Reaping Rewards

Autumn is harvest time, and there has been much in the news about how the heatwave of summer 2018 has affected arable farming. Wheat harvests came early, but salad crops suffered from the lack of water. We are better protected from food shortages and weather anomalies than our ancestors, but the weather still has a huge impact on this vital aspect of the economy.

Agriculture has always been an important industry in the United Kingdom, with arable and horticultural (i.e. crop) farming employing hundreds of thousands of people. It uses 20% of the UK's total land mass, but is particularly concentrated in the East and East Midlands.

The examples come from documents and rare books held by Manuscripts & Special Collections at The University of Nottingham. Our collections relate to the University and the wider East Midlands, including businesses. For more information:

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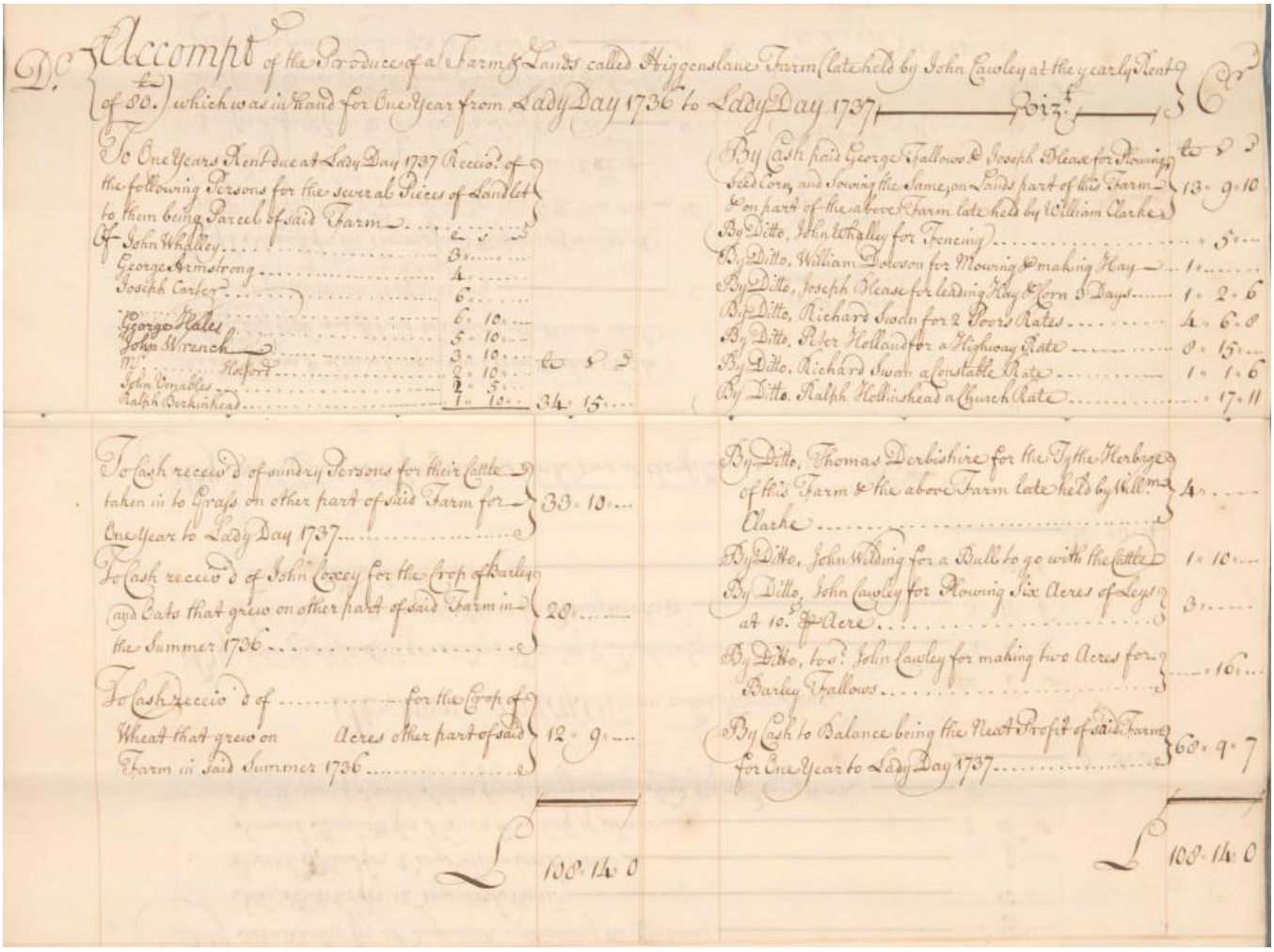


