

# The imperial abbey of Ellwangen and its tenants: a study of the polyptych of 1337\*

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## Abstract

This article presents an analysis of Ellwangen Abbey's polyptych of 1337, with a view to understanding better the nature of the south German rural economy in this period. It is generally accepted that in England by this time, rural society was highly commercialized, despite (or because of) the survival, at least formally, of the manorial system. In contrast, there was little direct management of demesne lands in much of Germany at this date, but the evidence suggests that rural society was, here as well, highly commercialized. Although this article is an analysis of only one source for one micro-region, its results suggest that the situation in England might have been less exceptional than is often supposed, and in the final section of the article some further suggestions are advanced regarding the implications of this point.

The later Middle Ages have been understood as a crucial phase in the agrarian and economic history of England: an 'age of transition', a period characterized by changing forms of land tenure, increasing commercialization and social stratification, and, according to one influential thesis, the origins of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship on England – like scholarship on most other regions – tends to follow a 'national' trajectory, and generally avoids comparative analysis as a means of understanding the causes of socio-economic change in the long term. This is a particular misfortune in the case of England because, as a result of its industrialization earlier than other parts of Europe, and because of apparent peculiarities in its agrarian socio-economic system in earlier periods, England tends to be seen very much as an island to itself, unique and following a different path from the rest of the world. Whether deliberately, as

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<sup>1</sup> The period between c.1300 and c.1550 was most recently characterized as an 'age of transition' by Christopher Dyer, *An age of transition? Economy and society in the later Middle Ages* (2005). On processes of commercialization, see the seminal work of Richard Britnell, *The commercialisation of English society* (sec. edn, 1996). For the arguments regarding the origins of 'agrarian' capitalism in the period following 1350, see Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe', *Past and Present* 70 (1976), pp. 30–75; Brenner, 'The agrarian roots of European capitalism', *Past and Present* 97 (1982), pp. 16–113. Both papers are also reprinted in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds), *The Brenner debate: agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe* (1985).

in the case of Robert Brenner (who did indeed adopt a comparative framework, but only in order to prove that England was unique), or unwittingly in the case of most other more recent historians (whose narratives about England normally betray no hint that similar developments might be found elsewhere), England tends to be presented as exceptional with respect to agrarian commercialization, and as a region that appeared to have some sort of drive towards capitalistic development earlier and to a greater extent than can be found elsewhere.

The only way one might genuinely establish just how exceptional England was, however, is by means of detailed comparison with other regions. The basis of any comparative work must necessarily be rigorous empirical analysis, and the purpose of this article is to provide a comparandum from a region – southern Germany – that tends not to loom large in discussions of agrarian commercialization and transitions to capitalism, while also providing some stimulus for the more theoretical debate regarding these issues and the question of how unique England's situation on the eve of the Black Death actually was.<sup>2</sup> Agrarian historians in the English-speaking world seeking comparative empirical material from the German lands are relatively well-served by scholarship on the sixteenth century and later periods.<sup>3</sup> For the Middle Ages, however, most work in English on Germany concerns political history.<sup>4</sup> Although Werner Rösener's survey of the medieval peasantry focuses on Germany and is available in English translation, with the exception of some articles by Michael Toch, there is a lack of detailed studies of single estates or landlords that could stimulate further comparative research.<sup>5</sup>

This article intends to take a first step towards filling this gap, providing an examination of the economic relations in the 1330s and 1340s between the principal landowner of one south German micro-region, the abbey of Ellwangen, and its tenants; this will be the first study in any language of Ellwangen's agrarian history in this period. The first part of this article introduces Ellwangen and its surroundings, and the primary source on which this study is based. Part II provides an analysis of the economic organization of the abbey's holdings. Part III discusses briefly some of the theoretical implications arising from the foregoing empirical analysis, with reference to scholarship on both southern Germany and England in the same period.

<sup>2</sup> A more lengthy theoretical discussion is forthcoming elsewhere: see my 'Rural economies and transitions to capitalism: Germany and England compared (c.1200–c.1800)', *J. Agrarian Change* (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Exemplary studies in English are provided by Thomas Robisheaux, *Rural society and the search for order in early modern Germany* (1989), and Govind P. Sreenivasan, *The peasants of Ottobeuren, 1487–1726: a rural society in early modern Europe* (2004). See also most recently Katherine M. Brun, *The abbot and his peasants: territorial formation in Salem from the later Middle Ages to the Thirty Years' War* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Agrargeschichte, 56, 2013). For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see William W. Hagen, *Ordinary Prussians: Brandenburg Junkers and villagers, 1500–1840* (2002), and David Warren Sabean, *Property, production, and family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (1990). For the period 1300–1600, the sections on rural society in Tom

Scott's survey are very useful: *Society and economy in Germany, 1300–1600* (2001), pp. 76–90, 153–99.

<sup>4</sup> This scholarship tends to ignore economic history altogether; however, a useful, brief survey on peasant life can be found in Benjamin Arnold, *Power and property in medieval Germany: economic and social change c.900–1300* (2004), pp. 35–74.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Rösener, *Peasants in the Middle Ages* (1992; originally published as *Bauern im Mittelalter*, 1985). Toch's work on this subject is collected in his *Peasants and Jews in medieval Germany: studies in cultural, social and economic history* (Variorum Collected Studies Series, 757, 2003). See further Ludolf Kuchenbuch, 'Links within the village: evidence from fourteenth-century Eastphalia', in Del Sweeney (ed.), *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: technology, practice, and representation* (1995), pp. 138–62, for a study of rural social structures.

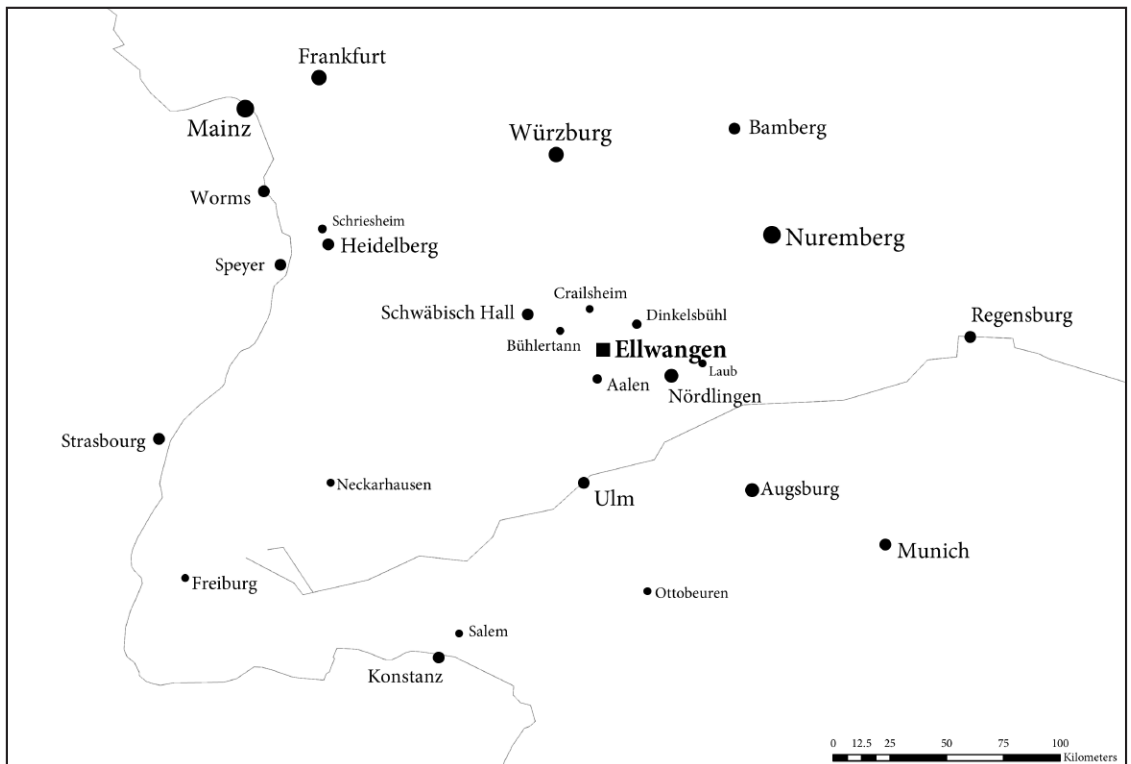


FIGURE 1. Ellwangen within southern Germany

## I

The town of Ellwangen is situated in the north-eastern corner of what is now Baden-Württemberg, roughly in between two geological areas: to the south and south-east are rolling hilly landscapes of rich clay and marl soils, well-suited to arable cultivation, while the north and west are characterized by more wooded areas with rocky soils. A number of rivers flow through the region, including the Jagst, on the banks of which the town of Ellwangen came into being. A Benedictine monastery was founded here by Hariolf, Bishop of Langres, in 764.<sup>6</sup> From 814, Ellwangen was an imperial abbey, with no regional overlord.<sup>7</sup> An Ellwangen penny is mentioned in a charter of 1147, and although it does not occur in any other document, its existence suggests that there was by this point a market at Ellwangen; by the middle of the fourteenth century there is evidence for four regular markets held in the town.<sup>8</sup> The town

<sup>6</sup> There is no original foundation charter. A narrative of the abbey's foundation is in the ninth-century biography of Hariolf by Ermenrich, a monk of Ellwangen who later became bishop of Passau, and the date of foundation is given in a charter of 1124 recording the rebuilding of the abbey after its destruction by fire in 1100. See Viktor Burr, 'Vita Hariolfi', in Viktor Burr (ed.), *Ellwangen 764–1964: Beiträge und Untersuchungen*

*zur Zwölftundertjahrfeier* (1964), pp. 14–18, where the founding of the abbey is described; *Württembergisches Urkundenbuch* (hereafter *WUB*), I, no. 281, pp. 357–8. On Ermenrich, see *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, III, col. 2157.

<sup>7</sup> *WUB* I, no. 71, pp. 79–80.

