

Estate Improvement and the Professionalisation of Land Agents on the Egremont Estates in Sussex and Yorkshire, 1770–1835

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Abstract The role of land agents in the management and improvement of English landed estates between 1770 and 1850 is examined in this paper. The focus is on the responsibilities of land agents, their contribution to agricultural improvement, and in particular the validity of a thesis of the professionalisation of agents during this period. The Petworth House archives are used to compare the work of two legal agents at Petworth in Sussex with that of a professional land agency firm in Yorkshire, both employed by the third Earl of Egremont (1751–1837). This study suggests that the role of land agents in agricultural improvement at Petworth was limited to the financial, legal and political aspects of these developments rather than practical management. It proposes that legal agents remained more influential than has been supposed, even on estates renowned for agricultural improvement, and despite contemporary criticism that emphasised the importance of applied agricultural expertise. The belated professionalisation of the Petworth agents and the significant differences in their roles when compared with contemporary and historical accounts suggests that estate management was therefore far more diverse than is suggested in some recent literature.

Land agents and estate improvement

The ‘improvement’ of English estate landscapes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is now widely recognised as a multi-faceted process, involving social, political and aesthetic as well as narrowly economic concerns.¹ Economically, in early usage ‘to improve’ was synonymous with ‘to invest’ or to gain profit, usually from land, and was associated with enclosure. From the seventeenth century, it was considered a moral duty of landowners and farmers to improve land visually and to make it more productive to feed a growing population, utilising concurrently both economic and aesthetic concepts of landscape design and agriculture. ‘Improvement’ has been characterised by Stephen Daniels and Susanne Seymour as the process of ‘progressively restructuring the landscape for social and economic as well as aesthetic ends and, by extension, restructuring the conduct of those who lived in, worked in and looked upon it’.² Studies on this ‘darker side’ of landscape improvement have suggested that this reconciliation of economic progress

with social stability often involved the coercion of those least able to determine the course of agricultural ‘improvement’. Alun Howkins’ analysis of J. M. W. Turner’s paintings of Petworth Park for example has illustrated that depictions of ‘an ideal and harmonised social order’ often concealed contention. While the current paper focuses on agricultural improvement gauged mainly by rental income, it is recognised that estate improvement involved many contradictory cultural, moral and political themes, aspirations, and struggles.³

A term of almost equal complexity is that of land agent. The definition of ‘agent’ was not stable, and was often used concurrently with ‘steward’ to describe many different occupations. During the eighteenth century, the roles of steward and legal adviser were not clearly distinguished, and were often performed by attorneys.⁴ As Penelope Corfield has argued, occupational pluralism was not uncommon, although a trend towards specialisation can be observed in the professions during this period. The position of land agents had originated in that of the bailiffs and stewards of the great medieval estates, and the profession developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as landowners left their estates for long periods whilst engaged in, for example, entertainment or politics in London.⁵ The management of a landed estate, in effect the supervision of some of the largest enterprises in the British economy and a key space of social and political activity, was increasingly in the hands of agents. However, ‘despite their acknowledged importance’, and although there has been some work on particular individuals, including Francis Blaikie and Nathaniel Kent, John Beckett has argued that ‘relatively little is known about individual eighteenth century stewards’. The tendency has in fact been to portray agents, according to Beckett, as ‘rapacious, untrustworthy and weak willed’.⁶ Edward Laurence dedicated his text in 1727 on *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord* to landowners that ‘have already suffered through the knavery and unfaithfulness of their stewards’ and stressed the dangers of extended absence from estates. In contrast, studies have shown that many agents were competent and influential figures in agricultural improvement.⁷

Land agents played an important role in fostering improvement on landed estates by increasing the efficiency of estate management, thereby enabling improvement to take place, and also in disseminating agricultural knowledge to tenants. Agents mediated complex and wide-ranging estate improvements, such as the newly developed agricultural techniques, and supervised the ‘moral improvement’ of tenants. They were expected to oversee the administration of the estate including the home farm, house, gardens and park and were also involved in land purchases, surveying, accountancy, political campaigning, and legal issues, including the administration of Poor Laws.⁸ These wide-ranging activities notwithstanding, in 1804 William Marshall claimed that the primary duties of an estate manager lay ‘in the field’, and involved the supervision of estate work, crop layout and ‘the right ordering of servants and workpeople’. According to Marshall, estate management required ‘the whole of any man’s attention’, and could not be undertaken by those without practical agricultural experience, such as lawyers.⁹

Despite Marshall’s strictures, the employment of lawyers as agents was partly due to the predominance of precedent and custom, and the volume of legal disputes and tenures (especially regarding enclosure) in estate management. The activities of attorneys as estate agents cannot be separated from their work as political agents due to the close

connection between the right to vote and the possession or tenure of land. According to John Lawrence in 1801, an agent was expected to ‘introduce and fairly experiment upon the estates under his care, with the honourable and patriotic views both of private and national benefit’; however, the writer claimed that ‘the too general custom of employing these attorney-stewards has been a great bar to agricultural improvement, and, in that light, a national loss’.¹⁰

Historians have echoed Marshall and other contemporaries in their dismissal of solicitors as agents, and their emphasis on the practical and technical at the expense of the legal and political aspects of agricultural improvement. However, at Petworth, the home estate of the third Earl of Egremont (1751–1837), renowned then and now as the quintessential agricultural innovator, a succession of qualified solicitors were employed as land agents, while contemporary commentators actively discouraged this practice.¹¹ This paper is an attempt to answer David Spring’s call for further research on the work of solicitor-agents, a much-neglected aspect of our knowledge of land agents.¹² Comparison is made between the two Petworth solicitor-agents and the professional land agency firm employed to manage Egremont’s Yorkshire estates, in order to consider the agents’ contribution to estate improvement, and, in particular, to assess the validity of a thesis of the professionalisation of agents during this period.

G. E. Mingay maintained that estate administration improved during the eighteenth century as estate stewards became professionalised. Professionalisation, for Mingay, was a product of the forces driving estate improvement, and was due to the increasing complexity of the economy, the resultant demands for expert services, and the extension of capitalist criteria of performance to estate management.¹³ Further, non-economic drivers included a growing elite concern with science, changing views on service and practical endeavour and the reform of political sinecures. From the seventeenth century, estate management gradually became standardised, and increasingly centralised, with complex administrative hierarchies.¹⁴ This process coincided with the professional and managerial revolution in law and medicine, although the growth of professions was far from uniform.¹⁵

The chronology of the professionalisation of agents, however, is unclear; F. M. L. Thompson and John Beckett have argued that this process occurred in the nineteenth century, while Edward Hughes and G. E. Mingay saw it as an eighteenth-century phenomenon.¹⁶ The implications for this transition are also uncertain. Eric Richards has argued that agents’ diligence and loyalty sustained the aristocracy in their ‘careers of extraordinary leisure or of political and social leadership’, while J. H. Porter claimed that professional agents contributed to increasing social distance in rural society between landlord and tenant, and led to agents’ ‘growing importance as a middle class in the social structure of rural society’.¹⁷

As well as its timing, the very definition of professionalisation has been the focus of scholarly attention. Professionalisation has been characterised by Paul Brassley and others as an increased dominance and autonomy in a profession, while the ‘professional’ is recognised as an independent practitioner holding exclusive knowledge of a specialised activity that may have been gained through training, and who has been selected on merit (rather than wealth or inheritance), and belongs to a formal qualifying association with

a professional identity.¹⁸ For Brassley, modern English agriculture demonstrates ‘some but not all of the features of a profession’, in that there were not universal regulated training courses and in that entry into the profession by birth was still possible.¹⁹ Similarly, land agents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries met a limited number of these characteristics. Although there was no formal education for a land agent until the establishment of the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester in 1845, the great estate offices such as Holkham or Woburn became recognised training grounds for agents.²⁰ However, it was not until 1902 that the land agents’ profession was recognised with institutional status.

The gradual emergence of professional land agency demonstrates an attempt to apply scientific and industrial management techniques to the estate in order to provide a more efficient and profitable resource for the landowner, replacing legal knowledge with technical expertise. Nevertheless, as F. M. L. Thompson states, professional agents continued to work in a ‘field whose possession he was still disputing with others, principally attorneys and farmers’. Furthermore, David Spring claims that the lawyer-agent was found on the majority of landed estates in the early nineteenth century.²¹ This paper will examine the roles of Petworth solicitor-agents James Upton Tripp and William Tyler in comparison to changes made on the Yorkshire estates by the professional London firm Kent, Claridge and Pearce (see figure 1). An assessment will then be made regarding the level of ‘professionalisation’ achieved at Petworth in the period 1770 to 1835.

