

Daniel Defoe, the Palatine refugees and a projected new town in the New Forest, 1709*

R. W. Hoyle

This is an essay about an episode which came to nothing. There was never a new town in the New Forest: it is a might-have-been. As such it might seem to be hardly worthy of the historian's attention. And yet the episode poses a number of interesting questions. Why, in the particular circumstances of 1709, was – if only for a few weeks – a new town thought to be a good idea? And why did the idea suddenly die only to be given a general circulation by Defoe 15 years later? In fact, the paper turns out not to be about the New Forest or projected towns in the New Forest at all, but about improvement, and more than improvement, about a reading of how society developed, and might develop again.

I

The Palatines were German refugees who arrived in England in considerable numbers between May and November 1709.¹ In all

* I first traversed this ground in a couple of paragraphs in the Introduction to the collection of edited essays, R. W. Hoyle (ed.), *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 26–7. Other shorter accounts of the projected town have already appeared: here I have tried to offer a definitive account calling on all the material known to me. Improvement is considered by the essay by Paul Warde in *Custom, improvement and the landscape*, but all accounts of improvement now defer to Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement. Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2015) (although he does not consider the episode considered here). The spelling and punctuation of extracts from newspapers and documents has been modernised.

1 There are two recent accounts of this movement: D. Statt, *Foreigners and Englishmen. The Controversy Over Immigration and Population, 1660–1760* (Newark, 1995), chs 5–6; P. Otterness, *Becoming German: the 1709 Palatine Migration to New York* (Ithaca, 2004).

around 13,000 people came to England, predominately from the middle Rhineland, many encouraged by the expectation created by pamphlets circulating in Germany that they would be trans-shipped to the Carolinas. Arguably they were less refugees than economic migrants, but it suited government to cast them as victims of the French. As Protestant co-religionists they were objects of sympathy but, as tent cities developed in and around the capital, the problem emerged of how they should be assisted. The options were obvious. They could be helped to stay or they could be assisted to move a second time to a colony where they could re-establish themselves. But unlike previous waves of religious migrants, they came in such numbers and with such rapidity as to pose a problem and attract attention. There was, then, something of an emergency in London in 1709 as resources and philanthropy were both stretched coping with the sudden influx. Instructions were given to try and head off the flow of people in Germany and at Rotterdam, which was suffering its own refugee problem as the Palatines waited for ships to take them to London. In the autumn a royal proclamation was circulated in the Rhineland saying that any further Palatines landing in England would be repatriated.²

Until the enormity of the problem became clear, the domestic response was sympathetic. A letter in *The Post man and the historical account* for 4–7 June 1709 described the first wave of refugees. They were

for the most part a meek, humble, civil and so religious a sort of people, that they are singing psalms or reading some portions in scripture all day long ... they are a hale, strong and well made people, pretty much of our English complexion, inur'd and inclined to hard labour, both men, women and children, insomuch that they are continually begging that we would set them to work and say they shall all be sick if we let 'em lie idle ...

But the letter continued, the problem was where to 'fix them and how to employ them'. On 8 June the Queen established a commission to collect donations in support of the Palatines and make arrangements for their employment and settlement. As it contained just short of 100 members, it was probably not intended to be a functional body, and certainly the weight and number of its members brought no great insights into what needed to be done. Indeed, the commission advertised for suggestions, publishing an occupational breakdown of

2 Statt, *Foreigners and Englishmen*, pp. 142–5.

the 6,520 people known to it by the beginning of July.³ A report of their meeting on 6 July in the *Post Boy* reported that they had received some suggestions, but the *British Apollo* reported that a further 2,000 refugees had landed at Deptford on 13 July.⁴ Increasingly the Palatines were arriving in a country which did not welcome them and could not cope with their numbers. Few employment possibilities were found for the refugees and, by the winter, conditions amongst the Palatines in and around London were pretty grim. Many were finally shipped to the American colonies, and large numbers died in the crossing. This lay in the future: in the summer of 1709 their cause was taken up by the journalist, hack propagandist, man of letters and later novelist, Daniel Defoe.

At this time Defoe was publishing a journal called *A Review of the state of the British nation* which offered him a mouthpiece. Defoe was also well-connected to government at this time so he was both able to advise but also to try and shape government policy through his political journalism. It is noticeable that when the possibility of a new town had been rejected by government, Defoe took to arguing for something similar in his newspaper.

