

MALTHUS, POVERTY AND POPULATION CHANGE IN SUFFOLK 1780–1834¹

by RICHARD SMITH AND MAX SATCHELL

THE YEAR 2016 was the 250th anniversary of the birth of T.R. Malthus, who retains a significant place in discussions of how society understands its past and present and contemplates its future. He is best known, of course, for his first *Essay on Population*, which was published in 1798 against the background of revolution in France and war between Britain and France.² The *Essay* is particularly famous for the distinction Malthus drew between the ‘positive’ and ‘preventive’ checks to population growth – the positive being death rate surges associated with famine, warfare and disease; and the preventive arising from the exercise of forethought shown by prospective married couples regarding entry into marriage. The *Essay* appeared and was first read in the midst of a run of years of particularly poor harvests in the very last decade of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth century, which created severe food price rises. These dearth-induced price rises exacerbated war-induced inflationary tendencies and were further intensified by rapid national population growth that was close to, or even exceeding, 1 per cent per annum. Indeed the *Essay* was published during an extended period of sustained population growth that had been unprecedented in the previous three centuries.³

Malthus’s *Essay* went into six editions before his death in 1834. In this work, and in many other component parts of his writing, Malthus revealed a longstanding hostility towards what might be regarded as collectivist institutions and their impact on the demographic behaviour of individuals, particularly behaviour which facilitated population growth. Chief amongst the institutions that received Malthus’s ire was the English Poor Law. Almost 150 pages of the longer second edition of the *Essay* that appeared in 1803 were devoted to the Poor Laws and their impact on the behaviour of the labouring poor.⁴ The Poor Laws attempted to guarantee a minimum level of subsistence to all those whose incomes fell short of what was thought necessary to support them and their families. Malthus’s hostility to rate-based poor relief emanated from his belief that the Poor Laws gave a right of subsistence to the labouring poor, a right that those administering them could not fulfil. He believed that the income redistribution that the Poor Laws attempted through the parish poor rates had the effect of raising prices and particularly, in conditions of dearth, served to swell the numbers of dependent poor whose incomes were insufficient to enable them to purchase enough food for themselves and their families. In the medium to long term, he supposed, welfare provision in this form facilitated population growth but did not stimulate increases in food supply. Given the difficulties associated with securing a steady expansion in all forms of agrarian output, Malthus thought it especially rash to encourage additional population whose continued existence would be dependent upon economic growth achievable only with severe penalties for society at large. Nothing, therefore, was more certain to prejudice the well-being of those largely or solely dependent for a living upon the sale of their labour than to increase their number impreviently. The Poor Laws, Malthus believed, represented a constant temptation to do this; they were a standing invitation to sacrifice long-term interests to short-term relief.⁵

Malthus’s view had an apparent clarity as presented in the first *Essay* when he wrote:

If men are induced to marry from a prospect of parish provision with little or no chance of maintaining their families in independence, they are not only unjustly tempted to bring unhappiness and dependence upon themselves and children, but they are tempted without knowing it to injure all

the same class with themselves. A labourer who married without being able to support a family may in some respects be considered as an enemy to all his fellow labourers.⁶

Of course, he reveals in the above passage an awareness of individual fertility as having social consequences that extended beyond the confines of the immediate reproductive unit – the conjugal family.

Malthus displayed a remarkably durable commitment to such notions. A quarter-century after 1798 in an article on population that he wrote for the 1824 supplement to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (issued separately in 1830) as a *Summary View on the Principle of Population*, he was unwavering when he wrote:

If, from the numbers of the dependent poor, the discredit of receiving relief is so diminished as to be practically disregarded, so that many marry with the almost certain prospect of becoming paupers and the proportion of their numbers to the whole population is in consequence continually increasing, it is certain that the partial good attained must be much more than counterbalanced by the general deterioration in the condition of the great mass of the society.⁷

Malthus was one of the staunchest contemporary advocates of the view that the impact of Poor Law allowances was to promote marriage. He was particularly concerned about the impact of poor relief that was scaled and increased in value upon marriage and with the addition of each child. We know that from c.1790 there was adoption in some places, particularly in the English southern and eastern counties, of parish schemes of relief for ‘able-bodied’ married labourers; not a feature generally found in earlier phases in the Old Poor Law when poor relief recipients predominantly (in some cases all recipients) fell into the categories of orphans, widows and the elderly.⁸

The prime reason why Malthus believed that the Old Poor Law must necessarily fail to alleviate the sufferings of the poor lay in his understanding of the nature of an organic economy in which the productivity of the land conditioned everything else. Productivity growth could be increased only slowly, Malthus supposed, and with great difficulty. Prolonged growth of agrarian output was, he thought, impossible and this formed a conclusion arising from his famous analogies of agricultural output with the tortoise and population growth with the hare.⁹ Neither Malthus, nor the Poor Law commissioners who eventually reported so negatively on the Old Poor Law in their famous 1834 report and who were widely believed to have been influenced by Malthus’s style of argument, appeared willing to consider the possibility that family allowances and various forms of family support under the Old Poor Law were a *demand-led* response to demographic and economic processes. That is, to put it starkly, the rising birth rates and associated population growth with adverse dependency ratios (the number of children relative to those of working age) created demands on England’s institutional welfare arrangements, rather than being the consequence of such arrangements, as Malthus and the Poor Law commissioners reasoned. To rephrase the issue as simply as possible, was poor relief responding to the actual incidence of poverty rather than a cause of it?

