

LIBERTY AND LOCALITY
IN REVOLUTIONARY
FRANCE

Six Villages Compared, 1760–1820

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Mise-en-scène

This study first encounters the village in the culminating decades of the *ancien régime*, a period of some thirty or forty years during which a totalising vision of administrative monarchy took hold of France. From the 1760s country dwellers in general and rural communities in particular became the focus of attention of reformers to a degree which historians have only recently begun to understand. While most of the reforms that were mooted received little more than piecemeal application, their reverberations would be far reaching. By 1789, when instructions were issued for parish assemblies to draw up *cahiers de doléances*, life in many, perhaps the majority of, French villages was already caught in a spiral of accelerating change. These changes – at once institutional, cultural and socio-economic – signal the direction in which it would be most profitable to press our enquiries.

At the most fundamental level we will need to ask whether Alexis de Tocqueville's argument that rural communities had become moribund by the end of the *ancien régime* can be accepted. We will need to determine whether such administrative structures as villagers did possess were subscribed, that is to say developed from within, or imposed from the outside. The former invites a comparison of villages equipped with 'municipal' institutions in emulation of the towns with those lacking independent organs of collective expression and reliant still upon the resources of the seigneurie or the parish. The latter raises questions pertaining to the power of the state in the second half of the eighteenth century. Did the monarchy perform a normative role in successfully fashioning the institutions of village life around a common template, or did it compete uneasily and, in the final analysis, unsuccessfully with sectional providers of administrative *tutelle*: the Provincial Estates, the *parlements* and the sundry *cours des aides* and *chambres des comptes*? The policies of successive reform ministers are known in some detail, as are those pursued by a number of provincial intendants. The outlook of the Estates and of the various sovereign courts in the face of perceived encroachments by 'ministerial' power are not too

difficult to fathom either, although it is true that the attitudes of bodies such as the Cour des Aides of Montauban or the Chambre des Comptes of Nancy remain shrouded in a good deal of uncertainty. The point at which the policies of all of these agencies intersected was the village. How did one group of villagers accommodate such multiple and often competing forms of interventionism by comparison with another? And how much freedom of manoeuvre remained to them at the end of the day? Of these things we know almost nothing. But first we must acquaint ourselves with the villages that provide the frame of reference for this study.

NEUVILLER-SUR-MOSELLE

The unremarkable Lorraine village of Neuviller is situated midway between Charmes and Flavigny at a point where the road executes an abrupt 90-degree turn before continuing in a straight line (see map 9). Nancy, the historic capital of Lorraine and present-day capital of the Meurthe-et-Moselle department, is roughly twenty-five kilometres to the north, and Epinal, the capital of the department of the Vosges, forty kilometres to the southeast. Linking all of these places is the Moselle, a fast-flowing river with a tendency to flood. It bounds the territory of Neuviller to the east and, until recent times, posed a constant threat to low-lying meadows. For part of the period of interest to us the village bore another name. The significance of this name change, and also of the abrupt turn in the road, will be explored in chapter 2; but in most other respects the configuration of the village has not changed greatly since the late eighteenth century. Then as now the territory of the parish and commune coincided and, until very recently, covered some 440 hectares, an area well below the norm for modern-day French communes (see table 1). This physical area can be divided roughly into three: a portion marked out on the shallow valley floor ('la plaine'), a portion stretched along the flanks ('les coteaux'), and a plateau portion raised about 100 metres above the Moselle river ('le plateau'). The village proper is located on the floor of the valley and in common with the prevailing habitat pattern of Lorraine is highly nucleated: no hamlets and no outlying farms. Within easy walking distance of our village, however, are two smaller settlements whose eighteenth-century history was closely, almost inextricably, entwined with that of Neuviller: Roville-devant-Bayon in the plain and Laneuveville-devant-Bayon on the plateau. At intervals they too will feature in this study.

The provinces of Alsace and Lorraine led the demographic recovery of the eighteenth century, and the *généralité* of Nancy recorded no less



Plate 1. The modern village of Neuviller-sur-Moselle

Table 1. *Physical area of case-study villages*

Village	Territory		
	c. 1760	c. 1820	Present
Allan	12,919 <i>sétiers de Provence</i> [2,871 hectares]	2,871 hectares	2,881 hectares
Châtelaudren	287.2 <i>arpents de Plélo</i> [46.53 hectares]	46.53 hectares	46.53 hectares
Neuviller-sur-Moselle	1,974 <i>jours de Lorraine^a</i> [394.8 hectares]	440.4 hectares	440.4 hectares ^b
Roquelaure	1,192.5 <i>arpents d'Auch^c</i> [1,824.5 hectares]	1,852.8 hectares	2,123.2 hectares ^d
Saint-Alban	4,560.7 dextres [7,244 hectares]	7,244 hectares	5,386 hectares ^e
Villepreux	2,432.2 <i>arpents communs</i> [1,026.5 hectares]	1,026.5 hectares	1,039 hectares
Averages [communes]	1,200–1,300 hectares	1,200–1,300 hectares	1,400 hectares

