

**THE ECONOMIC  
ORGANISATION OF  
ENGLAND, AN  
OUTLINE HISTORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649371136

The economic organisation of England, an outline history by William James Ashley

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WILLIAM JAMES ASHLEY**

**THE ECONOMIC  
ORGANISATION OF  
ENGLAND, AN  
OUTLINE HISTORY**



THE ECONOMIC ORGANISATION  
OF ENGLAND

# The Economic Organisation of England

An Outline History

Lectures Delivered at Hamburg

By

William James Ashley

M.A., M.COM., HON. PH.D. BERLIN

Professor of Commerce in the University of Birmingham ;  
Late Professor of Economic History in Harvard University ;  
Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford

Longmans, Green and Co.

39 Paternoster Row, London

Fourth Avenue & 30th Street, New York

Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras

1914

All rights reserved

HC 253  
A8

TO  
SENATOR VON MELLE  
OF HAMBURG

## PREFACE

THE following lectures are printed substantially as they were delivered in the fortnight before Christmas 1912, as part of the "general lecture system" attached to the Colonial Institute of Hamburg. They are on the lines of a brief course which I have been in the habit of giving for the last few years at the University of Birmingham.

For the purpose which I have had in view, I hope the brevity of this book will be regarded as a merit. I venture to think it may be of some advantage to those who approach for the first time the subject of English economic history, to be furnished with a narrative which gives them a general notion of a great part of the ground to be covered and of many of the topics they will have to consider.

EDGBASTON, *April 1914.*



## CONTENTS

LECTURE	PAGE
I. THE ENGLISH AGRARIAN SYSTEM : THE MANOR AS STARTING POINT . . . . .	I
II. THE STAGES OF INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION : THE GILD AS STARTING POINT . . . . .	25
III. THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN FARMING : THE BREAK-UP OF THE MANOR . . . . .	44
IV. THE RISE OF FOREIGN TRADE : THE ADVENT OF CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT . . . . .	68
V. DOMESTIC INDUSTRY AND TUDOR NATIONALISM	88
VI. AGRICULTURAL ESTATES AND ENGLISH SELF- GOVERNMENT . . . . .	119
VII. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND FREEDOM OF CONTRACT . . . . .	140
VIII. JOINT STOCK AND THE EVOLUTION OF CAPIT- ALISM . . . . .	173
APPENDIX— Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	193
INDEX . . . . .	207

# The Economic Organisation of England

## LECTURE I

### *The English Agrarian System: the Manor as Starting Point*

IN this course of lectures I propose to direct your attention mainly, though not exclusively, to the forms of economic organisation, as illustrated by English development. Economic history, the history of man's economic activity, is the history of the utilisation by man of his environment, to obtain therefrom subsistence and the satisfaction of those material wants which are bound up with subsistence. But his activity in this direction, from the very dawn of history, has never been entirely individualistic; never altogether the operation of absolutely isolated individuals. Some form of association has always been in existence, it would appear, since man became man; and this has involved some sort, however rudimentary, of distribution of functions—some form, in short, of organisation. Economic history is an exceedingly wide and complex subject, even for one nation for a few centuries of its career. We cannot hope to deal

## Economic Organisation

satisfactorily with it in a short course : much indeed of it is still so imperfectly known to us that we could hardly hope to deal with it quite satisfactorily, in the present state of our knowledge, however many lectures were assigned to it. But by taking for our special theme the forms of organisation and their changes, we may find threads which will guide us, at any rate through that part of the labyrinth which I am going to ask you to tread.

I shall begin with agricultural conditions ; and this for two reasons. The first is that, like all the rest of western Europe, England, until a couple of centuries ago, was an almost exclusively agricultural country. One of our tasks will be to show the way in which England, from being an agricultural country, supplying itself with food, has become primarily a manufacturing country, dependent upon importation for its sustenance. The other reason is that hitherto the agrarian development of England has been unique in western Europe. All over western and central Europe, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the land was cultivated by serfs bound to the soil. Outside England, the descendants or representatives of these serfs still remain on the land, in all but a few districts ; either as " peasant proprietors," owning the acres they till, or as small tenant farmers with something closely approaching in practice to permanence of tenure. In Germany, as a whole, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the land is still owned and cultivated by peasants : peasant properties occupy from two-fifths to two-thirds of the area even of those provinces east of the Elbe which most nearly resemble England in the predominance of large