Dr. Accompt of the Produce of a Farm & Lands called Higgenslane Farm (late held by John Cawley at the yearly Rent of £80.) which was in Hand for One Year from Lady Day 1736 to Lady Day 1737 — Viz.

To One Years Rent due at Lady Day 1737 Receiv'd of the following Persons for the several Pieces of Land let to them being Parcel of said Farm

Of John Whalley	3		
George Armstrong	4		
Joseph Carter	6		
George Hales	6	10	
John Wrench	5	10	
Mr. Hosfort	3	10	
John Venables	2	10	
Ralph Berkinhead	2	5	
	1	10	
			34 15

To Cash receiv'd of sundry Persons for their Cattle taken in to Graze on other part of said Farm for One Year to Lady Day 1737 — 33 10

To Cash receiv'd of John Coxcey for the Crop of Barley and Oats that grew on other part of said Farm in the Summer 1736 — 20

To Cash receiv'd of ..... for the Crop of Wheat that grew on ..... Acres other part of said Farm in said Summer 1736 — 12 9

£ 100 14 0

By Cash paid George Fallows & Joseph Please for Plowing Seed Corn, and Sowing the same on Lands part of this Farm & on part of the above Farm late held by William Clarke — £ 13 9 10

By Ditto, John Whalley for Fencing — 5

By Ditto, William Dobson for Mowing & making Hay — 1

By Ditto, Joseph Please for leading Hay & Corn 3 Days — 1 2 6

By Ditto, Richard Swan for 2 Poors Rates — 4 6 8

By Ditto, Peter Holland for a Highway Rate — 8 15

By Ditto, Richard Swan a Constable Rate — 1 1 6

By Ditto, Ralph Hollinshead a Church Rate — 17 11

By Ditto, Thomas Derbishire for the Tythe Herbage of this Farm & the above Farm late held by Will.m Clarke — 4

By Ditto, John Wilding for a Bull to go with the Cattle — 1 10

By Ditto, John Cawley for Plowing Six Acres of Leys at 10.d ℔ Acre — 3

By Ditto, to.d John Cawley for making two Acres for Barley Fallows — 16

By Cash to Balance being the Neat Profit of said Farm for One Year to Lady Day 1737 — 60 9 7