Suffolk provides an interesting context within which to consider the evidence for and against the Malthusian case from the end of the eighteenth century through to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (which was also the year of Malthus’s death). When considered at the level of the county, Suffolk can be viewed as a part of the country where expenditure on poor relief was relatively high. From the *Abstract of the Poor* for the accounting year 1802/3 (demanded by parliament and easily accessible as a printed source in Parliamentary Papers), we can see that expenditure *per capita* in Suffolk was higher than the national average, as was the proportion of paupers to the total population (13 per cent as opposed to 11 per cent). It is noteworthy, however, that county population growth during this period was significantly

Suffolk			
1801-11	1811-21	1821-31	1831-41
8.61	15.13	8.07	4.60
England			
1801-11	1811-21	1821-31	1831-41
11.5	19.4	17.0	18.4

TABLE 1 – Inter-censal population change (%) 1801-1841 (including towns of less than 2000) (after 1801: *Census Enumeration*, PP 1802, VII; *Census Enumeration*, PP 1812, XI; *Census Enumeration*, PP 1822, XV; *Census Enumeration I and II*, PP 1833, XXXVI-XXXVII).

Suffolk			
1802	1812	1821	1831
11s.5d	19s.4d	17s.0d	18s.4d
England			
1802	1812	1821	1831
8s.11d	12s.9d	10s.6d	10s.1d

TABLE 2 – Poor relief expenditure *per capita*, 1802-1831: Suffolk and England compared (after *Abstract of the Poor*, PP 1803-4, XII; *Abstract of the Poor* [1813-15], PP 1818, XIX; *Report of the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns*, PP 1822 v; *Returns on Poor Relief*, PP 1831-2, XLIV).

below the national average (Table 1). These attributes were sustained when we observe average *per capita* relief expenditure in the first year of each decade from 1802 to 1831 (Table 2).

While Malthus remained committed to the position that the provision of relief to persons in their own homes was a major form of subsidised income that encouraged marriage, he was always far less certain that relief provided within workhouses had the same impact on behaviour. He certainly thought that workhouses, because they led to overcrowding, had a positive impact on disease and ultimately reduced the life chances of those entering them.¹⁰ Also, he remained critical of workhouses as locations within which the poor would be put to work to produce goods. In his view these goods were either inferior in quality to those produced in 'free market' conditions, or led to oversupply, or served to undercut other producers. As a result, more persons would be thrown out of employment, eventually seeking poor relief in consequence.¹¹ He did suppose that the 'terrific forms of workhouses' would undermine the resolve of those who were contemplating marriage if by so doing they would experience hardships arising from fragile household incomes that would ultimately force them into such institutions.¹² In fact, it might be concluded that workhouses for Malthus were a disincentive to marriage and thereby thwarted intensification of population growth.

The workhouse was certainly not a rare species in Suffolk parishes before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 resulted in the creation of Poor Law Union workhouses. Some Suffolk parishes had established them, especially in the more substantial urban centres and in south-western areas of the county which had lost industrial employment after 1700.¹³ However, these developments paled in comparison with the movements to incorporate sizeable numbers of parishes to run large 'houses of industry'. Parishes in Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury had been incorporated respectively in 1702 and 1747, but it was the movement from the 1750s to incorporate whole hundreds in Suffolk that changed the institutional landscape in which poor relief was delivered. In whiggish fashion Sidney and Beatrice Webb saw such corporations as institutional precursors of the Poor Law reform enacted in 1834, noting that:

It was from these Statutory Poor Law Authorities that was derived the machinery of administration by committees for, unions of parishes through salaried officials, with the workhouse as the background.¹⁴

After Middlesex (which included the cities of London and Westminster) with twenty-eight local acts, Suffolk was the county with the highest propensity to engage in these practices.¹⁵

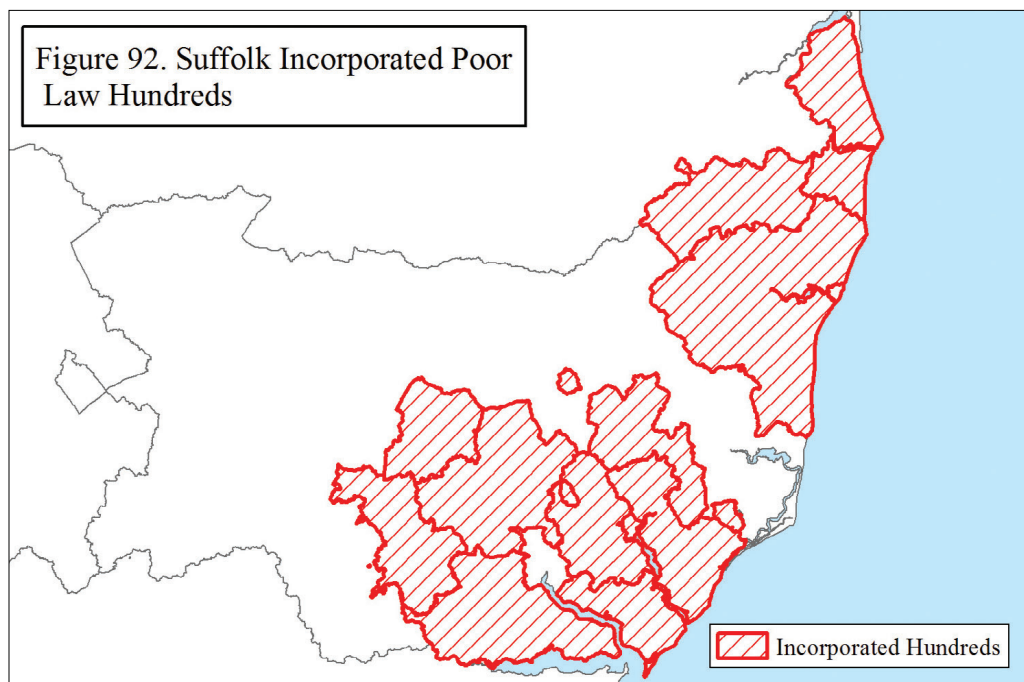


FIG. 92 – Suffolk Incorporated Poor Law Hundreds (*after Dymond and Martin 1989, 96–7*).