<sup>8</sup> *WUB* II, no. 325, p. 41. On the history of markets in Ellwangen, see Immo Eberl, 'Der kalte Markt und

itself makes its first documentary appearance in 1229 when Ellwangen is mentioned as a *civitas*.<sup>9</sup> From entries in the polyptych (*Urbar*) of 1337 it is clear that the abbey remained the overlord of the town.<sup>10</sup> There was another market about 20 kilometres away to the north west at Bühlertann, where the abbey had a number of holdings, and a further market within a day's journey of Ellwangen was located in Aalen, roughly 15 kilometres to the south; the abbey was a major landowner here as well. Other market towns between 20 and 40 kilometres distant from Ellwangen were Crailsheim to the north and Dinkelsbühl to the north east, and the major regional markets of Nördlingen to the southeast and Schwäbisch Hall in the north west. The abbey's peasants thus lived within a day's journey of one of the local market towns, and were but two days away from major centres of regional and inter-regional exchange.

By the 1330s, Ellwangen was a reasonably well-endowed monastery: the polyptych of 1337 records properties at over a hundred locations, mostly within a 12-kilometre radius around the abbey (although a fair number are further away), as well as rents from citizens of the town of Ellwangen itself.<sup>11</sup> The source used in this article is a record of renders of all kinds due to the abbey from its tenants. It also lists a number of tithes owing from properties that did not

*Note 8 continued*

die Ellwanger Jahrmärkte: Pferde, Vieh und Handel in der Geschichte von Kloster, Stift und Stadt Ellwangen', *Ellwanger Jahrbuch* 38 (1999–2000), pp. 11–118, pp. 18–21 for the period up to c.1400. There are no sources to inform us as to how or why these markets originally came into being, but it is plausible that the growth of other towns in the region and associated commerce, coupled with, perhaps, the abbey's own increasing demand for cash payments, were factors involved in bringing these markets into existence.

<sup>9</sup> *WUB* III, no. 769, p. 258. The town appears to have grown out of an informal settlement of lay people, attested in the early twelfth century, and was located immediately without the abbey walls; in the fourteenth century, part of the northern wall of the abbey also functioned as one of the city walls: Eberl, 'Der kalte Markt', p. 18; Eugen Weis, 'Bürger zu Ellwangen unter Abt und Propst', in Burr (ed.), *Ellwangen 764–1974*, pp. 168–78, at p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> This polyptych, the basis of the present study, is cited from Hubert Häfele (ed.), *Das älteste Urbar der Abtei des gotzhuses zu Ellwangen von 1337* (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg, Reihe A: Quellen, 52, 2008), hereafter *Ellwanger Urbar*, followed by entry number; page numbers are given only for references to the editor's introduction. The text states clearly that the abbot is the legal lord of the city, which is defined explicitly as his possession: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 206. The abbey was owed an annual communal fee of £100 from the town, along with rents from the communal herd of cattle, tithes, a monopoly on milling rights,

and the right to appoint and approve most officials of the town, from the shepherd to the court officers: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 2–5, 8–9, 11–13, 206. For a discussion of the abbey's relations with the burghers of Ellwangen, focusing mainly on the period after 1400, see Weis, 'Bürger zu Ellwangen'.

<sup>11</sup> Note, however, that in many of the places mentioned the abbey was not the only landlord; a number of lay landlords in the region have a shadowy existence in this source as the other parties in the purchase and sale of the abbey's lands. A useful overview of the history of the abbey's landholding is provided by Häfele in his edition of the polyptych: *Ellwanger Urbar*, pp. xxii–xxxvii. For the period up to c.1300, a number of charters recording land transfers to the abbey are printed in the *Württembergisches Urkundenbuch*; these provide little information about how the land and the people cultivating it were managed. Some other relevant sources for the period before the compilation of the 1337 polyptych have been published, including a twelfth-century lectionary that contains information about rents due from various properties (*WUB* VI, no. N8, pp. 435–6); a list of holdings compiled c.1136 (Karl Otto Müller, 'Ein Ellwanger Güterverzeichnis über die Schädigung des Klostersguts durch Abt Helmerich', *Württembergische Vierteljahreshefte für Landesgeschichte*, neue Folge, 39 (1929), pp. 36–58); and a necrology commenced in the later twelfth century (Karl-Heinz Mistele, 'Necrologium Elvacense', in *Ellwangen, 764–1964*, pp. 160–7); Häfele's edition provides references to additional material, both published and unpublished. The source used in the present study is the earliest polyptych, and the earliest text to provide

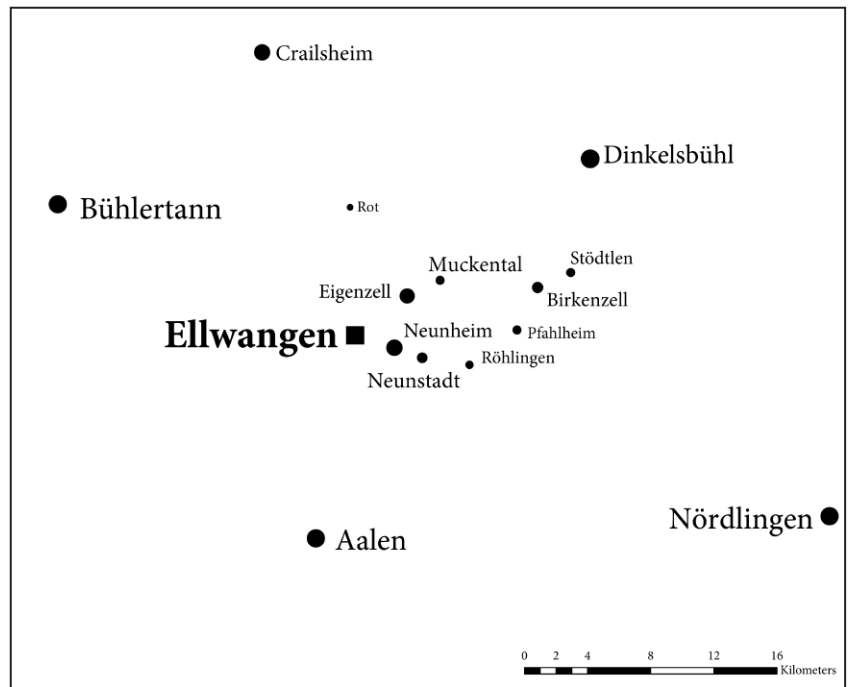


FIGURE 2. Ellwangen and its immediate surroundings

have the abbey as their landlord.<sup>12</sup> The compilation of this text began after the election of Kuno of Gundelfingen to the abbacy in 1335, and an initial draft of the document was completed in 1337, whence the (modern editorial) title derives.<sup>13</sup> Between 1337 and 1344 further entries and marginal notes were added to the manuscript. In addition, two paper inserts (which one of the scribes calls the 'zwei quatern', and the editor refers to as the *Jüngerer* and *Älterer Quatern*) of eight pages each, were added into the parchment codex; these contain modifications of rents already recorded as well as information about other holdings not contained in the main codex. Five pages of have been lost from the two *Quatern*.<sup>14</sup> The manuscript – including the *Quatern* – was revised a number of times from 1356 onwards until 1381; most of these revisions were made in the 1360s and 1370s.<sup>15</sup> The earlier scribes had already periodically compiled *summae* of

*Note 11 continued*

any level of detail regarding land management; the earlier documents almost invariably do little more than record transfers of property to and from the abbey.

<sup>12</sup> Since almost all properties of Ellwangen also owed tithes (though in some cases these, like the recognition fees, were to be paid to the abbey's advocate), these are not discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, pp. xxxix, xlix, li–lii. On Kuno, see further Karl Fik, 'Geschichte der Leitung der Abtei Ellwangen', in Burr (ed.), *Ellwangen, 764–1964*, pp. 107–52, at pp. 145–6; Sigrid Pfeiffer, 'Abt Kuno von Gundelfingen, 1332–1367: Mönch – Politiker – Manager', *Ellwanger Jahrbuch*, 39 (2001/3), pp. 109–18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, pp. li–lix.

<sup>15</sup> The sources for Ellwangen's history expand considerably from the later fourteenth century, as the individual offices of the abbey now compiled their own discrete lists of properties and pertinences (Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, H 222, Bd. 263; Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, B 389: Bü 230 and Bü 804); the abbey also produced a polyptych in 1379 (Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, H 222, Bd. 171), and a register of rents in 1381 (Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, H 222, Bd. 172), both pertaining to the properties within and in the immediate vicinity of the town. These texts have yet to be edited; there are, however, editions of a brief polyptych from 1360 and a rent register from the parish of Ellwangen

rents of all holdings from individual settlements; these too are sometimes revised by the later hands. Most of the document is in Middle High German, but there are also many entries and annotations (particularly in the *Quatern*) in Latin. For the purposes of this study, I use only the entries from earlier period (1337–44) and provide a description of the rural economy based on the abbey's relations with its tenants during these years.<sup>16</sup>

## II

The abbey's holdings fall into a number of categories (Table 1), ranging from the large estates that were probably the descendents of former manors (the *Meierhof* or *curia villicalis*), to cottage plots (*Selden*), as well as a number of urban properties in the towns of Ellwangen, Bühlertann, and Aalen.<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this article, most of the latter are excluded. The only urban holdings included in my sample are the 77 Ellwangen burghers who were also obliged to provide labour services on the abbey's lands, and citizens of Bühlertann and Aalen whose plots are explicitly described as fields or meadows.<sup>18</sup> Also excluded from my sample are communally owed rents for common lands, fees paid by persons that appear unrelated to landholding of any sort, mills, three bathhouses, a hospital, and a brickworks; when the

### Note 15 continued

from 1353: Hubert Häfele, 'Das Bucher Urbar um 1360', *Ellwanger Jahrbuch* 27 (1977–8), pp. 260–5; Häfele, 'Das Zinsregister der Pfarrei Ellwangen von 1353', *Ellwanger Jahrbuch* 29 (1981–2), pp. 142–5. These sources, like the polyptych of 1337, provide information primarily about properties relatively close to the abbey and from which the abbey drew considerable income; the abbey also produced a series of lists of properties (*Lehenbücher*) between 1367 and 1450 (Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, B 424), which include details about a large number of stray holdings further afield. These, along with numerous charters recording land transfers, are held in the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Stuttgart and the Staatsarchiv in Ludwigsburg, in some cases along with transcriptions by Häfele; brief descriptions of and references to the broader source base for the later period are provided in the introduction to his edition and notes to the text: *Ellwanger Urbar*, pp. xi–xii, xxi, *et passim*.