£ 100 14 0

Estate account and rental for Higgenslane Farm, Cheshire, 1736-1737

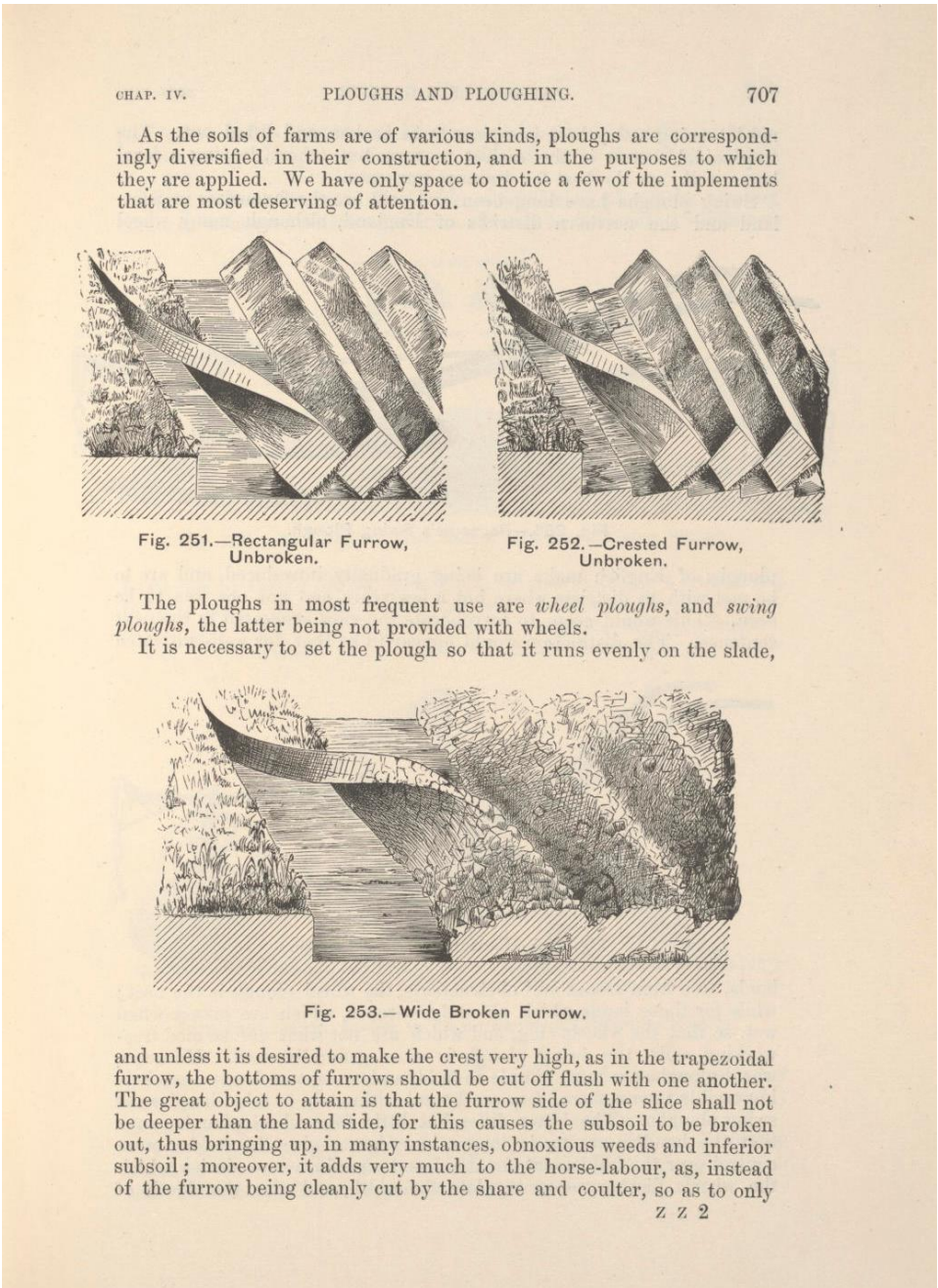
Account of receipts and expenditure on Higgenslane Farm for the year up to Lady Day 1737, from an estate account and rental for the manor of Dracklow and Rudheath, Cheshire. It includes entries for rents, expenditure on seed, ploughing and sowing, fencing, mowing and haymaking, rates, tithes, and workmen's wages.

Ref: Pl E4/1/20/1

Farming at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire; c.1920s-1930s

Agriculture suffered a depression in the inter-war years due to the impact of World War One on the economy, as prices rose and wages fell. For the first time, the majority of British millionaires were not landowning aristocrats but businessmen and investors.

Ref: MS 565/97



CHAP. IV. PLOUGHS AND PLOUGHING. 707

As the soils of farms are of various kinds, ploughs are correspondingly diversified in their construction, and in the purposes to which they are applied. We have only space to notice a few of the implements that are most deserving of attention.

