

AGRICULTURE

POSITION OF AGRICULTURE ON THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Lincolnshire had a higher than average dependence on agriculture, a large agricultural population and few large towns or alternative employment.¹ However, farming was a low-paid occupation. In 1907 the average weekly wage of an unskilled farm labourer was 15s 4d. Therefore poverty was usual and pauperism not infrequent. Hours averaged 58 per week, and could be longer. On 1 August 1914 Frederick Walker of Nettleham Heath, a farmer who served in the Lincolnshire Imperial Yeomanry, raised his men's wages to 3s a day.² Attitudes towards agricultural labourers were patronising. Prizes given at Agricultural Shows to labourers who had the greatest number of children without receiving parochial relief, were less than those awarded for a group of plants. Rev. Richard Lawson Gales, Vicar of Gedney, from 1909-27 said that Lincolnshire villages were 'sleepy' because the people were underfed, underpaid and poorly housed.³ To be free from worry of poverty a working class family needed a regular income of about 40s a week. Many semi-skilled men in agricultural engineering earned only 23s . 25s a week, and could be laid off when times were hard.⁴ These workers probably had more incentive to enlist than other groups.⁵

Pre-war agriculture operated on the landowner, tenant-farmer and labourer system and was essentially a livestock industry typified by W.R. Caudwell of Holbeach Marsh, a breeder of the famous Lincolnshire Red cattle. Farming was also a declining industry; between 1851 and 1911 agricultural labourers and farm servants in England and Wales had fallen from 1,097,794 to 622,279 males and from 143,147 to 13,214 females. In contrast, the number of horses available rose from 720,000 in 1840 to 815,000 in 1910. Mr C.C. Harrison, of Holbeach Hurn, bred Shire horses. He was also a life Member of the Society of Fruit and Seed Potato Growers.

SHORTAGE OF LABOUR

All contemporary estimates of labour shortages were uncertain, differing in various areas. Holland was less denuded partly because of the many small farms; but many large intensive agricultural businesses also retained a good proportion of labour. The Government had no means of knowing how many men had left agriculture for the forces.⁶

By mid-September, South Lincolnshire farmers were experiencing a considerable labour shortage for potato lifting and several Belgian refugees went from Spalding to Bourne Fen to assist. Swelling the unemployment difficulty, many of the Irishmen who came over in fair numbers had hurriedly left for home. People were unsure why since they had thrown up 'profitable employment', bringing in 6s to 8s a day. One farmer said the education authority ought to excuse children between ten and fourteen years old for a month to meet the difficulty. Older children could earn as much as 10s a week and it would mean £1 a week extra in some homes, very acceptable with food dearer.⁷

Hiring fairs and advertisements in the local press were the usual methods of obtaining agricultural workers but in October the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* published Recommendations to Farmers from the Board of Agriculture & Fisheries whose President was Lord Lucas.⁸ Farmers should apply to local Labour Exchanges which were making special efforts to supply the names of available men and women with previous farm-work experience. In return, farmers were asked to state the wages and terms they offered, whether free board and lodgings would be provided, what kind of work was to be done, whether it could be done by women, and if so, whether suitable accommodation was available for them.⁹ One farmer suggested that if men left their tied cottages they could not return and their families would be turned out.¹⁰

Harvest became particularly difficult and in July 1915, teachers were wanted to help get it in because the supply of potatoes had been left unconsumed. By August there was a great shortage of labour for farms and an appeal was made by the Winterton Farmers Club to the

public of the ironstone district to help. What was worse, the recent drought in North Lincolnshire had been followed by heavy rain that had flattened the crops.¹¹

By March 1916 farmers were finding it even more difficult to find workers and it was reported that generally there was a labour shortage of ten to twelve per cent. This was now linked with low pay. *The Times* Correspondent said in the Eastern Counties 'arable farms about 30s per acre was paid out in wages per annum and argued that labourers' wages should and could be increased by 5s per week. Farmers were faced with the alternative of working the land with a reduced staff, putting it down to grass or providing motor tractors which were becoming more dependable.¹²

Land was requisitioned for military purposes and on 29 September 1914, Helen Fane wrote that they had interviewed a farmer 'about the Lincolns drilling and manoeuvring on his land. he seemed most reasonable and willing.¹³ Such co-operation was tested when appropriated land was unused. In January 1915, the Lincolnshire Chamber of Agriculture asked the Government to receive a deputation requesting arbitration or appeal in cases of agricultural land taken over.¹⁴

TRACTORS AND OTHER MECHANISED EQUIPMENT

Agricultural machinery, being gradually introduced onto farms, was produced largely from the home industry, and estimates are that the output in 1913 was worth some £6.5 million. The industry consisted of mainly of small engineering works dominated by a few very large ones, especially those in Lincolnshire towns and in Lincoln itself. The largest producer of motor tractors in Britain before 1914 was Marshalls of Gainsborough.¹⁵ However, as a result of the two-decade agricultural depression, farmers could afford little in the way of agricultural equipment and home demand was largely for replacement machines and repairs. The number of tractors in Lincolnshire was still small by 1914. Foster's paraffin engine tractor, a two cylinder horizontal Hornsby engine, started with petrol, impressively pulled fourteen plough shares on a farm near Lincoln when undergoing trials prior to being exported to the Argentine. (Fig. 6.1) MLL 895.¹⁶



Lincs to the Past reference: MLL 895

Fig. 6.1 Foster's paraffin engine tractor. MLL 895.
From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.
<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/294282.record?pt=S>

Agricultural workers saw machines as a threat. Helen Fane's journal included a notice issued by the police on 22 August 1914, telling farmers to provide at least one Night Watchman to guard corn stacks to prevent firing and warning the public to avoid the vicinity of stacks between sunset and sunrise.¹⁷ On 2 October there were stack fires at Cabourne (near Caistor), and at Brandy Wharf. Another, at Redbourne (near Scunthorpe), resulted in the destruction of a new threshing set belonging to Mr Beech of nearby Hibaldstow, the traction engine just being got out of the way in time.¹⁸ On 3 September, 1918, threshing machinery was damaged at Pinchbeck Marsh, near Spalding. In September 1915, Mr Drewery of Little London, Boston, held a sale of threshing machinery including four traction engines. This sale was described as 'A unique occasion, not seen in the town before but no reasons were given for it. Workers found machinery dangerous. In December 1915 George Richardson of Pinchbeck and other employees of Jackson Bros., Deeping St Nicholas, went to court claiming their lives had been placed in danger while working with a threshing machine when the driver left it running. Consequently, they left after half a day's work.'¹⁹ **Fig 33** indicates some of the dangers; this Fordson was started by handle and had spiked rear wheels.



Lincs to the Past reference: MLL 9051

Fig. 6.2 MLL9051

Harry Johnson on a Fordson tractor.

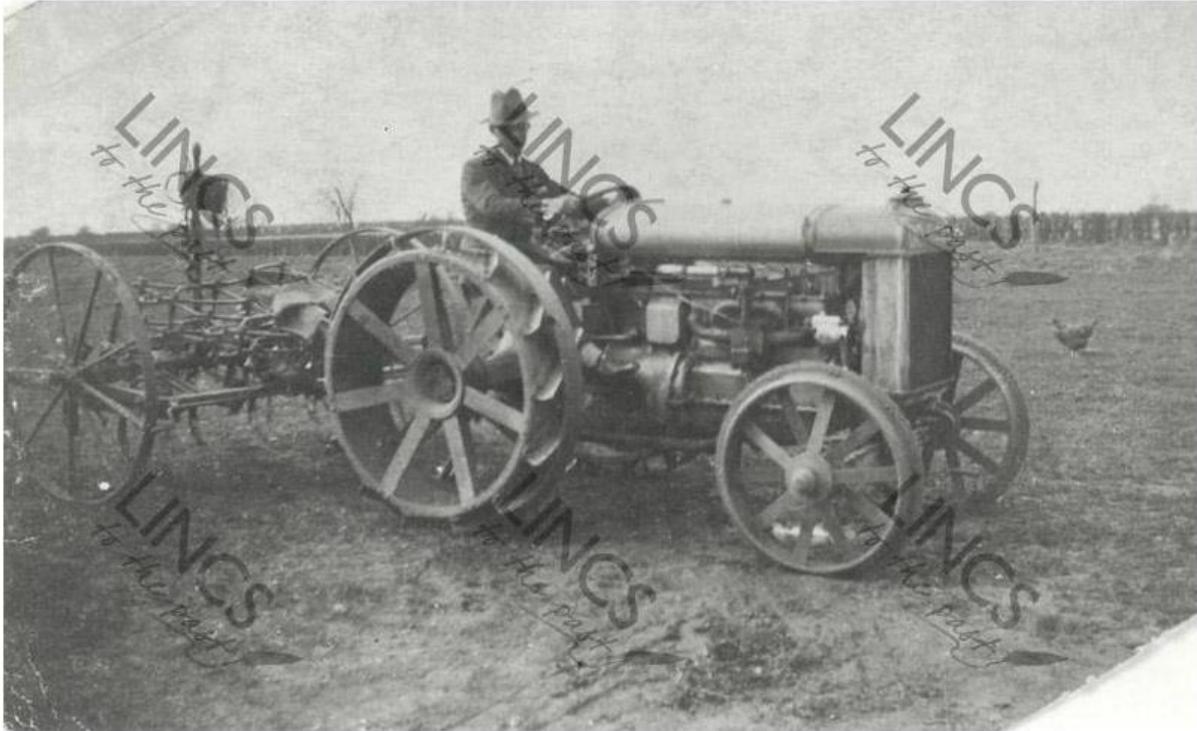
From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.