<sup>16</sup> I include material that has been crossed out by later hands. However, entries and information deleted by the contemporary hands are excluded. Where there appears to be contradictory information in a contemporary hand – as when material is contained both in the parchment codex and one or both of the *Quatern* – I include the data from the *Jüngerer Quatern* only. Note further that for the years concerned, while some stray charters recording transactions with other landowners do survive, there are no other sources relevant to the questions posed here.

<sup>17</sup> Where a recognisable modern equivalent of a Middle High German term occurs in the source that is in current (at least academic) use, I use the modern equivalent throughout, with modern capitalization and plural forms; thus the source's *mayerhof* is rendered as *Meierhof*, pl. *-höfe*, *selde* as *Selde*, pl. *Selden*, *hub* as *Hufe*, pl. *Hufen*. In other cases (e.g. *zins* and *stiu rekker*, *hartzheller*, *morgen*), I retain the form given in the source.

<sup>18</sup> While it is possible – even likely – that holdings listed under the rubric of a particular town, and described as a house, or a house and garden, were engaged in the agrarian economy, it is impossible to be certain about this, and it is also probable that these tenants were more involved in non-agrarian occupations. Since in a number of cases urban tenants are indeed listed as paying rents for fields or meadows, it is reasonable to assume that when no such details are given, and when urban tenants are said only to pay rents on a home (and sometimes garden) but not on fields or meadows, these tenants had relatively little involvement in the agrarian economy. It is likely, however, that they did engage in intensive market-gardening for the towns, and probably also in raising poultry; in addition, there are entries relating to urban shepherds, suggesting that the towns had access to communal pasture. On the communal financial obligations of the city, see *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1–14, 206, and 254 for the tithes; see further Weis, 'Bürger', pp. 168–71.

TABLE 1. Holdings by type

	<i>Hof</i>	<i>Hufe</i>	<i>Selde</i>	<i>Lehen</i>	<i>Zins and stiur ekker</i>	Other	Total
N	66	69	71	202	94	262	764
(%)	8.5	9.0	9.0	27.0	12.5	34.0	100.0

millers also holds a field or a meadow, however, the latter have been included.<sup>19</sup> With these properties and dues excluded, we are left with a total of 764 holdings, which form the basis of the following analysis.<sup>20</sup>

Table 2 shows that just under nine per cent (66) of the properties in this sample are categorized as *Höfe*. A *Hof* (*curia*) was a large holding, most likely descended from an earlier demesne, though not necessarily the full land area of that demesne; eight of these are *Meierhöfe*, which would have been held by the *Meier* (reeve).<sup>21</sup> Of the *Höfe*, 18 are a fraction:

<sup>19</sup> One field-watchman is recorded as owing oil, but either he had no land, or this fee is related to the office: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1480. The open fields (*Flur*) at Aalen collectively owed one *malter* of spelt: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1508. On two occasions, a rent is recorded as owing from the cows of a settlement collectively, in one case of cheese, in the other of money, called 'der kueue heller': *Ellwanger Urbar*, 653 (cheese, with a monetary value specified); 1557 (money). Apart from the herdsmen at Ellwangen itself, two further herdsmen are mentioned who appear not to have had any landholdings; one of them owed a *malter* of oats and a quarter of oil, the other owed 100 eggs; the collective fee for the Ellwangen herdsmen is 5s. and 200 eggs: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 11, 1481, 1556. Haintze Volrat's son of Muckental paid 5s. for the abbey's protection: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 322 (this entry has been deleted, but it is unclear whether by a contemporary or later hand). In what might be a similar case, Walther Schatzman is described as 'dez gotzhus aygen' ('belonging to the abbey') and paid 10 schillings 'vom lib' (for his person): *Ellwanger Urbar*, 787. Mills are recorded at *Ellwanger Urbar*, 12, 295, 332, 370, 388, 407, 658, 745, 1158, 1380, 1412, 1484, 1485-8, 1509. Apart from the first, which is an entry concerning all the mills of the town of Ellwangen, these are for individual mills, mostly in villages; in most cases, the miller also had some additional land, which is listed separately. Apart from the Ellwangen mills, two others also paid grain rents and no cash; the rest owed money alone. Three bathhouses are listed: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1157, 1476, 1489. All owed cash rents only. One hospital (*selhus*) pertaining to the parish of Stödtlen is also listed, and was surprisingly not exempt from rents, paying 3s.

and a chicken: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 691. The brickworks owed 8000 bricks every year: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 381. The currency used here is £1 = 20s. = 240 heller (*d.*); the heller was a local penny, widely circulated in southern Germany by this point.

<sup>20</sup> Where one tenant demonstrably has more than one holding, these are counted separately in my sample, though where I attempt to distinguish between smallholders and fullholders, I exclude from the former category individual smallholdings held by single tenants that together could be equal in size to a full holding (see further below on the criteria for differentiating between these categories). Where one entry lists one tenant as paying a single rent, but explicitly from two properties (e.g. X pays a certain sum from two *Lehen*), these are accounted for as a single holding for my purposes since in such cases the abbey appears to have counted the multiple holdings as one in terms of the rent due. However, where one entry explicitly lists multiple properties held by multiple tenants, these have been counted separately, even if the entry does not separately enumerate the rents for each holding. Although it is not always clear that the 17 tenants owing only cash rents from collecting resin (*hartzheller*) actually also possessed landholdings, I have included them as individual entries in my sample.

<sup>21</sup> Note that the title of *Meier* or reeve would have earlier implied a hereditary tenant who also functioned as the manager of the demesne; by this point, however, the term did not necessarily have such connotations, and simply indicated the tenant of the *Meierhof*, a term attaching to the property by virtue of its earlier associations. The *Meier* could, however, often function

TABLE 2. Holdings by size

	<i>Höfe</i> <sup>a</sup>	Full <i>Hufen</i>	Other full holdings <sup>b</sup>	<i>Selden</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>Zins</i> and <i>stiur</i> <i>ekker</i> <sup>d</sup>	Other small- holdings <sup>d</sup>	Fragmentary <i>Lehen</i>	Tenants owing <i>hartzheller</i> alone	No size information	Total
	65	66	14	69	82	42	8	17	401	764
(%)	8.5	8.5	2.0	9.0	11.0	5.5	1.0	2.0	52.5	100.0

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup> This figure includes fractions of a quarter-*Hof* or larger.

<sup>b</sup> Full holdings include all holdings larger than 10 *morgen* apart from those explicitly called *Höfe* and *Hufen*.

<sup>c</sup> This excludes *Selden* that are known to be part of an accumulation of holdings of a single individual.

<sup>d</sup> This includes only individual holdings of less than 10 *morgen*, and excludes such individual holdings that are known to be held by tenants who also held other lands, with their properties cumulatively comprising more than 10 *morgen*.

ten are half, three each a quarter and a third, one is three eighths, and the last is an eighth of a *Hof*. A total of 48 are full *Höfe*. At the next level are those holdings called *Hufe*: full holdings, most likely descended from the holdings (*mansi*) of dependent peasants of former demesnes; there are as many *Hufen* as there are *Höfe* (66), with a further two being half a *Hufe* each, and one described as a small *Hufe*.<sup>22</sup> If all but the fragments of *Hufen* and the *Hof*-fragment less than a quarter in size are counted as full holdings, these comprise 131 holdings, 17 per cent of the whole; to this we may add a further 14 holdings that are neither *Hufe* nor *Hof*, but of which the size is specified and, at 10 *morgen* or more, may be counted as full holdings.<sup>23</sup> Thus 145, or 19 per cent, of the 764 properties are full holdings.<sup>24</sup>

*Note 21 continued*

as rent-collector on behalf of the landlord, and as we shall see below, it appears that the *Meier* at Neunheim retained some of his earlier role. For a thorough study of the end of the manorial system and the descent of the *Meierhöfe* from demesne lands in southern Germany (mostly further to the south than the region discussed in the present article), see Werner Rösener, *Grundherrschaft im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung geistlicher Grundherrschaften im südwestdeutschen Raum vom 9. bis 14. Jahrhundert* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 102, 1991), pp. 373–566.

<sup>22</sup> Fragments of *Höfe* and *Hufen*: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 329–31 (one *Hof* divided into one half-*Hof* and two quarters); 373–4 (a *Hof* divided into two halves); 411 (a half-*Hof*); 648–9 (two half *Hufen*, together paying £1 of rent); 1007 (a quarter-*Hof*); 1369 (two half-*Höfe*); 1370–2 (one *Hof* split into a half-*Hof*, and two fragments of an eighth and three eighths); 1375–8 (one *Hof* divided into one half-*Hof* and three sixths); 1385–6 (two half-*Höfe*). In addition, at *Ellwanger Urbar*, 144, 158, 162, 202–3,

we have records of holdings in the town of Ellwangen, each of which was half a *hofstat*, and all of which owed labour services only (the labour services are discussed below).

<sup>23</sup> German measures are notoriously unstandard, far more so than their English equivalents for this period. The *morgen* was a standard measure of both agricultural land and meadow, though what it meant could differ depending on what sort of land was being measured; there were also vast differences depending on region. One *morgen* in this region in this period would have been somewhere between 0.75 and 0.85 acres, or roughly a third of a hectare. Ten *morgen* would have been between 7.5 and 8.5 acres.