Between 1756 and 1780 ten corporations had incorporated parishes covering fifteen Suffolk hundreds in the central and eastern parts of the county. When we consider the broad geography of incorporation, Suffolk divides roughly into two halves. One half contained Colneis and Carlford, Bosmere and Claydon, Samford, Mutford and Lothingland, Wangford, Loes and Wilford, Stow, Cosford, Hartismere, Hoxne and Thredling. These hundreds, covering much of east Suffolk, were incorporated by 1780. Although Hartismere, Hoxne and Thredling, which were incorporated in 1780, never built their workhouses, the others did.¹⁶ The remaining hundreds, largely located in west Suffolk, were unincorporated (Fig. 92). The corporations were modelled on the first such incorporation of the parishes constituting Colneis and Carlford hundreds. A parochial system with each parish under the management of an overseer or overseers was replaced by a management system of directors of the poor, acting guardians (who were elected from the local clergy), landowners and larger occupiers. The guiding motif of these incorporations was to hold down or reduce expenditure since annual expenditure was not to exceed in each case the annual average of the seven years prior to the passage of the act establishing the incorporation.¹⁷

This substantial shift towards a poor relief system based on significant indoor provision and institutional management at the level of the hundred has recently been the subject of an interesting investigation by Stephen Thompson.¹⁸ In his study, Thompson addressed two key issues. First, how effective was incorporation in curtailing a growth in relief expenditure when levels were skyrocketing in many areas of the country? Second, were the incorporated hundreds of Suffolk distinguished by significantly lower population growth than those parts of the county where relief was managed by individual parishes and therefore almost entirely delivered to persons in their own homes? Thompson considered poor relief expenditure listed in the 1821 report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns alongside population

Unincorporated	1821£	1831£	Incorporated	1821£	1831£
Babergh	1.38	1.23	Blything	0.67	0.80
Blackbourne	0.97	1.05	Bosmere & Claydon	0.68	0.78
Hartismere	1.10	1.11	Carlford	1.22	1.00
Hoxne	1.27	1.28	Colneis	1.05	0.77
Lackford	0.76	0.72	Cosford	1.04	1.52
Plomesgate	0.98	1.01	Mutford & Lothingland	0.18	0.22
Risbridge	1.14	1.17	Samford	0.82	0.67
Thedwestry	0.86	1.01	Wangford	0.69	0.77
Thingoe	0.93	1.00	Stow	0.82	0.87
Thredling	1.06	0.98	Wilford	0.98	0.76
			Loes	1.01	0.86
Sub-Total	1.09	1.06		0.76	0.62
Boroughs					
Bury St Edmunds	0.64	0.65			
Ipswich	0.77	0.73			
Sudbury	0.77	0.69			

TABLE 3 – Poor rate expenditure *per capita* in the unincorporated and incorporated hundreds of Suffolk in 1821 and 1831 (after *Abstract of the Poor*, PP 1803–4, XII; *Abstract of the Poor* [1813–15], PP 1818, XIX; *Report of the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns*, PP 1822 v; *Returns on Poor Relief*, PP 1831–2, XLIV).

totals, as recorded in the 1821 census, for all ten unincorporated hundreds, thirteen incorporated hundreds and the three boroughs of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury. He found average expenditure *per capita* in the incorporated hundreds was 31 per cent lower than in the unincorporated hundreds. In the three boroughs, expenditure was 54 per cent lower *per capita*. This pattern persisted and was even more marked when relief expenditure contrasts are drawn between the incorporated and unincorporated hundreds in 1831, only three years prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. In 1831 the unincorporated hundreds were spending £1.06 *per capita* compared with £0.62 *per capita* in the incorporated districts (Table 3).

Thompson also discovered that population growth between 1781 and 1821 in the incorporated hundreds was 48 per cent greater than in the unincorporated hundreds.¹⁹ While Bury St Edmunds experienced population growth rates slightly lower than the Suffolk average, Ipswich grew in size at a rate six times faster than the Suffolk average and nine times faster

Incorporated hundreds	1781	1831	% change 1781–1831
Blything	17,834	24,177	35.6
Bosmere & Claydon	10,446	12,956	24.6
Carlford	4,222	6,369	50.9
Colneis	2,874	4,369	52.1
Cosford	6,497	11,479	73.9
Loes	8,132	13,544	66.6
Mutford & Lothingland	7,774	15,255	96.2
Samford	8,366	11,242	34.4
Wangford	9,601	13,605	41.7
Wilford	4,486	7,433	65.7
Sub-total	80,333	120,426	49.9
Unincorporated hundreds			
Babergh	19,001	22,678	19.0
Blackbourne	9,930	14,267	43.6
Hartismere	13,608	17,871	31.3
Hoxne	13,012	16,399	26.0
Lackford	7,679	13,109	70.7
Plomesgate	7,647	11,2845	47.6
Risbridge	12,396	16,215	30.8
Thedwestry	7,106	10,103	42.2
Thingoe	4,591	6,022	31.2
Sub-total	95,870	127,048	33.5
Boroughs			
Bury St Edmunds	7,559	11,436	51.3
Ipswich	5,373	20,201	376.0
Sudbury	3,491	4,677	34.0
England	7,042,140	13,283,882	88.6

