, 1 June 1867, 5.

<sup>372</sup> Erickson, 'Cattle Plague', 101.

<sup>373</sup> 'Important proceedings with reference to the Cattle Plague Bill', *Northwich Guardian*, 3 March 1866, 3, *Chester Chronicle*, 3 March 1866, 6 and *Cheshire Observer*, 3 March 1866, 3.

The Act... was a very valuable Act for most of the counties of England, but he did not believe it was suited for [Cheshire] and one or two other counties. He was confident that the act.... would not be carried out strictly in Cheshire.<sup>374</sup>

Tollemache went further at a meeting of the Nantwich Board of Guardians later in the year, when he vowed he 'should wink very hard at a man trying to save his cow instead of fining him the full penalty of the law'.<sup>375</sup> When the local MP and leader of the county Justices had stated that the Act would not be applied in full, it was hardly surprising that compliance was less than perfect. The government *Report on the Cattle Plague*, evaluating the situation in Cheshire, made it clear that the authors blamed the county authorities, and farmers, for the losses in the county, saying

During the first four months of the prevalence of the disease great reluctance was manifested in [Cheshire] to the slaughter of diseased animals, and to this is partly attributed the rapid spread of the disease. During the week ending 17 Feb 1866, when 7,095 attacks were reported, only 79 diseased Cattle were returned as killed, while 5,541 are stated to have died and 846 recovered.<sup>376</sup>

This left 629 infected cattle alive. The Third report of the Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague, published in May 1866, noted that

the slaughter of diseased animals has been enforced with different degrees of stringency in different counties; it appears to have been more systematically done in Yorkshire than in Cheshire; in the latter county, indeed, in no single week has the number of animals killed been equal to the attacks.

The Commission report went on to show that, in the six weeks to the end of March 1866, '4,457 diseased animals were left [alive] in Cheshire to spread contagion'.<sup>377</sup>

Norfolk veterinary surgeon William Smith claimed non-compliance with the law was rife in Cheshire, reporting to the NCPA that

In the County of Cheshire the Orders in Council and the law were generally disregarded, and for some weeks after the passing of the act for the appointment of local authorities, &c. (I know, being on Cattle Plague business in the county, that it was not put in force.)<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> 'Important proceedings', *Northwich Guardian, Cheshire Observer*, 3 March 1866, 3, *Chester Chronicle*, 3 March 1866, 6.

<sup>375</sup> 'Nantwich Board of Guardians: The Cattle Plague', *Northwich Guardian*, 8 September 1866, 6.

<sup>376</sup> Veterinary Dept, 'Appendix I: Remarks on the Returns from each County: 33 Cheshire', *Report*, 22.

<sup>377</sup> 'Third Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Origin and Nature of the Cattle Plague', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 May 1866, 2.

<sup>378</sup> Smith, 'Cattle Plague in Norfolk', 396. Smith, a veterinary surgeon in Norwich, had been appointed Norwich Inspector in late August 1865 ('The Cattle Plague, Inspector Appointed', *Norfolk News*, 2 September 1865, 3).

This was not the opinion of distant government officials but of an eyewitness. He went on to allege that the 'great and ruinous losses' in Cheshire resulted from 'a prejudice in favour of treatment' and the lack of immediate slaughter.<sup>379</sup> James Simonds and George Brown, veterinarians working for, and reporting to the Privy Council, were not surprised by the losses in Cheshire.<sup>380</sup> They identified several contributory factors, one being that the dairy farmers 'displayed more than usual obstinacy in resisting the means by which the Plague could alone be exterminated' and went on to complain that the Local Authority was 'far too lax'. They claimed that farmers got themselves elected as Inspectors, 'that they might spare the lives of their own or their neighbour's cattle' by exercising the discretion not to slaughter available to them before the passing of the Act, and 'allowing animals to live when the attack appeared a mild one and not destroying cattle that had survived the crisis'. The Privy Council vets clearly saw the actions of Cheshire farmers as defiance. Similar charges were not levelled at either of the other study areas, indicating differences in how control measures and their enforcement varied between them, which might be explained by the different ('capitalistic') class structure of Norfolk agriculture and by the very low infection rate in Wiltshire. Two additional examples make the difference even more apparent. The Cheshire Quarter Sessions did eventually take action; in September 1866, the chairman put forward a resolution that powers for dealing with the Cattle Plague should be removed from the local sessions and given to a new, county Central Committee.<sup>381</sup> The committee was to be made up of two magistrates from each hundred in the county to 'secure uniformity of proceedings throughout the County', taking away the power of local magistrates to deal with Cattle Plague offences. In other words they moved control from local to county level, which was the system employed in Norfolk throughout the epizootic. Given that by then the outbreak was almost over in Cheshire (only 18 more cattle were lost in the remaining three months in which the disease was in Cheshire), it was too little too late.

#### **4.4.4 Northwich, Clackclose and Freebridge Lynn – case studies in local control**

This section considers how local authorities in Cheshire and Norfolk reacted to failures, by their own sub-committees and designated local authorities, to enforce the regulations. It is shown that the responses in Cheshire were very different from those in Norfolk with the Cheshire Quarter sessions appearing to actively support (illegal) actions.

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<sup>379</sup> Smith, 'The Cattle Plague in Norfolk', 402.

<sup>380</sup> James Simonds and George Brown. 'Appendix II: Medical Report of the Cattle Plague' in Veterinary Dept, *Report*, 301.

<sup>381</sup> 'Cheshire Adjourned Sessions: The Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer* and *Northwich Guardian*, 22 September 1866, 3.

Under the Act, local authorities had 'large discretion' as to the slaughter of *uninfected* cattle and the Cheshire Quarter Sessions had warned their local committees that 'Very great caution must be used in carrying out this power... otherwise the greatest mischief may arise'.<sup>382</sup> This power appears to have been misapplied in Cheshire with Inspectors not declaring cattle infected so that they did not have to order slaughter. In March 1866, a few weeks after the Act came into force a Cheshire MP, GW Latham, wrote to the Home Secretary complaining about how the Northwich committee was implementing the provisions of the Act. He complained that the committee had instructed their Inspectors to 'deal tenderly with all cases of Cattle Plague', which had resulted in the inspectors 'leaving all cases for some days to see whether there is any hope of recovery' and noted that 'no cow is killed until it has had time to infect the neighbourhood'. Once the Inspectors eventually declared the cow infected and ordered it destroyed, the farmer could claim compensation under the Act. In contrast, cattle that died rather than were slaughtered did not qualify for compensation (a provision to encourage early notification of infected cattle). The identical reports, carried by the *Chester Chronicle* and its sister paper the *Cheshire Observer*, indicated that Latham's main complaint was financial; because slaughter was 'generally only a few hours antecedent to that of the probable death', he felt that by the 'granting of compensation in cases where death is a certainty... in this district compensation is turned into a mere payment to the owner out of the pocket of the ratepayer!'<sup>383</sup> However, in a letter to the *Times*, Latham was more concerned about the effects of leaving infected cattle alive, a policy which, he noted, was 'assented to by the [local] committee'.<sup>384</sup> He emphasised the results of the policy of not slaughtering infected animals at once were that 'cattle in every stage of this disease are kept alive for days, distilling poison from their pores and spreading infection far and wide among the healthy stocks of the neighbouring farms'.<sup>385</sup> He accepted that the local authority had discretion in the case of healthy 'in contact' animals but noted that these were not the animals the committee had instructed its Inspectors to delay slaughtering. Latham had endeavoured 'to induce my fellow committee-men to act in accordance with the law. Hitherto I have been unsuccessful'.<sup>386</sup> In a letter to the Home Secretary, reprinted in the *Chester Chronicle*, he claimed that the Northwich chairman had declared that the requirement under the Act, for 'all Cows to be *at once* destroyed', was illegal (which was not what the Act said, it limited immediate destruction to infected cattle, with the discretion to slaughter animals 'in-contact but apparently healthy'). Latham asked the Home Secretary to 'take any steps to prevent the present practice [as]... in the meantime the disease is spreading without any honest effort to check it'.<sup>387</sup> The Home Secretary wrote to the Cheshire Quarter Session Chairman on 26 March demanding that the attention of

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<sup>382</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Chester Courant*, 7 March 1866, 7.

<sup>383</sup> 'Cheshire Quarter Sessions: The Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer*, 14 April 1866, 3.

<sup>384</sup> 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 20 March 1866, 20.

<sup>385</sup> 'Cheshire Quarter Sessions: The Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer*, 14 April 1866, 3.

<sup>386</sup> 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 20 March 1866, 20.

<sup>387</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle* and the *Cheshire Observer*, 14 April 1866, 3 and 7 respectively.

the local Committee and the Quarter Sessions itself be drawn to the issue immediately. At the Quarter Session meeting on 10 April, the chairman of the Northwich committee presented a resolution that denied they had 'given any order to their Inspectors on which such an interpretation can be founded'. The Quarter Sessions sent the resolution to the Home Secretary as their answer i.e. that Latham's allegation was incorrect. At the meeting, a supporter of Latham's position stated that he felt that 'the practice then being carried out [in Northwich] was not ... in accordance with the spirit of the Act of Parliament'.<sup>388</sup> Major Leigh summed up the feeling of the Quarter Sessions when he said that 'with care and attention a good percentage [of infected cattle] can be saved. I know a farmer who had eleven attacked and saved them all', and 'the subject was then dropped'. The Quarter Sessions quite clearly agreed that infected cattle did not have to be slaughtered when diagnosed but still told the Home Secretary that the Northwich policy had not been as reported. They certainly did not move to change the procedure followed in Northwich, which fitted with their own previous announcements. This is in stark contrast to the reactions of the designated authorities in Norfolk when two of their sub-committees were not applying the law's requirements.

In Norfolk, the Quarter Sessions delegated its Cattle Plague powers to the Central Committee of the NCPA. They, in turn, delegated power to Cattle Plague Committees for the individual Hundreds. These Hundred Cattle Plague Committees consisted of the justices for the Hundred plus selected others and implemented the decisions of the Central Committee. Or most did, the Cattle Plague Committee for Clackclose, a Hundred in West Norfolk, became a serious problem, with its neighbouring Hundred of Freebridge Marshland initially not complying with the legislation but falling into line when challenged. The more serious resistance, by Clackclose, is considered first.

Clackclose lost the most cattle in the county (see Figure 4-2 below); in mid-March 1866, twenty-two Norfolk Hundreds reported a total of 467 cattle infected, with the loss of 454 of them (98% loss). Clackclose accounted for almost half of these (212 - 46.7%).<sup>389</sup> A month later, Clackclose accounted for an even more significant percentage of the total number of attacks, 55 out of 72 (76%) in the previous week.<sup>390</sup> One of the Act's provisions was that any location where Cattle Plague was found had to be declared an 'Infected Place' (IP), and a quarantine zone established around it. Several other legal restrictions then came into force, including no movement of living animals out of the IP, and no parts of the animal or any manure, feed, bedding etc., could be removed without a licence.<sup>391</sup> The extent of the IP was left to the local Committee

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<sup>388</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle* and the *Cheshire Observer*, 14 April 1866, 3 and 7 respectively.

<sup>389</sup> 'Adjourned Quarter Sessions', *Norfolk News*, 24 March 1866, 9.

<sup>390</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: Meeting of the County Justices', *Norfolk News*, 21 April 1866, 10.

<sup>391</sup> 'Cattle Plague Act as amended by order in Council dated 24 March 1866'. Veterinary Department, 'Report on the Cattle Plague', 361-2.

and varied from place to place; for example, South Greenhoe in Norfolk declared an Infected Place to extend 1 mile from the infection site, whereas Tunstead & Happing set half a mile.<sup>392</sup> On April 4<sup>th</sup> 1866, the Clackclose Committee reported to the Clerk of the Central Committee that they had ‘no recommendations to make declaring a place to be infected’ even though farms had been attacked. The NCPA Central Committee sent a letter demanding action that was ignored by the Clackclose committee, who again made no ‘Infected place’ orders in their area. The Central Committee elevated the problem to the Privy Council ‘with a request that they would deal with the case as they might think fit’.<sup>393</sup> The Privy Council saw fit to send Professor Simonds to Clackclose to set infected-place boundaries. The following weekly report from Clackclose noted, disingenuously, that ‘Professor Simonds came to this place on Monday last; but we are not informed to what cause we are indebted for his visit’.<sup>394</sup> Simonds’ report, read to the next meeting of the NCPA, noted that ‘the declaration of places already made in Clackclose, he was of the opinion, to be very inefficient for the required purposes’.<sup>395</sup> The ‘Clayclose’ [sic] representative informed the Committee that the Local Committee had not fixed infected areas because they could not agree on them. Once appropriately established, the IPs were effective, Clackclose infections fell from seventy to nine in a week. There were still problems with the Hundred however, the Central Committee was concerned that the local Committee had not made a road running through infected premises at Watlington part of the Infected Place because ‘such a step would effectually stop the traffic to Watlington Railway station’ (Figure 9-1b).<sup>396</sup> The Central Committee was firmly of the opinion that the road should be closed, and an Infected Place declaration, including all roads, was imposed over the heads of the local Committee. It is unclear why they did not follow this route initially, rather than involving the Privy Council, but the Clackclose committee was overruled and brought to heel by the higher tiers of Norfolk local authority acting both on their own and by bringing the might of the Privy Council to bear. Figure 4-2 (below), clearly shows that Clackclose lost almost twice as many cattle as the next highest area, neighbouring Freebridge Marshland (1592/809). There is evidence that the Clackclose committee continued to be awkward, in 1867 the local Inspector reported that the Clackclose committee would not allow him to slaughter cattle that had been in contact with diseased animals on five separate occasions even though this mandated under the Act.<sup>397</sup> On this occasion censure by the Central Committee was enough to make the local committee comply.

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<sup>392</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague: Meeting of the County justices’, *Norfolk News*, 21 April 1866.

<sup>393</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague, The meeting of the Central Committee’, *Norwich Mercury* 5 May 1866, 2-3; *Norfolk News* 5 May 1866, 3; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 5 May 1866, 2

<sup>394</sup> ‘Downham, The Cattle Plague’, *Norwich News*, 5 May 1866, 6.

<sup>395</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague, Meeting of the Central Committee’, *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 2, *Norwich Mercury*, 12 May 1866, 3

<sup>396</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague, The Central Committee, Infected Places’, *Norwich Mercury*, 6 June 1866, 2.

<sup>397</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague’, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 23 March 1867, 2.

Freebridge Marshland also showed signs of resistance; in May 1866 the local committee reported that there had been twenty new cases of the disease but that 'seeing the inconvenience, they thought that the circumstances were sufficient not to justify them in declaring the districts to be infected'.<sup>398</sup> The local representative to the Central Committee reported that the 'occupations' (farms) were very small, so if an infected area of two miles was set for each 'the whole traffic of Marshland would be shut up' and that 'a great many of the farmers of the fens said that they would not submit to the shutting up of the district'. The Central Committee declared that the making of infected places was mandatory under the Act, and the F-M representative undertook to inform the local committee of the 'unanimous opinion of the central Committee and promised that the districts in which disease had recently existed should be declared infected'. As nothing further was reported the local committee complied.

The area produced another example of deliberate disobedience, but with a different outcome; Simmonds noted that 'at the premises of Mr Hugh Aylmer, West Dereham, who keeps a herd of very valuable shorthorns I found several of his best animals to be suffering from the plague and that creative measures were being adopted by him' and complained that Aylmer was 'doctoring not killing them'.<sup>399</sup> It became clear that Aylmer had not applied for a licence from the Privy Council to allow him to keep infected cattle to experiment on, using chloroform as a treatment, and the NCPA wrote to Aylmer about the matter.<sup>400</sup> In its report about the next NCPA meeting the *Norwich Mercury* wrote fulsomely in support of Aylmer, saying that his cattle were 'perhaps the most perfect herd of cattle this county has ever possessed' and was of great importance to 'the present as well as future breeders and graziers of Norfolk'.<sup>401</sup> The paper allowed that his trials of a treatment 'that had worked elsewhere' was 'in strict law a breach of the Act of Parliament' but that this was so important that the Privy Council 'would not hesitate to give the required permission'. Aylmer, with the support of the West Norfolk MP and 'a great number of farmers and magistrates from the district' retrospectively applied to the Council for a licence. Some on the NCPA committee urged that it should support Aylmer's application whereas others maintained that this was encouraging him to break the law which would be 'complained of' by those who had already been fined for similar offences. It appeared that the '*feeling* of the great majority of the Committee' (original emphasis) was in favour of Aylmer, nonetheless 'the strict letter of the law was maintained' and it was agreed that the Committee should leave the issue with the Privy Council for a decision. The newspaper noted that this was

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<sup>398</sup> 'The Cattle Plague, Meeting of the Central Committee', *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 2, *Norwich Mercury*, 12 May 1866, 3.

<sup>399</sup> 'The Cattle Plague, Meeting of the Central Committee', *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 2, *Norwich Mercury*, 12 May 1866, 3.

<sup>400</sup> 'The Cattle Plague, Meeting of the Central Committee', *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 2, *Norwich Mercury*, 12 May 1866, 3.

<sup>401</sup> 'Mr Hugh Aylmer's Herd', *Norwich Mercury*, 12 May 1866, 5.

a case where an exception should be made. It maintained that Aylmer’s herd was for breeding better stock for local farmers, not slaughter. The newspaper went so far as to maintain that it was Aylmer’s ‘duty... to the public that he should endeavour to save ... as many as he could of a valuable national property’. The Privy Council exempted Aylmer’s cattle from slaughter ‘in order to try the effect of chloroform on the Cattle Plague’.<sup>402</sup> This shows a local farming luminary openly breaking the law, being supported by the local newspaper with the result of the local authority, the NCPA, putting the matter before the Privy Council. In this case the Council allowed the actions to continue. Unlike the failure to fix ‘infected places’ in the same area. The desire to treat infected animals may have been for reasons other than financial or resistance to the regulations; Jane Rowling showed that ‘one great source of pride for practical farmers, and a sure method of securing a reputation as a good livestock man, was the ability to cure sick animals’.<sup>403</sup>

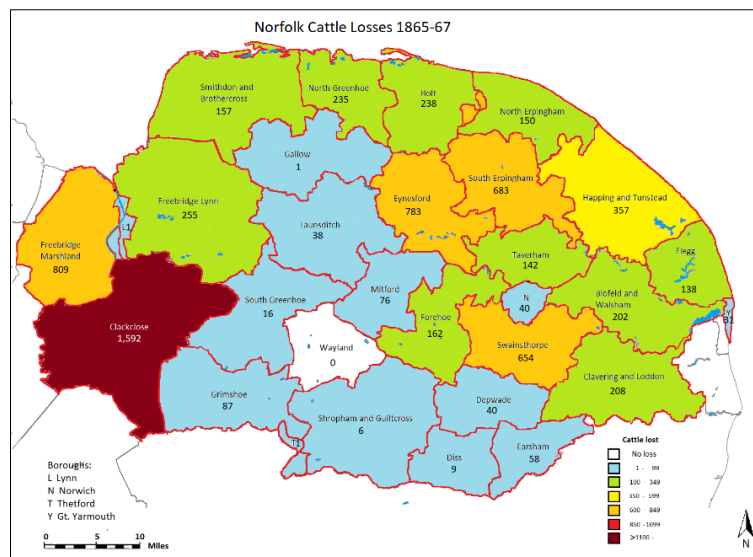


Figure 4-2 Norfolk total cattle losses by Hundred

How the Cheshire and Norfolk authorities addressed ‘resistance’ by their local committees could not have been more different. In Cheshire, the Quarter Sessions effectively conspired with the local committee to allow infected cattle to live for ‘several days’ to see if they recovered, contrary to the Act, whereas in Norfolk the NCPA faced resistance from its Freebridge Marshland committee and successfully ended the problem. They were less successful with the Clackclose hundred, and rapidly referred the matter to the national authority, the Privy Council, who took enforceable action. The NCPA also referred the issue of Aylmer’s unofficial trials upwards. This is discussed further in the Conclusion chapter (Chapter 7) but indicates that there were differences at county and sub-county levels in how the legislation was perceived

<sup>402</sup> ‘Cattle Plague: The Central Committee’, *Norwich Mercury* 23 May 1866, 3, *Norfolk News*, 26 May 1866, 9, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 May 1866, 2, *Lynn Advertiser* 26 May 1866, 6.

<sup>403</sup> Jane Rowling, ‘Trust in a Masculine Space and a Community within a Community: Pre-1950 Auction Mart Culture in Lower Wharfedale, Yorkshire’, *Rural History*, 26, no. 1 (2015): 84-5.



and enforced. It is concluded that this is a result of differences in the world view of the areas, in Cheshire this was generally very local and paternalist, in Norfolk more a county-wide view and market orientated.

#### 4.4.5 Other local authority cases

Although not from one of the study areas, it is instructive to see how another authority dealt with things. Even before the Act became law, the methods employed in Aberdeenshire included the designation of infected places, but their approach was both less restrictive and more effective than those of the Act. Aberdeenshire led the way in dealing with the disease, although the process was always referred to as 'The Edinburgh Method'. They were the first area to enforce 'stamping out' (the compulsory slaughter of infected animals). Infected areas were rigorously quarantined but without a county-wide halt of cattle movement. In a letter to the *Times*, it was explained that

We have isolated the county by prohibiting the congress of cattle, stopped all fairs and markets, and provided that when disease breaks out this fact, *per se*, makes it illegal to move any animal within the distance of one mile of the place where the disease exists from the time of the outbreak to 30 days after the last case.

According to this provision the infected district extends with the disease, and always a mile beyond. Police-constables watch these infected districts day and night (without this the provision would be worthless).<sup>404</sup>

The necessity of rigorously enforcing the restrictions using the Police 'day and night' indicates the authority considered non-compliance was likely. It is interesting, if pointless, to speculate on how different things might have been if such an approach had been enforced kingdom-wide, and earlier than February 1866.

The case of the Clackclose local committee was not the only example of a local authority at fault, an entire council was prosecuted for ignoring the regulations, although again not in any of the study areas. This prosecution showed what appears to have been deliberate defiance of the law but was not labelled as such. In February 1867, the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* reported that the Provost and town council of Dunfermline, in Fife in Scotland, had been charged with breach of Privy Council orders 'By digging up and removing the remains of animals that had died of the Cattle Plague'.<sup>405</sup> It appeared that the animals were removed because the Council wanted to use their burial site to construct a town reservoir. In their defence, the report said, 'every precaution appeared to have been taken', and the council claimed they were

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<sup>404</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 26 February 1866, 5. Letter written by James W Barclay of the Aberdeenshire Rinderpest Association.

<sup>405</sup> 'Breach of Privy Council Orders', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 16 February 1867, 3. This account was also carried by the *Norwich Mercury* 3 March 1867, 2.

unaware they were breaking any Orders. As the local authority, it is impossible the council was ignorant, and ignorance of the law is no defence, although there were many precedents at the time where this *mitigated* the offence. A letter published in three local Scottish papers declared that, under the Act, “any person digging up any disused animal.... shall be guilty of an offence against this order” and charged that ‘the majesty of the law has been openly and deliberately violated by those whose duty was to vindicate its authority.’<sup>406</sup> Further investigation, however, has demonstrated that the writer was frequently antagonistic to the Council in print, and much of his ‘evidence’ was untrue, an example of where what was printed cannot be taken at face value. The Council defence of ignorance was not accepted when the case came to court, which the *Dunfermline Saturday Press* reported on at length. The paper was a supporter of the council, they subtitled their report ‘Trial of the Burgh Magistrates’, not ‘the Town Council’, which was factually inaccurate as the Provost was summonsed as the head of the Council and not as Chief Magistrate.<sup>407</sup> The defence entered mitigation that they had not known that diseased cattle were buried in the land they purchased to construct the reservoir. This seems unlikely as the Corporation had acquired the land two years’ previously. Despite this, and the court’s refusal to accept the ‘ignorance’ plea, the judge ruled that the offence had been committed ‘from an erroneous idea of duty to the community’ and reduced the fine to £30, £1 for each carcass, from the £600 that the Order allowed. At the Council meeting after the hearing the council chairman, upon whom the financial penalty and the conviction fell, asked the Council to relieve him of the financial liability, saying ‘the humiliation was great enough without having to put his hand in his own pocket’, which the Council agreed to do.<sup>408</sup> The judge did not see the offence as deliberate defiance of the law. This case certainly showed disregard for the orders, if not outright defiance, but again appears to have been because of a hope of ‘getting away with it’ rather than an action to protest the law. In many of the cases reported where people of importance or local bodies were found guilty, the courts appear to have been much more lenient than with more common defendants, this being a case in point.

There is evidence for resistance to the collection of the Cattle Rate, the county rate that Quarter Sessions could levy to raise the money to pay for Cattle Plague related expenses and government-sanctioned compensation. Unsurprisingly, given the enormous amount required in the county, resistance was most clearly expressed in Cheshire. There, the collection of the ‘Cattle Rate’ was so slow that the Cattle Plague committee could not pay compensation before the loan the county arranged with the government arrived. In April 1866, representatives of the Cheshire Poor Law Guardians met to consider the ‘collection or non-

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<sup>406</sup> ‘Letter - Resurrection of Rinderpest Carcasses’, *The Dunfermline Saturday Press*, 29 December 1866, 3.;

<sup>407</sup> ‘The Exhumation of Rinderpest Carcasses: Trial of the Burgh Magistrates’, *The Dunfermline Saturday Press*, 16 February 1867, 2.

<sup>408</sup> ‘Raising of Rinderpest Carcasses’, *The Dunfermline Saturday Press*, 16 February 1867, 3.

collection' of the Cattle Rate, and resolved that it was 'inexpedient for the Board of Guardians of the County of Cheshire to interfere with the collection of the Cattle Plague Rate'.<sup>409</sup> The *Chester Chronicle*, as Matthews noted, claimed that several Boards of Guardians had 'so strong an opinion of the injustice of the rate that they fully determined on a little passive resistance,' although, they pointed out, if the Poor Law Guardians declined to be involved the Quarter Sessions would simply instruct the local area Poor Law Inspectors to collect the money anyway.<sup>410</sup> This was not the start of a revolution, and the local paper did not consider the Guardian's actions shocking or unusual, declaring that opposition would be 'not unlike that with which church rates are often met'. A Wiltshire newspaper considered these events as being more serious, reporting that the Cheshire magistrates had told the Home Secretary that the rate could not be collected in Cheshire 'unless writs of mandamus were issued' and that the Wrexham Guardians had 'unanimously resolved not to obey the precept', which was a misreporting of the facts.<sup>411</sup> This serves as a caution to relying on too limited a range of newspaper opinions and illustrates Jeremy Gibson's point that newspapers do not always accurately represent events.<sup>412</sup> The money was collected, albeit slowly. Examples of dissent to the Cattle Plague rates have not been discovered in Norfolk or Wiltshire which is probably related to the considerably lower amounts required and so is linked to the level of cattle losses experienced, one of the few occasions where this is the case

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that resistance to the regulations, demonstrated by breaches of the control measures occurred in all three study areas and that the levels of offences were not related to levels of attack by the Cattle Plague.

However, differences between the areas were found, for example, with market closures and how 'straying' sub-areas were dealt with. Livestock markets were closed in all three study areas but, whilst there was some discussion about the desirability of re-opening them in both Cheshire and Wiltshire, there was far more concern and reaction in Norfolk, as the case study demonstrated. The Conclusion chapter (Chapter 7) considers this further but the reasons relate to the types of agricultural production and business models found in the different areas and it is concluded that Norfolk had a much more production orientated 'system than the other study areas. With the cases of the Northwich committee in Cheshire and Clackclose committee in Norfolk, the local authorities took very different actions. In Cheshire, the Quarter Sessions

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<sup>409</sup> 'The Cattle Rate in Cheshire', *Chester Chronicle*, 21 April 1866, 6.

<sup>410</sup> Comment. 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire', *Chester Chronicle*, 21 April 1866, 8; Matthews, 'Who's to pay?', 89.

<sup>411</sup> 'Cattle Slaughter', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 5 May 1866, 3.

<sup>412</sup> Jeremy Gibson, *Local Newspapers, 1750-1920: England, Wales, Channel Isles, Isle of Man: a select location list*, 2nd ed. (Sherringham: Federation of Family History Societies, 2002).

supported the actions of the Northwich area. They connived at deflecting the attention of the Home Secretary. In contrast, in Norfolk the NCPA, having failed once to bring the Clackclose committee to heel, appealed the Privy Council to take action and took no action over 'recovered' cattle until the epizootic was effectively over in the county. The different social structures of these two counties are considered to have affected how these problems were dealt with, or not in the case of Cheshire.

Some of the reactions identified in this chapter, for example, the view that government interference was seen as unwanted and even 'tyrannical' have been discussed before, but the conclusion drawn by this study is that these were evidence that England was not a centralised state at the time of the Cattle Plague. The evidence presented in detail here is the first description of others, such as the 'markets and fairs' discussions, and the active resistance as exhibited by the Cheshire butchers (although this was mentioned by Matthews), the Staffordshire farmers and the Clackclose and Freebridge Marshland committees. The actions by Freebridge Marshland were less serious than those of Clackclose in that they immediately followed the NCPA instructions to enforce the regulations which shows that even in a very local area there were variations in how the local authorities reacted to the demands of their superior authority.

## 5 Chapter 5 – The Cattle Plague, Insurance and Compensation

### 5.1 Introduction

Work using traditional ‘top-down’ methodologies suggest that how nineteenth-century farmers attempted to protect themselves from, and were supported against, loss were similar throughout the country. This chapter investigates these measures with reference to the study areas, following the ‘within-area’, comparative methodology of this thesis. It demonstrates significant differences between the areas which suggests more diversity than previously acknowledged, and concludes that these variations reflect differences in the social organisation and agricultural practices in the study areas. Compensation and support at local scales is an area of limited previous research and this chapter investigates support methods available to alleviate losses from the Cattle Plague. Although all were found in each study area the balance between them varied. This chapter presents the first analyses of support from Norfolk and Wiltshire and the first sub-regional comparative study of remediation of an epizootic in the nineteenth century.<sup>413</sup> A case study of a Cheshire association (Altrincham) is used to explore some of the factors involved in detail. Quantitative subscription data, extracted from local newspaper reports of the Cheshire and Norfolk Cattle Plague subscription funds, are evaluated to investigate contribution patterns and distribution issues.

That ‘Farming is a risky business’ is almost a truism, as Ulrich Hess and Peter Hazell amongst others appreciated, and agriculturalists developed strategies to mitigate these risks well before the Cattle Plague.<sup>414</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, several support methods were used to reduce exposure to the effects of risks. For landlords one option was to make their tenants suffer the risk instead, mainly through tenancy agreements, as both David Stead and James Caird noted.<sup>415</sup> Farmers faced serious loss from the destruction of stock or crops to pests and diseases. Although the Cattle Plague was an extreme example, it was not the only one that threatened farmers. Both BPP and FMD had returned to the country with the introduction of Free Trade in the 1840s, as Sherwin Hall commented ‘free trade in cattle meant free trade in cattle diseases.’<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Stephen Matthews, ‘Who is to pay? Cheshire attitudes towards paying for the Cattle Plague of 1865-1866’, *Journal of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 553, (2003): 86. The work of Stephen Matthews on remediation in Cheshire is acknowledged and valued but he did not undertake comparative studies.

<sup>414</sup> Ulrich Hess and Peter Hazell, ‘Innovations and Emerging Trends in Agricultural Insurance’, 1, In *G-20 Round Table on Innovations in Agricultural Finance* conference at Antalya, Turkey September 2015. Online at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283089244\\_Innovations\\_and\\_emerging\\_Trends\\_in\\_Agricultural\\_Insurance](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283089244_Innovations_and_emerging_Trends_in_Agricultural_Insurance) accessed 15 December 2020.

<sup>415</sup> David Stead ‘Risk and risk management in English agriculture, c1750-1850’, *Economic History Review*, 57, (2004): 335 ff.; James Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-1*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1852, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. this edition London: Forgotten Books, 2018), 254.

<sup>416</sup> Sherwin Hall, ‘The Great Cattle Plague of 1865’, *British Veterinary Journal*, 122, no. 6 (1966): 260.

Previous work on financial support for British farmers is minimal. William Smith's 1868 paper on the Cattle Plague only briefly mentioned insurance and compensation.<sup>417</sup> Hess and Hazell considered farm insurance and relief efforts worldwide, as did Edwin Kopf.<sup>418</sup> His detailed investigation of worldwide livestock insurance, sixty years after the Cattle Plague, included some detailed discussions on insurance in different English locations, but these were not compared. The only other recent studies of agricultural assurance and insurance in nineteenth-century Britain were by John Fisher on Nottinghamshire and several influential papers about the events in Cheshire by Stephen Matthews.<sup>419</sup> In this chapter examples from Cheshire confirm, develop and, in a very few instances, contradict Matthews' work. The role of local aristocratic landowners in supporting public subscription funds were acknowledged in Nottinghamshire by Fisher and Matthews in Cheshire but has not discussed in detail.<sup>420</sup> This chapter demonstrates that the way in which farmers were supported during the epizootic varied between the study areas and that the responses indicate that Cheshire, and parts of Wiltshire, exhibited more paternalistic attitudes, and that they were implemented on a much more local scale, than in Norfolk.

## 5.2 Livestock Insurance

Before considering how farmers were supported during the Cattle Plague, it is necessary to review the methods available to provide support, specifically farm insurance companies, cattle associations and clubs, and subscription funds. This section develops Matthews' work on Cheshire and includes the first investigation of farm insurance in Norfolk and Wiltshire in the nineteenth century. It is concluded that the amount of support provided by insurance companies during the Cattle Plague was limited. Insurance and assurance societies and companies functioned in similar ways, they used member's payments to reimburse those who lost assets from various, carefully defined causes. Their differences were in what was covered and the areas over which they worked. Insurance companies often covered risks other than livestock, such as crop disease, hail damage or buildings and covered wider geographical areas than assurance societies. These were limited in area and scope, often supporting losses from a single disease, e.g. BPP. Insurance

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<sup>417</sup> William Smith, 'The Cattle Plague in Norfolk', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 31, no. 4 (1868):395-406.

<sup>418</sup> Hess and Hazell, 'Agricultural Insurance'; Edwin W. Kopf, 'Origins, Development and Practices of Livestock insurance', *Proceedings of the Casualty Actuarial Society*, X IV, 11, no. 2 (1928): 291-372.

<sup>419</sup> John Fisher, 'A Victorian Farming Crisis: The Cattle Plague in Nottinghamshire, 1865-67', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 104, (2000): 113-126; Stephen Matthews, 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, 1865-1866', *Northern History*, 38, no. 1 (2014): 107-119; Stephen Matthews, 'Underwriting disaster: risk and the management of agricultural crisis in mid-nineteenth century Cheshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 58, no. 2 (2010): 217-235; Stephen Matthews, 'Cattle clubs, insurance and Plague in the mid-nineteenth century', *The Agricultural History Review*, 53, no. 2 (2005): 192-211; Matthews, 'Who is to pay?', 79-100.

<sup>420</sup> Fisher, 'A Victorian Farming Crisis', 119; Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 193.

companies were registered limited liability companies, whereas most mutual assurance associations were not, see below.<sup>421</sup>

Limited work has been undertaken on farm insurance, Matthews cited just three works and only that by Rex Russell was considered an in-depth study, whilst Kopf's work was not mentioned.<sup>422</sup> Matthews noted that much of a farmer's capital was tied up in his mortal livestock, yet insurance for beasts was slow to be adopted. It has been proposed that this was because insurance was not readily available and 'the innate conservatism of farmers'.<sup>423</sup> Farmers are notoriously conservative or, more charitably, cautious; in a speech at the re-opening of a local cattle market in the Norfolk Breckland, the point was made that 'the farmers in this neighbourhood especially were fond of experiment, but it was the experiment of others. They were rather slow to experiment themselves but waited to see the results of other people's experiences (Laughter and cheers)'.<sup>424</sup> This supports the view that farmers tend to be conservative and value the opinions of their peers. It also indicates that the farmers of the Breckland were considered conservative even for a rural county like Norfolk, showing sub-county scale variability in practice and outlook.

Insurance companies made money because more was paid in premiums than was paid out for losses. The premium charged was based on the probability of any individual insured item being lost. However, the probability could only be calculated from what had happened before, if a new risk developed that was more likely to result in loss than previously, the premiums being charged would be insufficient to cover the amounts needed. Insurance/assurance associations and companies found themselves in precisely this position when the Cattle Plague arrived. This was understood at the time, a correspondent of the *Sussex Advertiser* warned 'that there being no scale from which premiums can be calculated will probably lead to many failures'.<sup>425</sup> As Kopf stated, many of the local companies established in the middle of the nineteenth century 'came to a disastrous end in consequence of the Cattle Plague'.<sup>426</sup> Although Matthews claimed there was 'probably' no commercial *nationally* available insurance for livestock at the time of the epizootic, it is possible to propose at least one; from the early 1860s, the *Provincial Horse and Cattle Insurance Company Limited* provided livestock insurance across the country although the company's core area

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<sup>421</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 193-6.

<sup>422</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 193; Rex Russell *Cottagers and Cows 1800-1892: the Cow Clubs in Lincolnshire*, (Barton on Humber: WEA Barton Branch, 1987).

<sup>423</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle Clubs', 192.

<sup>424</sup> 'The Opening of Watton Cattle Market', *Norwich Mercury*, 4 February 1869, 5.

<sup>425</sup> 'The Cattle Disease: To the Editor', *Sussex Advertiser*, 26 August 1865, 3.

<sup>426</sup> Kopf, 'Development and Practices', 320.

appears to have been in Scotland.<sup>427</sup> The earliest advertisements for this company located were in 1862.<sup>428</sup> The operational model is considered here as many local Cattle Plague assurance associations were organised along similar lines. The type of farming had an effect on the risks, as a correspondent of the *Sussex Advertiser* appreciated, 'there must be infinitely more risk by any infectious disease in a stock of cows being kept up for a regular supply of milk, or for fattening calves, than where a regular breeding stock is kept', because the breeding farm would not be bringing in new stock on a regular basis.<sup>429</sup> Dairy herds were more vulnerable as they needed regular replacements for older, non-productive cattle and cattle in 'town' dairies were in the most danger. In his evidence to the Royal Commission Professor Simmonds said that:

It is the custom in [large urban] dairies... to send cows to market nearly every market day out of the stock, as fat cows, and to purchase fresh cows for milking purposes; consequently a large dairy is more likely to suffer from a contagious disease than a smaller one.<sup>430</sup>

Urban cattle attracted much higher insurance rates than cattle on farms because of the higher mortality in urban dairies.<sup>431</sup> The high mortality rate was not surprising, the conditions and treatment of the cattle in many, if not most, urban dairies were known to be appalling. A leader in the *Swindon Advertiser* in 1865 referred to

the dismal non-ventilated cellar of the metropolitan milk purveyor who, after draining the milk-bag of the poor animal to its last dregs makes up for any deficiency an artificial system of feeding may have failed to supply by the vigorous application of the pump handle.<sup>432</sup>

which was not generally the custom in non-urban dairies.

