

## Reshaping Rural Culture? The Church of England and Hiring Fairs in the East Riding of Yorkshire c. 1850–80

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**Abstract** A previous article in *Rural History* entitled ‘“Rustic and Rude”: Hiring Fairs and their Critics in East Yorkshire c. 1850–75’, examined a critique of hiring fairs and farm service mounted by the Church of England in the East Riding of Yorkshire during the mid-Victorian period. This discussion builds upon that article by offering a more detailed examination of the actual attempts to reform and abolish hiring fairs that emanated from that critique. The article examines three stages of reform and abolition stretching over the mid-Victorian period: a first stage that centred upon imposing a system of hiring based upon written characters; a second stage that focussed upon imposing segregated hiring for male and female servants, and a final abolitionist stage. The campaign’s tactics and the various measures deployed against hiring fairs during each stage are detailed and their level of success evaluated and explained. The broader motivations of the campaign and the manner in which they signified deeper Church anxieties about the nature of the rural social order are also discussed in a concluding evaluation of the campaign’s impact.

A previous article in *Rural History* examined a critique of hiring fairs and farm service mounted by the Church of England in the East Riding of Yorkshire during the mid-Victorian period.<sup>1</sup> This discussion builds upon that article by offering a more detailed examination of the actual attempts to reform and abolish hiring fairs that emanated from that critique. Because there is a close correlation between the measures deployed against hiring fairs, their economic and social context, and the critique that presaged them, these aspects will be briefly revisited.

The context for the critique was the East Riding of Yorkshire and its system of agriculture. By the mid-Victorian period the East Riding was associated with a dynamic and large-scale form of arable farming and had established itself as one of the more progressive agricultural regions in English agriculture.<sup>2</sup> Unlike many arable counties, however, the East Riding had combined the transition to large-scale capitalist agriculture with an expansion, rather than a decline, in its reliance upon the labour of male and female farm servants. These farm servants ‘lived in’ on the farm and were hired on annual contracts created at hiring fairs held in November and December of each year.<sup>3</sup> The continuation and expansion of farm service in the East Riding meant that its hiring fairs remained a vibrant aspect of the local festival calendar. This vibrancy, and the

persistence of farm service that underpinned it, were major sources of irritation for rural clergymen as an examination of their critique of hiring fairs will illustrate.

The Church of England's antipathy towards hiring fairs can be summarised in terms of two analytical categories: 'internal' and 'external'.<sup>4</sup> By the 'internal' critique, is meant those criticisms directed at the fairs actual content.<sup>5</sup> Here the Evangelicals' concerns with the dangers of 'the world' were most salient. In this respect the Church critics focused upon the carnivalesque turbulence of the hiring fair, its absence of moral restraint and its reputation for disorder and excess. They also focused upon the hiring practices of farmers, particularly their alleged neglect of moral character when selecting their servants. The 'external' critique located the hiring fair within the broader context of a perceived crisis in farm service. From this perspective the problematic behaviour at hiring fairs was regarded as a reflection of the moral degeneration that had become characteristic of the farm servant's way of life. It was suggested that farm service had once functioned as a system of social control with farmers presiding over a close and caring paternal regime. Contemporary farmers, in contrast, were castigated for treating farm servants as little more than factors of production and for neglecting the moral character and conduct of the male and female servants boarded on their farms.<sup>6</sup> This problem of farmers' alleged absence of control over the everyday lives of their servants was exacerbated by the manner in which agricultural change had reshaped the settlement pattern of parts of the East Riding.<sup>7</sup> This meant that farm servants were increasingly likely to be congregated on large isolated farmsteads away from villages. This placed many of them outside of the influence of parish clergy which, when combined with the neglect of their employers, created a seemingly demoralised and disruptive spectre lurking on the margins of parish life. The Church of England critique of hiring fairs was, therefore, a dual one. Hiring fairs were themselves a source of moral evil but their danger was amplified because they were integral to the practice of hiring farm servants on yearly contracts and boarding them on the farm. The combined effect of this interrelated system of hiring fairs, annual contracts and living in was, it seemed, a negative one – a rootless, delinquent and amoral sub-group whose lifestyle and culture challenged the Anglican ideal of a stable parish community.<sup>8</sup>

The East Riding was not alone in experiencing Anglican hostility towards hiring fairs and farm service at this time. By the 1850s there was a national campaign against hiring fairs and the lifestyle and culture of farm servants was a source of concern and irritation in other counties.<sup>9</sup> The contradictions between the parochial ideal of the Church, the manner in which agricultural modernisation had underpinned the hiring fair, and a reshaped farm service system were, however, especially pronounced in the East Riding. The aims of the Church of England campaign against hiring fairs in the East Riding reflected this. Its ultimate objective, for its most zealous advocates at least, was to secure the end of hiring fairs, yearly contracts and even farm service itself. Most opponents of hiring fairs recognised that their economic function as labour markets and their popularity as rural festivals meant that immediate, outright suppression was unlikely. As a consequence, the main focus of the mid-Victorian campaign by the Church of England concentrated upon developing an approach that was designed to secure abolition through stealth. What emerged was a strategy of eroding and undermining the functions of hiring fairs by

providing a substitute system. These attempts to provide a substitute system developed in three main stages. The first originated in the 1850s and involved attempts to supplant existing verbal agreements made at the hirings with written 'characters' administered through registration societies. From around 1860 a second and overlapping initiative developed which sought to establish hiring rooms and register offices at hiring fairs. The third phase emerged in the early 1870s and involved an attempt to promote separate hirings for men and women at different times of the year and also to secure the legal abolition of hiring fairs. These three stages of reform will now be examined in more detail.

The first stage began in the early 1850s when a number of Anglican clergymen attempted to co-ordinate clergy, landowners and farmers in a combined effort to introduce a 'moral nexus' as the basis of relations between masters and servants.<sup>10</sup> Farmers were called upon to issue every servant leaving their employment with a written character 'briefly but fairly and honestly specifying what his conduct had been in his employer's service, to which might be added ... the sort of situation his capacities qualified him for undertaking' and to '*Never hire a servant without asking for written characters of this nature*'.<sup>11</sup> It was envisaged that the introduction of written characters of this kind would provide a reminder to both farmers and servants that past conduct and moral character were as important as skill, experience, strength and cost in the hiring process. In order to promote this new system, and guarantee its moral rigour, the written characters were to be administered through a network of registration societies located in the towns and villages of the Riding. These offices had the task of collating and keeping a duplicate record of all written characters and acting as a source of information for farmers seeking servants and servants seeking employment. Once established, therefore, register offices would provide an alternative means and locus for the hiring of farm servants, which would, it was envisaged, render the annual hiring fairs unnecessary. By shifting the act of hiring away from the hiring fair and encouraging the adoption of a contract that was more flexible in its creation and duration, it was hoped that the current practice of hiring servants from Martinmas to Martinmas (November 23) would also fall into decay. It was also envisaged that as a consequence of this, the custom of all farm servants being released simultaneously from their contracts at Martinmas, for a week's annual holiday, would decline as the farm servants' holiday moved with the point of engagement to any time of the year. Stripped of their legitimate economic functions and denied their annual influx of rural youth, the hiring fairs would, it was hoped, effectively wither away.