<sup>24</sup> By smallholding I mean land that would have been too little to support the subsistence of a family; by full holding I do not mean a large plot, but simply one that would have been enough to support a family (even if at a bare minimum level of existence and not in years with bad harvests). I know of no detailed study of how large a plot had to be for subsistence in this region in the fourteenth century; the source does not allow us



At the other end of the spectrum, we have a number of holdings that can be clearly categorized as smallholdings. There are 71 holdings called *Selde*, a term that implies a cottage plot and can safely be understood as a smallholding. Two of these can be excluded from this category since they were held by persons also occupying other properties, leaving 69 (9 per cent). In addition, 94 holdings (12 per cent) are called either *zins akker* or *stuur akker* (pl. *ekker*; literally 'rent-paying fields', though sometimes some meadowland is also included under these headings); these rendered only chickens, and the size of all of them is specified. If we exclude those that are 10 *morgen* and above, and exclude also multiple individual holdings held by one tenant that together make up more than 10 *morgen*, we are left with 82 (11 per cent) that are smallholdings. A large number of the abbey's holdings are difficult to categorize by size or type: 202 are described only as *Lehen* or *feudum*, and of a number of others we are told only that X owes a certain sum of money or a natural rent from field (*Acker*), meadow (*Wiese* or *pratun*), or woodland (*holtz*). Some indication of size is often given in the latter cases, but this is not true of all of them; the *Lehen* almost never receive any further description. Seven of the *Lehen*, however, are fragments – half, thirds, or quarters – of *Lehen*, and can probably be counted as smallholdings; this also probably applies to the one property explicitly called a small *Lehen*.<sup>25</sup> Of the holdings called *Acker* or *Wiese* for which an indication of size is given, once the larger plots and conglomerations of properties are excluded, we are left with 38 holdings of field or meadow that are less than 10 *morgen* altogether. For the remainder – about half the listed properties – we have no indication whatsoever regarding size. It is nevertheless perhaps suggestive that no *Selde* paid more than 25s. 6d. in rent and only one paid that much (most owe 10s. or less), and the rents from the *Lehen* range from 3s. to £3 and 70 of them paid £1 or more; in contrast, both the full *Höfe* and the *Hufen* rarely gave less than £1.<sup>26</sup>

*Note 24 continued*

to make accurate estimates of productivity. For the sixteenth century (by which time there might have been some increase in productivity, but it is unlikely to have been really significant), for a neighbouring region, Sreenivasan suggests that 6.5 acres was the minimum amount of land required for subsistence: *Ottobeuren*, p. 148. In contrast, Dyer states that while 15 acres would have been sufficient for subsistence, rents, and a small surplus, 7.5 acres would have been too little to feed a family in medieval England: *Making a living in the Middle Ages: the people of Britain, 850–1520* (2002), p. 163. At 7.5–8.5 acres, 10 *morgen* seems a reasonable, conservative cut-off point for smallholdings. In any case, only eight holdings whose size is specified are larger than 10 *morgen*, and never more than 16 *morgen*, so the relative numbers of full holdings and smallholdings would change by only 2% even if we were to follow Dyer's estimates rather than Sreenivasan's. No sizes are available for *Höfe* and *Hufen*, but it is reasonable to assume that a full *Hufe* was a full holding; other studies suggest that demesne lands in southern Germany, when leased, were normally let out in parcels of about 40

acres, so a quarter *Hof*, if exactly 10 acres, would still have been over 10 *morgen*. These figures are all admittedly speculative. On the size of leased demesne lands, see Philippe Dollinger, *Der bayerische Bauernstand vom 9. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, trans. Ursula Irsigler (1982), pp. 127–30; Friedrich-Wilhelm Henning, *Deutsche Agrargeschichte des Mittelalters, 9. bis 15. Jahrhundert* (1994), p. 174; Rösener, *Grundherrschaft*, 469–71, 521–30.

<sup>25</sup> Fragmentary *Lehen*: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1349–51 (a *Lehen* divided into one half-*Lehen* and two quarters; the rents for these holdings added up comes to £1 6s., suggesting at least a *Hufe*-sized property originally); 1388–90 (a *Lehen* divided into three, cumulatively paying a rent of £1 13s.); 1433 (a *Lehen* explicitly called small, paying 31d. of rent only).

<sup>26</sup> The *Selde* that paid over £1 of rent occurs at *Ellwanger Urbar*, 699, and was located at Röhlingen; it was also one of only two *Selden* owing renders of grain (a number of *Lehen* with rather low money rents also owed grain). Only six of the 48 full *Höfe*, four of the fragmentary *Höfe* a quarter or more in size, and four of the 67 full *Hufen* did not pay at least £1 in rent (two of the *Höfe* paying less than £1 owed no cash

Although it would be unwise to make judgements regarding holding size solely on the basis for rents, it nevertheless appears fair to state that while the term *Lehen* could be applied to holdings of any size, ranging from *Selde* to *Hof*, most are unlikely to have been large holdings of any kind, and many were probably too small to support a family.<sup>27</sup>

Adding all these figures (the *Selden*, the *stiur* and *zins ekker* less than 10 *morgen*, the eighth-*Hof* and the three fragmentary or small *Hufen*, and all other holdings of less than 10 *morgen*) leaves us with a sum of 201 holdings that were less than 10 *morgen* and were not held by persons also holding other land giving them a total of more than 10 *morgen*. To this we may add the 17 individuals who paid only *hartzheller* or *hallenses resinales*, cash rents from collecting resin in the woods.<sup>28</sup> In most cases, it is not clear that these persons held any land at all, and most likely simply had the rights to exploit the forest resources of the area. (Surprisingly, none of them was expected to provide any pigs or pork; this suggests that whatever land they possessed would only have provided space for very little livestock of any kind, whether pigs, cattle, or poultry.) They are said to pay their rents from *holtze* or *wicmarch* (woodlands); if we assume that they had no other significant landholdings (none are recorded in the source), they can also be counted among those who had insufficient land to provide directly for the subsistence of their families. (They must, however, have had at least a small cottage to live in, and possibly also a small garden plot and perhaps access to commons, though this is pure speculation.) Thus a very significant proportion of the abbey's tenants – 218, or 29 per cent – were certainly smallholders (or possibly, in the case of those owing *hartzheller* alone, absolutely landless), who would have been dependent on some source of income to sustain themselves, beyond what they could produce on their own lands. As we have seen, of the remaining holdings for which no size indication is given, it seems most likely that most were smallholdings.

While the majority of Ellwangen's tenants thus appear to have been smallholders, there is also some evidence of accumulation: I count 20 instances of a single tenant (or, in one case, a tenant and his brother) possessing two or more *Lehen* that are assessed as one holding (and counted thus in my sample); or a *Hufe* or *Hof* as well as *Lehen* or fields or a *Selde*; or multiple holdings of *Acker*; in all these cases either the cumulative land area is recorded as 10 *morgen*

*Note 26 continued*

whatsoever, but one of them owed a half share of the crop). The three holdings owing as much as £3 10s. or more were *Höfe*, and one of them was the *Meierhof* at Aalen: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 595, 1493, 1496 (*Meierhof*). One *Hufe* and five *Lehen* had rents as high as £3: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 298–300 (*Lehen*), 371 (a holding consolidated out of three *Lehen*), 402 (*Hufe*). In addition, use rights to one plot of woodland (*holtz*) at Laub (this is one of the abbey's holdings furthest away from Ellwangen, located to the north east of Nördlingen) were also worth £3: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 654. See the Appendix for a discussion of the value of the monetary sums paid in rents.

<sup>27</sup> Even if we count the 70 *Lehen* owing £1 or more as full holdings on the basis of their rents, this would take

the total number of full holdings only up to 30%. And if we count properties paying £1 or more as full holdings, we must count the others as smallholdings, which leads to the inevitable conclusion that roughly two thirds of the abbey's tenants were smallholders. Of course, this is speculation, however well-founded, since the level of the rent is not necessarily a good basis for judging the size of a holding. Nevertheless, there seems to be no doubt that smallholdings significantly outnumber the full holdings, and most likely comprised more, possibly significantly more, than half of all the holdings.

<sup>28</sup> What was done with this resin is unclear from the source; it is apparent, though, that it must have been sold in order for the collectors to be able to pay cash rents.

or more, or the rent paid was £1 or more.<sup>29</sup> This is a statistically insignificant number, given the size of the sample; but from the perspective of the social history of the region it is not inconsequential that we can find the beginnings of some amount of accumulation among the upper strata of the peasants. Furthermore, it is likely that other tenants holding large *Lehen* or a large acreage of fields also represent such accumulation that had occurred at an earlier date: the result of consolidating as one holding fragments of *Höfe* or *Hufen*, or cottage plots, or individual fields and meadows. (The number of *Hufen* and *Höfe* is relatively small, and an individual *Hof* or *Hufe* is unlikely to have been built up by accumulation.) The evidence thus suggests that processes of both fragmentation and accumulation had led to a fairly high level of social and economic differentiation among the local population.

Table 3 shows that 465 of the properties (61 per cent) paid rents in cash (many also, as we shall see, owed other renders as well); a further 17 (2 per cent) owed only *hartzheller*.<sup>30</sup> Apart from rents, 83 holdings (11 per cent) also paid a *wisat* (a recognition fee) in cash; all but three of these also owed a money rent.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to money, the abbey expected

<sup>29</sup> Evidence of accumulation (I do not here include instances of tenants with multiple holdings of less than 10 *morgen* altogether, or paying less than £1 of rent): *Ellwanger Urbar*, 79, 571, 631 ('diu Suterin' holds a house and fields in Ellwangen, and two plots of 3 *morgen* each of *zins ekker*); 234 and 786 ('der Gerhuser' holds a *Hof* and a single *morgen* of fields elsewhere); 304 and 304a (Sitze Egelolf holds two *Lehen*, owing 10s. for each); 319 (Dentzelin holds what were 'wilunt triu kleiniu lehen, diu sint nu geaht uf ain lehen': 'three small *Lehen* now counted as one'; he pays 30s. rent); 371 (the brickmaker holds a *Lehen* said to have earlier been three, paying £3 of rent); 430–2 (Haintze Smit holds three *Lehen*, cumulatively paying over £1 of rent; one of these holdings is itself comprised of three *Lehen*); 435 ('des Spilmans sun' holds two *Lehen* counted together, paying £1 of rent); 539, 548, 555 (Butzan holds a *Hufe* and a *Lehen* together paying £1 10s. rent; he also holds 5.5 *morgen* of fields); 573, 621 (Utze der Wegener and his brother hold two plots of *zins ekker* totalling 15 *morgen*); 586, 604, 610, 626 (Sitze Zimmermann holds a *Hufe*, a *Lehen*, a field of 1.5 *morgen*, and *zins ekker* of 4 *morgen* and a small meadow); 627 (a *Hof* holding a *zins akker*; the *Hof* is not elsewhere recorded); 141 and 638, 173 and 635, 179 and 644a (Wernher Maister, Haintze von Kotzpuhel, and Walther Russe each have both a *hofstat* in the town of Ellwangen and *zins ekker*); 537, 547, 572 (Setzelin der Gesser holds a *Hufe* and a *Lehen*, together paying £1 10s. rent as well as grain and commuted labour services; he also has 12 *morgen* of *zins ekker*); 182, 210, 641 (Cuntze Smit holds a *hofstat*, a field, and *zins ekker*); 1133 and 1275 (Cunrat der Genanne holds a *Hufe* and 3 *morgen* of *stiur ekker*); 1134 and 1281 (Sitze Hertuelder holds a *Hufe* and 11 *morgen* of *stiur ekker*); 1149 and 1277 (Hainrich

Wolfganch holds a *Lehen* owing 12s. and a grain render, and 8 *morgen* of *stiur ekker*); 1280, 1400, 1407 (Lutze Herinch holds 4 *morgen* of *stiur ekker* as well as a *Lehen* paying £1 of rent and a *Selde*; he may the same as the Herinch recorded at 1392, who holds a *Hof* with his son).

