

THE BEALBYS OF COLLINGHAM, NOTTS: SOME BACKGROUND NOTES

Travelling southwards on the main road from Gainsborough to Newark, the first house on the left on entering Collingham, a village six miles north of Newark, is North House, built in 1858 by George Henry Bealby, great grandfather of Frank Bealby, the present occupant. Nearby survive the buildings which were used in their trade by the Bealbys. One of them houses the timber drag (wagon), on which they fetched oak, ash and other trees which they had bought in the locality.

The bigger metal parts were bought in for the making of the ploughs. The plough breasts (Document 1) were made of tempered steel by A. Spafford and Co. Ltd, Imperial Works, Sheffield. The shares were made from Bealby's models at the Victoria Foundry in Newark, later by T. W. Bradley's Foundry, Northgate, Newark and later still by Walker's Foundry, Bowbridge Road, Newark. This is a reminder that many small towns had foundries until the early part of the present century, as a study of man-hole covers will often reveal.

Other small metal parts were made in the blacksmith's shop at Bealby's. This contained the usual smithy equipment, plus a lathe on which screw holes were made and countersunk into the shares, a process designed to prevent the screw heads from collecting soil, thus creating unnecessary friction.

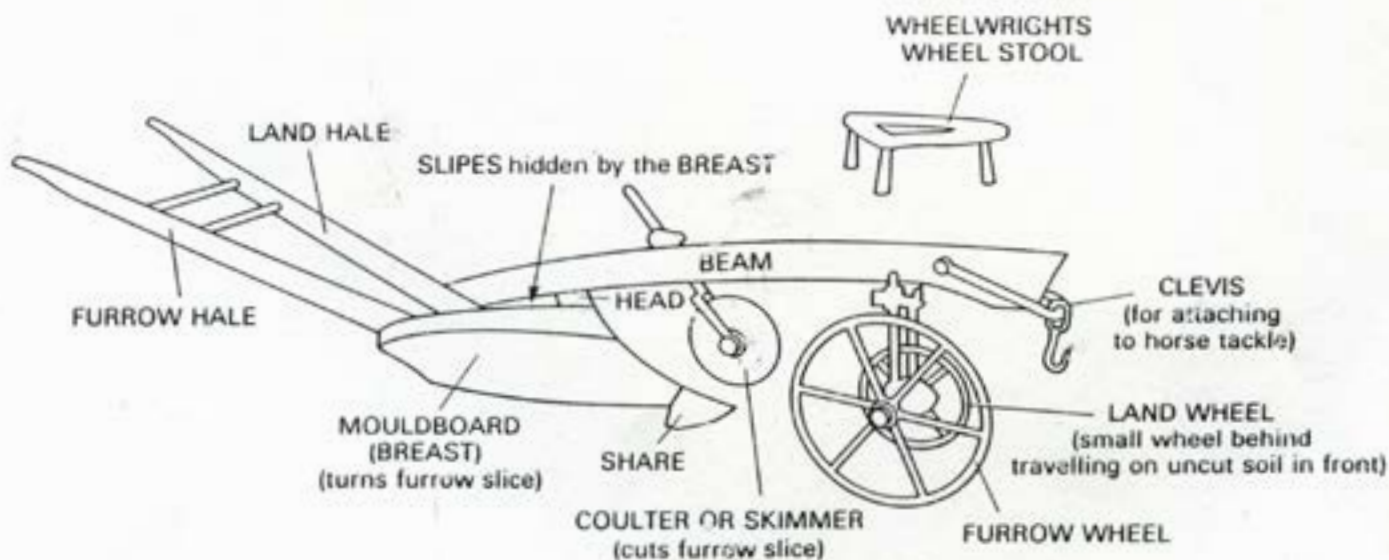
The document on which the work is based is the firm's account book for the period from 1871, when the brothers James and Benjamin Bealby (sons of George Henry) were in charge, to 1882. Apparently the partnership was dissolved in September 1873, Benjamin going off to become a farmer. I would like to acknowledge here the fact that Mr Frank Bealby, grandson of James, generously lent me the book for several weeks, enabling my wife and I to extract the data on which the maps are based. Mr Bealby also patiently discussed with me the technicalities of plough-making and some of the business problems firms of this kind had to face, like deciding whether to put a farmer in court for a debt of less than £2.

