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## 7 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

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### 7.1 *Jack's houses and their inhabitants over the century c 1830–1930*

While it is not possible to date precisely the construction of Jack's Houses, there is enough evidence from the census and the Hopetoun estate papers to indicate the late 1830s as the most likely date; a valuation document from 1838 would suggest that Jack's Houses did not then exist. The first, indeed only, direct reference to Jack's Houses in the estate papers occurs in 1843, in a memorandum relative to the proposed new let of Humbie farm: 'Houses at Carmelhill and Swineburn and Jack's Houses if to be kept up – a portion of them may be kept up for workers and the others taken down.'<sup>1</sup> We know from the 1841 census that Jack's Cottages were on the farm, and that both cottages were inhabited. The 1840s in particular seem to have been a time of improvement and new building of farm cottages on the estate. The total valuation of the buildings on the farm in 1831 and 1838 was given as £2,095, including a £600 valuation on the farmhouse. In contrast, a number of cottages on the farm were given a total valuation of £160. These were eight cottages, 'stone and thatched, communication with each other', at £50 each; two ranges of cottages at Carmelhill, 'tiled', at £30 and £20 respectively; a house at Swineburn, 'thatched', at £30; and three cottages at Swineburn, 'tiled', at £30.<sup>2</sup> Jack's Houses could not be among these eight cottages, as they were a terraced row, and there was no specific reference to them. So, although it may be possible that there were earlier 'Jack's Houses', it seems sensible to conclude that the Jack's Houses of this study were built some time between 1838 and 1841.

All farm cottages on the estate at this time seem to have been in a very poor condition and in urgent need of attention. In 1846–47 considerable effort and expense was spent on the labourers' cottages at Humbie and elsewhere on the Hopetoun Estate. A letter to the Hopetoun factor from a Mr Hope Wallace (presumably a relation to the Hope family) spelled out the urgent need, and the need not to cut corners:

With respect to Humbie – the cottages are of the most wretched description – and I am very sorry that there has been any delay about renewing them. There is no doubt you will get no reduction in the estimates, and we have in Niddry a proof that there is no economy in taking the lowest offer. Of the two plans you propose – I prefer that which ensures a better class of cottage, viz. to build six new ones and to keep up some of the old ones. I do not see how we could in building new ones avoid

putting up cottages of a much superior kind to the old ones, which are disgraceful. You had better see Mr Dudgeon on the subject that no time may be lost.<sup>3</sup>

There is no way of knowing if this work included Jack's Cottages, but it is clear that the estate was spending a not insignificant amount of money. The mason work came to £276; the wright work £260; slater and plaster work £104, plus additional costs on paving and flooring the cottages, and building dykes for the gardens. The major burden fell to the estate, but the tenants (George and Robert Dudgeon) had to pay 5% interest on any sum above an initial £500, and to keep the cottages 'in proper repair' for the duration of their lease.<sup>4</sup>

Since each cottage during the 19th-century decennial censuses (starting 1841) records different sets of occupants, it may be assumed that occupancy of these houses was not of a long-term nature. This is what we would expect, given the annual hiring of farm labour and the 'tied housing' that constituted part of that contract. However, this does not mean that occupancy changed on an annual basis. The Baxters, one of the first families recorded inhabiting Jack's Houses, were still at the same address in 1845, while the Anthonys, who were resident in Jack's Houses in 1891, were to be found at nearby Humbie Farm cottage in 1901. Over the five censuses, 1841–91, the occupations of the inhabitants were Agricultural/Farm Labourer, Blacksmith, Coachman & Gardener, Quarry Labourer, Out-Worker, Roadman, Servant, Shepherd and Wright. These occupations reflect the economic needs of the farm and its proprietor at various times. There were two quarries located at Humbie Farm, though not tenanted by the farmer; an old lime quarry dating back to the early 17th century, and a sandstone quarry which produced a renowned stone, used in the construction of Newliston House and the Glasgow Stock Exchange, and which may have produced the stone for Jack's Houses also.<sup>5</sup> Within the estate papers there is a somewhat cryptic reference to the quarry being approached in the 1830s with the possibility of 'exhibiting stones . . . to be considered for the new Parliament Buildings'.<sup>6</sup> The demand for blacksmiths seems to have been directly related to the smithy on the farm.<sup>7</sup>

Using the place of birth on the census form as an indication of the region from which the inhabitants were drawn, it appears that most came from the surrounding Lothians area. This was particularly true for the more skilled workers, viz. blacksmiths and wrights. A visit to the old kirk cemetery at Kirkliston showed that the surnames of 'Brash' and 'Borthwick'

featured prominently in the locale. However, some occupants were born in the Borders, Aberdeenshire and Ireland. This is in accordance with the historical migratory patterns of agricultural workers and other specific employment factors such as the construction of the Union canal in 1818–22, which used much Irish labour.<sup>8, 9</sup>

Though it cannot be determined which set of occupants inhabited which dwelling from the earlier censuses, as they do not specify the number of windowed rooms per cottage until 1861, it is clear from the number of individuals recorded in families that overcrowding was a fact of life. In 1841 the Baxter family may have inhabited the cottage with one or two windowed rooms; either way, it seems a tight squeeze. However, we know that in 1861 Patrick Curron, an agricultural labourer, occupied the one-window house with his extended family, comprising eight individuals in total, five adults and three children.