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<sup>427</sup> Stephen Matthews, 'Stockport and East Cheshire in the Cattle Plague of 1865-77', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 103, (2007): 123; *Per example* advertisements in *Fife Herald* 30 March 1864, 1; *Sherborne Mercury*, 25 April 1865, 6; *Hertfordshire Guardian, Agricultural Journal and General Advertiser*, 15 August 1865 1; *Belfast Newsletter* 1 September 1865, 1; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 2 September 1865, 5; *Northampton Mercury*, 9 September 1865, 1; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 21 September 1865; *Western Gazette*, 27 October 1865, 4; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1 January 1866; *Elgin Courier*, 19 January 1866, 4; *Dundee Advertiser*, 20 January 1866, 1.

<sup>428</sup> Advertisement 'Insure your cattle and sheep!', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 30 August 1862, 4, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 4 September 1862, 1.

<sup>429</sup> 'The Guildford Cattle Insurance Association', *Surrey Advertiser*, 2 September 1865, 2.

<sup>430</sup> Royal Commission on the Cattle Plague, *First report of the commissioners*, 163, 9 October 1865, 9.

<sup>431</sup> Dairy cattle were covered for 9d per pound of assessed value for cattle below £12 and 10d for those valued at between £12- £16 whereas for town dairy cattle the rates were 2s and 2s 6d respectively. Fat-stock beef cattle were insured up to £20 and cost 8d in the pound. Bulls and cattle under two years old both attracted a rate of 1s in the pound.

<sup>432</sup> 'In almost every direction we find the "Cattle Plague" ...,' Leader, *Swindon Advertiser*, 11 September 1865, 2; Kopf, 'Development and Practices', 319.



Generally the owner of lost cattle received compensation of three-quarters of the insured value, up to certain limits, as well as a quarter of the 'salvage'.<sup>433</sup> Salvage was the income from the 'salvageable' parts of a dead animal, such as edible meat, hooves, hide and offal. Salvage was worth considerable amounts and reduced the compensation payments that had to be made (where paid) until the Act required that the entire slaughtered animal be buried in its slashed skin, a provision that caused complaints from Cheshire farmers.<sup>434</sup>

The Provincial Insurance Company failed in 1866 when several Warrington dairymen made a petition for its winding-up.<sup>435</sup> Other insurance companies operated during the Cattle Plague, but these were all local in their coverage and were not well supported by farmers. Some amended their rules to exclude claims for Cattle Plague losses, and the effect of Insurance companies during the epizootic was necessarily limited.<sup>436</sup> Government-backed insurance/assurance against Cattle Plague was mooted but successfully resisted by the government itself, see below.

### 5.3 Assurance Associations, rates and compensation

Insurance companies were thus not a major feature of how farmers protected themselves from loss. Two other types of agricultural cover were more important - cattle associations and cattle clubs. These are discussed in detail as variations in how they operated reveal differences in the organisation of the different areas. Matthews defined a cattle association as a self-help group generally run by a committee of members (although the local landowners' agent often undertook the administration). He maintained that in contrast cattle clubs tended to be 'paternalistically run for the benefit of the poor by their social superiors'.<sup>437</sup> Rex Russell believed landowners set up cattle clubs for two reasons, a philanthropic and paternalistic wish to improve the conditions of the poor and a desire to keep Poor Rates low.<sup>438</sup> Kopf noted that these local clubs offered protection to the small cattle owner, for whom the loss of a single cow was a serious matter, people whom the insurance companies considered a 'source of more expense than they cared to carry'.<sup>439</sup> Small cattle owners were found throughout the country, and particularly in Cheshire, where newspaper reports gave numerous examples of owners losing one or two cattle alongside the sad note 'all that he

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<sup>433</sup> 'Insurance: The Provincial Horse and Cattle Insurance Company, Limited, *Fifeshire Journal*, 14 January 1864, 8.

<sup>434</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire: County Meeting', *Chester Chronicle*, 17 March 1866, 6.

<sup>435</sup> 'In the matter of the Companies Act, 1862, and of the Provincial Horse and Cattle Insurance Company (Limited), *London Gazette*, 17 April 1866, 2468.

<sup>436</sup> 'Stone Mutual Cattle Insurance Company', *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 1 February 1866, 1.

<sup>437</sup> Matthews, *Cattle clubs*, 198.

<sup>438</sup> Russell, *Cottagers and Cow Clubs*, 5, 17.

<sup>439</sup> Kopf, 'Development and Practices', 296.

[very occasionally 'she'] had'.<sup>440</sup> Cattle clubs did not feature greatly in the Cattle Plague, having very limited funds, and they 'probably failed early on'.<sup>441</sup>

Two variants of Cattle Associations can be identified, local area associations and those that covered a much larger area, typically an entire county. These associations were the major focus for dealing with the Cattle Plague, supporting farmers financially where possible and implementing local rules to reduce the spread of the disease. This section considers how they varied between the study areas, from which conclusions as to why these variations occurred, are drawn.

Some of the associations already established to cover BPP added Cattle Plague but generally entirely new associations were formed, mostly in late 1865, of varying sizes and constitutions. Kopf claimed that 'no less' than 22 companies offered insurance specifically against Cattle Plague and pleural pneumonia. He probably based this figure on James Wilson's 1914 paper on livestock insurance in England and Wales, but the figure is woefully conservative.<sup>442</sup> As Matthews stated, there is no sure estimate of how many associations there were, but a cursory examination of some reports found in the BNA (which, it is acknowledged, was not available to Wilson, Kopf or Matthews) revealed at least 50 associations, and the number likely ran into hundreds nationwide.<sup>443</sup> An investigation into the number of associations remains to be undertaken. The support in the individual study areas follows.

### 5.3.1 Cheshire

In Cheshire, at least twelve 'area' associations, including one called a Farmer's Club and three 'estate' associations, can be identified.<sup>444</sup> The three 'estate' associations identified were at Eaton [John Antrobus], the Crewe estates [Lord Crewe] and Norton Priors [Sir Richard Brooke, Bart.] but there were almost certainly others.<sup>445</sup> The Eaton Association was created, before the epizootic, to cover estate tenants against BPP, to which the Cattle Plague was added. The association of Sir Richard Brooke's tenants was 'newly formed' in November 1865, and within a month, a call for £800 was made, a very large amount.<sup>446</sup> The

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<sup>440</sup> For example, 'The Cattle Plague', *Congleton & Macclesfield Mercury*, 17 February 1866, 4, "William Taylor lost 2 – all his stock".

<sup>441</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle Clubs', 198.

<sup>442</sup> James Wilson, 'The Co-Operative Insurance of Live-Stock in England and Wales', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 77, no. (1914): 151.

<sup>443</sup> Matthews; Cattle clubs', 201; British Newspaper Archive, BNA <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> database interrogated 14 November 2020.

<sup>444</sup> Altrincham, Gt. Boughton, Congleton, Macclesfield, Mottram, Nantwich, Northwich, Over and Middlewich, Runcorn, Whitchurch, Wirral, Wrexham, and the Eaton, Norton Priors and Crewe estate associations. The Wirral Farmer's Club was formed in 1843 ('Wirral Farmer's Club', *Chester Courant*, 25 April 1843, 2).

<sup>445</sup> 'The Eaton Cattle Insurance Society and the Cattle Plague', *Chester Courant*, 6 December 1865, 5-6.

<sup>446</sup> 'Runcorn Board of Guardians – The Cattle Plague', *Warrington Guardian*, 30 December 1865, 11.

Crewe estates' association was reported to have '£1,900 at its back ready for the plague or any other disease' in October 1866.<sup>447</sup> Other local associations were also formed; a member of the Nantwich Union association, which pre-dated the Cattle Plague, stated that 'In the [Nantwich] Union area there exist many local societies.... Some of these societies have been long established, and well supported by their respective landlords... whilst others have had to be self-supporting' and, in a speech to the tenants of the Doddington estate, there was a reference to 'the cattle clubs with which [the tenants] had associated themselves'.<sup>448</sup> Most of the associations known were based on the Poor Law Union (PLU) areas, an idea which the Cheshire Agricultural Society had supported in September 1865, and Lord Egerton had recommended to the Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society a month earlier, as well as to Lancashire farmers.<sup>449</sup> Associations covering smaller areas within a Union have been identified, for example, the Over and Middlewich Mutual Assurance Society.<sup>450</sup> Another was the Mottram Cattle Insurance Company, founded in November 1865 and which had members in Godley, Hattersley, Matley and Mottram townships in the east of the county.<sup>451</sup> The very limited extent of this association is shown in Figure 5-1. The *North Cheshire Herald* and the *Glossop Record* noted its formation in late November 1865, and within six weeks the 50 members had registered 429 cattle valued at £5,022, but no further references have been found after this.<sup>452</sup> It probably failed early, although Matthews noted that the extreme northeast of the county 'hardly suffered' he recorded that the Stockport area, which bordered the Mottram association, lost 364 out of 562 cattle (65%) although how he arrived at this figure is unclear.<sup>453</sup> This figure is far smaller than the number of cattle reported for the Stockport area in the Livestock Census on 21 March 1866 - 4,946 cows in milk, with a further 2,985 cows and calves declared. It is, however, suspiciously similar to the total number recorded in the townships of the Association (526) in the Livestock census, however it might have been that fewer cattle were attacked in proportion to the number being kept than elsewhere in the county.<sup>454</sup> The difference between the figures, - the cattle insured, and the numbers given by Matthews or the census - supports the *Record's* observation that 'a few farmers have determined to run their own risk, and we

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<sup>447</sup> 'The Cattle Disease', *Chester Courant*, 20 September 1865, 6.

<sup>448</sup> 'The Nantwich Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', *Chester Courant*, 13 September 1865, 8; 'Presentation to Thomas Speakman, Esq, Senior, of Doddington', *Northwich Guardian*, 21 October 1865, 6.

<sup>449</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Manchester Times*, 23 September 1865, 5; 'Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society' *Warrington Guardian*, 26 August 1865, 11.

<sup>450</sup> 'Cheshire Agricultural Society', *Chester Courant*, 6 September 1865, 4; 'The Murrain or Cattle Disease', *Chester Courant*, 30 August 1865, 6.

<sup>451</sup> 'Mottram: The Cattle Plague', *Glossop Record*, 25 November 1865, 2; 'Mottram: Cattle Plague', *North Cheshire Herald*, 25 November 1865, 3; 'Local and District Events of the Year 1865: November', *Glossop Record*, 30 December 1865, 2; 'Mottram: Cattle Insurance Company', *North Cheshire Herald*, 30 December 1866, 3.

<sup>452</sup> 'Mottram: Cattle Insurance Company', *Glossop Record*, 6 January 1866, 3.

<sup>453</sup> Matthews, 'Who's to pay?', 91; Stephen Matthews, 'Stockport and East Cheshire', Table 3, 125.

<sup>454</sup> Data extracted from MAFF and predecessors: Statistics Division: Parish Summaries: 'Cheshire – Numbers of Livestock 1866', MAF68/9. Stockport parish. Digitised image supplied by the National Archives, 27 May 2021.

earnestly hope that they may not have cause to repent not having joined the society'.<sup>455</sup> This brief consideration of a very local association, only known to have been formed in response to the Cattle Plague and then not heard of again, exemplifies the precarious nature of small local associations and is the first time this particular organisation has been discussed. A proposal for an association between estate and Union extent was made at the meeting to form the Northwich Association, a proposal to cover the entire Union area was resisted by 'a large body of men' from the south side of the River Bollin because north of the river was mostly grazing whereas on the south was 'very different' and were at much less risk than the northern areas. The 'northern' farmers replied that actually there was more risk with the high stocking density of the dairy farmers on the south side of the river. Eventually the suggestion was defeated and a whole Union area association formed but this proposal gives a glimpse of tensions within a very limited area, at a sub-Union scale.<sup>456</sup>

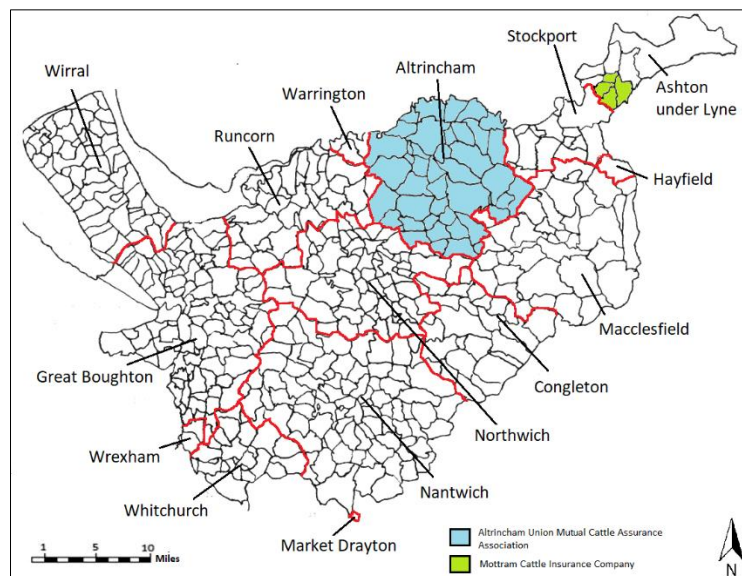


Figure 5-1 Cheshire Poor Law Unions and townships (Altrincham and Mottram associations identified)

### 5.3.1.1 Altrincham case study

By considering the development and demise of the Altrincham Cattle Assurance Society in detail the way in which these important support groups operated is clarified. This demonstrates how local landowners and farmers were involved in Cheshire, which allows comparison with landlords in the other study areas and, in turn, this shows that landlord support varied between areas. It also indicates how local support was affected by national legislation. Local associations were necessarily limited in what they could achieve by

<sup>455</sup> 'Mottram: Cattle Insurance Company', *Glossop Record*, 6 January 1866, 3.

<sup>456</sup> 'Cattle Plague Meeting at Knutsford', *Northwich Guardian*, 23 September 1865, 4.

their restricted areas and available funds. The problems associated with voluntary agreements of mutual support show how local attitudes could affect the support available.

Matthews commented that 'the Altrincham Cattle Plague Association... appears to have failed quickly, for there is no trace of it save its name', but the availability of local newspaper reports through the BNA allowed this investigation of the association's progress.<sup>457</sup> The Altrincham association was formed at a meeting of 'landowners and inhabitants of the Altrincham Union' held at Knutsford on September 1865, two weeks before the first outbreak in the county but a month after it appeared in neighbouring Lancashire.<sup>458</sup> In Altrincham, the *ex officio* and elected Poor Law Guardians were appointed as directors of the association, and they set up a committee to run it.<sup>459</sup> The organisation of the association was typical of most others. Its area of operations was not rigidly defined, membership was open to 'the Townships of the Altrincham Union and such other Townships as shall be willing to join, subject to approval from the Committee'.<sup>460</sup> Each township appointed two local Inspectors to work with the local Guardians to inspect each member's cattle, value them and, more importantly for the association if not the cattle keeper, certify they were healthy. Such details varied elsewhere, in Derbyshire the visit of a single local Inspector in November 1865 was noted by farmer William Hodkin in his diary, 'Mr Leech came to inspect our cattle and premises, we have insured them in the Bakewell Insurance Society'.<sup>461</sup> Hodkin was in advance of the local great landlord, the Duke of Devonshire, it was not until six weeks later that the local newspaper reported the rules of the Assurance Society set up for the Duke's tenants.<sup>462</sup> Association inspectors were not those appointed and statutorily empowered by the various Orders in Council and the CPA. For this reason most associations, Altrincham included, required members who suspected their cattle were infected 'to immediately give notice to the Government *and* local Inspectors', with claims disallowed if they did not do so.<sup>463</sup> Kopf noted that 'prompt notification of infectious disease is an organic part of .... the control of epizootics the world over'.<sup>464</sup> These requirements should have resulted in control measures being taken early.

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<sup>457</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle Clubs', 196.

<sup>458</sup> 'Cattle Plague Altrincham Union,' *Warrington Guardian*, 16 September 1865, 1; Veterinary Dept, *Report*, 116 and 120.

<sup>459</sup> 'Rules and Regulations of the Altrincham Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', *Warrington Guardian*, 7 October 1865, 1.

<sup>460</sup> 'Rules and Regulations', *Warrington Guardian*, 7 October 1865, 1.

<sup>461</sup> TA Burdekin (ed), *A Victorian Farmer's Diary, William Hodkin's Diary 1864-66*, (Bakewell: Derbyshire County Council Cultural & Community Services Department, 2003), 117, entry for Friday 23 November 1865.

<sup>462</sup> 'Duke of Devonshire's Mutual Assurance Society Against Rinderpest', *Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal*, 8 February 1866, 2.

<sup>463</sup> 'Rules and Regulations of the Altrincham Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', *Warrington Guardian*, 7 October 1865, 1. Rule 6.

<sup>464</sup> Kopf, 'Development and Practices', 301.

The cost of insurance was one of the elements that varied markedly between associations. Altrincham members paid an entrance fee of 6d per head on all their cattle and then a premium that was a proportion of the average value of the stock insured whereas the rate for the Bakewell Assurance Association, to which William Hodkin belonged, was 2d per pound of the farmer's Poor-rate valuation.<sup>465</sup> The rates paid in Altrincham have not been discovered but the compensation paid was 15s per pound of value (75%) on bulls and cattle over three years old, £10 for heifers under three years old, and £4 for calves over six months, the boundary between calves and heifers was not made clear.<sup>466</sup> The funds available were limited, and, on joining, members committed to pay additional amounts as 'called' for by the Committee to cover payments and expenses. Matthews noted that with a few exceptions (Altrincham being one), cattle associations and cow clubs had the same problem, that 'most were obliged to operate under rules of honour', they had to trust their members to pay up when calls were made.<sup>467</sup> As the *Surrey Advertiser*, discussing the Guildford association stated,

The honest and honourable feelings and wishes of the members were not to be bound by extraordinary legal formalities. Every man's word was considered to be his bond, it could not be supposed that any member of the Association would act otherwise than with the most perfect good faith.<sup>468</sup>

Altrincham avoided this by registering under the Joint Stock Companies Act (JSA), adding 'Limited' to their title in November 1866, legally becoming a business organisation owned jointly by all of its member-shareholders.<sup>469</sup> One of the Warrington Guardians noted the main advantage: 'unless the association is registered, the calls upon members could not be enforced in a court of law, and the committee themselves would be liable to make good any claim upon the association'.<sup>470</sup> Discussion preceding the formation of the Great Boughton association in Cheshire noted that an alternative was to register under the Friendly Societies Act (FSA). However, under the FSA, all compensation claims *had* to be paid, but the association could still not enforce payment through legal action. The downside of the JSA was that it was 'an expensive approach to follow'.<sup>471</sup> Some associations did register under the JSA, for example the Oxford Cattle Plague Association in November 1865, following the advice of one Mr Tidd Pratt.<sup>472</sup> A parliamentary Act was passed in 1866 to encourage cattle associations by removing limitations on how much could be paid out in

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<sup>465</sup> 'Meeting at Bakewell for Mutual Insurance against the Cattle Plague', *Derby Mercury*, 20 August 1865, 8.

<sup>466</sup> 'Rules and Regulations', *Warrington Guardian*, 7 October 1865, 1 Rule 10.

<sup>467</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 199.

<sup>468</sup> 'Leader: The Surrey Advertiser'. *Surrey Advertiser*, 1 September 1866, 2.

<sup>469</sup> 'Altrincham Union Cattle Insurance Association', *Northwich Guardian*, 11 November 1865, 6.

<sup>470</sup> 'The Warrington Union Cattle Association', *Northwich Guardian* 28 October 1865, 6.

<sup>471</sup> 'Proposed Cattle Association meeting', *Chester Chronicle*, 7 October 1865, 7.

<sup>472</sup> 'The Oxford Cattle Plague Association', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 2 November 1865, 2.

compensation but, more importantly, it allowed associations to take defaulting members to the County Court to recover unpaid calls.<sup>473</sup> This legislation was certainly used, see below, but no associations in the study areas were formed under the terms of the FSA.<sup>474</sup>

Associations were not necessarily intended to be long-lived, Altrincham was to disband after a year but was effectively defunct by April 1866.<sup>475</sup> By the end of February 1866, the Altrincham Association had received claims for £7,098 and made a call for a further 7½% of member's assessments to cover it. The largest local landowner Lord Egerton supported his tenants by paying their calls, which is significant as it shows a local landowner acting to help his tenants, but by March it was clear that many members would not pay up without coercion.<sup>476</sup> A 'large majority' of the members then elected to wind up the association but disbanding such a legal entity was complicated. It took three additional meetings, and court action against call defaulters before the association was finally disbanded in late December 1866.<sup>477</sup> The Guildford association, noted above, also failed when members refused to pay calls.<sup>478</sup> The problems of the Altrincham association were exactly those identified by the *Stockport Advertiser* and were common to many others:

Mutual Cattle Insurance Associations sufficed in the early stages of the Pestilence; so long as an agricultural parish was called upon to pay 2/3rds of the value of ten or twenty beeves, the funds were adequate. But when the calls upon the Treasurers daily became more frequent and greater – then the Treasurers became tender of their funds and farmers, finding the exchequer closed, refused to kill their cattle to prevent the spread of infection. They determined to take their chance, refused to pay additional premiums or contributions, and it may be now said that all local and mutual insurance associations are powerless to meet the terrible calamity.<sup>479</sup>

Not every farmer supported the associations, and more than Altrincham failed. Matthews mentioned two, one at Wem in Shropshire and an (unnamed) society in Lancashire, which failed by March 1866.<sup>480</sup> John Fisher noted that two associations failed in Nottinghamshire because of 'inadequate support and non-

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<sup>473</sup> The Act was 29 & 30 Vict. c. 34, 'An Act for the provision of Assurance to any amount against Loss by Death of Neat Cattle, Sheep, Lambs, Swine and Horses, from Disease or otherwise (1866)'. This was enacted under the provisions of 18 & 19 Vict, c. 63. 'An Act to consolidate and amend the Law relating to Friendly Societies'. [HMSO, *Public General Statutes 18 & 19 Victoria* (London: HMSO, 1855), 493-520.]; Kopf, 'Development and Practice', 321.

<sup>474</sup> Kopf, 'Development and Practice', 301.

<sup>475</sup> 'Rules and Regulations', *Warrington Guardian* 7 October 1865, 1.; 'Township Meeting at Mere', *Northwich Guardian*, 21 October 1865, 6.; 'Altrincham Union Cattle Insurance Association', *Northwich Guardian*, 11 November 1865, 6.

<sup>476</sup> 'Altrincham Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', *Northwich Guardian*, 31 March 1866, 6.

<sup>477</sup> 'Winding up of the Altrincham Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', and 'Notice: Altrincham Union Mutual Cattle Assurance Association Limited', *Northwich Guardian* 22 December 1866, 6 and 1 respectively.

<sup>478</sup> 'Leader: The Surrey Advertiser'. *Surrey Advertiser*, 1 September 1866, 2.

<sup>479</sup> *Stockport Advertiser*, 26 January 1866, quoted in Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 200. Not in the BNA.

<sup>480</sup> Matthews, 'Cattle clubs', 198.

compliance with their policies'.<sup>481</sup> In Wiltshire, the Devizes Mutual Cattle Assurance Association was set up in late August 1865 but only two months later, the local newspaper was 'astonished' by the apathy of the local cattle keepers. Although 'many large dairies [had] entered – some of them containing upwards of 100 cows' this was nothing compared to the 'hundreds, nay thousands of head of cattle' kept within the Union.<sup>482</sup> The paper urged people to join noting, grimly, that 'it is too late to talk about insuring after the house is on fire'. This certainly indicates that the local newspaper was on the side of the local association and considered the farmers who had not joined to be unwise. Vindication for their view was swift in coming, a neighbouring house 'caught fire' that very day, on the same page of the newspaper an outbreak of the disease was reported at Bowood just outside the Union boundaries and only a few miles from Devizes itself.<sup>483</sup> Surprisingly this close call did not generate more members for the association, and only two weeks later it was announced that 'the indifference manifested on the part of the public... has induced the few members who joined to withdraw', and the association was dissolved at a meeting on 19 October 1866.<sup>484</sup> Other proposed associations never got going at all, at the end of September 1865 *John Bull* reported that a scheme to compensate cattle owners in the Metropolis had been 'given up', as there was too little support and that the few subscriptions received had been returned.<sup>485</sup>

This study of the Altrincham association highlights some of the procedures, challenges, and problems other associations faced.

### 5.3.2 Wiltshire

Wiltshire is considered next as its provisions were closer to Cheshire than Norfolk, which follows. In Wiltshire there were very few losses (138 in total), and these were geographically limited, (Figure 5-2, below).

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<sup>481</sup> John Fisher, 'A Victorian farming crisis', 117.

<sup>482</sup> 'Opinion', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 12 October 1865, 6.

<sup>483</sup> 'Calne – the Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 12 October 1865, 6.

<sup>484</sup> 'The Devizes Union Cattle Plague Assurance Association', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 26 October 1865, 6.

<sup>485</sup> 'Meeting of the Cattle Plague Committees in the City', *John Bull*, 30 September 1865, 16.



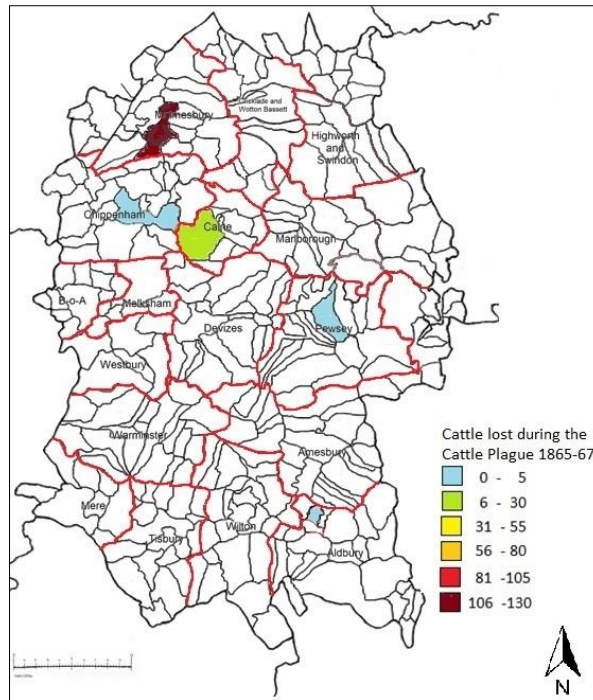


Figure 5-2 Wiltshire Poor Law Union areas and cattle losses by parish<sup>486</sup>

Losses were *very* geographically limited, it is clear that the vast majority of Wiltshire cattle were lost in a single parish in the Malmesbury Union, Malmesbury itself.

Early in the epizootic, the influential Bath & West of England Society suggested that ‘an association for the mutual protection of agriculturists should be established within the area of each Poor-Law Union’.<sup>487</sup> The support of landlords was not assumed by Wiltshire farmers, a meeting in Chippenham was warned, in December 1865 after the county had experienced attacks of the disease, that ‘It was no use to wait for the support from the gentry. The farmers must protect themselves’.<sup>488</sup> Assurance Associations were formed in Wiltshire, as early as August 1865, on the clay lands of the north and west of the county, in Calne, Chippenham, Devizes, Highworth, Pewsey, and Wotton Bassett; Keevil, Melksham, Westbury and Trowbridge already had agricultural associations and did not form separate Cattle Plague organisations.<sup>489</sup> It is noteworthy that the Keevil Cattle Assurance Association added Cattle Plague to the list of diseases they

<sup>486</sup> Wiltshire is the only county in the study where the losses were small enough and the reports detailed enough to make mapping at parish scale over the entire county, possible.

<sup>487</sup> ‘Meeting at Chippenham with reference to the Cattle Plague, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 24 August 1865, 3.

<sup>488</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 December 1865, 3.

<sup>489</sup> All reports in the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*: Calne - ‘Public Meeting’, 24 August 1865, 3; ‘Meeting at Chippenham with reference to the Cattle Plague’, 24 August 1865, 3; ‘Devizes: The Cattle Plague’, 31 August 1865, 3; ‘Highworth – The Cattle Disease’, 17 August 1865, 3; ‘Keevil – Cattle Plague’, 7 September 1865, 3; ‘Wootton Bassett – the Cattle Plague’, 24 August 1865, 6; ‘Westbury Cattle Plague’, *Trowbridge Chronicle*, 16 September 1865, 5.

covered however, as soon as the CPA brought in compensation, they promptly removed it again.<sup>490</sup> No county-wide organisation existed in Wiltshire until the Quarter Sessions set up their Cattle Plague Committee to administer the requirements of the CPA, which was most definitely *not* an assurance association. Although the Chippenham Poor Law Guardians declined to form or organise the new Cattle Plague association, the PLU boundaries were employed. The new association immediately appointed an Inspector who was instructed, in stark contrast to some of the Cheshire associations, to ‘slaughter any animal tainted with the disease’. A member of the Chippenham BPP association approved, noting that this policy had worked well with BPP, with only one occasion where more than ‘one or two animals’ had to be slaughtered. He was convinced this was because they ‘never allow[ed] a bullock from an infected dairy to be removed under any circumstances whatever and [enforced] the immediate slaughter of any animal affected with the disease’.<sup>491</sup> This stringent standard was not always followed elsewhere, *per example* Cheshire. The low numbers of cattle lost in Wiltshire, and the amount of support necessary were directly influenced by how effectively outbreaks were contained. Comparisons with Cheshire are relevant, where poor compliance with slaughter regulations (see the Control chapter, Chapter 4) were associated with extremely high cattle, and subsequent financial losses, for the entire county.

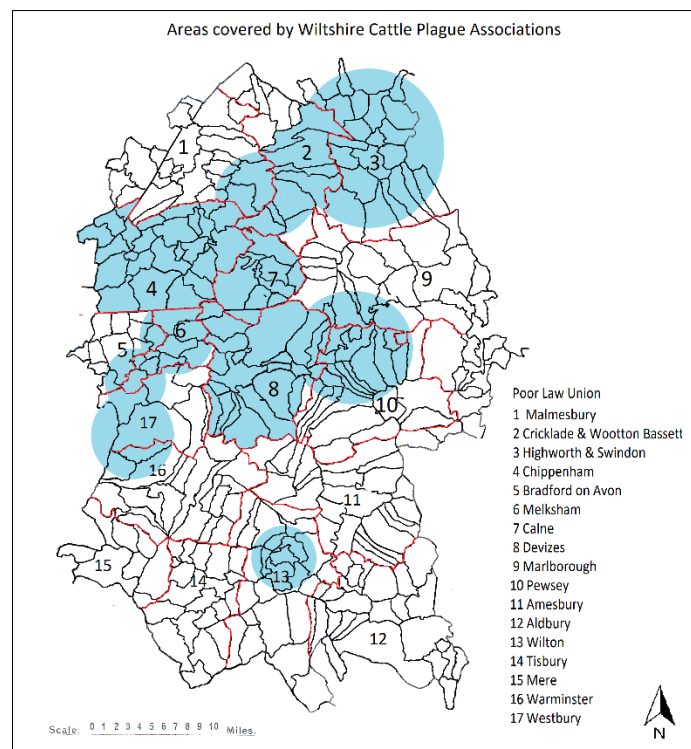


Figure 5-3 Wiltshire areas covered by Cattle Plague associations

<sup>490</sup> ‘Keevil – Cattle Plague’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 7 September 1865, 3; ‘Keevil Cattle Assurance Association’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 15 March 1866, 6.

<sup>491</sup> ‘Meeting at Chippenham with reference to the Cattle Plague’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 24 August 1865, 3.

All the Poor Law areas without Cattle Plague Associations were in the south of the county, but some existed there, such as Salisbury, which levied 2s in the pound value (10%). Members initially 'only' paid £5 for every £100 of value insured, i.e. a 5% rate but, as the Salisbury newspaper revealed, 'in the case of necessity' further calls of the same amount could be made.<sup>492</sup> 'Calls' have already been seen in Cheshire, and they were also a requirement of the Cottager's club Kopf described.<sup>493</sup> Calls were a standard feature of organisations and joint-stock companies in other areas of endeavour. For example, when the Wilts and Berks Canal was being constructed, there were numerous calls on the members for additional funds.<sup>494</sup> As in Cheshire, the amount of compensation varied between Wiltshire associations, in Chippenham, it was 75% of the declared value of the animal up to a maximum of £15, whereas in neighbouring Melksham, it was 75% of the value with no limit on compensation, which caused complaints from some in Chippenham.<sup>495</sup>

Most associations were based on the local Poor Law Union, the Devizes mayor set up the, rapidly-defunct, Devizes Cattle Assurance Association to be 'co-extensive' with the Devizes Poor Law Union for example, but others were not. Keevil was an association but not a Poor Law Union, and the one established in the Pewsey Vale was based on the Poor Law Union but was larger than that because 'as [the Union] extends 8 or 9 miles on one side of the town [but] only ... 4 or 5 miles on the other... it was determined to make it co-extensive with the Union but at the same time open it to all who live within a radius of 6 miles of Pewsey'.<sup>496</sup> These examples are another demonstration of the variation in how associations organised themselves. Similar decisions have already been seen in Cheshire. It can be argued that Wiltshire could afford to maintain purely local associations as it was never seriously visited by the epizootic. However, when the disease did strike, changes sometimes had to be made; the Highworth Cattle Plague Protection Society, rapidly renamed the Highworth Cattle Plague Association, originally insured 6,000 beasts with at least £60,000 of liability.<sup>497</sup> After the disease struck close by, in Malmesbury in October 1865, the Society rapidly amended its rules. The value of each animal insured had to be stated, which was not the case previously. Fees rose from 1s per head to 1% of the average declared value for the individual farmer's herd and compensation limited to either 10, 15 or 25% of the declared value. As a result of these changes, 43 of the 160 members withdrew 'principally owners of small herds'.<sup>498</sup> If the figures reported by the local

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<sup>492</sup> 'Salisbury and District Mutual Cattle Assurance Association', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 11 November 1865, 6.

<sup>493</sup> Kopf, 'Development and Practices', 228.

<sup>494</sup> 'Wilts and Berks Canal', *Reading Mercury*, 10 April 1797, 1, 16 October 1797, 1, 23 April 1798, 1; *Bath Chronicle*, 21 March 1799, 2.

<sup>495</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: To the Editor of the Devizes Gazette', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 31 August 1865, 2.

<sup>496</sup> 'Devizes – The Cattle Plague', and 'Pewsey – The Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 31 August 1865, 6.

<sup>497</sup> 'Highworth Cattle Plague Protection Society', *Swindon Advertiser*, 2 October 1865, 6.

<sup>498</sup> 'Highworth Cattle Plague Protection Society', *Swindon Advertiser*, 2 October 1865, 6.

newspaper were correct, this did not make a great deal of difference. The third (34.3%) reduction in membership numbers reduced the number of insured cattle by a quarter, to just over 4,500, but with £59,588 of liability remaining (a reduction of only 0.7%). From these figures, it is clear it was the owners of a few, very low value, beasts who withdrew. The members who left got their money back, less 1d per head to cover administration costs.<sup>499</sup> The details are less important than the demonstration of a society taking pre-emptive action to cover their commitments even if the result was only a slight reduction in their liability. As it turned out the disease did not visit Highworth. The Highworth Cattle Plague Association was eventually wound up in April 1867, when it was decided that there was no further need for it.<sup>500</sup> The Chippenham Association reduced the amount of compensation paid, from 25s to 10s, in December 1865 with payment deferred until March 1866, but this was because there were only 'about' 45 members.<sup>501</sup>

Other variations in organisation were evident; in Wootton Bassett, the Cattle Plague association adopted the existing BPP assurance association rates. Members assessed the value of their cattle and insured them in one of four classes. The fees per head, compensation and call amounts depended on the class entered, with call amounts ranging from 2s 6d to 4s in the pound (12-20%).<sup>502</sup> The number of inspectors appointed also varied between associations, an extreme case was Highworth, where *every* member was an Inspector as well as a member of the General Committee, although a small Executive Committee ran the association.<sup>503</sup> The variations in organisation, fees and rules show that the support offered was based on very local conditions, traditions, requirements and expectations.

### 5.3.3 Norfolk

There were at least 13 local associations in Cheshire, three covering individual estates and the others based on Poor Law Union areas, and mostly organised by the Poor Law Guardians and co-opted officers; in Wiltshire, there were at least nine associations, none of which were for individual estates but were also not always rigidly bound by the PLU boundaries and were not organised or run by the Poor Law Guardians. In Norfolk, in contrast, there was one county-wide association.

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<sup>499</sup> 'Highworth Cattle Plague Assurance Association', *Swindon Advertiser*, 6 November 1865, 6.

<sup>500</sup> Initially and for time afterwards, the Cattle Plague organisation for Highworth was known as the Cattle Plague Protection Society and was intentionally distinct from the original Highworth Cattle Assurance Association which was set up to cover BPP and remained separate. ['The Cattle Plague: Meeting at Highworth', *Swindon Advertiser*, 21 August 1865, 3.]; 'Highworth: Dissolution of the Cattle Plague Association', *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 13 April 1867, 5.

<sup>501</sup> 'Chippenham - Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 December 1865, 3.

<sup>502</sup> 'Wootton Bassett', *Swindon Advertiser*, 28 August 1865, 2.

<sup>503</sup> 'Highworth: The Cattle Disease', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 15 August 1865, 6.

According to three local newspapers, the NCPA was set up in August 1865 at 'one of the largest and most influential meetings of noblemen and agriculturalists that ever was held in the county'.<sup>504</sup> The large number of landowners involved at the very start of the association was significant, the NCPA was always a 'landed' association. Indeed it was satirically referred to as the 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Parliament' by the *Norfolk News*, which was rarely impressed by its actions; on one occasion the paper reported that it had 'looked into the Norfolk Cattle Plague Parliament on Saturday. There sat the Speaker; there sat the Chancellor of the Exchequer... there sat the leader of the House'.<sup>505</sup> Given that the newspaper was unceasingly scathing of the government, these were not flattering comparisons. The *News* even suggested that with the market closed (see Control chapter section 4.3, above), attending NCPA meetings was merely 'a pleasant, although not very cheering or satisfactory means, of whiling away an hour or so'.