Defoe was able to slot the Palatines into an existing world view. He held that 'the number of inhabitants is the wealth and strength of a kingdom, provided those inhabitants were such, as by honest industry applied themselves to live by their labour'.⁵ Given this, it was a public benefit to receive migrants. Defoe had already argued that an open-door policy and willing naturalisation was of benefit to the country in the debates which preceded the 1709 Naturalization Act. Now he applied much the same arguments to the Palatines. In a letter of 20 July published anonymously but which may well be from Defoe's hand (it certainly stated his views), the writer commented that

I think it is no longer a question with any body whether people are the riches and grandeur of a nation, and whether the increase of one is the increase of the other ... and therefore nobody doubts whether

- 3 *London Gazette*, 2-5 July 1709. The commission's letters patent is printed in A. Boyer (ed.), *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals, Year the Eight* (London, 1710), appendix, pp. 37-42. The names of the commissioners are given there, and in the *London Gazette*, 7-9 July 1709.
- 4 *Post Boy*, 7-9 July 1709; *British Apollo*, 8-13 July 1709.
- 5 D. Defoe, *A Tour Through England and Wales Divided into Circuits or Journies* (Everyman's Library edn, ed. G. D. H. Cole, 2 vols, London, 1927), I, p. 200. For Defoe's view of population, and his conviction that more people of working age was better, see P. Earle, *The World of Defoe* (London, 1976), pp. 146-9.

we shall receive this treasure that providence has thrown into our lap, but how we shall dispose of it in such manner as may be most beneficial to Great Britain.⁶

Arguments along these lines were circulated generally. The Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter to his clergy on 6 July commented that

I am sensible that in these and the like cases divers prejudices do and will arise from the weakness of some and the cunning craftiness of others. You will therefore do well after mature consideration to open this matter judiciously and to show as you have occasion that the increase of people is means not of impoverishing or weakening a nation but of advancing the wealth and strength of it.⁷

Defoe was well aware that there were arguments against accepting the Palatines and gave their flavour. 'They will starve our poor, rob the manufacturers of their bread and help to impoverish us.' It had, he said, been held by some when the Naturalization Act had been passed earlier in the year that 'all the beggars of Europe would come over hither. And now they allege, here is the experiment made and that in time we will drain all Germany of their poor.'⁸

But Defoe produced elaborate arguments to refute this under three heads. For the first, he argued that the increase of people was in itself a source of wealth, especially as the cost fell on the importers of English goods. If there was work for these people making goods for export, then they were an asset. He then turned to ask whether the addition of poor people to the country was equally advantageous. Industrious poor, yes, he concluded, idle poor, no. The industrious poor paid their way. They were a stimulus to agriculture as they needed to eat and be clothed. They were bound to be industrious so long as there was 'a foot of land uncultivated or a pound of wool unwrought in the whole nation'. As to the third question,

'Whether England really wants people or not' ... will be best answer'd by another question; 'Is there any land in England that is not improv'd to the best advantage?' If you improve land at all, you must have more people to do it with, or else you must prove, that the lands in England are capable of no further employment, which, I believe, nobody will pretend to.⁹

6 *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 21–23 July 1709.

7 Boyer, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, Appendix, p. 43.

8 *A Review of the State of the British Nation* (hereafter *Review*), 23 June 1709, pp. 137–8.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

The immigrant would be, as he had argued before, a stimulus to every aspect of agriculture. So Defoe finally summarised his argument in the *Review* for 30 June

For if a foreigner comes over that was never here before, and he encloses and improves a piece of land which was never improved before – I say then that all that land will let or sell for more now, that it would let or sell for before, is clear gain to the public stock. Nay, all that this land will produce, more than it would produce before, whether corn, cattle or wool, excepting only what the poor foreigner and his family, who are the improvers, must necessarily expend in the work or in his subsistence, is clear gain to the public stock.

For suppose, this foreigner gets in 20 years out of this land clear £1000, besides the rent he has paid to his landlord, and has liv'd upon the farm – Is not all the rent he has paid clear'd to the public stock, and have we not a family planted and maintained, and £1000 laid up in England more than there was before?

It is impossible to make anything plainer than this – and the consequence is evident. While there is a foot of land in England unimproved, we cannot have too many people.¹⁰

It therefore made perfect sense to Defoe that the Palatines should be given unoccupied land to improve. Of course, the objection might be made that his analysis contained no concept of productivity. It simply assumes that more is better. This may be taken to be a blind spot in Defoe's mind, but also in the mind of improvers generally. Unimproved land was often unimproved for the very good reason that it was irrational to try and improve it. Even if the costs of improvement could be written off and ignored, there is plainly land which does not repay the effort of cultivation because even when improved, it could not offer the cultivator an adequate living. It may, of course, be argued that the open New Forest at the beginning of the 18th century fell entirely into that category, land from which no self-sufficiency could be won, just as it does today. Where Defoe's arguments might best apply was in the uncultivated wastes of the American frontier which is where, of course, many of the Palatines eventually found themselves.

Defoe's arguments for the desirability of the Palatines extended over four successive issues of his *Review*. In the third issue, of 2 July, he made his proposals concrete.