In an attempt to flesh out the information in the censuses, an effort was made to link families from census to census and track life events such as births, deaths and marriages through the civil register (only possible with the introduction of compulsory civil registration). It was not possible to track some occupants from the earlier censuses due to the common nature of the names and because of the lapse of 40 years between 1841 and 1881, the first census searchable by name. The record-linkage method is explained in more detail in the [Appendix](#).

The poor or labouring population leave little by way of documentary evidence of their lives. Such records are generally the preserve of the wealthy. A case in point is the early Valuation Rolls, which listed neither Jack's Houses nor their inhabitants. The bias towards those with property is demonstrated by the assessor's presentation, which amounts to a list of properties in the parish arranged alphabetically by owner. Workmen's cottages were not given individual addresses and their inhabitants were ascribed the collective term 'sundry'. It is only towards the end of the 19th century that Jack's 'Cottages' are identified in the Valuation Roll.

Although one would not expect the inhabitants of Jack's Houses to have left much in the way of personal wealth or possessions, a search of 19th-century inventories produced one instance, that of Ann Borthwick who was listed in the 1861 census at Jack's Houses; Ann was then 29, married with three children. Both she and her husband James were agricultural labourers. When Ann died in Kirkliston in 1890 she was a widow, having been predeceased by her husband five years previously. Ann's inventory reveals that she left £47 12s 9d, which comprised £32 12s 9d in the National Security Savings Bank of Edinburgh, household furniture and effects valued at £9, and £6 death benefit from the Kirkliston Funeral Society. By contrast, an inventory of one of the tenants of Humble, George Dudgeon, who died in 1876, brought in

a total of £392 5s 9d, £88 of which was cash, £5 personal effects and the rest in stock of the Bank of Scotland and money in the Clydesdale Banking Co. of Edinburgh. Another inhabitant of Jack's Houses was Lewis Gilbert, a farm labourer, who lived there in 1851. Lewis had a son, William, who was not listed as living with his parents in 1851, but who became a farmer in his own right and who, when he died in 1894, left a personal estate of £1,489 12s 6d. Dwarfing all of these, however, was the wealth of the landowner. The inventory of John Hope, Earl of Hopetoun, who died in 1824, amounted to £63,809 3s 6d, comprising sums from rentals and feus, debts owed and mining concerns in the Leadhills; his interests stretched from Arniston Hall in Midlothian to arable land in Dumfriesshire.<sup>10</sup> This is not an accurate reflection of Hope's true wealth, as the inventories only include 'personal' wealth, not 'real' wealth, ie land and property.

Another contrast can be drawn from the fate of Mary McRiner, who inhabited the one-roomed house in 1891 with her husband Peter, a roadsman. Her husband was then aged 64, and Mary was 62 years old; no other family lived with them. Peter died of bronchitis in 1896 at Overtoun, Kirkliston. The 1901 census shows Mary residing with her sister at Overtoun, both in receipt of Parish Relief. Shortly thereafter, in June of that year, Mary died, aged 74, of cardiac disease, dropsy and heart failure. This was not the only example of the poverty of those who lived in Jack's Houses, as two other inhabitants died in the poorhouse (see [Appendix](#)).

Jack's Houses were largely typical of the cottage accommodation that was provided for farm workers and their families throughout Scotland from the early 19th century. Until that date the usual house was 'a primitive erection of four walls of stone, or a mixture of turf and clay and stone, thatched with turf or straw, without chimney and often without windows, the floors of clay'. Thereafter, more substantial properties were constructed, 'stone and lime walls were built, two rooms were provided with a proper partition between, floorings and ceilings were added, and the internal finishings of the rooms attended to'.<sup>11</sup> The farm cottages tended to be built in pairs or rows, usually the site being selected to economise on land and/or to house the occupants close to their work. Jack's Houses was located at one extremity of Humble Farm, along what is identified on one map as the parish road, and between two fields: Jack's Park North and Jack's Park South. The names of the fields explain the sobriquet of the cottages, but, unfortunately, it is not known why the fields were so titled originally. Including their 'yards' or gardens, the physical area of Jack's Houses comprised 0.142 acres.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Royal Commission on Housing in 1917 reported that one-roomed houses were very rare in agrarian districts, we know from the census (see above) that one of Jack's Houses was such a dwelling. While we do not have any plans or descriptions of Jack's Houses themselves, there

is an architectural drawing of the nearby 'Humbie Farm Cottages' dated 1904. This plan was drawn up by the Hopetoun Estate when 'additions' were being made to a terrace of four cottages, which still stands today. The plan reveals a very basic internal layout of 'Kitchen', 'Room', 'Lobby' and 'Pantry', with one cottage having an extra 'Cupboard'. In addition, each cottage had its own coal shed attached, and there was one 'Ashpit' and one 'E.C.' (earth closet) shared between two cottages. The 'additions' being made seem to have been an extension to the 'Room' in each cottage, rather than the construction of an additional room. In one case it is possible to identify the dimensions of the 'Room', which was 12 feet 3 inches by 14 feet (3.73 × 4.27m). Neither the 'Pantry' nor the 'Lobby' constituted a room as such; the two rooms of the cottages were the 'Room' and the 'Kitchen', with the latter being the larger.<sup>13</sup>