<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/302438.record?pt=S>

For the first two years of war, the supply of machinery to farmers was adversely affected by the manufacturers undertaking government munitions contracts. Nonetheless, state-sponsored mechanization increased the numbers. The Government bought about 500 tractors which were distributed around the country by War Agricultural Executive Committees. There was a wide variety of types and implements, not all reliable, but this gave farmers their first real experience of tractors. As the need for home-produced food became urgent, the Board of Agriculture appealed to the agricultural colleges and local education authorities to provide facilities for demonstrations. The Lindsey Council began a series of exhibitions showing the Universal motor-plough made by Messrs Saunderson & Mills, Bedford, and the American Sandusky motor-digger.²⁰ In April 1915 a demonstration of the Hull Tractor, manufactured by the Hull Tractor Co., Newton, Iowa, was held on Mr J. Gilliat's Potterhanworth Farm and tested to plough a field on the heath. It was a great success, in both the short time taken and the quality of the work. It was also tested for road work, taking hay from the fen to the station, which included 'some severe hills'. The cost of these tasks was estimated and declared favourable.²¹ A demonstration of ploughing by another American tractor, the Big Bull, was arranged by Mr Jos. Bowser in Mr Mowbray Gilliat's field near Langrick Station at Frithville on 10 and 11 February, 1916. Individual people were invited to inspect the acres ploughed by it.²² Some tractors were brought onto farms by military contractors to bale hay. In 1917 the Government decided to standardize and ordered 5,000 Fordsons; the War Agricultural Committees retained control of a high proportion of these. Weekly notices were published of the work accomplished. During the week ending 29 March 1918, the Bourne unit, of nine tractors, cultivated 566 acres and ploughed five acres.²³ (Figs 5 . MLL 9051, MLL 1478)

War-related difficulties surfaced in tractor ownership. Some farmers found their allowance of petrol insufficient to run them, or spares were unobtainable, or the only workers able to drive them were conscripted. Considerable delays often arose in the transport of Agricultural Machinery by

rail and the Board of Agriculture warned farmers of the desirability of making early arrangements for the purchase and repairs of such machinery so as to allow ample time for delivery.²⁴ Contractors usually worked only within cycling distance of their homes. Consequently it was decided that certain skilled men, those connected with steam ploughs, threshing machines, engine drivers and blacksmiths, were to be starved.



Lincs to the Past reference: MLL 11478

Fig. 6.3 MLL 11478

"Frank Brinkley with his first tractor", probably a Fordson; he owned a 40 acre farm
From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.

<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/304865.record?pt=S>

Fig. 6.4
s05009

Title: Frederick William Johnson's steam engine and threshing set in use in the Isle of Axholme

Description: Fred Johnson farmed at Church Farm, Belton, and in addition to farming his own land he owned a steam engine and threshing set which he took around other farms in the area to thresh their corn

See North Lincolnshire Museum Picture Archive

Other machines, such as the Lister Hand Power Sheep Shearing Machine, were available for farmers to use. The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union thought that sheep shearing machines were not popular because labour was cheap. In 1915, owing to the labour scarcity, Lister's decided to make a hand powered sheep-shearing machine for the home trade. Demand outstripped supply and a much larger number of machines were made for the next season.²⁵ Wool supplies were requisitioned by the Army Council and George Pell Clarke, of Winterringham was summoned at Scunthorpe for failing to sell and deliver wool as required. He was fined £25 and ordered to deliver the wool within fourteen days.²⁶

Whether to milk cows by machinery was an important issue. Farmers found it increasingly difficult to get workers who could be relied on to do their work efficiently and the size of some dairy herds was being restricted by the number of milkers available. Various machines were on the market, but there were concerns that they might result in a reduced output. Milking is a skilled task, requiring a rapport with the cow who will refuse to let down her milk if she does not like the milker.²⁷ Could cows be milked satisfactorily by machine for an extended period of time? The milking machine was of such recent invention that there was not enough data to show that the average cow yielded approximately as much milk by machine as by hand, particularly if she was stripped by hand after the machine milking.²⁸ Farmers complained that the price of milk was controlled without reference to the cows that produced it.

Only towards the very end of 1916 was agricultural machinery considered a national need. By June the Agricultural Machinery Department of the Ministry of Munitions was encouraging manufacturers to start producing it again. This is reflected in Ruston Proctor's statement that in 1917 there was a large expenditure during the year on the ordinary purpose of the firm.²⁹ However, Clayton & Shuttleworth and Ruston Proctor of Lincoln, and Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies of Orwell Works, Ipswich, had been almost entirely on war work and seriously disorganised through loss of workers. The Department Report stated that less direct agricultural industries like Edge Tool Manufacturers, and Binder Twine Manufacturers, were not seriously affected so far as production and turnover were concerned. It was thought that it would take most of them three to six months to return to their normal work and output if they could obtain materials and that there would be a sufficient home demand provided there was a restriction on imports and the continuation of a Government scheme to encourage agriculture. The Report continued:

The greatest new industry in reference to agriculture will be Motor Tractors, for which there should be a demand of about 30,000 per year, representing an annual turnover of about £6,000,000. In addition the Reaper Binder and Mower Trade can all be doubled at least, but motor power really means a complete new series of implements right throughout the whole agricultural implements trade.³⁰

It was considered desirable to increase the domestic manufacture of agricultural machinery in view of the tonnage, the dollar situation and British dependence on overseas supplies because by February 1918 approximately 40 per cent of agricultural machinery was imported. However, to increase production labour must be increased but dilution could not be introduced unless it was classed as munitions work. This required insertion of a clause in the Munitions of War Bill, 1918, but by June no steps had been taken to make the production of agricultural machinery munitions work.³¹

Clayton and Shuttleworth's records show deliveries of various classes of works machinery within Lincolnshire from 1913 to 1918. The decline from 1913 output is dominant, the exception being wagons, which were used in war work.

	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Total Deliveries	36	28	16	20	14	7
Engines incl. Tractors	6	3	2			1
3 Furrow Ploughs				1	1	
Repairs	4	2				
Oil Engines	3			1		
Chaff Cutters	11	8	4	3	2	4
Trailers	1					
Wagons	4			9	2	

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Threshing Machines		1	1	1		
Pumps	5		5	2	1	
Elevators	1	5	2	1		
Odds	6	2	1	2	7	3

Table 6.1. Clayton and Shuttleworth, Works machinery deliveries in Lincolnshire.
MERL. TR 3/MAR

In 1917, Clayton's supplied steam wagons to Ruston Proctor and Humber Graving Docks. During the period 1914 . 1918 unspecified items of machinery were supplied to the following companies:

- 14 items supplied to Lincoln Finance
- 2 items supplied to Ruston Proctor
- 3 items supplied to Lincoln Co-operative
- 2 items supplied to Lincoln Corporation
- 1 item supplied to Clayton and Shuttleworth (Steam wagon)
- 1 item supplied to the Board of Agriculture

Clayton's became a Controlled Establishment due to its munitions production. A dispute in 1917 between the Company and the Workers Union over piece-work rates for painting threshing machines therefore went to arbitration. The Union asked for a pay increase of 10 per cent. The arbitrator was Mr Dodd and on 28 July he gave an award of 6¼ per cent. This was accepted.³²

PLOUGHING PASTURES, SMALL HOLDINGS, GOLF COURSES, ALLOTMENTS

The pre-war depression meant that much arable land was turned over to grass. The German submarine blockade meant that less imported grain so more needed to be grown in Britain. Farmers were encouraged to plough up grass-land for winter wheat. In January 1915, as the second enlistment campaign began in the Spalding division, the Lincolnshire Chamber of Agriculture discussed the issue. It was pointed out that Britain imported oats to the value of £6 million and barley to the value of about £8 million and these were essential crops. Nevertheless, wheat should not be grown on land unsuited for it and ploughing pastures might produce a national calamity, for how could beef be supplied?³³ As anticipated, many complaints were received from occupiers of newly broken up grass-land that their crops were being destroyed by wire-worms. These would get more numerous as the area under grass was ploughed up and cultivated.

