The diversified surface of the county is accounted for by the variety and complexity of its geological structure. The Old Red Sandstone, composed of sandbanks and mud- banks of a land-locked lake, is met with in the Mendip Hills and on the banks of the Avon, but presents no feature of importance. The Devonian rocks, after plunging beneath the Triassic strata of the low ground between Williton and Taunton, rise again to the surface in the well-wooded Quantock Hills. The Carboniferous strata occupy a considerable area between Bristol and the Mendip Hills, forming a portion of the Bristol and Somerset coal­field. The Carboniferous limestone, built up mainly of petrified shells and corals, forms a truncated arch in the Mendip Hills, which owe their steepness and rugged contours to its compact and jointed structure, and their ravines and caves to atmospheric influences and to streams acting on the formation at and below the surface. It overlaps to the south the plain of Somerset, and plunges northwards under the coal-measures and Triassic rocks, reappearing in isolated and picturesque masses. The coal- measures, which have a thickness of about 7000 feet, include an upper and a lower series, separated by beds of grit about 2000 feet in thickness, also containing beds of coal (see Coal, vol. vi. p. 52). It is supposed that similar beds underlie the marshes to the south at a depth of from 1000 to 1200 feet. A large portion of the Carboniferous rocks are covered unconformably with the New Red Sandstone and Liassic and Oolitic strata. Triassic rocks prevail over the whole western area, from the Mendips to Exmoor. The highly fossiliferous Rhætic strata rest on the grey marls of the Trias, and constitute the lower part of the bold scarp of the Lias limestone and clays of the ranges from the sea to the Poldens. Plunging beneath the Oolitic strata, they occupy a large but scattered area in the east between Yeovil and Bath ; and these in their turn pass under the Cretaceous strata of the serried Black­down Hills. A large extent of the county is occupied by alluvial deposits. Caves are common in the body of the

hills, among which the greatest are the bone cave near Banwell, the stalactite caves at Cheddar, and Wookey Hole. Hard by the last-named is the hyæna cave dis­covered in 1852, and explored in 1857-63, when, besides animal remains belonging to a great variety of species, flint and chert implements were also discovered.

*Minerals. —*Though the exposed area of the coalfield of Somerset is only about 14 square miles, it is estimated to extend over 238 square miles. The amount of coal raised within the county in 1884 was 843,437 tons, valued at £295,202. Spathose iron ore has been long worked in the Brendon Hills, but the industry is declining,—26,041 tons, valued at £13,021, having been obtained in 1858 and only 3582 tons, valued at £2619, in 1884. Lead mining has been carried on in the Mendips from time immemorial, but the industry is of much less importance than it was in earlier times, the amount of dressed lead ore obtained in 1884 being only 664 tons, of lead obtained in smelting 178 tons, of silver obtained from the lead 2760 ounces, and the value of the ore at the mines £1055. Next to coal the most important mineral production is freestone from the Oolitic strata, the largest quarries being in the neighbour­hood of Bath. Copper and manganese are obtained in small quanti­ties, as well as fuller’s earth, marl, cement from the Lias, and ochre.

*Railways.*—The county is so completely intersected by branches of the Great Western Railway in the north and west, and of the South Western in the south and east, that there is perhaps no hamlet more than seven miles from a railway station.

*Manufactures.—*Woollen and worsted goods are manufactured in a large number of towns ; silk at Frome, Taunton, and Shepton Mallet ; gloves at Yeovil, Taunton, and other places ; crape at Dulverton and Shepton Mallet. There are large potteries at Bridgwater and Weston-super-Mare ; at the former town and at Bath there are extensive carriage-works ; and there are paper-mills on several of the streams. Most of the commerce of the county passes through Bristol, which is situated mainly in Gloucestershire.

*Agriculture.—*In the hilly districts much of the land is unculti­vated and barren, although affording some pasturage for sheep. There are large tracts of rich meadow land along the banks of the rivers, and the vale of Taunton is well adapted for wheat. On account of the extensive damage frequently caused in the lower grounds by floods, the Somerset Drainage Act was passed by parliament 11th June 1877, providing for the appointment of commissioners to take measures for the drainage of lands in the valleys of the Parret, Ile, Yeo, Brue, Axe, Cary, and Tone, where extensive damage is frequently caused by floods. The following table gives a classification of the holdings in 1875 and 1880:—