10 *Ibid.*, 30 June 1709, p. 150.

The Palatine strangers may be planted in small townships, like little colonies, in the several forests and wastes of England, where the lands being rich and good, will upon their application to husbandry and cultivation of the ground, soon not only subsist them but encourage them.

The 'little colonies' were to

consist of 50 or 100 families each, as the goodness of the land or the extent of the forests or wastes they are settled in will admit, but none to contain above 100 families for several reasons; particularly that the language and customs of the people, as foreigners, may not be too long preserv'd, but that they may by time and mingling themselves with us, become the same people with ourselves, as all other nations we have entertained hitherto, have done.¹¹

The colonies were to become self-sustaining with the right proportions of trades so that they were to include not only farmers but artificers and labourers.¹² But as Defoe acknowledged, this was not really an answer. Where was the empty land for them to colonise to come from? In the next issue of the *Review*, he gave his answer in an essay which enlarged on the whole question of commons and common rights.

In his discussion, Defoe rode several horses at once. First, as he was to do at greater length later, Defoe argued that establishing a colony of farmers would bring in its wake all the trades which farmers required, from wheelwrights to hatters and everything in between. 'Thus planting a few makes money for a great many, and the husbandry being the foundation, the artificers, labourers and manufacturers are employed amongst themselves.' Second, his plans for the Palatines became the occasion on which he held forth on commons in general. He acknowledged opposition to the idea of giving up commons to the commoners. 'We will not give up our common even tho' in many places 'tis of no manner of use.' Here he mentioned the disturbances in the New Forest after the 1698 Act which permitted the enclosure of areas for silviculture; 'a rabble rose and tore down the fences, destroyed the enclosure and leaves it all open'.¹³ But Defoe also saw commons as the rightful property of the poor.

11 *Ibid*, 2 July 1709, p. 154. This is a familiar Defoe theme, that the English were a mongrel race and should not fear migrants who, following precedent, would be assimilated into the whole. Earle, *World of Defoe*, p. 148.

12 *Ibid*, 2 July 1709, p. 154.

13 There seems to be no adequate account of the disturbances which followed the passing of the 1698 statute.

I tell you, 'tis a national fraud – the commons and open grounds in England, were, originally indeed, left free to the poor and were designed for their support but 'tis the rich [who] enjoy them and the rest is all sham and outside.

He explained how for a farm rented at £100, the tenant was probably paying £20 for the commonage attached to it.

This is one of the many ways we cheat ourselves, for here the landlord really makes £20 a year of the common and we talk of the poor having the benefit of the common: the thing's a cheat. There's not a farm in England, if there be any right of common or herbage on the forests belongs to it, but the landlord gets the more rent for it. If the poor get [any benefit] by the common, it is the poor cottager, and God knows, they are so few and their profits so small, that they are easily satisfied by such equivalent advantages as may be given another way.¹⁴

So the poor, he held, gained nothing from the commons. He proved this with an observation:

that when any attempt is made to enclose wastes or forests, it is not the poor cottager that rabbles the lord of the manor, it is the tenants of the lordship, and the reason is just, because the common has always been an appendix to the farm and the rent is paid accordingly.¹⁵

Now it may be thought that Defoe's view of commons might by now have collapsed under the weight of its inconsistencies. For Defoe, commons were empty spaces calling out for colonisation. Attempts to enclose provoked riots because they were not empty spaces, but owned spaces, with a fifth of the rental value of his hypothetical farm coming from a common. But none of this stopped his identification of the New Forest as the place to plant the Palatines. Rather, 'Now here is an opportunity to restore people and towns to this vast wilderness and to people, cultivate and improve the land as it was before [William the Conqueror's clearances].'¹⁶

This did not end Defoe's editorialising about the desirability of using the Palatines to stimulate the economy, but we can leave him ranting at his readers: we have learnt enough. There can be no doubt that

14 *Review*, 5 July 1709, pp. 158–9.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Defoe was romantic rather than economic in these arguments. That he was offering them to a public audience through his *Review* probably reflects the fact that these or similar suggestions had already been made and canvassed within government, and dismissed as impractical.

II

In assessing this, we need to pay careful attention to dates, remembering that Defoe was writing the four columns that we have considered at the very end of June and in the first week of July.

The first influx of German migrants had arrived by the beginning of May and it was known that others were making the journey from the palatinate. Charles Spencer, 3rd Earl of Sunderland, and at the time southern Secretary of State, wrote to the Council of Trade on 3 May saying that some hundreds of poor Protestants had recently arrived and more were expected. The migrants expected that their stay in England would be a temporary one, as they wanted to be sent to the American colonies. But the Queen

being convinced that there would be much more for the advantage of her kingdoms if a method could be found to settle them in such a manner as they might get a comfortable livelihood instead of sending them to the West Indies that it would be a great encouragement to others to follow, and that this addition to the number of her subjects would in all probability produce a proportionable increase of their trade and manufacturers.