The NCPA local committees were organised around the Hundreds although the organising authorities were the Poor Law Union guardians, and others (Figure 5-4). Even when initially a separate local association had been formed, as in Docking and in Loddon, they amalgamated with the NCPA.<sup>506</sup> The NCPA central committee was designated by the Quarter Sessions as the Cattle Plague authority for the county, rather than the Petty Sessional benches as in Cheshire and Wiltshire. The NCPA Central committee was made up of two representatives from each local area committee.<sup>507</sup> This did not totally avoid fears of possible 'favouritism'. In early 1866 it was noted that the Compensation sub-committee 'did not number a single West Norfolk man amongst its members' and that, whilst the West Norfolk members had faith in the 'impartiality' of the committee, it was felt that 'West Norfolk men would better understand their interests than those of East Norfolk'.<sup>508</sup> The Central Committee asked for 'the names of two or three West Norfolk gentlemen' who could be invited to join the committee.

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<sup>504</sup> 'Norwich: Important meeting of agriculturalists', *Norwich Mercury*, 16 August 1865, 2, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 August 1865, 2 and *Norfolk News* 19 August 1865, 9.

<sup>505</sup> 'Opinion', *Norfolk News*, 23 December 1865, 9.

<sup>506</sup> 'Docking', *Norfolk News*, 19 August 1865, 6; 'Norwich: Important meeting', *Norwich Mercury*, 16 August 1865, 2, etc.

<sup>507</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 13 January 1866, 1.

<sup>508</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 6 January 1866, 9.

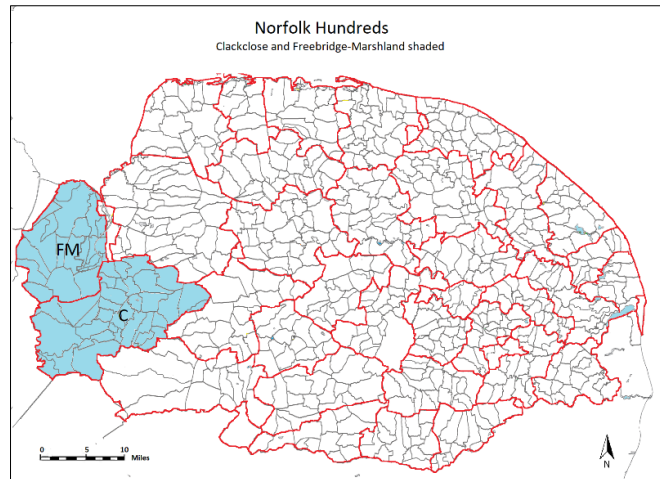


Figure 5-4 Norfolk Hundreds, Clackclose and Freebridge-Marshland identified.<sup>509</sup>

Setting the rate for this county association caused arguments. It was proposed that cattle owners pay the association 2d per pound of their Poor Law assessment. A large arable farmer from Swaffham in Clackclose Hundred in the west of the county, 'having very few animals indeed', complained that being charged on the Poor Law assessment was unfair and advocated a charge to be 2d on the value of each cow instead which was eventually agreed. A great difference between Norfolk and the other two counties was that all dairy cattle, and those kept on commons, were rated at 2s per pound of the Poor Law assessment because 'dairy stock was much more subject to disease than [fat] stock on farms, by being driven to and from the pastures'. This was the same rate as the Provincial Insurance Company set for town cattle whereas in Cheshire and Wiltshire it varied but not above 6d, (75% less). In contrast, fat-stock were insured at 2d.<sup>510</sup> The compensation rate was set at two-thirds the agreed value of the animal, up to £20.<sup>511</sup> The disparity in rates was considerable but they were accepted, possibly because of the very low numbers of dairy cattle in the county. The NCPA, aware of the many small farmers who were most likely to have cattle for milking or be keeping them on common land, 'hoped' that the landed proprietors would 'put their hands in their pockets to make up for the little men who could not afford to do so', an example of an expectation of obligation on the part of the landowners.<sup>512</sup> Cottagers with one cow and a house only paid on the assessment on their home and lands, not the full evaluation.<sup>513</sup> In both Cheshire and Norfolk, there were considerable areas of marsh where cattle were turned out in the spring, but only in Norfolk were cattle on

<sup>509</sup> Re-drawn after Christopher Barringer, 'Norfolk Hundreds' in *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, ed. Peter Wade-Martins & Jane Everett, 88-89, (Norwich: Norfolk Museums Service & Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Organisations, 1994), 2nd ed.

<sup>510</sup> The Cattle Plague, The Norfolk Association. Meeting of the Committee', *Norfolk News and Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 August 1865, 9 and 2 respectively.

<sup>511</sup> 'Meeting of the Cattle Plague Association Committee', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 August 1865, 2.

<sup>512</sup> 'The Cattle Plague, The Norfolk Association. Meeting of the Committee', *Norfolk News and Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 August 1865, 9 and 2 respectively; 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 13 January 1866, 1.

<sup>513</sup> 'Norwich. Important meeting of agriculturalists', *Norfolk News*, and *Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 January 1866, 9 and 2, respectively.

marshes considered a problem. In August 1865, the Fen Reeves in Bungay ordered that no more cattle were to be stocked on the commons and wetlands and, if any were removed, they could not be returned to the Fen to try to prevent the introduction of the disease. Strangely, given that cattle on commons were assessed at 2s, those on the marshes initially only paid the 2d rate. By January 1866 it was clear that this was 'utterly inadequate' for covering the risks of marsh-stocked cattle, and they were eventually rated the same as dairy cattle, at 2s per head.<sup>514</sup> Cattle being insured at different rates, depending on where they were grazed and whether they were dairy cattle, was not seen in the rates of local associations in Cheshire and Wiltshire. The difference in Norfolk was because most cattle in Norfolk were for meat and so the farming community would accept a difference in rates between the two types, whereas in Cheshire and Wiltshire, most cattle were dairy cows anyway, so either a different rate was not necessary, or there were not enough fat-stock farmers to force the issue, the reverse of Norfolk. This indicates the differences in farming production found in the three study areas.

#### 5.4 Landlord support

An important part of the support available to farmers during the outbreak was from their landlords. Matthews commented that Lord Egerton was not the only landowner in Cheshire to help his tenants through his financial support of Cattle Clubs and Associations, and named lords Westminster, Cholmondeley, Leigh and Warburton in this context.<sup>515</sup> They and others also compensated tenants directly; out of many examples reported almost weekly in 1866, in Altrincham two landlords paid a third of the calls made on their tenants.<sup>516</sup> Sir Hugh Williams of St Asaph's in Flintshire expressed his 'strong sympathy with the tenantry' and declared that he and his fellow landlords 'were willing .... [to support compensation for farmers] in a fair and honourable way, to pay whatever they were called upon as gentlemen to pay'.<sup>517</sup> However, he went on to say that he thought that the money should come from the Government. Still, there is no reason to believe that he was not sincere in his expressions of support, which fits with the expectations that landlords would assist their tenants in hard times, discussed in the Literature review (Section 2.4). In January 1866 William Hodkin recorded that his neighbour Mrs Drabble 'has lost 5 cows of the rinderpest' on the twenty-first, ten on the twenty-sixth, thirteen on the twenty-seventh and another fifteen on the twenty-ninth, at which point 'Mr. Worrall condemned the others to death two affected and two not affected with the disease'.<sup>518</sup> 'Worrell', or Warrell as he was named in a newspaper report, was the

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<sup>514</sup> 'Bungay', *Norfolk News*, 19 August 1865, 6.; 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 20 January 1866, 9.

<sup>515</sup> Matthews, *Cattle clubs*, 206.

<sup>516</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Northwich Guardian*, 9 December 1865, 4; 'Altrincham Union', *Northwich Guardian*, 4. November 1865, 6. The 9 December report was also referenced by Matthews, *Cattle clubs*, 206.

<sup>517</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Flintshire – Proposed scheme of Insurance', *Chester Courant*, 31 January 1866, 7.

<sup>518</sup> Burdekin (ed), *A Victorian Farmer's Diary*, 125-126; 'Beeley Moor', *Ilkston Pioneer*, 1 February 1866, 2; 'The Cattle Plague in North Derbyshire', *Derbyshire Courier*, 17 February 1866, 3.

Duke of Devonshire's agent. Hodkin went on to say that 'the Duke is to pay her for those they order slaughtered'. This suggests that the unfortunate Mrs Drabble was compensated by her landlord, but only for four of the losses which did not follow the compensation paid by the Duke's Society (two thirds of the assessed value of the losses).<sup>519</sup> This small vignette indicates the value of local and even personal accounts. There were many occasions when tenants expressed their thanks for their landlord's support. In Cheshire, an example was seen in the speeches at the annual dinner of the Nantwich Mutual Cattle Insurance Company. In replying to the toast to the landlords, Mr Rigby of Fenny Wood Farm thanked the landlords for their support but also cautioned his fellow farmers not to expect too much of them.<sup>520</sup> Cheshire landlords, he said, were, 'on the whole, highly respected by [their tenants]' but cautioned that the landlords should not be expected to give any more support than the farmers would expect 'from their bankers, merchants and tradesmen in towns'. Rigby was a prominent local Wesleyan, which may explain his attitude, and his comment that 'the landlords were not better than they should be and in that he was paying them a compliment of the highest sort', which was greeted with '(Cheers)'. As a Wesleyan, he would have believed that the great should help the less well-off but also that everyone had a duty to help themselves.<sup>521</sup> It is surely not a coincidence that in *Annie Gray*, a serialised story set in Cheshire during the Cattle Plague, the non-conformist minister was named 'Mr Fenny Wood'.<sup>522</sup> Tenants appreciated their landlords' help; Stephen Matthews gave the example of an illuminated testimonial presented to Baron Crewe by his tenants, thanking him for the 'liberality and kindness which your Lordship has extended to us under the fearful visitation of the Cattle Plague'.<sup>523</sup> These examples demonstrate a functioning paternalistic landlord-tenant system. However, not only landlords helped; in November 1866, the Rev. Atkinson of Audlem in Cheshire returned a fifth of his tithes 'to help those who had suffered from the Cattle Plague', and in Norfolk, the Rev. Parkes returned 10% of their half-yearly tithes to 'those who had lost stock'.<sup>524</sup>

However, there were far fewer notices of landlords supporting their tenants in Norfolk than Cheshire. In one of the few located, Mr Jacob Neve of Barton Turf, on the western edge of the Broads in eastern

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<sup>519</sup> 'Duke of Devonshire's Mutual Assurance Society Against Rinderpest', *Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal*, 8 February 1866, 2.

<sup>520</sup> 'Nantwich Mutual Cattle Insurance Company', *Chester Chronicle*, 4 November 1865, 6; Fennywood Farm is at NGR SJ 361795, 364514.

<sup>521</sup> 'Marshall Memorial School, Over: Inaugural address by Mr T Rigby', *Nantwich Guardian*, 26 March 1881, 4. He wrote a history of Over in 1864. [Thomas Rigby, 'The Ancient Borough of Over, Cheshire', *Journal of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 17, (1865): 13-22.] In 1861 he was dairy farming 91 acres and employing a cowman, dairymaid and carter [1861 Census, NA R9/2606, 20 (57).]

<sup>522</sup> Annie Gray, 'Annie Gray, A Tale of the Cheshire Cattle Plague. written for this Paper', *Northwich Guardian*, 11 instalments between 15 June 1867 and 24 August 1867.

<sup>523</sup> Stephen Matthews, ' "Our Suffering County": Cheshire and the Cattle Plague of 1866. Correspondence received by Rowland Egerton Warburton of Arley Hall', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 96, (2000): 101.

<sup>524</sup> 'Audlem', *Northwich Guardian*, 3 November 1866, 4. 'District Intelligence: Hilgay', *Norfolk News*, 12 May 1866, 5.



Norfolk, was held up as an example to other landlords when he granted a 10% reduction of rent in March 1866. 'It is to be hoped that so good an example will be followed by other landlords', said the *Norfolk News*, but without much apparent effect.<sup>525</sup> There were certainly no pæons of praise as were seen in Cheshire. There were many Norfolk reports involving landlords and their tenants, but at the time of the Cattle Plague the majority were concerned with the problems of poor housing for agricultural labourers and the reluctance of many landowners to do anything about it, which hardly indicates caring landlords. There is little evidence of paternalistic feelings, or expectations, in the county, which supports the conclusion that the social organisation in Norfolk differed from that in Cheshire. There had been an expectation of landlord support at the meeting called to set up the NCPA when one of the speakers 'hoped that the landed proprietors would support the class that supported them' (with their rents). Another speaker was sure that 'there were many persons of the middle class who would put their hands in their pockets' to support the 'little men'.<sup>526</sup> These comments are important in that they show both expectations of support, not only from the landlords but also from the middle class in the county, but also indicates a clear view of Norfolk as having a 'class' society. The identification of class was not evident in this way in Wiltshire or Cheshire in relation to the Cattle Plague and indicates that the two areas were not as class based as Norfolk at the time.

In Wiltshire, there were more reports of landlords supporting their tenants than in Norfolk, particularly in the Malmesbury-Brinkworth area which saw the greatest losses in the county. Some concern about landlord support was expressed early in the outbreak, as seen above, farmers were urged to take measures to protect themselves as 'it was no use for them to wait for the support of the gentry', as the meeting at Chippenham was told.<sup>527</sup> Chippenham was in the 'Cheese' area, dominated by relatively small farms and less gentry controlled than the 'Chalk' (see the Regional Topographies chapter, section 3.1.3). Wiltshire farmers did not suffer greatly from the disease and, where they did, their landlords appear to have been supportive. Less than a month after the Chippenham meeting, the disease struck in Brinkworth, in the north of the county and the major landlord, the Hon. Mrs Holland immediately informed her tenants that she would bear one-third of any loss they suffered.<sup>528</sup> In late 1866 Lady Herbert, of Lea near Malmesbury, gave the 'Misses Woody', two farming sisters, their entire year's rent back as compensation for the heavy losses they had suffered.<sup>529</sup> Mentions of female farmers are not unknown but are relatively uncommon in

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<sup>525</sup> 'Barton Turf', *Norfolk News*, 10 March 1866, 5.

<sup>526</sup> 'Norwich. Important meeting of agriculturalists', *Norfolk News and Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 August 1865, 9 and 2 respectively.

<sup>527</sup> 'Chippenham – Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette and Wiltshire Independent*, 28 December 1865, 3.

<sup>528</sup> 'Brinkworth: The Cattle Plague', *Wiltshire independent*, 25 January 1866, 2.

<sup>529</sup> 'Noble Generosity', *Swindon Advertiser*, 12 November 1866, 3; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 November 1866, 8.

contemporary reports. Support in Wiltshire, given the very small losses experienced by the county in comparison to Norfolk, was far more forthcoming than in the latter county.

Inevitably not all landlords helped their tenants or wanted their help to be known. An example from Cheshire is considered in some detail as it indicates otherwise unseen attitudes and expectations. In late April 1866, it was reported, by the *Chester Courant*, that John Leche, whose family had owned the Carden estate for centuries, had 'very generously returned to the tenants one half of their payments' because of their Cattle Plague losses.<sup>530</sup> A week later, the *Chester Chronicle* commented on an 'epistle' from the landlord had sent them which, the newspaper sarcastically noted, 'ought to stand out as a model of a country squire's style until the end of time' and went on to lambast the landlord.<sup>531</sup> The following account is based on this account and is given to show a landlord not behaving as was generally expected. Leche had complained that he was 'much annoyed' by the original report. It is relevant to note that no less than three different newspapers carried the initial report not just one. Neither the *Chronicle* nor the *Observer*, published by the same people and frequently having exactly the same reports, were in the habit of copying, or even agreeing with, items originating with the *Courant*, so it was not a single 'report' as Leche claimed.) As the *Chronicle* commented, 'if statements proved partially erroneous it would [normally] be met with a graceful deprecation from the person whose actions had thus been flatteringly misreported' rather than the landlord's actual response of bitter complaint. The *Chronicle* noted that 'many of the tenants appear to be not at all conscious of any such boon'. The landlord had his own idea of why the 'false assertion' had been made, that it was 'putting a pressure on others' to shame them into giving rent reductions that they did not want, or could not afford, to give. Leche was strongly of the opinion that arrangements between landlord and tenant 'are not matters to be blazoned in the public prints, as they do not concern the public'. The newspaper commented that there were two types of people in favour of anonymous philanthropy – 'those who give... in a meek and modest spirit' and 'those who do not give at all', leaving it for their readers to decide which was the case here.

The newspaper clearly considered that Leche had not behaved properly and was moreover acting unwisely, as the damage caused 'should an over-extended tenant have to give up his farm might be far greater than the cost of the remission of rent'. They finished their piece by noting that Leche declined to contribute to the county subscription fund as a landed proprietor and that it 'remains to see what he will

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<sup>530</sup> 'Country houses with creative ties', *County Life*, 4 April 2013, online at <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/property/country-houses-for-sale-and-property-news/country-houses-with-creative-ties-8259> accessed 31 August 2021; 'The Carden estate rent Audit', *Chester Courant*, 25 April 1866, 8; *Chester Chronicle*, 28 April 1866, 6 and the *Cheshire Observer*, 28 April 1866, 5.

<sup>531</sup> 'A Cattle Plague Growl', *Chester Chronicle*, 5 May 1866, 6.

do as a private gentleman'. An analysis of the subscriptions lists for both the Cheshire and Chester Subscription Funds, Section 5.7 below, did not find any contributions from Mr Leche. It seems clear that this was an example of a landlord who did not support his tenants, in contrast to those noted earlier. It is noteworthy that, in this instance, the landlord concerned was not one of the new, entrepreneurial landlords but from a well-established county family, showing that such attitudes were not entirely associated with 'new money'.

There were demonstrable variations in the support offered to tenants by landlords within the study areas and even more between them. Whilst by far the greatest support was in Cheshire, where losses were also very high, help in Wiltshire was still forthcoming in the few areas where the disease struck. In contrast, landlord support in Norfolk, which experienced considerable losses, was very limited. The landowners in Norfolk appear to have been generally uninvolved in supporting their tenants except through their contributions to the NCPA funds. This indicates a more personal, paternalistic view of their responsibilities to their tenants, in most cases, by the Cheshire landlords than their Norfolk counterparts.

## 5.5 Government-mandated compensation

Filip van Roosbroeck noted that, during the eighteenth century Cattle Plague outbreak in the Netherlands, the elites were 'disposed towards action; a budget surplus meant that the Estates of Flanders had the means as well as the will to buy the cooperation of cattle owners' and in England the government also used public funds to achieve the same ends.<sup>532</sup> This was not the case in Britain in 1865-67, when no compensation was forthcoming from the public purse, nor were the 'elites' initially very disposed towards action.

There was much debate about Government compensation of losses. The main argument for compensation was that cattle were 'compelled to be slaughtered for the benefit of the public' whilst the owner bore the loss. Unfortunately farmers had to appeal to a 'paternal Government' (who were anything but) as their 'only resource... [was] from the public purse'.<sup>533</sup> The *Norfolk News*, not always a fervent supporter of farmers, doubted 'the propriety and possibility of any Government becoming an insurance office'.<sup>534</sup> A letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Gladstone) to a Cheshire MP concerning government compensation was widely reprinted. Gladstone gave many reasons why the government would not set up

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<sup>532</sup> Filip van Roosbroeck, *To cure is to kill?: State intervention, cattle plague and veterinary knowledge in the Austrian Netherlands, 1769-1785*. unpublished PhD thesis University of Antwerp, 2016, 235; John Broad, 'Cattle Plague in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Agricultural history review*, 31, no. 2 (1983): 110.

<sup>533</sup> 'Wholesale Slaughter!', *Norfolk News* 4 November 1865, 7; 'Article by "Practical Farmer" in the *Park Lane Express*', *Norfolk News*, 3 January 1865, 2.

<sup>534</sup> Introduction to article from the *Mark Lane Express*. *Norfolk News*, 3 January 1866, 2.

an agricultural insurance scheme, including the possibility of fraud, that farmers were already making their own arrangements, that the Cattle Plague might not become widespread and that farmers would benefit from higher meat prices, all of which were refuted in the newspapers.<sup>535</sup> He also noted that only particular classes would feel the costs, so self-help groups were more appropriate. Not surprisingly, this provoked reactions from rural areas, for example leaders in Cheshire and Norfolk newspapers and copies of letters written to Gladstone and Earl Russell were widely reprinted in the press including in all the study areas.<sup>536</sup> It might have been thought that Gladstone would have sympathy for the farmers of Cheshire at least. He was a landowner himself, and his letter was written from his estate at Hawarden, a mere 4 miles from Chester, Cheshire villages appear in his nonsense verses, and he often spent time with Earl Grosvenor at Eaton Hall.<sup>537</sup> In a postscript to his letter, Gladstone acknowledged that 'In Cheshire, allowances must be made for dairy stock', but there was little sign of sympathy.<sup>538</sup> His arguments exemplified a view of farmers held by many, and not unknown even now that they were a wealthy and comfortable group with social privileges and did not require or deserve assistance. Concerns about fraud involving Cattle Plague were not new and there is literary evidence from much earlier than this; a long verse-form account of the period 1714 to 1717, published in 1717, referred to an outbreak in 1716 (excerpt).

Some cunning Huxters, who had Cows,  
 Old, Dry and Lean, not worth a Souse,  
 Tho' sound in Health, but scarce deserving  
 Of Pasture to prevent their starving,  
 These wisely knock'd 'em on the Head  
 By Night, when Neighbours were in Bed,  
 Next Day assign'd their expiration  
 To this new fatal Visitation: ...  
 Then, like true Hippocrites, put on  
 A mournful Look, as if undone,  
 And claimed the Sum of Forty shillings  
 For e'ery Cow of Heaven's killing.  
 A gen'rous Bounty! that destroy'd  
 More Cattle than the Plague annoy'd;  
 Wh' in Lanes and Commons sought her Living  
 But dy'd, if not of Pest, by Slaughter,

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<sup>535</sup> 'Leader - The Cattle Plague, *Northwich Guardian*, 13 January 1866, 4, 'Leader - Mr Gladstone and National Insurance', *Lynn Advertiser*, 13 September 1866, 4, 'Letter - Government and the Rinderpest', *Lynn Advertiser*, 27 January 1866, 6.

<sup>536</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Norwich Mercury* 13 January 1866, 2; 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer* 13 January 1866, 4, *Chester Chronicle* 13 January 1866, 7, *Norwich Mercury* 10 January 1866, 4, *Norwich Chronicle*, 13 January 1866, 2, *Norfolk News* 13 January 1866, 7, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* 11 January 1866, 2, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 13 January 1866, 2.

<sup>537</sup> HGG Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 150-152.

<sup>538</sup> 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer* 13 January 1866, 6.

Because o'th' Money that came a'ter.<sup>539</sup>

This part of the poem was re-published in *Notes and Queries* in 1866, at the height of the outbreak.<sup>540</sup> The quote clearly implied that fraudulent claims had been made in considerable numbers ['A gen'rous Bounty! that destroy'd / More Cattle than the Plague annoy'd'] a hundred and fifty years previously. This could be seen as supporting Gladstone's concern, when he claimed fraud was one of the reasons why a national cattle insurance scheme was a bad idea, that concerns were based on long term historical experience.<sup>541</sup> It is significant that the 1866 re-publication was in a journal that was subtitled 'a medium of inter-communication for literary men, artists, antiquaries, genealogists, etc'; its readership was more 'professional middle class' than 'landowner and farmer' and, as such, more likely to support Gladstone's position on the matter.<sup>542</sup>

In February 1866, the Government finally enacted the CPA, which required the slaughter of all infected animals and empowered, but did not require, local authorities to authorise the slaughter of cattle 'which have been herded with infected animals'.<sup>543</sup> Owners of cattle slaughtered by order of the Government inspectors were only compensated at half the assessed value of the animal, up to a maximum of £20. Even this was hard-won, John Stuart Mill had argued that the compensation proposed in the Act was 'excessive in amount' and that 'as the chief hardship of the calamity to the farmer was the inequality of its incidence...that those who had been unfortunate should be compensated by their fellows in the same class who had suffered no loss', in other words, there should be no government-sanctioned compensation, and other farmers should cover the losses.<sup>544</sup> It was also noted that the Act allowed compensation for cattle killed from the date of the Act, but there was no retrospective compensation.<sup>545</sup> A Cheshire county memorial to the Home Secretary, in March 1866, plainly stated that 47,383 beasts had died or been slaughtered, 'of which upwards of 38,500 died previous to the provisions of the "Cattle Diseases Prevention Act"' and were therefore, they neglected to say, not eligible for compensation.<sup>546</sup> The High Sheriff had

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<sup>539</sup> Edward Ward, *British Wonders; or a Poetical Description of the Several Prodigies and most Remarkable Accidents that have happen'd in Britain since the Death of Queen Anne*, (London, 1717), 3-4 online at [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/British\\_Wonders\\_Or\\_a\\_Poetical\\_Descriptio/OCZWAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=british+wonders+or+a+poetical&pg=PA1&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/British_Wonders_Or_a_Poetical_Descriptio/OCZWAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=british+wonders+or+a+poetical&pg=PA1&printsec=frontcover) accessed 22 January 2022.

<sup>540</sup> 'The German Cattle Plague', *Notes & Queries*, 9, 216 (17 Feb. 1866): 135-6. Online at <https://academic.oup.com/nq/issue/s3-IX/216> accessed 23 January 2022.

<sup>541</sup> 'Leader - The Cattle Plague', *Northwich Guardian*, 13 January 1866, 4.

<sup>542</sup> *Notes and Queries*, 1, (Nov 1849 - May 1850, 1850): title page, at <https://archive.org/details/notesqueries01londuoft/page/n7/mode/2up> accessed 23 January 2022.

<sup>543</sup> For example 'County Magistrates Meeting'. *Norfolk News*, 3 March 1866, 9.

<sup>544</sup> 'Cattle Diseases Bill', *The Times*, 15 February 1866, 8.

<sup>545</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Nantwich Guardian*, 24 February 1866, 6.

<sup>546</sup> 'Copy of a MEMORIAL from the County of Chester on the CATTLE PLAGUE, agreed to at a County meeting, and presented to the Secretary of State for the Home Department', HMSO, 26 April 1866.

specifically mentioned the need for retrospective compensation at the county meeting which authorised the memorandum, but this was not included in the document.<sup>547</sup> The writers of the Memorandum noted the requirements that cattle be slaughtered and buried in the skins, which meant 'salvage' was not possible. The memorialists 'most respectfully request[ed] that Her Majesty's Government ...will devise some means for compensating, out of the Public Funds, those who have thus been compulsorily deprived, by the Government of the country, of their property for the public good'.<sup>548</sup> Mill was not the only MP to resist the idea of compensation. Initially, the Act was to have allowed up to £50 per beast, but the radical MP for Northampton, John Bright, had argued strenuously for less compensation, and it was reduced to £20. In the debate Bright had said that he would 'rather give a hundred times the amount to alleviate the poor of Lancashire in the crisis they had gone through than he would give to compensate rich men for what might be considered a bad debt', referring to the Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1861-1865. A Norfolk correspondent took Bright to task and questioned how much Bright had actually contributed to the famine fund (which turned out to be 'nothing').<sup>549</sup> In March 1866, Lincolnshire farmer James Longbottom accused Bright of being 'frightened' by the idea of 'large, immensely rich' landowners receiving compensation before reminding the MP that not all farmers had extensive holdings or were wealthy.<sup>550</sup> The view of farmers as a monied and comfortable class affected how people reacted to their problems, and they did not understand the range of farmers affected. Longbottom noted that where he lived, around Holbeach, there were 'hundreds of small occupiers owning perhaps, two, three or four cows'. The Cattle Plague had 'swept their all away, plunging them in [sic] sorrow and dismay and opening to their view a dreary prospect for the future.... [that] will terminate in their utter ruin' and all through lack of adequate compensation, a point that was not made explicit as often as it might have been.<sup>551</sup> This situation was not limited to Holbeach, there were very small farmers in Cheshire and elsewhere. A contributor to the *Norfolk News* noted that compensation was only payable under the Act if the beast was killed by order of the Inspector, therefore 'all animals *dying* from the Cattle Plague will not be compensated for'.<sup>552</sup> The restrictions on compensation affected all farmers that experienced cattle losses but very unevenly, depending on whether they were slaughtered by order or 'just' died, and losses for small farmers were proportionally much more severe.

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<sup>547</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire, County Meeting', *Northwich Guardian*, 17 March 1866, 6.

<sup>548</sup> 'Copy of a MEMORIAL from the County of *Chester* on the CATTLE PLAGUE, agreed to at a County meeting, and presented to the Secretary of State for the Home Department', HMSO, 26 April 1866. Personal archive.

<sup>549</sup> 'Letter Mr Bright's Charity', *Lynn Advertiser*, 17 February 1866, 6.

<sup>550</sup> 'Letter The Cattle Plague', *Lynn Advertiser*, 3 March 1866, 8.

<sup>551</sup> 'Letter The Cattle Plague' *Lynn Advertiser*, 3 March 1866, 8.

<sup>552</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: To the Editor of the *Norfolk News*', *Norfolk News*, 24 February 1866, 4.

There were other financial consequences of the Act, it provided that all local authority Cattle Plague expenses, including compensation, were to be covered by local ratepayers through an additional 'Cattle Plague' rate, not from the government. Tenants were allowed to deduct half these Cattle Rate payments from their rents. Landlords *had* to allow this, so they paid their own assessments *and* lost half of all their tenant's Cattle Plague rates (it was these rates that the Cheshire landlord seen above paid for his tenants). Eventually, in late October 1866, the Exchequer agreed that landlords could set the rent lost through this provision against income tax.<sup>553</sup> The Government allowed counties to borrow the money to cover their expenses from the Public Works Board, at a negligible 6.5% interest over 30 years. Seen within the framework of mid-nineteenth-century ideas about the role of central government (see discussion in Regional Topographies and Literature review chapters), where 'Authority rested with the county and the parish', this was understandable.<sup>554</sup> This was unpopular, the labourite *Reynold's Newspaper* complained that because compensation was paid for by a county rate that 'the public... have thus been robbed at both pockets for the benefit of the landlords and farmers'.<sup>555</sup> The 'both pockets' was because as well as paying the Cattle Plague rate the public was also paying higher prices for meat, although this had been true even before the outbreak. They were also facing increased Poor rates to cover 'the increased burdens thrown on the rates by unemployed agricultural labourers and dairymaids'.<sup>556</sup> There was considerable variation in the speed with which one of the costs, compensation, was paid out in the different areas, which is considered next.

### 5.5.1 Cheshire

Because of the extreme losses experienced in Cheshire, a loan of £270,000 was required there; magnanimously, the government reduced the interest rate it was charging anyone else who took up a loan to 3% and a 2-year repayment and interest 'holiday' was allowed.<sup>557</sup> This did not mean that compensation was speedily available, it was not until the middle of November 1866 that the first payments were made to farmers in Wirral and Broxton, some £47,000 with 'the coin itself being paid out in the room and not through the medium of a bank', which suggests that farmers were wary of banks (or at least Banker's

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<sup>553</sup> Original Exchequer letter to Income Tax collectors: 'Income Tax and Losses from the Cattle Plague', *North British Agriculturalist*, 20 October 1866, 7. Local reports: 'Important to Farmers and Landlords' *Chester Courant*, 24 October 1866, 3; 'Cattle Plague and the Income Tax', *Norfolk News*, 17 October 1866, 7; 'Important to Agricultural Interests', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 20 October 1866, 7.

<sup>554</sup> Matthews, 'Who's to pay?', 86.

<sup>555</sup> 'Working Class Starvation: To the editor of Reynold's Newspaper', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 24 November 1866, 3.

<sup>556</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 28 March 1866, 6.

<sup>557</sup> 'A deputation', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 2 August 1866, 2.

drafts) and preferred hard cash.<sup>558</sup> By the end of the following week, a total of £106,000 had been paid out.<sup>559</sup>

The Quarter Sessions took out the loan so that they could pay out compensation and cover the costs of administering Cattle Plague activity throughout the epizootic, which were themselves considerable. These included the costs of placing notices in newspapers, remunerating the Justices clerks for additional Cattle Plague related work, paying the Inspector's expenses and getting licences printed, but these costs were minor compared to the compensation pay-outs. The total outlay in Cheshire eventually came to £266,315 13s 9d. The administration costs were only 6.3% of this. The amounts spent on administration and compensation in Norfolk and Wiltshire were very different, as can be seen in Table 5-1, in section 5.5.3, below.

### 5.5.2 Norfolk

The situation in Norfolk was completely different from Cheshire. The NCPA was already paying out compensation to its members, from association fees and donations received, before the Act was passed and they continued to do so regularly, there was no long wait as in Cheshire. The NCPA compensated their members for beasts that died, rather than were ordered killed, at a higher rate than the eventual Government compensation (66% compared with 50%). After the Act the local paper suggested that, as the NCPA had a healthy amount of funds, it should continue to pay 25% after the government compensation started, to give claimants 75% of the beast's value, but the association declined to do so. The NCPA agreed to continue compensating members for cattle lost before the Act but suspended claims after that date.<sup>560</sup> The administration costs of dealing with the Cattle Plague were 62.4% of the total costs to the county. A Cattle rate of '8/16<sup>ths</sup> of a half-penny' (which was, as the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* noted, 'an unnecessarily elaborate mode of expressing a farthing' or 1/4d) was set to raise £4,449 6s 8d.<sup>561</sup> The NCPA was wound up in October 1867, after a year without infections in the county.<sup>562</sup> The association held £4,000 when wound up, and this was invested 'to be available in the case of any future emergency'. The NCPA could do this as it was separate from the Quarter Sessions with devolved powers and could be brought to an end. In contrast, in Cheshire, the co-ordinating organisation, the Cattle Plague committee was a committee of the Quarter Sessions. As the Infectious Diseases Act remained in force, the committee could not be discontinued. Funds had not been raised above what was required, so there were none to allocate, differences in organisation

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<sup>558</sup> 'The Government Cattle Plague Loan', *Chester Chronicle*, 17 November 1866, 8.

<sup>559</sup> 'The Cattle Plague : Compensation in Cheshire', *Cheshire Observer*, 24 November 1866, 2.

<sup>560</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk Chronicle* 24 February 1866, 2; *Norfolk News* 24 February 1866, 2.

<sup>561</sup> 'Cattle Plague Rates: Norfolk', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 19 April 1866, 2.

<sup>562</sup> 'The County of Norfolk...' *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 October 1867, 6.



led to differences in outcomes in these two areas. These differences again indicate that Norfolk was organised on a county, not a local, basis

### 5.5.3 Wiltshire

Things were different again in Wiltshire in that there were not many issues, even though most of the county losses were before the Act and so before Government compensation came into force. Most of the costs (99.3%) to the Quarter Sessions as the local authority were administration expenses, not compensation. There was no need for a government loan, and there were no problems with the Cattle Rate in the county, which was set at the same level as in Norfolk,  $\frac{1}{4}$ d in the pound, which can usefully be compared to the  $\frac{3}{4}$ d rate made to support the Wiltshire County Asylum in the same year.<sup>563</sup> All three study areas show different problems and issues with Cattle Plague related finances. These were in part the result of differences in the scale of losses and compensation, but also of organisation.

	Killed	Died	Total Lost	Compensation paid	Exepenses	Total	Cost per cow		
							Comp.	Expenses	Total
<b>Cheshire</b>	<b>38,918</b>	<b>40,851</b>	<b>79,769</b>	<b>£249,409 15s 6d</b>	<b>£16,905 18s 8d</b>	<b>£266,315 13s 9d</b>	<b>£3 2s 7d</b>	<b>4s 2.5d</b>	<b>£3 6s 9.5d</b>
Chester, Borough	182	164	346	£1,232 12s 6d	£1,566 6s 9d	£2,798 19s 3d	£3 11s 2.5d	£4 10s 7d	£8 1s 9.5d
<b>Norfolk</b>	<b>3,586</b>	<b>2,311</b>	<b>5,897</b>	<b>£10,120 8s 4d</b>	<b>£16,567 6s 6d</b>	<b>£26,688 4s 10d</b>	<b>£1 14s 5d</b>	<b>£2 15s 2.5d</b>	<b>£4 10s 7d</b>
Kungs Lynn, Borough	1		1	£14 10s 0d	£276 4s 4d	£290 14s 4d	£14 10s 0d	£276 4s 6d	£290 14s 5d
Norwich Borough	31	9	40	£11 17s 8d	£186, 16s 10d	£198 14s 6d	6s 0d	£4 13s 5d	£4 19s 5d
Yarmouth, Great, Borough	12	19	31	nil	£22 4s 11d	£22 4s 11d		14s 5d	14s 5d
<b>Wiltshire</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>£15 0s 0d</b>	<b>£2,073 8s 5d</b>	<b>£2,088 8s 5d</b>	<b>3s 0d</b>	<b>£29 2s 7d</b>	<b>£20 5s 7d</b>
Chioppenham, Borough			0	nil	£14 3s 4d	£14 3s 4d			
Devizes, Borough			0	nil	£15 18s 6d	£15 18s 6d			
Marlborough, Borough			0	nil	£16 14s 6d	£16 14s 6d			
Salisbury, Borough			0	nil	£60 15s 0d	£60 15s 0d			

Table 5-1 Numbers of cattle lost, expenses and compensation, and cost per cow, by area  
Note that these figures only refer to government-sanctioned expenses and compensation

Table 5-1 shows the compensation and administration costs for each study area and borough within each. It is noted that the total expenses for the three study areas differ by an order of magnitude between each. This table shows sub-county areas, i.e. the boroughs, incurred administrative costs even if there was little or no compensation to be paid. Table 5-1 includes details that allow the cost of each beast lost to be calculated. The compensation cost per beast was highest in Cheshire (£3 2s 7d) and least in Wiltshire (3s 0d) whereas the administration cost was reversed, Cheshire £0.85 (17s) and Wiltshire £10.26 (£10 5s 2d). This is reasonable, the costs of running the compensation scheme and inspectors etc., had a component that varied according to the number of infections, but other costs were incurred no matter what number of attacks occurred. It is relevant that, although the compensation figures do not include the period before the CPA came into force, the expenses do. These data show large variations in the numbers and amounts

<sup>563</sup> 'Wiltshire Michaelmas Sessions: County Finance report', *Wiltshire Independent*, 18 October 1866, 3 and *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 20 October 1866, 9.

involved within and between the study areas. They demonstrate that national and even county figures conceal large variations that can only be appreciated through comparative local studies.