This style of housing was largely determined by the agricultural improvements of the late 18th century, which also dictated the nature of the tenancy and occupancy. With enclosure and the removal of the subtenants, the farmers needed more hands and also more regularly employed workers. This labour arrangement was crucial to the efficiency of 19th-century agriculture in Scotland.<sup>14</sup> Cottages had to be built for the married men, who were employed on six-month or yearly contracts and who brought their wives and children onto the farm. A particular aspect of Scottish farming was the heavy use of female labour.<sup>15</sup> Wages were paid partly in cash and partly in 'allowances', that is, from the produce of the farm, and the cottage, provided rent and rate free, was part of the contract. In Linlithgowshire or West Lothian the hiring system was yearly, with the contracts made in February and the move to a new cottage on Whitsunday. The average wage of a farm servant in this area was estimated in 1914 to be £1 3s, comprising £1 1s in cash and 2s in allowances. This placed West Lothian in the top six wage-earning counties of Scotland, and, alongside Edinburgh, the county with the lowest level of allowances.<sup>16</sup>

The demand for labour was determined by the type of agriculture and the size of farms. The vast majority of Scottish farms were small. A survey conducted in 1906 found that fully 70 per cent of all farms had an annual valuation of under £50. On a county basis, West Lothian was in the middle range, which still meant that very few farms were in the high-rated category (ie over £300).<sup>17</sup> Humbie, however, was definitely a high rental farm; the Valuation Roll for 1909–10 gave the rateable value, or annual rental, as £720 6s 1d.<sup>18</sup> This meant that the labour needs of Humbie would be different from those of a small farm. According to John Frew, the County Sanitary Inspector for Linlithgowshire, most farms were small, between 100 and 120 acres, a large proportion of which would be worked by the farmer and his family. When they did need labour, they preferred single men, indeed they often stipu-

lated this. Frew explained the logic of this decision: 'The older people get, the older-fashioned they get.'<sup>19</sup> But Frew could not have been unaware that single men did not need a cottage and so the farmer would have been spared that expense. On a larger farm, such as Humbie, however, married farm workers, and hence cottages, were necessary.

While the worker got his accommodation from the farmer, the actual cottage was the property of the landowner. This gave a divided responsibility for maintaining the cottages, which could encourage each party to try and avoid the burden of repairs. Minor repairs were meant to be the responsibility of the farmer, while the landowner was to see to structural repairs. It may have been the case, as the 'additions' to the Humbie Farm Cottages in 1904 suggest, that the situation in larger farms and estates was better. Nevertheless, the condition of Jack's Houses was likely to have been similar to most farm cottages. All cottages had gardens of between 100 square yards and one eighth of an acre, though Scottish farm workers tended not to grow flowers. Potatoes were ubiquitous and, along with other vegetables grown, an important part of the family income.<sup>20</sup>

The interiors of the cottages were very basic; each new occupant was likely to personalise the accommodation only by the little personal furniture they had and by papering or painting the walls. Baths were unknown in farm cottages: indeed the Royal Commission on Housing debated whether or not the working class could be taught how to use them. There was no internal plumbing in the cottages, but, at least in West Lothian, the water supply was just outside. All farm cottages suffered from damp. Often this was to do with the location; they tended to be built on an available space without consideration of the consequences. In addition, there was usually no internal lining; the plaster was put straight onto the bare walls. Whatever the causes, complaints about damp were more or less universal, as was the chronic rheumatism that farm workers suffered from.<sup>21</sup> The evidence for West Lothian given to the Commission was consistent with the national pattern.<sup>22</sup> The incidence of respiratory conditions as a cause of death among the sometime inhabitants of Jack's Houses suggests that these cottages were no different to the norm, and the fact that they were condemned in the early 1930s suggests that they might indeed have been inferior to most.

## 7.2 *A history of Kirkliston parish, focusing on the 1830s and '40s*

Today the area that was the Parish of Kirkliston is part of the City of Edinburgh, but it was, for most of its history, divided between the counties of Midlothian and West Lothian, or Linlithgow. The main part of the parish, including the town of Kirkliston and – of most concern to us – the lands

of Humbie, were located in the latter county. While agriculture (Humbie remains a working farm today) provides historical continuity with a much earlier period, Kirkliston has experienced major social and economic changes over the last two centuries. Canal-building in the early 19th century, followed by the railways, the rise and fall of the shale mining industry, the construction of the Forth rail and road bridges, the M9 motorway, the building and continuing expansion of Edinburgh airport, have all made their impact on the local economy and physical landscape.

The ecclesiastical history of Kirkliston provides the lengthiest unbroken link in the area's history. The parish church of Kirkliston was built around the end of the 12th century and was dedicated by the Bishop of St Andrews on 11 September 1244. The earliest written records of agriculture, however, date from the later 17th century only. Crops grown then include bere (or bear, barley), oats, wheat and peas; horses, cattle and sheep were kept, and liming, manuring and the rotation of crops were known about and practised. While the traditional system of 'infield' and 'outfield' cultivation continued in some parts of the parish until the later 18th century, 'improvement' was being progressively pursued from early in the century. The most famous figure in this respect was Lord Stair, who inherited the estate of Newliston and is acknowledged as being the first in the area to replace the traditional ox plough with one pulled by two horses. He is also credited with being the first person in Scotland to have had turnips and cabbages planted in open fields.<sup>23</sup>