Fig. 251.—Rectangular Furrow, Unbroken.

Fig. 252.—Crested Furrow, Unbroken.

The ploughs in most frequent use are *wheel ploughs*, and *swing ploughs*, the latter being not provided with wheels.

It is necessary to set the plough so that it runs evenly on the slade,

Fig. 253.—Wide Broken Furrow.

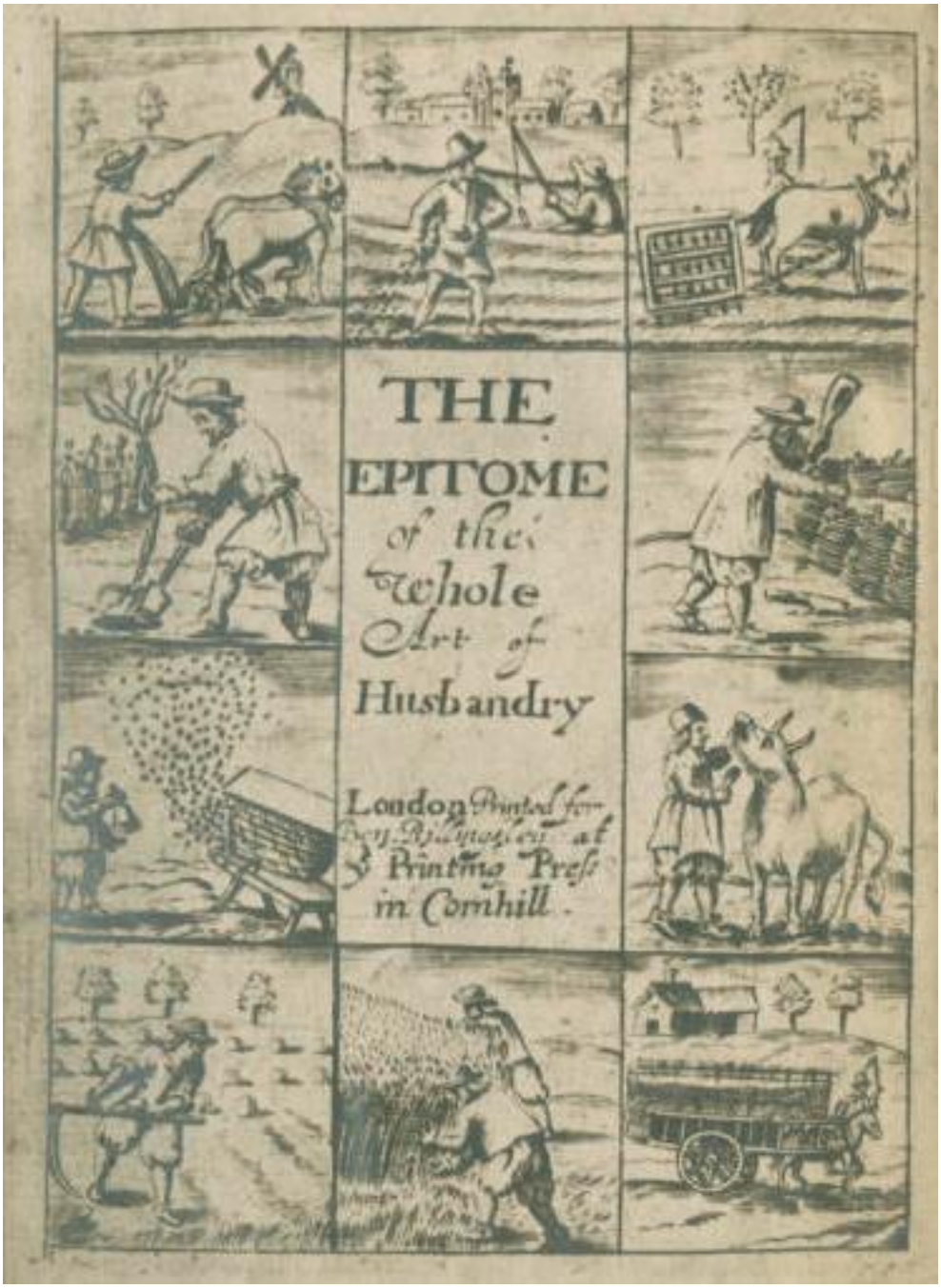
and unless it is desired to make the crest very high, as in the trapezoidal furrow, the bottoms of furrows should be cut off flush with one another. The great object to attain is that the furrow side of the slice shall not be deeper than the land side, for this causes the subsoil to be broken out, thus bringing up, in many instances, obnoxious weeds and inferior subsoil; moreover, it adds very much to the horse-labour, as, instead of the furrow being cleanly cut by the share and coulter, so as to only