## 5.6 Compensation before the Act

Compensation for losses before the Act was a point of contention and the discussions demonstrate resistance to the provision of compensation for farmers by some politicians, and variations in how different areas argued in favour of it. The Act allowed compensation for cattle slaughtered by order of the Inspectors after it was enacted (on 20 February 1866) but not for any losses from orders of the Inspectors before that. This was seen as unfair by farmers, especially in those areas such as Wiltshire and Cheshire, where large numbers had been killed before the Act. Indeed it was claimed in Parliament, just before the CPA was passed, that the slaughter of cattle by order of the Inspectors was not sanctioned by the enabling Act under which the Orders on Council had been issued, one of 1848.<sup>564</sup> The earl of Sandwich maintained that those who had lost cattle ‘had a peculiar claim on the Government for compensation’ which the Government denied, maintaining that although the *letter* of the enabling Act specified only sheep the *spirit* of it covered cattle as well (and the full title included ‘Cattle’).<sup>565</sup> Gladstone rather disingenuously argued that the Orders must have been legal because it would be ‘useless to issue any Order which was not calculated to meet the requirements of the case’, but allowed that *if* (my emphasis) the Order went beyond the ‘strict letter of the law’ it could be easily covered by compensation, although the loss ‘must be very slight, as the infected cattle slaughtered... must have been of little or no practical value to their owners’, presumably because they were infected.<sup>566</sup> The result was that compensation was not forthcoming for cattle slaughtered under the enabling 1848 Act, and agitation for pre-CPA compensation continued after the CPA was passed. The government was ‘making enquiries’ about pre-Act compensation as early as April 1866, but nothing came of it.<sup>567</sup> The debate continued for some time, in November 1866, a prominent Cheshire farmer was still arguing that ‘no Government has a right to arm men with power and authority to destroy cattle belonging to her Majesty’s subjects, and, if they died, insist upon burying them six feet deep, with horns, hides &c., without some small compensation and called for the ‘exhumation’ of the ‘good old laws’ of the eighteenth century.<sup>568</sup> In December 1866, in a letter to the MP for West Surrey from the Home Secretary, it was indicated that retrospective compensation would finally be paid. However, the Home Secretary warned

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<sup>564</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague- Question’, *Hansard*, House of Lords, Debates, 13 February 1866, 181, cc 436-447; ‘An Act to prevent, until the First Day of *September*, One thousand eight hundred and fifty, and to the End of the then Session of Parliament, the spreading of contagious or infectious Disorders among Sheep, Cattle, and other Animals’, 10 & 11 Vict. c.107. [*A Compendium Abstract of the Public General Acts for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland 11 Victoria, 1847-1858* (London: EB Ince, 1848), 268.]

<sup>565</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague- Question’, *Hansard*, 13 February 1866, 181.

<sup>566</sup> ‘Imperial Parliament: House of Lords Tuesday, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 February 1866, 2.

<sup>567</sup> ‘The Chancellor of the Exchequer’, *Hansard*, HC Deb. 15 March 1866 cc283.

<sup>568</sup> ‘The Cattle Plague: To the Editor of the *Guardian*’, *Northwich Guardian*, 17 November 1866, 6.

that the exact conditions for compensation had not been decided.<sup>569</sup> The *North Wilts Herald* was cautious in supporting the idea but believed, 'If [the report] is authentic.... it will be only what is fair and just'.<sup>570</sup> Not all rural newspapers agreed, the *Wiltshire Independent* thought the proposal would be met with 'strong and righteous indignation'. In their opinion, 'the compensation legalised by the Act was bad enough, the nation being called upon to put its hand in its pocket for the benefit of the not worst off class, but the attempt to antedate the obligation of the Act must be strenuously resisted'.<sup>571</sup> In Parliament, Bright did just that and, in another 'pugnacious' speech, 'attacked the agricultural class and the country gentlemen', saying he thought the amount suggested was 'excessive'.<sup>572</sup> He used the old argument that the public purse should not make up the losses of private individuals that resulted from 'accident or the visitation of Providence'. Eventually, pre-Act compensation was awarded for cattle slaughtered between 26 August and 29 November 1865, up to half the value of the animal.<sup>573</sup> There was no provision for compensation between 29 November 1866 and the passing of the Act as Inspectors were not able to order slaughter then but, as the *Norfolk News* commented, even so, they 'advised numerous farmers to at once kill their plague-stricken cattle and enforced that advice with some pretty strong arguments and in some cases with some very formidable threats'.<sup>574</sup> The newspaper argued for retrospective compensation, saying that farmers who had slaughtered their animals under this duress should be compensated. A letter to the *Norwich Mercury* in May 1866 complained of exactly this problem The writer had slaughtered his cattle at the Inspector's 'most imperative to slaughter' instructions but was not eligible for compensation and, although it is not certain, it would appear that this was also the case with the farmer who declined to pay the local Cattle Plague rate in Staffordshire because he had also not received any compensation (see the Control chapter, Section 4.4.3)..<sup>575</sup> Problems were not only identified in Norfolk, in October 1868, the Swindon Chamber of Agriculture debated a circular received from the Cheshire Chamber that claimed that 'killing all the cattle in Cheshire [during the outbreak] benefited other counties by stopping the disease from spreading whilst enhancing the value of cattle in other counties', which meant that Cheshire farmers had to pay high prices to restock. The latter point was valid, but the suggestion that slaughtering Cheshire cattle benefitted other counties is debatable given the large numbers lost even by neighbours such as Lancashire and the delays in slaughtering cattle in Cheshire seen in the Control chapter. The Cheshire circular repeated the claim that the Act was unjust in 'charging the compensation upon each country', by which Cheshire suffered the greatest losses and had to pay the greatest amount in compensation, and called for a national

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<sup>569</sup> 'Our readers will be glad to learn...', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 20 December 1866, 2.

<sup>570</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *North Wilts Herald*, 21 January 1867, 6.

<sup>571</sup> 'An intention of the Government', *Wiltshire Independent*, 21 February 1867, 6.

<sup>572</sup> 'House of Commons Wednesday', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 15 February 1867, 2.

<sup>573</sup> 'Cattle Plague Compensation', *Norwich Mercury*, 13 April 1867, 1.

<sup>574</sup> 'Opinion', *Norfolk News*, 26 January 1867, 7.

<sup>575</sup> 'Cattle Plague Compensation: To the Editor of the Norwich Mercury', *Norwich Mercury*, 25 May 1866, 6.

rate of 1d that would cover all the charges of the Act. The Swindon meeting supported the idea unanimously.<sup>576</sup> An 1869 proposal to remit some of Cheshire's compensation debt was introduced in Parliament because the plague had reached the county 'by the inaction of the Government'. MPs from other counties resisted this saying they would call for similar measures for their areas. The Chancellor of the Exchequer spoke 'very strongly' against the proposal, which was eventually defeated.<sup>577</sup> Thus the problems associated with compensation were many, varied and long-lasting.

This section has shown that the actions by the government with regard to compulsory slaughter were viewed as unacceptable interference even after the outbreak was over. It has also demonstrated that the government, which had been accused of being under the control of the landed interests after the CPA was passed, as the landowners had 'hustled....the Government into a *quasi* treasonable course against the liberty and property of the people', looked very unfavourably on agriculturalists' demands for additional compensation.<sup>578</sup> The government clearly felt that compensation was a matter for local areas not national government, which is unsurprising given the sums involved but does not indicate a government bent on 'expanding [government power] in every direction' as has been suggested.<sup>579</sup>

## 5.7 Public subscription.

The other way compensation might be received was through funds raised by public subscription. Public subscriptions were regularly set up in the nineteenth century to raise funds for deserving causes. Lynne Kiesling noted that

When an unprecedented and unanticipated downturn strikes a community, resources from disparate sources combine to aid those harmed by the distress. Today, as in the past, public and private sources coordinate relief efforts, and persistence of distress beyond that which had been anticipated and provided for by insurance brings in resources from outside the communities.<sup>580</sup>

Some of the nineteenth century's most famous public subscription efforts were those for the Lancashire Cotton Famine, at its worst in 1862 and referred to above. Lancashire, along with parts of Derbyshire, Cheshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 'contained all the cotton manufacturing firms in the country'.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> 'Swindon Chamber of Agriculture', *North Wilts Herald*, 26 October 1868, 2.

<sup>577</sup> 'The Imperial Parliament', *Salisbury Times & South Wilts Gazette*, 17 July 1869, 7; 'Rinderpest in Cheshire', *Salisbury & Winchester Journal*, 17 July 1869, 2.

<sup>578</sup> 'National Calamities', *Brighton Guardian*, 21 February 1866, 3.

<sup>579</sup> Erickson, 'The Cattle Plague', 6.

<sup>580</sup> L. Lynne Kiesling, 'The Long Road to Recovery: Postcrisis Coordination of Private Charity and Public Relief in Victorian Lancashire', *Social Science History*, 21, no. 2 (1997): 219.

<sup>581</sup> Kiesling, 'The Long Road to Recovery', 220.

There was a downturn in the cotton textile industry at the same time as the Union blockade of the Southern States in America, during their Civil War, cut off supplies of cotton to the Lancashire mills, which created unemployment and distress for the cotton textile workers and their families.

The normally thrifty and hardworking, independent [in spirit, they were employees] textile workers were perceived as deserving recipients of private charity....As news of the distress spread beyond the area, local, national and international charity flowed into the communities of Lancashire.<sup>582</sup>

Parallels were drawn at the time of the Cattle Plague between the distress in Lancashire and that caused by the Cattle Plague. Indeed, in early 1866 a suggestion was made, at a Halifax meeting of subscribers to the Cotton Famine Fund, that the surplus of £2,000 should be 'appropriated to assist the small farmers and others who are otherwise unable to meet the losses of the disease' in Lancashire.<sup>583</sup> In Norfolk, a local newspaper asked, 'Are the manufacturing districts, helped in their late adversity by the rest of the nation, to be indifferent when agriculturalists are suffering so deplorably? We invoke sympathy for the farmers from all the untroubled classes of the community' and went on to say 'it is their duty to help their neighbours and fellow subjects'.<sup>584</sup> This sympathy, as already indicated, was somewhat diluted by perceptions of farmers as a wealthy class and by the view that the disease was a divine visitation.

In Cheshire, it was maintained that the public should help tenant farmers because 'the tenant farmers have aided others in times of sudden calamity. This they did... for the operatives of our manufacturing districts at the outbreak of the American war' which had amounted to nearly £1,000 in the first half of 1863.<sup>585</sup> In a letter to the *Times*, the High Sheriff pointed out that Cheshire farmers had lost 38,500 head of cattle which had cost the county upwards of half a million pounds and that £100,000 would be needed for compensation. He appealed for assistance from those 'residing in more fortunate counties'.<sup>586</sup> The *Times* supported this and noted that 'large numbers of people are deprived of employment and must depend for support on embarrassed land-lords and half-ruined farmers' and re-drew comparisons between Cheshire and the Cotton Famine.<sup>587</sup> The validity of this was questioned in a letter that noted that the relief given during the Cotton Famine was to the 'employees of labour, not the employers', a distinction mentioned

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<sup>582</sup> Kiesling, 'The Long Road to Recovery', 220.

<sup>583</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Wiltshire Independent*, 1 February 1866, 4; 'General Intelligence', *Chester Chronicle*, 13 January 1866, 6.

<sup>584</sup> 'The Cattle Plague - Relief of the Farmer's a National Concern', *Norfolk News*, 6 January 1866, 6.

<sup>585</sup> 'Aid by Public Subscription to Tenant Farmers', *Northwich Guardian*, 13 January 1866, 6.

<sup>586</sup> 'The Cattle Disease in Cheshire: To the editor of the Times'. *The Times*, 25 April 1866, 7.

<sup>587</sup> 'Opinion', *the Times*, 26 April 1866, 9.

above.<sup>588</sup> The significance of this is that, again, farmers were seen as wealthy employers when, in many cases, this was not the case.

### 5.7.1 For individuals

There are examples where a charitable subscription was set up to help an individual because of the Cattle Plague. A very early case was in October 1865 when a Warrington cowkeeper, Mr Thomas Proffitt, lost his 19 cows. The Warrington Union Cattle Association Chairman said he was very sorry that Mr Proffitt had not joined the association 'although the members generally would benefit by his not having done so'. Proffitt 'had been pressed to insure his cattle but had been stupid and would not'.<sup>589</sup> He was not alone in this, the 'majority' of Warrington cattle owners were not members. A subscription was set up for the unfortunate Proffitt, although the Warrington Cattle Plague committee generally felt that promoting a subscription was not a good idea as other farmers might think that 'the philanthropists of Warrington would make good, to some extent, any loss they might sustain'.<sup>590</sup> The association emphasised that no future subscriptions would be raised for anyone, as they now had the opportunity to join the association and cover any losses up to £10 per head. The *Warrington Journal* emphasised this, warning

if they [cowkeepers] do not at once enter all their stock in some of the various assurance societies which, thanks to the energy of some and the philanthropy of others, now abound, they will leave themselves without excuse. They must not rely on public subscriptions when self-help is so evidently neglected.<sup>591</sup>

The subscription appeal for Proffitt gave a good example of the 'voice' used in these cases:

The sympathy of the public is respectfully invited on behalf of Mr. Thomas Proffitt, formerly of Culcheth, who has been a cowkeeper in Warrington for nine years and who, since Tuesday last, has lost nineteen out of his stock of twenty milch cows. Fourteen were infected with the rinderpest, one is supposed to be recovering and thirteen died or were killed by order of Mr Insley, the borough inspector. The remaining six were slaughtered after proper examination. The loss is estimated by Mr Haycock, veterinary surgeon, Manchester, as upwards of £300 in cows alone, and it is feared that Mr Proffitt's business connection will suffer most seriously. Mr Proffitt, whom has a wife and family to support is at present a ruined man. The savings of his life were in his stock, and unless he can be kindly assisted in his need his home and business,

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<sup>588</sup> 'Aid to Farmers', *Northwich Guardian*, 20 January 1866, 6.

<sup>589</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Leigh Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser*, 21 October 1865, 2.

<sup>590</sup> 'The Warrington Union Cattle Association', *Northwich Guardian*, 28 October 1865, 6.

<sup>591</sup> 'The Rinderpest in Warrington', *The Warrington Advertiser*, 21 October, 1865, 2.

the fruits of his industry, will be lost. The object of this appeal is to raise a subscription to enable him to begin life again, and it is hoped that the exceptional nature of the case and the sudden fall from comfortable circumstances to poverty of a striving and respectable man, renders it superfluous to make any appeal to the feelings of the public.<sup>592</sup>

It is noted that, although the cattle were killed at the orders of the local inspector, this was before the passing of the CPA, and so no public compensation was available. How 'exceptional' the affair was is debatable, but the loss was far more than the sum indicated, the *Warrington Guardian* put it at over £700.<sup>593</sup> Within a week, the appeal had raised up to £150.<sup>594</sup> Subscriptions lists did not remain open indefinitely and, in early November, the *Warrington Advertiser* noted that Proffitt's was about to close.<sup>595</sup> The subscription was successful, in December 1865, Proffitt was advertising for 'a dairy of milk', and he published a notice to the subscribers of the fund a week later, thanking them for giving him and his family the chance of 'starting again in the world'.<sup>596</sup> Three other Warrington cattle keepers suffered attacks at the same time, and, according to the Chester newspaper, appeals for them were also made.<sup>597</sup> Strangely the Warrington press did not report this - the *Warrington Advertiser* gave details of the other attacks, including the loss of both her cattle by 'a poor industrious woman' but only Proffitt's subscription was mentioned in the paper. The *Advertiser* did note, after Proffitt's subscription closed, 'it will probably be necessary to originate a general subscription' for others affected, but this was made unnecessary by the development of a county-wide subscription fund, which shows that county-based initiatives were not rejected in Cheshire out of hand.

### 5.7.2 Cheshire subscription funds

The Cheshire County subscription fund was only set up in March 1866. In contrast, Shropshire and Norfolk both set up county subscription funds as early as August 1865.<sup>598</sup> At the Cheshire Quarter Sessions in February 1866, a 'numerously signed' petition was handed to the High Sheriff asking (=instructing) him to

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<sup>592</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Leigh Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser*, 21 October 1865, 2.

<sup>593</sup> 'Outbreak of the Cattle Plague at Warrington', *Warrington Guardian*, 28 October 1865, 11.

<sup>594</sup> 'The subscription to aid Mr Proffitt', *Warrington Guardian*, 28 October 1865, 11 and 'The Cattle Plague', *The Warrington Advertiser*, 28 October 1865, 2, total £100 or £150 respectively.

<sup>595</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Warrington', *The Warrington Advertiser*, 11 November 1865, 2.

<sup>596</sup> 'Wanted', *The Warrington Advertiser*, 2 December 1865, 2.; 'To the subscribers to Thomas Proffitt's fund', *Warrington Guardian*, 9 December 1865, 1.; 'To the subscribers to Thomas Proffitt's fund', *Warrington Advertiser*, 9 December 1865, 1.

<sup>597</sup> 'The Cattle Plague at Warrington', *Chester Chronicle*, 21 October 1865, 8.

<sup>598</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 19 August 1865, 1; 'Norwich: Important Meeting of Agriculturalists', *Norfolk News*, 19 August 1865, 9 and *Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 August 1865, 2.

call a public meeting to consider setting up a County Cattle Plague subscription.<sup>599</sup> The meeting was held on 10 March 1866, and a county subscription fund was opened with a donation of £5,000 by the Marquess of Westminster (nearly half a million pounds today) and two of £500 each by the High Sheriff and the Marquess of Cholmondeley.<sup>600</sup> The Chester paper noted that the Marquess of Westminster could possibly afford this because he was 'less interested in land than in property, which is less influenced by the prosperity or depression of agriculture' but acknowledged he was acting 'most liberally' towards his Plague-struck tenants. The news that he had subscribed such a large amount 'swiftly spread over the town' and the paper noted with approval that he was using his wealth in a way 'which even envy must admire'.<sup>601</sup> The actions of the Marquess were entirely in line with the expectations of the actions of 'true' aristocrats that John Stuart Mill had noted in his maiden speech during the debates on the Cattle Plague Bill,

An aristocracy should have the feelings of an aristocracy, and inasmuch as they enjoyed the highest honours and advantages, they ought to be willing to bear the first brunt of the inconveniences and evils which fell on the country generally. This was the ideal character of an aristocracy; it was the character with which all privileged classes were accustomed to credit themselves; though he was not aware of any aristocracy in history that had fulfilled those requirements. (*Laughter.*)<sup>602</sup>

Such expectations were not always or, according to Mill ever, met; in August 1866, the *Cheshire Observer* took members of the Cheshire Hunt to task for such a failure. The paper took pains to note that these were not the county gentry but 'the Lancashire men, who rent residences in the county' and who only hunted because of the social cachet it gave them, 'to improve their social position', in other words *incomers* and the *nouveau riches*.<sup>603</sup> The newspaper noted that, although they gave the impression of wealth, they did not contribute to the county subscription fund, indeed they 'buttoned their pockets and ....conveniently overlooked the fact that hunting is a privilege, not a right'. They had made contributions to the fund, in April, the Master of the Cheshire hunt had paid in a donation 'from gentlemen at Birkenhead and Liverpool who hunt with the Cheshire Hounds and transmitted to Earl Grosvenor, as Master of the hound'.<sup>604</sup> However, an analysis of these donations (Table 5-2) shows that 48 members of the Hunt contributed under the heading of 'Cheshire Hunt', donating a total of £1,765, but over half of this was presented by just under

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<sup>599</sup> 'Adjourned Quarter Sessions: Proposed public subscription to compensate farmers' *Northwich Guardian* and *Cheshire Observer*, 3 March 1866, 3, *Chester Chronicle* 3 March 1866, 6.

<sup>600</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 17 March 1866 1.

<sup>601</sup> 'Town talk in Chester', *Cheshire Observer*, 17 March 1866, 9.

<sup>602</sup> John M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer (eds), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Volume XXVIII - *Public and Parliamentary Speeches Part I November 1850 - November 1868* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988). Section 12 'The Cattle Diseases Bill', 14 February 1866. Online at <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/262> accessed 19 July 2020.

<sup>603</sup> 'Rinderpest and Foxhounds', *Cheshire Observer*, 18 August 1866, 8.

<sup>604</sup> 'Subscription List', *Chester Chronicle*, 7 April 1866, 8.



a fifth of the members (£900 by 9/48 members). It is noteworthy that the vast majority of contributing members from the hunt lived in either Liverpool or Birkenhead (45/48 = 94%), with a third of them located in Birkenhead. It is likely that these contributions were the basis for the Chronicle's stance; although Liverpool members contributed 60% of the total members from Birkenhead contributed 10% more each than those living in Liverpool. Even so these contributions were not noticeably generous especially when compared with the members from Chester, Frodsham and Nantwich. This might support Matthew Arnold's contention that the business-based middle class, represented by the 'Liverpool men', did not possess 'guiding principles', or at least possessed different ones from the agricultural landlords.<sup>605</sup>

Cheshire Hunt Subscription			
Area	No.	Total (£)	Average (£)
Birkenhead	11	445.00	40.45
Chester	1	100.00	100.00
Frodsham	1	50.00	50.00
Liverpool	33	1,070.00	32.42
Nantwich	1	100.00	100.00
Total	47	£1,765.00	37.55

Table 5-2 Analysis of donations by 'Cheshire Hunt' members by residence location.<sup>606</sup>

The meeting of Chester Town Council, held a week after the county fund was launched, instructed the Mayor to call a public meeting to set up a subscription fund to support inhabitants of the Borough who lost cattle. The fund was duly organised, with the Mayor heading the subscription list.<sup>607</sup> It may seem strange to have two funds operating at the same time and, indeed, it had been suggested at the county meeting that Chester should join the county fund but opinion in the town, 'and this not from any selfish motives' the Chester paper insisted, was that charity should begin at home.<sup>608</sup> The borough fund was necessarily smaller than that for the county, by the middle of April the county fund stood at over £20,000 and Chester at £631, and the middle of May saw totals of £24,000 and £688.<sup>609</sup>

Collecting subscriptions from the public is a worthy activity, but they do no good if they are not distributed to the people who need them. The Cheshire funds suffered from this, in early May some people were asking when the money would be distributed as 'rents, taxes &c are all due'.<sup>610</sup> In June, subscribers adopted a resolution that the Chester fund should be exclusively for 'the relief of persons within the city and borough' who had lost cattle before the CPA compensation period. On 9 June, the Chester fund reported it

<sup>605</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Schools and Universities on the Continent*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1868), 276-7.

<sup>606</sup> Extracted from 'Subscription List', *Chester Chronicle*, 7 April 1866, 8.

<sup>607</sup> 'Town Council Meeting: The Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 17 March 1866, 6.

<sup>608</sup> 'Our present position', *Chester Chronicle*, 24 March 1866, 8.

<sup>609</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 14 April 1866, 1 and 12 May 1866, 6.

<sup>610</sup> 'The Cattle Plague County Fund', *Chester Chronicle*, 5 May 1866, 8.

had £900 to cover 365 cattle lost in the borough.<sup>611</sup> This generated additional contributions and finally, on 16 June, the fund started paying out half of the £4 per cow they could afford.<sup>612</sup> In August, one of the Town Councillors asked when the other half would be paid, and the Treasurer reported that, although 'they had sufficient money ... it was all bespoke for the Town Hall' and the matter was referred to the Finance Committee.<sup>613</sup> It was the middle of September before the second payment was made.<sup>614</sup> This suggests that the urban councillors of Cheshire did not see the support of cattle owners in the city as a priority, indicating a different focus from the county landowners, who were demonstrably supportive of their own, equally local, farmers.

That is not to say that the county fund was without problems; applications for compensation from the County fund were invited after 9 June 1866, but justifiable claims were not always passed on.<sup>615</sup> In July, the Middlewich committee admitted they had not submitted claims because 'they had almost forgotten the subscription which had been raised by the High Sheriff' and a committee was duly formed to look into the matter with 231 Middlewich claims outstanding.<sup>616</sup> By early August applications for compensation from the county fund had been made for 27,127 cows, 845 2-year olds and 4,140 calves, with £28,600 available. Some landlords had said they would compensate their tenants and withdrew their claims from the fund, for example, Mr Snoyd of Keele allowed his tenants £5 per cow or two-year-old heifer.<sup>617</sup> The fund was still reporting donations at this date.<sup>618</sup>

The Cheshire subscription funds were successful, to a greater or lesser extent, in attracting donations from within, and outside, the county. The fund for the individual paid out very rapidly, the county fund only after the disease had left the county and the Chester city fund only paid out reluctantly, having re-assigned half the money collected to a municipal project. The rural landowners, especially the aristocratic ones, had supported the funds in a timely and paternalistic manner, whereas it was seen that the urban new men from Liverpool and Birkenhead had to be shamed into doing so, supporting the idea that they had a different view of their responsibilities than their rural counterparts.

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<sup>611</sup> 'Chester and the Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle* 2 June 1866, 6 and *Cheshire Observer*, 2 June 1866, 6; 'Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 9 June 1866, 6.

<sup>612</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire', *Chester Chronicle*, 16 June 1866, 8.

<sup>613</sup> 'Cattle Compensation', *Chester Chronicle*, 11 August 1866, 6.

<sup>614</sup> 'The Cattle Plague Compensation', *Chester Chronicle*, 15 September 1866, 6.

<sup>615</sup> 'County Cattle Plague Relief Fund', *Chester Chronicle*, 9 June 1866, 6.

<sup>616</sup> 'Claimants for relief from the Cattle Plague Fund', *Northwich Guardian*, 21 July 1866, 6.

<sup>617</sup> " Relief Fund' *Chester Chronicle*, 4 August 1866, 8.

<sup>618</sup> 'Cattle Relief Fund', *Chester Chronicle*, 4 August 1866, 6.

### 5.7.3 Norfolk subscription fund

The county subscription in Norfolk was launched very much earlier than in Cheshire, in August 1866. It was started at the same time as the NCPA because 'it is obvious to all that this [2d] rate will be quite inadequate to meet the demands' and the NCPA Chairman urged the public to give voluntary subscriptions.<sup>619</sup> The concern expressed by the NCPA shows a quite different understanding of the seriousness, or potential seriousness, of the situation compared to Cheshire, where only a few associations indicated any thought that their rates would not be sufficient. The NCPA informed the county that it was powerless unless 'immediately placed in possession of Funds to meet the many pressing claims [for compensation] now under consideration' with subscription lists open at various banks.<sup>620</sup> Lord Leicester started the subscription fund with a 'munificent donation of £500'. This was a staggering sum (although only a tenth of the donation by the Marquess of Westminster in Cheshire) and represented about 1% of the peer's annual income. This was not the only example of his generosity – in the same month, he donated another £500 to the Gloucestershire subscription appeal.<sup>621</sup> On the same day as the Norwich meeting, the ratepayers of Diss approved a 2d rate to support the NCPA and the opening of a subscription fund headed by the local rector.<sup>622</sup> The county newspapers supported the subscription appeal, noting that prevention of the disease was important to everybody and hoped that 'those who are in a position to render assistance will cheerfully accord their support'.<sup>623</sup> In November 1865, the *Times* reported that the Prince of Wales had donated £100 to the fund and that the Association had funds of £6,000.<sup>624</sup> It was not only the large landowners who contributed, collections were made in parish churches, and the Depwade Poor Law Union donated over £760 (including the 2d rate, it should be noted) from parishes in the Union area.<sup>625</sup> Subscriptions lists were published in the local newspapers but not with the regularity or numbers seen in Cheshire.<sup>626</sup> An important difference between the Cheshire subscription fund and that in Norfolk was that Cheshire was entirely from public donations, albeit sometimes collected through a church or parish, whereas in Norfolk, some Poor Law Unions enacted a 2d ('voluntary') additional rate which was paid into the county fund. Additional rates had been raised in Cheshire in the past, see above, but this was not done in the Cattle Plague. The most obvious difference was that, whereas Cheshire collected the money, saw how much they had and then

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<sup>619</sup> 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association', *Norfolk News*, 2 September 1865, 6.

<sup>620</sup> 'Appeal to the Public', *Norfolk News*, 26 August 1865, 1.

<sup>621</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 17 August 1865, 6. 'Estate income' from John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1876 this edition (New York: Leicester University Press, 1971), 266. 1876 estate income converted to 1866 equivalent as above.

<sup>622</sup> 'Diss: The Cattle Plague', *Norfolk News* and *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 August 1865, 6.

<sup>623</sup> 'Local Intelligence: Cattle Plague', *Norfolk News*, 26 August 1865, 6.

<sup>624</sup> 'The Prince of Wales and the Cattle Plague', *The Times*, 18 November 1865, 9.

<sup>625</sup> 'Depwade Union', *Norfolk News*, 16 September 1865, 6.

<sup>626</sup> Eg 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Subscription List', *Norwich Mercury*, 16 September 1865, 1, 23 September 1865, 1, 7 October 1865, 1, 14 October 1865, 1; *Norfolk News*, 9 September 1865, 5, 18 November 1865, 8; 'Norfolk Cattle Plague Association Subscription in aid of Old Rate', 3 February 1866, 6.

distributed it (eventually), Norfolk set a compensation rate and distributed compensation for claims as they were approved. The organisation of a county-wide initiative was more efficiently handled and actioned in Norfolk than Cheshire, suggesting that the county was more competent at operating as a unit than Cheshire.

#### 5.7.4 Wiltshire subscription fund

In Wiltshire, a public subscription was first mooted in August 1865 and supported by the Salisbury press, although it was phrased so as to appear to be a county assurance scheme

compensation for infected animals...would better come from such assurance fund as was instructed by the Wiltshire farmers than from the hands of Government. In the one case the money would be paid by those directly interested in its proper application, whilst in the other the source of the funds would be one which it is too often considered a quite venial fault to defraud.<sup>627</sup>

The quote suggest a belief that farmers would attempt to defraud a government-backed fund, although the paper may have been using ‘defraud’ in the sense of ‘take advantage of’, which would fit the syntax better although this would imply that taking money from a government fund was wrong. Fraud had been one of the problems, identified by Arvel Erickson, with the compensation in previous outbreaks; the ‘surveyors’ – Inspectors – appointed in Middlesex in 1745 (three butchers and two cow-keepers) were instructed ‘to inform [the Privy Council] of any fraud that may be put upon the government’ and, it was claimed, compensation was abandoned in the eighteenth century because ‘every animal that was ailing, or had diseases of any kind, was killed and charged to the Government as having died of the plague’.<sup>628</sup> This has already been mentioned, see the ballad extract from 1716 in Section 5.5 above. In the end, a Wiltshire subscription fund was not set up. The Salisbury District Mutual Cattle Assurance Association asked for landlords and others to subscribe towards the funds of their Association. In the list, several subscriptions were annotated ‘(Donation)’ presumably to differentiate these from membership payments, for example:

Name	£	s	d
R. M. Wilson (Donation)	1	1	0
Rev Tupper Carey (Ditto)	0	10	2
Thomas Fraser Grove, Esq, M.P.	20	0	0

Table 5-3 Two examples of subscription donations in Wiltshire

<sup>627</sup> ‘History of the Week’, Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 5 August 1865, 8.

<sup>628</sup> Arvel Erickson, ‘The Cattle Plague in England, 1865-1867’, *The Agricultural History Society*, 35, no. 3 (1961): 96; ‘The Cattle Plague in the last Century’, *Dundee Courier*, 8 December 1865, 3; ‘The Cattle Plague’, *Evening Mail*, 13 November 1865, 6.

Given the small number of cattle that were infected, let alone died, in Wiltshire, it is not surprising that subscription funds did not feature. Where they were found they followed the model seen in Norfolk much more closely than those in Cheshire.

### 5.7.5 Analysis of subscriptions

This section presents the first comparative investigation of Cattle Plague subscription funds and is one of only a few studies of the actual finances involved in subscription funds'. As Sarah Flew commented:

while there is a large body of work on nineteenth century philanthropy, it is fair to say that this historiography has largely ignored the economics of philanthropy... voluntary action historians have been unwilling to engage with the minutiae of financial detail found in balance sheets, general ledgers and cash books'.<sup>629</sup>

As well as, in this case, newspaper reports. These investigations are based, uniquely, on contributions reported in the local newspapers, not the 'balance sheets, general ledgers and cash books' of the local funds, in Norfolk and Cheshire and allow the implications of any differences in subscription patterns between the two areas to be considered. They are presented as a separate section to allow comparisons to be more easily drawn. Analyses of these contributions reveal differences between donations in the two areas. As the data came from multiple newspaper reports, it is acknowledged that they may not be entirely accurate, and it has not been possible to cross-check with other records. The comparative differences are so pronounced, however, that it is unlikely that the conclusions are suspect. Contributions were analysed using nine classes of donations, as seen below.

		<= £1	£1 0s 1d - £10	£10 0s 1d - £25	£25 0s 1d - £50	£50 0s 1d - £100	£100 0s 1d - £250	£250 0s 1d - £500	£500 0s 1d - £1000	>£1000
Number	Cheshire	14	137	85	152	58	27	15	1	1
	Norfolk	140	343	58	55	20	4	1	0	0
% of total	Cheshire	2.86	27.96	17.35	31.02	11.84	5.51	3.06	0.20	0.20
	Norfolk	22.54	55.23	9.34	8.86	3.22	0.64	0.16	0.00	0.00

Table 5-4 Cheshire and Norfolk Subscription, numbers and % of total by category

Table 5-4 (above) and Figure 5-5 (below) show the combined information for both counties. It is clear that the patterns of subscription were different. The total subscribed in Cheshire was nearly 3½ times greater

<sup>629</sup> Sarah Flew, 'Unveiling the Anonymous Philanthropist: Charity in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20, no. 1 (2015): 21.

than in Norfolk but from only just over half as many subscribers. Unsurprisingly the average subscription in Cheshire was much greater than in Norfolk, almost six times greater. The largest amount subscribed in Cheshire was an order of magnitude greater than in Norfolk, but the smallest amount subscribed was only twice as much as in Norfolk. There were many, relatively large, subscribers in Cheshire compared to Norfolk, possibly the result of more, wealthy contributors in Cheshire; an analysis of the amount contributed shows that the vast majority of Cheshire contributions were made in amounts between £50 and £1000, whereas more money was donated in amounts under £50 in Norfolk, therefore many more small contributions.

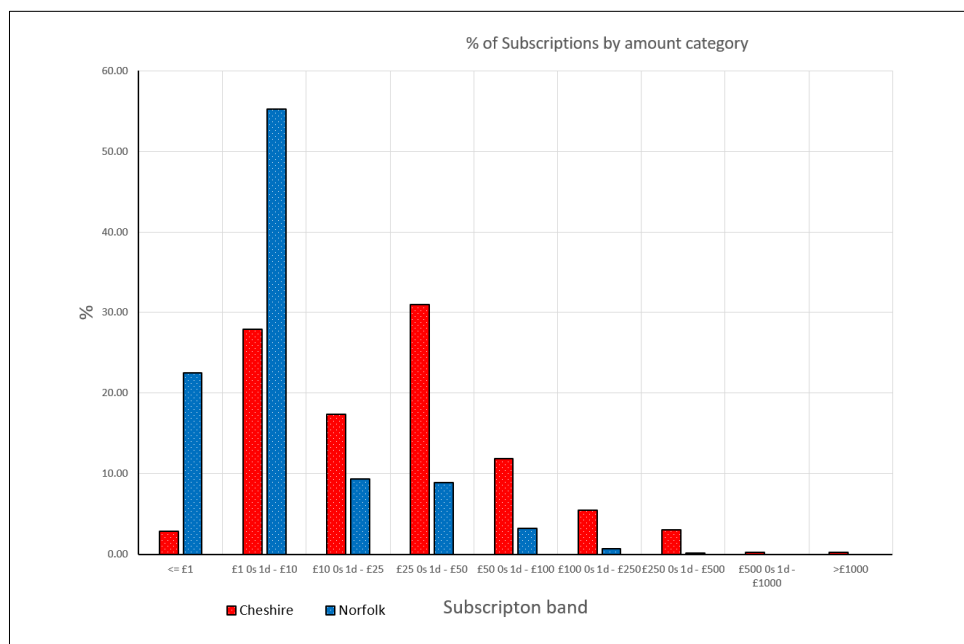


Figure 5-5 Cheshire and Norfolk Subscriptions by category and percentage of total

Cheshire gained its vastly greater total of subscribed money from subscriptions above £50. More money was donated in large amounts than in smaller sums. It might be suggested that the affluent individuals in large urban and manufacturing trading areas were a significant factor but the 94 contributors giving their locations as Liverpool, London, Manchester and Warrington added only £2,785 9s 3d to the Cheshire fund (an average of £29 12s each). It is worth noting that 26 subscribers from the relatively affluent Cheshire area of Birkenhead in the Wirral contributed £802, very slightly more on average (£30 17s). Birkenhead was not poor, but neither was it particularly wealthy, it averaged a taxable income of between £10 and £15 per head of population at the start of the Cattle Plague, the middle-income tax category.<sup>630</sup>

<sup>630</sup> David M Phillips, and Colin B Phillips, 'Wealth: Measures and patterns of wealth, 1664 – 1913-14', in Phillips and Phillips, *Atlas*, 92-3, map c, 'Taxable income per head of population, 1864-5 by township'.

A different pattern is seen when the total amount per subscription class is considered, Table 5-5 and Figure 5-6.

	<= £1	£1 0s 1d - £10	£10 0s 1d - £25	£25 0s 1d - £50	£50 0s 1d - £100	£100 0s 1d - £250	£250 0s 1d - £500	£500 0s 1d - £1000	>£1000	Total
Cheshire	£10 10s 7d	£875 9s 10d	£1751 10s 10d	£2426 1s 5d	£5779 0s 7d	£5405 0s 0d	£6000 0s 0d	£600 0s 0d	£5000 0s 0d	£27847 13s 0d
Norfolk	£115 19s 0d	£1590 17s 7d	£1015 9s 0d	£2377 7s 0d	£1981 18s 7d	£876 0s 0d	£500 0s 0d	0	0	£8458 11s 0d

Table 5-5 Amount subscribed per contribution class

The small number of large amounts contribute more to the total than the many smaller donations. Again this is more obvious in Figure 5-6, which clearly shows the differences in the patterns of donations.

