


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Bound to the soil (Part I): the origins of compulsory apprenticeship schemes in South-West rural England c.1670–1750

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## Abstract

This is the first of two articles examining a highly distinctive but overlooked system for organizing child and youth labour in rural England. It reveals how parishes used their powers under the 1601 Poor Law to allocate children as unpaid indentured farm servants (for up to 17 years) to local landholders occupying properties of a certain value. As both apprentice and master could be compelled by law, parish authorities were able to implement centralized rotation schemes. This article (Part I) addresses the initial questions of when, where, why and how compulsory apprenticeship schemes were introduced, based primarily on a survey of the South West before 1750. It presents new evidence of how they emerged as local experiments from the 1670s in a context of overlapping crises and became widespread by the mid-eighteenth century. The consequence was a labour system that bound children to local soil, and thus had peculiar parallels to serfdom, leading nineteenth-century authorities to condemn it for distorting the ‘free’ labour market.

## 1. Introduction

The vast infrastructure of laws and institutions compelling the able-bodied to labour that was established in England in the centuries after the Black Death was provocatively characterized as constituting ‘a new serfdom’ by A. L. Beier, analogous to the ‘second serfdom’ imposed upon peasants in Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> One element within this edifice was the policy of parish (or pauper) apprenticeship established by the Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601, in which parish officers were granted the power to bind poor children by indenture as ‘apprentices’ to those judged fit to be masters, with the consent of two magistrates, until they reached the age of 21 (girls) or 24 (boys).<sup>2</sup> Since no consent was required by either the child or their parents/guardians, it was a mode of poor relief based on coerced labour. The majority of rural children were bound as apprentices in husbandry or housewifery, starting between the ages of 7 and 15, to live and work with

their master or mistress as an unpaid indentured farm servant for a potential term of up to 14 or 17 years, in exchange for maintenance and the opportunity to gain experience and skills.<sup>3</sup> However, in this case, the parallels with serfdom ran deeper than its general coercive character. Most labour laws aimed to compel people into waged work, to restrict labour mobility generally and to shift the locus of extra-economic coercive power from individual landlords to the state. Yet, as this article will demonstrate, many rural parishes developed distinctive systems for organizing parish apprenticeships that compelled young people to perform unwaged work, bound them to specific local landholdings and empowered local landowners to exercise wide-ranging discretionary power over the local workforce. While the analogy is limited, it highlights the startling peculiarity of parish apprenticeships within the English economy. This is the first of two articles that aims to explicate why and how these labour systems bound children to local soil and explore their historical relationship to the Poor Laws and the labour market.

Parish apprenticeship had evolved into three distinct forms by the early nineteenth century, as recognized by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1927: the binding of children individually to masters with a premium, who accepted ‘voluntarily’; the binding of children in ‘batches to manufacturers,’ primarily to textile factories; and the compulsory ‘allotment of parish children among the ratepayers.’<sup>4</sup> This third type is the subject of this study.<sup>5</sup> It was distinctive owing to the way the legal power to compel an individual to receive an apprentice was used to construct predictable systems for allocating children among ratepayers, which the Webbs noted was ‘somewhat analogous to the “Roundsmen” and “Labour Rate” devices for sharing the burden of the adults.’<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this analogy was the basis of repeated criticisms by three assistant Poor Law commissioners in 1836. William Gilbert, for example, argued that apprenticeship schemes were erected ‘upon the same false principles upon which the labour-rate was established’ and were subject to the same ‘objections.’<sup>7</sup> The significance of the analogy is that the Labour Rate was one of the labour allocation schemes that emerged from the 1790s in response to the crisis of rural poverty and unemployment.<sup>8</sup> Each ratepayer was required either to employ labourers at an agreed wage level or to pay the equivalent in rates to the overseers, or some combination.<sup>9</sup> These labour schemes were condemned as one of the chief ‘evils’ of the Old Poor Law because they were judged to be an unnatural distortion of the labour market.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore striking that the commissioners criticized compulsory apprenticeship schemes in exactly the same terms – as ‘an undue interference with the market of free labour.’<sup>11</sup>

Given the concerns of contemporaries and the significance of the historical associations, it is surprising that such schemes have been overlooked since the Webbs’ account a century ago. Beyond passing mentions in individual studies – which indicate their existence as early as the seventeenth century – we know nothing about the development of these schemes before the nineteenth century. Part of their apparent neglect can be explained by being confined to particular regions, as explored here. Yet, more fundamentally, our dominant interpretive frames have rendered them either invisible or insignificant. The most common framing is to study parish apprenticeships primarily as a device of poor relief, focusing on the circumstances of the family and its effectiveness as a method to alleviate poverty.<sup>12</sup> When attention turns to the economics of apprenticeship, however, it is either at the micro level of individuals and

families within the household economy or at the macro level of the market economy.<sup>13</sup> In the latter, apprentices are reduced to an artificial supply of labour, the dynamics of which are explicable only as either a direct *response to* or an *interference with* market demand.<sup>14</sup> A partial exception is Katrina Honeyman's study on factory apprenticeships after 1780, which demonstrates that they constituted a distinctive economic arrangement that was 'rigorous, well coordinated and formally recorded'.<sup>15</sup> Methodologically, the standard approach has been encouraged by a reliance on indentures, which present a series of discrete, disconnected events with standardized information ripe for statistical analysis.<sup>16</sup> Theoretically, it has been shaped by the naturalization of markets within much economic history, which leads to a presumption that most economic phenomena should be explicable in market terms.<sup>17</sup> Yet, it is a mistake to attempt to explain parish apprenticeship schemes solely in terms of market forces for at least two simple reasons: first, their labour had no price and was not subject to standard supply-and-demand dynamics; second, in contrast to the decentralized allocation of a market, these schemes were centralized.<sup>18</sup> While historians of unfree labour have identified pauper apprenticeships as coerced labour shaped by non-market forces, this has focused on national law rather than local implementation.<sup>19</sup>

The aim here is to contribute to the political economy of parish apprenticeship by exploring how its distinctive mode of organizing labour was shaped by legal and political institutions, without reducing it to an incidental by-product of how the costs of poor relief were distributed. It is principally concerned with compulsory apprenticeships as a local social policy, such that the question of labour is not merely about the allocation of productive resources but always deeply entangled with wider concerns about socialization, moral discipline and patriarchal authority.<sup>20</sup> Over two articles, this study presents the first sustained examination of the origins, evolution and governance of compulsory apprenticeship schemes in rural England. Such schemes were not marginal and could involve as many as one-quarter of all parish-born children.<sup>21</sup> The core analysis rests on a survey of the best-documented schemes in the South West before 1750 in order to focus on their early origins and development. It therefore does not attempt to offer a comprehensive national survey until their formal abolition in 1844.<sup>22</sup>

This article, Part I, addresses the initial questions of when, where, why and how compulsory apprenticeship schemes were introduced. First, it explains the context in which they first emerged in the late seventeenth century, as the rising costs of poor relief and a relative labour shortage prompted experiments in parochial work schemes and a series of unsuccessful attempts at full national structural reform c.1695–1714. Second, building especially on Steve Hindle's analysis, it shows how the legal uncertainty on the question of compellability arising from the 1601 Poor Law was only partially resolved by statute in 1697, which did not specify how parishes were to use their power. Third, it reviews the scattered historiographical clues about compulsory schemes in conjunction with evidence from the 1834 Poor Law Report to sketch a picture of regional differentiation and identify the significance of the South West. Fourth, it presents new evidence from 40 parishes in Devon, Somerset and Dorset that clearly demonstrates they were operating schemes based on binding to properties rather than persons before 1750, but that these evolved slowly through local initiative. Finally, it concludes with reflections on the general relationship between compulsory schemes, the Poor Law and the

labour market. Part II builds on this by examining the scale and organizational principles governing the schemes, primarily through a detailed case study of the parish of Awliscombe, Devon.

## 2. Crisis and experimentation

Towards the end of the seventeenth century there was growing anxiety and frustration among ratepayers and policymakers about the rising costs of poor relief.<sup>23</sup> While commentators over-estimated the problem, a fresh assessment by Brodie Waddell confirms that the underlying trend was indeed 'substantial growth' in poor relief expenditure in the last three decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> Further, Waddell has also shown how this was compounded by a general economic crisis in the 1690s, as a brutal combination of war-affected trade, rapid inflation and monetary instability severely damaged the living standards of the working population.<sup>25</sup> The late seventeenth century was also a period of rural labour shortage, which strengthened the bargaining position of servants and labourers, infuriated employers and fused with a wider anxiety among elites about young people 'living at their own hands' outside proper authority. Officials responded by intensifying their efforts to police poor youth through parish apprenticeship and compulsory service, targeting younger and older age groups, respectively.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the twin motivations to lower the poor rate and regulate the labour supply both served to renew attention to the implementation of parish apprenticeships towards the eighteenth century.

Local and national government responded to this turbulence with new experimental initiatives and efforts at wholesale reform of the Poor Laws.<sup>27</sup> Although the national efforts to overhaul the Elizabethan Poor Laws were ultimately a failure – with parliament unable to pass any of 14 bills between 1695 and 1714 – the efforts were revealing.<sup>28</sup> The priority was to more fully realize the aim of putting the poor to work, which had attracted creative solutions from a series of pamphlets from the 1670s stimulated by the 'utility of the poor' doctrine.<sup>29</sup> Leading this task from 1696 was the new Board of Trade, which received one proposal notable for both its content and its author.<sup>30</sup> John Locke, in his role as a commissioner for the board, sent his report on employment for the poor in the autumn of 1697. Regarding children, Locke proposed a combination of a 'working school' with a mix of voluntary and compulsory apprenticeships. Poor children aged 3 to 14 would be sent to learn and work in the school, from which local craftsmen and landholders were obliged to take boys as apprentices. Craftsmen would be 'bound to take every other of their respective apprentices from amongst the boys' without money at whatever age, until they reached 23. Landowners possessing more than £25 per annum and tenants renting more than £50 per annum would likewise be expected to choose a boy as an 'apprentice in husbandry'. Crucially, these selections were underpinned by compulsory binding-by-property:

[W]hatever boys are not by this means bound out apprentices before they are full 14 shall ... be bound to such gentlemen, yeomen, or farmers within the said hundred as have the greatest number of acres of land in their hands, who shall be obliged to take them for their apprentices till the age of 23, or bind them out at their own cost to some handicraftsmen.<sup>31</sup>

Locke therefore proposed a kind of rotation system for parish apprentices among both craftsmen and landholders, the latter based on a minimum property qualification and adjusted to ensure that the larger landholders took the greatest proportion of children. While Locke's proposal never progressed to statute, it is significant that ideas for binding children by property were circulating around Westminster at this time.

It is within this context of failed national reform that apprenticeship schemes must be understood as one of numerous efforts at local reform, especially alongside the more well-known founding of Corporations of the Poor and establishment of workhouses in towns and cities, beginning with Bristol in 1698 and followed by 14 more by 1712.<sup>32</sup> The workhouse and apprenticeships are often discussed together generally as alternative methods for instilling industrious habits in pauper children.<sup>33</sup> Yet the synchronous statutory support for compulsory apprenticeships (1697 Act) and for workhouses (through local Acts for Corporations in 1698) hints at a greater affinity. Hindle has suggested that in the early eighteenth century apprenticeships and workhouses were primarily disciplinary tools to restrict relief, functioning as a deterrent in the same manner as badging.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as we will see, this alone cannot account for the considerable administrative effort into designing complex systems for allocating children (when the deterrent was clearly ineffective). Similarly, John Broad contrasts the responses to two acute periods of crises – 1690–1710 and 1790–1815 – by characterizing the former as focused on 'punitive measures', including 'forcing teenagers into apprenticeship', and the latter with more productive measures of 'Speenhamland, the roundsman system, and bread quotas'.<sup>35</sup> Yet, if we follow the Poor Law commissioners of the 1830s in seeing compulsory apprenticeships as constituting a labour allocation scheme, then there is a clear resemblance between these periods in the way parish vestries sought to exert central control over the supply and distribution of pauper labour.

### 3. The legal power of compulsion

The relationship between the 1697 Act and parochial rotation schemes is particularly oblique, and thus it is not surprising that the significance of both has been under-appreciated in histories of eighteenth-century parish apprenticeships. For many historians, the statute merely enhanced the ability of parishes to bind children through the threat of fining recalcitrant masters, providing a new revenue stream for shrewd vestries.<sup>36</sup> Only a few, following the Webbs, have loosely linked the Act to organized schemes for compulsory binding, but without further analysis.<sup>37</sup> Yet it was precisely the way in which the vague provisions of 1697 were interpreted by local authorities that enabled the construction of elaborate local labour systems.