Improvement was not, however, simply imposed from the top by the landowners. The tenant farmers played a crucial role also, especially once the initial structural changes had been introduced.<sup>24</sup> In Kirkliston this meant men such as John Allan of Loanhead and George Reid, tenant of Humbie, who made marked improvements in draining the land. Around 1767 most of the land of the parish was enclosed, with the old strips or rigs being consolidated into fields divided by trees, hedgerows or dykes. Longer leases were granted by the landlords to the tenant farmers, though by 1839 (the date of the New Statistical Account) 19 years was the general term. At this same date many farm cottages in the parish were renovated or improved. It is evident that this was the period of tenure enjoyed by the Dudgeons as shown, for example, on the new let agreed for Humbie in 1925.<sup>25</sup> Lets were, however, open to re-negotiation during the stated period and new agreements could be reached before the term was finished. In 1838 a memorandum regarding a new lease for Humbie was written up, and a copy sent to Professor Low of Edinburgh, who was contracted to produce a report and effective valuation of the farm.<sup>26</sup> It is worth quoting from this report, since it reveals both the recognised worth of the farm and the need for mutual co-operation between landlord and tenant:

The farm is in excellent order, but a considerable portion of it, as you are aware, is not of a quality to admit of a high rent and can only be kept productive by a liberal expenditure on the part of the tenant. I very much approve of the proposed arrangement with the present occupier and it is of the first importance to the interests of the farm that the improvements now in progress with respect to draining and otherwise should proceed without interruption. I have no hesitation in saying that the manner in which this farm has been managed is an example to the country.<sup>27</sup>

Humbie Farm, as indicated above, was part of this process of improvement. It appears likely that Jack's Houses were built in 1839, the same year that the new lease was drawn up for the farm.<sup>28</sup>

It is likely that the farm area was originally within the ecclesiastical lands of Kirkliston, though by 1500 it was in the possession of the Liston family. The Liston and Hamilton families were connected by marriage and farmed the lands throughout the following century, before the latter became sole proprietor. Humbie then passed to the earls of Wintoun, before becoming, in 1678, the property of the Hope family; firstly John and then his son Charles, the first earl of Hopetoun. George Reid, whose Covenanter ancestor Alexander is buried in the churchyard of Kirkliston, became the tenant during the 18th century, and the farmhouse of Humbie was built around 1782. Reid's daughter, Elizabeth, married Alexander Dudgeon and it has been the Dudgeon family who have farmed Humbie since the 19th century. It would appear, from the Hopetoun estate papers, that a more precise date for the building of Jack's Houses may be 1839, the same year that a new lease was drawn up for Humbie Farm.<sup>29</sup>

The first *Statistical Account* of Kirkliston was written by John Muckarsie, assistant to the minister, in 1792–93 and he remarked that there had been 'great changes of landholders here as in all the parishes of Scotland'. The New Statistical Account of Kirkliston (1839), written by the local minister, Rev. Tait, identified nine men as the chief landowners, the most significant being the earl of Hopetoun, who owned more than 40 per cent of the valued rent of the parish (£12,846 18s Scots). The same source identified 30 farms and, in his evidence to the 1844 Poor Law Inquiry, stated that the size of these ranged from 50 to 500 acres. Fifty years previously Muckarsie had commented that most farms were between 100 and 200 acres, with only three or four farms between 300 and 500 acres. A plan of Humbie Farm, drawn up in October 1843, shows the total acreage then to have been 644 imperial acres (or 510 Scots acres), which would suggest that Humbie was one of the larger farms of the parish.<sup>30</sup>

In his census of 1755, the first census undertaken in Scotland, the Rev. Dr Alexander Webster gave the population of Kirkliston parish as 1,461.<sup>31</sup> The *Statistical Account*, written almost 40 years later, gave the inhabitants as 1,504 individuals and 352

families. The first census revealed a population of 1,674 in 1801, and in 1811 this had risen only fractionally, to 1682. Over the next decade, however, a more substantial increase occurred so that in 1821 the population had reached 2,213, the reason being the influx of labourers working on the construction of the Union Canal between 1818 and 1822. The impressive aqueduct these men built over the River Almond remains a significant local landmark, as does the later Almond Valley railway viaduct built in 1842. In 1831 there was little change in the population, which had increased by only 42, to 2,265. Another surge thereafter brought the population to 2,989 in 1841, presumably due to the building of the Edinburgh–Glasgow railway line, which was completed in 1842. The temporary nature of this second influx of labourers is shown by the subsequent sharp fall in population to 2,029 by 1851. For the next 20 years there was little change, but by 1881 the number of inhabitants had expanded to 2,580. A much greater rate of increase, however, occurred over the next ten years, when an almost 50 per cent increase took the population to a new high of 3,737. Behind this expansion lay the development of the shale oil industry and the building of the Forth Railway Bridge. James ‘Paraffin’ Young first extracted shale oil in the district in 1858 and over the next hundred years this industry would play a significant role in the life and economy of Kirkliston. Another significant jump in population between 1901 and 1911 (from 3,904 to 5,298) is explained by the rapid expansion of the shale industry in these years, which brought a large number of labourers from Northern Ireland into the area. The opening of St Philomena’s Catholic Church in 1903 is indicative of this immigration. For the next 50 years population figures were more or less static, the census of 1961 giving a figure of 5,242.<sup>32</sup>