The Egremont estates and the Petworth agents, 1772–1835

George O’Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont (1751–1837) owned over 110,000 acres in the West of England, Sussex, Cumberland, Yorkshire, and Ireland, with an estimated annual income of £100,000.²² Over 30,000 acres of this land was located near Petworth, situated on the River Rother in the south of the Low Weald in West Sussex, forty miles south-west of London.²³ The estate, home of the Percys of Northumberland from the twelfth century, and the site of seventeenth-century Petworth House, had a powerful influence on the agricultural landscape. Petworth was Lord Egremont’s main seat, primary residence and the central site from which the wider estate was managed during this period, which is known as the ‘Golden Age’ of Petworth due to the longevity and relative stability of the Earl of Egremont’s control (1763–1837).²⁴ The Yorkshire estates were part of the ancient Percy estates, which the second Earl of Egremont inherited in 1750, consisting of 24,733 acres in Wressle and Leconfield (East Riding), Catton and Seamer (North Riding), and Spofforth and Tadcaster (West Riding).²⁵

The third Earl of Egremont was a renowned agricultural improver who was offered the post of President of the Board of Agriculture in 1798 and was described by the historian Mark Anthony Lower in 1865 as ‘one of the fathers of modern English agriculture’.²⁶ Contemporary agricultural commentators recorded the Earl’s interest in, and enthusiasm for, agricultural improvement. William Marshall (1798) described Egremont’s ‘patriotism and benevolence’ that flowed ‘in every direction’, and his ‘truly noble and patriotic exertions’ in the selective breeding of livestock.²⁷ Similarly, in his 1813 report on the agriculture of Sussex, the Reverend Arthur Young, son of the renowned

LANDOWNERS:

2ND EARL OF EGREMONT (1750-1763) Charles Wyndham, 4th Baronet Wyndham and 2nd Earl of Egremont, born 1710, son of Sir William Wyndham and his wife Catherine Seymour. Succeeded as Earl of Egremont and Baron Cockermouth from his maternal uncle, the seventh duke of Somerset, in 1750.

3RD EARL OF EGREMONT (1763-1837) George O'Brien Wyndham, born 1751, first son of Charles Wyndham and his wife Alicia Maria Carpenter (1729?-1794). He adopted the title 'O'Brien' on the death of his uncle, Percy Wyndham O'Brien, Earl of Thomond, in 1774 on inheriting the Irish estates. The 3rd Earl is referred to as 'Egremont' in this paper.

COLONEL GEORGE WYNDHAM (1837-1869) Illegitimate son of 3rd Earl and Miss Elizabeth Ilive (d. Countess of Egremont 1822), created 1st Lord Leconfield 1859.

4TH EARL OF EGREMONT (1786-1845) George Francis Wyndham, son of 3rd Earl's youngest brother, William Frederick Wyndham (1763-1845). Inherited title and Western estates in Somerset and Devon. On his death, all honours became extinct.

AGENTS:

THOMAS ELDER agent to the 2nd Earl of Egremont and steward of the Wiltshire and Somerset estates, c.1714-1780.

JAMES UPTON TRIPP, PETWORTH AGENT 1772-1801

WILLIAM TYLER, PETWORTH AGENT 1801-1835

JOHN CLARIDGE, YORKSHIRE AGENT 1796-1835. Claridge was trained by Nathaniel Kent (1737-1810) and was a partner in the firm Kent, Claridge and Pearce, established by the 1790s.

HENRY CLARIDGE, YORKSHIRE AGENT 1835-1848. Son of John Claridge.

HENRY TRIPP, AGENT FOR WESTERN ESTATES c.1798-1835. Barrister in London, and brother of the Petworth agent James Upton Tripp.

THOMAS CROWE, IRISH AGENT 1801-1851, son of Thomas Crowe, agent 1774-1801.

WILLIAM CLUTTON, AGENT FOR NORTHERN ESTATES (including Cumberland) from 1848. The firm Cluttons managed the estates until the end of the nineteenth century.

CLERK:

JAMES CHALLENGER (1779-1834), William Tyler's clerk at Petworth. It seems likely that Challenger would have succeeded Tyler as agent to the Earl of Egremont, if he had not predeceased him.

Figure 1. Glossary of Key Figures in the Management of the Egremont Estates, 1770–1835.

<p>BAILIFFS:</p> <p><u>JOHN HABBIN</u> acted as bailiff on the Petworth estate between 1765 and 1801.</p> <p><u>JOHN SHERWIN</u> and his son Thomas Sherwin were employed as bailiffs at Petworth from 1791 to 1850.</p> <p>SURVEYORS:</p> <p><u>JOHN UPTON</u> (d.1812), the 3rd Earl's Surveyor at Petworth, succeeded by his son Thomas Poling Upton.</p> <p>OTHERS:</p> <p><u>MESSRS STEPHEN AND WATSON</u> Mr John Stephens and Mr Watson were employed individually by the 3rd Earl to assist in the rationalisation of James Upton Tripp's accounts at Petworth from 1801. Following a four-year long investigation by Messrs Stephens and Watson, Tyler was forced to admit: 'The result of [Watson's] examination has not produced much; but this does not surprise me, because such loans and money transactions your brother wished not to be known to me were not entered in his books and no discovery of them can be traced through any sums of that description...' (PHA 8638).</p>

Figure 1. Continued.

agricultural observer, described Egremont's estates as 'conducted upon a great scale, in the highest style of improvement'.²⁸ The Reverend Young depicted Lord Egremont as a conscientious and benevolent landlord, providing incentives for agricultural improvement through patronage of the Sussex Agricultural Society, established in 1797 and in his role at the Royal Society and the Board of Agriculture.²⁹ The funding of an assisted emigration scheme from Sussex by Lord Egremont further demonstrated a concern (both moral and economic) for the poor of Sussex, and enabled 1,800 poor tenants to immigrate to Upper Canada between 1832 and 1837.³⁰ This scheme was later extended by Egremont's son, Colonel George Wyndham (later first Lord Leconfield) to an assisted emigration scheme from the family's Irish estates, and also to the purchase and attempted management of land in South Australia in 1838.³¹

The Petworth and Yorkshire estates were inherited by Lord Egremont on the death of his father in 1763. The engagement of James Upton Tripp, the first Petworth agent in this study, coincides with Egremont's twenty-first birthday, and an associated reassessment of the Egremont estate. Tripp (c.1747–1801) was employed as solicitor and land agent to the third Earl from 1772, retaining this position for twenty-nine years until his death in 1801. This employment continued a pattern of Egremont patronage of the Tripp family, which may in part explain the continued employment of Tripp, despite demonstrations of incompetence and procrastination.³² Nevertheless, Tripp retained his position as agent, receiving a modest salary of £200 that may suggest the agent was part-time, whilst earning further income from a private legal practice.³³

An investigation of Tripp's financial estate from the 1770s and a four-year examination of his accounts did not produce evidence of a misappropriation of Egremont's capital, although there was clearly enough suspicion of Tripp's financial dealings for this to be undertaken.³⁴ As Joanna Martin argues, the use of charge and discharge accounting meant

that it was likely that neither steward nor owner usually knew the financial position of the estate in any great detail. In practice, however, it is difficult to distinguish genuine incompetence from dishonesty.³⁵

The second agent, William Tyler (c.1764–1835) was the son of William Tyler, a yeoman from Lewes in East Sussex. As Eric Richards recounts, this was a relatively common upbringing for agents, who were primarily drawn from families of country gentlemen, farmers or lawyers.³⁶ Tyler acted as clerk to a Petworth attorney, William Carleton, (1781–6) and was employed by Tripp (1786–88) in the same position in his early twenties.³⁷ The successful nature of this agreement is demonstrated by Tyler's continued employment after this period with a salary of £210 a year and Tripp and Tyler's partnership in legal practice from 1793. Tyler became Petworth agent to Lord Egremont following Tripp's death in 1801, and continued in this position for a further thirty-four years until his own death in 1835. Shortly before this, Tyler was given responsibility for the Somerset estates, previously managed by Henry Tripp, a London barrister and brother to the former Petworth agent.³⁸

Tyler's wages were increased to £500 a year in 1801. From 1813, Tyler was paid a commission of three-and-a-half per cent of Egremont's rental income in Sussex, the same figure given to the London firm Kent, Claridge and Pearce, who managed the Yorkshire estates, as both a reward and an encouragement for the agent's energies in improving rental income. This increased Tyler's wages from £824 to £969 between 1813 and 1822, although this total fluctuated with altered economic circumstances. The agent also charged Egremont considerable legal fees for his work as solicitor, and travelling expenses.

