

‘A WANT OF GOOD FEELING’ A Reassessment of the Economic and Political Causes of the Rural Unrest in Hampshire, 1830

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the early nineteenth century agrarian community in Hampshire at a moment of crisis: the riots of 1830. The traditional relationships within the community were put under pressure by a combination of post-war depression, overpopulation and the introduction of new ideas and techniques. The resultant economic distress felt by a major part of society, the small farmers, traders, craftsmen, and, most of all, agricultural labourers, was ignited by political tension into an open, widespread revolt. The more modern industrial and commercial attitudes from outside Hampshire were threatening traditional authority and subservience. The revolt was an early, tentative step out of the essentially rural community into modern industrial society. The subject of the 1830 unrest has been studied before. In 1937 A M Colson wrote of the ‘agricultural labourers revolt’ in an MA thesis. This is an invaluable work especially because it centralizes many sources of information, including Home Office Papers, the Northbrook Papers, and newspaper reports. However, it views history in more traditional ways before the wealth of local material which is available today had been collected together in county record offices. In Captain Swing, E L Hobsbawm and G Rudé again study the rioting as a national problem which leads to inaccuracies when the model they devise is related to Hampshire. However, they do recognize the need for localized studies. This article approaches the study using the methods and attitudes of local historical investigation and, consequently, reassesses certain traditionally held views on the unrest.

THE EVENTS AND RESPONSES TO THE 1830 UNREST

In 1830 agricultural depression and political

tension resulted in widespread unrest in Southern England. It began in June with an arson attack in Kent. From there it spread, slowly at first, until, by December, few counties south of the Humber were left unaffected. Hampshire, where the actual rioting lasted only ten days, from the 17th of November until the 26th, was one of the most severely affected counties (see Figs 1-2). On the 19th and 20th of November a large mob from several parishes roamed between Sutton Scotney and East Stratton extorting money for food and beer, breaking agricultural machinery, and assaulting those who refused their requests. On the 20th, Taskers Waterloo Iron Foundry at Upper Clatford was severely damaged by a crowd of several hundred people. Another crowd destroyed machinery at an agricultural engineering factory and a flax spinning/sack weaving mill near Fordingbridge. On the 22nd and 23rd a crowd of up to 1700 damaged the poor houses at Selborne and Headley and demanded a reduction in the tithes from the local rector. Throughout the county riots, ‘extortion’, and machine breaking were daily events (HC 27/12/1830).

An analysis of the events which occurred during November, 1830, gives an indication of the labourers’ reaction to the situation in which they found themselves (see Fig 3). There were two types of incident. First, there were the generally clandestine actions, arson and threats, which were often carried out as revenge for some past grievance (*BSP Poor Laws*, 1834, 423e, 426e, 439e). This type of crime, a typical reaction to rural disaffection, was most common in the early days of the 1830 unrest in south-eastern England. It was, however, the second type of incident, the open,

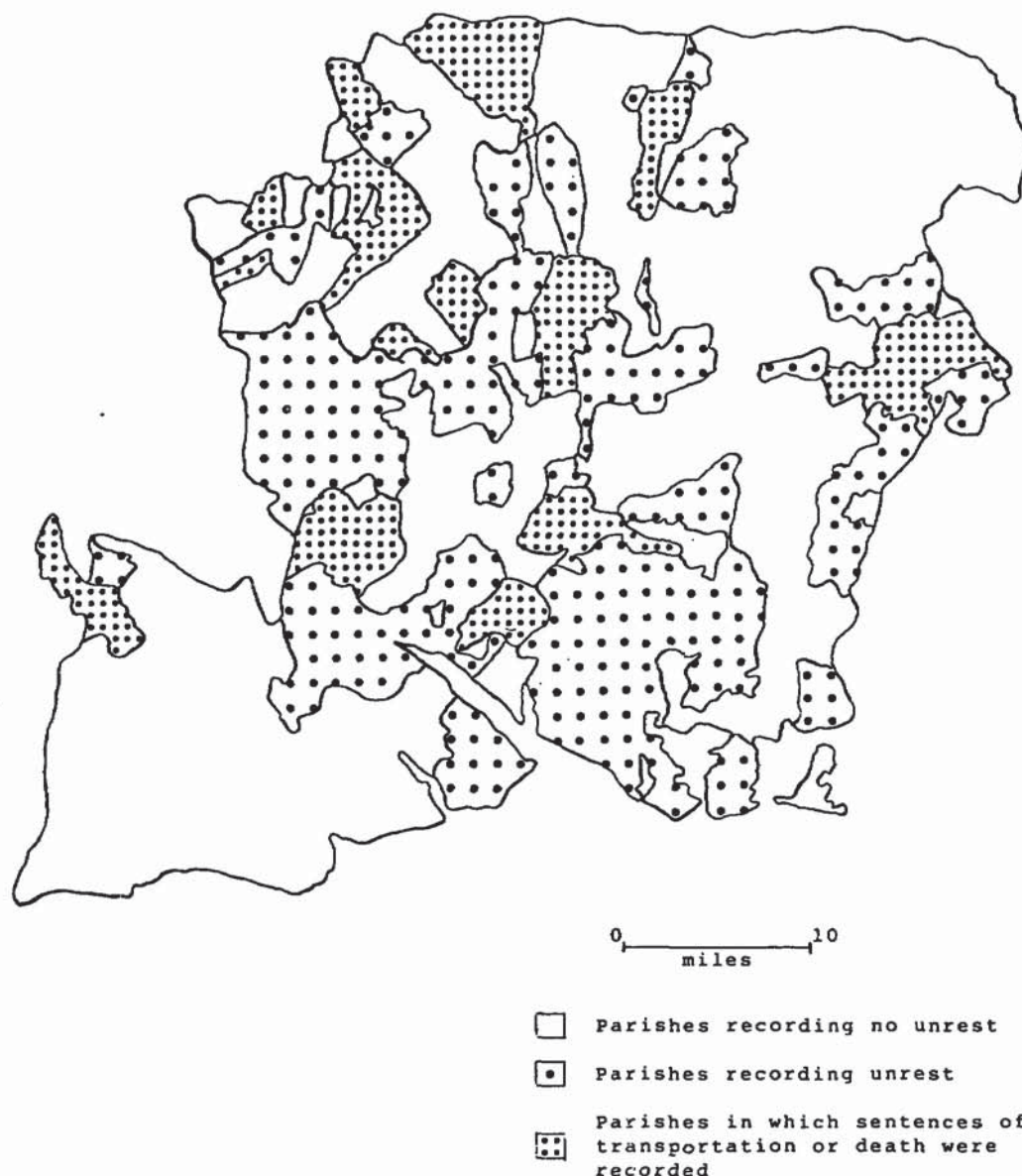


Fig 1. The 1830 unrest in Hampshire. Sources: HRO 14M50/2; *The Times*; *Hampshire Chronicle*.

