

## Estate Stewards and their Work in Glamorgan, 1660–1760: a Regional Study of Estate Management

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In recent years the importance of the work of the eighteenth-century estate steward has increasingly been recognized. General studies by E. Hughes[1] and G.E. Mingay[2] have been supplemented by work done on individual stewards, and some collections of the letters exchanged between the stewards and their employers have been published[3]. This essay is an attempt to combine the two approaches: to study the estate stewards of a particular area (Glamorgan), as a group, selecting individual stewards for more detailed attention. I have concentrated in particular on the origins of the stewards, on their part in the economic life of the estates on which they worked, and on the extent to which they lived up to the standards laid down by contemporary writers such as Edward Laurence. I have tried to look at all the stewards in the area, not just the more prominent or successful ones, and it is hoped that such an approach will be found useful in evaluating the steward's overall role in the economic and social history of the period.

In the early eighteenth century Lord Mansel of Margam described the qualities and qualifications expected of an estate steward when he wrote the following instructions:

You are to live in my house as my menial servant and to do all manner of business for me that I do think proper to be done by a Steward or an Attorney ... You are not to take the value of a farthing of any tenants nor of any person with whom I have any transactions upon any pretence whatsoever without my privy. You are to keep all accounts in bound books, in such a manner that I may see a state of my affairs any day or hour I please and that in case of mortality everything may be

clear. You are to account with me half yearly. You shall be at liberty to practise as far as is consistent with my service, but by no means so enlarge your practice as to take off your attention and application to the affairs of your stewardship. You are in all your receipts to specify the tenement and time when the money was due, in whole or in part and never to give a general receipt upon account[4].

In the Report of the Royal Commission on Land in Wales (1896) estate stewards were described as the "Alter Ego of the landlord". "Upon the choice of an agent", the Report continues, "the success or ill-success of the estate as a whole, the well-being or ill-being of tenants and servants, the good and bad relations of landlord and farmers very largely depend"[5]. The steward or agent was responsible for conducting the day-to-day administration of the estate, for drawing up accounts, for concluding tenancy agreements and ensuring that the tenants paid their rents promptly (and also distraining on those who did not) and for seeing that the tenants kept their farm buildings and fences in an adequate state of repair and did not exhaust their land by taking too many corn crops in succession. In addition, the steward was in overall charge of the home farm and he directed any building work his employer wanted carried out, and he was also responsible for the exploitation of the mineral resources of the estate; he held the manorial courts and acted as the legal representative of the landowner and, when occasion arose, as his election agent too. He did all this in a period when the landed estates were a major force in the economic and social life of the county: before the mid eighteenth century Glamorgan's urban centres and their commercial communities were still small and underdeveloped and outside interest in its land and industrial resources was, as yet, minimal.

The problem of nomenclature is one which presents itself immediately to anyone who wishes to study the men employed in the management of eighteenth-century landed estates. Several words were used in this period, such as Steward, Bailiff, Receiver, Accountant or, simply, expressions such as: "Mr Mansel's man" or "Mr Mackworth's servant". In late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Glamorgan the word "Steward" is most commonly — though by no means exclusively — used, and one of

the best-known and earliest manuals on estate management is called *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord* [6]. This word will, therefore, be used throughout this study.

No less difficult is the problem of definition. Any landowner who leased out some or all of his land might employ someone to collect his rents and communicate with his tenants if his property were widely scattered or if he were too old or too busy to do the work himself. This work might be done by a local farmer or attorney, by the village parson or by a relative of the owner of the property. In the 1750s, for example, the estate of John Llewelyn of Ynisgyerwn was managed by his mother, with the help of a cousin, Gabriel Jeffreys of Brecon, until the time when Llewelyn himself came of age. Such people cannot, however, properly be called stewards, for the work was for them very much a subsidiary and part-time occupation, done to oblige a friend or relative, rather than because it was their main source of income. Most of the smaller properties in Glamorgan in this period — that is, those producing under £500 to £800 a year — were probably run in this way, with the owner himself in charge of most of the everyday administration, calling on others for help when necessary.

