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# Making Modern England

## The “New Domesday” and Estate Landscapes during the Late-Nineteenth Century

By Jonathan Finch

The landed estate was one of the pre-eminent cultural landscapes in Britain from the late-seventeenth century until at least the end of the nineteenth century. It was both ubiquitous and socially significant, but its form and character varied over time as did its relative importance within the wider landscape. However, despite numerous studies of specific estate histories there has not been a systematic re-interpretation of the data, other than to try and measure changing social status amongst the landed elite.<sup>1</sup> This study offers the first interrogation of the estate in its national context from a landscape perspective. At the heart of the estate was the country house or seat, which looked out over gardens and parkland, while beyond the park pale lay the wider estate landscape, made up of tenanted farms, enclosed fields and woodland, supplemented with moorland in the upland regions. The house and grounds have long attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines, as have the families who owned them since they held the reins of power and wealth into the twentieth century. However, the estate has not attracted the same degree of attention as a form of landscape with its own historical characteristics. Travellers and inhabitants alike would have known instinctively that they were entering or crossing an estate since ownership was written on the landscape in various ways and through various forms of social performance. Estates had a distinct character created by the manipulation of the landscape on a micro level – such as the colour of the estate livery for carts, wagons and buildings – and on the macro level – such as the control and limitation of housing, the character of farmsteads and the provision of woodland.

**Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, the seat of the Dukes of Devonshire** Oil painting by William Marlow (1740-1813). Like most late eighteenth-century paintings of country houses in England, the working estate landscape is not shown, with emphasis instead placed on the parkland around the house, which had been enclosed and claimed from the working agricultural landscape, and a romantic vision of the ‘natural’ landscape beyond.

### 3.1 | Map of England and Wales showing the key estates and counties referred to in the text

Rutland in the Midlands is the smallest historic county and was identified as having the highest concentration of estate landscapes. Northumberland in the far north was dominated by the extensive estates of ‘great landowners’, reflecting its extensive upland areas and light soils, whereas Norfolk in the east was characterized by the more numerous estates of the ‘greater gentry’. The profile of estates of different sizes relates to the complex agrarian histories of each county, and continues to determine the character of the contemporary landscape.



When the estate has been studied it has often been as a basis for studies of the social elite, and data from the extensive archives has been critical to the ongoing debate concerning pace of estate agricultural improvement and increasing productivity in advance of industrialization.<sup>2</sup> Historians have produced a number of family histories which have used the estate as a lens through which to study the ruling class, but few mention the impact on landscape character and wider social change. Studies of agricultural change have tended to focus on crops, and farm sizes as indices of change but rarely place those farms into the wider context of landownership.<sup>3</sup> The fact that historians have used the acreage<sup>4</sup> owned by individuals, families and social groups as a convenient index of relative status amongst the elite has contributed to a perception of land being of quantitative rather than qualitative value to our understanding of the past. With the focus on the relationship between the amount of land owned and the status of landowners, it is often forgotten that estates provided the framework within which communities lived out their lives, and within which landscape change – particularly forms of “improvement” such as the enclosure of open fields and the planting of trees in plantations – was often carried out.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it was not just those living on estates who felt their

impact; by the late-nineteenth century the presence of estates was affecting the lives of those who lived beyond their bounds, as will be discussed further below.

As a geographical or spatial entity, the estate is an area of land defined by common ownership, often over many generations of the same family, and these ownership patterns led to a distinctive character expressed in terms of settlement form, a common architectural grammar, amenities such as school buildings, church rooms and almshouses, and in the wider landscape by dispersed modern farms surrounded by enclosed rectilinear fields, interspersed with woodland, plantations and game coverts. The spatial element is thus overwritten and unified by its cultural characteristics, which together signify its economic and social role. Despite their distinctive landscape character, their important role in rural social life, and their contested political role, there has been no systematic attempt to understand the estate's enduring contribution within the historic landscape.

This chapter begins by exploring the political context which forced the first modern survey of landholding in Britain, before interrogating the data to demonstrate how regional differences in the profile of landholding affected the character of the rural landscape. The estate landscape will then be explored in more detail, focusing on elements such as the enclosure of open fields and commons, farm sizes and the character of settlement on and beyond the estate, including programmes of cottage building. These themes will be explored through county case studies, which reveal how estates impacted landscape character, as well as examples from individual estates to show how such differences were manifested on the ground.

## Landownership and Estates

The importance of landownership, and therefore of estates, and the power landowners wielded grew from the seventeenth century, and was considerable throughout the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century. Landownership not only defined the right to vote, but also access to seats in the House of Commons, while parliament's second chamber – the House of Lords – was exclusive to titular peers and bishops. Even after the constitutional reform of the 1830s which claimed to modernize the voting system and extend the franchise, large landowners who could muster loyal tenants to vote still held sway in the electoral process. Despite – or perhaps because of – the wealth and power that landownership signalled and con-

trolled, there was no national inventory of ownership in Britain until late in the nineteenth century.

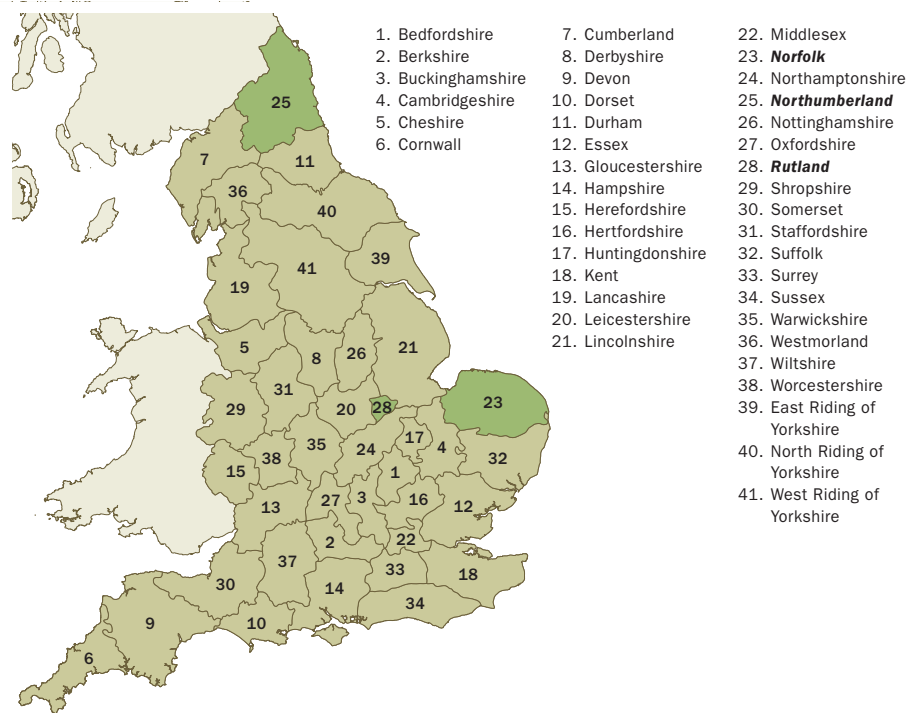
The success of the first detailed national population census in 1851 provoked further thought on the value of national statistical surveys amongst academics and government statisticians.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, popular agitation for further political reform, following the disappointment of the 1830s, centred on reducing the power of landowners and recognizing instead the growing economic and social significance of commerce and industrialisation, and the enriched middle class. By 1861 when the second census was taken, radical politicians such as John Bright used the data to argue that a landowning class of around 30,000 people had strengthened its grip on power and that fewer than 150 men owned “half the land of England”.<sup>7</sup> His figures were widely criticized in the conservative press and in parliament, and Lord Derby sought to counter the claims on behalf of the landed interest by pointing to defects in the census data, such as who self-identified as a “landowner”. Derby estimated that even 300,000 landowners, ten times Bright’s figure, would still underestimate the extent of landownership. In 1872 Derby proposed that the Local Government Board, who assessed the value of land for the Poor Law rates, should collect the necessary data and the *Return of Owners of Land* was published in 1875.<sup>8</sup> As soon as the project was proposed it acquired the popular name of the “New” or “Modern” Domesday in recognition of the fact that it was the first comprehensive survey of landownership since the “Domesday Book” compiled for William I in 1086, twenty years after the Norman Conquest.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, the New Domesday excluded several key types of landownership: it excluded London where many large landowners held valuable property; it excluded “waste” – which was loosely classified as that which did not return a profit and whose extent was rarely measured with accuracy; it excluded woodland – which was predominantly held as part of estates – except where they contained saleable underwood; and it excluded mineral workings, which might add considerable profit to certain landholdings.<sup>10</sup>

The publication of the data merely stoked the fire for reform. The government statistics listed, alphabetically, all freeholders in each county, while the explanatory introduction – in an effort to support the government’s case – suggested that nearly a million people (972,836, 4.5% of the population) owned land and therefore had a stake in the nation.<sup>11</sup> It was pointed out that most (703,289) owned less than one acre, and were not those for whom landownership opened the door to political influence, in

the sense used by radicals. The data was analysed in two articles published by the liberal newspaper *The Spectator* which identified “the Seven Hundred” (actually 710) who each owned 5,000 acres or more in any one county, and who the paper styled the “Territory Aristocracy”.<sup>12</sup> The articles pointed out that this group owned almost a quarter of the country, thus undermining the government’s argument by replacing Bright’s “Thirty Thousand” which Derby had ridiculed with a mere seven hundred significant landowners. The articles concluded by suggesting that radicals should invest in conducting a thorough review of the data to drive home their argument. However, it was John Bateman, a minor Essex landowner<sup>13</sup> and Tory politician, who set about revising, correcting, and supplementing the data over the following decade and who produced the figures which still form the basis for academic work on historic landownership and estates in his landmark publication, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*.