collective action, which distinguished the 1830 agitation in Hampshire. The large numbers of labourers, craftsmen, artisans, and small farmers who gathered together to protest about their conditions was unusual (Charlesworth 1983, 131–155). The targets of their

anger tended to be anything which symbolized the hardship they had experienced. Because the workers felt a special grievance against labour-reducing machinery, all types of agricultural implements, especially threshing machines, were attacked. Forty-two parishes

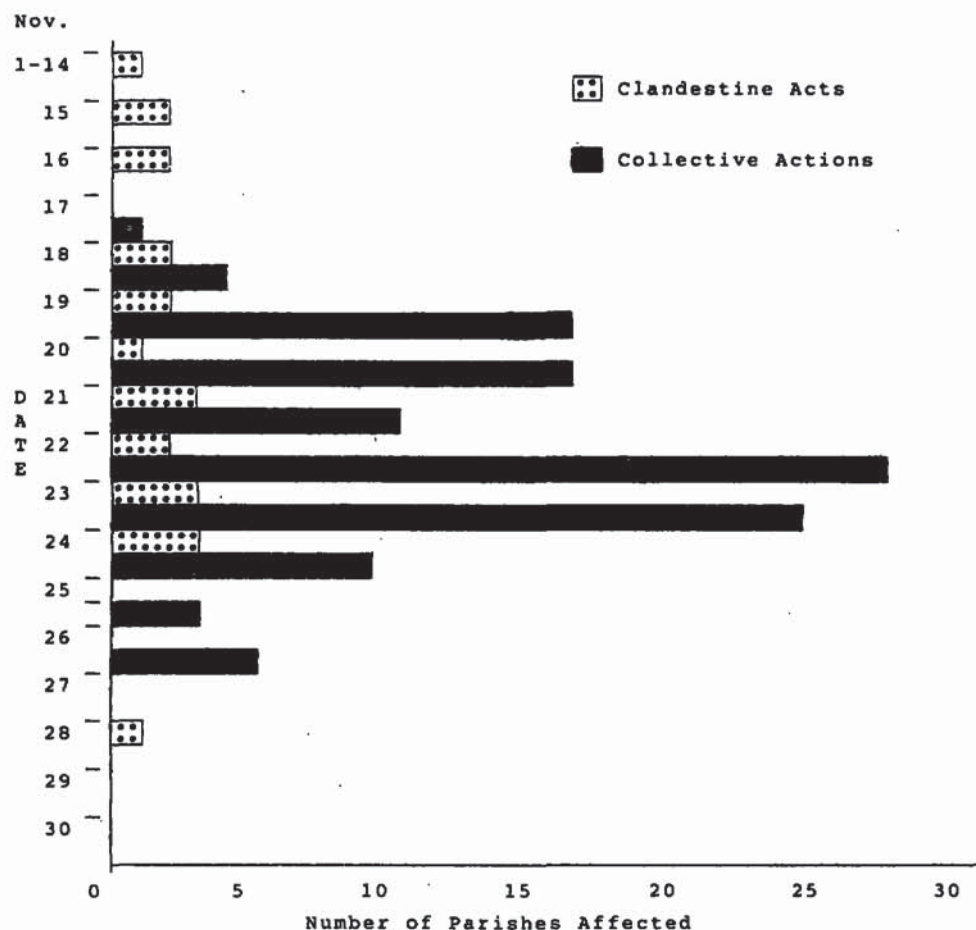


Fig 2. The number of daily incidents in November 1830 in Hampshire. Sources: HRO 14M50/2; *The Times*; *Hampshire Chronicle*. See Appendix for data.

reported machine breaking. The Parish Register of Ampthorpe records:

The 21st of November 1830

This day will be memorable in the annals of this Parish. The Labourers were in a body destroyed every Threshing Machine and every other Machine of any description and all cast iron work; and demanded an increase of wages, which demand was granted – the wage been tried at 12s per week for able Bodied Labourers – above 20 and 9s per week for lads above 16. This rising was general throughout the County and there being no force to repel violence, all were

obliged to submit to see the destruction of their property. (HRO 43M67/A PR5)

Such wage demands, as well as protests about poor relief and tithes, were fairly common. Yet there was little real violence, and, of the 12 cases of assault which were reported, the only one which caused actual injury was committed against William Bingham Baring, a member of one of the most influential landowning families in the county. The most frequently recorded occurrence was 'extortion'. This was legally robbery with menace from a person and was a capital offence. In reality it was far less serious consisting largely of demands for beer

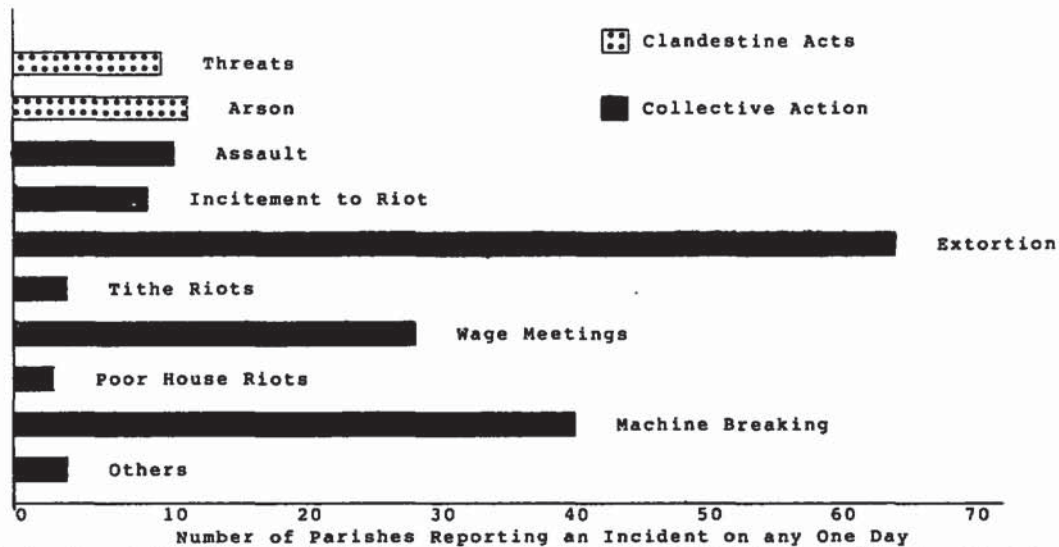


Fig 3. Recorded incidents of the 1830 unrest. Sources: HRO 14M50/2; *The Times*; *Hampshire Chronicle*. See Appendix for data.