The power to bind poor child apprentices was uncertain from the beginning. The Acts of 1598 and 1601 gave parish officers almost complete discretion as to the selection of both child and master (as long as they could get assent from two magistrates).<sup>38</sup> The basic legality of compulsory parish apprenticeship – referring to the compulsion of the master, not the child – was contested continually throughout the seventeenth century, as detailed by Hindle. The principle that anyone selected by parish officers was compellable was affirmed by Chief Justice Heath in 1633, the 'spirit' of which was largely upheld until the 1670s, but judicial guidebooks in 1682 and 1683 acknowledged

that the matter of compulsion remained unsettled.<sup>39</sup> Yet there was also ongoing doubt and confusion about precisely *who* could be forced to take an apprentice – discussed in detail as ‘this *Vexata Questio*’ by an author of a Poor Law treatise in 1710.<sup>40</sup> A few judgments in the King’s Bench sought to limit the compulsory power in relation to landholding: in 1663, it was judged that an apprentice may be placed outside the parish, but only if the master did ‘farm Lands in the same Parish’;<sup>41</sup> in 1678, Judge Twisden concluded ‘that the Overseers of the Poor could not force Apprentice on any that did not personally occupy husbandry’;<sup>42</sup> in 1689, Chief Justice Holt gave his opinion that ‘in husbandry only they can bind by Compulsion’.<sup>43</sup> Notably, the last two cases interpreted the 1601 Act in light of a clause in the Statute of Artificers (1563) that allowed for any householder ‘using half a plough land at the least in tillage’ to take anyone aged 10 to 18 as an apprentice in husbandry until the age of 21 or 24, even though it was not strictly the purview of parish officers. This demonstrates how such statutes were understood to be overlapping and interlocking planks of social policy, which we misrepresent when we refer to separate Poor and Labour Laws. The correct application of parish apprenticeships was to be interpreted in terms of national labour strategy as well as tax liabilities.

The 1696–1697 parliamentary session sought to resolve the issue of compulsion by passing the first substantial amendment to the legal powers created by the 1601 Act. Owing to ‘there being Doubts whether the Persons to whom such Children are to be bound are compellable to receive such Children as Apprentices’, it declared that those appointed by parish officials were indeed compellable to accept and maintain apprentices, with a £10 fine as penalty for refusal.<sup>44</sup> Hindle reflected that the first century of legal ambiguities created ‘space for local negotiation’ of policy, which was ‘finally resolved’ by the 1697 statute.<sup>45</sup> Yet the statute remained strangely silent on the troublesome subject of *who* could be compelled to take apprentices, which kept open a range of interpretations and practical strategies. The most fundamental question was whether children could be bound to those living outside of the parish.<sup>46</sup> It was only settled in 1789, in *Rex v Clapp*, that the compulsory power applied to (and was therefore limited to) occupiers of lands within the parish, both resident and non-resident. Chief Justice Kenyon noted that the power must be limited as officers ‘cannot compel mere strangers who stand in no relation to the parish to take such apprentice’, but pointed out that the purpose of the 1601 Act ‘was to compel all those who had any property in the parish to contribute their due proportion towards the maintenance of the poor; and the receiving [of] apprentices is one mode of contributing to their general relief’.<sup>47</sup> The same legal clarification was given a few years earlier in 1780 with respect to the specific case of Incorporated Hundreds, which stipulated that the only people who could be compelled were ‘an inhabitant and occupier of lands, tenements, or hereditaments in the parish to which such child belongs’.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the power bestowed by the 1697 Act was eventually interpreted as placing a legal obligation on all landholders within the parish to maintain poor children allocated to them.

To gauge legal opinion in the intervening decades we can consider the guidebooks for justices published in the eighteenth century, which tended to present the 1697 Act as a subtle clarification of the law. In 1704, William Nelson’s *The office and authority of a justice of peace* followed Michael Dalton by asserting that ‘Every Man of good Estate or Ability may be compelled to take Apprentices’, since the power given to

parish officers to bind children implied that masters must take them. In this view, the 1697 Act merely streamlined the mechanism for fining resistant masters in order to enforce this compulsory power.<sup>49</sup> However, Nelson claimed that parish officers could not bind to masters in another parish, only justices could. Revisions to later editions continued to assert that the scope of the compulsory power ultimately lay with magistrates.<sup>50</sup> Richard Burn's *The justice of the peace and parish officer* replaced Nelson's as the classic of the genre, but the early editions (1755, 1758, 1766, 1780) added little to the basic provision of 1697.<sup>51</sup> None of the handbooks gave any guidance on how to practically implement parish apprenticeships on any scale. Although a 1738 pamphlet on poverty claimed that the 'Power of the Parish Officers extends no farther than to Masters within their Parish', but magistrates could compel anyone within the county.<sup>52</sup> Therefore the period from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century was characterized by statutory licence for parishes to compel both apprentice and master into an indentured relationship, to be applied as they pleased under the eye of the magistrates.

#### 4. Regional patterns

We currently know little about the relationship between the compulsory clause and local practice from 1697 to its abolition in 1844. The best overview remains the snapshot provided by the Webbs using evidence from the assistant Poor Law commissioners' reports in 1834, in which they highlighted the variation of parish 'allotment' schemes, from rotations to lotteries, all seemingly designed to share the burden of maintaining children among occupiers.<sup>53</sup> By 1833, they summarized, the batch-binding of children to textile factories in the North and the Midlands had almost disappeared, while binding individual children by premium was declining but continued in most urban parishes. Yet the 'great increase in pauperism' at the end of the eighteenth century pushed parish officers to find solutions for higher numbers of poor children, to which some rural counties ('notably Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Suffolk, Norfolk and Yorkshire') responded by using their powers of compulsion to forcibly allocate children among ratepayers, whereas in the counties that fully implemented the 'Allowance System' (Sussex, Surrey, Kent and Berkshire), 'orphans and other children were simply kept in the poorhouse or workhouse' until they were old enough for employment or weekly allowances.<sup>54</sup>

However, a re-examination of the 1834 reports shows that compulsory apprenticeships were even more widespread in counties not mentioned by the Webbs, extending into the rural West Midlands counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire.<sup>55</sup> Further, their earlier existence is indicated by the observation that they had been 'generally discontinued' in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire and had become 'unknown, from disuse' in Wiltshire and 'quite obsolete' in Dorset.<sup>56</sup> Even some Hampshire parishes such as Lymington were 'billeting' apprentices to ratepayers, while the Isle of Wight allocated apprentices to ratepayers according to a property qualification.<sup>57</sup> The 'Rural Queries' sent to parishes in 1832 did not contain a direct question about parish apprentices, but the occasional reference in answers mostly confirms this picture, although some parishes from Lancashire and the North Riding indicated that they systematically bound apprentices to husbandry.<sup>58</sup>

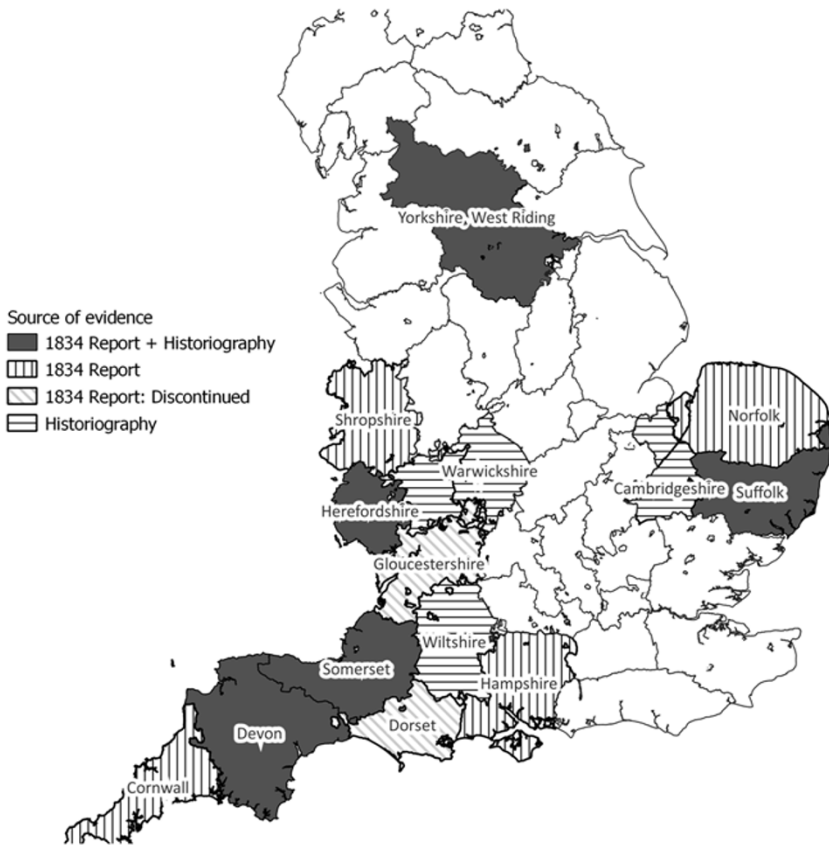


This national snapshot provides little insight into implementation prior to the 1830s. If we gather together the occasional hints (often a sentence or less) scattered across more than a dozen county and parish studies, then they are broadly consistent with the geographical pattern found in the 1834 report. However, they push the chronology further back than the Webbs, who suggested that parishes resorted to compulsory apprenticeship from the 1790s only as a reluctant response to increases in poverty. Evidence for rotation or lottery schemes, or the systematic use of compulsory binding, appears in studies in Devon (from 1728),<sup>59</sup> Somerset (from 1741),<sup>60</sup> Wiltshire (from 1668),<sup>61</sup> Suffolk (from 1770),<sup>62</sup> Herefordshire (from 1750), Warwickshire (from 1787),<sup>63</sup> Staffordshire (from 1739),<sup>64</sup> Worcestershire (from 1781)<sup>65</sup> and Cambridgeshire (from c.1663?).<sup>66</sup> A few other references are unclear or difficult to verify, including to parishes in Essex found in the volumes of the Victoria County History (VCH).<sup>67</sup>

A fairly clear regional pattern emerges, as displayed in [Figure 1](#), which highlights the counties with existing evidence for some schemes, combining the total of 26 reports in 1834 and the various county-level or parish-level studies cited earlier. This map is intended to provide a rough picture only, as the evidence is not co-extensive with county boundaries. Building on the regional contrast noted by the Webbs, we can identify a rough regional split that is mostly consistent with the basic socio-economic division between a highland pastoral zone in the North and the West and a lowland arable zone in the South and the East of England.<sup>68</sup> It is also mostly aligned with the two ‘macro-regions’ of Poor Law administration, with distinct cultures of welfare in the eighteenth century, as argued by Steven King.<sup>69</sup> In summary, the vast majority of evidence for compulsory schemes has been found to the North and West of a line running from around Weymouth to Teesmouth: especially the South-Western counties of Devon, Somerset and Cornwall; the West Midlands counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire; and the West Riding in Yorkshire.<sup>70</sup> Yet it is important to stress that this is an incomplete picture that will certainly include significant variation within and between counties. The major exceptions to this broad pattern – the Eastern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk – are perhaps instructive as they represent a special case.<sup>71</sup> These schemes were developed and administered by the Incorporated Hundreds established from the 1750s onwards under local Acts of Parliament, which centralized administration, including the power to bind apprentices.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, an Act of 1780 was the first statute to clarify that apprentices could be forcibly bound only to inhabitants and occupiers in the same parish.<sup>73</sup> This anomaly indicates that any explanation of the schemes must incorporate the political structures administering poor relief as well as the general socio-economic conditions, or the farming system in particular. This theme will be addressed in Part II.

With this regional picture in mind, a scoping exercise was conducted searching for earlier evidence of compulsory schemes in three counties representing different regions, all with a good survival of early eighteenth-century parish records, indicating a practice of binding parish apprentices: Devon in the South-West, West Yorkshire in the North and Essex in the East.<sup>74</sup> Whereas Devon and West Yorkshire were chosen as strong candidates, Essex was selected as a contrasting test case. Abundant early records were identified in Devon from the late seventeenth century, prompting a wider survey of the South-West including Somerset and Dorset, resulting in





**Figure 1.** A map of counties in England with evidence of compulsory binding or rotation schemes, labelled by source of evidence.

the detailed study that follows. A search for earlier records in West Yorkshire suggests that the systematic use of compulsory binding was predominantly an early nineteenth-century development, with only a few clear examples found in the late eighteenth century. The overall level of evidence for parish apprenticeships in Yorkshire is relatively low before 1800. Among 16 parishes and townships with good surviving records, only two (Bingley from 1766, Heptonstall from 1776) show clear evidence for organized property-binding schemes.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere the records suggest only a partial use of the compulsory power in what were perhaps more flexible or hybrid systems without systematic estate-binding.<sup>76</sup> As numerous schemes were reported by John Tweedy in 1834, we can conclude that property-binding schemes were only adopted in Yorkshire from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>77</sup> In Essex, no concrete evidence was found that parishes were binding children with respect to estates, based on a sample of the best apprenticeship records across 21 parishes before 1750 (including those that the VCH indicated did operate early schemes).<sup>78</sup> Instead,

vestry minutes show case-by-case agreements using premiums to incentivize masters.<sup>79</sup> However, there are indications that parishes used their compulsory powers when necessary, although usually simply to ‘parishioners’ rather than specifying occupiers or estates.<sup>80</sup> In summary, the South-West was confirmed as the key region for early development.