Z Z 2

Illustrations of ploughed furrows, 1893

Illustrations of how the soil is turned over in a regular unbroken furrow, a crested unbroken furrow, and a wide broken furrow. In the Middle Ages, an acre was the area of land that could be ploughed in one day by a yoke of oxen, and thus varied depending on the landscape. Later it was standardised to 1/640 square mile. As it only ceased to be a standard unit of measurement in the UK in 1995, the vast majority of historical land records will refer to land in acres.

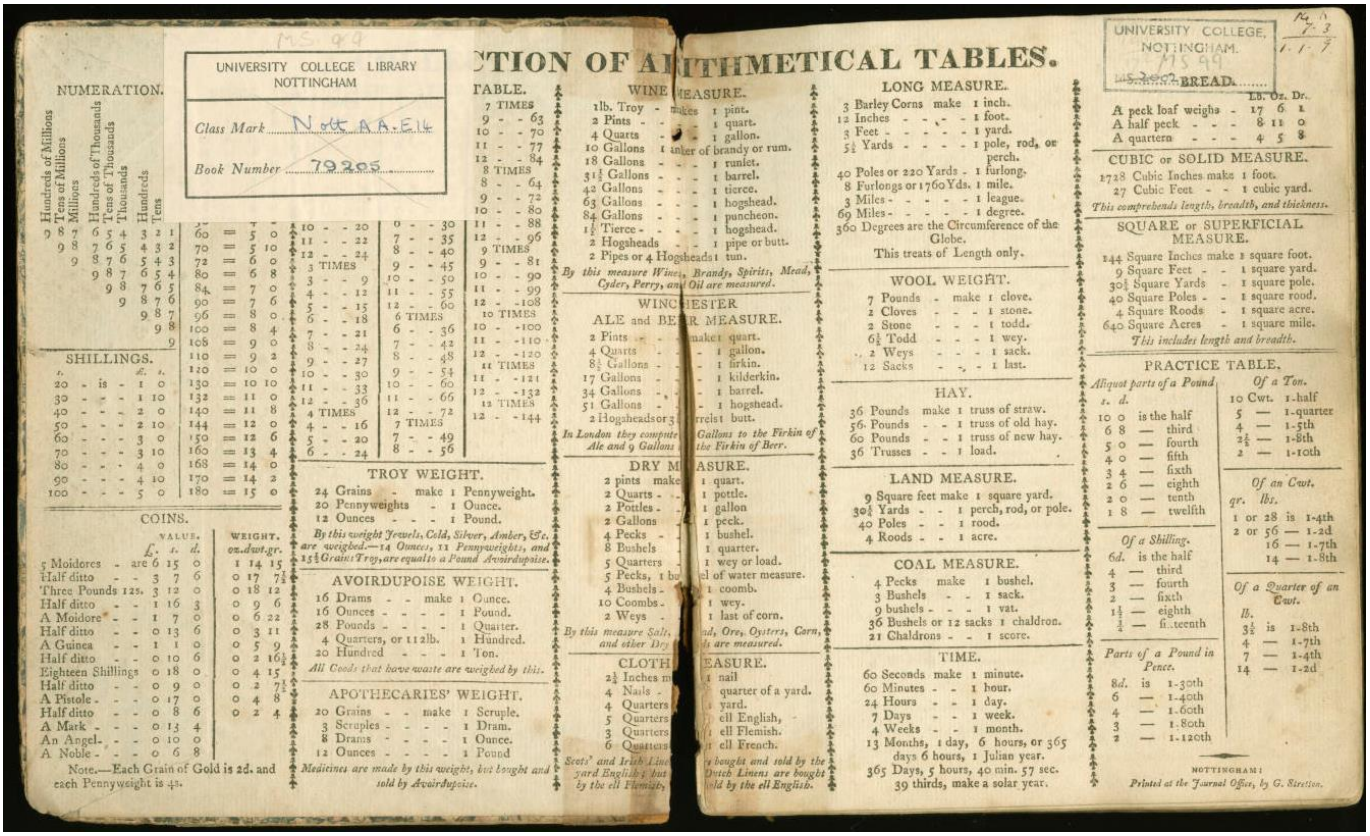
Ref: Youatt and Fream. *The complete grazier and farmers' and cattle-breeders' assistant (1893).* Special Collection S511.C6 barcode 6002593590