and money. The riots often had a festive atmosphere with the demands reminiscent of the contributions collected by waits and mummers at village fetes (Hobsbawm & Rudé, 1973, 45). Sixty-six cases of extortion were committed for trial. By December 1830, 342 men were awaiting trial at a Special Commission of Assize in Winchester (HRO 14M50/2; *The Times* 21/12/1830 – 3/1/1831).

At the trial a candid effort was made to set an example of those committed in order to warn others of the consequences of such collective crime (HRO 14M50/4). Memories of the Bread and Blood Riots in East Anglia in 1816, of the Luddite machine breaking in the North between 1811 and 1816, and of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, were fresh in the minds of the authorities. With no police force, agrarian agitation was especially difficult to contain. There was very real anxiety that the revolt in the southern counties would ignite into national revolution if it were allowed to spread into northern industrial areas (HRO 14M50/3). However, the severity of the court shocked even the magistrates involved. Many witnesses testified to the previous good character of the defendants. In spite of this, six men were sentenced to be hanged, ninety-five

further sentences of death were recorded, thirty-six men were to be transported, seventeen men were sentenced to hard labour, and forty-three men received gaol sentences of various terms (HRO 14M50/4). Within days efforts were being made to modify the punishments. After numerous petitions to the King and the court, only two men, James Cooper who led the attack on the factories near Fordingbridge, and Henry Cooke who assaulted and allegedly tried to murder William Bingham Baring, were executed (*The Times* 3/1/1831). The latter was the most violent action of the Hampshire unrest, with *The Times*, sympathetic towards the other defendants, reporting that Cooke had a cruel disposition and deserved his punishment (*ibid*). The other ninety-nine men who had been sentenced to death were transported for life.

In 1834 the House of Commons published the findings of a Royal Commission on the Administration and Operation of the Poor Laws. Question 53 had asked for information relating to the causes and consequences of the Agricultural Riots and Burnings of 1830–31. The fifty-four responses from Hampshire varied widely in nature. They displayed personal biases and the limitations on freedom of

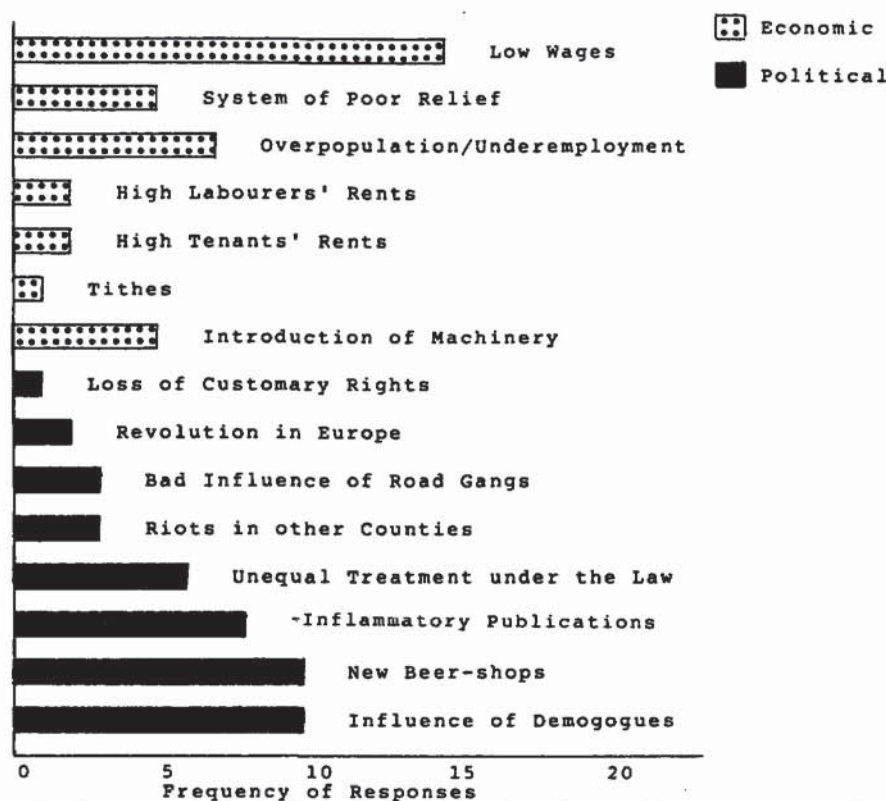


Fig 4. Perceived causes of the 1830 rioting and burning. Source: Responses to question 53, Royal Commission on the Administration and Operation of the Poor Laws, app. B, part V.

expression that could occur. Fourteen respondents either would not or could not answer the question. O A Baker, Churchwarden from Easton, a parish dominated by the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, wrote, 'I have my opinion as to the cause, but would rather not express it' (*BSP Poor laws* 1834, 427e). However, in spite of their limitations the forty remaining returns provide valuable information on how the various authorities including magistrates, rectors, overseers of the poor, churchwardens, farmers, and landowners from around the county perceived the unrest. The responses can be divided into politically and economically based causes (see Fig 4). 'Low wages' was the most commonly cited cause of unrest. This and other economic conditions, e.g. overpopulation, underemployment, high rents, and the system of poor relief, reflect the very real distress felt by those

participating in the riots. An anonymous reply from Minstead in southwestern Hampshire suggested:

The cause was the want of good feeling which ought and used to exist between the Farmer and the Labourer; the former of whom seemed endeavouring to indemnify himself for his excessive rent at the price of justice and liberality to the latter, because, in the north of England, where wages were sufficient to maintain the labourer and his family by his labour, there were no Riots nor Burnings. There should be a declamatory Act to explain the 43rd Eliz., so as to secure a similarity in the way of granting relief throughout the Kingdom. Nothing would tend more to the improvement in the conditions of the Labourer than a fixed idea of what he was to expect. (*ibid*, 433e)

From Eversley in the north-east of the county, H Rush and H B Parfelt wrote:

Distress appears to have been the prevalent cause of the riots, as the overseer had been reducing the amount of wages to those who applied for parish relief to the lowest possible scale, more particularly to single men. The Farmer paid wages too small for the Family to subsist upon. (*ibid*, 428e)

Political factors such as the presence of ill-disposed persons, the reading of inflammatory publications and the opening of newly legalized beer-shops, were, however, more dominant amongst the responses. Bramshaw, in southwestern Hampshire, is a parish close to Fordingbridge where a man from outside the county was singled out as the ringleader and where the major target of the rioters was factory machinery. From there, G Eyre, JP, wrote:

I believe they were caused in many places by some ill-disposed persons exciting the peasantry to gain higher wages by joining together for that purpose. Machines were pointed out as interfering with labour. Thus stirred up, bad example and liquor led to great excess. (*ibid*, 423e)

Rev J Cole, rector at Silchester, wrote that the discontent was brought about by:

...the excitement caused by the beer-shops, and giving them a point to meet in every village to discuss their grievances, and to hear them aggravated by the reading; or hearing there, low and dangerous pamphlets. . . (*ibid*, 437e)

Silchester was in the north of the county where the nationally known radical, 'Orator' Hunt, had been active during the riots. His speeches undoubtedly would have been a topic of conversation in many village beer-shops.

The importance attached by contemporaries to the political, as well as the economic, causes presents a somewhat contradictory impres-

sion. The economic factors suggest a distressed worker whose wage was kept low by an overabundance of labour and who, consequently, had to rely on an unstandardized system of poor relief. The political considerations provoke an image of an aware worker with money to spend in beer-shops listening to inflammatory pamphlets read and written by 'ill-disposed persons'.

This paradox highlights several important features of the 1830 Agricultural Revolt. First, the unrest occurred during a period of economic improvement, not during the period of highest food prices as would be expected if the rioting were merely a reaction to hunger. Bread and wheat prices had fallen from a high of 85/11 for a quarter of wheat and 1/11 - 2/- for a loaf of bread on 27 September, 1828 to 54/11 for wheat and 1/7 for bread in November 1830 (*HC* 27/9/28 & 1/11/30). The harvest in Hampshire of 1830 was good after two extremely bad years. Secondly, the timing of the revolt is significant. Harvesting and haymaking were labour intensive occupations and the task work involved made this the best paid time of the year. Harvest was followed by the sowing of wheat. By November these tasks were complete and threshing had begun. Many skilled men, who in earlier years would have been employed flailing, had been made redundant by the threshing machine. These men were now amongst the unemployed who had time to gather to listen to talk of revolution and reform. They responded with the 1830 Revolt. A more detailed investigation of both the economic and political factors involved with help explain why the events of 1830 occurred.

THE ECONOMIC CAUSES OF THE 1830 UNREST

Low wages, one of the most commonly cited causes of the revolt, were symptomatic of the disturbed state of Hampshire's economy in the early nineteenth century. Because the county was heavily dependent on agriculture, anything which disrupted farming affected the

entire county. During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, two such situations occurred. First, the grain market was disturbed by the Napoleonic Wars and the subsequent depression. Increased demand for home produced corn during the wars resulted in a lengthy period of abnormally high grain prices. The ending of the wars renewed foreign competition and prices fell. Secondly, by the 1820s, there was a serious oversupply of agricultural labour in the county. Between 1801 and 1831 the population increased by 43% (*BSP Census* 238). This, combined with the mechanization of some farming techniques, the increased concentration on less labour-intensive sheep husbandry, and the reduction of employment opportunities in war related industries and services, exacerbated the difficulties. The traditional patterns of farming in Hampshire were challenged. To a great extent, the ability to adapt to the changing situation varied according to economic status.

The large landowner was most sheltered from the economic hardship which followed the Napoleonic Wars. Size and efficiency of the estate made it easier to endure bad years. Sufficient capital was available to enable the large farms and estates to delay the sale of livestock and grain during periods of especially low prices. Often the property and capital of the landowner were distributed over large areas of the country, as in the case of the Earl of Caernarvon, or between agriculture and commerce, as with the Baring family. During the rioting this group, along with the clergy, came under pressure from both the tenant farmer who sought rent and tithe reductions, and the labourer who wanted increased wages. The demands of the mob at Romsey were typical:

Gentlemen Farmers we do insist upon your paying every man in your parish 2 shillings per day for his labour – every single man between the ages of 16 and 20 eighteen pence per day – every child above 2 – to receive a loaf and sixpence per week – the aged and infirmed to receive 4/- per week. Landlords – we do also insist upon your

reducing their rents so as to enable them to meet our demands. Rectors – you must also lower your tithes down to £100 per year in every parish but we wish to do away with tithes altogether. (Colson 1937, 86)

The response of the landowning classes ranged from conciliatory to repressive. At the Swan Inn in Alresford on the 22nd November, 1830, a meeting of clergymen and proprietors and occupiers of the land resolved to increase wages, standardize parish relief, and reduce rents (HRO 44M69 J/9/77). The Rev Newbolt made similar concessions at Micheldever (*HC* 22/11/1830). On the other hand, the Duke of Wellington employed special constables from London to protect his estate at Stratfield Saye (Colson 1937, 161). The Duke of Buckingham and Chandos organized 'two cannon at his principle doors, a swivel at each window and 100 men of his village armed with cutt [l]asses' when it was reported that a mob of 200 was marching from the Winchester area towards his estate at Avington (HRO 100M70).