In short, the Queen seems to have shared the ideas of Defoe and to have initially welcomed the movement of peoples into her domain.¹⁷ The Board of Trade set about gathering information on the number of peoples who had arrived and their trades using Lutheran ministers in London as their contact. On 23 May news came of a further 1,300 Germans waiting to disembark and it became clear that the problem posed by the migrants was on a much later scale than had been supposed.¹⁸

It seems clear that there was much scrabbling around to come up with ideas as to how the Palatines could be deployed. Around the middle of the month the Board thought of offering them stocks on which to work

17 TNA, SP 44/108, fo. 66r.

18 *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 1708–9 to 1714–5*, pp. 26–36, *passim*.

to keep the women occupied with knitting and spinning and using the men to make steel tools. A proposal from the Company of Mines Royal to employ some of the poor Germans in their mine at Penlyn in Merionethshire was received on 23 May.¹⁹ Around the end of the month the possibility of planting the Palatines in the royal forests and wastes started to be canvassed. It seems likely that the Queen herself was initially attracted by the idea. It ran into trouble though as soon as it was placed under scrutiny. On 30 May the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations sought the advice of the attorney general and the solicitor general on two points. The first was whether the Queen had any power to grant parcels of land in her forests with licence to build cottages and enclose the land with the aim of converting it into tillage and husbandry. The second question touched on a matter not considered by Defoe. This was how the Queen might indemnify the parishes in which settlements of the poor Germans were located, that is, how could they be prevented from being a charge on the poor rates of the parishes concerned.²⁰ We do not have their reports, but we can only assume that the answer to the first question was no: the Queen had no such powers. What they advised about the question of poor law must be a matter of speculation, but this was indeed a consideration.

The Surveyor General of Crown lands, Samuel Travers, had been approached by 10 June when he wrote at length to the Lord Treasurer. He began by explaining that the Queen's forests, though large in extent, were mostly owned by other people and merely subject to Forest Law. Moreover they were subject to rights of common which could only be removed by agreement or act of parliament. In the particular case of the New Forest, he reminded the Lord Treasurer of the opposition to the 1698 Act. The House of Commons had been warned that to pass the legislation would be to provoke an insurrection. But the bill had been passed regardless and an uneasy truce achieved in the Forest. He thought it unlikely that people who had opposed the obvious benefits of timber for the navy would be of 'hospitable temper' to the Palatines. He had heard suggestions that the Palatines could be established on Dartmoor but this too was subject to rights of common which, even if little used, could not be removed except by act of

19 *Ibid*; for knitting and spinning, pp. 35, 38 and for the mines royal, pp. 37, 41, 42.

20 *Ibid*, p. 39. It was announced in August that there would be a central fund established to help those palatines with sickness or incapable of working so that they did not become a burden on individual parishes. D. Defoe, *A Brief History of the Poor Palatine Refugees Lately Arrived in England ...* (London, 1709), p. 34, citing *London Gazette*, 4-6 Aug. 1709.

parliament. Moreover, there was no timber on Dartmoor so the costs of establishing a settlement would be very high indeed. Epping Forest and Enfield Chase produced a different problem: that being near to London provisions would be very expensive.²¹ His letter was not sufficient to kill the idea though. A further letter of 20 June from one Richard Martyn, who had been appointed to look into the question, reported a meeting with Travers and some gentlemen, by the context gentlemen drawn from the area of the New Forest, which again concluded that the problems posed by common rights were insuperable. But Travers was reported as holding out the possibility that if an individual gentlemen saw it in his advantage to host a colony of Palatines, then it was possible that the project could proceed quickly.²² Somebody else took the trouble of writing a paper to counter the objections which had circulated. He (perhaps Defoe himself) maintained that he had never advocated that the rights of 'the good people of England' should be taken away from them when he made his proposal; he had taken it for granted that the Queen had the right to dispose as she pleased of her own lands. But he thought that the opposition to enclosure came from the failure to compensate people properly for their rights, and if 'a full satisfaction could be made by giving people land for their lost common rights, then he thought that people would not feel aggrieved but would voluntarily quit their present rights'. Moreover the writer advanced the novel argument that neighbouring farmers would welcome the loss of their commons to the Palatines as they would provide an outlet for the farmers' produce. A second objection that the whole settlement required an act of parliament was waved away by this writer who fell back on arguments about the profitability of the whole project to the economy.²³