Tyler's wages compare favourably with those of his contemporaries. For example, Francis Blaikie, steward to Thomas William Coke at Holkham, had a salary of £650 in the early nineteenth century, while Charles Bowns, the agent to Earl Fitzwilliam received £1,200 after a similar pay increase to Tyler in 1811 from £400 a year.³⁹ Salaries and commissions ranging from £600 to £1,200 placed these agents high on the scale of professional and country gentlemen. Tyler died leaving eleven properties and legacies of over £35,000. His fortune was apparently made through efficient management, and an increasing salary, as well as through private business transactions and prudent investments, in contrast to his predecessor.⁴⁰

Tyler's economic success and the patronage of his employer enabled the agent to hold a high position in local society. Tyler was a welcome dinner guest to both the Earl and his heir. He had the use of the Countess' carriage and the Earl's Theatre and Opera box in London, and he borrowed books from the Earl's library.⁴¹ However, the agent was extremely unpopular with some members of the Petworth community, in part due to his attempts to lower workers wages on the estate in 1823, and his search for other ways to reduce spending, such as suggesting to his employer that fewer people should eat dinner at Petworth House. The agent's tone in much correspondence is impatient and forthright, and his behaviour was described by his nephew Thomas Gould in 1826 as 'perhaps sometimes rather hasty', and even ungentlemanly.⁴²

His inadequate treatment of some Petworth inhabitants notwithstanding, Tyler seemed to suffer excessive personal cruelty at their hands. Tyler was the subject of a hoax in 1812,

possibly by a disgruntled London tradesman, receiving a note claiming that Egremont was dying, leading to great embarrassment and the expense of a chaise, hired at 1s 6d, to rush to London. A prosecution at the assizes in 1834 reported that four men had paraded effigies including one of Tyler through the town.⁴³ A similar incident is recalled in *Tales of Old Petworth*, where John Osborn Greenfield (1802–1869), writing in the 1860s recalls:

To parade the effigies of men who had given offence was then a frequent practice in Petworth. I have seen our late Rector Sockett and afterwards Tyler and his man Goatcher thus exhibited. Once in Tyler's latter time they were thus carried about at Egdean Fair on September 4th. Haslett and others hired a tramp with stentorian lungs and his woman to sing obscene songs about Tyler to such a degree offensive that no lady could venture to come into Petworth . . . For these songs were roared out day and night from many mouths not only in the town, but in every tap room also.⁴⁴

Both men were unpopular, although this was probably due as much to the nature of their position as agent, involving the collection of rents and debts, and the discipline of tenants, as it was to their infamous tempers.⁴⁵ However, Lord Egremont's support for Tyler, in particular, seemed to be unshakeable. On numerous occasions, Egremont defended the manner of Tyler's correspondence; when writing to a Mr Wills, Egremont claimed:

I am very sorry to hear that you thought that Mr Tyler had written to you in an uncivil manner and therefore, as he keeps copies of all letters, I looked at the copy and I can assure you that there is nothing in it which I should have considered as offensive if it had been addressed to me on a matter of business.⁴⁶

This support does not seem misguided. Tyler appears to have been a diligent and fastidious agent to Egremont, in contrast to his seemingly less adept predecessor.

Despite their unpopularity, the Petworth agents were influential on both a local and a national scale, and were involved in the management of the wider Egremont estates. Tyler acted as overseer of agents in Somerset, Yorkshire and Ireland and both Tripp and Tyler made annual visits to Yorkshire, sometimes accompanied by their employer. They also made regular visits to London and Brighton, and occasionally to Somerset and Cumberland. Large purchases or enclosure bills often prompted travel that was assisted by significant improvements in communications during this period. As D. R. Hainsworth has argued, stewards were located at the interface between London (and provincial towns) and the rural community, assisting in the flow of intelligence of national events and ideas from the metropolis to the locality.⁴⁷ This role as 'mediator' between rural and urban communities, and between aristocrats and rural labourers, seems to have been competently, if not diplomatically realised by the two agents.

In addition to Tripp and Tyler's mobility, the agents for Yorkshire, Somerset and Ireland met regularly in London, where Lord Egremont could be advised on the latest events on his geographically dispersed estate. While Tripp and Tyler do not seem to have held a straightforward position as head agent, their proximity to Egremont meant that they had greater influence than the other agents. For example, Thomas Crowe, agent in Ireland (1801–51), inherited his father's position on the condition that he visited London every July to settle his accounts with Tyler. The Petworth archives also demonstrate an increased role for Tripp and Tyler in Yorkshire affairs during the early nineteenth

century.⁴⁸ It seems likely that the influence of the Petworth agents grew as Egremont's interest in the more distant estates increased; a process demonstrated by Egremont's measures for improvement in Yorkshire, Somerset and later in Ireland.⁴⁹

The wider Egremont estate was increasingly coordinated at Petworth. Tripp's employment, and later the construction of the estate office there from 1803 to 1804, indicates a change of estate policy initiated by the third Earl. Before this, there had been no resident agent at Petworth, and the management of the estate was coordinated in London, the primary residence of the politician Charles Wyndham, second Earl of Egremont.⁵⁰ The relocation from London to Petworth (as the third Earl's main residence) is an important, though not uncommon, decentralisation of estate management that demonstrates the increased significance of Petworth to the landowner during this time, which resulted in considerable 'improvements' to the estate landscape. The new estate office was proximate to the House, town, and parish church at Petworth, and was in an excellent position for the supervision of servants and estate staff. The estate office acted as the hub of estate management and rationalisation during this period, with the layout of the estate office demonstrating the importance placed on the rational collection and organisation of financial and legal material regarding Egremont's estates.

Together with their influence as estate coordinators, the Petworth agents acted as Egremont's 'viceroys' in Sussex during his absence, and as representatives for the estate on committees and in local government. The agents represented Egremont at the assizes, and presided over both leet and baron courts.⁵¹ The agents also acted as trustees on local boards, committees and charities. The agents' roles in local politics extended to civil defence, preparation for elections, and the payment of entertainment for voters. As John Beckett argues, however, local government was organised by both formal and informal structures.⁵² One such informal arrangement in Petworth involved an economy of gifts. The agents frequently distributed gifts of venison, cider, and even puppies and plants to local landowners, stewards and other influential people.

It is clear that Tripp and Tyler held significant positions in society, due both to their employment by the third Earl, and to the legal and political tasks, both formal and informal, associated with this position. Tripp and Tyler both referred to themselves during their respective employment as steward to the Earl of Egremont. The two, however, would more appropriately be called legal agents. Both Tripp and Tyler had legal training, and held the position of solicitor to the Earl. The agents' correspondence reveals close tracking of the parliamentary progress of Yorkshire enclosure bills, and the reading of Parliamentary Bills. In comparison to these activities, the supervision of practical farming appears to have been relatively insignificant. This may have been due to the employment of an experienced bailiff in Sussex, the legal specialisation of the two agents, and an over-emphasis by contemporary commentators on the need for agricultural experience.⁵³

Lord Egremont's policy of land acquisition and rationalisation in Sussex and Yorkshire utilised the legal training of the Petworth agents. Each land purchase involved complex legal processes, as well as negotiations between the buyer and seller regarding a suitable price, the production of deeds, and the settling of obligations regarding tithes, fines and heriots. These intricate procedures, as well as the legal and political machinations

necessary for enclosure and inheritance, were navigated by the land agent, and seem to have helped to justify the employment of a succession of solicitors in this position. Part of this role involved being aware of land available for purchase, its relative value, and ways to secure an advantageous price from the purchaser.⁵⁴ Exchanges of land involved similar transfers of abstracts of title and other papers, negotiations that could continue for months or even years.⁵⁵ Egremont also made significant purchases and enclosures in Yorkshire. These estates, though managed by the London firm Kent, Claridge and Pearce, became increasingly prominent in Tyler's correspondence, suggesting both the increasing interest of the landowner, and the agent's expanding legal responsibilities.

While the negotiation, construction, and copying of leases were important tasks undertaken at all levels in the estate office, little evidence has been found in the Petworth archives to substantiate the agent's role in managing new tenants. This may have been the result of a relatively stable tenant base in Sussex, and a potentially greater role for estate bailiffs rather than for their supervisors. In contrast, the negotiation of leases, and the settling of disputes caused by tenant actions in violation of these agreements were central tasks performed by the agents. Leases contained complex covenants to ensure the maintenance, and if possible the improvement, of agricultural conditions on each farm. Breaking these covenants led to stern warnings from the agent, and on occasion to fines, court cases, or eviction. In a letter to a Mr Sandham in 1803 regarding a damaged wall, Tyler warns that 'you are bound by your lease to repair by a certain day: that certainly you have not done, and therefore your covenant is broken, and you are liable to be sued upon it'.⁵⁶ Despite this, the agent suggests a method for attaining a fair price for the repair, demonstrating elements of both coercion and conciliation towards tenants.