Corn Production Act.

Prothero's appointment as President of Board of Agriculture in December 1916 led to the ploughing up policy and the Corn Production Act of August 1917 which guaranteed national minimum prices for wheat and oats, thereby creating a subsidy for the first time, enabling long-term planning and stability for farmers. The Food Controller bought all essential food supplies. Part II of the Act established the Agricultural Wages Board and specified a minimum wage for agricultural workers so that they had a share of this stability. The County Boards set a county rate which was ratified by London.³⁴ The aim was to increase output of home-grown food and reduce dependence on imports. R. John Evans, of Burton, near Lincoln, was the Employers' Representative on the Board. There were thirty-nine members, seven as impartial members, and sixteen employers' representatives.³⁵ By 1918, there were controls over almost all aspects of farming.

The Act's late start limited its impact and in Lincolnshire the acreage sown to wheat in 1918 was not much greater than in 1915; barley had started to pick up again and oats had risen during the period.³⁶

Lincoln (Holland)	Lincoln (Kesteven)	Lincoln (Lindsey)	Whole County ³⁷
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6. Agriculture

	<u>1914</u>	<u>1915</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1919</u>
Wheat	175,001	219,803	224,117	181,641
Barley	201,170	163,344	180,870	188,809
Oats	117,718	133,154	141,216	135,784
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	493,889	516,301	546,203	506,234

Table 6.2. Agricultural Returns showing the acreages grown to cereals from 1914 to 1918.
Cd 8240, Cmd 13.

The Returns show that by June 1918 there was an overall increase of 52,314 grain-producing acres but only a small amount of the increased cropping of wheat was coming from ploughing up pasture. There was a reduction of 20,300 acres put to barley, a problem crop due to restrictions on brewing, whereas wheat and oats were for direct food consumption. Farmers appeared to be cashing in on the higher prices, while retaining the acres of pasture they had built up during the past decades. Table 12 gives details of acreages grown to cereals, with those for potatoes for comparison.

	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey
Total Area (Excluding Water)	267,801	464,669	968,374
Total Acreage under Crops & Grass	242,376	419,750	864,494
Arable Land	189,000	274,985	576,903
Wheat	28,359	53,069	100,213
Barley, or Bere	18,392	58,586	111,831
Oats	27,602	29,237	78,945
Rye	31	2,258	6,193
Potatoes	41,685	9,542	30,276

Table 6.3 Acreages of Corn Production
Cmd 680. June 1919

Inspectors were appointed to determine what land should be ploughed.³⁸ If a farmer failed to plough it up, he could be summonsed and punished. At Spalding, George William Boyden of Moulton Chapel was fined £50 and costs for failing to plough up 19 acres of grass-land at Sutton St Edmunds. The defendant's plea was that he would have ploughed it later when the prospects of getting good crops were better. Farmers could not plough wherever they wanted and in November 1918, Dennis & Sons were convicted for ploughing footpaths.³⁹ Land farmed by Mrs Phoebe E. Barnes, Howell House, Heckington was examined and details recorded on 15 November 1916. She was not planning to sow wheat and all her sheep were grazed on enclosed land.

Crop and Type of Land	Acres	Livestock	Number
Permanent Grass	171	Horses	19
Clover and Rotation Grasses	56	Plough teams usually worked	7
Wheat ó estimated area to be sown Autumn 1916		Cows in milk	5
- estimated area to be sown Spring 1917		Cows not in milk	27
Other arable land	275	Cattle, stall and yard fed	20
Market Garden Land		Other cattle	38
Mountain, Heath or Moorland		Sheep grazed on enclosed land	259
		Sheep running on mountain or hill pasturage	
		Sows	5
		Other pigs	3

Table 6.4. Agricultural Census. Sleaford. 15.11.1916
MISC DON 24/3

In addition, information about the workers was also recorded.

Name	Married or single	Age	Length of service	If exempted and nature of exemption
Farmer: L. G. Barnes	Single	27	11 years	14.2.1917
G.H. Barnes	Single	19	Working farmer's son, 3 ½ years	RNVR
T.A.Southern	Married	54	Foreman, 26 ½ years	
J. Woods	Married	50	Shepherd, 3 ½ years	
E. Sharpe	Married	38	Labourer, 1 year	No Rejected
A. Priestley	Married	29	Horseman Labourer, 2 years	Yes. 14.2.1917
H. Hopland	Married	29	Groom-Gardener, 3 ½ years	Yes Rejected
T.Hollingsworth	Single	28	Waggoner, 3 ½ years	Yes. 1.1.1917
W. R. Roye	Single	18	Waggoner, ½ year	
F. Chapman	Single	18	Waggoner, ½ year	
W. Priestley	Single	17½	Labourer, 2 ½ years	

Table 6.5. Agricultural Census.
MISC DON 24/3 Sleaford.

It was noted that three workers employed on the farm had since left and joined the army. They were likely to be the three shown at the bottom of the list.

In July 1918 the Government suspended all ploughing-up notices due to lack of labour despite the fact that the number of women on the land had been increased from approximately 91,000 to over 300,000. In addition there were 11,000 women of the Land Army.

FOOD CROPS

From the outbreak of war the Army took hay and straw and women were involved in its preparation.⁴⁰ On 26 November 1915 at Digby the Bishop found Miss Walker & Miss Dallas at work at Pressing-hay for the army: War work for (educated) ladies! A few weeks later he discovered Mr Backhouse, the Locum Tenens. at Cowbit, superintending the supply of hay for the army!⁴¹

As part of the Government's policy, minor crops like mustard were discouraged in the Fens but onions and flax were promoted.⁴² Potatoes were more important.

Donnington and Kirton were the centre of the potato trade. The Peers of the Potato, were Arthur H. Worth of Hovendon House, Fleet, George Caudwell of Weston and William Dennis of Kirton. New potatoes came in July and August, the main crop from September to April. Hundreds of railway wagonloads of potatoes were dispatched each day for six months of the year to destinations countrywide.

Before the war, especially in the Holbeach Marsh and Spalding area, farmers introduced special railways to transport potatoes, link their farms and in some cases connect with the national railway lines. About 1914 T.J. Ward laid a light railway at Leadenhall Farm, Holbeach St Marks. He also owned West Fen Farm, Carrington, and had a potato railway there.⁴³ The railways

existence was indispensable to getting the nation fed with potatoes. Few lines employed locomotives, the railways being worked by horse. However, at Deeping St Nicholas, where Dennis had an estate of 2,000 acres, a LIFU locomotive was used and photographed in 1916.

Maximum prices were set at which potatoes could be sold, but some farmers ignored the ruling. In May 1917, at Spalding, George Henry Goose, farmer, Whaplode Drove, was twice fined £50 for selling potatoes above the maximum price.⁴⁴ On 4 September 1917 at Spalding, George Thompson of Luton Marsh, near Long Sutton, who was referred to by the Chairman of the Bench as a pioneer of potato-growing in that part of Lincolnshire, was fined £5,500 and £250 costs for selling potatoes in March, April and May at prices above the maximum allowed. There were altogether 55 summonses against him and he pleaded guilty to all.

The importance of potatoes in the diet is indicated by their frequent mention in Mrs Fane's journals. In October they began to have baked potatoes at tea time, to reduce the amount of bread eaten during the week.⁴⁵ On 11 January 1918, she noted ~~the~~ Food Controller says anyone may use a quantity of potatoes in making bread.⁴⁶ The existence of potato wart disease created supply problems but in May 1918 Lincolnshire was free from it.⁴⁷ Increased demands of the Allied Forces and especially of the American Armies and the temporary over-running of the fields in France intended for the growing of food for the troops, made the tonnage situation more serious.⁴⁸ To increase the supply, the Food Controller appealed for one million acres under potatoes in 1918. Potatoes were so important that on 1 November 1918 the Food Controller took over control of the whole potato crop of England and Wales. The prices to be paid to the growers were tied by a commission which proscribed different growers' prices for different areas according to the size of the crop and the quality of the potato.⁴⁹

Potato farming was favoured by the war increasing by approximately 129 percent between 1915 and 1918. The price index rose from 113 in 1914-15 to 247 in 1918-19 and over the course of the war acreage extended out from the Fens to other areas increasing by 25 per cent over the whole county to reach 102,000 acres. W. Dennis reported they had turned about 1,000 acres of grass to arable.⁵⁰ The increase is particularly marked in Holland.