TABLE 4 – Population change in Suffolk 1781–1831 (*after 1801: Census Enumeration, PP 1802, VII; Census Enumeration, PP 1812, XI; Census Enumeration, PP 1822, XV; Census Enumeration I and II, PP 1833, XXXVI-XXXVII*).

than the unincorporated areas. Poor rate expenditure *per capita* in this rapidly growing urban centre in east Suffolk was very similar to that found in the incorporated hundreds (£0.77 *per capita* in 1821 and £0.73 in 1831). In fact, the pattern identified by Thompson was sustained throughout the period from 1781 to 1831 as population grew by marginally more than 33 per cent in the unincorporated hundreds and by almost 50 per cent in those that had been incorporated (Table 4).

Thompson felt fully justified in rejecting Malthus's claim that poor relief provision encouraged population growth. He pursued the question of whether the management of relief expenditure in the incorporated hundreds, particularly the establishment of a common fund in each hundred, enabled the managers to guard expenditure 'with more jealousy' than elsewhere.²⁰ Thompson discovered that there was a stronger positive correlation between

parochial population size and relief expenditure in the unincorporated parishes when compared with the incorporated. In fact, in the incorporated parishes, as their populations grew in size, their expenditure levels did not rise commensurately. Residents in the smaller incorporated parishes were seen to carry a *per capita* rate-raising charge that significantly exceeded that found among those ratepayers in the larger ones. Thompson drew attention, for example, to the small parish of Boulge in Loes and Wilford Hundred that, in 1831, paid £3.34 *per capita*, compared with Melton in the same hundred paying only £0.53. He thought it unsurprising that the unequal burdens carried in the parishes of that hundred led them to seek disincorporation in 1826.²¹

Thompson makes a brief reference to the report made of Suffolk poor relief practices by Henry Stuart, the assistant commissioner appointed by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Poor Laws. In Thompson's opinion this supported his own view that the lower levels of expenditure in the unincorporated hundreds were not a reflection of lower levels of poverty, but of resistance from those incorporations to the driving up of expenditure occurring in other parts of Suffolk.²² A detailed consideration of Stuart's remarkably full report might throw further light on Thompson's argument. On first reading, Stuart's detailed reflections suggest unequivocal support for Thompson's view. Stuart emphatically regarded Suffolk as 'exclusively agricultural' with 'no kind of trade or manufacture carried on within it'. Given this lack of economic variation across the county, it might be supposed that any 'variety in the parochial operation of the Poor Laws within the county' arose 'from a difference in the manner of administering them'.²³ Stuart is adamant in the introductory paragraphs of his report that:

The pressure of the poor rates in those parts of the county where it is under parochial management will be observed to be uniform and heavy. [However] in the incorporated districts it will be seen that the burthen is comparatively light and is affected more by the constitution of the incorporation and the vigilance and unanimity... of those who direct it, than by the influence of local circumstances.²⁴

While convinced of there being sizeable contrasts between expenditure on poor relief between those hundreds of Suffolk which were incorporated and those that were not, Stuart was not of the opinion that the differences arose from the roles played by workhouses or houses of industry. In reference to incorporation, he noted that while:

The workhouse was the great recommendation of this system at the outset... after it had been for some years in full operation, it was discovered that the benefits to be derived from it had been greatly overrated.²⁵

Like Malthus, Stuart thought it 'impossible ever to exact a profitable return from labour thus employed' and that the house of industry became 'little more than a preserve with which to terrify the applicants for relief'.²⁶ Another defect of the system of incorporation rested in the manner of regulating the assessment by a fixed average of the expenditure over seven years prior to the Act initiating it. He was especially critical of the way such a practice led to great inequalities across the parishes that were incorporated and argued that such charges should have been set by reference to the value of property.²⁷ Thompson, as we have noted, also stressed this problem arising from inequalities as a factor eventually leading to the abandonment of incorporation in certain locations.²⁸

Stuart provided a quite detailed evaluation of each incorporated hundred. While critical of various procedures which were locally adopted and their resulting outcomes, he is generally persuaded that in those incorporations where all relief decisions were taken at the level of the

hundred committee (made up of directors and guardians) 'the business of the rates is more vigilantly attended to' than when decisions were 'left entirely to the prejudices and partialities of a parish vestry'.²⁹ Indeed, he made favourable comparisons of levels of expenditure per head in incorporated hundreds with those immediately adjacent (e.g. lower expenditure per head in 1831 in Blything Hundred when compared with Hoxne and Plomesgate).³⁰