## 5. South-West schemes c.1670–1750

The following analysis is based on a survey of evidence for property-binding schemes beginning before 1750 in the South-Western counties of Devon, Somerset and Dorset.<sup>81</sup> After a thorough search of the county archive, positive evidence was found from 40 parishes, which can be roughly divided into four categories based on the type of record: (A) formal policies to organize an apprenticeship scheme based on the principle that occupiers of ‘estates’ could be compelled to receive a poor child from within the parish, as found in vestry memos or minutes; (B) systematic records that display the operation of such an organized scheme, but lacking a formal policy statement, such as registers or lists of apprentices bound out, or lists of estates liable to take them; (C) occasional references to estate-binding for individual or small groups of children, with no further evidence of wider organization; (D) statements in contracts (indentures) specifying that the child was bound to the named master ‘for’ or ‘in respect’ of a particular estate. Table 1 presents a summary of the earliest evidence (and record in which it was found) for 40 parishes in categories A, B and C (as D will be treated separately). To indicate the chronological development, Figure 2 displays the number of schemes introduced per decade from 1670 to 1750. Parishes are not directly comparable because the level of evidence varies significantly and many records are retrospective, which is potentially misleading about the formal beginnings of schemes (as discussed later).<sup>82</sup> All parishes in A and B operated some form of rotation scheme, binding children in turn to selected estates before going round again, albeit subject to various modifications. Where recorded, all parishes were almost universally binding children to farm service (to practise ‘husbandry’ or ‘huswifery’).

In this article (Part I), the analysis will focus on the chronological development and geographical trend that emerges. Part II will present a detailed analysis of the policy (e.g. landholding thresholds) and practice (e.g. scale) of the schemes. The main finding is clear from the table: property-binding schemes began before the end of the seventeenth century and were widely established in the South-West by the mid-eighteenth century, with many parishes keeping systematic records. The more detailed chronology will be reviewed in three stages: the earliest origins before and after the 1697 Act; the evolution over time; and the additional evidence from indentures. This is followed by a consideration of the geographical distribution.

### 5.1 Origins

What was the relationship between the 1697 Act and the property-binding schemes of individual parishes? The considerable autonomy of parishes to interpret national legislation was a general characteristic of the Poor Law, and a range of factors complicated

**Table 1.** Summary of earliest evidence of property-binding across South-West England pre-1750

Parish	County	Earliest evidence date (date created)	Reference
<b>Colyton</b>	Devon	1673	DHC, 3483A/PO/24, <i>Register of Apprentices 1598–1711</i>
<b>Ide</b>	Devon	1679 (1745)	DHC, 1857A/add/PO/83, <i>Apprentice Book, 1679–1817</i>
<b>Cheriton Fitzpaine</b>	Devon	1680	DHC, 1633A/PO/1, <i>Churchwardens and Overseers account books, 1676–1723</i> (inc. annual lists of apprentices)
<b>Halberton</b>	Devon	1684	DHC, 4074A/PZ/1, <i>Parish records book, 1684–1804</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1684–1802)
<b>Banwell</b>	Somerset	1684 (c.1757)	SHC, D/P/ban/13/6/1, <i>Overseers' accounts with rates throughout. 1738–1760</i> (inc. list of apprentices 1684–1757)
<b>Broadclyst</b>	Devon	1686 (c.1714)	DHC, 3594A/add99/PR/16, <i>Burials, 1678–1830</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1685–1830)
<b>West Bagborough</b>	Somerset	1691 (c.1742)	SHC, D/P/w.bag/13/2/2, <i>Overseers' accounts with assessment and list of apprentices from 1691 to 1800, 1718–1802</i>
<b>Washfield</b>	Devon	1693 (c.1709)	DHC, 1146A/add/PO/1, <i>Register of parish apprentices, 1686–1802</i>
<b>Feniton</b>	Devon	1696	DHC, 1090A/PV/1, <i>Parish account book, 1572–1830</i>
<b>Ottery St Mary</b>	Devon	1696	DHC, 180A/PO/1, <i>Minutes of election of overseers and churchwardens and apprenticeship rotas, 1682–1838</i>
<b>Bishops Hull</b>	Somerset	1696 (c.1729)	SHC, D/P/b.hll/9/1/1, <i>Vestry minutes. 1743–1825</i> (inc. list of apprentices 1696–1820)
<b>Aller</b>	Somerset	1697	SHC, D/P/all/13/2/2, <i>Churchwardens' accounts, with rates. [1660]–1766</i> (inc. list of apprentices 1660–1728)
<b>Drayton</b>	Somerset	1697	SHC, D/P/dton/13/2/3, <i>Accounts and rates... list of apprentices bound out and to whom bound, 1697–1742</i>
<b>Nettlecombe</b>	Somerset	1698	SHC, D/P/net/13/6/2, <i>Apprenticeship roll. 1698–1821</i>
<b>Litton Cheney</b>	Dorset	1699	DoHC, PE-LIC/OV/4/1, <i>List of children bound out as apprentices by the parish. 1699</i>
<b>West Buckland</b>	Somerset	1701	SHC, D/P/w.bu/13/2/1, <i>Poor Book with rating assessment. 1700–1719</i> (inc. 1701 scheme for apprentices)
<b>Stogumber</b>	Somerset	1704 (c.1763)	SHC, DD/TB/29/9, <i>Family and Estate Papers of the Carew, Trollope-Bellew and associated families, Crowcombe: Miscellaneous documents. [1647]–1764</i> (inc. list of poor children bound apprentice 1647–1763)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

Parish	County	Earliest evidence date (date created)	Reference
<b>Yatton</b>	Somerset	1706	SHC, D/P/yat/13/2/3, <i>Overseers' accounts and rates throughout. 1706–1736</i> (inc. list of apprentices, 1706–1742)
<b>Awliscombe</b>	Devon	1708 (c.1740)	DHC, 3020A/PV/1, <i>Memorandum Book, 1708–1847</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1708–1753)
<b>Cullompton</b>	Devon	1709	DHC, 2404A/PO/66, <i>Register of apprentices 1709–1757</i>
<b>Bleadon</b>	Somerset	1709 (c.1777)	DHC, D/P/ble/13/2/2, <i>Accounts and rates. 1742–1781</i> (inc. list of apprentices 1709–1777)
<b>North Tawton</b>	Devon	1713 (c.1732)	DHC, 2914A/PO/9: North Tawton Parish, <i>List of apprentices bound, 1713–1732</i>
<b>Crowcombe</b>	Somerset	1714 (c.1730)	SHC, DD/TB/29/9, Family and Estate Papers of the Carew, Trollope-Bellew and associated families, <i>Crowcombe: Miscellaneous documents. [1647]–1764</i> (inc. list of apprentices 1714–1760)
<b>Kenn</b>	Devon	1720 (c.1780s)	DHC, 2668A/PO/39, <i>Volume entitled "A Rotation for Binding out Parish Apprentices in Kenn formed from inspecting the Counterparts of the Indentures, the Book of Orders and the Poor Books since the year 1716", 1716–1833</i>
<b>Loxbeare</b>	Devon	1721	DHC, 1558A/PO/79, <i>Register of Parish Apprentices, 1721–1837</i>
<b>Sidbury</b>	Devon	1725	DHC, 2096A/add99/PO/1, <i>Annual lists of parish officers... lists of apprentices and people removed, 1722–1776</i>
<b>Wedmore</b>	Somerset	1727 (c.1770s)	SHC, D/P/wed/13/6/7, <i>Register of apprentices, proprietors of land 1727–1780</i>
<b>Alphington</b>	Devon	1727 (c.1802)	DHC, 1481A/PO/687, <i>Register of parish apprentices, 1689–1824</i>
<b>Withycombe Raleigh</b>	Devon	1728	DHC, 2868A/add99/PW/1, <i>Accounts, 1714–1841</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1726–1786)
<b>Broadwindsor</b>	Dorset	1733	DoHC, PE/BDW/OV 1/1/2, <i>Account book 1723–1789</i> (inc. register of apprentices c.1733–1793)
<b>Huntspill</b>	Somerset	1736	SHC, D/P/hun/13/1/2, <i>Poor rate book... vestry meetings re binding of apprentices 1735–1757</i>
<b>Kilminster</b>	Devon	1736 (c.1752)	DHC, 50M/O/14, Marwood Tucker family of Kilminster, <i>List of apprentices bound on estates in Kilminster, 1736–1753</i>
<b>Combe St Nicholas</b>	Somerset	1736 (c.1760s)	SHC, D/P/com.n/9/1/1, <i>Vestry notices. [1725–1775]</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1731–1774)
<b>Whitchurch Canonichum</b>	Dorset	1738 (c.1785)	DoHC, PE-WCC/OV/1/11, <i>Summary Account Book 1771–1820</i> (inc. register of apprentices 1738–1785)

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

Parish	County	Earliest evidence date (date created)	Reference
<b>Horsington</b>	Somerset	1741	SHC, D/P/hors/9/1/1, <i>Vestry notices. 1727–1754</i>
<b>Bishops Tawton</b>	Devon	1741 (c.1790)	NDRO, 1469A/PO136, <i>Register of apprentices, 1741–1808</i>
<b>Bratton Fleming</b>	Devon	1742 (c.1765)	NDRO, 1506aA/PV 1, <i>Vestry minutes (inc. register of apprentices 1742–1775)</i>
<b>Kingsnympton</b>	Devon	1744 (c.1783)	NDRO, 3330-1/PO 1, <i>List of 'estates' providing overseer of poor and names of apprentices. 1744–1809</i>
<b>Burnham On Sea</b>	Somerset	1745 (c.1791)	SHC, D/P/b.on.s/23/8, <i>List of Burnham parish apprentices 1745–1791. 18th century</i>
<b>Landkey</b>	Devon	1747 (c.1765)	NDRO, 1951A/PO/1, <i>Accounts, 1747–1774 (inc. list of apprentices 1747–1765)</i>

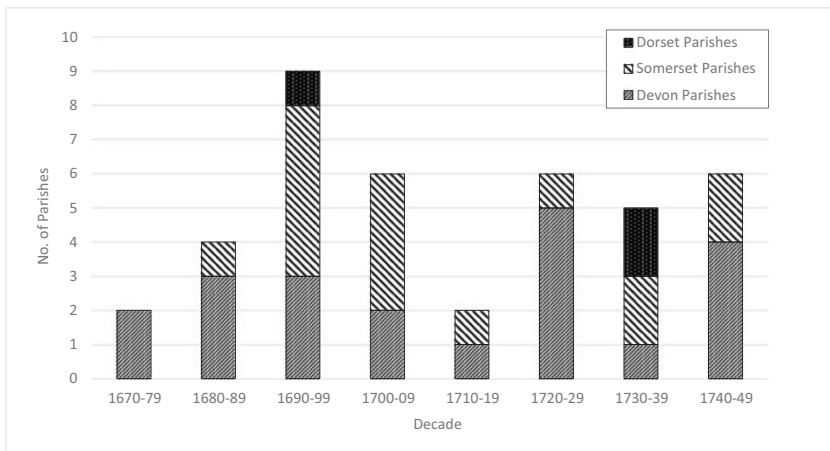


Figure 2. A graph showing the number of property-binding schemes introduced per decade in the counties of Devon, Somerset and Dorset, as indicated by the earliest surviving evidence from 1670 to 1750.

local efforts at implementation.<sup>83</sup> It was common for statutes to lag behind local initiatives, but also for implementation to lag behind the law, especially since most Acts 'enabled' certain initiatives only by creating a series of overlapping powers.<sup>84</sup> In general, as we would expect given the vagueness of the law, property-binding schemes were primarily a local initiative, but were clearly boosted by the confirmation of their compulsory powers in the statute. The clearest evidence of an established practice of binding-by-property or 'estates' before 1697 is found in Devon. The Register of Apprentices in Halberton was headed 'An account of Apprentices Bound out yearly by ye Parish and to whome and for what estate'. It began in 1684 with a change of hand in 1693 testifying to its near-contemporaneous compilation. Almost every entry from

the start named the estate, although most simply labelled 'his/her estate', with 70 children bound before 1697.<sup>85</sup> The register for Colyton first added an estate to the name of the master in 1673 ('To Robert Moore for Horneshayne Tenement'), with the property specification becoming more frequent over the next decade.<sup>86</sup> In Cheriton Fitzpaine, the annual accounts included a list of apprentices bound the previous year from 1676 onwards, with the first estates specified in 1680 ('Nicholas West for Hayne barton'), although these were the exceptions and the lists stopped in the 1690s.<sup>87</sup> Many other surviving registers have entries dated before 1697, but were compiled retrospectively, which could indicate that binding-by-property was being practised from this earlier period, or that subsequent developments prompted a review of previous bindings to check the estates of the respective masters. The register for Ide, for example, described itself as an account of 'what Estates ... have Taken Apprentices from 1679 to this present year 1745', with short entries such as '1679 John Bunce Bound on Ford Land' often not specifying the name of the master at all.<sup>88</sup>

There are only a few explicit signs of parishes responding directly to the 1697 statute. The most unequivocal example is a register (1697–1742) in Drayton (Somerset), whose title stated that it was an account of parish apprentices bound out 'since ye new Act of Parliament that Impower'd them to doe ye same, which commenced the First of May 1697'.<sup>89</sup> Otherwise the noticeable flurry of activity in the years immediately following the passage of the Act is an indirect sign of influence. In Somerset, Nettlecombe began a highly organized system in 1698, as recorded in the most systematic register from the period, whose extensive table included a specific column for the respective 'Estates'.<sup>90</sup> On 11 June 1701, the vestry of West Buckland, including the 'most Substantial Inhabitants and owners of estates', sat down to discuss and agree a scheme for the 'Binding of poor Children our Apprentices by an equal pound Rate', with a full classification of estates by value.<sup>91</sup> Further examples include: the first entry to name the estate in the list for Aller (covering 1660–1728 but compiled c.1709) was dated 1697;<sup>92</sup> the first list of children bound out to estates in Litton Cheney was dated 1699;<sup>93</sup> the earliest signs of estate-binding in the parishes of Stogumber and Yatton appear in 1704 and 1706.<sup>94</sup> Hence, it is likely that numerous parishes were acting on a principle of occupier liability and binding by estates before 1697, followed swiftly by other parishes responding to the legislative clarification of their compulsory power by organizing new schemes.

