

Organic society: agriculture and radical politics in the career of Gerard Wallop, ninth Earl Of Portsmouth (1898–1984)*

by Philip Conford

Abstract

Through examining the ideas and activities of G. V. Wallop, ninth Earl of Portsmouth, this article demonstrates a close connection between the emerging organic movement and radical right-wing politics during the 1930s and 1940s. Evidence from his papers reveals that Wallop, a noted farmer and landowner, was instrumental in drawing together leading organic pioneers, and belonged to many of the groups which promoted organic husbandry during the mid-twentieth century. Other important organicists were to be found actively involved in his political initiatives, which were well to the Right of the spectrum. While rejecting the view that commitment to organic husbandry necessarily implies far-Right politics, the article argues that Wallop's espousal of both causes casts serious doubt on the claim that the early organic movement was a-political.

Many members of the contemporary organic movement, and of the Soil Association in particular, experience a certain discomfort when the political dimension of its early history is discussed. Over the past two decades, several historians have demonstrated that during the movement's formative years a number of its leading personalities were associated with Fascist or radical right-wing organisations and, in so doing, have handed ammunition to its enemies.¹

Two main lines of response to the problem are evident. One is to try to drive a wedge between the organic movement as it has developed since the 1960s and its earlier incarnation from the 1930s to the 1950s, downplaying any continuity between the two and attributing the modern movement primarily to the impact of a broader environmentalism given impetus by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. The other is to accept that some leading organicists in the movement's early years were indeed involved in political activities likely to be unacceptable to the majority of today's Soil Association members, but to argue that these activities and their

* The author would like to thank the Earl of Portsmouth for his generous permission to draw so extensively on material in his grandfather's archives, and to thank Sarah Farley of the Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, for her help and interest. His thanks are also due to Professor Richard Moore-Colyer, Dr Dan Stone and Dr Mike Tyldesley for their helpful comments on the first draft of this article.

¹ See for instance, Philip Conford, *The origins of the organic movement* (2001), pp. 146–54; Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right* (1983), pp. 142–46, 317–28; Patrick Wright, *The village that died for England* (1996), pp. 150–202.

associated ideology were quite distinct from advocacy of organic husbandry.² Only a comprehensive study of the organic movement from the 1950s onwards could hope to establish whether or not either of these explanations is valid, and such a study remains to be undertaken.

This article will consider the second approach and, by concentrating on the life and career of Gerard Vernon Wallop (1898–1984), the ninth earl of Portsmouth, will argue that it is seriously flawed.³ Wallop was both one of the most influential figures in the early organic movement and one of the most extreme politically, and his views on agriculture, rural life and food quality were central to his social and political philosophy. Indeed, given that organicists emphasize the importance of a ‘holistic’ outlook, it would be surprising if one of their leading thinkers kept his agricultural ideas separate from his politics. The reverse was in fact the case; in his early book *Horn, hoof and corn*, Wallop wrote explicitly that it was the task of agriculture to save the State.⁴ Evidence from Wallop’s papers demonstrates that some other important organic personalities were involved in his political initiatives. Given Wallop’s importance in the organic movement and the centrality of his agricultural views to his political philosophy, the thesis that the radical right-wing politics were distinct from the agricultural ideas cannot be sustained.

This essay proceeds as follows. Firstly, it examines Wallop’s life and career, concentrating on his achievements as an estate-owner and his work in agricultural politics. We shall see that as an agriculturalist he was highly regarded, even by those who did not share his politics; that he had many and varied contacts; that his books were widely reviewed, and that he was much in demand as writer and speaker. Then Wallop’s central importance to the emerging organic movement will be established; in particular we shall note the influence of his 1938 book *Famine in England*, his role in bringing together Sir Albert Howard, Sir Robert McCarrison and other key figures at a conference on his Hampshire estate later the same year, his role in the Kinship in Husbandry and his work with various groups promoting organic ideas. Next comes an examination of his political activities on the far Right as a leading member of the English Mistery and the English Array during the 1930s, and his role in anti-war groups towards the end of that decade. The final section demonstrates that several other prominent figures in the early organic movement belonged to Wallop’s political groups.

Certain caveats are required. This article is but one contribution to a growing study of rural politics and eugenics in mid-twentieth-century Britain, and no definitive conclusion is likely to be reached in the near future. Much work on Gerard Wallop, his associates in the Kinship in Husbandry, and the history of the organic movement remains to be done, and the material uncovered is likely to be complex and ambiguous. But it does seem clear that certain influential figures in the movement’s early days believed that organic farming and the food it produced

² See for instance, Tracey Clunies-Ross, ‘Agricultural change and the politics of organic farming’, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bath, 1990), p. 144, as an example of the first approach. In this connection, it is worth noting that the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth* regularly addressed ecological and environmental issues during the 1950s. The late Mary Langman, OBE, who worked at the Pioneer Health Centre in the 1930s

and was a founder-member of the Soil Association, took the second approach in an interview with the author, 28 June 2000.

³ Gerard Wallop, Viscount Lymington, succeeded his father as Earl in February 1943. He will be referred to throughout by his family name.

⁴ Viscount Lymington, *Horn, hoof and corn* (1932), p. 189.

could help realize their vision of a regenerated England, and that this poses a problem for those who maintain that organic farming was an a-political cause.

Although demonstrating that the influential Gerard Wallop advocated organic husbandry as part of a wider vision, this article is not intended to suggest that belief in organic husbandry must of necessity be linked with, or imply, a far-Right political standpoint. As a matter of empirical fact this is clearly not the case, while in order to claim a logically necessary connection one would have to build a dauntingly complex edifice of argument on the uncertain base of political theory. Keeping instead to the comparative security of empirical history, we can note that commitment to organic husbandry has co-existed, and still co-exists, with a variety of social and political beliefs.⁵ Nevertheless, before examining Wallop's career, we need to understand, albeit only in the broadest terms, the main reasons why this commitment formed an integral part of the outlook of such far-Right figures as Gerard Wallop and Rolf Gardiner.

Firstly, then, racial health was a central issue. There was considerable evidence that a substantial section of the population was in poor physical condition and ate food of limited nutritional value. If the British were to avoid becoming a 'C3 nation' – that is a nation of sub-standard physical specimens, judged according to the categories used by the army's recruiting board – then it was literally vital that they should adopt an improved diet, by which the organicists meant a diet of fresh foodstuffs produced from humus-rich soil. They believed that the work of agriculturalists like Sir Albert Howard, and nutritionists like Sir Robert McCarrison, strongly implied the superior quality of organically-grown foodstuffs, which might be used to reverse the 'degeneration' of the race.⁶

Secondly, Wallop and his associates resisted the erosion of rural life and culture. They believed the nation to be too dominated by urbanism and industry, and suffering from the social instability consequent upon that perceived imbalance. To increase the rural population it was necessary to replace industrial, quantitative standards of efficiency (output per man) by biological, qualitative standards (output per acre of nutritionally valuable produce). Seeing organic methods as labour-intensive, they called for a return to the land, envisaging – in defiance of agricultural trends – an expanding rural population of organic smallholders.⁷

This desire to revive British agriculture provided a notional justification for anti-semitism. The argument ran as follows: agriculture had been sacrificed for the sake of industry and free trade, and Jewish interests, through their involvement in industry, shipping, import-export and finance, had benefited from this policy. The concept of wealth had been corrupted, so that it

⁵ Among prominent past supporters of organic husbandry whose examples support the contention that organicists do not have to be right-wingers can be found the Labour MP and peer Lord Douglas of Barloch, a founder-member of the Soil Association; the socialist horticulturalist Edward Hyams, author of *Soil and Civilization* (1952); the American Marxist Scott Nearing; E. F. Schumacher, author of *Small is Beautiful* (1973); Laurence Easterbrook, noted agricultural journalist for the *News Chronicle* and *New Statesman*; J. I. Rodale, Jewish liberal and a leading promoter of organics in North America, and Robert Waller, editor of the Soil

Association journal during the 1960s.