On the larger estates — in early eighteenth-century Glamorgan this meant those producing between £800 and £5,000 a year — and particularly on those where the owner was non-resident for much of the year, it was necessary to employ someone — on the largest estates two or more people — who would devote all, or at least most of their time to the running of the estate. It is with these men that this paper is concerned. Such men were not an entirely new phenomenon in the eighteenth century; indeed their origins can be traced back to the bailiffs and stewards of the great medieval estates. Their position did, however, become more responsible and more important in this period. Improving communications meant that estate-owners could travel more widely and many from Glamorgan began to spend the season in London and even to acquire London houses. The assertion in Chambers and Mingay's book on the Agricultural Revolution that "In Wales ... the landlords consisted either of remote estate owners operating through agents, or poverty-stricken squires interested only in their rents and the exercise of their sporting rights"[7] is, however, a

gross distortion of the facts as far as South Wales is concerned, since all of the landowners, apart from a few absentee aristocrats such as Lord Windsor, the Duke of Beaufort and the Earl of Plymouth, spent a considerable part of their time in the county, and most took a keen personal interest in the running of their estates. Nevertheless, the growth of some of the larger estates and, in particular, marriage with heiresses from outside the county, meant that several Glamorgan landowners also had country seats elsewhere. The Mansels of Margam had a small estate at Newick in Sussex, the Mackworths of Gnoll in the Vale of Neath had one at Buntingdale, near Market Drayton in Salop, and the Wyndhams of Dunraven owned an estate at Clearwell in Gloucestershire. In these cases the importance of the steward was obviously increased.

In the eighteenth century, too, an increasing amount of attention was given to the work that the steward was expected to do. Manuals were written and a knowledge of accountancy and surveying became almost indispensable, in addition to experience in legal matters. The stewards were expected to help their masters to realize the agricultural and industrial potential of their estates, in addition to overseeing the day-to-day business and supplying the landowner with money and information when he was away. An assessment of how far this ideal was actually achieved will be attempted below.

It is important to remember that, before the second half of the eighteenth century, the exploitation of the mineral resources of an estate and the management of the timber that grew on it were regarded simply as different branches of estate administration and were directed by the steward, with perhaps a clerk or bailiff who would work full-time in the coal or iron works, to help him. Pleydell Courteen, the steward of the Gnoll estate, for example, was described as Herbert Mackworth's "Receiver in collecting the rents, issues and profits of his several estates in Monmouth and Glamorgan and ... chief clerk or agent in the management of his colliery in Glamorgan"[8]. The larger the estate, the more complex the administrative hierarchy became. On the largest ones, and particularly on those of the non-resident aristocrats such as the Duke of Beaufort and Lord Windsor, an accountant or receiver and sometimes also an auditor were employed, whose job it was to

inspect and approve the accounts of the stewards of the various scattered portions of the estate. In 1714 it was stated that the purpose of the General Receipt or Audit on the Margam estate was "To control or check the Receiver and the general management and to show My Lord [Mansel] how his affairs stood at the determination of it"[9]. On Lord Windsor's Cardiff Castle estate, audit and receipt days were held every year. If an estate was inherited by a minor — which was not an uncommon occurrence — a Receiver was generally appointed (usually the former estate steward) and he had to submit his accounts every year to the Master in Chancery who was officially in charge of the estate. Next in the hierarchy came the steward proper, sometimes referred to as the acting steward — on smaller estates he was the sole employee of this kind, on the larger ones he would have several people below him, such as coalwork stewards, park-keepers, bailiffs in charge of the home-farm and the collectors of the rents from individual parts of the estate. Often the steward himself collected the rents from those parts of the estate which were within easy reach of the main house and depended on the more substantial tenants or lesser free-holders to collect the rents elsewhere, in return for a nominal payment. On the Margam estate, for example, the rents from one part were collected by about 20 bailiffs and from the other, by the Receiver, directly from the tenants. In 1656 the rents of the Cardiff Castle estate were collected by 18 bailiffs, 7 collectors, 28 farmers and 6 reeves and portreeves. Sometimes the respective responsibilities of the various stewards were not entirely clear and this could lead to confusion. In 1714, for example, Erasmus Phillips commented on the management of the Margam estate:— "Mr. Cory sets, Mr. Phillips receives, Mr. Cory pays, Mr. Phillips makes up the accounts in the name of Mr. Cory, Mr. Cory stands charged with the money Mr. Phillips receives, Mr. Phillips examines and passes the accounts he himself has prepared in the name of Mr. Cory"[10]. Erasmus Phillips finishes with the comment, "It is humbly conceived that this is not proper".