The small farmer, both freholder and tenant, found the post-war years difficult. Many had overexpanded during the years of high grain prices. Marginal land was taken into cultivation. Money was borrowed at high interest rates. Rents had been fixed at high rates which anticipated continuing high profit margins. When the price of grain fell, survival demanded that maximum profit from the land be obtained with minimum outlay. Evidence before a Select Committee on Agriculture, 1833, indicated that fertility of the soil had fallen because of insufficient stock was kept to manure the ground and the land was overcropped (*BSP Agriculture* 1833, 198–99). Rates and taxes were increasing (*ibid* 210). Tithes, still frequently collected as payment in kind, were difficult to finance and, when paid in kind, had to be left on the ground until assessed (Vancouver 1810, 77–86). Many small farmers were forced to give up their land. Hostility towards social betters, both large landowners and the clergy, was not infrequent. Small farmers were known to support, and were occasionally

actively involved in, the 1830 unrest. At Selborne it was reported: 'There were many farmers present, not present as it forced to join but voluntarily looking on.' A petition demanding that the local rector reduce his tithes was witnessed by ten farmers (*The Times*, 24/12/1830). However, only one farmer, John Boyes of Owslebury, was committed for trial (*ibid* 30/12/1830).

The village craftsmen and traders were dependent on the farmer and labourer for their livelihoods. The economic depression reduced the spending power of the small farmer, which, in turn, adversely affected the village economy. However, the economy benefitted somewhat from the changes in the traditional employment patterns of the farm labourer. As the payment of wages in cash and the hiring by the task or day became the norm, the farm labourer made more use of the facilities offered by the village. He was increasingly likely to buy prepared goods such as loaves of bread instead of flour and quarts of beer rather than the malt needed to brew at home. Contact between agricultural labourers and nearby villages increased. The more literate and higher paid village artisans took an active role in the 1830 riots. Of those committed for trial on whom occupational information is available, almost half, 36 out of 74, were craftsmen, traders, or other non-agricultural labourers (HRO Book 328; *The Times* 22/12/1830 – 3/1/1831).

The worst affected by the depression and, consequently, most active in the riots, were the agricultural labourers. Due to an oversupply of labour, conditions had deteriorated. Agriculture did not provide sufficient, regular employment for the population, and there was very little work outside farming. Generally, apart from shepherds, carters, and other men with special skills, workers were hired by the day or task and tended to be laid off as soon as their labour was no longer needed.

Low, irregular wages resulted (*BSP Agriculture* 1833, 201). In 1830 married men generally earned between 7/- and 9/- per week; unmarried men would expect less, sometimes as little as 3/- weekly (*BSP Labourers' Wages* 1825,

380–381). An annual income for a married man was £30 to £35 (*BSP Poor Laws* 1834, 418a–446a). In 1828, on the Tichborne Estate, Thomas Steptoe was paid:

Sundries days work – 59 days	£4.8.6
Mowing 29 acres at 1/8 per acre	2.8.4
Mowing 27 acres at 4/- per acre	5.8.2
Reaping 4–11 Rod of wheat at 8/- per acre	1.14.6
Thrashing 60 quarters of wheat at 4/- per quarter	12.0.0
Thrashing 80 quarters of barley at 2/- per quarter	8.0.0
Total	£33.19.4

William Hill, another labourer at Tichborne, earned:

Sundries paid for 5 ducks	7.6
Sundries days work 12 wk + 2 days	5.11.0
8 weeks	3.12.0
3 weeks + 4 days	1.13.0
Harvest-reaping 5–2–35 of wheat 20 days	2.5.9
20 days	2.10.0
Brewing 10 days	1.0.0
Water [meadows] 6 days	18.0
Water [meadows] 8 days	10.0
Brewing 3 wks	1.16.0
Water [meadows] 6 days	3.12.0
8 weeks	1.5.0
Total	£25.0.3
(HRO 37M48/11)	

A wife and several working children could add £10 to £15 to the family's income in a good year (*BSP Poor Laws* 1834, 418b–446b). Dame Hill at Tichborne earned:

Weeding and Stonepicking 24 days	12.0
Turnip hoeing 50 days	1.13.4
30 days	1.0.0
19 days	12.0
Mowing and Haymaking 53 days	1.15.4
Harvest work 12 days	12.0
Total	£6.5.4

During the mowing and haymaking, William Hill's boy earned 12/- for eight weeks work, and Ann Hill, 2/8 for 8 days. The annual income for the Hill family from work at Tichborne was £32.0.3 (HRO 37M48/11).

The expenses of a labourer's family varied considerably according to the location of the farm and the customs and generosity of the employer. Statistics published in 1834 by a Royal Commission shows that rents in Hampshire varied between £1.10.0 and £10 (*BSP Poor Laws* 1834, 418b-446b). Housing which included a garden or the availability of allotments enabled families to supplement their incomes with home grown food. Common pasturage, turbury (the right to dig peat or turf on common lands), and estover (the right to carry wood from common lands) were important where they were available. Fuel could be gathered easily in woodland areas, but it had to be purchased in the chalklands where much of the agitation occurred. In 1830 an able-bodied labourer, his wife, and four children could expect to have the following expenses:

Weekly expenditure	
5 gallons of bread	7.6
3 lbs of bacon at 7d per pound	1.9
2 lbs of butter at 10d per pound	1.8
2 lbs of cheese at 6d per pound	1.0
tea	.9
1 lb sugar	.7
Beer - 7 quarts	1.2
1 Bushel coal	1.2
3 faggots	.9
Half pound soap	.4
Half pound candles	.4
Total weekly	17.0
Total annually	£44.4.0
Annual rent	5.4.0
Annual Clothing expenses	10.0.0
Annual Total	£59.8.0
(Carpenter 1972, 21-23)	

This makes no allowance for vegetables or potatoes which were important foods in the average worker's diet. With an average annual wage, assuming the wife and at least two children worked, of £30 to £50, few families

could meet these expenses. It would therefore appear that even an able-bodied labourer with fairly regular work was at least occasionally dependent on parish relief.

The situation was exacerbated by the modernization of tasks which altered the labour requirements. Probably the most hated newly introduced piece of farm machinery in 1830 was the threshing machine. Using the flail was a slow task demanding skilled labour. Between six and eight bushels of wheat could be prepared for marketing by one thresher in one day (Collins 1972, 25). The task continued throughout the winter when few other jobs could be done. Threshing at Tichborne provided Thomas Steptoe with over half his annual income in 1828. By using a water-powered threshing machine such as in the mill at Hockley, Twyford, five semi-skilled workers could accomplish in an hour what five skilled men using the flail could complete in a day (Vancouver 1810, 110). The introduction of the threshing machine meant that many farm labourers with families were unable to earn enough to survive without charity.