In order to secure the co-operation of farmers and servants, the campaigners emphasised the benefits of abandoning the hiring fair and the form of contract with which it was associated. It was suggested, for example, that employers would 'obtain a better conducted class of servants, and more efficient control over them'.<sup>12</sup> As one of the clerical activists in the campaign pointed out, this was because of the

additional authority and power a master would have over his servant, by having it always in his power in the event of wilful negligence, disobedience, or misconduct to threaten that he should, at the years end, decline giving a satisfactory account of his behaviour; for were this system universally adopted as it ought to be, servants would soon discover the loss of having only an indifferent character to show to a person wishing to engage them.<sup>13</sup>

The clergy claimed that this new system would also benefit the farm servants because under the new regime those who were 'well principled, well educated, well brought up, sober, honest and intelligent' would find that these qualities received greater recognition and reward.<sup>14</sup> In addition, because the new agreements could be made at any time and place, all farm servants would no longer be compelled, by the need to find work, to attend hiring fairs and suffer the moral degradation and physical discomfort that this entailed.<sup>15</sup>

A network of farmers' clubs existed in the East Riding and the Anglican clergy regarded these as a means through which these reforms could be publicised and promoted. Clerical opponents of the hiring fairs attended club meetings and urged farmers to co-operate in the formation of register offices and to use written characters.<sup>16</sup> The campaign received considerable publicity in the local press, which reported these meetings and printed letters from clergy attacking the present system and outlining their proposals for change. By March 1854 the issue of hiring fairs and the necessity for their reform was reported as 'engrossing considerable attention' in the East Riding area.<sup>17</sup> This attention also focused upon the allegedly degenerate condition of the East Riding farm servant. The momentum was maintained during the summer and autumn of 1854 as the letter pages and editorial sections of the local press deplored the immorality of the hirings, the moral malaise affecting farm servants and commended the efforts being made to elevate their condition.<sup>18</sup> One notable intervention into this discursive process which sought to demonise both hiring fairs and farm service was that of the Chairman of the East Riding Magistrates, Charles William Strickland, who, in April 1854 attacked 'the reckless carelessness of employers as to the character of their servants' citing this as the prime reason why 'sessions after sessions, they had cases of stealing by farm servants from their masters'.<sup>19</sup> Another success for those advocating reform was having the hiring-fair question adopted as the discussion topic for the Council Dinner of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society in 1854.<sup>20</sup> Clearly the Church was exploiting its traditional association with the land-owning elite in order to promote awareness of its campaign and encourage farmers to co-operate with it.

In terms of actual results the campaign appears also to have met with some success. After receiving an address by Reverend F. O. Morris, one of the leading activists in the campaign, Driffield Farmers' Club appointed a committee of 'fourteen Gentlemen' to consider the question of the abolition of the present system of hiring.<sup>21</sup> At the June meeting of the club, it was resolved that the clergy within the area should be requested to 'use their influence with the farmers to give written certificates of character to their servants'.<sup>22</sup> By July, Driffield Farmers' Club had established a register office in Driffield for 'the purpose of ascertaining the character of all farm-servants employed in that neighbourhood', and the farmers of Driffield were reported to 'have made up their minds to close the doors against Farm Servants not of approved habits of morality and industry'.<sup>23</sup> Farmers' clubs at Howden and Pocklington had also indicated their support by agreeing that they would no longer hire servants without written characters.<sup>24</sup> A number of East Riding landowners also lent their support to the campaign in the form of offering their patronage of and participation in registration societies. The Sykes family, the largest landowners in the region, was particularly supportive of the cause. They worked alongside the clergy in establishing register offices and sponsored functions

designed to encourage attention to moral character amongst the female farm and domestic servants employed on farms on their estate.<sup>25</sup> Those of good character were also invited to 'Martinmas Feasts' at the close of which every servant's character was read aloud – a finale that ensured 'every eye sparkled with emotion'.<sup>26</sup> By 1859, register offices had been established in a number of parishes on the Sykes estate including the Wolds' villages of Nafferton, Wansford, Wetwang, Sledmere, Garton, Weaverthorpe, Fimber and Fridaythorpe.<sup>27</sup> Another prominent East-Riding landowner, Sir Henry Boynton, encouraged his tenants to sign a petition condemning the hiring of female servants at statute fairs.<sup>28</sup> These and other actions against what it described as 'The evils attendant upon public hirings' were regarded by the *Yorkshire Gazette* as evidence that 'a very strong effort is being made to put them down, and to introduce a system more consonant with public decency and social order'.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of these efforts, however, the level of success achieved by the campaign during the 1850s was limited. As advocates of change recognised, in order to offer a credible alternative to the established system of contracts and hiring fairs, written characters would have had to be have been adopted on a near universal basis.<sup>30</sup> This proved to be an unrealisable objective. The resistance of farm servants was especially problematic. The correspondent of the *Yorkshire Gazette* who discussed the issue of reform with the farm servants standing at York's hirings in 1854 found them opposed to the idea of reform.<sup>31</sup> The opposition of farm servants stemmed in part from their continued attachment to the traditional holiday festivities that took place at the hirings. But it also reflected the fact that the customary verbal means of negotiating contracts, wages and conditions at the hirings continued to offer material rewards. In this respect the timing of the reform campaign was unfortunate as it coincided with a revival of the agricultural economy and a tightening of the market for farm servant labour. This meant that the Anglican-led campaign emerged at a time when the hiring fairs were functioning as a particularly effective vehicle for the farm servants' collective bargaining strategies.<sup>32</sup> This unfavourable context was exacerbated by the tactics and rhetoric employed by the opponents of current hiring practices. Servant opposition to change had been anticipated and there was some attempt to reassure farm servants that there was no intention of harming their entitlement to a holiday, or their interests in general.<sup>33</sup> As a rule, however, the letters and pamphlets on the issue talked about farm servants rather than to them. Campaigners such as Reverend John Eddowes of Garton on the Wolds, offered themselves and their fellow agitators before farm servants as 'your real friends . . . only desirous of your improvement' but when such claims were accompanied by descriptions of servants as 'rudely independent', 'disobedient and impertinent' and 'heedless and ignorant' one can only conclude that such utterances were unlikely to draw the farm servants to the barricades of reform.<sup>34</sup> Generally, the farm servants were regarded as objects of reform who were ignorant of their own degradation and therefore unable to comprehend their true interests. The observer of Driffield hirings in 1854, for example, believed that 'the servants themselves . . . would feel great repugnance to the hirings being abolished' but discounted these feelings on the grounds that 'Like all persons who are the subjects of an evil system, they would be found to oppose every measure for its improvement'.<sup>35</sup> Given the condition of the agricultural labour market at

this time, such indifference towards farm servant opinion was misplaced. Farm servants were well placed to resist the attempted implementation of written characters as the newspaper report of Bridlington hirings in 1854 noted with perhaps a touch of irony:

One extensive farmer in this neighbourhood, who is parting from several of his servants this Martinmas, offered to give them written characters, and for this purpose he provided himself with printed forms, to be filled up according to circumstances, yet, strange to say, every servant refused to accept such documents, saying that they could get hired quite as well without such characters as with them.<sup>36</sup>

Reformers may have underestimated the importance of winning over the farm servants to their cause but they were keenly aware that securing the co-operation of farmers was fundamental. It was felt that if farmers and mistresses would determine to use only register offices and written characters, servants would have no choice but to follow their example.<sup>37</sup> In some respects the Church effort was well positioned to secure the support of farmers because its campaign was launched at time when there was some dissatisfaction on their part with hiring fairs and annual contracts. During the early 1850s the effects of the tightening labour market had enabled farm servants to manipulate the hirings and the annual contract in ways that provoked irritation amongst farmers particularly with regard to the frequency with which servants broke their contracts.<sup>38</sup> Clergymen recognised this and offered their own alternative system as a remedy, emphasising, as was noted above, that it would offer the employer more control over their servants.<sup>39</sup> The example of Driffield and other farmers' clubs willingness to co-operate with the movement illustrates that some farmers were prepared to support the new system.<sup>40</sup> There were also letters in the local press from farmers complaining of the present condition of farm servants and their unruly behaviour, which also indicated support for change.<sup>41</sup> Even at this early stage in the campaign, however, the clerical critique of farm service that was integral to the clamour for a change in hiring practices was a source of irritation for many farmers. The views of the Beeford farmer William Barugh, who published a pamphlet on the issue, offer an illustration of this.<sup>42</sup> Barugh was generally supportive of a change in hiring practices, but he clearly resented some of the criticisms levelled at farmers by local clergy. He argued that these were the product of an idealised and ill-informed view of rural life and that as a consequence they were exaggerated and misplaced.<sup>43</sup> He also indicated that farmers and clergymen had divergent views on what was the most appropriate way forward. Barugh argued that the fundamental problem was not an absence of employer paternalism or the immorality of the hirings but the shifting balance of power between labour and capital in the market place. This he suggested was the root cause of the 'insubordination' prevalent amongst farm servants because it enabled them to hire and break their contracts almost at will.<sup>44</sup> In offering this analysis Barugh was foreshadowing a divergence of opinion between farmers and clergymen that was to become more significant in the course of time.