The salaries of the various stewards and bailiffs ranged from about £10 a year for the bailiffs of individual parts of an estate and for woodmen, park-keepers and others, to £150 for a head steward or receiver. The average salary for an acting steward or the steward

of a medium-sized estate, producing perhaps £1,000 or £2,000 a year, was about £40 to £80 per annum, in addition to board and lodging, for the steward was often expected to live in his master's house. In 1712 a steward of the Margam estate wrote to his master, Lord Mansel:

I think it would not be amiss if Mr. Cory (another steward) lay in my chamber when I am gone, he'll be nearer Mr. Lewis who will want him often and the tenants etc. will have no occasion to go further into the house, besides, if nobody lies there, the rats and mice will get the better of the writings etc.[11]

In 1763 another Margam steward, Hopkin Llewelyn, described the responsibilities and salaries of the men concerned in the administration of the estate thus:

The principal agent, or more truly, the Receiver, never had less than one hundred pounds a year for his salary. Mr. Lewis Thomas, as assistant or acting steward, had £40 and under him a bailiff in constant employ at a shilling a day, which is upwards of £15, Mr. Edward Harris, the Woodward, had £20 with perquisites and fees amounting to as much more for showing timber etc. to the tenants ... Then there was Lewis Griffith, as an assistant to him, at what allowance I know not, but his present circumstances don't seem to indicate it was for nothing ...[12]

Travelling expenses were often paid in addition to the salary; in 1656 Mr. Thomas, the Receiver of the Cardiff Castle estate, had £40 a year, plus £20 for "Riding charges" and in 1761 John Franklen, the steward of the Llanmihangel estate, had £60 per annum, plus £20 for travelling, in addition to which he received 1% interest on rents collected. This latter form of payment seems, however, to have been uncommon. The Receiver of an infant's estate would generally be paid a relatively high salary in recognition of the importance of his position. In 1724, for example, Thomas Cradock, the Receiver of the young Lord Mansel's estate, asked for his salary of £100 a year (including £10 each for two bailiffs) to be increased, "Considering the largeness of the Infant's estate and the distances of divers parts and the great charge, trouble and expenses of the said Receivership"[13]. His request was granted and his salary was increased to £160 a year, including the £10 each for the bailiffs as

before. If, for some reason, the steward had an extra amount of work to do, an additional allowance might be made. In 1725-6 Thomas Cradock received £52:03:11½d. for his "Extraordinary trouble many days searching over the late Lord Mansel's papers and writings with the Executors and making an inventory of all the household goods at Margam and utensils in the garden and separating the papers that belonged to My Lord from those that belonged to the Executors, this being almost three weeks' constant attendance"[14]. Other expenses which were usually allowed were the cost of the annual dinners given to bailiffs and tenants and the money paid out when the manorial courts were held.

The origins of many of the agents cannot be traced. Several, particularly on the largest estates, have English names and men such as James Pratt and Thomas Bryan of the Tredegar estate, Pleydell Courteen of Gnoll, Stephen Howard and Thomas Cory of Margam, Nathaniel Taynton of Dunraven, John Burroughs of Briton Ferry and Oliver Robotham, Francis Durbrow and Edmund Jeane of Cefn Mably probably all came from outside Glamorgan. Most of the stewards are referred to as, for example, *Mr. Cory* or *Mr. Howard* and they usually have the word "Gent." added to their name. John Lawrence, writing in 1801, included in a list of the types of men suited to the position of land steward, "The unfortunate decayed gentleman ... who being a man of parts and integrity, his experience, as more dearly purchased, will be in proportion of the higher worth"[15]. Stewards were often the younger sons of the lesser gentry, or small freeholders who needed an income additional to that produced by their own estates. According to John Mordaunt, writing in 1761, stewards were not always chosen for their skill in estate management alone. He said that noblemen and gentlemen showed an unfortunate tendency to favour:

A person that can draw up a dog well with good language, according to rule and order and is a good shot; who can after a shot, with a lusty voice cry 'Mark' ... Such a one is too often looked upon as well qualified; and he that can leap a five-barred gate and take over a quickset hedge on full speed after a pack of hounds and come in first or second at the death of the hare or fox etc. is no less qualified than the former, and especially if to these are added a certain or elastic spring in

casting a net; and where these all happen to centre in one man, they render him as complete a steward as any in the kingdom[16].