## 5.2 Evolution

Since complex administrative arrangements require more complex forms of record-keeping, the varying types of record and their level of detail likely reflect a genuine spectrum of organizational complexity across parishes and over time, despite the fundamental contingency of record survival. As such, the dating of different *types* of evidence is itself suggestive of the development of schemes over time. Roughly speaking, the first phase was simply adopting the principle that all occupiers of parish land were liable to receive an apprentice, which could be used to compel a parishioner to take an apprentice. But this could be implemented on a case-by-case basis without elaboration, especially if the numbers were low, and recorded in an ad hoc manner (in an indenture or a vestry minute). The second phase was reached when landholding

became the primary or sole criterion for binding children and a *de facto* rota emerged, which at a certain scale required a basic list or register to keep track of when each estate last had an apprentice and whose turn was next. The third phase was reached when specific adjustments were introduced to regulate how the burden and benefits were distributed among landholders, the policy for which may be formalized in a vestry memo or reflected in how registers arranged information. The overall chronology of evidence supports this notion that parishes progressed through these three phases of organizational complexity: single references to binding in respect of an estate, especially in indentures, first appear around c.1670–1700; the earliest lists and registers of apprentices tracking rotations date back to c.1680–1710; and the earliest formal policies were recorded in 1740s (with one earlier exception).

This picture of evolving organizational complexity is supported in two key ways. First, recording the master's estate grew slowly in importance over time, such that there was not a sharp 'beginning' to property-binding for most parishes. In many early lists or registers, the first entries named only the master, then the occasional entry specified 'for' a particular estate, which over a couple of decades became standardized, often in increasing detail.<sup>95</sup> This progression is apparent over four separate lists recorded in Banwell (Somerset), all backdated to the 1680s. The first list covering 1688–1722 was likely composed within these dates and did not record any estates; the second list covering 1688–1738 began adding estates from 1733; the third list covering 1684–1757 was more organized and recorded estates on a few earlier entries, but only regularly from the late 1730s, with annotations from a later hand adding estate descriptions to entries from the 1680s; the fourth list is the official Apprentice Register begun in 1803 but backdated to 1684, which similarly only consistently adds estates from the 1730s–1740s.<sup>96</sup> As the majority of registers are retrospective to some extent, the lack of early estate recording may partly be owing to a lack of information about bindings among the previous generation, but this only reinforces the impression that the importance of knowing and recording the estate increased over time. In fact, many retrospective registers of apprentices do not bother to name the child being apprenticed as they were concerned only with tracking estate and occupier liability.<sup>97</sup>

The rising importance and increasing standardization are best exhibited in the changing format of registers. The Ottery St Mary register commenced with three columns in 1682: apprentice name, master name ('to whom bound') and date of indenture. After a few of decades of adding the estate next to the master's name, from 1744 onwards the phrase 'and what Estate' was added to the middle column heading; and from 1781 a separate 'Estate' column was created to ensure that it would not be overlooked.<sup>98</sup> In North Tawton (Devon), a short list of apprentices bound out (with named estates) covering 1713–1732 over three pages was replaced by a large volume covering 1736–1829, with a mini-register per double page for each of 88 estates in the parish.<sup>99</sup> An almost identical transition in record-keeping took place in the nearby parishes Cheriton Fitzpaine and Sandford (Devon).<sup>100</sup> These registers were designed entirely around an estate-based system of distribution, making it easier to track the frequency of bindings to each estate, regardless of changing occupiers.

Second, schemes emerged gradually through customary practice, with the actual order of rotation constructed retrospectively and implemented retroactively. In most



parishes, it is probable that the precise order in which estates took children was initially decided on a case-by-case basis, which then set a precedent to be maintained for consistency and fairness, prompting the need to make a list of previous bindings. The phrasing in many documents encourages this view: for example, a list of Langford Budville (Somerset) estates c.1756–1777 was headed ‘the Several estates accustomed to take apprentices in this parish.’<sup>101</sup> We can almost observe this retroactive phenomenon at work over a few vestry meetings held in Horsington (Somerset) in November 1741 ‘for considering of proper persons to take Apprentices.’ On 25 November, the vestry compiled a ‘List of Estates and Persons are Lyable to Take Apprentices’ along with names of children to be bound. This simple list was annotated with information about previous apprenticeships; five parishioners claimed to have had an apprentice between 20 and 30 years beforehand (e.g. ‘Mr Christopher Wadman one abt 25 years ago’), while three could name the child that was bound to them more recently (8–12 years beforehand). Two potential masters were told to ‘produce’ the old indentures to prove their claim or otherwise ‘one to be put to him’. Such uncertainty and disagreements prompted a second list, perhaps compiled the following day: a ‘List of such Estates as have taken Apprentices allready and are to take their Turns after the before List is Compleated’ comprised 22 names with notes on when their last apprentice left or was due to leave, such as ‘about 14 years ago last Apprentice out’, ‘had one in 1738’ or ‘out of his time about 3 years hence.’<sup>102</sup> While some kind of rotation had likely been operating informally for many years, this was seemingly the first time Horsington had attempted to formalize a rotation system, as they clearly lacked an existing record to consult and had to conduct a data-gathering exercise. In this instance we see a rotation order in the process of being formalized and negotiated, with its attendant difficulties.

In some instances, the work of reconstruction appears to be the research of an individual, as a few annotated registers conjure up the image of a clerk sorting through the parish chest to establish what occurred decades earlier. In Kenn (Devon), a neat register in a slim volume was helpfully titled ‘A Rotation for Binding out Parish Apprentices in Kenn formed from inspecting the Counterparts of the Indentures, the Book of Orders and the Poor Books since the year 1716’, first compiled in the 1780s with entries running from 1720 to 1833.<sup>103</sup> It included the name of the estate, the present owner and the occupier at the time (i.e. who was appointed master).<sup>104</sup> Alongside this register is a separate earlier list titled ‘Rotation for binding Parish Apprentices at Kenn’, covering 1720–1772, which listed 66 estates labelled with two sets of overlapping dates correlating to two rotations – the first from 1720 to 1760, and the second in progress from 1760 to 1772 but almost complete – signalling an increase in the frequency of bindings, which may be linked to the effort for more careful record-keeping. The complications of administering an estate-based system over a long period of time were indicated by a small note at the bottom stating that the ‘Names of the Owners & Occupiers in this list are nearly as they stand at present and not as they were at the time from whence the Rotation begins.’<sup>105</sup> Taken together, we can trace the evolution of the rotation scheme from custom to formal system, through the progressive attempts to keep track of the order of previous bindings (c.1730s–1760s), to reconstruct and fix the rotation order (c.1772) and to eventually formalize the whole scheme through an ongoing register (c.1780s) and thereby establish a continuity between past and future bindings.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, the early part of the register for Combe St Nicholas (Somerset) (1731–1774) displays signs of its own construction; the scribe expressed their difficulties recovering accurate information, noting in the margin of the entries 1743–1750 that they did ‘not stand in ye order plac’d out, but as I could inform my Self [after?] being able to come at the Indentures or Counterparts.’<sup>107</sup>

The key function of a register to serve as a record of the past rotation order was expressed in a few records.<sup>108</sup> It was articulated neatly in a couple of memos inserted into the register for Ide (Devon), which was created in 1745, extended back to 1679 and continued until 1817. On 12 June 1807, a short instruction explained to future officers how to ‘read’ the register to find out the sequence of participating estates: ‘All the Estates and Cottis that are liable to take apprentices in Ide are contained between Halscomb 1789 and Halscombe 1803. You must go back for Halscomb 1789 and Look forward.’ The rotation included 59 estates. Referring to the proportional set-up whereby estates over £40 took two apprentices (‘double’), it continued concisely: ‘NB. Canns Cottis is the first Single/Halscombe the first Double and/Halscombe the first Tribble/and so go Round.’ Indeed, as if to reinforce the point, a different hand added bluntly a year later (26 April 1808): ‘This book is of no manner of use Only to see Whose turn it is to take apprentices.’<sup>109</sup>

### 5.3 Indenture clauses

Another perspective on the increasing use of landholding as the key criterion for selecting masters can be gained by examining series of indentures. The contracts were slowly standardized over the seventeenth century, but until the 1660s included only the name, the residence and/or the occupation of the master. In the following decades it gradually became common in the South-West to add that the child was bound to that particular master ‘for’ or ‘in respect of’ a particular estate. The precise form of this addition varied. While handwritten indentures could easily incorporate a new clause or phrase, they were progressively replaced in the final decades of the seventeenth century by printed templates that left only small gaps for customization. Standard templates did not include a dedicated blank space for the qualifying estate to be entered, as they did with other key information, such as the names of the contracting parties. This is, of course, suggestive that property-binding was never fully formalized as a legal standard. Yet, there were exceptions. In 1692 – notably before the 1697 Act – a few printed templates used in the parish of Nettlecombe, Somerset, included the wording ‘and to, for, and in respect of’ followed by a blank space, which in one example on 21 Oct was completed by hand with ‘yea tenement in Nettlecombe.’<sup>110</sup> Considering the thousands of indentures that would later struggle to insert such information, it is surprising that this template model does not appear to have been widely produced.<sup>111</sup>

The vast majority of indentures adopted one of two solutions: a brief addition following the master’s name inserted into the body of the contract, usually in simple forms such as ‘for X estate’ or ‘for occupation of X’; or a separate memo added somewhere in the margin or on the reverse. The latter was a sensible choice as the small insertions were frequently untidy and crammed against or above subsequent printed words, especially when further detail was required (e.g. ‘for the farm at X being [name of owner’s] estate which he/she now occupieth’). An example memo from Colyton (1710)

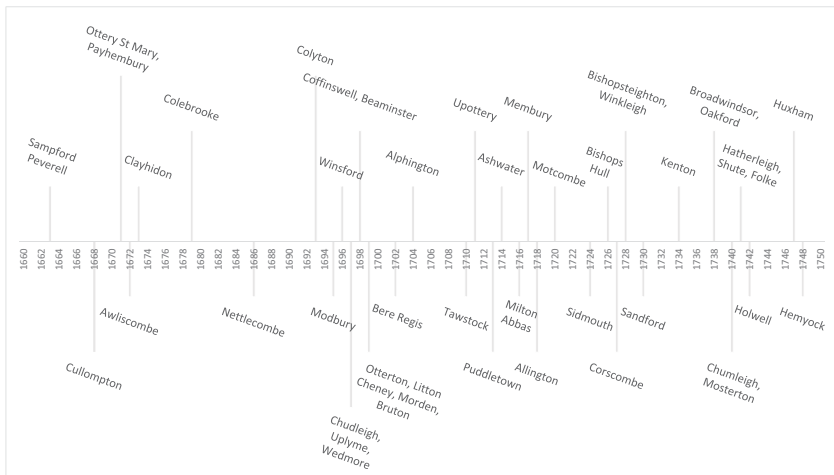
reads: ‘The abovesaid apprentice is put upon the abovesaid Mrs Alice Haydon for her Estate in Colyton called Farwood.’<sup>112</sup> These memos occasionally recorded more complex arrangements. For example, a Nettlecombe indenture (1707) binding a child to Henry Burge included a memo explaining that this was in fact a deviation from the planned rotation: ‘This apprentice doth in course belong to Sir John Trevelyan Baronett but was bound to ye Henry Burge in Consideration of Four Pounds.’<sup>113</sup> In parishes with a policy of grouping estates to contribute financially, additional memos would not only specify the estate to which the child was bound but also list all the contributing estates and their amounts, which could be as many as seven properties, as found in one example from Bishops Hill (Somerset) in 1746.<sup>114</sup>

Since the parishes with the best records of organized schemes often had indentures that specified the estate, and since indentures are by far the most widely surviving record of apprenticeships, a partial survey of surviving indentures, including parishes with no other records, was conducted to better indicate the chronological development of property-binding practices. Figure 3 shows a timeline of the earliest indentures with estate information found for 48 parishes before 1750, mostly from Devon, which can be used as an indicator of the gradual adoption of estate-binding.<sup>115</sup> However, it is important to keep in mind what this does and does not show: the specification of the estate merely provides justification for the selection of the master and does not necessarily signal that bindings were organized into a scheme. Conversely, indentures did not always name estates even when the binding was part of a planned rotation scheme, especially when the master was the owner of the relevant estate and it was presumably considered unnecessary. It is also notable that many early instances were in cases where the master was resident outside of the parish; hence, the estate was named to provide the rationale for placing an apprentice with them.<sup>116</sup> Overall, the proportion of indentures that name the estate varied significantly between parishes and was rarely universal. A fairly typical representative is Cullompton, for which 69 out of 174 indentures between 1668 and 1729 specified the estate.<sup>117</sup>

With these cautions, it is clearly significant that 11 parishes first specified the estate before the 1697 Act, beginning with Sampford Peverell in 1663, and in some cases were already adding detailed memos.<sup>118</sup> A further nine parishes first specified the estate in the years immediately following the statute (1697–1699). Over the next few decades more parishes slowly adopted the same approach, with another small cluster of six parishes around 1740–1742. This supports the chronology outlined earlier that it was becoming customary to bind apprentices to occupiers of estates in the late seventeenth century in a few areas, which accelerated after 1697 and became widely established for many Devon parishes by 1750.