Greater than their role in the management of tenants was the land agents' influence on the organisation of estate repairs. Although it is likely that bailiffs and surveyors supervised the practical work, Tripp and Tyler made decisions regarding the necessity of repairs, and the financial responsibility for these, according to lease conditions and the circumstances of each case. Similarly, it was the bailiffs at Petworth, rather than Tripp or Tyler, who undertook the management of the home farm. However, the agents performed a supervisory role in regard to servants and other estate employees, keeping accounts of both wages and conduct. Both Tripp and Tyler advised on the employment of servants, and made moral judgements to justify these recommendations.

The agents had significant power over the financial operations of this complicated estate enterprise. They were involved in the collection of rents twice a year and an annual audit, as well as the production of accounts. William Marshall in 1804 argued that the 'superiority of accounts is to be estimated by their clearness and brevity', which could only be obtained by 'simplicity of method'.⁵⁷ There are, however, some difficulties in the comparison of the accounts of Tripp and Tyler. Those of Tyler demonstrate a mastery of detail and accounting technique, and indeed, Tyler lectured tradesmen on accounting procedure.⁵⁸ In contrast, Tripp's chaotic and obscure records necessitated the inspection of Messrs Stephens and Watson, who were employed by the Earl to restore clarity to them over a number of years.

A similar contrast in detail and clarity can be seen in financial correspondence, the recording of requests for money by Egremont's family (indicating interesting power

relations between the agent and his employers), the payment of bills, tithes and taxes, and the establishment of loans and mortgages. It is clear that legal and financial management formed a significant part of the role of the Petworth agents. In comparison to Tripp's hazy records, Tyler's apparent mastery of financial matters demonstrates the relative competence of the two agents in one of their most important responsibilities.

The apparent absence of practical estate management by the agents was not due to insufficient agricultural knowledge. Correspondence stating that the bailiff would settle the 'terms of culture' in a lease agreement suggests that the agents delegated even important agricultural tasks.⁵⁹ John Lawrence in 1801 argued that lawyers could hold some knowledge of agriculture, 'since there are many in the profession [...] who rank among our most scientific and able cultivators'.⁶⁰ One particularly prestigious area of improvement in which the agents were involved was the development of animal and plant breeds. Lord Egremont's association with the Royal Society and his interest in agricultural experimentation enabled the transfer of innovations or crops from London to the estate farms. It was at Tyler's request that Egremont asked Sir Joseph Banks about spring wheat, and sent a sack of seed to the estate.⁶¹ In addition, the Earl and his agents promoted the local Southdown breed of sheep, and demonstrated an interest in the improvement of tenants' livestock more generally. The selective breeding of sheep in Sussex was enabled by loans of exceptional rams by Egremont. Tyler suggested to Mr Gell, a tenant farmer of Applesham (West Sussex) in 1806 that the selective breeding encouraged and enabled by Lord Egremont, as well as Mr Sherwin the bailiff, had produced a stock superior even to that of Mr Ellman, a national authority on sheep breeding.⁶² Tyler's letter illustrates the central role that Lord Egremont, his bailiff and agent played in the promotion and facilitation of improvements in livestock.

The agents were also involved in the dispersal of agricultural equipment, as demonstrated by correspondence regarding ploughs and threshing machines for the Egremont estate. A letter from one Mr Cleavers to Tripp in 1787 concerns the conveyance of a plough which would be 'particularly useful to me and to the neighbourhood' on the Yorkshire estates.⁶³ Lord Egremont provided materials for the construction of a threshing machine by Mr Gell of Applesham, but was solemnly informed of the destruction of a similar machine in 1835, 'where [sic] wilfully or not I do not know', possibly as part of ongoing Swing Riots from 1830.⁶⁴

Together with the patronage of improvements to livestock and agricultural equipment, the Petworth agents influenced the legal, social and political, as well as technical aspects of land drainage and enclosure. Between 1797 and 1812, Egremont spent £26,000 on draining and fencing on his Yorkshire estate.⁶⁵ However, in part due to the early enclosure of Sussex and contrasting soil conditions, these processes were less significant for Petworth.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, letters regarding alterations to field drainage following the Rother navigation in Sussex demonstrate Tyler's technical proficiency and knowledge of drainage.⁶⁷ Tripp and Tyler were influential in the negotiation and preparation of enclosure bills, as well as gaining agreement between landowners in cases where a private agreement was considered more suitable.

Enclosure involved a negotiation between large landowners and the committees representing tenants and small-scale farmers. In 1807 a meeting regarding the North

Heath enclosure (near Pulborough, West Sussex) carried the motion, although further meetings were still being held regarding this scheme two years later.⁶⁸ Similar delays were experienced with the Warningcamp enclosure near Arundel in 1809, while one at Duncton near Petworth was not expected to encounter any hindrances, as 'the Earl of Egremont is Lord of the Manor and owner of nearly all the property in it'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the Yorkshire and Cumbria Parliamentary enclosure bills were of far greater expense and inconvenience, as constant additions were made to the Croglin (near Carlisle) enclosure bill as it passed through the Houses of Commons and Lords. Egremont's response was to request in 1808 that 'in future, before any inclosure be brought so forward as to be introduced into the house, the rights and claims of the different parties may be fully understood, and accommodated' for reasons of the expense and trouble involved.⁷⁰

In addition to the legal and technical aspects of drainage and enclosure, the solicitor-agents were involved in the construction of marriage settlements, the enfranchisement of property and the resolution of legal disputes. The last of these dominate the agents' private legal correspondence for their joint firm, and also figure prominently in estate documents. Legal correspondence was primarily concerned with cases for debt. Correspondence with the novelist Charlotte Smith (1749–1806) regarding Egremont's assistance and actions as trustee to the Smith estate in Barbados was a lengthy saga involving both agents, who were required to answer the novelist's stream of disgruntled letters.⁷¹ More sensational cases such as the murder of Captain Sargent form brief interludes in the papers among more mundane disputes over land and timber rights, inheritance and debt.⁷² These disputes are clearly connected to an equally important element of the agent's work, that of financial management.

It is clear then from this evidence that, despite the Marshallian ideal (1804) and the image evoked by G. E. Mingay of an agent riding around the estate and advising tenants on agricultural techniques, the Petworth agents had largely office-based, rather than field-based managerial careers.⁷³ Furthermore, Tripp and Tyler did not meet many of William Marshall's requirements for land agents. While Tyler possessed some technical knowledge of drainage and surveying, the agents relied on surveyors and bailiffs to make valuations, and both agents spent most of their working days either in an office, travelling or in London, rather than in the field. Similarly, complaints regarding the manner of both agents suggest they were often not as conciliatory as Marshall would have liked. The prime disparity between the Petworth agents and Marshall's ideal, however, was their legal profession.

It is likely that the disparate salaries of Tyler and Tripp reflected Tyler's superior managerial ability, and probably the relative amounts of responsibility borne by each agent. However, despite the increased responsibilities placed on Tyler, the agent was far from autonomous. His almost daily communication with Egremont demonstrates the landowner's interest in and control over his estate, which suggests that the development of the land agency profession was not purely the result of landowners' continued absence or disinterest in the estate, as has been argued.⁷⁴ Tripp and Tyler were far from independent, and acted primarily as legal agents. In contrast, as the next section will argue, Kent, Claridge and Pearce, employed by Egremont to manage the Yorkshire estates, specialised in estate rationalisation and demonstrated a professional and systematic approach to agricultural improvement on a neglected estate property.⁷⁵

Nathaniel Kent and the Yorkshire estates

Kent, Claridge and Pearce was a London firm established by the 1790s to provide professional guidance in the management and rationalisation of estates. Led by Nathaniel Kent (1737–1810), the firm managed several properties, including the Royal estates at Richmond and Windsor, and surveyed and valued many more. Kent also published texts on agriculture, including the influential *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775). Kent's *Hints* advocated good relations between landowner and tenant, including durable leases and favourable terms for repairs, and attempted to demonstrate the value of small-scale farms, contrary to William Marshall who had emphasised large-scale production for economic agricultural improvement.⁷⁶ In contrast to the Petworth agents, Kent retained professional independence, never becoming associated with one particular client or estate. His firm was renowned for its proficiency in rationalising estate layout and leases to provide an increase in overall value, whilst still attempting to provide for small-scale farmers.⁷⁷

Egremont's Yorkshire estates were extensively reorganised by the firm from 1796, resulting in both increased rental value, and the provision of small closes for some cottager tenants enabling them to keep a cow.⁷⁸ Kent's partner, John Claridge, completed a survey between 1796 and 1797 that revealed an under-rented and poorly organised 24,000-acre estate. Nevertheless, Claridge's diligent management and suggestions for improvement resulted in a doubling of rental value between 1796 and 1811, although this was due in part to a period of inflation.⁷⁹ Claridge charged the firm's customary fee of three-and-a-half per cent of an estate's net yield, plus additional costs of surveying and valuations.⁸⁰ His account also lists improvement costs, such as contributions to the Beverley and Barmston Drainage. This drainage scheme, initiated to prevent the flooding of 1,100 acres of Leconfield by the river Hull, eventually cost over £20,000.⁸¹ Claridge continued to manage the estates after Kent's death in 1810, and was succeeded by his son Henry in 1835, on whose death (1848) another firm of surveyor-land agents, Cluttons took over the management of the estates, which they retained until the end of the century.