⁶ On Howard, McCarrison and nutritional issues see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 50–59, 130–45. *Nutrition and physical degeneration* (1945) was the title of a major study of diet and health by the American dental scientist Weston Price. See also Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown* (1935).

⁷ As an example of this outlook, see H. J. Massingham (ed.), *The Small Farmer* (1947). That organic agriculture can be large-scale and mechanized has been demonstrated by the Wiltshire farmer Barry Wookey; see his *Rushall: the story of an organic farm* (1987).

was now identified with the abstract figures of an accountant's ledger rather than the natural resources and human skills on which all societies depend. There were cultural factors, too: the Jews, it was argued, had no commitment to the countries they lived in, and particularly not to any national soil. In the frequently-used and transparent code of the time, they were 'rootless cosmopolitans', perceived as a threat to the traditional rural culture which men such as Wallop and Gardiner wished to re-vitalize.⁸

There is another reason, of a more theoretical nature, why organic husbandry and right-wing politics came together in the minds of some of the organic pioneers. It concerns what the philosopher John Macmurray termed the 'organic analogy'; that is, the idea that human beings and the societies they create should be conceived of as biological organisms. The organicists rejected the application of mechanistic metaphors and standards to the natural world, but as Macmurray (who had dealings with a number of prominent figures in the movement) argued, interpreting society as an organism leads in the direction of totalitarianism, with human beings defined by their functional role in a hierarchy and assessed for their usefulness as if they are merely biological 'stock'.⁹ The historian of twentieth-century British eugenicism, Dan Stone, has pointed out that the 'comparison of men to animals such as sheep and horses was a common theme of right-wing thought'. Wallop expresses the idea in his post-war essay 'The English way of life', when, during a discussion of indigenous English racial types, he states: 'It is clear to any breeder of stock that, without the right environment, it is almost impossible to bring out the desired genetic quality of animals ... The most important single factor in environment is good food.' The clear implication is that human beings should be regarded as farm animals, their breeding controlled by eugenicists like Wallop.¹⁰

We shall return to these issues after examining Wallop's life and ideas, but it is worth bearing in mind as we follow his career that his political stance was extreme, and that even among his associates in the Kinship in Husbandry there was unease about his views.¹¹

⁸ *Jews and the Jews in England* (1938) by Gerard Wallop's close friend Anthony Ludovici, under the pseudonym 'Cobbett', provides a good example of this outlook.

⁹ John Macmurray (1891–1976) was Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College, London (1928–44) and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh (1944–58). His analysis of the organic mode of thought can be found in *Freedom in the Modern World* (1968), pp. 193–202; *Interpreting the Universe* (1933), pp. 103–21, and *The Self as Agent* (1957), pp. 33–37. Macmurray was prominent in the New Britain movement of the early 1930s, in which Philip Mairet, George Scott Williamson of the Pioneer Health Centre, Montague Fordham and other notable organicists were involved; see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 167–68. He influenced the doctor Aubrey Westlake, later a founder-member of the Soil Association, and worked closely with the literary critic John Middleton Murry, who took up organic farming in the 1940s: see John E. Costello, *John Macmurray: a biography* (2002), pp. 204–06, 240–44. Macmurray reviewed Maurice Reckitt's symposium *Prospect for Christendom*, which

contains a major essay by Philip Mairet on environmentalism, for the *New Statesman* (20 Oct. 1945, p. 269).

¹⁰ Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman* (2002), p. 39. Hampshire RO (hereafter HRO), 15M84/F154: 'Notes on the English way of life', p. 8. Compare Anthony Ludovici's rhetorical question: 'What breed of sheep, what breed of horses, what breed of common barnfowl, could have been abandoned to the promiscuous mating ... to which modern man has long been abandoned, without suffering degeneration?', quoted in Stone, *Breeding*, p. 39.

¹¹ H. J. Massingham wrote to Arthur Bryant about the 'three squires' in the Kinship (Wallop, Northbourne and Gardiner) and how their attitudes revealed 'not a little fascism peeping out'. The letter, dated 4 Apr. 1943, can be found in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London, file E/27. On the internal relationships of the Kinship in Husbandry, see R. J. Moore-Colyer and Philip Conford, 'A "Secret Society"? The internal and external relations of the Kinship in Husbandry, 1941–1952', *Rural Hist.* 15 (2004), pp. 189–206.

To examine Wallop's far-Right ideas is not to indulge in any kind of witch-hunt against him: his activities in the 1930s have been documented by Richard Griffiths and Patrick Wright, and he devoted a chapter of his autobiography to the English Mistery (though it must be said that he makes it appear more benign than it really was). Nor, conversely, does an interest in Wallop's career imply sympathy with his politics; rather, it indicates recognition of his significant role in mid-twentieth-century agriculture, one which has until recently received less attention than that of his friend Rolf Gardiner.¹² We shall see that Gerard Wallop was a shrewd man who knew the English establishment from inside, had many contacts in government, and was realistic about what he and his associates could hope to achieve. Since the 1945 Labour landslide ensured that their vision of an organic, ruralist society became more remote than ever, they achieved very little politically. But in so far as they helped establish the organic movement as a coherent alternative to the industrialized, chemically-intensive approach which dominated agriculture in the second half of the twentieth century, they have had a longer-term influence of considerable moment.

I

Gerard Wallop was born in 1898, into a family which had owned land in Hampshire since the Norman Conquest: but he was born into it in Chicago, of an American mother. His father was an adventurer who in 1884 had fallen in love with the north-western states of America and bought a ranch near the Montana-Wyoming border, living there as a horse-breeder for ten years before moving to another about 60 miles south. Young Gerard was brought up on this latter ranch until 1909, when he went to school in England. He returned to the West every couple of years before joining the army (one of the last volunteers before conscription) in 1916. He served in France in the Household Cavalry and the Guards Machine Gun Regiment, and records that the contrast between the destruction of battle and the healing effect of fields and woods at dawn turned his mind towards farming.¹³

After the Armistice, A. L. Smith of Balliol College, Oxford wrote to him agreeing that he could sit Finals in History and Economics in June 1920.¹⁴ Having taken his degree, Wallop spent a year in Oxford's School of Agriculture, where one of his tutors was C. S. Orwin, later a scourge of the organic husbandry school. In 1922 he was a pupil of the Hobbs brothers at Kelm-scott and the following year took over a 150-acre farm on one of the family estates. As a farmer and, subsequently, estate-owner, Wallop was successful and progressive. He had much to learn

¹² For Wallop's own account of the English Mistery see the Earl of Portsmouth, *A Knot of Roots* (1965), pp. 126–33. There are many files of Mistery material in the Wallop archive in the Hampshire Record Office, among them 15M84/F/13/3, F176, F195, F206, F378, F379, F380, F382, F395, F396, F398, F407, F413, F414. On Gardiner, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Rolf Gardiner, English patriot and the Council for the Church and Country-side', *AgHR* 49 (2002), pp. 187–209, and Wright, *Village*, pp. 151–62, 176–202. The political historian Dan Stone has examined Wallop's career in relation to eugenic

thought and British fascism: see his *Breeding Superman* (2002), pp. 44, 49, 53, 57; id., 'The English Mistery, the BUF and the dilemmas of British Fascism', *J. Modern History* 75 (2003), pp. 336–58, and 'The Far Right and the Back-to-the-Land Movement' in Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas Linehan (eds), *The Culture of Fascism* (2004), pp. 182–98. Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the twentieth century* (1989), pp. 117–19, refers briefly to Wallop's far-Right activities.

¹³ HRO, 15M84/F170; Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 33.