The tape discussion concentrates on the spatial analysis of the Bealby's trading area. Ploughs, like the clocks discussed in Unit 16 (Section 2.1), are just one of the many commodities one could use in a study of the commerce of previous centuries. How did the customers relate spatially to the centre of manufacture? How did the manufacturer promote his product and deliver it? What were the actual conventions over payment? How specialized was the work? From where did the maker acquire raw materials and/or semi-finished parts? And so on. Unfortunately, documentary sources such as account books are rare, but we can live in the hope of finding more.

The enquiry is related closely to central place theory, as explained in Units 16 and 17. In this connection it is interesting to notice that, despite the large area which they supplied with ploughs, Bealby's works were not located in a town. Nor does the important farmers' market at Newark seem to have had much influence on the marketing arrangements for Bealby ploughs, though no doubt it was one of the many places where farmers discussed the merits of ploughs and other pieces of equipment. Perhaps more important is the fact that Collingham was, and is, a large village with its own agricultural show, held each September in association with a ploughing match. It also has a station on the former Midland Railway line which runs from Lincoln to Derby. Ploughs were taken about 1 mile from the Bealby's works to the station by pony and trap and an odd job man was paid 2s. per plough to take them rather more than 2 miles to Carlton Ferry. Here they could be taken across the River Trent to villages on the west bank.

Documents 1-9

Document 1 Frank Bealby outside the smithy with a well preserved single furrow Bealby plough. Notice the large amount of woodwork in the plough, a distinguishing feature of many non-factory made ploughs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The parts of the plough are named in the diagram beneath the photograph. The mouldboard, slipes, shares and coulter were the wearing parts which constantly needed replacing. Other parts broke from time to time, especially clevises and haies when horses bolted. (Peter Morrell, Collingham.)



Document 2 Portion of the index of the Bealby's account book. The neat printing at the top probably represents the customers who had accounts at earlier dates. The places named range across Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and South Yorkshire. (Lincolnshire Archives Office by courtesy of Frank Bealby.)

E	EALAND. J. Esq Aisthorpe	Page 108
	ESAM Avarham Park	
	EAST. H. Thorpe	140
	EGGLESTON Little Carlton	
	EVENS Burton Lincoln	47
	EVANS Codnor Park	138
	ESAM Normanton	225
	EVANS. R. Darley Matlock	
	EBERSON. N. Scarle	148
	ELVIDGE Hykeham	131
	EVANS White Leys Farm Ripley N ^r Alfreton	142
	ESAM Norwell	139
	EVANS. R. George Hotel Tidswell N ^r Sheffield	189
	ELLIS. B. Mill Street Hayfield	295
	ELVIDGE. Newstead	42
	ELSTON. Winkburn	224
	EDDISON. Brandiff Grange.	240
	EAST. G. N ^r Scarle	340
	EVANS. Jun ^r . Burton	227
	ELLIOTT Besthorpe	99

(Lincolnshire Archives Office by courtesy of Frank Bealby.)