The Glamorgan landowners were generally content to base their choice of a steward on more conventional considerations. David Rees, the steward of the Margam estate in the mid eighteenth century, recommended that his master should employ Hopkin Llewelyn with these words:

He is strictly honest and I have had no dealings with anyone to whose veracity I would sooner trust. He is a grandson to Mr. Evan Davies ... who is about 80 years of age and very infirm, and after his death Hopkin will have a freehold estate of about £70 a year, but pretty much encumbered and therefore he would be very glad to get into some post or other, so that he might live pretty comfortably and leave his little estate to clear itself[17].

A great many stewards came from a legal background and were themselves attorneys-at-law. Lewis Thomas, steward of the Margam estate, was the son of one Thomas Thomas of Cardiff, an attorney-at-law. Lewis's younger brother, Edward, entered a profession allied to that of estate steward: he was one of the most active and highly skilled estate surveyors in Glamorgan in the second half of the eighteenth century. Finally, Lewis's son, Richard, was apprenticed to Mr Thomas Edwards of Cardiff, a well-known lawyer and agent of Lord Windsor. Some degree of legal training was, indeed, vital in a period when most landowners were involved in at least one legal battle during their lifetime. Pleydell Courteen, steward of the Gnoll estate from about 1726 to 1743, spent a large part of his time in London, dealing with the legal business of his masters, Sir Herbert and Humphrey Mackworth. Occasionally the stewards' origins were somewhat bizarre; Pleydell Courteen had one brother who was a seaman and another who set up business as a peruke-maker in London. Christopher Bassett, steward of the Fonmon estate, was "Originally a common ship's carpenter and worked at his trade, he can write, though but indifferently"[18]. One of the most interesting stewards is James Pratt of the Tredegar estate, whose epitaph is worth quoting in full:



“James Pratt of the Town of Newport, born 1662 at Codsall in Staffordshire, brought up under a Turkey Merchant, but a weak constitution and ill state of health not permitting him to go abroad, retired at the age of 35 into Monmouthshire where, by a regular life and temperance, having acquired a settled health (with but little interruption till his last illness) he acted first as clerk, afterwards as chief agent to the Hon. and worthy family of Tredegar; with the utmost integrity, exactness and fidelity, for the space of 34 years: example worthy of imitation! rare to be met with!

He was affable in office, charitable without ostentation and learned without pride. The many opportunities given him and his long continuance in so profitable a branch of business gained him but a moderate fortune but the best of characters. He died a bachelor, 4th. March 1743, aged 81 years”[19].

Some personal financial resources were almost indispensable for a man wishing to become an estate steward, both in order to provide some security for the money which would be entrusted to his charge and to give him the social standing and prestige he needed if he were to have any control over his master's tenants. Thomas Hawkins, steward of the Gnoll estate in 1705, was contemptuously dismissed as being “A mere stranger in these parts and consequently very little respected, having nothing but his service to depend upon”[20]. It was not uncommon for a steward to be required to give some security for the faithful performance of his duties. In 1743, for example, Lazarus Herbert of Monmouth, yeoman, entered into a bond of £1,500 to Thomas Morgan of Ruperra Esq. “For the faithful discharge by the said Lazarus Herbert of the office of Receiver of the rents and profits of the real estate of William Morgan of Tredegar Esq., infant”[21] and Thomas Bryan entered into a similar one, for £2,000 at the same time.

It was not unusual for a steward to serve the same estate for many years. James Pratt, as already mentioned, worked for the Morgans of Tredegar for 34 years, Pleydell Courteen served the Mackworths for 17, David Bennett of Pitt served Sir Edward Mansel for about 25, and Nathaniel Taynton worked on the Llanmihangel — and later also the Dunraven — estate for about 20

years. It was quite common for a son to follow his father into the office of a particular estate and then to take over the stewardship when his father retired. Thus, continuity of administration could be achieved, sometimes to a remarkable degree. The two Gabriel Powells, father and son, were Coroners and Stewards of the Duke of Beaufort's Seignory of Gower for about 50 years and members of the Llewelyn family provided the Margam estate with stewards for almost a century. When, therefore, the owner of an estate died, the day-to-day business was barely interrupted, even if the eldest son was only a child, and the inheritors of estates were generally content to retain their predecessors' stewards.