	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey	Total Lincolnshire
4.6.1915	4,195	10,122	30,075	44,392
4.6.1918	50,349	13,706	38,011	102,066

Table 6.7. Acreage under Potatoes. Lincolnshire
Agricultural Statistics. Cd 8240; Cmd 13⁵¹

ALLOTMENTS

It was now considered the duty of anyone with a garden or allotment to see it was planted with seasonal vegetable crops.⁵² In Lincoln, the Land Utilisation Committee was criticised for making insufficient allotments available. A scheme was laid before the Council, but it had to be sanctioned by the Health Committee and was ~~rejected~~ because of a few middle-class Aldermen and Councillors who lived in the area.⁵³ In Woodhall Spa there were ~~no~~ men, so no applications for allotments. In contrast, in Skegness in February there was an application to the Council for seed potatoes and artificial manure for men working on the golf links. By March 1917 twenty applicants had land ranging from 11 to 160 poles, most had been ploughed and tenants were cultivating plots.⁵⁴ However, when small-holdings were provided, sometimes rents were in arrears.⁵⁵

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN

The National Service Department's Agricultural Section aimed to supply civilian volunteer labour to meet the demands made by the War Agricultural Committees. The War Agricultural

Committees' function was the organization of the labour supply, especially female. Margaret Wintringham was a member of the Lincolnshire Committee. Usually they were dominated by County Councillors and farmers. One scheme was to use Public schoolboys and masters. In Lindsey 500 boys were allocated for the 1917 harvest.⁵⁶ The Department's Commissioners included Mr A.E. Elliott of Worksop, who was responsible for Leicester, Derby, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The whole county of Lincolnshire represented one Sub-Commissioner's district and the 1911 census showed that there were about 55,000 workers in the county, spread over 420 square miles.⁵⁷

Children traditionally worked on the land, particularly at harvest time. They were allowed to leave school before the official leaving age if they had reached the required standard or attended a requisite number of days. The ruling created uncertainty and was discussed at the Quarterly Meeting of the Lindsey County Council held in January 1915.⁵⁸ The Education Committee decided that for eight months from 1 March children twelve years and over were exempted from school as long as they were engaged in agriculture and for an eight-hour day they were to be paid not less than 1s per day or 1s 3d when longer hours were worked. In Kesteven there were 976 exemptions from school in 1914, half probably for agriculture. In March 1918, there were 772, and 641 temporary wartime exemptions of which 500 were thought to be for agriculture.⁵⁹ One Council and seven voluntary schools were closed for the duration, Annsby, Dunsby, Stainby, Stroxtun and Stubton, (S. Kesteven); Easton, Harmston, Rowston, (N. Kesteven). Staffs were reduced at other schools. In March 1918, the Spalding Local Education Authority decided to release boys of 12 and over to work on the land. Consequently a boy from the Goodfellows School was released next day.⁶⁰ Girls of twelve and over were also released for farming work and to look after their homes when mothers were helping in agricultural work. Children worked part-time out of school hours and had an extended Easter holiday to help in potato setting. The timing of school holidays was rearranged in Lindsey to help with hay and potato harvests.

George Hare, Headmaster of Spalding Goodfellows CE School, discovered John East, aged eight on 23 April 1917 truanting after he was excluded for suspected ringworm. The boy was being paid 1s 6d per day potato setting or twitch picking for Mr Ashling, Little London. He returned to school the next day. At Bourne Fen School on 17 August 1914 three children were away all week to help in harvesting.⁶¹ There were mixed views about this. Rev. J. Carvath thought farmers should use the hundreds of men unemployed by the war rather than prevent boys receiving education. Mr C.A. Holmes replied that men would not work at the wages farmers offered.⁶²

EMPLOYMENT OF ALIENS

Foreigners, known legally as 'aliens', were another option to the agricultural labour problem and at a meeting of the Kesteven War Agricultural Committee at Grantham,⁶³ members decided to inform the Board that 100 Danes could be placed in the county to do the second delivery of letters in rural districts which was being done by men, including a seventeen year-old lad, who would be better employed on the land.⁶⁴ However, under the Aliens Restriction Acts parts of Lincolnshire were prohibited to foreigners. Belgian refugees were another option; many were allowed to live in officially prohibited areas but in December 1917, the War Refugees Committee reported that 'Farmers are still very reluctant to accept alien labour.'⁶⁵ A further idea was that British people in distress arising from the war should be helped by offering employment on the land.

EMPLOYMENT OF SOLDIERS

Soldiers were the most convenient replacement, coming initially from the Home Defence Force. Medical category CIII were made available for the duration. The Bishop' son, Ned, came to see his Yeomanry who were sent to do harvest work.⁶⁶ Soldiers on leave worked on farms and numbers increased after the ploughing up campaign. However, accommodation was short, especially in the Fens and soldiers refused to stay when the farmer could only offer a shed for sleeping quarters.

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Another suggestion was that invalided soldiers, unfit for further service should be quickly discharged. In February 1917 the War Office agreed with the Board of Agriculture that in addition to the 15,000 soldiers already on the land, a further 15,000 would be allocated to assist with the spring sowing. Of this number, liberal allotments would be made to the more important wheat growing areas, such as Norfolk. This statement was immediately challenged by Viscount Henry Chaplin, whose family had lived in Lincolnshire since the seventeenth century. He had been a member of the royal commission on agricultural depression (1879. 81) and the first President of the newly created Board of Agriculture but was now living in retirement in London. He asked why this prominence was given to Norfolk which had only 144,425 acres devoted to wheat, whereas Lincolnshire had 219,803 and Yorkshire and Essex both had over 163,000 acres.⁶⁷

Agricultural Companies were formed and although one was not established in Lindsey until August 1917, a number of soldiers were put on extended furlough in the spring to help in the late ploughing season. However, many of those who described themselves as ploughmen could not plough, and reapers could not use reaping hooks, but there were 746 skilled soldiers working on farms, and a high proportion of these were probably ploughmen. There were also 226 unskilled, the majority becoming more useful as they were gradually trained. Training centres were established to teach skills, including tractor work. The ploughing school in Lindsey only produced 85 men to the end of March 1918, to which were added 40 ploughmen, recalled from overseas in February. In the Kesteven district early in 1918, 957 soldiers were on farms, but only 109 were classified as unskilled and 468 were Old Company, semi-skilled and 275 were skilled. However, the perceived discrepancy between soldiers and civilian pay and hours caused dissatisfaction amongst civilian workers.⁶⁸

Another initiative was the establishment by the Board of Agriculture of colonies for discharged soldiers, wounded men who might benefit from work on the land. One of three across the country was in Holbeach on Crown Land. Christopher Turnor, of Stoke Rochford, Grantham, pointed out in December 1915 that such schemes would need to be philanthropic for the partially disabled, but for able-bodied men it was essential that they should be commercially sound. It was also important that such men should get on well with the village population and they needed to be settled in large groups to enable them to form their own community.⁶⁹ In Holbeach 66 semi-detached cottages were erected. The sites, which were on Middle Marsh Road, Sluice Road and Flinthouse Road, were staked out in February 1917 and in May the tender of Mr R.S. Jellings of Peterborough amounting to £14,550, was accepted. This price did not include the cost of timber, which was purchased by the Board through the Director of Timber Supplies, nor the cost of iron and cement which were purchased forward by the Board to avoid the recent rise in prices.⁷⁰ The cottages mostly had three bedrooms, a parlour, and a kitchen. There was a coal outhouse and outside lavatory.⁷¹

In August that year Captain John William Boddy, a Territorial officer, was appointed Holbeach Director and his salary raised to £400 a year, whereas his pay was only £196 plus a grant of £124. On 9 April 1918 he was summonsed for having twice fraudulently procured an order from HM Paymaster-General for £31 to be delivered to his wife. His defence was that covering letters were pinned to his applications but these were not seen by the secretary to the Civil Liabilities Commission. As the situation was equivocal he was sent by Bow Street Police Court to be tried by Jury at London Sessions. He was acquitted in May 1918 because the pin-holes, proving his case, could be clearly seen on his declarations.⁷²

The Ministry of Reconstruction asked County Councils to submit schemes for agricultural reconstruction in their areas. This included not only the Smallholding colonies, but ideas for returning soldiers and sailors who might want to take up country life. The Ministry wanted legislation to empower the Board of Agriculture to acquire land, the possibility of using electric power in agriculture, land settlement for ex-service men and the employment of disabled men in rural industries.⁷³ In July 1918 there was still inadequate provision for ex-soldiers' settlement on the land. In August, at a meeting of the Federation of Executive and County War Agricultural

Committees, the Lincoln War Agricultural Executive Committee said they thought the Board should purchase land for disabled soldiers' settlements because a large quantity of land was on the market. Existing Treasury regulations should be relaxed to allow county councils to buy small-holdings. The Kesteven War Agricultural Executive Committee considered that it was essential for the successful working of the reorganized tractor scheme which the FPD had placed under the direction of War Executives that the latter should have complete control over the soldiers working on this scheme. They should be allowed to pay the soldiers direct, to discipline them, and return them to the depot if necessary. Further, the FPD should be requested to reconsider its decision to increase charges for tractor ploughing as these would endanger the financial success of the scheme. This resolution was adopted. An un-named member enquired whether insurance policies covered damage by wilful firing of stacks by German prisoners of war. Where this had occurred cannot be ascertained.