At this stage, however, it was the condition of the labour market and its capacity to empower the farm servants rather than farmers' reluctance to embrace the reforms proposed by clergymen that undermined the early efforts to abolish hiring fairs. Even those farmers willing to support the new system found that they were not able to do so

because of the resistance of farm servants. Thus, although reformers could point to their success in at least beginning to establish an alternative mode of hiring, their impact on the hiring fairs themselves was negligible during the 1850s. At Driffield, for example, the newspaper report of the hirings in 1859 concluded that: 'notwithstanding the efforts being made to put down these meetings, the company was more numerous than for several years'.<sup>45</sup> That this was the case at a hiring fair that was at the centre of reforming activity at this time indicates that the campaign was as yet having little success in securing the decline, never mind the complete abolition, of customary hiring practices.

The lack of success achieved up to the late 1850s was also conceded by one of the most active Anglican opponents of hiring fairs, Reverend J. Skinner, Curate of Driffield. In 1861, he published a tract entitled *Facts and Opinions Concerning Statute Hirings*. This contained many examples of condemnations and criticisms of hiring fairs drawn from the East Riding and elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> When it turned to offering examples of successful attempts to supplant hirings via the introduction of register offices, however, Skinner's tract cited Lincolnshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, but offered no mention of the East Riding other than his comment that 'If success has attended the establishment of Register Offices elsewhere, I do not see why they should not be equally successful in the East Riding'.<sup>47</sup> He then called for the adoption of measures not dissimilar to those advanced by East Riding clergy in the early 1850s when he suggested 'That Register Offices be established in every Town or Village where Statutes are held, and others if thought advisable'.<sup>48</sup> Evidently these reforms had had so little impact that a local clergyman was either unaware of them or deemed them unworthy of mention.

Skinner's intervention, and the publicity it gained in the local press, helped to move the East Riding campaign into a second phase which attempted to offer a more direct challenge to the internal practices of the hiring fair. The original aim of securing the abolition of hiring fairs through the promotion of written characters and registration societies remained, but the campaign increasingly concentrated its energy upon the provision of indoor accommodation for the hiring and registration of female farm servants at the hiring fairs themselves. This decision to concentrate the effort upon female servants may have been informed by the experience of the first phase of the campaign. The reports of the societies established on the Sykes estate, for example, indicate that they had managed to gain a foothold amongst what were termed 'rural domestic servants', a group of female workers who were still hired in large numbers at outdoor hirings in the 1850s.<sup>49</sup> Another initiative had been instigated at York hirings where, from 1857, the provision of 'accommodation and refreshments for young persons especially females attending the fair, ... had been the means of keeping several hundreds of them from the public houses'.<sup>50</sup> Whatever the reasons, indoor hiring facilities aimed at females and located at the hiring fairs themselves were now regarded as the prime means of offering a fundamental challenge to the hiring fair and securing its eventual abolition.<sup>51</sup>

From 1860 Reverend Skinner launched a series of initiatives designed to achieve this end at Driffield hirings. He issued an address *To the Masters and Mistresses of Farm Houses in the East Riding of Yorkshire* which warned of the dangers that the fairs posed to the moral character of young women and called upon masters and mistresses to

abandon the custom of hiring female servants at them.<sup>52</sup> His address then announced that at the forthcoming hirings at Driffield, the Corn Exchange would be available as a register office for female servants.<sup>53</sup> Employers were urged to hire only those female servants with a written character and to issue their own servants with characters, which had to be 'strictly correct'.<sup>54</sup> They were also instructed to encourage their servants to pursue private enquiries away from the hirings in village register offices and, if possible, prevent and dissuade their female servants from attending hiring fairs. Until the hiring of females at hiring fairs had been totally supplanted, however, those servants attending statute hirings were to be encouraged to make extensive use of the indoor register offices established at them.<sup>55</sup> Copies of this address were distributed to farm houses in the locality by local clergy who were specifically requested to discuss the issues of reform with the Mistress of each farm so as 'to solicit their interest in the effort'.<sup>56</sup> Skinner's address was also printed in local newspapers, which, in drawing attention to his efforts offered their own words of encouragement and called for the public to support him.<sup>57</sup>

This energetic approach towards publicity was continued on the day of the hiring fair. Large placards advertising the new hiring facility were posted on lampposts at the corner of every road leading into Driffield and outside the Corn Exchange itself.<sup>58</sup> Male 'helpers' were stationed in the Market Place and, assisted by the local police, directed girls to the rooms that had been made available for hiring. The rooms were carpeted with 'clean straw'; benches and cheap refreshments were also provided.<sup>59</sup> In a letter to the *Yorkshire Gazette* in which he reported on the progress of his experiment, Skinner claimed that it had been 'crowned *with complete success*':

The hall was opened at ten, one room was speedily filled so that I was compelled to throw open another still larger. The mistresses came and the servants followed . . . The *usual* place for standing was *cleared*, and the town altogether wore a more comfortable and quiet appearance.<sup>60</sup>

As a result of this success, a permanent register office was opened in Exchange Street, Driffield and Skinner declared that the experiment would be repeated the following year.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly the Corn Exchange was opened for female servants at the next year's hiring and once again met with success. The rooms set aside for hiring and registration being described as 'crowded' in the newspaper report of Driffield hirings in 1861.<sup>62</sup>

Skinner was no longer curate at Driffield in 1862 but his successor, Reverend J. Nares, continued the work. The Corn Exchange was again opened for the hiring of female servants. Nares and several other local clergymen were present in the rooms and, as well as superintending the proceedings, distributed addresses containing 'some admirable advice to both servants and their employers, on the duties to themselves and all connected with them'.<sup>63</sup> It was estimated that 3000 people attended that year.<sup>64</sup> By the end of the 1860s this practice of providing indoor accommodation and refreshments for the female servants had become established at Driffield. In 1869, for example, 'an immense number of servants and employers were present' at Driffield hirings but whilst the 'the streets were crowded with men servants and masters', the 'female servants, and those who wished to do business with them' were accommodated in the Corn Exchange and the Assembly Rooms, which were reported as being in a 'crowded state'.<sup>65</sup>



The 1860s also heralded a bout of reforming zeal at Bridlington, Beverley and Hedon. At Bridlington in 1861, the Corn Exchange was opened for female servants but they refused to use it.<sup>66</sup> The following year, however, despite fine weather the 'female portion' of a large assembly were 'prevailed on to enter the Corn-exchange' and did so.<sup>67</sup> Mary Simpson, daughter of one of the prominent critics of farm service and hiring fairs, Reverend F. Simpson, was involved in the reform movement at Bridlington and her account of the preparations made prior to the first success there suggest that Reverend James Skinner's efforts at Driffield had provided a model. Before the hiring day, circulars advertising the facilities being offered and urging their use were sent to all clergy in the surrounding district with a request that they should distribute them to farmers in their parishes. Placards advertising indoor accommodation and refreshments were also placed at every blacksmith's shop in the Bridlington area. On the hiring day itself, 'helpers' were placed on the streets of Bridlington, their task being that of 'directing girls the way of the Corn Exchange as they entered the Town'.<sup>68</sup> According to Mary Simpson:

The room was soon filled, and the hiring went on briskly. The mistresses were greatly pleased, remarking with surprised satisfaction how much better behaved the girls were than when hired in the streets, where all was confusion and rude joking and jostling among the lads.<sup>69</sup>

As was the case elsewhere, those seeking to promote indoor hirings were helped by the police. On the morning of the hiring, Simpson 'found the police already at the Corn Exchange, before the appointed hour, a good fire lighted, and all prepared'.<sup>70</sup>

At Beverley, where Mary Simpson was also involved, the Assembly Rooms were first opened for the use of female farm servants in 1861. The male farm servants were allowed to remain about the Market Cross, the traditional location for hiring at Beverley.<sup>71</sup> Here, success was achieved at the first attempt, with the inclement weather playing a helpful hand in overcoming the reluctance of female servants:

Last year, which was the first year that the experiment was tried at Beverley, it had been a pouring day, and it seemed for some time to hang in the balance whether it would succeed or fail: the girls (doubtless backed by the lads) having long persevered standing the streets, till, when quite soaked they were at last induced to avail themselves of the offered shelter.<sup>72</sup>

Once this initial wariness and reluctance had been overcome, however, the new measure proved popular and established itself as part of the fabric of Beverley's large hiring fair. On the second year of the experiment, for example, Simpson recalled that 'there was no doubt from the first; all went, like a flock of sheep, into the large public rooms provided for them. There were 1300 present at one time, including, of course, the farmer's wives, who were much delighted'.<sup>73</sup> Although Simpson's account of the progress made at Beverley hirings implies that reformers swept all before them, some female servants continued to hire outdoors. In 1866, for example, it was reported that the 'greater part' of the hiring for female servants took place at the Norwood Assembly Rooms, suggesting that at least some part of it took place outside.<sup>74</sup>