There were, of course, ample opportunities for the dishonest or unscrupulous steward to feather his own nest at his employer's expense, particularly when the estate-owner was a child or lived out of the county. The rapaciousness of stewards was proverbial; Edward Laurence's book was written for "Those who have already suffered through the knavery and unfaithfulness of their stewards"[22] and, according to him, "Stewards are of all others under the greatest temptation to be knaves, because they have it so much in their power to be such with impunity"[23]. Glamorgan certainly had its share of rogues: Stephen Howard, steward of the Margam estate, was dismissed in 1709 because he had "Neither honesty nor method"[24] and he was eventually arrested, since he owed Lord Mansel £600 on bond. Others undoubtedly did very well out of their stewardship. In the 1750s Philip Williams of Duffryn, a noted poet and genealogist, was alleged to have increased his own small estate of £40 or £50 per annum to one of £400 or £500 a year at the expense of his absentee employers, the lords of Neath Abbey, by "Taking into his own possession such lands as lay convenient to himself of the lands of the tenants"[25]. He had also raised the rents and kept the increased revenue for himself. Another steward, Francis Durbrow of Cefn Mably, was dismissed in 1766 for a whole series of misdemeanours. It was reported that: "Mary Powell, Durbrow's servant, was three years since delivered of a bastard child ... Mrs. Durbrow is very jealous of her, she having the sole management of the house and, it is said, has made Mrs. Durbrow beside herself ... Durbrow's horses, cattle and sheep eat up all the grass in the park and warren to the prejudice of the deer"[26].

Christopher Bassett, steward of the Fonmon estate during the minority of Robert Jones III, benefited from his position to become 'One of the most considerable maltsters in the country and had enriched himself so much that, besides his capital in the malting trade and farming, he had even lent his master a considerable sum by bond[27].'

For some men, estate management was a direct road to wealth and social advancement. Nathaniel Taynton, steward of the Llanmihangel estate from about 1728 to 1747, left legacies totalling £2,600 to his four children, in addition to leasehold and freehold property[28]. The son of Hopkin Llewelyn, a Margam estate steward who had started work as a clerk in the estate office, married an heiress and sent his son to Rugby school. Others who built up estates at least partly out of the proceeds of estate management were the Edmondeses of Cowbridge, the Williamses of Duffryn, the Franklens of Clemenston, the Nicholls of Merthyr Mawr and the Trahernes of Coedarhydyglyn. Sometimes the origins of these men were remembered by their neighbours long after they had ostensibly become assimilated into the landed gentry of the county. In the early nineteenth century it was remembered of the Edmondese family, agents of the Aubreys of Llantrithyd in the early eighteenth century, that:

The first Edmondese who settled in Cowbridge was a butcher; brought his son up to the law; proved a clever, or at least an unscrupulous scamp, intent only in making money, and cared not how he made it; managed to get a good deal of land into his clutches but had no good title to show for the possession of the greater part of it. When the Edmondeses later became 'big people' in the neighbourhood they were scoffed at by high and low as the parvenu gentry of the neighbourhood ...[29]

On the whole, however, the stewards of the Glamorgan estates of this period seem to have worked conscientiously at a job that was not always easy. In 1748 David Rees of the Margam estate complained that "The constant business that I have on my hands to do ... is great, and the people I have every day to answer are many. so that often when I shall think to be able to do a great deal, I am interrupted and hindered from doing anything, otherwise than the present business of the day"[30]. If, as so often happened, the