Notes

^a Cultivated area in 1771

^b Recently augmented to 648 hectares

^c Cultivated area in 1741

^d Arcamont added in 1950

^e Lajo detached in 1837

than a twofold increase in population by the century's end.¹ However, this headlong rush to make good the biological shortfall of Louis XIV's reign seems scarcely to have registered in the villages overlooking the Moselle. In 1771, the earliest date for which we can determine a figure, the population of Neuviller hovered at a little over 400 souls (see figure 2). Not until the period of Napoleonic consolidation did it climb above 500, by which time the new road constructed at the cost of so much hardship some forty-five years earlier (see pp. 80–1) had established Neuviller as a 'lieu de passage'. An increasing volume of haulage traffic helped to push the numbers living in the village to 612 by 1856.² But that was the peak: with the opening of the Nancy–Épinal railway the population started to ebb away. Roville's demographic profile displayed similar characteristics, with the main phase of growth beginning during the Empire (189 inhabitants in 1789, 379 in

¹ M. Morineau, *Pour une histoire économique vraie* (Lille, 1985), p. 125.

² Bibliothèque Municipale [hereafter B. M.] de Nancy, Monographies communales: Neuviller-sur-Moselle, 1888.

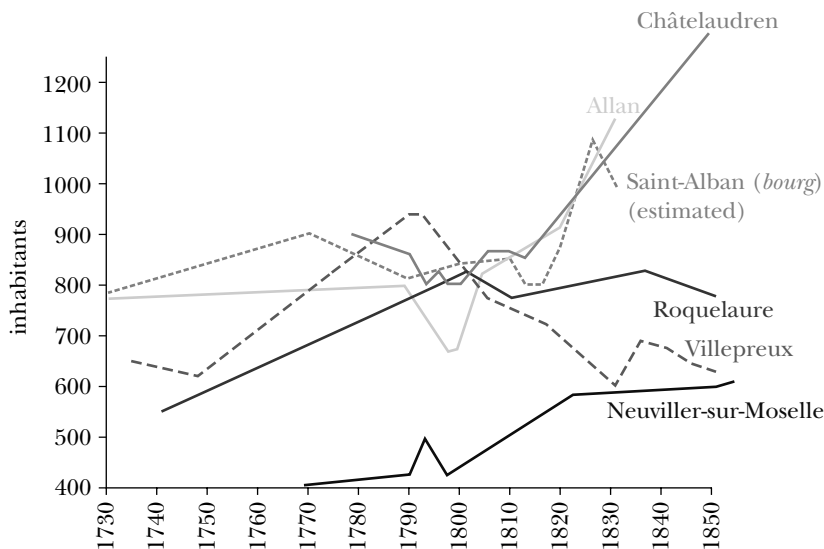


Figure 2. Population shifts in case-study villages

1836), and the same applies to Laneuveville (259 inhabitants in 1789, 388 in 1823).

How did the several hundred households grouped in these modest-sized settlements make a living? Lorraine was noted, then as now, for its open-field landscape and the inhabitants of all three villages derived their livelihood from this land. Cottage industrial activity was negligible and can be discounted as a source of income. Yet only Laneuveville, situated on the plateau, conformed closely to the regional model of a 'pays de grande culture' producing wheat and oats. In 1796 the villagers admitted to owning fifty-four plough horses (a ratio of 1:5 inhabitants), and since the figure was volunteered for the purposes of a military levy it can be treated as an underestimate.³ Neuville's farmers produced wheat and oats in abundance, too, but barely half of the quantities harvested by their neighbours on the plateau to judge from the agricultural *statistique* of 1836. Instead they had discovered a vocation for viticulture: from 1770, or thereabouts, an accelerating process of converting arable strips into vineyards had been under way, with the result that by 1818 the inhabitants would describe themselves as *vignerons* rather than farmers. By the end of the *ancien régime*, the village territory (*finage*) no longer produced enough bread grain to satisfy

³ Archives Départementales [hereafter A. D.] de Meurthe-et-Moselle, L2943^{bis}, 20 Thermidor IV.

domestic consumption needs; by 1836 almost half of the surface available for cultivation had been switched to viticulture. Viewed from an ecological perspective, the tiny village of Roville might also have found a vocation in vine cultivation, but the 1836 *statistique* suggests otherwise inasmuch as it records a mere twentieth of the cultivable land planted under vines.⁴ Rather, the village appears to have adopted a more flexible pattern of arable husbandry geared to the production of lesser grains (rye, barley, buckwheat) alongside wheat and oats. Meadows, and in particular sown meadows, covered nearly a quarter of the territory of the village by 1836. This relative absence of vines combined with a substantial investment in fodder crops hints at social forces at work. It serves as a reminder that the agricultural vocation of a village is not a 'given', but is shaped by a variety of factors, among which the pattern of land holdings figures prominently.