The first *Statistical Account* divided the population of the parish into two ‘classes’; apart from the three resident heritor, or landowning, families, the people were labelled either ‘farmers’ or ‘mechanics and servants’. The farmers, ‘being almost wholly on the same level, live together in the most intimate habits of friendship and hospitality’. Muckarsie commented favourably on the ‘increasing civilization of manners’, and how the farmers had foregone the pleasure of conducting their business and amusement in the public houses of the parish; now they entertained at home ‘in the family style’. On the other hand, he could detect no great change in the ‘morals of the common people’. Because of the ‘equality of the farms and the want of manufactures’, it was effectively impossible that any mechanic or farm servant could rise to become a master in his own right.<sup>33</sup>

Writing in the *New Statistical Account* nearly 40 years later, Rev. Tait presented a largely unchanged picture. The developments in farming had continued steadily and ‘at the present time there is perhaps no parish in Scotland, which, in respect of the system of husbandry pursued, is further advanced in improve-

ment, or more distinguished by the excellence of its management’. The building of the Union Canal had been done mostly by labourers from Ireland, ‘many of who became, from that time, settled inhabitants’. This in-migration did not, however, alter the social structure of the parish, as the Irish who stayed once again became workers on the land. In his evidence to the Poor Law Inquiry of 1844, Tait stated that the parish had no manufactures, no colliers or miners, and he did not give an estimate of the number of agricultural labourers because, ‘the population is almost wholly agricultural’.<sup>34</sup>

Like his predecessor, Tait bemoaned the ‘low price of spiritous liquors’ (the original Kirkliston Distillery, still in existence today, was built in the early years of the 19th century), though unlike Muckarsie, Tait did not repeat the call for a combined solution of raising the price of spirits while making ale ‘a more palatable and substantial beverage’. While complaining about the failings of the labouring classes to save sufficiently ‘from present income a provision for future want’, he did recognise a ‘distressing amount of poverty’, especially in the village of Kirkliston itself, ‘where some of the houses are little better than Irish cabins’. A Friendly Society had been established in 1798, and two other benefit societies had been established subsequently; these paid out an annual benefit to members, while the former operated as a genuine insurance against sickness, unemployment and old age. Notwithstanding these efforts at mutual assistance, Tait could not see how the poor could be helped ‘without also multiplying the demands for future relief’. This last statement reveals Tait’s sympathy with the views of the Rev. Thomas Chalmers on the necessity of denying any legal right of the poor to support, in order to avoid ‘encouraging pauperism’.<sup>35</sup>

The Disruption of 1843 saw the majority of ministers and kirk elders follow the charismatic Thomas Chalmers out of the state Church of Scotland, into the new voluntary Free Church of Scotland. This schism, led by a man who, ironically, desired a state-funded Church, had major repercussions, both theologically and socially, for Scotland. In Kirkliston there was immediate support for the new congregation, with a Free Church opening its doors in Kirkliston High Street in May 1843. Traditionally, the Free Church has been identified as the more ‘democratic’ body, in that more of its members were from the lower orders than was the case in the Church of Scotland. That interpretation has been revised, particularly for urban congregations, but it appears to hold true for Kirkliston. The earliest Communion Roll for Kirkliston Free Church reveals that both of the families then inhabiting Jack’s Houses were members: John and Agnes Baxter, and William Gibson and his wife.<sup>36</sup> Other names on the Communion Roll from ‘Humbie’, which presumably meant other farm workers, were: Fairlie, Kirwood, Lawrie, Potter, Stewart and Tod. A George Sharp from ‘Kirkliston’, was also on the Communion Roll, and this may have been either the John Sharp

who inhabited one of Jack's Houses at the time of the 1841 census, or his eldest son, who was 25 in 1841.<sup>37</sup> One cannot, however, say that all agricultural labourers identified with the Free Church, as the Baptismal Register of the Church of Scotland contains four baptisms between 1863 and 1923 of children born to parents who resided at Humbie.<sup>38</sup>

It was the great debate over the efficacy of the Poor Law, and whether the poor and the unemployed should have a right to statutory relief, which brought about the 1844 Inquiry. The Disruption of 1843, which split the Church of Scotland and saw the formation of the Free Church, threw the existing system of parish relief into further crisis. The evidence collated by the Poor Law Commissioners allows us a little more detail (alongside the first and second Statistical Accounts) on the lives of the labouring classes or common people, ie the sort of people who inhabited Jack's Houses.<sup>39</sup>

The local arrangements for the relief of the poor were put under tremendous strain by the establishment of a rival congregation in the parish; the Free Church had opened its doors in Kirkliston High Street in May 1843. For many years the heritors had paid an annual voluntary contribution based upon valued rents. About 1839, however, an agreement was reached between the heritors and the kirk-session whereby the former would continue to provide for those already on the poor's roll, while the latter would provide for new additions to the roll; in 1842 the heritors contributed £200, while the church-door collection amounted to about £40 plus an additional £15 collection for coals for the poor.