¹⁴ HRO, 15M84/F246.

when he started and met with hostility from neighbouring tenant farmers, but in the 1930s Farleigh Estate became a centre of agricultural experiment. By 1931 he had disposed of his last draught horses (a policy significant enough to be reported in the *Sunday Times*), and early the next year he was advocating full mechanisation of livestock farming in an address at Rothamsted Experimental Station. He reclaimed 3,000 acres mostly taken over from bankrupt tenants, laying on water, folding pigs on grass and using A. J. Hosier's moveable bails. As a result, arable production doubled and gross output trebled. He was also actively concerned to improve the wretched conditions of rural housing.¹⁵

During the 1920s Wallop combined farming with a vagrant life in Europe, and mixed in bohemian circles in Paris; the literary socialite Caresse Crosby and her husband Harry published his poetry. He also committed himself to Conservative politics, being elected a county councillor for Hampshire in 1923 and winning the parliamentary constituency of Basingstoke in the general election of 1929. But parliamentary democracy disillusioned him, as it seemed incapable of tackling the nation's dire economic and social problems, and he turned down the opportunity to become Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Walter Elliot, reluctant to submit to the unconscionable demands of the party whips. In 1934 he resigned his seat, too impatient, as he later judged himself, to accept the slow unfolding of events.¹⁶

During his time as an MP he became a leading figure in William Sanderson's organisation the English Mistery, of which more below. He also published his first book on agriculture, *Horn, hoof and corn* (1932), an interesting combination of the themes which would later dominate his organicist thought: the need for a larger, peasant, rural population; the spiritual dangers of industrial progress; the damaging sacrifice of farming to free trade, and the importance of agriculture to national health. His policy recommendations were in tune with the mood of the times: increasing home production for the sake of national security; creating more highly organized marketing systems; developing the dairy industry and market gardening, and promoting mechanisation (with the reservation that stockless arable farming would increase rural unemployment).

Wallop's reputation grew during the 1930s. In November 1936 he spoke at the Farmers' Club on 'The Place of Agriculture in Home Defence'. *Famine in England*, which reflected his interest in the ideas of Sir Albert Howard, sealed his reputation when it appeared in the spring of 1938. It received widespread and overwhelmingly enthusiastic press coverage. To promote it, Wallop spoke at a Foyle's literary luncheon which was reported in several national newspapers. The *Sunday Times* made *Famine in England* one of its Books of the Month, while the *Dairy Farmer* devoted more than three pages to responses to it from a variety of experts, among them E. J. Russell, the Director of Rothamsted, who praised its vigorous and convincing argument. Even the left-wing *New Statesman* reviewed it favourably, rejecting its racial alarmism but praising its sound views on agricultural policy.¹⁷ The book made Wallop something of a national

¹⁵ HRO, 15M84/F132.

¹⁶ Caresse Crosby, *The Passionate Years* (1979), pp. 128, 141–42; Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 106–25.

¹⁷ Viscount Lympington, 'The place of agriculture in

Home Defence', *J. Farmers Club*, Nov. 1936. Press cuttings on *Famine in England* can be found in HRO, 15M84/F149. *New Statesman*, 17 Sept. 1938, p. 428.

celebrity, and in the autumn of 1938 he spoke on the BBC's West of England service on 'The Changing Processes of Agriculture'. The other speaker, Professor J. A. Scott Watson, was later Director-General of the National Agricultural Advisory Service, and was to write ironically of a 'wave of mysticism' about humus.¹⁸

The period between the Munich crisis and the fall of France saw Wallop actively involved in opposing war with Germany and then doing what he could to bring about an armistice. Once the war started in earnest, he became Vice-Chairman of the Hampshire County War Agricultural Executive Committee (WarAg). His years as an MP had enabled him to establish a variety of friendships and contacts, a number of them across party boundaries. When Tom Williams became Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture in May 1940, Wallop wrote to congratulate him and invited him to stay at Farleigh House, the family seat. Williams welcomed the prospect of a meeting and wrote (rather ambiguously, in view of Wallop's recent political initiatives) that he had 'been much nearer to you and your activities than you may imagine'. In 1942 Wallop persuaded Malcolm Messer, editor of *Farmers' Weekly*, to publish a series of four articles by members of the Kinship in Husbandry: himself, J. E. Hosking, Philip Mairet and Lord Northbourne.¹⁹

The following year his book *Alternative to Death* appeared. While not receiving quite the degree of attention awarded to *Famine in England*, it was nevertheless widely reviewed in the national and provincial press. Wallop's former Oxford teacher, C. S. Orwin, struck the sourest note, scathingly condemning in the *Manchester Guardian* its 'mass of false premises and its undertone of vulgarity'.²⁰ While the book was being prepared for publication, Wallop succeeded his father as Earl of Portsmouth, contributing on 26 October 1943 to a major Lords debate on the impact of chemical fertilizers on the soil. He was by now closely involved, as the following section will show, with various groups and publications advocating organic husbandry, but he kept one foot firmly planted in the establishment camp, being prominent in the Central Landowners Association and travelling to the USA and Canada in 1945 as a member of the Farm Buildings Mission. The advent of the post-war Labour government did not adversely affect his ministerial contacts; Tom Williams, the new Minister of Agriculture, had visited Farleigh Estate in January 1945, and Wallop requested a private meeting with him a year later. In July 1946 Williams asked him to continue serving on the Hampshire County Agricultural Executive Committee, and take over as Chairman for the interim. Wallop declined, but emphasized in his letter how much he admired Williams's work.²¹ The following summer, Wallop contributed to a series of broadcast talks on the topic *Rural England: The Way Ahead*. The representative of progressive orthodoxy who challenged his views was the East Anglian farmer and Labour Party supporter H. D. Walston, whose son Oliver is today a noted farmer and outspoken opponent of organic farming.²²

¹⁸ J. A. Scott Watson, 'Old farming beliefs in the light of science', *Agriculture*, Mar. 1949, p. 508.

¹⁹ HRO, 15M84/F213, Wallop to Williams, 21 May 1940; F212, Williams to Wallop, 23 May 1940. *Farmers' Weekly*, 3 July 1942, p. 27; 10 July 1942, pp. 25–26; 17 July 1942, p. 27; 24 July 1942, pp. 26–27.

²⁰ Reviews of *Alternative to Death* can be found in HRO, 15M84/F152.

²¹ HRO, 15M84/F206 and letter from Wallop to Tom Williams, 17 July 1946, F213.

²² *Rural England: The Way Ahead* (National Council of Social Service, 1947).

For two decades, then, Gerard Wallop was a prominent agriculturalist who became a well-known public figure speaking and writing on behalf of the farming industry. His knowledge of British agriculture was wide-ranging (he took an active interest in the work of the Land Settlement Association and the Smallholdings Advisory Council) and he counted several Ministers of Agriculture among his friends, most notably Reginald Dorman-Smith, a member of the English Mistery. However much opponents like Walston might try to paint him as nostalgic and unrealistic, he had demonstrated his practical and administrative skills on his estate.²³

But although Wallop liked and respected Tom Williams, it was clear that agricultural policy was proceeding in a direction far removed from that which the organicists favoured, and that there was no possibility under Mr. Attlee's government – or, for that matter, any foreseeable Conservative government – of a rural revival of the kind that they adumbrated. In 1948 Wallop made his first visit to East Africa and, moved by the same pioneering spirit which had possessed his father, bought farms near Mount Elgon. Finding England now over-restricted, he opted to make his future in Kenya, where there was 'more elbow room': 10,000 acres of it, once he had purchased other nearby land.²⁴ He spent about 25 years in Kenya, improving soil fertility and playing his part in agricultural policy and national politics. He was a government-nominated member of the Board of Agriculture, and Chairman, and later President, of the Electors' Union during the Mau Mau troubles. In 1957 he was chosen under the new constitution as a Member for Agriculture, serving three and a half years in the Legislative Assembly. Once the 'wind of change' began to blow through Africa, Wallop found himself, in 1965, among the first estate-owners to have their land nationalized. Compensation was minimal and was in any case paid in the non-negotiable Kenya shilling. Rather than leave Kenya, however, he accepted an invitation from the President, Jomo Kenyatta, to become a special advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, discharging his duties in this capacity until he suffered a severe stroke in 1976 and returned to Britain.²⁵ He died in 1984.