All three villages possessed extensive common land (wooded and pasture) at the start of our period, that is to say around 1760. Indeed, somewhat more than a third of Roville's territory was open access pasture and heath, which helps to explain how the majority of the inhabitants – officially described as 'landless' in 1768 – were able to survive. At Laneuveville the figure was lower (around one-fifth), and at Neuville lower still (between one-sixth and one-seventh). In each locality, moreover, the villagers would be subjected to the process known as *triage* in the decades before the Revolution. As a result they lost a third of these precious assets to their titular seigneurs. Such transactions between unequals left bitter memories, as the *cabiers de doléances* would testify. Who owned the remaining 'freehold' property, and in what proportion, is more difficult to ascertain. But at Neuville, the village that is the chief focus of our interest, twenty-eight households (21 per cent) were entirely without land, and only two resident farmers owned sufficient to maintain a plough team.⁵ There were several absentee or institutional landowners, notably the prior, but their holdings paled into insignificance when compared with that of the seigneur (also absent from his chateau for much of the time). In 1771, that is to say after the strip consolidation operation and concomitant *triage* (see chapter 7), the seigneur owned some 238 hectares or, to put it another way, a little over half of the *finage*. Moreover, his holdings were now grouped into relatively compact blocks of arable, vines and forest. Significantly, the 'chateau' would still hold the title to approximately one-third of the territory of the village more than a hundred years later.

⁴ A. D. de Meurthe-et-Moselle, 7M 122*, Statistique, 1836, arrondissement de Nancy.

⁵ A. D. de Meurthe-et-Moselle, B 11928.

