

Final Research Report

The research aimed to revise Bateman's calculations from the Return of Landowners in England and Wales of 1873 for the number of landowners in eight categories determined by size and rental in England and Wales. It aimed to do so by examining in detail the return for one county, Staffordshire, applying size and rental figures more rigorously than Bateman did and then comparing the categorised results with Bateman's for the county. The difference between the two data sets would enable multipliers to be calculated to apply to Bateman's national figures, assuming that Bateman's inaccuracies would be repeated to the same extent in the other counties. This of itself would be valuable research in testing the accuracy of Bateman's figures which demonstrated the dominance of great landowners in England and Wales; but also the resultant figures could then be compared against numbers of new men of wealth purchasing estates in each category to establish the rate of turnover of landed estates in England and Wales and whether the country actually had a 'closed' or an 'open' elite. It would also offer insights into the problems of using the Return of Owners of Land as a source about the landownership of individuals.

For a variety of reasons outlined in the interim report, the research proved to be more time consuming and complex than was originally anticipated largely due to the nature of the Return and the opportunity of a publication for the Staffordshire Record Society. It required the compilation of a database with nearly 3000 entries to determine the frequency of multiple entries. This has meant that many of the conclusions concern the nature of the Return and dangers in its usage. The main results about this area of the research are:

- Many problems acknowledged by Bateman and subsequent users of the return are confirmed but to an even greater extent than Bateman acknowledged. Thus while the return has multiple entries, Bateman's handlist of 3,754 landowners of over 2000 acres/£2000 in the United Kingdom, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain* (1883) omits at least 58 individuals because he did not identify all their entries. In total there were 499 duplicate entries in Staffordshire and 458 owners held more property in another county than Staffordshire out of a total of 42910 entries.
- Many of the properties listed as private were actually institutional (107) or companies (28). In addition 31 of those listed as companies or institutions were either duplicates or held more property in another county. In total there were 41718 private owners and (net) 565 institutional owners.
- The return understated the true extent of Staffordshire by 1/7 and nationally by 1/13 by comparison of the return with Ordinance Survey figures. The reason is that occasional parishes like Whiston in North Staffordshire did not submit any return (demonstrable by comparison with land tax returns) while several urban and industrial parishes only submitted rating entries rather than acreage as the parish rating authorities – whose data was used to compile the return – were more concerned with rateable value rather than extent. As a result not only have the number of landowners with under an acre been greatly understated but historians have understated the landholdings of industrialists and peers in such areas. Thus Horace Saint Paul qualifies as a 2,000+ acre landowner although his entries by acreage purely are only 1,372 acres. This lends weight to the view that the upper middle class was far more interested in joining the ranks of the landed elite than has previously been thought. Moreover it shows that any calculation based on the return itself must be qualified; the probable effects of these omissions has been to reduce the total number of landowners in larger categories and to inflate those in the lowest. While there would be a larger total amount of land into which these figures would be based, it reinforces the view of the stranglehold of larger owners on the land in the 1870s.

The last result starts to illustrate the wider value of the research. The next series of results can be best understood by reference to the following table comparing Bateman's and my results for Staffordshire. It shows that while shaving a relatively small amount off the total number of owners, his methods have led his results to understate the number of squires while overstating the numbers of smaller landowners. In fact the dominance of the landed elite in terms of landownership is reinforced by these figures; while eroding slightly the dominance of the peers it increased the position of the squirearchy. The number of owners counted as 'public bodies' is debatable as Bateman appears to have counted many partnerships as public bodies whereas some were dominated by one person and he appears not to have considered that such bodies held estates in many counties or had multiple entries.

Table 1 Numbers of landowners by category in Staffordshire 1873

Class	Qualification	Bateman Number	Crude Number	Revised figures based on the return	Multiplier	Revised estimate with land omitted in return
Peers	10000+	10	8	9	0.9	9
Great Landowners	3000+	23	23	24	1.0435	25
Squires	2000-2999 1000-1999	37	15 47	16 30	1.2432	18 32
Greater Yeomen	300-999	137	171	114	0.8321	126
Lesser Yeomen	100-299	414	438	339	0.8188	372
Small proprietors	1-100	8617	8628	7891	0.9157	10500
Cottagers	under 1	33672	33583	33261	0.9878	31000
Total		42910	42913	41684	0.9714	41200
Public Bodies		641	458	565	0.8814	565
Final Total		43551	43371	42249	0.9701	41765

Making two large assumptions – that Bateman’s rate of error was standard for all counties and that his average estate size is accurate (they are probably understatements at the higher end as he underestimated the total size of individual estates) - these multipliers can be applied to Bateman’s final figures with the following results.