II

If Gerard Wallop's status as an agriculturalist during the 1930s and '40s was considerable, in the development of the organic movement he was crucially important. Two events alone, both occurring in 1938, suffice to establish his central role in the movement's coalescence: the publication of *Famine in England* and the July conference at Farleigh Estate on agriculture and health. But as we shall see, he was active in the organic cause in a variety of ways.

Wallop wrote in his autobiography how 'By 1928 I was probing into the problems of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and leaping by instinct rather than knowledge towards some of her 1962 conclusions.' Regrettably, he does not give any detailed account of the experiences which led him to respond in this way, contenting himself with saying that he came 'to question the breeding and feeding of my animals' – as he did later of the British people – and that the older

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁴ Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 213.

²⁵ Letter to the author from the present Earl of Portsmouth, 21 Apr. 2003.

employees on his estate made him sensitive to the feel of the soil, with the result that he rethought 'the mechanical and chemical side of my agricultural education'.²⁶

Wallop's friendship with Sir Albert Howard, which began around 1935, gave his instincts a more scientific basis. In the autumn of 1937 he was corresponding with Howard about the manuscript of *Famine in England*, sending him reports on soil erosion and a brace of pheasants, and borrowing from Howard's wife Louise a League of Nations report on nutrition to lend to Anthony Ludovici (of whom more in the following section). The following spring, Wallop organized an agricultural luncheon for Howard, to which Ludovici was invited. Howard wrote to Wallop when his own book *An Agricultural Testament* appeared in 1940, saying that he intended the book to demolish 'most of the absurd research work now being subsidized by the State', and hoping that the war would be seized as an opportunity to remedy the neglect of the soil which had been occurring for two generations. Wallop reviewed *An Agricultural Testament* in the *New English Weekly* and Howard wrote to thank him. Privately, Wallop had some reservations about the manner in which Howard attacked orthodox agricultural science, but he nevertheless considered him 'a fine fighter', for whom he had 'great affection'.²⁷

Wallop was also in close touch with Sir Robert McCarrison, whose research in India on human health and nutrition complemented Howard's work with plants and animals. In June 1937 McCarrison sent Wallop a copy of his Lloyd Roberts Lecture at the Medical Society, and Wallop evidently reciprocated by putting McCarrison's name forward as a potential speaker on health and the soil at the Farmers' Club, though the suggestion was turned down on the grounds that McCarrison had insufficient knowledge of English conditions. When *Famine in England* appeared, Wallop sent McCarrison a copy.²⁸ We shall see in the following section that Wallop used McCarrison's ideas for his own political purposes.

Like McCarrison, Dr. Guy Theodore Wrench had spent many years in India and studied the diet and agriculture of the north-west frontier's Hunza tribesmen; his book *The Wheel of Health*, published by C. W. Daniel in 1938, is another classic of the early organic movement. In the autumn of 1937 Wrench wrote to Wallop complaining about publishers' reactions to the book and expressing interest in seeing the typescript of *Famine in England*. The following June, he told Wallop that he had recently spent a day with Howard.²⁹

Wallop came to know Howard, McCarrison and Wrench during the years 1935–37, but his friendship with the agronomist R. G. (later Sir George) Stapledon went back to the mid-1920s. Stapledon led something of a double life, agriculturally speaking: as an acknowledged international authority on grassland and plant breeding he was at home in the world of orthodox, progressive agriculture, while as a ruralist, poet and ecologist he was a strong influence on the organic school, a close friend of Rolf Gardiner, an inspiration for the Kinship in Husbandry and a sympathetic fellow-traveller with the Soil Association. He reviewed *Famine in England* glowingly for the *Spectator* and visited Farleigh Wallop several times; Wallop visited him at the

²⁶ Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 37, 36, 78

²⁷ HRO, 15M84/F147; *ibid.*, Wallop to Howard, 21 Oct. 1937, and to Howard's secretary Mrs. Hamilton, 23 Nov. 1937; F183, Wallop to Ludovici, 29 April 1938; F166, Howard to Wallop, 1 Mar. 1940 and 26 July 1940; F170,

Wallop to Massingham, 30 July 1941.

²⁸ HRO, 15M84/F147, C. B. Rolfe to Wallop, 2 Nov. 1937; F148, McCarrison to Wallop, 9 Apr. 1938.

²⁹ HRO, 15M84/F146, Wrench to Wallop, 14 Nov. 1937, and F147, 1 June 1938.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station at Aberystwyth and arranged for him to speak to groups of Hampshire farmers.³⁰

In addition to these four scientists, two landowners were particularly influential in giving impetus to the organic movement, and both were Wallop's friends. He first met Walter, Lord Northbourne, at Oxford after the war, and the acquaintance was renewed when Northbourne wrote to praise *Famine in England*; by 1941 Wallop could describe him as 'a real personal friend'. Wallop was similarly enthusiastic about Northbourne's *Look to the Land* (1940), describing it in a letter to another correspondent as 'absolutely admirable'. The two men worked closely on arranging a conference held on Northbourne's estate in the summer of 1939, at which the bio-dynamic agriculturalist Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was the guest of honour. They also knew each other through their membership of the Economic Reform Club and Institute.³¹

Perhaps Wallop's closest agricultural friend and ally, though, was Rolf Gardiner, the Dorset forester and folk-dancer who made his estate near Shaftesbury a centre of 'rural restoration', holding harvest camps and trying to revive the disappearing link between farming and a sense of the sacred. Gardiner and Wallop shared a particular political agenda. The former's career and his influence on the early organic movement are well chronicled and need not be recounted again here; suffice it to say that he and Wallop were at the heart of the Kinship in Husbandry group which during the 1940s sought to spread the organic message through as many channels as possible.³²

In what must be considered one of the most important gatherings in organic history, Wallop brought together on 11–12 July 1938 the above half-dozen key organic personalities. Also present were a number of farmers, medical men and other interested figures, including the Welsh industrial doctor G. Arbour Stephens, Lord Phillimore (friend of Wallop and fellow Hampshire landowner), Baron de Rutzen of Slebech, Pembrokeshire, and Captain Leslie Bomford, a member of the Vale of Evesham family noted for developing agricultural machinery, who farmed near Whitchurch in Hampshire. These latter two belonged to Wallop's political group, the English Array. The conference's object was to decide 'whether certain experiments on soil and crops at Farleigh Wallop merited extension and wider consideration', which was agreed.³³ In effect, the conference was proposing an experiment to assess the nutritive value of food produced from crops grown on soil manured by composted dung and vegetable waste. The members envisaged feeding rats with cereal crops produced this way – something similar to McCarrison's experiments at Coonor in India – and the feeding of humus-grown products of field and garden to pupils at a local school for their main meal of the day. This is, of course, the project at the heart of the organic movement: to establish that food produced from

³⁰ On Stapledon, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Sir George Stapledon (1882–1960) and the landscape of Britain', *Environment and History* 5 (1999), pp. 221–36, and Robert Waller, *Prophet of the New Age* (1962). Stapledon's review was in the 8 Apr. 1938 issue of the *Spectator*, p. 634. Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 78–80.