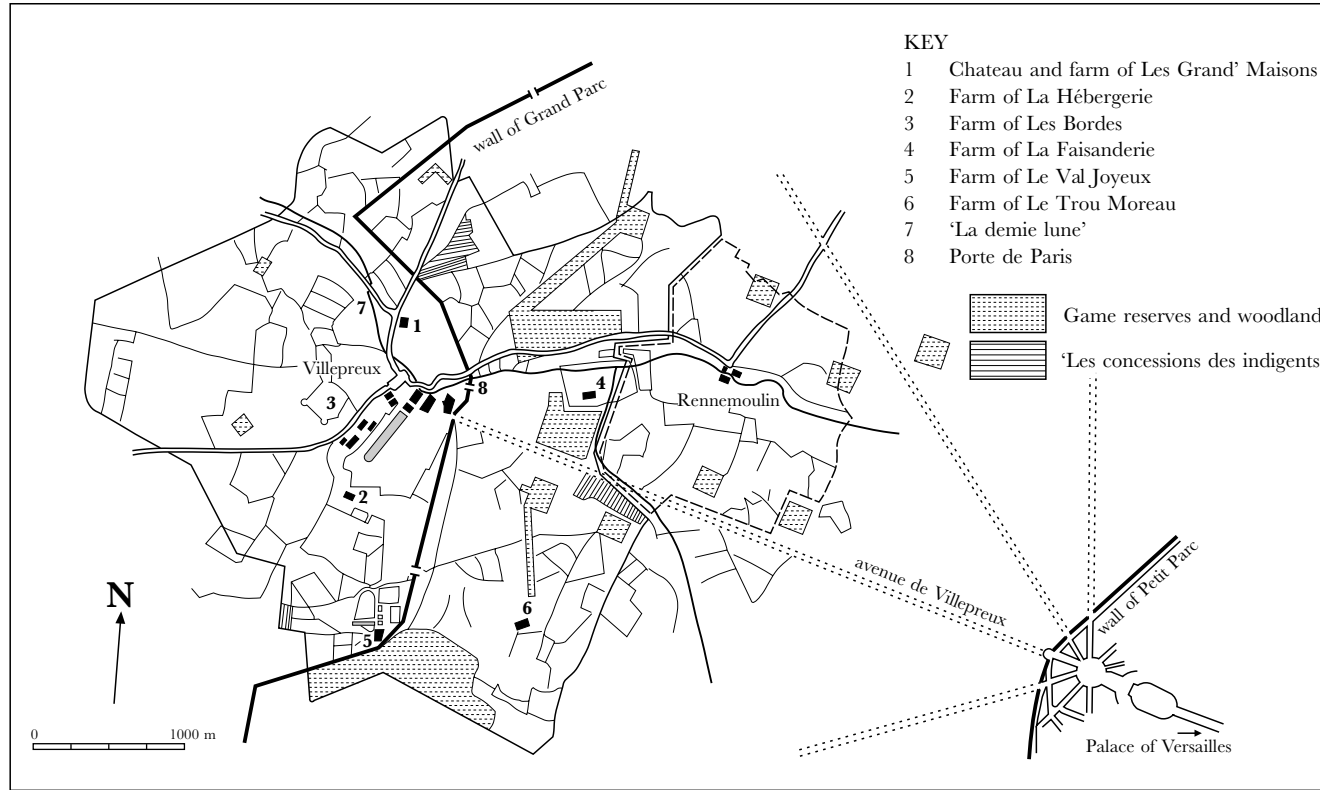


Plate 2. The modern village of Villepreux

VILLEPREUX

Situated barely 10 kilometres from the royal seat of Versailles, the village of Villepreux lived in the shadow of its large neighbour in more ways than one. Indeed, this close proximity to a large centre of population which would undergo severe problems of social, economic and political readjustment in the years following the outbreak of the Revolution and the departure of the Court makes this case study of more than usual interest. The inhabitants of Villepreux worked a territory that, at 1026 hectares, was more than twice the size of that of Neuville. Forming part of the Plain of France, it was a 'pays de grande culture' and as such intrinsically fertile. The villagers could be forgiven, however, if they felt alienated from this bounteous landscape, which had been altered significantly by the hand of man over the previous century. In 1670 the young king Louis XIV projected the creation of a vast game reserve extending westwards from his new palace. By 1684 the forty-three-kilometre wall enclosing this 'Grand Parc' was more or less complete and it neatly dissected the territory of Villepreux into roughly equal halves, as well as enclosing eight other parishes in their entirety. Three of the twenty-three gates in the wall opened directly onto the farmland of Villepreux, including the principal portal, the Porte de Paris, which was located at the entrance to the village (see map 3).

The village itself was nucleated in keeping with the pattern of settlement commonly found in the open-field zones of northern and eastern France. Residual defensive fortifications constructed in the early sixteenth century had no doubt served to reinforce this character, although by the eighteenth century the small *faubourg* of Les Bordes had come into being. The only other inhabited places were four farmsteads located a short distance from the village, two of which had chateaux attached to them. Les Grand' Maisons was the seigneurial abode, but not since 1766 had there been a seigneur in residence, and in any case both the title and the fief of Villepreux passed into the Royal Domain from 1776. Not much further away, albeit on the other side of the wall, lay Rennemoulin, a tiny settlement in its own right despite a population that barely exceeded 100 even at its peak. The inhabitants of Rennemoulin lived in daily contact with those of Villepreux and at different times both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities considered merging the two villages. Indeed, the parish status of Rennemoulin would succumb in the post-Concordat reorganisation of 1804, although the commune has survived until the present day. Since the farmers and wage workers of Rennemoulin faced problems and sought solutions to those problems that



Map 3. Villepreux and Rennemoulin (based on the Carte des Chasses du Roi of 1767-8)

were in every way comparable to the experiences of their close neighbours, they too will feature in this study from time to time.

Although the countryside around Paris exhibited a generally healthy demographic profile (net increase of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent across the eighteenth century),⁶ that of Villepreux displayed the symptoms of a fragile and easily undermined social structure. During the first half of the century the population of the village actually declined, a phenomenon that may have been linked to the rerouting of traffic on the main Normandy–Brittany highway. Growth resumed in the second half and carried the population to a peak of around 940 during the early years of the Revolution (see figure 2). But the removal of the Court from Versailles and the collapse of that city's wage-earning economy hit the satellite villages hard. Villepreux would never again see the numerical buoyancy of the 1780s and early 1790s: under-employed labourers and craftsmen drained from the village in search of work in the capital, or else they signed up for service in the army. The economic crisis (inflation followed by deflation) of 1795–8 hit particularly hard and reduced the population to 661, or 711 if soldiers serving on the frontiers are added to the total. Towards the end of the decade a recovery that was sustained into the early years of the Empire took place, but the village remained desperately vulnerable to the slightest economic downturn, as in 1817 when the population plummeted once more to 727.⁷ In Rennemoulin, too, the events of the Revolution brusquely curtailed the demographic cycle: from 1791 its population sagged and then stagnated.

Villepreux produced wheat, fodder crops (oats, luzerne) and dairy produce (milk, eggs and butter) in quantities well in excess of those required to feed its resident population. By 1787 some 74 per cent of its territory was given over to arable cultivation, and that figure would rise by a further 6 per cent during the revolutionary decade. Even by the standards of the *généralité* of Paris, therefore, the village was a major player in the market for agricultural produce. Why then were the majority of its inhabitants so poor and vulnerable? The answer is to be found in the pattern of land holding, although the lack of commons and the underdevelopment of cottage industry must count for something as well. Nearly all of the arable land in the parish was grouped into six large farms, four of which were owned by the Royal Domain and leased to tenant farmers. If forest and game covers are included, the king's share alone amounted to a little over half of the territory of the village (522 hectares). This left about fifty

⁶ Morineau, *Pour une histoire économique vraie*, p. 125.

⁷ A. D. des Yvelines, 2LR 111, 2LX 183, 23L 2, 23L 16, 9M 984.

hectares distributed among the remaining two hundred or so households. Needless to say, the majority (72 per cent) owned no land whatsoever.

Compared with those of Neuville, most of the inhabitants of Villepreux had but a small stake in their own community. Nor could they fall back on the commons, or still vigorous traditions of collective rights, like their counterparts in Lorraine. Yet this kind of loosely meshed and highly polarised social structure was not untypical of villages in the Ile-de-France. On the eve of the Revolution most Versailles villages contained similar percentages of landless. In Rennemoulin on the other side of the wall, the Royal Domain controlled 69 per cent of the territory (144 hectares) leaving the bulk of the population to manage as best they could on a mere thirteen hectares. In fact most of that which remained belonged to the miller, and 65 per cent of households had no land that they could call their own. There was, moreover, a further factor complicating the lives of tenant farmer and plot holder alike. The Grand Parc teemed with game; indeed, it existed primarily in order to raise and protect game for royal pleasure. Hunting was forbidden and anyone farming land enclaved within the Parc expected higher cultivation costs and yields lower than those applicable to land of equivalent quality located beyond the wall. Indeed, the leases negotiated by the *régisseur* of the Royal Domain acknowledged as much. Arable land in the enclaved portion of Villepreux fetched between a quarter and a third of its intrinsic rental value on the eve of the Revolution owing to the problem of *gibier*.

