

## The Path to Sustained Growth

Before the industrial revolution, prolonged economic growth was unachievable. All economies were organic, dependent on plant photosynthesis to provide food, raw materials, and energy. This was true both of heat energy, derived from burning wood, and mechanical energy, provided chiefly by human and animal muscle. The flow of energy from the sun captured by plant photosynthesis was the basis of all production and consumption. Britain began to escape the old restrictions by making increasing use of the vast stock of energy contained in coal measures, initially as a source of heat energy but eventually also of mechanical energy, thus making possible the industrial revolution. In this concise and accessible account of change between the reigns of Elizabeth I and Victoria, Wrigley describes how during this period Britain moved from the economic periphery of Europe to becoming briefly the world's leading economy, forging a path rapidly emulated by its competitors.

E. A. WRIGLEY is Emeritus Professor of Economic History at the University of Cambridge and co-founder of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure at the University of Cambridge.

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978-1-316-50428-4 — The Path to Sustained Growth: England's Transition from an Organic Economy to an Industrial Revolution

E. A. Wrigley

Frontmatter

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# The Path to Sustained Growth

*England's Transition from an Organic  
Economy to an Industrial Revolution*

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E. A. Wrigley

*University of Cambridge*



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The Group has always consisted of a mixture of established staff, research assistants, graduate students, and a constant stream of visiting scholars from every continent. Its structure is not hierarchical and everyone present benefits from being able to call upon the expertise of others and finds pleasure in returning this favour. Coffee time is often the key period of the day when informal discussion stimulates thought and gives rise to new insights which would otherwise be missed. I have felt a particular gratitude to the Group in retirement since its nature has meant that it is readily possible to remain in touch with current research, and to receive the advice, help, and criticism so beneficial in developing initial ideas. This book is, indirectly, a tribute to the value of this contact.

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