tenants were slow in paying their rents, it was the steward who was blamed. In 1678, for example, Oliver Robotham of the Cefn Mably estate wrote to his master, Sir Charles Kemeys, "I assure you, I have been as earnest as possibly I could with your tenants and could not produce more rent than I sent"[31]. The surviving letters between estate-owners and their stewards show that the latter were rarely reluctant to express their own opinions and their judgement was generally respected by landowners who, however conscientious they were, could not know as much about their property as the men who were directly concerned with it every day. In 1729 Herbert Mackworth of the Gnoll wrote to Pleydell Courteen, "Your zeal and fidelity in my service is what I shall always value, and therefore depend on you, not only as an agent, but as a friend"[32]. A pleasant and sympathetic manner might also be required — or, at least, a talent for acting. In 1702 Sir Humphrey Mackworth noted in his diary, "I stayed at home, being a rainy day; Mr. William Williams the steward dined with me, I told him the story of my shipwreck, which made him cry; he seems to have a true sense of religion and virtue"[33]. Griffith Price of Penllergaer, in his will, dated 1787, left 100 guineas and an annuity of £50 a year to "My trusty and most faithful servant, my steward, Daniel Thomas, gent. ... in remembrance of his fidelity and affection to my ever-honoured father, my children and myself"[34]. He also left £100 a year to his coal-steward, Robert Terry, yeoman.

To what extent did the estate stewards of Glamorgan live up to the standards laid down by writers such as Edward Laurence, and how far did their activities affect the economic development of the county? One point on which Laurence laid particular emphasis was that "Noblemen and Gentlemen lie under great Evils and Inconveniencies, when they suffer themselves to be persuaded to employ Country Attornies for their Stewards; because it seldom happens that they are well qualified for that trust"[35]. In eighteenth-century Glamorgan, however, the stewards were often practising attorneys, who would undertake work for people other than the landowner by whom they were theoretically employed, if their duties on the estate left them with sufficient time. Some estates, indeed, were managed purely on a part-time basis by men who depended chiefly on their legal practice for a living. Such a person

was Thomas Edwards of Cardiff, who was in charge of the Cardiff Castle estate in the mid eighteenth century. At this time the attorneys were probably the only people in Glamorgan with the necessary training in accountancy and legal matters and this was presumably considered more important than the practical experience in farming which Laurence considered to be indispensable. Laurence also condemned the employment of part-time stewards, but on the smaller estates there was probably not enough work to keep a man fully occupied throughout the year.

Laurence considered that the sons of local farmers made the best stewards and advised the landowners "To have always one or more of (them) ... in their eye, who are deem'd to be of a suitable Genius, and whose Education hath been such, that they may be suppos'd not only to be expert in Country Affairs, but to bear the character of supporting Truth and Honesty"[36]. He suggested that the parents of such children should be given the sum of ten or fifteen guineas in order to encourage them to have their son taught accounting. Hopkin Llewelyn is the only steward in eighteenth-century Glamorgan who definitely came from such an ideal background. One reason for this may be that the farms in Glamorgan were generally small and there were few farmers who could afford to give their sons the necessary education. Such a shortage of suitable young men is indicated by the fact that so many of the stewards came from English families.

As far as salary was concerned, the Glamorgan landowners seem to have conformed to the levels prevailing elsewhere in the country. This is not surprising, for if people did come from outside, they would know how much stewards received on estates in other counties. Such men were comparatively well-paid for, in the words of Laurence, "It is ... on all accounts, much the wisdom and interest of all Noblemen, and others, to allow their Stewards a handsome salary, that they may be able, without new-invented Perquisites, to live with Reputation and Credit; by which they will preserve an Authority over the Tenants to keep Business in order"[37]. A salary of forty to eighty pounds a year, plus board and lodging, compared well with the incomes of the lesser gentry, many of whom probably received little more than £100 or £150 a year from their lands.

On the day-to-day work of the stewards, Laurence also gives specific instructions. According to him, "It (is) ... the least part of the Business of a steward to collect the rents"[38]. For most of the Glamorgan landowners, however, collecting the rents and ensuring that the tenants did not run up arrears was generally the main — sometimes, indeed the only — duty of the steward. This is, perhaps, hardly surprising since rents were the estate-owners' chief source of income. But Laurence expected that the steward's role would be a more positive one. It was he who should be chiefly responsible for ensuring that the agricultural and industrial resources of the estate in his charge were exploited to the full. He should be "Well vers'd in Country Business, and in all the new Arts of Improvement"[39]. The inventory drawn up on the death in 1773 of John Nicholl of St. Athan, formerly steward of the Llanmihangel estate, includes a list of books which indicates the range of knowledge expected of a steward. He had: Book-keeping Methodized (1/-), Practical Measuring (6d.), The Art of Farriery Improved (1/6d.), Horseman's Conveyancing (2/6d.), Burn's Justice (2/-) and The Complete Court-Keeper (1/-)[40]. This list does not include any books on husbandry, but another landowner, Lord Mansel, certainly had books on the subject and his stewards, at least, would have had access to them. Most of the stewards corresponded regularly with their employers and their accounts record visits to London, Hereford, Bristol and Gloucester, in addition to the landowners' estates in other parts of the country, so it is unlikely that they were ignorant of contemporary developments. In 1743 Edmund Lloyd of Cardiff, agent of Lord Windsor, wrote a letter to a cousin, which illustrates one of the methods by which information was obtained. He wrote: "As you are acquainted in great men's families ... I should be glad if you could get me the method some nobleman's steward lays down in stating his rental and accounts, perhaps it might be better than what I have at present"[41].