#### 5.4 Spatial distribution

We now know roughly *when* property-binding schemes developed, but *where* were they adopted? Figure 4 shows the geographical distribution within the South-West, highlighting the 40 parishes within the counties of Devon, Somerset and Dorset with evidence before 1750, shaded to show the chronology of earliest evidence (as detailed in Table 1). As this evidence is the result of a comprehensive search of the county archives,

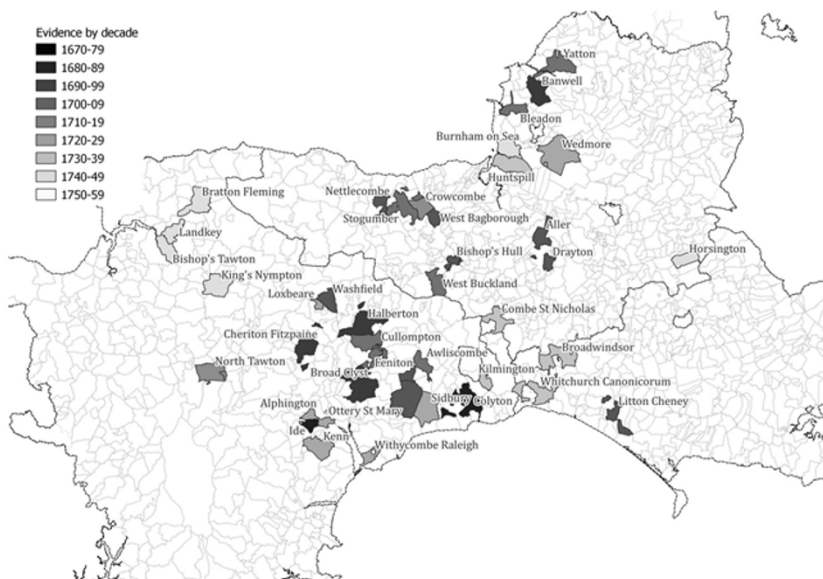


**Figure 3.** A timeline of the earliest dates of indentures with the master's estate specified for parishes in Devon, Somerset and Dorset 1660–1750.

we can reasonably conclude that this distribution partly reflects actual geographic patterns. Two features are immediately noticeable. First, the earliest and best-documented schemes are located within a well-defined zone that joins east Devon, west and central Somerset and the western edge of Dorset. This sub- and inter-county zone is consistent with the broad macro-division as it cuts off most of Dorset.<sup>119</sup> Almost by definition – those with evidence of binding in rotation to landholders – these were all rural parishes.<sup>120</sup> Second, there are numerous clusters between two, three or even four contiguous parishes, which could indicate that ideas and practices were transferred between neighbouring villages that shared an administrative culture as well as socio-economic characteristics.<sup>121</sup>

Broadly speaking, the schemes were spread throughout pastoral communities.<sup>122</sup> In the 1790s William Marshall collected information on the rural economy of the West of England, discussing seven 'natural districts'.<sup>123</sup> Although Marshall observed that parish apprenticeships were 'universal' throughout Devonshire, the early schemes were overwhelmingly located in what he called the 'Vale of Exeter', plus the 'Vale of Taunton' and the 'Dairy District' (Devon and Dorset), with later incursions into north Devon, but almost none within west Devon, the South Hams or the 'Mountains', that is, Dartmoor and Exmoor.<sup>124</sup> The Vale of Exeter was characterized by small farms and encompassed the areas around the cloth towns of Exeter, Tiverton, Crediton and Honiton, with the parish schemes appearing to circulate like satellites around these urban centres. The Dairy District encompassed the Blackdown Hills in east Devon and Marshwood Vale in west Dorset, with extensive grasslands.<sup>125</sup> The Vale of Taunton, however, was mostly characterized by more arable production. Hence, there is a correlation between pastoral communities and the early development of rotational apprenticeship schemes.

If we focus our attention on differentiation within Devon, and the significance of east Devon, then the contours of an explanation may be found in the spatial variations



**Figure 4.** A map of parishes in Devon, Somerset and Dorset with evidence of property-binding before 1750, showing earliest evidence by decade.

of the structures of labour between east, south and north Devon in the late medieval period, as identified by H. S. A. Fox.<sup>126</sup> Three distinct types of labour supply characterized these regions, related to different settlement patterns and modes of farming: the large, dispersed cattle-rearing farms in the north relied on live-in servants; the small dairy-oriented farms in the east were supplied by casual labour from independent cottagers; and the grain-producing farms in the south were intermediate between these two, relying on labourers in 'tied cottages' next to farms, dependent on the farmer for their work and accommodation. Although for an earlier period, Fox's study sprang from the similarities between c.1350–1500 and c.1750–1850 in terms of a shift from hiring labourers to servants; when population decline or stagnation, relative labour shortage and a shift to pastoral farming all 'encouraged farmers to begin to bind young people to annual contracts and to keep them on the farm'.<sup>127</sup> Fox's argument is notable for drawing attention to the varying mix of 'enticement' or 'social control' used by larger employers to secure their required labour supply.<sup>128</sup>

In this light, the development of extensive apprenticeship schemes in east Devon can be seen as an attempt to use the mechanisms of the Poor Law to exert control over the labour supply in a context where the relative independence of cottagers (who had a greater range of resources for earning a living than elsewhere through domestic cloth work or access to commons) meant that there was 'no danger that labour would become entrapped in servanthood'.<sup>129</sup> If larger farmers struggled to entice workers through wages or other means, a local supply of servants could be artificially created by using their power on the vestry to bind children to farmers around the parish for long terms, whether by extracting younger members from labouring families or simply channelling

orphans into these restrictive roles. This is not to argue that individual apprentices were bound to farmers in response to immediate labour demands, but rather that certain parishes favoured this social policy as a way of simultaneously managing family poverty and the local workforce. Indeed, since apprentices were bound from as young as seven, most were almost an initial burden to maintain, only later developing into an asset as cheap adult labour. This hypothesis will be explored in further depth by examining the governance structures and policymaking of parishes in Part II.

There are also two important qualifications about this distribution. First, this shows the distribution of organized schemes, but the spread of estate-binding generally was more widespread. Some of the Devon parishes with indentures specifying estates before 1750 are situated outside the above zone, stretching it slightly farther west and south, although the earliest indentures are mostly clustered in east Devon.<sup>130</sup> Second, later evidence from the nineteenth-century Poor Law reports indicates that this zone of early development spread wider over time, with compulsory schemes reported in south and north Devon in 1834.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, in 1843, Alfred Austin believed that a 'few years ago compulsory or parish apprenticeship prevailed in the whole of Devonshire, and also in parts of the adjacent counties of Dorset and Somerset'.<sup>132</sup>

## 6. Reflections: labour policies

The vague legal power of parishes to bind poor children as apprentices, first established in 1598 and bolstered in 1697, led to the evolution of a new kind of rural institution for managing poor youth, as distinctive as the workhouse, which diverged radically from the model of craft apprenticeships and whose economic logic resembled other labour allocation policies that motivated the dismantling of the Old Poor Law. The peculiarity of compulsory apprenticeships as a labour system was neatly articulated by the assistant Poor Law commissioner Robert Weale in 1836:

[T]he relation of the master and apprentice was entered into, not from any fitness in the child, in point of health, strength or age, to the situation to which he was bound, nor from any qualification on the part of the master, in point of family, business, or character, fitting him to receive apprentices, but from the circumstances that the estate which he held was of a certain value.<sup>133</sup>

The systematic allocation of poor children as servants to landholders, solely on the basis of their occupation of property, achieved belated recognition by statute only in 1780 and never had clear national approval as a policy. As it was not implemented by design, it has no strict origin. Rather than being imposed from the centre, it was constructed haphazardly through local experimentation and evolved through custom as rural vestries and justices in certain areas converged on a similar solution for managing poor families and the local labour supply. Yet the resulting chronological pattern is significant in relation to three other areas of social policy. First, the earliest schemes were coeval with the new workhouse movement from the 1690s, both emerging in a context of economic crisis, rising poor rates and a renewed drive to set children to work. Second, they preceded and then ran parallel to the batch-binding of factory apprentices from around the country to the textile industries from the 1780s, showing that the

systematic organization of parish apprenticeships began within agriculture, not manufacturing. Third, they anticipated the controversial labour allocation schemes of the Speenhamland era from the 1790s, in the way that the parish apportioned workers to property holders. In sum, they are a striking demonstration of how parishes found ways within the framework of the 1601 Poor Law to methodically organize the labour and socialization of poor youth.

Geographically, the schemes were regionally limited, but the South-West was not an anomaly. In general, English parishes can be roughly divided between those that bound poor apprentices by *premium* (voluntary) and those that bound by *property* (compulsory). Property-based schemes flourished across extensive areas of the pastoral West and North of England, albeit at different times. The reliance on compulsory apprenticeships in heavily agricultural communities owing to the limited opportunities for child employment has been commented on by both contemporaries and historians.<sup>134</sup> In 1834, Chapman observed that in the 'strictly agricultural parishes' of Devon, the overseers 'appeared utterly at a loss to devise any expedient for the employment of the children' beyond the use of compulsory apprenticeships.<sup>135</sup> Arthur Lewis also remarked that the 'purely agricultural districts' in the West Midlands would struggle to maintain poor children without 'the power of compelling persons to take apprentices', whereas manufacturing districts had little difficulty putting children to work.<sup>136</sup>

Yet we still need to explain the different policy responses by agricultural parishes in the two macro-regions. Two regional patterns suggest the outline of an explanation. First, it is well-established that capitalist farming developed earliest and most intensely in the South and the East, with far higher numbers of wage workers in this period.<sup>137</sup> Second, the rural South and East was also the region of the highest prevalence of Speenhamland policies or labour allocation schemes for adults (c.1790–1830).<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the 1836 report noted that 'in the western part of England and in Wales, where the Labour Rate and the roundsman systems were unknown, the evils and abuses of the compulsory binding of parish apprentices ... were found to be extremely prevalent'.<sup>139</sup> Hence, extrapolating from the model for Devon sub-regions borrowed from Fox, we can put forward a general hypothesis: in the pastoral West and North where farming relied more on continually available resident labour, large farmers preferred to bind poor youth into long-term service through apprenticeship schemes to maintain a stable local labour force, whereas in the arable South and East with a plentiful supply of casual wage labour, large farmers preferred to regulate the short-term employment of adult paupers to maintain a flexible labour force through Speenhamland-style policies.<sup>140</sup> However, any exploration of this hypothesis would need to incorporate demographic trends and the effects of inward or outward migration on policies to bind within or without the parish.<sup>141</sup>

The contrasting distribution of workhouses adds a further layer to this picture. The early parochial workhouse movement from 1714 was concentrated in the South-East, spreading from Essex through the Home Counties, such that the geographical development of apprentice schemes and that of workhouses are almost mirror images.<sup>142</sup> This would support the observation by the Webbs that in the South-East young children were mostly maintained in the workhouse until old enough to hire themselves out.<sup>143</sup> Yet parochial workhouses were also founded in Devon after the 1730s, undermining any neat division. Over the long term, it appears to have been equally common



for workhouses and apprenticeships to operate in tandem, with younger children sent to the workhouse first and apprenticed second.<sup>144</sup> In the South-West, apprenticeship schemes and workhouses were perhaps alternative rural and urban strategies. It is notable that east Devon was the location for some of the earliest workhouses established by Corporations of the Poor in Exeter, Tiverton and Crediton, created by three local Acts of Parliament in 1698.<sup>145</sup> At the same time that these workhouses were being planned for the urban poor, surrounding rural parishes such as Halberton and Broadclyst were developing their alternative systems for systematically distributing rural children to local landholders. The rationale for the latter over the former was indirectly expounded by Richard Dunning, whose pamphlet *Bread for the poor* (Exeter, 1698) argued against workhouses as too costly and too risky, recommending instead that rural parishes use existing employment structures rather than centralize them in a single institution.<sup>146</sup> Hence, we could view farm apprenticeship schemes as institutions that placed a new layer of administration upon existing household economies to be managed by individual ratepayers, thereby distributing costs, risks and responsibilities. It is only a slight stretch to describe such schemes as networks of private workhouses.