³¹ HRO, 15M84/F147, Northbourne to Wallop, 6 May 1938; F170, Wallop to Massingham, 24 Apr. 1941; F162, Wallop to C. Hussey, 13 June 1940. The provisional list

for Northbourne's conference can be found in F211. On the Economic Reform Club, see Philip Conford, 'Finance versus farming: rural reconstruction and economic reform, 1894–1955', *Rural Hist.* 13 (2002), pp. 225–41.

³² On Rolf Gardiner and the Kinship in Husbandry, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and "A Kinship in Husbandry"', *Rural Hist.* 12 (2001), pp. 85–108.

³³ HRO, 15M84/F204.

humus-rich soil benefits the health of animals and humans. As the group at Farleigh Estate recognized, it is a hypothesis whose establishment requires exhaustive research and plenty of financial backing. The nearest there has ever been in Britain to such a project is the Haughley Experiment in Suffolk, which operated during the 1950s and '60s.³⁴ This was inspired by the influence of Wallop's book *Famine in England* on Eve Balfour, who farmed at Haughley, near Stowmarket. In a letter to him of September 1943 she wrote: 'There is no one in the country whose opinion I value more than yours, the man who started me on the humus trail, so you can perhaps imagin[e] the glow of pleasure which your very high praise of my book [*The Living Soil*] gave me.' She was reading Wallop's *Alternative to Death*, and described it as 'one of the really great books of the age'.³⁵ Having read *Famine in England*, Balfour became convinced of the need for an experiment to test whether or not Howard's and McCarrison's theories were justified, and with the help of her neighbour Alice Debenham set in train the processes which, after the war, resulted in the establishment of the Haughley Experiment, later taken over by the Soil Association. She wrote *The Living Soil* to arouse interest in the case for humus farming and its putative health benefits, and its success led to the founding of the Soil Association in 1946, of whose Council Wallop was for several years a member. His own efforts, in 1945, to persuade the Agricultural Research Council to fund an experiment were unsuccessful.³⁶

Wallop was involved in most of the important groups which together constituted the early movement and was friendly with a number of figures in addition to those who attended his conference in July 1938. We have already referred to Ehrenfried Pfeiffer and the bio-dynamic cultivation inspired by the lectures which Rudolf Steiner delivered in 1924. The bio-dynamic movement was established in Britain by 1929, two years before Howard returned from India, and was a significant strand in the early organic movement.³⁷ Wallop was not a disciple of Steiner, but the practical results of bio-dynamic methods impressed him and in the 1930s he conducted some field-scale experiments to compare bio-dynamic cultivation with chemical manuring. When Pfeiffer spoke at Northbourne Court in July 1939, Wallop made various suggestions as to who should be invited to meet him; it is interesting to note that Dr. George Scott Williamson of the Pioneer Health Centre was one of the other speakers, and that Wallop's suggested names included Rolf Gardiner, Baron de Rutzen, and Moses Griffith of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station. In a letter the following spring to the then Minister of Agriculture Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, Wallop referred to 'the great Dr Pfeiffer', who would be visiting England in April, and invited Dorman-Smith to lunch so that he could meet him.³⁸

Late in 1938 Wallop launched another initiative, a journal called *New Pioneer*. We shall consider *New Pioneer's* political stance in the next section, but can note here that it promoted both a pro-organic agricultural policy and an anti-war agenda. Its pages included contributions from Sir Albert Howard, Rolf Gardiner, Lord Northbourne, Philip Mairet and the Conservative MP

³⁴ On the Haughley Experiment, see E. B. Balfour, *The Living Soil and the Haughley Experiment* (1975).

³⁵ HRO, 15M84/F152, Eve Balfour to Wallop, 28 Sept. 1943.

³⁶ HRO, 15M84/F199.

³⁷ See Conford, *Origins*, pp. 65–80.

³⁸ HRO, 15M84/F166: Wallop to G. Harrison, 16 Mar.

1945; Wallop's list of suggested names can be found in F211; F210, Wallop to Dorman-Smith, 21 Mar. 1940. Moses Griffith was a prime mover in Welsh nationalism and an advocate of the de-industrialisation of south Wales in favour of a peasant-based Welsh economy. He was manager of the Cahn Hill Improvement Scheme in central Wales.

Pierse Loftus, as well as much material by Wallop himself. Mairet edited the *New English Weekly*, which, as I have argued elsewhere, could claim to be the most important forum for organic husbandry in the years before the Soil Association.³⁹ From 1938 onwards Wallop wrote and reviewed for it regularly.

Philip Mairet became one of the twelve founding members of the Kinship in Husbandry, which first met in September 1941 and whose aim was to promote a rural, organicist vision of post-war society. Its members also included Wallop, who was a moving spirit in its establishment, Northbourne, Gardiner, Edmund Blunden, Arthur Bryant and H. J. Massingham.⁴⁰ Like Eve Balfour, Massingham had been impressed by *Famine in England* and began to correspond with Wallop, suggesting in a letter of November 1939 that there should be an organisation to draw together those who shared their ruralist philosophy. In 1941 Massingham edited the symposium *England and the Farmer*, to which Wallop contributed; it is in various respects an early manifesto for the wider aims of the Soil Association.⁴¹

Wallop was active in a number of other groups in the network of which the *New English Weekly* and the Kinship were part. In 1938 Richard St. Barbe Baker's Men of the Trees organisation held, at Oxford, its first summer school, and Wallop chaired the session at which Howard spoke. In 1940 Wallop addressed an Economic Reform Club dinner on the theme of agriculture, and he was a vice-president of the Rural Reconstruction Association, to which the Economic Reform Club became closely linked in the 1940s.⁴² During the war, Rolf Gardiner was prominent in establishing the Council for the Church and Countryside, a body which served as a front for the organic movement; Wallop too belonged to this, and spoke at the major debate which it sponsored in November 1945 on *Agri-Culture or Agri-Industry?* (Privately, though, as he confessed to T. S. Eliot, he considered the Council a 'forlorn hope'.⁴³) He also spoke on 'Food and Agriculture' at a meeting of the Food Education Society, held at the London School of Tropical Medicine in April 1945. The Society's Vice-Presidents included several pro-organic figures, among them Wallop himself, Howard, McCarrison, Massingham, the dental scientist Sir Norman Bennett and the agriculturalist Lord Bledisloe.⁴⁴

Wallop's papers reveal, as is to be expected, that he took a particular interest in the Pioneer Health Centre, an experiment in preventive social medicine which attracted international interest and whose founders, Dr. George Scott Williamson and Dr. Innes Pearse, were instrumental in establishing the Soil Association. The Centre was forced to close during the war, and Wallop

³⁹ Philip Conford, 'A forum for organic husbandry: the *New English Weekly* and agricultural policy, 1939–1949', *AgHR* 46 (1998), pp. 197–210.

⁴⁰ The other founder-members of the Kinship were the ruralist writer Adrian Bell; the botanist and seed merchant J. E. Hosking; the director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Douglas Kennedy; the editor of *The Gloucestershire Countryside*, Robert Payne, and the ruralist writer C. Henry Warren. Visitors to Kinship meetings included Jorian Jenks, first editor of the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth*, and the noted agricultural journalist Laurence Easterbrook.

⁴¹ HRO, 15M84/F148, Massingham to Wallop, 24

Nov. 1939. Correspondance between Massingham and Wallop on *England and the Farmer* can be found in F170.

⁴² *Three addresses on food production in relation to economic reform* (Economic Reform Club and Institute, 1940). On the links between the ERCI and the Rural Reconstruction Association, see Conford, 'Finance'.

⁴³ On the Council for the Church and Countryside, see Conford, *Origins*, pp. 201–04. HRO, 15M84/F165: Wallop to Eliot, 29 July 1944.