By 1830 the English poor relief system, based largely on Elizabethan laws, had come under considerable pressure in the South. This was due to the uneven distribution of labour demand during the year, the inadequacy of wages, and the unwillingness or inability of farmers to keep men in employment when there was no work. The result was a tendency to interpret the laws in a variety of ways according to the needs and resources of the individual parish. Generally, in Hampshire, relief was based on a family allowance linked to the price of bread and/or a wage supplement (*BSP Poor Laws* 1834, 418b-446b). The burden on the rate payer was heavy. In Hampshire in 1826 the average payment of over 4/- in the pound was one of the nine highest in the country (*BSP Relief of Poor* 1826-7, 667). A growing belief, based on the writings of Malthus, that such a system kept wages low, induced idleness, and encouraged large families led to increasing demands for reform of the poor laws. Rumours spread amongst labourers that relief was to be abol-

ished and caused anger and hostility. It had become a necessity for survival and was considered a customary right.

By November 1830 the people of Hampshire had suffered over a decade of agricultural depression. The harvests of 1828 and 1829 had been especially poor (Jones 1964, 164–65). The winter of 1829–30 was one of the worst known with the harbour at Portsmouth freezing and livestock dying through starvation and disease (HC 8/2/1830). The weather remained cold until the end of February (*ibid* 15/3/30). The spring and summer, however, were warm and sunny (*ibid* 5/4/30, 7/6/30, 12/7/30, 6/8/30). The harvest in July and August was good – ‘wheat was excellent in quality and abundant in quantity’; barley and oats yielding ‘an extraordinary quantity and better in quality than for some years past’ (*ibid* 6/9/30). October was changeable but good for field labour and winter wheat sowing was largely completed that month (*ibid* 8/11/30). By November many men were out of work, and, without flailing, there was little chance to find any. The month was ‘the warmest for a long time past’ (*ibid* 6/12/30). . . . Perfect weather for riots!

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Although the basic cause of the Agricultural Revolt was long term economic distress, the timing of the unrest in Hampshire was essentially political.

The events and mood of 1830 in England appear to be a preamble to revolution. In February at the State Opening of Parliament, George IV, when speaking of the distress amongst the agricultural and manufacturing classes, suggested that the causes of their distress were ‘beyond the Reach of Legislative Control or Remedy’ and that measures to remove the distress were not ‘compatible with the general and permanent Interests of His People’ (*Hansard* 2nd ser, vol xxiii, cols 3–4). The statement did nothing to encourage hope or confidence amongst his suffering subjects, and hostility towards the king grew. By April William Cobbett was predicting revolution

(Cobbett 1936, 253–4). The death of George IV on 26th June forced the Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister, to call an election for the end of July. Unfortunately for the stability of the nation, polling in Britain coincided with a revolution in France. By the 2nd August the French middle and lower classes had risen, overthrown the monarchy, and made Louis Philippe ‘The King of the French’. Peace was immediately restored. A letter received by F T Baring at the time stated, ‘The carnage ceased with the resistance, and . . . the abstinence from plunder . . . was incredible’ (*Journals of Sir F T Baring* 1905, 64). Thus, while the violence of the French Revolution of 1789–94 had confirmed the belief in Britain that the masses were unfit to govern, the restraint shown during the Revolution of 1830 shattered that same belief. The summer election in Britain and the revolution in France gave impetus to demands for change in the British franchise. Tension and agitation increased with key issues now increasingly being debated outside Parliament. That October in Hampshire, 186 villagers gathered at the Swan Inn, Sutton Scotney to sign a petition demanding universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and vote by secret ballot (*Two Penny Trash* 1/7/1832). By the end of October, serious unrest or even revolution was predicted if Parliament did not resolve the reform question. On the 2nd November Wellington rejected any alteration of the franchise (*Hansard* 3rd ser, vol i, col 9). This caused uproar. On the 8th and 9th of November mass demonstrations occurred in London. Brougham, a Whig MP, was due to introduce a reform motion in Parliament on the 16th November. Before that could happen, Wellington and Peel resigned. Rioting began in Hampshire the next day.

The Tory Government had failed to respond to the unrest which had been taking place in other counties in the south of England with a positive or decisive attitude. Many people misinterpreted the lack of repressive action as tacit support for the activities of the agitators (Charlesworth 1983, 153–4). The excitement created by the news and publicized by the

radical press quickly spread through improved communication and transportation. Literacy was increasing amongst the lower classes through the growing influence of non-conformist religions and the greater provision for basic schooling (*VCH* 1903, vol ii, 395–408). By 1830 there was a growing audience able to read and discuss the news coming from elsewhere in England and the Continent. News sheets and pamphlets, especially the produced by the radical press and aimed specifically at the working classes helped end the isolation of the Hampshire countryside.

Two nationally known radicals had special influence in Hampshire through their close connections with the county. Both were members of a group publishing pamphlets and news sheets aimed specifically at the working classes. William Cobbett had, according to J R M Butler, 'a wider influence in the country at this time than any other single man' (Butler 1964, 58). He knew Hampshire well and was himself a well known figure in the county. He had farmed at Botley, near Southampton, for several years and had made a series of 'Rural Rides' throughout the county to study agrarian conditions. Henry 'Orator' Hunt, an advocate of Parliamentary Reform and an MP for Preston, also had close connections with Hampshire. He was born in the neighbouring county of Wiltshire, was educated for a time near Micheldever, farmed near Overton, and died in Alresford (Hobsbawm & Rudé 1973, xiii). During the rioting he was actually in the county on 'private Business' (*Hansard* 3rd ser, vol ii, col 279). At Overton he was approached by farmers to mediate between themselves and a crowd of six to seven hundred. He obliged and the crowd dispersed (*ibid* cols 249–50). At Basingstoke on the eve of the unrest there he lectured at the Crown Inn (SU Lib 25M61/2/2/27). On the 28th November, T Asheston, writing to the Duke of Wellington, said:

That Hunt is concerned I have not the least doubt – He was at Overton and there was a Mob – He came to Andover and there was a Mob and he went from thence to Salisbury and there was a mob. (*ibid*, 2/2/34)

Attempts were made in 1830–31 to blame these leading radicals for the unrest which spread throughout the south of England. Finding evidence of such influence and direction would have been a facile solution to what was in fact a far more complex problem. However, whilst both Cobbett and Hunt had an impact in Hampshire, neither actually participated in any criminal activities. Leadership was local, and in each centre of rioting a different group of suspected ringleaders was identified. Alarmist reports of individuals travelling from county to county to lead the revolt spread with the rioting. In fact, no such person was ever found in Hampshire. James Thomas Cooper came closest to that description. He led the attack on two factories in the Fordingbridge area in a militaristic style. Cooper was reported to have 'come 40 miles from the other side of London', but in fact was from Wiltshire and had worked in Fordingbridge as an ostler for several months (HRO 14M50/4; *The Times* 3/1/1831).