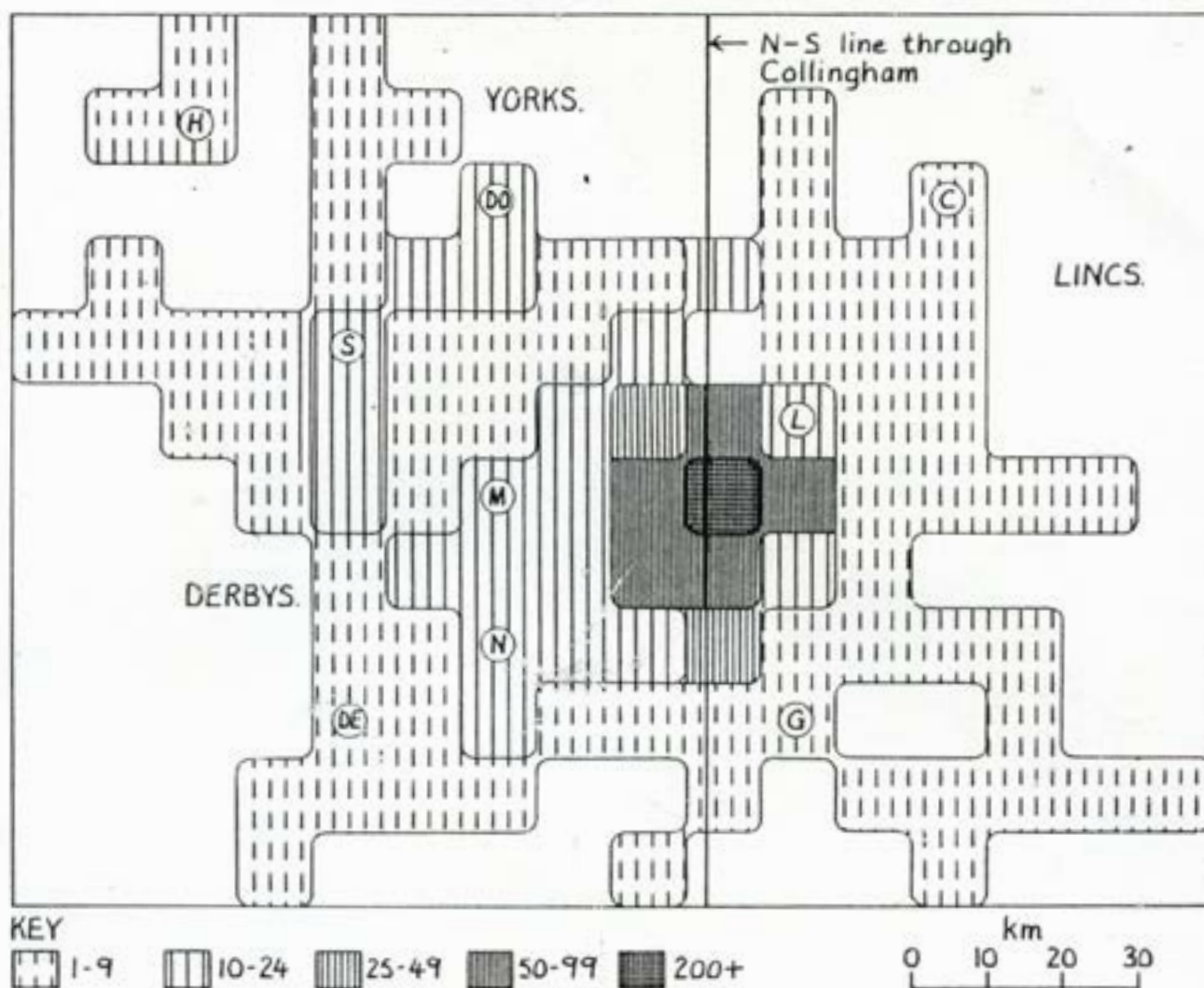
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Document 6 Distribution of Bealby customers from 1871 to 1882. Collingham situated in the square with 209 customers.