Martyn's suggestion that individual initiatives might be the way forward had clearly already been adopted by Henry Grey, Marquis of Kent and Lord Chamberlain. He petitioned the Queen early in June asking to be sent an unspecified number of Palatines, of whom at least a third would be farmers and a good proportion of the rest carpenters, smiths or masons. They would be used to plant lands which lay close together in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. Grey envisaged creating essentially agrarian settlements but held out the possibility of developing iron working. He thought that the necessary precondition

21 TNA, CRES 6/24, fo. 271r-v.

22 BL, Add. Ms 61649, fos 78-9.

23 *Ibid*, fos 80-1.

for improving these lands was a ready supply of lime, which he undertook to make possible. Kent's proposal was placed before the Queen and sent on to the Council for Trade and Plantations for their opinion.²⁴

Kent's agent, a Mr Aston, attended the board on 15 June and outlined Grey's proposal. The idea, essentially, was to plant the Palatines on waste grounds (so we may assume commons) belonging to Grey and grant them three-life leases at a penny an acre. The marquis would accept 20 to 25 tenants at first, and would supply them with timber and building materials, but he hoped that the Queen would accept the cost of erecting their houses and offer something towards their subsistence until they were 'in a condition to live by their own labour'. Aston could not enlarge further on the proposal until he had additional details from the country, but on 20 June a fuller proposal was tabled before the Board, and Aston appeared before them the following day. The Board were not persuaded by the project as presented to them. It sought £1,550 as a subvention from the Queen for the settling of 20 families: as the Board observed, this implied that if the other Palatines were to be settled in the same way, the total cost to the Queen would be more than £150,000. The Board made a counter suggestion that as the Palatines would be improving Grey's estate for his private profit, the Queen's liability should be limited to the cost of conveying the Palatines to where they were needed. Aston undertook to relay this back to his master, and no more is heard of the proposal.²⁵ Perhaps it was not the free lunch he expected. All in all though, this may well have been a useful exercise for the government as it learnt just how much money was going to be needed to place the Palatines in the countryside.²⁶

We have a further insight into the conversations happening within government at this time in a letter dated 20 July and published in the *Post Man*.²⁷ We are not told who the writer and the recipient were, but the writer was certainly someone on the inside, and the recipient one of the senior officers of state who was serving as one of the commissioners for the Palatines. It is possible that the writer was again Defoe, and the recipient Lord Treasurer Godolphin. The background is one of earlier

24 TNA, SP 34/10, fos 275-6.

25 *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations*, 1708-9 to 1714-5, pp. 44-7.

26 Defoe also refers to an offer from a gentleman in Staffordshire to take a considerable number of Palatines and build houses for them at £6 a house, but I have not been able to discover anything further about this project (if, indeed, it came to pass): *Brief History*, p. 34.

27 *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 21-23 July 1709. The letter is continued in the following issue, of which I have not been able to discover a copy.

conversations between the two men, of which the writer wanted to remind his correspondent, and a letter the senior figure had written on 16 July updating his recipient on the actions of the commissioners for the Palatines.

The letter of 20 July acknowledged that it was necessary to start somewhere, but that what had been achieved so far had been wholly inadequate. Small numbers of Palatines had been sought by Sir Francis Drake in the West Country, the industrialist Sir Ambrose Crowley and the gardener at Windsor, who was using them to dig a canal. But small initiatives like this were inadequate to deal with the problem the Palatines posed, and the writer was critical of the policy of dispersal. Rather his mind had returned to ideas of colonisation. He remained in agreement with an earlier conversation with his Lordship in which the latter had outlined how an influx of Protestants in the late 16th century had revived the economies of Norwich, Colchester and Canterbury, and what folly it had been by the Duke of Alva to expel them. Indeed, he had offered a succession of instances where the expulsion of peoples had damaged the countries which they left behind. It was here that the two correspondents agreed that the strength of a county was in the number of its population.

This brought the writer back to the question of a colony. His lordship had raised this option as being the one 'least liable to any objection'. The only one of any weight was the right of common, but His Lordship had felt that this could be smoothed over by arbitration to which everyone would be willing to submit. That done, 'Your Lordship proposed the New-Forest', and 'amongst several reasons you have for the preference of that forest was the nearness to the sea, the thinness of people in Hampshire etc'. Moreover there was a historical justification:

Your lordship told me that either William the Conqueror, or his son William Rufus, had extirpated 30 or 40 towns, with their churches etc and turn'd about 100,000 acres of good ground into a horr'd wilderness, to gratify their unreasonable and impolitick passions, and therefore that it would be a glorious reverse of politicks as well as a goodness for her present majesty (who is also a conqueror, since she reigns absolutely in the hearts of his subjects) to plant every spot of ground with Christians and Protestants, which you thought might be done with very small trouble and charge.

