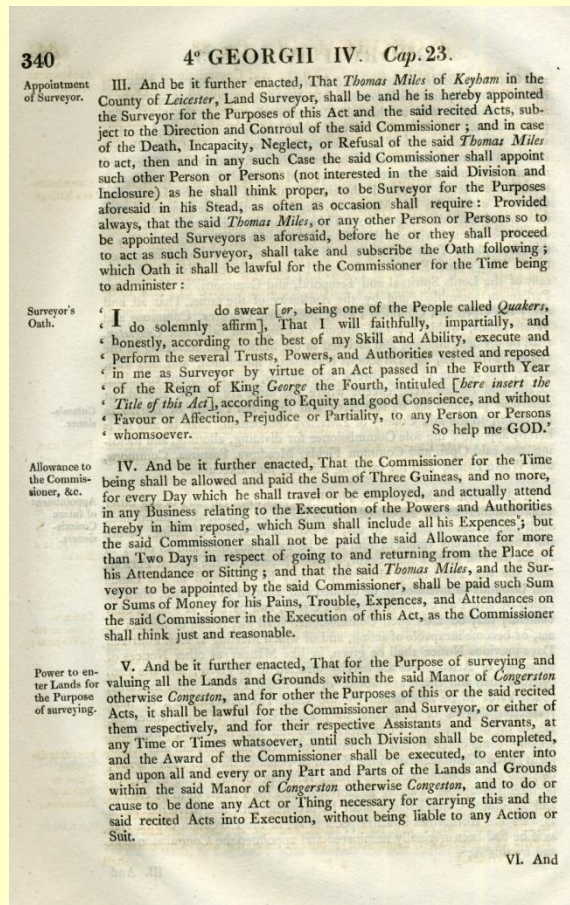
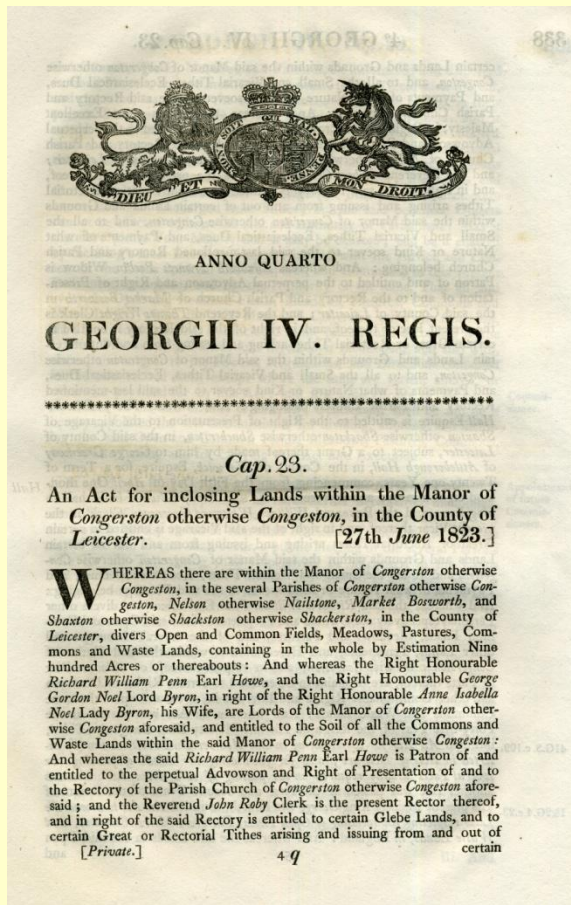


Inclosure

The "enclosure" of lands making up the Congerston manor was the result of an Act passed in 1823.



The Inclosure Acts use an old or formal spelling of the word now more usually spelt "enclosure". They cover enclosure of open fields and common land in England and Wales, creating legal property rights to land that was previously held in common. Between 1604 and 1914, over 5,200 individual enclosure acts were passed, affecting 6.8 million acres (2,800,000 ha; 28,000 km).

Prior to the enclosures in England, a portion of the land was categorized as "common" or "waste" or not in use. Common land was under the control of the lord of the manor, but a number of rights on the land (such as pasture or collection of wood) were variously held by some or all tenants within the manor. Waste was land without value as a farm strip – often very narrow areas (often less than a yard wide) in awkward locations (eg. cliff edges or inconveniently shaped manorial borders). Although was not officially used by anyone, Waste was often cultivated by landless peasants.

The remainder of the land was organised into a large number of narrow strips, with each tenant possessing a number of disparate strips throughout the manor, as would the manorial lord. Called the open-field system, it was administered by manorial courts, which exercised some kind of collective control. Thus, what might now be considered a single field would, under this system, have been divided among the lord and his tenants; poorer peasants (serfs or **copyholders**, depending on the era) would be allowed to live on the strips owned by the lord, in return for cultivating his land. This system facilitated common grazing and **crop rotation**.

Any particular individual might possess several strips of land within the manor, often at some distance from one another. In search of better financial returns, landowners looked for more efficient farming techniques. Inclosure Acts for small areas had been passed sporadically since the 12th century, but with the rise of new agricultural knowledge and technology in the 18th century, they became more commonplace.

Because tenants had legal rights on the land, substantial compensation was provided so that many tenants were active supporters of enclosure, but the acts enabled landlords to force reluctant tenants to comply with the process.

With legal control of the land, landlords utilised innovations in methods of crop production, increasing profits and supporting the **Agricultural Revolution**; the higher productivity also enabled landowners to justify higher rents for the people working the land. In 1801, the Inclosure (Consolidation) Act was passed to tidy up previous acts. In 1845, another General Inclosure Act allowed for the appointment of Inclosure Commissioners, who could enclose land without submitting a request to Parliament.

The tenants displaced by the process often left the countryside to work in the towns. This contributed to the industrial revolution - at the very moment new technological advances required large numbers of workers, a concentration of large numbers of people in need of work had emerged; the former country tenants and their descendants became workers in industrial factories within cities.

This text has been modified from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclosure_Acts