Bateman carried out surprisingly little interpretation of the data himself, but he did produce a series of county summary tables which divided the landowners between peers – distinguished by their title rather than the extent of their landholding; great landowners – commoners (non-peers) who owned estates of at least 3,000 acres with a rental of £3,000; and then squires (1,000–2,999 acres), greater yeomen (300–999 acres), lesser yeomen (100–299 acres), small proprietors (1–99 acres) and cottagers (less than 1 acre), none of whom were included in the body of his text.<sup>14</sup> Bateman’s definitive fourth edition of 1883 has been used ever since by social and economic historians as a tool with which to discern hierarchy and change within the elite, and to explore the dynamics of power within late Victorian society. These historiographical debates have tended to revolve around finer definitions of groups within the elite. The social and economic historian F. M. L. Thompson, for example, suggested a tripartite structure of “great landowners” – those who owned over 10,000 acres of land (c. 4047 hectares) – at the top; the “greater gentry” – those who owned between 3,000 and 9,999 acres (c. 1214–4046 hectares); and the “squirearchy”, who owned between 1,000 and 2,999 acres (c. 405–1214 h), with the latter two categories combining to form the gentry as a whole.<sup>15</sup> The geographer Heather Clemenson adopted Thompson’s term “great landowners” to describe those owning over 10,000 acres, but distinguished “magnates” within that group as those owning a minimum of 30,000 acres, whereas Thompson followed Bateman and distinguished the peerage as the upper stratum regardless of landholding.<sup>16</sup> Clemenson also used the term “greater gentry” for those

**3.2 | The historic county boundaries of England** before the changes enacted in 1974 under the Local Government Act. The three counties used as case studies in the chapter – Rutland, Northumberland and Norfolk – are highlighted. (Map by Neil Gervaux)



who owned between 3,000 and 9,999 acres, but used the term “large landowners” when referring to all three groups as a single cohort.<sup>17</sup>

Although the varying modern terms can be confusing, two benchmarks recur in the historiography – ownership of 10,000 acres (c. 4,047 hectares) or more, demarcating the aristocracy from the gentry, and 3,000 acres (c.1,214 hectares) demarcating the greater gentry from smaller landowners who nonetheless might have adopted a gentry or “polite” lifestyle. The 10,000 acre mark seems to offer a watershed in terms of the scope and ambition of the owners, above which landowners were nationally rich rather than locally wealthy, often held positions in government, made money from the proceeds of office, and had both the political need and the financial means to keep abreast of national and European trends in architecture and landscape design. The group was largely made up of hereditary peers (titled nobility) with established family estates often spread across county boundaries, but during the eighteenth century it also came to include those with non-hereditary titles (baronets and knights), those who had risen through the expansion of global trade and industrial resources, and government office. The 3,000 acre mark, at the lower end, was used by Bateman as the minimum necessary to sustain gentry status, provided the annual income was also above £3,000 per annum to exclude “Cheshire soapboilers, Staf-



ford potters [...] and Yorkshire clothiers” amongst other tradesmen who might own land, but whose income came from industry.<sup>18</sup> Bateman did add those who owned less than 3,000 acres, but whose income exceeded £3,000 per annum, as footnotes to his fourth edition, acknowledging that land had variable rental value across the country and that many gentlemen below the acreage threshold might have considerably higher incomes than those with just over 3,000 acres. Bateman also admitted that using the 3,000 acre/£3,000 per annum criteria at the lower end of his study, rather than 1,000 acres/£1,000 per annum, was in part to make the publishing project manageable – a fact often overlooked by historians – but he also justified it from his own knowledge of the land market as a reflection of a notional national average for gentry landed status.<sup>19</sup>

Bateman identified 1,363 landowners who owned more than 3,000 acres and who collectively owned around 12.5 million acres or 43% of the land area of England. Using Clemenson’s categories these figures can be broken down further to identify 331 “great landowners” (over 10,000 acres each) who owned over 7 million acres (c. 24%) and included in their ranks forty-three “magnates” (over 30,000 acres) who accounted for 2 million acres (8%), and a further 1,032 “greater gentry” (3,000 to 9,999 acres each) who owned 5.5 million acres (19%), almost a fifth of the land area.<sup>20</sup> These figures, which suggested that 43% of the rateable land in the country was held in estates of over 3,000 acres in extent, were much nearer to Bright’s estimates about the landowning class and to the initial calculations by *The Spectator*, and certainly put paid to the government’s claim that nearly a million people owned a meaningful stake in the country’s land.

The snapshot of estates and landownership that Bateman provides is fascinating, but it is important to place it within an historical context of how estates were assembled over the centuries before his survey to ascertain whether the landowning class was changing in size or composition, and to see whether the amount of estate land across the country had grown over the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. In 1688 the statistician Gregory King estimated that the landowning class could be roughly divided into three groups – the 160 peers (with average incomes of around £2,300) and 26 bishops (£1,300); 800 baronets (£800), 600 knights (£650) and 3,000 esquires (£450); and finally 12,000 gentlemen (£280). King’s figures are generally considered to be conservative – particularly for incomes – but his number of peers was reasonably accurate and by 1780 their number had only risen to 200. However, given the problems of defining the

gentry group below the titular elite, it is almost impossible to quantify the wealth of the wider gentry with any certainty in the late-seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The peerage was the most influential group. Rising in numbers from 160 in 1688, to 200 in 1780, and 400 by the 1860s, they remained a small and select group which was rarely augmented with recruits from beyond its own bounds. Assured of political influence through both the House of Lords, and family members populating the increasingly important House of Commons, their position within the local county where they held land or had their seat was unassailable. They were of course distinguished by their wealth. Their average income at the end of the seventeenth century has been estimated at between £5,000 and £6,000 per annum – twice King’s estimate – and it was around £10,000 a century later, although the very top grandees, such as the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth (Derbyshire) and Fitzwilliam at Wentworth Woodhouse (West Yorkshire), could earn £40,000 or more. The prosperity brought from rising agricultural prices and rental incomes over the second half of the eighteenth century was further boosted by mineral rights or urban and suburban leases as industrialization and urbanization took root, while public office often brought substantial dividends. The historian G. E. Mingay distinguished between the “Great Landlords”, who numbered around 400 and enjoyed an income between £5,000 and £50,000 (but an average of £10,000), and the gentry who might be anything from 13,500 to 24,800 in number with incomes of between £300 to £5,000 per annum.<sup>22</sup> Although both sets of figures are inevitably open to criticism, they suggest that the size of the landowning elite did not fluctuate greatly over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and certainly did not reflect the considerable population growth over the same period. Crucially, however, the proportion of land they held did increase.

How and when estates grew varied between regions, but basic stages can be discerned. In the period after the Dissolution and Reformation in the sixteenth century the land market was stimulated by the release of large amounts of monastic land onto the market, and this land often changed hands many times over a short period. In west Norfolk, for example, the basic building blocks of the Holkham estate were purchased in the late sixteenth century as manors around the family home in Mileham. It was not until 1610 that the manor of Holkham, some 30 kilometres to the north, was bought and became the centre of estate holdings and the family seat



from 1653. The architect of this new family estate was Edward Coke (1550–1634), Lord Chief Justice, who is estimated to have spent at least £100,000 on purchasing land over his lifetime – money which he accrued through his lucrative legal career at court and through his two wives.<sup>23</sup> Coke was not alone in accumulating land and there were important legal changes at the time that both facilitated land purchases and made the investment attractive. The key developments from the seventeenth century were the consolidation of landholding into contiguous blocks, and that the social and economic value of the land came from rents rather than manorial rights over resources.