Men believed to have been leaders were specially selected for arrest and severe sentencing. The judge stressed the role Cooper had played in the riots. 'You vaulted yourself on repeated occasions as the captain of that unlawful band' (HRO 14M50/4). Cooper was hanged. Henry Eldridge, one of the four sentenced to be hanged but later commuted to transportation for life, was the first to enter the factories at Fordingbridge (*ibid*). John Gilmore, another of the four, was a 'ringleader' in the attack on Tasker's of Andover. During the day he 'was seen at the head of a riotous and tumultuous mob which paraded the streets of Andover, . . . [and was] the first to enter that factory' (*ibid*). Robert Holdaway had been a publican in Headley and was well known in the area. In sentencing him, the judge said, 'you gave the signal for the attack, and set on others to execute the designs which you yourself formed' (*ibid*). At Barton Stacey 19 out of 26 of the men who had signed the petition to the King were committed for trial (Colson 1937, 139–41). Of these Henry Cooke was hanged and twelve were transported for life (HRO 14M50/2). In each area a few men stood out as

the leaders who headed the mob, stated demands, and collected the takings.

It was recognized by the court and magistrates that two distinct groups were involved in the unrest. The majority were farm labourers who were suffering from real financial hardship. This group sought a return to traditional agricultural patterns – a paternalistic, authoritarian landowner meeting the needs of a loyal workforce. However, most of the leaders came from the more literate group of craftsmen and traders who had more links with the outside world and were therefore more likely to have been influenced by radical writers. It was they who sought Parliamentary reform, more equal and universal justice, and reduction of tithes and taxes.

The association between the two groups was a significant feature of the unrest. The increasing use made by labouring families of village shops and services provided one means of contact. This contact often focused on the inns and pubs, but a trend during the early nineteenth century increased the numbers of tied houses and resulted in more careful magisterial supervision. However, on October 10th, 1830, an Act came into force which allowed a householder with surety of £20 and a 2 guinea licence to open a beershop in his home. Within three months 24,000 beershops were licensed in England (Clark 1983, 336). These were believed by many authorities to have been 'frequented largely by labourers, who did not wish to go to the village inn where they would meet their superiors' and were frequently cited as being a cause of riots (Colson 1937, 70). The inns, pubs, and newly opened beershops served as a convenient meeting place between the disaffected labourers and the men who became instigators and leaders during the riots. These hostelrys were one forum for the discussion and reading of radical ideas and the airing of grievances.

Another place where discontent could be voiced was provided by the growth in popularity of the Dissenting religions in Hampshire. Non-conformity was particularly common in rapidly growing parishes and in parishes where a single, dominant landowner

did not enforce church attendance. Between 1820 and 1830, 376 meeting houses were licensed in Hampshire (Willis 1965). These, because of their structure of ministry and their emphasis on personal Bible reading, encouraged literacy, independent thought, and the questioning of authority.

The labourers, artisans, and small farmers of Hampshire gained confidence to express their discontent in newly developing ways. They wanted higher wages, better working conditions, less mechanization, and fairer, more uniform parish government. They adopted the radical language of William Cobbett and 'Orator' Hunt. In the East Stratton/Micheldever/Barton Stacy area, the most politically active area of Hampshire, a group known as 'The Radical and Musical Society' met in local pubs to entertain with songs and to discuss politics. In evidence Enos Diddams, the 'Old Radical', admitted, 'the last meeting was on Saturday 13th November.' Before that, on the 10th October, they had 'agreed upon a petition to the King' (*The Times* 22/12/1830). During the unrest Thomas Baring, the major landowner in the area, wrote:

The motive which has operated upon the minds of my people has not been distress but a revolutionary spirit. The language they have used has been, 'We are going to have another constitution – the heads have been in power long enough, and now it is our turn,' and to the farmers they said, 'When we are in possession you shall have the land at ten shillings the acre.' This has been the language used at Stratton and Micheldever. (*Journals of F T Baring* 1905, 78–79)

There was, however, a dichotomy between the use made of political methods and language and the traditional world many labourers believed they would re-establish. The relationship between the paternal landowner and the deferential, loyal worker was breaking down. The revolt helped hasten its destruction. The agricultural labourer was a victim of the political excitement and tension of 1830. Poverty and unemployment made him that victim.

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APPENDIX

Date and Location of Incidents in November 1830

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Source</i>
before 15th	Portsmouth area	Threatening letters	HC 22/11
Monday 15th	Exton/Gosport area	Threatening letters	HC 22/11
	Gosport	Arson	HC 22/11
Tuesday 16th	Wallington	Arson	HC 22/11
	Fareham	Arson	HC 22/11
Wednesday 17th	Whitchurch	Riots, extortion, machine breaking, wage demands	HC 22/11
Thursday 18th	Warblington	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Havant	Riots	HRO 14M50/2
	Micheldever	Extortion	HRO 14M40/2
	Overton	Riots, extortion	Times 22/11
	Bourne	Arson	Times 22/11
	Estrop	Threatening letters	Times 23/11
Friday 19th	Winchester area	Riots, threatening letters	HC 22/11
	Basingstoke	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Northington	Riots, machine breaking assault	HRO 14M50/2
	Itchen Stoke	Riots	HRO 14M50/2
	East Stratton	Riots, extortion, assault, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Micheldever	Extortion, machine breaking, wage demands	HRO 14M50/2
	Barton Stacey	Riots, extortion, arson, wage demands	HRO 14M50/2
	Sutton Scotney	Riots, machine breaking wage demands	HC 22/11
	Andover	Riots, wage demands, extortion, arson	Times 22/11
	Lower Wallop	Riots, wages, tithes	Times 23/11
	Overton	Riots, extortion, wage demands	Times 22/11
	Alresford	Riots, machine breaking	Times 22/11
	Cliddesden	Riots, wage demands	Times 23/11
	Warnford	Wages, threats against threshing machines	Times 23/11