⁴⁴ HRO, 15M84/F217 contains a typescript of Wallop's talk.

commiserated with Pearse in the autumn of 1940, describing it as a most hopeful experiment. In the winter of 1943–44 Pearse sent him a copy of her book on the Pioneer Health Centre, and he declared himself enthralled by it, feeling that her science had reinforced his philosophy. An undated letter from Pearse to Wallop discusses with him the formation of the Soil Association.⁴⁵ Wallop went on to serve on the Soil Association's Council for four years (1947–50), but it is uncertain whether he played a significant part in its activities given that he moved to Kenya during this period. His archives do not contain material relating to the Association for these years and he did not contribute to its journal *Mother Earth*, but his earlier work had been of crucial importance to the body's establishment.

Wallop's files contain much more correspondance with other leading organic personalities, but the evidence presented in this section fully establishes his central importance in the early movement. We can now turn to his political activities and see how closely connected they were with his organicist beliefs.

III

'I, personally, am not a Fascist,' Wallop wrote in 1937 to a Mr L. Bussell, 'though I can appreciate and understand their motives'. Indeed, in a speech reported by the *Andover Advertiser*, he had declared that a British Mussolini was needed to halt the nation's drift to disaster. But in his autobiography he maintains that his political activities in the 1930s were far from Fascist, since they involved no leadership principle, no mass rallies, no uniforms – just a desire for 'government by sane consent'. Wallop and his associates 'did not regard ourselves as Herrenvolk but we wanted our revival to be Anglo-Saxon . . . We felt that outside influences were corrupting our standards and national purpose'.⁴⁶ A look at the company Wallop kept during the 1930s provides some context for these remarks.

Two figures in particular are important, though significantly only one of them, William Sanderson, features in Wallop's autobiography; the other, Anthony Ludovici, does not rate a mention, though Wallop's papers reveal that the two men were very close for a period of at least fifteen years. Since it is probable that Wallop met Ludovici through Sanderson, we shall consider Sanderson first.

In 1930, as a new Conservative MP, Wallop made a speech attacking the ineffectual party leadership of Stanley Baldwin (whom he privately deemed 'a scheming old bladder of stale wind'). As a result, he was invited to the rooms of a barrister, William Sanderson, at New Square in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sanderson was the 'fountain head and philosophic leader' of a movement called the English Mistery, which coloured Wallop's political thought after 1930 and dictated most of his standards of value. The Mistery was a royalist, quasi-masonic organisation, a 'school for leadership' dedicated to regenerating English society and the English race through a restoration of true values and individual responsibility and by resisting all forms of 'outside'

⁴⁵ HRO, 15M84/F260: Wallop to Pearse, 30 Oct. 1940, 21 Dec. 1943, 24 Jan. 1944; Pearse to Wallop, undated. 1937. *Andover Advertiser*, 6 June 1930. Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 129, 127.

⁴⁶ HRO, 15M84/F147: Wallop to L. Bussell, 13 Dec.

(that is, primarily, Jewish) influences. The term ‘Mistry’ was derived from the idea of ‘mastery’ of a craft, implying special or secret knowledge.⁴⁷

Sanderson was, in Wallop’s view, ‘utterly dedicated to his purpose and at the same time was some small part charlatan’. Another picture of Sanderson, confirming Wallop’s in several respects, has recently been given by someone of a very different political stance but who, remarkably, was also involved in the Mistry: this is the left-wing barrister John Platts-Mills, who, before adopting socialism, flirted with the political Right and attended a number of Mistry gatherings, even giving an address at one of them. His unsuitability for the Mistry is evidenced by comments among the society’s documents that he displayed ‘Whig tendencies’ and had become a Communist. He was removed from membership in November 1933. Demonstrating that the political Left is not immune to patronising snobbery, Platts-Mills describes the talks given at Mistry meetings as ‘trivial little papers written by well-intentioned but dim little people’. Nevertheless, he met his future wife at a Mistry soirée.⁴⁸

Platts-Mills conveys more idea than Wallop does of Sanderson’s unpleasantness, describing his loathing for the idea that God cares for the lowliest (“the statesman must consider quality”), and his convictions that illness is a cause for shame, denoting innate inferiority, and that pensions stifle character: this despite (or because of) his own very small and handicapped physique, which almost entirely confined him to a chair and made him dependent on the charity of two mature ladies.⁴⁹ But neither writer describes Sanderson’s links with British fascism or gives the flavour of his personal communications, at once embittered, hectoring, contemptuous and self-pitying. One can fully understand why Wallop, an ebullient character, broke from him; it is baffling that he should have succumbed to his spell in the first place.

Writing to an Oxford undergraduate in 1937 about Fascism, Sanderson said that he had been consulted on each of four or five occasions when there had been attempts to start a Fascist movement in England, and that Grandi, the Italian ambassador in London, had attended the English Mistry’s fourth anniversary dinner. Sanderson was in no way hostile to Italian Fascism, and the Mistry both understood and sympathized with the Nazi movement. Sanderson’s credentials as a supporter of extreme conservative politics dated back to before the First World War, when he belonged to the Order of the Red Rose and gathered around him active Royalist and loyalist young men, several of them connected with the chambers of F. E. Smith. He was associated with the Imperial Fascist League and contributed regularly to *The Fascist*. In Wallop he saw a figure who could represent, articulate and further the values he believed necessary for the redemption of English stock and culture, describing him as his ‘spiritual son’, ‘the real leader of a real movement and it will be 1500 years before anyone can say that it is dead’. In a long letter to Wallop and Norman Hay he was even more apocalyptic, writing of himself as a Genghis Khan, setting out to alter what were supposedly ‘facts’ about society, and envisaging Gerard Wallop as ‘a legend 10,000 years hence’. Before them lay ‘the conquest of the world’. Three months later he wrote to Wallop: ‘You are my last throw and I have staked more on you than anyone else ... has done’. And in February 1933 he told him: ‘there is no limit to the

⁴⁷ HRO, 15M84/F170. On the Mistry, see n. 12 above.

⁴⁸ Portsmouth, *Knot*, p. 127. The comments on Platts-Mills can be found in HRO, 15M84/F379. John

Platts-Mills, *Muck, silk and socialism: recollections of a left-wing Queen’s Counsel* (2002), p. 58.

⁴⁹ Platts-Mills, *Muck, silk and socialism*, pp. 57, 58.

destiny that lies open before you'. Sanderson displays clear signs of megalomania: if he is God the Father, then Wallop is the Messiah-Son who will enable his divine plan to be fulfilled.⁵⁰

In this same letter, Sanderson wrote that he had brought Anthony Ludovici – whom he described elsewhere as ‘the best disciplined mind in Europe’ – round to ‘admiration and belief’ in Wallop’s abilities. Wallop erased Ludovici from his autobiographical memory, an omission which needs to be rectified if we are to form an accurate picture of his political associates. Dan Stone, in his study of British eugenicism, devotes a chapter to this now largely forgotten figure (whose writings nonetheless still influence the far Right), revealing that Ludovici was prepared to recommend incest, infanticide and mass slaughter as means to the end of racial purification. (Ironically, Ludovici was himself the product of a mixed-race marriage, but according to Wallop ‘realise[d] to the full the dangers that this involve[d]’). The journalist Francis Beckett, whose father John was a colleague of Ludovici’s in the British People’s Party, describes Ludovici as possessed by a ‘cold, intellectual fanaticism’. This cold, intellectual fanatic was a close friend and associate of Wallop and Gardiner; the former acted as his agent in finding a publisher for his anti-semitic tract *Jews and the Jews in England* (1938), which he wrote under the pseudonym ‘Cobbett’ for fear that it might harm his literary reputation. The book was published by Boswell, having first been rejected by Eyre & Spottiswoode, a decision which Wallop attributed to fear of Jewish influence. Wallop regarded Ludovici as responsible more than anyone else for the intellectual swing to the Right which he believed was occurring in the late 1930s, describing him as an ‘evangelist of sanity’. As reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Wallop chaired a meeting at which Ludovici described Nazi pogroms as examples of ‘domestic sanitation’, and both men had at least one meeting with the Fascist theoretician A. Raven Thomson. Ludovici followed Wallop from the Mistery into the Array and spoke at Array camps in the late 1930s.⁵¹