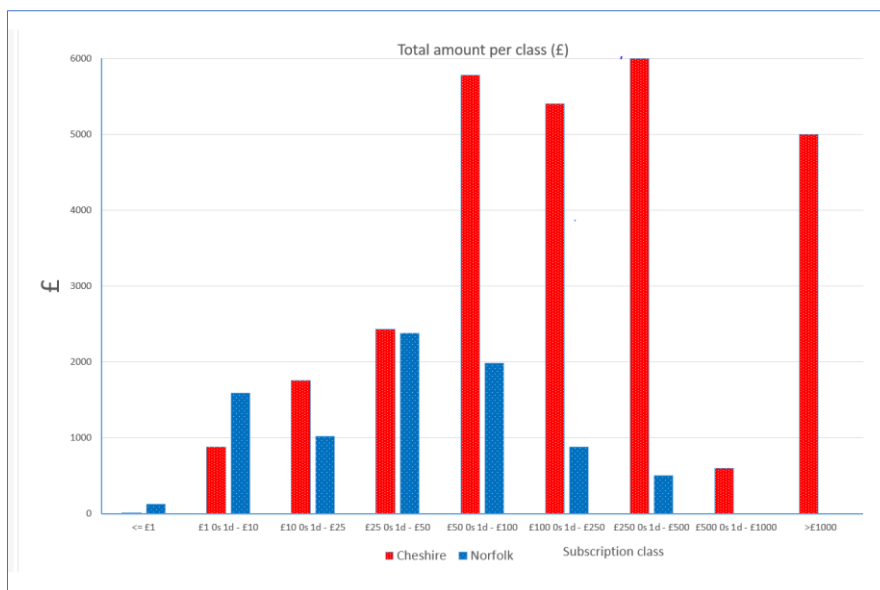


Figure 5-6 Amount subscribed per contribution class

The amount subscribed by an individual was obviously affected by their wealth but other factors were also involved. This is supported by Flew’s observation that ‘individuals were aware their philanthropic activities (or absence from them) would be publicly observed and judged’, especially with a subscription fund where the names and contributions of donors were published. Flew gave the example of a contributor to the Cotton Famine fund who said, ‘Well, if you have a collection in Church I shall give probably 1s., whereas if you have a subscription list, of course I shall give a guinea’.<sup>631</sup> This analysis supports the conclusions about the funds drawn in sections 5.7.2 and 5.7.3, that Norfolk was more experienced at operating as a unit than Cheshire but that the people of Cheshire as a whole donated more than in Norfolk and that the ‘larger’ contributors donated substantially more and that here appeared to be less incentive for Norfolk

<sup>631</sup> Flew, ‘Unveiling the Anonymous Philanthropist’, 23.

landowners to contribute than in the rural areas of Cheshire. This may also indicate that Cheshire retained a feeling of local social responsibility that was lacking in Norfolk.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the three study areas varied in their responses to financing compensation of cattle owners. New information on issues discussed by Matthews has clarified what occurred, for example the investigation of the Provincial Insurance company and the Altrincham case study. The chapter has shown that local assurance associations in Norfolk were essentially different from those of Cheshire and Wiltshire. In Norfolk, there was a county-wide response with the local Poor Law Guardians, plus others, acting as the local committees and organisers. In Cheshire and Wiltshire, local areas organised their own associations, often based on Poor Law Unions but not always tied to their boundaries, and separate associations were also formed. In Cheshire, most of the organising committees were Poor Law Guardians and often met at the end of Guardian meetings, whereas in Wiltshire evidence was seen for Guardians declining to be involved. Although a detailed analysis of other areas of the country has not been undertaken, evidence from Nottinghamshire suggests that Poor Law Guardians there were not directly involved there. Still, considerable further work could be done as a follow-up study to investigate this more widely.<sup>632</sup>

The amount of direct landlord support varied between study areas, with considerable evidence of support, often through the remission of rents but sometimes pre-emptive advice or materials, in Cheshire and very little in Norfolk and Wiltshire. However, given that most support was given as a direct result of loss, the opportunities for Wiltshire landlords to contribute in this way were far fewer than in Norfolk. The discrepancy here is not likely to be from an imbalance of large, wealthy landowners, Norfolk and Wiltshire both had considerable numbers of large and solvent landlords. It is concluded that this is partly explained by the less paternalistic, more market orientated systems found in Norfolk than Cheshire. The expectation that the 'middle classes' would contribute to support funds in Norfolk, which was not seen in Cheshire or Wiltshire, suggests that Norfolk was a more 'class' based society and that the development of a 'class' society nationally was non-uniform. The apprehended lack of support of the 'Liverpool men' for the Cheshire compensation suggests a difference in attitude between the, mostly entrepreneurial industrialists, of the Cheshire industrial fringe and the more established, 'older' aristocrats and landed proprietors on the dairying areas; the old-order landlords expected to support their tenants, the *new men* wanted the status that land ownership or running with the hunt gave but did not accept the responsibilities that traditionally went with them. The 'middle class, which here includes farmers, were looking to convert their traditional

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<sup>632</sup> Fisher, 'A Victorian Farming Crisis', 115-6.



responsibilities for their tenants and workers, to fixed more regular payments; in the more traditional system the amount of support that a landowner had to give to his tenants and workers varied, little at one point and then, at times such as the Cattle plague, very much greater. This is mirrored by the 'fewer but much greater' contributions seen from Cheshire and the more numerous, smaller contributions in Norfolk.

## 6 Chapter 6 Cattle Plague and Hunting: Social elements revealed

Stags in the forest lie, hares in the valley-o!  
Web-footed otters are speared in the locks;  
Beasts of the chase that are not worth a Tally-ho!  
All are surpassed by a gorse-cover fox!  
Fishing, though pleasant,  
I sing not at present,  
Nor shooting the Pheasant,  
Nor fighting of Cocks;  
Song shall declare a way  
How to drive care away,  
Pain and despair away,  
Hunting the fox!<sup>633</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction and background

The verse above, penned by the Cheshire MFH REE Egerton-Warburton lists Victorian ‘country pursuits’, showing that rural recreational opportunities were varied and extensive. However they were not just recreations but indicators and generators of social status and control. The impact of the Cattle Plague on country pursuits gives a different view of some aspects of Victorian society than seen elsewhere. An initial investigation into the reactions generated by the collision of the Cattle Plague with each activity indicated that otter-hunting, fishing and shooting occasioned little Cattle Plague-related discussion. Although there was considerable discussion on other topics there were none relating to the epizootic, and by the time the verse above was published, in 1846, cock fighting had been illegal in England and Wales for 11 years.<sup>634</sup> This chapter therefore concentrates on foxhunting as it caused the greatest concern and debate. Foxhunting also had the widest interaction between different levels of society. Indeed this chapter takes the view that fox-hunting can be regarded as ritual activity, in the sense explored by Daniel de Coppet.<sup>635</sup> This sees ritual as helping to ‘create and maintain... a society’s cultural identity and social relations’. This chapter maintains that this is what fox-hunting was doing in the nineteenth century and that it was far more than ‘the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable’, as Oscar Wilde famously wrote.<sup>636</sup> Although framed by and focused on fox-hunting, this chapter is not *per se* an exposition of hunting in the nineteenth century and certainly does not engage with debates about the morality or acceptability of hunting. After a brief consideration of the relative importance of hunting in each of the study areas, it is shown that the greatest

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<sup>633</sup> REE Egerton-Warburton, *Hunting Songs and Ballads*, (London: William Pickering, 1846, this edition London: Constable and Company, 1925), 41.

<sup>634</sup> Section III of ‘An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Several Laws Relating to the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Animals, and the Mischiefs Arising from the Driving of Cattle, and to Make Other Provisions in Regard Thereto’ 5 & 6 William 4 c.59, online at <https://statutes.org.uk/site/the-statutes/nineteenth-century/1835-5-6-william-4-c-59-cruelty-to-animals-act/>, accessed 27 September 2021.

<sup>635</sup> Daniel de Coppet (ed), *Understanding Rituals*, (London: Routledge, 1992). ‘Book description’, at <https://www.routledge.com/Understanding-Rituals/Coppet/p/book/9780415061216>, accessed 3 April 2022.

<sup>636</sup> ‘Lord Illingworth’ in Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*, 1893, Act 1.

concern about hunting in relation to the Cattle Plague was expressed in Cheshire, considerably less in Norfolk and almost none in Wiltshire. The chapter then outlines the development of hunting to place it within its historical context and discusses elements not encountered elsewhere in this thesis, such as the importance of hunts to local economies. It also considers the relationships between landlords, tenants and other landowners as shown by discussions and reports on hunting. Expectations of gentry behaviour are explored, as is the diversity of the hunt as a 'gentry' organisation, in terms of class and gender and hunts' apparent desire to be seen as 'open' to all. Allied to hunting but somewhat separate, issues involving dogs and hounds are explored; evidence of public fear of dogs spreading both Cattle Plague and other disease leads to consideration of how Cattle Plague legislation was used to address the problem of dogs in towns and cities. These are shown to relate to local area governance and public health concerns.

There are two main foundations to this discussion; that there were differences in the responses to the epizootic related to hunting which are explored in this chapter and which identify differences in social order within the study areas. In many cases, these concerns were linked to fears that foxhounds would spread the disease. It is important, in this context, to recollect that *how* disease was spread was entirely unknown, and it was feared that it could be carried by the wind, birds, infected cattle, people, dogs and animals generally. It is relevant that 'the debates [of the 1860s] over the origins of the Cattle Plague began at a point in time when not a single micro-organism had been convincingly identified as the source of a ... disease'.<sup>637</sup> This meant that those who did not accept that disease could be transmitted by, for example, dogs were not necessarily being dismissive or obstructive. Hunts were reluctant to accept that there were risks and a leader in their sporting journal, *The Field* 'The Country Gentleman's Newspaper' at the height of the outbreak, considered that there was little risk that hunts could actively spread the disease, which was vigorously opposed elsewhere, for example by a Northamptonshire cleric in the *Times*.<sup>638</sup>

There were variations in the hunting activities in the study areas, which may have influenced responses to hunting during the epizootic. Cheshire was an important hunting country (the area over which a particular hunt had the right to operate); the oldest hunting club in England was believed to have been The Tarporley, founded in 1762 in Cheshire.<sup>639</sup> Norfolk was described in late 1865 as being 'a great hunt country. The country itself is not so favourable for the sport as Leicestershire, not so good as Cheshire, but everybody

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<sup>637</sup> Nancy J Tomes and John Harley Warner, 'Introduction to Special Issue on Rethinking the Reception of the Germ Theory of Disease: Comparative Perspectives', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 52, no. 1 (January 1997): 11.

<sup>638</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague,' *The Field* 24 February 1866, 5; 'Letter - Hunting and the Cattle Plague,' *The Times* 1 March 1866, 12.

<sup>639</sup> 'Hunting: The Cheshire Country', *The Field*, 16 December 1865, 11.

hunts, and foxes are plentiful because all are interested in their preservation'.<sup>640</sup> Northern Wiltshire was primarily part of the huge country of the Beaufort. Forty years after the outbreak, TF Dale merely described it as a 'fashionable country'.<sup>641</sup>

## 6.2 Fox-hunting and its historical development and context

Hunting has to be put in its historical context before investigating what the Cattle Plague and its unique circumstances brought to the fore. Historians of rural eighteenth and nineteenth-century England have seen hunting as central to the social life of the upper and gentry classes.<sup>642</sup> The hunting of the eighteenth century, when the Cattle Plague had last been seen, was very different from that of the nineteenth and work on the subject since 2005 has resulted in several long-held beliefs being challenged.<sup>643</sup> In 2000 Ray Physick believed that 'Foxhunting is not an ancient sport... there is no doubt that it was generally unknown until the end of the seventeenth century'.<sup>644</sup> Italo Prado and Giuliana Prato put its origins even later, claiming that until the early nineteenth century foxes were hunted 'mostly with sticks in a way very similar to rat-catching', but the evidence for the Tarporley proves this to be incorrect.<sup>645</sup> Possibly displaying their prejudices when they characterised the fox as 'this hot scented, low-cunning, stinking creature', they maintained that 'hunting foxes was considered a menial activity usually carried out by poorer people'. They then weakened their argument by also claiming that 'by 1800 fox-hunting had become a widespread, "public" activity' and that 'Country gentlemen and squires had long supported fox-hunting'.<sup>646</sup> However, hares and foxes were being hunted well before this. Rowland Eyles Egerton-Warburton, Master of Foxhounds (hereafter MFH) of the Tarporley, recorded that it had been founded in 1762 to hunt hares, but 'commenced fox hunting in 1769' although it appears that they continued to hunt their original quarry as well.<sup>647</sup> A satirical broadside of 1728 described fox-hunting in Norfolk and stated that 'two of the most eminent persons of this our country are now hunting', which indicates that hunting by the great and the good was of note but possibly relatively new.<sup>648</sup> The interpretations of Physick and Prado and Prato have

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<sup>640</sup> 'Riding to Hounds with the Prince of Wales', *Cheshire Observer*, 23 December 1865, 8.

<sup>641</sup> TF Dale, *Fox hunting in the Shires*, (London: Grant Richardson, 1903), 294.

<sup>642</sup> Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting* (London: Weidenfeld Paperbacks, 1986) Revised edition, 3; David C Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege: A Social history of English foxhunting, 1753 -1885*, (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Limited, 1977), 1.

<sup>643</sup> Venetia Newall, 'The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Some Comments on Fox-hunting', *Folklore*, 94, no. 1 (1983): 86; Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, 6; Italo Pardo and Giuliana Prato, 'The Fox-hunting Debate in the United Kingdom: A Puritan Legacy?', *Human Ecology Review*, 12, no. 2 (2005): 145-6.

<sup>644</sup> Ray Physick, 'Fox hunting' in *Encyclopaedia of British Sport*, by Richard Cox, Grant Jarvie and Wray Vamplew (eds), (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2000), 142.

<sup>645</sup> Pardo and Prato, 'The Fox-hunting Debate 145; 'Hunting: The Cheshire Country', *The Field*, 16 December 1865, 11.

<sup>646</sup> Pardo and Prato, 'The Fox-hunting Debate', 145-6.

<sup>647</sup> Egerton-Warburton, *Hunting Songs*, 118-119, note 5 to 'He rides, you may swear, in a collar of green'.

<sup>648</sup> 'The Norfolk Congress: or A Full and True Account of their Hunting, Feasting and Merry-making; being singularly delightful and likewise very instructive to the Publick. To which is added a QUADRILLE, as now play'd at Soissons',

been disputed, for example Iris Middleton contended that foxes were hunted for sport as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>649</sup> After 1671 the Game Laws prevented non-landowners from hunting 'game', but foxes, being vermin, were exempt.<sup>650</sup> According to Raymond Carr, by the 1830s fox hunting was the 'common activity' of the countryside, enjoyed by tenants, gentry and aristocracy alike.<sup>651</sup> The view that foxes became the hunts' quarry after a dramatic decline in deer numbers (itself a result of enclosure and disappearing woodland) was supported by Carr but this has been challenged.<sup>652</sup> Carr, a hunting man, himself stated that 'whereas the great aristocrats might hanker after deer, the country gentleman hunted anything that jumped up in front of his hounds, and in England, the most abundant quarry consisted of hares and foxes', which suggests that a reduction in deer numbers was not essential for the change to fox and hare hunting.<sup>653</sup> The argument that foxes became the prey because deer habitat and numbers were seriously reduced has been further effectively challenged by both Jane Bevan and Mandy de Belin.<sup>654</sup> de Belin considered that the change was in the reasons people hunted, a shift from 'observing the skill of the hounds' to 'the thrill of a fast gallop across country', and Bevan maintained that it was related to 'good access to land by hunters', dependent on geophysical factors and tight control by landowners, who could 'force the compliance of deferential tenants to allow free passage over their holdings'.<sup>655</sup> These views have implications for how hunts operated during the Cattle Plague. The high social status of the local MFH was indicated in the Regional Topographies chapter (Section 3.1.3), where Lord Willoughby de Broke's hierarchy of rural positions placed the MFH second only to the Lord Lieutenant.<sup>656</sup>

### 6.3 Hunting and fears of contagion

Several concerns about hunting and the disease are explored here, highlighting aspects of rural relationships in the mid-nineteenth century. The most common was that hounds would spread the disease,

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(London? 1728), National Library of Scotland, Crawford NB 1299 online at <https://digital.nls.uk/144783712> accessed 19 February 2022.

<sup>649</sup> Iris M. Middleton 'The Origins of English Fox Hunting and the Myth of Hugo Meynell and the Quorn', *Sport in History*, 25, no. 1 (2005): 3, DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460260500073025>.

<sup>650</sup> Middleton, 'Origins', 8; 1670 & 1671: 'An Act for the better preservation of the Game, and for securing Warrens not inclosed, and the severall Fishings of this Realme.," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80*, by John Raithby (ed), (London: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 745-746. British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp745-746> accessed September 27, 2021.

<sup>651</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 1.

<sup>652</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 24.

<sup>653</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 24-5.

<sup>654</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 23.

<sup>655</sup> Amanda de Belin, *Transitional Hunting Landscapes : Deer Hunting and Foxhunting in Northamptonshire, 1600-1850*, PhD diss., (Leicester, Centre for Local Hist., 2010), 96; Jane Bevan, *Foxhunting and the Landscape between 1700 and 1900; with particular reference to Norfolk and Shropshire*, PhD diss., (University of East Anglia School of History, 2011) ii.

<sup>656</sup> Richard Grenville Verney, Lord Willoughby de Broke, *The Passing Years* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1924), 57-8.

and the first time this was apprehended in the study areas was in October 1865. Newspapers in all three counties carried reports of a call for an end to hunting in East Sussex.<sup>657</sup> The details of this are given in some detail as it stands for many other similar calls. A farmer's group, the East Sussex and Hailsham Cattle Plague Association (ESHCPA) resolved that

It is highly desirable to refrain from hunting all hounds during the prevalence of the cattle plague; and it is therefore suggested to masters of hounds that hunting should be stopped in the district till it can be resumed with safety or, at any rate, until the middle of November.<sup>658</sup>

A report carried by the *Northwich Guardian* (Cheshire), but none of the Surrey or Sussex newspapers, claimed that the resolution continued 'in order that the hounds might not, by hunting across different farms, be the means of carrying the disease from an infected to an uninfected place'.<sup>659</sup> However, a Sussex account of the subsequent meeting of the hunt included 'as it was well-known that dogs had often been the means of communicating the disease', a conclusion hunts were reluctant to accept.<sup>660</sup> The response of the hunt was not atypical, to start the 1865-6 season on time, but they also undertook to 'avoid infected areas for the first two weeks' and appointed a Committee to advise the Master.<sup>661</sup> The chairman of the ESHCPA claimed that all his members, whether landowners or occupiers, were 'cordial supporters of hunting' and pointed out the risk that stopping hunting would 'cause the subscriptions by which the hounds were maintained to fall off to a great extent'.<sup>662</sup> Thus, two issues considered below, farmer support for hunting and the financial aspects of hunts, were raised in one of the first reports about the Cattle Plague and hunting.

Concern was geographically varied, with numerous examples in Cheshire, fewer in Norfolk and almost none in Wiltshire. The pattern of concern mirrors the losses from the Cattle Plague and may be linked, but it also reflects the importance of hunting in each area. One of the earliest Cheshire reactions was a letter from a farmer to *The Field* in January 1866 supporting the stopping of hunting during the outbreak, in which he

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<sup>657</sup> 'East Sussex Cattle Insurance Association', *Sussex Gazette*, 21 October, 1865, 2; 'The Cattle Plague and its Interference with Hunting', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 21 October 1865, 3; 'The Cattle Plague and its Interference with Hunting', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 19 October 1865, 3; 'Suggested stoppage of Hunting', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 21 October 1865, 3; 'Epitome of News', *Swindon Advertiser*, 27 January 1865, 5.

<sup>658</sup> 'East Sussex Cattle Insurance Association', *Sussex Gazette*, 21 October, 1865, 2.

<sup>659</sup> 'At a meeting of the East Sussex Cattle....', *Northwich Guardian*, 21 October 1865, 4; 'Hunting in East Sussex', *Sussex Advertiser*, 21 October 1865, 5.

<sup>660</sup> 'At a meeting of the East Sussex Cattle....', *Northwich Guardian*, 21 October 1865, 4; 'Hunting in East Sussex', *Sussex Advertiser*, 21 October 1865, 5.

<sup>661</sup> 'Hunting in East Sussex' *Surrey Gazette* 31 October, 1865, 3, *Sussex Advertiser* 28 October, 1865, 2 and 31 October, 1865, 5; 'The Southdown Hunt', *Brighton Gazette* 2 November, 1865, 7.

<sup>662</sup> 'East Sussex Cattle Insurance Association', *Sussex Advertiser*, 24 October 1865, 5.

claimed that 'in many parts of this county it is impossible for hounds....to avoid passing over an infected place'.<sup>663</sup> In contrast a correspondent of the *Chester Courant* thought that stopping hunting would not help, mostly because there were few cattle left in the fields to be infected, they had either already died of the disease, been slaughtered or were being kept indoors.<sup>664</sup> Farmers certainly claimed that hunts and dogs spread the disease; Stephen Matthews noted the case of Mr Moss, in Cheshire, who claimed the 23 cattle he lost were infected after the hunt had visited his lands.<sup>665</sup> The report, carried by the *Northwich Guardian*, made it clear the hounds had first visited the area where cattle had been buried and then a remote field where the heifers that died were grazing.<sup>666</sup>

In Norfolk, several correspondents suggested that hounds could spread the disease. In January 1866, a correspondent of the *Norfolk News* noted that Lord Hastings' hounds had been over land at Hindolvestone, in the north of the county, where over a hundred bullocks had been infected, died and buried the previous month. The writer obviously feared disease transmission as he hoped that the 'noble lord is prepared to pay for all the losses that may arise therefrom'.<sup>667</sup> Another correspondent pithily enquired, 'what is the use of closing fairs and markets and not allowing any stock to be removed without certificates if hounds are allowed all over the country?'<sup>668</sup> Such views were not limited to Norfolk; similar comments were made by a correspondent of the *North British Agriculturalist* who asserted that when 'A troop of gentlemen and a pack of hounds cross a farm where the plague is raging, then, without precaution or care, gallop over other farms... where perhaps large stocks are [they would]... bring the terrible contagion'.<sup>669</sup> The responses of hunt masters are exemplified by those of lord Grosvenor, MFH of the Cheshire hunt. In a letter to the *Northwich Guardian*, he acknowledged there was talk 'among hunting men and others in the county' and in letters in the newspaper regarding the 'propriety' of continuing to hunt. This phrase is illuminating as it indicates a moral element to the debate, and raises expectations of behaviour by the elite and landowners which is developed below and was also seen in the Compensation chapter (Chapter 5). Grosvenor put forward reasons why it was pointless to stop hunting; that the entire county was effectively infected, that there were so many infected areas 'that the wind from them must carry the poisonous blast over the remainder of the land', that the disease was present in non-hunting areas, that other animals including

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<sup>663</sup> 'The Cattle Plague', *Cheshire Observer*, 20 January 1866, 8. The original letter was 'The Cattle Plague and Hunting', *The Field*, 6 January 1866, 15.

<sup>664</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague', *Chester Courant*, 24 January 1866, 8.

<sup>665</sup> Stephen Matthews, "'Our Suffering County": Cheshire and the Cattle Plague of 1866. Correspondence received by Rowland Egerton Warburton of Arley Hall', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 96, (2000): 105-6.

<sup>666</sup> 'Another case of Cattle Driving', *Northwich Guardian*, 10 February 1866, 4.

<sup>667</sup> 'The Cattle Plague: Letter to the editor of the Norfolk News', *Norfolk News*, 13 January 1866, 6.

<sup>668</sup> 'How to Spread the Rinderpest: To the editor of the Norfolk News', *Norfolk News*, 27 January 1866, 7.

<sup>669</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *North British Agriculturalist*, 29 November 1865, 5.

birds easily moved from area to area and finally that there were some districts in the county where there were 'literally no cattle left to become victims of the disease'.<sup>670</sup> This last was not mere hyperbole, in February the *Chester Chronicle* reported that 'Assuming that there are 200,000 cattle in the county, one-sixth of the whole number have now been attacked, and an immense number besides slaughtered and sold at low prices, for fear of the rinderpest'.<sup>671</sup> This last is supported by a report on losses in Eddisbury hundred, which included the comment that George Willis had lost 50 cattle and 'had sold upwards of 100 to be slaughtered before attacked'.<sup>672</sup> Things were actually even worse than the newspaper suggested; by the end of February 1866, Cheshire had lost 44,285 cattle, which would have been more than a fifth if the figure of 200,000 cattle in the county was correct, 22%.<sup>673</sup> Members of the Cheshire Hunt were in no doubt about whether to stop hunting, the same newspaper carried a report of a 'numerously attended' meeting of the Hunt which 'carefully and anxiously' considered the views of landlords and tenants, both for and against discontinuing hunting, and it was

unanimously resolved:- 'That the evidence in favour of Hunting being so preponderating this meeting does not consider it necessary to recommend Lord Grosvenor to discontinue it at present but Subscribers would, however, be most willing to advise him to accede at once to any generally-expressed wish of the Landowners and Tenant Farmers on the subject'.<sup>674</sup>

At the same time in Nantwich, 'a district that perhaps has suffered more from the Cattle Plague than any other in the country', the local authority believed that hounds did not spread the disease but that it was due to 'butcher's and other dogs that prowl about the infected spots at night seeking after carrion'; a belief which was seconded by the farmer who had lost the most cattle in the district.<sup>675</sup> In contrast, it was reported that at a meeting with the farmers in Wem in Shropshire, the local MFH, Sir Watkin Wynn, had agreed to be

guided as to what he should do, because he was quite certain it was no use trying to fight against the farmers. (Applause). Permission to hunt was entirely attributable to their kindness and forbearance, and if they really objected, it was necessary to give way, and it was better to do so at once. (Applause).

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<sup>670</sup> 'The Cheshire Hunt', *Northwich Guardian*, 27 January 1866, 2.

<sup>671</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire', *Chester Chronicle*, 19 February 1866, 8.

<sup>672</sup> 'Notes on the Cattle Plague in Cheshire by a Cheshire Farmer', *Northwich Guardian*, 11 August 1866.

<sup>673</sup> Veterinary Dept. Privy Council, *Report*, 116-119, 172-173 and the 1866 Livestock Census 'Cheshire' data National Archives MAF 68/73.

<sup>674</sup> 'The Cheshire Hunt', *Chester Chronicle*, 27 January 1866, 1 and *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 2 February 1866, 3.

<sup>675</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague', *Northwich Guardian*, 27 January 1866, 6.



In the event, Wynn's hunt continued even longer than the Cheshire, see below. Two weeks after this meeting, the *Northwich Guardian* noted the alleged transmission of the disease to a previously uninfected farm at Knutsford by hounds, commented that the disease might have been transmitted by the person looking after the stock, and stated that they were sure 'no one would, more readily than earl Grosvenor, abandon a pastime – agreeable as it might be – if it were shown, beyond reasonable doubt, to be productive of evil consequences'.<sup>676</sup> Three weeks later still, in late February, the *Salisbury Journal* reported that Grosvenor had discontinued hunting for the rest of the season 'owing to resistance against him doing so during the continuance of the cattle plague' which was confirmed by the Cheshire County magistrates when they acknowledged the 'concession made by the Cheshire Hunt, who have now temporarily discontinued their meets'.<sup>677</sup> Public pressure had affected the hunt's activities against the wishes of many of its members. Other hunts also curtailed their activities; in March, the Norfolk and Suffolk Harriers announced that 'in consequence of the Cattle Plague raging in the neighbourhood of the Kennels these hounds will discontinue hunting for this season', although three other hunt meets were notified on the same page of the newspaper.<sup>678</sup> The West Norfolk hunt stopped two weeks early in 1866 due to public pressure. The Master 'acquiesced to the many letters' he had received expressing fears of contagion by the hounds, another example of public concern affecting a hunt.<sup>679</sup> These were the only examples of Norfolk hunts cancelling their meets discovered. In Wiltshire, there were no reports of hunts stopping, indeed the closest to outright opposition in the county was an opinion piece by the *Wiltshire Independent*, and that only at the end of 1866, which noted that a 'large number of farmers in the southern counties, who do not follow the hounds' were (still) protesting about hunts entering farmland and claimed that many farmers who had previously hunted no longer did so.<sup>680</sup> The newspaper emphasised that going on to farms to find or chase a fox against the occupier's wishes was 'illegal trespass' but also made it clear that the discontent was in the 'southern counties', not specifically Wiltshire.

The requests for hunts to limit their activities indicate more than opinions about hunting. For tenants and farmers to call for their landlords and 'betters' to take such a step was unusual and was not regarded kindly by all. A London vet complained that only the prejudiced would 'raise so puerile an objection [of hounds spreading the infection] for the interruption of a national and eminently favourite pastime'.<sup>681</sup> That this

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<sup>676</sup> 'Cattle Plague', *Northwich Guardian*, 10 February 1866, 4.

<sup>677</sup> 'Epitome of news', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 2 March 1866, 3; 'The Cattle Plague in Cheshire', *Chester Chronicle*, 3 March 1866, 8.

<sup>678</sup> 'The Chase', *Norwich Mercury*, 24 March 1866, 5.

<sup>679</sup> 'Castle Rising - The West Norfolk Fox Hounds', *Norwich Mercury*, 14 March 1866, 3.

<sup>680</sup> 'A large Number of Farmers...', *Wiltshire Independent*, 6 December 1866, 4.

<sup>681</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague', *Rugby Advertiser*, 30 December 1865, 5 and *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* 1 Jan. 1866, 3. An MFH forwarded the letter from Mr Mavon MRCVS, to the newspapers.

sentiment was (re)published in the radical *Newcastle Chronicle*, which was not given to supporting landlords, might be taken to indicate the view was a pervasive one.<sup>682</sup> This section has demonstrated that concern about the possibility of hunts spreading the disease was widespread, reflecting different concerns in each study area. However, the reactions of hunt masters were similar in most cases, they looked for unanimity of concern from the farmers and, not finding it, continued to hunt.

#### 6.4 Farmers, hunting and social position

Hunting was, from the eighteenth century, a marker of social class; hunting had become ‘much more class specific in the eighteenth century’ than previously, according to Susan Easton.<sup>683</sup> Class distinctions were still very much in force in the mid-nineteenth century and this informed attitudes of farmers to the hunt. These attitudes bring relationships and expectations of behaviour between landlords and their tenants into focus. Farmers were generally supportive, even an opponent of the continuation of fox-hunting during the Cattle Plague admitted that

Fox-hunting is no doubt a thoroughly manly and an essentially English sport, and one which, for the sake of all classes, ought to be encouraged in every legitimate way, and no men do so much to encourage it as the farmers.<sup>684</sup>

This admission, made as it was by an opponent of the continuation of hunting, carries more weight than the self-serving comments made by hunting men themselves. As an example, the Duke of Beaufort, at the local Farmers’ Club annual dinner at Badminton in 1866, claimed

He never went to a meet with his hounds that he did not meet with friendships from all those with whom he came into contact (*cheers*). He never walked over a man’s wheat when he did not meet him – if he happened to be walking about his farm – without a smile on his face (*laughter and cheers*) He hoped they would do as little damage as possible, but the manner in which the farmers of that county allowed them to ride over their fences and their wheat was an example to the country (*hear, hear*). The farmers were getting fond of hunting. He never went to a meet that he did not meet with seventy or eighty young farmers mounted like “bricks” (*laughter and cheers*)<sup>685</sup>

It is noteworthy that the ‘*laughter and cheers*’ were being given by the local farmers, which lends some support to the ‘noble Duke’s’ claims, but those who disagreed might well have been reticent in expressing

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<sup>682</sup> The ‘radical’ categorisation was by Alun Howkins. Alun Howkins, ‘From Diggers to Dongas: The Land in English Radicalism, 1649-2000’, *History Workshop Journal*, 54, (2002): 11.

<sup>683</sup> Susan Easton *et. al*, *Disorder and Discipline: Popular Culture from 1550 to the Present*, (Aldershot: Temple Smith, 1988), 57.

<sup>684</sup> ‘Letter, The Cattle Plague and Hunting’, *The Field*, 15 January 1866, 4.

<sup>685</sup> ‘Badminton Farmers’ Club: The Annual Dinner’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 9 August 1866, 3.

the feeling given the situation, the Duke being the major landowner for miles around. Edward Bovill claimed that most farmers were non-hunters and took little interest, even though most were affected.<sup>686</sup>

There are many reports indicating farmers supported hunting. In a hunting-related court case of 1866, the judge stated that 'generally farmers were the keenest followers of hounds'.<sup>687</sup> An account in the *Burnley Gazette* maintained that

The English farmer takes great pride and thoroughly enjoys seeing the master at the hall riding to hounds, across his growing wheat and oat fields and rushes out crying 'Tally-ho' with all the zest of a lover of the sport, even though his crops are seriously damaged thereby. The master and his family in return do not forget the tenant.<sup>688</sup>

This paragraph might be ironic, that the farmers did not cheerily accept the damage to their crops, and their apparent acceptance was because of their effective powerlessness in the matter, however context suggests this was not the case. This passage formed the introduction to a report on 'a notable example of the landowner's thoughtfulness of the requirements of his tenantry and sympathy with their misfortunes', which was entirely favourable to the reputation of the landowner, showing him fulfilling the expectations of paternalistic concern and assistance that his position in society traditionally required. The newspaper certainly approved of the landowner's actions and emphasised expectations of both landlord and tenant behaviours. It is assuredly not the farmers' voice but is advanced as evidence of how landowners believed, or hoped, their tenants felt. Newspaper evidence from the months of the Cattle Plague give some idea of what farmers felt. Those reported generally regarded the hunt as the preserve of the gentry, a tenant farmer in Northamptonshire said the hunt was the link in 'social intercourse between the aristocracy, the gentry and the farmers' whilst another saw it solely as a 'landowner's' body. The Oswestry newspaper considered the hunt to be the 'Gentry's', and a farmer in Warwickshire referred to the 'gentlemen' who hunted in his area.<sup>689</sup> These instances show perceptions of social separation between the Hunt and the farmers.

Hunting provides a window onto the make-up of these socially important groups, which was changing at the time of the Cattle Plague although this had commenced even earlier. FML Thompson noted that change was underway by the 1840s when the 'fumbling and maladroit intrusion of the *nouveaux riches* into the

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<sup>686</sup> Edward William Bovill, *English Country Life 1780-1830*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 218.

<sup>687</sup> 'An Assault in the hunting field', *Chester Courant*, 12 December 1866, 4.

<sup>688</sup> 'Elton Hall', *Burnley Gazette*, 21 January 1888, 6.

<sup>689</sup> 'Fox hunting and the Cattle Plague, adjourned meeting at Towcester,' *Northampton Mercury* 3 Feb. 1866, 6; Letter, *The Staffordshire Advertiser* 3 Feb. 1866, 2.

hunting field [was] observed with delightful humour in the sporting novels of RS Surtees'.<sup>690</sup> With the rise of subscription hunts, where many of the members and often the Master were unknown to the local agricultural community, the goodwill prominent earlier was more easily lost. The spread of railways exacerbated this trend, they allowed Hunt members to live far from the Hunt country, travel to the meets and then return home, all without interacting with the local area in any 'real' sense. 'Railways put foxes, even more than pheasants or deer, within the reach of the unlanded', opined Thompson.<sup>691</sup> Surtees considered the railways a bad thing as they allowed the gentry to leave their rural homes, live in London and feared 'superfluous cash was sucked into the metropolis and spent on luxuries rather than [hunt subscriptions]'.<sup>692</sup> They also allowed the lower classes easy access to the country, his character 'Jorrocks' was described, by Nancy Fix Anderson, as 'a vulgar wealthy London grocer, who wants to advance himself by participating in fox hunts....The epitome of the "cockney hunter", taking advantage of quick railway transport and subscription packs'. However he had to have the means to 'possess or hire a couple of sound horses, leisure, the means of access to the meets', which the railways provided and, most importantly, that 'his presence was accepted by the local hunt committee'.<sup>693</sup> These restrictions are discussed below. As the Compensation chapter showed, the *Cheshire Observer* characterised some Lancashire members of the Cheshire Hunt in similar terms, 'Who are these Lancashire persons? A few are gentlemen and sportsmen, but the greater number hunt merely to improve their social position. Some seek the magistracy, others to be mighty Nimrods'.<sup>694</sup> Whether this last was a reference to the famous hunting writer or the Torahic-Biblical character is unclear but given the context, it was probably the hunting author.<sup>695</sup> This section supports FML Thompson's assertion that 'the newcomers may have mingled with the traditional gentry on the hunting field but otherwise the two sets scarcely met'.<sup>696</sup>

Charles Bindley, writing as 'Harry Hieover' in mid-eighteen-fifties 'sporting press' titles such as *The Field*, stated that a farmer who rode out with the Quorn, *the Society* hunt, would be politely received 'and no one

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<sup>690</sup> FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, (London, Fontana Paperbacks, 1988), 267.

<sup>691</sup> FML Thompson, *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780- 1980*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107.

<sup>692</sup> Jane Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, (London: Collins, 1990), 62.

<sup>693</sup> Nancy Fix Anderson, *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games*, (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 210; Thompson, *Gentrification and Enterprise Culture*, 107.

<sup>694</sup> 'Rinderpest and Foxhounds', *Cheshire Observer*, 18 August 1866, 8.

<sup>695</sup> 'Nimrod' was the *nomme de plume* of Charles James Apperley (1779-1843), a famous writer on hunting, who frequently contributed to *The Field*, when he left he was replaced as hunting correspondent by the little-known at the time Surtees [Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, 29]. The *Torah* 'focuses on his [Nimrod's] hunting prowess, "He was a mighty trapper before the L-rd; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty trapper before the L-rd"''. [Genesis 10-9, Shaul Wolf, 'Nimrod the Biblical Hunter', online at [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3162874/jewish/Nimrod-the-Biblical-Hunter.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3162874/jewish/Nimrod-the-Biblical-Hunter.htm) accessed 2 August 2021].

<sup>696</sup> Thompson, *Respectable Society*, 164.

would mention a plough in his presence... [and] if he acted his *natural* part would consider him... a trump'. But with 'one attempt at equality, his fate is sealed; aristocracy will often welcome a man of another grade as being with them, but he must not attempt to be one of them'.<sup>697</sup> FML Thompson suggested that the 'social distance' of the famous Shire hunts, such as the Quorn and the Pytcheley, was such that:

the cotton men who hunted rode mostly with the Cheshire (Engels famously so), the Cheshire Forest and the Wirral... [he] was the son of a Salford cotton entrepreneur and whilst living as a respected businessman and leading figure of the Manchester German community... he participated in the Cheshire hunt,

EP Thompson was quite cutting about this, he considered that Engels' hunting was

evidence possibly of no more than his love of exercise, although such a gentrified form of exercise was possibly evidence also that the regrettable necessity of making money out of the cotton business in order to support Marx in the work of constructing socialist economics was not incompatible with socializing with the detested bourgeoisie and gentry.<sup>698</sup>

This probably says more about EP Thompson's opinion of Engels than Engels' attitude to hunting, but it shows that hunts accepted the entrepreneurial class and their sons.

Discussions of Cattle-Plague-related hunting concerns provide insights into the problem of rights of access to land, most acutely involved in poaching but also of relevance to the hunt.<sup>699</sup> In the 1866 court case noted above, the judge allowed that 'a man had a right to object [to the hunt going over his land], and if he did so, then, no doubt it was, strictly speaking, unlawful to go upon his lands' a view that is referred to elsewhere.<sup>700</sup> As an American visitor noted in an account published in *Tinsley's Magazine*, 'no American farmer would permit such invasions of his rights without a protest from either a rifle or a lawyer.... Hunting will never be naturalized in any other country than England; the spirit of the present refuses to recognise it; the laws of property will not permit it'.<sup>701</sup> A right to ride over other people's land in pursuit of a fox without being subject to claims of trespass had been established in law in 1786 but was removed, again by case law,

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<sup>697</sup> Harry Heiover, *Sporting Facts and Sporting Fancies*, (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1853 this edition London: Forgotten Books. 2021), 81. Emphasis in the original. It is noted that the quote given in Ridley differs from that seen in this edition, although the quote above is the same.