<sup>30</sup> A similar proportion of tithe-paying properties that owe no rents (recorded in the source but not included in my sample) paid their tithes in cash: of a total of 103 tithes, 67 (65 per cent) were in cash. Tithes are recorded as greater (grain) and lesser (vegetables and animals) tithes, with hay tithes a category by themselves; greater and lesser tithes are almost invariably to be paid in kind, whereas hay tithes are almost all recorded as commuted; all but two of the cash tithes are expressly recorded as commuted hay tithes. See *Ellwanger Urbar*, 268: the tenant 'git 3 schillinge heller fuer den huwe zehenden' ('gives 3s. for the hay tithe'); the following entries list only the cash fee, but all come under a heading 'Von den heuwe zehenden, die zu Ellwangen gehoerent' ('regarding the hay tithes that pertain to Ellwangen'). The commutation of the tithes is made more explicit at *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1047: 'Vnd wanne die kircherre vormals lange daz heuwe von den lueten nit nament noch samentent, do sluog man daz heuwe an heller vnd namen heller fuer daz heuwe. Vnd so wil ich beschriben die heller, die man fuer daz heuwe git' ('and because the possessors of the church from a long time ago neither took nor collected the hay from the people, the hay was commuted to pennies and pennies were taken instead of hay. And thus I will list the pennies that people give for the hay').

<sup>31</sup> On the *wisat* or *Weisat* and its origins, see Josef Hopfenitz, 'Die Weisatgabe – ein grundherrschaftliches

TABLE 3. Holdings by rent type<sup>a</sup>

	Cash rents	<i>Hartzheller</i> alone	Labour services <sup>b</sup>	Grain renders <sup>bc</sup>	Share of the crop <sup>b</sup>	<i>Zins</i> and <i>stiur ekker</i> owing only chickens	<i>Selden</i> paying no cash rents	Natural rents alone <sup>d</sup>	Total
N	465	17	78	6	37	94	33	22	752
(%)	61.0	2.0	10.0	1.0	5.0	13.0	4.0	3.0	99.0

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup> These figures add up to just under 99 per cent of the total of 764 holdings, since the four holdings owing no rents at all and the eight holdings for which no information is available are not included.

<sup>b</sup> These refer to holdings that do not also owe cash rents.

<sup>c</sup> These holdings owe a specified amount of grain, rather than a share of the total harvest.

<sup>d</sup> This figure refers to holdings owing only natural rents not including chickens; it also does not include the *Selden* of the previous column.

labour services from just 132 (17 per cent) of its tenants. Of these, 12 could either perform labour or commute this service for a cash rent; all of these 12 also owed a cash rent anyway. If we exclude all those holdings with money obligations, we are left with only 78 holdings owing labour services and not also paying cash in some form. That is to say: 59 per cent of those properties that were obliged to provide labour services neither paid cash rents nor had the option of commuting their labour for money; this amounts to just 10 per cent of the total sample. All but one of these were homesteads (*hofstete*; sg. *hofstat*) in the town of Ellwangen, which suggests that close proximity to the abbey has something to do with the importance of labour services. These tenants were supposed to provide *sniter* (reapers for the corn harvest) and *recher* (people to rake mowed hay). None of the labour to be provided for the grain harvest – the *sniter* – was performed on demesne land at Ellwangen: these tenants are explicitly said to owe their labour services on the lands of the *Meier* of Neunheim, about two kilometres to the east, to assist with the reaping of rye and oats.<sup>32</sup> Nothing is said about where the *recher* go, though some entries mention a number of meadows around Ellwangen that belong to the abbey and appear not to have been cultivated by anyone else, and it is

*Note 31 continued*

Reichnis (Nach oberdeutschen Quellen), *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 40 (1977), pp. 23–38. Hopfenitz argues that this was originally always paid in kind (and mainly by full holdings), but by the fourteenth century was (in southern Germany) commonly commuted.

<sup>32</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, 580: 'Vnd der apt sol dem selben mayer lihen die sniter der hofstet ze Elwangen ... vnd sol im da mit helfen sniden in dem rogggen snit vnd in dem haber snit'. The fact that labour services are owed at this *Meierhof* is not necessarily an indication that the abbey directly managed any lands here, and the fact that, as the same entry tells us, the *Meier* owed half of

the crop of this property as well as a substantial cash rent of £2 suggests in fact that it did not. However, we should note that the abbot was supposed to provide not just labour, but also half the seed corn for this property; the *Meier* himself had the rights to collect the lesser tithes in the whole of the hamlet of Neunheim; and the *Meier* also claimed further rents from *Lehen* pertaining to this holding. It is apparent from this entry, therefore, both that the *Meier* had himself taken on some of the characteristics of a landlord, and that while the abbey may not have managed the lands there directly, it did retain some direct interest in terms of providing labour and seed corn.

possible that the hay was made there.<sup>33</sup> It is equally possible that all of these labour services were due at the *Meierhof* in Neunheim: if so, this is a further indication that this property descended from former demesne land, most likely one of the more important and older manors of the abbey.<sup>34</sup> Almost every other instance of an obligation for labour service is for mowing hay (*mader*). Thus all those tenants who performed labour services but paid no cash rents did at least part, probably all, of their labour not on directly farmed demesne land, but on a *Meierhof* (albeit one that owed a half-share of its crop to the abbey); almost all the others performed labour service related not to cultivating grain, but to the pastoral economy. Remarkable for its absence is any mention of labour services not related to the harvest, except for transport services owed only by the *Meier*.<sup>35</sup>

The obligations of the tenants are in all cases recorded as their owing a person – a *sniter* or *mader* or *recher* – rather than any specific number of days of service. But since all of the labour services relate to the harvest, whether of grain or hay, it seems likely that this information can be taken at face value: tenants had to provide one or more labourers to perform specific services for the duration of the harvest. In most cases, each holding owed only one labourer; the burghers of Ellwangen, however, who had no other obligations whatsoever beyond labour services (and, of course, tithes), all owed at least two labourers and in many cases more: each homestead (*hofstat*) had to provide one *recher* and two *sniter*, and tenants with more than one *hofstat* provided more labourers accordingly. A family, depending on the age and number of its children, would possibly have been able to provide three persons for the harvest without needing to hire wage labourers, but those tenants who had to send more people than this would almost certainly have had to find others to perform these labour services, and it seems plausible to suggest that even many of the single homesteads would have had to pay for at least some non-family labour to fulfil their obligations.

The only lands that would appear to have been under the abbey's direct control are a few meadows; labour services owed relate overwhelmingly to mowing or raking hay, and the labour that is related to grain crops was performed exclusively at the *Meierhof* in Neunheim. It is obvious therefore that labour services were not a major component of the relationship between landowner and tenant for most people on Ellwangen lands. Furthermore, insofar as labour services did exist on the abbey's lands, they were related more to the pastoral economy than to grain production; the abbey's grain consumption was clearly not predicated on forced labour on its own lands.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1027–8, 1031–6, for 'prata ad castrum pertinentes' (this description is placed in a later hand at the head of these entries).

<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, there appears to be no earlier charter evidence regarding Neunheim, which in itself might suggest that it belonged, if not to the abbey's original endowment, then to a very early stage in its history, making it more likely originally to have been a directly managed demesne.

<sup>35</sup> These are recorded for four *Meierhöfe*, at Birkenzell, Pfahlheim, Neunstadt, and Neunheim: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 445, 505, 530, 580. In no case did the *Meier*

owe any other labour, but the transport service is not an insignificant one: these *Meier* had to travel to Schriesheim – over 100 kilometres to the north west, in the vicinity of Heidelberg – and bring back half or one wagon-load of wine.

<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that 48 holdings paid cash dues that are explicitly recorded as commuted labour services: *madheller*, *madschillinch*, or *snitheller* (all of these also owed other money rents); mostly, these dues were for commuted mowing (*madheller* or *madschillinch*, which derives from *mader*, mower, and *schillinch* or *heller*), rather than reaping (*snitheller*, which derives

TABLE 4. Number of holdings owing each type of rent or service

	Money rents <sup>a</sup>	<i>Hartzheller</i>	Labour services	Commutated labour services	Grain renders	Share of the crop	Chickens	Other rents in kind	Total
N	465	18	132	48	142	40	523	117	1485

Note:

<sup>a</sup>This figure excludes those owing *hartzheller* alone.

The abbey was not, however, dependent on the market, or not primarily so at any rate. Close to a quarter of its holdings owed rents in grain. This is recorded either as a specified amount (142, or 19 per cent of the holdings), or as a share, normally a fifth but occasionally more (40; 5 per cent).<sup>37</sup> However, almost all holdings owing grain renders (136) also owed rents in money, though almost all of the sharecroppers (37) did not (one of these did, however, have to pay a cash recognition fee, the *wisat*); thus a total of 43 holdings that owed grain did not also pay cash rents. The most common natural render recorded is of poultry: 523, or 68 per cent of the abbey's tenants owed one or more chickens.<sup>38</sup> Most of these holdings, however, also had other forms of rent due, and it is not clear in most cases whether these chickens are to be counted as a rent or as a recognition gift (*wisat*) (they are occasionally explicitly called the latter, though in the case of the *zins* and *stiur ekker*, the chickens are clearly the rent, the *zins* or *stiur*). In

Note 36 continued

from *sniten*, to cut, and *heller*). It seems likely that at least some of the money rents of other holdings were also commuted labour services, but are not described thus because the commutation lay in the distant past; the fact that in 48 instances dues are recorded as commuted labour services, most of which are for mowing and all of which have to do with harvesting rather than ploughing, suggests that these commutations were relatively recent, and that labour services not related to the harvest had been commuted so much earlier that there was by this point not even any memory of the provenance of the money rents and grain renders as commuted labour services.