Printed title page showing ten agricultural illustrations relating to planting, harvesting and animal care; 1675

Many books, guides and manuals were published intended to provide advice, although the farming techniques and equipment was still quite primitive. They proved very popular, as the majority of the population was employed in agriculture, and would be until the Industrial Revolution.

Ref: Blagrave, Joseph. *The epitome of the art of husbandry: comprizing all necessary directions for the improvement of it etc (1675).* Special Collection S509.B5 barcode SC8716

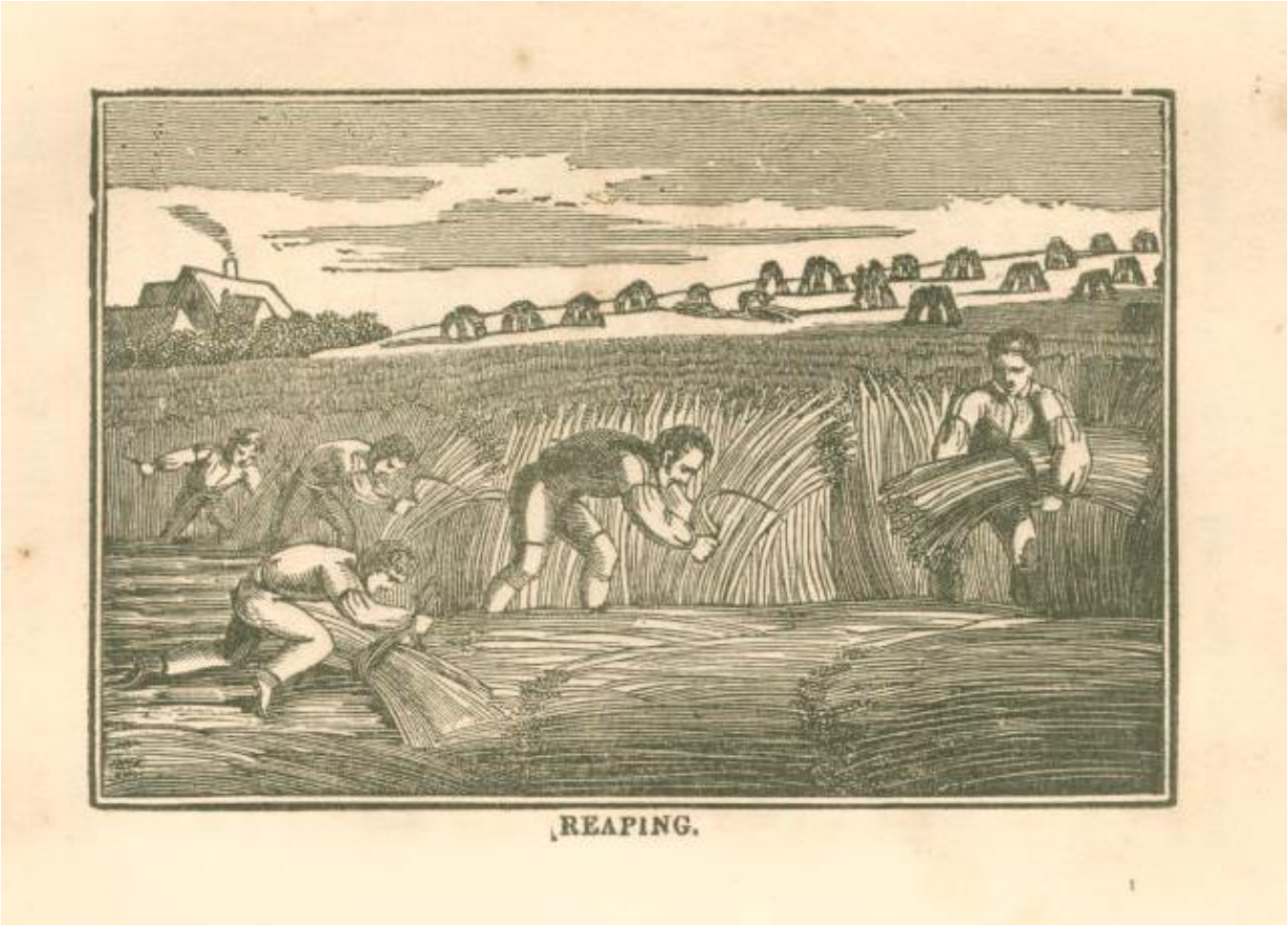


Printed tables showing currency, weights and measures; 1814-1848

From the inside cover of a memoranda book for a farm in the Stragglethorpe, Holme Pierrepont and Cotgrave area, Nottinghamshire. It was intended to be a handy reference guide, and with the baffling array of units of measurements it is easy to see why even the most adept tradesman or farmer might need prompting. The barley corn – literally the length of three grains of barley, approximately 1/3 of an inch or 0.8cm – was still a fundamental unit of measurement in 1814 but today survives mainly as the basis for shoe sizes in English-speaking countries.

The volume is a journal of agricultural activities. From internal evidence, the farm was a sheep farm, and it also produced the arable crops barley, corn, wheat, oats, grass, hay, turnips, swedes, potatoes and beans, many of which were probably grown for fodder.