Stuart's report focused on how workhouses functioned, the numbers resident within them, the sums spent on them along with the composition of the committee and its *modus operandi*. Nevertheless, he did, in a number of quite revealing instances, conclude that reduction of expenditure could be 'greatly aided by *local* circumstances'.³¹ In the case of Mutford and Lothingland, where poor rate expenditure was only £0.23 *per capita* in 1831 compared with £0.72 in Bosmere and Claydon, Stuart stressed the presence in the former hundred of a stringent regime in which only in 'special cases' did relief exceed 1s to man and wife and 6d to each child.³² However, he was at pains to draw attention to the advantages accruing to the 'maritime position of this hundred' which 'affords more means of employment to the inhabitants than are possessed by those which are inland'.³³ Indeed, he notes the presence of the town of Lowestoft within the hundred and the proximity of Yarmouth and their respective positions as principal stations for the east coast herring and mackerel fishery. Thereby, the agricultural labourer in this area could look to 'the herring and mackerel season, as well as the harvests for profitable employments'.³⁴ Stuart stresses that:

The small expenditure on the poor in Mutford and Lothingland must to a considerable degree be ascribed to the various sources of employment which are open to the inhabitants, compared to the contracted resources of the districts which depend entirely on the cultivation of the soil.³⁵

He finds too in Mutford and Lothingland the only workhouse in the incorporated Suffolk hundreds that possessed a clear source of profit in 'the braiding or making of fishing nets, the materials for which are sent to those who are engaged in the fisheries' thereby enabling young people to be 'taught an art which must always be a useful acquisition to persons living next the sea'.³⁶ In a similar vein, Stuart concludes that the only explanation for the significantly lower expenditure in the incorporated hundred of Colneis, as compared with that of the adjacent incorporated hundred of Carlford, was that:

Colneis is surrounded on three sides by the sea, which... give a more adventurous spirit to the inhabitants, and draws off many who would otherwise fall on their parishes.³⁷

In his consideration of the case of the most westerly incorporated hundred of Cosford, which did not include Hadleigh, and which only maintained a workhouse and provided medical relief, therefore leaving all other areas of outdoor relief to the decisions made by individual parishes, Stuart shows some willingness to understand why poor rate expenditure was so high with 'a charge of £1 10s 5d per head' in 1831. Such heavy expenditure, he thought, was in part due to 'the density and superabundance' of the population (240 per square mile compared with 195 for the county as a whole in 1831) so that even in the harvest months, full male employment was not secured.³⁸ Furthermore, Stuart acknowledges that this situation and that in '*several of the nearby hundreds*' is accounted for by this having been part of the country in which the Flemings first introduced the woollen manufacture but is 'now removed to more favoured places'. Stuart notes the loss of this employment although he claimed that 'the population were left chained to the soil by the Poor Laws'.³⁹

It is striking that this attention to local circumstances is rarely, if at all, encountered in his detailed assessment of the causes of high poor rate expenditure in the unincorporated areas of

western Suffolk, where his emphasis is principally on burgeoning levels of relief arising from parochial support for the able-bodied through various forms of child allowance, bread and flour scales and the roundsman and labour rate systems.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, in one relatively brief passage, Stuart does acknowledge the decline in the demand for homespun yarn that had 'aggravated the existing distress'.⁴¹ He views this work as principally a source of household income derived from the work of women and children since he notes that a single woman could earn from 2s 6d to 3s a week, a woman with four or five children 4s to 7s, and that 'employment was always to be had by those who sought it'.⁴² In fact, while he is never specific about those areas of the county which were unincorporated that suffered most from this shrinkage of employment, he does note that:

All classes with whom I have conversed attribute to the loss of this domestic manufacture the present burdensome amount of the assessment of the poor.⁴³

The influence of the more inflexible nature of welfare provisioning within the incorporated hundreds can be readily identified as offering some explanation for certain of the distinctive geographical patterns in the matter of poor relief expenditure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Yet, in assessing Suffolk as whole, it would be questionable, as Stuart claimed, to view 'the general circumstances of the population being thought so much alike' that administrative practices alone should be seen as creating whatever spatial variations in rate-based expenditure were detectable.⁴⁴

In plotting at a parish level poor relief expenditure per family in 1813, using finer-grained information on the number of families per parish in the census of 1811, we can observe a geographic pattern of welfare expenditure that reveals differences between the east and west of Suffolk that are not solely a reflection of the geography of incorporation (Figs 93 and 94). Furthermore, this pattern is clearly present in the 1780s although the absolute levels of relief were lower than they had become by the tail end of the Napoleonic Wars (Fig. 95).

An ongoing project led by Leigh Shaw-Taylor and Sir Tony Wrigley of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (CAMPOP) that seeks to reconstruct national occupational change from the late fourteenth to early twentieth centuries using information in wills along with the occupations of fathers baptising infants recorded in parish registers (for the period 1601–1817), has made it possible to chart broad changes in the agrarian, manufacturing and service sectors of every English county before the availability of census data from the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Such data reveal the extent of deindustrialisation in Suffolk, associated principally with the decline in the textile industry after c.1700 so that the county became far more agricultural in 1800 than it had been in 1700. The agricultural share of the male working population rose from just over 40 per cent to around 60 per cent between 1701 and 1801, although the demographic base at the end of the century was substantially larger. It is likely that the areas of relatively slow population growth between 1781–1831 and high poor relief expenditure in western and southern Suffolk were considerably more capitalist in their agrarian economic structure than those in the east and north-east of the county. This difference is reflected in the far higher ratios of labourers to farmers c.1817 in the former areas when all Anglican parish registers recorded the occupations of fathers who were baptising infants (Fig. 96). This agrarian regime, based heavily on arable farms using relatively large numbers of labourers with large seasonal variations in the demand for labour, created high levels of winter unemployment in an economy with few alternative sources of paid work. A sizeable burden resulting from severe deindustrialisation impacted disproportionately most heavily on these western and south-western parts of the county over the 'long eighteenth century'. We need, as did Henry Stuart,