CHÂTELAUDREN

This village contrasts with those discussed so far in almost every respect. For a start, it lies in Brittany, a province still culturally and institutionally distinct from the rest of northern France at the end of the *ancien régime*. Situated on the linguistic frontier between the 'pays gallo' and the 'pays bretonnant', the medium of day-to-day intercourse for many of its inhabitants was Breton. It is therefore likely that they identified more readily with their locality in its Breton incarnation: Kastel-Aodren. But French influence was never far away: the main Rennes–Brest highway passed their doorsteps and the unmistakably French town of Saint-Brieuc was only fourteen kilometres along the road in an easterly direction. Yet Châtelaudren differed from all the other places covered in this study in another and perhaps more cogent way. It was not an agricultural village, a fact reflected in its meagre territorial base of just forty-seven hectares. Arguably, indeed, it was not even a village, since the vast majority of households made a living from trade and



Plate 3. The village of Châtelaudren, *c.* 1900

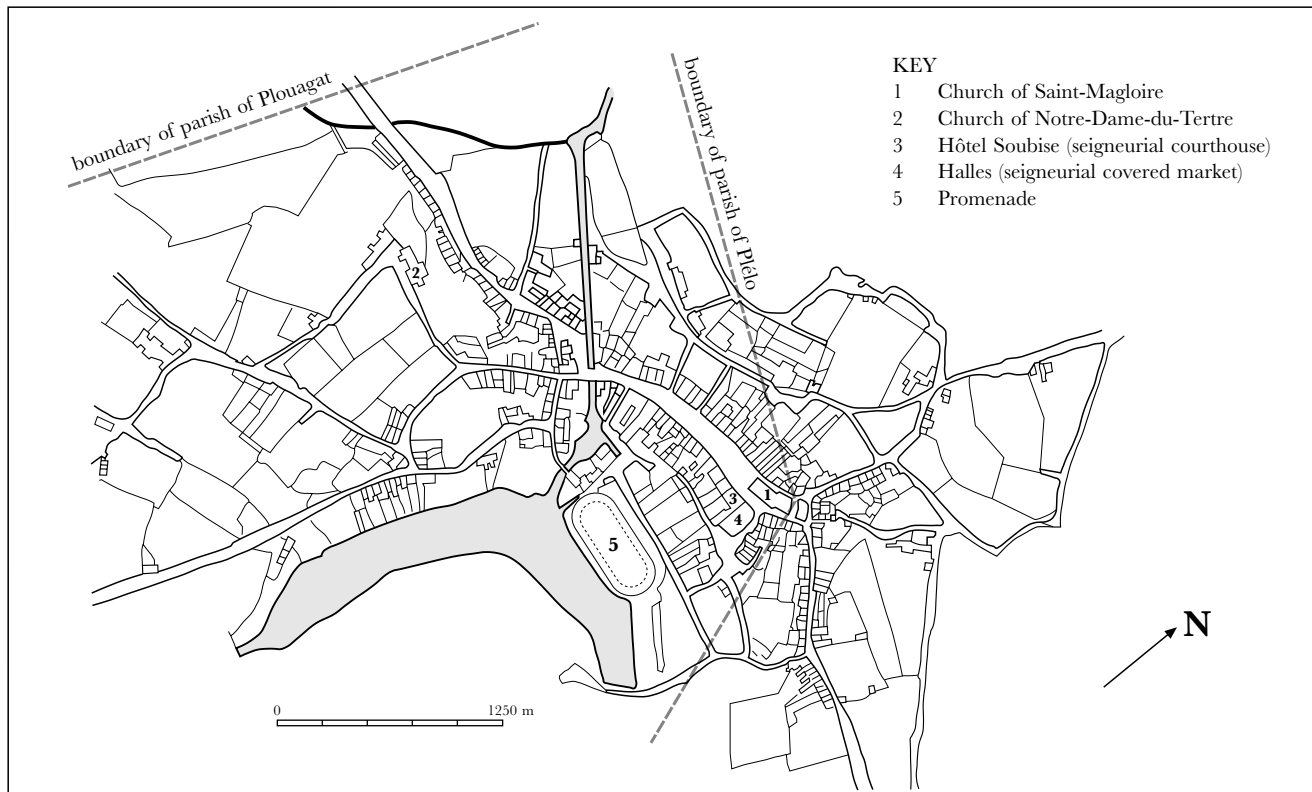
industry, or from the supply of professional services. Nevertheless, while the status-conscious elite of Châtaudren clearly aspired to higher things as the Breton Pre-Revolution got under way, none of the surrounding towns was prepared to grant it civic recognition.