This could all be done using the methods employed in the settlement of French Protestants in Prussia: the King of Prussia had given the emigrants timber, a sum with which to buy stock and a period free of taxes, and was now taking a handsome return on his investment.

The author of the letter was therefore trying to revive a strategy on a grand scale which had been discussed but left behind whilst smaller projects were considered by the commissioners: they were not enough to solve the problem of the Palatines. And we have an explanation of why the New Forest was thought suitable for colonisation: it had once been 'good ground' and could be made so again by the application of people. The logic is unimpeachable: it is unfortunate that it is based on bad history.

The shape of discussions within government must now be plain enough. Initially the Palatines were seen as a resource which could be turned to national advantage. An early idea was that they could be used in the internal colonisation of the royal forests including the New Forest. On consideration it turned out that there were considerable problems in making land available in any forest. Common rights would have to be negotiated away and even if it were possible, it was not going to be a quick solution to the immediate problem of the Palatines. One might guess that by the middle of June 1709, as the Palatines turned from benefit to problem, this possible solution to the dilemma they posed had been explored – and disregarded. Defoe's canvassing of it in his *Review* in late June and early July and the letter in the *Post Man* of 20 July may therefore be the work of someone who knew they had lost the argument in government circles but nonetheless continued to believe in this project.

III

There can be no doubt that Defoe had access to government. He himself said that he was one of a group commissioned by the then Lord Treasurer, Godolphin, to come up with solutions to the problem of the poor migrants.²⁸ We will come to Defoe's project in a moment. For the moment it is worth considering a simpler project which remains in Sunderland's papers. This was a project signed by one Thomas Smith. A man of that name might have existed: or it might be a pseudonym for Defoe.²⁹

Smith's project was to house and employ 5,000 men, women and children (aged over six) on 5,000 acres of land near a navigable river, at a cost of £25,000, without attracting complaint from the inhabitants

²⁸ Defoe, *Tour*, I, p. 200.

²⁹ For the following BL, Add. Ms. 61649, fos 76r–77v. If not the author of this proposal, then Defoe was probably familiar with it as a version is incorporated in his *Brief History*, pp. 31–3.

of England. The 5,000 acres were to be divided between 50 merchants or manufacturers who were to build 10 houses on every 100 acres, at a cost of £30 a piece, giving each house 10 acres. They were to advance £15 to stock each 10-acre holding with cattle and to buy furniture for the house. This, it became clear, was to be done at their expense, each one investing £450. The £25,000 advanced by government was to be used as seed corn money to start the Palatines in business.

Smith thought that 500 of the colonists would be engaged in agriculture. The remaining 4,500 would be taught petty artisan trades. Five thousand pounds was allowed for the purchase of tools and a further £5,000 for materials. The working up of materials (it is not clear what is meant here) was to cost £12,000. The remainder was to be spent in the first year on salaries: on 20 teachers of crafts at £100 a piece (this included their working capital) and 100 teachers at £10 each who were to instruct the people. This spent the £25,000 budget. Smith also suggested that the government offered three month's subsistence to tide the 5,000 over whilst the project started, but his budget did not extend to this.

The merchants who underpinned the whole venture though were not to take any return in the first three years in either interest or rent. After that, they could make leases for seven years of the tenements to the tenants at rents to be agreed by the government. Smith was confident that the profits promised by the project were so large as to encourage the projectors who provided capital to be patient about getting any return. Perhaps this was so good a prospect that 50 merchants really could be found to put up £450 a piece in return for the promise of future investment, but where was this all to take place? Which navigable river was it to be near? And what crafts were the inhabitants of the plantation to follow?

Smith's project was pretty rudimentary and full of holes: Defoe's, as he described it some 20 years after it was written, was much more elaborate.

IV

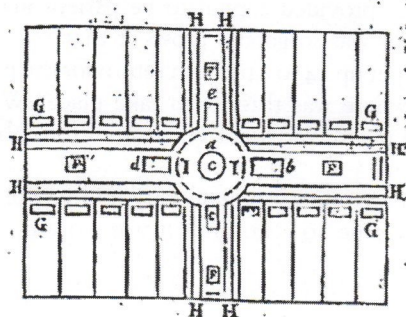
That we know so much about the projected town is simply because Defoe incorporated an account of it into his *Tour of England*.³⁰ Travelling from Romsey to Lymington, he passed the putative location

³⁰ Defoe, *Tour*, I, pp. 200–5. The appearance is that he was quoting from a document of 1709 still in his possession.

of the town and was prompted into reminiscence, as he said, as the sole survivor of those involved in the town's planning. A sense of disappointment pervades his comments, both that the project came to nothing, but also that the opportunity posed by the Palatines was squandered.