John Claridge, Kent's partner, appears to have been a competent and efficient surveyor and land agent. His letters provide detailed and knowledgeable accounts of the estate, which he visited twice a year. These letters have a greater clarity than those of the Petworth agents, due in part to the geographical distance between landowner and property and the consequently less frequent correspondence.⁸² Claridge and Tyler's correspondence was that of equals, but with the former frequently complimenting the latter on his abilities.⁸³ Tyler also visited the estates and wrote to Yorkshire tenants as Lord Egremont's solicitor, warning tenants of the potential of legal action if lease covenants were ignored, and also managed the complex legal processes involved in land purchases and enclosure in Yorkshire. It is unclear which agent took the more senior role as they belonged to different management hierarchies, although Tyler did assess, and frequently criticised, Claridge's accounts. As Pamela Horn has suggested, permanent stewards sometimes resented the intervention of professionals.⁸⁴ While Tyler and Claridge's relations appear to have been relatively amicable, Tyler's most trenchant criticisms were made of Nathaniel Kent, perhaps due to professional jealousy. Tyler grumbled to Lord Egremont about the cost of a valuation by Kent, while the eminent surveyor was forced to defend his position

regarding a particular valuation made of the Cumberland estates, an extract of which is shown below.

PHA 12186: Letter from Nathaniel Kent, Fulham 18 Nov 1783.

I have never been in Cumberland – though I have [surveyed] estates in more than half the counties in England to upwards of £100,000 per annum with the general satisfaction of every person who has employed me – I am sorry that the nature of your enquiry calls for this declaration from me, which I should rather you had learnt from an other [...] you must from the perusal of my publication on agriculture where I have aimed at making every gentleman a judge of his own property, collect whether I am competent to ascertain the value of the estate in question [...] I admire your idea about the advantages of being acquainted with a countryside, the sort of knowledge is certainly good upon a small scale – but local knowledge alone will not come up to the test of our profession – great experience and a natural turn to combine and compare different objects must always lead to the best decision.

Kent had clearly been provoked by either Tyler or Lord Egremont into a defence of his profession, and his ability to value an estate he had never visited.⁸⁵ However, despite this outburst over the Cumberland estates, it appears that the London firm's improvements in Yorkshire were generally considered successful. As well as the management of the Yorkshire estates, Kent was involved in the transfer of some of the king's merinos from Windsor to Egremont's home estate in 1797 (which was completed by Sir Joseph Banks), and the surveying and valuation of the tithes of Petworth park and farms in hand during 1799.⁸⁶

A comparison of the Sussex and Yorkshire agents' incomes is revealing. The estate management fees for Yorkshire were considerably higher than the Sussex agents' wages until 1802, when Tyler's salary was made more competitive, and from 1813 the Petworth agent was paid a commission at the same rate as the London firm. However, net yields were affected by the payment of property tax from 1804, and by a more substantial decrease in income between 1821 and 1836 caused by rent arrears and abatements, attributable to economic scarcity. Nevertheless, despite temporary reductions, both the Yorkshire and Sussex agents' salaries rose significantly, suggesting that the position of estate manager became an increasingly valued and profitable profession in the period.

Kent, Claridge and Pearce provide a useful contrast to the Petworth agents due to their different professional status. This business was simultaneously engaged by several clients to manage and improve multiple estates, and demonstrated a systematic and commercial approach to estate management and an active involvement in agricultural improvement. For both G. E. Mingay and Barbara English, a move away from resident agents to firms such as this one was a sign of the professionalisation of estate management.⁸⁷ Kent, Claridge and Pearce held an independent position that further enabled them to view their role as one with responsibility to tenants as well as employers.⁸⁸ In contrast, the Petworth agents remained reliant on their sole employer, with little autonomy or liberty over estate management and improvements. If we consider a 'professional' as an independent practitioner holding specialised knowledge, it must be recognised that the Petworth agents fell far short of this.

Conclusion: professional land agents or solicitor-agents?

Even if not directly involved in the husbandry elements of estate improvement, the tasks of the Petworth agents in financial and legal management made such improvements possible, through the rationalisation of estate management, including accounting techniques and the standardisation of leases, as well as financial management. The process was also assisted by political activities promoting enclosure, drainage and navigation; the agents' representation of Egremont on local committees and courts; and the preparation of Parliamentary bills. Agricultural improvement was not, as Marshall (1804) claimed, entirely undertaken by 'practical' men at Petworth, but was fostered by legal agents who supervised and administered the finance for this work, and navigated the complex legal and political procedures by which it was facilitated. It is clear that the land agents made a significant contribution to 'improvement' beyond simply agricultural improvement. Barbara English has suggested that the amount of estate management policy that was defined by the agent rather than by the landowner depended on the characters of the men involved.⁸⁹ At Petworth, it seems that the landowner's increasing interest in the estates in fact led to an increased role for the land agent. However, Egremont, as a renowned agricultural innovator, was far from typical.

In particular, this article has suggested that estate improvement at Petworth was supervised by legal agents, and undertaken in practice by bailiffs and surveyors.⁹⁰ This mixed structure of estate management does not seem to have been unique to Petworth. On the Leveson-Gower estates in the West Midlands, agents were employed during the eighteenth century to oversee tenant bailiffs in tasks of rent collection and estate supervision. Similarly, the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland relied on bailiffs for estate management during this period.⁹¹ Despite the criticisms of agricultural commentators, the employment of lawyer-stewards did not decline until the 1870s, by which time the increasing complexity of agricultural processes and economic management during financial scarcity led to their being replaced by practical men with agricultural training, such as those from the Royal Agricultural College established in 1845. As J. A. Chartres has argued, 'even in 1800 the full professional 'estate agent' was still in the minority'.⁹² It is likely that the professional land agent of the late nineteenth century fitted Marshall's (1804) description better than those of his own time.

John Beckett has argued that professionalisation was symbolised by the emergence of land agents rather than stewards in the early nineteenth century.⁹³ Similarly, David Spring has suggested that the replacement of the term 'steward' with 'agent' could be seen as 'a sign of the land agent's growing self-consciousness, of his attempt to make an occupation into a profession'.⁹⁴ However, both James Upton Tripp and William Tyler continued to use the term 'steward', although, as it has been argued, the term legal agent more appropriately describes their work. Tripp, Tyler and their successor Murray were solicitors, making it hard to argue that the agents established a 'profession' in estate management. Their status was very different to that of the independent firm of Kent, Claridge and Pearce, as well as other non-resident professionals such as solicitor-agents James Loch and the Oxley Parker family, whose successful management of over twenty properties in Essex demonstrates the increasing role of land agency firms in estate management during the nineteenth century.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the increased competence, responsibility and salary of Tyler suggests that the early stages of professionalisation may have been taking place, with the role of land steward becoming a respectable and profitable employment for county solicitors and others. The retention of this position by solicitors, however, means that land agents had not become a distinctive professional body by the early nineteenth century. This process arguably took place after 1850 at Petworth, although the structure of estate management may well still have differed from the ideal.⁹⁶

While this study does not position itself as transferable, its conclusions may contribute to wider debates on estate management. It has been shown that estate management was infinitely more variable than has been suggested in recent literature. It has demonstrated that legal agents remained influential even on estates renowned for agricultural improvement despite contemporary criticism that emphasised practical agricultural expertise. The disjuncture between the roles of the Petworth agents and those described by historians and contemporaries such as William Marshall, suggest that some qualifications need to be made regarding general statements of the nature of estate management.