The mid-seventeenth century civil wars (1642–1651) impacted on estate building and its effects reverberated into the eighteenth century. Before Henry Lascelles bought the Harewood estate in North Yorkshire with money from his West Indian interests in 1739, for example it had passed through a number of owners in quick succession since the 1640s who had all found the debt it carried too much to bear.<sup>24</sup> The early-eighteenth century brought its own financial uncertainty with many landowners damaged by the financial crash following the collapse of the South Sea Company

### **3.3 | East Front, Wentworth Woodhouse, West Yorkshire**

*Wentworth Woodhouse was built during the second quarter of the eighteenth century around a seventeenth-century core for the Wentworth family, later Earl Fitzwilliam. Generally considered to be the largest private house in the UK, the east front measures 185m (606 ft). By the 1880s, the family's estates covered over 22,000 acres in Yorkshire with a gross annual value of £87,406, whilst total landholdings of nearly 116,000 acres included substantial estates in Ireland. (Photo: Jonathan Finch)*

in 1720. The Coke family sold substantial amounts of land in the first half of the 1750s to pay off debts and mortgages, but all the land they sold lay outside Norfolk and had the effect of focusing attention on the nucleus of its “Great Estate” in the county, to which they continued to add in the second half of the decade. When Lord Leicester died in 1759, although Holkham Hall remained unfinished, he had redefined the estate as largely Norfolk-based; he had increased its size in Norfolk; and his annual rental in the county had increased by nearly 60% since he had come of age in 1718, rising from £6,192 to £10,541.<sup>25</sup>

The shifting social and economic geography within the county of Norfolk can also be captured by the fact that when Charles II visited Norfolk in 1671 he stayed at the seats of the three chief men of the county: Lord Townshend (the Lord Lieutenant at Raynham Hall), Sir John Hobart at Blickling Hall, and Sir Robert Paston at Oxnead – the latter two seats both in the north-east of the county.<sup>26</sup> By the nineteenth century only Raynham retained its status – Blickling remained an unmodernized Jacobean mansion with a modest 8,000 acre estate, whilst Oxnead was partially demolished and let as a tenanted farm. In their place the Palladian classicism of Holkham (built by Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester, 1734–61) and Houghton (built by Sir Robert Walpole, 1st Earl of Orford, 1721–35), each surrounded with estates of 17,000–18,000 acres in the north-west, joined Raynham (18,343 acres) as the most substantial estates and houses in the county, built by men with a stake in government as architectural and political statements of national significance.<sup>27</sup>

The general picture of estate building between the late-seventeenth and the late-nineteenth century is hard to secure as it varied regionally throughout the country. However, after the strife of the civil wars and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, a new political settlement was established, including the abolition of the few remaining feudal relationships, and subsequently reinforced after the “Glorious Revolution” in 1688.<sup>28</sup> The importance of property was enshrined in both settlements, and as the link between landownership and political power became more closely articulated, so a raft of legal and economic tools, such as a form of entail called “strict settlement”, was developed which kept landed assets together with the eldest male heir as a coherent and sustainable entity.<sup>29</sup> As estates became locked into the landscape, so their role as indices of wealth and status was assured and reinforced. Although rarely as profitable as other forms of investment, land endowed a family with access to political power and

was a safe investment for the foundation of their wealth, and hence when they became available estates were the investment of choice for ascendant families. J. G. A. Pocock has argued that from the 1670s the definition of property as a moral and political phenomenon became a staple of English political rhetoric.<sup>30</sup> These cultural expressions seem to have reflected the economic and legal shift from the medieval landscape in which landownership was associated with complex and dispersed manorial rights and obligations, to one of moral governance based on the virtues of personal or private landownership, and it was within this cultural and political context that estates flourished over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries against a background of economic growth fuelled by agricultural, industrial and colonial expansion.

## County Portraits

Although the size of estate holdings and their social distribution amongst the elite have been important indices for historians, estates had an equally important physical and social impact on the landscape and Bateman's data allows the distribution of landed estates to be mapped, although few have tried. Thompson concluded that there was a "lack of uniformity" and "considerable diversity between neighbouring counties", while Clemenson, who was primarily interested in the endurance of the estates into the twentieth century, offered little in the way of geographical analysis beyond acknowledging its complexity, despite mapping the proportion of estates over 3,000 acres in each county (see Table 3.1).<sup>31</sup> Thompson listed counties by the proportion of land held in estates that exceeded 10,000 acres, and his top seven counties are the same (with one exception) as those offered by Clemenson who calculated the proportion held in all estates over 3,000 acres. The top seven counties in Clemenson's list notably included all those in which she calculated that over half of the land area was held in such an estate (Table 3.1).

The distribution of these counties from Northumberland (68%) in the far north, to Rutland, the smallest county (69%), in the Midlands, to Dorset (57%) and Wiltshire (55%) in the south, has confounded interpretation, with Thompson claiming that "The distribution by size of counties, or by prevailing types of agriculture, whether cereal-growing, stock-keeping, or dairying was almost entirely random".<sup>32</sup> Before interpreting the national distribution it is perhaps useful to examine Rutland in greater detail as it is

**Table 3.1 | The national distribution of estates**

The seven counties in England with the highest proportions of land held in estates. Thompson (1963) listed the proportion of each county held in estates of over 10,000 acres, whilst Clemenson calculated the proportion held in estates of 3,000 acres or more. For Clemenson this represents all the counties with a majority of land held in estates. The only discrepancies between the two lists are Derbyshire, which is listed as having 48% estate land in Clemenson, whilst Shropshire is ranked 22nd of 39 counties by Thompson with 21% of estate land.

Percentage of total county area occupied by estates over 10,000 acres Source: Thompson 1963			Percentage of total county area occupied by estates over 3,000 acres Source: Clemenson 1982	
1	Rutland	53	Rutland	69
2	Northumberland	50	Northumberland	68
3	Nottinghamshire	38	Nottinghamshire	57
4	Dorset	36	Dorset	57
5	Wiltshire	36	Wiltshire	55
6	Cheshire	35	Shropshire	54
7	Derbyshire	31	Cheshire	52

**Table 3.2 | The large landowners in the county of Rutland c. 1883**

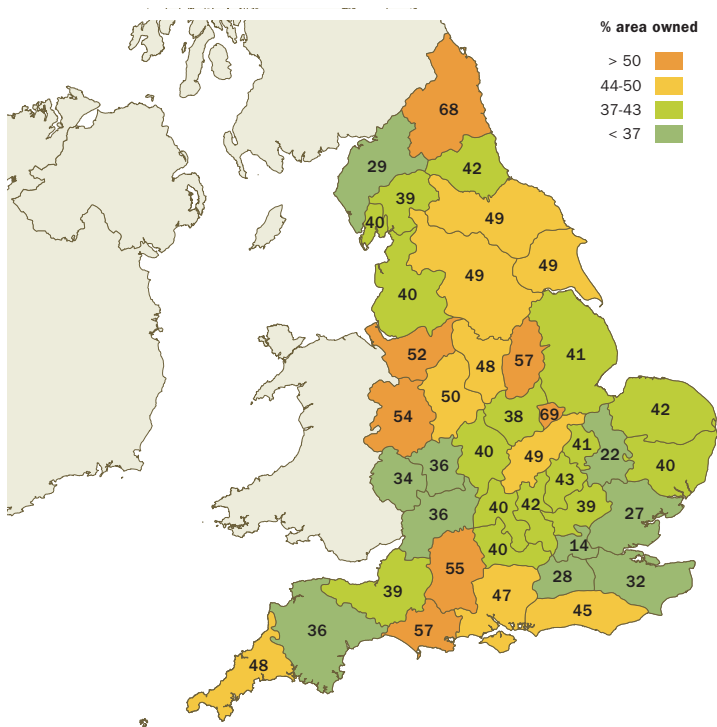
These four large landowners accounted for the high proportion of estate land in England's smallest county, yet only Lord Aveland would have been classified as a landed magnate, with a total landholding of over 30,000 acres.

Name	Rutland Acreage	Rutland Rental	Seat	Total Acreage Owned	Total Rental
Earl of Gainsborough	15,076	£23,716	Exton Park, Rutland	18,568	£28,991
Lord Aveland	13,633	£19,797	Normanton Park, Rutland	31,275	£46,894
George Henry Finch	9,183	£15,098	Burley on the Hill, Rutland	17,332	£28,443
Marquis of Exeter	8,998	£16,388	Burghley House, Lincs	28,271	£49,044
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,890</b>	<b>£74,999</b>		<b>95,446</b>	<b>£153,372</b>

listed as the most estate dominated county in England in both Thompson and Clemenson's lists, and because it can be used as a case study to explore some of the issues in using Bateman as a source for estate landscapes.