Glamorgan was certainly not as backward as writers such as Arthur Young suggested. In his *Six Weeks Tour*, for example, he wrote that: "About Cowbridge and Bridgend the husbandry is the most imperfect I ever met with and totally contrary to the most common ideas in more informed counties"[42]. Farms remained small, it is true — the average size was about thirty to fifty acres and

anything over a hundred acres was exceptional — but the Glamorgan gentry and their stewards had, since the end of the seventeenth century, been experimenting with clover and the other new sown grasses on their own home farms. It was not entirely their fault that the tenants were often slow to follow their example. Developments were also being made in stock-breeding; in 1796 John Fox wrote approvingly of the Glamorgan breeds of cattle, horses and sheep[43], and it was not uncommon for a landowner to keep, for example, a boar for the use of the tenants.

Laurence thought that stewards should insert covenants into leases, in order to enforce a particular system of husbandry on the tenants, to give instructions about crop rotations in order to prevent the exhaustion of the soil and to ensure that all manure was used to the best possible advantage. Such covenants were certainly rare, though not entirely unknown, in mid eighteenth-century Glamorgan; the covenants that were usually employed were confined to instructions about the upkeep of buildings and fences, the payment of taxes and where the tenant should grind his corn. One practice of which Laurence wrote with particular disapproval — that of paring and burning the land — continued to be widely used until the end of the eighteenth century, when the landowners began to forbid it.

As far as the terms of leases were concerned, considerable changes were instituted in this period. To an increasing extent, the old system of leasing land for three lives — generally those of the tenant, his wife and one of their children — was abandoned, and tenancies for terms of years, generally 21, or from year to year, were introduced. It is true, however, that three-life leases were still, in several instances, being granted at the end of the eighteenth century, particularly on the older, more scattered estates such as Dunraven-Llanmihangel and the Gower portion of the Margam estate. Contemporaries saw three-life leases as a major obstacle to advance: John Fox wrote in 1796 that they were “Particularly objectionable; on principle and on account of the miserable aspect that many of the estates thus held, bear in this country ... Secure in his possession, [the tenant] grows indolent in his possession of it”[44]. The introduction of shorter terms meant that the landowner

had more control over his land and made it easier for him to adjust rents to changing economic conditions.

A further instruction of Laurence was that the Steward's "Business is to lay small Farms into great ones[45]." In much of England at this time the size of farms was tending to increase; in Wales conditions were rather different. There was a general shortage of tenants with sufficient capital to stock large farms and, whatever they wished to do, the stewards were often forced to reduce, rather than increase, the size of holdings. As late as 1765 John Franklen, agent to Lady Charlotte Edwin, wrote, "Without dividing the large Farms, My Lady can have no chance for leasing them, there being few or no gentlemen disposed to pay large sums for leases and the Farmers will not lay out the small sums they save but for leases of such lands as are most convenient for them"[46]. One of Laurence's directions the stewards could and did follow, however: they were constantly looking out for parcels of land which might be purchased to extend or round off their master's estate. In 1729, for example, Thomas Cradock advised Lord Mansel's guardians to purchase the Manor of Walterston in Gower, since it was "In respect of its situation and other conveniencies ... as proper and beneficial a purchase as could be made"[47].