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Notes

1. S. Daniels and S. Seymour, 'Landscape Design and the Idea of Improvement, 1730–1814' in R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin, eds., *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (London, 1990), pp. 487–519; R. Williams, 'Improve' in R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: 1976), pp. 160–61; S. Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes: Rural Britain 1720 to 1870* (Macclesfield, 2004), p. 8.
2. S. Daniels and S. Seymour, 'Landscape Design' (1990), p. 487.
3. J. Barrell, *The Dark Side of Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Paintings 1730–1840* (Cambridge, 1980); J. M. Neeson, 'The Opponents of Enclosure in Eighteenth Century Northamptonshire', *Past and Present* 105 (1984), 114–39; S. Seymour, 'Historical Geographies of landscape', in B. Graham and C. Nash, eds., *Modern Historical Geographies* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 193–215; J. Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 235; S. Daniels, S. Seymour and C. Watkins, 'Enlightenment, Improvement, and the Geographies of Horticulture in Later Georgian England', in D. N. Livingstone and C. W. J. Withers, eds., *Geography and Enlightenment* (London, 1999), p. 345–71; A. Howkins, 'J. M. W. Turner at Petworth: Agricultural Improvement and the Politics of Landscape', in J. Barrell, ed., *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700–1850* (Oxford, 1992), p. 250.
4. R. Robson, *The Attorney in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1959); P. J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain, 1700–1850* (London, 1995); E. Hughes, 'The Eighteenth-Century Estate Agent', in H. A. Cronne, T. W. Moody and D. B. Quinn, *Essays in British and Irish History* (London, 1949), pp. 185–99; J. V. Beckett, 'Absentee Landownership in the

- Later Seventeenth and Early-Eighteenth Centuries: The Case of Cumbria', *Northern History* 19 (1983), 87–107; D. Hey, *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History* (Oxford, 1996).
5. E. Hughes, 'The Eighteenth-Century Estate Agent'; J. V. Beckett, 'Absentee Landownership'; D. Hey, *The Oxford Companion*; G. E. Mingay, 'The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward', in E. L. Jones and G. E. Mingay, eds., *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution: Essays Presented to J. D. Chambers* (Chatham, 1967), pp. 3–27; J. V. Beckett, 'Estate Management in Eighteenth Century England: The Lowther-Spedding Relationship in Cumberland', in J. Chartres and D. Hey, eds., *English Rural Society, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 55–72; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963); P. Horn, 'An Eighteenth-Century Land Agent: The Career of Nathaniel Kent (1737–1810)', *Agricultural History Review* 30 (1982), 1–16.
 6. J. V. Beckett, 'Estate Management', p. 56.
 7. E. Laurence, *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord* (London, 1727); J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750–1880* (London, 1966), p. 163.
 8. G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963); D. Spring, *The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: Its Administration* (Baltimore, 1963).
 9. W. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England: An Elementary and Practical Treatise; Containing the Purchase, the Improvement, and the Management of Landed Estates* (London, 1804), pp. 338–9, 422. One of the earliest complaints regarding the employment of lawyers as agents was made by Edward Laurence (1727), who pleaded for expertise and professionalism in estate management. F. M. L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors: The Growth of a Profession* (London, 1968).
 10. J. Lawrence, *The Modern Land Steward* (London, 1801), pp. 44–5.
 11. E. Laurence, *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord* (London, 1727); W. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England* (London, 1804).
 12. D. Spring, *The English Landed Estate* (1963), p. 64.
 13. G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society*; P. J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions*; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*; J. Chartres, 'Country Trades, Crafts and Professions', in G. E. Mingay, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. 6, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 416–66; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (London, 1992). As F. M. L. Thompson argues, it 'required more powerful incentives to economy and efficiency imparted specifically by the wars of 1793–1815 and their aftermath and generally by the altered position of agriculture within the economy as a whole, to carry professionalism forward at a brisk pace': F. M. L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors* (London, 1968), p. 29; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society* (London, 1963).
 14. J. V. Beckett, *Landownership*; G. E. Mingay 'The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward'; H. J. Habakkuk, 'Economic Functions of English Landowners in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History* 6, 2 (1953), 92–102; J. Martin, 'Estate Stewards and their Work in Glamorgan, 1660–1760: A Regional Study of Estate Management', *Journal of Glamorgan History (Morgannwg)* 13 (1979), 9–28.
 15. D. Duman, 'Pathway to Professionalism: The English Bar in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of Social History* 13 (1979), 615–27; P. J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions*.
 16. F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*; J. V. Beckett, 'Landownership and Estate Management'; E. Hughes, 'The Eighteenth-Century Estate Agent'; G. E. Mingay, 'The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward'.
 17. E. Richards, 'The Land Agent', in G. E. Mingay, ed., *The Victorian Countryside Volume 2*. (London, 1981), pp. 439–56; J. H. Porter, 'The Development of Rural Society', in G. E. Mingay, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, vol. 6, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 836–65. The activities of both lawyer and land agent offered an opportunity for social advancement. As Paul Langford argues, the pursuit of genteel status united a diverse

developing middle class. Professionalisation was connected with attempts by practitioners to make a social virtue, respectability, a professional asset. See P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1992).

18. Duman, 'Pathway to Professionalism', 615.
19. Brassley notes the unjustified and emotive implications of the term 'unprofessional' that does not adequately describe those highly skilled individuals who fail to correspond with strict requirements for 'professional' characteristics: P. Brassley, 'The Professionalisation of English Agriculture', *Rural History* (2005) 16: 2, 249.
20. The Royal Agricultural College was established at Cirencester in 1845. See F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*; D. Spring, *The English Landed Estate*; J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution*; R. Sayce, *The History of the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester* (Stroud, 1992).
21. F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society*.
22. T. H. S. Escott argues that 'the great landlords of England are really the rulers of principalities. They are at the head of not one department, but of three or four different departments of State. They are charged with the administration of a miniature empire, which often embraces a number of provinces, whose conditions, resources, and necessities differ as much as if they were separate kingdoms': T. H. S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity and Pursuits*, vol. 1 (London, 1879), p. 45.
23. This figure is calculated from acreage values from Bateman's *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1876, 1883). Lord Leconfield, as Egremont's heir, owned the quantities of land shown below. The figures do not include the Wyndham family's Somerset estates (of around 15,000 acres), which were inherited by Egremont's nephew, George Francis Wyndham (1786–845), fourth Earl of Egremont, whose title became extinct on his death.

	ACREAGE	% OF TOTAL	Value per acre
Sussex (West)	30,221	28 %	£ 0.98
Yorkshire (North, East and West)	24,773	23 %	£ 1.25
Cumberland	11,147	10 %	£ 0.60
Ireland (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary)	43,834	40 %	£ 0.47
TOTAL	109,975	100	

24. The district of Petworth, according to Marshall (1798), 'is between the western quarter of the Weald, or Vale Lands, and that part of the Chalk Hills of Sussex, called the West Downs; extending, eastward, to Pulborough, and westward to Midhurst'. The soil of the Petworth district is characterised as 'a light sandy loam; resting on a mass of sand': W. Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties*, vol. 2 (London, 1798), pp. 165–6.
25. The Yorkshire estate was situated mainly in the East Riding (54%), with less land in the North Riding (31%) and the West Riding (16%). It consisted of 24,733 acres, valued in 1873 at £31,019. Contemporary agricultural surveys for the East and North Ridings indicate that the estate lands were characterised by soils of 'fertile clayey loam' in the Cleveland (Seamer), Holderness (Leconfield) and Howdenshire (Wressle) regions: H. E. Strickland, *A General View of the Agriculture of the East-Riding of Yorkshire* (London, 1812); C. Howard, *Report of the Farming of the East-Riding of Yorkshire* (York, 1848); J. Tuke, *General View of the Agriculture of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (London, 1800).
26. M. A. Lower, *The Worthies of Sussex: Biographical Sketches of the Most Eminent Natives or Inhabitants of the Country, from the Earliest Period to Present Times; with Incidental Notices, Illustrative of Sussex History* (London, 1865); M. Butlin, M. Luther and I. Warrell, *Turner at Petworth. Painter and Patron* (London, 1989).
27. W. Marshall, *The Rural Economy*, vol. 2 (London, 1798), pp. 153, 197.