The demography of Brittany reveals some unusual features as well. While the population of the province certainly expanded in keeping with the trend observed nearly everywhere else, the rate of increase was modest (around 10 per cent). That increase, moreover, was chiefly registered during the middle decades of the century: after 1770 it came to a halt and even went into reverse as waves of epidemic disease traversed the province.⁸ The lack of hard-and-fast population data for Châtaudren prior to the Revolution makes it difficult to translate these trends into a local context, but certain facts stand out. A catastrophic flood in 1773 claimed the lives of over thirty villagers, while in the last months of 1779 a widespread outbreak of dysentery decimated their ranks afresh. Certainly, if we reason from the experience of the nearby town of Guingamp, it seems likely that Châtaudren's population was either stagnant or in regression on the eve of the Revolution. The not particularly reliable census of 1790 recorded around 900 inhabitants (861 plus the *faubourg*), and for the rest of the decade the figure hovered closer to 800 (see figure 2). This decline can probably be attributed to the loss of an important seigneurial jurisdiction whose clientele helped to sustain the shopkeepers and craftworkers of the village. Here as elsewhere, however, matters improved during the period of Napoleonic stabilisation. Traffic started to move more freely along the highway following the cessation of *chouan* activity, and the growth of a relay function brought benefits in terms of investments in village infrastructure. By 1806 the population had climbed back to 867.⁹

Tightly packed onto a pocket-handkerchief of territory carved from the adjacent parish of Plélo, under constant threat of inundation from a pool of water held in place by a grossly inadequate embankment, hemmed in by semi-*bocage* farmland dotted with isolated farmsteads in the manner characteristic of the Breton countryside, Châtaudren was a topographical anomaly. The village was also a social anomaly, and, as we shall see, it elicited feelings of deep ambivalence in the population of the surrounding rural parishes. For a start, the inhabitants could not feed themselves since they controlled very little land. In 1797 only seven households out of 212

⁸ G. Duby and A. Wallon (eds.), *Histoire de la France rurale* (4 vols., Paris, 1975–6), II, pp. 368–9.

⁹ A. D. des Côtes-d'Armor, 2E Dépôt 19, 1L 583; [J.]Ogée, *Dictionnaire historique et géographique de la province de Bretagne* (2 vols., Mayenne, 1843 [reprint 1973]), I, p. 175; R.-H. Le Page, *Les Bleus du Châtaudren: histoire des châtaudrennais sous la Révolution* (Lorient, n.d. [1974]), p. 41.



Map 4. Châtelaudren (based on the cadastre of 1837)

made a living from farming, although a further seventeen put themselves out to hire in neighbouring parishes. The remainder, logically, relied on the weekly grain market which, in tandem with the daily flow of goods and travellers passing along the highway, generated the economic lifeblood of the village. An occupational profile confirms this reality: alongside the twenty-four heads of household involved in agriculture we find twenty-three merchants, eighteen tavern- and innkeepers, twenty-nine craftworkers, a host of domestics, a nucleus of thirteen professional families – most of which supplied services on behalf of the absentee seigneur – and, unusually, two titled families ‘living nobly’.