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 50 Acres and under. | | From 50 to 100 Acres. | | From 100 to 300 Acres. | | From 300 to 500 Acres. | | From 500 to 1000 Acres. | | Above 1000 Acres. | | Total. | |
| No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. | No. | Acres. |
| 1875 | 11,999 | 136,068 | 1,812 | 132,687 | 2,354 | 396,215 | 341 | 127,111 | 62 | 37,966 | 4 | 6,354 | 16.572 | 836.401 |
| 1880 | 13,300 | 140,912 | 1,750 | 129,838 | 2,349 | 402,421 | 358 | 132,745 | 72 | 43,168 | 4 | 5,786 | 17,833 | 854,870 |

Out of a total area of 1,049,815 acres there were 867,469 acres in 1885 under culture, of which 625,957 acres, or nearly three-fourths, were in permanent pasture, 58,863 under clover and rotation grasses, 115,005 under corn crops, 61,650 green crops, 560 flax, and 5434 fallow. Of the corn crops the largest area—49,199 acres —was occupied by wheat, barley occupying 27,934 acres, oats 24,783, beans 11,349, pease 1576, and rye 164. About one half of the area under green crops was occupied by turnips, which covered 30,891 acres, mangold coming next with 10,867 acres, while vetches occupied 8881, potatoes only 7517, and carrots 212. Horses in 1885 numbered 34,848, of which 23,229 were used solely for purposes of agriculture. The number of cattle was 236,899, of which 110,068 were cows and heifers in milk or in calf. Cattle-feeding and dairy-farming are the principal branches of husbandry. Large numbers of cattle are brought from Devon to be grazed on the rich Somersetshire meadows. The district east and west of Wells, with that of Cheddar, is famed for the cheese of that name, and cheese is also extensively made in other districts. Sheep, chiefly Leicesters and Southdowns, are grazed, the number in 1885 being 601,020. The number of pigs in 1885 was 111,719, and of poultry 414,803. In the extent of its orchards, chiefly apple trees, Somerset comes next among the counties of England to Hereford and Devon, the area in 1885 being 23,660 acres. The apples are principally made into cider, which is the common drink of the peasantry. The area under market gardens was 759 acres, and under nursery grounds 170 acres. There were 39,850 acres in 1881 under wood.

According to the Landowners Return Somerset in 1873 was divided among 32,765 owners, possessing 940,483 acres, at an annual value of £2,705,393, 18s., or an average value all over of about £2, 17s. 6d. per acre. There were 20,370 proprietors, or about 62 per cent., who possessed less than one acre, and 19,246

acres were common land. The following possessed over 9000 acres each:—Viscount Portman, 24,171 ; Sir T. D. Acland, 16,320 ; Sir J. H. G. Smyth, 13,543 ; Earl of Ilchester, 13,169 ; G. F. Luttrell, 12,732 ; Earl of Carnarvon, 12,732; Earl Poulett, 10,118; A. G. Lethbridge, 9103 ; and Sir A. A. Hood, 9008.

*Administration and Population.—*Somerset comprises forty hun­dreds, two liberties (Hampton and Claverton, Mells and Leigh), the cities of Bath (population 51,814 in 1881) and Wells (4634), part (38,131) of the city of Bristol, and the municipal boroughs of Bridgwater (12,007), Chard (2411), Glastonbury (3719), Taunton (16,614), and Yeovil (8479). For parliamentary purposes the county, which was formerly divided into East, Mid, and West Somerset, was by the Act of 1885 parted out in seven separate divisions—North, South, East, West (or Wellington), Bridgwater, Frome, and Wells. The borough of Frome was in 1885 merged in its county district. The city of Bath returns two members, and a portion of the East Division of Bristol is within the limits of the county. In addition to the boroughs the following urban sanitary districts are situated within the county:—Burnham (1904), Clevedon (4869), a rising watering-place, Frome (9377), Midsomer- Norton (4422), Radstock (3074), Shepton Mallet (5322), Street (2514), Wellington (6360), Weston-super-Mare (12,884), a favourite watering-place, and Wiveliscombe (1624). The county has one- court of quarter sessions, and is divided into twenty-two petty and special sessional divisions. The city of Bath and the borough of Bridgwater have commissions of the peace and separate courts of quarter sessions ; and the city of Wells and the borough of Yeovil have commissions of the peace. The county contains 489 civil parishes, with parts of three others. Ecclesiastically it corresponds closely to the diocese of Bath and Wells. From 273,577 in 1801 the population had increased in 1831 to 403,795, in 1851 to 443,916, in 1871 to 463,483, and in 1881 to 469,109, of whom 220,582 were