The town was to have occupied a site of 4,000 acres divided by roads into four quadrants. (For Defoe's plan of the town, see Figure 1.) The whole was then to be parcelled out into the hands of 20 farmers with 200 acres each. At the centre of the town an area of 12 acres of land was to be laid out which was to be divided into streets for the inhabitants to build on building leases, gratis, for 20 years. And in the very centre of the town, space was to be reserved for a market-house which might also serve as a town hall, and for a church. (The plan that Defoe provided also included a shambles for butchers.) Land was also to be reserved close to the town for a common so that the poor might run a few sheep, or cows. Journeymen and the labouring poor, whether servants or day labourers, were to have three acres of ground each, with licence to build cottages on them.

(49)
The Form of the several Farms would be laid
out thus.



a the Church, b the Shambles, c the Market House, d a Town Hall, e a Conduit with Stocks, &c. f the Conduits, or Wells, g Houses, h the Lands enclosed behind, i Streets of Houses for Tradersmen.

Figure 1: The projected new town, taken from A Gentleman [Daniel Defoe], *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain Divided Into Circuits or Journies* (1724), Letter III, p. 49.

These pioneering farmers were to clear the land and cultivate it: they were to pay no rents or taxes for 20 years, after which they were to pay rents of £50 a piece. Each of the 20 farmers was to be given a stock of £200 to set them to work, allow them to buy cattle and horses, carts, wagons, ploughs and harrows and pay labourers in the first year when, Defoe assumed, there would be little or no income. They were to have timber out of the forest with which to build their houses, barns, sheds and other buildings and for plough gear and other equipment.

It was then assumed that the 20 farmers would provide work for the rest of the Palatines at no further cost to the government (although we are given no clue as to how they were to support themselves until their skills were required). There then followed some heroic assumptions which underpinned the detail. The first task of every farmer would be to clear the land he had been allotted. He would need to employ a couple of servants and a maid whilst that was being done. Throughout that period, he and his family would continue to live in the army-issue tents that the Palatines had been provided with on their arrival in England, but they would quickly start to erect farmhouses in which to live. And they would need to acquire the farm equipment mentioned previously. So immediately every farmer would be employing three servants. There would need to be four families of wheelwrights, four families of carpenters, each family consisting of five family members and three servants making 32 persons. A labourer would be needed on each house site. So immediately Defoe argued, there was employment for 232 persons.

This sort of calculation was continued right through the projected town. It was, for instance, to have two physicians, three apothecaries, two surgeons and so on. In effect, Defoe offers a tabulation of the occupational diversity of the town as may be seen in Table 1 which shows how 20 farmers with households numbering eight a piece could support a population of 415 craftsmen and their families. Defoe thought that when all the crafts he had not itemised were added in, the 20 farmers would support at least 600 of their own people. With the passage of time, the number of people would grow with additional crafts being added together with the development of manufacturing for female employment.

The town would also be the location of a social change. There were to be two ministers, one to officiate in English and the other in German, so that over time the Palatines would adopt English: moreover it was to be made law that they would teach their children English. (It might be noted that Defoe does not factor a school or schoolmasters into his table of occupations.)

Table 1: The inhabitants of Defoe's projected town

	Number	Family size	Number of servants	Household members	Total population
<i>Founding inhabitants</i>					
farmers	20	5	3	8	160
wheelwrights	4	5		5	20
carpenters	4	5	3	8	32
labourers					20
Sub-total					232
<i>Second generation inhabitants</i>					
Butchers	4	5		5	20
shoemakers	4	5	2	7	28
hatmaker	1	5			5
glover	1	5			5
ropemakers	2	5			10
taylors	4	5			20
woollen weavers	3	5			15
linen weavers	3	5			15
basketmakers	2	5			10
common brewers	2	5			10
shopkeepers	20-24	5			120
additional labourers	40				40
Sub-total					298
<i>Other inhabitants</i>					
Ministers	2	5			10
Clerk	1	5			5
Sexton or gravedigger	1	5			5
Physicians	2	5			10
Apothecaries	3	5			15
Sub-total					45
Total					575

Source: tabulated from Defoe, *Tour*, I, p. 201-4.

Defoe ends his account with an estimate that the 20 farming families in the new town would offer employment for six or seven hundred people. Of course, this would not have made much impression on the overall numbers of Palatines milling around London looking for work and sustenance. But then Defoe tells us that the town in the New Forest

was to be the first of twenty such plantations situated on commons and wastes. The £80,000 this would have cost, he argued, would have been money much better spent than paying for the Palatines to be kept in suspense, or sending them begging over the nation, or exporting them to a colony (which was the ultimate fate of most of them): it would, for one thing, finally generate a rent of £40,000 per annum so that in time the initial investment would be handsomely repaid.