The existence of these complex administrative schemes is itself a testament to the fact that the labour of parish apprentices was not an insignificant by-product of poor relief. As judicial debates, vestry negotiations and official rebukes all make abundantly clear, the administrative choice to compel occupiers of parish land to take on poor children as indentured servants facilitated a new form of labour organization with profound implications. In a few short steps, almost by accident, some rural parishes had improvised systems with an uncomfortable resemblance to the feudal relationship between land and labour, which authorities eventually came to condemn as a gross violation of the newly forged principles of a 'free' labour market. In a subsequent article, Part II, the policies of these compulsory schemes in the South-West will be examined, focusing on a case study of Awliscombe in Devon to explore how it was governed and administered within a particular community.

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## Notes

1 A. L. Beier, "A new serfdom": labor laws, vagrancy statutes, and labor discipline in England, 1350–1800, in Paul Ocobock ed., *Cast out: vagrancy and homelessness in global and historical perspective* (Ohio, 2008), 35–63, 54. See also Jane Whittle and Thijs Lambrecht eds., *Labour laws in preindustrial Europe: the coercion and regulation of wage labour, c.1350–1850* (London, 2023); Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, 'Labor laws in Western Europe, 13th–16th centuries: patterns of political and socio-economic rationality', in Marcel van der Linden and Leo Lucassen eds., *Working on labor* (Leiden, 2012), 297–321, 308.

2 39 Eliz. I, c.3 s.4 (1598), 43 Eliz. I, c.2 s.4 (1601). The latter added that girls could leave earlier if they married. Earlier precedents for binding beggars' or vagrant children into service or apprenticeship, especially into husbandry, were contained in the following Acts: 27 Hen. VIII, c.25 s.6 (1536); 1 Edw. VI, c.3 s.3 (1547); 3 & 4 Edw. VI, c.16 s.10 (1550); 5 Eliz. I, c.4 s.18 (1563); 14 Eliz. I, c.5 s.24 (1572).

3 For overviews of parish apprenticeships, see Steve Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c.1550–1750* (Oxford, 2004), 191–226; Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914* (London, 1996), ch. 4; E. G. Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', *Local Historian* 14, 7 (1981), 400–5; J. Dunlop and R. D. Denman, *English apprenticeship and child labour: a history* (London, 1912), ch. 16. See also discussion in Patricia Crawford, *Parents of poor children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford, 2010), ch. 4; Ivy

Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English society, Volume I: from Tudor times to the eighteenth century* (Toronto, 1969), 223–59.

4 Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *The English Poor Law history, Part 1: the Old Poor Law* (London, 1927), vii, 197.

5 For variations in colonial contexts: Misha Ewen, “‘Poore soules’: migration, labor, and visions for commonwealth in Virginia,” in Paul Mussellwhite, Peter C. Mancall and James Horn eds., *Virginia 1619: slavery and freedom in the making of English America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2019), 133–49; Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray eds., *Children bound to labor: the pauper apprentice system in early America*, 2009; Rebecca Swartz, ‘Child apprenticeship in the cape colony: the case of the Children’s Friend Society emigration scheme, 1833–1841,’ *Slavery and Abolition* 42, 3 (2021), 567–88. For the related charity apprenticeships, see Helen Berry, ‘The occupational distribution of founding apprentices during the English Industrial Revolution,’ *Social History* 48, 2 (2023), 259–83.

6 Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, vii, 207, 210.

7 William John Gilbert, ‘Appendix B. No. 9. Report on the country of Devon,’ *Second annual report of the poor law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 343, 345. James Kay also observed that ‘the principle of the labour-rate involves the assumption of the responsibility of providing labour for the poor’ and the ‘system of a compulsory allotment of apprentices has a parallel tendency’ – James Phillips Kay, ‘Appendix B. No. 1. Report on the administration under the Poor Law amendment act, in Suffolk and Norfolk,’ *Second annual report of the Poor Law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 176.

8 Fred Block and Margaret Somers, ‘In the shadow of Speenhamland: social policy and the Old Poor Law,’ *Politics and Society* 31, 2 (2003), 283–323, 294.

9 The 1834 report defined it as ‘an agreement among the ratepayers, that each of them shall employ and pay out of his own money a certain number of the labourers who have settlements in the parish, in proportion, not to his real demand for labour, but according to his rental or to his contribution to the rates.’ Nassau Senior and Edwin Chadwick, *Report from His Majesty’s commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 24.

10 Mark Blaug, ‘The myth of the Old Poor Law and the making of the new,’ *Journal of Economic History* 23, 2 (1963), 151–84; Anne Digby, ‘The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties,’ *Economic History Review* 28, 1 (1975), 69–83, 69; Simon Deakin and Frank Wilkinson, *The law of the labour market: industrialization, employment, and legal evolution* (Oxford, 2005), 129–31.

11 ‘Appendix B. General report to central board, from assistant commissioners,’ *Second annual report of the Poor Law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 355, 347, 348.

12 For example in local studies such as S. A. Cutlack, ‘The Gnosall records, 1679 to 1837: Poor Law administration,’ *Collections for a history of Staffordshire, Part I* (Stafford, 1936), 53–62; F. G. Emmison, *The relief of the poor at Eaton Socon, 1706–1834* (Martlesham, 1933), xv, 64–70.

13 Sharpe’s landmark study of the parish of Colyton is excellent on the family economy and local markets, but does not consider the organizing role of the parish itself: Pamela Sharpe, ‘Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830,’ *Continuity and Change* 6, 2 (1991), 253–70; Pamela Sharpe, *Population and society in an east Devon parish: reproducing Colyton 1540–1840* (Exeter, 2002), 256–70.

14 Mary B. Rose, ‘Social policy and business: parish apprenticeship and the early factory system 1750–1834,’ *Business History* 31, 4 (1989), 5–32; Alysa Levene, ‘Parish apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London,’ *Economic History Review* 63, 4 (2010), 915–41, 918.

15 Katrina Honeyman, *Child workers in England, 1780–1820: parish apprentices and the making of the early industrial labour force* (Abingdon, 2007), 33.

16 Examples include: Keith Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 6; Ann Minister, ‘Pauper apprenticeship in south Derbyshire: a positive experience?’, in Anne M. Scott ed., *Experiences of poverty in late medieval and early modern England and France* (London, 2012), 63–84; Deborah Simonton, ‘Apprenticeship: training and gender in eighteenth-century England,’ in Maxine Berg ed., *Markets and manufacture in early industrial Europe* (London, 2013); Jerome Farrell, ‘Lutterworth pauper children and apprenticeship, 1673–1856,’ *Leicestershire Historian* 3 (1983), 17–24.

17 Since markets are assumed to always exist, whenever the early modern economy does not fit market models it is described in negative terms: as undeveloped or immature, as disrupted or distorted. For example, Jan De Vries, ‘How did pre-industrial labour markets function?’, in George Grantham and Mary Mackinnon eds., *Labour market evolution* (London, 2002), 39–63.

- 18 Adam Przeworski, *States and markets: a primer in political economy* Reprinted (Cambridge, 2008).
- 19 Jane Whittle, 'Attitudes to wage labour in English legislation, 1349–1601', in Jane Whittle and Thijs Lambrecht eds., *Labour laws in preindustrial Europe: the coercion and regulation of wage labour, c.1350–1850* (Woodbridge, 2023), 33–54, 50; Beier, 'A new serfdom', 47–9; Douglas Hay, 'England, 1562–1875: the law and its uses', in Douglas Hay and Paul Craven eds., *Masters, servants, and magistrates in Britain and the Empire, 1562–1955* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005), 59–116, 65.
- 20 For a policy-centred approach, see Samantha A. Shave, *Pauper policies: Poor Law practice in England, 1780–1850* (Manchester, 2017). On eighteenth-century social policy, see Joanna Innes, *Inferior politics: social problems and social policies in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2009).
- 21 Proportion calculated for Awliscombe, discussed in detail in Part II. Awliscombe Parish, 'Memorandum book, 1708–1847', 3020A/PV/1, Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter.
- 22 7 & 8 Vic., c.101 s.13 (1844).
- 23 Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531–1782* (Cambridge, 1995), 21–5; Paul Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), 173–82; Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, shame and belonging: badging the deserving poor, c.1550–1750', *Cultural and Social History* 1, 1 (2004), 6–35, 8–10; John Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650–1834', *Historical Journal* 42, 4 (1999), 985–1006, 1002.
- 24 Brodie Waddell, 'The rise of the parish welfare state in England, c.1600–1800', *Past and Present* 253, 1 (2021), 151–94, 25.
- 25 Brodie Waddell, 'The economic crisis of the 1690s in England', *Historical Journal* 66, 2 (2023), 281–302.
- 26 Tim Wales, "'Living at their own hands": policing poor households and the young in early modern rural England', *Agricultural History Review* 61, 1 (2013), 19–39; Steve Hindle, 'Work, reward and labour discipline in late seventeenth-century England', in A. Shepard, J. Walter and S. Hindle eds., *Remaking English society: social relations and social change in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 2013), 255; Steve Hindle, 'Labour discipline, agricultural service and the households of the poor in rural England, c. 1640–1730', in Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe eds., *Accommodating poverty: the housing and living arrangements of the English poor, c. 1600–1850* (London, 2011), 169–90, 174–7, 180–2.
- 27 Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531–1782*, 27; Joanna Innes, 'Parliament and the shaping of eighteenth-century English social policy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 40 (1990), 63–92, 70; Tim Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse: a study in institutional poor relief in selected countries 1696–1750' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), 14, 23–39.
- 28 Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse', 23–4; Slack, *Poverty and policy*, 193.
- 29 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 3; Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and capitalism in pre-industrial Europe* (Brighton, 1982), 127; Cosma Orsi, 'The political economy of inclusion: the rise and fall of the workhouse system', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 39, 4 (2017), 453–81, 455.
- 30 Slack, *Poverty and policy*, 193; Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse', 25.
- 31 John Locke, 'Report of the Board of Trade, to the Justices in the year 1697, Respecting the Relief and Employment of the Poor', *An account of the origin, proceedings and intentions of the Society for the Promotion of Industry in the Southern District of the Parts of Lindsey in the County of Lincoln* (Louth, 1789), 100–26, 116.
- 32 Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse'; Paul A. Fideler, *Social welfare in pre-industrial England: the Old Poor Law tradition* (Basingstoke, 2006), 151–4.
- 33 Crawford, *Parents of poor children*, 160; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), 59; Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', 400. On apprentices as a cheaper alternative: Honeyman, *Child workers in England, 1780–1820*, 22; Rose, 'Social policy and business: parish apprenticeship and the early factory system 1750–1834', 6–7; Hugh Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children in England c.1680–1851', *Past and Present* 126 (1990), 115–50, 131.
- 34 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 226; Hindle, 'Dependency, shame and belonging'.
- 35 Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650–1834', 1002.
- 36 Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 75; Cunningham, 'The employment and unemployment of children in England c.1680–1851', 132; Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531–1782*, 31–2; Ethel Mary Hampson, *Treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire, 1597–1834* (Cambridge, 1934), 155.
- 37 W. E. Tate, *The parish chest: A study of the records of parochial administration in England* (Cambridge, 1960), 221; Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 76; Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', 401; Frank Crompton, *Workhouse children* (Stroud, 1997), 24; G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales, 1601–1834* (London, 1974), 75–6.

- 38 'That it shall be lawful for the said Churchwardens & Overseers or the greater part of them, by the Assent of any two Justices of the Peace, to bind any such children as aforesaid to be apprentices where they shall see convenient, till such man child shall come to the age of four and twenty years, and such woman child to the age of one and twenty, or by the time of her marriage; the same to be as effectual to all purposes as if such child were of full age and by indenture of covenant bound him or her self.' 43 Eliz. I, c.2 s.3 (1601).
- 39 'Resolutions of the judges of assizes, 1633' printed in T. G. Barnes ed., *Somerset assize orders, 1629–1640* (Taunton, 1959), app. II. See discussion in Hindle, *On the parish?*, 199–203.
- 40 A library keeper at Inner Temple notably chose to illustrate how previous guides mishandled the complexity of case law by referring to the 'Clause in the Act of 43 Eliz for compelling Parishioners to take Poor Children Apprentices': Samuel Carter, *Legal provisions for the poor* (London, 1710), sec. preface, 58.
- 41 *Rex v Spearing* (1663): *ibid.*, 51; see also Joseph Keble, *Reports in the Court of Kings Bench at Westminster, from the XII to the XXX Year of the Reign of our Late Sovereign Lord King Charles II* (London, 1685), vol. I, 474.
- 42 *Rex v Pine* (1678): Keble, *Reports in the Court of Kings Bench*, vol. III, 854.
- 43 *Rex v Fairfax* (1689): Sir Bartholomew Shower, *The reports of Sir Bartholomew Shower, Knt. of cases adjudg'd in the Court of King's Bench* (London, 1708), 76–8.
- 44 8 & 9 Will. III, c.30 s.5 (1697).
- 45 Hindle, *On the parish?*, 203.
- 46 In 1772, *Rex v Clowerly*, two justices argued against this notion, since 'the jurisdiction of the parish-officers is merely local'. Edmund Bott, *Decisions of the Court of King's Bench*, 3rd edn (London, 1793), 547–8.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 559.
- 48 20 Geo. III, c.36 (1780). John Meadows White, *Some remarks on the statute law affecting parish apprentices* (London, 1829), 31.
- 49 Nelson's guide was the most successful manual in this period, with 12 editions from 1704 to 1745. William Nelson, *The office and authority of a justice of peace* (London, 1704), 34–5.
- 50 For example, the 1724 edition asserted that the courts were 'the proper Judges [of] what Person is fit to receive a poor Apprentice or not' (43).
- 51 Richard Burn, *The justice of the peace and parish officer* (London, 1755), 61–2; Norma Landau, 'Burn, Richard (1709–1785)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.
- 52 T. Andrews, *An enquiry into the causes of the encrease and miseries of the poor of England* (London, 1738), 42.
- 53 Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, vii, 208–9. Mainly based on three reports covering the Southwest and the West Riding (Yorkshire). 'Appendix A. Reports from assistant commissioners', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834). It contained 26 reports of varying detail and quality on the operation of the Poor Law covering uneven areas of England, informed by a questionnaire returned by around 10 per cent of parishes.
- 54 Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, vii, 211.
- 55 Arthur James Lewis, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 18 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834). Noted in Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 75.
- 56 C. P. Villiers, 'Appendix A. Continued. No. 23 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 8A; D.O.P. Okeden, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 3 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 23A.
- 57 Captain Pringle, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 11. Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 286A, 306A.
- 58 For example, Dalton in the County of Lancaster reported that '[c]hildren at 14 and 11 are sent to service by the parents, or the parish ballots them apprentices in husbandry.' 'Appendix B.1. Answers to Rural Queries. In five Parts', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 271, 604, 630, 650. On the 'Rural Queries', see Blaug, 'The Poor Law report reexamined', 234.
- 59 Sarah Child, 'Parish apprentices in Rackenford 1728–1844', *Report and Transactions of the Devon Association* 136 (2004), 135–48, 139–44. See also the 'ballot' system of Bradford (1820s) and Tiverton (1830s) described in G. F. Baker, 'The new Poor Law and pauper apprenticeship in Devon, 1834–1844', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* 30 (1965), 145–55.