SAINT-ALBAN-SUR-LIMAGNOLE

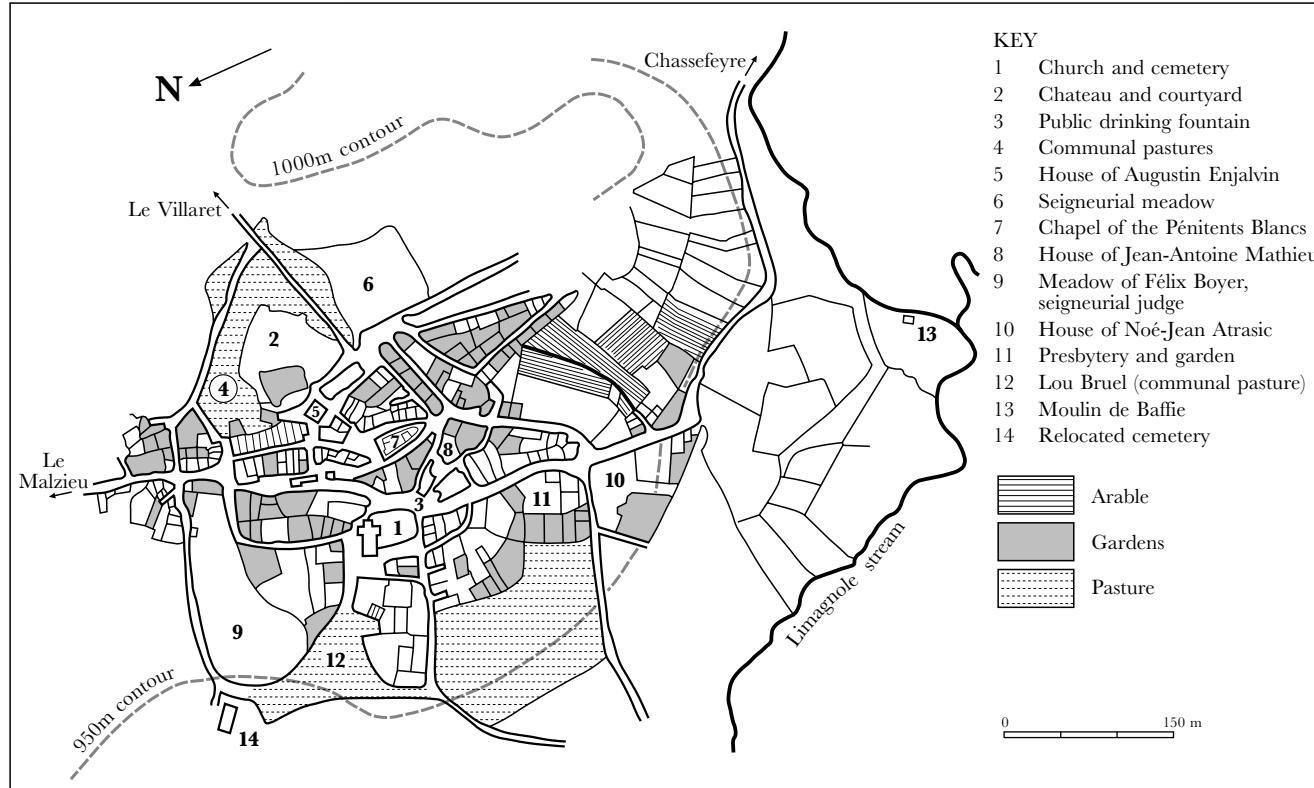
Space was not a problem for the highlanders of Saint-Alban, and torrents of water were not the natural hazard they lived most in fear of. This remote village located deep in the mountainous hinterland of the southern province of Languedoc constituted something of a dead-end for travellers. Still some distance from anything resembling a highway at the end of the *ancien régime*, it had no market, no post office, nor any institution that might have attracted attention or consideration. The nearest genuine town was Mende, some forty kilometres to the south, but access to this subprovincial capital involved a precipitous downhill journey after first traversing a 1,200-metre plateau. Much nearer (thirteen kilometres) was Saint-Chély-d’Apercher, a *bourg* scarcely different from Saint-Alban in terms of size or appearance. It was situated on a road capable of carrying wheeled vehicles during the dry season, however, and in 1790 would become the site of one of the new District administrations. A post office followed not long afterwards. The village of Saint-Alban hugs the 950-metre contour and owes its existence (and no doubt its modern name) to a shallow and fairly fertile valley (*limagne*) that extends to the east. But most of the territory of the community or parish – the two coincided – lay at higher altitudes (up to 1,400 metres) stretched along the granite flanks of the Margeride mountain spine.

Space was not a problem because the agro-pastoral economy of the Margeride has never been able to support a resident population of more than about twenty-five per square kilometre.¹⁰ Settlement dispersion has always been the rule, and when the human habitat began to ‘thicken’ in the early nineteenth century, it did so on a basis of hamlets not nucleated

¹⁰ *La Margeride: la montagne, les hommes* (Paris, 1983), p. 118; see also A. Fel, ‘Notes de géographie humaine sur la montagne de Margeride’, in *Mélanges géographiques offerts à Philippe Arbos* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1953), p. 78.



Plate 4. The village of Saint-Alban, c. 1900



Map 5. Saint-Alban (based on the cadastre of 1827)

villages. This is a type of habitat that we have not encountered hitherto, and it tended to throw up problems and responses to problems that simply never arose in villages, and between villages, encamped on the flat and neatly ordered lands of the north and east. Even by the standards of the Margeride, however, the 'community of inhabitants' of Saint-Alban controlled an exceptionally far-flung territory of some 7,244 hectares. So much so that the in-coming revolutionary administrators were willing to make Saint-Alban a 'canton' in its own right with the addition of just one, much smaller, locality. But 'control' and 'territory' are ambiguous terms in this particular context. The community/parish of Saint-Alban numbered about 2,000 souls in 1790, of whom around 800 lived in the village proper. The remainder resided in thirty hamlets for want of a better term, and some of these settlements were up to ten kilometres from the parish church. Although civil and ecclesiastical territory was supposedly indivisible (notwithstanding a decision by the bishop to allow the most distant settlements to construct a chapel-of-ease), each hamlet jealously guarded its own 'ecological territory', that is to say forest, water-courses and, above all, communal pastures.

In this part of the Gévaudan (subprovince of Languedoc) population densities were linked closely to the fortunes of the domestic woollen industry. Nearly every farm contained a loom for the manufacture of rough fabrics known as *serges* and *cadis*, as lease contracts bear witness; but this substantial rural industry was on the wane by the time the Revolution erupted. The high decades had been the 1750s and the 1760s, and there are clear indications that the population of the village, and probably also that of the outlying hamlets of Saint-Alban, entered a phase of decline after this period. Enumerators counted 403 households in the parish in 1766, but only 318 in 1788. Unfortunately there is no reliable way of calculating the distribution of the population, although occupational analysis suggests that the main losses occurred in Saint-Alban proper. If the estimate of 800 can be taken as roughly accurate, Saint-Alban appears to have vegetated in the 1790s and early 1800s (see figure 2). There may have been a population recovery in the parish at large from the time of the Empire, but the prefect of the Lozère on a visit of inspection in 1813 still found only around 800 inhabitants in the *bourg*. And in any case, the recovery was sharply curtailed by a damaging three-year cycle of harvest shortfalls beginning with hailstorms in the summer of 1815. When the overall population of the parish in 1820 – the end of our period – is compared with the total for 1790, the picture is close to one of stagnation.¹¹