Ludovici does not appear to have been interned during the war; astonishingly, Wallop described him in November 1939 as being ‘on highly responsible war work’. Late in 1940, Wallop had Ludovici’s furniture in storage at Farleigh Wallop. The friendship continued after the war, with Wallop sending Ludovici the draft of his essay on ‘The English way of life’ for his comments. This essay demonstrates Wallop’s continuing concern with the influence of ‘blood and soil’ on the English race; it discusses England’s racial history and the putative effects of alien influences on breeding and culture, and urges a shift from a predominantly urban to a predominantly rural society. Ludovici’s comments demonstrate both strong sympathy with Wallop’s aims and a greater ruthlessness in his attitude towards their achievement: ‘open and gentle means’ would never be effectual.⁵²

Many of Wallop’s other contacts and associates confirm the picture revealed by his closeness to Sanderson and Ludovici. Baron John de Rutzen of the English Mistery and the English Array

⁵⁰ HRO, 15M84/F176, Sanderson to unnamed Oxford undergraduate, 8 Mar. 1937; F407, Sanderson to Wallop, 7 Oct. 1932; Sanderson to Wallop and Norman Hay, 9 Sept. 1932; Sanderson to Wallop, 2 Dec. 1932 and 9 Feb. 1933.

⁵¹ HRO, 15M84/F407, Sanderson to Wallop, 2 Dec. 1932. Stone, *Breeding*, pp. 33–61. HRO, 15M84/F147, Wallop to A. H. Lane, 28 May 1938. Letter to the author from

Francis Beckett, 21 Feb. 2001. On John Beckett, see Francis Beckett, *The rebel who lost his cause* (1999). HRO, 15M84/F147, Wallop to Ludovici, 15 Nov. 1937; Wallop to Lane, 28 May 1938; Wallop to Ludovici, 3 Dec. 1937. *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 Dec. 1938, p. 40.

⁵² *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, no. 9, Nov. 1939. HRO, 15M84/F183, Wallop to G. Johnstone, 8 Nov. 1940; F154, Ludovici to Wallop, 15 & 16 Jan. 1947.

was another close friend; David Pryce-Jones's biography of Unity Mitford identifies de Rutzen as a friend of hers and contains a photograph of him at ease in the company of Janos Almasy, a Nazi necromancer who cast Hitler's horoscope. Wallop himself was in contact with the Nazi agriculture minister R. W. Darré, contributed to the Nazi publication *Odal* and attended a Nazi rally as late as April 1939. He was a leading figure in the British Council Against European Commitments, a response to the Munich crisis of autumn 1938 whose support seems chiefly to have been drawn from those who saw any possible war against Germany as Jewish-inspired.⁵³ The pro-organic journal *New Pioneer* pushed a similar anti-war line, including among its contributors prominent members of the non-Mosleyite far Right such as John Beckett, A. K. Chesterton (second cousin of the writer G. K. Chesterton) and Ben Greene.

Wallop's writings reveal a tendency to conspiracy theory. He saw Hitler's Czechoslovakian coup of March 1939 as utterly stupid, driving sympathizers back into the arms of the Jews and the Wall Street profiteers: 'I sometimes wonder whether one of his Lieutenants is not either in the service of the Jesuits or the Jews'. Equally, he disliked the obsessive and provocative antics of people such as Arnold Leese precisely because they created sympathy for the Jews. One of the great conspiracy theorists, Nesta Webster, thanked him for the copy of the *New Pioneer* he sent her, and invited him to visit. The *Jewish Chronicle* closely monitored Wallop's activities in the late 1930s, reporting on the launching of *New Pioneer* and on one of its dinners.⁵⁴

Having established Wallop's status as a key personality on the radical Right, we can proceed to examine how, through the English Mistery and, particularly, the English Array, organic ideas became an integral part of Wallop's political programme, and to show that a number of important figures in the organic movement were either directly involved in, or, through Wallop's initiative, associated with his political activities.

IV

It is instructive to note just how many pro-organic figures came within the orbit of Wallop's organisations and publications. Rolf Gardiner does not appear to have been a member of the English Mistery and was not a member of the English Array, but he spoke at a Mistery meeting and attended at least one Array camp, in September 1938. Michael Beaumont, Chairman of the Rural Reconstruction Association in the mid-1930s, was an early member of the Mistery, as was the forester St. Barbe Baker. Two noted practitioners of organic methods, later prominent in the Soil Association, loyally served the Mistery and the Array: Captain Ronald ('Roy') Wilson and Ralph Coward. Wilson, who ran the Icen Nurseries at Surfleet in Lincolnshire, became 'Marshal of the Fens' for the Array, while Coward, a neighbour of Rolf Gardiner, was 'Reeve' of the Dorset Kin. Wilson's estate was a showpiece of organic and bio-dynamic cultivation – Sir Albert Howard and Ehrenfried Pfeiffer acted as advisors – and was visited by the British Association in September 1937; it also hosted Mistery and Array camps. It is impossible, where

⁵³ David Pryce-Jones, *Unity Mitford: a quest* (1976), p. 201 and plate no. 20. On the British Council Against European Commitments, see Richard Griffiths, *Fellow-Travelers*, p. 322, and HRO, 15M84/F255.

⁵⁴ HRO, 15M84/F189, Wallop to Norman Hay, 23 Mar. 1939; F184, Wallop to Tom Nesbit, 29 Jan. 1939; F207, Nesta Webster to Wallop. *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 Dec. 1938, p. 40 and 3 Mar. 1939, p. 40.

Wallop's activities are concerned, to draw a line between politics and agriculture: in October 1935 he held a farming conference at Farleigh Estate which was not sponsored by the Mistery but which Wilson attended and to which another Mistery-man, future Minister of Agriculture Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, was invited. One of the conference's proposals was a Land Bank, in order that agriculture could 'get away from the present system of usury'. A year later, the Eleventh, or Farleigh, Kin of the English Mistery attended a meeting at which Wallop's paper on 'The place of agriculture in Home Defence' was read about ten days before he presented it to an audience at the Farmers' Club. In the summer of 1939, in a 'Report on Progress', Wallop referred to the camp being held by Lord Northbourne, at which Ehrenfried Pfeiffer was guest of honour. He wrote that it was not directly connected with the Array but might help spread the Array's approach to agriculture.⁵⁵

As we saw earlier, the nutritionist Sir Robert McCarrison attended the Farleigh Estate conference on health and agriculture in the summer of 1938, and a year later Wallop invited him to an Array camp, explaining that the English Array, in preaching regeneration and right values, paid 'the greatest attention to health and the soil'. An article by McCarrison had been read to the Farleigh Kin in April 1938, and a concern with nutrition, health and physique can be found in the work of both the Array and the Mistery. In 1934 and 1935 the virtues of un-pasteurized, raw, 'virile' milk were extolled at meetings of the Farleigh Kin; in November 1936 the Kinsmen discussed the state of the national physique.⁵⁶ After Wallop ousted Sanderson in 1937 and changed the Mistery's name to the more pugnacious 'Array', the organic concerns of agriculture and health became more prominent. A memorandum, probably dating from the spring of 1938, was issued, outlining the Array's policy on nutrition and health; it was in most respects identical to that of the wider organic movement. The Array's constructive policy began in the soil, since regeneration of the soil was the basis of sound nutrition; the work of McCarrison, Howard, Pfeiffer and Wrench was adduced as evidence for this assertion. Leaders of the Array, in conjunction with eminent men outside it, were questioning the unsound methods of contemporary agriculture and thereby challenging the vested interests of importers, pill makers and those who, through 'the false semitic standards of money value', had debased the national diet. Tea, black coffee, refined sugar and white bread were particularly harmful; Array members did what they could to promote local production of wholemeal bread. Preventive medicine was vital, since the cost of sickness could be halved by instituting 'a really sound intensive home agriculture'. All Wardens were recommended to own a copy of McCarrison's *Nutrition and Health*.⁵⁷