At Hedon, the effort began in 1862. Prompted by the urgings of clergy and local magistrates in the district, 'three or four ladies' including the wife of Reverend Fox, vicar of Hedon, opened the Town Hall for the hiring of female servants, providing 'a plentiful supply of tea and coffee' as an added attraction.<sup>75</sup> They enjoyed immediate success and 'the female servants were induced to leave their old standing place in the open air, and to avail themselves of the provision made for their comfort, unexposed to the many evils which inevitably attend hirings in the public market'.<sup>76</sup> The servants were reported as being 'well satisfied' with the change, and by the late 1860s, the Town Hall at Hedon had become established as the major location for the hiring of female servants at Hedon.<sup>77</sup>

Similar changes were introduced at Malton and York, although here the female servants seem to have been less co-operative than those elsewhere. At Malton the process of reform began in 1862 when the clergy of Malton and the surrounding district, through the auspices of The Society for Promoting the Respectability of the Female Servant, opened Malton Corn Exchange 'free of charge' for the hiring of female farm servants 'in order to separate them from the lads, and the immorality of the open market place and beer shops'.<sup>78</sup> This measure appears to have met some success but the following year 'hot meals at cheap rates' were offered as an added inducement.<sup>79</sup> By 1864 it was claimed that the majority of females had used the Corn Exchange, that only 'the roughest of the sex still resorted to the open market', and 'masters and mistresses preferred those who did not "stand the market"'.<sup>80</sup> Although indoor hiring for female servants became the normal practice at Malton, the resistance of a tenacious minority of female servants continued and proved irksome for those seeking reform. In 1869, for example, although the Corn Exchange was described as 'well patronised' it was also observed that 'In the open market, however, there were hundreds of boys and men, and among them great numbers of rougher girls, who regard the statutes as a time of revelry and cling to the custom of "standing the market" with the men'.<sup>81</sup> A minority of women continued to rebut the offer of indoor hiring at Malton throughout the mid-Victorian period.<sup>82</sup> The tenuous nature of the changes so far realised by the reform movement at Malton was illustrated in 1877 when 'through some misunderstanding the Corn Exchange was not opened till late', and all women returned to the old system of 'standing the market' with the male servants.<sup>83</sup> At Malton the campaign introduced an interesting innovation in that it attempted to extend the segregation of men and women outside the hiring fair itself. In 1863, for example, 'at the request of clergy' the North Eastern Railway Company provided carriages marked 'for females only' on trains to and from Malton hirings. This proved a short-lived experiment, however, as the carriages provided were 'almost deserted'.<sup>84</sup>

At York, the impulse for significant reform stemmed from the activities of an ecumenical philanthropic agency, the York Society for the Prevention of Youthful Depravity. This organisation, formed in 1808, had lain dormant for several years but it was reconstituted in 1859 as a sister society of the York Penitentiary Society.<sup>85</sup> Aware 'that many young persons fall into temptation and sin during the Martinmas hirings' and that in recent years there had been some success in attracting female servants to indoor accommodation, the society resolved 'to extend this means of usefulness and

make it more generally known'.<sup>86</sup> To this end, the society hired the Merchant's Hall in Fossgate, for the two main hiring days of York's Martinmas fair in 1859. Cheap tea, coffee and other refreshments were offered in an attempt 'to draw farmers' servants and others, to that place, and thus enable them to avoid those haunts of vice which so thickly abound the city'.<sup>87</sup> This facility was advertised in local newspapers and on handbills distributed in neighbouring villages.<sup>88</sup> It was claimed that approximately four hundred people visited the hall over the two days.<sup>89</sup> This was a relatively modest number for such a large hiring fair but the experiment was repeated in 1860. On this occasion the venture was advertised as the 'Farm Servants Cheap Tea and Coffee Room' and received the 'special patronage of the Lord mayor of York'.<sup>90</sup> There was an increase in attendance with 450 males and females attending over the two days, each receiving as their reward – a religious tract.<sup>91</sup> The following year, 1861, witnessed further developments. As usual the Merchant Hall was opened for tea coffee and other refreshments but now it catered only for female servants. A register office was also opened at the hall. Registration facilities for male servants were now available at a Post Office in nearby Walmgate and in Coney St in the city centre.<sup>92</sup> Once again, however, only limited success was achieved. Complaints made by local shopkeepers to the city council regarding the crowds of female servants gathered before their shops indicate that female servants were still being hired in large numbers in the open streets at York that year.<sup>93</sup>

By 1863, the register office facilities offered at York had been incorporated into the Church of England's campaign against hiring fairs, becoming part of a network of register offices provided by the Bulmer, Ainsty and Buckrose Registration Society. The hall was now superintended by Canon Randolph, a prominent Church of England opponent of hiring fairs and critic of farm service.<sup>94</sup> Despite this, however, the new system failed to advance upon the modest success of previous years, with only 200 persons using the hall on the Monday, the first day of York's hirings in 1863. The main problem for the reform effort at York was a reluctance on the part of farm servants to use the facilities provided; it being recorded that although 'a large number' of farmers were disposed to use the 'new and improved system of hiring' the number of servants who were willing to do so was 'not so satisfactory'.<sup>95</sup> The majority of servants and, therefore, masters at the hirings that year were to be found outside in the open streets.<sup>96</sup>

The following year saw a change of tactics. The Merchants Hall in Fossgate remained open for refreshments but additional accommodation for farmers and servants was also made available in a large room at the White Swan Hotel on the corner of High Ousegate and Coppergate. The White Swan was a large public house and hotel in the centre of York adjacent to the usual location for the hiring of male and female servants. In offering their facilities at a popular resort for farm servants, campaigners were clearly hoping that this would encourage increased patronage. The campaign's supporters in the press attributed the fact that it did not to the unusually fine weather that year.<sup>97</sup> This line of reasoning and the observation that most of those employers who used the room succeeded in hiring 'respectable servants' was reported to have revived 'fresh hopes that outdoor hiring is a fast fading institution'.<sup>98</sup> Fresh hopes or not, the reform movement decided to become more aggressive in its approach. Force as well as the power of persuasion was now deployed against the farm servants. In 1866, for example, the city

authorities issued regulations regarding the conduct of hiring at York. These stipulated that males and females should no longer stand together. The women were ordered to occupy a space in front of the White Swan Hotel and the nearby street of Coppergate. The men were allocated to a separate part of pavement near St Crux Church.<sup>99</sup> Both men and women resisted this and a sexual division of hiring was only achieved through the actions of the police who physically removed the women to their new place. The police were unable, however, to prevent the men from later abandoning their new, officially allocated hiring location and reoccupying their usual positions at All Saints Church Pavement, a site much closer to the female servants.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the resistance of male and female servants, this success in at least establishing a degree of segregation marked a turning point at York. From that year onward, segregated hirings and indoor hirings for women secured increased acceptance.<sup>101</sup> By 1870, the tactic of segregating male and female hiring through inducing women to use indoor register offices had prevailed and 'only male servants offered their services at the place usually occupied for that purpose'.<sup>102</sup> Thus, after many experiments and setbacks, the Church of England reformers, led by the industrious Canon Randolph, had finally established indoor hirings for women on a permanent basis at York. This success was greeted by the *Yorkshire Gazette* as evidence that 'the evils associated with the statute hiring of servants in the street seem to be giving way to a better state of things, at least as far as the City of York is concerned'.<sup>103</sup>

Alongside the promotion of indoor accommodation for women, the clergy continued to make progress on the original objective of building a network of register offices in the villages and market towns of the East Riding. During the 1860s, for example, committees of clergy and gentlemen continued to work for the extension of this network, promoted the compilation of registers of young females leaving situations and appealed to landowners 'asking them to press the subject on their tenants, so as to advise them to use register offices and discontinue the practice of hiring at fairs'.<sup>104</sup> It was still envisaged that the system could in future be extended to include male farm servants.<sup>105</sup>