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Source</i>
Saturday 20th	West Meon	Wages, threats against threshing machines	<i>Times</i> 23/11
	Whitchurch	Wage demands, riots	<i>Times</i> 23/11
	Newton Stacey	Riots, incitement, wage demands	<i>Times</i> 23/11
	Upper Clatford	Riots, machine breaking (Taskers)	HRO 14M50/2
	Finkley	Riots, poorhouse attacked	HC 29/11
	Longparish	Riots	HC 29/11
	Micheldever	Assault, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Barton Stacey	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Martyr Worthy	Assault, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Kingsworthy	Riots, extortion	P Johnson
	Holyborne	Wage demands	HC 29/11
	Romsey area (mobs from Houghton)	Riots, incitement, extortion, wage demands	HC 29/11
	Compton, Broughton, Mottisfont	Machine breaking, threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Michelmarsch,	Machine breaking, threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Tytherley, Lockerley	threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Tytherley, Lockerley	threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Alresford	Assault, riots	<i>Times</i> 23/11
Sunday 21st	Vernham Dean	Riots, assault, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Kimpton	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Stockbridge	Riots, extortion	HC 29/11
	Houghton	Riots, extortion	HC 29/11
	Bossington	Riots, damage to property	HC 29/11
	Kings Somborne	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HC 29/11
	Sparsholt	Riots	HC 29/11
	Crawley	Riots	HRO 14M50/2
	Littleton	Riots, extortion	HC 29/11
	Andover area	Arson	HC 29/11
	Alverstoke	Threatening letters	HRO 14M50/2
	Alvington	Riots-mob from Winchester repelled by Parish	HC 29/11
	Southampton	Threatening letters	<i>Times</i> 29/11
	Southwick	Riots	<i>Times</i> 30/11
	Ampert	Machine breaking, wage demands, riots	HRO 43M67/A/PR5
Monday 22nd	Bishop Waltham	Riots, extortion	HC 29/11
	Durley	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Source</i>
	Upham	Riots, extortion, tithes	HRO 14M50/2
	Stockbridge	Riots, extortion, tithes	HC 29/11
	Leckford	Riots, extortion, tithes	HC 29/11
	Romsey Extra	Riots, machine breaking, robbery	HC 29/11
	East Dean	Arson (Turnpike gates)	HC 29/11
	Tytherley	Arson (Turnpike gates)	HC 29/11
	Mottisfont	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Michelmars	Assault, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Broughton	Riots, robbery, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Andover	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Quarley	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Penton Grafton	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Weyhill	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	St. Lawrence	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Watton		HRO 14M50/2
	Thruxton	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Vernham Dean	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Itchen Abbas	Riots, machine breaking	HC 29/11
	Selborne	Riots, Poorhouse attack, tithes	HRO 14M50/2
	Hurstborne	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Tarrant		
	Farringdon	Robbery	HRO 14M50/2
	Corhampton	Extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Buriton	Riots, assault	HRO 14M50/2
	Bighton	Riots	HRO 14M50/2
	Martyr Worthy	Extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Basingstoke	Riots	HRO 14M50/2
	Alresford	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Swanmore	Riots	HC 29/11
	Soberton	Riots	HC 29/11
	Liphook	Riots, wage demands	Times 30/11
	Steep	Wage demands	Times 30/11
Tuesday 23rd	Wickham	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Botley	Riots, machine breaking	HC 29/11
	Sherfield English	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Sydmonton	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Kingsley	Robbery	HRO 14M50/2
	Headley	Riots, extortion, destruction of poorhouse	HRO 14M50/2
	Greatham	Extortion	HRO 14M50/2

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Source</i>
	South Stoneham	Assault, extortion, riots machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	North Stoneham	Assault, extortion, riots machine breaking	HC 29/11
	Swathling	Assault, extortion, riots machine breaking	Times 29/11
	Fordingbridge	Riots, extortion, machine breaking (Thompsons & Shepherds)	HRO 14M50/2
	Rockborne	Riots	HC 29/11
	Highclere	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Quarley	Riots, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Pamber	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Owslebury	Riots, extortion, assault	HRO 14M50/2
	Ewhurst	Riots	HC 29/11
	Titchfield	Wage demands	HC 29/11
	Hambledon	Wage demands	HC 29/11
	Tytherley	Arson (Turnpike Keeper's House)	HC 29/11
	East Dean	Arson (Turnpike Keeper's House)	HC 29/11
	East Woodhay	Riots, robbery, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Droxford	Extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Monk Sherborne	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Burghclere	Riots, extortion, machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Breamore	Riots, extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	Weyhill	Arson	HC 29/11
	Southampton	Arson (Bakers)	HC 29/11
	Morestead	Riots, extortion	HC 29/11
	Gosport area	Threatening letters	Times 30/11
Wednesday 24th	Headley	Extortion	HRO 14M50/2
	East Woodhay	Riots, extortion machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Dockenfield	Riots, wage demands	HRO 14M50/2
	Droxford	Machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Binstead	Machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
	Durley	Wage demands, threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Millbrook	Wage demands, threatening letters	HC 29/11
	Eling	Threatening letters	HC 29/11
Thursday 25th	Fawley	Riots, incitement, wage demands	HRO 14M50/2

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Incident</i>	<i>Source</i>
	Redbridge	Riots, extortion	<i>Times</i> 29/11
	Liss	Riots	<i>Times</i> 29/11
Friday 26th	Fawley	Riots, assault, aiding an escape	HRO 14M50/2
	Romsey	Riots, extortion	<i>Times</i> 27/11
	Lyndhurst	Mob travelling from Poole to Winchester intercepted	<i>Times</i> 27/11
	Exbury & Lepe	Machine breaking	HRO 14M50/2
around the 28th	Bishop Waltham	Threatening letters	HRO 14M50/2

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BSP British Sessional Papers, House of Commons
 HC Hampshire Chronicle and Southampton Courier
 HRO Hampshire Record Office, Winchester
 SU Lib Southampton University Library, Wellington Papers

HRO 100M70, Ashburton Correspondence
 HRO Book 328, Proceedings at the Special Commission Holden at Winchester December 20, 1830, and the Eight Following Days, (1831)
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