In addition to being a legal expert, accountant and agriculturalist, the ideal steward had to advise his master on the industrial development of his estate. This aspect of estate management became increasingly important in eighteenth-century Glamorgan, particularly on the Tredegar, Briton Ferry, Gnoll and Margam estates. The steward was often responsible for the day-to-day running of the coal and iron works, for drawing up their accounts, for suggesting to his master where money should be invested and for selling the materials produced. Several stewards seem to have had a fairly detailed knowledge of contemporary industrial techniques and two, at least, involved themselves in their own, private industrial ventures. Gabriel Powell senior had a share in a copper-work near Swansea and both he and his son had interests in coal-mining. In the mid eighteenth century both James Pratt and Hugh Jones of the Tredegar estate had an interest in the Tredegar ironworks.



Finally, the steward was occasionally expected to act as an election agent for his master. At election times he had to arrange transport for the voters, in addition to food and, more important, drink for them. In a Glamorgan poll-book of 1745 there is an entry which illustrates this political role of the stewards: "The Candidate Thomas Mathews Esq. enters a protest against Gabriel Powell gent., agent to the Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Windsor and David Rees gent., steward to the Hon. Bussy Mansel for appearing as managers and continuing on the booth after being desired by the Sheriff to quit the same"[48]. David Rees was also accused of telling one of the voters what he should say.

In general, the impact of the land stewards on the economic development of eighteenth-century Glamorgan was an indirect one. As Professor Habakkuk has written, "Supervision of estate management rather than the promotion of agricultural improvement was their characteristic contribution[49]." A conscientious steward would know all the tenants on the estate and visit them at least once a year, though communication may have been hampered, particularly in the more remote, mountainous districts of Glamorgan, by the fact that many of the stewards were English and spoke little or no Welsh. It is worth noting that the founder of the Glamorgan Agricultural Society, John Franklen of Llanmihangel, was an estate steward. According to Iolo Morganwg, writing in 1796, "He (Franklen) has been the principal means of introducing the modern, improved system of agriculture into this county"[50].

Estate management certainly became increasingly efficient during the course of the eighteenth century and the number of stewards who were little more than rent-collectors decreased. The gradual abandonment of three-life leases and the introduction of shorter terms for holding the land increased the responsibilities of the landowners and brought more work for their stewards. More frequent contacts with the tenants were necessary and, in the case of annual tenancies, the landlord had to assume much of the responsibility for taxes and repairs: a responsibility which had previously fallen principally on the leaseholders. Such changes led landowners to demand a higher standard of accounting and the effect of this is immediately evident from the surviving documents. Instead of odd scraps of paper and accounts drawn up at long, irregular intervals

and in a haphazard manner, methods became more regular and, on the better-managed estates, an abstract of the accounts was drawn up every year for the landowner's approval. Nevertheless, due to the continuing use of the old Charge and Discharge system of accounting, it is possible to suspect that neither steward nor owner usually knew the financial position of the estate in any great detail. On the death of Pleydell Courteen — in most respects one of the more capable stewards — his accounts were found to be "Very irregular, confused and intricate"[51]. Until the latter part of the eighteenth century there was often considerable uncertainty about the boundaries of particular properties — a problem which was gradually overcome as standards of surveying improved and many estates were mapped in detail for the first time. Administration was probably least effective on the larger, older estates, which tended to be very scattered, with large numbers of tenants holding their land on three-life leases. In addition to such practical problems, the fact that the greater landowners were more likely to be at least partly non-resident than were their lesser neighbours increased the chances that their properties would be managed inefficiently or dishonestly. The greater landowners of Glamorgan seem generally to have been reluctant to spend money on tenanted property in this period and this fact, combined with their reliance on stewards and agents to manage their affairs, tended to nullify the advantages that they should have derived from the greater financial resources and expertise which were, in theory, at their disposal.

Perhaps Iolo Morganwg should have the last word on the estate stewards. He wrote that "The land stewards [of Glamorgan] are in general such, with respect to knowledge and honesty, as their employers seem to be satisfied with"[52]. The administration of an estate was, after all, ultimately the landowner's responsibility; if he demanded only that his steward should concern himself with collecting rents, drawing up leases, keeping accounts and holding the manorial courts, who was the steward to argue? An estate-owner such as Herbert Mackworth of Gnoll, who took a personal interest in the running of his estate and wished to make the most of its resources, would make sure that he employed a steward who would carry out his wishes. One who wanted only his rents would be less particular.

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## NOTES

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