<sup>698</sup> Thompson, *Respectable Society*, 269; Thompson, *Gentrification and Enterprise*, 108; Danny Crosby, 'Engels in Manchester' at [https://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/work/england/manchester/article\\_4.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/work/england/manchester/article_4.shtml) accessed 10 August 2021';

<sup>699</sup> There is a vast literature on poaching and land rights, see for example Douglas Hay *et al*, *Albion's Fatal Tree*,

<sup>700</sup> 'An Assault in the hunting field', *Chester Courant*, 12 December 1866, 4.

<sup>701</sup> English Photographs by an American No VII', *Tinsley's Magazine*, August 1868, 92. The foxhunting section of this article was reproduced as 'A Yankee on English Out of Door Sports', *Chester Courant*, 29 July 1868, 7.

less than twenty years later.<sup>702</sup> Removed it may have been, but, as Alyson May observed, 'it did nothing to deter the growth of fox hunting [and] most landowners chose to ignore their legal rights', although not all.<sup>703</sup> Heiover, writing in 1853, had noted all of this but believed that access problems were 'avoided by the little mutual obligations that hunting produces'.<sup>704</sup> Itzkowitz baldly stated that 'unlike shooting and fishing, foxhunting could not be restricted by property boundaries'.<sup>705</sup> The geographical limitations of shooting and fishing rights were a limitation on how they functioned, and there are numerous examples of disputes about fishing rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries related to estate boundaries. For example, the Lackham estate in northern Wiltshire 'provides a typical example of nineteenth-century riparian disputes as successive owners attempted to enforce their rights to the river Avon'.<sup>706</sup> There were fewer of these limitations on hunts. Although the country of a hunt, particularly after the start of the nineteenth century, was usually limited by agreement with other hunts, hunt areas were not necessarily, or even usually, constrained by estate boundaries. Landowners did refuse access to their land, as was their right in law, and occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, tenants would also deny the hunt access, but it was unusual. In 1866 the Quorn, one of the premier society hunts, was 'somewhat surprised' when their passage into a wheat field was blocked by the farmer Mr Brett and 'a body of peasants armed with sticks and bludgeons'. Brett clarified that 'he did not mean to have his wheat destroyed' and the chase had to be broken off.<sup>707</sup> Two newspapers reacted to this report very differently, the Norfolk *Lynn Advertiser* merely reprinted it, whereas the Somerset *Taunton Courier* commented that, whilst the farmer's courage was to be applauded, it was 'sincerely to be hoped that he is either a freeholder or that his landlord is not an enthusiastic foxhunter'. These comments might indicate that the *Courier* was indifferent to reports of hunts being impeded - which would imply a lack of support for them - but it could also be that the newspaper was indifferent to whatever happened to the obstructive Mr Brett. Resistance to hunts riding over land was nothing new, Ridley noted that as early as the 1820s, when carted-stag hunting was attempted near Harrow, the 'miserable' farmers 'fought riders, caught their horses and made them pay to get them back. They served notices not to trespass and extorted large sums for damage under threat of going to law', a (borderline legal) example of the ability of lesser classes to use the law to oppose their 'betters' discussed in the Literature review, at least in an area that was not part of an established hunts' country.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> 'An action for trespass....', *British Chronicle or Pugh's Hereford Journal*, 13 July 1786, 1.; 'Assizes: Hereford, July 24: Fox-hunting - George, Earl of Essex v the Hon. and Reverend William Capel', *The Star*, 26 July 1809, 3.

<sup>703</sup> Allyson N. May, *The Fox-hunting Controversy, 1781-2004: Class and Cruelty*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 117.

<sup>704</sup> Heiover, *Sporting Facts*, 380.

<sup>705</sup> Itzkowitz, *Privilege*, 67.

<sup>706</sup> Tony Pratt, 'Lackham's rights to the River Avon and various 19<sup>th</sup> century *contra-temps*', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 106, (2013): 257.

<sup>707</sup> 'Extraordinary occurrence in the hunting field', *Taunton Courier*, 21 Jan. 1866, 7; 'Singular Hunting Incident', *Lynn Advertiser*, 3 February 1866, 3.

<sup>708</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, 40-41.

In 1850 the cartoonist John Leech published a relevant cartoon in the satirical magazine *Punch*, (Figure 6-1, below) as part of his series 'Mr Briggs goes hunting' showing an aggrieved farmer blocking access to his land, or attempting to do so. The farmer is characterised as a 'protectionist', a term that harked back to the protectionist Corn Laws farmers had previously enjoyed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a term which suggested a group desiring 'special privilege'. In passing, it is noted that the very still and serene rider, seen in the background between Briggs and the farmer, is a female hunter riding cross-saddle. This is probably to make Briggs seem even more pathetic and less rightly a 'manly' part of the hunt. The huntsman immediately behind and to the right of Briggs is in the classic fence-jumping posture; 'Crack riders negotiated ... [fences] leaning well back in the saddle, legs stuck straight out in front; "hailing a cab" with the right hand', although this last is not shown in this cartoon, or he might just be trying to stop the horse before the fence, the loss of his hat suggests loss of control.<sup>709</sup>

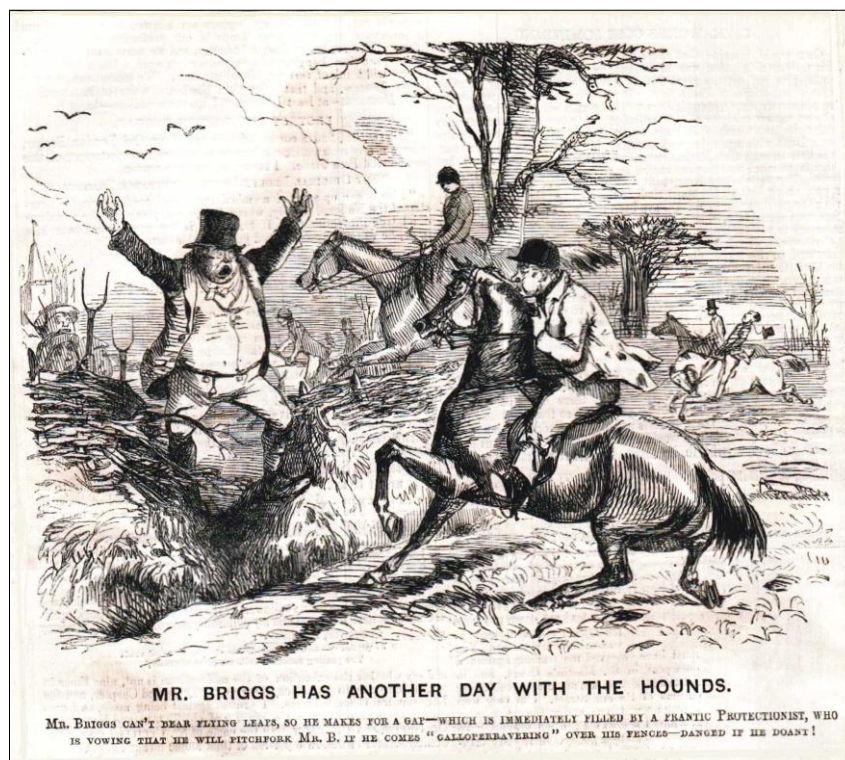


Figure 6-1 'Mr. Briggs has another day with the hounds'

'Mr Briggs can't bear flying leaps, so he makes for a gap - which is immediately filled by a frantic Protectionist who is vowing that he will pitchfork Mr. B. if he comes "galloperravering" over his fences – dang'd if he doant'<sup>710</sup>

<sup>709</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, 23. Competitors at the Badminton Horse Trials have frequently been observed adopting precisely this method (*pers. ob.*)

<sup>710</sup> 'Mr Briggs has another day with the hounds' *Punch*, 18, (1850): 84. (John Leach, cartoonist).

Even where there were no restrictions on access hunts, in theory, had to avoid annoying local landlords, especially by damaging their property as the duke of Beaufort noted above, although ‘they were often less careful when it came to the property of *farmers* (my emphasis)’.<sup>711</sup>

This section demonstrates the relationships between the gentry of the hunt and their tenants, other farmers and members of the ‘public’.

### 6.5 ‘Openness’ of Hunts, gender and class.

One of the positive aspects claimed for fox hunting by the journal the *Field* was that ‘the hunting field is open to all, as long as they conduct themselves with propriety’.<sup>712</sup> This is also relevant to the consideration of the relationships in rural areas between the ‘gentry’ and other levels of society that is explored through this focus of hunting as influenced by the Cattle plague. This chapter considers that the desire of hunts to be seen as open to all was a result of a, possibly unconscious, need for the gentry to demonstrate the paternalistic system was not archaic but ‘modern’ and relevant, and so allowed the possibility of inclusion of all. However, it is a claim that needs more background yet as this involves understanding what hunters wanted from the hunt, which can be summed up as ‘interest’. By the time of the Cattle Plague, hunters required that foxes could run fast enough to be interesting and that the hounds, and horses, could keep up. MFH’s required that hunters followed the rules and keep up, not forge ahead; as the MFH of the Tarporley in Cheshire, Egerton-Warburton, noted in one of his ‘Hunting Songs’:

The fox takes precedence of all from the cover,  
The horse is an animal purposely bred,  
After the pack to be ridden, not over -,  
Good hounds are not rear’d to be knock’d on the head.<sup>713</sup>

This is a good example of one of the ritualistic elements of hunting – hunters must not get ahead of the hounds and the same sentiment is seen again below. That hunting was ritualistic was demonstrated by James Howe, who said that ‘English fox hunting can be seen as a ritual of social class, one dramatizing themes and images about the gentry and aristocracy, and about rural society as a whole’.<sup>714</sup>

de Belin noted that throughout the eighteenth century ‘once hounds scented a fox, they would follow him relentlessly, albeit slowly, and the pursuit of a single fox could take all day. A phrase used to describe this

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<sup>711</sup> Itzkowitz, *Privilege*, 68-69.

<sup>712</sup> ‘The Courtesies of the Hunting Field’, *The Field*, 10 Feb. 1866, 5.

<sup>713</sup> Egerton-Warburton, ‘A word ere we start’, *Hunting Songs*, 90, verse II.

<sup>714</sup> James Howe, ‘Fox hunting as ritual’, *American Ethnologist*, 8, no. 2 (May 1981): 1.



was “walking the fox to death”<sup>715</sup>. However as the eighteenth century drew to a close, hunts became more and more the place for those who wanted to ride (fast, across country), rather than hunt (foxes), the journey had, to some extent, replaced the destination. In the late eighteenth century the famous, and mistitled, ‘Father of Fox hunting’ Hugo Meynell would ‘ride as fast and hard as necessary’ but to ‘keep up with his hounds so as to watch them in their work’ rather than for the excitement of the ride alone.<sup>716</sup> de Belin agreed that one of the reasons fox hunting was popular was because it gave an opportunity to experience the power of horses bred specifically for hunting. This led to leading to the ‘hard riding’ huntsmen of the nineteenth century although, Allyson May concluded this ‘became (largely) a thing of the past’ by the 1850s.<sup>717</sup>

The emphasised gender is deliberate and leads to a short consideration of gender roles in hunting, which also applied to wider Victorian society and are seen elsewhere in this study. Women were involved with the Hunt but generally in gender-specific, subsidiary positions. Some rode to hounds, as evidenced in Figure 6-1, but this was rare even in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The *Field* was firmly of the opinion that women should not hunt at all although, by the late 1870s, their position was weakening.<sup>718</sup> During the mid-nineteenth century, it was maintained that one gender could not, and should not, do the work of the other, and so it was patently absurd for women to take part in ‘manly’ hunting; women hunters were not common, and none of them was described as ‘hard riding’.<sup>719</sup> Women, or more usually Ladies, were involved with the hunt and attended meets, although generally not going out with the field. The Wiltshire writer Richard Jefferies recorded that, although his (fictional) ‘fine lady farmer’ and her daughter had saddle horses, ‘they do not often hunt but frequently go to the meet.’<sup>720</sup> TF Dale stated that ‘in the old times a woman who hunted was treated with courtesy, but was made to feel herself present on sufferance’.<sup>721</sup> They were, however, ‘exempt from subscriptions, were given first chance at gates and gaps and were permitted unrebuked to do things that were forbidden to men’.<sup>722</sup>

This thesis investigates elements of Victorian society as revealed through reports for the Cattle Plague and, where there were geographical variations, to explain these. The position of women in society is not, *per se*,

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<sup>715</sup> de Belin, *Transitional Hunting Landscapes*, 123. Quote from ‘The Druid’ (H. H. Dixon), *Silk and Scarlet* (London: 1859), 243, in de Belin, *Transitional Hunting Landscapes*, 14 fn 23.

<sup>716</sup> Itzkowitz, *Privilege*, 10.

<sup>717</sup> de Belin, *Transitional Hunting Landscapes*, 231; May, *Controversy*, 65.

<sup>718</sup> ‘B.M.’, ‘Female equestrianism’, *The Field*, 31 March 1866, 9; ‘Review of “Hollybush Hall” by Miss Bowers’, *The Field*, 24 December 1870, 557.

<sup>719</sup> May, *Controversy*, 41.

<sup>720</sup> Richard Jefferies, *Hodge and his Masters*, 2 vols, (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1880), Vol 1, 211.

<sup>721</sup> Dale, *Fox-Hunting*, 274.

<sup>722</sup> Dale, *Fox-Hunting*, 274-5.

investigated here but allow an appreciation of attitudes held by those in power, in this case the gentlemen of the hunt. The restrictions on female hunters seen above were a result of the ‘sexual division of power’ described by RW Connell, one of the three elements of the theory of Gender and Power she formulated in the 1980s, saying that ‘constraints on social practice operate through a complex interplay of powers and an array of social institutions’, in this case, the forms and organisation of the Hunt’s social world.<sup>723</sup> There were notable exceptions, for example Lady Elizabeth Bruce, the daughter of the Marquis of Aylesbury of Tottenham Park in Wiltshire and a member of the Craven Hunt in Berkshire. Surtees, who launched and edited *The New Sporting Magazine* in 1831, regarded her highly and believed that ‘no country in England can produce a finer horse-woman or a better rider to hounds’.<sup>724</sup> The *New Sporting Magazine* has been accused of being ‘one of those abnormally dubious nineteenth-century periodicals that professed reporting but traded in fiction’ but, in this case, the description is supported by other evidence; she was described as being ‘a fine horse-woman’ in connection with a painting by Thomas Assheton-Smith of the Craven hunt.<sup>725</sup> He was a well-known Cheshire huntsman and was dubbed ‘probably the boldest rider of his day’ by Ridley, who gave examples of his ‘hell for leather’ riding.<sup>726</sup> Hunting was far more than the actual meets, and women were mostly involved in these other activities, Surtees noted that ‘female patronage’ included fox preservation work and ‘the exercise of hospitality’, the social activities of the Hunt.<sup>727</sup> Dinners, balls, and dances were vastly important events in the social calendar and for the hierarchy of the rural Shires. These were sometimes single-gender occasions, in the West Riding the Honley Hunt held an annual men-only ‘balling off’ supper to mark the end of the hunting season but ‘the hunters well know that if they have a supper, they will have to provide a “balling off” tea for their wives and sweethearts, otherwise their hunting will soon come to an end’.<sup>728</sup> During the Cattle Plague, a ‘full pack’ of ladies attended the 1866 event and, after a ‘hunting tea’ and dancing, the evening concluded by the ladies ‘joining in the very appropriate song and chorus, “Who would not be a hunter’s wife?”’.<sup>729</sup> These traditions helped secure the hunt as a bonding activity and confirm its ritualistic status. These events, and ‘county’ social events generally, were certainly not egalitarian. At the hunting tea, it was noted that there were ‘a few of the

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<sup>723</sup> RW Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1987), 92.

<sup>724</sup> Robert Smith Surtees, ‘Nim South’s Tour’, *New Sporting Magazine*, 1, no. 1 (1831): 14.

<sup>725</sup> Troy Gregory, ‘Mr Jorrocks’s Lost Sporting Magazine’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36, no. 4 (2003): 331; ‘Country Quarters: Berkshire: The Craven’, *Bailey’s Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, XXIV, December 1873, 270.

<sup>726</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, 22. Assheton-Smith also owned Tidworth, in Wiltshire.

<sup>727</sup> Surtees, ‘Nim South’s Tour’, 14.

<sup>728</sup> ‘Hunters’ Tea Party’, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 31 March 1866, 7.

<sup>729</sup> ‘Hunters’ Tea Party’, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 31 March 1866, 7.

“upper ten thousand”... beside many of inferior note’, a reference to the ten thousand people nationally who supposedly owned most of the land and ran the country.<sup>730</sup>

Social separation was clearly shown in a fictional account of the Cattle Plague in Cheshire, serialised in a local newspaper. The eponymous heroine, Annie Gray, described the excitement of being able to attend the County Ball because she was the niece of a prominent local farmer and that

Farmers and anyone connected with farming are admitted but the greatest care is taken to keep out those of trade, especially shopkeepers. A few who make their living by trade got in, because they are in the Volunteers, but the bulk smelled too much of oil, tan and saltpans,<sup>731</sup>

These were the major industries of Cheshire, after farming, at the time. (Silk fabric production was also important but is not mentioned, possibly because it didn’t have a characteristic odour or maybe it was seen as more refined. Whichever it is very unlikely even those in the silk ‘trade’ were invited). It is noted that this was the County, not the Hunt, Ball, the farmers would not have been attending the latter, see below. When Annie said ‘anyone connected with farming’ she did not, of course, include farming *labourers*, and the few trades people who were included through their association with the county militia would have all been officers.

Thus, gender was not the only area in which the openness of hunts can be questioned. Howe observed that in the accounts of the mid-nineteenth century, and ‘despite [a] thorough identification of fox hunting with the upper classes, one repeatedly encounters puzzling claims that it is open and democratic’.<sup>732</sup> He concluded that this had more to do with the ideology of those making the claims than the reality of the time, which is discussed below. There were no *legal* barriers to anyone hunting, traditionally farmers and other non-gentry followed the hounds, but there were undoubtedly financial ones, as suggested above concerning “Jorrocks”, not least the cost of a suitable horse or horses. As Ridley noted ‘the theory of hunting as open to all was always qualified in practice by the cost’.<sup>733</sup> This was not a small concern, a poem by Egerton-Warburton presented the concerns of ‘The Man with One Horse’, which started with the verse

There are lords who their hunters can count by the score,  
Scarce a squire in the land can but stable his four;

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<sup>730</sup> A term referring to the aristocracy and the ‘Upper Class’ in an excerpt from Grantley F Berkeley’s 1867 *Anecdotes of the Upper Ten Thousand: their legends and their lives*. [‘The Upper Ten Thousand’, *Falkirk Herald*, 25 July 1867, 5.]

<sup>731</sup> ‘Miss Annie Gray: A Tale of the Cheshire Cattle Plague written for this paper’, Part 4, *Northwich Guardian*, 6 July 1867, 2.

<sup>732</sup> Howe, ‘Fox hunting as ritual’, 284-5.

<sup>733</sup> Ridley, *Fox Hunting*, 33; Itzkowitz, *Privilege*, 23; Howe, ‘Foxhunting as Ritual’, 281.

Like myself, there are few who, too poor to keep two,  
Go a-hunting on one, and that one an old screw.<sup>734</sup>

It concluded, several verses later,

Though I bend to the goddess Diana my knee,  
She never has bestow'd a like favour on me,  
She seems to forget, with her quiver and bow,  
He now needs a good horse who a-hunting would go.

Ye who own patent mangers, where flyers are fed,  
Which the dealer supplies at three hundred a head,  
Let a crumb from your stable in charity fall,  
Give a mount to the man who can fill but one stall

This shows an expectation, or at least hope, that the wealthy would recall the troubles of the less well-off and act magnanimously. The telling line was 'He now needs a good horse who a-hunting would go', a good horse was needed to keep up with the 'flyers' and, indeed, the hounds. This is an atypical verse, requests for wealthy assistance were more usually associated with the poorer labourers, rather than a hunting man; Alan Howkins, considering 'songs which express the deference relationships in the countryside', gave the example of 'The Noble Man and the Thresher', which he saw as representing 'the hopes and beliefs of a certain kind of countryman in paternalism', part of what EP Thompson referred to as 'the deep deference of the countryside'.<sup>735</sup> The deference was obviously not only by the humble poor. There is no indication of a date for this song, although Howkins observed that 'they were most prevalent in the first half of the [nineteenth] century'.

Claims to openness were not new, as early as the 1830s, hunting people delighted in listing the men of 'humble positions' who loved to hunt even, apparently, labourers.<sup>736</sup> Bevan stated that much of the writing about the openness of hunts was 'self-serving' but did not explain *why* huntsmen felt the need to make the statements in the first place, discussed below.<sup>737</sup> *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* lauded two 'humble' hunting people in consecutive issues; the sweep who hunted with the Duke of Beaufort in 1836 and became a national celebrity ('The sweep was in his sooty attire, a black jacket and trousers with his brush as a whip') and a Lechlade blacksmith who hunted with the Vale of the White Horse (VWH), being

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<sup>734</sup> RE Egerton-Warburton, 'The Man with One Hunter', *Bailey's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, XXIV, no. 165, November 1873, 201.

<sup>735</sup> Alun Howkins, 'The Voice of the People: The Social Meaning and Context of Country Song', *Oral History*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 66-67; EP Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1963, this edition London: Penguin Classics, 2013), 917.

<sup>736</sup> Itzkowitz, *Privilege*, 24.

<sup>737</sup> Bevan, Foxhunting and the landscape, 365.

one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and with his old horse, the Smuggler, is generally in a good place, frequently carrying off the brush. He is well known amongst the members of the VWHC as “the smith wot hunts with Mereton”,<sup>738</sup>

Mereton being the famous Master of the VWH. In 1845 the columnist ‘Observer’ thought that ‘there is no pursuit to be compared to it for bringing people together and familiarising the peer with every class of the community. It is in the fox hunting field that rank is laid aside, and personal prowess takes precedence.’ and, just before the outbreak of the Cattle Plague ‘Cecil,’ the pen name of Cornelius Tongue, proclaimed that

We may traverse England throughout and find representatives of every class participating in the gay scene at the covert side, and even the butty collier is delighted to emerge from his subterranean labours, and cheer his heart with the enlivening melody of hound and horn.<sup>739</sup>

It is noted that, in the Shire counties at least, the *butty collier* was almost certainly cheering his heart by following the hunt on foot, rather than riding to hounds but, even so, Sally Mitchell maintained that ‘Fox-hunting traditions were seen as the glue that bonded county society’ and Prado and Prato said that hunting ‘played a central role in the social calendar of many country people, including those who did not ride and [who] followed on foot’.<sup>740</sup> They were all discussing characteristics of hunting the results of which make it ritualistic, it is maintaining the rural society’s ‘cultural identity and social relations’ even in the face of changing views.

This thesis considers the desire of hunts to be seen as open to anyone, emphasised by reactions to the Cattle Plague, to be a consequence of the need to be seen to embrace the ideal that Victorian society was a meritocracy. It therefore had to be possible for anyone to become elevated enough to hunt if the doctrine of ‘self-help and advancement’ was to be validated. It was not about allowing the lower classes *per se* to take part but deservingly self-advanced individuals. Exactly how open the hunts were and how open they were perceived to be, is debatable. It is telling that both the Sweep and the Blacksmith were mounted on ‘old’ horses’, the sweep had ‘a pad for a saddle and no stirrups’ and he was almost a ‘licensed entertainer’

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<sup>738</sup> ‘The Hunting Sweep or a Day with the Beaufort’, *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 18 December 1836; ‘An Eccentric Blacksmith’, *Bell’s*, 25 December 1836 (no page numbers).

<sup>739</sup> Observer, ‘Thoughts on Fox Hunting’, *The Sporting Review*, Vol XIII, (Apr. 1845), 230; Bevan, *Hunting*, 2011, 84; Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 66; ‘Cecil’, *Hunting Tours*, (London: Saunders, Otley and Co, 1864), 2.

<sup>740</sup> Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, (Westport: The Greenwood Press, 1996), 216; Prado and Prato, ‘The Fox-hunting Debate in the United Kingdom’, 146.

at the meet.<sup>741</sup> The quote from *Annie Gray* strongly suggested that farmers were welcome (only) as long as they made no pretence of gentility above their station. That this was changing by the time of the Cattle Plague might be suggested by a letter in the local press, complaining that an ‘industrious’ local farmer (one who worked hard to advance himself) had been barred from taking part in the Farmer’s race at the Frodsham and Merton Steeplechase meeting because he was wearing a red coat and ‘on that account could not enter his horse for the farmer’s cup’ (traditionally red coats, where they were worn at all, were reserved for the Master and senior hunt members).<sup>742</sup> The letter writer, ‘A Lover of Fair Play’, noted that ‘it is at all times satisfactory to see farmers in the hunting field. Like all county landlords, the Cheshire landlords give them a hearty welcome there’ and that the individual ‘may be considered a farmer even if he wears a red coat in the hunting field, in place of green or grey’. The writer feared that the decision ‘gave countenance to the old saying that Cheshire is 100 years behind the other counties in England’, and commented that, elsewhere, farmers were accepted in the hunts to the extent that they could wear red. Bevan, however, noted that only the ‘new polite commercial class and [larger] farmers’ were involved and, according to Mingay, they were ‘rarely seen ... at the hunt Ball, even though [they] might be called upon to ride with the hunt or help make up a shooting party’.<sup>743</sup> Mike Huggins considered that ‘hunt balls allowed social mixing which integrated the aspiring middle classes and tenant farmers into hunting society’, but Bevan disputed this, stating that farmers ‘were tolerated by [the] smarter packs while on horseback but socially excluded once dismounted’.<sup>744</sup> Ian Hodge agreed, claiming that one of the compensations for the damage to crops and hedges was that farmers could obtain ‘invitations to social events such as dinner, although not the hunt ball’.<sup>745</sup> Newspaper reports certainly show the ‘elite’ attended Hunt Balls; for example, the West Norfolk Hunt Ball of 1852 was attended by ‘upwards of 200 ladies and gentlemen’ and the 1890 Ball by ‘120-150 of the most prominent members of the Hunt’.<sup>746</sup> In Wiltshire ‘most of the best-known people in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire’ were among the 140 attendees at the Malmesbury Hunt Ball in 1891, and reports of a hunt ball at Cirencester thirty years earlier talked of ‘nearly one hundred and eighty members of the aristocratic and leading families of Wilts and Gloucestershire being present’.<sup>747</sup> In contrast, the Anglesey Hunt Balls were renowned for having ‘freedom from restraint and exclusiveness’ and

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<sup>741</sup> ‘The Hunting Sweep’, *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 18 December 1836; Itzowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, 26.

<sup>742</sup> ‘Should a farmer wear a red coat?: To the editor of the Guardian’, *Northwich Guardian*, 1 April 1865, 4.

<sup>743</sup> George Mingay, ‘The Farmer’ in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: Volume, VII 1850-1914*, 808 ed. E. J. T. Collins. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1, 760-809; Bevan, *Foxhunting and the Landscape*, 365.

<sup>744</sup> Mike Huggins, ‘Sport and the British Upper Classes c.1500–2000: A Historiographic Overview’, *Sport in History*, 28, no. 3 (2008): 366.; Bevan, *Foxhunting and the Landscape*, 365.

<sup>745</sup> Ian Hodge, *The Governance of the Countryside: Property, Planning and Policy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 96.

<sup>746</sup> ‘West Norfolk Hunt Ball’, *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 February 1852, 2; ‘West Norfolk Hunt Ball’.

<sup>747</sup> ‘Malmesbury Hunt Ball’, *North Wilts Herald*, 25 December 1891, 5; ‘Cirencester – the V. W. H. Hunt Ball’. *Wiltshire Independent*, 14 February 1861, 4.

that many attendees who were ‘geographically speaking, neighbours, were separated by considerable social distance’.<sup>748</sup> This emphasises that Hunt Balls were occasions of exclusivity in general, else the Anglesey Ball would not have been praised as having ‘great ... peculiarity’, even if seen as ‘charming’. An indication that, by the time of the Cattle Plague, Cheshire hunts were indeed open to the lower orders were given in a (disapproving) letter that alleged that ‘meets consist now, largely, of shoemakers, tailors, counter-skippers &c &c’.<sup>749</sup> The writer claimed that these were the people who were causing problems because ‘they know little of horses or horsemanship; they respect not clover, wheat, or turnips, and blunder through the fences causing them serious damage’, noting that previously ‘meets were very small, and the followers mostly good riders, who cleared the fences, not riding through them’. Not all the damage was being caused by ‘shoemakers &c &c’ however; a discussion of hunting and shooting in a Cheshire paper in 1869 identified ‘the rich brewers, or wealthy cotton lords, cloth manufacturers, and iron masters’ as ‘the very same men who ride recklessly and indiscriminately over wheat fields or pasture land’ and included ‘absentee landlords and the few in whose breasts the spirit of selfishness reigns predominant’, almost an exact description of the ‘Lancashire men’.<sup>750</sup> That they, specifically the new gentry of Liverpool and Manchester, could be a problem was acknowledged by Egerton-Warburton when, in his 1853 dialect Hunting Song ‘Farmer Dobbin: A day wi’ the Cheshur Fox Dugs’, the huntsman is overheard issuing a warning to the ‘swells’:

The dogs look’d foin as satin, an’ himself as hard as nails.  
An’ he gives the swells a caution not to roid upon their tails.

Says he “Young men o’ Monchester an’ Liverpool, cum near,  
Oiv just a word, a warning word, to whisper in your ear,  
When, starting from the cuvver soid, ye see bowd Reynard burst,  
We canna ‘ave no ‘unting if the gemmen go it first”<sup>751</sup>

Here is another example of one of the ritual elements of hunting – hunters must never get ahead of the hounds. This was an indication that the brash ‘Young men o’ Monchester an’ Liverpool’ did not behave as expected. The Cheshire accent is given to the story-telling old Cheshire farmer, who had followed the hunt on a whim and his ‘owd mare’, not the huntsman. This poem supports the idea of problems already identified from newspaper reports and contemporary letters; using a diverse range of local sources has allowed a deeper understanding of a dilemma faced by Victorian society, that of changing and unexpected behaviours by different levels of society, at a local scale. Another newspaper correspondent reported the

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<sup>748</sup> ‘The Anglesey Hunt’, *Chester Courant*, 11 November 1857, 7.

<sup>749</sup> ‘Injury to Farmers by Hunters’. *Northwich Guardian*, 16 December 1865, 4.

<sup>750</sup> ‘An animated and interesting discussion...’, *Chester Courant*, 19 May 1869, 8.

<sup>751</sup> Egerton-Warburton, ‘Farmer Dobbin: A day wi’ the Cheshur Fox Dugs’, *Hunting Songs*, 77.

case of a farmer who, having already lost forty cattle to the Cattle Plague, sustained serious loss to his crops and fences from the hunt crossing his land. He entertained no hope of compensation because 'his landlord was amongst those who committed the damage', which the farmer described as 'scandalous in the extreme' although the newspaper distanced itself from the criticism.<sup>752</sup> These examples all show that hunt members did not always, or often, feel concern over the damage they were causing. Even Egerton-Warburton's 'owd' and apparently relatively poor, farmer had little sympathy with his more affluent neighbour:

I seed the 'ounds a-crossing Farmer Flareup's boundary loin,  
Whose daughter plays the peany an' drinks whoit woin,  
Gowd rings upon her finger and silk stockings on her feet;  
Says I, "It won't do him no harm to roid across his wheat".<sup>753</sup>

That farmers were hunting appears in song lyrics that are also evidence of annoyance with, and envy of, the 'new', more affluent and socially 'acceptable' farmers, a subject that might be the basis for further study. In 'The new-fashioned farmer' the singer laments that

In former times, both plain and neat, they'd go to church on Sunday  
Then to harrow, plough or sow they'd go upon a Monday.  
But now, instead of the plough tail, o'er hedges they are jumping  
Instead of sowing of their corn, their delight is in fox-hunting,<sup>754</sup>

In 'The Times Have Altered', a lament about the gentrification of 'swaggering farmers' is found

Some years ago the farmer's sons were learnt to plough and sow.  
And when the summer-time came, likewise to reap and mow;  
But now they dress like Squire's sons, their pride it knows no bounds,  
They mount upon a fine blood horse to follow up the hounds.<sup>755</sup>

There was a definite view that the common farmers were forgetting their place (and the ideal of hard and honest work) and putting on airs as a result of increasing disposable wealth from increasing levels of agricultural income.

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<sup>752</sup> 'An Observing Tradesman', *Northwich Guardian*, 6 January 1866, 4.

<sup>753</sup> Egerton-Warburton, 'Farmer Dobbin: A day wi' the Cheshur Fox Dugs', *Hunting Songs*, 78.

<sup>754</sup> Roy Palmer, *The Painful Plough*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1971), 'Song 3 The new-fashioned Farmer', 14.

<sup>755</sup> William Hugh Logan, *A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs With Illustrative Notes*, (Edinburgh: William Patterson, 1869, this edition London: British Library Print Edition no date), 432-436. Logan noted that 'this Ballad may date to 1820'.



The openness of hunts to the 'lower orders' was varied in both place and time and not least in Cheshire. Evidence for hunt attitudes in Norfolk and Wiltshire is rarer. The duke of Beaufort's declarations seen above indicated that considerable numbers of young farmers were able to attend hunt meetings in the Wiltshire area, even if they were not highly regarded as horsemen. It might be argued that the Beaufort hunt was based in Badminton, in Gloucestershire, but its 'country' extended over much of northern Wiltshire. The 'openness' of the Norfolk hunts is less clear still. However, the evidence from hunts in these areas and other locations across the country clearly shows that the 'middling sort', taken here to include farmers, could associate with the gentry, even if it were far from equally.

Thus, hunts were affected by and involved in several social elements of Victorian society, including the status of women, smaller farmers and serve to indicate differences between paternalistic and 'class based' attitudes. Hunts were an area where different social worlds undoubtedly met, but not with the acceptance that was often claimed at the time.

## 6.6 Hunting, Dogs and Disease

As seen above (Section 6.3), the main concern about hunting during the Cattle Plague was the fear of hounds spreading the disease. Concerns about dogs, shown by these reactions, were not only connected with fox hunting. Demands for dogs to be restrained, or captured and destroyed, were not limited to the period of the Plague, but they did become more urgent, and the Cattle Plague formed a point of focus in a country-wide debate. In December 1865, Thomas Siddell, who farmed 360 acres in Cornwall, wrote to the local newspaper after witnessing his neighbour's sheepdogs feeding on a dead cow that had been 'thrown into a ditch'. He urged farmers to bury their cattle correctly and keep their dogs home. He went on to encourage gentlemen to 'give up the sports of the field... it is well known that a piece of carrion is more tempting to many a hound than is even the excitement of the chase.'<sup>756</sup> The editor of the newspaper in which this letter was published commented, rather tersely, that it would not be necessary for anybody to give up the sport, or even for dogs to be chained up, 'if farmers would do their *duty* of burying their dead cattle in a proper manner' and went on to complain that the local Justices were being derelict in *their* duty (all emphases in original) in not strictly enforcing the Privy Council Orders, alleging that 'unless in the presence of the strong arm of the law many farmers are not sufficiently conscientious to do so small an act of justice towards their neighbours'.<sup>757</sup> A writer to a Chelmsford paper noted 'where the carcass is there will the dog resort' and called for the Police to impound any stray dogs they found, as they were already

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<sup>756</sup> 'Dogs and the Cattle Plague: Letter to the editor', *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 14 December 1865, 5. Census details RG9/1539 district 6 at <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~kayhin/61539.html> Accessed 14 June 2020.

<sup>757</sup> 'Dogs and the Cattle Plague.. Letter to the editor', *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 14 December 1865, 5.

required to do with stray cattle.<sup>758</sup> In Scotland it was reported that, whilst they might be ambivalent regarding the local hunt, Fife farmers were unanimous that more needed to be done to 'put down' the numerous gangs of poachers who 'infested' the mining villages of the district because it was well known that poacher's dogs 'scrape up and feed upon portions of cattle which died of the rinderpest'.<sup>759</sup>

However, poacher's dogs were just one aspect of a wider issue. Stray dogs were of great concern, especially in towns, over fears of rabies if not the Cattle Plague. For example a Devon veterinary surgeon in July 1866 noted that the best way to reduce the chance of rabies 'would be to lessen the number of useless dogs that are allowed to stray about the streets of our towns'.<sup>760</sup> Numerous local authorities took advantage of an Order in Council of April 1866, made under the CPA, which allowed a local authority to order 'any stray dog... to be disposed of as it thinks fit' to control the spread of 'disease'.<sup>761</sup> Numerous towns took advantage of these provisions, with considerable numbers of dogs being destroyed; the Manchester magistrates ordered that 'homeless and unclaimed' dogs would be destroyed. In six weeks, over a thousand had been slaughtered.<sup>762</sup> In Leeds more than fifty were destroyed in two weeks, in Edinburgh nine hundred and eleven 'uncollared and unmuzzled' dogs were killed, and in Hull the single constable tasked with rounding up 'unlicensed dogs' was reported to have slain fifteen hundred. These actions were not cost-free, in July 1866 the Glamorgan Quarter sessions, one of the many Welsh counties which had no Cattle Plague infections at all, received several claims related to the destruction of dogs; one for the cost of the poison used to kill the animals at Merthyr, a bill from the Swansea Chief Inspector of Police for 'killing 100 dogs at 1s each' and a bill for a guinea (£1 1s) for 'the removal and internment of three cartloads of the dead bodies of dogs'.<sup>763</sup> In Wiltshire, the Warminster magistrates were asked to take action about the 'large number of dogs which were continually prowling about the town' as there was no other authority that could deal with them.<sup>764</sup> The Magistrates were unable to help directly, but noted the stray-dogs provision under the CPA and instructed their clerk to contact the Cattle Plague Committee, who could 'instruct the Chief Constable... to order the police to capture and destroy any dogs found straying'. This cull was not related to the Cattle Plague, but the CPA was the enabling instrument. These examples show local authorities creatively using legislation aimed at a specific problem to address others. Local residents did not

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<sup>758</sup> 'Dogs and the Disease,' *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 29 December 1865, 7.

<sup>759</sup> 'The Cattle Plague Aberdour – Fife', *The Scotsman*, 11 Jan. 1866, 2.

<sup>760</sup> 'Mad Dogs: To the Editor of the Bideford Gazette', *North Devon Gazette*, 17 July 1866, 4.