- 60 I. Fitzroy Jones, 'Aspects of Poor Law administration, seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, from Trull overseers' accounts', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society* 95, Part II (1950), 72–105, 98. See also the example from Meare (1813) in Tate, *The parish chest*, 221.
- 61 A short-lived rota system in Lacock in 'which every ratepayer's responsibility for apprenticing children was fixed in proportion to the amount of his assessment'. F. H. Hinton, 'Notes on the administration of the relief of the poor of Lacock 1583–1834', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* 49 (1940), 166–218, 183.
- 62 H. Fearn, 'The apprenticing of pauper children in the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* 26 (1955), 85–97.
- 63 Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 10, 23, 75–6. See also earlier Joan Lane, 'Apprenticeship in Warwickshire 1700–1834' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1977), 171.
- 64 Tate, *The parish chest*, 221.
- 65 Crompton, *Workhouse children*, 24.
- 66 Parish of Shepreth 'compiled lists of eligible householders who were required to take apprentices by rota'. Hampson, *Treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire, 1597–1834*, 154.
- 67 The Essex parishes of Bobbingworth (1681–1718), Chigwell (c.1727), Chipping Ongar (c.1800), High Laver (date?): W. R. Powell ed., *A history of the county of Essex*, British History Online, 1956, IV, Ongar Hundred, 15–7, 37–8, 95–6, 167–9. Plus West Thurrock (c.1737) and South Weald (date?): W. R. Powell ed., *A history of the county of Essex*, British History Online, 1983, viii, 57–74, 74–90. See also reference to parishes compelling ratepayers to take children on a rota basis in Wakefield, West Yorkshire (c.1600–50?): Oxley, *Poor relief*, 76. Hindle suggests that some rotation systems were by 'informal agreements among the ratepayers' without the use of indentures, citing examples in Warwickshire (1638–39) and Frampton, Lincolnshire (1710–28): Hindle, *On the parish?*, 220.
- 68 Outlined in Joan Thirsk, *Agrarian history of England and Wales: 1500–1640 Vol IV* (Cambridge, 1967), 5. See discussion in Ann Hughes, 'The "chalk" and the "cheese": David Underdown, regional cultures and popular allegiance in the English revolution', *History Compass* 11, 5 (2013), 373–80.
- 69 Steven King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850: A regional perspective* (Manchester, 2000), 259.
- 70 Described as the 'Tees-Exe' line in Dennis R. Mills, *Lord and peasant in nineteenth century Britain* (London, 1980), 17; and the 'line running north to south from the East Riding, through Lincolnshire, central and east Leicestershire, south Warwickshire, Wiltshire, east Somerset and then to Exeter' in King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850*, 5.
- 71 The minimal evidence for some parishes in Hampshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex is more easily incorporated by considering subregional and local variations.
- 72 Fearn, 'The apprenticing of pauper children in the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk'; Kay, 'Appendix B. No. 1. Report on Suffolk and Norfolk', 167–84.
- 73 20 Geo. III, c.36; see discussion in White, *Some remarks on the statute law*, 31.
- 74 On the method: given the variety of record-keeping practices, the patchy survival of parish records and the fact that there is no single type of record that demonstrates a property-binding policy or practice, the scoping exercise was primarily a close examination of the parishes with the most abundant records and a strategic exploration of promising catalogue entries.
- 75 The township of Bingley operated a combined lottery and rotation scheme from at least 1766 for the three hamlets of Micklethwaite (50 estates), Harden (43 estates) and Bingley (27 estates), with the order of estates 'settled by Lott for taking Poor Apprentices' determining the apprentices bound until 1791 (or 1782 for Harden): 'Bingley Township accounts, poor relief, and other records 1701–1799', 33D80/1/2, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford. The township of Heptonstall recorded its rules for the 'Turns and Estates' in 1776, which divided estates into seven 'lots' totalling £30 per annum, with one farm taking the apprentice and the others contributing their share financially. 'Regulation of the Township of Heptonstall in Regard to Putting out of apprentices on persons assessed to the amount of £30' (17 September 1776), HPC/A:20/48, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale.
- 76 For example, in Halifax St John the Baptist the compulsory power was clearly exercised for a time since a resolution of 1700 agreed that anyone 'compellable by law to take a poor Apprentice' could pay a small fee of 50 shillings to be exempt for 14 years, but this exemption was removed in 1710. 'Halifax poor book, 1700–1759', WDP53/8/1/1, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield.
- 77 J. D. Tweedy, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 20. Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834). Rotation schemes were



identified in at least six parishes or townships: Tickhill, Rotheram, Harrogate, Brotherton, Huddersfield and Northowram.

**78** The apprenticeship records in the following parishes were consulted: Barking, Birdbrook, Bobbingworth, Braintree, Chelmsford St Mary Virgin, Colchester, St Leonard, Finchingfield, Fyfield, Halstead, High Laver, Horndon-on-the-Hill Newport, St Mary the Virgin, Rainham, Saffron Walden, Stebbing, South Benfleet, South Weald, Terling, Upminster, White Roding, Writtle.

**79** The premiums could be substantial; Upminster was paying masters around £8–£12 in the 1680s and 1690s. 'Vestry minute book for Upminster, St Laurence, 1681–1713', D/P 117/8/1, Essex Record Office, Colchester.

**80** In Writtle, where children were bound into farm service, a resolution dated 20 February 1698 referred to 'all masters who have apprentices bound out to them by virtue of ye Late Act of Parliament'. While subsequent memos binding children make no reference to estates, a 1708 resolution again refers to 'any person a parishioner of this parish to whom a child shall be liable to be put apprentice'. Writtle, 'Minutes 1695–1735', D/P 50/8/1, Essex Record Office, Colchester. The well-studied parish of Terling generally practised an informal system of boarding out children throughout the eighteenth century, mixing the language of 'service' and 'apprenticeship' for short terms (e.g. three years) with premiums. 'Accounts, 1694–1703', D/P 299/12/0; 'Minutes, 1767–1783', D/P 299/8/1, Essex Record Office, Colchester.

**81** Records were searched primarily for evidence of estate-binding before 1750, but a few parishes with excellent records post-1750 have been included in the discussion.

**82** For example, Banwell appears artificially 'early' in the 1680s, reflecting later eighteenth-century developments, whereas Nettlecombe was a fully fledged system from 1698.

**83** King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850*, 30–9; Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650–1834', 989; David Eastwood, *Government and community in the English provinces, 1700–1870* (New York, 1997), 42–8.

**84** See the case of badging the poor: Hindle, 'Dependency, shame and belonging', 20–4. It is not clear how well recent legislation and case law was actually known or understood by parish offices, some of whom diligently followed the latest handbooks while others were unaware or chose to deliberately ignore the latest directions. King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700–1850*, 18–9, 40.

**85** Halberton Parish, 'Parish records book 1684–1804', 4074A/PZ/1, Devon Heritage Centre (hereafter DHC), Exeter.

**86** In 1682, a memo recorded a complaint of a master to the justices that the child 'should be also putt on Robert Baseleigh for his estate', in response to which it was ordered that they were mutually responsible for both their estates. Colyton Parish, 'Register of Apprentices, 1598–1711', 3483A/PO/24, DHC.

**87** Cheriton Fitzpaine Parish, 'Churchwardens and overseers account books, 1676–1723', 1633A/PO/1, DHC.

**88** Ide Parish, 'Apprentice Book, 1679–1817', 1857A/add/PO/83, DHC. Similarly, the Broadclyst register recorded apprenticeships 'since' 1685 and specified the estate for which children were bound from the first entries (nine out of ten in 1686), but was likely compiled closer to 1714. The apprentice register is found in Broadclyst Parish, 'Burials, 1678–1830', 3594A/add99/PR/16, DHC.

**89** Drayton Parish, 'Accounts and Rates ... 1699–1744', D/P/dton/13/2/3, Somerset Heritage Centre (hereafter SHC), Taunton. It was followed by a simple list of names of apprentices and masters, but also occasional estates. A later register compiled in the 1740s but backdated to 1697 was more explicitly a list of 'Apprentices bound out to estates' in a rotation scheme. Drayton Parish, 'Accounts and Rates... 1744–1772', D/P/dton/13/2/4, SHC.

**90** Nettlecombe Parish, 'Apprenticeship Roll. 1698–1821', D/P/net/13/6/2, SHC.

**91** West Buckland Parish, 'Poor book with rating assessment. 1700–1719', D/P/w.bu/13/2/1, SHC.

**92** Aller Parish, 'Churchwardens' accounts, with rates. [1660]–1766', D/P/all/13/2/2, SHC.

**93** Litton Cheney Parish, 'List of children bound out as apprentices by the parish 1699', PE-LIC/OV/4/1, Dorset History Centre (hereafter DoHC), Dorchester.

**94** See 'Indentures for binding out poor children of Stogumber from 1647' in the Family and Estate Papers of the Carew, Trollope-Bellew and associated families, 'Crowcombe: Miscellaneous Documents. [1647]–1764', DD/TB/29/9, SHC; Yatton Parish, 'Overseers' accounts and rates throughout. 1706–1736', D/P/yat/13/2/3, SHC.

**95** For example, the retrospective Alphington (Devon) register covering 1689–1824 (likely compiled after 1802) only sporadically named estates from 1727, then more regularly from the 1740s. Alphington Parish, 'Register of parish apprentices, 1689–1824', 1481A/PO/687, DHC.

**96** Banwell Parish, 'Churchwardens' accounts with intermittent rates. 1688–1712', D/P/ban/4/1/3; 'Churchwardens' accounts with rates throughout. 1732–1763', D/P/ban/4/1/5; 'Overseers' accounts with rates throughout. 1738–1760', D/P/ban/13/2/2; 'Apprentices' Register (Begun c.1803). 1684–1834', D/P/ban/13/6/1, SHC.

**97** For example, see Yatton list titled 'Apprentices by whom taken for Estates in the Parish of Yatton commencing in 1706', solely concerned with 'by whom'. D/P/yat/13/2/3, SHC.

**98** Ottery St Mary Parish, 'Minutes of election of overseers and churchwardens and apprenticeship rotas, 1682–1838', 180A/PO/1, DHC. Similarly, in Wedmore (Somerset), a simple list of names from 1723 to 1777, was later replaced by two registers divided into classes of estates covering 1727–80 and 1740–93 respectively. Wedmore Parish, 'Register of apprentices and masters, list of overseers 1701–1782. 1723–1777', D/P/wed/13/6/6; 'Register of apprentices, proprietors of land 1727–1780', D/P/wed/13/6/7; 'Register of Apprentices. 1740–1793', D/P/wed/13/6/8, SHC.

**99** North Tawton Parish, 'List of apprentices bound, 1713–1732', 2914A/PO/9; 'Register of Apprentices 1736–1829', 2914A/PO/10, DHC.

**100** In Cheriton Fitzpaine: from 1676 to 1729 lists of apprentices were usually included at the end of annual accounts for most years, then from 1729 to 1844 bindings were recorded in a large volume with a double-page spread containing registers for two estates (top and bottom). Cheriton Fitzpaine Parish, 'Churchwardens and overseers account books, 1676–1723', 1633A/PO/1; 'Register of Apprentices, 1729–1844', 1633A/add/PO/11, DHC. The neighbouring parish of Sandford kept the same format from 1764: Sandford Parish, 'Apprentices Register, 1764–1838', 1238A/add2/PO/1, DHC.