Table 2 Summary Table of Landowners by categories in England and Wales

Class	Bateman’s total	Bateman’s extent in acres	Average estate size	Multiplier of total	Revised total []	Revised extent in acres []
Peers	400	5,728,979	14322.447	0.9	360	5,156,081
Great Landowners	1288	8,497,699	6597.592	1.0435	1344	8,867,163
Squires	2529	4,319,271	1707.896	1.2432	3144	5,369,625
Greater Yeomen	9585	4,782,627	498.969	0.8321	7976	3,979,777
Lesser Yeomen	24412	4,144,272	169.763	0.8188	19989	3,393,392
Small proprietors	217049	3,931,806	18.114	0.9157	198752	3,600,354
Cottagers	703289	151,138	0.214	0.9878	694709	148,668
Public Bodies	14459	1,443,548	99.837	0.8814	12744	1,272,323
Waste		1,524,624				1,524,624
Total	973011	34,523,974		0.9701	943918 [939018]	34,523,974 [33,312,007]

N.B. Applying multiplier to Bateman’s extent figures = 33491707

The revised figures are of course tentative and similar research on other counties would produce more certain multipliers. The differences in totals in the final two columns is in part a product of using a system of multipliers. However the larger shortfall in the final column probably reflects the fact that Bateman’s average understates the true size of estates. It would be possible to revise them as far as Staffordshire is concerned but that will be part of the next stage of the project.

Turning to the population of each class, using Bateman’s own handlist of named owners in *The Great Landowners of Great Britain* (1883) as a control there were 347 owners of estates of 10,000+ , far closer to the revised estimate than Bateman’s own; however research would be needed to confirm the lesser figures. In fact there were 1,156 owners of estates of 3000+ in England and Wales in Bateman’s handlist– far less than even Bateman’s own figures – but 50 omissions in England and Wales have already been established without a thorough investigation. The total figures (34,523,974 is used for

these purposes rather than the total revised extent in acres as the former was the total acreage of the return) show that if the landed elite is taken as squires and above, they owned 56.1% of the land in England and Wales, a significant increase on the 53.7% based on Bateman's figures. This proportion will almost certainly increase once fresh average sizes of estates are calculated which should reach a figure closer to that in the return. If correct, the figures reflect an even greater dominance of the landed elite on society.

The research will also inform research about the rate of penetration of 'new wealth' entrants identified from other ongoing research. The tentative results are as follows (the 347 figure from Bateman's handlist is used as it is more accurate than his national estimates of such large estates) :

Table 3a Penetration of the Landed Elite in England and Wales 1780-1879

Size of estate acres/rental	Social category	Total population (Bateman handlist)	New rich entrants	New owners as % of total
10,000+	'Nobility /peers'	347	47 (51)	14 (15)
3,000+	Aristocracy	1,288	315 (382)	24 (30)
2,000 to 2,999	Squirearchy	746	229 (306)	33 (41)
1,000 to 1,999		1,783	371 (511)	21 (29)
Total 1,000+	Landed elite	4,184	940 (1250)	22 (30)
300 to 999	Gentry	9,589	574 (705)	6 (7)

() figures refer to dispersals

Table 3b Penetration of the Landed Elite in England and Wales 1780-1879

Size of estate acres/rental	Social category	Total population (Revised figures)	New rich entrants	New owners as % of total
10,000+	'Nobility /peers'	347	47 (51)	14 (15)
3,000+	Aristocracy	1,344	315 (382)	23 (28)
2,000 to 2,999	Squirearchy*	1,094	229 (306)	21 (28)
1,000 to 1,999		2,050	371 (511)	18 (25)
Total 1,000+	Landed elite	4,785	940 (1250)	20 (26)
300 to 999	Gentry	7,976	574 (705)	7 (9)

*Dividing 3,144 according to the Staffordshire proportion 16:30

If land is accepted as the main criteria of the elite in the period 1780-1879, both Bateman's and the revised figures suggest that England and Wales did have an 'open elite' which was even more dominant in terms of landownership than previously considered.