After the Famine examines the recovery in Irish agriculture in the wake of the disastrous potato famine of the 1840s, and presents for the first time an annual agricultural output series for Ireland from 1850 to 1914. Michael Turner’s detailed study is in three parts: he analyses the changing structure of agriculture in terms of land use and peasant occupancy; he presents estimates of the annual value of Irish output between 1850 and 1914; and he assesses Irish agricultural performance in terms of several measures of productivity. These analyses are placed in the context of British and European agricultural development, and suggest that, contrary to prevailing orthodoxies, landlords rather than tenants were the main income beneficiaries in the decades before the Land War and land reforms. This interpretation could help to explain the emergence of the land reform movement from the late 1870s, which culminated in peasant independence by 1914. After the Famine is an important contribution to an extremely controversial area of Irish and economic history.
After the Famine
After the Famine

Irish agriculture, 1850–1914

Michael Turner

University of Hull
For Alison
Kate, James and Jessie
Contents

List of figures  ix
List of tables  x
Preface and acknowledgements  xiii

1 Introduction: Ireland and Irish agricultural history in context  1
2 Agricultural change  15
3 The occupation of the land  65
4 The product of the land: output  95
5 The performance of agriculture  126
6 Labour and the working of the land  161
7 Conclusion – structure, output and performance, and the distribution of the spoils  196

Appendixes: A note on the origin of the data  217
Appendix 1 Annual agricultural statistics, 1847–1914  227
Appendix 2 Crop yields in Ireland, 1847–1914  244
Appendix 3 Landholding and land occupancy distribution, 1847–1914  248
Appendix 4 Irish agricultural prices  255
Appendix 5 Weighting procedures adopted in estimating agricultural output  268
Appendix 6 Richard Barrington of Fassaroe, County Wicklow  281