Rutland is the smallest English county and tops both Thompson's and Clemenson's lists suggesting a highly developed estate system.<sup>33</sup> Its diminutive size, however, means that the presence of any large estate is likely to distort calculations based on county area, and there are also discrepancies between the data from the original parliamentary returns, Bateman's index nominum, his county summary lists and his own text, just as there are between Thompson's and Clemenson's calculations.

Bateman's index nominum, which sorted and grouped the corrected data from the parliamentary returns by landowner rather than by county, identified four landowners who owned over 3,000 acres in Rutland (46,890



**3.4 | The percentage of county area held in estates of 3,000 acres or more** (Map by Neil Gervaux after Clemenson 1982)

acres in total), which accounted for 50% of the county area (Table 3.2) – all four featured amongst the three hundred and thirty-one “great landowners” who personally owned more than 10,000 acres spread over various counties. The two largest landowners – the Earl of Gainsborough and Lord Aveland (Fig. 3.5) – both owned more than 10,000 acres within the county and accounted for just under a third of its acreage (31%). However, Clemenson states that 51.8% of the county was held by three “great landowners” (over 10,000 acres) and 17.6% was held by four of the “greater gentry” (3,000–9,999 acres), giving 69% of the county area.<sup>34</sup> In an attempt to resolve this discrepancy an investigation of the original 1873 returns identified the same four landowners who owned more than 3,000 acres and a further four who had a rental of over £3,000 from less than 3,000 acres in the county, and between them this group held 58,184 acres or 62% of Rutland’s rateable acreage, but still short of Clemenson’s 69%.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the Royal Statistical Society published their own analysis of the parliamentary returns data for Rutland in 1876 – seven years before Bateman’s corrected version of the data was published – and identified four landowners with 5,000 acres or more in the county, accounting for 33% of the county. Bateman named 27 “large landowners” (over 3,000 acres/£3,000 per

### 3.5 | Normanton Park, Rutland

Listed as the seat of Lord Aveland in the late-nineteenth century, it was rebuilt between 1735-40 by Sir John Heathcote, 2nd Baronet, and further enlarged in the 1760s. It was the centre of an estate of over 13,600 acres. The estate was sold in 1924, but the house did not find a buyer, and after the sale of its furnishings and fittings, Normanton Park was demolished in 1925. (Source: Matthew Beckett, [www.lostheritage.org.uk](http://www.lostheritage.org.uk))



annum) as owning some land in Rutland, but the amounts varied from the Earl of Gainsborough's 15,076 acres to the Hon. Harry Tyrwhitt-Wilson of Keythorpe Hall, Leicestershire, Equerry to the Prince of Wales, who owned only two acres in the county.<sup>36</sup> Together the group owned 60,401 acres or 65% of the total area – once again, less than Clemenson's figure. The closest figure to Clemenson's can be gained from Bateman's county summary tables that were included as an appendix in his fourth edition, and which noted six (unnamed) owners with more than 3,000 acres, totalling 66,294 acres, or 71% of the county area. However, these tables were originally compiled by Bateman for Brodrick's *English Land and English Landlords* published in 1881, two years before his final corrected figures were published.<sup>37</sup>

This brief discussion of Rutland shows the complexities of the data. Not only is it difficult to establish the precise nature of ownership in the county, but general figures about the proportion of land held in estates conceal variation in regional profiles between great landowners (over 10,000 acres) and the greater gentry (3,000–9,999 acres), or any gradations in between. Rutland was certainly atypical, as the smallest county in the country, and Bateman noticed how the county was "greedily seized upon by the host of pundits" due to the manageable dataset.<sup>38</sup> The county was dominated by four large estates of roughly 9,000 acres or more, slightly below the 10,000 acres historians have subsequently chosen to impose as a defining criteria, but both Bateman's table and that provided by the Royal Statistical Society show that beneath these four was not a gradation





of landownership, but a substantial gap above a considerable body of what Bateman called “yeomen” and “small proprietors” who owned between 10 and 1,000 acres. Those owning between 10 and 50 acres formed the largest group (149, holding on average 24 acres) in a county dominated by grazing and renowned for the seasonal sport of fox-hunting which was at its most fashionable in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> As a corollary to the presence of the large landed estates, however, the smallholders – those owning less than 1,000 acres – held a comparatively slight (17%) proportion of the land in the county as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

Northumberland is perhaps a better example of a county dominated by large estates – both Thompson and Clemenson name it as the second most estate-dominated county after the anomalous Rutland. Bateman’s county table notes that 62 landowners (9 peers,<sup>41</sup> 53 great landowners) owned 794,245 acres (67%) of the total acreage – close to Clemenson’s figure of 68%; however, the data from his *index nominum* suggests that sixty “large landowners” (3,000 acres or more) held a total of 757,274 acres (64%). Bateman names twenty-three landowners who owned more than 10,000 acres in Northumberland and thirty-seven more who owned between 10,000 acres and 3,000 acres. Five of the largest landowners in the county owned over 30,000 acres each in total, thus qualifying them as “magnates”. The largest landowner in the county was the Duke of Northumberland who owned 181,616 acres in the county which represented 97% of his total holdings, whilst the Earl of Carlisle, whose primary seat was Castle Howard in North Yorkshire (Fig.

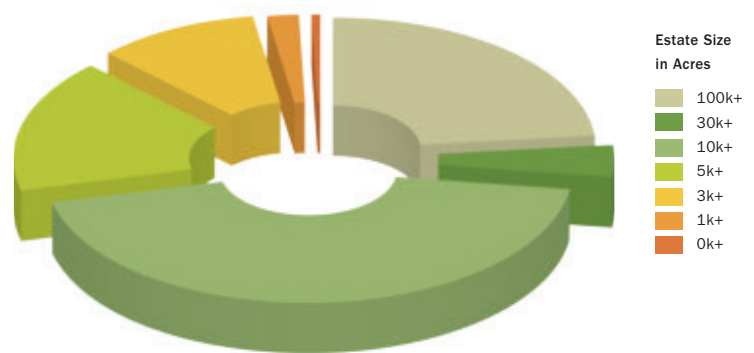
### 3.6 | Castle Howard, North Yorkshire

Castle Howard was built on a ridge within what are now known as the Howardian Hills in North Yorkshire by the 3rd Earl of Carlisle at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The designed landscape around the house is marked by various eye-catchers, monuments, and walls and includes an approach avenue around 6km in length. The associated estate was just over 13,000 acres in the 1880s. (Photo: Paul Stamper)

**3.7 | Rutland:** proportions of each estate size in the county from Bateman's index nominum (1883). Rutland had the highest proportion (around 70%) of land held in estates of 3,000 acres or more in Bateman's Great Landowners. However, it was dominated by only four large estates. The two largest estates (Gainsborough 15,076 acres, Aveland 13,633 acres) were just over the 10,000 acre threshold for 'great landowners', and accounted for nearly half (48%) of the estate land. Below them were two smaller estates of just less than 10,000 acres (Finch 9,183 acres, Exeter 8,998 acres) which accounted for 30% of the estate landscape. Bateman does not record any estates in the county between 3,000 and 5,000 acres, although four smaller estates had an income of above £3,000 per annum.



**3.8 | Northumberland:** proportions of each estate size in the county from Bateman's index nominum (1883). The estates of the "great landowners" (10,000–29,999 acre) accounted for 44% of the county, slightly less than in much smaller Rutland (48%). However, an additional 27% of the county was held in two much larger "magnate" estates of more than 30,000 acres (Northumberland 181,616 acres, Selby 30,000 acres). Thus the twenty-one estates of the "great landowners" formed the base rather than the top of the landowning hierarchy in the county, which was nearly thirteen times the size of Rutland.



**3.9 | Norfolk:** proportions of each estate size in the county from Bateman's index nominum (1883). The very largest estates of over 100,000 acres were absent from the densely populated county, but a pyramidal structure of landownership is clear, with Lord Leicester's Holkham estate at its apex (44,090 acres), above a cohort of ten "great landowner" estates of over 10,000 acres (25% of estate land). However, the estates of the "greater gentry" (3,000–9,999) hold the majority (57%) of estate land in the county, with over a third (35%) held in 26 estates between 5,000–9,999 acres and a similar number (29) held in estates between 3,000–4,999 acres, accounting for a further 22% of estate land.



3.6), was the magnate for whom their Northumbrian estates, in this case the Morpeth estate (17,780 acres), represented the smallest portion of their overall holdings (23%). Sixteen (70%) of the twenty-three landowners who held more than 10,000 acres in Northumberland had their primary seat in the county, including three of the five territorial magnates.<sup>42</sup>

The structure of landholding and estate size contrasts with that found in Rutland. In Northumberland substantial estates not only dominated the large county, but in some cases formed part of even larger holdings. By breaking down the data by estate size it is clear that estates of the “greater gentry” had little impact on the overall character of the county which was dominated in terms of the land held and the number of owners, by estates of the “great landowners” and “magnates” holding 10,000 acres or more.