Figure 93. England and Wales parish welfare expenditure, 1813

£ per annum
per family

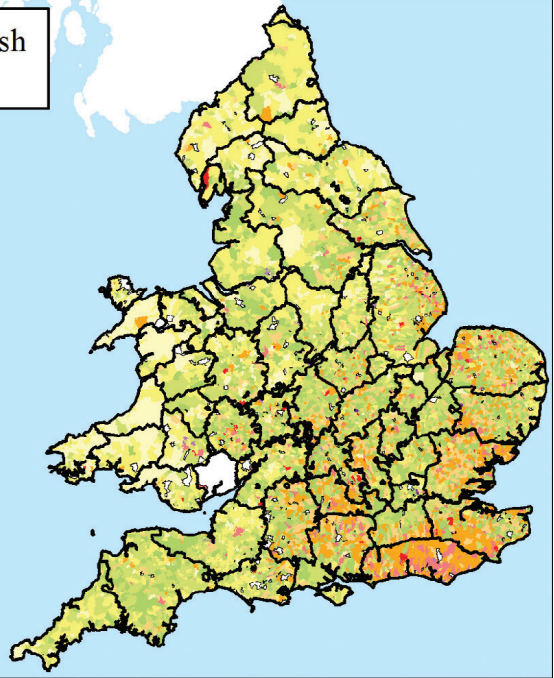
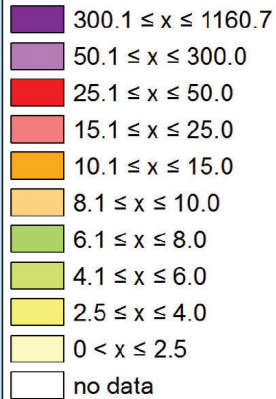


Figure 94. Suffolk parish welfare spending, 1813

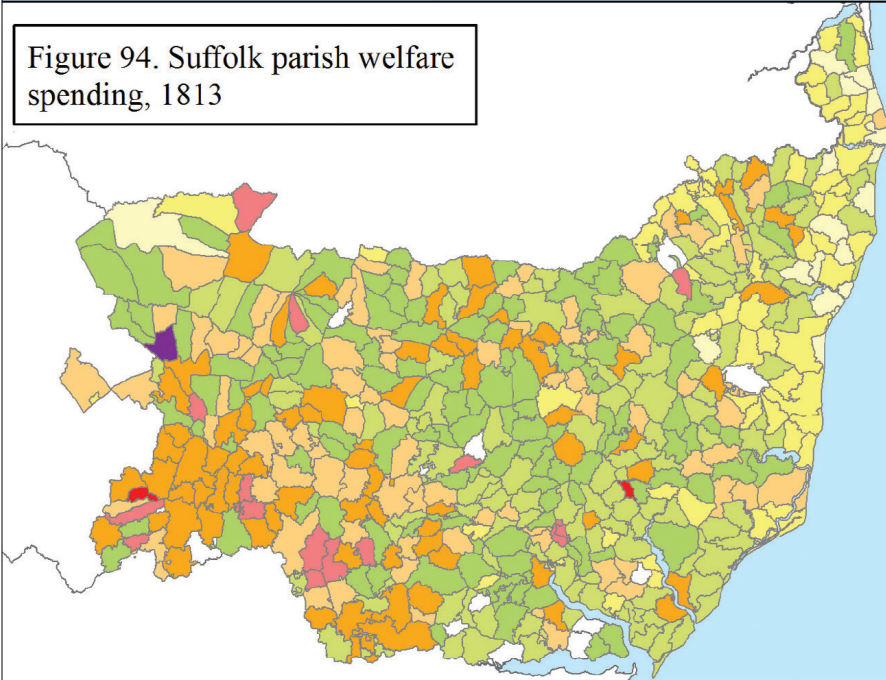


FIG. 93 – England and Wales Parish Welfare Expenditure, 1813: £ per family (after *Abstract of the Poor* [1813–15], PP 1818, XIX; data and GIS: John Broad; digital cartography: Max Satchell).

FIG. 94 – Suffolk Parish Welfare Spending, 1813: £ per family (after *Abstract of the Poor* [1813–15], PP 1818, XIX; data and GIS: John Broad; digital cartography: Max Satchell).

