

Farming in East Lancs in the second half of the 19 century.

This is a selection of observations from some papers on the subject. They give an idea of the context in which Springhill Farm would be working at the time.

Grint, AJ

The 'survival' of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire c 1650-1851.

In 1851, Haslingden registration district had 8.1% of adult male workforce in agriculture - 10th lowest in Lancashire with Rochdale also in the bottom 10 and Blackburn, Bury and Burnley just above. 13% of this was family labour and 81% day labour (3rd highest in Lancs) with 5% servants - a slightly higher proportion of day labour than the rest of East Lancs, slightly lower use of family labourer and approx half the % of servants. Employment rate of 0.7 labourers per farmer is the lowest in the county.

In the less agricultural areas there was a tendency for family workers to form a smaller proportion of the workforce with an increase in day workers. It appears that Haslingden was towards the extreme of this tendency, with only Salford and Liverpool having a higher percentage of day farm labourers. These 'less agricultural' districts tend to be pastoral farms.

Fletcher TW

Lancashire Livestock Farming During the Great Depression

East Lancs farming almost entirely dairy 'sold at the farm gate' [a practice I remember at Springhill Farm in the 1960s.]

Average size 30 acres in 1875

East Lancs crop acerages and livestock numbers average of 1870, 1874 and 1875 were

Arable	5	Corn	2	Oats	1	potatoes	-
Cattle	37	milk cows	22	sheep	46	pigs	4

both cattle and cow numbers higher than Lancs and England averages, arable numbers much lower. Sheep and pigs also low. Figures for 1894-8 broadly similar, with a slight fall in arable land use in East Lancs.

There was a locally rising population with rising wages, relatively speaking, and a change in dietary habits. Milk demand appears to have held up however. Cow/person ratio fell, with a need for increased yield/cow. Claims prices fell 1879-1891 then rallied, with milk prices being relatively well maintained c.f. butter and cheese.

One Rossendale farmer paid £400/yr of feed bot 31 milking cows on a farm of 44 acres probably rented at £90 - one of the highest in Lancs.

<7% of farmed land in East Lancs was owner occupied. Apparently there was a large number of informal arrangements with leases being relatively uncommon. Much land farmed without restrictions. Fletcher claims rents held up during the 'Depression' of the last quarter of C19 but does not give data for East Lancs.

Mutch A

Farmers' Organisations and Agricultural Depression in Lancashire, 1890-1900

Feels Fletcher underestimated the effect of the agricultural depression on Lancs farmers. He claims this based on reports in contemporary press. Mutch feels they may have perceived there to be depression even if the economics were relatively good, and that this perception is seen in the rise of farmers' organisations in Lancs at the time, which cannot be dismissed as a 'vociferous minority'.

Prices in Lancs fell later than elsewhere in the country so this organisation was in part response to events elsewhere. In part this organisation was to demand rent reductions but also, according to Mutch, reflected the declining influence of the landed aristocracy and the relative rise in the power of the labourer in an area with alternative sources of employment. However much of his data relates to a small number of areas in West Lancs.