Clemenson suggests that the mean proportion of county area held in estates of over 3,000 acres during the late-nineteenth century was 43% – making Norfolk’s 42% more representative of the country as a whole. Bateman noted eleven<sup>43</sup> landowners with Norfolk estates of over 10,000 acres, eight of whom were peers and ten of whom had their primary seat in the county. Below this notable assembly of national players and county elite was an equally impressive cohort of twenty-nine landowners with estates between 3,000 and 5,000 acres, the top seventeen of whom were based in the county. Between them, these two groups accounted for 63% of the estate land in the county. Norfolk provides a much clearer pyramidal hierarchy of estate ownership than the profiles seen in Rutland and Northumberland, with the estates of the “upper gentry”, between 5,000–9,999 acres, particularly prominent. Analysis of Bateman’s figures shows that although the average size of estates within the 5,000–9,999 acre group was roughly the same in Norfolk (7,085 acres; n. 26) and Northumberland (7,370 acres; n. 17), they were more numerous and a far more significant aspect of the estate and landscape structure in Norfolk, accounting for nearly 40% of the land in estates over 3,000 acres compared to only 17% in Northumberland.

Norfolk is also an interesting example of how there are significant patterns and distributions within counties that make it difficult to generalize at a county level. At the apex of the landowning pyramid was the undisputed magnate of the county, the Earl of Leicester, whose 44,000 acre estate was based at Holkham Hall. Located on the dry, light soils of north Norfolk, these had been dominated by sheep-corn husbandry and open fields prior to enclosure in the eighteenth century, at which point it was turned largely to arable. However, in the south of the county where heavy clays



**3.10 | Kimberley Hall, Norfolk**

The house originates from the first decade of the eighteenth century, and the park was redesigned by Lancelot “Capability” Brown in the 1760s. Although a modest estate (10,805 acres) in comparison to those in the west of the county on lighter soils, it had the highest gross annual rental return per acre of any Norfolk estate over 10,000 acres as recorded in Bateman’s Great landowners. (Photo: Jonathan Finch)

dominated, a mixed economy had flourished in the wood-pasture area, and enclosure had been earlier and piecemeal in nature, estates were generally smaller. The Earl of Kimberley’s estate near Wymondham (Fig. 3.10), for example, was the largest in the region (10,805 acres), but was only a quarter of the size of Holkham. Notably however, Kimberley’s rental return of £15,195 from 10,805 acres (£1 8s 1d per acre), as listed by Bateman, was the highest return per acre of all the Norfolk estates over 10,000 acres, including the Earl of Leicester’s return of £1 7s 0d per acre at Holkham (£59,578 from 44,090 acres), and Cholmondeley’s lowly 14s 1d per acre (£11,960 from 16,995 acres) at Houghton.<sup>44</sup> In comparison to Norfolk, Northumberland was a large county with expanses of upland grazing and rental incomes were generally low. In Northumberland the average acreage of the twenty three “great landowner” estates (over 10,000 acres) was 24,024 acres with an average gross annual value of £18,498. In Norfolk, the eleven “great landowner” estates had an average of only 15,867 acres, over 8,000 acres less, but enjoyed a slightly higher gross annual value of £18,723.

Across East Anglia, in both Norfolk and Suffolk, the larger estates were to be found on poor, light, dry soils where land was traditionally cheaper

and freeholders were less wealthy and so more readily bought out, and these historic differences continued to shape the profile of landowning into the late-nineteenth century. The same correlation between poor, light soil and larger estates can be seen in Yorkshire. The light soils of the East Riding lent themselves to the creation of large estates which accounted for nearly 60% of the Riding, whereas the West Riding which was the industrial heartland, had a high number (66) of estates over 3,000 acres although their average size (6,697 acres) was less than in the North (7,752 acres) and East (8,209) Ridings.

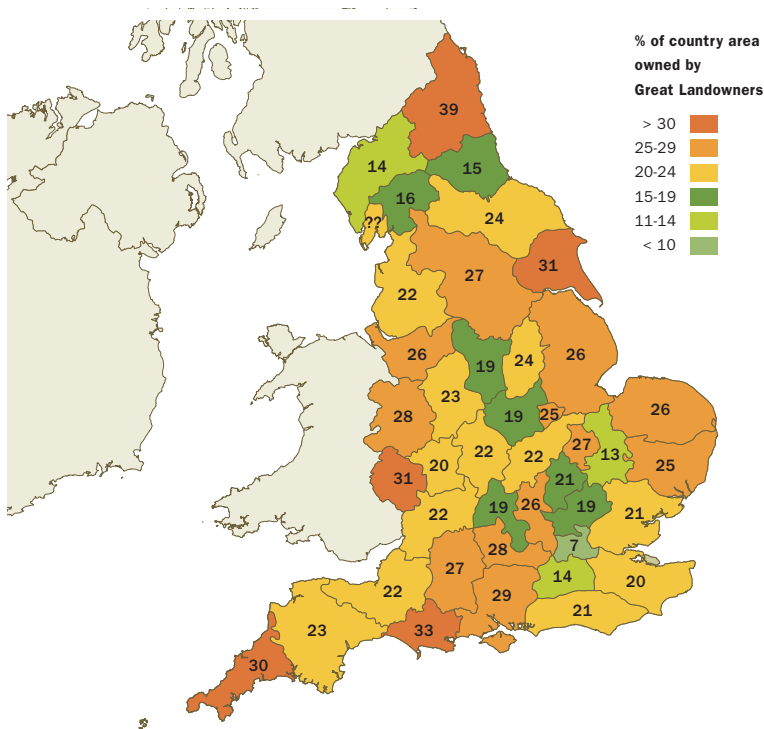
It should be pointed out that below the 3,000 acre threshold was a considerable body of lesser gentry who would have been recognized locally as being of some social distinction and power. The 2,558-acre estate of the Worsley family of Hovingham, North Yorkshire, for example, abutted the much larger holdings of the Earl of Carlisle around his seat of Castle Howard in North Yorkshire. Hovingham Hall is architecturally impressive, and although the house sits within the estate village, rather than isolated within its own grounds, parkland extends to the west of the house borrowing adjacent fields for effect, whilst the village has a clear sense of identity linking it to the Worsleys, with date stones and heraldic crests on the estate cottages and a common estate livery. If estates like the Worsley's – those between 1,000 and 3,000 acres – are included in the calculations, the proportion of the landscape held in estates across the country as a whole rises on average by 12%, but within a range from a minimum of 5% (Huntingdon) to a maximum of 18% (Surrey) of the total land. More significantly, however, it means that more than half of the country's land was held in estates in the late-nineteenth century.

## National Distribution

Understanding the distribution of large estates on a national scale is fraught with difficulties. The most commonly used indices are those derived from Bateman that offer the area of estate land as a proportion of the county area, excluding waste land and forestry, as a measure of the rateable, taxed or cultivated area. This obviously introduces issues around the definition and recording of "waste". By the 1880s the amount of land recorded as waste was minimal. Bateman's tables record only Westmorland (25%), the North Riding of Yorkshire (19%) and Cumberland (13.5%) as having more than 10% of the county area as waste. All are northern counties

with upland and moorland landscapes much of which was, by the 1880s, managed as part of large estates for shooting, though they did not return a high agricultural rental value, and so the figures likely underestimate the extent of estates in these counties. Bateman himself identified regions of Herefordshire and Sussex as being so heavily wooded as to affect the calculations of estate coverage.<sup>45</sup> Equally importantly, as seen with the case study of Rutland, county size is variable and that variability is arbitrary, at least in terms of its relationship to estate formation. Similarly, estates could cross county boundaries. So it is important to look in more detail at the distribution and constitution of the estate landscape and not to expect, as perhaps Thompson did, that a single factor might be found to explain the complex distribution of estates.

The most obvious pattern is the predominance of great landowners' estates in the north of England, as exemplified by the study of Northumberland, above. Eight (Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Westmorland, Durham and Northumberland) of the twelve counties where estates over 10,000 acres were more significant than those of less than 10,000 acres are located north of the river Trent (Fig. 3.11). There is a correlation between these large estates and poor agricultural land, either in the upland regions of the North and northern Midlands, or on the poor, light, chalklands of Wessex, the wolds of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, and west Norfolk, including the sandy Brecklands. The Midland clays which formed the core areas of medieval open-field agriculture and which resisted enclosure until the late-eighteenth century were characterized by the importance of greater gentry estates – those over 3,000 acres but below the 10,000 acre mark – suggesting that the complex rights and ownership may have inhibited the accumulation of land into larger estates. There is variation however within this “planned countryside”, and the gravitational pull of London affected land prices, and hence estate size, in the immediate hinterland of the capital city. Smaller estates, even those of 1,000–3,000 acres, were more prevalent in the regions which Oliver Rackham characterized as “ancient countryside”, particularly in the south-east – Kent, Essex and Hampshire, for example.<sup>46</sup> Here the landscape character of small enclosures and a mixed wood-pasture economy and prevalent freeholders, was already apparent in the medieval period, and it resisted the wholesale planning and re-planning of the Midlands. There are, of course, plenty of exceptions to this characterisation – the West Riding of Yorkshire



**3.11 | The proportion of each county held in estates of 10,000 acres or more** The distribution of the estates owned by the 'great landowners' is biased to the north and east of England. Other areas where great estates were important, such as the south west, had similar poor, light soils. (Map by Neil Gervaux)

was home to considerable industrial development, for example, had a high number of resident peers who collectively held over 236,000 acres of land, but smaller estates were most abundant and important in comparison to the other Yorkshire Ridings, and even nationally.