The Kirk Sessions Minutes do not mention any of the identified inhabitants of the houses; however, many bearing the same surname (eg Brash, Borthwick, Anthony, Sharp and White) were in receipt of allowances. Lord Hopetoun and the Dudgeons, who tenanted Humbie and Almondhill farms, contributed to the coffers on an annual basis. For example the decade 1854–64 saw Hopetoun donating £4 18s 10d per annum and the Dudgeons 10s each per annum. This arrangement, as well as a similar one for the payment of the parish schoolmaster's salary, was written into the farm lease.<sup>40</sup> Hopetoun also gave additional relief of oatmeal to the deserving poor who lived on his property, the Kirk-Session deciding who would qualify. He did not, however, see fit to contribute to the annual collection to provide coal for the poor of Bathgate.<sup>41</sup> In keeping with the paternalism through which much of the landlord's authority was maintained, Hopetoun did pay pensions to long-standing servants on his estate. For instance, in 1847 'Widow Erskine' received £3 as her half-yearly allowance, though deducted from this was 7s 3d, being the cash value of the meal that she was given.<sup>42</sup>

The usual allowance for an individual pauper was 4s per month, though a wholly bed-ridden person could be given 8s. A couple of specific cases were detailed by Tait, and these are worth referring to since they appear to echo some of today's welfare

concerns. There was 'an idiot' on the roll, a woman who was looked after by her brother, who received an allowance of 3s 6d for his efforts. There was also a widow with three children under ten years of age, who received 5s per month, but she was expected to supplement this with wages earned as an outdoor labourer; when at work her children were looked after by her neighbours. Tait stated that it was 'rare' for single women with illegitimate children to be given aid, though women deserted by their husbands were relieved. The minister added that such desertion was, and always had been, very uncommon in the parish.

In 1842 there had been 15 persons receiving occasional relief, especially during winter, while the number on those of the permanent roll was 52. Of the latter, women outnumbered men by more than two to one (36 to 16 respectively), while a similar number (35) were over 60 years old. Despite the lack of any legal entitlement of the able-bodied poor (ie the unemployed) to relief, aid was given to men who were temporarily sick and, more controversially, £17 had been spent on helping the unemployed during the winter of 1842–43.

At the 1844 Inquiry Tait also gave some detail relating to general living conditions, which supplemented his Account of the parish in 1839. He stated that the average wage of hinds or servants employed in farming was £16 for men and £6 for women, the latter figure including 'victuals'. Five years previously he had given the wages of farm servants as £26–£27 per annum 'on average, all things included'. One must assume that the higher figure incorporated allowances such as food and rent. Although payment in kind became increasingly less significant in West Lothian, it still remained part of the agricultural wage well into the 20th century.<sup>43</sup> Able-bodied day-labourers in farming got 9s–10s per week, which appears equal to the permanently employed farm servants such as a ploughman. The day-labourers, however, would not be employed every week of the year, so these amounts are not strictly comparable.

Artisans averaged 10s per week also, or at daily rates: wrights 2s 6d; masons 3s; slaters 3s or 3s 6d, while, 'smithy work is frequently contracted for, and often charged at a price per article'. More precise figures can be obtained from the Hopetoun estate papers, though these do not refer to the tenanted farms but to those workers employed directly by the estate. For instance, in 1847 John Cockburn, a grieve, was paid an annual wage of £84, plus 6.5 bolls of meal valued at £9 8s 6d. Robert Mitchell, a forester, was paid £50 per annum cash. Andrew Dick, a herd, was paid half a year's salary of £15, minus £5 16s worth of meal. Robert Allan, a carter, was paid £18 per annum, minus meal valued at £11 19s 3d, with a further deduction of 10s for house rent, leaving a cash total of £5 10s 9d.<sup>44</sup> This evidence indicates the substantial variances in wages, the significant contribution of payment in kind, and the difference in that some workers were

effectively given a bonus through the provision of meal, while for others it represented a reduction in their money wages.

Unfortunately, Tait gave no response to the question about the diet of the local population, but he did give some information on prices and rents. Potatoes cost 10s per boll of four cwt, and coal cost 10s per ton. Farm-servants generally had no difficulty getting accommodation in the parish, and Tait could recall only a couple of instances of men moving to towns on this account. The usual rent for a labourer's cottage was £2 per annum, and the cottages had gardens attached.

Tait considered that 'the people seem to be generally alive to the benefits of education'. Nearly all young people between the ages of six and fifteen could read, and 'a large proportion' of them could write also. Very few aged over 15 could not read, and most could write 'in a certain degree'. Since the parish of Kirkliston covered 5.5 miles by 4.5 miles, no one was so remote they could not attend a school. Apart from the parish school, which had 90 pupils, there were four other schools in the vicinity. One was for girls who were taught sewing as well as 'the ordinary elements of education'. In contrast, the curriculum of the parochial school comprised reading, English grammar, writing and arithmetic, geography and Latin. The fees were paid quarterly in advance and could, in total, amount to £50 per annum. The heritors provided a salary, house and garden for the teacher, who also earned an additional £20 per annum in his other roles of session clerk, clerk to the heritors and Statute Labour commissioners. All pauper children were 'instructed in the common branches', ie reading, writing and arithmetic. While the children of the poor had their school fees paid from the parish funds, it was recognised also that the labourers could find it difficult to find the money when 'work was scarce'; in such circumstances the Kirk-session could pay half the school fees.