Although the ultimate objective of the campaign – Canon Randolph's wish that both the hiring fairs and farm service would be 'generally abandoned' as they had in many of the southern counties – had not been realised, the establishment of segregated hirings at a number of the East Riding's larger hiring fairs marked a real advance.<sup>106</sup> The indoor hirings had succeeded in establishing a religious presence at the hiring fairs and, according to Canon Randolph, the campaign was also making progress in eroding both hiring fairs and farm service. When he addressed the Social Science Congress at York in 1864, and the Church Congress, also at York, in 1866, he claimed that both were falling out of favour with local farmers.<sup>107</sup> The tone in the local press was also enthusiastic, those active in the campaign being congratulated for protecting females from immorality, inclement weather, pickpockets and the public house.<sup>108</sup> It was also suggested that there had been an improvement in the standard of public order at those fairs with segregated hiring.<sup>109</sup>

But even if the achievements of the 1860s are evaluated as a stepping-stone towards a more fundamental change in the future, the extent of the campaign's impact remained circumscribed. Randolph's claim that farmers were abandoning hiring at the fairs must

be regarded with scepticism. There is no evidence that the numbers of farmers attending hiring fairs declined during the 1860s. No indoor accommodation was being offered at Hull, Howden, Hunmanby, Beeford, Kilham, Sherburn, Pocklington or Patrington. At those hirings where segregation had established itself, the impact that this had upon the character of the proceedings was less than the campaign's supporter's implied. The rooms provided were often small and could only cater for a limited number of servants at any one time. Another important limitation was that although the accommodation provided was often described as a 'Register Office', this was a misnomer. In general, the rooms provided little more than an indoor location for the traditional verbal bargaining. The limited impact that the provision of indoor hiring had made upon the consciousness of female servants is underlined by the fact that on those occasions when rooms were either not provided, late opening, or inconveniently located, women quickly reverted to the practice of hiring in the streets. The case of York in the 1870s offers an illustration of this point. For two years, 1875 and 1876, the accommodation was moved away from the White Swan Hotel at the centre of the hirings to the 'spacious Drill Hall in St Andrewgate' some distance away. But although the new location was well advertised and was provided with 'seats and fires and refreshments' the hall was little used and 'most of the bargaining took place in the open air'.<sup>110</sup> This failure, which was soon abandoned, underlined that fact that the female servants' acceptance of register offices did not necessarily entail a total rejection of outdoor hiring.<sup>111</sup> In any case, even when large numbers of women were attracted into the rooms, they could and did return to the streets, public houses and amusements outside once they had been hired. Indoor hiring was, therefore, at best only a temporary enclave of moral control. Similarly where some success had been obtained in persuading females to hire through registration societies away from hirings they still 'rushed to the fair for the sake of its amusements'.<sup>112</sup>

The farm servants' predilection for the attractions offered at the fairs, prompted clergy to develop other activities that sought to contest their appeal. They provided, for example, alternative 'rational recreations' that competed with the commercial entertainment offered in the public houses and at the fairgrounds.<sup>113</sup> The most impressive array of attractions of this kind was provided at Driffield. Here, in an attempt counter the appeal of the fair outside and keep the servants in the hiring room, Reverend James Skinner engaged a band 'for the amusement of the servants'.<sup>114</sup> Outside in the Market Place, the Nafferton Sax Horn Band was deployed and played a selection of music that, according to *The Yorkshire Gazette*, promoted a 'quieter and more rational aspect than a few years ago, when so much fighting and drunkenness took place'.<sup>115</sup> This strategy of trying to compete with the general holiday-mood culture of the hiring fair continued into the next decade. By 1870 the attractions offered by the Church of England at Driffield during included 'two balls' which took place on Monday and Thursday evenings of Martinmas Week. The purpose of these events was 'the laudable object of attracting some of the country servants from the public houses'.<sup>116</sup> From 1877, Martinmas Week at Driffield witnessed another innovation when the Temperance Hall became the venue for 'a social tea and entertainment'.<sup>117</sup> This provision was aimed at 'farm servants and their friends' and was designed to act as a 'counter-attraction to other entertainments of a questionable character'.<sup>118</sup> The entertainment

offered included a 'sumptuous tea', 'an efficient choir rendering several songs in a charming manner', and 'a triplet of selections' by the Musical Union band.<sup>119</sup> Each stage of the musical entertainment was interspersed with 'pleasing addresses by clergy and others'.<sup>120</sup> In its second year, this event was considered a great success and was said to be 'highly appreciated by the servants' who numbered 'about 400'.<sup>121</sup> By 1879, the Reverend Newton of Driffield, who had instigated these entertainments, had added organ recitals and 'a number of humorous songs, readings and recitations' which, it was reported, were 'greatly appreciated by the audience, many of the pieces being in the Yorkshire dialect'.<sup>122</sup> Although the attendance that year was down to two hundred it was still regarded as a success 'as many were detained from visiting places of less innocent amusements'.<sup>123</sup> Newton also had 'tolerably large premises ... fitted up as a coffee house' which was opened on a temporary basis on each of Driffield's hiring days.<sup>124</sup> Although the numbers attending these activities were modest, they built upon the success of the indoor hiring rooms and thereby increased further the religious presence at the hiring fair.

These alternative rational recreations exemplified a determination on the part of the Church of England to regard popular recreations as a field in which a more constructive engagement between the Church and the rural working class might be realised. Canon Randolph had offered an example of this more constructive train of thought in the course of criticising hiring fairs and farm service during the Social Science Congress at York in 1864 and at the Church Congress, also held at York, two years later. He argued for a more positive engagement with rural popular culture suggesting that 'it was the withdrawal of the upper classes from the festivities of the poor which had led to the evils they deprecated'.<sup>125</sup> He suggested that the 'upper classes' should not oppose working-class recreation, but should seek instead to ensure that it occurred under the supervision of their 'social superiors'.<sup>126</sup> Other opponents of the hirings offered similar sentiments. Reverend Greville Chester, for example, suggested that one of the reasons why farm servants longed for the hiring fair was that 'some relief is found from the long, dull round of unrelieved toil which is too often their lot'.<sup>127</sup> He argued that this longing was also fuelled by the failure of the 'richer classes' to offer alternative forms of recreation.<sup>128</sup> He then called upon the clergy to promote activities that would improve the lifestyle of the farm servant and thereby reduce the allure of events like the hirings. These included supervised courtship, or as Chester put it 'the intercourse of the young people at *stated* hours', lending libraries, reading rooms and 'manly games' in summer evenings.<sup>129</sup> Archbishop Thomson, being of an Evangelical persuasion was more cautious than Chester who was clearly influenced by the Oxford movement, but he too, voiced his concern that the Church had lost touch with the culture of the poor.<sup>130</sup>

Evidence that other clergy favoured a more engaged approach towards leisure and recreation can also be found in the form of reformed harvest festivals promoted by Anglican clergy in the East Riding from the early 1860s.<sup>131</sup> These not only offered suitably anodyne activities they also provided, in microcosm, an exemplification of the carefully controlled interactions between rich and poor that many Anglicans believed should be at the heart of the ideal rural parish. The development of alternative rational recreations at the hiring fairs themselves illustrates that Anglican clergy were prepared

to extend this ideal into the centre of a popular event that until recently had seemed closed to religious influence. Despite the undoubted energy and enthusiasm that went into such initiatives, however, their effectiveness in countering the appeal of the burgeoning array of attractions offered by publicans and fairground entrepreneurs at the major hirings was limited. The most vigorous efforts were those at Driffield but reports of Driffield's hirings in the 1860s and 1870s indicate that the streets remained thronged with large numbers of female and male servants, who, the *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald* complained, were still 'celebrating the times as festivals and resorting to the worst excesses'.<sup>132</sup> This view tends to confirm that the attempt to promote a calmer and more rational atmosphere through the provision of alternative recreations was, at best, intermittent in its impact.

The reasons for the limited success of this stage of the campaign are similar to those of the first. Significant change could only progress with the co-operation of those who had the greatest involvement in the hiring fairs: farm servants and farmers. In general this was either absent or present in only a limited sense. In offering indoor rooms for females, the reform campaign had identified an area in which change was welcomed. The hiring rooms were not only more comfortable they also helped to affirm the reshaping of female farm service into a form of domestic service. As those females engaged as indoor domestic servants commanded higher wages and a more respectable status, female servants perceived a correlation between indoor hiring and their own identity and interests. Women did not wish to be completely separated from either the pleasure fairs or the informed comment on wages and conditions available in the market place, however. This helps to explain their non-compliance with attempts to move the indoor accommodation away from the centre of the hiring fairs.