Along with these proposals was to be found an explicit eugenic policy. Array members should

⁵⁵ A letter from Wallop to Gardiner, HRO, 15M84/F191, 15 Mar. 1938, indicates that the latter was not a member of the Array. I must therefore correct the error contained in App. B of my *Origins of the organic movement* (p. 245), which makes him a member of both the Mistery and the Array. On Wallop's friendship with Michael Beaumont, see Portsmouth, *Knot*, pp. 108–10. On Roy Wilson's work at Surfleet, see George Godwin, *The Land our larder* (1939). Material on

the 1935 farming conference can be found in HRO, 15M84/F178. Wallop's reading of his Farmers' Club paper is recorded in HRO, 15M84/5/13/3. The 'Report on progress' is in F184 and the note on Northbourne's summer camp is in F176.

⁵⁶ HRO, 15M84/F184, Wallop to McCarrison, 31 July 1939. Notes on the papers read to the Farleigh Kin can be found in HRO, 15M84/5/13/3.

⁵⁷ 'Memorandum to Wardens', HRO, 15M84/F366.

recruit, work and mate only with 'sound' types; more than that, as one of the appendices emphasized (displaying the hallmark of Ludovici), they should oppose all breeding which diluted national characteristics, especially the breeding of Jews and of physically inferior specimens. Another Array document expresses the sinister view that 'if we are to save our race, we must exclude all those waste human products of the world that today are turning us rapidly into a mongrel population'.⁵⁸ Yet in organic cultivation, it is precisely the waste products which are of most value and guarantee renewed life. The wider organic movement did not adopt this eugenic programme, for which Ludovici condemned it. But Wallop, Wilson and Coward subscribed to a creed requiring them to 'hate the alien corruption and internationalism which tries to destroy the frontiers of culture and clean breeding', and which referred to 'God's purpose in making soil and blood and climate something different for every land'.⁵⁹

The Array placed the survival and regeneration of rural life at the centre of its vision of England's future. While Wallop was prepared for the Array to collaborate with the British Union of Fascists where appropriate, he disagreed with Mosley's movement for a number of reasons, one of them being that it was too urban. After the war, when former Array members were considering the feasibility of reactivating its work, Col. G. L. Archer of Ely wrote to Wallop to say that they could now hope for no more than to sow seeds, but that above all they should fight urbanisation.⁶⁰ This, of course, was exactly what Wallop was trying to do through the Kinship in Husbandry.

V

In the case of Gerard Wallop, then, the contention that far-Right politics and support for organic cultivation were separate beliefs, coincidentally to be found held by certain members of the organic movement, is completely unsustainable. 'We in the Array see the picture as a whole', he declared, and, whatever one may think of his social and political philosophy, it had a coherent pattern to it of which organic farming was an integral part.⁶¹ Furthermore, Wallop was a central figure in the organic movement's coalescence during the 1930s and '40s. But he was also one of the most politically extreme of its pioneers, and his views were not shared by all who sympathized with his ideas on agriculture. There might be a case for arguing that Wallop seized on the ideas of Howard and McCarrison for his own purposes, giving the organic movement a far-Right bias which was not essential to its message. Issues of food and health were as much a concern of the Left as of the Right during the 1930s, and one could advocate a healthy diet out of concern for those afflicted by poverty, as John Boyd Orr did, rather than from a desire to preserve pure racial types. Similarly, it was not necessary to be anti-semitic to dislike finance capitalism. Neither was concern for the state of the countryside a preserve of the Right: witness the range of political views represented by the contributors to Clough Williams-Ellis's jeremiad *Britain and the Beast*, or the work of Valentine Ackland. In fact, one of George

⁵⁸ HRO, 15M84/F366 and F364.

⁵⁹ 'Belief for a man of the Array', HRO, 15M84/F178.

⁶⁰ Wallop's willingness to collaborate with the BUF is

revealed in documents in HRO, 15M84/F188 and 364. F193, letter, Archer to Wallop, 6 Aug. 1946.

⁶¹ 'Advice to Wardens', HRO, 15M84/F366.

Orwell's complaints about socialists in *The Road to Wigan Pier* was precisely that they tended to be too much tarred with the brush of dietary faddism and hiking.⁶²

Nor did a refusal to interpret biological life mechanistically mean that one had to take the step of seeing human beings as purely organic. John Macmurray, whose rejection of the 'organic analogy' we noted earlier, agreed with the organicists that living things should not be regarded as machines, but he parted company from them when they applied organic categories to humanity. He devoted his philosophical career to developing a conception of human life which, while doing full justice to its material and organic nature, saw person-hood as its defining feature. Macmurray's ideas profoundly affected one of his students at University College, London, in the 1930s; this was Robert Waller, who later advocated 'human ecology' and edited the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth* from 1964 until the early 1970s.⁶³

That the far-Right politics of some of the organic movement's founders were bound up with their agricultural views should now be clear; that such political views are a necessary corollary of a belief in organic cultivation and an ecological perspective is a much more doubtful proposition. It may be that Gerard Wallop's central influence during the organic movement's formative period hindered it by harnessing his extreme nationalist and anti-semitic beliefs to concern for the very real problems of national nutrition and agriculture. And it is ironic that someone who opposed monoculture in farming systems should be so convinced of the need to keep England free from anything that might dilute its own supposed cultural purity.

Wallop's contribution to the organic movement must in the end be considered ambivalent. That it emerged as a coherent opposition to industrial-chemical farming is substantially thanks to his gift for bringing people together, his extensive knowledge of agriculture, his energy and his powers of communication. But the vision of an 'organic' English society, racially and culturally pure, lent the movement a political taint which must have been unappealing to many who might otherwise have supported it, and is still used to its discredit today. In many ways a remarkable and interesting figure, Gerard Wallop insisted on seeing human beings as little more than 'stock' or examples of racial types; the result was animosity towards the 'alien' and the physically inferior which cast a shadow over a movement whose chief aim was to celebrate the potential bounty which Mother Earth could offer to all her children.

⁶² John Boyd Orr, *As I Recall* (1966), p. 118. Clough Williams-Ellis, *Britain and the Beast* (1937); contributors included Patrick Abercrombie, E. M. Forster, C. E. M. Joad, J. M. Keynes, H. J. Massingham and G. M. Trevelyan, and messages of support were sent by, among others, Lloyd George, George Lansbury, Stafford Cripps, J. B. Priestley and Julian Huxley. Valentine Ackland wrote *Country Conditions* (1936); also see Wright, *Village*, pp. 128–30 and 136–39. George Orwell, *The road to Wigan Pier* (1972), pp. 152–3.

⁶³ The appointment of Robert Waller (b. 1913) as editor of the Soil Association journal *Mother Earth*, after

the death of Jorian Jenks in 1963, marks a significant change in the Association's stance. Jenks had been agricultural advisor to Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists during the 1930s, and still supported Mosley in the late 1940s, when he was editor of *Mother Earth*. Waller, on the other hand, took to heart Macmurray's warnings against seeing human life as purely biological. With his assistant Michael Allaby, he sought to shift the Association towards a philosophy of 'human ecology', and reduce the influence of the squirearchical tendency. See Robert Waller, *Be human or die* (1973); for the influence of Macmurray, see particularly pp. 66–78.