EMPLOYMENT OF PRISONERS

Problems in the use of soldiers also applied to prisoners-of-war whose use was first suggested in February 1916, but strong feelings against them meant they were originally confined to drainage work. At first they had to be guarded and were only allowed out in certain numbers. Later they were boarded out on farms and special ploughing camps were set up. Lindsey established six depots with 175 prisoners and reported that, to the end of March 1918, the prisoners were specially selected agriculturalists, engaged in farm work, ditching, hedging, and so on. Although they were reported in all cases to be working satisfactorily, generally work was inefficient due to poor nourishment during the day. Twenty German prisoners arrived at Leadenham station on 9 July 1917, to work on Mr Robinson's farm at Brant Broughton.⁷⁴

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

From the first few months of the war there was growing pressure to encourage women onto the land and get farmers to accept them. However, many were convinced that women were incapable of doing ~~men's~~ work of ploughing and sowing, or handling machinery and animals. The annual meeting of the Sleaford Branch of the National Farmers' Union in January 1916 insisted that women could only do a few odd jobs including helping with the threshing, but they must have men to attend to the stock, carry corn and plough.⁷⁵



Lincs to the Past reference: MLL 8971

Fig. 6.5. MLL8971

Baling in progress; group of soldiers and land girls at work using a Fowler steam engine.

From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.

<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/302358.record?pt=S>



Lincs to the Past reference: MLL 8929

Fig 6.6. MLL8929

Group of land girls taken outside a chapel of church hall, perhaps in Grantham; they wear round brimmed hats and white overalls; two women on front row wear uniform coats and skirts, the 2 in centre front are in civilian coats and hats.

From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.
<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/302316.record?pt=S>

The campaign escalated and the Board of Trade, in consultation with the Board of Agriculture, and working with women's agricultural organizations, began to mobilize a supply of women to take the place of enlisted agricultural workers. Reserves were chiefly among the local unoccupied women in country villages. In 1916 the County War Agricultural Committees were required to form Women's War Agricultural Committees to register countrywomen willing to work on the land and by February 1916, women's county committees, operating with or as sub-committees of the War Agricultural Committees, had been established in 25 counties. To supplement their work, District Committees were appointed. Lincolnshire was placed in the East Midlands Division supervised by Lady Thorold of Syston, near Grantham.⁷⁶

In January 1916, women and girls from 16 to 60, and 'of a highly respectable class', were earning honest money pea picking in Boston, the centre of the pea trade.⁷⁷ In May 1916 it was reported that in Norfolk, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire thousands of women were working on the land, thereby

encouraging more reluctant farmers in other counties. George Caudwell of Weston was leading this trend. His use of up to 400 women at any one time, including war widows from the Boston and Spalding district, was an extension of the traditional Lincolnshire use of women particularly in areas where there was reclaimed land and in the Wolds. Instead of walking in gangs several miles to their work, they were now fetched to and fro in horse-drawn and motor-vehicles. On June 3, 1916 the *Lincolnshire Standard* published a photograph of a huge motor bus in Boston with 63 women and girls who were working on the land. Two smaller motor conveyances also carried workers daily so that the total number, including boys, was nearly 200. Those in the photo had just got back from Holbeach Marsh, where Mr Caudwell was experimenting with cultivation of onions on up to 300 acres on his 3,000 acre farm. It was thought this successful trial should realize about £100 an acre, or between £30,000 and £40,000. Instead of being lifted by hand, as was done by smallholders, his onions were ploughed up, picked and put to dry in preparation to be marketed in the coming months. Lincolnshire normally used chitting-boxes for storing and drying. These could be stacked, but allowed air circulation and gave roots an opportunity to develop through gaps in the base, thereby eliminating further decay. Now the quantity was so large that he had to find other methods. By the following year hundreds of women and girls were engaged in this very necessary work⁷⁸

Each County Committee was directed to appoint a small Executive and two sub-committees for Training, and Selection and Allocation. Four thousand Village Registrars were already appointed. Registrations resulted in the setting up of sixty-three Women's Farm Labour Committees, but when circularised for information only thirty replied. This gave 57,497 women registered, and 28,767 working. But it was known that many more women were working in all parts of the kingdom than these returns showed. In certain parts of Lincolnshire, women in large numbers had always been on the land and these do not care to register thinking it an unnecessary fuss.⁷⁹ The Kesteven Division returns showed 599 registered and 2041 working. On 4 October 1916 it was reported that there was no trace of a Women's Committee in Kesteven. In Holland the War Agricultural Committee Chairman considered women were working on farms to such an extent that no Women's Committee was necessary.⁸⁰ Therefore Holland's Committee was the last to be appointed. Nevertheless, there was an organizing committee at work. On 8 April 1916, the *Boston Guardian* reported that three applications had been received from women who wanted to work on the land and sent on to Miss Jackson of Holbeach who was in charge of the Women's Labour Movement there. The ladies lived away from the area.⁸¹

The Countess of Ancaster was Chair of the Kesteven Women's War Agricultural Executive Committee and Helen Fane was Fulbeck registrar. On 18 June 1917, the only time she mentioned this work, she was busy putting out notices in the villages urging that everyone growing potatoes in gardens and allotments should spray them with Burgundy mixture to keep off the disease. The Committee had purchased a knapsack sprayer and gallons of the mixture and they were waiting to see whether anyone would use it. In addition, the government announced that through these Committees they would give 5s bonus on 17s strong farm boots to women workers on the land, of not less than 24s in the week throughout the summer.⁸²

It was recognised that women might have been reluctant to register, fearing that the work could become compulsory and often they could only offer part time work. Child-care responsibilities were important. The crèche question was considered difficult, the Holland division being the only district that attempted to deal with it. However, it was not a very positive attempt. The Holbeach Women's Farm Labour and Preservation of Infant Life War Committee decided at their Meeting on 28 February to apply to the War Agriculture Committee for a grant of £10 toward the expenses of opening a crèche under the superintendence of qualified nurses. They argued that a crèche would reduce infant mortality in the district and that many mothers would volunteer if a crèche were provided. The Holland War Agricultural Committee discussed the matter at Sessions House, Spalding.⁸³ The Chairman reminded the meeting that Long Sutton had two or three nurseries and the crèche at Boston was maintained by voluntary subscription. Committee members were worried about expenditure and wanted to know if the women who used the crèche

would do something towards payment. The Chairman pointed out that money was wanted only to help start the scheme. Mr Mawby said they should start the thing first, then we'd consider a grant. At this point everyone changed their minds and by a vote of seven to three the request was denied. The Chairman regretted this. He said the scheme would go far to solve the labour trouble.⁸⁴ The lack of crèches provided by local authorities was still under discussion by the War Cabinet in July 1918.

As well as working directly on the land, women were being encouraged to take up milking, being described in Boston as 'admirable.'⁸⁵ As the *Skegness, Mablethorpe & Alford News (SMA News)* reminded its readers on 7 April, 1915, there was 'No degradation in milking cows.' Mrs Portman Dalton, of Fillingham Castle, Lincoln, who had been Lady of the Manor at Ingham, added her voice. She wrote that in 1864, when she was young, seventeen women milked their cows in the cottage pasture. Now there were none, and no cows. 'The women refused to milk or be troubled with a dairy and dare not go near a cow.' Mrs Dalton said that labourers' wives should also take their share of potato planting in spring, and beet and turnip sowing in summer.⁸⁶

In March 1917 the Women's Land Army (WLA) was formed. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers to encourage middle-class women to join. The *SMA News* carried a whole column on the Women's Land Army on 14 March 1917, explaining how the National Service Recruit was Selected, Trained and Placed. Organizers 'felt they had to fight certain prevailing notions about the countryside and women's place there. Agricultural work had to become something that ladies did and women and farmers had to be convinced of this. Educated women were to be the patriotic role models for village women.' However, the Land Army uniform was considered immodest and was hidden in recruiting posters.⁸⁷ Certificates were awarded to Land Army women bearing the assurance that 'Every woman who helps in agriculture during the war is as truly serving her country as the man who is fighting in the trenches on the sea, or in the air.'⁸⁸

Women's work now included some occupations which they did not normally undertake such as sheep-shearing, ploughing and thatching. Under the heading General Farm Work were such tasks as: cleaning land, stone picking, weeding, thistle cutting, manure spreading, singling and hoeing turnips, potato setting and lifting, vegetable planting and transplanting. In addition, due to the seed-growing experts not being granted the exemptions the Tribunals were authorized to give, insufficient men were now left on the existing seed farms. Arthur W. Sutton described how a crop of mangold seed, considered to be the finest in the county of Lincoln, was in 1916 entirely planted and harvested by women, under the grower's supervision.⁸⁹

Formal training, which included lessons in milking and how to feed calves, to hoe, lighter work of haymaking and harvesting, was organised at a training centre, at first four weeks, and when it was realised that was insufficient it was lengthened to six weeks. Some farmers engaged women and trained them, sometimes without consulting the Registrars. Arrangements were made with the Army Contract Department of the War Office for the supply of equipment to women land workers.