¹¹ Archives Nationales [hereafter A. N.], B^a 51, F¹⁶ 970, F²⁰ 212; A. D. de la Lozère, C 62, M 11853, 59V2, 2Z 1; *Almanach historique, politique et économique du département de la Lozère pour l'an IX*

The harvest shortfalls of the late Empire and early Restoration were so damaging precisely because the resources provided by cottage textile manufacture had dwindled away. In effect the village was reaffirming its agro-pastoral vocation, as a producer of cereals for domestic consumption in a marginal landscape. Although the high pastures were fit only for sheep, whether the flocks of local farmers or those of transhumant shepherds, neither altitude nor granite subsoil posed an insuperable obstacle to the cultivation of rye. The danger came rather from winter snow cover inadequate to protect sowings from frost, and also from summer hailstorms. Rye was the hallmark of 'petite culture', of course. Its presence is a reminder that we have travelled far beyond the northern and northeastern plains where agricultural practices more closely resembled those of England and the Low Countries than those of the rest of France. In Saint-Alban mule trains were still used for moving goods at the end of the *ancien régime*, horses were an unusual sight and were never used for farm work. Ploughing was undertaken by bullocks and even cows, which were quite incapable of the traction exerted by a four-, six- or eight-horse team working the heavy clays of Lorraine. On the other hand the thin boulder-strewn soils of the Margeride scarcely tolerated deep ploughing, and when an enlarged arable surface was required it could usually be obtained by employing slash-and-burn methods (*écobuage*).

In common with many southern villages, Saint-Alban was dominated by a bourgeois elite (approximately a dozen households) which lorded over the rest of the population when not engrossed in internecine quarrels. There were no nobles apart from the seigneur, who came to reside permanently in his chateau from 1789 onwards and who played a full part in the life of the community. The seigneurie or 'barony' of Saint-Alban exercised jurisdiction chiefly in the form of a right of *censive* applicable to the arable territory of fifty-two surrounding hamlets. Although surviving lease documents make mention of up to seven seigneurial farms, it is clear that these *censives* constituted the most valuable source of income (see p. 71). Collection was usually subcontracted to local bourgeois who also took turns staffing the seigneurial assize court. Before 1789 the bourgeoisie and the seigneurie cooperated to mutual advantage, therefore, although this did not prevent a rift from opening once the news of the 'abolition' of feudalism came through. Alongside this bourgeoisie should be ranked a more numerous *ménager* class, most of whom farmed their possessions in person. Although matching the notaries, attorneys, bailiffs and sundry writ-servers in terms

of economic muscle, they generally played second fiddle, either because they lacked the leisure and linguistic skills to play a public role, or because they resided outside the *bourg*. The rest of the population lived in more or less endemic hardship. Few, if any, households were entirely without access to land, it is true, and in this respect there is a contrast to be drawn with the small fry of plains villages such as Villepreux. However, a pocket-handkerchief of arable and the chance to put a cow or a few sheep on the common did not make for a living, particularly in an environment where opportunities for wage labour were severely limited. This is why the decline in the market for rough woollens was felt so keenly, and it is noticeable that householders recorded as 'weavers' in the tax rolls of the 1750s often reappear under the heading 'day labourers' some thirty years later. If work could not be found locally, the menfolk migrated from the village in search of it as soon as the autumn sowings had been completed.

ALLAN

Travellers heading south along the A7 motorway catch a glimpse of Allan as the carriageway deviates in order to skirt round Montélimar. Looking east they will notice the ruins of a fortified village embedded in a nearby escarpment. The fact that no modern line of communication approaches the village speaks volumes, for Allan is a place that has experienced a crisis of identity. The climax occurred in 1857 when it was decided to abandon the hilltop site and to relocate the village in the plain, closer to the then main road. In reality, though, this highly controversial decision of the municipal council had been impending since the 1820s; it was, moreover, just the final act in a long-running saga of identity lost and identity regained.

In 1789 Allan depended on the small town of Grignan some twenty kilometres to the southwest to all administrative and judicial intents and purposes. This, despite the fact that Montélimar, the economic hub of the district, lay only a short distance to the north. Why the anomaly? Because Allan, Grignan and twelve other localities formed part of a greater anomaly known as the 'Terres Adjacentes de Provence', that is to say a block of territory that looked to Aix, took orders from Aix and considered itself indistinguishable from the Provençal 'nation', even though it was entirely enclaved within the province of the Dauphiné. Ecologically speaking, it is true that Allan belonged more properly to Provence than to the Dauphiné, but the origins of the Terres Adjacentes do not lie in this quarter. Rather they can be found in political feuds dating back to the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the Terres Adjacentes managed to cling on to substantial fiscal