Bibliography  294
Index  305
## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Land use in Ireland, 1847–1914</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2a</td>
<td>Wheat and cattle price relatives</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2b</td>
<td>Livestock and crops price relatives</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Wheat, oats and potatoes: acreages, yields and outputs, 1850–1914</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Provincial land-use change, 1851–1911</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Cultivated area: percent of county area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6a</td>
<td>Corn: percent of cultivated area 1851–1911</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6b</td>
<td>Root and green crops: percent of cultivated area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6c</td>
<td>Potatoes: percent of cultivated area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7a</td>
<td>Tillage: percent of cultivated area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7b</td>
<td>Tillage: percentage change, 1851–1911</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8a</td>
<td>Hay: percent of cultivated area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8b</td>
<td>Pasture: percent of cultivated area, 1851–1911</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Livestock trends, 1849–1914</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Cattle: per 100 acres of hay and pasture, 1851–1911</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1a</td>
<td>Landholding distribution, 1850s – 1900s</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1b</td>
<td>Land occupancy distribution, 1860s – 1900s</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Average size of holdings, 1851–1911</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Final agricultural output in Ireland, 1850–1914</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Irish agricultural output, constant volume index, 1850–1914</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Physical output of Irish agriculture, 1847–1914 – Starch index</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Physical output of Irish agriculture, 1850–1914 – in calories</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Population growth in selected European countries in the nineteenth century</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Ireland, the division of the land, 1841–1914</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Trends in European cereal acreages, 1851–1911</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Trends in European potato production, 1851–1911</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Irish animal numbers, 1841–1914</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Pigs and potatoes, 1877–1883</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Net horse trade between Ireland and Britain</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Livestock exports from Ireland to Britain, 1854 to 1914</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>European livestock trends, 1851–1911</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Distribution of agricultural holdings in 1841</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Distribution of holdings and farm sizes c. 1845–51</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Long-term trends in landholding distribution and average size of holdings, 1853, 1861, 1871, 1902</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Average size of holdings, 1851–1914</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Land use by holding size groups, 1853, 1861 and 1871</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Livestock densities by holding size groups</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Standard man days labour requirements by holding size groups</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Distribution of landholding by size groups, 1841–1911</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Average size of holdings &gt; 1 acre by province</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Comparison of coefficients in the estimation of final output</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The final value of Irish agricultural output, 1850–1914</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Annual average final agricultural output, 1850/1854 to 1910/1914</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Comparison of different estimates of final Irish agricultural output</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Distribution of final agricultural output, 1850–1914</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>The constant volume of agricultural output, 1850–1914</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>United Kingdom and Irish final agricultural output, 1867–1869 to 1910–1914</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Agricultural output in Ireland, the UK and Britain</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Factor inputs in Irish agriculture,</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Factor shares in Irish agriculture, 1850s–1910s 137
5.5 Estimates of total factor productivity in Irish agriculture, 1850s–1910s 138
5.6 Physical output of crops from Irish agriculture, 1847–1914 142
5.7 Starch output of crops in Ireland 143
5.8 Index of the agricultural output of Ireland, 1850–1854 to 1910–1914 145
5.9 Agricultural output in Ireland in calories 147
5.10 Gross calorific output from agriculture in Ireland, and England and Wales 153
5.11 Distribution of agricultural output in Ireland and Denmark 156
5.12 Trends in agricultural output in Ireland and Denmark 158
5.13 Irish/Danish price relativies 158
5.14 Index of agricultural output per unit of labour input 159
6.1 Imputed labour requirements in mid-nineteenth century Irish agriculture 175
6.2 Estimated farm labour requirements in nineteenth-century Ireland compared with modern estimates 178
6.3 Estimates of standard man days labour inputs for livestock 180
6.4 Standard man days weighting factors for mid nineteenth-century Irish agriculture 181
6.5 Estimates of labour inputs into Irish agriculture, 1850–1854 to 1910–1914 183
6.6 Labour productivity in Irish agriculture, 1851–1911 186
6.7 Standard man days labour inputs in Irish agriculture, 1851–1911 190
6.8 Labour input and the value of agricultural output in Ireland, 1851–1911 191
6.9 Wages trend, 1850–1903 192
6.10 Labour costs and labour output 193
6.11 Value of labour output per unit value of labour input, 1850–1903 195
7.1 The progress of owner-farming in Ireland 198
7.2 Crop yields, 1877–1879 201
7.3 Land, labour and tenant net income, 1852–1854 to 1905–1910 206

Appendix tables
Appendix 4
A4.1 Comparison of prices in 1912 258
A4.2 Comparison of price data in the 1850s 260
A4.3 Comparison of potato prices, 1852–1855 261
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A4.4</td>
<td>A comparison of mean high, mean low and average potato prices, 1894–1904, by province</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4.5</td>
<td>Agricultural product prices in 1912</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4.6</td>
<td>Thomas Barrington’s index of Irish agricultural prices</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6.1</td>
<td>Barrington’s labour costs 1837–1885</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6.2</td>
<td>Comparison of wage rates at Fassaroe and the national average</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6.3</td>
<td>Man labour days for selected crops 1837–1885</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6.4</td>
<td>Labour inputs on the Barrington family farm, 1837–1885</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6.5</td>
<td>Holding sizes and the employment of labour in Wicklow and Ireland, 1912</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface and acknowledgements

Through personal and domestic circumstances I have made many visits to Belfast in the last twenty years or so. I want to take this early opportunity to record my thanks to my mother and father-in-law, and indeed to all my contacts in Northern Ireland for making me feel so welcome. Whilst in Belfast I often took the opportunity to use Queen’s University Library. I can commend the marvellous collection of nineteenth-century parliamentary papers held there. This was my initial entry into Irish agricultural history, along with my extraction of material from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland which was concerned with the County Down livestock census of 1803.¹ I shall always be grateful to Peter Roebuck for alerting me to the existence of this material. This research also allowed me to become familiar with the abundant annual agricultural census material which was collected from the late 1840s which now form the main data on which this present study is based.

A more deeply rooted connection with Ireland is literally a matter of roots. My mother came from Achill Island, a remote Atlantic island connected to its administrative county of Mayo by a causeway. She was born into an impoverished family in 1913, one of eight children. This study of Irish history inevitably took on a personal meaning.