<sup>761</sup> 'Order in Council dated 11 April 1866', *Norfolk News*, 21 April 1866, 3.

<sup>762</sup> 'Destruction of Dogs in Manchester', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 28 April 1866, 3; 'Dog Slaughter in Salford', *Westmorland Gazette*, 5 May 1866, 3; 'Notice against stray dogs', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 2 June 1866, 6; 'Dogs', *Edinburgh Daily Review*, 16 July 1866, 2; 'Miscellaneous Intelligence', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 9 June 1866, 3; 'The Dog Slaughter', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* 10 May 1866, 3.

<sup>763</sup> 'Epitome of News', *Walsall Free Press*, 21 July 1866, 3.

<sup>764</sup> 'The House that Jack Built', *Wiltshire Independent*, 9 August 1866, 2.

leave the removal of strays entirely to the police, at 'a largely attended meeting of the parishioners' of Probus in Cornwall, 'all persons finding dogs straying about their premises were strongly recommended to kill them'.<sup>765</sup>

## 6.7 Hunting, the countryside and rural economies

In most hunting areas foxes were in limited supply, for example at a special Suffolk Hunt dinner in 1866 the MFH noted that there had been a shortage of foxes that year and urged the members of the hunt to encourage their fellow landowners to preserve foxes 'for if they did not preserve the foxes in the summer, they could not have them to hunt in the winter'.<sup>766</sup> The need to preserve of foxes impacted landowners' relationships with local farmers.<sup>767</sup> Carr claimed that in some hunting areas – including northern Wiltshire - 'landlords would have soon got rid of a tenant with notorious vulpicidal tendencies' and that many hunting landlords forbade farmers from destroying foxes through their leases. Shortage of foxes was not new, it was becoming a problem in some areas by the end of the eighteenth century, and 'the hunter [was] perforce a preservationist in order to have a beast to hunt'.<sup>768</sup> 'Cecil' noted with approval an area where 'the preservation of foxes is satisfactorily respected' and that, in the country of the VWHHC, 'the foxes are well cared for by the landed proprietors and the farmers' whom he referred to as a 'very influential class'.<sup>769</sup> Egerton-Warburton recorded the disdain of huntsmen for those who controlled foxes:

We hold in abhorrence all vulpicide knaves,  
With their gins, and their traps, and their velveteen slaves;  
They may feed their fat pheasants, their foxes destroy,  
And mar the prime sport they can't enjoy;  
But sportsmen as these, we good fellows condemn,  
And I vow we'll ne'er drink a quæsitum to them.<sup>770</sup>

However, the need to maintain a stock of foxes was not always bad. Carr pointed out that, to support fox numbers, both landowners and farmers alike had to act to preserve the animals, and this meant that Masters and hunting landlords had to court the farming community. The improvement of agricultural land

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<sup>765</sup> 'Cornwall', *The Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 2 January 1866, 7.

<sup>766</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 113; 'The Suffolk Hunt: Complimentary Dinner for the Master', *Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald*, 10 April 1866, 6.

<sup>767</sup> 'The Cheshire Hunt and the Cattle Plague', *Chester Chronicle*, 27 January 1886, 8 and *Northwich Guardian*, 27 January 1866, 2; 'Letter', *Norfolk News*, 27 January 1866, 7.

<sup>768</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 111.

<sup>769</sup> 'The Ledbury Country, and Mr Cam Thackwell's Hounds', 'Cecil', *The Field*, 24 November, 1866, 10; 'Cecil', *Hunting Tours*, 384.

<sup>770</sup> Egerton-Warburton, 'Quæsitum Meritis', *Hunting Songs*, 5. In the note to this song Egerton-Warburton explained that 'At the Tarporley Hunt Meeting, all toasts considered worthy of the honour are drunk in a "quæsitum", a name given to the glasses from the inscription they bear, "quæsitum meritis"', ['Note 5 Page 6', 118]. The Latin is translated as 'The search for rewards'.

reduced natural cover for foxes to live in, so much so that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries ‘coverts’, pronounced ‘covers’, often of gorse, were planted to provide fox shelter which explains the ‘gorse cover fox’ in the verse which introduced this chapter. Hunts ‘very often paid “covert rent” to landowners’ and these, sometimes-generous, payments were ‘yet another hidden subsidy to the farming community’.<sup>771</sup> Hunts also had to cultivate their non-hunting peers; one newly-arrived ‘incomer’ Wiltshire landowner was praised for encouraging foxes.

The meet at Lackham was one of the finest imaginable, and it would be want of courtesy as well as gratitude not to acknowledge the high sense of pleasure every sportsman in the county feels for the peculiar care with which Capt. Rooke preserves foxes; and this liberality is more particularly felt from the circumstance of that gentleman not himself participating in the sports of the chase.<sup>772</sup>

Rooke was new to Wiltshire and estate-ownership and was probably cultivating his hunting peers just as much as they were cultivating him; as a newcomer, he wanted to be accepted by local society. The hunt was an important part of that society, so even though he did not hunt himself, he took pains to make the hunt welcome and encouraged their prey.

The Cattle Plague caused some landowners to change their attitudes towards encouraging foxes. In March 1866, one of the largest landowners on the Flint-Shropshire border caused ‘a state of alarm and indignation’ among the local hunting community when he ordered the immediate slaughter of all foxes on his estate because they had been observed digging out infected cattle carcasses. The local paper complained that ‘the landowner thinks beef is more valuable than sport’, with the clear implication that others thought differently.<sup>773</sup> The Cattle Plague was also directly blamed for what the *Morning Post* headlined as a ‘decline in hunting’ in April 1866. Reporting that several well-known packs would stop hunting at the close of the season, the newspaper indicated that this was because of ‘differences’ between hunt members, when hunting ‘landowners and the farming interest’ had protested about hunting over land during the disease while other members were ‘opposed to ... suspension’.<sup>774</sup> Whether any hunt stopped hunting purely because of dissent among members about the Cattle Plague is unclear, but the outbreak had a marked effect on numerous hunts and their local elite and semi-elite society.

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<sup>771</sup> de Belin, *Transitional Hunting Landscapes*, 157; Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 115.

<sup>772</sup> ‘A run with Mr Hurlock’s Hounds’, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 5 December 1836, 4.

<sup>773</sup> ‘The Foxes and Cattle Plague’, *Oswestry Advertiser*, 7 March 1866, 8.

<sup>774</sup> ‘Decline in Hunting’, *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 5 April 1866, 4, credited to the *Morning Post*,

Calls for a stop to hunting give a view of the financial implications for the hunt itself and the local economy. One of the dangers, for the hunt, of unilaterally halting hunting was that people would take their horses and their hunt subscriptions elsewhere. Earl Grosvenor stated that there were 500 hunters in Cheshire owned by non-Cheshire gentlemen and that there would be a financial loss to the hunt and the county if they went elsewhere.<sup>775</sup> 'A [Cheshire] Farmer' calculated that this would be a loss of £4,000 but pointed out that this was the compensation value of only 200 cows, and he considered hounds might infect many more than that.<sup>776</sup> Cheshire was not the only county to be concerned about the economic effects; in Sussex, one Hunt member worried that 'one [hunter] I know with three horses proposes to migrate to Wiltshire', which would result in the Sussex hunt losing his contributions and the local economy the money spent to support his horses.<sup>777</sup> Potential losses were not just from the care of horses; a report initially carried by the *Sporting News* listed 'tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, saddlers, druggists, butchers, bakers, grocers, brewers, wine merchants, surgeons, veterinary surgeons &c' as tradesmen that benefited from hunting.<sup>778</sup> At a public meeting in Northamptonshire, called to consider asking the duke of Grafton to 'keep his hounds at home', Lord Southampton gave a very similar list of 'trades' that benefited from the hunt.<sup>779</sup> The memorial that was eventually sent to the duke was almost entirely financial in its concerns and firmly of the opinion that hunting should continue. Carr even suggested that the Berkley hunt was 'much to the profit of the growing spa of Cheltenham' in the 1830s, as the proximity to a renowned hunt attracted hunters to the town.<sup>780</sup> The value of the local hunts to the economy of Dorset was demonstrated by 'Idstone' (the Rev. Thomas Pearce), who said that

all these horses eat corn, and hay, and beans and want saddles, bridles, clothing, stables, attendance, whilst their spirited owners want what they can get, and get it... But for three packs of hounds, three spirited masters, and the requisite staff of men... our poor heath land and flinty hills would starve a peewit.<sup>781</sup>

At almost the other end of the country, the Fife Hunt extolled the 'enormous' amount of hay and oats the Hunt purchased in the county. However, this claim was, as in Cheshire, roundly dealt with by a local farmer who calculated how much the Fife farmers would lose if hunting stopped for the entire season, concluding

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<sup>775</sup> 'The Cheshire Hunt: To the editor of the *Guardian*', *Northwich Guardian*, 27 January 1866, 2.

<sup>776</sup> 'A Farmer', *Northwich Guardian*, 24 Feb. 1866, 4. The £20 per cow was the Government compensated farmers with if their cattle were slaughtered by order of the Inspector.

<sup>777</sup> 'The Southdown Hunt', *Brighton Gazette*, 26 October, 1865, 8.

<sup>778</sup> 'Hunting', *The Suffolk Chronicle; or, Ipswich General Advertiser and County Express*, 31 March 1866, 8, giving (*Sporting News*) as the originating publication.

<sup>779</sup> 'The Cattle Plague and Fox Hunting - Meeting at Towcester', *Northampton Mercury* 27 January 1866, 5.

<sup>780</sup> Carr, *English Fox Hunting*, 80.

<sup>781</sup> 'What does fox hunting do for a country?', 'Idstone', *The Field*, 24 November, 1866, 10. The 'heath land and flinty hills' was Dorset.

it would be the princely sum of £464, less than half the cost of losing a herd.<sup>782</sup> The financial importance of hunting was not limited to England and, in 1858, it was reported that

A short time ago the Pope prohibited fox-hunting. He has been induced to withdraw his inhibition for the sake of the shopkeepers at Rome, who profit by the residence of the English, who introduced hunting in the Campagna a few years ago,

This emphasises how important this aspect of hunting could be.<sup>783</sup>

The debates about hunting and the Cattle Plague reveal local feelings. Newspaper reports provide evidence that locals had expectations of 'fair play' from the hunts and their members, that the hunts had social obligations. Individuals, such as Samuel Downes of Liverpool, specifically associated hunting men 'selfish and thoughtless behaviour' in continuing to hunt.<sup>784</sup> Newspapers themselves also expressed concern, the *Morning Post* stated that

great indignation is felt and expressed at the selfishness of those lovers of sport who continue to course over the very lands where the Plague is stirring, the hounds passing among cattle whose owners are using every exertion to prevent an outbreak of the dreaded plague.<sup>785</sup>

It is noteworthy that the *Post* felt that it was unfair that the gentry should continue with their relaxation at the expense of the farmers. This is important because it demonstrates that the paper, at least, felt that the local magnates could not do whatever they wanted and that there was an expectation of fair play and communal spirit, indicated by the terms 'indignation' and 'selfishness'. This was not the only occasion when the *Post* was unsupportive of the hunt. In November 1866, followed by the *Independent* in Wiltshire a month later, they stated that hunts had no right to access to land without the farmer's permission and could be sued for trespass.<sup>786</sup> Given that the '*Post*' was a staunchly Conservative newspaper and was generally seen as presenting a positive 'record of the doings of the aristocratic and wealthy', this is telling, this was not a 'swipe' at the wealthy by a radical paper.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>782</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in the County of Fife', *North British Agriculturalist*, 10 January 1866, 5.

<sup>783</sup> 'A short time ago....', *John Bull*, 18 January 1858, 13.

<sup>784</sup> 'The Rinderpest and the Suspension of Fox Hunting: to the Editor of the *Norfolk News*', *Norfolk News*, 10 March 1866, 9 letter by Samuel Downes of Liverpool.

<sup>785</sup> *Morning Post* reported in 'Foxes and Rinderpest', *Northwich Guardian*, 27 January 1866, 3.

<sup>786</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague', *Morning Post*, 21 November 1866, 2.

<sup>787</sup> A.W. Ward 'The Victorian Age', ch.4, s9, 'The Growth of Journalism: The Stuarts and The Morning Post', *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes* edited by AW Ward and AR Waller, (1907–21), Vol 14, part 2 online at <https://www.bartleby.com/224/0409.html> accessed 21 June 2021.

The debate was not only carried on in the pages of the newspapers, sometimes concern turned physical, the 'blocking' of the Quorn has already been referred to. Farmers elsewhere warned of the possibility of direct action. For example twenty-nine farmers around Carlisle published notices in the local paper, asking 'Hawkers and strangers of every description' not to trespass on farm lands, stated that trespassers would be prosecuted and warned that any dogs straying onto them would be shot. How these farmers reacted to hunting across their land, if it happened, is unknown.<sup>788</sup> It is noted that these resistances were not aimed at the hunt from a class basis, but from the very pragmatic one of safeguarding the farmer's livestock from disease.

The response of the Rev. Law to the suggestion that hounds posed little risk of transmitting the Cattle Plague has been seen above.<sup>789</sup> His letter drew attention to another serious risk that was 'inseparable' from hunting, the 'wandering and indiscriminate mingling of cattle from fences broken down and gates left open'. Law noted that, although the Master of the Pytchley had warned his hunt about these problems, after the hunt had crossed the Little Oxenden estate all the field gates had been left open along a two-mile line. Law commented that 'The business which belonged to everybody, found nobody to perform it'.<sup>790</sup> The tenant farmer said that, if his men had not quickly closed the road gates, his cattle ('which were not indoors but lying in the fields') would have strayed onto the highway. It is noteworthy that, apart from the risk of infection, the farmer would also have been liable for serious fines for each beast found on the road. The *Field's* response was dismissive, it maintained that the type of gates there were 'not so common outside the Shires' (a huge area in itself) and that long experience told them that 'cattle and sheep rarely stray one field beyond their own', whilst still acknowledging the 'stringency' of the argument to cease hunting.<sup>791</sup> The *Field* was wrong about how far cattle will stray once loose. It is noted that, in issuing his warning to the Hunt, the Pytchley's Master seems to have taken the problem far more seriously than did the *Field*. These responses to continued hunting show that there were divisions and differences of opinion over landlord rights in the countryside in the mid-nineteenth century which relate to the ongoing change from a deferential, paternalistic society to a class-based one.

Newspaper reporting was foundational to the debates on hunting during the Cattle Plague. During the late summer of 1866, the *Cheshire Observer* as well as reporting the news was attempting to influence local events and reflected community expectations of behaviour by members of the local elite. Reduced hunting

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<sup>788</sup> 'Cattle Plague Notice', *Carlisle Journal*, 2 February 1866, 8.

<sup>789</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague - Letter,' *The Times* 1 Mar. 1866, 12.

<sup>790</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague - Letter,' *The Times* 1 Mar. 1866, 12.

<sup>791</sup> 'Hunting and the Cattle Plague,' *The Field*, 3 March 1866, 20.

before the end of the 1865-66 season had led to hope and expectation of a similar reduction in the following season, which the Cheshire Hunt confounded. In a scathing editorial in August 1866, the *Cheshire Observer* noted the official announcement that the following season the hunt would not only continue but increase their hunting from four days a week to five. The paper's tone was decidedly against the decision but blamed 'the Lancashire men, who rent residences in the county' and who only hunted 'to improve their social position'.<sup>792</sup> The 'Lancashire Men' gave the impression of wealth but, the newspaper accused, they did not contribute to the county subscription fund to compensate people who had lost cattle, indeed they 'buttoned their pockets and ....conveniently overlooked the fact that hunting is a privilege not a right', the men involved were not acting in the way gentlemen were expected to act. The newspaper encouraged 'those who dissent[ed]' about the Hunt's decision to continue hunting in the new season not to be 'intimidated by rank or wealth, but carry out the dictates of their consciences' supported by public opinion which, 'advocated by a free press, is overwhelming'. The *Observer* urged the farmers to rely only on themselves and urged that township meetings, with the view to 'furthering the proposed suspension' of hunting, should be held. The local newspaper was actively encouraging tenant farmers to oppose an organisation that was run and supported by their landlords and even offered to facilitate confidential communication between those involved, 'we would be pleased to receive the names of parties... for organisation and private introduction to each other'.<sup>793</sup> Influencing local discussions through leaders and selecting opinion pieces was not unusual. Still, active involvement was just that and indicated great concern from a newspaper not generally anti-hunt or anti-gentry although the newspaper had a 'Liberal' stance in 1860.<sup>794</sup> The newspaper very carefully distanced itself from criticising the county gentry directly, blaming the 'incomers'. In Cheshire the contempt of the *Cheshire Observer* for the generosity, or lack of it, exhibited by the 'Lancashire Men' showed that newspapers could influence things. The newspaper's call for resistance, however, was not successful, there were no reports of meetings against the resumption of hunting, and the 1866-7 season started as planned on the 29 October, despite the *Chronicle's* disquiet.<sup>795</sup> There was much more discussion about the continuation of hunting in Cheshire than in Norfolk or Wiltshire. This might be because of the much greater losses and concern in Cheshire but it is concluded that it was also because in Cheshire the traditional paternalistic deferential society was starting to give way to a more 'class based' society, more in evidence in the industrialised areas around and outside the county borders in the north and west, There was less concern in Norfolk because the county society was more

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<sup>792</sup> 'Rinderpest and Foxhounds', *Cheshire Observer*, 18 August 1866, 8.

<sup>793</sup> 'Rinderpest and Foxhounds', *Cheshire Observer*, 18 August 1866, 8.

<sup>794</sup> 'Cheshire Observer' online at <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/cheshire-observer> accessed 30 April 2021.

<sup>795</sup> 'eglington', *Northwich Guardian*, 2 October 1866, 2.



established having mostly completed its move to agricultural capitalism earlier. The lack of long-term infection in Wiltshire meant that the concern was less.

## 6.8 Conclusion

This chapter, for the first time in this thesis, provides evidence that local reactions were sometimes influenced by the intensity of the local outbreak, in that the possibility of hounds transmitting the disease was, in part, related to the amount of infected land they might run across. However, other factors were also present. The argument that hunts should stop because hounds posed a threat to cattle by transmitting the disease was seen to be weakened by uncertainty about how the disease was actually spread and also the large numbers of other dogs roaming the countryside, and the strays that infested both towns and the countryside. In many parts of the country, farmers were concerned enough to ask, and in some instances, demand that the local hunt stopped meeting. Differences of opinion were also seen in the responses of the hunts themselves. There were no reports of an MFH refusing to stop, most were only prepared to stop if the farming community was overwhelmingly in favour. In no case were the farmers unanimous in their views and many hunts continued their seasonal meets throughout the outbreak. The arguments put forward in support of hunting, especially those relating to the benefit of hunting to the local economy, are of value to considerations of relationships between the gentry and tenantry in hunting areas and also for local economic histories that have not generally considered this element. This chapter has shown that hunting was important to the economies of hunting counties, which strengthened the position of the hunt in local society. Differences between the areas were found to be more to do with the intensity of hunting and the underlying social makeup of the areas rather than being directly Cattle plague related.

This chapter provides evidence for the use of specific legislation, aimed at the Cattle Plague, to deal with a general concern, the huge numbers of dogs in cities and towns and fears of rabies and sheep-worrying. The complaint about dogs made to the Warminster magistrates in Wiltshire was because there was no other relevant local authority.<sup>796</sup> This speaks to debates about the government of local areas in the mid-nineteenth century, specifically the problem identified by the Warminster complainants, that 'nuisances of all kinds abound, and are growing daily more abundant, merely because it is nobody's duty to remove them', which was discussed in the Regional Topographies and Methodology chapter 3.<sup>797</sup>

This chapter contributes to debates about mid-nineteenth century rural communities and their relationships, particularly those between landowners and their tenants, and 'sporting' gentlemen and their

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<sup>796</sup> 'The Plague of Dogs', *The County Court Chronicle*, 1 March 1866, 55.

<sup>797</sup> 'The Plague of Dogs', *The County Court Chronicle*, 1 March 1866, 55.

communities as highlighted by reactions to continued hunting during the epizootic. The discussion on the 'openness' of hunts to non-gentlemen and women provides evidence that the hunt was clearly seen as a sport of the 'gentlemen' and contributes to class and diversity discussions and indicates that hunting was a ritualistic, element of the older paternalist gentry system that was still evident in Cheshire and elsewhere but was less evident in Norfolk. It also provides additional evidence to deepen debates on gender and women's positions and power in Victorian society, particularly those of the gentry and the middle classes. The desire of hunts to be seen as open to all shows that hunt members were affected by public or peer-group pressures to conform to expectations of behaviour and provides an opportunity for further work in this area.

These discussions on status and position were enhanced by the contributions from non-factual sources such as ballads, poems and fiction. The value of using such sources was advocated and demonstrated by, amongst others, Alun Howkins and their use here supports his conclusion that they are of value in historical research.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Alun Howkins, 'The Voice of the People: The Social Meaning and Context of Country Song', *Oral History*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 50-75

## 7 Chapter 7 Conclusion

The Literature review of previous work showed that, even though the reality of regional variation has been demonstrated by workers as diverse as Joan Thirsk, Alun Howkins, Alan Scott and both EP and FML Thompson, much previous work on rural Britain was national studies drawing broad conclusions that were limited in what they revealed. This thesis seeks to explore previously hidden information and demonstrates the potential of this flexible methodology that sees local events as having value far beyond the report-generating events themselves. The thesis investigates aspects of rural nineteenth-century British society through the prism of a specific national event, the Cattle Plague. It allows the national picture to be nuanced in a way not often realised.

This thesis is not an epidemiological study of the 1865-67 outbreak, but an understanding of the progress of the disease is necessary to understand the reactions to it that this study investigates through reports in local newspapers. A quantitative evaluation demonstrated that the progress of the disease varied considerably nationwide and in the selected study areas. The numbers of Cattle Plague related newspaper reports were not, as intuition might suggest, closely linked to either national or local cattle losses or the number of outbreaks. It is concluded that variations in responses to the outbreak were the result of factors other than national or local losses of cattle.

The three major themes of this thesis, local and national control, household-producer and large-scale market-orientated agricultural production and paternalism and class, are all elements of the much-discussed development of a centralised class-based capitalistic system in England. It is generally taken that the 'agricultural revolution' was the 'agricultural-industrial' revolution, the British Industrial revolution would not have followed the course it did if agricultural changes had not been able to support the geographical concentration of the workforce that resulted from the industrialisation of production. It has been further suggested that for this to be possible a more centralised market-based economy was required. Further, following the consolidation of a 'middle class' hegemony during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the consequent concentration of workers in factories and certain types of farming systems this led to their seeking support laterally from each other rather than upwards from their 'betters', and the further development of a 'working class' consciousness with the 'collective self-consciousness' that EP Thompson considered to be the 'great spiritual gain of the industrial revolution' that had a national, rather than purely local, world view.<sup>799</sup> However, the investigations detailed here demonstrate that previous work, that claimed this process was complete by the middle of the nineteenth

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<sup>799</sup> EP Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963, this edition London: Penguin Classics, 2013), 913.

century, was mistaken and that there were considerable areas where this was not the case. It is, however, acknowledged that by the time if the Cattle Plague British agriculture was operating as a more or less market orientated system

The research chapters show that England was not a fully centralised state in the middle of the nineteenth century and provides new evidence to support claims of extensive local control. Contrary to previous work, the study shows that the agricultural revolution was not complete at the time of the Cattle Plague, with considerable numbers of small family 'household producer' farms in all the study areas, and that this varied geographically with many in Cheshire and less in Norfolk. The thesis also demonstrates that there were considerable variations in the social organisation in the country, with a detectable class structure in East Anglia and the more industrial edges of Cheshire and a paternalistic system still existing in clayland Wiltshire and most of Cheshire. This study shows that there were examples of both patriarchal and class elements in all areas and reveals considerable variations that have previously been missed or under-appreciated. A comparative 'bottom-up' methodology, working at county and local-history scales, has produced new, more nuanced and informative results than previous national or even regional studies.

## 7.1 Centralisation

This thesis has provided evidence that contradicts the idea that government in England was increasingly centralised by the middle of the nineteenth century. The Literature review indicated that some historians accept that the Factories, New Poor Law and Prisons Acts of the 1830s had centralised control of specific areas of local organisation, although it also indicated a reduction in centralisation between 1840 and 1870.<sup>800</sup> These Acts all included government-appointed Inspectors who had extensive delegated powers to ensure that the provisions of the Acts were enforced. However, these inspectors did not report to the local authorities or a government department but to their respective Boards. By mid-century, 'it became normal to appoint... [Inspectors] simultaneously with the first incursion into a new field' which was exactly what was done during the Cattle Plague.<sup>801</sup> This thesis has shown, in the Control chapter, that their powers of entry and compulsory slaughter were unpopular and seen as 'unacceptable interference' in local and individual business affairs (see Section 3.1.3). That the government did not impose national controls to combat the epizootic and, where it did mandate slaughter (for example) delegated the powers and responsibility to local authorities through their Quarter Sessions, does not indicate one bent on increasing centralisation. This was a justifiable opportunity to develop centralised control, and indeed there is ample

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<sup>800</sup> Henry Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised', *The Historical Journal*, 3, no. 1 (1960): 32-33.

<sup>801</sup> Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government', 33.

evidence of demands for the government to do exactly that, and yet they refused to do so. For example one of the control measures was to allow the closure of markets, but this was not mandatory and the government allowed individual local authorities (which operated at Borough and Petty Sessional level) to decide whether to close their markets. There were many calls for this to be made mandatory to give a unified national response but the government refused to do this. It has been suggested that the government was restrained by the landowners in parliament but in this case it was the landowning interests who actively supported the Cattle Plague Act and nationwide market closure, even though the Act's provisions overruled the much-prized 'local solutions for local problems'. The failure of the Cheshire Sessions, and some Hundreds in Norfolk, to fully implement centrally imposed provisions of the Act were the most obvious indications of resistance at local level. This was also clearly demonstrated by Tollemache's comments in Cheshire about the Act and the likely less-than-complete implementation in the county, and the complicity of the Cheshire Quarter Sessions when one of the local Benches instructed their Inspectors not to slaughter infected cattle immediately, as was required by the Act. 'Resistance' is further evidenced by numerous breaches of the regulations by local authorities, elite individuals and groups. It is concluded that resistance of the control measures by the 'common' folk, which here includes small and part-time farmers, demonstrated by these breaches and subsequent court cases, were the result of individuals 'working the system to their minimum disadvantage', as James C Scott phrased it. This is a striking example of Scott's idea of 'hidden resistance' by those with little power to ruling edicts that 'stop well short of outright collective defiance and [are] instead actions by individuals' and demonstrates that not only 'peasants' resist in this way.<sup>802</sup> The cases of the Birkenhead butchers and the Staffordshire farmers are the closest to 'outright collective defiance' identified. The evidence presented in this thesis supports the idea that there was very widespread resistance to the control measures but that this remained covert in most cases.

These conclusions are only possible because of the local and comparative nature of this study. With very few exceptions the previous studies cited in the Literature review were based on national scale investigations and this study makes it clear that the balance between local and national governance was much more varied and nuanced than previous studies allowed.

## **7.2 Agricultural revolution**

The Literature review revealed that there has been considerable debate regarding the Agricultural revolution, with various authorities placing it before 1700 (Richard Thomas), between 1700 and 1800 (Eric Hobsbawm, Eric Kerridge, Naomi Richards, Leigh Shaw-Taylor), between 1750 and 1840 (Bruce Campbell,

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<sup>802</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvi, xv.

John Chambers, John Edwards, Gordon Mingay, Mark Overton) and, in 2022, the middle of the twentieth century (Paul Brassley *et al*) but was generally understood to have begun after the sixteenth century and been complete sometime between 1750 and 1850. Arnold Toynbee was of the opinion that ‘the period 1760-1843 witnessed “an agrarian revolution [that] played as large part in the great industrial change of the eighteenth century as does the revolution in manufacturing industries”’.<sup>803</sup> A few authors have maintained there were locational variations in the timing, including Leigh Shaw-Taylor who argued the south and east of the country completed their change before 1700 and the north-east ‘later’ but before 1800, when the tri-partite landlord-tenant farmer-wage labourer system was in place. Richard Allen saw two revolutions, a farmer’s one before 1700 and a landlord’s revolution between 1700 and 1800. F.M.L. Thompson went one better, identifying three periods of enhanced agricultural change (before 1815, 1815-1880 and after 1914). With the exception of Thompson, Brassley *et al* and Mick Reed (who argued that the assumed ubiquity of the tri-partite system was incorrect), they all considered that the agricultural revolution was complete by the middle of the nineteenth century. This thesis demonstrates, again, that the reality was more nuanced than the historiography suggests, showing that even as late as the mid-1860s areas of the country showed varying levels of ‘completeness’ of the revolution. This thesis concludes, however, that the idea of an ‘agricultural revolution or revolutions’; is not helpful and sees periods of increased ‘agricultural change’. The time of the cattle Plague, it is agreed, was in a period of change when agricultural production was in a state of change from ‘self sufficient farms’ as identified by Thompson and production systems closer to those of the factory and more market oriented but the ‘completeness’ of this change varied geographically. The defining characteristics of the agricultural revolution include the use of new crops, machinery, and farming techniques but are mostly the development of large farms and a capitalist system where production by waged labour was for sale at market to maximise profits. As seen above, one of the control methods enacted by the government to control the outbreak was the discretionary closure of markets. Evidence presented in the Control chapter showed that in Norfolk there was great debate and concern over this, whereas in Cheshire and Norfolk there was almost none. This indicates that in Norfolk enterprises were operating a different ‘business model’, having many of the characteristics of capitalistic production – farms there being orientated to produce more, if not maximised, profits through the use of capital to employ a workforce rather than utilising family members, as predominantly seen in Cheshire. It was shown that Norfolk was operating at a scale much larger than the purely ‘local’, at a county scale that was closer to the models seen in the twentieth, than the early nineteenth, century. This was evidenced in the Control and the Compensation chapters, in both of which the NCPA was shown to have operated across the entire county as the local authority for ‘command and control’ of the outbreak, countermeasures and compensation. In contrast, in Wiltshire and in Cheshire control and compensation efforts were enacted at

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<sup>803</sup> Eric Kerridge, ‘The Agricultural Revolution Reconsidered’, *Agricultural History*, 43, no. 4 (October 1969): 463.

very local, sometimes even single estate, scales. With the re-opening of the 'agricultural revolution' debate by Paul Brassley and his colleagues in 2022, it is clear that the idea is still current.<sup>804</sup> However this thesis considers that agricultural change may be better seen as a process that has been happening, with varying intensity, from at least the thirteenth century and that this will continue into the future. The term 'period of increased agricultural change' may be more appropriate.

All of the indicators for 'agrarian capitalism' employed by Shaw-Taylor and essential elements of the agricultural revolution, indicated that Wiltshire was at least, and for some measures even more, market orientated in its farming by 1860 than Norfolk. This may have been true on the Chalk, with its large farms and employer dominance, in the dairying areas this is not clearly shown. This thesis demonstrates that county average figures can, and do, hide important variations that are only visible at smaller scales.<sup>805</sup> One of the characteristics of the agricultural revolution detailed above was an inevitable move towards large capitalistic farms. This thesis agrees with Mick Reed, who did not accept the depiction of agriculture as being organised either along the lines of market orientated landlords-tenants-labourers or yeoman farmers using family and employed labour. He demonstrated that throughout the nineteenth century there was a very large group of what he termed 'household producers', which can be equated to the idea of 'family farms', where production was mainly by family members and who were aiming to produce enough to be comfortable by occasionally using the markets but who were 'trading' mostly within what he termed 'local networks of obligation', a system not dominated by markets or cash but value-equivalent exchange of goods and services. It is emphasised that there were elements of 'market orientated' and 'household producer' farming in all the study areas, as Roberts & Wrathmell noted 'there is no doubt that each of the three [areas] contains examples of each of the three fundamental farming types; what differs is the overall *balance* between each [area]'.<sup>806</sup> They were discussing 'provinces' rather than individual counties, but it was true at county and regional or province levels. This supports the claims made by Bryer, that East Anglia developed capitalist agriculture earlier than elsewhere and by Alun Howkins, that in 1851 'A 100-acre farm in East Norfolk, on some of the best land in England, would certainly be a capitalistic unit employing several full and part-time workers and producing enough profit for a farmer to live well'.<sup>807</sup> Frederick Olmstead's

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<sup>804</sup> Paul Brassley, 'The Real Agricultural Revolution', *Rural History Today*, 42, (February 2022): 3; Paul Brassley, David Harvey, Matt Lobley, and Michael Winter, *The Real Agricultural Revolution: The Transformation of British Farming 1939-1985*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2021).

<sup>805</sup> Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise in agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England', *Economic History Review*, 65, no. II (2012): 26-60.

<sup>806</sup> Brian K Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell, *Region and Place: A study of English rural settlement*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2002), 59; Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise in agrarian capitalism', *Economic History Review*, 65, no. 2 (2012): 37 Fig. 3.

<sup>807</sup> Rob A Bryer, 'The genesis of the capitalist farmer: towards a Marxist accounting history of the origins of the English agricultural revolution', *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, 17, (2006): 476-7; Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925*, (London: HarperCollinsAcademic, 1991), 38.

observations of Cheshire (Regional Topographies chapter, Section 3.1.4), however showed that many farms were less than a hundred acres and worked with family labour, only employing a 'couple of Irish reapers in the harvest' and Shaw-Taylor's investigation of waged employment found that more than a quarter of Cheshire farms employed no male staff in the mid-nineteenth century, compared with only four percent in Norfolk and three in Wiltshire.<sup>808</sup> This does not necessarily mean that Wiltshire's agriculture was more market orientated than Norfolk; other evidence, including contemporary accounts and reports, show that the reasons for the similar numbers of employed males were different in the two counties and at sub-county levels within them, the Clay in Wiltshire was more similar to Cheshire than Norfolk. This thesis concludes that at least two aspects of the 'Agricultural Revolution' – that agriculture became very market orientated, with production focused on profits and that farms became larger - were not nationally complete by the time of the outbreak. The very local differences in the study areas shows that the picture was again more varied and requires more nuanced explanations than have heretofore been provided.

### 7.3 Paternalism or Class

The view of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century revealed in the Literature review was of a paternalistic society where the aristocracy and larger landowners accepted the benefits of their positions but also responsibility for the well-being of their tenants and the poor. These, in turn, had responsibilities of work and deferment to their masters.<sup>809</sup> In passing, this thesis notes EP Thompson's complaint, identified in the Literature review, that there was clear evidence that the poor did not 'love' their masters but understood there was little they could do and, therefore, did not exhibit deference.<sup>810</sup> It is maintained that deference does not require the 'deferee' to love or even like their masters but merely exhibit 'Courteous regard... to a superior, or to one to whom respect is due', as the OED defines deference. Moreover, evidence from the actions of farmers and locals during the Cattle Plague, such as the testimonial from his tenants to Baron Crewe in Cheshire (also noted by Stephen Matthews) indicate a thankful, if not deferential, tenantry.<sup>811</sup> Thompson claimed that 'the class consciousness of the working man had little deference in it'.<sup>812</sup> The deference detected in the responses in Cheshire indicate that a 'working class consciousness' was not found there.

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<sup>808</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*, (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, 1857), 2 vols, Vol. 1, 113.

<sup>809</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900*, (London, Fontana Press, 1989).

<sup>810</sup> E.P. Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity', in Douglas Hay *et al*, *Albion's Fatal Tree*, (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 307.

<sup>811</sup> Stephen Matthews, ' "Our Suffering County": Cheshire and the Cattle Plague of 1866. Correspondence received by Rowland Egerton Warburton of Arley Hall', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 96, (2000): 101.

<sup>812</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Making*, 115.



The relationships between the landed gentry and their tenants were shown to vary, again most notably between Norfolk and Cheshire, with Cheshire and northern Wiltshire showing more evidence of 'traditional' paternalistic relationships than was generally the case in Norfolk or on the Chalk in Wiltshire. However the comments at the Chippenham Cattle Plague meeting that was warned 'we cannot rely on the landowners' indicted that even in the Clay Wiltshire was less certain of the paternalism of the gentry. The Compensation and Hunting chapters evidenced numerous examples from Cheshire of landlords supporting their tenants, from Tollemache making materials, believed to be prophylactic for the disease, available to his tenants to landlords reducing or returning rent to those suffering losses, which was also seen in Wiltshire but not so frequently in Norfolk. Some Cheshire landlords paid their tenants subscriptions to local assurance societies or covered some or all of their 'calls' when associations had to seek additional funds. Examples of this was also seen in the dairy areas of Wiltshire but not in Norfolk. That this support was expected, by both the tenants and the landowners, was made clear in the report of a Flintshire proprietor who bluntly stated that he and his fellow landlords would act 'in a fair and honourable way, to pay whatever they were called upon as gentlemen to pay'.<sup>813</sup> Clear expectations of support were evident in the speech by Cheshire farmer Rigby, when he stated that Cheshire landlords were 'on the whole, highly regarded by their tenants' but then cautioned his fellow farmers against expecting too much from them.<sup>814</sup> The ones who weren't were most likely those exemplified by the new landed men discussed in the Compensation and Hunting chapters who, according to FML Thompson. 'slice[d] out the agreeable and pleasurable elements [of the old aristocratic lifestyle] and ignore the responsibilities for tenants and labourers'.<sup>815</sup>

There were similar beliefs in expected landlord behaviour Norfolk at the start of the outbreak, when the landlords were expected to support the subscription funds. However it is relevant that, at the same time, expectations of support by the middle class were also expressed, this was not seen in Cheshire or Wiltshire and is taken to indicate that Norfolk was more consciously a class-based society in contrast to the other study areas. This supports the claim for Norfolk being a county-based area with a less local world-view.

However, examples of paternalistic and non-paternalistic behaviours were evidenced in all three study areas. Both the Compensation and Hunting chapters showed these differences. The Hunting chapter evidenced differences at sub-county level and between counties; antagonism to the continuation of hunting during the outbreak was demonstrated countrywide, but there was little evidence for it in either

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<sup>813</sup> 'The Cattle Plague in Flintshire – Proposed scheme of Insurance', *Chester Courant*, 31 January 1866, 7.

<sup>814</sup> 'Nantwich Mutual Cattle Insurance Company', *Chester Chronicle*, 4 November 1865, 6.

<sup>815</sup> FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 164.

Norfolk or Wiltshire. In contrast, there were numerous reports of local areas in Cheshire both opposing and supporting the continuation of hunting. This was partly because, in Cheshire, the idea of 'expected behaviour' by the patriarchs of the county was still evident. In contrast, in Norfolk, there were limited indications that tenants had expectations of their landlords. In Wiltshire low numbers of attacks meant that opportunities for landlords to show support, were limited but the evidence indicate a more varied response than in either Norfolk or Cheshire. Some Clay-area farmers were supported by individual landlords when they suffered losses, and at least one other landlord indicated support would be forthcoming, but there was evidence of disbelief that the landlords would act, 'It was no use for [farmers] to wait for the support for the gentry'.<sup>816</sup> This was said *after* most of the Wiltshire attacks had occurred and indicates that landlord support had not been evident up to December 1865.