<sup>37</sup> All but three of the holdings with a specified grain rent fall into the categories of *Hufe*, *Hof*, or *Lehen*; those holdings that are simply called *Acker* never owe specified grain rent, and when they owe grain, it is a share of the crop. Fourteen of the *Lehen* that render grain to the abbey are, if their money rents are any indication, quite small, and might be smallholdings; and as we have seen, two *Selden* also give grain. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that the majority of those owing specified grain renders were full holdings. Most holdings giving a share of the harvest are said to owe the *lantgarbe*, which means simply a share, and does not indicate how

great a share; it would normally not have been more than a third. Where the share is specified among these holdings, it is almost invariably a fifth. Only one *lantgarbenakker* is specified as owing a third. In addition to these, however, a few holdings that are not said to owe the *lantgarbe* are recorded as owing a share; two of these owe as much as half their produce, and both are *Höfe*, at Neunheim and at Bühlertann: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 239, 580 (both Neunheim), 1160 (Bühlertann). Indeed, one is the *Meierhof* at Neunheim, where the labour services of the citizens of Ellwangen were to be performed: the abbey thus indirectly satisfied at least some of its consumption needs by way of obligatory labour services, though it is still important to recall that these were only for the harvest; the *Meier* would have had to find other ways of satisfying his labour needs for the rest of the year.

<sup>38</sup> Given that most holdings owed two chickens, and many three or more, the abbey would have received over 1000 chickens a year. For English comparisons, see Philip Slavin, 'Chicken husbandry in late-medieval eastern England, c.1250-1400', *Anthropozoologica*, 44 (2009), pp. 35-56; and D. J. Stone, 'The consumption and supply of birds in late medieval England', in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (eds), *Food in medieval England: diet and nutrition* (2006), pp. 148-61.

addition, 117 holdings (15 per cent) owed rents in kind other than, or as well as, grain and chickens; most also paid money rents; 22 did not.<sup>39</sup> To these 65 holdings owing only rents in kind (grain or otherwise), we may add the 94 *stiur ekker* and *zins ekker* giving only chickens, as well as 33 of the *Selden* that also owed only chickens; we arrive at a total of 192 holdings (25 per cent) that paid no cash rents and performed no labour services. The majority of these – 82 *zins* and *stiur ekker*, the *Selden*, 36 of the sharecroppers, and four other holdings that paid rents in kind alone – were smallholdings. Thus 155, or 81 per cent, of the holdings that owed rents and not labour services, and paid these rents in kind only without any money rents owing, were occupied by smallholders. This leads to the conclusion that not only did the majority of the abbey's tenants owe cash rents of some sort, but also that those who owed only rents in kind were overwhelmingly smallholders.<sup>40</sup>

From the foregoing description of the abbey's holdings and the dues they owed, it is clear that the Ellwangen economy was highly monetized: almost two thirds of the abbey's tenants needed to realize a cash income in order to pay cash rents, otherwise they would have been unable to hold on to their land. The majority of Ellwangen's tenants were thus dependent on the market. Furthermore, the bulk of those not paying money rents were smallholders; they may not have been dependent on the market in order to pay rents and thus retain access to their lands, but they had insufficient land to feed their households, and would therefore have to have been engaged in some sort of activity that most likely had a market element in it: cultivating cash crops for the market, wage labour, or rural industry.<sup>41</sup> It is also striking that not just labour services, but even cash fees that are explicitly said to be commuted labour services, were a negligible part of the relationship between the abbey and its tenants.

Since there is no evidence for the abbey holding land in demesne and paying wage labourers to cultivate this land, the only conclusion is that by this point – and probably considerably earlier – Ellwangen had given up direct management of its agricultural land (whether for its own consumption or for the market) preferring instead to collect rents: this was a *Zinsherrschaft* or *Rentengrundherrschaft* (rent-based lordship), rather than the classical *Grundherrschaft* (landlordship). It is equally clear, however, that the abbey had not in any significant measure replaced labour services with its own engagement in the market, profiting from the sale of rents

<sup>39</sup> The natural renders excluding chickens are mainly eggs, oil, cheese, and (more infrequently) wax. Animals or meat are almost never specified as renders, though they were doubtless also included in the tithes; flax or textiles of any sort are also rare. One *Lehen* owed a rent of 6s., but earlier used to give 300 clay pots and no money: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 605: 'daz selbe lehen galt wilunt triu hundert schuesschelun und kainen heller. So gilt ez nu heller und nit schuesschelun'. One tenant with a *Lehen* at Aalen owed a pound of pepper every year, clearly an indication of commercialization: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 1554. The only other pepper rent was also paid by a town-dweller, though in this case by someone who appears to have had no fields or meadows: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 54. Note that a monetary value is often given for the cheese and the few renders

of pigs, a further indication of the monetization of society; indeed, in some cases it is not clear whether it is actually pigs or meat rendered, or a cash fee instead.

<sup>40</sup> The 78 holdings owing labour services alone, however, cannot be placed in this category; 77 were urban properties with no indication of size recorded, and one, a field of a single *morgen* owing one *mader*, belonged to a member of the lesser nobility who held the office of cellarar at the abbey: see *Ellwanger Urbar*, 523, and the editor's note on that entry.

<sup>41</sup> It is likely that wages were paid in kind, and wage rates were probably based on custom, ties of kinship, or patronage, rather than on some kind of 'free' market rate. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the source, nothing further can be said about the incidence of wage labour or a labour market.

in kind: less than a quarter of its tenants owed grain rents, and while the abbey may well have placed some of this grain on the market, the fact that more tenants did not owe grain suggests that the abbey was not looking to become a large-scale player on the market itself, and was not profiting directly, in any significant manner, from the sale of its tenants' grain. This is equally true of other rents in kind, which are too few to suggest that they were intended for the market (though there is of course a possibility that some renders ended up being sold).<sup>42</sup>

### III

The course of medieval German agrarian history in many respects appears different from what is found in England. In the latter region, direct management of demesne lands actually became more common over the course of the thirteenth century, so that in the period of relevance to this article, landlords were themselves actively engaged in farming, and given the size of their estates, this was, at least in the case of major ecclesiastical landlords (comparable to Ellwangen), in large part for the market as well their own consumption.<sup>43</sup> In Germany, the process of the dissolution of the manorial system (*Auflösung des Villikationssystems*) – that is, the abandonment of direct management of demesne lands, and with this the commutation of most labour services for rents in kind or cash – was largely complete by the beginning of the fourteenth century, though many landlords did retain some land in demesne, normally estates close to home.<sup>44</sup>

The situation at Ellwangen was by no means unusual: labour services were rare, cash payments were common, and as we saw, even the perquisites of lordship – the recognition fee, dues pertaining to personal bondage – were often paid in cash. Although Rösener found, on

<sup>42</sup> This conclusion is supported by the fact that we are told on occasion that other renders were sold; but these are hay tithes only: *Ellwanger Urbar*, 265, 950. Since the sale of hay and income therefrom is recorded, it is probable that other renders, of which no sales are mentioned, were not actually intended for the market.

<sup>43</sup> See the syntheses provided by Britnell, *Commercialisation of English society*, pp. 140–7; and Dyer, *Making a living*, pp. 119–45; the fundamental study of English manorial agriculture is Bruce M. S. Campbell, *English Seigniorial Agriculture, 1250–1450* (2000). To be sure, in England as well there were manors that were essentially rent-collecting centres rather than directly managed demesnes. Furthermore, obligatory labour services were by now largely commuted, with perhaps less than 10 per cent of the work on demesnes being carried out by the servile fullholding peasant as his labour service due: Bruce M. S. Campbell, 'The agrarian problem in the early fourteenth century', *Past and Present* 188 (2005), pp. 36–40. Nevertheless, the characterization of diverging paths of German and English agrarian systems, with a far higher incidence of direct

management in England than in Germany, remains valid at a broad level.

<sup>44</sup> On this process (and the rest of this paragraph), see Dollinger, *Bauernstand*, pp. 121–37; Rösener, *Grundherrschaft*, pp. 373–566; see also Ludolf Kuchenbuch, 'Potestas und Utilitas: Ein Versuch über Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung zur Grundherrschaft im 9.–13. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 265 (1997), pp. 117–46; and Kuchenbuch, 'Abschied von der Grundherrschaft'. There is no direct evidence for the bipartite manor at Ellwangen before the fourteenth century, though it seems likely that in some instances – at Neunheim, for example – the demesne had been directly managed in an earlier period. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that the classical bipartite manor was, even in the early middle ages, probably less widespread in many parts of Germany than in the Carolingian heartlands further west: see the essays collected in Werner Rösener (ed.), *Strukturen der Grundherrschaft im frühen Mittelalter* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 92, 1989); it is possible that many of Ellwangen's lands had never really conformed to the model of the bipartite manor.



the estates he examined in southern Germany, that leases were more commonly for a share of the crop, he also states that money payments were not unusual; in this respect Ellwangen differs from Rösener's sample in that shares are actually far less frequent than cash rents. While initially the Ellwangen estates might have been leased out whole, we have seen here, as Rösener did elsewhere, that even the *Höfe* and *Hufen* are sometimes held in fragments; and many of the uncategorized smaller holdings that appear to predominate might well have descended from full holdings that were broken up over time because of population pressure, as Rösener suggests.<sup>45</sup> There is also, as we have seen, some evidence of accumulation: particularly if it is the case, as I speculated above, that the larger *Lehen* reached their size as a result of smaller holdings and fragments being accumulated within one family. Thus even if population growth was one of the principal causes of fragmentation and therefore growing social stratification, here – as in England – there was already some level of accumulation among the upper reaches of the peasantry, which also contributed to economic and social differentiation.

Nevertheless, we certainly do not have here a 'free' land market with anything like 'free' tenant farmers of the sort that emerged in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, once demesne lands started being leased on a large scale there. Although the Ellwangen polyptych tells us nothing about sales of land among the tenants, we need not assume on that basis that there was no land market: the silence most likely has more to do with the nature of the evidence than the facts on the ground. It is clear from this source, however, that many 'feudal' restrictions did remain on the tenants, and the demands the abbey made on those who chose to give up their tenancies were high. Fees of a third of all crops and movable goods are ubiquitous for departing tenants, and higher rates also occur.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the recognition gifts and fees, while perhaps more of symbolic than practical significance for the tenants, nevertheless remain as evidence of subject status.<sup>47</sup> If there was a land market, it was therefore constrained in many ways by the landlord's right to levy fines and fees on tenants who chose to give up their holdings. What we find here, therefore, is a feudal system without a manorial system, and with a great deal of market dependence and commercialization.