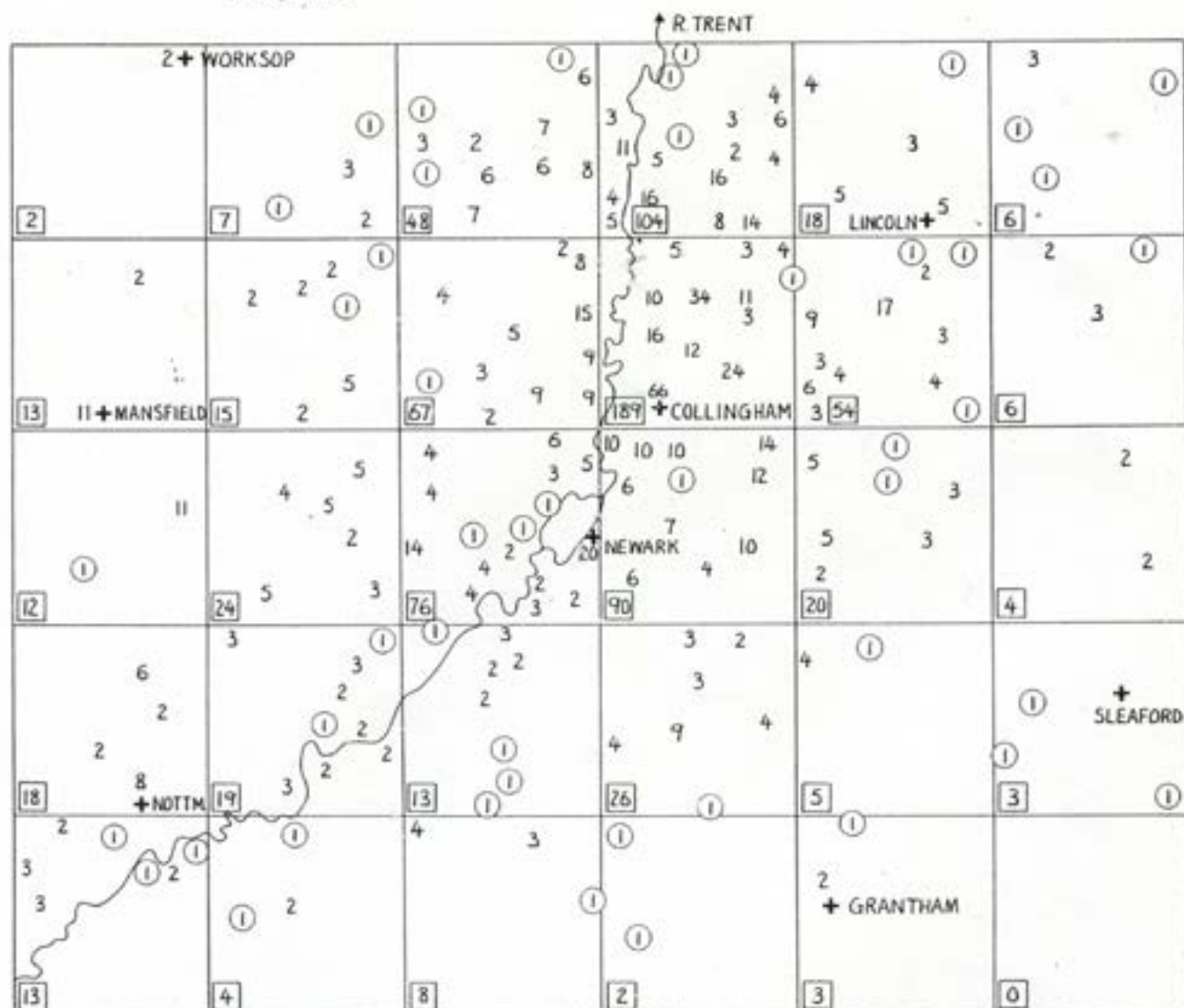
C = Caistor
DE = Derby
DO = Doncaster

G = Grantham
H = Huddersfield
L = Lincoln

M = Mansfield
N = Nottingham
S = Sheffield



Document 7 Plough customers *only*, using the Ordnance Survey Quarter-Inch Map with 10 km squares.