Lindsey accepted 159 WLA members initially; twenty were passed on to instruction depots, and 42 were given bursaries to train with farmers and landowners. However, farmers feared they would lose men to the forces and had difficulty providing accommodation. Twenty-four WLA girls were unemployed in August 1917 in Lindsey and it was feared there would be more. Several had run away. Some complained they were not helped, looked after or assisted; there is evidence that some farmers exploited them. Farmers complained the women were uncontrolled. It was recognised that there was a need for more supervision and Welfare Officers were appointed.

Lindsey	Miss Mugliston
Kesteven	Miss Campbell
Holland	Mrs Shearsmith.

C. Ethel Cartwright, the County Organising Secretary of the Food Production Department, Women's Branch, Holland County, Spalding, sent overly-strict suggestions to Miss Talbot at 72 Victoria Street, London on 8 August 1918. With the large influx of Land Army girls into the County, Cartwright's Committee urgently wanted definite regulations concerning behaviour and a copy forwarded to the Board for authorization to use them. If agreed, they intended to have them printed and give copies to every Land Army girl and to the landladies where they were billeted. However, it was felt that Military discipline might compel a woman to stay at a job but no farmer would want a farm hand to stay against their will if in charge of stock or position of responsibility. Permission was not given. Numbers fell over the winter and did not regain the September level until March 1918 when they had 83 WLA girls on the land, but 24 of them had been imported from other areas. Then numbers increased, reaching 115 in July and 308 at the Armistice.

The most stubborn opposition from farmers to the employment of women came from areas where the shortage of labour was not acute but demonstrations of women's agricultural work converted many. It is not known whether such demonstrations were held anywhere in Lincolnshire because Holland, Lindsey, and the Kesteven County Council War Agricultural Committees did not send in reports. Nonetheless, in August 1918 Lincolnshire was shown as a large employer of women although very little official energy went into their mobilisation.⁹⁰ The number of village women employed part or whole time on the land was estimated to have been about 90,000 before the war. At the beginning of 1918 this had risen to 260,000 and at the end of September to at least 320,000.⁹¹ In February 1919 a census of women working on the land during 1918 was published and published in *Sleaford Notes*. Fluctuations were attributed to weather conditions and the time of year:⁹²

February	2303
May	1929
August	2172
November	1954

A Secret Report on the State of Employment in All Occupations in the UK in April 1918⁹³ showed that there had been 80,000 females employed in agriculture on a permanent basis in July 1914. This had increased by 9,000, an increase of 11.2% of those employed in July 1914. The number of women stated by employers to be directly replacing men was 40,000. This meant that the percentage of females to total numbers of work-people employed in April 1918 was 13%.

LIVESTOCK

Horses

Much motive power was supplied by horses and a shortage was created by Army requisitioning. In the first days of August about sixteen from the Holbeach district were branded on the hoof with a Government arrow.⁹⁴ On 1 September Mr Marriner, on behalf of the Government, bought the Fane's carriage horse for £40, which was to go straight to the artillery. He paid £60 and £40 for two hunters which Mrs Fane considered fair prices. The removal of farm horses created potential problems for the future and on 29 January the Annual Meeting of the Lincoln Farmers Union memorialised the War Office and Board of Agriculture to return from the Continent all disabled mares unfit for military purposes but suitable for breeding, to be dispersed among farmers of the country. This shortage is reflected in the Agricultural Returns for June 1915.⁹⁵

Date	Total horses	Horses Used in Agriculture
June 1913	76,851	50,239
June 1914	76,190	49,436
June 1915	69,556	45,195
June 1918	75,961	50,941
June 1919	76,939	51,024

Table 6.8. Agricultural Returns. Horses in Lincolnshire, 1913 to 1919.

These figures bear out what one farmer said in 1915: 'The draught horse has not yet been substituted by the motor. There is plenty of work for horses to do.'⁹⁶ Further, they show that the number of horses in the county had increased from 1913 with the greatest proportion in Lindsey.⁹⁷ (Table 6.8).

PIGS

PIGS ENTERING LINCOLN MARKET	1915	1916	1917	1918
Fat	11849	11035	8125	646
Store	5058	3355	2234	1561
TOTAL	16907	14,390	10,359	2207

Table 6.9. Pigs entering Lincoln Market⁹⁸
Agricultural Statistics, 1918. HMSO. Cmd 13

The above table shows the severe decline in pigs entering Lincoln market and the dire situation in 1918. In 1917 the Horncastle Urban Council relaxed their bye-law to enable residents to keep pigs within 50 ft of their dwellings. Mr W.B. Stevenson, miller and corn merchant, Horncastle, offered to advance up to 30s to each of 10 workmen approved by the Committee to enable them to buy pigs and promised to let them have pig meal at cost.⁹⁹ However, in December 1917, Georgina Portman-Dalton, a farmer at Fillingham Castle, Lincoln, was troubled by a rumour that in Lincolnshire all the cottagers' pigs were to be commandeered in January. Consequently, countless half-grown pigs were slaughtered. As Lincolnshire labourers lived on bacon and bread, this meant a future lack of bacon. Also, eight-weeks-old pigs, usually bought to replace the slaughtered ones, would now be difficult to buy. She wanted correct information from the Government to save the situation.¹⁰⁰

By July 1918, the decline of the pig population had been arrested but the returns for June 1919 show a total of 99,361 pigs in Lincolnshire, still 17,755 less than the 1915 figure, a reduction of 15 per cent.

PIGS	Returns for 4 June 1919			
	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey	Total
Sows for breeding	3,582	3,843	9,624	17,049
Boars used for service	196	234	533	963
Other pigs	21,522	15,338	44,489	81,349
Total	25,300	19,415	54,646	99,361

Table 6.10 Number of pigs in Lincolnshire. 4 June 1919. Cmd 680 p.23**Sheep and Cattle**

In September 1918, the lack of animal feeding stuffs became serious. The right kind of feeding stuffs had to be available when required, not according to any official timetable. Lincolnshire was famous for its stock and arable husbandry, and farmers appealed to the authorities for feed so that young cattle and sheep suffering from the wet autumn herbage would survive the winter, but felt the situation was not understood. Sheep suffered badly. There was difficulty in obtaining cake from manufacturers and numbers fell back to 822,122 in 1915 from 1 million in 1910. Farmers bitterly resented that calves and lambs could die in their hundreds from preventable troubles, but the 'town-made rules must be respected'.

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	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey	Total Lincolnshire	
SHEEP					
4.6.1915	43,255	233,070	545,797	822,122	Cd8240
4.6.1919	27,274	209,814	488,316	725,404	Cmd680 - 11 %
CATTLE					
4.6.1915	45,816	66,570	142,718	255,104	Cd8240
4.6.1919	39,266	68,034	150,605	257,905	Cmd680 + 1%

Table 6.11 Difference between the Number of Sheep and Cattle in Lincolnshire, 1915 and 1919. Cd 8240, Cmd 680.

Table 6.12 gives a summary of the livestock position in June 1919.

LIVESTOCK	Lincoln Holland	Lincoln Kesteven	Lincoln Lindsey	Lincolnshire
Horses used for agricultural purposes	11,288	12,706	27,030	51,024
Total horses	16,366	20,018	40,555	76,939
Total cattle	39,266	68,034	150,605	257,905
Sheep	27,274	209,814	488,316	725,404
Pigs	25,300	19,415	54,646	99,361

Table 6.12 Livestock in Lincolnshire. June 1919. *Agricultural Statistics*, 1920. HMSO. Cmd 680

PROFITS

Despite such difficulties, the war brought prosperity to farmers from 1914 to 1921. By January 1915 the *Lincolnshire Standard* reported that prices were increasing at all markets, Lincoln, Stamford, Sleaford, Spilsby, Market Rasen, Spalding, Boston. Wheat was 53s, oats 30s, peas had risen from 90s to 110s, flour had also risen in price.¹⁰¹ At Louth the trade in cattle was good, but this contrasted with Lincoln, which had a small show with slow trade. Financial results of a Kesteven Farm during the period 1913 to 1919 show a move first from loss to profit and then an increase of approximately 850 per cent in 1917 with a fall-back the following two years.