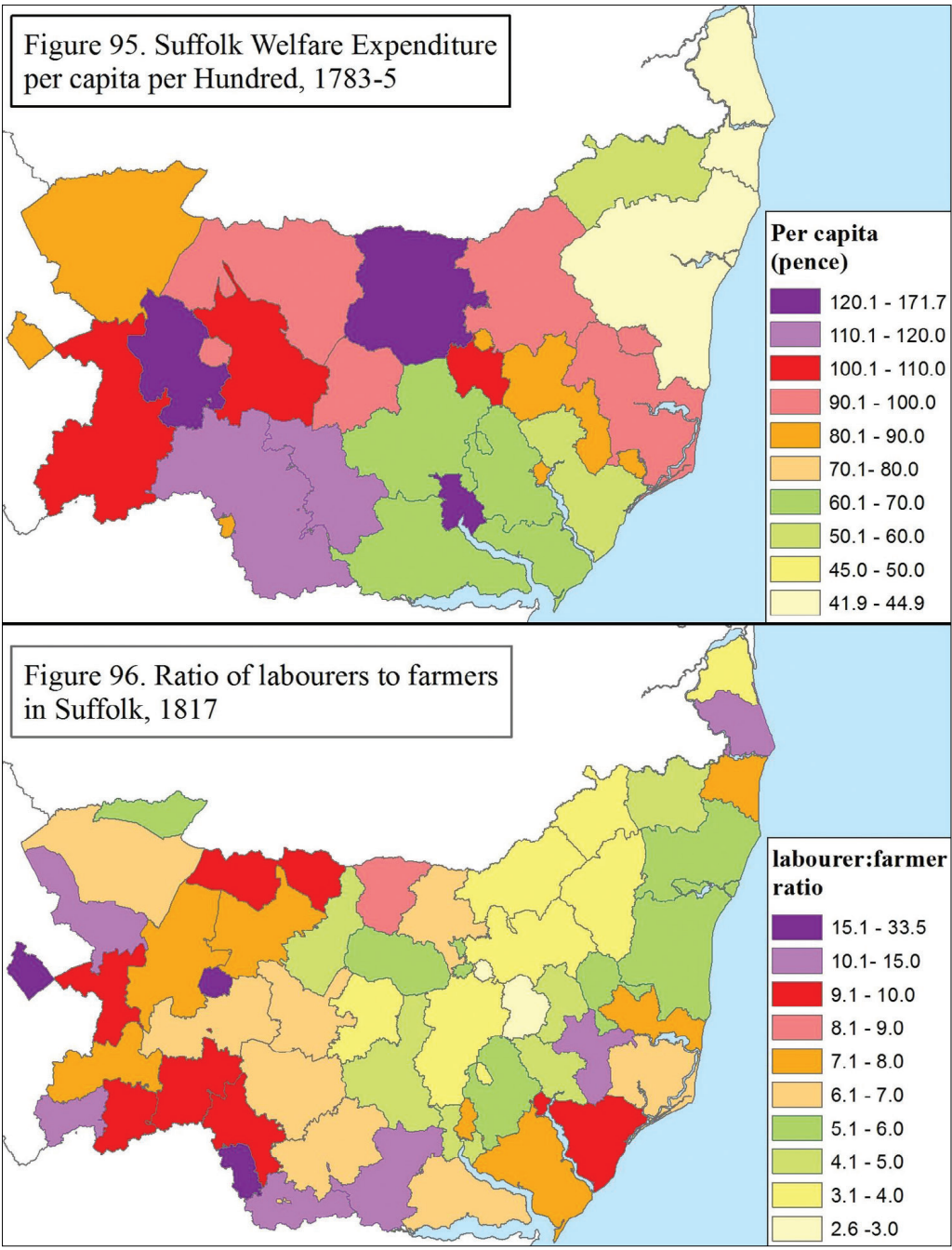


FIG. 95 – Suffolk Welfare Expenditure *per capita* per Hundred 1783–5 (after Wrigley 2011; *Abstract of the Poor PP 1803–4*, XII).

FIG. 96 – Ratio of Labourers to Farmers in Suffolk, 1817 (after CAMPOP, L. Shaw-Taylor, E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Davies, P. M. Kitson, G. Newton, and M. Satchell, ‘1817 Estimated Census of Adult Male Occupations for England and Wales in 1851 Registration District Database’).

to note large losses of employment for women in that area who had been implicated in the textile trades, especially the loss of spinning by women and girls which had provided a far from inconsequential addition to household incomes. In these areas of Suffolk tighter agricultural labour markets resulting from the oversupply of workers, such as was noted by Stuart in Cosford Hundred, as well as the increasingly limited role of agricultural work for women in what had become a more male-dominated arable farming regime, produced higher *per capita* welfare bills that most likely characterised this area before any of the practises associated with child allowances and bread scales came into play after 1790.

The relatively slow population growth in the unincorporated hundreds may have reflected significant out-migration to alleviate economic pressures, notwithstanding a larger contribution to individual and household needs from the poor rate. Furthermore, there would seem to be considerable reason for supporting the idea that the high relief expenditure evident in the west and south of the county was not generating reckless entry into marriage with associated rapid population growth.⁴⁶ Thompson stressed the need to pay particular attention to 'legal and institutional heterogeneity within the eighteenth-century welfare regime at any given moment' and concluded that 'the high degree of variation' observed within the county's welfare expenditure makes it impossible to secure 'unambiguous confirmation or refutation of Malthus's hypothesis'.⁴⁷ However, he also acknowledged that his important finding regarding the positive correlation between relief expenditure and population size in the unincorporated parishes 'implies that the demand for relief...exercised a very powerful influence over parish rating and relief practices'.⁴⁸ Rather, welfare expenditure was a response to a genuine need reflected in the hard economic conditions of labour surplus in a farming regime with substantial seasonal variations in labour demand. In fact, it would seem justifiable to interpret the maps in this study that were generated from demographic and poor relief data sets as cartographic representations of varying welfare demand and hardly supportive of a Malthusian mode of argument. The more finely grained geographical approach adopted above in the later part of this paper casts considerable doubt on any interpretation that treats Suffolk in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as economically homogeneous, notwithstanding the fact that in the county as a whole over 60 per cent of male employment was in the primary sector.