In recent years historians have begun to use criminal records as potential sources for wider social history.<sup>45</sup> An examination of the Advocate Depute records of serious crime in the 19th century reveals that Kirkliston, while hardly a hot-bed of vice, had its fair share of criminal acts. A few of these demanded some further attention. In 1871 a James Anthony, miner and native of Kirkliston, was tried at Stirling for the crime of bigamy.<sup>46</sup> In 1871, Jane Baxter, a washer and cleaner and native of Kirkliston, was tried at Glasgow on a charge of theft and previous conviction.<sup>47</sup> The interest in these two cases is because the accused shared the same names as sometime residents in Jack's Cottages. It is not possible directly to link these individuals to those identified in the census, but it is likely that they were related at least. In the case of Jane, she had made strenuous efforts to disguise her true identity; at her trial she was charged under her own name and eight aliases. Her attempted subterfuge did not help and she was sentenced to seven years' penal

servitude. James was also found guilty, but received only nine months' imprisonment.

Perhaps a more distinctively rural crime was poaching, and two cases concerned Humble Farm. In 1827, and again in 1830, poachers were caught by the Earl of Hopetoun's gamekeepers, Henry Logan, John Martin and Archibald Dick; on both occasions at exactly the same spot. In 1827 the accused were George Binnie and Robert Orrock, a wright and his journeyman respectively, and natives of Kirkliston. While there is no record of any verdict against Binnie, which suggests he either was not charged or absconded, Orrock was found guilty in terms of his own confession, and got two months' imprisonment.<sup>48</sup> The case in 1830 involved Walter Omit, Peter Taylor and John Young, all of whom were employed as quarrymen at Humble Quarry. All were found guilty and were given the same sentence of five years' probation and £100 penalty.<sup>49</sup> As poaching was a transportable offence, all five would appear to have got off relatively lightly, perhaps due to their having no previous convictions, or an understanding by the authorities that taking game was simply part of rural life.

This, then, was the world that the early occupants of Jack's Houses would have inhabited. In many respects it changed little over a century. Over this period, and indeed beyond, both the farmer and the landowner remained the same. The tenancy of Humble stayed within the Dudgeon family, and the farm remained the property of the Hope family; the formal change in ownership from the Marquis of Lothian to the Hopetoun Development Company in the inter-war period was likely an early example of reducing exposure to death duties.<sup>50</sup> While the inhabitants of the cottages changed on a regular basis, this was part and parcel of the labour system and the hiring contract. It was not difficult for people to leave the land, and the record-linkage undertaken in this study shows movement to Kirkcaldy, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Most, however, moved only short distances and remained in or near Kirkliston (see [Appendix](#)).

The inhabitants of Jack's Houses were mostly agricultural workers living in tied cottages, which, along with the yearly hiring, designated them as 'farm servants'. Historically, such workers have often been regarded as deferential. The work of Howard Newby has been influential in seeking to explain why agricultural labourers have remained low-paid and resistant to trade union organisation.<sup>51</sup> Newby's approach has been to look beyond the economics of agriculture – the price of products determining wages – to a more sociological approach exploring the social relations between farmer and worker. However, Newby's original research was based on East Anglia and, whatever explanatory significance it has for the English experience (and there have been English critics of Newby<sup>52</sup>), it does not appear to have much, if any, relevance to Scotland. Carter, writing about the north-east, and Anthony, writing about East Lothian, have found a marked absence of

deferential behaviour and attitudes among Scottish farm workers.<sup>53</sup> These authors emphasise the independence of such workers, who were conscious of their skills and who could easily avoid employers with a bad reputation. More generally, it was not difficult to leave the land in 19th-century Scotland, which encouraged farmers to maintain wages and conditions. There was considerable social mixing between workers and farmers, through Church and at school. Thus, while farm workers may have recognised the inequality of the employer–employee relationship, they did not regard themselves as socially inferior.

There has been no similarly detailed work done on West Lothian but, while some of the peculiarities of the area have been mentioned above, one would not expect the broad picture to have been significantly different. The farmer of Humbie at the time of the excavation, George Dudgeon, grew up there in the 1930s and 1940s, and recalls that most of the workers employed came from the Lothians, Fife and Perth. Since these areas had similar types of farm, such workers were familiar with the largely arable needs of Humbie.<sup>54</sup> In his father's and grandfather's time, most of the hiring of the labourers took place annually at the Dalkeith Hiring Fair, though this was later supplemented and eventually replaced by simply placing adverts in the *Edinburgh Evening News* and the *Farming News*. Recruitment through word of mouth continued to play a role. While the contract was for a year, sometimes individuals would stay from five to ten years, a decision which was dependent upon their relationship with the farmer. Temporary workers came locally, such as miners from Winchburgh, and from Ireland for picking the potatoes. It has been argued that the system of tenancy encouraged social mobility, as the capital outlay needed to secure a tenancy was much less than under the system of owner-occupation of farms. In Scotland, it was only after the First World War, and more so after World War Two, that there was a substantial move by tenants to purchase farms.<sup>55</sup> It is interesting that the Dudgeon family only purchased Humbie, and did so reluctantly, as late as 1980, when death duties forced the Hopetoun estate to sell some of its land. For George Dudgeon, the displacement of the tenant farmer is regarded with some sadness as, in his view, the best relationship was where landlord and tenant worked to their mutual benefit: 'If the landlord is a good landlord he will look after the tenant and the tenant will appreciate that and work the farm accordingly. The landlord has no responsibility as regards the farming of it if he has a good tenant; he collects the rent which, hopefully, is a fair rent to him and the tenant. And I've seen so many estates bust up when a tenant dies and they take the land back into their own hands, and they won't re-let it and, quite honestly it's not as well farmed as when the tenant farmers were in it.' Referring directly to his own family's situation, Mr Dudgeon continued,