Year	Loss	Profit
1913	£157.15.0	
1914		£366.1.6.
1915		£619.6.1.
1916		£1702.4.8
1917		£3152.6.5.
1918		£2966.3.1.
1919		£2556.3.11

Table 6.13. Financial Results of a Kesteven Farm, 1913 . 1919¹⁰²

Edward Lee Hicks had something to say about this situation in November 1915 when he travelled to Spalding where he was met by Mr Atkinson (rich farmer, of Weston) who drove me in his car to Weston St Mary Vicarage. The following day he addressed more rich farmers and at Moulton he had supper with more. He said:

¶ This class of man abounds in S. Lincolnshire, & has superseded the old gentry. They are very modern business men: often sons of clerks, labourers etc. Wealthy & sterling men: but 'near' with their money: with quite limited outlook: they accumulate farms, & manage them with foremen: the farmers & old-fashioned farm-houses have disappeared. I doubt if the labourers have got any advantage out of it. More produce is yielded by the land. But I liken this change to the old ~~enclosures~~.¹⁰³

Farmers now reaped the benefit of inflated prices, yet still continued to pay labourers the miserable pittance of 12s a week out of which the latter have to eke out a miserable existence, notwithstanding the fact that prices of domestic commodities have gone up by 19% since July.¹⁰⁴ It was impossible for a family of five to subsist when a hundredweight of coal cost 1s 6d, and a quartern loaf 7d.¹⁰⁵

Earnings of 2% on capital in 1914 reached 10.6% in 1917. Costs rose by less than prices and incomes; rent was held down.¹⁰⁶ These increased profits meant farmers were able to contribute to various war charities associated with the agricultural community. For example through the Agricultural Relief of Allies Fund which had a County Committee to coordinate efforts Lincolnshire raised funds for ruined Allied farmers. Consignments of poultry, some from Wragby, were sent to Marne and Meuse in France.¹⁰⁷ They also contributed to the British Farmers Red Cross Fund. In 1916 Spalding raised £4,000. Sales were organized to raise as much money as possible through having fun. For example, in September 1915, a bullock made £36 10s and then it was put up for sale again and another 10s raised. Sheep were sold for 80s and 71s and then their legs, for 14s and 12s. A perambulator made £3 10s, being put up more than a dozen times.¹⁰⁸ In January 1917 another sale was held at Ingoldmells. Pigs, sheep, ducks, fowls, pigeons, vegetables, Ralli (sic) car, wagonette, straw, ham, implements, were all sold and realised £70.¹⁰⁹

Mrs Fane did not comment on the fact that Lincolnshire was not included when, in 1918, the Agricultural Wages Board decided to issue formal notices of their proposal to fix minimum wage rates on the basis of a 6-day working week of 54 hours for male workers of 18 years of age and over for Gloucestershire, Leicestershire and Rutland, Herefordshire, Kent, Brecon and Radnor, Dorset and Somerset.¹¹⁰ Farmers found the provision for minimum wage irksome. First there had been the shortage of labour after Kitchener's appeal, then the construction of airfields. Farmers became less willing to let labourers go and workers, supported by War Agricultural Committees, less anxious to enlist. The Lindsey committee issued 2,160 exemption certificates in the first three months of 1918. However, heavy military losses in early 1918 led to an abandonment of agricultural exemption.¹¹¹

FARMING AS MUNITIONS WORK

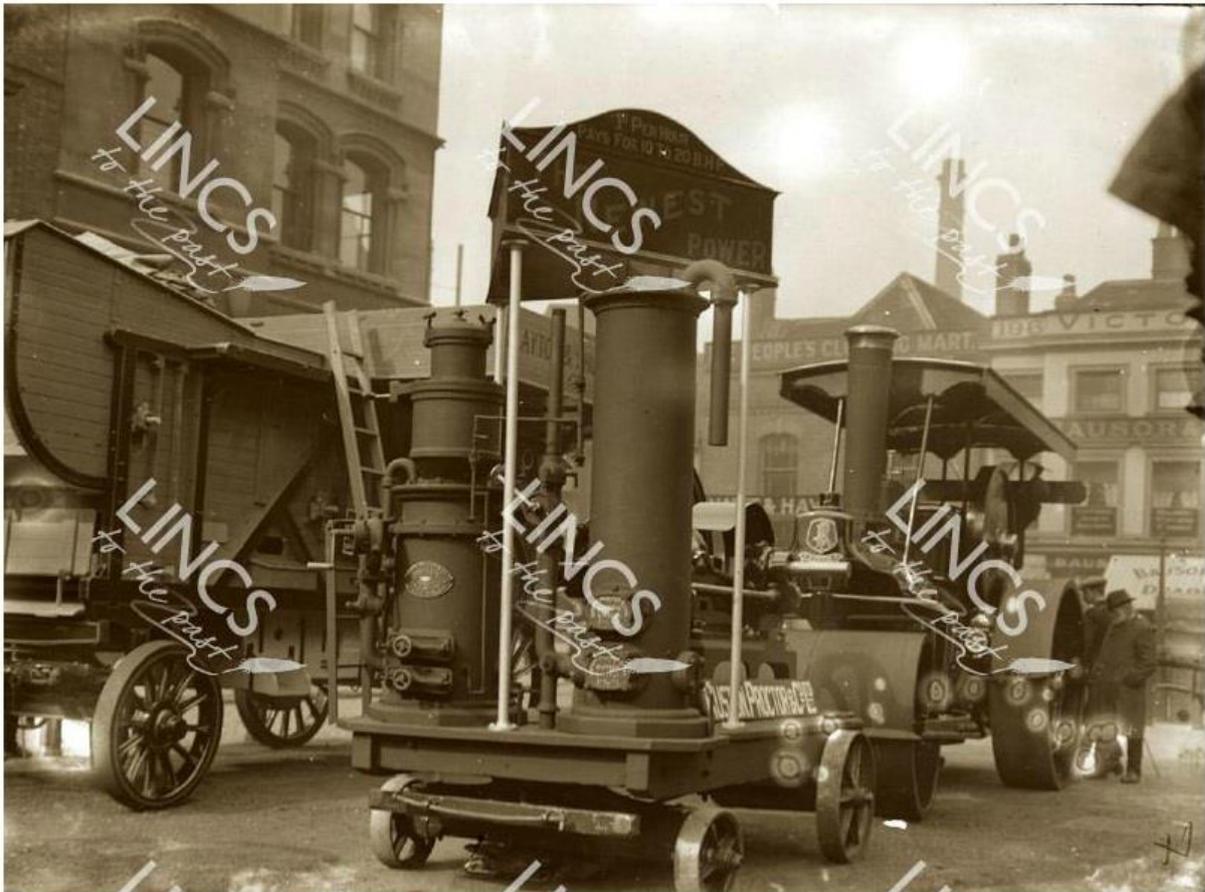
Farming is about fertility, growth and well-being. It is the antithesis of war, which is about destruction. Nevertheless some crops were needed for destructive purposes. Flax was needed for various military purposes including manufacture of aeroplane wings. When war started all possible stocks had been bought from Belgium until the Germans occupied Ghent. The Navy and Army contributed to shortages and a price rise by placing orders for heavy linen. Consequently, the Government wanted to revive the flax industry in counties where it had formerly been successful. A meeting at Spalding of South Lincolnshire farmers with representatives of the Board of Agriculture decided in January 1918 to support the revival of the Lincolnshire flax industry. Alderman H.P. Carter, chairman of the Holland War Agricultural Committee said he believed it could be a great commercial success. A considerable number of farmers undertook to grow the crop, some offering 50 acres each and 10,000 acres were allotted to the Spalding district for flax-growing. In July 1918, the Flax Production Branch of the Board of Agriculture asked for information on workers with experience in the flax industry from the Central Register of Belgian Refugees which was answered from their personal dossiers.¹¹² On 25 August 1918, under the Defence of the Realm Act, (DORA), the Ministry of Munitions took over all flax. Staddlethorpe and Selby, (Yorkshire); Crowle, (N. Lincolnshire); and Pinchbeck, (S. Lincolnshire) were places of

particular significance. The Board of Flax Department took over the Old Mill at Pinchbeck which in 1872 had been owned and run by Mr Aitken employing 100 hands, mainly women.¹¹³ With mass production, profit diminished and although several attempts had been made to revive the industry, this had been unsuccessful. Now, because the crop was wanted for military purposes, things might be different.

Shortly before the Armistice Christopher Turnor cited Lincolnshire as an example of scientific farming. Although crop growing dominated, it had a fair proportion of cattle and sheep and an appropriate ratio of arable to pasture, not only from the farmer's viewpoint, but also of national safety. In June 1915, 525,396 acres were devoted to pasture, which included fodder crops such as clover and sainfoin, and permanent grass, some of which was for hay. He advocated certain adjustments in the balance of national farming to counter the downward trend in the production of sufficient food saying the grass-land policy produced fine pedigree stock, but not the required amount of milk and dairy products, and nor had it produced the amount of cereals and potatoes which national safety demanded.¹¹⁴ People's ability to sustain physical effort depended on the quality of the diet. Protein now came from potatoes and cereals rather than meat and dairy products and the calorific value of food went down.¹¹⁵

ARMISTICE

At the Armistice the farming industry asked the Government take immediate steps to release all agricultural workers from military service. The Flax Production Branch was dealing with wages, deseeding and the work of factories. A test had been carried out with a patent device attached to a threshing machine. However, modification in the relation between the farmer and the factory would be necessary. During 1918, applications were received for the establishment of drainage authorities for the Welland and from five out of the six counties on the course for the Great Ouse.¹¹⁶ The Board was concerned with the improvement of rural transport in Lincolnshire.