Although the 3,000 acre mark is accepted as important, the distribution of estates shows clear differences that relate to the profile of estate ownership and the relative importance of the larger examples. The very largest took advantage of cheap land on light soils where historically low values had created a social structure characterized by hierarchy and lordship. Elsewhere, entrenched and relatively wealthy owner-occupiers enjoyed relative freedom from manorial control and estate formation was more problematic. Having explored the national distribution of large landed estates and its relationship to regional landscape types that were reflected in rental values, and how that impacted on estate size and distribution within counties, it is apposite to focus down onto the micro level of how an estate landscape was recognizable at a local level.

## Estate Villages and Farmscapes

Agricultural land was at the heart of every country estate, and large landowners were attentive to the remarks of the land agent and agricultural writer Nathaniel Kent, whose *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* – published in 1775 – was one of the first publications on modern estate management. Kent drew on the classical tradition to link good husbandry – now a rational natural science – to moral obligation and social responsibility; agriculture was a public duty and a national endeavour, not simply a productive process:

A competent knowledge of Agriculture is the most useful science a gentleman can attain; it [...] becomes a duty, which they owe not only to themselves but to the community, as it behoves every man to make the most of his property, by every laudable means.<sup>47</sup>

From the later eighteenth century, large landowners translated this “duty” into the pursuit and execution of “agricultural improvement”. Their chief tool was enclosure which affected the dissolution of the remaining medieval open-field systems and commons, removed customary rights and tenancies, imposed new leasehold tenancies, and facilitated the reallocation of land into consolidated blocks. In regions of poor light soils where extensive tracts of waste or sheepwalks survived into the eighteenth century, for example, the impact was considerable, creating large new rectilinear fields, erecting new field boundaries marked by hedge and wall, and new routeways across the landscape, whereas in areas of “ancient countryside” and wood-pasture, smaller enclosures had been in place for centuries. Although the “long history” of enclosure is still disputed, in terms of how much land was enclosed when, the documented phase of enclosures from the mid-eighteenth century shows two distinct phases. The first, roughly between 1755 and 1780, saw the enclosure of the last medieval open fields, particularly on the clay soils of the Midlands which were turned to pasture, and the second phase from 1790–1815 saw the enclosure of waste and common land in order to increase arable production during the high prices of the Napoleonic period.<sup>48</sup> There has been considerable debate about the impact of improvement and enclosure on the landscape nationally, re-examining the claims made by contemporary advocates, such as Arthur Young



(1741–1820), who tended to over-emphasize the advantages. Tom Williamson has warned, for example, that “we must be careful not to confuse (as contemporaries often did) dramatic and visible change in the landscape with any real achievement in increasing productivity or raising wealth”.<sup>49</sup> The historiographical narrative has been preoccupied with the economic motives behind improvement and has suggested that the period of innovation was in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, and was most apparent in regions cultivated predominantly by small freeholders rather than on the great estates. The result has been to downplay the importance of the estates in terms of improvement, despite the levels of investment and radical landscape change that they implemented.

While this argument may be true, it assumes that the improvers’ sole focus was economic rather than social change, and it neglects the extensive landscape change that was implemented under the banner of improvement, which had a dramatic effect on the landscape and upon the lives of those living in the rural landscape. Beyond the rhetoric of the improvers, few landowners expected their landholding or rentals to make them rich; it was rather a secure investment for capital and the necessary key to social status. Agricultural economics was not an exact science in the eighteenth century and much of the expenditure on improvement was a mix of motives, including being seen to be involved and, significantly, being seen to be modern.<sup>50</sup>

Arthur Young railed against those who resisted or opposed the imposition of modern farming methods during his agricultural tours around Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of which enclosure was the most obvious manifestation in the landscape:

The Goths and Vandals of open fields touch the civilization of enclosures [...]  
When I passed from the conversation of the farmers I was recommended to call on, to that of men whom chance threw in my way, I seemed to have lost a century in time, or to have moved 1000 miles in a day.<sup>51</sup>

If it was “Goths and Vandals” who sought to preserve the medieval open fields, Young was equally clear about the character of those farmers embracing modern ways when he described the improving farmers around Brocklesby on the Lincolnshire Wolds, for example:

I have not seen a set more liberal in any part of the kingdom. Industrious, active, enlightened, free from all foolish and expensive show, or pretence to emulate the gentry; they live comfortably and hospitably as good farmers ought to live.<sup>52</sup>

Although Young is not explicit, the improving farmers of the Lincolnshire wolds that he praised so highly would have been tenants on the Earl of Yarborough's 57,000 acre estate based at Brocklesby Park.<sup>53</sup> Tenants were attracted to new estate farms by the profits offered in the second half of the eighteenth century. The post-enclosure farm holdings were compact and new buildings facilitated modern methods, taking advantage of the economies of scale offered on the larger farms. On most estates enclosure led to larger consolidated farm holdings, usually of over 100 acres, through the amalgamation of farms and the redistribution of land. Landowners built modern farm houses in the midst of the new holdings rather than in the villages – mirroring the social distance of the country house. The new tenant farmer was therefore expected to be a man of status and capital, able to afford the higher rent and invest in new cultivation regimes alongside his landlord. The Money-Hill family, for example, were celebrated tenants on the Holkham estate in Norfolk, and were wealthy enough to keep their own boat to take corn to London or Hull and bring back rape-cake manure from wherever it could be procured at the cheapest rate, including Holland.<sup>54</sup> Such was their status that they were commemorated within their parish church over the period they were tenants, between the 1780s and 1840s, marking them out as parishioners of social distinction.<sup>55</sup>

There has been little research into estate farms specifically, particularly in comparison to that on historic farm size more generally, which has been studied in the context of the decline of the small landowner over the post-medieval period. Farms were generally getting larger, and those on estates were often larger than those of independent freeholders.<sup>56</sup> Arthur Young had an unwavering preference for large-scale farming and made a point of visiting the larger landowners on his agricultural tours, almost to the exclusion of others. At a county level however there is no obvious correlation between either the extent of enclosure in the eighteenth century or the dominance of estates, and the size of farms. The counties with the highest proportion of farms over 300 acres were predominantly on the chalk downlands of Wessex and the Chilterns – Berkshire (27%), Hampshire (22%), Hertfordshire (21%), Wiltshire (21%) and Dorset (20%), and

if the threshold is dropped to farms over 100 acres, counties on the clays such as Essex (29%), Northamptonshire (28%), and Suffolk (26%) also feature. Only Northumberland (35%) and the East Riding of Yorkshire (25%) represent the northern regions with a high concentration of large estates, but they had very similar soil, topography and climate to the Wessex downland and shared a history of sheep-corn husbandry prior to the 1770s with extensive rough grazing that was subsequently enclosed and converted to arable.<sup>57</sup>

County statistics prove problematic again, as counties do not map onto regional farming specialisms or soil types, but within counties it is possible to suggest that estates stood out. The exceptional size of the Holkham estate in Norfolk was reflected in the comparative size of its constituent farms. In 1850, six of the estate farms were over 1,000 acres accounting for about 8% of the estate as a whole, while twenty-eight farms were between 500 and 1,000 acres. In contrast, most farms in Norfolk (58%) were less than 100 acres, compared to only 8% of farms on the Holkham estate.<sup>58</sup> However, other factors were at work within the estate landscape. Nathaniel Kent's preference for medium-sized farms on estates in order to support as many of the local population as possible demonstrates that economies of scale and profits were not the sole drivers of improvement and estate reorganization. In his survey of the Harewood estate in West Yorkshire (1796) Kent noted approvingly that inhabitants were allowed to rent small parcels of land "to keep a cow or two" and that some of the land was let "in small Bargains and not in great Farms".<sup>59</sup> However, there was some change in farm sizes at Harewood over the second half of the eighteenth century, with the number of tenants renting between 20–100 acres falling by half at the expense of those farming over 100 acres.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Harewood demonstrates the increasing polarisation of landholding, with larger farms at one end of the scale and small allotments for labourers at the other, but fewer small farms. The impression from individual estate records is that although the economies of scale are evident in the re-ordering of estate farms, it was leases and the control they gave the landowner over the maintenance of the land, and the level of rent paid that were predominant concerns. Providing allotments or gardens for labourers was also a priority, in an effort to stave off poverty amongst those dependent on wage labour and provide a wholesome occupation for their free time, thus keeping them out of the public houses and meeting rooms. Estate strategies can be seen to embrace a range of variables, both economic and social, rather than simply maxi-



**3.12 | New Houghton, Norfolk**  
Built at the end of the 1720s, *New Houghton* was a model village for estate workers at Houghton Hall. There are two rows of five houses, each divided into two semi-detached dwellings. Almshouses, a school and a chapel were added in the first half of the nineteenth century. The gates leading into the park can be seen at the end of the rows. (Photo: Jonathan Finch)

mizing profit through the enlargement of farms, which has hitherto been the pre-occupation of agricultural historians.