If women still retained an attachment to the vibrancy and bustle of the open air, the level of identification amongst the male servants was almost total: they flatly refused to patronise indoor hirings. As these became established as centres for the procurement of female labour this served to enhance further the burgeoning correlation between outdoor hiring, outdoor work, and masculinity: *men* worked and hired in their natural environment – the open air. As had been the case in the 1850s, even those farmers who wished to participate in the alternative hiring system promoted by the clergy found that the resistance of farm servants precluded this. Many male employers appear, in any case, to have regarded indoor hirings with ambivalence. E. B. Portman, who reported on the East Riding for the Royal Commission on Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture in the 1860s, noted that many farmers objected to register offices because they felt that it was 'too much trouble' to attend them.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps they too felt that the public sphere of the market place was their natural environment. Portman also found little support for written characters and register offices amongst the East Riding farmers he met.<sup>134</sup>

The tactic of promoting segregated hiring and alternative rational recreations at the hiring fairs continued and remained the dominant approach of the Church of England campaign: by the end of the century mixed hiring was unknown.<sup>135</sup> For some, however, this represented insufficient progress. This sense of dissatisfaction fuelled a third and final phase of activity. There were two schools of thought on how a more radical

approach might be advanced. One, represented by that long-standing critic of hiring fairs and farm service, the Reverend F. O. Morris, favoured outright suppression. This approach had always had its advocates and recent legislation in the form of the Fairs Act of 1871 (34 Victoria C 12), which had simplified the process of securing the legal suppression of fairs, revived interest in this means of taming the hiring fair.<sup>136</sup> The second position argued that there should be a complete separation of the hirings for male and female servants. Men would continue to be hired at Martinmas but female hiring would be moved to May.<sup>137</sup> There was also at this time a resurgence of enthusiasm for the idea of promoting written characters as the basis of an alternative system of hiring contracts.<sup>138</sup>

Those advocating these changes recognised that the active co-operation of farmers would have to be secured if either of these strategies was to succeed. Given that local farmers' response to the first two phases of reform had been characterised by a growing sense of ambivalence this seemed unlikely. Farmer dissatisfaction with aspects of the farm service system had reached new heights in the 1870s, however, and this provided a window of opportunity for those seeking to progress radical change. Three forms of 'structural conflict' which had afflicted the farm service system in the past – bargaining gains at the hirings, the practice of servants agreeing several contracts and repudiating all but the most lucrative, and the habit of hiring in autumn and then later absconding from service – had reached unprecedented levels in the 1870s.<sup>139</sup> These difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that employers often found that they could not find redress and enforce their contracts under the existing law because many servants were hired at pre-Martinmas hirings. This meant that as their contracts were over a year in length and not in writing, under the provisions of the Master and Servant Act of 1867, they were not legally binding.<sup>140</sup> The response to these structural conflicts was a revival of interest in the idea of reforming the hiring fair so as to erode the farm servants' bargaining position and ensure that they fulfilled their contracts. At a series of meetings, the various proposals advanced by clergymen were considered. After some deliberation, the overtures of the clergy were rejected and local farmers decided instead to instigate their own programme of reform. This campaign – which was largely ineffective – cannot be examined in detail here but its objectives and organisational basis are worth considering because they help to explain why the final phase of the Church-led campaign made no headway.

The central objective of the farmers' drive for change was to ensure the legal validity of the traditional verbal contract. At a large public meeting at York, which was attended by farmers from across the East Riding, it was agreed that a memorial should be sent to the Home Secretary requesting that the Master and Servant Act of 1867 be amended so that verbal contracts were as binding as those in writing.<sup>141</sup> Instead of amending the Act as farmers had hoped, the Conservative Government passed the Employers and Workmens Act of 1875. Farmers felt that this failed to address the problems posed by unwritten contracts of over a year's duration. The response of farmers was to attempt to ensure the legality of verbal contracts by securing the abolition of those hiring fairs that took place before Martinmas. Such a change would mean that contracts would no longer exceed a year and would, therefore, be compliant with the law.<sup>142</sup> This was part of a general campaign by Chambers of Agriculture across the north of England. In total, forty different authorities in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, Nottinghamshire and



Lincolnshire received deputations requesting that the dates of hirings be altered.<sup>143</sup> In the East Riding the hirings at Beverley, Driffield, Malton, Bridlington, Market Weighton and Howden were moved to post-Martinmas dates in accordance with the representations of local farmers.<sup>144</sup>

As an exercise in entrepreneurial politics this was not a success as the results were often farcical. Farm servants and shopkeepers continued to support the old 'unauthorised' pre-Martinmas hirings. Many farmers too, either would not or (because of their fear of not securing servant labour) could not comply with the Chambers of Agriculture's prescription to boycott the earlier hirings. Those farmers that did comply and attended only the new 'authorised' post-Martinmas hirings, often found that most of the farm servants had already been hired.<sup>145</sup> The very existence of an independent campaign of this nature illustrates, however, that by the 1870s the relatively latent tensions between the Church campaign and East Riding farmers had become more manifest. Chambers of Agriculture were willing to condone the provision of indoor accommodation for women but generally regarded the other measures advocated by clergymen – written characters, separate hirings for male and female servants, and the total abolition of hiring fairs – as impractical, undesirable and hare-brained. The longer-term vision that continued to motivate at least some of the Anglican critics – that of eroding farm service or at least reconfiguring it into a regime of moral paternalism – also had little support. Indeed throughout the mid-Victorian period farmers had continued to re-shape farm service in ways that meant that their relationship with their employees became more indirect, impersonal, economic and contractual.<sup>146</sup> By the 1870s the contradictions between the aims and tactics of the Church of England campaign, the course of agricultural modernisation, and the interests of farmers had become more pronounced. The Chamber of Agriculture campaign, for all its imperfections, reflected this and ensured that the third phase of the Church effort hardly got started.

It was not only the increased divergence of opinion between farmers and clergy that undermined the final phase of the reform campaign, however, but the fact that the former had the means to initiate actions of their own. The vehicle for the independent action taken by farmers – The East Riding Chamber of Agriculture – was also an indication of a more fundamental shift that was taking place in rural society at this time. The Chamber of Agriculture had been formed in the mid 1860s in response to what farmers regarded as local magistrates' bungled handling of the outbreak of the cattle plague which affected the East Riding during the 1860s. The feeling amongst many local farmers was that the largely clerical magistracy had disregarded their opinions, expertise and economic interests.<sup>147</sup> The fact that a majority of local magistrates were clergymen was regarded as the fundamental problem because it had placed 'the whole management of local expenditure in the hands of parties who were not ordinary businessmen'.<sup>148</sup> What this mishandling revealed, it was claimed, was that farmers 'had no voice' and 'suffered very much from want of organisation'.<sup>149</sup> The outcome of this dissatisfaction, was the formation of an organisation that became known as the East Riding Chamber of Agriculture.<sup>150</sup> Branches were soon formed in the major towns and cities of the region including York, Beverley, Howden, Bridlington and Driffield, creating a network of local farmers' organisations across the East Riding.<sup>151</sup>

The cattle plague issue and the resulting formation of the East Riding Chamber of Agriculture had significance for the future course of the campaign against the hiring fairs. It offered a practical illustration of the fact that clerical influence might conflict with farmers' interests and that instead of accepting the legitimacy of that influence they should represent their own interests. The development of a more assertive and independent attitude amongst tenant farmers had a second consequence for the Church-led campaign. This had continued to place considerable reliance upon the traditional alliance between the Church and local landowners. By the 1870s, however, such tactics were increasingly counter-productive. As the formation of Chambers of Agriculture indicated, there was less readiness on the part of farmers to accept directed guidance of this kind. Those advocating the creation of an independent organisation, for example, also criticised existing landowner-dominated organisations, principally Agricultural Societies, for excluding the discussion of issues of practical significance for the farmer.<sup>152</sup> In creating their own organisations designed to 'rouse themselves and their own interests', farmers were indicating that they were no longer so ready to defer to the hegemony of squire and parson on issues that concerned their interests.<sup>153</sup>