Lincs to the Past reference: LCL 1055

Fig. 6.6. LCL 1055. Exhibition of machinery manufactured locally; includes a Ruston road roller, a Clayton and Shuttleworth threshing drum and a Ruston Proctor engine mounted on a low loader.

From Lincs to the Past by courtesy of Lincolnshire County Council.

<http://www.lincstothepast.com/photograph/258439.record?pt=S>

In December, at the Soldiers Colony in Holbeach, farming consisted of ploughing and drilling wheat. All the potatoes had been harvested so the women and most of the soldiers temporarily employed had left. Many of the early potatoes were heating in the clamps owing to blight and steps were being taken to get them turned and riddled and sold as soon as possible. However, the local Food Controller reported a great shortage of trucks, and as there were five acres of Eclipse potatoes on the Colony the Board proposed to take special action to deal with this transport difficulty.

Agricultural training for ex-service men continued to be a major source of concern and many of the enquiries came from men whose studies were interrupted by the War. In February 1919 the third wave of influenza reached its peak, less severe than the Autumn wave and had fallen two months later. The Board arranged residential treatment for discharged soldiers and sailors suffering from pulmonary TB and for their re-introduction into employment, especially on the land. By-products of munitions and other industries were being investigated as possible manures. The Publications Branch was issuing pamphlets on *How to Manage an Allotment*, *The taking of Wild Rabbits*, and *Rats: How to Exterminate them*.¹⁷

Farming in 1918-19 appeared reasonably comfortable with undreamed of profits. Nevertheless, peace brought a sense of caution and the Farmers Union called for a permanent settlement for

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agriculture. A Rural Commission was appointed in 1919; this was followed by the Agricultural Act of 1920. The acreage of permanent grass was starting to rise by 1921¹¹⁸ and that year came the 'Great Betrayal' when subsidies were withdrawn.¹¹⁹

¹ Peter Dewey. *War and Progress: Britain, 1914 – 1945*. Longman, 1997. 13

² Lincoln Archive. MISC DON 948/18. [948/19, 20, 21, 22, 23 take us up to 1919]

³ Mills: 286

⁴ Peter Dewey. *Iron Harvests of the Field: the Making of Farm Machinery in Britain since 1800*. Carnegie Publishing, Lancaster. 2008. 146

⁵ Peter Dewey. *British Agriculture in the First World War*. Routledge. 1989. p.38

⁶ Dewey. *British Agriculture*. p.41

⁷ *Lincolnshire, Boston & Spalding Free Press*. 15.09.1914

⁸ From May 1915, the President of Board of Agriculture was Lord Selborne and from December 1916 Rowland Prothero.

⁹ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 2.10.1914

¹⁰ Alun Howkins. *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside since 1900*. Routledge. 2001. p.16.

¹¹ *Lincolnshire Standard*. 19.09.1914; 10.07.1915; 14.08.1915

¹² *Times*. 13.4.1915

¹³ LA. 9-FANE 1/1/4/6

¹⁴ *Lincolnshire Standard*. 16.1.1915

¹⁵ Dewey. *Iron Harvests*. 129

¹⁶ W. Rigby, The Man who made Tanks. *Lincolnshire Life* vol 8 no 1 Mar 1968 p42-43.

¹⁷ 9-FANE 1/1/4/5. 22.08.1914

¹⁸ *Lincolnshire, Boston & Spalding Free Press* 2.10.1914

¹⁹ *Lincolnshire Standard*. 11.09.1915; 4.12.1915

²⁰ *Times*. 30.8.1915

²¹ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 1.5.1915

²² *Lincolnshire Standard*. 5.2.1916

²³ Jonathan Brown. *Farming in Lincolnshire 1850 – 1945*. History of Lincolnshire Committee. 2005. 186 ó 192. *Agricultural Gazette*, 9.04.1918

²⁴ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 24.04.1915

²⁵ *Boston Guardian and Lincolnshire Independent*. 22.4.1916

²⁶ *Times*. 7.6.1917.

²⁷ Merritt Wesley Harper. 'A Manual of Farm Animals: a practical guide to the choosing, breeding and keeping of horses, cattle, sheep and swine. 1911' in Bailey, L.H. (ed.) *The Rural Manuals*. Macmillan. 1910,

²⁸ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 7.08.1915

²⁹ MERL. TR3/MAR

³⁰ TNA. MUN 5/22/ 1950/1-7

³¹ TNA. LAB 2/252/LR18242/1918 LR 19046

³² TNA. LAB 2/42/IC361/1917/PTS I & II

³³ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 1.01.1915; 23.1.1915

³⁴ (p.34, Howkins).

³⁵ *Times*. 3.12.1917

³⁶ Brown. *Farming in Lincolnshire 1850 – 1945*. 186 ó 192

³⁷ Cmd 680 1919

³⁸ LA. MISC DON 24/3 Sleaford. Agricultural Census

³⁹ *Times*. 21.08.1918; 16.11.1918.

⁴⁰ LA. 9-FANE 1/1/4/20

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⁴² Brown. *Farming in Lincolnshire 1850 – 1945*. 186 - 192

⁴³ Stewart E. Squires. *The Lincolnshire Potato Railways*. Oakwood Press 2005. (First edition 1987) 23. 24, 77, 126.

⁴⁴ *Times* 16.5.1917

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⁴⁶ LA. 9-FANE 1.19

⁴⁷ *Times* 17.5.1918

⁴⁸ LA. Kirton Magazine. May 1918

⁴⁹ *Lincolnshire Echo*. 28.10.1918

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- ⁵⁰ Brown. *Farming in Lincolnshire 1850 – 1945*. 186 - 192
- ⁵¹ *Agricultural Statistics, E. & W. 1915 - 1920*. Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, Acreage and livestock returns of England and Wales. London, HMSO, 1916, 1919. Further statistics concerning crops and animals are shown in the Appendix.
- ⁵² *SMA News*. 24.3.1915
- ⁵³ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 9.1.1915
- ⁵⁴ *SMA News*. 31.1.1917, 14.03.1917
- ⁵⁵ *Lincolnshire Standard*. 29.1.1916
- ⁵⁶ Dewey. *Agriculture in WWI*. 136, 137
- ⁵⁷ *Times*. 31.3.1917
- ⁵⁸ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 30.1.1915
- ⁵⁹ Dewey. *Agriculture in WWI*. 136, 137
- ⁶⁰ LA. SR 1002/8/4. Spalding Goodfellows CE School.
- ⁶¹ LA. SR067/8/2. Bourne Fen School Log Book
- ⁶² *Lincolnshire, Boston & Spalding Free Press* 15.09.1914
- ⁶³ The Earl of Ancaster was a member; he was also President of the Lincolnshire Bee Keeping Association.
- ⁶⁴ *Times*. 3.4.1916
- ⁶⁵ IWM. BEL 1/7 Report Of The War Refugees Committee Second Report. December 1917, p.49.
- ⁶⁶ *Hicks Diaries*. 959. 9 Sept. 1916
- ⁶⁷ *Times*. 16.2.1917 and 17.2.1917
- ⁶⁸ Dewey. *British Agriculture in the First World War*. Routledge. 1989. 113-120
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- ⁷⁶ TNA. MAF 59.1. L 29962.1916
- ⁷⁷ *Lincolnshire Standard* 2.1.1915
- ⁷⁸ *Times*, 8.05.1916; 17.10.1916, 8.01.1916
- ⁷⁹ *Times*. 7.2.1916.
- ⁸⁰ TNA. L 29369. 4.10.1916
- ⁸¹ *Boston Guardian and Lincolnshire Independent*. 8.04.1916
- ⁸² LA. 9-FANE/1/1/4/17.
- ⁸³ Mr H. P. Carter, Messrs F. W. Dennis, E. Richardson, J. Maltby, R. T. Proctor, E. Coupland, A. H. Clark, T. Mawby, A. E. Banks, W. Gilding and J. S. Diggle present.
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- ⁸⁵ *Boston Guardian & Lincolnshire Independent*. 10.01.1915
- ⁸⁶ *Lincolnshire Standard*. 20.02.1915
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- ⁸⁸ TNA. MAF 42/8
- ⁸⁹ *Times*. 16.1.1917
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- ⁹⁷ *Agricultural Statistics*, 1918. HMSO. Cmd 13
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- ⁹⁹ *SMA News*. 24.1.1917
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