Just as enclosure and improvement had a profound effect on estate landscapes, their management also had a direct impact on the living conditions of rural populations. One of the most significant elements of any estate was the housing stock across the estate, including “model villages” often positioned outside or close to the park gates (Fig. 3.12), which housed the agricultural workers, craftspeople and professionals of the estate and their families. The buildings themselves created the “architectural grammar” and identity which helped signal the extent of the estate. Nathaniel Kent was one of the first to set out detailed plans for estate cottages, and he was clear about the advantages to estate owners of providing adequate cottage accommodation:

We are careful of our horses, nay of our dogs, which are less valuable animals; we bestow considerable attention upon our stables and kennels, but we are apt to look upon cottages as incumbrances, and clogs to our property; when in fact, those who occupy them are the very nerves and sinews of agriculture.<sup>61</sup>

However, the burden of paying poor relief fell on the parish of residence, and this was a powerful disincentive to provide anything more than the most restricted level of accommodation within an estate. The control exerted over development by large landowners created estates that were under-populated, and created rural slums on the periphery of the estate in what became known as “open” parishes – those where no single landowner or group could control development. Over the first half of the nineteenth century these open parishes tended to grow rapidly in size and to acquire pubs, shops, printers, and dissenting chapels – facilities associated by landowners with sedition and unrest. So although the “closed” parish – where one or few landowners could control development through a monopoly of ownership – was portrayed by landowners as providing a model of ordered rural settlement, by the mid-nineteenth century their alter egos – the open parishes – were perceived as a real threat to morality and internal peace, threats for which the large landowners were held responsible by bourgeois radicals. The significance of open and closed parishes has been debated for many years, and although Sarah Banks recently concluded that rather than binary opposites, there was a scale of difference between the two extremes. It is clear that control through ownership shaped the social and physical form of settlements and that this was most effectively exercised within the context of an estate.

The presence and distribution of open and closed parishes had a significant effect on settlement development, morphology and building types. Although half of the nation’s acreage might have been collected together within large estates, it certainly did not house half of the population. In a sample of ten parishes within and beyond the Yarborough estates in Lincolnshire, population change within the closed parishes of the estate ran at an average of 7% between 1801 and 1861, yet over the same period the population in surrounding open parishes grew by over 200%. This meant that the initial 3:1 population ratio between open and closed parishes in 1801 had become 9:1 by the mid-century mark. These very distinct rural populations were accommodated in very different conditions. In open parishes speculative builders constructed low-cost cottage accommodation that was then rented at high rates, whilst larger cottages were divided to accommodate multiple families. Government Reports from Hornsea in the East Riding of Yorkshire during the mid-nineteenth century, for example, directly associated the conditions endured with simmering social unrest:

A hard feeling has grown up between the classes [...] In the cottages the people huddle together in one sleeping room even if they have others, from habit and ignorance.

In Norfolk the contrast between open and closed parishes was marked. Closed parishes were typically reported thus:

There are now 21 cottages in the parish all in good order. There is no overcrowding. All the new cottages have three bedrooms. The gardens contain a quarter of an acre of ground, which is thought to be as much as a labouring man can cultivate properly. (Haveringland, Norfolk)

Residents of open parishes on the other hand, endured very different conditions:

There are 119 cottages in the parish of which between eighty and ninety are in the hands of small owners. The general condition of the cottages in the parish is very unsatisfactory with some terrible cases of overcrowding [...] A man and his wife and seven children between 2 and 21 of both sexes and one female lodger with an illegitimate child occupy one sleeping room. (Sedgeford, Norfolk)

The key outcome of these reports was the Union Chargeability Act of 1865 which changed the way poor relief was charged by spreading the cost across a number of parishes. Although investment on some estates seems to have been underway in the 1840s, the main burst of cottage building, nationally, came in the decade after the 1865 change in legislation, with many estates embarking on programmes of cottage building and repair. At Castle Howard in North Yorkshire during the 1870s, for example, around £9,500 was spent on 53 cottages, lodges, a reading room and a schoolhouse in the six core parishes of the estate. The impact of these patterns of ownership should not be underestimated. They remain within the landscape today in the form of subsequent development and the survival of historic building stock, and continue to shape the rural landscape.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided the first critical review of the state of landed power in England during the late nineteenth century, when it was arguably at its height, from a landscape perspective. It has evaluated how the data in the “New Domesday” provide a framework, a structure within the landscape, of how the landed estate shaped landscapes and communities at a time of economic and social change. Bateman’s monumental survey of landownership stands as an exceptional, if flawed, work that reveals the extent of the estate landscape in Britain and Ireland during the late-nineteenth century, some nine hundred years after the only previous survey. As such his “New Domesday” deserves greater recognition alongside its Norman counterpart as a unique insight into the historic landscape. A profile of wealth and status can be fashioned from the data that would otherwise be lost, as can a unique insight into a key structuring feature of the landscape – the landed estate. Fortuitously, it also captures the landed estate at its very apogee. An agricultural depression hit Britain hard in the early 1870s and lasted until the very last years of the century, but Bateman’s data was collected largely before its impacts were felt by most landowners. The depression of prices and the subsequent fall in land value compounded the effects of industrialization and migration to the new urban centres and so marked the end of the long period of rural dominance in the economy and society. Further reform of the political system in the late-nineteenth and into the twentieth century also demonstrated the loosening of the landed interest’s grip on political power. Stripped of their economic and political power, many country houses became mere sporting retreats of the increasingly urban elite and the estates began to fragment.

Yet at the moment when agitation about the Land Question was at its most febrile, the landed estate had been the most significant cultural landscape in the first industrial nation. As Nigel Everett has argued, intervention in the landscape during the long eighteenth century “was understood as making explicit and readable statements about the political history, the political constitution, the political future of England, and about the relations that should exist between its citizens”.<sup>62</sup> His characterization can be extended well into the nineteenth century, although the message, the audience, and the orators of the message changed subtly. Historians have long argued about the social status and economic importance of the elite which Bateman captured in his data, but insufficient attention has been

paid to its relationship with the nineteenth-century landscape. Yet the “New Domesday” was about land and about estates as the manifestation of social, economic and political power within the landscape. The impact of estates was – and still is – everywhere to be seen: in the very hedgerows that cut across the wold tops, in the architecture of rural villages, in church towers. Estates were a way of life that determined where and how, most people lived at the start of the modern industrial world, and it is time that they were recognised by scholars as worthy of greater attention.



## Notes

- 1 Mingay, G. E.: *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*. London. 1963; Thompson, F. M. L.: *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*. London. 1963; For a single estate study see Beastall, T. W.: *A North Country Estate: The Lumleys and Saundersons as Landowners, 1600-1900*. London. 1975.
- 2 For example, Richards, Eric: *The Leviathan of Wealth: The Sutherland Fortune in the Industrial Revolution*. London. 1973.
- 3 See Beckett, J. V.: "The Debate over Farm Sizes in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England", in: *Agricultural History* 1983/57, pp. 308-25; Mingay, G. E.: "The Size of Farms in the Eighteenth Century", in: *Economic History Review* 1961/14, pp. 469-88.
- 4 British land was and is still habitually measured in acres. One acre is equivalent to 0.4 hectares.
- 5 Finch, Jonathan: "The Estate: Recognising People and Place in the Modern Landscape", in: C. Dryer, P. S. Barnwell and M. Palmer (eds.): *Post-Medieval Landscapes: Landscape History after Hoskins*. Macclesfield. 2007, pp. 39-54.
- 6 Fellows, F. P.: "On a Proposed Domesday Book...", in: *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*. London. 1872; Spring, David: "Introduction", in: John Bateman (ed.): *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*. Leicester. 1971.
- 7 quoted in Spring 1971, "Introduction", p. 8.
- 8 Spring 1971, "Introduction".
- 9 Lord Derby referred to it as a Domesday Book during a speech in 1871; Spring 1971, "Introduction", p. 9; see also Fellows 1872, "Domesday Book"; Bateman noted on his title page that the data he used was "culled from the Modern Domesday Book" (Bateman, John: *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*. Leicester. 1883, p. iii).
- 10 Lambert, John: "Explanatory Statement", in: *Return of Owners of Land in England and Wales*. London. 1875, pp. 3-14; Spring 1971, "Introduction".
- 11 The introduction to the Return was written by the "strong and influential administrator and civil servant" John Lambert, who was secretary to the Local Government Board, and who had been chief of the Poor Law Board whose statistics the survey used. See Sheard, Sally and Liam J. Donaldson, L. (eds.): *The Nation's Doctor: The Role of the Chief Medical Officer 1855-1998*. London. 2005, pp. 12-19.
- 12 *The Spectator*. Editions from 12 February 1876 and 4 March 1876. The articles were probably written by Meredith Townsend or Richard Holt Hutton, the joint proprietors.