28. Reverend A. Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex with Observations on the Means of its Improvement* (London, 1813), p. 17. The Reverend Arthur Young studied at Cambridge (1789) and took holy orders, although he produced two agricultural surveys for Sussex (1793, 1808) and made an extended survey in Russia from 1805 to 1814. See M. Bentham-Edwards, *The Autobiography of Arthur Young* (London, 1898); J. G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young, 1741–1820* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1973).
29. Young, *General View*, pp. 466–8.
30. W. Cameron and M. McDougall Maude, *Assisting Emigration to Upper Canada: The Petworth Project, 1832–1837* (Montreal and Kingston, Canada, 2000).
31. W. Cameron and M. McDougall Maude, *Assisting Emigration to Upper Canada*; S. Thomas, ‘Colonel George Wyndham, 1st Lord Leconfield, and his Agency in the Fledgling Colony of South Australia, 1838–1860’ *South Australian Geographical Journal*, 97 (1998), 3–19.
32. James Upton Tripp was the second son of John Tripp (Deputy Recorder of Taunton under Charles, second Earl of Egremont) and his wife Anne, daughter of the Reverend James Upton, who was Sir William Wyndham’s (1688–1740) tutor at Eton. John and Anne’s first son, Dr John Tripp, attended Westminster School with Egremont, and was presented to the living of Spofforth in Yorkshire. John also acted briefly as superintendent of Egremont’s Yorkshire estates. Robert, a fourth son, was given livings in Devonshire. The youngest son, Henry, was a barrister and agent for the West of England estates for over fifty years. Tripp family patronage continued in the following generation, John’s son becoming Rector of Silverton in Devonshire and James’ son, Rector of Upwaltham in West Sussex. See H. A. Wyndham, *A Family History 1688–1837. The Wyndhams of Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire* (London, 1950).
33. West Sussex Record Office, Petworth House Archives (hereafter PHA) 6285: Papers of James Upton Tripp, solicitor, of Petworth, relating to his own family business, and general business transacted (1745–1791).
34. It is clear that William Tyler was suspicious of the financial dealings, integrity and the prudence of some of the loans of his former partner, despite fifteen years of working together. Tyler also made disparaging comments about the obscurity of Tripp’s accounts, although this may be suggestive of Tyler’s comparative competence at accounting and his attention to detail rather than Tripp’s alleged dishonesty.
35. J. R. Edwards describes the purpose of an account as a record to check the integrity and reliability of the agent. From the agent’s viewpoint the report served to prove his honesty. The retention of charge and discharge accounting rather than a double entry system was partly due to there being less interest in performance assessment as activities were repetitive and usually followed a fairly consistent seasonal pattern. A gradual transition in accounting processes, however, was observed during the nineteenth century. See J. R. Edwards, *A History of Financial Accounting* (London, 1989); Martin, ‘Estate Stewards and their Work’; Mingay, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward’.
36. Richards, ‘The Land Agent’.
37. Tyler acted as Tripp’s assistant and eventual partner in his legal practice, succeeding as agent following the death of Tripp; after which it is unlikely that Tyler continued much private legal business, with the exception of the writing of wills. Tyler did not have a deputy agent, although James Challen (1779–1834) was a reliable head clerk who might have succeeded Tyler as agent if he had not predeceased him. The Petworth archives demonstrate the diverse activities undertaken by this clerk. Challen collected debts, served notices to quit farms, arranged for the sale of timber, organised witnesses for court cases, and canvassed for Egremont’s brother Charles Wyndham’s election in 1807. However, he was not empowered to make decisions regarding the estate. See PHA 9026; A. McCann, ‘The greatest rascal I ever heard of – William Tyler, The 3rd Earl’s Man of Business’, *Petworth Society Magazine*, 115 (2004), 24–7.
38. The employment of Tyler as agent following a period as a clerk to James Upton Tripp was not unusual, and acted as a source of education for prospective agents who did not have the capital

- to pay for apprenticeships. For example, Francis Blaikie, steward to Thomas William Coke at Holkham, was succeeded by William Baker, who was first employed there as clerk in 1821. R. A. C. Parker, *Coke of Norfolk, a Financial and Agricultural Study, 1707–1842* (Oxford, 1975); S. Wade Martins, *A Great Estate at Work: The Holkham Estate and its Inhabitants in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1980).
39. Blaikie's wages were cut by £100 in 1822 to assist the steward's employer during financial hardship. J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660–1914* (Oxford, 1986); Richards, 'The Land Agent'; F. M. L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors* (London, 1968), p. 30.
 40. Alternatively, this may indicate that Tyler was in fact more 'professional' at financial embezzlement. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 7 (1837), 110.
 41. PHA 8621: Letter to Lady Egremont, Fulham 19th December 1808; PHA 12014: Letter from Tyler to Egremont thanking him for opera ticket, 22nd January 1807, see A. McCann 'The Greatest Rascal' (2004).
 42. A. McCann, 'The Greatest Rascal' (2004), 25.
 43. McCann, 'Greatest Rascal'.
 44. P. Jerome (ed.), *Tales of Old Petworth* (1976), p. 44.
 45. R. J. Colyer, 'The Land Agent in Nineteenth Century Wales', *Welsh History Review* 8 (1976), 401–23.
 46. PHA 2685: Letter to William Wills Esq., Lancing from Lord Egremont, 4th April 1819.
 47. D. R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People. The Estate Steward and His World in later Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1992).
 48. T. H. S. Escott (1879) describes four different models of estate management: (1) where a chief agent was in sole control of a (geographically concentrated) estate (e.g. the Duke of Cleveland's estate); (2) where a chief agent managed the estate with the assistance of regional managers who were subordinate to him (e.g. the Duke of Northumberland's estate); (3) where co-equal agents managed dispersed estates, reporting only to the landlord who acted as co-ordinator (e.g. the Duke of Devonshire's estate); and (4) where an agent managed several (usually smaller) estates. The Wyndham estates do not fall neatly into any of these categories. Tyler and Claridge appear to correspond with respect and autonomy, and often compliment each other on their different areas of expertise (legal and surveying), suggesting a co-equal model between Sussex and Yorkshire (although Tyler assessed Claridge's accounts, and the former's increasing involvement in Yorkshire affairs illustrates that the estates were not managed as separate units). Also, Kent, Claridge and Pearce (and their successors in managing the Northern estates, Cluttons) were an independent firm that managed several estates (model 4). However, the Irish example indicates that Crowe was subordinate to Tyler (model 2): T. H. S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity and Pursuits*, vol. 1 (London, 1879), pp. 55–70.
 49. This paper does not consider in detail the role of the landowner in agricultural improvement, which has been examined by others. However, as Thompson has argued, 'on an efficient and improving estate it was certainly normal to find an active owner, as well as an efficient agent, engaged in a joint enterprise, but it was not always so': F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society* (1963), p. 176
 50. The Second Earl of Egremont (1710–1763) was appointed Secretary of State for the Southern Department in 1761 and played a significant role in international politics during this period. H. M. Scott, 'Wyndham, Charles, second earl of Egremont (1710–1763)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, September 2004; online edition, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30139>, accessed 7th August 2006].
 51. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People*, p. 11.
 52. Beckett, *The Aristocracy*.
 53. John Habbin acted as bailiff on the Petworth estate between 1765 and 1801. Habbin performed many of the roles that commentators such as John Beckett and G. E. Mingay have commonly identified with land agents. The bailiff collected rent and kept husbandry accounts, paid

labourers and household bills for coal, food and medicine; supervised work on the home farm, park and gardens, and purchased seed and livestock. Habbin was succeeded by John Sherwin and later by his son Thomas, who undertook similar activities to Habbin, as well as assisting in livestock improvement, from 1791 to 1850. The bailiffs were local tenants or landowners, described in the West Sussex Land Tax survey of 1785. John Habbin owned property in Chichester, while John Sherwin was a substantial tenant farmer in Petworth, occupying land owned by Lord Egremont (£46 rent), and others. His son, Thomas Sherwin, can be found in the 1837 tithe survey apportionments, with over 20 acres of meadowland primarily in Byworth, near Petworth. See PHA 10816, 1894, 3087, 7724–8, 8096, 10642, 4424; A. Readman, L. Falconer, R. Ritchie and P. Wilkinson, *West Sussex Land Tax 1785* (Lewes, 2000); J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy*; G. E. Mingay, 'The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward'; E. Laurence, *The Duty*; W. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England*.