The failure of the third and final phase of the Church-led campaign meant that its one area of significant success remained the segregation of male and female farm servants through the provision of indoor hiring accommodation for female servants. Unlike the other more ambitious and expansive objectives of the campaign it complemented recent changes in the nature of farm service without threatening the hiring fair as a site for collective bargaining and festive enjoyment. As the fate of the final lurch back to a more radical position in the 1870s indicated, any significant attempt to offer a more serious challenge to the hiring fair was unlikely to succeed. The failure of this final phase also underlined the fact that the fundamental cause of the campaign – the gulf that existed between the Church of England and rural popular culture – remained. Indeed, the campaign's rhetoric and tactics and the response these engendered over time had probably widened this gulf. The Church of England critique of hiring fairs was often informed by an exaggerated and ill-informed view of their internal practices. It was also motivated by a pre-lapsarian vision of farm service. Its imagined fall from a patriarchal system of moral regulation informed a discourse which advocated the restoration of moral paternalism. This was regarded as a necessary response to the corrosive effect that capitalist social relations had had upon the master and servant relationship. This discourse, and the campaign that it generated, also sought to re-assert the Church of England as the institution which was best placed to preside over the revival of an organic society. Although an amplification, the clerical critique was founded upon real, as well as perceived, changes that were taking place in farm service and rural social relations in general. The expansion of large-scale capitalist agriculture had facilitated the emergence of a more class-oriented system in which tensions and conflicts were more salient. Rather than seeking shelter within the hegemony of an Anglican-centred regime of paternal regulation, however, both capital and labour sought instead to defend their interests through their own collective actions within a fledgling civil society.<sup>154</sup> This failure to accommodate and articulate with this changing consciousness was perhaps the

fundamental reason for the limited impact of the Church of England campaign against hiring fairs in the East Riding during the mid-Victorian period.

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### Notes

1. G. Moses, ‘“Rustic and Rude”: Hiring Fairs and their Critics in East Yorkshire c. 1850–75’, *Rural History*, 7: 2 (1996), 151–175.
2. On the transformation of the East Riding’s agriculture and landscape from the late eighteenth century see: O. Wilkinson, *The Agricultural Revolution in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, East Yorkshire Local History Series: no 5 (1956); M. G. Adams, ‘Agricultural Change in the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1850–1880: An Economic and Social History’, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Hull (1977); A. Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire 1700–1850* (Oxford, 1961); J. E. Crowther, ‘The Incidence and Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure’, and ‘Agricultural Land Use in 1801’, and A. Harris and R. Kain, ‘Agricultural Land Use in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, in S. Neave and S. Ellis, (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire* (Hull, 1996).
3. On farm servants and the symbiosis between the development of large-scale agriculture and farm service in the East Riding see: S. Caunce, *Amongst Farm Horses: The Horselads of East Yorkshire* (Stroud, 1991) and ‘Farm Servants and the Development of English Capitalism’, *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997); A. Howkins, ‘Peasants, Servants and Labourers: The Marginal Workforce in British Agriculture, c. 1870–1914’; G. Moses, ‘Proletarian Labourers? East Riding Farm Servants c. 1850–75’, *Agricultural History Review*, 47 (1999).
4. Moses, ‘Rustic and Rude’, 159.
5. Examples of the criticisms directed at hiring fairs by Anglican opinion include: Reverend Nash Stephenson, *On The Rise and Progress of the Movement for the Abolition of Statutes, Mops, Or Feeing Markets: A Paper Read Before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Glasgow, 1860* (London, 1861); Reverend Greville J. Chester, *Statute Fairs: Their Evils and Their Remedy* (York, 1856); Reverend James Skinner, *Facts and Opinions Concerning Statute Hirings, Respectfully Addressed to the Landowners, Clergy, Farmers and Tradesmen of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (London, 1861); Reverend F. O. Morris, *The Present System of Hiring Farm Servants in the East Riding of Yorkshire with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London, 1854); Reverend J. Eddowes, *Martinmas Musings: Or Thoughts about the Hiring Day* (Driffield, 1854).
6. For contemporary Anglican criticisms of farm servants and farm service see Reverend R. I. Wilberforce, *A Letter to the Gentry, Yeomen, and Farmers of the Archdeaconry of the East Riding* (Bridlington, 1842); Reverend J. Eddowes, *The Agricultural Labourer as he Really Is; Or, Village Morals in 1854* (Driffield, 1854); Reverend F. D. Legard, ‘The Education of Farm Servants’, in F. D. Legard (ed.), *More About Farm Lads* (London, 1865); M. E. Simpson, *Ploughing and Sowing; Or, Annals of an Evening School in a Yorkshire Village, and the Work that Grew out of it*, ed. Reverend F. D. Legard (London 1861); Idem, *The Life and Training of a Farm Boy*, in Legard (ed.), ‘Farm Lads’; Archbishop, W. Thomson, *Work and Prospects. A Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of York Delivered at his Primary Visitation October 1865 by William Lord Archbishop of York* (London, 1865).
7. M. B. Gleave, ‘Dispersed and Nucleated Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, 1770–1850’, *Institute of British Geographers Transactions and Papers*, 30 (1962).

8. Moses, 'Rustic and Rude', 160–164. On the contradictions between the Anglican parochial ideal and the manner in which agricultural change had reshaped farm service in the East Riding, see also G. Moses, 'Popular Culture and the "Golden Age": The Church of England and Hiring Fairs in the East Riding of Yorkshire c. 1850–75', in I. Inkster, C. Griffin, J. Hill and I. Rowbotham (eds.), *The Golden Age: Essays in British Social and Economic History, 1850–1870*, (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 184–99. These and other related themes are also developed in greater depth and detail in G. Moses, 'Social Relations in the Victorian Countryside: Hiring Fairs and their Critics in the East Riding of Yorkshire c. 1840–1880', unpublished PhD. D thesis (Nottingham Trent University, 2000). The tensions between East Riding farm service and the Church of England are also discussed in M. G. Adams, 'Agricultural Change', pp. 405–8; and Caunce, *Farm Horses*, pp. 54–65.
9. By the late 1850s there was an established national campaign against hiring fairs and the East Riding drew inspiration from this example which is powerfully asserted in Reverend N. Stephenson, *On the Rise and Progress of the Movement for the Abolition of Statutes, Mops or Feeing Markets; A Paper Read Before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in Glasgow*, 1860 (London, 1861). On the antipathy between rural clergy and farm service in Lincolnshire see J. Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825–1875* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 66–9, 81–5, 133–4, 140–4.
10. For examples of these initial proposals see: *Yorkshire Gazette*, 28th January, 1854, Letter, 'The Abolition of Hiring Fairs', Reverend J. Eddowes; *Ibid*, letter, 'Hiring of Farm Servants', Reverend F. Simpson, Morris, *Present System*.
11. Letter, 'Hiring of Farm Servants', Reverend F. Simpson, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 28th January, 1854.
12. *Ibid*.
13. *Ibid*.
14. Chester, *Statute Fairs*, pp. 10–11.
15. *Ibid*.
16. Morris, *Present System*, pp. 6–7. This paper was delivered at Driffeld Farmer's Club 16th March 1854, and reported in the local press. See, for example, *Hull Advertiser*, 24th March, 1854.
17. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 11th March, 1854.
18. In addition to those cited above, see also the following: letter: 'The Public Hiring of Farm Servants' by 'A Farmer', Beverley, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 14th January, 1854 and Editorial: 'The Hiring of Agricultural Servants'; Letter 'Agricultural Servants' by 'A Rural Dean', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 11th February, 1854; 'The Evils of Public Hirings' *Yorkshire Gazette*, 18th November, 1854; Editorial, *Hull Advertiser*, 7th April, 1854.
19. *Hull Advertiser*, 7th April, 1854. He continued this theme throughout 1854. See also, for example, *Hull Advertiser*, 1st July, 1854.
20. Yorkshire Agricultural Society, Council Minute Book, 29th June, 1854, cited in V. Hall, *A History of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society 1837–1987* (London, 1987) p. 34.
21. *Hull Advertiser*, 24th March, 1854.
22. *Hull Advertiser*, 24th June, 1854.
23. *Hull Advertiser*, 1st July, 1854.
24. *Hull Advertiser*, 10th March, 1854, 31st October, 1854.
25. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 3rd December, 1854.
26. *Ibid*.
27. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 19th November, 1859, 3rd December, 1859, 10th December, 1859.
28. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 19th November, 1859.
29. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 10th December, 1859.
30. Letter, 'The Abolition of Hiring Fairs', J. Eddowes, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 28th January, 1854.
31. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 25th November, 1854.