While the differing trajectories of the manorial system in England and Germany are well known, what is less commonly acknowledged is that in terms of rural commercialization and concomitant processes of social and economic differentiation, the two regions were not so dissimilar.<sup>48</sup> As we have seen, at Ellwangen, the majority of tenants most probably

<sup>45</sup> Rösener, *Grundherrschaft*, pp. 469–71, 521–30.

<sup>46</sup> These fees are mentioned not in entries for individual holdings, but in separate entries that specify the fees for all the holdings at a particular location.

<sup>47</sup> On the changing face of seigneurial dominance in Germany, see the important theoretical reflections in Julien Demade, 'Ponction féodale et société rurale en Allemagne du sud (XIe–XVe siècles): Essai sur la fonction des transactions monétaires dans les économies non capitalistes' (unpublished PhD thesis, Université Marc Bloch [Strasbourg II], 2004), here pp. 334–40. Note that subject status (*Untertänigkeit*) and personal bondage (*Leibeigenschaft*) were not, in Germany,

necessarily the same thing, and it was possible for tenants to be subject to a landlord (*Grundherr*) without necessarily being tied to the latter through a form of personal bondage; the subject status could arise from the landholding rather than personal status. We have seen (n. 19 above) only limited evidence for fees arising from personal bondage, though in itself this fact says little about how widespread this phenomenon might have been on the abbey's estates. It should be noted further that the *Grundherr* need not always also have been personal lord (*Leibherr*).

<sup>48</sup> For England, see Britnell, *Commercialisation*, pp. 79–101, 113–27; Britnell, *Britain and Ireland*

had smallholdings only, and tenants with such holdings certainly outnumbered those with full holdings: some sort of market dependence was thus not only common, but would have affected more than half the population. Furthermore, the frequency of money rents also implies a dependence on the market on the part of the tenants with full holdings as well. (The abbey, however, doubtless secured enough grain through its rents not to be itself dependent on the market.) The larger holdings certainly would have been able to provide for their own subsistence; but the tenants on these plots also needed to realize a certain level of income on the market in order to retain access to their land, and as we have seen, full holdings tended to pay £1 or more: this was not an insignificant amount (see the Appendix for further discussion), and almost certainly implies the sale of a substantial portion of their crop. That such market dependence was possible was doubtless enabled by the growth of nearby market towns; the importance of small towns and local and regional markets has been stressed with regard to economic growth in medieval England, and it seems apparent that in the Ellwangen region, a similar co-dependence had emerged by the time our source was composed. Clearly, it is not just in England that one needs to understand the significance and consequences of the symbiosis of urban growth and rural commercialization within a feudal economy.<sup>49</sup>

It has been suggested that the dissolution of the manorial system in Germany had something to do with urbanization, population growth, commercialization, and social stratification; it remains unclear, however, what sort of causal links obtain between these various factors.<sup>50</sup> Given that these very developments are found in England as well, it is apparent that they in themselves cannot be seen as the sole causes for the dissolution of the manorial system in Germany. Passive peasant resistance in various forms is another potential cause, and indeed there is some evidence for such resistance even at the late date of our source. A number of entries state that a tenant refuses to pay his rents or some component of them; others say that although a certain rent is recorded, the tenants do not pay it, or that the bailiff (*Ammann*) believes that a rent is or was different from what the tenants actually pay.<sup>51</sup> We have no way

*Note 48 continued*

1050–1530: *economy and society* (2004), pp. 138–217; Campbell, ‘Agrarian problem’; Dyer, *Making a living*, pp. 166–7, 169–71, 187–227. For southern Germany, see Henning, *Agrargeschichte*, pp. 138–258; Rösener, *Grundherrschaft im Wandel*, 198–207, 335–40, 352–3, 373–86, 407, 502–42; see further, with more detail, Ghosh, ‘Rural economies’.

<sup>49</sup> On small towns in England, see Christopher Dyer, ‘Small towns’, in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain I* (2000), pp. 505–37; Dyer, ‘Small places with large consequences: the importance of small towns in England, 1000–1540’, *Historical Res.* 75 (2002), 1–24. On the significance of rural markets in England, see Richard Britnell, ‘Urban demand in the English economy, 1300–1600’, in James Galloway (ed.), *Trade, urban hinterlands and market integration, c.1300–1600* (2000), pp. 1–22, at pp. 2–6; Dyer, ‘The hidden trade of the middle ages: evidence from the

West Midlands of England’, in Dyer, *Everyday life in medieval England* (1994), pp. 283–303; Dyer, ‘Were peasants self-sufficient? English villagers and the market, 900–1350’, in Élisabeth Mornet (ed.), *Campagnes médiévales: l’homme et son espace* (1995), pp. 653–66. On local and regional trade in general, see further James Masschaele, *Peasants, merchants, and markets: inland trade in medieval England, 1150–1350* (1997).

<sup>50</sup> Rösener, *Grundherrschaft*, pp. 47–53, 561.

<sup>51</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, 291 (the bailiff says the rent was 2s. higher but the tenant refuses to pay those 2s.); 312 (the bailiff is uncertain as to whether the labour service is properly owed by the tenants of Eigenzell, though the source does not suggest that they themselves dispute it); 334, 480, 530, 545–51 (disputes regarding the number of chickens); 379, 1015a, 1016a (the bailiff believes these holdings should render more than they do); 445 (a dispute about whether 80 or 100 eggs are owed); 471 (the bailiff believes the holdings in Birkenzell should

of knowing whether the commuted labour services appear in such a form because peasants successfully objected to performing labour on the abbey's lands, but this is certainly a possibility.<sup>52</sup>

If peasant resistance of this sort eventually led to the breakdown of the manorial system here, however, we must ask why a similar outcome cannot be found in England. Approaching the issue from very different points of view, both Bruce Campbell and Christopher Dyer find that lordship in England was relatively 'ineffective' by the early fourteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, lords chose to retain direct management of their demesnes, and resorted to wage labour where necessary, rather than acting as did the abbey of Ellwangen, which did not retain any agricultural land, and little meadowland, under its own management. To be sure, there was an incentive for English landlords to retain control of their lands, in that they could profit from sales to nearby markets and towns. But Ellwangen was also located close to a number of towns, and Schwäbisch Hall and Nördlingen were major centres of regional and inter-regional exchange in this period; it is, furthermore, only the existence of nearby markets that enabled tenants to realize the cash income they needed to pay their money rents. Clearly the abbey nevertheless felt, for whatever reason, no compulsion or desire to profit as a market-oriented grain-producer itself. These differing outcomes need explanation, and suggest also that any proposed theory regarding one region must take rural histories elsewhere into consideration; simply to postulate on the basis of one region that peasant resistance, commercialization, and urban growth led to the decline of the manor, or, conversely, that (some of) these factors led to greater lordly control over production, is insufficient.

A further, more theoretically significant consideration is that if, in the long-term trajectories of economic growth of both regions, this period shows significant similarities in terms of commercialization among the bulk of the population, we need to consider how this fact would affect our understanding of the nature and causes of economic change in both regions, and the relationship between economic transformation and prevailing social relations; the ways in

*Note 51 continued*

provide labour services and eggs, but the peasants dispute this and do not); 486 (the holding should pay 10s., but only gives 5s. because it is in bad condition); 580 (the *Meierhof* at Neunheim, where the *Meier* disputes his rent since he claims he is owed rents by several *Lehen* that have been taken away from him); 597 (it is said that this holding used to render twice as much oats as it now does); 603 (the entry states that this holding should rightly pay 10s., but only gives 9s.); 651 (this holding is recorded as earlier having paid 50% more; it is not clear why the renders are now lowered); 992 (the rent should not be recorded in the *summa*, 'quia raro dat').

<sup>52</sup> Demade suggests that the switch from labour services to renders of a share of the grain did not mean that a lower proportion of the peasant's labour was effectively in the hands of the landlord: labour services had in most cases earlier been required for two or three

days of a six-day week, and shares were normally of a third or half (Demade, 'Ponction féodale', pp. 406–13). This change, however, could potentially lead to a rise in productivity, since the peasant could now also benefit from any such rise. We have seen that the pattern at Ellwangen does not quite fit this model: few owed shares, and the shares were almost always of a fifth or sixth, rarely as high as a third. It is possible that labour services owed had never been as high as two days a week in this region; it is also possible that even before labour services were commuted, tenants had successfully negotiated a decrease in their burdens, or that the process of commutation brought about such a reduction.

<sup>53</sup> Campbell, 'Agrarian problem'; Christopher Dyer, 'The ineffectiveness of lordship in England, 1200–1400', in Christopher Dyer, Peter R. Coss, and Chris Wickham (eds), *Rodney Hilton's middle ages: an exploration of historical themes* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 69–86.

which the latter developed were possibly more dissimilar than the dynamic of the economy at the level of the tenants and labourers. One of the most influential theories regarding the trajectories of socio-economic change in the later middle ages is the 'Brenner thesis': Brenner argued that out of the collapse of the 'feudal' system in England after 1350 there emerged a tripartite structure of large landlords, tenant farmers, and a rural proletariat of wage labourers: 'agrarian capitalism'.<sup>54</sup> For Brenner, England was the only region in which such a transition took place.<sup>55</sup> Brenner's theory has been disputed on empirical grounds by many scholars (albeit primarily with regard to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), and he is unable to account for what we now know regarding the high levels of social stratification and market dependence in England even before 1350: it is hard to reconcile the commercialized rural society of early fourteenth-century England with Brenner's version of the feudal economy.<sup>56</sup> While some other scholars, notably Rodney Hilton, were able to integrate commercialization and even urban growth within a model of the feudal system, there is nevertheless no convincing theory that accounts for these factors and also manages to explain how they contributed to the dynamic of socio-economic transformation in the later middle ages and beyond.<sup>57</sup> English rural commercialization is hard to fit into theories regarding the nature of the feudal economy in the fourteenth century, and the dynamic of this economy still needs explanation; since Germany is quite similar to England in terms of rural commercialization, any proposed theory regarding such commercialization and its consequences in the long term can only hold water if it can explain comparable developments in more than one region.<sup>58</sup>

A greater awareness of the German situation should lead also to the realization that the market involvement and dependence of peasants, tenants, and smallholders could be as significant for our understanding of economic structures and long-term transformations as the decisions of landlords and their forms of engagement in the market. The state of the manorial system and the nature of 'feudal' relationships might be less significant than levels

<sup>54</sup> Brenner, 'Agrarian class structure'; Brenner, 'Agrarian roots'.