The analysis of the subscription funds in Norfolk and Cheshire in the Compensation chapter (Chapter 5) revealed differences in attitudes towards social support. The voluntary subscriptions donated in each area were necessarily different, but the totals subscribed were much more significant in Cheshire than Norfolk and roughly followed the intensity of infection. The patterns of amounts donated were, however, different between the two counties. It is suggested that these differences were the result of differences in how the gentry and middling sort supported their dependants, that the traditional paternalistic landowners were prepared to give support when needed, even when a great amount was required, and to not be involved when support was not needed whereas the middling sort desired to convert their responsibilities into more manageable and consistent payments. Cheshire had more of the former and Norfolk more of the latter landowners hence the differences in the contribution patterns. These characteristics can be identified in the compensation payments; the Norfolk fund was paid out throughout the epizootic, requiring smaller amounts consistently throughout, whereas in Cheshire payments were made from a large fund (eventually) that was paid out in a few large total amounts. Differences in the availability of donated funds to farmers and the speed with which they were distributed, were also affected by the fact that the Norfolk policy and implementation were focused through a unified, if not always united, governing organisation, the NCPA. This more unified approach allowed Norfolk to achieve a more effective, and even collection and distribution of the funds. It is concluded that because the Norfolk fund was also supported by a county-wide levy on all members of the NCPA, Norfolk landlords considered they were already contributing to farmer support and were less forthcoming with additional post-loss support. The expectation that specifically the 'middle classes' would support the subscription fund in Norfolk also suggest that Norfolk considered itself a class-based society, whereas evidence for this was rare or totally lacking in Cheshire and

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<sup>816</sup> 'Chippenham - The Cattle Plague', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 28 December 1865, 3.

Wiltshire, although the identification of the 'Liverpool men' in Cheshire suggests it in the surrounding manufacturing areas.

The variations in contributions to the funds, and support mechanisms generally, were investigated at a local level not previously attempted in Norfolk and Wiltshire, and also developed the studies by Stephen Matthews detailed in the Literature review (Section 2.1), of support mechanisms in Cheshire, revealing details not previously considered.<sup>817</sup> Whilst the losses involved in Wiltshire were much smaller than in the other areas, there was still considerable local activity to support local cattle keepers, even without the formation of a subscription fund. The differences in support were far more significant than the differences in response levels to the Cattle Plague. This agrees with the conclusion (Section 3.1.1 and above) that responses to the outbreak, as seen in newspaper reports, were not significantly linked to levels of infection or loss but were associated with the social and business models of the counties.

#### **7.4 Local variation**

This study has demonstrated that a national approach can fail to discover or identify important local variations. It has shown that there were significant and very real differences between the study areas that give a different understanding of society in the mid nineteenth-century than previous work. However significant sub-county scale variations were also evident, no area was as homogenous as the claims above make it appear, and there are several indications of sub-county variations in organisation and community. A geographical element can be suggested in Cheshire with the north and west of the county being less traditional than the central, south and eastern areas but it was more connected with attitudes than location. The debate between farmers north and south of the River Bollin in Knutsford union showed variation perceived at a local 'catchment area' scale (see Section 5.3.1).<sup>818</sup>

In Norfolk, a clear 'area of discontent' was seen in the mostly-Fenland west of the county. Eight examples of perceived or actual division and some resistance, by both individuals and local 'authorities', were identified from this limited area, these being the resistance of the Wisbech farmer Mr Wooll to completing the centrally organised livestock census, an authority figure (Magistrate) found breaking the rules supposed to apply to all, resistance to using the Poor Law assessment for setting the NCPA rate, the concern that the NCPA was not interested in West Norfolk at all, concern that the Compensation committee would be biased against claims from West Norfolk because it had no members from the area, Aylmer's unauthorised trials,

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<sup>817</sup> Stephen, Matthews, 'Underwriting Disaster: Risk and the Management of Agricultural Crisis in Mid-nineteenth Century Cheshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 58, no. 2 (2010): 217-235.

<sup>818</sup> 'Cattle Plague Meeting at Knutsford', *Northwich Guardian*, 23 September 1865, 4.

and two local committees of the NCPA resisting applying the restrictions imposed by the county and national authorities with one requiring intervention by central authority. These incidents indicate an area in Norfolk that was more resistant to following central (both national and county) regulations and which saw itself as different from, and poorly regarded by, the rest of the county, particularly the powerful farmers and landlords of the eastern half. In comparison, Wiltshire was not affected by the Cattle Plague to any great extent and sub-county divisions were not seen, although the coverage available against the Cattle Plague by local associations (Figure 5-3) suggests the classic 'chalk-cheese' divisions of the county.

These examples show that in Norfolk the discussions were based at county scales, whereas in Cheshire the only example of confrontation between areas was at a level below that of the local Poor Law Union. Again Norfolk perceptions were county wide and Cheshire was operating at sub-county scale, was much more localised in its organisation. They also show that even investigations at a county level can miss significant elements and that, where possible, localised investigations are more likely to detect important and previously unseen local variation.

This thesis indicates that the degree of market orientation affected local social systems, with areas that were very market orientated more likely to exhibit 'class-based' rather than 'paternalistic' attitudes. Where agriculture was almost entirely market orientated, indicated by negative reactions to the closure of markets, landlords and farmers were less likely to support their tenants and workforce directly. Additionally although not considering issues in Europe, this study supports John Fisher's assertion that Britain was 'more commercial in orientation, less centralized and bureaucratic and less prone to interfere in the economy and society'.<sup>819</sup> Filip van Roosbroek saw this as the reason why the statutory measures put in place in the eighteenth century to control the Cattle plague were 'dismantled' and also why the government was reluctant to deploy the same, proven, strategy, in the nineteenth; 'government policies was influenced by the political culture of the country, as van Roosbroek concluded and, this thesis maintains, the political culture of the country was both influenced by and in turn influenced which agricultural production models landlords and farmers employed.'<sup>820</sup>

Thus the research demonstrates that the suggestion that England was a fully centrally organised, class-based society in which the agricultural revolution was complete by the 1860s is unsupported at county and

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<sup>819</sup> John Fisher, 'To kill or not to kill: the eradication of contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia in western Europe', *Medical History* vol 47, No. 3 (2003): 316.

<sup>820</sup> Filip van Roosbroeck, *To cure is to kill?*, 235.

local levels, with all of these elements incomplete and with extensive areas where central government did not hold sway.

### **7.5 Future research opportunities**

A number of issues in this thesis provide the opportunity to extend this research. One is the events around John Aylmer's trials of chloroform in Norfolk, which were noticed in the Control chapter. As indicated, there is considerable material including correspondence in the Norfolk archives relating to this trial and what happened when the NCPA refused compensation for animals that died during the trial, which had eventually been authorised by the Privy Council. From a very cursory examination of some of this material several years ago it would appear that there were 'personality' issues as well as procedural ones. It is anticipated that an investigation of the affair would throw light on local politics within the agricultural community in Norfolk at the time. This would further understanding of the social and agricultural fabric of the county in the mid nineteenth-century as well as events relating to trial investigations of animal diseases at the time. It would link to, but is entirely different from, the Homeopathy trials carried out in the county at the same time.

Stephen Matthews' paper on support for farmers in Cheshire during the Cattle Plague raised the question of how many associations for this purpose there were. A 'guestimate' by Edwin Kopf was included in the Compensation chapter but, as indicated there, even a cursory examination of BNA search results indicate there were vastly more. It would be valuable to determine how many there were, where they were located and whether this related to cattle density. There is an assumption that most did not survive long, but this is not known for certain. Such investigations would increase our knowledge of mid-nineteenth support structures for farmers at national and individual county and sub-county levels enormously.

As stated in the conclusion to the Compensation chapter, the brief analysis of the contribution patterns in Cheshire and Norfolk is unique. Although indicating differences in wealth and patterns of giving between the two counties, further work to calibrate the newspaper reports with fiscal records would validate the conclusions and potentially develop qualitative understanding of philanthropic giving in two very different counties the mid-nineteenth century.

The social position of farmers in the mid-nineteenth century has been discussed but there seems to be no consensus on what it was. It appears likely that there is a split between large farmers, 'yeomen or household' farmers and part-time farmers who engaged in additional occupations. Initial research showed considerable negative comments about farmers 'getting above their stations' in the early nineteenth

century but it is less clear whether this continued to the time of the Cattle Plague. Some evidence, including attitudes expressed in two serialised novels about the Cattle Plague, suggest this may have been so. There was certainly a similar feeling about butchers immediately before and during the outbreak, and it would be useful to investigate public perceptions of both. The contemporary view, for example by George Bright, MP that farmers were a monied and comfortably-off class, certainly impacted attempts to set up national compensation.

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## 9 Appendix: Additional information

### 9.1 Markets and Carriers

Table 9-1 Carrier trips to/from market towns by day of week  
(market days shaded), ranked by total trips a=Cheshire, b=Norfolk c=Wiltshire. MD=market day <sup>821</sup>

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	Total trips	MD Trips	% trips on MD
Chester	5	6	14	5	6	27		63	41	65.1
Birkenhead	2	2	2	2	2	2		12	4	33.3
Norwich	5		1		5	1		12	5	41.7
Knutsford	2		3		2	1		8	1	12.5
Tarporley			4			4		8		0.0
Middlewich	1		1		1			3	1	33.3
Totals	15	8	25	7	16	35	0	106	52	49.1

a

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	Total trips	MD Trips	% trips on MD
Norwich	27	24	153	12	20	183	4	423	366	86.5
King's Lynn		62	5	25	12	54		158	116	73.4
Yarmouth	10	6	26	5	5	34	5	91	60	65.9
Redenhall	2	3	4	2	2	4	2	19	4	21.1
Aylesham	1	5	1		5	1		13	4	30.8
Watton	2	1	1	3	2	2	1	12	1	8.3
Fakenham	3		1	6		1		11	6	54.5
Loddon		1	3		1	3		8	1	12.5
Buckenham (New)		4	1		1	1		7	1	14.3
Holt				1	5	1		7	5	71.4
Attleborough		1	1			2		4		0.0
Reepham	1		1			2		4	1	25.0
Thetford		1		2		1		4	1	25.0
Briston			1			1		2		0.0
Dereham			1			1		2		0.0
Diss			1			1		2		0.0
Docking				1		1		2	1	50.0
Plumstead			1		1			2		0.0
Totals	46	109	200	57	54	293	12	771	567	73.5

b

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	Total trips	MD Trips	% trips on MD
Salisbury	5	114	6	34	16	77		252	191	75.8
Devizes	6	7		41	5	9		68	41	60.3
Swindon	21	2	6	8	9	9		55	21	38.2
Warminster	2	3	4	7	6	12		34	12	35.3
Highworth	4	3	8	2	3	2		22	8	36.4
Trowbridge	3	6	3	3	3	3		21	12	57.1
Chippenham	3	2	3	2	7	3		20	7	35.0
BoA	2	2	2	2	2	2		12	2	16.7
Calne		1		3		1		5	3	60.0
Totals	46	140	32	102	51	118	0	489	297	60.7

c

<sup>821</sup> Sources:

Cheshire: William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cheshire*. (London: Francis White and Co, 1860).

Norfolk: William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cheshire*. (London: Francis White and Co, 1860)

Wiltshire: Kelly, *Directory of Hampshire, Wiltshire Somerset and Dorset*. (London: Kelly's Directories, 1867)

## 9.2 Newspaper details

Table 9-2 Study area newspaper details

Cheshire				
Names		Location	Dates	Notes
Full	Working			
<i>Cheshire Observer and Chester, Birkenhead and North Wales Times,</i>	<i>Cheshire Observer</i>	Chester	1854-	First published on Saturday 13 May 1854, under the full title <i>Cheshire Observer and General Advertiser for Cheshire and North Wales</i> , the editorial proclaimed: "The people require information and sympathy, not opprobrium and neglect... It shall be our pleasure... to assist in the development of their self-respect and independence... for it is now universally admitted that properly conducted cheap newspapers are important elements in advancing civilisation, in building up and perpetuating free institutions, and in securing every man his natural position, with its rights and privileges. The paper was considered to have a Liberal outlook in 1860, and an Independent one in 1882, with a circulation of 5,000.
<i>Chester Chronicle and Cheshire and North Wales General Advertiser</i>	<i>Chester Chronicle</i>	Chester	1775-	There was always significant disagreement between the Chronicle and the Courant. Gerard Barnes stated that the Chronicle was specifically founded "to curb and correct the insolence and partiality of the Courant". For an account of the serious rivalry between the two see Barnes. The Courant was a partisan of the Chester Corporation, hardly surprising for a newspaper founded by a Freeman of the Borough. whilst the Chronicle repeatedly attempted to organise resistance to the corporation and supported alternative members at election times. <sup>822</sup>
<i>Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales.</i>	<i>Chester Courant</i>	Chester	1747-1900	
<i>The Congleton &amp; Macclesfield Mercury,</i>	<i>Congleton &amp; Macclesfield Mercury</i>	Congleton	1858-	Probably not an establishment paper, it saw US President Johnson's 'growing unpopularity with the extreme Republicans is the best measure of his merit' <sup>823</sup>

<sup>822</sup> Gerrard Barnes, 'Chester's Feuding Newspapers and the Unreformed City Corporation', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 99, (2003): 111-131.

<sup>823</sup> 'America', *Congleton and Macclesfield Mercury*, 30 December 1865, 8.

<i>and Cheshire General Advertiser</i>				
<i>The North Cheshire Herald, and Hyde, Glossop and Dukinfield Weekly News.</i>	<i>North Cheshire Herald</i>	Hyde	1860-1882	This paper was seen as supporting the Whigs, or Tories. It saw Earl Russell as 'member of an illustrious house and long-tried faithful friend of his country but supported Parliamentary reform. It supported the Victorian ideal of Self-help 'our many kind readers will see to what a large extent it depends upon themselves whether success or failure be the moral of their lives'. <sup>824</sup>
<i>Northwich Guardian and Winsford, Middlewich and Weaverham Advertiser</i>	<i>Northwich Guardian</i>	Northwich	1861-	'While party politics and religious differences have had no place in our editorial columns, every movement in either direction has been fairly and fully chronicled as our mass of local and district news would permit'. <sup>825</sup>

Norfolk				
Names		Location	Dates	Notes
Full	Working			
<i>The Lynn Advertiser, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire Herald.</i>	<i>Lynn Chronicle</i>	King's Lynn	1842-	The paper's political stance at the time of the Cattle Plague is unclear but can be inferred to have been radical as, in 1868, the paper changed its name because 'It has long been a ground of dissatisfaction that the Conservative interest in the important town of Wisbech and the surrounding district is not fairly represented in the local press; and complaints to that effect have recently been strongly re-iterated. At the request of several influential members of the Constitutional party the proprietors of the Lynn Advertiser, have determined to endeavour to supply the want, and to devote a larger portion of their paper than heretofore to the news of the town'. <sup>826</sup>

<sup>824</sup> 'A Retrospect of the year 1865', *The North Cheshire Herald*, 30 December 1865, 2.

<sup>825</sup> 'To our Readers', *Northwich Guardian*, 30 December 1865, 4.

<sup>826</sup> 'Wisbech', *The Lynn Advertiser, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire Herald*, 17 October 1868, 5.

<i>The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette</i>	<i>Norfolk Chronicle</i>	Norwich	1776-	This was a Tory newspaper. 'We cannot.. forget that the year 1865... has brought distress upon a large and important section of the community amongst whom we reckon our most numerous supporters, and in whose welfare and prosperity we naturally have a lively interest... the farmers of Norfolk'. <sup>827</sup>
<i>Norwich Mercury</i>	<i>Norwich Mercury</i>	Norwich	1823-1905	The paper did not show any particular allegiance to any particular party. It was a supporter of 'progress'. 'As it has ever been , so it will continue to be, our endeavour to maintain and uphold those principles and measures which, in our humble judgement, are best for the welfare and prosperity of all classes and fort he maintenance of that civil and religious liberty which is the foundation of general happiness'. <sup>828</sup>
<i>Norfolk News</i>	<i>Norfolk News</i>	Norwich	1845-	Possibly one of the more radical newspapers in the study areas - 'Year by year we have broadened the basis of this journal...While ours becomes less and less a party paper, it becomes more and more popular, because, we believe, more patriotic.. Happily for all classes the distinction between parties are growing fainter and fainter and are now scarcely perceptible... we care nothing for an party, except as that party offers and accomplishes some good thing for the people... We recognise no 'Fathers', no 'Church' as an authority... So we say to Divines, whether of Church or Chapel – when they ask us to believe in this or that, Point us at the section of [the Bible]' <sup>829</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> '1865', *Norfolk Chronicle* 30 December 1865, 5.

<sup>828</sup> '1865'. *Norwich Mercury* 30 December 1865. 4.

<sup>829</sup> 'New Year's address', *Norfolk News* 7 January 1865, 4.

Wiltshire				
Names		Location	Dates	Notes
Full	Working			
<i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i>	<i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i>	Devizes	1822-	The <i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i> began life as <i>Simpson's Salisbury Gazette</i> , published weekly in Salisbury from January 1816. George Simpson was both proprietor and editor. Simpson moved publication to Devizes in 1819 following threat of a libel action and changed the name of the paper to the <i>Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette</i> . It advocated agricultural interests and supported the Church of England. <sup>830</sup> At the time of the Cattle Plague its by-line was 'Open to all parties: Influenced by none' / <sup>831</sup>
<i>The Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	<i>The Salisbury and Winchester Journal</i>	Salisbury	1751-	The <i>Salisbury Journal</i> is one of Britain's oldest provincial newspapers, founded 1729, and by the 1780's its circulation was claimed to exceed 4,000. Historically, the <i>Salisbury Journal</i> represented landed, agricultural and commercial interests. In 1808 the new owner, William Brodie, was politically active, he was Whig M.P. for Salisbury, 1832–43 and wrote pamphlets on slavery. His strong Whig and pro-reform views were reflected in the paper. When Brodie went bankrupt in 1847, the paper was sold and became more politically neutral, adopting a distinctly Unionist stance by the 1890's. <sup>832</sup>
<i>The Swindon Advertiser, Wilts, Berks, and Glo' Chronicle</i>	<i>Swindon Advertiser</i>	Swindon	1854-	No strong political ties. Not greatly supportive of agricultural interests
<i>The Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser</i>	<i>The Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser</i>	Trowbridge	1855-1965	Supporter of landed interests and the Game Laws and against those 'striving [their] utmost to render working men discontented, in organizing deputations to employers, spouting at any Radical meeting that may be got up, defending by ill-written letters any working man who may have been guilty of trade outrage and

<sup>830</sup> BNA

<sup>831</sup> For example 'The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 14 September 1865, 3.

<sup>832</sup> BNA

				generally performing the duties of trade agitator and demagogue'. <sup>833</sup>
<i>Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard and Cirencester and Swindon Express</i>	<i>Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard</i>		1837-1916	Unknown
<i>The Wiltshire Independent</i>	<i>The Wiltshire Independent</i>	Devizes	1836-1874	Founded 1836 as 'mouthpiece for the Wiltshire Liberal party' 'The founders of the <i>Independent</i> , local men, realised the importance of receiving, if possible, the patronage of the agricultural community'. <sup>834</sup> However in 1866 it did not agree with pre-CPA compensation, which was certainly not supporting farmers

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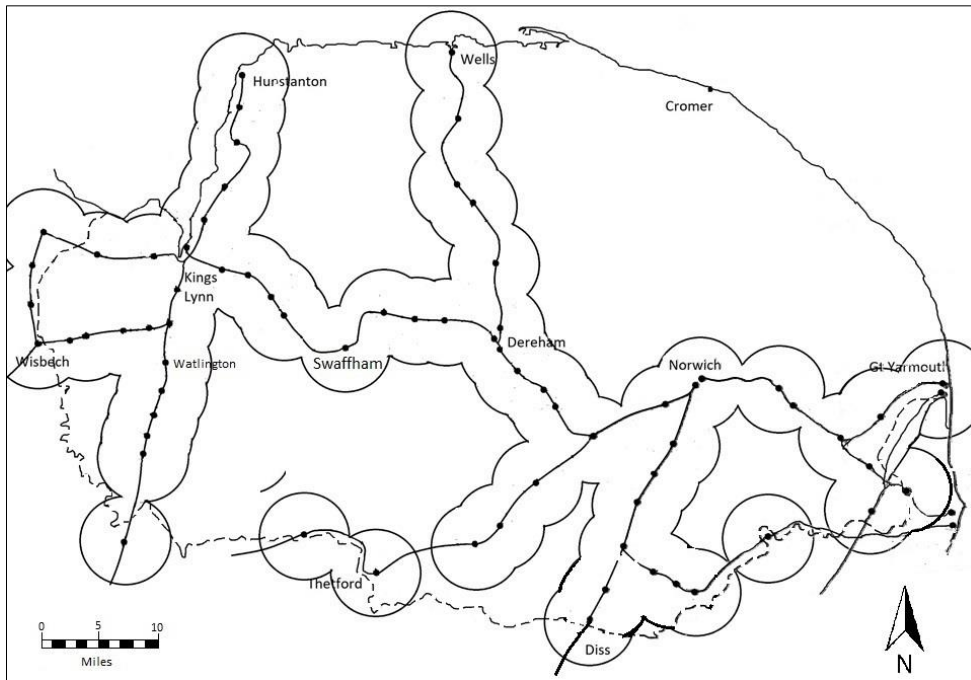
<sup>833</sup> 'The New Season', Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser, 30 December 1865, 2.

<sup>834</sup> J.J. Slade, 'Newspapers of Northern Wiltshire: The Wiltshire Independent', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 42, no. 138 (June 1923): 231-241.

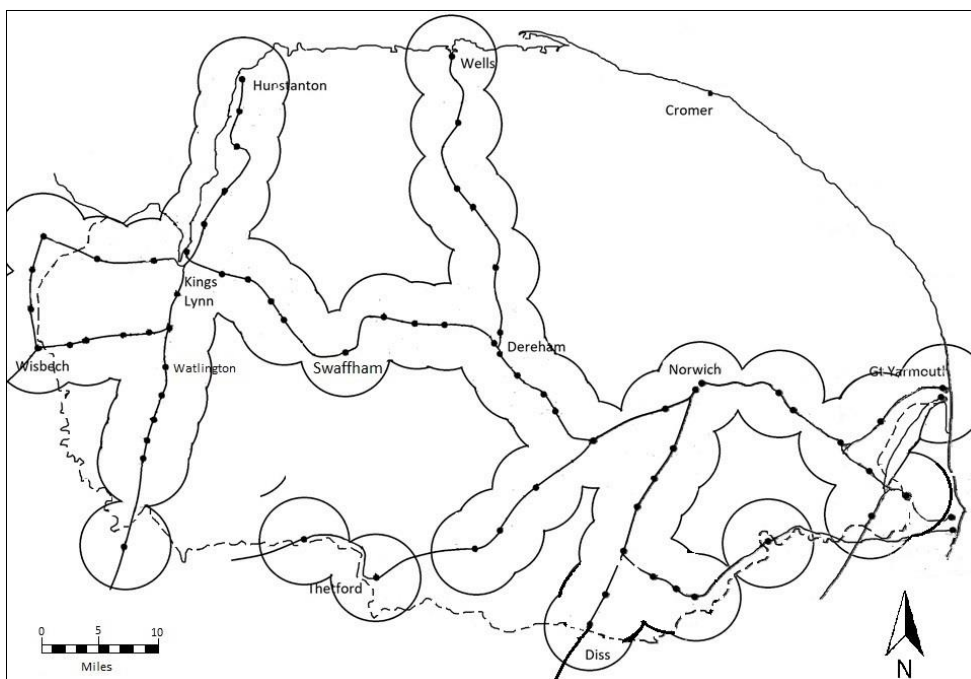
### 9.3 Railway catchment areas by county

Figure 9-1 3-mile radius (1 hour walk) station isopleths

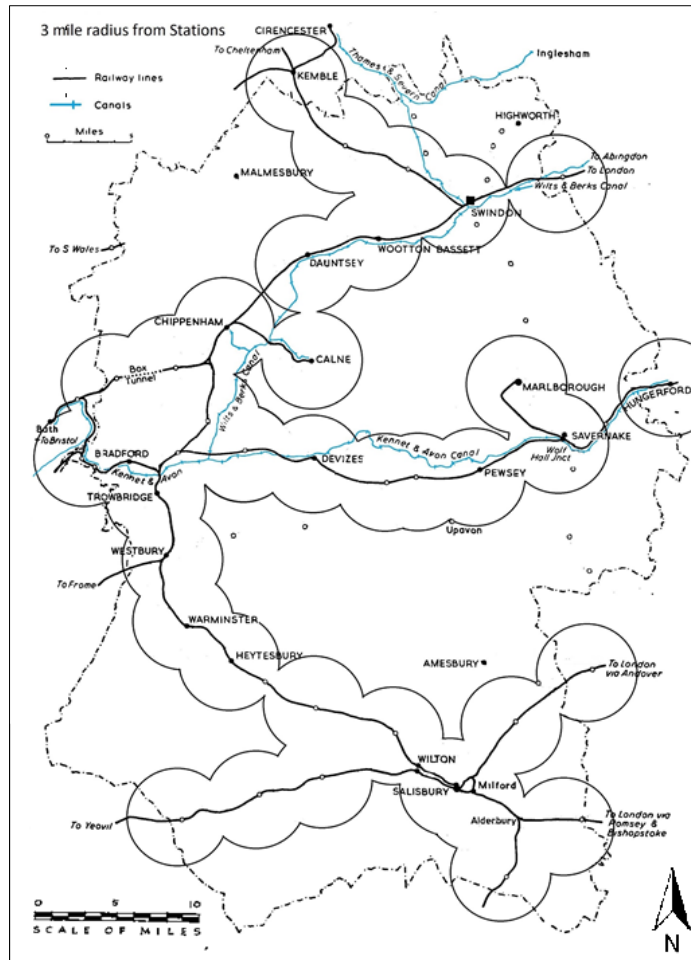
a=Cheshire, b=Norfolk, c=Wiltshire



a



b



C

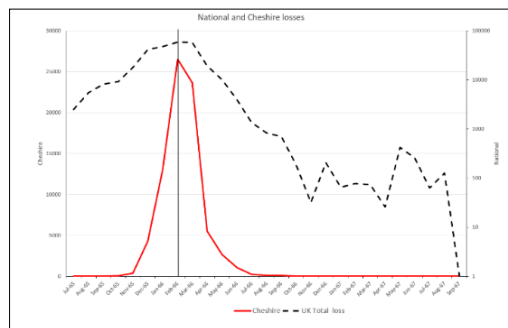


## 9.4 Cattle loss and Newspapers

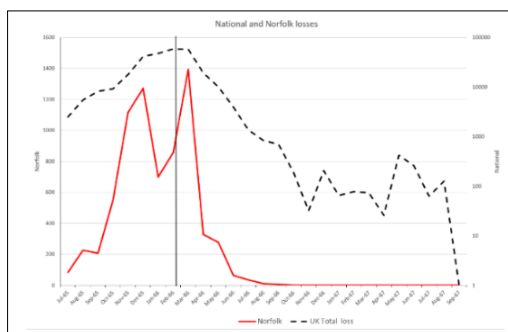
Because of the huge range of monthly losses, from none to fifty-eight thousand nationally, plotting the national losses with an arithmetic axis appears to give a smooth curve which hides important variations. In all figures below national data are plotted with a logarithmic axis to display these smaller variations. The vertical line in February 1866 indicates when the Cattle Plague Act was passed.

### 9.4.1 National and County losses

Because of the large difference in monthly losses between Cheshire (a peak of 25,000) and the other study areas the county losses are given as individual charts within Figure 9-2 below.



Cheshire



Norfolk

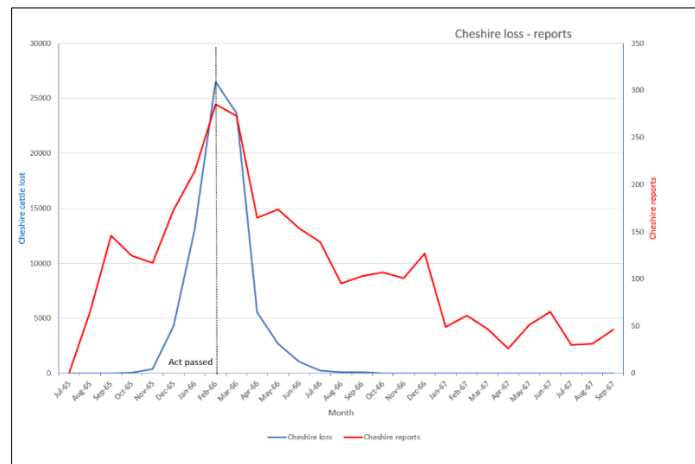


Wiltshire

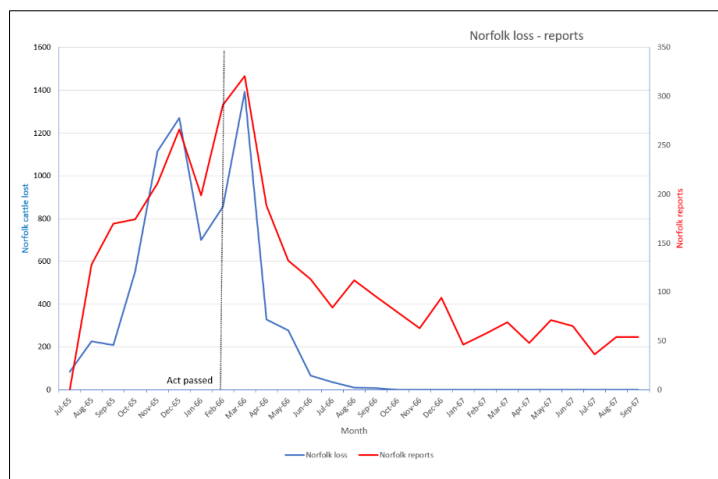
Figure 9-2 National and county losses by month

### 9.4.2 County Losses and county reports

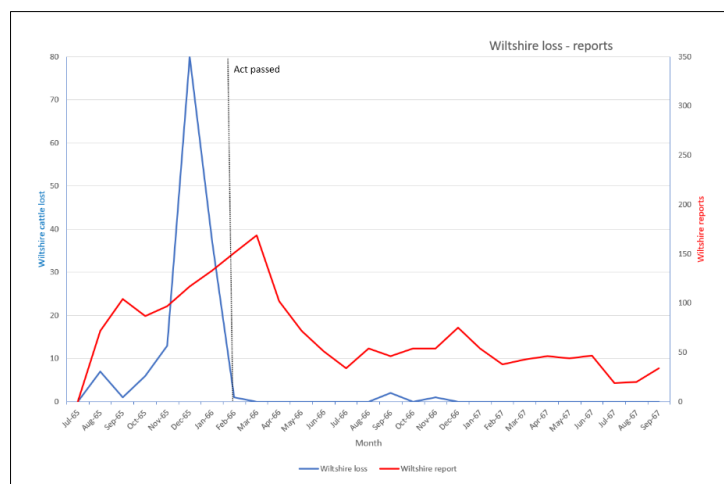
As all three counties experienced vastly different losses it is not possible to represent local losses and newspaper reports on the same graph and they have to be considered individually, Figure 9-3



Cheshire



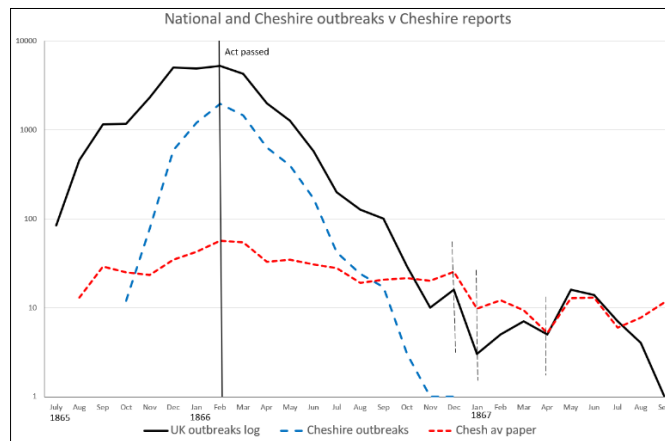
Norfolk



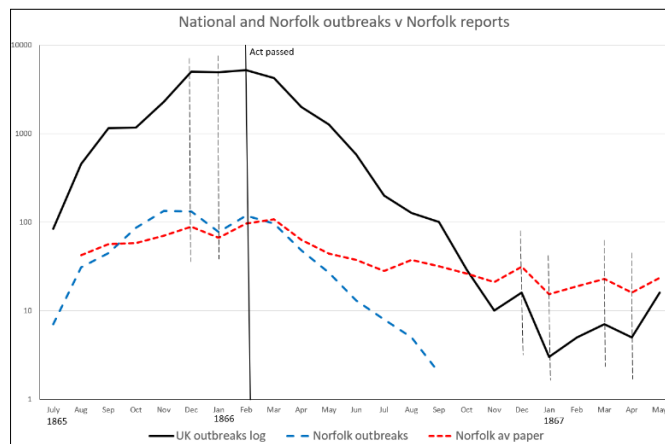
Wiltshire

Figure 9-3 No of newspaper reports / No of cattle lost per month by area

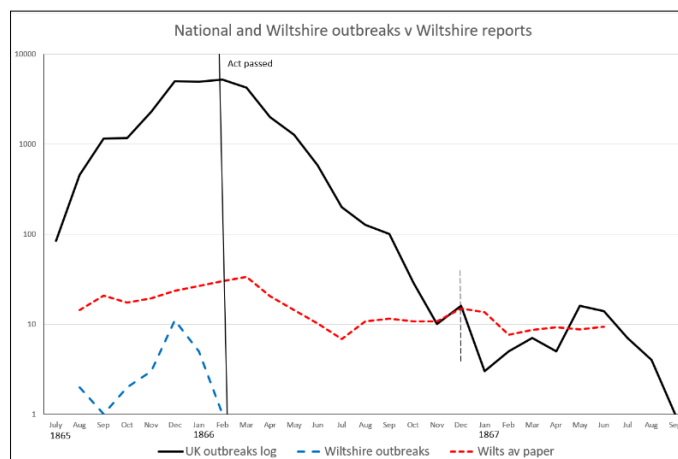
### 9.4.3 National and County Outbreaks and County reports



#### Cheshire



#### Norfolk



#### Wiltshire

Figure 9-4 No. of National and County Outbreaks and County reports

### 9.4.4 Numbers of Recovered cattle

Figure 9-5 below presents the numbers of recovered cattle in the study areas. Because of the large range, the number axis is logarithmic.

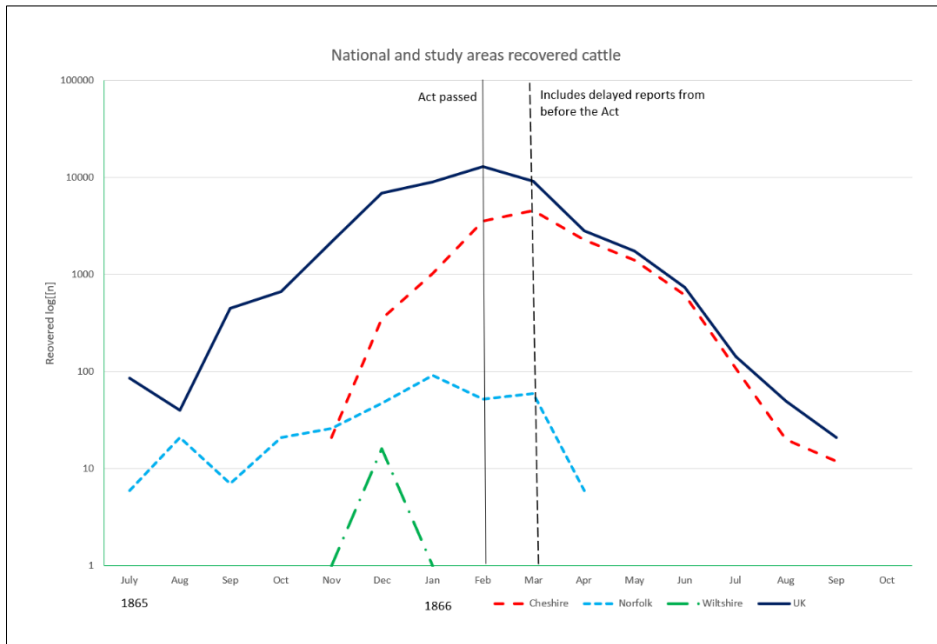


Figure 9-5 Cheshire, Norfolk & Wiltshire Recovered cattle returns

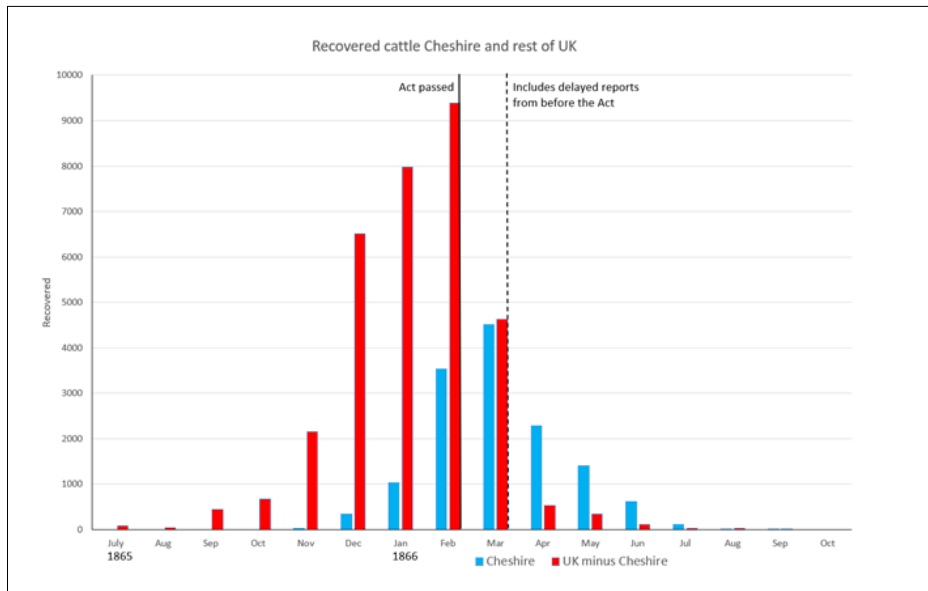


Figure 9-6 Cheshire recovered cattle compared to the rest of the UK