**101** Sandford Family of Nynhead, 'Notebook containing lists of estates liable to the office of tithingman, estates accustomed to take apprentices ... Langford Budville [1673–1784]', DD/SF/16/30/3, SHC.

**102** Horsington Parish, 'Vestry Notices. 1727–1754', D/P/hors/9/1/1, SHC.

**103** Three separate lists of indentures survive for 1669–1739, 1669–1742 and 1669–1760, presumably compiled around the end date of each list. Kenn Parish, 'Lists of apprentices bound, 1669–1760', 2668A/PO/41–43, DHC.

**104** Kenn Parish, 'Volume entitled "a rotation for binding out parish apprentices in Kenn formed from inspecting the counterparts of the indentures, the book of orders and the poor books since the year 1716"', 1716–1833', 2668A/PO/39, DHC.

**105** Kenn Parish, 'Rotation for binding apprentices, 1720–1772', 2668A/PO/40, DHC.

**106** Another example is Withycombe Rawleigh, whose 'Rotation of Estates in Withycombe Rawleigh to take apprentices' was likely compiled from the contemporaneous list of apprentices bound from 1726 to 1780. Withycombe Raleigh, 'Accounts, 1714–1841', 2868A/add99/PW/1, DHC.

**107** It probably dates from the early 1760s. Although arranged with the column 'In consideration of what estate', this was not filled for the first 17 apprentices before 1736. The names of estates from 1736 to 1751 were annotated with the next dates they received apprentices (e.g. 1739 Mrs Dyer the Moore 1756'), thereby affirming and making visible the rotation order. Combe St Nicholas Parish, 'Vestry Notices. [1725–1775]', D/P/com.n/9/1/1, SHC.

**108** For example, in Broadwindsor (Dorset), a list of apprenticeships from 1733 was marked next to the year 1761 with the comment 'Hear End the First Turn of apprentices'. Broadwindsor Parish, 'Account Book 1723–1789', PE/BDW/OV 1/1/2, DoHC.

**109** 'Apprentice Book, 1679–1817', 1857A/add/PO/83.

**110** Although the same template was also used to explain the alternative basis for a binding on 12 February 1700, which was in consideration of 'Five pounds' as a premium. Nettlecombe Parish, 'Apprenticeship Indentures. 1625–1821', D/P/net/13/6/1, SHC.

**111** A rare example is found in Winsford in 1700, which completed the sentence with 'her Estate in the said parish called lower Shutcom'. Winsford Parish, 'Apprenticeship Indentures. 1681–1740', D/P/wins/13/6/19, SHC.

**112** Dated 22 May 1707. 'Apprenticeship indentures for poor of Colyton parish', 1585F\_15\_5d, Colyton Chamber of Feofees, Colyton, Devon.

**113** Dated 29 November 1707. D/P/net/13/6/1.



**114** Dated 20 September 1746. Bishops Hull Parish, 'Apprenticeship indentures. 1671–1820', D/P/b.hl/13/6/1, SHC.

**115** In chronological order: Sampford Peverell (1198A/1/PO/193a, DHC), Cullompton (2404A/PO/69/1, DHC), Ottery St Mary (3327A/1/PO/44, DHC), Payhembury (2974A/add/PO/12/1), Awliscombe (3020A/PO/23/5, DHC), Clayhidon (1061A/PO/319, DHC), Colebrooke (541A/PO/748, DHC), Nettlecombe (D/P/net/13/6/1), Colyton (1585F\_15\_4b, Colyton Chamber of Feofees), Modbury (269A/PO/394, NDRO), Winsford (D/P/wins/13/6/15, SHC), Chudleigh (3009A/99/PO/20/441, DHC), Uplyme (3030A/PO/12/12, DHC), Wedmore (D/P/wed/13/6/1, SHC), Coffinswell (73A/PO/123, DHC), Beaminster (PE-BE/OV/5/1/5, DoHC), Otterton (2423A/2/PO/1/15, DHC), Litton Cheney (PE-LIC/OV/4, DoHC), Morden (D-FIL/E/7, DoHC), Bruton (D/P/brut/13/6/1), Bere Regis (PE-BER/OV/6/1/8, DoHC), Alphington (1481A/PO/3/b/1, DHC), Tawstock (2288A/PO 19, NDRO), Upottery (1231A/99/PO/1/168, DHC), Puddletown (PE-PUD/OV/5/1, DoHC), Ashwater (2466A/PO/3/b/318, DHC), Milton Abbas (PE-MIL/OV/5/3, DoHC), Membury (2845A/99/PO/4/119, DHC), Allington (PE-ALL/OV/3/1/3, DoHC), Motcombe (PE-MOT/OV/5/1), Sidmouth (1855A/PO/20/7, DHC), Bishops Hull (D/P/b.hl/13/6/1), Corscombe (PE-COR/OV/5/1/7, DoHC), Bishopsteighton (2202A/1/PO/18/3, DHC), Winkleigh (2989A/PO/ 299, DHC), Sandford (1238A/PO/3, DHC), Kenton (70A/PO/6862, DHC), Oakford (805A/2/PO/13/8, DHC), Broadwindsor (PE-BDW/OV/5/2/3, DoHC), Chumleigh (4678A/PO/9/41, DHC), Mosterton (PE-MSN/OV/4/7, DoHC), Hatherleigh (2917A/PO/13/3, DHC), Shute (4262A/PO/166, DHC), Folke (PE-FOL/OV/4/1/2, DoHC), Holwell (PE-HOW/OV/6/3, DoHC), Huxham (2811A/PO/47, DHC), Hemyock (3137A/PO/48/1, DHC).

**116** For example, see memo added to a Wedmore indenture dated 26 August 1701. Wedmore Parish, 'Apprenticeship Indentures 1695–1749', D/P/wed/13/6/1, SHC.

**117** Cullompton Parish, 'Apprenticeship Indentures [1668–1750]', 2404A/PO/69–98, DHC.

**118** For example, handwritten indentures in Payhembury regularly named the estate 'for' which the apprentice was bound. Payhembury Parish, 'Apprenticeship indentures, 1671–1793', 2974A/add/PO/12, DHC.

**119** The locations of other rotation schemes identified elsewhere are consistent with this picture, namely Rackenford in mid-Devon (e.g. near Washfield) and Trull outside Taunton (e.g. near West Buckland). See Child, 'Parish apprentices in Rackenford 1728–1844'; Fitzroy Jones, 'Aspects of Poor Law administration, seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, from Trull overseers' accounts'.

**120** It includes the two market towns of Cullompton and Colyton, but these sat within large fertile parishes with scattered hamlets and farms.

**121** See especially two nearby groupings in east Devon of Broadclyst, Cullompton and Halberton, and Sidbury, Ottery St Mary, Feniton and Awliscombe; and in west Somerset the cluster of Nettlecombe, Stogumber, Crowcombe and West Bagborough between Exmoor and the Quantock Hills.

**122** On agriculture in the southwest, see Thirsk, *Agrarian history of England and Wales: 1500–1640*, 71–80.

**123** William Marshall, *Rural economy of the West of England*, 2 vols (London, 1796).

**124** *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 110.

**125** *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 141–2. On the character of the Blackdown Hills, see Lucy Ryder, *The historic landscape of Devon: a study in change and continuity* (Oxford, 2013), ch. 3.

**126** H. S. A. Fox, 'Servants, cottagers and tied cottages during the later Middle Ages: towards a regional dimension', *Rural History* 6, 2 (1995), 125–54.

**127** *Ibid.*, 125. Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), 98–134; Snell, *Annals*, 67–103.

**128** Fox, 'Servants, cottagers and tied cottages', 141–2.

**129** *Ibid.*, 136.

**130** For example, Tawstock towards the northwest and Modbury in the south.

**131** In 1834 Captain Chapman reported that parishes in southern Devon were operating compulsory binding by estates, such as Ashburton and Blackawton, Captain Chapman, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 15 Report', *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws* (London, 1834), 432–3. In a separate report for North Devon, C. P. Villiers described practices of binding children to ratepayers in proportion to their rated assessment, enforced through fines. Villiers, 'Appendix A. Continued. No. 23 Report', 43.

- 132 Alfred Austin, 'Report on the counties of Wilts, Dorset, Devon, and Somerset, by Alfred Austin, Esq, with Appendix', *Reports of special assistant Poor Law commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture* (London, 1843), 1–126, 43.
- 133 Robert Weale, 'Appendix B. No. 10. Report on the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, and Somerset', *Second annual report of the Poor Law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 357.
- 134 Thomas, 'Pauper apprenticeship', 401; Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 76; Hindle, *On the parish?*, 216.
- 135 Chapman, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 15 Report', 432.
- 136 Lewis, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 18 Report', 661. Conversely, compulsory apprenticeships were declining in areas of the West Riding where children could help their parents 'by winding bobbins and getting work in the factories'. Tweedy, 'Appendix A. Part I. No. 20 Report', 803.
- 137 Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England', *Economic History Review* 65, 1 (2012), 26–60. See map at 60.
- 138 Although not exclusively, for example a number of Devon parishes were operating a Labour Rate. See Blaug, 'The Poor Law report reexamined', 236; Digby, 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties'; George R. Boyer, 'The Old Poor Law and the agricultural labor market in southern England: an empirical analysis', *Journal of Economic History* 46, 1 (1986), 113–35.
- 139 *Second annual report of the Poor Law commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1836), 19.
- 140 Minister suggested that a plentiful labour supply disincentivized farmers to take on young apprentices as live-in servants on long-term contracts. Minister, 'Pauper apprenticeship in south Derbyshire', 71.
- 141 See discussion on this point in Kimberley Jayne Pullen, 'Population, migration, and socio-economic change in two provincial counties: Leicestershire and Rutland, 1700–1834' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2022).
- 142 Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse', 221–3. The eight counties listed by Hitchcock are all those in which no apprentice schemes have been identified: 'eight counties, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Essex and Kent, played a disproportionately large role in workhouse development' (103–4).
- 143 Webb and Webb, *The Old Poor Law*, vii, 211.
- 144 For example, on 18 August 1748 Cullompton (Devon) listed 19 children in the workhouse 'capable of work' and therefore 'fit to be bound out to Apprentice'. Cullompton Parish, 'Vestry minute book, 1732–1756', 2404A/PV/1, DHC.
- 145 Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse', 17, 59, 60.
- 146 Richard Dunning, *Bread for the poor* (Exeter, 1698), 15–6.

### French Abstract

Cet essai est le premier de deux articles qui examinent un système bien particulier, mais fort méconnu, d'organisation du travail des enfants et des jeunes gens en Angleterre rurale. Il fait apparaître comment les paroisses ont mis en œuvre les pouvoirs que la Loi des pauvres de 1601 leur donna: placer des enfants comme domestiques agricoles non rémunérés (jusqu'à l'âge de 17 ans) chez des propriétaires fonciers locaux établis sur des terres d'une certaine valeur. Comme cette loi pouvait contraindre autant l'apprenti que le maître, les autorités paroissiales furent en mesure d'instituer des systèmes centralisés de rotation. Ce premier article aborde ici les questions initiales à cette recherche: quand, où, pourquoi et comment ces systèmes d'apprentissage obligatoire furent-ils créés? On peut déjà s'appuyer sur une enquête qui fut menée dans le Sud-Ouest de l'Angleterre avant 1750. Ce dossier apporte des éléments nouveaux de réponse sur la façon dont ces pratiques ont émergé, sortes d'expériences locales dans les années 1670, dans un contexte de crises diverses plus ou moins concomitantes, et se sont généralisées au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Au total, ce type d'apprentissage sous contrat attachait les jeunes travailleurs au terroir local, selon un modèle proche du servage, ce qui conduisit les autorités du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à le condamner au motif d'être contraire au 'libre' marché du travail.

**German Abstract**

Dies ist der erste von zwei Aufsätzen, in denen ein äußerst markantes, aber bislang übersehenes System der Arbeitsorganisation von Kindern und Jugendlichen im ländlichen England untersucht wird. Er zeigt, wie Gemeinden ihre durch das Armenrecht von 1601 gegebenen Machtmittel nutzten, um Kinder (bis zu 17 Jahre lang) mit formellen Lehrverträgen örtlichen Landbesitzern mit Höfen von einer bestimmten Größe als unbezahlte Farmarbeiter zuzuweisen. Da sowohl Lehrlinge als auch Meister rechtlich zu solchen Verträgen gezwungen werden konnten, waren die Gemeinderäte in der Lage, zentralisierte Rotationsprogramme einzurichten. Dieser Aufsatz (Teil I) behandelt die Ausgangsfragen, wann, wo, warum und wie Pflichtprogramme zur Lehrlingsbeschäftigung eingeführt wurden und stützt sich dabei vor allem auf eine Untersuchung des südwestlichen Englands vor 1750. Er liefert neues Material, das belegt, wie die Programme ab den 1670er Jahren als örtliche Experimente im Kontext sich überlagernder Krisen entstanden und sich bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts weit verbreiteten. Das Ergebnis war ein Arbeitssystem, das Kinder an den örtlichen Boden band und dadurch besondere Parallelen zur Hörigkeit aufwies, was im 19. Jahrhundert dazu führte, dass namhafte Beobachter es verdammt, weil es den, freien Arbeitsmarkt verzerre.