'Hopetoun estate was always a pretty fair estate . . . it wasn't a ridiculously high rent, but it wasn't a low rent.'<sup>56</sup> An indication of how smoothly the relationship operated is that Mr Dudgeon could not recall the exact period of the lease: 'we just paid the rent and carried on'.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, as a farm, Humbie remained largely unchanged over this period. Although a pig house was built in 1927,<sup>58</sup> the farm remained committed to arable farming. A map of 1926 shows the division of the fields and crops with turnips, wheat, oats, rape and so much lying to lea or pasture.<sup>59</sup> Traditional farming methods, such as horse-ploughing, continued to be used in some farms in this area, including Humbie, even until the later 1950s.<sup>60</sup> This type of husbandry would have been immediately recognisable to the authors of the first and new Statistical Accounts.

The 1930s did, however, bring adversity to Scottish agriculture. While the levels of unemployment were hardly comparable to the mass lay-offs in the likes of coal and shipbuilding, yet for the first time in over a century, unemployment had become an issue in the agrarian districts such as the Lothians. There was a decline in the need for labour and, at the same time, fewer opportunities for out-migration.<sup>61</sup> It was this situation which most likely explains why Jack's Houses were allowed to become 'condemned' rather than renovated. George Dudgeon has a memory of a blacksmith living in Jack's Houses at one time. The blacksmith would visit the farm twice a week, essentially to shoe the Clydesdales on whom so much of the work of the farm depended. Other than that, he thinks that in their final years Jack's Houses would have been inhabited by Irishmen and part-timers, rather than by the more regular farm labourers. He agrees that the reason Jack's Houses were abandoned was because they became surplus to requirements, which, in turn, was due to the changing demand for labour.<sup>62</sup>

### 7.3 Conclusion

Documentary evidence has provided us with some insight into the way that many families inhabited these two small houses and used and developed their facilities over the space of a century. Study of the Valuation Rolls has provided the names and occupations of the householders. The Rolls reveal that, until the cottages were condemned in 1934, their occupiers were agricultural workers, their occupations being more or less the same as those earlier in the 19th century. The inhabitants of Jack's Cottages were representative of the rural lowland labour force. Most came from the immediate vicinity or nearby, though there were migrants from further afield. People did move out of the area, though most seem to have remained in or near to Kirkliston. As well as geographic, there was some evidence of social mobility also. But, in the main, the occupants came from 'common stock'; their parents were of the

**Table 1 Summary of occupants based on the census and other records**  
 (\* = uncertain which house was occupied by these families)

Record date	one-window	two-window
1841	*Sharp × 6	*Baxter × 9 (to 1845+)
1844	*Gibson × 2	
1851	*Brash × 3	*Gilbert × 4
1861	Curron/Carr × 7 (c 1859–61 max)	Borthwick × 5 (c 1859–?)
1871	Fleming × 1	Dodds × 4 (to 1873?)
1881		White × 6
1891	McRiner × 2	Anthony × 6 (to 1899 at least)
1901	empty	empty

labouring class, and, mostly, their children became waged workers. For all the dramatic changes that the area experienced over that century from 1830 to 1930, Jack's Houses remained inextricably linked to the land and representative of an essential continuity.

Since the 1930s, however, there has been enormous change in the structure and operation of agriculture, and the abandonment of Jack's Houses is symptomatic of that change. To quote George Dudgeon again, 'I can't tell you the amount of change. Father had a staff of 20 in 1940, women workers, odd laddies, tractor-men, cattlemen, shepherds, ploughmen. They were mainly horse-drawn vehicles in those days, and then the tractors came in during the war, and the tractors took over in the 1950s and '60s, and so it went on. The staff were reduced because the tractors did more work and were down to about four tractor-men and a cattleman; so there were five instead of twenty in the 1950s and '60s and then it got less and less, and there were three, there were two, and there was one, and then there were none.'<sup>63</sup> Today Humble Farm does not employ a single worker, the last having retired in 1998, and the actual farming is done through a contractor.

The cottages which remain on the farm are inhabited by people who tend to work in Edinburgh, and who move in and out of the farm at times different from the farmer, and with little or no direct contact with him. Today, the Dudgeon family is looking to renovate some derelict buildings and turn them into holiday cottages, an indication of the

ways in which the agricultural industry throughout Europe needs to diversify if it is to survive. While Humble continues to produce some of the same crops it has always done, such as barley and wheat, as well as rape, which it started growing during the last century, others such as oats, hay, turnips and potatoes have been abandoned because they are too labour-intensive. Because of this, and the increased use of mechanisation, the society which the farm sustained has more or less completely gone. There is no longer the large number of people, both permanent and temporary, working and living on the farm, socialising together and with the farmer. As George Dudgeon expresses the change, 'in those days there were people about the steading, people tidying up, people sweeping, people feeding sheep, people feeding cattle, and now there's nobody. It's really very lonely work.'<sup>64</sup>

#### 7.4 Summary of the findings from the census and other records, by Sue Anderson

**Table 1** presents a summary, based on the documentary evidence presented in the **Appendix**, of the residents of Jack's Houses between 1841 and 1891. The study of the census records highlights the transient nature of the rural population was at this time: 12 families were recorded as living at the cottages between 1841 and 1891 and it seems likely that there were others within each decade who were never recorded.