54. E. M. Jancy, 'An Eighteenth Century Land Steward and his Work', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society* 56 (1957), 34–48.
55. PHA 12009: 1799–1807, Letter books of James Upton Tripp, then William Tyler, on the third Earl of Egremont's business, particularly letter from William Tyler to Mr Scott, York, regarding the exchange of Property, 1783.
56. PHA 2681: William Tyler to Mr Sandham of Storrington, 10th October 1803. Tyler suggests that two surveyors could value the repairs in order to compromise and find a fair price, demonstrating ability to compromise.
57. Marshall, *On the Landed Property*, p. 401.
58. PHA 511: Rental of Sussex estates by John Stephens, 1789–1800; PHA 8620: 1807–1809 Letter-book of William Tyler, solicitor, containing copies of letters written on the affairs of George, third Earl of Egremont, particularly letter dated 6th August 1807.
59. PHA 1099: 1834–1838, Letter book from December 1834–March 1838, concerned with the Sussex estate.
60. Lawrence, *The Modern*, p. 45. Similarly, John Morton (1858) argued that there were 'some gentlemen connected with the law who have been careful to study the best means of practically managing the properties of their clients. But, as a general rule, law agents make bad land agents': J. L. Morton, *The Resources of Estates; being a Treatise on the Agricultural Improvement and General Management of Landed Property* (London, 1858), p. 94.
61. PHA 8620: 1807–1809 Letter-book of William Tyler, particularly two letters in April 1808.
62. PHA 12009–12014, particularly PHA 12014: William Tyler to Mr Gell 30th August 1806. In his portrayal of the *Rural Economy of the Southern Counties* (1798), William Marshall describes Mr Gell (Applesham) and Mr Sayer (North Stoke) [both tenants of the Earl of Egremont] as of a 'desirable cast' of tenants, suggesting that 'there are few farms, in the kingdom, under better management' (p. 368). Egremont's assistance to livestock improvement was not limited to sheep. For example, Marshall records that 'tenants of the Petworth estate, who are desirous of breeding hunters, or saddle horses, of a superior quality, have the privilege of sending their mares, to the first blood horses in the kingdom, gratis': W. Marshall, *Rural Economy*, vol. 2, (1798), p. 193. It seems that horses were also sent to Yorkshire during Claridge's agency for this purpose. PHA D22/15.
63. PHA 726: 1787, Correspondence of J. U. Tripp, mainly estate and financial matters. See Letter to J.U. Tripp from Mr Cleavers, Leeds, 16th January 1787.
64. A. Charlesworth, B. Short, and R. Wells, 'Riots and Unrest', in K. Leslie and B. Short, eds., *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (Chichester, 1999), p. 74.
65. H. A. Wyndham, *A Family History* (1950), p. 333.
66. Much of West Sussex was enclosed during the sixteenth century. P. Jerrome, *Cloakbag and Common Purse: Enclosure and Copyhold in 16th Century Petworth* (Petworth, 1979).
67. Both Tyler and Tripp were involved in the Rother Navigation; Tripp helped to choose a contractor for the navigation, and organised meetings for owners/occupiers of land. Tyler

- was involved in deciding the route of the navigation itself. See P. A. L. Vine, *London's Lost Route to Midhurst: The Earl of Egremont's Navigation* (Stroud, 1995).
68. PHA 8621: 1807–1809, Letter-book of William Tyler, solicitor, containing copies of letters written on the affairs of George, third Earl of Egremont. Letter 19th January 1809.
 69. PHA 2681: 1803–1804, Copies of letters written chiefly by William Tyler. Letter dated 17th October 1813.
 70. PHA 8620: 1807–1809 Letter-book of William Tyler, solicitor, containing copies of letters written on the affairs of George, third Earl of Egremont, particularly letter dated 7th May 1808.
 71. J. P. Stanton, *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith* (Bloomington USA, 2003); L. Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (Basingstoke, 2001).
 72. PHA 8620: Letter from William Tyler to Lord Egremont, 2nd October 1807.
 73. Mingay, 'The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward'; W. Marshall *On the Landed Property*.
 74. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People*.
 75. As Barbara English has demonstrated, in the nineteenth century the majority of the estates of more than one hundred acres in East Yorkshire were managed by land agency firms, either from London or from a provincial office. B. English, 'Patterns of Estate Management in East Yorkshire c.1840–c.1880' *Agricultural History Review* 32 (1984), 29–48.
 76. P. Horn, 'An Eighteenth-Century Land Agent'.
 77. Kent, Claridge and Pearce designed their own leases for the Yorkshire estates, which ranged from one to twenty-one years (PHA, D22/12, 1796). Nathaniel Kent's attitude to honest estate management can be seen in the following: 'in estimating the value of estates, between landlord and tenant, I have always considered myself as the common friend of both; and endeavoured to act the part of an honest evidence between them: and where I have entertained doubt, I have never failed to let the scale preponderate in favour of the latter'. N. Kent, *Hints* (1799), p. 246.
 78. H. A. Wyndham, *A Family History* (London, 1950), p. 308; P. Horn, 'The Contribution of the Propagandist to Eighteenth-Century Agricultural Improvement', *The Historical Journal*, 25: 2 (1982), 313–29.
 79. Wade Martins, *Farmers*.
 80. Nathaniel Kent describes the conditions for annual management of the estate at '3 1/2 per cent which includes all travelling expenses – the expense of a deputy in each district and every expense whatever except entertainment of the tenants at the audits when they pay their rents... [we will] make two regular annual visits to all the estates – [and] return the rents regularly into your bankers hands in London'. PHA, D22/12 Letter from Kent, Claridge and Pearce, (Craig's Court, Charing Cross), 24th October 1796.
 81. Wyndham, *Family History*.
 82. Both John Claridge and William Pearce were surveyors and had published reports for the Board of Agriculture. Claridge was also a witness for the Select Committee relating to the Corn Laws in 1814. See J. Claridge, *General View of the Agriculture in the County of Dorset* (London, 1793); *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Petitions relating to the Corn Laws of this Kingdom: together with the Minutes of Evidence*, Second Edition (London, 1814).
 83. Claridge wrote to Lord Egremont in 1799: 'Mr Tyler's attendance here appears to me to be so highly necessary, and his activity and exertions for your lordships interest so material in this business that I have requested him to give up the wish he has of leaving this place, till the [tithe] commission breaks up, and I have told him I write to you by this post to inform your lordship of my urging his stay'. Letter from John Claridge to the Earl of Egremont (Tadcaster, Yorkshire), 27th October 1799. PHA D22/12.
 84. Horn, 'The Contribution of the Propagandist', p. 11.
 85. William Marshall (1804) claimed that 'a man who ventures to step forward as a universal valuator, should either have an extraordinary talent for his line of profession, or should, after a suitable initiation, have had great experience in rural concerns, in various parts of the kingdom' (Marshall, *On the Landed Property*, p. 9). Marshall's research technique involved

farming for months in a county before making assessments such as these: P. Horn, 'An Eighteenth-Century Land Agent'.

86. 'Mr Kent desires me to signify to your lordship that his Majesty has given his consent to the drawing of any of his cows by any person you may send and the two Spanish ewes and the ram will be delivered by Mr Robinson of his majesty's little park Windsor to any person your lordship may send for them', PHA D22/12, Letter from John Claridge to the Earl of Egremont, 24th January 1797. See also H. B. Carter, ed., *The Sheep and Wool Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1781–1820* (London, 1979), p. 293, letters 661 and 667. The Petworth survey (1799) is noted in a bill for five days surveying and valuing for £10.10s. with £6.5s travelling costs; PHA 8061.
87. G. E. Mingay, *The Gentry. The Rise and Fall of the Ruling Class* (London, 1976); B. English 'Patterns of Estate Management' (1984). It is interesting to note that the Land Surveyors Club, established in 1834, ruled 'that no resident land agent who is not likewise publicly engaged for other owners of estates [...] should be deemed eligible to become a member of this club'. This suggests that resident agents were considered 'unprofessional', or at least had different interests, which were closer to those of the landed gentry, rather than fellow professionals. Despite this, the Club welcomed land agents from great estates for the next thirty years. F. M. L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors* (London, 1968), p. 94; F. M. L. Thompson. *English Landed Society* (London, 1963).
88. English, 'Patterns of Estate Management', 29–48.
89. English, 'Patterns of Estate Management'.
90. F. M. L. Thompson argued that, in regions where improving farming methods were not being adopted, there remained many advantages to the employment of agents with legal training. These included a 'familiarity with the routine of leases, agreements, covenants, rent collection, distrains, and for probity in presenting estate accounts'. Thompson suggested that one of the strands of professionalism was the emergence of stewards with legal training who 'made estate management their whole-time occupation and conducted little if any ordinary private law practice': F. M. L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors* (London, 1968), pp. 29–30. However, Petworth continued to employ legal agents, despite its emphasis on agricultural improvement.
91. J. R. Wordie, *Estate Management in Eighteenth Century England: The Building of the Leveson-Gower Fortune* (London, 1982); Beckett, *The Aristocracy*, p. 144.
92. J. Chartres 'Agricultural Markets and Trade' (1989), p. 452. At the end of the nineteenth century, T. H. S. Escott suggests that '[t]he custom, which was once common, of placing estates in the management of county solicitors, is gradually falling into desuetude, though still very far from being obsolete': T. H. S. Escott, *England*, vol. 1 (London, 1879), p. 70.
93. Beckett, *The Aristocracy*.
94. Spring, *The English Landed Estate*, p. 97.
95. James Loch was agent to the Sutherland estates in the late eighteenth century, although he also advised and managed other estate properties and enterprises including the Bridgewater Trust. Christopher Comyns Parker and his son John Oxley Parker managed over twenty different estates during seventy years of land agency in Essex: J. Oxley Parker, *The Oxley Parker Papers. From the Letters and Diaries of an Essex Family of Land Agents in the Nineteenth Century* (Colchester, 1964); Beckett, *The Aristocracy*, p. 147.
96. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England*.