V

Now this may be thought to be an odd story and capable of analysis in several ways. First, we have to acknowledge that the arrival of large numbers of Germans in London was initially welcomed by the government. Using analogies from the 16th century, they saw these people as a transfusion of people and skills into England, and whilst the Palatines had their eyes fixed on a life in the Americas, serious consideration was given to how they might be best be deployed in England. Few convincing ideas emerged, and the lifetime of the proposal to use the Palatines to settle the forests was probably only three or four weeks before it was realised that it posed intractable problems. It was based on a rather surprising ignorance. We might expect Defoe to underestimate the problems, but one would have thought that a government of landowners, who had to deal with enclosure riots and other disturbances, would not need to be told that wastes were not simply empty spaces crying out for people to cultivate them.

Second, in his proposal for the new town, Defoe is really offering a study of economic development. Start with farmers to clear the land, and what will follow is an occupationally-differentiated settlement in which every man will have his own trade and specialism. Defoe seems to see these societies as self-contained and self-sufficient. He never suggests that they will draw services from the settlements surrounding them. But these settlements are both utopian and isolated. It almost comes as a surprise that the inhabitants are to be integrated through their acquisition of the English tongue. It is noticeable, for instance, that they lack gentry or social differentiation amongst the farmers. Whilst Defoe speaks of having a town hall for 'corporation business, doing justice and the like', we know nothing about how they might be governed or by whom. The economic aspects are well worked through, the social and governmental barely considered.

The idea of creating new settlements for migrant populations was nothing new in English history. Where it is most familiar is in the transformation of Irish society which was envisaged in the first round

of Munster plantations in the 1580s when a number of schemes were devised for the creation of new villages. If anything, these plans were more elaborate than Defoe's, for they assumed a hierarchy of landownership: but where Defoe was keen on the occupational diversity of his new towns, the Munster plantation settlements were essentially agrarian settlements.³¹ Of course, where they failed was that their assumption about the character of the land to be planted was faulty. In Munster it was scattered as the process of confiscation rarely gave extended areas at the disposal of the crown. Defoe would not find many places where there were 4,000 contiguous acres waiting for the arrival of the Palatines to blossom.

And this is finally perhaps why Defoe's ideas and schemes were relegated to a bottom drawer and the Palatines were finally sent to America. For it was there, with enormous areas of unexploited land, that ideas of town foundation could best be put into effect, and yet the tendency there was for settlements to fly apart, for towns not to coalesce and (following on from that) for occupational diversity not to develop.³² It is unlikely that Defoe knew much about Munster. He was much more likely to be influenced by contemporary ideas about economic development in Colonial America than events in Ireland over 100 years before.

There was another reason though why Defoe's plans were never pursued. They are quite terrifyingly unrealistic: they have all the naivety of the improving zealot. In the same way as nature abhors a vacuum, Defoe hated the idea of what he saw as empty space. He praised recent enclosure, for instance the extension of corn growing onto the chalk uplands of southern England for instance.³³ But Defoe really could not grasp the simple fact that what he saw as empty and unexploited land was usually nothing of the sort. Wiser minds pointed to the existence of common rights, but the economically-rational Defoe, even when he acknowledged them, saw them as something to be negotiated away (or at least someone whose paper remains in the government's files did). What others might have mentioned was

31 See for instance, J.H. Andrews, 'Geography and government in Elizabethan Ireland', in N. Stephens and R. Glasscock (eds), *Irish Geographical Studies in Honour of E. Estyn Evans* (Belfast, 1970), ch. 11; or W. J. Smith, *Map-Making Landscapes and Memory. A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland, c. 1530-1750* (Cork, 2006), p. 48 and plate 1j.

32 For instance, J.F. Martin, *Profits in the wilderness. Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth century* (Chapel Hill, 1991).

33 *Tour*, I, p. 282.

that land which was apparently empty was empty for a reason. The improving mind could not grasp the fact that some land could only be exploited in low-intensity ways. In a sense government was guided by history, by the belief that the New Forest had once had villages and settlements, and that William the Conqueror's depopulation could be reversed. Even when travelling through the New Forest on his *Tour*, Defoe never stopped to look at the thinness of the soil, the poverty of the grass, the tendency for the shallow valleys of the forest to be waterlogged. It was merely 'a waste and a wild part of the country'.³⁴ Defoe was no agriculturalist.

We can perhaps be glad that that Defoe's proposals were never put into effect. No one who has been there can really believe that much in the way of intensive (as opposed to extensive) agriculture could take place in the unenclosed New Forest or that anything like an adequate living could be scratched from the soil. One might regret that there is no 18th-century new town to go and see somewhere near Lyndhurst, but equally, one is grateful – for the sake of the palatines – that something so impractical was never implemented.

34 *Ibid*, I, p. 199.