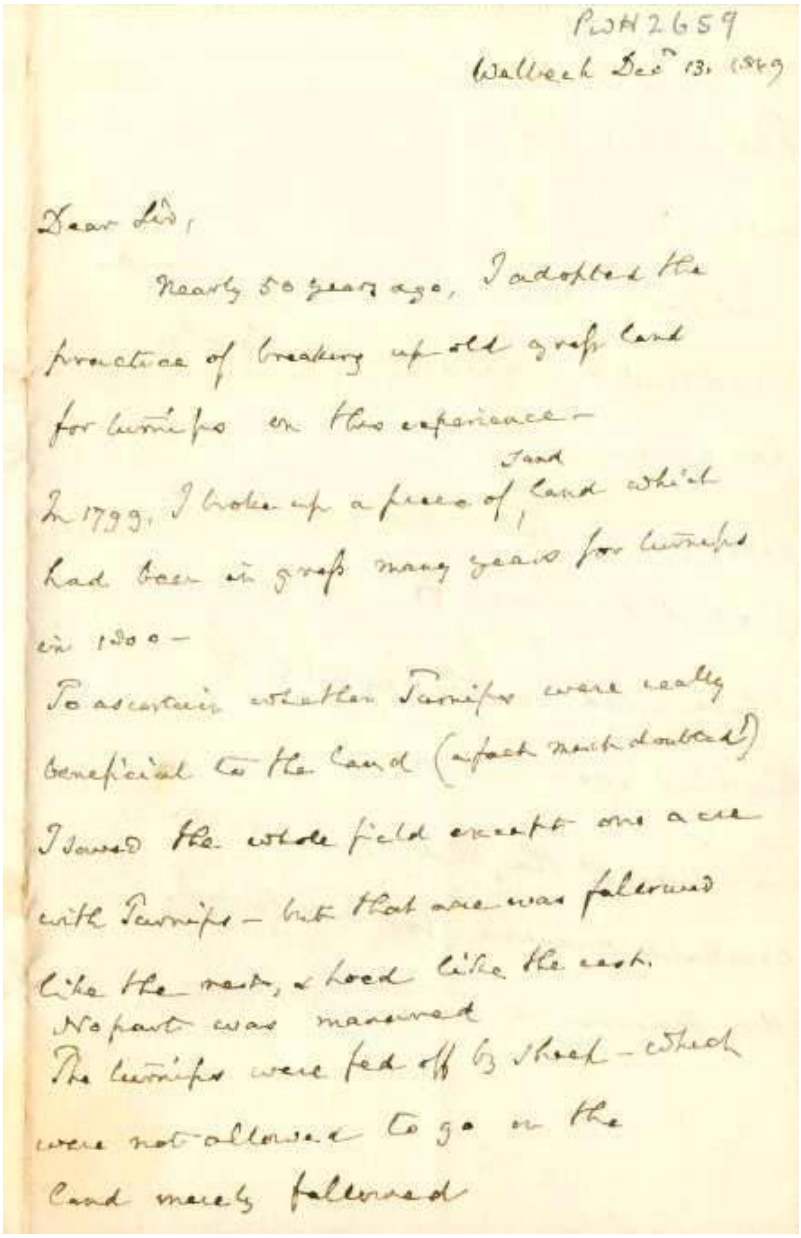
Ref: MS 99



Woodcut showing five men reaping corn in a field; 1831

Agricultural labour was hard manual labour until mechanisation became widespread in the 20th century. This volume combines descriptions of the weather, the insects, birds and wildlife to be seen, and the farmers' tasks, with poetry. Wheat was and remains the most widely grown and most valuable crop in the UK, with just over 13.2 million metric tons produced in 2012.

Ref: *Picture of the seasons: with anecdotes and remarks on every month in the year: embellished with* cuts (1831). Briggs Collection LT210.S/P4 barcode 1000214401



PwH 2659

Welbeck Dec^r 13. 1849

Dear Sir,

Nearly 50 years ago, I adopted the practice of breaking up old grass land for turnips on this experience – In 1799. I broke up a piece of land which had been in grass many years for turnips in 1800 –

To ascertain whether Turnips were really beneficial to the Land (in fact much doubted) I sowed the whole field except one acre with Turnips – but that acre was fallowed like the rest, & look like the rest. No part was manured The turnips were fed off by Sheep – which were not allowed to go on the Land merely fallowed

First page of a letter from the 4th Duke of Portland to Henry C. Sherbrooke, 13 December 1849

Crop rotation is important to help the soil recover after the harvest and to avoid a build-up of disease. Many 19th century farmers adopted a four-field system of rotation (wheat, turnips, barley, then clover). One such proponent was William Cavendish-Scott-Bentinck, 4th Duke of Portland (1768-1854) who took a great interest in agricultural innovation on his vast estates. He advocated growing turnips instead of leaving land fallow for a year, claiming that almost twice as much barley was produced the next year.

Ref: Pw H 2659

Students and staff inspecting potatoes at the Midland Agricultural College; c.1938

The University of Nottingham and its predecessor colleges have taught agriculture and farming since the 1890s. Amongst this group inspecting potatoes is Nora McDermott, lecturer at School of Agriculture. She was dubbed the ‘Potato Queen’ for her extensive knowledge of potatoes.

Ref: UMP/11/6/5