

18.2 New approaches to labour

Room 104

Chair: Richard Hoyle

18.21 Joyce Burnette – Measuring the seasonality of agricultural employment, 1740–1850

Agricultural employment is generally agreed to be very seasonal in grain-producing areas such as the southeast of England. The outdoor poor relief system, cottage industry, and resistance to the threshing machines have been interpreted as consequences of seasonal unemployment.

This paper measures the seasonality of agricultural labour using a wide sample of accounts from English farms in the period 1740-1850. Previously, the seasonality of labour has been measured mainly by wages, though settlement examinations have also been used. There have also been detailed studies of individual farms that show the seasonality of employment at those farms. This paper will measure seasonality using employment records from a large sample of English farm accounts, which will allow me to examine how seasonality varied across regions and over time.

For each farm I measure the employment of male and female day-labourers in the third quarter (July through September) and compare that to average employment for the other three quarters. On average, the employment of male labourers in the third quarter exceeded the normal level by one-third. Seasonality was much greater for female labourers; the number employed in the third quarter was four times the average of the other three quarters. Employment was less seasonal at estate farms and at larger farms.

Joyce Burnette is Professor of Economics, Wabash College. She has a PhD in Economics, Northwestern University, 1994. Selected Publications include *Gender, Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (2008); ‘Married with Children: The Family Status of Female Agricultural Labourers at Two Southwestern Farms in the 1830s and 1840s,’ *AgHR* (2007); ‘How Skilled Were Agricultural Labourers in the Early Nineteenth Century?’ *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 59 (2006); ‘The Wages and Employment of Female Day-labourers in English Agriculture, 1740-1850,’ *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 57 (2004); ‘“Labourers at the Oakes”: Changes in the Demand for Female Day-Labourers at a Farm near Sheffield During the Agricultural Revolution’, *J. Econ. Hist.* (1999).

18.22 Ryutaro Mizuta – Labour exchange and peasant economy

The common production organisation in Japanese villages is a small peasant farm, which depends on labour mainly supplied by the family members. However, as history has taught us, Japanese peasants have not been engaged in agricultural production solely by depending on the labour supplied by the family members. Japanese peasants have spontaneously developed a unique production organisation based on the co-operative relationship among peasants to make the production process more efficient through the exchange of labour. Interestingly enough, an entirely new form of production organisation called ‘co-operative work’ became rapidly prevalent in Japanese villages under the leadership of a nationwide organised agricultural association between the two world wars, when the population of agricultural labourers was on the decline. This production organisation is considered to have been established on the basis of firm community relationships characterised by strong social interactions among people tied by both blood and locational affinity; these relationships have made a major contribution to the maintenance of agricultural yields as a mechanism to mutually coordinate labour among peasants and improve the efficiency in agricultural work under the specific economic conditions of labour shortages. This paper aims to focus on this agricultural co-operative work reported to have been widely prevalent as part of the agricultural labour force countermeasure, particularly during the war, and to help reveal the actual conditions of the organisation and function of such co-operative work – both qualitatively and quantitatively – by looking at the data of the peasant.

Ryutaro Mizuta (b.1982) is a Doctoral Student in the Division of Natural Resource Economics, Graduate School of Agriculture, Kyoto University JSPS Research Fellow (DC1). His research fields are Japanese Economic History and Japanese Agricultural History.

18.23 Jeannie Whayne – Building it of brick and hollow tile: Lee Wilson and black labour

Planter Lee Wilson of Mississippi County, Arkansas, who operated a 50,000-acre plantation in early twentieth-century Arkansas, enjoyed a reputation for better treatment of Black labour but he also used physical coercion and debt peonage to maintain his labour force. Even Wilson's construction of a model school for African Americans in 1924 has to be understood in terms of how it served his interests. As Wilson stood viewing the smoldering ashes of the school on the morning of its scheduled dedication, he silently smoked his cigar and said nothing. When he returned to his office, however, he 'gave vent to his feeling' and vowed to begin again, 'except that I may build it of brick and hollow tile' to prevent the arsonists from repeating the offense. Incidents of white capping against both African Americans and the planters who hired them were notorious in the region, and not even Lee Wilson, who was almost a law unto himself, was exempt. Whites wanted plantation jobs, but Blacks were cheaper and planters were in the business to make money. Wilson, who considered himself a paternalist and embraced what C. Vann Woodward characterised as the conservative position on race, may have deserved some of the praise he received – occasionally even from black activists in Arkansas – but he could not protect black labour from white violence, and he was not above using force himself. This paper examines his reputation against the backdrop of a notorious lynching of a black man, a man who stood accused of killing Wilson's brother-in-law and niece. Here we see in sharp relief the limitations of Wilson's paternalism.

Jeannie Whayne is professor of history at the University of Arkansas and adjunct curator of America History at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Rogers, Arkansas. She has published numerous articles and eight books including *A New Plantation South: Land, Labour, and Federal Favor in Twentieth-Century Arkansas* with the University of Virginia Press in 1996, a book which won the Arkansiana Award. She has a book under contract with LSU Press, *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Southern Agriculture* which will be published in a series on the Modern South edited by distinguished historian David Goldfield in fall 2011. She has given dozens of conference papers and has had fellowships at the Smithsonian Institution and the Carter Woodson Institute. The Agricultural History Society recently named her a 'Fellow of the Society.' She has won numerous awards for both her teaching and publications.

18.24 Johann Custodis – Employing the enemy: the economic contribution of German and Italian prisoner-of-war labour in British agriculture, 1941–1947

Davis considers prisoner of war (POW) labour a liability for captors in the twentieth century. This paper tests his hypothesis by assessing German and Italian POW employment in British agriculture during and after World War Two. Historians stress the significant role of Italian and German POW labour for British agriculture while government sources are ambiguous. New qualitative and quantitative evidence from British and Canadian National Archives provides a first estimate for POW contribution to British GDP and produces new POW productivity results. Rural POW employment developed from small-scale wartime experiments with Italians to large-scale German POW usage post-war. At peak in 1946, one in five rural workers was a German POW. POWs on average represented one eighth of Britain's rural labour force 1944-1947, twice as much as official government figures allege. They were half as productive as civilians and in high demand by farmers despite initial scepticism. They contributed on average seven per cent to British net rural output. Sensitivity analysis yields a German POW contribution in agriculture of approximately one per cent to British GDP in 1946. Davis therefore omitted an economic valuation of POW labour for

the captor's agricultural sector. German and Italian POW workers alleviated manpower shortages and production bottlenecks and enabled civilian labour releases to war-relevant industries.

Johann Custodis has read BSc Economic History with Economics and received an ESRC scholarship for Economic History Master and PhD studies at the LSE. His current research examines the economics of prisoner of war (POW) employment in Britain, Australia and Canada during and after World War Two with a particular focus on agriculture. He has taught European Economic History and presented at various international conferences. Recent and forthcoming publications include contributions to an undergraduate microeconomics textbook, a volume on wartime economic exploitation and papers for the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Journal of Scottish Historical Studies.