- 13 He owned a 1,400 acre estate, thus dropping out of his own calculations; Spring 1971, "Introduction", p. 13.
- 14 Bateman 1883, *The Great Landowners*, pp. 501-15.
- 15 Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*.
- 16 Clemenson, Heather: *English Country Houses and Landed Estates*. London. 1982, pp. 7-8.
- 17 Clemenson 1982, *English Country Houses*, pp. 20-21 and Appendix 2.
- 18 Bateman 1883, *The Great Landowners*, pp. xv-xvi.
- 19 Bateman 1883 *The Great Landowners*, pp. xiv-xvii.
- 20 Clemenson 1982, *English Country Houses*, pp. 20-21 and Appendix 2.
- 21 Beckett, J. V.: "The Pattern of Landownership in England and Wales, 1660-1880", in: *Economic History Review* 1984/37, pp. 1; 22; Cooper, J. P.: "The Social Distribution of Land and Men in England, 1436-1700", in: *Economic History Review* 1967/20, pp. 419-40; Mingay 1963, *English Landed Society*; Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*; Thompson, F. M. L.: "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in England since the Sixteenth Century", in: *Economic History Review* 1966/19, pp. 505-17.
- 22 Mingay 1963, *English Landed Society*.
- 23 James, C. W.: *Chief Justice Coke, his Family and Descendants at Holkham*. London. 1929; Martins, S. Wade: *A Great Estate at Work: The Holkham Estate and its Inhabitants in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge. 2008, pp. 2-3.
- 24 Finch, Jonathan: "Harewood House and the destruction of Gawthorpe Hall", in: B. Andersen, M. K. Elkjaer and M. Frausing (eds.): *Herregårshistorie Vol 12. Gammel Estrup*. 2017, pp. 85-96.
- 25 Parker, R. A. C.: *Coke of Norfolk: A Financial and Agricultural Study, 1707-1842*. Oxford. 1975.
- 26 Ketton-Cremer, R. W.: "The Visit of King Charles the Second to Norfolk", in: *Norfolk Portraits*. London. 1946, pp. 16-19.
- 27 Wilson, R. W. and A. Mackley: *Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House, 1660-1880*. London. 2000.
- 28 The Glorious Revolution saw James II removed from the throne and replaced by the dual monarchy of his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange in order to ensure a Protestant succession.
- 29 By the late seventeenth century, conveyancers had devised a form of entail called strict settlement which reached over three generations by making the landowner's heir into a tenant-for-life and by settling the estate on trustees for the contingent remainders – in most cases the heir's first son. The system preserved the family estate intact by preventing it from being alienated at

will and protected primogeniture, whilst providing separately for daughters and younger sons. It spread rapidly amongst landed families after the Restoration in 1666 and marked a major step towards securing the prominence and growth of the estate within the modern landscape. Habakkuk, John: *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System: English Landownership, 1650–1950*. Oxford. 1994; Robinson, John Martin: *The English Country Estate*. London. 1988.

- 30 Pocock, J. G. A.: *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge. 1985, p. 107.
- 31 Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*, p. 29; Clemenson 1982, *English Country Houses*.
- 32 Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*, p. 30.
- 33 Establishing accurate acreages for the counties can be problematic. Bateman's table totals 93,489 acres, whilst the 1871 census lists it as 93,078 acres. The current size is 94,394 acres. The discrepancies make scant difference to the proportions owned as estates, but the 1871 census data is used here. Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*, Table I, p. 30; Clemenson 1982, *English Country Houses*, pp. 7–8.
- 34 Clemenson 1982, *English Country Houses* does not identify any of the landowners.
- 35 The additional four are Fludyer (2,638 acres/£4,841); Monckton (2,183 acres/£3,111); Lucas (1,631 acres/£3,647); Hankery (1,388 acres/£3,850).
- 36 His total landholding was 6,922 acres mainly in Leicestershire but also in Norfolk. Bateman 1883, *The Great Landowners*.
- 37 Brodrick, George Charles: *English Land and English Landlords*. London. 1881.
- 38 Bateman 1883, *The Great Landowners*, p. 519.
- 39 Finch, Jonathan: "What More Were the Pastures of Leicester to Me? Hunting, Landscape Character, and the Politics of Place", in: *International Journal of Cultural Property* 2017/14, pp. 361–83; Finch, Jonathan: "Wider Famed Counties: Historic Landscape Characterisation in the Midland Shires", in: *Landscapes* 2017/8, pp. 50–63.
- 40 Thompson 1963, *English Landed Society*, Table VI.
- 41 In his summary tables, Bateman chooses to distinguish peers from great landowners. The latter was based on Bateman's association of a quantitative amount of land and estimated income with a certain social status. The former assumes an association between a hereditary title and substantial landownership. These are slightly different sets of significance and meaning.
- 42 Duke of Northumberland (Alnwick Castle), Earl of Tankerville (Chillington Castle), Walter Charles Selby (Biddleston).

- 43 Earl of Leicester; Marquis of Townshend; Marquis of Cholmondley; Evans-Lombe; Lord Hastings; Earl of Orford; Lord Walsingham; Lord Suffield; Sir G. R. L. Hare; Earl of Kimberley; Hamond.
- 44 Rental return values are given in the pre-decimal currency of pounds, shillings and pence. There were twelve pence in a shilling, and twenty shillings in a pound.
- 45 Bateman 1883, *The Great Landowners*, p. xvii.
- 46 Rackham, Oliver: *The History of the Countryside*. London. 1986.
- 47 Kent, Nathaniel: *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*. London. 1775, pp. 7-8
- 48 Mingay, G. E.: *Parliamentary Enclosure in England: An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact, 1750-1850*. London. 1997; Turner, Michael: *Enclosures in Britain 1750-1830*. London. 1984; Williamson, Tom: "Understanding Enclosure", in: *Landscapes 2000/Vol?*, pp. 56-79.
- 49 Williamson, Tom: "Archaeological Perspectives on Landed Estates: Research Agendas", in: J. Finch and K. Giles (eds.): *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape*. Woodbridge. 2007, p. 3.
- 50 Daniels, Stephen and Suzanne Seymour: "Landscape design and the idea of improvement", in: R. A. Dogshon and R. A. Butlin (eds.): *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*. London. 1990, pp. 487-520; Gregory, Jon: "Mapping Improvement: Reshaping Rural Landscapes in the Eighteenth Century", in: *Landscapes 2005/6*, pp. 62-82.
- 51 Young, Arthur: *General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire*. London. 1809, pp. 35-36.
- 52 Young, Arthur: *General View of the Agriculture of Lincolnshire*. London. 1808, pp. 42-45.
- 53 Fuller, Heather A.: "Landownership And The Lindsey Landscape", in: *Annals Of The Association Of American Geographers 1976/66*, pp. 14-24.
- 54 Young, Arthur: *General View of the Agriculture of Norfolk*. London. 1804, p. 490.
- 55 Finch, Jonathan: *Church Monuments in Norfolk before 1850: An Archaeology of Commemoration*. Oxford. 2000, pp. 165-66.
- 56 Overton, Mark: *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850*. Cambridge. 1996, pp. 170-72.
- 57 Overton 1996, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 196.
- 58 Martins 2008, *The Great Estate at Work*, pp. 8-9.
- 59 WYAS WYL 250/3/Kent, Claridge and Pearce Survey.
- 60 WYAS WYL 250/3/13b, 16 Estate Surveys; WYAS WYL 250/3/Kent, Claridge and Pearce Survey.
- 61 Kent 1775, *Hints to Gentlemen*, p. 230.
- 62 Everett, N. *The Tory View of Landscape*. 1994. Yale, p.7.

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