NOTES

- 1 This paper was first delivered at a meeting of SIAH on 10 December 2016.
- 2 Malthus vol. 1 eds Wrigley and Souden 1986.
- 3 These contexts are well covered in Winch 1987 and Winch 1996.
- 4 Malthus 1803 ed. Winch 1992, 89–123, 225–75.
- 5 Smith 2001, 403–407; Smith 2003, 81–84.
- 6 Malthus vol. 1 eds Wrigley and Souden 1986, 33–34.
- 7 Malthus vol. 4 eds Wrigley and Souden 1986, 238.
- 8 Huzel 1969, 403–407.
- 9 Wrigley 2016, Chapter 2.
- 10 Malthus 1803 ed. Winch 1992, 36.
- 11 Malthus 1803 ed. Winch 1992, 100.
- 12 Malthus 1803 ed. Winch 1992, 295.
- 13 A very useful and admirably succinct coverage is to be found in Dymond and Martin 1989, 96–97.
- 14 Webb and Webb 1922, 109–110.
- 15 Hoppit 1997.
- 16 Colneis and Carlford hundred (29 Geo. III, c.79); Blything Hundred (4 Geo. III, c.56); Bosmere and Claydon Hundred (4 Geo. III, c.57); Samford Hundred (4 Geo. III, c.50); Mutford and Lothingland Hundred (4 Geo. III, c.89); Wangford Hundred (4 Geo. III, c.91); Loes and Wilford hundreds (5 Geo. III,

- c.97); Stow Hundred (18 Geo. III, c.35); Hartismere, Hoxne and Thredling (19 Geo. III, c.13); Cosford Hundred (19 Geo. III, c.30).
- 17 Webb and Webb 1922, 120–35.
 - 18 Thompson 2014, 214–25.
 - 19 Thompson 2014, 217–20.
 - 20 Thompson 2014, 221.
 - 21 Thompson 2014, 224.
 - 22 Stuart 1834.
 - 23 Stuart 1834, 333.
 - 24 Stuart 1834, 333.
 - 25 Stuart 1834, 335.
 - 26 Stuart 1834, 355.
 - 27 Stuart 1834, 356.
 - 28 Thompson 2014, 224.
 - 29 Stuart 1834, 359 and 358.
 - 30 Stuart 1834, 359.
 - 31 Stuart 1834, 333.
 - 32 Stuart 1834, 362–63.
 - 33 Stuart 1834, 364.
 - 34 Stuart 1834, 364.
 - 35 Stuart 1834, 364.
 - 36 Stuart 1834, 363.
 - 37 Stuart 1834, 371.
 - 38 Stuart 1834, 371.
 - 39 Stuart 1834, 372.
 - 40 Stuart 1834, 342–49.
 - 41 Stuart 1834, 342.
 - 42 Stuart 1834, 343.
 - 43 Stuart 1834, 343.
 - 44 Stuart 1834, 333.
 - 45 Shaw-Taylor and Wrigley 2014; Keibek 2016, 422.
 - 46 For doubts concerning the impact of poor relief on marriage behaviour see Wrigley and Smith forthcoming; Williams 2004.
 - 47 Thompson, 2014, 224.
 - 48 Thompson, 2014, 224.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dymond, D. and Martin, E., 1989. *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*. Ipswich.
- Hopppit, J., 1996. *Failed Legislation, 1660–1800: Extracted from the Commons and Lords Journals*. London.
- Huzel, J.P., 1969. ‘Malthus, the Poor Law, and Population in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Economic History Review*, 22, 430–52.
- Keibek, S.A.J., 2016. The Male Occupational Structure of England and Wales, 1600–1850. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.
- Malthus, T.R., 1986. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in *The Works of Thomas Robert Malthus*, E.A. Wrigley and D. Souden (eds), 8 vols. First ed., vol 1; sixth ed., vol. 4. London.
- Malthus, T.R., 1992. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, D. Winch (ed.) using the text of the 1803 edition. Cambridge.
- Shaw-Taylor, L. and Wrigley, E.A., 2014. ‘Occupational Structure and Population Change’ in R. Floud, J. Humphries and P. Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. 1: 1700–1870*. Cambridge.

- Smith, R.M., 2001. 'Welfare of the Individual and the Group: Malthus and Externalities', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145, 4, 402–15.
- Smith, R.M., 2003. 'The Social Policy: Malthus, Welfare and Poverty', in A-M Jensen, T.J. Knutsen and A. Skonhoft (eds), *Visiting Malthus: The Man, his Times, the Issues*. Oslo.
- Stuart, H., 1834. 'Report on the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws in the Counties of Suffolk and Norfolk' in Report from His Majesty's Commissions on the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws with Appendix (A). Part I Reports From Assistant Commissioners and Indices. *British Parliamentary Papers*, 44 vol. 28.
- Thompson, S., 2014. 'Population Growth and the Corporations of the Poor, 1660–1841', in C. Briggs, P.M. Kitson and S.J. Thompson (eds), *Population, Welfare and Economic Change in Britain 1290–1834*. Woodbridge.
- Webb, S. and Webb, B., 1922. *English Local Government: Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes*. London.
- Williams, S., 2004. 'Malthus, Marriage and Poor Allowances Revisited: A Bedfordshire Case Study, 1770–1834', *Agricultural History Review*, 52, 56–82.
- Winch, D., 1987. *Malthus*. Oxford.
- Winch, D., 1996. *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain 1750–1834*. Cambridge.
- Wrigley, E.A., 2011. *The Early English Censuses*. Oxford.
- Wrigley, E.A., 2016. *The Path to Sustained Growth: England's Transition from an Organic Economy to an Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge.
- Wrigley, E.A., and Smith, R.M., forthcoming. 'Malthus and the Poor Law Revisited', *Historical Journal*.