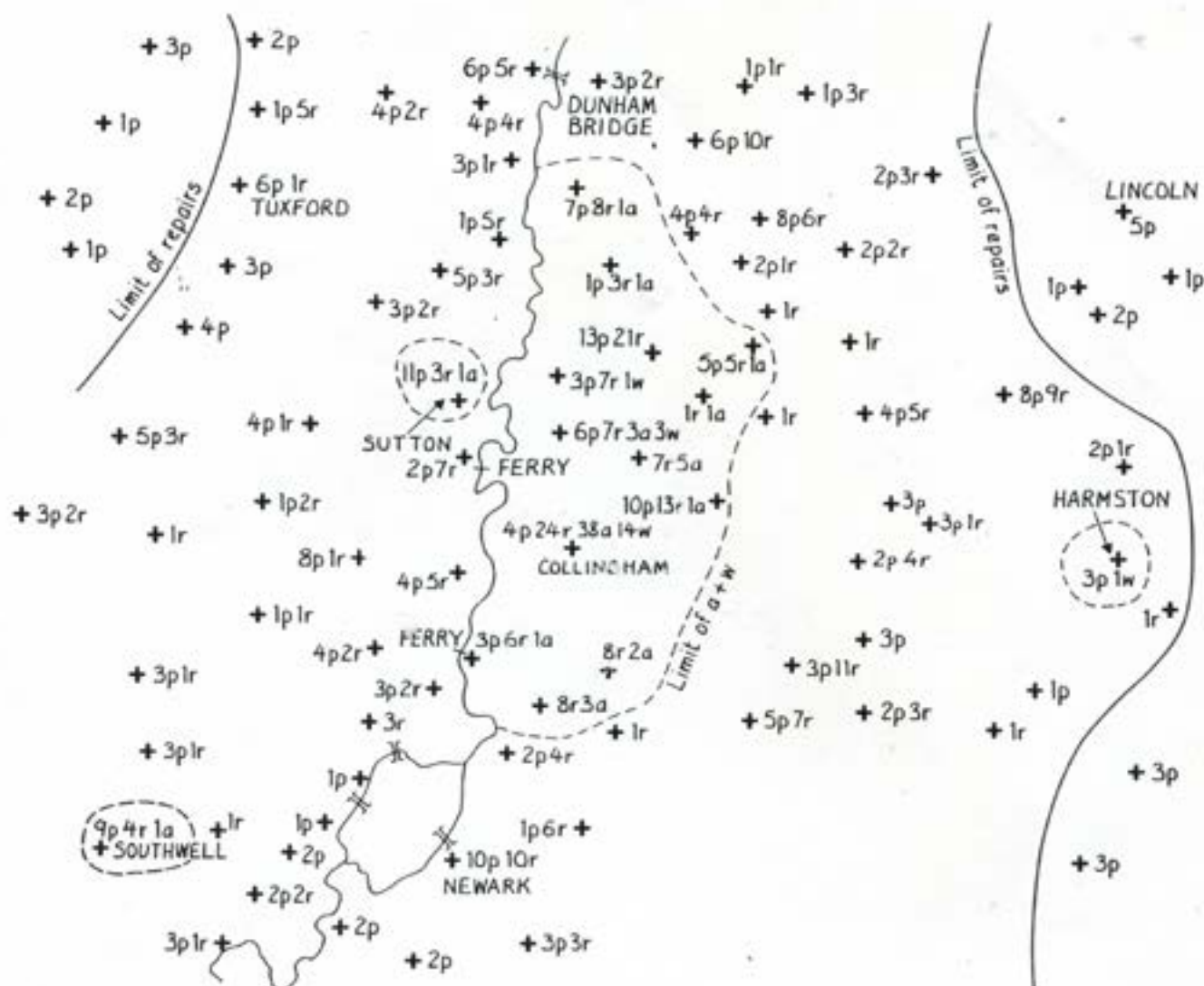
Document 8 Part of map showing customers differentially

p = bought ploughs and plough parts only

r = ditto, plus plough repairs

w = wheelwrighting jobs

a = p + r + w (i.e. all services)



KEY

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