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‘Arable freehold land values in two English counties before the Black Death’

Aggregate analysis of arable land values before the Black Death has been completed by B. M. S. Campbell et al., extracting data from the intermittent *Inquisitiones Post Mortem*. Whilst producing a plausible cartography of the values, there remain some potential issues of the data, admitted by the proponents. Firstly, the data pertain largely to the estates of tenants-in-chief, those holding immediately from the King. Although not exclusively large domains, these estates are perhaps not entirely typical. Equally, the values often relate to the demesnes, directly exploited by these lords, possibly consolidated in contradistinction to other landholders, free or unfree. The information is organized at the manorial level and is geographically sporadic - coverage is not available for all localities and so wider geographical coverage is extrapolated. Those caveats are theoretical. One way of addressing the potential difficulties of that source is to compare the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1341-2, an imposition of Edward III on the produce of wool and grain. In two counties, Suffolk and Sussex, the *NonInq* describe the glebe (land allocated anciently to the rector) in every parish, including a valuation of the arable. The coverage is comprehensive. The glebe, moreover, may have more closely resembled the holdings of the peasantry, in size and in configuration. These assigned values are mapped for the two counties (using QGIS and MapInfo). The size of the glebe is enumerated in acres rather than larger measures, so more reflective of peasant holdings. From the mapped data, we can illustrate more comprehensively the variation in arable and values and the existence of pays or farming regions, despite the omission of non-arable resources. In the end, however, we still have to suspect that these conventional values, although assigned by local peasant jurors (as also were the IPMs) are no more than conventional and that they do not represent the productivity nor the price of freehold land.