32. Adams, 'Agricultural Change', pp. 346–7. On the farm servants' assertive use of the hiring fair during the mid-Victorian period, see also G. Moses, 'Proletarian Labourers? East Riding Farm Servants c. 1850–75', *Agricultural History Review*, 47 (1999), 78–94 and 'Social Relations', chapters two and three.
33. Chester, 'Statute Fairs', p. 16.
34. Eddowes, *Martinmas Musings*, pp. 5–14.
35. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 18th November, 1854.
36. *Hull Advertiser*, 18th November, 1854.
37. Morris, 'Present System', p. 8.
38. See for example, W. Barugh, 'Master and Man', *A Reply to the Pamphlet of the Reverend. John Eddowes, entitled "The Agricultural Labourer As He Really Is"'* (Driffield, 1854).
39. Morris, *Present System*, pp. 6–8.
40. For a farmer's critique of farm service advocating a return to paternalism see J. Wells, *The Relative Duties of Employers and Employed in Agriculture* (Hull, 1858).
41. See, for example, Letter, 'A Holderness Farmer', *Hull Advertiser*, 3rd November, 1855.
42. Barugh, *Master and Man*.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
45. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 17th November, 1859.
46. Skinner, *Facts and Opinions*.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 3rd December, 1854.
50. 'Annual General Meeting of the York Society for the Prevention of Youthful Depravity', *York Herald*, 18th February, 1860.
51. Skinner, *Facts and Opinions*, p. 16.
52. Reverend J. Skinner, *To The Masters and Mistresses of Farm Houses in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, Appendix II of Facts and Opinions, p. 23. This address was first issued in 1860 and circulated by hand, it also appeared in local newspapers, see, for example, *York Herald*, 10th November, 1860.
53. Skinner, *Masters and Mistresses*, p. 23.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.
56. Skinner, *Facts and Opinions*, Appendix III, p. 25.
57. See for example the Editorial in the *York Herald*, 3rd November, 1860.
58. Skinner, *Facts and Opinions*, Appendix III, p. 25.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 16th November, 1861.
63. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 15th November 1862.
64. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 13th November, 1862.
65. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 18th November, 1869.
66. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 20th November, 1862.
67. *Ibid.*
68. M. Simpson, *Gleanings: Being a Sequel to Ploughing and Sowing*, ed. Reverend D. Legard (Driffield, 1876) pp. 104–6, cited in Caunce, *Farm Horses*, pp. 58–9.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Beverley Recorder*, 9th November, 1861.
72. Simpson, *Gleanings*, in Caunce, *Farm Horses*, p. 58.

73. Ibid.
74. *Beverley Guardian*, 10th November, 1866.
75. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 20th November, 1863.
76. Ibid.
77. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 19th November, 1868, 19th November 1869.
78. *York Herald*, 19th November, 1864.
79. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 19th November, 1863.
80. *York Herald*, 19th November, 1864.
81. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 18th November, 1869.
82. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 17th November, 1870; *Driffield Times*, 30th November, 1872; 22nd November, 1873.
83. *Driffield Times*, 17th November, 1877.
84. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 19th November, 1863.
85. This latter organisation had for some time concentrated its efforts upon rescuing, rehabilitating and reforming prostitutes. The reformation of the older society as a sister society was regarded as a means of the organisation augmenting its curative work with the more preventative strategy of opposing the root causes of vice, *York Herald*, 27th October, 1859; *York Herald*, 11th February, 1860.
86. *York Herald*, 18th February, 1860, Annual General Meeting of the York Society for the Prevention of Youthful Depravity.
87. *York Herald*, 27th October, 1860.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 9th February, 1861, Report: Annual General Meeting of the York Penitentiary Society and York Society for the Prevention of Youthful Depravity.
91. Ibid.
92. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 30th November, 1861.
93. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 16th November, 1861.
94. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 28th November, 1863.
95. *York Herald*, 28th November, 1863.
96. Ibid.
97. *York Herald*, 26th November, 1864.
98. Ibid.
99. *York Herald*, 29th November, 1866.
100. Ibid.
101. *York Herald*, 28th November, 1868; *York Herald*, 27th November, 1869.
102. *York Herald*, 26th November, 1870.
103. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 26th November, 1870.
104. *York Herald*, 10th November, 1866, Meeting of the clergy and laity of the Rural Deanery of Bulmer.
105. Ibid.
106. *York Herald*, 1st October, 1864.
107. *York Herald*, 13th October, 1866.
108. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 13th November, 1862; *Yorkshire Gazette*, 15th November, 1862; *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 19th November, 1863.
109. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 21st January, 1862.
110. *York Herald*, 24th November, 1875.
111. *York Herald*, 24th November, 1876.
112. *York Herald*, 10th November, 1866.
113. As in new forms of public leisure that were controlled, ordered and improving, educational and communal and which sought to compete with and erode a popular culture which was characterised by drunkenness, spontaneity, emotion, and physical contact. For a discussion

- of rational recreations see H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, (London, 1980), esp. pp. 90–107.
114. *Yorkshire Gazette*.
  115. *Ibid.*
  116. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 14th November, 1872; *Driffield Times*, 30th November, 1872.
  117. *Driffield Times*, 1st December, 1877.
  118. *Driffield Times*, 30th November, 1878.
  119. *Ibid.*
  120. *Ibid.*
  121. *Ibid.*
  122. *York Herald*, 29th November, 1879.
  123. *Ibid.*
  124. *York Herald*, 28th November, 1879.
  125. *York Herald*, 1st October, 1864; *Ibid.*, 13th October, 1866.
  126. *Ibid.*
  127. Chester, *Statute Fairs*, p. 16.
  128. *Ibid.*
  129. *Ibid.*
  130. Archbishop W. Thomson, 'Sports and Pastimes: a sermon' in J Kempe (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of the World*, (London, 1873).
  131. See for example, *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 30th October, 1862, 'South Cave Harvest Home'; *Ibid.*, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1862, 'Kirk Ella Harvest Home'.
  132. *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 5th November, 1869.
  133. BPP XVII, *First Report From The Commissioners on The Employment of Children Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*, 1867–8, I, pp. 98–100.
  134. *Ibid.*
  135. Caunce, *Farm Horses*, p. 58.
  136. *Beverley Guardian*, 10th April, 1875.
  137. *Ibid.*
  138. *Ibid.*
  139. For the concept of 'structural conflict' see A. Howkins, 'Structural Conflict and the Farmworker: Norfolk, 1900–1920', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 4 (1977), 217–9; for its application to farm servants see Moses, 'Proletarian Labourers', pp. 90–94 and 'Social Relations', chapters two and three.
  140. This was stipulated in the first schedule of the Master and Servant Act of 1867.
  141. *York Herald*, 7th May, 1875.
  142. *York Herald*, 14th July, 1876.
  143. Letter, J. Dunn, Chairman of York Chamber of Agriculture, *York Herald*, 28th October, 1876.
  144. *Hull Times*, 28th October, 1876; *Driffield Times*, 11th November, 1876; *Ibid.*, 18th November, 1876; *York Herald*, 28th October, 1876.
  145. *Hull Times*, 2nd December, 1876; *Beverley Guardian*, 1st December, 1877 and 16th November, 1878.
  146. Caunce, *Farm Horses*, chapter Sixteen; Moses, 'Proletarian Labourers', pp. 83–94.
  147. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 16th June, 1866; *Beverley Guardian*, 16th June, 1866. This outbreak of rinderpest began in London in July 1865. The Privy Council delegated powers to Justices of the Peace to appoint inspectors who could slaughter animals, prohibit movement of diseased stock and close fairs and markets. Under the Cattle Diseases Prevention Act of 1866, magistrates and inspectors were given increased powers to control movements of cattle and to slaughter diseased animals; it also authorised the payment of compensation to farmers for stock slaughtered. This compensation came from the county rate. C. S Orwin

and E. H. Whetham, *History of British Agriculture 1846–1914* (Newton Abbot, 1964), pp. 200–21.

148. *Beverley Guardian*, 16th June, 1866.

149. *Ibid.*

150. *Ibid.*

151. *Beverley Guardian*, 16th June, 1866.

152. *Beverley Guardian*, 16th June, 1866.

153. *Beverley Guardian*, 16th June, 1866.

154. Other East Riding examples of this 'civilising process', in addition to Chambers of Agriculture, were; friendly societies, Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism, agricultural trades unions and the informal collective actions of farm servants at the hiring fairs.