<sup>55</sup> More recently, Brenner acknowledged the similarities in economic development between the Low Countries and England: 'The Low Countries in the transition to capitalism', *J. Agrarian Change*, 1 (2001), pp. 169–241.

<sup>56</sup> His most recent publication on this subject brushes these issues aside, and takes no account of the more recent empirical scholarship, including critiques of his theory: Robert Brenner, 'Property and progress: where Adam Smith went wrong', in Chris Wickham (ed.), *Marxist history-writing for the twenty-first century* (British Academy Occasional Papers, 9, 2007), pp. 49–111. For empirical critiques of Brenner (exclusively addressing England), see most recently H. R. French and R. W. Hoyle, *The character of English rural society: Earls Colne, 1550–1750* (2007), and Jane Whittle, *The development of agrarian capitalism: land and labour in Norfolk, 1440–1580* (2000); see also the

more theoretical discussion in John Hatcher and Mark Bailey, *Modelling the middle ages: the history and theory of England's economic development* (2001), pp. 67–120. Spencer Dimmock's recent spirited defence of the Brenner thesis appeared too late to be taken into consideration in the present paper: *The origin of capitalism in England, 1400–1600* (Leiden, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> See in particular the essays collected in R. H. Hilton, *Class conflict and the crisis of feudalism* (sec. edn, 1990); and Hilton, *English and French towns in a feudal society: a comparative study* (1992). As theoretical stimulus, Epstein's suggestions, building on Hilton's work, are fundamental: S. R. Epstein, 'Rodney Hilton, Marxism and the transition from feudalism to capitalism', in *Rodney Hilton's middle ages*, pp. 248–69.

<sup>58</sup> I provide a more thorough rebuttal of the Brenner thesis elsewhere, along with suggestions for alternative ways of posing and understanding the question of transition in a comparative perspective: see Ghosh, 'Rural economies'.

of social stratification and market dependence among the non-landowning classes, and the economic relationships between these classes and their urban counterparts. The Ellwangen smallholders had to make a living somehow; someone had to need their labour or products, just as the tenants of full holdings had to have a market to sell their grain in order to be able to earn the coin in which their rents were due; and the smallholders also potentially provided a locus of demand for some of the surplus of the fullholders. Thus it is important, as Govind Sreenivasan has recently suggested, that we shift our focus ‘from processes which were not entailed by economic modernization – the destruction of the peasantry as a class – to processes which were’, of which one of the most important, I suggest, is ‘the commercialization of their production’.<sup>59</sup> This is because, as the late Larry Epstein pointed out, agricultural supply is best understood not as an independent variable determining the rate of growth and the possibility of development, but rather as ‘a *dependent* variable that could respond elastically to changes in demand, subject to the opportunity costs of investment and trade’; for this reason, ‘students of the transition from feudalism to capitalism need to pay more attention to the conditions that made investment in agriculture profitable, rather than to the technical or organizational characteristics of feudal agriculture itself’.<sup>60</sup>

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of what conditions might have made agriculture profitable, but it is obvious that the existence of a market is a prerequisite for agricultural profits. The kind of social stratification and market involvement that we have seen in the estates of Ellwangen already by the middle of the fourteenth century, with the likelihood of market dependence for many, and market orientation of a good deal of production, is thus arguably one of the preconditions – though by no means a sufficient condition – for further changes in socio-economic organization that could possibly – but need not – have led towards capitalism. This form of low-level commercialization and market dependence was common to both England and Germany, regardless of the differing trajectories of the manorial system; and the dynamic of both their economies was arguably increasingly located within this level of commercialization rather than at the level of luxury consumption. The high incidence of money rents and the high levels of social stratification have significant consequences for our understanding of economic structure, and potentially also of longer-term trends in both regions. Only comparative work can provide plausible theories to explain the continuing spread of market dependence in both England and Germany (and, for that matter, other regions too) and its long-term consequences. I hope, therefore, that the example of the present article will provide an incentive to others also to take up the challenge of comparative analysis of the vast reserves of untapped sources in regions of Europe beyond England.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Govind P. Sreenivasan, ‘Beyond the village: recent approaches to the social history of the early modern German peasantry’, *History Compass*, 11 (2013), pp. 47–64, at p. 51.

<sup>60</sup> Epstein, ‘Rodney Hilton’, p. 264.

<sup>61</sup> Ellwangen alone offers enough material for at least one doctoral dissertation on its social and economic history to c.1450; a glance at the catalogues of primary sources published by the *historische Kommissionen* of even just Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria reveals a

large number of edited texts that have scarcely been examined – at least with a view to the questions posed here – even in the German scholarship. In addition, there are literally thousands of sources from these two *Länder* of Germany alone that have yet to be published, principally rent rolls, polyptychs, and cartularies. Manorial accounts of the kind extant in England from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are relatively rare in Germany, most likely because of the earlier abandonment of direct management of demesne

## APPENDIX

## The value of money and the burden of rents

Unfortunately, there are no reliable price (or, for that matter, wage) data from this region for this period, so it is not possible to do more than speculate regarding the weight of the rent burden on Ellwangen's tenants. The polyptych itself provides some information that, although of limited use, allows us at least some slightly informed speculation regarding the relative monetary value of some commodities. One entry states that a tenant may pay either four chickens or 1s. as rent.<sup>62</sup> In another entry, a quarter of oil may be substituted with 2s.<sup>63</sup> Cheese is in a number of instances valued at 2d. each, though on occasion the value is given as 1d.; unfortunately we know nothing about how much each cheese weighed.<sup>64</sup> The value of three pigs is given as £10.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, grain prices or monetary equivalents of grain renders are nowhere recorded. A further indication of monetary value is given in an entry that states that a *curia* at Rot was purchased for £41; the annual rent from this property was £2, but it also owed 24 cheeses (valued at 2d. each), 80 eggs, a quarter of oil, and 3 chickens, and a recognition fee of 1s.<sup>66</sup> Going by the equivalences given above, this would mean that this property paid a total value of £2 7s. 9d., in addition to the eggs; the purchase price was thus equivalent to about 17 years' rent.

It is difficult, from this information, to come to any definitive conclusions regarding the weight of the rent, but we can make some attempts at understanding what the rents might have meant to a peasant economy. We have seen that most *Höfe* and *Hufen* owed at least £1 of rent, and very few *Selden* owed more than 10s.; if we take these few indications in the polyptych as reliable information regarding the value of commodities, we would infer that the annual rent of full holdings were thus normally at least the value of 80 chickens, 120 cheeses, or a third of a single pig. In contrast, the average *Selde* owed no more than half that amount, and normally less. In terms of the equivalence of rent and labour, 1 *mader* could be substituted for 1s., and a *sniter* was worth 8d.<sup>67</sup> If my speculation is valid, namely that these terms refer not to a day's work, but to the labour of a person for the duration of the harvest, the rent for a full holding, at £1, would be equivalent to 20 persons' wages for mowing hay during the harvest, or 30 persons' wages for reaping corn.

*Note 61 continued*

lands; Campbell suggests that, in England as well, it is precisely the decline in direct management that leads to a decline in numbers of manorial accounts: *Seigniorial agriculture*, pp. 28–9. This genre of evidence is not, however, completely unknown even from late medieval Germany, and two sets of accounts have recently been edited: Bernhard Lübbers (ed.), *Die ältesten Rechnungen des Klosters Aldersbach (1291–1373/1409): Analyse und Edition* (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte, 47/3, 2009); Michael Toch (ed.), *Die ältesten Rechnungsbücher des Klosters Scheyern, 1339–1363* (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte, 36/3, 2009). I am currently preparing a comprehensive study of the latter; account books from the fifteenth

century are also extant for Scheyern, and are as yet unpublished.

<sup>62</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, 315. The value of 3d. per chicken is at the low end of the spectrum for an annual lease of a chicken given by Slavin for various English landlords, but is considerably higher than the 1.5–2d. range he records as sale prices during this period: 'Chicken husbandry', p. 38, Figure 3, and p. 53, Figure 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ellwanger Urbar*, 659.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 748, 1005, 1025, 1154, 1441–6 (2d.); 1336–7, 1362 (1d.).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1005.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 532–41, 1025.

There is little available evidence regarding urban wages and prices from this period.<sup>68</sup> However, the evidence from Ellwangen may be compared with data from a 1342 ordinance of the Speyer town council regulating the wages of construction workers (Speyer is, admittedly, quite far to the north west, but I have been so far unable to find any relevant material from closer to Ellwangen, which is not to say that further researches might not produce better evidence). Wage rates varied depending on the status of the workers and what sort of labour they performed; excluding masters' rates, most construction workers receiving only cash wages were paid between 12*d.* and 15*d.* per day; where they were paid a cash wage along with payment in kind for their expenses, the latter were reckoned at between 9*d.* and 12*d.* per day. The full holding mentioned above, paying rents valuing £2 7*s.* 9*d.*, thus owed a sum roughly equivalent to a Speyer construction worker's cash wage for 38 days of labour, or the equivalent of the payment in kind for between 47 and 63 days of work. An Ellwangen full holding paying £1 of rent owed an equivalent of 16 days' cash wages for a Speyer construction worker, or between 20 and 26 days of payment in kind.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> An excellent study of income and cost of living in southern German cities is presented by Ulf Dirlmeier, *Untersuchungen zu Einkommensverhältnissen und Lebenshaltungskosten in oberdeutschen Städten des Spätmittelalters (Mitte 14. bis Anfang 16. Jahrhundert)* (Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1978/1); Dirlmeier is concerned mainly with the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth, with only brief excursions into the second half of the fourteenth,

the reason being a lack of available data. His work was, however, based on published sources, and he acknowledged the great untapped reserves of material in the relevant south German archives.

<sup>69</sup> The data for Speyer wages are from Gisele Möncke (ed.), *Quellen zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte mittel- und oberdeutscher Städte im Spätmittelalter* (Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters, 37, 1982), no. 45.