The whole exercise has illuminated the value of inter-disciplinary cooperation. I have relied upon the expertise and good advice from many disparate areas – geography, economics, history, computing, economic history, and even geology. At a minimum, the size of the data set on which this study is based – upwards of 40 variables for 70 years at the national level, and the same 40 variables for 32 counties for each of seven specific census years – are about 12,000 separate numbers. In the text they have usually been presented as some kind of transformation of the originals. This work has only been possible with the aid of modern

¹ This was part of the data gathering exercises related to the invasion scares of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. See M.E. Turner, ‘Livestock in the agrarian economy of Counties Down and Antrim from 1803 to the Famine’, Irish Economic and Social History, 11, 1984, 19–43.
technology and the grant of a year away from university teaching and administration through the generosity of the Nuffield Foundation. I am happy to thank the Nuffield for the award of a Social Science Fellowship during the year 1985–6. Much of that year was occupied in data entry and transformation, and only in a small measure to data analysis. All of the data were made adaptable to a table top computer. My thanks to Norman Davidson of the Department of Geography firstly for educating me in the use of data management systems, and secondly for introducing me to the statistical and mapping packages which were in current use at the time. He also taught me the intricacies of digitising (inputting the boundaries of the Irish counties into the computer for automatic mapping). Good students always strive for independence but there is often a battle with technological constraints. Although I acquired a computer I remained dependent on Norman and his department for the use of their digitisers and pen plotters. During this, the initial phase of development, my final thanks are to Richard Middleton, formerly of Geology, for constant encouragement and the use of his packages for some of the original transformations of the data.

Immediately the Fellowship expired it was back to other duties, and in my case this involved the acquisition of the role of Senior Tutor for Social Science students at Hull University, as well as a full teaching load. In the three years while I held office the project lay largely dormant, but there occurred an immense technological change. The geographers changed systems for a start, and in general the schools and departments throughout the university acquired PC computers. My new-found skills were not wasted because the adaptation to an alternative computing system involved a steep learning curve. I ended up completing this study on a PC using the most modern of packages. For his assistance during this phase I particularly thank Chris Hammond of the Department of Economics for his interest and work on my behalf, especially in terms of mapping and allied computer skills. I also thank John Palmer of the Department of History for the use of his digitising equipment and to George Slater of the Computer Centre for his developmental work on the mapping package. For constant encouragement, often of a non-specific nature, I thank my colleagues Donald Woodward and David Richardson of the Department of Economic History, Gerry Makepeace and Stephen Trotter in Economics, and Mahes Visvalingam of the Cartographic Information Systems Research Group. A good library is a must for any substantial research, and we have a good library in Hull. Within it we have marvellous support services, but I must single out John Morris for special mention. No inquiry was too large, no search too tedious.

Away from Hull I owe debts of thanks to Cormac Ó Gráda and Peter
Preface and Acknowledgements

Solar for constant encouragement and good advice. Peter Solar has been generous with his time commenting on earlier drafts of specific chapters and making valuable suggestions for improvements. A small army of anonymous readers, and some not so anonymous, have had their say and I am grateful to them all. In particular I would like to thank Cormac Ó Gríada a second time for his help with earlier drafts, and also Patrick O’Brien and Charles Feinstein for their help in the final tidying up process. I always took advice in the spirit in which it was given, though I may not have always applied it in the correct manner. Richard Fisher at Cambridge University Press has been a model of patience.

While the book was developing there were invitations to give papers, to test ideas, and to contribute to edited volumes. The bare data in chapter 4 and two related but separate arguments in chapter 5 appeared in a journal article in 1990 and an edited volume in 1991, but they have now been completely revised; a long general essay on post-Famine agriculture has appeared in a volume of essays, though again much of this has been revised in this book.²

Finally, my love and thanks go to Alison, Kate, James and Jessie for their patience over many years, for putting up with the countless late nights in the office and even the missed holidays.